

LUTTERWORTH & DISTRICT GROUP - Annual Chairman's Report

For AGM at Peatling Parva Village Hall 1.15pm Sunday 16th October 2022

This year's Report outlines another unusual year for our Group in particular. Over the past few years, we have focussed on marketing & events to increase our reducing membership (67 last year) so we could carry on offering regular walks. We ran another successful Open Coffee Morning at Lutterworth Town Hall on 1st October and hope to make this an annual event.

The Committee

Our Committee meetings are always busy but we do manage to plan a lot as well as have a hot drink and usually a nice bit of cake. I would like to thank all the members for their enthusiasm and hard work over this past year & especially to Julie Nelson and Mary Button who are standing down from the Newsletter & as Membership Secretary. We appreciate everything you have done.

Group Membership

For a variety of reasons this year we have seen a substantial increase in our membership which is still steadily continuing, and we are enjoying meeting a variety of new members. We have continued to offer led group walks on most Sundays and our Friday shorter walks fortnightly, led by Anita, Dianne and now Peter Berry. Many of these walks have been very well attended and covered a wide area of Leicestershire & beyond.

Walk Leadership

Although our membership continues to grow, we are beginning to have difficulties offering walks every Sunday due to our pool of walk leaders getting smaller. For lots of reasons some of our Leaders are not as available as in the past due to health reasons, grandparent duties and pressure of time.

In an effort to overcome this problem and with the aim of sharing the role across our membership, for this coming year we will be focussing on helping as many members as possible to feel confident that they can play their part in helping out by leading walks, even if this is offering just a couple a year.

We would not expect anyone to take on this role without the help and support of experienced leaders, to feel confident enough to do their bit. Ramblers also has on-line opportunities for training but the direct experience of sharing the

skills of our walk leaders as mentors, who have a wealth of walking experience and happy to share this with you is fun and will build your own skills & confidence to help you recce & lead walks.

Ramblers now require a written risk assessment to ensure that leaders and participants are well protected. This might be a bit off putting for some members, but we have a ready-made tick list with a number of headings appropriate to the walk. It outlines what you would consider when doing a walk just for yourself anyway and takes only a few minutes to complete. You also need to register on the Ramblers Volunteer section of their website, Assemble, but we can help you do this if needed.

Training Opportunities

We organised a free 1st Aid training course in March for those who wished to take part from our group and other local groups. This is a one-day course with a focus on being in the outdoors. We hope the next one will be in March next year. We have run several outdoor navigation training events at Bradgate Park this year, and hope to continue over the next year, open to any member who might be interested, both for potential new walk leaders and anyone just wishing to get to know more about being in the outdoors.

Change of Group Name

Together with Ramblers Area Group, we have been in discussion about the name of our group. Lutterworth's area includes almost all of the Harborough District, and we would like our name to reflect this. By calling ourselves 'Lutterworth & Harborough District Group' we hope attract a wider membership especially if we hold some promotional events in places like Kibworth or Market Harborough. We have gone through the formal processes of changing our name and we are now in a position to ask members to vote on this change of name at the AGM.

Technology

Many of us have increased our technology skills, not an easy thing for most of us, but as with many things over the last few years, this has helped us to communicate and function better as a group. Some members are now using the Ramblers app which allows us to follow the walk route on our mobile phone. We are also making it easier to communicate with & between our members by using What's App Groups for Sunday and Friday walks. This is

helpful by sending reminders of walk information, booking onto walks, car sharing, cancellations etc.

We have also had help this year with updating our website to the new Ramblers format although we are still awaiting an update on the Group Walks & Events site through which the information is transferred onto the Ramblers website. Currently Milton is our only expert at entering this information and so we are looking for a volunteer to be a deputy for him once the procedures have been updated.

Val Deacon has also been trying to get our presence onto a Facebook page with some success and her skills are evolving.

Trips Away & social events

Because of the uncertain situation of Covid 19 still at large, we have not planned a trip away this year which has been disappointing. However, we hope to be able to present a few ideas for the Spring which it might be possible to get organised, providing we can find flexible accommodation at a reasonable price in the financial climate we are now in. Got any suggestions or knowledge of areas for walking not too far away? Get back to us & we will share the info at the AGM.

In June we held a very successful BBQ at Claybrooke Village Hall, and we hope to do this next year. Also walks with a theme, picnic and mince pie walks which will again be repeated as well as the Summer Evening walk & meal from the pub in Sharnford. A new venture might be a Bring and Share New Year Lunch which we hope to plan for next January at Claybrooke Village Hall again. In the past we have had a great skittle evening at the Red Lion Pub in Huncote but it rather depends on the virulence of Covid over the next few months whether we book another session. Any other ideas, contact Dianne Thorpe.

We look forward to continuing with a full walking programme this coming year, some trips away and again, some good walking in 2023.

Anita Mothersole