

MEMBERS DIARY

AREA WALK -

Sunday 2nd September 2018
Figure of Eight from Walton on
the Wolds (SK592198) 10.30am
Meet at "The Green" LE12 8HR
for 6 miles and / or
2.30pm for 5.4 miles (approx)
Organisers Leicester Group

AREA QUIZ -

Friday 2nd November 7.15 for
7.30 start. Teams of about 4.
Individuals can be made up into
teams on the night.
Barwell Constitutional Club.
20 Chapel Street, Barwell LE9 8DD
Teas and coffees provided.
£2 per person.
Organisers Hinckley Group

AGM 2018/19

Hosted by Leicester Group,
Saturday January 26th 2019,
gather from 9.15 to start at 10.00
Venue
The Linford, Newtown Linford
Followed by a short walk for
those interested

CONTENTS

- 6 The AGM
- 7 Chairman's Chatter
- 8 General Council
- 8 Snippets
- 10 Best Kept Paths
- 13 Walking Environment
- 15 Obituaries
- 20 Footpath changes

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

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

January's AGM saw some changes in the line up of your Area Executive Committee. After two years sterling efforts Tony Smith stood down as Chairman to be replaced by Martin James, not new to the committee but a new set of hands at the helm. Also after a year without a formal Secretary we now have a willing volunteer. It is not a major task these days with the advent of much electronic communication but it is still one we can ill do without. We have coped by two other members stepping into the breach when required but the committee are delighted to welcome her on board.

Also towards the end of the year the AEC co-opted Jo Marshall onto the committee to be our Social Media Officer is particular looking after our Facebook page. The AGM confirmed her appointment and we now have a better gender balance on the committee and the youngest Chairman we have had for many a year.

The other officers remained in post.

Two members can be elected from the floor to represent the wider membership rather than be delegates for a specific group and Trevor Martin has again been elected to this position. We can also elect up to two representatives of affiliated organisations and Andrew Thomas of CHA Leicester was elected. Tony Smith, the retiring chairman, is to remain on the committee as the Hinckley delegate and it gives us some continuity.

At the AGM the guest speaker, Peter Tyldesley, Director of Bradgate Park, gave an informative and entertaining update on the park and the wider Charnwood Forest. Bracken clearance in the park had effectively led to some rewilding as more unusual flora had appeared of its own accord. The park was making increasing use of volunteers doing work that would otherwise require well over 20% more full time staff. He went on to expand on the ambitions and challenges of making the lottery grant for the Forest work and improving access was a large part of this.

Many Groups and Areas are finding it difficult to fill positions and the reasons vary wildly. Some times it is because there is an all powerful figure in a major position who has been there for ages and new people don't want to just be passengers on his or her ride. Many groups and areas have solved this by having rules which make senior officer stand down after a given period as our Area has. This does itself throw up problems though. One benefit of it is that people are not afraid they will get trapped in a job but the big downside is that when we cannot find a replacement the incumbent who would be perfectly happy to carry on is not allowed to do so.

There are pluses and minus for both positions and we are looking at a possible hybrid and will offer a constitution change to the next AGM.

The present rule reads

7. HONORARY OFFICERS

The Honorary Officers of the Area shall be the Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary and such other officers as the members shall from time to time determine; to be elected at the AGM.

All the above Honorary Officers shall retire at the AGM following their election, but shall be eligible for re-election with the exception that new holders of the positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer shall not be entitled to hold the same office for more than three consecutive years; neither shall they be eligible for election to a different one of these offices until the expiry of one year from the date when they last held one of these offices.

The Area Executive Committee are proposing this should in future read:

All the above Honorary Officers shall retire at the AGM following their election, but shall be eligible for re-election with the exception that holder of the position of Chairman who shall not be entitled to hold that office for more than three consecutive years.

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

Welcome to this the latest edition of Write Of Way. At this year's AGM I was elected to serve as Chairman. So who am I? I joined the Ramblers' in 2001 as a member of Melton Mowbray Group. Within a couple of years I was Programme Secretary, I then served as Membership Secretary, and am currently Footpath Secretary and Chairman for the group.

At an area level I have done two spells as Membership Secretary and for the last couple of years I have been Area Footpath Secretary. I firmly believe that there is nowhere else in the world that has such a wonderful network of diverse paths that the public have a RIGHT to enjoy.

At the AGM this year we were entertained again by Peter Tyldesley of the Bradgate Trust who gave an excellent talk about the management of such an important local area.

When it came to the election of Area Officers the other major change was the election of Kim Vallance as Area Secretary (a role that was not filled last year).

I am very lucky because the people elected to the Area Committee are all very dedicated and knowledgeable.

My main aim for the coming year is to encourage all 8 groups of the area to work together and share experiences with each other, both good and bad, to help every group within our area to prosper and promote the aims of the Ramblers'.

Martin James

GENERAL COUNCIL

This year Tony Smith (Hinckley group) and myself were delegates at General Council which was held at Bangor University. Trevor Martin (Hinckley group) and Anita Mothersole (Lutterworth group) also attended as observers.

The Council elected four new Trustees and elected Kate Ashbrook as Chair of the Board of Trustees, a role that she has held before.

Following an address from the Chief executive Vanessa Griffiths, we were given several presentations by the Senior Management Team on the plans for the next three years.

There were five motions submitted for debate. A motion on regional staff dedicated to devolved regional government areas and a motion about a voluntary question about skills being added to the membership form were both rejected.

Motions on campaigning for better roadside signage and campaigning for Highway Authority PROW maintenance budget protection were both carried, as was a motion for central office to provide support to Areas/Groups who want to set up 'Donate A Gate' schemes.

We also attended workshops on "Integrating Short Walks", "Membership Matters" and "Area Support". We found that some of the workshops were very interesting and will help us manage our Groups and Area better.

Financially the Ramblers' are in a satisfactory position, however membership numbers are a concern and this was highlighted throughout the weekend. The Ramblers' have around 105,000 members but with 9 million people saying that walking is their favourite hobby, we need to tap into this vast pot of potential members.

"THE MORE MEMBERS WE HAVE THE LOUDER OUR VOICE IS WHEN CAMPAIGNING".

Martin James

SNIPPETS

The County Council is currently conducting a survey on Passenger Transport and it includes what bus services they should subsidise in future. There is a place to suggest new routes which could be considered. Many places we like to walk are already hard to access by bus so why not make your views heard.

The consultation can be found on their web site or you can contact them by post or email to the Passenger Transport Consultation, Room 300B, Leicestershire County Council, Freepost NAT18685, LE3 8XR or ptps@leics.gov.uk

Another one of our groups has managed to get their MP out on a walk with them. Andrew Bridgen recently joined Coalville for an eight mile walk taking the group around the Queen's Jubilee Wood in Ravenstone. During the walk, Andrew discussed concerns that the group have and learnt how the walks are a great opportunity for people to make new friends and improve their fitness. They talked



about ongoing maintenance of the footpath network currently one of the best in the country, and the importance of countryside access for all people. Andrew Bridgen said: "I was delighted to join the Coalville Ramblers on one of their walks. These walks are a great opportunity to meet new people, get some exercise and enjoy North West Leicestershire's beautiful countryside".

The walkers left to right are: Terry Newman (walk leader), John Boodle, Andrew Bridgen, Martin Pyatt, Jenny Adcock, James Weston, Mandy Ottey, David Bozon, Marion Dillon, Ruth Middleton, Robert Woodward

COMMUNICATION

During a survey of Areas and groups, the ability to communicate by email was widely emphasised as the most pressing need for future development, a point we have been making for some time. 74% of groups and areas said improved member communications would be helpful.

London recognise the urgent need to improve communications across the organisation and have established a new Communications Group, consisting of representative volunteers and staff, to take forward some specific initiatives to improve communications. As part of this work, they will be transforming the approach to data over the next few years, to enable staff, area and group volunteers, to be able to communicate better with members by email in the future. The crux of the issue is though the capture of email addresses and a means of keeping them up to date. The new data protection rules will impact on this however.

As part of the exercise, they will continue to offer workshops at Ramblers Roadshows on the use of social media platforms and are reviewing and updating the social media toolkit in 2018.

Part of the problem is of course expertise locally; 30% of groups told them they rely on a single expert for ICT and many were interested in training and support to increase confidence in using digital tools. This year they will be piloting more training through 'webinars' – online video conferences where multiple people can join a live training session.

BEST KEPT PATH AWARDS

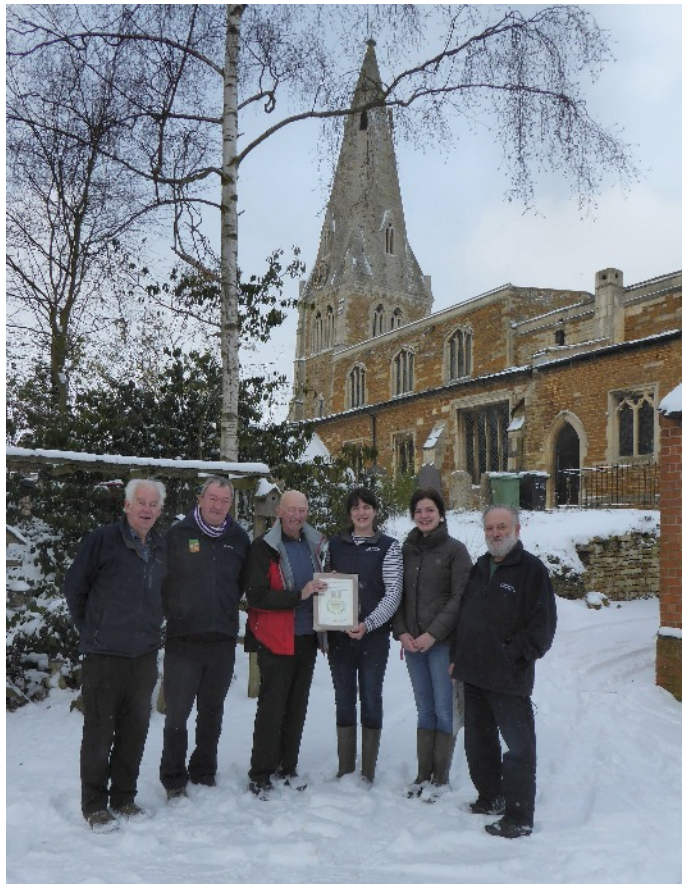
This year's awards were announced at the AGM in January. The winners were presented with their framed certificates on the coldest day of the year but lining up three diaries on our side when three different farmers would all also be available did mean cancellation would have been a problem

We did have a good number of nominations this year and although we unanimously thought there was a stand out winner, two other paths were so well maintained we felt them worthy of an official commendation.

The winners were the Johnson family for the network of permissive paths at Rectory Farm in Great Easton, overlooking Eyebrook Reservoir. Normally reached by road from Uppingham it was impossible in the blizzard conditions but a very wide detour through magnificent snowscapes eventually got us there.

A hot coffee and some biscuits by the fire was very welcome.

The award was given to Fay Smith and Abigail Rees, daughters of the family.



Peter Williams, Ramblers President, Paul Tame of the National Farmers Union, Tony Smith, 2017 Area Chairman of the Ramblers and Roy Denney, Walking Environment Officer for the Ramblers, braving the snows to present the ladies with their award



Throughout the months of May and June they offer guided farm walks to interested organisations, lasting around two hours and free of charge and Hinckley Group are to visit as part of a walk this year.

We had a good selection last year and the judging panel enjoyed three very pleasant days checking them out. All were lovely walks but not all really demonstrated what we are looking for so perhaps it is time to remind members of the criteria.

The overall winners were a family run farm, very welcoming with wide well signposted grass paths (with grass kept to a reasonable walking length). They have created permissive paths and circuits of walks for visitors. This ticked all our boxes.

What we are basically looking for is landowner going above and beyond what might normally be expected to provide and maintain pleasant footpaths and make walkers feel welcome. A pleasant path through lovely countryside will not qualify unless there is evidence of ongoing and regular maintenance of the path.

Last year there were three other paths we felt might have won were there not such strong competition. Swannington Heritage Trust have done an excellent job of creating well maintained grass tracks in and around the Hough Mill museum site but counting against them for our purposes were two issues when comparing them to the winners.

Firstly they are only open on some Sundays. You can still access and walk round the site but only by rights of way off their property which are not very well maintained; not their fault but it does make access tricky at times. The other thing was that they are a tourist attraction and good maintenance is very much in their own interest. The paths around the mill lead out to join a network of paths to various other destinations close by.

The paths nominated were all over our patch and the two near Gaddesby receiving commendations were maintaining wide paths cut through their crops.

We did walk part of a path running between Stanton under Bardon and Thornton, a very attractive area feeling surprisingly remote. However after ploughing the landowner had only marked the path by driving his tractor along the route and such compressed surface as there was appeared only to be the result of footfall. Not much evidence of actual maintenance so this was not in the running. Another path where much the same could be said was one we looked at near Whissendine.

Another nominated path where we enjoyed a very interesting walk was Frisby Lakes. There were good gates and furniture but all new and some may have been the work of the County Council as the walks included new (and resisted) rights of way.

The grass paths were well mown but given how new things were and without knowing what the landowner had been obliged to do we felt we could only judge this a few years down the line. We may look at this again this year and Ulverscroft Manor has also been suggested.

WALKING ENVIRONMENT UPDATE

As often the case much of the campaigning work done is under the auspices of the Local Access Forum where both the Chair and Vice Chair are Ramblers officers.

Two big ticket projects this period have been accelerating the unrecorded and lost ways project and work with HS2. Another where there will be increasing opportunity will be Charnwood Regional Forest Park Forest Park.

After colleagues and I had several meetings with lottery board people, the Charnwood Forest Regional Park has been successful in a bid for lottery money to protect and enhance the area. Money has now been provided to employ somebody to help us flesh out the projects and in 18 months time we should get the balance of the funds for this £3.7M project unless we mess up. That lady is now in post.

From our point of view we wish to see the smaller areas of access land joined up and better path networks linking them to make them useable for longer walks. Access is a large part of the project but so also is protection of the environment and ecology of the area and we want to spread the visitors out more away from the flesh pots to reduce adverse impacts.

Amongst the schemes we are working on there will be an off road footway between Beacon and the Outwoods and a surfaced track in Bradgate to take people from the Old John area to the ruins and tea rooms / visitor centre.

Another possibility is the creation of a long distance path and we are working on that. If it gets the go ahead we may be looking for volunteers to walk stretches to assist with descriptions.

As for the 'lost ways' we hosted an evening seminar on the subject which attracted over 40 interested volunteers and we are now going round them trying to agree what they will look at and what help they need from us

Charnwood Forest itself for historic reasons does not have a great network of rights of way and there may be some historic routes to be found there.



The Forest's unique landscape erupted out of a volcano in the oceans near the South Pole 600 million years ago. It has developed rich layers of heritage: its landscape is defined by granite-topped hills, wooded valleys, heathlands and grasslands; its shaded lanes reveal Arts and Craft cottages, ancient monasteries and dry-stone walls. We need to improve means of getting between them.

Despite being on the doorsteps of Leicester, Loughborough, Coalville, Shepshed, Whitwick and many villages, its value, beauty and importance is not as well-known as it should be and we want to encourage people to get out there and wander about. If we cannot generate some pride in Charnwood it is at risk: if people are not passionate about it and do not understand its importance, ultimately, the things that make it so special risk being forgotten and lost.

Sir David Attenborough was inspired as a boy in Leicestershire by its internationally important geology and fossils and we need to inspire the next generation.

Finding historic routes is one way of improving the network as is encouraging the creation of new paths but of equal importance is protecting the paths we have. We have been fighting Network Rail for some years now as it attempts to close footpath crossings and expect to be giving evidence sometime soon in a public enquiry about the at present closed crossing at Barrow.

We also now have HS2 to contend with. It will be a long time coming but legislation is likely next year after which any changes very difficult so we are engaging with them now to try and agree the least worst options where paths are to be cut. While many appear on the Definitive Map of Paths or the List of Streets a few do not. Some are of these of historic nature which may well have legal status of one sort or another but not yet recorded in those records. With detailed research of the final route we have reduced the number of identified issues to 42.

In addition Leicestershire has numerous more informal “desire paths” which are de facto paths which could be claimed on the grounds of unchallenged use over many years. The mitigation exercise we are contending should aim to recover these historic assets and/or link existing paths together to generally improve the rights of way network. The legislation will almost certainly give them powers to make changes some way out from the trackbed to facilitate a holistic approach to the changes to be made.

We have submitted ideas to them on all these crossings and are having a series of meetings with them to go through them. They were so impressed with our detailed responses that three of us were invited to their offices in Birmingham to discuss the issues with their senior team.

Whether we feel the concept is worth the money or not, it is important that we get the best outcomes for the rights of way impacted by the route.

Further afield there are ambitious plans to create new woodlands across the north of England. We have seen locally how successful the National Forest has been and now the Woodland Trust working with the major cities, the Forestry Commission and various agencies, plans to plant 50 million trees. From Hull to Liverpool and Leeds to Sheffield a new Northern Forest is planned bringing the countryside nearer to cities; transforming some former industrial areas and creating new walking environments.