

WRITES OF WAY

THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION

LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND AREA

NEWSLETTER Summer 2021

Change in the air

This is the first of new website-only editions

**If you wish to keep
receiving printed
versions let the
Editor know**

roydenney@hotmail.com



See page 6 for proposed arrangements

KEEP IN TOUCH

VISIT THE WEB SITE REGULARLY

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER AND FACEBOOK

THERE ARE EIGHT GROUPS MAKING UP THE AREA

**RUTLAND MELTON MOWBRAY COALVILLE LOUGHBOROUGH
HINCKLEY LUTTERWORTH LEICESTER and the
LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND YOUNGER RAMBLERS GROUP**



**Ramblers
The
walking
charity
working
for you**

**Produced and
published by the
Ramblers
Leicestershire &
Rutland Area**

**Compiler & Editor
Roy J Denney**

**33 Clovelly Road, Glenfield
Leicestershire LE3 8AE
0116 233 8604**

**See the Area's facebook page
www.facebook.com/leicsrutlandra**

**Visit our web site -
<http://leicsra.org.uk>**

**and the Ramblers national web sites
www.ramblers.org.uk**

**and their walkfinder web site
[/go-walking/find-a-walk-or-route.aspx
/areas_groups/groupswalksfinder.htm](http://go-walking/find-a-walk-or-route.aspx/areas_groups/groupswalksfinder.htm)**

**The next AGM
will be on
Jan 29 2022
More details
to follow**

The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the RA or its officers. Unattributed articles are by the Editor.

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Our Chairman is serving one extra year but has to stand down at the end of this year as our rules only allow for 3 year terms

If you want to consider taking on the role have a word with Martin. You will find it both interesting and rewarding and with this rule it cannot be a long term prison sentence

You would be backed by a team with a lot of knowledge and Martin will still be there as Footpaths Officer. Meetings are likely to be a mixture of

physical ones and ones using zoom. There are four executive committee meetings each year and between time the officers meet to keep things ticking over. Traditionally these have been in a central social venue but some may now be by zoom.

THE AREA EXECUTIVE

President - Peter Williams

Vice-President - Mike Statham

Chairman - Martin James - 07969 669230 martin at langsett1.com

Secretary - Katherine Hardwick katherinek2 at yahoo.co.uk

Treasurer - Lisa Parker lisa.parker83 at NTLworld.com

Footpath Officer - Martin James

Assistant Footpaths Officer - Charles de Podesta

Walking Environment Officer - Roy Denney - 0116 233 8604 roydenney at hotmail.com

Membership Secretary - Ray Phipps ray.phipps2 at ntlworld.com

Newsletter Editor - Roy Denney

Communications Office (taking on webmaster) - Georgina Sear - georginasear at hotmail.com

Committee without portfolio - Tony Smith tonyjensapcote at gmail.com
- Sue Bicknell suebicknell at talktalk.net

and a representative from each group

OTHER POSTS ASSISTING THE RAMBLERS

I T Advisor / Webmaster Jim Storer in transition

Independent Financial Examiner Chris Tipper

National Forest Access & Recreation Representative Liz Roberts

Charnwood Forest Regional Park Stakeholders Representative Peter Williams

Blaby Tourism Partnership Peter Williams

GROUP CONTACTS

Coalville

Ken Storer 01530 833334 kenstorer@talktalk.net,

Hinckley

Deborah Hopewell 01455 446997 Ramblersbosworth123 at outlook.com

Leicester

Howard Watmore 0116 289 9255 howard.watmore at talktalk.net

Loughborough

Sue Bicknell suebicknell at talktalk.net

LRYWG

Mark Hewitt - 01162 741068 markbrianhewitt at yahoo.co.uk

Lutterworth

Anita Mothersole a.mothersole at NTLworld.com

Melton

Martin James - 07969 669230 martin at langsett1.com

Rutland

John Williams 01572 747515 johntriciaamorcot at aol.com

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

AUG 21st	Area Walk- host Loughborough-Nanpanton
OCT 31	Deadline for material for November edition
NOV 12	Area Quiz Wing Village Hall hosted bt Rutland
Jan 29	Area AGM
Feb 28	Deadline for material for March edition
Jun 30	Deadline for material for July edition

Today is the tomorrow we all worried about yesterday and thankfully we are still okay.

Unfortunately we have lost friends and family and most things will never return to how they were before the pandemic

Change has been forced upon us and we need to manage it and decide how to take things forward

COMMUNICATIONS

In the absence of fast to face meetings we have had to learn to rely on electronic means of communication.

As the cost of postage has increased we have been working towards transferring our newsletter on line and for those who can access them in this way it has many advantages. It will also entail us contacting you by email when anything needs to be brought to your attention particularly. There are downsides though. You will have to remember to keep an eye on the website and to keep us advised of any changes of email address.

If you wish to still receive a paper copy we will try and make arrangements to provide one. Initially please let the editor know but in due course it is expected that groups will keep a note of such requirements.

Postage costs continue to escalate so how many copies each year can be posted out remains to be seen as the electronic version will be produced more regularly in future.

It may be that a printed one will only be provided each winter prior to the AGM

Arrangements for the production of any printed versions are not yet certain and depend largely on numbers wanting to receive them; numbers that should progressively reduce over the years.

If few in number they may be produced locally by each group but if there are several hundred then it will be cost effective to produce them centrally.

This edition is not being printed and members will be advised by email when it goes on line which will test the accuracy of our contact records.

The next edition will be just prior to the next AGM and will be distributed by post so that all members receive notice of the change but after that unless specifically requested you will not receive any further postal copies.

The national walk finder on the website gives details of group walks so you may not receive any written details of these from your group

Those members not attached to a group or not getting involved with their designated group will still receive the Walk magazine and we are pressing that Areas can insert short pieces in that production to keep you abreast of local developments.

As the cost of printing and postage no longer comes into the equation there is theoretically no limit to how much material we can include in newsletters so do please send in anything you think of interest to other members. Photos can be displayed in all their colourful glory

Given the size of modern photography files and the need to meet page breaks, please send text and photographs separately, not embedded in the article. Keep emails at under 15 mb and send a piece spread over several emails if necessary.

Some of the material currently in the newsletter will not now be included as it already appears elsewhere in the website pages.

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

I am still here!

At the AGM in January it was decided that I should carry on as Chair for an extra year to see out this pandemic to the end.

Also at the AGM we welcomed a new Area Secretary, Katherine Hardwick. Katherine is already doing a fantastic job and she will be a great asset to the Area Georgina Sear who looks after our social media

presence has now taken on more responsibility by looking after our Area website and Jim Storer who is handing over is working with her to transition arrangements. All her roles now come under the heading of Communications Officer.

Our thanks to Jim and to Kim Valance our former Secretary for their contributions in the past.

With longer days and a few less restrictions it is good that we have been able to start walking in our groups again. The social aspect of group walking is important to many members as it helps with their mental health as well as their physical health.

I think that in some ways the pandemic has benefited us. We used to take things for granted but having had many of our rights removed for a period it has made us appreciate our freedoms a lot more. All group walks are now Risk Assessed, this is something that we should have been doing for a long time but had always found reasons not to. When we were told we couldn't start group walks without these simple checks which included Covid protocols we soon started doing them.

There are a lot more people walking for leisure in the countryside since the beginning of the 'lockdowns' and it will be interesting to see how many continue walking in the countryside once all of the restrictions are lifted. I am presuming a lot will go back to walking around Fosse Park and the like. There will be some that continue with their new-found love of the countryside and the Ramblers' need to encourage these people to become members. As you are all aware there are lots of walking groups out there, most are much cheaper than the Ramblers', however the Ramblers' are the only national charity who work to maintain and improve opportunities for people on foot, and we need to make sure others know this.

Having written off last year we will be reintroducing the Best Kept Footpath Award this year. Please think about submitting entries to this initiative.





All footpath changes will now be shown, with maps, on the Area Website under the Footpath News pages.

This will be updated as and when diversions are confirmed.

If anyone has any questions on diversions etc. they can email Martin on footpaths@langsett1.com

The lost ways project is gearing up and a lot of background progress has been made. We now have more local volunteers raring to go. The National Archive at Kew is re-opening and we are paying for some evidence from that source and hopefully the local records office will reopen before long

We now have a map of all the missing links identified by the national programme and they are currently being prioritised.

The big challenge locally is to compare these with our own existing list and merge the information which is also being worked on at the moment

Hopefully also before long the local core team will be able to meet again as this sort of work cannot be effective over Zoom. We will also arrange local volunteer get-togethers as soon as we are allowed to.

This work to utilise such historic evidence as is available to get gaps in the network registered is essential but protecting what we have is just as important and the ongoing process of claiming paths because of unchallenged usage must continue.

In the last three months we have assisted people and parishes in claiming a path across a car park closed by a supermarket, have aided claims for two feeder paths onto the Ivanhoe Trail and a claim for an informal path long used unchallenged up the side of an old golf course under threat of development.

If you have a local path of this nature and want help claiming it, get in touch. It is often too late once somebody closes them.

When it comes to protecting paths you can report obstructions through the County Councils website but if you need help or LCC don't resolve the issue please tell Martin all the facts.

Some obstructions are so dramatic that any solution is difficult or nigh on impossible like path K62 which was a casualty of the construction of the M1 and has been a difficult and dangerous nuisance ever since

It is however in the process of getting even worse. Originally it went along the old Charnwood Forest Canal to Shepshed. The M1 diverted the path to the current location which means a large dogleg to walk along the side of the motorway to a difficult crossing at a roundabout. With rising traffic flows at that junction there is no safe exit onto the carriageway for the public.

The road has had Armco barriers for many years which had to be straddled before taking your life in your hands to get across.

With major road works the roundabout will end up greatly enlarged and lethal for pedestrians but K62 will remain on its existing original line once the works are complete. The embankment will also be reinstated to a gradient which is no steeper than before the works had commenced.

When we have challenged LCC on this over the recent past they have offered no solutions and 'hide' behind the fact that a diversion is not needed as the path still goes to the carriageway as it always did.

The authority say that they had explored moving the path to the underpass under the M1 servicing the old quarry nearby. Unfortunately that was linked to other land use proposals and never came to fruition. This underpass could play a major role in linking the halves of Charnwood Forest for leisure purpose

Area and Group officers have been running with this but Loughborough member Martyn Speight has taken up the cudgels. His wife is pictured facing the 'route' away from the roundabout but crossing the major roads is the major issue.



He comments that from a walkers perspective experience shows that those running the

Highways Department at County Hall

are fixated with roads and there is apparently no one at County Hall fighting to ensure that road work schemes do not make public paths dangerous for walkers!. On paper the Rights of Way team would rightly consider no footpath was affected but does nobody look outside the box for impacts?

Path?

What Path?

The current status is that the final section of the path leaves the Ashby Road (A512) to the West of Loughborough actually on the M1 Junction 23 roundabout. The path then follows the M1 south before crossing Longcliffe Golf Course to Nanpantan. The golf course section is particularly pleasant and

the soon to open walkways through the nearby Garendon Estate could make K62 a useful linking path on a variety of new walks.

County Highways however seem to have a very different perspective. Having temporarily closed the path during their road scheme they see it as alright although the latest roadworks have drastically changed the situation.

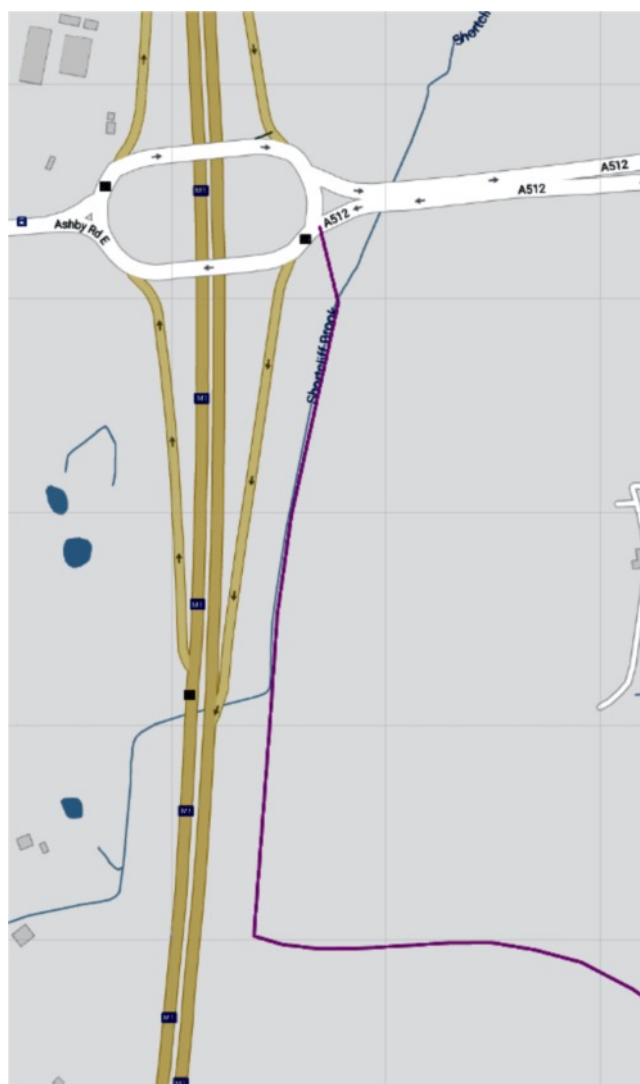
So it is alarming that without any apparent thought about the dangerous consequences the highway engineers are putting the footpath sign back in as near the same place as the widened road permits. Yes this is the place where the path leaves the surfaced carriageway so where a sign should go but it is in a position that is totally unsafe for walkers to get to – this is unless it is acceptable for walkers to clamber over crash barriers having first crossed five lanes of traffic navigating a roundabout!

Even the County's liaison engineer for the roadworks says, for walkers coming from Nanpantan, that "there is no safe exit onto the carriageway for the public" and adds "LCC will advise all individuals not to climb over the crash barrier and into the live carriageway." Martyn ponders as to how a supposedly proficient engineering section has installed crash barriers without a crossing point or diversion of the path to where safer access is possible takes some believing!

LCC just said that it is too late to change any aspect of their project (as they only respond to issues at the consultation stage!).

There are options open to both us and LCC. We would choose to work with them but if they are not open to constructive ideas this leaves us possibly serving a Rights of Way notice on the Council to remove the crash barrier obstruction they have themselves erected!

One member has suggested we could have people walk along this right of way. We have the right to pass and re-pass so nothing stops a group going to see what is happening on the ground and then back again crossing the road holding up traffic which would certainly draw some attention (and probably in-vective)



Unfortunately if someone was hit by a vehicle it would get us publicity but not the way we would want

The latest formal response from the council may be technically correct in fact but is hardly helpful.

“The Council's position is that footpath K62 is not obstructed. It ends where it joins the carriageway extents which include the embankment. The path was moved to near the Motorway junction rather than a bridge being provided when the M1 was constructed. Ever since, the path has been left in an awkward position.

The A512 is on an embankment as it approaches the junction. Because of this, safety barriers have been provided for many years. These are now duplicated in the new works.

The carriageway works are to accommodate traffic from two new large developments that will join at the new roundabout, although the Science Park is likely to provide a purpose built link to K62

I note your initial request to use the highway verge of the A512 to link K62 with the safe crossing on the roundabout. In due course, this will provide a safe crossing to the route on the north side, as well as future recreational developments on Garendon Park. The verge option is being looked into”

We feel they do have options if they choose to use them. At the very least they could invite us to make a diversion order application at nil cost given the public benefit and let us argue our case in front of an inspector.

Better still though they do have powers they never use these days to actually create a footpath of benefit to the public which could provide the facility that K62 fails now to provide but that would involve them compensating landowners.

It would have been comparatively small beer if it had been made a condition of the approval of the development bringing about these changes given the cost overall but retro fitting at their own (LCC) expense is not likely to be considered.

Perhaps our best course of action in such circumstances is to actually contact the developers.

If they hold control of the whole land parcel they may be prepared to extend the intended pathways within the development to accommodate a route to a safer crossing. They can only say no!

JOHN HARPER

John passed away in January after over forty years of promoting fitness and cultivating athletic talent as one founder of Charnwood Athletic Club, at Loughborough University. John, for several years Chairman of the Loughborough Group, will be sadly missed.

His wider work has meant that hundreds of local people have enjoyed sporting experiences and fulfilled their ambitions

John moved to Loughborough in 1974 as a lecturer in materials, later directing the Graduate School.



He was an active runner - he completed the Yorkshire Three Peaks in under 3 h 10 min. John's aim was to build a fully fledged athletic club, competitive in all track and field disciplines, and open to all and he spent more than 2 decades as Secretary and then Chair of the management committee.

In the early 1980s, he was instrumental to the negotiations between the club, Charnwood Borough Council and Loughborough University for the funding of the first, prestige all-weather track at

the university, opening the facility up to all members of the public, eventually negotiating the erection of the current club house.

As the years took their toll, and his runs became shorter John took to rambling and on his retirement from the university in 2010 he took on a major role with Loughborough Group, first as Treasurer, then as Chair from 2012 to 2017, and became a frequent participant in, and leader of, walks. On these many walks he led or joined, members benefited from his knowledge ranging from bluebells on the University campus to bird life and more.

John devoted considerable energy and commitment to all activities he was involved in, and Loughborough Ramblers are fortunate that he was with the Loughborough Group.

Our thoughts go to Yvonne and the family.

CHIPPINGS

Alan Loasby

We are pleased to be able to now advise that the rustic bench in Swithland Wood funded by the Ramblers in memory of stalwart long term officer has now been engraved by permanent etching.



This is in addition to the plaque we had had made



Area Quiz

To be hosted by Rutland group on Friday Nov 12th in Wing Village Hall .
Arrive and get set up 7.00 to be ready to start at 7.30 sharp. Cost £2.00 per person with warm drinks and biscuits provided.
If you want alcohol you must bring your own.

Teams of up to four which can be put together on the night if you are less in number.

No individual questions to embarrass anybody

Charitable Status

The Ramblers enjoy charity status because of our public service encouraging people to take exercise. This is a win win as it also gives us an opportunity to try and recruit new members.

Locally in the recent past members have devised tailor made walks for parish councils and churches and from YHAs, we are currently doing some for hotels for their residents.

It is an important part of our aims and we would encourage any member to take up any opportunities to do this, promoting the Ramblers as a result.

Four of us recently complied 20 'walks-from-your-front door' routes for people living on the edge of Charnwood Forest which the Forest Park are promoting on social media. These will end up on our website but examples are shown later in this newsletter

Their idea was during the various lock-downs to help people not used to walking to have short family-friendly walks into the Regional Park and to reduce the pressures on Bradgate Park and Beacon Hill

Walks were created from Anstey, Thurgarton, Rothley, Swithland, Cropston, Mountsorrel, Quorn, Woodhouse, Nanpanton, Shepshed, Whitwick, Coalville, Thornton, Groby, Ratby, Fieldhead, Markfield and Newtown Linford

Area Walk

This years walk is hosted by Loughborough with choices of either a five or ten miles option.

Both starting at Nanpanton Sports ground
SK517173, post code LE11 3TN.

It is on August 21st and the walks leave at 10.00 a.m.

Groups are asked to include this walk in their programme and encourage members to come along.

Area events are a chance to meet and socialise with like minded people from other groups on a social basis



Gallery



**Spot the
faces?**

**Previous
walks**



**MEMBERS PHOTOS OF INTERESTING PLACES
THEY HAVE SEEN ARE NOW VERY WELCOME**





Peter Williams, our President, consulting the walkers map of Charnwood we produced.

£6.99 in the shops but we still have discounted stock available at £5 to members

**Contact the Editor if you want a copy
roydenney at hotmail.com**

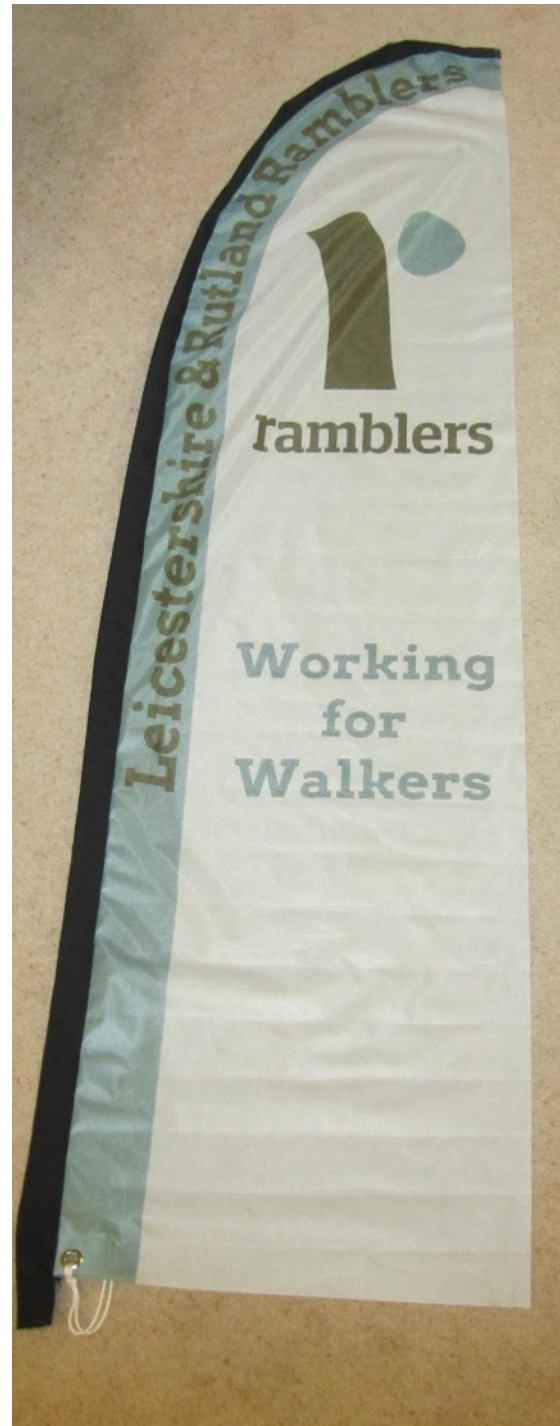


Numerous promotional posters are available from central office for example this one on walking for health

The Area itself has promotional material available as well if any group is staging any event

If you want to 'fly the flag' we have a feather banner

We also have a large Horizontal banner



WALKING ENVIRONMENT REPORT

The biggest news on the great outdoors is that we are increasingly able to get about and enjoy it once again. People have been out in their own locality and many have discovered green corners they did not know existed.

Hopefully these new walkers will keep it up and eventually become Ramblers.

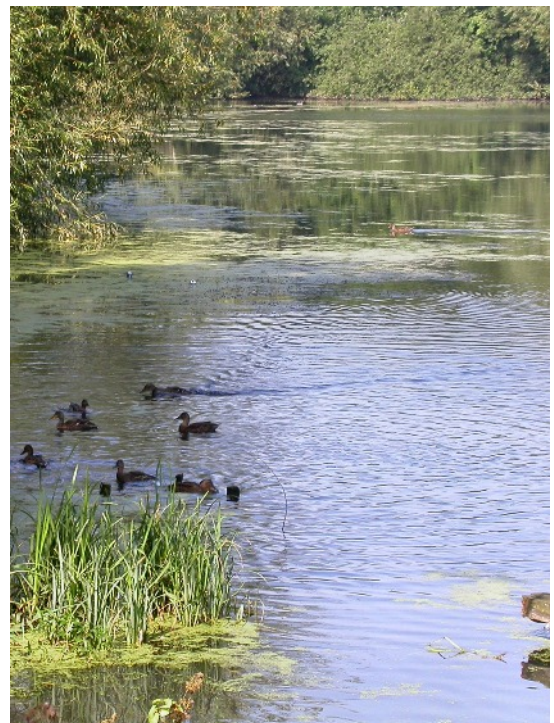


With the records office closed and not being able to have working meetings research on lost footpaths is very slow at the moment but the Charnwood Forest project is gearing up apace.

Members of the Ramblers local executive have produced twenty short walks from the communities around the edge of the forest to give people ideas about where to walk without heading straight for the honey-pots. At times during recent months Bradgate Park in particular has been overwhelmed.

On my rare forays I have seen children very excited at the presence of waterfowl and obviously not used to seeing them

It is great to see more people enjoying out outdoor spaces and indeed many going for walks and discovering places they did not know existed but we have to find a way of making them realise how big a part the Ramblers play in getting them access to these places and keeping the paths open and usable. Only then may we convert some to actually joining us as members,



Charnwood Regional Park will give other opportunities for helping as we are allowed out and every hour put in by volunteers is valued as match funding helping trigger the lottery board contributions.

In the background nationally work on lost ways continues albeit very slowly. National advertising led to 3500 people acting as volunteers looking for footpaths, bridleways and roads shown on historical maps but which appear to not be recorded on current OS maps.

This produced a mass of suggestions and there is a mountain of work to be done to whittle down the resulting map of potential lost rights of way. We want to focus on those that would bring the most public benefit and contribute to the improved continuity of the rights of way network

We also need to exclude those which have been legally extinguished/diverted or a in practical terms just not claimable - either because of significant development or because it is highly unlikely we could find enough evidence to support a good quality application

The Ramblers are recruiting local volunteer coordinators for highway authority areas but as we are well ahead of the field and already have a set-up in place I have been appointed as the Leicestershire coordinator which is just another label to what I had already been doing.

We will be developing the national map further to be able to prioritise and assign individual paths to those who want to research and are planning a significant expansion of our training, guidance and resources to support research

One big problem we do have is how to integrate our own extensive records in to the map and data base to prevent duplication.

The big plus is that hopefully some of the 23500 new volunteers live locally and will join our team.

Nationally, Ramblers continue our advocacy aims - an extension to the 2026 cut-off date and full implementation of the Deregulation Act which should give us the time and promised tools to complete this exercise.

One of the biggest issues about the environment we wish to walk in is of course the adverse effects of our changing climate. Getting out into the countryside gives us respite but the matter is getting critical and we must all do our bit.

When deciding where to walk try and reduce the element of travel keeping it fairly local. Whenever possible use public transport but if not do car share.

It is not compulsory to pre walk. If you feel you know the area don't bother and save that trip; just tell the others you may end up deviating. If you do not think your map skills are enough to do this we are running a series of navigation training sessions.

Mountain and Water Views

Over the years members have produced many good photos which in black and white did not do them justice

**Trawling back to show the benefits that an online newsletter offers these are a selection
I cannot identify all the camera people**

I you have ones of good walking areas which might enthuse fellow members do share them with us.

The first three are my own and particular favourites but strangely two are almost black & white

The first is the Khumbu skyline on the approaches to Everest and the setting sun over the Atlantic from cliff tops in Tenerife



Roski River, Croatia



Three photos of the Mayrhofen Area of Austria from one of Stan Warren's many trips there with groups of Ramblers.





The following
are from
members
activities
both at home
and abroad

Yorkshire



Ethiopia



Grand Canyon



The Ure



The Lakes



River Linn

AWARDS

PHOTOGRAPHS

If we get sufficient pictures sent in we will have a picture of the year announced each AGM

This will be selected from all those published in Writes of Way during the year

They can be of Ramblers activities, remarkable places visited, wildlife or just remarkable photographs of any subject no matter how mundane.

They must be submitted as JPEGs electronically to assist publication with a caption saying when where and what.

Pictures must not be of children such that they can be identified.

FOOTPATHS

We are looking for nominations for this years best kept footpath competition. This is an annual competition to thank those landowners making an effort to keep our footpaths in good condition.

We are excluding paths maintained by local authorities as they have a duty to properly maintain them. The arrangements have been agreed with the National Farmers Union and nominations are welcome from landowners and members or the general public.

Each constituent group in the Area is asked to nominate at least one each year. Nominations should be advised as discovered but will close each year on Jul 31st to allow time for judging during the growing season and before the weather closes in.

Please make your suggestion either direct to our Footpaths Officer or via your group

In addition to the landowner / manager of the winning path receiving a framed certificate and notices to go on the path other paths may be given Highly Commended certificates

The winner is also announced at our AGM at the start of the following year.

General Council and the way ahead

The Annual meeting to determine the way ahead saw the election of a partially new team at the top. General Council, ultimately our governing body, had to meet using zoom this year but the formalities all went smoothly.

This 'assembly' agrees motions requesting action by the Board of Trustees (BOT) which they have to either adhere to or report back saying why not.

One of the first roles of Council is to elect members to the BOT

Amongst the motions submitted and out to the vote were two which are close to the hearts of many local activists. Both were passed.

The first was a call to arms to fight the decline in membership stretching back many years with little sign of the decline ending. The numbers of people describing walking as their hobby has been increasing steadily for many years and while Covid has curtailed group walking, there has been an even more significant increase in walking activity, but not in our Membership.

If there was an easy answer it would be adopted but the BOT was asked to take a different approach and have a fresh look at the opportunities presented

It was suggested we need a change of emphasis from being a 'Membership Organisation' to being the 'National Walking Charity'; promoting our varied mission to the wider walking community, and providing more support locally for the general public on footpath issues

Providing free access the Ramblers Routes was included in this suggestion but that raises the counter argument that if they were freely available why would anybody join the Ramblers. This gets the heart of the problems the Ramblers face which has been recognised for many years: It is actually two different organisations under one name. As long as we are seen as a walking club the second argument rings true but as the Walking Charity the first does.

The recommendation was that the Ramblers should concentrate on clearly communicating what we do at the local and national level to the wider public. The thinking is that it is vital that the public understand and respect what Ramblers does, if we are to grow our membership because if we are seen as primarily a walking club why join us when there are hundreds of clubs out there with subs a fraction of what ours are.

Even our sister club the Leicestershire Footpaths Association only charge £6 a year. The LFA is also a charity and also campaigns on footpath issues and monitors the state of our footpaths but only locally.

*Reduce subs
get more members*

It is suggested that we consider reducing our membership fee as it is a major barrier to recruitment.

During then debate both at the Council and before and after council once the suggestions were floated there has been a call for more local autonomy with some going as far as to suggest that we should be a Federation of almost independent Clubs affiliated to the Ramblers as a charity, just as affiliates are now.

One suggestion is that each group set its own fees and operate from those revenues but pay an affiliation fee per member to Central office for support services and to fund the charitable and advocacy work done or organised by central office. This puts the present funding pattern in reverse and is a model used by numerous other organisations. One large example of this is the British Mountaineering Council and one of my colleagues in the Midlands Clubs Group of the BMC is involved with the Ramblers Area which submitted these suggestions.

The actual suggestions on the table and passed by Council do not go that far but the BOT is tasked with considering providing more local staff and resource, to aid Ramblers Areas and Groups, instead of London-based staff ; providing the tools to allow Groups and Areas to demonstrate to the public and local government the ever growing problems with the path network caused by funding cuts and empowering the local Ramblers Groups and Areas, encouraging them to buy-in at a local level - unlike current rules which severely limit local autonomy over use of funds.

Our Area prepared a motion for last years Council also seeking more local officers but held it back to see how promised changes bedded in so this motion reiterates what we were to have said and has gone further.

As your walking Environment officer I am on the campaigning side of the organisation and I see Areas being the local focus for campaigning and advocacy, work effectively being outstations of the Ramblers central operation and I see much merit in the federation idea. Groups are all different some geographically based some organisation based like an LCC or British Railways walking group and some are age related. All place different emphasis on social activities and attract members by those means. If all groups were independent they could decide their own fees but on the basis that they must include a £10 donation to the Ramblers Charity and I would suggest that most groups could do that only charging their member a £15 fee or even less,

On this basis the Ramblers could target the thousands of other walking groups out there seeking them to affiliate their members by a similar donation and at £10 there would be a much greater take up.

I have from my professional days, both marketing and economist qualifications and understand the law of diminishing returns which strangely few people do. Market traders do; if they can't sell their produce they reduce their prices. Similarly on several occasions in our recent history the national tax rates have been reduced and the exchequer received more tax revenue.

If the Ramblers halved their subs they would have a real opportunity to market themselves and after a few years more than double their membership gaining both more revenue but a bigger pool of campaigners.

Another important motion passed at this year's council was on membership specifically and to my mind overlapped with the last one in its ambitions.

General Council highlighted the difficulty that Groups have in supporting, encouraging and retaining volunteers. To help address this, Council urged the BOT to prioritise those IT developments that directly assist the Groups.

*Help with
email contacting*

These will include help in managing their email distribution lists, improving the information for membership secretaries, logging into and running their own Ramblers websites rather than create their own stand alone sites.

The lack of support to enable Groups to email their members has been particularly embarrassing over the course of the pandemic when the need for regular communications has been paramount. Many membership secretaries are unhappy with the utility of the reports available to them and have been for many years despite several promised but ineffective updates.

There is also a need to develop local booking systems for walks; many Groups have had to implement a mechanism to allow Members to log onto their local websites, while the request to roll out Single Sign On more widely has not been prioritised.

A series of communication ideas introduced presumably at considerable cost have never worked satisfactorily. The effort and money spent on Assemble, the latest, offers little of practical use to the Groups, with take-up low. The much heralded promise of it providing support for Groups to email all their members has not materialised.

The organisation is pushing ahead with another expensive re-branding when the money could be better spent on low profile mundane basic improvements long sought by the groups.

It has been of great concern to those of us beaver away at local level so hopefully with this directive the message will get through

Roy Denney

WALKS INTO CHARNWOOD FOREST

EXAMPLES OF THE 20 WALKS WE HAVE DEVISED FOR THEM

GROBY

This is a circular so you can pick it up where it passes nearest to your home. We have to start somewhere so I will take it from the Stamford Arms.

Head towards Ratby along Ratby Road and follow it up the hill. At the top of the hill at Oaktree Close, continue using the tree-lined path on your left, the line of the old Groby Granite Railway. Built in 1832 it was surveyed by George Stephenson and his son Robert and carried granite from the local quarries to sidings here in Glenfield. Much of it was sent to London using the Grand Union Canal. This granite was used in the building of St Pancras Station, the Albert Memorial and many other important buildings. Charnwood is the nearest outcrop of hard rock to London.

Loaded wagons were hauled to the top of Ratby Road and released to travel to Glenfield relying on gravity under the watchful eye of a courageous brakeman. The line was closed in the mid-1960s.

Continue till you see Woodbank Road on the right and then go up that road. Where it kicks left go straight on along Laundon Road keeping left to join Forest Rise. Follow this (it becomes Forest View) and as you approach the school you will be passing above the disused quarry and skirting Quarry Park. In the right hand corner of the park there is a drive past a Scout hut which drops you down to Markfield Road where going right will take you back towards the Stamford.

En-route on your left you come to St Philip and St James Church.

Turn left into the church entrance and follow the path round the church to the graveyard for a view of the old Groby Castle motte. The church was built in 1840 by the 7th Earl of Stamford.

The castle was erected in around 1086 and was partially destroyed a century later by followers of King Henry II so that it could not be used by rebels.

Carry on down the hill towards the Old Hall. Time Team did a 'dig' in 2010 and found evidence of a second great hall and chapel suggesting that this had been a very large and imposing building.

The Old Hall is a Grade II listed building and contains remnants of the earlier hall. The current brick built building you can see from the road on the left dates from the 15th century.



ANSTEY, WALKING THE BOUNDS

A tour of four historic bridges over Rothley Brook

This is a circular walk from Anstey, following the Rothley Brook dipping in and out of the Regional Park; around the edges of Cropston and Thurcaston and passing through Castle Hill Country Park, harbouring much wildlife, particularly kingfishers. In Summer it is a delightful waterway for children to paddle in. The source of the brook is in Bagworth and it flows through Glenfield to Anstey and on to Rothley near where it joins the River Soar; a distance of 18 miles. It forms the southern boundary of Charnwood Forest.

The walk is on solid surfaces but with some field crossing in Castle Hill Country Park and around the two distant bridges. However, if hard surfaces are required use can be made of the roads with care, in place of the footpaths although it will make the walk longer. The walk as described should take around 1½ hours.

Anstey can be reached by bus to the village centre, called The Nook, or by car, using The Nook (free) car park.

From the car park take the passageway exit on the left hand side of the public conveniences to reach The Nook. Cross the road to the Coach and Horses public house and follow Leicester Road round the side of the pub.

In a short distance at Ned Ludd Close cross over Leicester Road to the first bridge, Anstey Packhorse Bridge.

Built C16/17, it is composed of slate and granite rubble stone and a red brick coping to the parapet. There are five rounded arches with side embankments. Pointed cutwaters rise to form niches in the parapet. It is grade 11 listed monument.

The old Anstey Enclosure map of 1762 indicates a rectangular pool in the vicinity, probably for livestock. In heavy rains the area around the bridge becomes widely flooded.



Follow Centenary Walk over the bridge until it rejoins Leicester Road. Cross with care and turn right with Castle Hill Country Park on your left. Follow the pavement as it bends left around the woods, into Gorse Hill, until you come to an access to the country park.

Turn in and continue straight ahead under the power lines forking left beyond them and pass through the community orchard. Follow this path, which runs parallel with the power line and with Rothley Brook on your left.

The path will end at a gate alongside the next bridge, King William's Bridge.

Recently restored in 2008, King William's Bridge; small stone rubble bridge, has two arches and pointed cutwater on its upstream side.



The bridge is medieval, probably dating from 1500, but was widened in more recent times. It is named after King William III who visited the nearby residence of Lord Grey in 1696.

Early maps and records refer to it as 'Damgate'. There are groundworks that indicate there was once a sheepwash alongside.

Go through the gate and turn right, over the A46 and then left the other side. Continue on this path, bending to the right to an open space.

Here, turn left through a gate and spot the 300 year old Great Oak on your left.

Pause to read the notice board giving the history of this Early-Medieval Royal Deer Park.

Continue past the tree and follow the footpath up hill to the second bridge over the A46 (not under the A46) where there is a yellow post directing users.

Turn left over the A46 and along the footpath around the edge of the fields and riding school to the road, Anstey Lane.

Cross straight over, with care, and take the bridle path ahead, down to the Brook and bridge.

Little is known of this historic bridge which served the inhabitants of local villages and may have been installed by Leicester Abbey who owned properties in this vicinity. It is of similar construction as Sandham Bridge.

After exploring the bridge and water edge, return up the bridleway to the hedge and take the footpath diagonally left across the field towards the church. Continue along the path up to the road. Turn left, past All Saints church and turn left along the footpath the other side. This leads to Sandham Bridge.

All Saints' church has been much altered and extended. Pre 1006 it was an Anglo Saxon building site but much altered after the Norman Conquest. There are many notable features including one of the oldest surviving screens in England. A historical guide is for sale in the church. Sandham Packhorse Bridge of similar construction as the bridge at Anstey with 2 rounded arches and cutwater niches on both up and down sides. Located beside it is a marker stone maybe associated with Leicester Abbey as they owned property in this area. Note the cobbled path still in existence and the splayed embankments. This bridge is believed to be a coffin bridge serving inhabitants of Cropstone as they have no church of their own.

Return back to the road, where you need to go right, back to the footpath you came on. Return along the footpath by the riding school but instead of going over the A46 bridge, turn right before it. Follow the footpath down to the end, bending right away from the main road half way down.

Take the gate on your left back into Castle Hill CP and immediately turn right into the meadows. Follow the path and Rothley Brook back to King William Bridge. This time go over the bridge and along Sheepwash Walk to Cropston Road. Turn left along the road back to The Nook.

The 'Luddites' were a few desperate weavers who began breaking into factories and smashing textile machines. They called themselves "Luddites" after Ned Ludd, a young apprentice from Anstey who wrecked a textile mill's equipment 1779.

Castle Hill Country Park covers some 250 acres of grassland, plantation and broad leaved woodland, divided in two by the A46, Leicester Western Bypass. The northern section, bordering Anstey, comprises mainly of flat meadow land near the Rothley Brook with its abundance of birdlife. The park takes its name from the dramatic medieval Castle Hill Earthworks, believed to be a Knights Hospitallier monastic grange or sheep farm, which lies within the park.