

MEMBERS DIARY

Area Walk – Saturday Sept 30th

8 mile walk followed by a 4 mile walk both starting from Hallgates car park, Bradgate LE7 7HQ.

The 8 mile walk will start at 10.00 am and will take in Swithland Wood, Woodhouse, Quorn, Swithland and Cropston Leys and back. The 4 mile walk will start at 2.00 pm and be a circuit of Bradgate Park and should finish around 4.00 pm. There is the option of doing one or both of these walks.

Map grid ref: SK542113

Streetmap URL co-ordinates:

Lat(WGS84) N 52:41:50 (52.697295)

Long (WGS84) W 1:11:53 (-1.198095)

Lat,Long 52.697295 -1.198095

Area Quiz - Friday Oct 20th

To be held at the Linford in Newtown Linford (LE6 0AD) 7.00 for a 7.30 start.

£2 entry and refreshments provided.

AGM 2017/18

The next AGM will be hosted by the Leicestershire & Rutland Walking Group on Saturday January 27th 2018, gather from 9.15 to start at 10.00

Light refreshments will be provided and there will be a short walk at about 1.30 for those wishing to go along. If doing so please bring a packed lunch.

Venue St Peters Church Centre, Glenfield

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AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

Footloose DLNS

Glenfield Parish Council

Leicestershire Footpath Assoc.

Leicester CHA

Market Harborough R.C

Oadby Hill Walking Club

Over The Hill

The Grasshoppers R.C.

Kibworth Rambling Club

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Now in my second year of office and still enjoying the experience although there have been some more awkward moments. Thanks to assistance from my colleagues on the committee it makes the job much easier and enjoyable. However we are still without an Area Secretary and this makes it difficult. At the AGM I said I would try to cover but it is proving very difficult with other commitments I have had outside of Ramblers duties which were not all forecast. With much appreciated help from Peter Williams, Roy Denney and John Howells we have managed to cope. If anyone feels they are willing to help please contact myself or other members of the committee, even if they can only offer assistance on a temporary basis till end of the year. It is not arduous but not really my forte.

2016 Best Kept Footpath competition was a great success and now we want recommendations for 2017. The Farmers Union are fully on board and we have had proposals submitted from them already in the Rutland area. A combined effort with ourselves and the NFU can only work to our advantage. Keep the proposals coming.

The AGM hosted by Lutterworth went well congratulations to the host team. Venue and refreshments were very appreciated.

The Write of Way proved to be a very emotive subject and after consideration we have decided we should keep it as a twice yearly document for now but to save costs in the future we may need to go more electronic. Therefore we need more member E mail addresses and are asking all groups to work on this.

Hinckley Group are celebrating their 45th year this summer with a special walk (similar to the first walk) followed by a 'birthday' tea at a Burbage Inn. Some of the original walkers are hoping to attend at least for the tea. Radio Leicester have recorded a special interview with our current Chairman Tony Smith and previous stalwart and Chair person Ellen Sandeman.

We were also privileged to stage the Ramblers Road Show at Beaumanor Hall in April. This event was run by the Ramblers Headquarters team and proved a great success. There were several interesting workshops and a short walk organised by Loughborough in the afternoon. The weather was on its best behaviour and the catering was first class. Delegates came from all over the Midlands and numbers far exceeded forecasts. We had well over 90 which was 20 more than any previous. Congratulations to all who helped to make the day so enjoyable.

Over the next few months we will be hearing about the Lost Ways project which is important if we wish to keep our existing footpath structure. Use it or lose it is the emotive slogan, so watch this space and try to assist where you can.

I did say I would visit all Groups during my tenure leaving Leicester, Melton and Rutland to complete my tour. The hospitality of all groups has been first class and I thank you all. The local areas are all in good shape and it augments well for our future.

I wish you all a good summer and remainder of 2017 and hope to see you at the various area activities.

COMMUNICATION

Your Area Committee, and Central Office London, have been trying to find ways of communicating with the membership in better, more diverse and less expensive ways. We now have a more dynamic website regularly being updated and have further improvements in mind. We have also looked into the possibilities with Facebook and Twitter but have been unable to find a volunteer to set up and manage this.

We have also been looking at the possibilities for distributing our Write of Way electronically but this is far more complex. It requires members to keep us updated with their email addresses and many still do not use email. The Ramblers do not have addresses for half the membership and many they have bounce back when used. The advice is that just putting the newsletter on the web site without telling people when it is there will get very few reading it.

Four years ago we asked the entire membership if they wanted to continue receiving a paper newsletter with surprising results. Given the demographics of our membership we expected that a lot of older members may not be much into electronic communications and that proved the case but also a lot of younger members using the web and email regularly said they preferred to keep receiving paper. Those saying they were happy with electronic only were a very small minority.

The time will come when the change happens but we have to reach a tipping point first. Printing as many copies as we do we enjoy substantial reductions in cost and the effort to set up a system of splitting out some of the members is not justified until we reach a point where very real savings are being made. The actual cost of printing each copy is very modest after the set up costs and the cost per copy climbs the fewer we print.

We must bear in mind as well that London want us to send out newsletters and they pay for them. Having said all this the cost of these newsletters is a sizeable sum and we continue to look at ways of reducing it. In the past we issued four quarterly editions a year with an extra for the AGM but it is now down to two in total. In addition by finding a commercial means of distribution affording a substantial discount against the ordinary mail the overall cost is little more than the cost of two second class stamps a year per member..

It is important that we have a local means of keeping our membership informed and, as more than half have nothing to do with their groups, the area newsletter is the only place they learn anything about what is going on locally. It is also necessary as a campaigning organisation that we can call on the wider membership when help is needed and over recent years most volunteers have come from the section of the membership who for whatever reason do not want anything to do with a group.

The target must eventually be an electronic newsletter but the time is not yet. The issue will resolve itself in time but how do we bridge the gap from now till then without disadvantaging many members?

We have been monitoring our web site to try and assess take up by members and most 'hits' are people looking for walks or looking at the photographs. We take this to suggest that a lot of them are not our members but walkers from outside the area.

Your Area executive have looked at this again and are seeking a volunteer to compile and maintain a list of member email contacts and if somebody comes forward we will create a position for the role on the AEC.

There are a number of ideas being suggested including introducing a digital only newsletter to bridge the gap between the paper versions hopefully to get people used to receiving them this way. If it appeared on the website and members were advised of it by email that might allow us to count the number of times the web page containing it has been visited.

We will continue to monitor the situation and keep this matter under review but until such time as we can be confident that most of our members are reading material on the web site it is in our own interests to keep open the existing lines of communication and paper versions will continue to go out at the end of May and November

Finally don't forget this is your newsletter. If you have some good tips to pass on to other members let the Editor know. A blocked footpath; welcoming pub; a good new guidebook; some really useful kit or much less welcome, an unfriendly landowner or a dangerous dog.

PROTECTING HISTORIC ROUTES

We are now getting down to the serious business of protecting any legal routes under threat of extinguishment.

After several years of preparing the ground we now need help on specific cases. There are lots of tasks which can be done. Some are easily done at home, many are in bite sized chunks but if you get the bug there are opportunities for fascinating deep research.

We have now laid out a programme to handle this. It is being overseen by a committee of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum where we are well represented and which has co-opted members from other organisations.

Having identified likely routes from gaps in the network our next task is to find an indication of a possible route from historical sources (one reference will do initially) We will then apply a 'public benefit' test and prioritise accordingly

If we can then collect sufficient evidence by full research we will submit a claim (Map Modification Order application)

Indications of a possible route from historical sources can include comparing OS maps dating back to 1883 against the current definitive record. Many have already been checked systematically, as has the Highways List of Streets for routes which do not appear to be primarily for vehicular traffic. Other sources can help if not evidence as such e.g. local knowledge, but other publication e.g. cycle maps can provide secondary and supporting evidence.

We have made a list of discovered anomalies including critical gaps where the path did not meet another highway. There are other records at County Hall and the county records office at Wigston which should help:

Maintenance hand-over maps for highways

Parish returns when the Definitive Map was created

Tribunal reports when the draft definitive map was disputed, in terms of omissions, inclusions and mis-routing.

There may be some mileage in comparative checking other commercial maps (*we are supported in our efforts by the County Council and they have given us a very useful list of sources they use*), the Cassini reprints, covering the county, and The Village Atlas, Most of these possible sources could be checked at little or no expenses as a series of 'bite-sized' exercises for people with infinite patience and a sense of curiosity. The National Library of Scotland has a lot of historical OS Maps available on-line for free, and these may include older editions than those we have already checked

We have in hand a tour of principal libraries which might lead to a potential source - this could be an expanding trail.

One important, although negative, source which could be studied as a small' exercise, is checking all the Quarter Sessions records of path closures and diversions. It could save us digging into a path which no longer legally exists.

So far we have looked at around 6000 routes and put 5000 of them on the back burner for various reasons, but the list could still grow. We think we could reduce this still further by applying a 'public benefit' check and prioritising those which would be of most value.

We have a number of very keen volunteers now but the more we have the more paths we can research.

The evidence sources include things such as

Enclosure Awards and Maps

Tithe Awards and Maps

OS Boundary Remarks Books and Object Name Books

Inland Revenue Valuation Records

Other documents which could help are deposited plans for railways, canals, mining and quarrying, reservoirs etc. As these are specialist subjects with their own devoted followers, it may be that someone would delight in poring over these, and all we need to do is for them to look for paths etc. whilst so doing.

Our prioritised categories initially reflected the degree of vulnerability but we are now refining the list to include potential benefit to people to reduce the number of routes which we can seriously research to manageable levels. As things unfold it may be that routes move down the target list due to an apparent lack of evidence, or lack of researchers interested in that area but the information will not be discarded. Priorities may also change when the Statutory Guidance on how the Deregulation Act should be applied by the Highway Authority finally appears.

When we start acquiring evidence we have a check list for researchers to use when doing detailed research and a spread sheet on which the information will be collated. We will probably introduce some form of brownie points system to score the weight of material and those routes coming out highest are the ones where expect to be able to submit a claim (Map Modification Order application)

To date a great deal of work has been done by a small number of individuals. We now need a lot of people to each do a little work to enable us to move this on.

THE CHRONICLES OF CHARNIA

Roy Denney

Made by volcanoes, shaped by people, for all to experience

Charnwood Forest is much more than people realise. It is composed of layers that have been laid down over millennia. Its foundation is its geology; created by volcanic eruptions over 600 million years ago and leaving a legacy of granite that has influenced so much of what was to follow. On top of this is the landscape and natural heritage that was shaped by evolution; from the first complex lifeforms through to the valuable biodiversity of today. Next came the influence of mankind, with evidence of human activity dating back to Palaeolithic hunter gatherers nearly 15,000 years ago. Since then, Charnwood has seen the rise and fall of priories, the development of towns and villages, the growth of the quarrying industry and agriculture and eventually the final layer, the people of Charnwood Forest with their rich social history and wealth of stories.

Many of the people who live, work and play in Charnwood Forest are unaware of a lot of this heritage; and there is a danger that much of this heritage will be lost because of a lack of proper investment and because it is not made relevant to people and communities of the twenty first century. The geology could be lost because the internationally important fossils remain unrecognised; the natural environment ruined because it is not appreciated and managed; the man made heritage lost because it deteriorates through lack of investment and the stories of its people are lost because they are not celebrated and retold.

The growth of the towns and cities surrounding Charnwood is leading to increasing pressure on ‘honeypot’ sites like Bradgate Park, where the volume of visitors threatens to damage its valuable ecological and geological features. Yet, many of these visitors do not venture from the tarmac road through the Park, failing to explore the wider countryside of Charnwood and as a result, do not understand its true value. Without a clear focus, this ‘hidden’ Charnwood will be gradually lost by attrition until all that is left is its name. As Sir David Attenborough says:

*“No one will protect what they don’t care about,
and no one will care about what they have never experienced”*

To prevent this, ‘The Chronicles of Charnia’ need to be told. Communities within and around Charnwood Forest need to be encouraged to explore Charnwood, and to be provided with the stories to better understand Charnwood. They also need to be given the skills to work together to care for Charnwood. The environment needs to be linked to new development in sensitive ways; new industry needs to develop hand-in-hand with heritage; and new communities need to be able to access Charnwood and disperse across the whole forest. Key sites and attractions need better co-ordination to help them tell the many stories of Charnwood to a diverse, modern audience. In turn, the benefits of increased visitor and community interest can then be shared more widely across multiple locations.

With this in mind I have been playing a major part in the preparation of a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund and John Howells and Peter Williams are also one the work groups which have been pulling it together. If we are successful and have the funding we will be coordinating the development of a new visitor economy, contributing positively to growth and generating new investment to protect and manage key heritage assets. Charnwood Forest will have a tourism sector that celebrates and thrives on local heritage; community wellbeing that has heritage at its heart; and people sharing pride and drawing inspiration from their local landscape. A distinct ‘sense of place’ needs to be developed among the communities of Charnwood Forest to not only celebrate its heritage, but to create new heritage and stories for the future.

The legacy of people exploring, understanding and caring for Charnwood will be a landscape where local residents and businesses feel part of the ongoing story of Charnwood, visitors can enjoy the many elements that make up its heritage and Charnwood continues to add new chapters to the Chronicles of Charnia.

We submitted the bid at the beginning of June. If this is successful, we will then move on to a development phase where information will be gathered to support the development of a more detailed delivery plan which will be submitted as part of a second round application in late 2019. Following approval of this application, the five-year delivery phase would begin in 2020. The current bid is for about a quarter of a million pounds to fund the development phase working towards a grant of about £3,000,000 for the project itself.

If we get the initial funding we would have to fall down rather badly not to eventually get the balance.

The ultimate aim is to get people out into Charnwood Forest in a sustainable way e.g. rail, bus, cycling and walking routes directly from the centres of population like Leicester, Loughborough and Coalville and to achieve a joined-up network of routes where people understand clearly where they can go (not just the honey-pot sites), with clear information and a series of themed, marked trails

We will also promote the tourism economy by providing advice and support for small-scale tourism facilities to cater for visitors when they get here e.g. provide more overnight accommodation (as there is currently a shortage)

We wish to help people gain a better understanding of Charnwood Forest's heritage informing the public about this wealth and variety of heritage in exciting and engaging ways, tailoring messages to a range of audiences young and old, rural and urban, using different methods including interpretation boards and a range of digital media.

We want to engender local pride in the reasons why Charnwood Forest is so special (including "intangible heritage", i.e. stories, culture, traditions, etc.) and provide education programmes, enable schools to use the existing facilities within the area and fill any significant gaps in provision.

The aim is also to provide opportunities for everyone to play an active part in caring for the heritage of Charnwood Forest, with a range of activities across all the heritage types and to all types of visitors/communities.

To do this we would provide a co-ordinated heritage skills training programme, facilitate volunteering opportunities and provide where there are gaps, building capacity among communities and 'Friends of' groups.

For the current bid we have to find at least 25% match funding, which equates to £25-30,000 for each of the two years of the Development Phase. While this can be a combination of cash contributions, in-kind support and volunteer time, the majority must be in cash. The various local authorities involved and the National Forest will be providing funds and as unpaid volunteers, the three RA members can have all their time costed as a contribution. Peter Williams, our President, represents the Ramblers on the Charnwood Forest Regional Park Steering Group and has been invited to join the Development Board because of his extensive local knowledge. Whilst not directly representing the Ramblers, John Howells our Treasurer and I as your Walking Environment Officer are members of the Local Access Forum in our personal capacities and as such represent the interests of all who enjoy the countryside.

From our point of view we hope to see a better network of paths we can use, more spaces open to the public and more facilities when we are out there.