

Annual General Meeting, Saturday 2nd November 2024 at 11:00am at Coalville CAN

Members Present:

Lesley Scott, Roy Grew, Geoff Branton, Sue Dance, Maire Cotton, Ken Storer, Andy Holmes, Valda Holmes, John Cartwright, Paula Dawson, Jim Weston, Martyn Pyatt, Hilary Matthews, Carol Hughes, Richard Hughes, Terry Newman, Roy Denney, Andrew Brown, Anna Swalwell, John Spinks, Jonathan Ashmore, Keith Mitchell, David Jackson, Glynis Batchen, David Rogers, Penny Marsden, Brenda Snape, Alan Box

1. Welcome

Opening remarks by the Chair and handed over to Roy Denney to present an obituary for Stan Warren, a longtime member of the Coalville Ramblers who passed this year.

Welcome to the AGM by the Chair, David Rogers and introduction of the current committee members.

Chair: David Rogers

Treasurer: David Jackson

Group Secretary and Membership Secretary: Brenda Snape

Webmaster: Keith Mitchell

Walks Programme Coordinator: John Spinks

Social Secretary: Glynis Batchen

Footpaths: Andrew Holmes

Area Rep: Glynis Batchen

Ex Officio: Andrew Brown

Walking Environment: Roy Denney

2. Apologies for Absence

Martyn and Brenda Wroe, David Bradbury.

A request was made to Head Office (on 21/10/24) for a representative, which was declined by the Regional Officer, who advised giving more notice should the request be made in future.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the AGM from 4 November 2023

Proposed: Geoff Branton. Seconded: Jonathan Ashmore.

4. Matters arising from the minutes of the 2023 AGM

No independent examiner was appointed at the 2023 AGM, so we will need to appoint one at this meeting. We have used Diane Powney this year in anticipation of Diane being appointed. Diane is independent, not involved in the day-to-day running of the Group and not a committee member.

5. Presentation of accounts for year ended 30/9/2024 - David Jackson

SUMMARY for YEAR END 30/9/24

The balance at the start of the financial year 1/10/23 was £ 1234.55

Throughout the financial year we have had:

OPENING BALANCE 1/10/23:				£ 1234.55
Income from:				
The Ramblers Association	£ 337.40			
Ramblers Holiday Commission	£ 80.00			
Social Fund Input	£ 17.00			
Total		PLUS	£ 434.40	
Expenditure to:				
Walks related	£ 537.42			
Walks Leader Training	£ 32.45			
Publications/Goods costs	£ 71.75			
Meetings (inc. AGM)	£ 318.23			
Admin	£ 64.98			
Total		MINUS	£ 1024.83	
CLOSING BALANCE 30/9/24:				£ 644.12

Table 1. Summary for year ending 30.9.24

Further details can be requested from the Group Secretary when the accounts have been verified by Head Office which is expected to be in early February 2025.

I feel a word of explanation may be needed regarding “Meetings (inc. AGM)” in Table 1; £250.00 of this item was paid to Coalville CAN (Community and Neighbourhood).

This payment, which can be redeemed, gives us a share in Coalville CAN, (a community cooperative which has an asset lock and charitable tax status with HMRC) with the benefit of continuing to use their premises for committee meetings and the AGM as further explained in response to Carol Hughes’ question below. Further, more detailed, discussion of this payment can be found below in response to Carol Hughes’ question.

Martyn Pyatt asked about the purchase of secateurs and other items and made a suggestion that these items donated by Ramblers to individuals be carried on walks. There was general consensus in favour of this suggestion.

Carol Hughes asked if we took advice on our investment in Coalville CAN.

David Rogers responded that the Committee had the benefit of advice from the Coalville CAN Founder and Manager, had studied the Share Offer documents and had made reference to the Ramblers Charity Objectives, particularly the document on the main website “Using Funds Effectively” which lists the following two items as worthwhile use of funds:

1. Campaigns/casework {the Committee felt that there were benefits for our Group from collaboration with Coalville CAN}
2. Meetings, venue hire and refreshments {the Committee felt that there were major benefits for our Group from collaboration with Coalville CAN by using their venue}.

The aims of the Ramblers and CAN overlap, particularly in the issue of walking and wellbeing and Groups are encouraged by the Ramblers Organisation to forge links with local community groups.

Coalville CAN has provided our Group with a venue for our five Committee meetings and the AGM this year at no cost (we paid approximately £120 per annum before) and the Committee feel that the new venue offers improved integration with our local community {thus the "Meetings (Inc. AGM)" category in Table 1 seemed the most appropriate category}

The Committee felt that purchase of the Share Offer achieved multiple benefits for both parties therefore we made the investment.

One final point on mutual support is that Coalville CAN is in the process of becoming an affiliated member of the Ramblers Organisation.

Alan Box stated that the committee should check with the trustees before making investments. David Rogers responded by agreeing to discuss this at the next Committee meeting.

6. Adoption of Accounts

Proposed Geoff Branton: Seconded: Alan Box.

7. Officers Reports

Chair - David Rogers

Some of you here know all about Ramblers, its mission, aims, and organisational structure. Others here, know very little about Ramblers and just come on walks. But most of us are in between, i.e. we know a bit about Ramblers and we come on walks.

So, I'm going to talk about (1) Group Walks and (2) Ramblers and the organisation.

Firstly walks:

Our core business, weekly Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and monthly Sunday walks have been maintained as have a few evening walks and members have stepped up into any gaps; we also have several new walk leaders and it's great to have this ENERGY in the Group.

We have an increasing variety of walks including: Sunday walks, Heritage Ramble with Coalville CAN, night walks, very long walks, stately home walks and walks on the periphery of our patch, e.g. at Stoney Cove, where members from five Groups attended. There is also an ornithological walk planned for 9 January 2025.

Trips to Scarborough, Monmouth, The Lake District and Youlgreave complete our walks program and we have some trips in the pipeline, maybe Eastbourne, Weymouth, or who knows where.

We've also had four or five social events including a Sherry Evening and a Quiz.

We've purchased and distributed materials, such as Hi-Viz items, first aid kits, walkie talkies, business cards, posters, an agenda book and we encourage use of these materials as appropriate. All of the above shows that we are a very active Group and thanks are due to all our walk leaders and organisers.

Secondly,

I'm going to talk about Ramblers Organisation, our Group, Area and Head Office and our Committee work:

Basically, we are a Group of around 240 members and in the UK, there are 485 similar Groups which make up the total membership of The Ramblers, around 100,000 people.

Our "Coalville Ramblers Group" is in the "Leicestershire and Rutland Area" along with seven other Groups and there are 59 Areas in the UK.

Our Area is in the Midlands/East Region for which we have a Support Officer, Claire Watkins who is a member of the Ramblers staff. Amongst other duties, Claire and colleagues, offer training courses to Officers of Groups.

Ramblers have a staff of 104 people in the Ramblers Organisation or as it is referred to "at Head Office".

The Ramblers Organisation supports large nationwide campaigns such as "Right to Roam", "English Coast Path" and "Wellbeing for Health" and as members of the Ramblers these are our campaigns.

Our Group represented by our committee is in contact with and involved with many facets of the above organisation and is also becoming more involved with local community Groups such as Coalville CAN (Community and Neighbourhood) and Coalville Heritage Society.

As well as keeping contact with the organisation above our committee discusses a whole range of issues including, Website, Facebook and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), use of Group Funds, First Aid and map reading courses, Walk Leaders responsibilities, poor footpaths, stiles and bridges and trips and events. Minutes of these meetings are available to all members on request from the Group Secretary.

We are a very strong and positive Group and although this meeting is about the formal part of the Group and so focusses on the Committee, I would like to thank again all the members for participating in the walks and events and particularly those who lead and organise walks and events whose efforts are appreciated by all.

Membership/Group Secretary - Brenda Snape

We have had five Committee meetings, all in Coalville CAN this year, and many informal discussions in person and by electronic means.

We were new to these roles and accessing the website was not easy to learn. However, we monitored membership in the second half of the year and found, from the Ramblers website, that since July 2024 we have 10 new members and in the same period 13 members have left the Coalville Ramblers Group.

Reasons given for the 13 leaving are: 1 left the area, 7 lapsed and 5 resigned.

We have a total of 236 members at present.

David Jackson asked why some of the members don't join the Group on walks. **Brenda** replied that some just like to support the aims of the Ramblers, such as opening up footpaths and right to roam, and to see what is going on in the Group.

Webmaster - Keith Mitchell

It's been an interesting year after taking over the webmaster role and thanks to all the help from outgoing members I have picked up the role quite quickly.

I am also pleased that quite a few of the walk leaders are taking an interest in loading their own organised walks onto the Ramblers website as this makes the walks more personal with good detail and promotional images which are better than the minimal detail taken from the spreadsheet. This makes it easier for me as I can just proofread and tweak if required. The walks are then scheduled to load two days before in the Facebook Group then pinned to Featured so that walks notices do not get lost in the page posts.

Some of the walk leaders still have their landline numbers as a point of contact for their walks which is not really useful on a walk day, as people need a mobile number if they are lost or going to be late, so changing this with Ramblers (Head Office) would be helpful.

Regarding Coalville Ramblers Facebook Group: it is only 3-years-old and has contributed greatly in generating new membership as well as providing a platform for information and a gallery for people

to show their images/videos. So, thank you to all the people who contribute as this is what makes an entertaining and lively Group.

One of the issues I spotted when I became webmaster & admin. was the number of fake profiles trying to make use of the Group which was solved by closing the Group so people had to ask to join which gave time to vet people prior to joining, it also encouraged long serving members to actually join the Group. So being in a closed Group makes the membership a lot safer for members wanting to share information and images as only members can see.

"Walk links" back to the Ramblers website are an important way of encouraging people to join the Ramblers as they get to see the benefits of being a member of not just a Facebook Group but the Ramblers as a whole which is why when the walks are posted on Facebook the link to the Ramblers site is important, so I think anything that shortcuts this process is not advisable. I also encourage people to make use of the Ramblers site as it is a wealth of useful information not only in terms of the Group walks program but also in providing information for all aspects of being a member or walk leader.

So, I would like to thank everyone who has helped me doing my job and contributed to the success and wellbeing of Coalville Ramblers.

Geoff Branton asked how to upload walks onto the website.

Keith explained how to do this and it was suggested that someone who can already do this could offer to help anyone who wants to upload their own walks. Keith will check the details before the walk goes live.

Geoff made a suggestion about putting upcoming walks on 4 days in advance instead of two.

Keith replied that it could be done. **Keith** further pointed out that as soon as anyone posts photographs of a walk then the walk link will drop down and it's not so easy to follow which is why he pins the link to "Featured" at the top of the Facebook site.

Social Secretary - Glynis Batchen

Since taking on this role last year, some of you will have attended the social events, meals, trips and holidays. Some of you may not have managed to attend all or any of them, so here is a summary of what the Group has been doing.

We started with a Christmas meal at Thringstone Members Club organised by Geoff Branton. A raffle was held and £97 was raised towards our Social Fund.

Our next event was a "Sherry evening" at The Priest House, where members offered suggestions in an "Agenda Suggestions Book" on many issues including, the use of business cards to hand out on our walks, Sunday walks, Night walks, themed walks, coach trips and First Aid courses. To date, all of these have been implemented or are being planned. 30 members attended and it was an opportunity to dress up for the occasion!

In March, 11 of us had a meal at The Noodle Bar in Loughborough and a second visit took place in October; also, well attended.

In April, we had a 2-night stay in Monmouth with 32 attending. We had two Group meals and walks led by Penny Marsden, and John and Moira Boodle.

A 4-night trip to Scarborough took place in May attended by 33 members. Excellent walks were planned by John and Moira Boodle and Carol and Richard Hughes.

In July, six of us attended a very comprehensive free First Aid course which was interactive and I'm glad to say we all passed the exam at the end of the day. Another three people attended the 2nd course in October. Our aim is to get as many people as we can booked onto the courses in the future.

Our next holiday was to Kendal in The Lake District for four nights, attended by 17. Walks were led again by John and Moira Boodle and Andy and Valda Holmes.

In September, 31 joined us for a coach trip to Yougholgreave in Derbyshire. Different length walks were arranged to suit the needs of those attending. It was good to welcome walkers from the Leicester Ramblers and South Derbyshire Group; the weather was kind until we got on the coach for home.

Our final event to date was last night when three teams of four attended the Area Quiz in Newtown Linford.

As you can see, we have had a successful year of various well attended events with positive feedback from those that attended.

Walks Programme Coordinator - John Spinks

A number of new Walk Leaders have been recruited and led both successful and interesting walks. A positive move has been made to encourage Thursday Walk Leaders to be more involved in Wednesday and Saturday walks. Thanks to Glynis Batchen, Maire Cotton and Jim Weston for stepping in.

Potential and existing Walk Leaders to take part in the on-line training module, now compulsory for new Walk Leaders.

The formula for all walks will remain the same. Longer walks Wednesdays and Saturdays and a shorter walk Thursday. Maire Cotton now plans and organises Thursday walking.

New initiatives have been introduced including Night Walks, Heritage Walks on a Sunday, and an Ornithological in the new year. Details of all walks will be added to the program which is sent out every two or three weeks. Evening walks were also a great success and well supported throughout the Summer. It should be noted that walks can be added on any day or night by a Walk Leader.

The second and third quarter program were fully covered and one date remains to be covered in the fourth quarter. Many thanks to all of our Walk Leaders for what has been a very successful year. Thanks also to all members who regularly turn up to make the walks a success.

Footpaths Officer - Andy Holmes

Six broken stiles and one bridge have been reported to Leicester City Council and have been resolved.

My role includes planning applications for footpath diversions for example for new housing estates in the area. A photograph and detailed location e.g. 'what3words' is needed to locate any issues and members are encouraged to continue to report any broken stiles etc.

Ex officio - Andrew Brown

I have been promoting Coalville Ramblers with the following:

- Simple direction signs for walk meets.
- Design and printing of our contact cards which the Chair holds a supply of.
- Obtaining A4 and A3 National Posters (which any member can request from the main website) which I have personalised with our Coalville logo and had them laminated.
- Supplied and personalised a Committee Clock.
- Helped with setting up the Sherry evening event and promotional items.
- All the above apart from our contact cards have been supplied to the Group at no cost.
- Accompanying walk leaders on their recce events including Leek, Monmouth and Scarborough.

Walking Environment Officer - Roy Denney

A project in the Charnwood Forest Area is ongoing with a budget of £5 million to spend with the help of a £3.5 million Lottery Grant.

Some of the work is to:

- a) Create a continuous path from Loughborough to Leicester via Charnwood Forest. It includes improving the path into the Outwoods, paving the stretch from there along the road to Beacon Hill and going via Castle Hill to Leicester.
- b) Improve the path from the Deer Barn Cafe in Bradgate Park up to Old John

Area Officer - Glynis Batchen

In November, three teams participated in the Area Quiz in Leicester. The Loughborough team won on that occasion.

In January, three of us attended the Area AGM at Gaddesby Village Hall followed by a 5-mile walk afterwards.

Note: Money from Ramblers Head Office is channeled into our Group account via Area and we can apply for more if we have a project related to things like signs, footpaths etc.

8. Adoption of Officers Reports

Proposed: Alan Box. Seconded: Valda Holmes.

9. Election of new Committee for 2024-25 and appointment of Independent Examiner

All the members of the Committee are standing for re- election.

Proposed: Geoff Branton. Seconded: Penny Marsden.
The Committee were unanimously re-elected.

Diane Powney appointed as Independent Examiner

Proposed: Roy Denney. Seconded: Penny Marsden.

10. Any Other Business

Geoff Branton: There are only 6 places left for the Christmas meal at The Birch Tree with a maximum of 40 places.

Carol Hughes stated that if members are not on Facebook, they can miss out on events.

David Rogers responded by explaining the limitations in using Mailchimp to e-mail members without further expenditure, costing £15 per month.

Carol suggested that some of the Group funds could be used to pay for 'improved access' to Mailchimp.

David Jackson said that £15 per month (= £180 per year) would be two thirds of our annual income from Ramblers Head Office and general consensus was that this was too expensive. The Committee will discuss this at the next Committee meeting.

Martyn Pyatt commented that due to his visual impairment, he doesn't get a lot of information and that if he uses WhatsApp, he only has one chance to read the messages. **Keith** responded with some suggestions and said he would help.

Sue Dance raised the issue of dogs on walks. Some are not well-behaved, run across crops and are quite boisterous. There is concern about somebody being knocked over.

Roy Denney: The official policy from the Ramblers is that there should be no dogs on walks.

Ken Storer: In the past Coalville's policy has been that well-behaved dogs could come along and preferably on short leads.

David Rogers: At present, it is the Walk Leader's decision as to whether dogs are allowed on particular walks or not. Walk Leaders can make the position clear regarding dogs by posting information on our website and/or on Facebook and/or by informing people on the walk the week prior to their walk. The Committee will discuss the issue further at the next meeting.

11. Closing remarks

Meeting finished at 12.40 pm.