

'Local Ramblers Honour Founder of The Rutland Round'

Rutland Ramblers enjoyed a long awaited social event at Ketton Sports Club last Sunday (22nd August) - tea & cakes ... and a presentation honouring the achievements of John Williams, retired committee member and founder of the county's own long-distance footpath, 'The Rutland Round'.

John, now 86, & his wife, Tricia, were special guests for the afternoon, sharing the occasion with over 40 guests, many of whom had just completed an 8 mile walk in the Ketton area that morning. Some of John's old walking friends popped in, as did Martin James, our Area Chairman, and local reporters were on hand to record the event.

The presentation had been due to take place last year - to mark John's retirement from Rutland Group's committee after many years, and to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Rutland Round. Unfortunately along came a dreadful disease ...

John came up with the idea for the 'Round' way back in the late 1990s. Disappointed at the time with the general state of footpaths in Rutland (indeed describing them as 'a bit rubbish!'), John felt that an eye-catching circular route around the county, showing off some of its beauty and taking in many iconic local landmarks, would concentrate minds on the footpath network, boosting its profile and raising standards. How right he was!

Working with various local bodies - including the local authority, Rutland Ramblers, CPRE (Campaign for the Protection of Rural England), farmers and landowners - John & his small team managed to secure some Lottery funding, put together the accompanying booklet ... and the Rutland Round was 'born' in April 2000.

Over 20 years later, this superb 65-mile long-distance footpath has been trodden by thousands of walkers, either in separate stages or all in one go - with one of the latest groups to do this being some intrepid folks from Hinckley Ramblers!

John Pitts, Chairman of Rutland Ramblers, made the presentation last Sunday, thanking John Williams for all his hard work in pioneering the Round, and in making such a huge contribution to countryside access right across the county.

And the gift for John on the day? Well, what could be more appropriate than a splendid yellow-topped 'mini' way marker post, complete with the Rutland Round disc and a glowing tribute from John's rambling friends. Not to be forgotten, Tricia was presented with a lovely bouquet of flowers by former group secretary, Lesly Hayes.

John, treated like a rambling 'superstar' all afternoon, had one final bit of attention as he was about to be chauffeured home - a touching impromptu radio interview with Rob Persani, lead presenter with Rutland & Stamford Sound. Quite a day!

Michael Gillon (Secretary - Rutland Ramblers)

