

MEMBERS DIARY

May 18- 31 Rutland Walking & Cycling Festival www.activerutland.org.uk

September 7th at Sence Valley Area Walk led by Coalville Group 10:00 start.

Sept 12th 7.00-9.00 Open meeting for anybody at all interested in the Lost Ways work - Glenfield Parish Council rooms

November 1st at 7.00 for a 7.30 start, the Area Quiz hosted by Melton Group at the British Legion in Melton

January 25th 2020 -Your next AGM is 10.00, hosted by the Coalville Group, Coalville Labour Club LE67 3PW

Twitter

The Ramblers has an Area Twitter account which never really got going but we hope to make it active now.

Unfortunately we do not know how to access it.

Does anybody know who set up the current account and/or have their name/contact details

If so please let our Social Media Officer know

CONTENTS

4 Chairman's Chatter

5 Round by bus

8 Best footpath

9 Snippets

14 Barrow Crossing

16 General Council

17 Membership

19 Footpaths

20 Leicestershire

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



What a lovely spring we have had, some of which seemed more like summer. With summer looming I am looking forward to the group evening walks starting, they are usually well attended and very sociable.

Earlier this month I, along with three other members, attended General Council in Manchester. Although this event is not everybody's cup of tea it is a great chance to "network" and meet others from around the nation. As a footpath person it is really good to talk to others and share their news and practices.

Talking of footpaths June will see the long awaited Public Enquiry for bridleway I20 at Barrow upon Soar. In June 2008 Network Rail (NR) closed (temporarily) this route on safety grounds following a "near miss".

Since then an alternative suitable to all has been sought. This has prove difficult and in December 2017 an order was made to extinguish the crossing permanently. The Ramblers have submitted a Statement of Case and have been working with other user groups and the Leicestershire Local Access Forum to object to this order.

On the positive side the line between Leicester and Peterborough has seen NR investing in safety improvements to crossings with the introduction traffic lights on some crossings and audible warnings on others. Unfortunately we have not yet thanked NR for these improvements as we have only found out them by people using the crossings.

It is my intention to attend a committee meeting of each of the groups in the area. Up to now I have attended a few and have more booked down in my diary. The way the groups are being ran is incredible. The work, organisation and dedication being put in by these committee members is incredible. Without these people the groups just would not function. Thank you.

The Area committee also runs with the help of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers who have now been joined by Georgina Sear. Georgina has taken responsibility for our Social Media activities and will be working with all of the group committees to expand the Ramblers presence in this area.

And finally I look forward to seeing many of you at the Area Walk Day and the Area Quiz.

Martin James

THE ROUND BY BUS

The Leicestershire Round.

However you are travelling, the bus can give you a helping hand.

This is a 100 mile circular walk around Leicestershire; a long distance walk on our doorstep.

This guide shows how to tackle it in bite sized chunks by utilising the local bus services The route is well waymarked and there numerous spots along the route to take a comfort break or get some sustenance.

As a circular it can of course start anywhere but the guides are to and from Bradgate Park

Leicestershire has no National Parks or Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and perusing the map gives people who don't know it the impression of nondescript countryside. The reality is as we well know, that the county has lovely rolling countryside with lots of attractive woods, hedgerows and nature reserves, including an abundance of SSSIs (Sites of Special Scientific Interest). It also has the Charnwood Forest Regional Park, a superb unspoiled landscape of rocky outcrops, the remnants of an ancient enormous volcano. It was under consideration as a national park until the M1 cut it in two. This includes three Country parks including Bradgate deer park, the former home of Lady Jane Grey for a few days queen of England.

A bonus for the walker, is that Leicestershire paths are mostly in good order and well waymarked, not least because our members keep the LCC rights of way team well informed.

The Leicestershire Round should be high on anybody's list of walking priorities. It is a circular walk around the county connecting many places of historical, geological and geographical interest.

As locals we all think it is something we can do anytime but on that basis anytime never seems to arrive.

Some people will find the most satisfying way of walking the Round is to do it in one go, doing each walk in the same order and direction. If doing so there are numerous hotels in the city and some spread round the villages but not at all the natural break points in the Round.

However, if this is not an option, the walk can be broken down into day trips or short breaks. This is where the bus can be really useful whether you live locally, drive to the walk on a day trip or if you are having a short holiday. Most of the walk can be done by staying in Leicester city, where there are a wide range of attractions if you want a rest day, or if you have come a long way, to fill in some of your arrival day, although with good planning you may be able to do part of the walk on your arrival and departure days if coming in from further afield.

If you are doing short sections Melton Mowbray can be used as a base for Syston to Somerby. The buses are also useful if you are doing sections staying at guest houses on route. If you do walks 3, 4 and 5 in this manner the buses are simplified. Of course as locals we need to get to a bus hub using whatever service serves our home locality

The county has good train services with local services serving places close to the Leicester Round and have paths to them. Useful stations are Sileby, Melton Mowbray, Oakham, Market Harborough and Hinckley.

There is also a regular service between Loughborough and the Leicester outskirts, run using vintage engines on the privately run Great Central Railway

On each stage of the walk sections, useful bus routes will be recommended. If you are driving it is best to drive to the end of your walk and catch the bus to the start. Where this is possible the bus will be listed. In many cases a bus will be needed to the start and from the end back to your base or car.

The walk plan in the Leicestershire Round guide book will be followed as far as possible but will be amended where relevant to access bus routes. It is best to walk from the less frequent bus route to the most frequent so this may involve doing the walk the 'wrong way round' or doing some legs in a different direction.

Sunday bus services are more limited but some sections can be accessed on what Sunday buses there are. We are not showing the bus times as these can change. The website is provided to enable times to be checked.

Leicestershire also has some nice canal walks and its section of the Midshires Way is attractive. There is also the Jubilee Way, the Ivanhoe Way and the National Forest Way to try.

There are numerous interesting pubs and tea rooms on the round. We all have different ideas as to what is a good pub but we detail a few watering holes we consider worth a visit. These are ones we feel welcome walkers, even if requiring muddy boots being removed.

These notes need to be read in conjunction with the Leicestershire Round guide book, or the Ordnance Survey Maps.

1. Newtown Linford to Mountsorrel 11m

Catch Coalville bus number 120 from Leicester St Margaret's Bus Station (Stand SL) to Newtown Linford.

<http://www.robertstravelgroup.co.uk/> Get off by the church and the entry to Bradgate Park.

The Swan in Mountsorrel is a friendly local worth considering and in the next village, Rothley, the Woodies is an excellent pub with good gardens but no food in the evenings. There is a very good fish & chips cafe.

Return to Leicester on services 126/127 frequent <https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/midlands>

2. Mount Sorrel to Frisby in the Wreake 11m

Catch the Shepshed service 126/127 bus from Leicester St Margaret's Bus Station to Mountsorrel and get off at the Buttercross.

As you approach Frisby the Blue Bell in Hoby is a good spot for food and drink

Return to Leicester on either the infrequent but faster 128 through the villages

(<https://www.centrebust.info/index.php/routes/leicestershire>) or service 5A on A607 (frequent). Take care crossing road.

<https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/midlands>

If choosing this option the Flying Childers near the bus stop, offers good value food and a choice of good ales etc.

NOTE: The next two sections are the least convenient section for public transport as the services are infrequent and there are no Sunday services. Staying in Melton Mowbray helps. You could stay two nights, reverse walk 3 and carry your stuff on walk 4, or post it home.

3. Frisby in the Wreake to Somerby 10m

Catch Melton Mowbray service number 5A from Leicester Haymarket Bus station to Frisby

<https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/midlands> These are frequent but take 42 minutes. Alternatively take the two-hourly 128 which takes 34 minutes (<https://www.centrebust.info/index.php/routes/leicestershire>)

The Stilton Cheese in Somerby is a welcome retreat

Catch 113 bus from Somerby to Melton Mowbray for 5A or 128 buses or train to Leicester

If you are driving park at Melton and catch bus to Somerby and reverse walk.

4. Somerby to Belton in Rutland 8m

You need to arrive early in Melton Mowbray for the 113 Melton Mowbray bus Somerby. The walk would have to be curtailed to Belton in Rutland, 8 miles, where the Centrebus service 747 will take you to Leicester.

<https://www.centrebust.info/index.php/routes/leicestershire>

The Sun Inn Belton is a 16thC coaching Inn with a real fire during the winter and a large beer garden for the summer but its opening hours are very limited##

5. Belton to A6 near Foxton 12m

It is simplest to split the section from Belton to Peatling Mana at the A6 rather than Foxton. Catch the 747 from Leicester Haymarket Bus station to Belton and walk to the A6 near Foxton 12m. The A6 finish is not a fun place to wait for a bus so try to time your arrival so you have a short wait.

At the A6 there is a bus to Leicester at least half hourly using the Arriva X3 or Stagecoach X7

<https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/midlands> from bus stops on A6 near Foxton

An alternative are the stops at Gallow Field Road where there is a pavement alongside the carriageway to the canal and a footpath branches off the towpath to meet up with the Leicestershire Round on the edge of Foxton.

It is possible to take the bus to and from Foxton itself but a bit messy. The 44 stops on Main St., adjacent to Vicarage Drive and you can catch this to go into Market Harborough for a Leicester bus

<https://www.centrebust.info/index.php/routes/leicestershire>

There are several pubs in Foxton ranging from the quick food to traditional, something for everybody. Perhaps the most interesting is the Bridge 61 by the canal at Foxton Locks- snacks, good beer and character.

6. A6 near Foxton to Peatling Magna and Countesthorpe 13m

Catch the Arriva X3 or X7 from Leicester St Margaret's Bus Station to the A6 near Foxton. where there is a request stop although there is no bus stop sign. Ask the driver. You can stay on into Market Harborough and catch 44 to Foxton itself. *This leg is blessed with several really good hostelryes. Early on you have the Bell at Gumley, then the Chandlers Arms at Shearsby and two pubs in Bruntingthorpe which could not be more different. The Joiners is a good upmarket eatery and the Plough a real ale haven with no food.*

When you arrive at Peatling Magna you will need to walk along a field footpath to Countesthorpe where there is a bus no 85 every 10 minutes towards Leicester. Some of the times require a change to a 48 in Wigston.

<https://www.arrivabus.co.uk/midlands>

The X3 also goes to Leicester.

7. Countesthorpe to Frolesworth 8m

Catch the Arriva X3 from Leicester St Margaret's Bus Station to Countesthorpe and walk back to the Leicester Round and proceed to Frolesworth.

At Frolesworth catch an Arriva X84 to Leicester St Margaret's Bus Station.

You may prefer to do this a walk in reverse so that you finish at the frequent service – there are pubs sometimes open in the villages along this leg – as it is only 8 miles so if you feel like 3 more the Pig in Muck in Claybrook Magna is a really good brew house with good food.

8. Frolesworth to Barwell 11m

This walk section tallies with those in the guide book.

Catch an Arriva X84 from Leicester St Margaret's Bus Station to Frolesworth

The route goes through Claybrook Magna and there are pubs in Sharnford, Burbage and Barwell.

At Barwell there are frequent Arriva 158 and Stagecoach 48 buses to Leicester

9. Barwell to Market Bosworth 7m

Catch an Arriva 158 or Stagecoach 48 bus from Leicester Haymarket to Barwell

The route goes to Sutton Wharf on the Ashby Canal and starts through an industrial estate. If using buses there is a variation to be had here. Stay on the bus from Leicester to Hinckley and catch the 66 towards Nuneaton. Get off in historic village of Stoke Golding and follow the canal to meet the Leicester Round near Poplar's Farm. The George & Dragon in Stoke Golding and Dog & Hedgehog in Dadlington are very good pubs.

The route continues through Sutton Cheney with two pubs and there are numerous cafes and pubs in Market Bosworth. The Red Lion is well worth a visit.

At Market Bosworth catch an Arriva 153 bus back to Leicester

You may prefer to do this a walk in reverse so that you finish at the frequent service

10. Market Bosworth to Markfield 12m

Catch an Arriva 153 bus from Leicester St Margaret's Bus Station to Market Bosworth

The Gate as Osbaston can provide a break as can the Bulls Head at Nailstone at weekends. The Bricklayers at Thornton can also provide traditional food. The Queens at Markfield is on your route but does not do food.

At Markfield catch an Arriva 29 half hourly bus to Leicester.

If you can walk another 2 miles to Newtown Linford you can finish the walk today!

11. Markfield to Newtown Linford 2m

Catch an Arriva 29 bus from Leicester St Margaret's Bus Station to Markfield

In this very attractive village there is an upmarket eatery and a simple club welcoming walkers but snacks only

From Newtown Linford use bus number 120 to Leicester.

<http://www.robertstravelgroup.co.uk/>

As this is a very short walk you can do it on your going home day if you are on holiday.

You may prefer to do this a walk in reverse so that you finish at the frequent service – if doing so and wanting a good pub to wind down with good value meals, break your journey in Groby where the bus stops outside the Stamford Arms

Useful other web sites

<http://www.travelineeastmidlands.co.uk>

<https://whatpub.com/>

<https://www.nationalforest.org>

<https://www.leicscountryparks.org.uk/>

<http://www.goleicestershire.com>

Good for public transport information

Local refreshments but ring to check opening times

Info re that element of walk

Parks along the routeP

Tourist information

Information gathered by Ray Wilkes www.bradfordwalking.org (twitter @RWilkes1) and Roy Denney, R. A.

To the best of our knowledge this information was correct at the time of publication but as things change you are well advised to double check where possible.

BEST KEPT FOOTPATH

Shuttlewood Clarke Foundation wins Best Kept Footpath Award

We have awarded its Best Kept Footpath Award 2018 to the Shuttlewood Clarke Foundation at Ulverscroft. Martin James, Chairman of the L&RRA is pictured handing the certificate of the award to Louise Moore, Principal Manager of the Shuttlewood Clarke Foundation.

Martin James said

"The Ramblers are keen to encourage landowners to develop and manage access for walkers and this award is one way in which this is done.

The judging panel were impressed with the developers of the link from the Grange at Ulverscroft to its other property at The Manor and with the way it has been opened to the public; the quality of the walking surface and the provision of seating from which to enjoy splendid views of the Ulverscroft Valley."



STAN WARREN

Following Stan's collapse whilst on the Great Orme in Llandudno and fears that he may not survive we are pleased to report that he is basically well with full mental facilities and his normal sense of humour.

The downside is he has only limited use of his hands, his speech is difficult and he is paralysed from the waist down.

Being therefore unable to care for himself he is now living in the Gratia Care Home, 472 Groby Road LE3 9QD (0116 231 1640)

Visitors are always welcome although best to avoid meal times

Stan like many of us was a compulsive collector and has a truly enormous collection of Albums and CDs largely of classical music and opera and hundreds of books about railways, artists and musicians not to mention walking.

Most will now unfortunately have to be sold or end up in charity shops. If any member knows of anybody who might be interested in seeing what is on offer please advise our Editor



SNIPPETS

Jack Cornish has been recruited by the RAMBLERS to lead on the **Lost Ways** project. He has now been in post for about a year and things are starting to move. Given we have been actively working on this 15 years this may be rather late for HO to get involved seriously but support is forthcoming at last.

They are to provide a digital platform which will enable us to have a “one-stop-shop” for everything we have related to historic rights of way including identification, research, document sharing, peer review of applications and writing of applications. The first part of this platform to be made available will be a crowd-sourcing tool to help identify lost rights of way using historical maps from the National Library of Scotland, work we have already been doing

They want over the coming months to get routes already identified into the system (including through ours and other local projects). This is bound to be useful for us but we plough on with our own system and research in the meantime

RESEARCHING LOST WAYS

I am going through all the accumulated files of help and source material culling duplications and things overtaken by events and now have a comprehensive set of guidelines and records which I can offer to the volunteers.

The Ramblers have also secured some funding from People’s Postcode Lottery which has enabled them to recruit to a DLYW Programme Officer who will be primarily focused on supporting our volunteers (old and new) as we gear up to release of the new digital platform. I expect that they will be working with us over the coming months to bring some of the strands of local DLYW projects into the national picture.

They have also had good media coverage in the recent past and new volunteers have been found so they have created a useful tool so that they could provide the new volunteers with a useful starter. [Guide to Finding Lost Rights of Way](#) The guide has been a great success with approaching 4000 downloads so far.

While on the subject of media coverage, Hinckley’s Walk Co-ordinator was contacted by Ramblers Head Office in April to see if they would like to feature a few days later on a Channel 5 News item. Apparently they were selected from detail that had been submitted by groups across the country on to Walk Finder and their walk in April had been deemed of interest.

HINCKLEY ON THE NEWS

The feature was to highlight that increasing numbers of people were taking up activities to increase fitness with particular emphasis on the number of ladies getting involved.

A Reporter / Presenter and a Cameraman, duly turned up ready to film and report. Initially it was to be a "walk past" maybe repeated a couple of times and some interviews. We suggested that accompanying us at least on the start of the walk would be more interesting. Both showed quite an interest and quickly dispelled any concerns we had that the piece would be a "mickey take" about "The Bobble Hat Brigade". The camera man ditched his large tripod based camera and filmed on a lightweight camera. They actually walked with us for about 45 minutes before they turned around to return to their vehicles to edit the item and cut it with other material including an interview with "Sport England". It featured on that day's Channel 5 News for about 2 1/2 minutes on the 5 o'Clock news

The Ramblers have also recently secured some additional funding to create further guides (current plan is to focus on the general process for applications and some specific guides focusing on types of evidence).

Why should we worry about lost ways?> Well they are more part of our heritage than stately homes built a few centuries ago. They may not be being walked now but if they were reinstated they might provide links making for many more circular walks.

In addition with new towns and garden villages springing up all over the place these ancient links could become invaluable again.

In this time of environmental extremists it is worth taking a step back. They are attacking a government which was the first to introduce carbon reduction targets and still has the toughest in the world as far as I am aware. As a life long environment campaigner the increased emissions caused by traffic problems around their demonstrations is not welcome.

To my mind most of those protesting are well meaning and I support their intentions but as always they have apparently been infiltrated by some rent-a-mob types who are little more than anarchists and give the green movement a bad name.

There are many very real concerns though, well highlighted by Sir David Attenborough and we can all do our bit by recycling more and never letting any food stuff out of the kitchen unless on a plate.

We do need to do something. Five species of our butterflies have become extinct in the last 150 years, although we still have 59 species, 57 residents 2, regular visitors, (Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow).

**BUTTERFLIES
IN TROUBLE**

Three quarters of these species are however in decline. All the more reason to get out walking and enjoy them while they are still about. These are just the more visible and attractive of insects but hundreds of species are at risk and if they go the birds go and so on up the food chain

There is a lot being done and we should applaud that. There can always be more but give credit where credit is due.

The Forestry Commission is now slowly removing all non native trees from the Duddon Valley, already one of the more bio-diverse areas of the Lake District. It is helping the rarer animals there to thrive such as otters, dormice and red squirrels.

More unusual birds are also making a come back e.g. bullfinch, jays and woodpeckers.

Glenridding Common and Helvellyn are also getting a touch of re-wilding. Now run by the John Muir Trust they have done some footpath repairs but have also scattered stones about to discourage off-path walking so that native plants can re-establish themselves.

There is no doubt that man is responsible for many of nature's problems. Once ancient woodland has gone it cannot be replaced but there are some lessons learned and we can undo some damage.

For example in one of the quieter corners of Cumbria, Swindale Beck was straightened many years ago but is being reshaped to restore its curves and reduce the speed of water flow. Trees are also being planted to help reduce the risk of floods. Haweswater used a natural lake just over two miles long, almost cut in two by a jut of land at the village of Measand. It was almost two separate lakes which were known as High Water and Low Water until Manchester built a dam drowning most of the once beautiful Mardale. Nature has steadily made the area seem more natural but man is now doing his bit as well

Not only can we undo some damage but we can also facilitate the natural eco-system to mend itself. It's no longer enough just to reduce carbon emissions. We also need to remove carbon from the atmosphere.

Planting more trees is bound to help but stopping them being cut down in their thousands in the rain forest would help a lot more;.

Nature is our greatest ally in locking carbon away and protecting our climate. Re-wilding can help nature recover on a massive scale and shape a better future for people.

To help we can re-establishing natural processes through blocking drains, removing fencing or grazing pressure, and ultimately assessing the desirability of reintroducing missing species etc.

REWILDING

Despite their well founded reputation for felling trees a family of beavers is to be released in the Cropton Forest on the North York Moors to see whether they can help prevent flooding downstream.

There is plenty of good work going on locally as well. The National Forest is creating woodlands where none existed and the Charnwood Forest team is to protect what we already have there.

Charnwood Forest Regional Park has no legal status but is a partnership of all the local authorities involved, the National Forest Company and other interested parties and two of the Rambler's area team are actively involved.

The Charnwood Forest Regional Park Local Nature Partnership has submitted a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Board for substantial sums of money to enhance and protect the Park.

The project will pull together and support a number of individual projects under this general banner, i.e. to explore, understand and care for and about the Charnwood Forest area.

The project follows a theme suggested by a quote from Sir David Attenborough "No one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced."

THE FORESTS

It is intended that the project will support the development of a new visitor economy, 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.

It will make it easier to move about within the Forest with new paths going in etc. The legacy of people exploring, understanding and caring for Charnwood will be a landscape where local residents and businesses feel part of ongoing story of Charnwood, visitors can enjoy the many elements that make up its heritage and Charnwood continues to add new chapters to the story of Charnwood.

Protection of the natural environment is a major plank of the work
We won initial funding for development work to flesh out the individual projects and this is well on the way but must be concluded by September at which point we can seek the balance of the grant, in the region of £3,000,000

The initial funding allowed us to recruit a manager for the project (Julie Attard) who was the guest speaker at our AGM in January.

This Forest Park is mostly within the wider National Forest also on our doorstep which has now been 30 years in the making. This green lung has helped cut down air pollution and has breathed life into a once depressing

landscape, transforming communities and lives. Not far short of ten million trees have been planted.

Charnwood Forest is geologically the oldest part of the National Forest and was being seriously considered to be a National Park until somebody cut it in two by building the M1. As such it has little legal protection other than the several sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs)

Charnwood Forest as we know it, is down to its geology. Many active volcanoes laid down the rocks around 600 million years ago when what it was in the southern hemisphere. Subsequently two continental plates collided about 400 million years ago pushing up mountains with the Charnwood Hills being the last remnants.

We have wandered about a bit. About 350 million years ago, Britain lay close to the equator and was partially covered by sea and the limestone sediments from this period were rich in fossils which can be found in the northern parts of Charnwood Forest, such as found at Grace Dieu. This rock does not extend throughout the whole area, however, since much of Charnwood was still a mountain range at this time.

In the latter years the sea over sections of Charnwood was replaced by a large delta, containing humid swamps and rainforests, resulting in the coal seams, ironstone and fireclay deposits to be found to the west of Charnwood Forest

No wonder it provides such a varied landscape and wonderful walking.

Another problem nature faces and one which makes walking in the countryside more difficult is again man made.

I dare say off-roading in 4x4s is great fun but it does great damage as well as disturbing the wild life. These vehical chew up the surface of trafcks in the wild places making them near impassable in places for walkers

The benefits derived from open air recreation, tranquillity, and the landscape bring people into these lovely areas boosting local economies as well as helping the general health and well-being of people.. It is considered that if these tracks are being affected by use of motorised vehicles, then the implementation of traffic management orders should be considered

National Parks in particular are slowly stating to use these orders, none to soon. The hardest thing to 'hear' in this country nowadays is nothing; rare commodity indeed is silence.

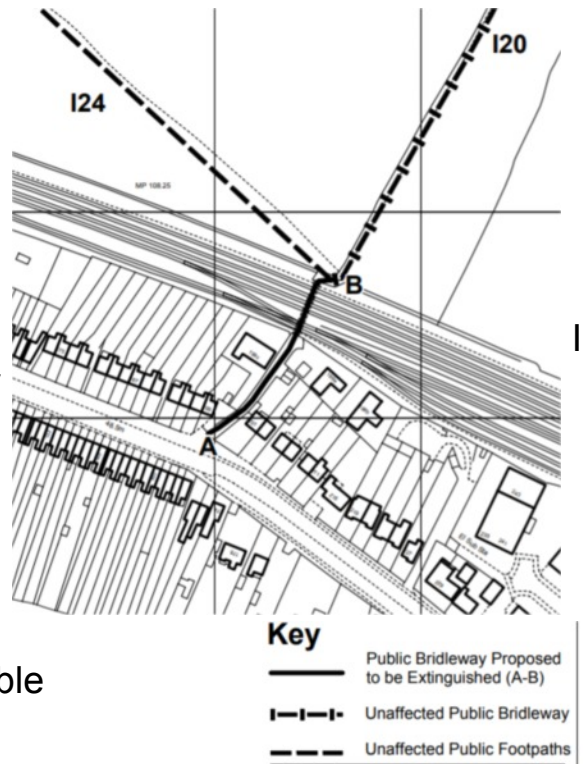
**THE SOUND OF
SILENCE**

This is still ever present, broken only by bird song or the rustling of leaves in the wind in a few corners of Britain but this could soon be a distant memory unless actions are taken.

BATTLE OF BARROW

As our Chairman mentioned we are facing a four day public inquiry hearing objections from us, individuals and other user groups all fighting to prevent Network Rail (NR) from extinguishing the bridleway which used to cross the rail track at Barrow by Pingle Nook. say 'used to' as it has already been closed for six years on safety grounds despite there never having been an accident there. We have been fighting this cause ever since,

We initially met with them and explored possibilities and giving constructive advice but they eventually decided there was no viable solution with which we disagree.



We do not dispute the potential danger from the crossing. What is wrong is closing it altogether instead of providing a safe alternative.

Network Rail clearly recognise the demand for a crossing here. 40 users a day were noted before use was prohibited and they recognise that there would be a significant increase in use as a result of a development "the character of the crossing will change into a busy thoroughfare". They say this "only serves to reinforce the requirement for stopping up". We contend that it does the opposite, and shows the need for a safer alternative crossing such as a bridge.

If it is closed on 'safety' grounds it will mean a long detour using already busy and dangerous roads. Walking in a country lane between paths could at one time have been a pleasurable activity. Nowadays the volumes of motor vehicles, and their noise and fumes and speeds, dispel any rural tranquillity. Some motor-vehicles are too large for lanes which existed before the age of lorries, cattle trucks and milk-tankers, but they still use them.

Many cars go at speeds which either endanger vulnerable road users or put them in fear of danger, even where a footway is provided.

If as part of NR's economic enterprise the level crossing needs to close so that the trains can run faster and faster, then the building of footbridges should be a reasonable expectation as part of the operation of such an enterprise. That is what needs to happen not to extinguish old-established rights in circumstances which will lead to fewer people walking and make it less attractive for those who continue with what is left.

NR have ambitions to close thousands of at grade 'path' level crossings despite almost all accidents being where vehicles cross as well and that other fatalities are quite often suicides.

The Ramblers have spent thousands of pounds fighting a test case in Essex the result of which is awaited but might well create a precedent. We cannot wait though and must fight our local cases as they come up.

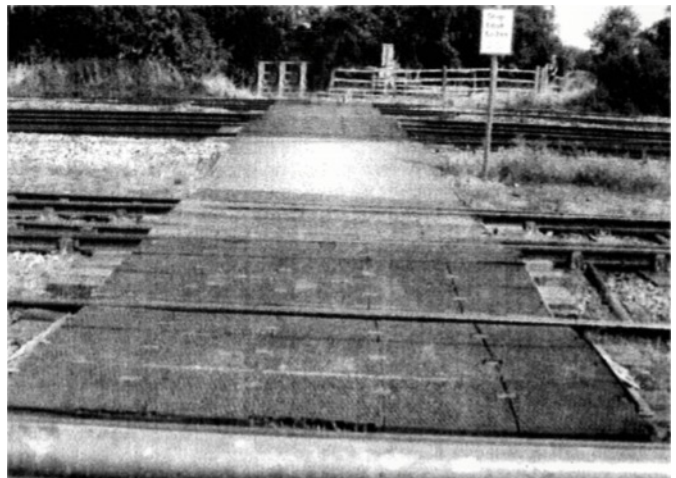
We do feel that there is a perfectly feasible solution with a bridge located just off the present line of the route which could have satisfied the foot traffic.

We are given to understand that NR does already have Permitted Development Rights for a stepped pedestrian bridge beside Pingle Nook. The route is a bridleway and this would not provide for cyclists and horse riders but riders can accept a more lengthy diversion and the bridleway rights could have been satisfied by separate means. It would keep horse riders and cyclists, off the busy roads in Barrow.

We see no reason why the existing rights should not be protected by two solutions if a one-fits-all solution is not available and, bearing in mind their original comments, it seems to us that the only reason why NR are not going down this route is one of cost. There is precedent for bridleway rights being extinguished but footpath rights being accommodated but in this case we believe that both sets of users can be accommodated by two different solutions.

We have over recent years tried to engage constructively with NR on several occasions as regards their plans for level crossings.

The suggestions put forward by NR to close a number of level crossings have been explored and we have agreed some diversions or alternative routings by bridge. However some proposals are not acceptable, the alternatives being unsuitable because they are too long; removing a sense of directness of purpose and taking users of a particular route too far out of their way.



This is especially true where the route is used more for everyday utilitarian

The Barrow crossing

travel rather than recreation or because the alternative involves walking or riding on a busy road, especially if it has no footway or useable verge.

The objectors have submitted several detailed responses in writing which speak for themselves and quote all sorts of legal arguments but John Howells, our Treasurer, will be speaking at the hearing making the case, as a local, in respect of prior usage, potential usage and the many perceived problems with the suggested alternative.

The hearing is to be at County Hall at the beginning of June

GENERAL COUNCIL REPORT

The GC was hosted by the Manchester & High Peak Area in Manchester and our Chairman and Walking Environment officer were our delegates. The footpath officers from Lutterworth and Leicester groups attended as observers, funded by the area. As Martin James is from Melton group and Roy Denney, Coalville group, half our groups were represented

Each year every Area is invited to elect people onto the board of trustees who direct the activities of the Ramblers through the team of paid employees.

General Councils are normally based in a university utilising the halls of residence but this year the accommodation was in a Manchester city centre hotel with conference facilities.



The format is that we gather for a buffet lunch on the Saturday with those arriving early enough being offered a local guided walk.

Afternoon discussions break up at about 5.30 when there is time to network and socialise before a dinner and an after-dinner guest speaker.

From about 9.30 /10.00 there is more time to socialise in the hotel bar if you can afford it or to wander off in small groups to suitable local hostelryes.

Early morning there is a walk on offer before breakfast but then the morning is taken up by elections and discussion and voting on motions before you are turned loose with a packed lunch. There is another guided walk in the afternoon for those who want it

Two new Trustees were elected and various motions passed but nothing a great note.

Our observers came away a lot more aware of the work of the Ramblers over and above arranging walks and we all learned H.O.'s priorities for the coming year.

Membership and recruitment and lost ways are centre stage and it was felt we should shout our achievements locally, a lot louder as a means of generating interest and more members.

We all talked to people from other

areas with common interests in footpaths and lost ways but our delegates also made contact with the Essex area who are also fighting a battle with Network Rail against their plans to close thousands of level crossings.

It was a bit of a pain getting up bright and early to go into Leicester early Saturday to catch a train to Birmingham and another to Manchester but we all felt it worthwhile.

We did not join any of the organised walks but as two of our number had knowledge of Manchester we showed the other two the historic buildings in the centre and took lunch in an authentic restaurant in Chinatown before catching the train home.



Martin James, our other delegate, flanked by Charles de Podesta (left) and Peter Berry, observers

The modest packed lunches provided a simple 'tea' on the train.

Roy Denney

MEMBERSHIP

The comments about declining membership at General Council were of course nothing new but it did trigger some debate and one theme coming out of that was that a strong social side makes Groups attractive and not only helps retain members but is a way of attracting members. It also helps in finding people to do the necessary roles to make a group function.

Most groups have some form of social programme but some socialise more actually during or at the end of a walk. Smaller groups find it hard to organise away trips and 'holidays' but increasingly Groups are paring up to organise these. Another way of gaining the needed numbers is to advertise events to members of other groups and we are always happy to put such adverts in the Write of Way

On Saturday July 6th Hinckley are having a walking "Treasure Hunt". Not collecting items but solving the clues. Venue will be in the Hinckley area, maybe one of the villages, and local knowledge is not necessarily an advantage. No charge, just turn up and take part.

No doubt there will be an option to finish off the afternoon supporting some local businesses including ones selling real ales! If interested contact Hinckley for more details nearer the time.

They are also in September having their annual Coach Ramble. This year's destination is Chester with 2 walks on offer, one of 10 to 11 miles and the other about 8.5 miles. At time of writing there are 3 seats still available so if you would like a day walking in to Chester or just seeing the sites and sights of Chester. If interested give their social team a call. Contact numbers on their website or Facebook Page

Rutland ramblers have been very active during the winter and early spring period, taking advantage of the unusually mild conditions - and general lack of mud! their fortnightly Sunday walks have been well attended, with the average hovering around the 20 mark, and they have been attracting a few non-members/members of other groups through our improved website information. Occasional Wednesday walks have also been on offer over the last few months and these are starting to attract more walkers.

The other point on attracting members was to get our major achievements and big battles out in front of the people. We have however always struggled to get local press interested. We sent a press release about the Barrow crossing case to 17 local news outlet and the Melton Times took it up, a small but welcome return for a lot of effort. Increasingly social media is the way to get things out and the Area now have an officer working on this. Some groups have been active in this area for some time and it is seen as getting people to join walks but not necessarily to join the Ramblers.

One difficulty is knowing who is a member. We do not ask people to produce a card to join us on a walk and indeed we encourage people to come on a few walks before joining. They could however walk all year by trying a few walks with each of our groups. One idea being discussed is that if we all had 'smart' membership cards we could just have them scanned when registering for a walk which would have the added benefit of cutting down the work of being a walk leader. Also if we wanted to lodge a claim for an unrecorded and unprotected right of way we would have evidence of usage.

The Ramblers are developing an 'app' to do this. The Ramblers App is your walking companion, helping members find, join and enjoy Ramblers group walks in England, Scotland and Wales. It has an upgraded walk register, quicker and easier to use so you can get on with your walk. Your membership card will always be with you in the Ramblers App.

To download it go to instructions at

<https://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer-zone/data-and-digital-transformation/ramblers-app.aspx>

One element of concern with membership which has been discussed over and over again nationally and by Area is that of 'churn'. If social activity or a more welcoming attitude to new members could stop us losing members we would have no problem. Hidden within the net membership movements it is clear that we have to keep winning new members to stand still as we lose them very regularly. Some die but a lot just do not renew and we need to understand why.

FOOTPATH CHANGES SINCE THE LAST EDITION

For more information on these or any other diversions contact martin@langsett1.com

Blaby

V82A, V82B Kirby Muxloe. The addition of two paths to the west of Kirby Fields.

Harborough

C50A Houghton on the Hill. Extinguishment of dead-end footpath.

W67, W68 Leire. Minor diversion to assist landowner to manage land. Bridge, possibly installed by LCC, not on definitive line now to be used. There is NO bridge on current line!!

A58, A105 Market Harborough. Diversions associated with new housing development.

A86 Church Langton. Small diversion around the edge of a field to improve “ecology”? and privacy.

C58 Billesdon. Slight re-alignment of path to take it onto a track.

W52 Broughton Astley. Small diversion to run path where it has been used for many years.

W53 Broughton Astley. Minor diversion to make way for development.

Melton

D66 Twyford. Addition of two short section to connect existing footpaths to the highway.

G11 Barkestone le Vale. Addition of a short length of path to bring G11 onto a highway.

North West Leicestershire

N19 Swannington. Small division to take path out of buildings and onto highway.

Rutland

E361 Thorpe by Water. Addition of path next to river.

LOST WAYS

The Ramblers, the Open Spaces Society and the British Horse Society. have recently written to the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, setting out our position that the 2026 cut-off date should be postponed (in England) setting out reasons why including the delay of the Deregulation Act (which is designed to improve the process for claiming historic rights of way) and the lack of time now to review and improve processes associated with the Deregulation Act.

Also mentioned was local authority resources, especially considering they are processing claims under the unreformed system.

There was a debate in the House of Lords on this subject a few weeks ago following a question raised by Lord Greaves. The partnership distributed a briefing to all peers, and are pleased to report that many points were picked up in the debate. Most of the peers who spoke supported postponement and the hard work of volunteers was particularly recognised

Locally we are also now well on with the process of prioritising targets and in the process dropping some in favour of others. This list will be provided to volunteers working on these problems who now number 15

This year we have submitted two comprehensive claims and there is another nearly ready

We must assume for now at least that the deadline is still there and more help is always welcome. A lot of people doing their little bit can amount to a good total of research. If you might be interested and want more detail please ring Roy Denney on 0116 233 8604

KNOW YOUR LEICESTERSHIRE?

Can you ID these 16 landmarks?

