

## Hinckley Ramblers Annual Report 2024–25

### Overview

2024–25 has been a positive and active year for Hinckley Ramblers.

We've seen strong growth in walks and attendance, new leaders stepping up, and continued enthusiasm across the group — despite a slight fall in membership.

### Walks and Leadership

A total of 142 walks were offered this year, up 35% from 105 last year.

We welcomed six new or returning leaders — Sarah Hall-Craggs, Maxine Aston, Dave Hall, Karen Saunders, Mark Walbank, and Julie Rock — who together led 23 walks.

Sarah and Maxine both led 5+ walks thereby earning their Walk Leader badges.

While leader numbers rose from 29 to 32, just seven led over half of all walks, so recruiting and supporting new leaders remains a key priority.

Our WhatsApp group helped add 12 short-notice walks without affecting the regular programme, which continues to run smoothly.

### Walk Leader Training

The new training requirements for walk leaders have proved contentious, particularly among some of our more experienced leaders who feel they should not have to complete additional training.

Unfortunately, some have chosen not to do the training and have indicated that they will no longer lead walks as a result.

As a group, we will be doing everything possible to encourage and support leaders to complete the training, which we believe is worthwhile regardless of experience.

To make the process more user-friendly, we have organised a 'Walk Leaders' Training Session in November 2025, which we hope will satisfy the requirements for most of our leaders and minimise any negative impact on the group's walk programme.

### Attendance and Membership

Total attendance rose 23%, from 1,262 to 1,558, though average attendance per walk dipped slightly (12.0 → 11.0) due to the higher number of walks.

Membership fell from 205 to 195.

15 new members joined, 2 rejoined, and 27 left overall.

Recruitment will be a focus next year, with more promotion through social media and local publicity.

### Committee and Organisation

The committee has worked effectively throughout the year:

- Chair: Mike l'Anson
- Secretary: Gill Spatcher
- Treasurer: Angela Preece
- Membership: Tony Smith
- Walks Coordinator: Pete Hopewell
- Walks Organiser: Jean Davies
- Footpaths: Wendy Birt
- Social: Hazel Dalziel & Angela Preece
- Web / IT: Trevor Martin & Brian Knight
- Map Library: Lin Cook

Thanks to all for their time and commitment.

The committee for the new year (2025–26) remains unchanged, providing welcome continuity and stability.

### Social and Activities

Social events organised by Hazel and Angela — including the Christmas Dinner, River Cruise, and Coach Ramble to Worcester — were well supported.

Special thanks to Gill and Eddie Newell for hosting the Mince Pie event for ten years, and to Tony and Donna Smith for organising the Alfa Holiday to Ilfracombe (next year's trip to Weymouth is already full).

Our long-distance walk, Shakespeare's Avon Way, covered 90 miles over eight days, with nine members completing the full route.

Thanks to Chris Catlin and Mick Beasley for leading sections.

In 2026 we'll tackle the Jurassic Way from Banbury to Stamford, and we look forward to once again welcoming members from other groups.

Monthly Hillwalking weekends, introduced by Jean Davies, have become a popular and successful feature, and have also attracted new members and additional walk leaders to the group.

### Finances and Footpaths

Although spending has remained in line with the budget and overall finances are well managed, the group has continued to suffer from the unbudgeted and unfunded increase in the recce mileage rate for walk leaders.

As a result, our reserves have fallen well below the recommended 40% level, and we have come close to running out of money at times.

We hope that this issue will be addressed in the new financial year to ensure a sustainable position going forward.

Thanks go to Angela Preece for her careful stewardship of the accounts, and to Chris Catlin for serving as our Independent Financial Examiner.

Wendy Birt continues to do excellent work as Footpath Secretary, helping resolve several long-standing access issues.

### Communications

Our weekly newsletter, Pete's Ramblings (now over 600 editions) and our website, maintained by Trevor Martin and Brian Knight, keep members informed and engaged.

Our Facebook page with over 1,750 followers continues to grow helping raise our local profile and support recruitment of new members.

### Looking Ahead

Despite a small membership decline, 2024–25 has been a strong year with growth in activity and renewed enthusiasm.

Priorities for next year:

1. Recruit 24+ new members
2. Develop 3+ new leaders
3. Increase average attendance to 12+

Thanks to everyone who has led, organised, or supported our walks and events.

Here's to another enjoyable year of walking, friendship, fresh air (and even the occasional beer) with Hinckley Ramblers.

Mike l'Anson

Chair.

