

FOOTPATH SECRETARY

Recent changes are reported in the normal way elsewhere in this newsletter. There are several major projects in the pipeline which will affect the network but nothing is imminent and a verbal update can be given at the AGM

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

	2017	2018
Area total	1495	1416
LE01 Hinckley	205	213
LE02 Leicester	452	421
LE03 Melton	113	101
LE04 Coalville	221	214
LE05 Rutland	127	115
LE06 Loughborough	140	135
LE07 Lutterworth	84	79
LE50 LRWG	117	107
LE96 Others	35	30

These figures show a decline in membership of 5.6% with only Hinckley group bucking the trend. Nationally the figure has dropped from 104,818 to 102,818 which is a reduction equating to 1.82%

GROUP REPORTS

COALVILLE

Another successful year for Coalville Ramblers. Although resignations due to illnesses throughout the year made work a little harder for the committee, now all positions have been filled, plus two extra members. Well done to everyone.

Our walks programme went well, which included our coach trip to Tissington and later on an extra trip to the canals of Birmingham, my thanks to 'Brummie' John for that. Unfortunately, our weekend away couldn't take place this year due to the lack of response but next year (2019) it will definitely be on.

We also led three walks for the National Forest Festival of Walks which were very well received and got us an additional member.

There is an ad hoc trek taking place next year where some of our intrepid souls will be walking the Camino Way.

May God go with them cause I aint.

Ken Storer

HINCKLEY

At the time of writing we don't know how Rambler's stalwart Stan Warren's recovery from his heart attack will have progressed when this issue of Write off Way is posted to members. Along with, I imagine, every other group in the Area we send him Hinckley's best wishes for as complete a recovery as possible.

Over the last year we have seen an increase in membership numbers which whilst not massive is encouraging when set against a general membership decline nationally.

One initiative which is in its early days and probably hasn't resulted yet in many new members is that we are sharing some of our Facebook posts, including the weekly newsletter "Pete's Ramblings" and notices of next walks, with a number of local Hinckley Facebook groups. With this and other "sharing" of posts means we are sometimes reaching over 2000 people when a post is shared. I think the "record" is 3,800 people reached but if understated I'm sure one of Hinckley Ramblers members will put me right!

September saw what is becoming an annual event for Hinckley with a Coach Ramble, the fourth in the same number of years. The destination this year was York and many members and friends took the opportunity to have a day out. About half of the participants walked a section of The Ebor Way with 2 groups walking 11 and 8 miles respectively. Thoughts have already turned to the 2019 Coach Ramble which will take place probably on a Sunday in early September. Members from other groups in the Area are welcome to join us. If interested keep an eye on Hinckley Ramblers Website or Facebook Page next Spring / Summer.

In October three Hinckley members walked a 12.5 mile section of Leicestershire Round, from Burbage Common to Shackerstone, as part of Radio Leicester's / Countryfile Big Walk. Over 5 days Radio Leicester had organised 2 walks per day to cover the whole Round. It was mentioned many times on the station every day in the weeks before it took place. We did an interview live on air with Radio Leicester in late September. Ours was the first in a short series with Ramblers from other groups appearing on subsequent days. Despite the amount of "plugs" for the walk and the fact that people could choose to walk only a short distance or a complete section the turnout was very poor. And for me, this sums up the difficulty in getting people out and subsequently signed up as members of Ramblers..

Thanks to a previous issue of Write of Way that alerted Hinckley Ramblers to the possibility, we visited Rectory Farm for a "Walk and Farm Tour". Rectory Farm of course the winners of the 2017 Leicestershire Area Footpath of the Year Award. Many thanks to the farmers Phil Johnson and Daughters for an excellent day. We had a short walk of around 4 miles in the surrounding area and were then joined by Phil to walk permissive paths around the farm. Along with an entertaining talk Phil pointed out items of interest, explained about their crops and their farming philosophy to minimise chemical usage. Tea and cakes were then enjoyed, courtesy of Mrs Johnson, in the barn along with an entertaining quiz organised by Phil. If other groups are looking for a different local day out give this option some consideration

We have had a number of members walking some very different Long Distance paths this year and a few of the paths include Wainwright's Coast to Coast, Lady Anne's Way, Pembrokeshire Coast Path, Yorkshire Wolds Way and Hebridean Way so congratulations to all who completed "their" walk, whether it is listed here or not.

As well as Long Distance walks on National paths a number of members over the last few years have walked on consecutive days more local trails including Leicestershire Round, National Forest Way and this year A Coventry Way. No doubt next year another such local walk will be arranged. An invite again extended to anyone who wants to come along for the whole route or the odd day.

It was Hinckley's "turn" to host this year's Area Annual Quiz. By the time W of W is with you it will have been and gone but writing in advance we hope it was a successful night with a good turnout and the level of difficulty of questions set being about right. Congratulations to the winning team and indeed to all those who took part.

Tony Smith

MELTON MOWBRAY

We have had a wonderful year for walking. Our walk leaders have provided interesting walks for us (which are open to non-members to come and try). Overall the walks have been well attended. There have been walks most Fridays and Saturdays of around 8 - 10 miles or Sunday's of around 5 - 7 miles. Walks every Wednesday evening of 4 - 5 miles between May and September have also been offered, which are always very popular.

We are keen to advertise our walking programme, and in addition to e-mailing it to the majority of our members and placing it on the website, we upload it onto the Ramblers "Walks Finder", have a regular section in the local weekly newspaper and local radio station, 103 The Eye, and post programme leaflets at various venues in and around Melton.

There have been holidays arranged to Offa's Dyke and the Isle of Wight this year, plus trips to the Peak District, which were greatly enjoyed by those who went.

We are also decorating a Christmas tree for St Mary's Church Christmas Tree Festival in Melton Mowbray this year and hope that those who go to look at this may decide to join us on a walk.

2018 has proved to be an enjoyable year for our Group, and I'd like to say a big "thank you" to all our members for their support during the year.

Joe King

RUTLAND

Rutland Ramblers numbers continue to be stable although we have a relatively small membership compared to other groups.

Our format has been to programme walks fortnightly on Sundays, coordinating with Stamford Ramblers (Lincolnshire) who do the same so that weekly Sunday walking is always available to both groups. We have now introduced occasional short walk options on Sundays either as a separate walk or a short cut to the long walk where possible.

Also during our six month programme we have added three mid week walks and we are constantly looking for different ways to suit out current membership.

Lesly Hayes

LUTTERWORTH

Our leaders offered walks on 27 weeks of the year which included 3 residential weekends & 2 summer evening walks. Added onto our Programme were 2 Sundays with the National Forest Festival of Walks, 3 joint walks with Hinckley Group and 1 Area walk. Our statistics show that our walks have involved 7 & 17 walkers with the average being 10-13 so we usually have a good group of walkers with time to chat to everyone

Although we usually do not walk on Bank Holidays and 3 walks had to be cancelled because of bad weather, this has left us with at least 12 blank spaces on our 2017-18 Programme. This year we also ran a free 6 hour basic certificated 1st aid course, a BBQ social evening and I attended the Ramblers General Council in Bangor as a guest.

What to do – Targets for 2019

We have around 17 who play their part although most of these only managed to lead one walk this year. Could all our walk leaders try to lead at least 2 walks per year, time and health allowing? This could include short weekday morning or evening walks with a pub meal.

Recruit new walk leaders either from our current membership or by enticing others to join us.

This year we have focused on promoting the Group, coming up with posters and flyers and distributing them to Doctors/Dentists/Chemists, notice boards, libraries, etc as well as taking a stall at Lutterworth Picnic in the Park. In the past we have publicised in the Lutterworth Journal and walk details are always in Leicester Mercury. This year we hope to dabble in the mysteries of Facebook??

There are ways the Committee can help?

Courses to brush up skills in navigation & leadership or another 1st Aid Course.

Offer recceing walks, it is not always fun walking on your own.

Suggesting ready planned local routes to walk, and sometimes maps to help with this.

What can individual members do to help?

Check the website & e mails regularly to see what is going on.

Make sure you have agreed to receive e mails from us in line with the new Data Protection legislation. If you don't let us know 'yes' we cannot contact you.

Check diaries for Sundays or other days when you can offer to lead a walk. It is always good to have a date in the diary well in advance so members can plan things accordingly

Want a bit of extra help with navigation and leading walks – contact Anita for a date which suits.

Invite other local people you know to try us out, experienced walkers or those new to walking. We have flyers and mini cards to hand out

Got new ideas or interests about walking or the Group – share them with us.

Anita Mothersole

LRWG

This year we have maintained a full programme of walks including one entitled 'new members walk' to encourage new people to attend.

As many of us are now over 40, to try to encourage more new members in their 20s and 30s, we repeated a number of walks exclusively for those in this age range. After some initial success, we found that these walks were not being well attended so we have discontinued these in our programme

We have held monthly pub meets at Leicester's Globe pub and separate monthly pub quiz evenings at Leicester's Rutland and Derby pub. We have held other social events including an Italian restaurant meal at Ask in Leicester, a High Ropes course at Conkers (National Forest Visitor Centre) and a pub skittles night.

We have organised weekends away in the Lake District (Keswick), in Lincoln and the Lincolnshire Wolds, and in Bath. In late November we have a visit to a canal 'floating market' in Birmingham and in December we have a Christmas meal booked at Le Bistrot Pierre in Leicester.

Last January we also hosted the Area AGM at Park House in Glenfield.

Mark Hewitt

LEICESTER

Over the last year Leicester & District Ramblers Group have maintained their busy walks programme. The Group organised over 300 walks with regular walks on four days of each week (and five during the summer). The group is lucky in having several long serving Walks Organisers, a very large pool of Walk Leaders and hard working committee members who create and publish the programme. Without their efforts we could not sustain such a full programme. Thanks are due to Mick Voss for his work as organiser of the Summer Evening Walks. He is standing down from this position so thanks also to Dave & Shirley Bell who are taking over these duties.

The Group still has a monthly Coach Trip to areas outside Leicestershire. These are still well attended and are open to Ramblers from any group.

Financially the group's position remains stable. There has been a slight drop in membership in the last year from 450 to 436 members but such a trend can be seen with many Ramblers groups nationwide.

The last year has also seen the Group develop its email system to improve communication with the membership. We now use a free service from Mailerlite which enables us to have more professional looking mailings and also helps us to comply with the new data protection regulations which came into force in May 2018

Several social events have been organised including guided tours of the Jaguar car plant, Welford Road Cemetery and Radio Leicester studios. In November 2017 Ruth & Tony Richards organised a very well attended charity supper which raised £1700 for the local Air Ambulance. This event will be repeated in November 2018 and all 150 seats are already sold out. Apart from raising money for a very worthy cause It is a welcome opportunity for members from different walking groups to meet together socially.

Charles de Podesta

LOUGHBOROUGH

The Committee of Loughborough and District Group have been active in promoting events throughout the year including providing a programme of two walks a week. To cater for all members the walks are on a variety of days, over a mix of distances and locations extending to seven counties. This has been possible due to the number of members willing to lead walks and we have been able to encourage new leaders during the year. It is therefore disappointing that our membership has slightly reduced (although this is a national trend) and that so many do not take advantage of the walk programme.

To all Group members we would like to encourage you to join us for walks or let the committee know what you would like to be done differently.

During the year we have held 3 walks as part of the National Forest Walking Festival; monthly walks are also included on the Charnwood Health Walks schedule and we have listed walks for the Ramblers Association Summer and Winter walk festivals.

Our outings have been enhanced by the company of other group members and potential members who are able to use our up to date website for information www.loughboroughramblers.org.uk . We have also held an excellent weekend in the hills around Brecon and encouraged group cohesion with local social events and Soar Feet newsletters.

Footpath access has not been a big issue but we continue to monitor the slow progress regarding Barrow on Soar railway crossing and more recently the opportunity for footpath development at Seagrave following the Leicester City Football Club's acquisition of a large area of land.

The committee have made the necessary adjustments to comply with changes to data protection.

This year has been successful and full of activity by all committee members despite being unable to identify and appoint a Group chairperson. The current committee hope that key positions can be filled at the Group AGM to ensure the continuing success of this vibrant Group.

Sue Bicknell