

THE 31ST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND AREA OF THE RAMBLERS

You will shortly be being asked to appoint people to roles on the Area Committee. We all want to enjoy our paths but in times of change somebody has to keep an eye on things and fight our corner.

During the years we have been an area of the Ramblers Association our region has seen many changes and is a far cry from what it was when we split from our then parent area. Not least we are two counties again after Rutland was allowed to stand alone again and in effect for political reasons, three.

Rutland became a district of Leicestershire in 1974, given its tiny population, but in 1997 it split off to become a unitary authority as did the City of Leicester.

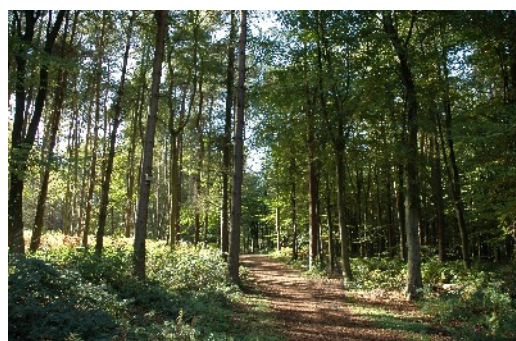
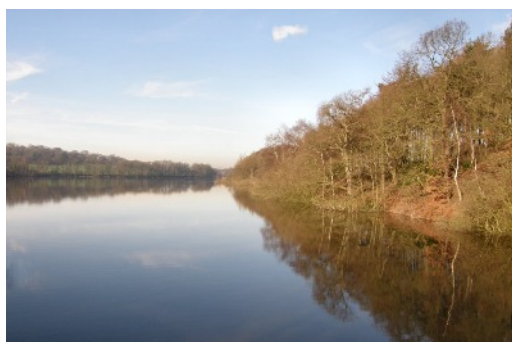
This complicates things when dealing with each as Highways Authorities when pressing footpath issues.

Tens of thousands of houses have been built with targets for tens of thousand more, mostly on 'green' land putting the path network under strain.

Our area officers work hard to fight unwanted development or mitigate the worst effects of these changes.

The Area is though still blessed with a lot of open countryside, several reservoirs, canals and rivers, that we can enjoy by using our endless miles of footpaths. Let's keep it that way! We must however remember the old Mantra,

'If we don't use 'em we will lose 'em'



***LOW
HIGH
WET
AND
WOODY
PLACES
TO
EXPLORE***

AGM AGENDA

- 1 Chairman's welcome
 - 2 Apologies for absence
 - 3 Approval of the minutes of the last A.G.M (page iii)
 - 4 Matters arising from those minutes not otherwise on this agenda
 - 5 Presentation of annual reports
 - a) Chairman's report and naming of best kept path
 - b) Treasurer's report and presentation of accounts (viii)
 - c) Secretary's report (x)
 - D) Footpaths Officer's report (xi)
 - e) Walking Environment Officer's report (vii)
 - f) Membership Secretary's report (vii)
 - g) Editors report (x)
 - h) Social Media Coordinator's report (x)
 - l) Publicity Officer's report
 - j) Group reports (xii)
 - 6 Adoption of accounts and acceptance of officers' and groups' reports
 - 7 GUEST SPEAKER - Gerald Price from the Woodland Trust
 - 8 President's address and response
- 15 MINUTE BREAK**
- 9 Motions/constitution changes previously notified if any
 - 10 Affirmation of President and Vice Presidents (maximum four).
 - 11 The President takes the Chair for the election of a Chairman
 - 12 Chairman takes the chair for elections of other officers
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Footpath Officer
 - Assistant Footpaths Officer
 - Publicity Officer
 - Walking Environment Officer
 - Membership Secretary
 - Editor
 - Social Media Coordinator
 - 13 Elections of further members to serve on Area Executive Committee
 - a) Up to two representatives of Affiliated Organisations
 - b) In addition to group representatives, up to 2 'elected' from the floor
 - 14 Confirmation of appointment of an Auditor / Independent Financial Examiner
 - 15 Nominations to other roles (reps on National and Charnwood Forests and webmaster)
 - 16 Any proposed motions for General Council (see page xv)
 - 17 Nomination of two representatives to General Council and up to two observers
 - 18 Young Walkers
 - 19 Central Office Representative - Chris Hodgson
 - 20 Area Events (dates, hosts and formats)
 - a) Area walk – Saturday, late summer - Loughborough Group
 - b) Area Quiz – Friday night Oct / Nov - Rutland Group
 - c) Next AGM - Last Saturday in January 2021 - Loughborough Group

FORMAL MEETING CLOSE

Open forum and networking followed by short walk for those wishing to participate and an informal meeting of the new area committee

**Minutes of the 30th Annual General Meeting
of the Leicestershire & Rutland Area of the Ramblers Association
Saturday January 26th 2019 - The Linford, Newtown Linford**

Martin James, The Chairman welcomed all present and gave site facilities update. There were 35 members in attendance.

Roy Denney said that copies of WoW were available with the agenda. There was a collection for Alan Loasby, if anyone wants to donate for a seat in Swithland Wood. Also Stan Warren's old maps were available, with contributions going to Air Ambulance. He also gave an update on Stan's condition; who is in a care home.

Apologies for absence were received from - Mike Statham

The minutes of the 29th A.G.M - 27th January 2018 were approved. There were no matters arising from those minutes not otherwise on the agenda

The presentation of annual reports followed:

The **Chairman's** report had been published in advance, Martin added that he was going to visit all the groups, and thanked them all for their continued support.

He went on to name the winners of **best kept footpath** competition for last year, expanding on the paths in question.

The winner was the Shuttlewood Clarke Foundation, Ulverscroft Grange permissive path.
Also Highly Recommended was Bedfordia Farm, Footpath D14 and D24. The President and the Walking Environment Officer will arrange to make the presentations and do press releases. 2019 nominations to be sent.

The reports of the other officers had also been published in the WoW newsletter but some updates were provided.

John Howells - **Treasurer** there was nothing to add to his published report and the accounts for the year were screened. The report and accounts were accepted and approved by the meeting. John also said that he would be stepping down at the next AGM in 2020. He also reiterated that he thanked the groups, and that he would like to thank Chris Tipper once again for being the independent auditor, and that they had achieved the budget for 2019. John also reiterated that there is a cost to use of cash or cheques, that where possible people should use electronic transfer.

Re the Alan Loasby Memorial bench, it was confirmed that once all monies had been received from either private or group donations that any shortfall would be paid by area.

Martin James, the **Footpaths Officer** added further path diversions etc since the publication of the WoW. In response to questions he updated members on the major Network Rail issues i.e. I20 at Barrow where the 4-day public enquiry starts on the 4th June 2019 where Martin and Charles will attend. John Howells was attending, representing the LLAF. On-going discussions with Network Rail.

Roy Denney, the **Walking Environment Officer** said he had nothing to expand upon as to what was in the WoW newsletter.

Ray Phipps, the **Membership Secretary** reiterated that membership was a major issue in line with national trends and groups commented on their own experiences. It was felt subscription was a major problem and that perhaps we need to market our campaigning work more to differentiate ourselves from other less expensive walking groups. It was suggested we could do more to enthuse very young children.

A tables was presented showing figures as at 10th Jan 2019 and the figures for the Area overall showed a drop in membership from 1485 to 1418

Roy Denney, the **Editor** had nothing to add to his report but wished to publicly thank Jim Storer for managing the Area Web Site which receives many plaudits - As Editor he provides the content but all the technical stuff is done by Jim.

Social Media Coordinator – No report - looking for a person to take on the role,

All the **Group reports** had been published in advance of the AGM.

The officers and groups **reports were then accepted** by the membership.

The guest speaker, Julie Attard, Project Manager, Charnwood Trust gave an update on the lottery bid to fund works to protect, preserve and enhance the Charnwood Forest Regional Park.

The **President** then responded to this presentation and Peter thanked Julie and the Charnwood Trust, saying they were exciting times in Charnwood and that if anyone wanted to volunteer to contact Roy Denney who will let Julia know. He went on to thank the Chairman, officers and other activists for their endeavours.

New positions. After a short break, the members affirmed Peter Williams as President and Mike Statham as Vice President for another year. The President then took the Chair for the **election of officers**. Members had been nominated for various roles by the Area Executive Committee and these were approved en bloc.

Chairman - Martin James
Secretary – Kim Vallance
Treasurer – John Howells
Footpath Officer - Martin James
Walking Environment Officer – Roy Denney
Membership Secretary – Ray Phipps
Editor – Roy Denney
Social Media Coordinator - Vacant

The members present were asked if anybody wished to take on the vacant role as Social Media Coordinator - Georgina Sear volunteered which was accepted.

Martin having resumed the Chair, also proposed that we have a new position of Assistant Footpath Secretary and that he nominated Charles De Podesta this was seconded by Tony Smith and accepted.

Elections then took place of **further members** to serve on Area Executive Committee with Andrew Thomas of CHA Leicester being adopted to represent affiliated organisations and Trevor Martin and Sue Bicknell to represent the ordinary members

Nominations of **Group Representatives** - changes to be advised to the Area Executive Committee .

Confirmation of Chris Tipper as our **Auditor / Independent Financial Examiner** followed.

Motion/Constitutional Changes - One Change previously notified was put to the members:

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 the holder of the position of Chairman shall not be entitled to hold that office for more than three consecutive full years.”

This constitutional change was accepted and the constitution will be updated accordingly.

Martin James and Roy Denney were nominated as representatives to **General Council**, which will be held in Manchester on the 13th and 14th April 2019, the meeting supported the funding of one observer and authorised one further if interest was shown and a candidate was agreed by the AEC.

There were no **proposals or motions** for the general council.

Family and affiliated memberships were discussed but have recently been looked at by GC.

The Central Office Representative, Ronnie Forbes

He said the new National President was assisting greatly with videos and photographs and initiating much more communication via email.

London was to have a major recruitment push.

Roadshows this year would be concentrating on support for volunteers and the next East Midlands event would be in Lincoln.

They were to heavily promote a walking festival which will coincide with the National Forest Walking Festival giving promotional opportunities.

They are also to consult on what people feel it means to be a Rambler and what they want out of the organisation.

A query was raised re Ramblers Position re HS2 and Network Rail – Ronnie said he would email their statement. *(See elsewhere in this newsletter)*

Discussion took place re junior groups, Ronnie said that he advises that Areas set up flexi groups, and he would provide details on who could assist.

Area Events were then confirmed

- a) Area walk – Saturday Late Summer - Coalville Group
- b) Area Quiz – Friday Night Oct/Nov - Melton Group
- c) Next AGM - Last Saturday Jan 2020 - Coalville Group

Details to be provided, as soon as possible.

An open forum followed including discussion re WoW and its costs, and it was agreed it was a pre requisite for all members to be on email before the WoW can move from print to electronic distribution. Not all members have email or keep us advised of changes and until they do, we don't want a half way distribution of both written and email.

Roy also said that a new issue of the Charnwood Map is being produced and he'll communicate further when available.

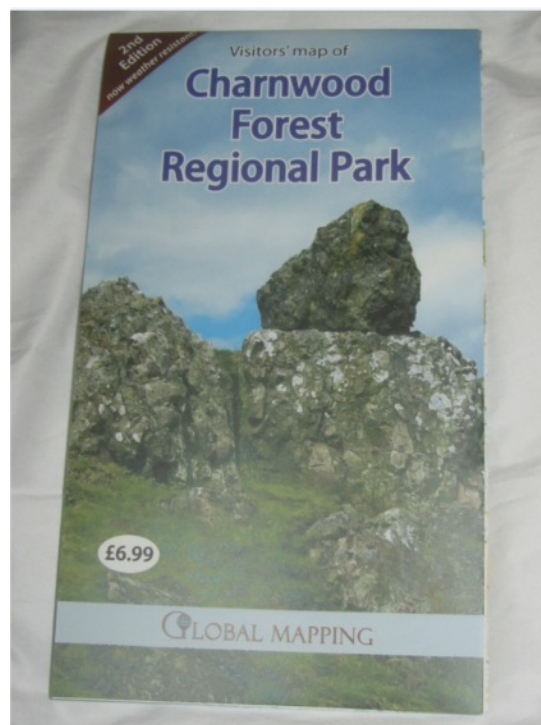
Meeting closed at 12:40

PROMISED INFORMATION FROM AGM

The New Charnwood Forest Map -

This is now in the shops at £6.99 - It is now on waterproof paper; has been updated with some additional permissive paths; closed pubs removed and new ones added together with all known tea rooms.

Roy as the local contributor to the map has some copies which can be made available to members at a discount. £5 if collected by you or your group rep for you at the AGM, an AEC or other meeting or requested with a cheque and a self-addressed sticker and second class stamp or £6 if required to be posted out without these.



Contacts for Flexigroups James.Austin@Ramblers.org.uk or Tel: 0203 961 3174 - James can offer advice

Network Rail

Ramblers staff are continuing to engage over the principal issues, which are NR's intention to extinguish many level crossings which accommodate footpaths and bridleways. They've instructed a barrister, a rights of way consultant, and expert witnesses, in three major public inquiries in East Anglia. There is no doubt that it is NR's intention to close all such crossings in the UK eventually. At first they said this was on pure grounds of safety (despite the danger of resultant road-walking in many cases); now they acknowledge that it is about economics as well, as they can run the trains faster through sections where crossings are closed, and can save on the costs of maintaining the crossings. Staff keep a watching brief on this and are glad to assist volunteers in resisting the proposals.

HS2

Re London to Birmingham (phase 1) volunteers got in touch with staff at central office, requesting that we petition Parliament (the HS2 Bill being a "hybrid" bill with a petitioning stage) over issues they could not resolve locally by discussion with highway authority staff (most of whom were "on our side"), and representatives of HS2 Ltd. Staff have continued to alert volunteers to announcements of new proposals in the HS2 roll-out, but no requests for assistance in opposing proposals under phase 2 of HS2 were received at central office from volunteers in the affected Areas.

The general impression staff have is that (as with Phase 1) there will be no mass severance (as initially feared with Phase 1) of public rights of way but rather that most will be reasonably accommodated by bridges, underpasses or acceptable diversions.

We could all do without HS2, but it's pleasing to note that most paths are being treated sympathetically. A few proposals are actually positive improvements: in Warwickshire one nondescript and largely unused path is to be incorporated into a wetland which will come about through the construction of balancing lakes which are necessary parts of the engineering of the line, making the path eventually very attractive.

Also a "green corridor" along the line is proposed as a walking and cycle route (Phase 1). We do not suppose anybody will want to walk great distances along the line, but it will have the merit of connecting up existing local rights of way so as to make a large number of circular walks which do not exist at present.

AREA WALK

Can we remind groups to include the Area Walk in their calendar of events and not to put on their own walks at the same time. This is one of the few occasions when members of the various groups have a chance to meet up and swap good ideas. The host group members can enjoy the walk but it defeats the object if they are the only ones attending.

For this to happen the host group does need to get at least a date and a start point and time to other groups before they put together their summer walks programme

AGM WALK

There is a long tradition of staging a walk after our Area AGMs for those who would otherwise miss out on their Saturday walk. This is of course in part to encourage people to come to the AGM but if people cannot make that they can still have their afternoon walk at 1.00

Given that in January it is dark by 4.00 this only gives under 3 hours so the walks are restricted to 4 or 5 miles.

Numbers participating in recent years have reduced so the AGM will ask whether these walks should still be offered or whether it should be optional for the organising group

As it is the new committee are invited to an informal meeting to explain the way ahead and plans for the year. Would members prefer this 'social' be expanded to allow any members who wish to do so to network rather than going on a winter walk?

Once again all groups should bear in mind that they must not organise walks on the last Saturday in January as all members are encouraged to attend the Area AGM when we always arrange an interesting speaker.

OFFICERS REPORTS

The Chairman's report is on page 4 of this newsletter and he will expand upon it and bring it up to date at the AGM

Membership officer -

	2019	2018
Area total	1389	1416
LE01 Hinckley	206	213
LE02 Leicester	424	421
LE03 Melton	95	101
LE04 Coalville	207	214
LE05 Rutland	121	115
LE06 Loughborough	129	135
LE07 Lutterworth	69	79
LE50 LRWG	102	107
LE96 Others	35	30

These figures show a decline in membership of 1.95%

Nationally the figure has dropped from 104,818 to 102,038 which is a reduction equating to 2.72%

The national figure of 102, 038 is actually a rise in membership from the August figure so perhaps the tide is turning, albeit very slowly

Walking Environment Officer -

Keeps members up to date by means of the Out and About articles in each edition of the Area newsletter (see page 8). Will give members any updates at the AGM

Receipts & Payments Account

Year ended 30th September 2019

	Current Year	Prior Year
Income:	£	£
Central Office funding	6,900.00	6,800.00
Donations (A Lowsby)	120.45	0.00
Other refund	0.00	0.00
Fundraising	0.00	0.00
Deposit interest	0.00	0.00
Publication/goods sales	0.00	0.00
Total Income	7,020.45	6,800.00

Expenditure:

Funding to Groups	3,318.40	3,233.32
Newsletter printing	1,657.50	1,501.11
Newsletter distribution	892.50	808.29
Publicity	47.00	0.00
Campaigns and casework	95.35	70.62
Meetings, inc. AGM and GC	616.30	645.70
Restoring the record	0.00	300.00
Admin costs	20.68	45.00
Other (A Lowsby bench)	250.00	0.00
Total Expenditure	6,897.73	6,604.04

Surplus	122.72	195.96
Funds brought forward	2,990.51	2,794.55
Funds carried forward	3,113.23	2,990.51

Balance Sheet at 30th September 2019

	Current Year £	Prior Year £
Assets:		
Fixed Assets	0.00	0.00
Investments	0.00	0.00
Stock	0.00	0.00
Debtors	0.00	0.00
Cash & bank	3,113.23	2,990.51
Total Assets	3,113.23	2,990.51
Liabilities:		
Creditors	0.00	0.00
Total Liabilities	0.00	0.00
Net Assets & Funds	3,113.23	2,990.51

For Information, the distribution of the Area entitlement to Groups was as follows:

Coalville	308.84	325.28
Hinckley	307.84	292.96
Leicester	1,560.00	1,560.00
Loughborough	340.00	233.16
Lutterworth	178.16	180.24
Melton Mowbray	200.92	215.52
Rutland	213.80	221.40
L & R Walking Group	208.84	204.76
Total	3,318.40	3,233.32

Note: In accordance with RACO guidelines, these accounts are prepared on a "receipts and payments" basis, and debtors and creditors are accordingly not recognised.

Treasurer's Certificate:- I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the books and records presented for audit were an accurate record of the Area's financial affairs and were complete in all respects.

Auditor's report to the Members of the Area:- The above Receipts and Payment Account and Balance Sheet are in accordance with the books and records of the Area and other information provided by the Treasurer.

G. S. Taper

24th October

Treasurer

During year ending 30th September 2019 we have been able to continue to support the charitable aims of the Ramblers and work within the financial constraints set, whilst ensuring all groups were able to receive the funding requested by individual groups.

It has been a pleasure working with the Area Executive over the last 4 years as your Treasurer.

I would like to thank all the group treasures for making this year's accounts seamless and it's been a pleasure working with you.

Chris Tipper has examined the Area accounts and given me invaluable assistance to ensure all the figures balance. Chris has kindly agreed to remain Leicestershire and Rutland Ramblers Independent Examiner for the year ending 30TH September 2020, thank you Chris.

Secretary

The Area Executive Committee has met 3 times this year, it's been well represented, we also had 5 officers meetings. The area continues to run smoothly. Thanks to the committee and all the group secretaries for their continued support. I enjoy seeing and hearing how the different groups work and in 2020 my new year resolution will be to do at least one walk with each group as well as the area walk in 2020.

Social Media Coordinator -

Since taking over the management of the Leicestershire and Rutland Face book account, the number of people liking the page has grown from 65 to 101. In addition to cross sharing other district groups' posts, I have posted information on area events and on a broad range of related topics from HQ, and local 'outdoor' groups such as the National Forest Walking Festival.

Most other groups in the area have a Face book page. The majority of these have seen growth in the number of people liking (or following) their pages since January 2019. The newest group to establish a Face book presence is Lutterworth. If Coalville or Rutland would like to send me details of anything they want to advertise or record, I am more than happy to put it on the area page.

The focus for most groups is on advertising or recounting group walks. Hinckley and Lutterworth use 'tagging' and/or 'sharing' to bring events to the notice of other Face book groups (and their followers) in their area. I am happy to support any group who would like to learn how to do this.

Twitter and Instagram

Our 'new' twitter account is called 'Leicestershire and Rutland Ramblers'. It has settled at 44 followers. Each of these followers may have thousands of followers, so our posts can, potentially, be seen by these members of other national and local groups.

There is a Hinckley Ramblers twitter account with 237 followers, and their Instagram account now has 103 followers.

Summary

There has been increased activity and interest in social media this year. If we want to interest all types of walker, we might like to consider balancing the focus on group walks, with things that would interest the lone walker - such as free downloadable walks and the map library. Area 'news' stories (from any source/group) are always welcome for the area's Face book and twitter feeds, ideally with a picture or two.

Footpaths Officer -

The footpath secretaries from each group have all been checking and dealing with the constant flow of planning permission applications. I would like to thank them for all their help and support.

Developers are getting much better with footpaths, providing green channels for the paths through their new developments.

This does protect walkers from walking along estate roads but does not stop the loss of countryside.

I will have attended a Public Enquiry in November where both Leicestershire and Northamptonshire councils are trying to add a new path along a disused railway. The decision of this enquiry will probably not be available before the AGM so I will give an update in the next Write of Way.

ORPA's. **O**ther **R**outes with **P**ublic **A**ccess. These are shown on OS maps as green dots. Walkers are normally entitled to use these routes. At the time of writing this Charles (Assistant Area Footpath Secretary) and myself are in the process of mapping and logging all the relevant information to these routes in Leicestershire and Rutland. If you ever get challenged when using one of these routes please let me know.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding Rights of Ways please contact your Group Footpath Secretaries. If they are unable to answer your query they will escalate it to the relevant people who can.

Editor -

Once again I would remind members that this is their newsletter. I invite them to share news good or bad with other members and this is really their one chance to contact the members of the other Leicestershire & Rutland groups. If you have found a welcoming inn or tea room or a useful app or bit of kit, let others know. If you have been somewhere unusual that other members might like to consider, share it. If you have come across a problem warn the other members

The Write of Way does end up on the website and eventually we would hope to only use that resource. Please do use the web site as that is often more up to date than the newsletter which only comes out twice a year given postage costs.

Some smaller groups are managing to keep current email addresses for their members and no longer send out walks programmes etc through the mail, but those who still do mailings I ask them to consider whether they could time their seasonal programmes so that I could print them as part of the Write of Way and save them that postage charge

My thanks to Jim Storer who puts my material actually onto the web site for me. I also feed appropriate occasional titbits to our Social Media Coordinator to go onto Facebook.

GROUP REPORTS

Hinckley

Our group has continued to put on 3 walks per week and generally these have been well attended. In addition during the summer an evening walk was arranged every fortnight. This year they have proven very popular with some excellent turnouts. Strange really as a few years ago we came close to scrapping evening walks following some very low attendances

After a period of slowly increasing our membership numbers we have experienced a slight downturn. However small increases or decreases don't tell the full story. Twice we have compared our membership list to the year before, and found that our overall membership totals are plus or minus a relatively small number but turnover is far more significant. A change of say plus or minus five hides the reality that we have had 35 new members but 40 haven't renewed or moved out of the area and switched to a new area. This makes it even more important that we recruit sufficient numbers to mitigate the "losses".

Our Facebook page is very active. This includes adverts for future walks and write ups of those walks, usually with numerous photographs. We also have a weekly newsletter, Pete's Ramblings, which will reach its sixth birthday. People can sign up for this and receive it direct to their email address or see it on the Facebook page. Or both!

One of our members shares "Pete's Ramblings" each week with a number of external groups on Social Media which gets the "word" out about Ramblers to a much wider audience.

Even if these people don't instantly join Ramblers they know about us and who knows may become members in the future. Information is shared with ten groups as varied as a couple of Past and Present sites, another couple of What's on sites and 2 more Spotted in sites. All ten sites catering for people in the local and surrounding areas.

A typical weekly reach number is 4,500 to 6,500 people. We just keep our fingers crossed that they don't all turn up on the same walk.

Recently photographs have also been shared on Instagram where the number of followers is heading towards a hundred. One of our Instagram followers is VisitScotlandNow. Probably unlikely that anyone seeing those photos on a Scotland site is a potential "Hinckley" recruit but who knows whether Ramblers Scotland may benefit.

Our Annual Coach Ramble, now in its fifth consecutive year since it was resurrected, continues to be very popular. This year we had a day walking northwards towards or in Chester. Half of the numbers walked into Chester covering 9 or 11 miles (there were 2 drop off points) and the other had a day out in a city tracing its origins back to Roman times. And tempting fate this was also the fifth successive year where we had fine weather!

Lutterworth

This year have achieved one of the aims we discussed at our last AGM with many thanks to our Walks Coordinator. Our walking programme is now efficiently organised and walk leaders and members greatly appreciate that we now have a much more consistent programme on a Sunday.

Our Group - the Highs and Lows

We have offered 36 Sunday walks this year with 4 cancellations due to bad weather etc. We had an average of 9-14 members attending which is fewer than last year. This must be a reflection of our declining membership now at 69 with only one new (non active) member joining this year.

As well as the Sunday walks our programme has included the 2nd Alstonfield winter w/e, the Spring Walking trip to Malvern in May, short weekends in Derbyshire, Lichfield, Chesterfield & Matlock and a week walking on Hadrian's Wall, several day walks with the National Forest Festival, and the Area Walk run by Coalville Group.

Our Footpath Secretary, went as an observer to the Ramblers General Council this year in Manchester and gained a lot of insight into how the Ramblers works locally & nationally. However, the work with footpath monitoring has increased and become more urgent with the Lost Ways project and the amount of industrial and housing developments around Lutterworth and surrounding villages. We hope to have another committee member to help out with this some time this year.

Although membership is low, most of our members are actively involved with the group. However, if our membership falls further we may need to consider the possibility of how to proceed with our group if we do not have sufficient people on walks or to form a committee at next year's AGM.

We have held 3 social events, Christmas Lunch, 2 skittles evenings and a BBQ.

Priorities for 2019-20?

- 1) Our first priority is to continue to offer a varied and interesting programme of local walks and occasional trips away to experience walking in new and exciting areas.
- 2) The Committee has decided that this year should be dedicated to increasing membership by raising the profile of the Group locally, e.g. house to house leafleting, advertising in the local press. There are costs for this which we are willing to cover with our Marketing Budget.
- 3) Develop the social events we offer (say 4 per year)
- 4) An occasional weekday walk with a pub meal, and some 'introduction to walking' opportunities. Walks with a special theme, e.g. photography, architecture - walk leaders think about offering a short walk from a pub which offers lunch or evening meal.
- 5) Promoting our Group and its programme to a wider audience on Facebook which our Webmaster recently set up with the help of the Area Group. We are also keen to develop our Group Website through the main Ramblers Website over the next year or two.

6) Offer opportunities to volunteer with supporting the Ramblers aim of protecting the footpath network in the area with the help of the Area Group.

We cannot compete with the two big Ramblers groups close to us, Hinckley & Rugby but we are local & have enthusiastic members. We need to be determined and focused in our promotion of the Group and keep interesting and sometimes challenging walking at the front of our minds.

LEICESTER

Central to Leicester & District Group's activities is the busy walks programme. Over 300 walks have been organised in the last year with regular walks every Tuesday, Wednesday (summer-time), Thursday, Saturday and Sunday. The short Tuesday & Thursday walks remain very popular and are attracting new walkers regularly. Thanks are due to Dave Bell for taking charge of the summer evening walks. These have proved very popular.

The monthly Coach Trip to areas outside Leicestershire is still popular though attendance has dropped a little over the last year.

Our email system has become more established and has proven a very useful tool for informing members about our walks & trips & social events. The Ramblers data protection regulations have relaxed over the last year so we are able to reach a larger section of our membership. We remain strict in only emailing members about our local activities.

Several social events have been organised including trips to the Gas Museum and the Bell Foundry at Loughborough. Our charity meal in November 2018 was a sell out (150 diners) and raised £1913 for the local Air Ambulance Service.

MELTON MOWBRAY

We have had a great 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. The Wednesday evening walks of 4 - 5 miles between May and September have also been offered, and these 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, The Cotswolds and Llangollen this year, plus trips to the Peak District and Staffordshire, which were greatly enjoyed by those who went.

Our group are hosting the Area Quiz on 1 November and we hope that this will be an enjoyable evening.

Some of us had a lovely Christmas Dinner, in the evening, at the Sysonby Knoll hotel in Melton and we are offering the same this year.

We are again 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. We will be putting leaflets out under the tree.

2019 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.

COALVILLE

Sadly two of our members passed away this year, Graham Bowley who was our Treasurer for many years but had been ill for the past few years and David Bozon who was a sterling member and our Web master for the past few years died in August after a short illness.

An incident occurred in June where one of our walkers was pushed over by a horse and fell and was knocked out.

The best kept footpath award was this year awarded to the Shuttlewood Clark foundation.

A first aid course took place at the St. John's Centre at Coalville and it was attended by 8 of our members.

Our Coach trip to Skegness and our weekend away at Bournemouth were both successful events

We also hosted two walks on the National Forest festival of walks in May, and next year we are planning to put three walks on their programme.

RUTLAND

It's fair to say that our group has had a pretty good year: a stable membership that has bucked the general declining trend, a real mix of walks offered, and some well supported social activities.

Membership as of September stood at 122, up 3 on last year.

Traditional Sunday walks have again been the mainstay of our programme, but we added a number of shorter Sunday options and some regular midweek walks in order to provide members with a greater choice.

Our social events included a rather splendid Sunday lunch back in March at Greetham Valley Hotel (with a walk beforehand and quiz afterwards), a farm visit (with refreshments) at Great Easton in June, and, more recently, a delicious afternoon tea and cakes at Launde Abbey - preceded by a somewhat muddy ramble. The latter also included our first 'bare bones' AGM, which we were able to work through in record time - while meeting Ramblers' regulations (amazing how the thought of tea and cake moves proceedings on a pace!)

Finally, we have it on good authority from John Williams, our stalwart footpaths officer, that the paths and bridleways of Rutland are, on the whole, in very good order. Long may it continue!

LRWG

We have managed to maintain a reasonably full programme of walks this year even though it has been getting harder to recruit walk leaders. Attendance levels on walks have been generally lower than in previous years. It is apparent that there are more alternative walking groups available now that don't attract the Ramblers' subscription. Our membership figure has fallen over the year like that of most of the other Ramblers groups in the area.

However, this year we have organised weekends away in the Cotswolds, the Surrey hills, Somerset and the Yorkshire Dales.

This year we have conducted two surveys of members of our group to try to find what they like and dislike about the group and what encourages or discourages them to do things like lead walks.

After our committee analysed the survey results, our AGM resolved to market the group as a younger ramblers/walking group and drop the 20s-40s age tag. We think that the age tag may discourage walkers in their fifties who are attracted to our group from coming on a walk with us.

We are looking forward to our Christmas meal at Cafe Rouge in Leicester's Highcross Centre.

LOUGHBOROUGH

This last year has been another successful one for the Loughborough and District Group.

We continue to provide a varied programme of two walks a week. The mid week walks are usually 6 miles and our weekend walks vary from 10-13 miles. They have been well attended and we have a number of members who are willing to lead interesting walks in the local area and further afield at the weekend.

This year the group has walked the Derwent Valley in its entirety from Shardlow to Ladybower and the Upper Derwent. There were 11 monthly, circular walks which were attended by

enthusiastic members from our group and friends from other groups.

We have explored the industrial and cultural heritage of mills, factories, mining, railways, canals and reservoirs along the Heritage Way. The final walks followed the gritstone edges high up on the Derwent and Howden Moors to the source on Bleaklow.

On the Derwent Valley Way



Our annual holiday was in April and we went to Selworthy in Somerset where we enjoyed several walks along the South west coastal path and the glorious countryside of Exmoor.

During the year we have held 3 walks as part of the National Forest Walking Festival. These have been well attended and we have gained members from putting the walks on.

We have had a number of social events including a Skittles evening, a Christmas walk with lunch afterwards and a summer evening river walk followed by a pub supper. These have been reported in our newsletter, Soar Feet.

In January, 4 walk leaders from the Group attended the British Red Cross First Aid course organised by the Area.

We are keen to encourage members to use our website. It is informative and easy to use, the walks can be downloaded to personal calendars and it is kept up to date with news and changes to the programme as they occur.

Our finances continue to be managed well and we are kept up to date with footpath changes and legislation.

There was a major issue with the Barrow on Soar rail crossing, a hearing was held but the case was lost. We would like to thank the members who put in a lot of time and effort preparing a submission and attending the hearings.

Finally thank you to everyone who has led a walk, served on the committee or supported Loughborough Ramblers in any way over the last year, it is always very much appreciated

PROPOSED MOTION FOR GENERAL COUNCIL

“This Council asks the Board of Trustees to explore funding opportunities to employ regional researchers to assist Areas and Groups find evidence to support requests for Definitive Map Modification Orders”

NOTE:

The Ramblers have obtained funding to encourage the public to report possible lost ways. This may well be a good way to promote the Ramblers but it is not the area where help is most needed. Most Areas already know where the missing links are but do not have the volunteers to research the evidence needed to have historic paths recognised. Such volunteers as we have can continue working but if full time staff could help it would go a long way towards making a real impact