

ANNUAL REPORT
(Covering the period 1st October 2016 – 30th September 2017)

Area Chair (Martin Gawith)

I took up the role of Chair last year following resignations and some unrest amongst the former committee members. I had had experience of Chairing Broxtowe Ramblers for a number of years and had enjoyed a successful time encouraging walkers old and new.

I attended the Ramblers General Council in April at the University of Southampton which was an introduction to the ways of the Ramblers. From a personal perspective it was an “eye opener” to witness the factional workings of the organisation and the search for a role in a changing society. It was not particularly helpful in defining the role of an Area Chair, or indeed the role of an Area Council.

There appears to be a real disjoint between Areas and the national organisation. The National Ramblers spends considerable time and resources in representing the rights of walkers by lobbying and creating, for example coastline paths and defending proposed changes to paths etc. It has some real anachronies, the maintenance of a map library for members. the cost of sending out to members must be similar to the cost of purchase of a map!

I attended an induction at London offices for new Chairs and secretaries where it was again clear that there is no defined role for a Chair or indeed Area. I feel that this opaqueness leads to increased tensions between the central role and areas as well as increasing misunderstandings.

In a changing world with increasing diversity of leisure opportunities the Ramblers has to find a better way of engaging with both members and non-members. I welcome the appointment of Vanessa Griffiths as Chief Executive and wish her well with much needed reforms. We need to define our offer to walkers, we must be sensible defenders of the rights of walkers, campaigners for greater access to countryside and indeed urban walks, and we need to look at what we can offer in exchange for membership fees. The National Trust is able to offer members access to properties, free car parking, guided walks/tours and even holiday homes at a not dissimilar price our own.

The Ramblers offer of an introduction to a walking group (currently taken up by less than 50% of members) access to walks on the website but little else. Perhaps we need to consider possible joint ventures with say Ordnance Survey offering free access to route planning and map printing.

Currently successful walking groups will carry on either in or out of Ramblers membership and with little or no interaction with the area there than discussions/actions re footpaths. I praise the work of volunteers both at area and locally who spend considerable time monitoring and working with local authorities to maintain the path network.

Change is difficult for any organisation, particularly one that has built up mistrust. There is a need for historical knowledge, but not as a means to halt progress, often change is about timing as much as ideas. It may just work this time, even if it failed ten years ago!

I am clear that there is a role for areas to champion local groups, walking rights and to play a part in national campaigns and there is also a clear role to hold the Board and trustees to account. We do however, I believe, need to both invest in and trust our paid members of staff and allow them to reinvigorate the Ramblers. I look at how Ramblers has managed the "Walking for Health" contract. It was apparent to most observers over two years ago that the contract would not just roll over and continue. Ramblers should then have been looking for new partners and seeking closer cooperation with Ramblers walking groups. They failed to do this and we are only now looking to instigate a future for health walking groups.

The challenge locally is to make the Area structures and actions compatible with the desires of both walking groups and the general membership. The Area has a good track record in path monitoring and defending rights of way etc but we need to create a greater relevance with walkers. There are opportunities for growth working with Health groups, encouraging walkers to step up to longer Ramblers walks and also encouraging our more infirm members to consider gentler walks with these groups. As a society we face our biggest challenges with ever growing obesity levels and increasing Type 2 diabetes - we all know walking and diet are the best solutions to this epidemic and we need to work more closely with public health professionals and show a lead in this area.

I recognise that these are my personal views, though I have attempted to share them over the past year. On a personal level it has proved a difficult year with the death of my father and the poor health of both my mother and my partners mother. The year concluded with the death of my favourite walking companion (Roxy the dog). I have also had considerable distractions attempting to ensure a successful merger of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Healthwatches. For these reasons I have decided not to stand again for the position of Chair and I wish the new Chair and committee well in trying to move the organisation forward

Area Secretary (Judith Anson)

It would always have been a difficult task to follow Jenny Fillingham, given her years of experience. As no-one came forward at the AGM, I agreed to take on the role of Joint Area Secretary with Steve Parkhouse to allow Area to continue to function. Steve has taken the minutes at Area Council. I am currently Area Secretary, Area Membership Secretary and chair the Communications Group. While each of these

jobs is manageable on its own, doing the three together has been almost impossible. As a result, the efficient function of all three jobs has suffered.

All Groups were invited to comment on the structure of Area Council and the purpose of meetings and the results were considered at the July meeting. It was agreed that the business section of future meetings would be limited to 45 minutes with a 30 minute networking break followed by a discussion topic. In October the topic was Walking for Health and in January is Impact on the Environment. The intention is to make meetings more interesting and encourage greater attendance. The circulation of a monthly newsletter from the CEO of Ramblers has greatly improved communication as Secretaries are no longer finding out about changes by chance or by discussions on Ramblers-net. Martin Gawith, Chris Thompson, David Hunt and Sue Rick represented Area at GC in April. Although the Area Secretary is a Voting Delegate at General Council, I had not intended to be Area Secretary and already had a prior commitment.

We urgently need someone to step forward as Area Secretary or to at least job share.

Area Treasurer (Jack Prust)

Jack is currently on sick leave and will not be returning until January. We wish him all the best for a quick recovery. Jack hopes to have the full accounts available for the AGM but has asked that we use the report to the October Area Council until then.

Area Rights of Way Secretary (Chris Thompson)

The Area Rights of Way committee is chaired by David Hunt
david.m.hunt@ntlworld.com with the District Coordinators as follows:

District	Coordinator'	Contact details
Bassetlaw	Stephen Parkhouse	bassetlawcoord@nottsarearamblers.org.uk
Newark & Sherwood	James McGill	newarkandsherwoodcoord@nottsarearamblers.org.uk
Mansfield	Stephen Parkhouse (temporary)	bassetlawcoord@nottsarearamblers.org.uk
Ashfield	Chris Thompson (temporary)	nottinghamcoord@nottsarearamblers.org.uk
Broxtowe	Alex Staniforth	broxtowecoord@nottsarearamblers.org.uk
Gedling	Alex Staniforth	gedlingcoord@nottsarearamblers.org.uk
Nottingham	Chris Thompson	nottinghamcoord@nottsarearamblers.org.uk
Rushcliffe	Paul Fenton	rushcliffecoord@nottsarearamblers.org.uk

The DCs link with group Footpath secretaries and welcome full groups support for all rights of Way work. If groups have a rights of way problem in their area please contact the local DC in the first instance for help. Thank you.

I must take this opportunity of thanking all the DC teams for their work. I must however particularly complement Paul Fenton who took over as DC for Rushcliffe replacing Martin Smith. During this year Paul has dealt with many issues in Rushcliffe. One of the issues was a path diversion at Bingham School and Leisure Centre. This was a controversial diversion as it took out public open space in the centre of Bingham and the diversion was long and unacceptable, but as it is a school our hands were tied. Thank you, Paul you are doing an excellent job. In addition, we must thank Allan Rogers as our Information Officer who is a vital link to the DCs. Allan receives all highway orders and other rights of way matters and passes them out to the appropriate DC or group. Thank you, Allan, for all this. Your work has been a great help and benefit to all the team.

During this year there has been, as previous years, a large amount of Rights of Way work carried out. As previously reported, Nottinghamshire County Council have now contracted all their highway functions to a joint venture company called VIAEM. This partnership has during the 2016/17 period now provided an effective service and partnership with a team at Notts County Council Rights of Way. We thank the DCs for dealing with all this work. Some cases drag on as indeed has a case at Ethel Ave Mapperley. This case is now in the hands of the Countryside Access Team who some time ago when asked by Alec Staniforth (AS) for an update that in the event of not reaching any agreement with the developer, then the case would go to a public inquiry, and that remains the position in late December 2017. Much research is being undertaken by the team and a decision has been made to employ a consultant to prepare the case for a possible inquiry. The case is proving expensive. AS welcomes comments to him about this case.

There was a very important right of way Inquiry at Stoke Bardolph. This was to discuss a rights of Way claim from Burton Road into Stoke Bardolph. At the first inquiry as previously reported in last year's AGM the Inspector would not confirm the right of way order. Our RA Area then reported to Ramblers Central Office and they took the view that we now find ourselves in a position where the Stoke Bardolph claim had become a test case making it difficult in future to claim a right of way over a railway line. Ramblers Central Office then consulted with Board of Trustees and Rights of Way Committee at Ramblers Central Office and it was decided to appeal to the High Court at the decision to the inquiry held at Stoke Bardolph.

This took place in London at Royal Court of Appeal with the representation for Ramblers of a top barrister. This inquiry sadly reached the same decision with the order for a right of way between Burton Road and Stoke Bardolph turned down and not confirmed. We await a further update on how we now proceed, but we take this opportunity of thanking Ramblers Central Office for putting our case forward.

One of the major issues at the moment is the pressure from Network Rail to close off several railway crossings throughout their network of railways. In Notts we have paths at Newark, Attenborough, Mansfield, Collingham, under threat. We are aware also that the East Coast Mainline may also be brought back for a review. We continue to work with Notts CC and Network Rail to achieve a compromise.

On top of this the Railway project called HS2 which is a fast railway line from London to Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds linking Nottingham continues also to be under negotiation. This project will involve many rights of Way and loss of much countryside. We thank Jim Norris Countryside Sec for his consultations on this project.

Another major problem has been the large amount of housing development now taking place in the countryside. This also has included the gravel sites and the establishment of new roads and improved services. Whilst much of this work has again been carried out by Jim Norris, it also involves saving and diverting rights of Way. We thank all the DCs and groups who have been involved in that work.

We are aware of a large development south of Newark which will involve several Rights of way. James McGill organised a meeting with the developers about that development. At Clipstone a developer built over a proposed right of way. The Ramblers have objected to an extinguishment of the right of way and are negotiating a system in planning where a layer of current and proposed rights of way are put over a current map. This would then hopefully prevent mistakes like at Clipstone being carried out. With a promise to undertake that work we will remove our objection. James McGill had tried to organise this in 2015 at a meeting at Newark and Sherwood. This will only be achieved if we can see the legal rights of way data for the map- layer completed by Notts County Council. Attempts will now be made to see if that work can be carried out for all the Planning Authorities throughout Nottinghamshire.

Another important issue has been the continued creation of cycling routes in the countryside. In Notts there are now several cycle/walk trails and there has been much lobbying to link these trails using the existing rights of Way network. This has been very contentious work as several proposals have been to see established links along footpaths. Full consultations are taking place with pressure from County Council and Borough Councils to see these route links achieved.

Ramblers have also been consulted by SusTrans about opening up a cycle route along the east bank of the Trent which will contact North Clifton with Langford via Collingham. There are many benefits to this scheme such as providing (i) better routes between villages without walking along a busy trunk road (ii) wheelchair / pram access to the river bank, and (iii) a link between local nature reserves. However, the plan involves turning some footpaths into a multi-user track and also involves stretches of the Trent Valley Way. James McGill organised a joint site visit for Ramblers and SusTrans. The RA Notts Area has decided to support the scheme with some important reservations about safety.

At Church Warsop Ramblers Notts Area negotiated a right of way with a local landowner along a former railway line. It is hoped this will resolve a serious rights of way problem in the area that is constantly flooded and also link a new trail in Derbyshire that will improve a link towards Creswell Craggs. Thank you very much Stephen Parkhouse for all your hard work in achieving that. Funding for this has been achieved by Ramblers Holidays, British Horse Society and other associated funding.

Much work continues to be carried out by Ramblers Notts Area in looking at Lost Way claims. This is important work as there is still a cut-off date of 1st January 2026 in force and a lot of work still to be carried out.

Here again we thank Stephen Parkhouse who has completed research on around 65 claims!! The claims are fully written up but none have gone in because the new streamlined process created by the 2015 legislation hasn't become operative – the Treasury are busy with Brexit and haven't set charges for applications such as diversions. It is worth waiting because we will be able to agree changes of status and route with landowners to get better paths in a much speedier process. In addition, Chris Thompson continues to be involved with this work and has put forward a few cases this year as well as seeing several of his previous claims now resolved with new paths on the ground. We welcome support from members to assist with this work. Please contact Chris Thompson on 07719827808.

In May 2017 there was a County Council election. All prospective County Councillors were written to ask their views on rights of way and if successful to become a County Councillor would they fully support the rights of way network. This resulted in a large number of responses and all the Councillors who were elected have been written to asking for their support.

On behalf of the DC Team and Footpath Secretaries, we must take this opportunity of thanking the Chair of the Notts Area Rights of Way Committee. David Hunt has been a strong effective chairman right from the start of setting up the revised committee. Throughout that time David has been able to meet lead offices AT Notts County Council to discuss rights of way issues, has been always there to assist the DCs, Group Footpath Secretaries and Rights of Way Officer. David on behalf of the committee a very big thank you for all your services as our Chair.

In summary I must thank Paddy Tipping our Area President who has also been very supportive to us providing important contacts and assistance in arranging important meetings. Also for all the support from group footpath secretaries, and members in supporting and assisting in rights of way work. I hope you will agree as previous years a large amount of work has been carried out by the Notts RA Area Rights of Way committee.

Lastly, I ask all members to inform us if you come across a rights of way problem or to inform us if a path that you regularly use or have used is not a definitive right of way to let us know. We need to protect all these paths for public use. Please contact your group footpath secretary or local DC. Everything will be done to see these problems are resolved.

Area Countryside Officer (Jim Norris)

1. Introduction

As a charity, the activities of the Ramblers Association are governed by its Articles of the Association. These include:

“b) The protection and enhancement for the benefit of the public of the beauty of the countryside and other areas by such lawful means as the Trustees think fit”.

Attempting to fulfil this purpose is the main function of the role of Area Countryside Officer. It is a very worthy cause. In Nottinghamshire there are a range of matters relating to the beauty of the countryside which pose potential and actual threats.

2. Planning Strategies

There is now a presumption that “proposals can be approved wherever possible”; there is no longer a “precautionary principle” relating to building on flood plains and it is no longer incumbent on developers to “robustly justify” why full compliance with policy requirements is not viable or feasible. These new principles are combined with the government view that planning permission for housing should be granted on brown field sites

This is having an impact on proposals and subsequent approval for large scale housing developments on rural land throughout the County. Perhaps typical of such developments is Sharphill Wood. We can all appreciate the need for affordable housing but such developments need to be carried out sensitively with due regard for the scenery, view points, rights of way and amenity. It is unfortunate from the point of view of Ramblers that when a greenfield site housing development is mooted, the last thing which is thought of is the overall impact on the footpath network.

When placing objections it is advisable that the wording concentrates on the ways in which the proposal might be contrary to planning regulations rather listing subjective dislikes.

The various Councils publish all their plans, often with an opportunity to make comments. It is also possible to make formal objections where it is felt that Regulations are not being followed. No formal objections have been lodged during the course of this year

3. Fracking

Nottinghamshire is one of the counties which is affected by fracking. The impact of this is likely to grow because large areas of the county have been identified as having the relevant geology.

The Ramblers Association has a national policy on this as follows:

- *Fracking has an unacceptable impact on the beauty and character of the countryside which is incompatible with areas that are designated for their natural beauty, biodiversity or geology.*
- *Fracking should not take place within a National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty or National Scenic Area; such activity is incompatible with their statutory purposes and would undermine their designation for the protection of their landscape and scenic beauty.*
- *Fracking should not take place within Sites of Special Scientific Interest or Natura 2000 sites; such activity is incompatible with their statutory designations and would undermine their biodiversity, habitats, geology and physiography.*
- *Outside of designated areas each application should be considered for its impacts upon people's ability to enjoy the outdoors via public rights of way and*

public access land as well on the beauty and character of the countryside and on climate change.

Ineos is in the process of moving towards testing for shale gas at Clumber Park. As a pre-emptive move in July the Company won a temporary High Court injunction to prevent stop any protests on the site. This includes siting, road blocks or people padlocking themselves to equipment. Subsequently the temporary injunction has been upheld by the same court. FrackFree Notts has stated that banning protests in this way sets a dangerous precedent for any future campaigns.

There have been two direct issues for Ramblers. There is an actual application for fracking in the North of the County at Misson. The actual site has no impact on any Right of Way and indeed is a fairly remote location. However, it is directly adjacent to the Misson Carrs SSSI, and is a site with a problem of water shortage. We have placed objections both to the original application and to the planning application for drilling for water.

4. Renewable Energy

Increasingly many of the developments that take in the Nottinghamshire Countryside relate to wind farms and solar panel farms. The Ramblers Association has a stated view that should form the basis of what we do about plans for such sites.

The key elements of this statement are:-

“As Ramblers we recognise then threat posed to our countryside by climate change, which could severely change our cherished landscapes.

We support measures to reduce harmful emissions of carbon dioxide, including by increasing the amount of energy produced from a wide range of renewable sources

Renewable energy developments should be strategically planned and sensitively sited. Proper assessments should be carried out prior to development to ensure that they do not damage sensitive landscapes, wildlife or historic places.

For large wind and solar developments sensitive areas such as national parks should be avoided.

Where wind turbines are built on onshore they should be located as far from public rights of way and access land as possible with every effort made to minimise the impact on walkers.”

In the circumstances of Nottinghamshire (with its sad lack of National Parks and indeed shores) we are trying to apply the exact principles and wording of the

Ramblers statement, consistently. This will may mean in that in many circumstances it is not necessarily a matter for us if there is a proposal for a wind turbine in the middle of an ordinary field with no footpaths. The same applies to solar panels, although they tend to cover a wider area.

Nottinghamshire in general is not a County of outstanding scenic merit which is substantially spoilt by wind turbines and/or solar panels. Objections to applications are likely to be the exception.

It also means that we might find ourselves not supporting pleas for assistance from villagers who dislike the necessity of constructing a local solar panel farm. It is important that members do not automatically join in objecting to proposals in the name of the Ramblers Association in a way which is not consistent with Ramblers Policy.

Many people are of the view that the development of renewable energy is essential in order to maintain the fulfilment of our need for energy whilst we run down the energy sources based on fossil fuels.

5 Quarries/Gravel Pits

One of the issues that impacts on Nottinghamshire is mineral extraction. The county has a Mineral Extraction Strategic which at various stages in the process invites objections and/or comments. The presence of the Trent flood plain invites the development of Gravel Pits. The Planning process for these includes a sustainability assessment taking account, for example, of the impact on wildlife. One key point about gravel pits is that the assessment can, and sometimes does, come out with a positive score – in other words they are environmentally beneficial in the long term. However, this is not always the case. Two years ago we objected to the creation of a gravel pit at Barton in Fabis. Approval was not given at that time but an application has been resubmitted and we are supportive of the other organisations who are objecting.

6. HS2

During 2017 we have established relationships with HS2. We have submitted comments on the Environmental Impact Policy. The key issue we have raised is the importance of recognising the requirements of walkers on rights of way both during the construction phase and in the eventual operational phase. Diversions of a mile and back along a road to the nearest bridge are not acceptable. HS2 have established a relationship with the Nottinghamshire Local Access Forum which should ensure that they are well advised on these matters. We intend to be kept informed.

Area Membership Secretary (Judith Anson)

GROUP	NEW AND	TOTAL AT	TOTAL AT
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	REINSTATED IN YEAR	1.10.17	1.10.16
Newark	13	122	126
Nottingham	42	321	319
Retford	10	89	86
Ravenshead & Hucknall	11	104	103
Worksop	4	65	73
Rushcliffe	31	319	310
Broxtowe	14	200	212
Gedling & Dukeries *	4	209	228
Mansfield & Sherwood	19	108	114
Southwell	13	75	66
Collingham	2	51	54
Vale of Belvoir	14	103	94
Notts Derbys Walking Group	34	205	223
One Step Walkers	48	165	143
Robin Hood Way	1	3	3
Not in Group	25	64	48
Area Total		2203	2202

National Totals: 1.10.17 – 104,694, 1.10.16 - 105,990,- 1.10.15 - 107,369

* The Gedling & Dukeries Group agreed at its 2017 AGM to change the name to Gedling Group.

All Groups have recruited new members with Area numbers holding steady and overall new members are replacing leavers. The national fall in membership continues. A new Director has recently taken up post and I hope there will be new national recruitment initiatives. Groups need support on recruitment.

Please note that the new/reinstated figures cannot be matched back as they do not show numbers leaving. These figures may also reflect a change of members between Groups, so one Group's loss is another's gain.

I would like to remind members and Groups that every member can now log in to their own membership account on the Ramblers website. This means they can change their personal details, address, Group, etc. Members have to register at <https://www.ramblers.org.uk/register.aspx> They can then log in to their account.

Area Groups Officer (James McGill)

There is not very much to report.

I joined Judith Anson, Membership Secretary, earlier in the year at a committee meeting of the Notts-Derby Walking Group. We seemed to have lost contact at Area level with NDWG and the meeting was useful in banishing some preconceptions we had harboured about the Group.

I continue to organise the "Secret Life of a Rambler" for the Area website.

There has been some activity from Central Office on allocation of the handful of new members who do not join on-line. This is currently done on the basis of parishes; the allocation map used by Central Office to show the boundaries of each Group contains some obvious anomalies which Judith and I have looked at and which will need discussion with the Groups involved.

Another initiative from Central Office has been to seek to appoint "local champions" or "volunteer organisers". This has proved rather controversial but a member in the Newark - Southwell area has put her name forward and I have attempted to contact her but without success at the time of writing this report.

Area Communications Sub-Group (Judith Anson, Chair)

My earlier comments explain why, despite good ideas and plans, the activities of the Group have not progressed as anticipated. Nevertheless, we have made progress and there are plans for new website features in 2017/18.

Notts Area Website www.nottsarearamblers.org.uk

The feature "Secret Life of a Rambler", gives interesting insights about individual members and why they are in Ramblers. All Area Council minutes and AGM papers appear on the site. We have included a report on General Council, Ramblers initiatives, the new newsletter from the CEO, amongst other articles. The planned forum for Group Webmasters and Social Media Editors has not been established as there is no one to organise it, although it remains on our wish list.

We have reviewed the ranking to find what visitors clicked on and the most popular section was the walks in Notts and people are also accessing the Notts Walker via the website.

Notts Walker

The emailed Notts Walker continues to be very successful with an open rate of over 50% (although it did fall below that when the May edition was sent out on the day the general election was announced!). The number on the distribution list has increased to 1,234 and if members are not receiving the Notts Walker they should contact the email address below or make sure they have given their email address to Ramblers.

Contributions should be sent to notts.walker@nottsarearamblers.org.uk

Facebook Page

This is being managed by Keith and has a growing following. Groups and members are invited to send photos and posts. www.facebook.com/nottsarearamblers

Other activities

We investigated MeetUp and similar Social Media sites. We felt we should not recommend their use to Groups. There is insufficient control over who actually turns up for walks which makes numbers difficult. This was a particular issue for

challenging walks to ensure participants were adequately equipped. The Notts & Derbys Walkers and the One Step Walkers had both stopped using Meet Up as the numbers turning up were unmanageable.

Keith is organising a walk, 15th – 22nd September, on the Isle of Wight coastal path. This will be in sections of about 14 miles a day. Those joining will need to arrange their own accommodation and travel. This now appears on the facebook page and will be in the next Notts Walker.

We also reviewed Group websites and there are four different ways that Groups can set up a website. This would be a topic for the Forum if we can get it established but in the interim the Communications Group can offer advice and support to Groups.

GROUP ANNUAL REPORTS

Broxtowe Group (Keith Jacobs)

Broxtowe held its AGM on Monday 27th November. A good attendance re-elected all current members of the committee, with the exception of Welfare Officer. This role has been filled with care and efficiency for some time by Kathy Whiting who feels she should step down now as her walking is less regular and contacts are lost. Until someone steps into Kathy's shoes, Chair, Heather Fortnum, will collate information about members welfare issues.

A full programme of walks for the next quarter with two on most Wednesdays and the longer, Sunday walks has been completed. The walks will be available on-line or in a much reduced (and less expensive), booklet form. As group finances are quite healthy at the moment, it was decided not to take Area funding for the coming year in the spirit of a non-profit making charity.

Walk leaders have been urged to encourage new walkers to join Ramblers after perhaps a couple of walks if they are not members already. It was pointed out that there are 12 walk leaders providing walks for the next programme, when that figure was up to 26 ten years ago. There is clearly a need for more, perhaps newer members to consider entering walks. The 'buddy' system, whereby an experienced leader can pass on expertise to newer members was encouraged as a possible answer, although there is still an overall decline in numbers.

A suitable date for a coach outing with two walks on offer to Chester, next summer was considered, after the success of our visit to York in 2017. The possibility of other outings or short residential visits was considered.

We look forward to our Christmas event when we hope to meet with older or former members after a short walk, in good voice (we trust).

We have started to consider some suitable celebration for Broxtowe Group's 30th anniversary in 2018. This may be a short walk followed by an afternoon tea and cake event at a local venue. We would be anxious to ensure attendance by as many older members as possible with transport being provided for those who might need it.

Gedling (& Dukeries) Group (Jim Norris)

At the 2017 AGM on Sunday 5th November at Lowdham Village Hall, after much discussion and the expression of heartfelt views, we eventually voted by a majority that the name of the Group should revert to “Gedling.” This will happen as soon as confirmed by Head Office.

Indeed this year’s AGM had healthy discussions leading to a vote on two other issues. One was an amendment to walks classifications, the proposal for which was carried. The other was a proposal to amend the AGM format from 2018, which was rejected. The current and continuing format is that there is a leisurely walk in the morning followed by a fuddle and the AGM itself.

There were two significant resignations from the Committee this year. Val Disney stood down after valued service as Membership Secretary. Mick Rawdin stood down after 5 years in the Chair and a somewhat longer period on the Committee. Unfortunately no one came forward to offer to replace Mick so the Group is currently without a Chair. All the other positions were filled except for the already vacant Countryside Officer role.

The matter of membership is giving some cause for concern. On 30th September we had 211 members which was 25 down compared with previous year. There were only 3 new members and 1 reinstatement across the course of the year. We did make a determined effort to attract new members through a stall at the Go Outdoors opening at Daybrook and subsequent events.

In spite of this the Group continues to thrive. We continue to be supported by our team of enthusiastic and experienced walks leaders and our walks are well supported. We have a full programme of walks across the year of varying lengths and difficulty to suit the tastes of our members. We do have to report however, the deterioration in the state of footpaths and the increasing difficulties in being able to do anything about it.

The group’s Christmas Walk & Fuddle in December was well attended as usual – the only problem being a surfeit of prizes which took a remarkably long time to draw.

Our annual dinner was held in May and was attended by 40 people, who enjoyed the entertainment provided by Trevor Lee and his Ukulele.

There was only one bus trip this year. This was to Skegness. In spite of the rain it was an excellent walk. Next year two coach trips are planned. One will be a coach walk from Thornham to Hunstanton and the other a coastal walk to Whitby.

We are rightly proud of our Group website. Much credit goes to Graham Dicker for this.

We believe the Group is a good example of a key element of the Ramblers Association – the provision of a service of providing excellent and popular walks for our members

Mansfield & Sherwood Group (Alex Staniforth)

At the Group's AGM held on 7th December 2016 there was uncertainty about the future of the Group and a fear that it might fold. It came at a time when some members on the Group Committee were standing down and their posts needed to be filled to ensure continuity. By the end of the AGM this was partially realised though one major post remained vacant; this fortunately was filled within a few weeks post AGM. Thus with some relief we managed to keep the Group going.

On the whole we have enjoyed a full and successful year despite the current gloom and despondency that seems to be pervading the country. We have had a full walking programme with our now standard short and long walks alternating each Sunday plus Saturday and Evening Walks and, of course, our Walking for Health Walks have continued unabated and expanded thanks to our indomitable Walks Coordinator, Keith Wallace, who incidentally received two awards for his work in this important aspect of the Ramblers work. The programme for the latter now occupies most of his time thus he will be concentrating on this from now on. Regrettably this entails Keith standing down from his positions of Group Membership Secretary and Walks Coordinator. The Group gratefully acknowledged the tremendous contribution he has made over the past six years or so.

Other walking items of note include the completion by some members of the Coast to Coast Walk and for the past few years, members have been going away for a weekend every September to complete sections of the Cleveland Way. So far they have walked the entire coastal route from Filey to Saltburn (yes they're doing it the 'wrong way' round) and this year turned inland towards the North York Moors. Locally, our Vice-Chair, Stephen Bramley once again led a walk to celebrate the East Markham Apple Festival at the beginning October, which, as in 2016 was well attended.

Our Group AGM is usually held in December but this year it was decided to move it to November. The venue for it was The Bowl In Hand PH right in the centre of Mansfield where we had the place exclusively to ourselves. The AGM was attended by 25 members and in addition to the serious business we had a buffet and not one, but two quizzes, plus a raffle!

Turning to the serious business it was noted that our membership had remained more or less static throughout the last year; our Group funds are healthy and though we lost the services of Keith Wallace we have recruited a new Membership Secretary and appointed a husband and wife team to the post of Group Footpath Secretary – or is that Secretaries! The posts of Social Secretary/Organiser and Walks Coordinator will be shared out among members, i.e. small interested groups.

Our main aim for 2018 is not only to keep the membership numbers up but try and increase them. A concern is that we are finding some new members sign up but leave when their subscription for renewal is due: is it because they find alternative walking groups/clubs less expensive? This is a worrying trend and one that needs to be addressed as a priority. To sum up: the Group is noted for its friendliness and we will continue to live up to that accolade.

Newark Group Report (Carol Wilkinson)

2017 has been a year of consolidation for Newark Ramblers. Numbers have been steady but with new members contributing actively to the Group. The walks and social programmes have been interesting and varied and, after many years, we have had a “mini-break” for members, this time on the Yorkshire coast.

At our recent AGM our Chair, James McGill stepped down after 5 years in office. He remains on the committee and is our Footpaths Officer and represents us on the Area Committee. Sadly we were unable to appoint a new Chair and so the committee will take turns to lead our meetings until a new Chair is appointed. All other committee members were re-elected and we were pleased to welcome a new committee member, Joyce Pedersen.

Following the AGM another of our members, who was unable to attend the meeting, has approached us and offered to serve on the committee. We were very pleased to accept her offer and are looking forward to seeing Anne-Marie at our meeting in December.

We were saddened to hear of the death of one of our long-standing members, Freda Kirby, a lady who, in the past had served as Secretary of the group. Several members attended Freda's funeral and a proportion of the collection at the service was donated to Newark Ramblers.

Since the AGM we have lost another of our members in a tragic road accident. Jean Quickenden, though in her 80s was still walking with us regularly. She often led walks and it was only last year that she stopped joining us on longer walks. She will be missed by us all.

Throughout the year members have enjoyed trips to the theatre, ceilidhs, a coach trip and a quiz as well as a Christmas meal and Fuddle. Social events are a very important aspect of Newark Ramblers. They give an opportunity for members to get together to enjoy an evening out, get to know each other a little better and very often to eat together. At the AGM we asked for ideas for social events and a Treasure Hunt walk was requested.

We have managed to reduce the number of paper copies we sent out to members to 20. This is a substantial reduction and saves us a great deal of money in postage. The majority of our regular walkers check our website and Facebook page for information about walks and social events. Notice of new events and any changes that have to be made are sent out by email and members really appreciate receiving this information.

Newark Ramblers is thriving – long may it continue!

Nottingham Group

No report received to date

Notts & Derby Group (Rachael Drewery)

After a turbulent couple of years, 2017 saw NDWG go from strength to strength with increasing numbers attending walks and lots of positive chatter. We have run a full programme of walks and have organised several trips away including a week in the Scottish Highlands and a New Year Trip to Llangollen.

October 2017 saw our AGM and as usual lots of changes to our committee. Phil Storer stepped down after a year as Chair. This was not however, before leading a successful discussion at the AGM regarding the group and what we want for the future. Discussions focused on ways of encouraging new members, how we communicate events and what sorts of walks, weekends and socials the group wants.

All committee roles were filled at our AGM and we have started actioning some of the suggestions made at the AGM. We have arranged a navigation course and the group will be undertaking its first long-distance path, the West Highland Way in August. We are also looking at some targeted advertising, 'buddying' for new walk leaders who feel that they would benefit from it and how we involve all members of the group.

A final note - it is NDWG's 21st birthday this year. As the original 20's/30's group we are planning a variety of celebrations which will include both current and former members.

One Step Walkers Group

No report received to date

Ravenshead & Hucknall Group

No report received to date

Retford Group (Sally Fraser)

This year has been very successful for our Group. It has been extremely pleasing to see walks so well attended, each Sunday has seen numbers over ten and more often nearer twenty.

Our Members have enjoyed two holidays during the year. The first to the Llangollen area of North Wales. This is a fabulous area for walking with stunning views. On arrival we set out on a short afternoon stroll which took us along the towpath of the Shropshire Union Canal where a decision was to be made. Do we walk over the Aqueduct or do we take the easy option and use the lift bridge to cross the canal and walk down the road. Everyone opted to walk over the Aqueduct but some wished they hadn't by the time we were half way across. What a splendid view – 126 feet up in the air! We enjoyed five wonderful walks including a trip on the steam railway all in glorious weather. It doesn't always rain in Wales!

Our second break was walking the section of the Northumberland Coast Path from Warkworth to Bamburgh Castle. What a nice change to walk by the sea sometimes on the cliffs, sometimes in the dunes and sometimes on the sand.

15th October was our Challenge Walk – The Beast of Bolsover. Eleven set out on a misty drizzly morning which fortunately very soon changed into quite a pleasant mild day. All completed the Challenge and felt very pleased with themselves.

We held our AGM at a local village hall. A buffet lunch followed a short morning walk. After lunch we were entertained by one of our Members who gave a short talk on the Social History of the Grand St. Ledger Race.

Our Committee is unchanged, however we do have a couple of new walk leaders which is very encouraging.

We continue to advertise our walks weekly in the Retford Times and also in three local free publications. This has, this year, proved to be successful in recruiting new members.

Rushcliffe Group (Mike Stock)

I am pleased to report that the Group has enjoyed another successful year of walks, social and holiday events. A survey conducted within the Group found that 48% of members participated in at least one of the events.

Our first walking holiday took us to the HF hotel at Abingworth for weekend of walking on the South Downs. Après walk activities included an impromptu game of croquet, quizzes and games. The weekend ended on Monday with a short walk in the morning followed by a pub lunch at Rudgwick before heading back up the M1 to Nottingham.

This year's major holiday involved an early start for 31 members to Birmingham to catch the early morning flight to Munich and a bus trip to Mayrhofen for a week's walking in the mountains. Walks were varied to suit all abilities with the more adventurous or foolhardy taking on the strenuous walks in the mountains. As you would expect, the scenery was superb and well worth the effort of the climb. Non-walking activities included a trip into an ice cave, a train ride from Mayrhofen to Jenbach and a visit to an equestrian event.

The day trip to London for a walking tour of the capital is fast becoming a popular annual event. This year, the tour started at Hampstead, taking in an informative guided tour of Hampstead cemetery where a certain Mr K. Marx is buried and then on to Parliament Hill for a superb panoramic view of London then heading back to central London for a meal before returning to Nottingham.

Finally, the September weekend away took 27 members to the 'Broadacres.' Based at Pateley Bridge, attendees, as ever, had a wide choice of walks as well as places to visit for any non-walkers.

The social side has not been neglected either. 23 inveterate punters enjoyed an evening 'going to the dogs' at the Nottingham Greyhound Stadium gambling away their pensions on the races from the comfort of the restaurant although some of the party made a profit on the evening!

The next event was an informative tour of Nottingham's Malt Cross attended by 20 members followed by lunch.

The next event took 21 members to Sheffield for the Five Weirs Walk to explore Sheffield's industrial past. Ably led by John Fallon who was born and grew up in Sheffield, this proved an interesting and informative tour. After the tour, we took the Folk Train to Edale for an evening of clog dancing and live music at the Rambler Inn to finish off the day.

Our Christmas lunch is becoming ever more popular with 66 members enjoying a meal at Ashmore's restaurant. After our resident 'poet laureate' Pam Duesbury entertained us with a review of the year's events, our Chairman Alan Wilson presented Jeremy Pratt with a Ramblers' Award certificate in recognition of his work in organising and leading the health walks, the Group's short walks' programme and the recruitment of new members.

Last but not least, the main business of the Group is walking and as usual, there has been a full programme of weekend and mid-week walks of varying lengths and difficulty.

None of the above activities would be possible without the hard work and enthusiasm of the committee, walk leaders, social events' organisers and holiday organisers to whom many thanks are given.

Southwell Group

No report received to date

Vale of Belvoir Group (John Young)

Over the last year, the group has continued to thrive and everyone involved in the group seems to be enjoying themselves. As perhaps could be expected, we have had our fair share of people not enjoying the best of health and we wish them all a speedy recovery.

We have had a varied programme of walks both geographically and walk type which seems to suit most members. We had 70 walks lead by 25 walks leaders to whom we are very grateful. Our walk attendance averaged 18, however, on one walk at Southwell we had 39 which for our group is a lot! In terms of the locations and areas covered we have been walking as far north as Gainsborough, as far west to Taddington in the Peak District, south to Rutland & down to Ashby-de-la-Zouch. In addition, we completed the Wolds Way in August. For our weekend away we went to Church Stretton which was a great success with 22 people attending. We plan to follow the same formula using HF accommodation for next years trip to Malhamdale in North Yorkshire.

Our membership is steady at about 100 and we attract a few new members each year which is good to see. We tend to communicate predominantly via email, the group blog and website. These methods are efficient and cost effective ways of

ensuring the majority of members are kept informed however, we do print some paper programmes for those without email.

Our social events - Lunch in the Garden, a skittles evening at a local venue and our Christmas social meal with entertainment remain as popular as ever and are a great way to socialise and provide the opportunity to meet partners who perhaps don't walk with the group.

Overall a successful and enjoyable year with the same planned for next year.

Workshop Group (Diana Munro)

At our 47th Annual General Meeting on 31.10.2017 attended by 10 members, we resolved to plan another year of walks and activities. We have estimated that our pro rata share of the membership subscription equates to approximately £2 per member, so we can assume that this will be about £134 for 2017/18. Our annual costs to run the Group amount to about £200, so potentially, unless our membership numbers increase significantly, we could see a time when the Group is no longer financially viable.

We currently have 67 members. During 2017 five new members joined us but sadly more than that number decided not to renew for various reasons, including some old friends. A copy of our programme and joining details are always given to any visiting walkers some of whom have expressed an interest in joining.

During 2017 walk numbers continued to be low. Between April and November the highest attendance was 12 on a Thursday walk in April. The big attraction was the gorgeous wood anemones in Wellow Park Woods! Two walks (both on Sundays) had to be abandoned due to no-one turning up at all except for the leader. A few walks only attracted three walkers, including the leader, but still enjoyed nevertheless. However, on 3rd December a walk from Longshaw attracted the huge number of 17 walkers, including two potential members and one member from another group. The seven summer evening Wednesday pub walks proved to be an enjoyable format with numbers participating being between three and nine.

In conjunction with the National Trust Volunteers, we ran two coach walks: one to Rippon, taking in Fountains Abbey, and one to Pickering, combining travel on the North York Moors Railway with a walk. Both days included a meal together on the way home. These days out were very much enjoyed by everyone who took part, however planning future joint activities with the National Trust Volunteers becomes increasingly difficult as our needs differ as to the types of possible activities and destinations. On a more positive note, we have made contact with Mansfield & Sherwood Ramblers with a view to planning a joint coach outing with them this year.

We are very pleased to report that our Group will be contributing two walks to the Chesterfield Canal Walking Festival in September this year. This is as a result of two of our members making contact with one of the organisers through leading a series of six walks along The Cuckoo Way.

Robin Hood Way (Flexi-Group) Jenny Fillingham

Ramblers' Walk-Finder – There is still a problem uploading walks for the Robin Hood Way Flexigroup. Ramblers have identified the problem and are working on a solution.

Robin Hood Way Path Wardens – There is still one section (Section 4 Kimberley – Bestwood) without a warden. If you are interested, please send an email to: info@robinhoodway.com
Thanks to all the wardens for looking after the Way.

Robin Hood Way Waymarks – Thanks to Nottinghamshire Area Ramblers for providing the funds to purchase a supply of 'rigid' and 'soft' waymarks.

Nottingham Castle Improvements – The castle will close in March 2018 and reopen in 2020. We are in contact with Nottingham City Council to ensure that the start of the Robin Hood Way will be given a prominent position.

New Visitor's Centre Sherwood Forest – In the old Sherwood Forest Visitor's Centre there is a tree and a plaque to mark the Robin Hood Way. We are contacting the RSPB to ensure that we will be able to plant a new tree and place a plaque to bring peoples attention to the Robin Hood Way at the new Visitor's Centre which will open in July 2019.

4th Edition Robin Hood Way Book - The 4th Edition Robin Hood Way Book (Revised January 2017) is now available. The cost of the book is £10.95 + postage £2.45 = £13.40. It can be ordered from: www.robinhoodway.com