

ANNUAL REPORT

Covering the period 1st October 2019 – 30th September 2020

AREA OFFICERS' REPORTS

AREA CHAIR (Jim Norris)

There is no getting around the fact that the last year has been dominated by the impact of Covid-19. I complement all of our Local Groups for the way in which they have coped with and adjusted to the constantly changing rules. We have veered from being unable to have led walks at all; to being able to have walks for six people; to being able to have up to 30 people, at times having to assess where we are actually allowed to walk and which municipal boundaries we can cross. I must also give credit to Central Office to having us approved as a sport for the purpose of led walks. Many of us have had to adjust to a life based around the use of Zoom.

We have had a very successful year in terms of filling vacancies on the Area Management Committee. During the year we appointed Neil Stafford as Area Treasurer, Sue Jones as Area Countryside Officer as well as welcoming back Rod and Jenny Fillingham. All are making excellent contributions in rather challenging and unusual circumstances. On the down side, Allan Rogers stood down from his role as Rights of Way Officer and James McGill is standing down in February 2021 from his position as Officer Without Portfolio and as Chair of the Rights of Way Sub Committee. It is hard to imagine an Area without Allan and James and the contributions that both of them have made over the years have been immense. We still have a vacancy for the position of Vice-Chair, an important role not least in terms of succession planning.

Over the Year we have started to get a grasp of some of the immense challenges that are likely to present themselves in the immediate future. It is important to remember what Ramblers are about and our radical history when we come to terms with matters such as:

- the potential implications of the proposed criminalisation of trespass;
- the potential implications of the changes to the Planning Regulations set out in the "Planning for the Future" White Paper
- The pressure from landowners to establish diversion of footpaths in fields with livestock.

- The implications of the Agriculture Bill

I recommend members to read Sue Jones' Countryside Officers Report for the position on these issues. But I will comment specifically on the Criminalisation of Trespass. There are some very dangerous and apparently unintended consequences from such a step which are quite alarming for those who enjoy the countryside. It is contrary to English tradition and I hope that some of the issues of concern and worry do not come to pass.

We need to keep a very close watch on the Agriculture Bill, due to become an Act in November, because in principle it should provide opportunities to countryside users.

It does seem as if Ramblers Central Office are very much on the ball on these issues and we do now have our own Countryside Officer.

Increasingly the biggest issue of the day for Ramblers remains the claiming of unrecorded footpaths. Nottinghamshire Area is playing its full and enthusiastic part in trying to ensure that legal applications to register lost paths are registered by 2026, now only 5 years away. Nationally Ramblers have identified 49000 miles of lost and forgotten paths. If all were to reappear on local maps, the recorded in England would increase by up to a third, although there are good valid, often sound ecological reasons why that won't happen in full. The pandemic has demonstrated once again the significance of walking in our collective imaginations. If I may quote the 17th century writer Thomas Treherne "the glory that is by walking in the bright and glorious day".

The efforts put in on this matter by Steve Parkhouse in particular really are beyond the call of duty

I would also like to record my appreciation of the valiant efforts of the Nottinghamshire County Council Countryside Access Team in trying to keep up with us. If only common sense might prevail and the deadline be extended beyond 2026.

It is usual for the Chair to Report back from the Ramblers General Council. This year for obvious reasons we were deprived of what we assume would have been an enjoyable event in Bristol in April. Instead, I attended a 50-minute-long Zoom Meeting (muted throughout) during which the legal necessities were completed. Not the same at all but ok in the circumstances!

If there really is a vaccine just around the corner then there might actually be a physical General Council in Birmingham in April 2021. If you are interested the opportunity will arise at our AGM in February 2021 to put forward your name to "attend" one way or another.

Finally, I would like to thank Judith Anson for ensuring that we are still more or less in working order – a major achievement given what we have all endured for the last 8 months. I would also like to apologise to Chris Thompson who has been champing at the bit to get his teeth in to his worthy projects during the various lockdowns. Eventually everything will return to something approximating to normal. The contribution of Alex Staniforth has, as usual, been immense.

AREA SECRETARY (Judith Anson)

The year started off well and was rather uneventful which should have been a warning. Central Office organised **walk leader training** courses in Nottinghamshire which were filled quickly and a further course had been scheduled for August this year.

The **Area AGM** went very well and the Vale of Belvoir organised enjoyable walks despite the previous wet weather. The following week the road to the Village Hall was under water (picture on the website) so we were lucky. Mike Penny, Trustee and Ramblers Treasurer gave an interesting talk and a lively question and answer session followed. Nottingham Group volunteered for the 2021 AGM and I am grateful they have agreed to do 2022 instead.

The **resignation** of Vanessa Griffiths as **Ramblers CEO** came as a shock and she has been replaced with an Acting CEO. I presume the delay in a permanent replacement is due to the current situation.

Assemble was introduced from March as a tool for all volunteers. This has benefits as Ramblers information can be found more easily than on the website and the intention is for it to share information amongst all volunteers across the country using a private email system. All volunteers in Areas and Groups should now be registered on Assemble although their details can only be viewed by the Chairs and Secretaries (not by the Membership Secretaries). The map of Group boundaries shown on Assemble continues to be incorrect but Wendy (the Assemble lead at that time) confirmed there was no one with the expertise to change it after Richard Colwill had left. I find this frustrating as I have all the necessary information for it to be changed. Wendy has recently left and it is not known how this will affect Assemble.

Then the world changed. All **walks** were stopped and Groups were innovative in their ways of keeping in contact with their members. These ideas were shared in the Area Council papers. Groups were imaginative and inspirational in how they continued to involve their members even though all usual walking and social activities had stopped. Groups then had the challenge of smaller numbers on walks until Central Office was successful in being included in the Sports Council rules of 30 people being allowed in outside activities.

Notices were put up on paths across the country trying to stop people walking but these were dealt with promptly by the County Council when they were reported.

New **insurance** was introduced but the good points were lost in the chaos of how the notification was managed to Areas and Groups. There are two aspects to the insurance. Liability insurance now covers all Ramblers members and all volunteers. These are mentioned separately as Ramblers say that not all volunteers have to be Ramblers members! Personal accident insurance was previously only available to path maintenance volunteers. It now applies to all volunteers who are recorded on Assemble but only to the role registered so you must have every role you do listed (e.g., walk leader and Group Secretary). These improvements can be a selling point for new members.

All Groups were caught in the rush to ensure their **walk leaders** were all registered on Assemble and therefore insured. Most of the useful information came from RamblersNET and CO staff time was wasted as all Areas and Groups were asking the same questions. As part of walks being restarted a risk assessment has to be completed for each walk and

although there were initial concerns about this it has worked well. When normal walks are allowed again, the insurance rules say a risk assessment is advisable but not compulsory.

The cancellation of **General Council** was a disappointment and Jim has reported on the Zoom session he watched. There is a further discussion session being held on the motions and if there is anything new from this a report will be made at the AGM.

Organising **Area Council** meetings when we have been unable to meet has been a challenge and the April and July meetings were managed by emails. These worked well with comments being shared and votes being held. In October we followed the trend and used Zoom.

Jim has already mentioned the change in **Officers**. At the last AGM Neil joined us officially as Area Treasurer and I was very grateful that Rod came forward to take the Area Membership Secretary role. Jenny Fillingham returned to Council as a member without portfolio. Sue was recruited as the Ex-Officio Countryside Officer and I am pleased she is standing for the role at the AGM. Sadly, Allan Rogers left us as Joint Area Rights of Way Officer after many years' service on Area Council. As Secretary of the Robin Hood Way Flexi-Group, Allan will still be with us at Council meetings.

A **photographic competition** for the 'best view in Nottinghamshire' was organised. Members were very shy and although the number of entrants was less than expected, the quality has been excellent. The winners will be announced in November and we hope to include the location of the winning photo(s) in a walk to be featured on the website.

On a personal note, I have missed you all. I look forward to Area Council meetings, seeing friends, keeping up with their news and meeting new people when they join. Although I am in touch with many of you by email and have seen some of you on screen, this cannot replace the personal contact. It will be particularly disappointing not to meet you at the AGM. I hope we can see each other soon.

AREA RIGHTS OF WAY SECRETARY (Steve Parkhouse)

An exceptionally busy year

Applications made to add Rights of Way to the Definitive Map

30 applications made on behalf of Notts Ramblers, which included some very important routes e.g.

- West Drayton Avenue at Bothamsall,
- Rufford ford to Kneesall
- Whitewater Lane Perlethorpe to Cuckney across the Thoresby Estate.

Highlight of the year

Getting Trent Hills FP claim, between Kneeton & Flintham, finally referred to the Planning Inspectorate after making a complaint to the Ombudsman – taken me almost 6 years to get this far.

Making progress on following issues

Hickling BW12 missing part through the farmyard – NCC in the process of diverting away from farmyard.

Warsop FP12 – NCC is process of diverting around the permanently flooded section.
Widmerpool FP – ‘Lost Way’ in process of being diverted to Stanton to avoid farmyard, rail line and house.

Lost Ways Research (Don't Lose Your Way)

Last able to go to Archives in early March 2020 because of Covid 19, but had enough records in hand to identify a further 54 possible claims. This was greatly helped by the British Horse Society providing access to their subscription to Tithe Maps online. Now working through these writing, them up. Many though still need further information once archival research becomes safer.

Rights of Way Area Committee

Meetings now monthly on Zoom, rather than quarterly. 12 expressions of interest following the recent Notts Walker appeal for new volunteers.

AREA COUNTRYSIDE OFFICER (Sue Jones)

I joined the Notts Area Ramblers team at the beginning of August and, with being in the middle of a pandemic, it has been a mainly virtual induction. I want to thank the whole team for a very warm welcome and their continued strong support as I learn the ropes. My time has been spent gathering up to date information on relevant issues, many of which have been ongoing for a while but are now progressing at pace with changes in the political landscape.

My role profile states “Your work will involve keeping a watching brief on planning and other environmental issues which affect the walking environment in your Area”. There are a number of issues from forthcoming legislation that may present threats (and possibly opportunities) for the Ramblers. These include the changes in building regulations announced by Boris Johnson at the end of June, the intention to criminalise trespass, and the passage of the Agriculture Bill through Parliament. More locally, there are the plans for HS2 route 2b, and the recent examination of the Nottinghamshire Minerals Local Plan published near the end of 2019.

National issues:

Planning for the Future White Paper

The consultation for this closed at the end of October, and the Ramblers and other charities such as the Open Spaces Society submitted very strong responses voicing numerous concerns. While it is recognised that the planning process is in need of an update, this should not be at the expense of public scrutiny of individual applications, protection of our green spaces and RoW, and access to nature or the enjoyment of the countryside. Whether any of these views will result in sensible legislation is yet to be determined. I will keep a watching brief.

Criminalising Trespass

In November 2019, the Home Office announced a consultation about strengthening police powers to deal with unauthorised encampments – a move to make intentional trespass a criminal rather than just a civil offense.

The consultation closed in March but there has been no outcome published yet. The concern is that this could threaten the right to roam with implications for those who may inadvertently stray from a public right of way. The Ramblers responded to the consultation arguing that this major change to the law would have a significant impact on the ability and confidence of the public to access the countryside, potentially be a threat to wild camping and the right to protest, and that a compelling case for changing trespass rules has not been made. I will be keeping an eye out for the Home Office response.

Agriculture Bill

The Agriculture Bill provides the legislative framework for agricultural support schemes to replace the CAP post-Brexit. It provides a range of powers to implement new approaches to farm payments and land management, and in England farmers will be paid to produce 'public goods' such as environmental or animal welfare improvements and improving countryside access. The Bill is stuck in a ping-pong at the moment as the House of Lords (HoL) returned the Agriculture Bill with amendments to protect farming standards, and these have been defeated twice in the Commons and will now return to HoL for further scrutiny.

Diversion of RoW where livestock are grazing

The NFU and CLA are lobbying for legislative change so that farmers are able to quickly and temporarily divert public RoW where livestock are grazing to protect the public from harm. The original proposal included every animal found on a farm including pheasants! Objections resulted in an amendment to include only potentially aggressive animals. There is concern that the likely vehicle for any change to the law is by way of amendment to the Agriculture Bill, so it will be interesting to see if this amendment is introduced at some stage in the ping pong between the Lords and the Commons.

Local issues:

HS2 Phase 2b Eastern leg

I have included this under local issues as while the rest of the HS2 project is moving forward, it was announced recently that the eastern leg of phase 2b through Notts to Leeds was being paused while the western leg to Manchester was to continue. Local councillors are describing this as a catastrophe, and Lord Adonis thinks the extension of HS2 to Leeds "will probably not now go ahead". However, his comment has been disputed and an Integrated Rail Plan to be published by the end of the year will outline the delivery of reliable services across the North and Midlands. Another watching brief to see if this includes the plans for HS2 through our county or not.

Nottinghamshire Minerals Local Plan

Following the publication of the Local Plan and a formal consultation, there was an independent examination by a government inspector via a public hearing at the end of October. While the plan incorporates extensions to some of the existing quarries in the Idle Valley and Newark & Sherwood, the main concern is the plan for a new quarry on a greenfield site near Barton in Fabis. The site is considered unsuitable by many stakeholders and environmental charities and will impact on RoW, wildlife sites and ancient woods. Following the hearing sessions, the inspector will compile a report likely to include only minor changes to the strategy. Having listened to the contentious sessions, I think it unlikely he will request withdrawal of the plan or replacement of the Barton in Fabis site, but we should know more in the New Year.

AREA MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY (Rod Fillingham) October 2019 to September 2020

Membership figures are now supplied from the Ramblers' Insight Membership site.

On the Insight Membership site our retention rate is 92.0% against the national rate of 89.7%

GROUP/AREA	CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP	OCTOBER 2019	SEPTEMBER 2020
Area Total Members	-19	2234	2215
Newark	7	117	124
Nottingham	-11	320	309
Retford	3	86	89
Ravenshead & Hucknall	-7	109	102
Worksop	3	63	66
Rushcliffe	4	318	322
Broxtowe	-10	187	177
Gedling	-1	191	190
Mansfield & Sherwood	4	117	121
Southwell	-2	79	77
Collingham	-4	62	58
Vale of Belvoir	1	100	101
Notts & Derbys	-4	188	184
One Step Walkers	7	227	234
Robin Hood Way	0	3	3
Not in Group	-9	67	58

Area Members Numbers are *minus* 19 Members down on the Financial year

National total 102,151 OCTOBER 2019, 98,717 SEPTEMBER 2020, -3434

The figures speak for themselves, but the overall trend for the National membership is still looking bleak with loss of national Ramblers' membership over the 2019/20 Financial year.

Percentage changes from the October 2019 till September 2020

Year 2019-2020	Monthly Membership	Retained Membership %	Lost Membership %
October	2,234	100.00%	0.00%
November	2,230	99.82%	-0.18%
December	2,234	100.00%	0.00%
January	2,239	100.22%	0.22%
February	2,237	100.13%	0.13%
March	2,227	99.69%	-0.31%
April	2,193	98.16%	-1.84%
May	2,151	96.28%	-3.72%
June	2,132	95.43%	-4.57%
July	2,165	96.91%	-3.09%
August	2,189	97.99%	-2.01%
September	2,215	99.15%	-0.85%
Total	-19	99.15%	-0.85%

I think considering taking everything into account we have managed to contain our Membership, during these very trying times and all Groups should be immensely proud of their achievement.

AREA PUBLICITY OFFICER (Alex Staniforth)

What a strange - and unnerving - past 12 months have been. If there is an analogy to be made then I know nothing better than the jargon favoured by football pundits: 'it's been 'a game of two halves.' In the last three months of 2019 we were looking forward to the new year and contemplating what events and other activities we could carry out to promote the Ramblers with an eye on increasing our membership and in January Newark Group took our publicity/exhibition displays and materials to an event being held at South Muskham Village Hall which, by all accounts, was quite successful and attracted a good deal of interest,

Early February the Area AGM took place at Bottesford, hosted by Vale of Belvoir Group, whose excellent organisation came in for much praise; the refreshments were excellent. Fortunately, the day was fine, though a little overcast but a relief from the recent inclement weather. However, we had been pre-warned by our Host Group that conditions underfoot for those participating in the morning walks could be trying in places and parts of the routes had been re-jigged to avoid the problem spots. The number of members attending the AGM was 66: slightly down on last year's figure of 70 plus, but nonetheless very creditable when compared with some recent years. The proceedings were lively and overall, very successful. At this time, we didn't have an inkling of what was to follow. Then of course in March everything was turned upside down by the rapid spread of the pandemic, which is still prevalent at the time of compiling this report (November 2020).

Any of our early planning of events were blown off course and that included the cancellation Newark Group's one day event scheduled for the 26th March. Also, as in 2019, we expected to repeat the two events held in July of that year, namely the Gedling Gala and the Beeston Carnival, both of which were quite promising but they succumbed also: likewise exhibiting at the prestigious Southwell Ploughing Match and Show (SPM&S) scheduled for September. While we may not be active in 'the field,' nonetheless, some 'behind the scenes work' has continued.

First up is a dedicated, long-desired pull-up display unit to highlight the work and the purpose of the Ramblers in our county. This has reached a final draft stage Thanks to Dave Hobson of Vale of Belvoir who produced a draft layout and the photographs and to Rod Fillingham for all the hard work and time he has put in designing this additional asset to our display resources. When completed and accepted by Area it will complement the two existing Ramblers CO produced pull-up display units and the recent Robin Hood Way pull-up display units. So, we may well be spoilt for choice when we can return to exhibiting both indoors and outdoors in the future.

Second, and very much complementing the item above, a pilot batch of three separate leaflets (single sheet hand-outs) each promoting different theme but under a common heading of 'Nottinghamshire Ramblers: Find a Friendly Local Walking Group' was produced. These were well received when we displayed at the SPM&S in September 2019. Again, Rod can take a bow as he did the preparatory work this initial batch, and also One Step Walkers Group who pioneered the idea of producing a Group/theme specific leaflet/handout as means of promoting not only themselves but the Ramblers also. It was planned to produce a slightly modified set of leaflets but this has been put on hold till we are back to some kind of normalcy.

Whilst our normal activities have been curtailed, or at least pared down, it's pleasing to note the increased use of the Area website during this severely restricted period. There has been, and still continues, a stream of useful and interesting information from Groups and members. With the above in mind there has been a number of requests for posting self-guided walks on the Area website for both members and Groups who may be tempted to find out more of what our county has on offer. Compared with other Ramblers Areas we are, as the current jargon goes 'behind the curve' and this needs to alter. Thus, in the intervening period, I undertook some research into those Ramblers Groups who have for some years now had a system in place promoting not only their walks but encouraging the wider public to participate and, hopefully, get some of them to join the Ramblers. This new avenue for Nottinghamshire Area seems to have been taken up with some gusto.

Before closing, it's worth mentioning a couple of items that brought to the attention of the general public the presence of the Ramblers and what it was doing during this difficult period. The first was a big splash about coastal walks (no pun intended) which appeared in the  weekend newspaper in July. There were three pages covering these walks and all were created and credited to the Ramblers. Slightly beyond the period this report covers, and again in the same newspaper was a full-page article announcing the 'walking charity The Ramblers had found 79,000km of public paths that have dropped off the maps of England and Wales – nearly five times as many as they thought existed.' It went on to describe the work the Ramblers had done, and are still carrying out, on this massive project. A similar story appeared in both The Times and The Daily Telegraph on the same day so I have been informed; in short, some really good publicity for us.

I'll conclude this report in the hope that the next Annual Report may welcome back more normal times and able us all to return to those 'sunny uplands.'

AREA TOURISM AND HERITAGE PATHS OFFICER (Chris Thompson)

I became the Tourism & Heritage Path Officer with an aim to make, enhance and promote Nottinghamshire as a proud walking county. Initially there were two aims: to set up a long-distance trail promoting the Pilgrim400 event planned for September 2020 and, second to hopefully work with the Ramblers Notts Area Groups and members to publish a new book of Rambling Heritage walks over the whole county.

Over the last year I have continued to work on the development of a Mayflower Pilgrim400 Trail in time for the 400-year events needed to be the priority. A key element of this route is in Nottinghamshire, a County which played a key role of the separatist movement.

A Pilgrim Working Party has been putting this trail together in common with other similar projects has found 2020 to be a difficult year because of Covid-19. The Nottinghamshire Area of the Ramblers will be interested to note that, sadly, the Pilgrim 400 events planned for September 2020 had to be cancelled due to the Covid19 lockdown. However, currently there are plans in place to see the Pilgrim 400 events now to take place in September 2021. This has allowed the opportunity to be able to extend the time to complete the Pilgrim Trail guidebook.

During the course of the year the Nottinghamshire Area of the Ramblers made a decision that a group sets itself up to manage the trail and to organise the funding and management. This is exactly how the Robin Hood Way is also organised and frees up completely any financial responsibilities and direct involvement by the Ramblers Notts Area. I hope

however that the Ramblers Notts Area will in time make some contribution to be associated with Pilgrim Trail.

In addition, because of current difficulties it has been decided by the Pilgrim working party to now have a Long-Distance trail part of which will be in Nottinghamshire.

The Nottinghamshire Area of the Ramblers may be interested to note that the Pilgrim Working committee is continuing with an aim to see a book describing the Way published in summer 2021.

As for the project to produce a new Nottinghamshire Heritage walk book, due once again to COVID-19 this project has been unable to make a start during 2020. As things stand at the end of the Reporting Year, the intention is to present a business plan to the Ramblers Notts Area Committee also asking if Ramblers groups and members will be able to assist in the project. Speaking to the Area Chair, Mr Jim Norris he has quite rightly advised that until a vaccine is available it will not be possible to involve groups and members in this project. However, as requested a business plan is currently being put together with the intention of seeking grant and, if possible, commercial funding to provide another project once again without any financial commitment to Ramblers Notts Area. At this time, it is difficult to obtain lottery funding due once again to Covid-19, so other funding streams are being perused.

Meanwhile following the increased interest by the public to walking, a decision has been made by the Area Committee for members to produce self-guided walk leaflets to put on the Ramblers Notts Area website. It is hoped to see self-guided walk leaflets put on the website in early 2021. I must thank Alex Staniforth and Neil Stafford for producing reports and formalising a policy in how we will undertake this work.

In addition, as Tourist & Heritage Path Officer I have carried out other duties including maintaining links with environmental partners including support from Nottinghamshire County Council Countryside Access Team assisting in improving paths either blocked off or unsuitable to walk with the aim to see provided new routes. I am walking extensively over the whole of the county looking out for major rights of way problems and looking at ways to produce routes currently not available so that when we are able to work on the new heritage walk book and the Walk for All leaflets, we can introduce new interesting routes for inclusion that are all fully available.

I must also thank members of the Ramblers Notts Area Rights of Way Committee for all their hard efforts in also working hard to resolve the numerous rights of way problems. In addition, to also thank the Nottinghamshire County Council Rights of Way who because of the Covid-19 situation have been extremely overstretched but have still assisted the Ramblers in resolving several rights of way issues. In addition to Steve Parkhouse and Allan Rogers for all the hard work they have done to claim new rights of way and manage the many changes that take place every year. A big thank you.

Finally, to James McGill who has been our Rights of Way Chair. As for Allan and James they have decided to stand down as members of the Rights of Way committee. We cannot thank you both enough for all the hard work you have carried out in your time on the committee. As you can also see the Tourist & Heritage Path Officer roll links very closely to the excellent work carried out by the Rights of Way committee.

I hope that the new year 2020/2021 will give us the opportunity to move forward to complete the Pilgrim Trail route, make a start when permission is granted by Ramblers Notts Area, to a book of Heritage Walks, to also see many walks for all self-guided walk leaflets added to the Ramblers Notts Area Website, and to see improvements to the Notts Path network so that we will be able to see a vast improvement to Nottinghamshire as a walking county.

To you all despite the problems with Covid-19 may I wish you a merry Christmas and hopefully a better new year. Keep Safe.

AREA COMMUNICATIONS SUB-GROUP (Judith Anson, Chair)

I would like to thank all members of the Group for making a valuable contribution to our wide remit. The responsibilities of the Group are website & social media, the Notts Walker Newsletter, communications generally, recruitment, raising the profile of Ramblers through publicity and GDPR.

Notts Area Website www.nottsarearamblers.org.uk

Chris Taylor continues to do the 'mechanics' of keeping the website updated and also manages Stackmail – the Area generic email system. I try and change the front page as often as possible and would welcome articles and photos from Groups. The pressure from my other Area roles means I do not always give the website the attention it needs.

It was hoped to include articles on the 10 highest points in Nottinghamshire but pressure on Officer time has delayed this into 2020/21 when Silverhill will be the first. As Alex has mentioned in his report, walking routes will be added to the website.

The photographic competition of "the best view in Nottinghamshire" was featured (see my Secretary's Report). I hope we will be able to make 'virtual' presentations to the winner(s) at the AGM, technology permitting.

Notts Walker

Steve Parkhouse is Newsletter Editor and should be congratulated by everyone on the excellent opening rates for the Notts Walker which during the year have averaged just over 61%. Steve has also set up a second mailing list for non-members who are interested in the work of Ramblers and for Ramblers members who are not willing to give their email to Central Office. The Notts Walker advert for a Countryside Officer was successful and we are currently recruiting a ROW Information Officer and new District Coordinators.

The number of email addresses continues to increase slowly with 1201 for normal contact and 1648 for the AGM (out of a total of 2298). Area Council has agreed funding to send letters to 418 single/joint members to ask them to provide their email.

The Notts Walker has covered important rights of way issues in the County, particularly lost way claims and has been successful in getting members to come forward to say they have walked paths.

What3Words has also been featured to encourage members to install this on their 'phones if they need the emergency services in the countryside. (Thanks to Neil Stafford for this.)

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

Facebook Page

I would like to thank Keith Wallace for managing this for several years and to welcome Sue Jones who took over in August. This is Sue's report.

"I took over the page at the beginning of August 2020 from Keith Wallace who did an excellent job setting it up and maintaining it up to then. We now have 164 people following the page with an increase of 20 since August.

For Ramblers groups in Notts with an active Facebook page that is publicly available, I am sharing posts about individual group walks and these are proving to be popular. I am not sharing posts from the two Notts Area groups who host private FB groups of which I'm a member.

I changed the 'about' section to include our focus on RoW work and am starting to post on the successes of our RoW volunteers and those of the Countryside access team at NCC.

We have not made special attempts to grow the numbers as yet - I am thinking of ideas on how to enhance the page and increase readership, to be discussed with the Communications Group."

You do not have to be a member of Facebook to view the page.

www.facebook.com/nottsarearamblers

Publicity

Alex has produced his own report as Area Publicity Officer.

Unfortunately, our new Events Tent has remained unused this year. A second print of the publicity leaflets was planned but again, this has not been actioned. Council also agreed to purchase a pull up banner to use at events. Thanks to Dave Hobson of Vale of Belvoir who produced a draft layout and the photographs. Rod Fillingham has converted this into a first draft of the banner but I have not taken it further until it can be used. These are all available for Groups to borrow and I hope we will be able to hold events in 2021.

Area Walks Day

It was intended to hold an Area Walks Day in 2021. Members will remember these used to happen each year with a different Group acting as host. This was yet another casualty as advance planning is required and it seems this may have to be delayed until 2022.

AREA TREASURERS' ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20 (Neil Stafford)

The annual accounts are presented below, on a Receipts and Payment basis using the Ramblers standard format.

Main					
Receipts	Current yr	Prior yr	Payments	Current yr	Prior yr
From CO (funding)	3,053.96	3,001.84	To CO	-	
From CO (other)	-		To Area	-	
From Area (funding)	-		To Group (funding)	3,053.95	2,438.85
From Area (other)	-		To Group (other)	-	310.00
From Group	254.39		To S/W Council	-	
From S/W Council	-		Walks programmes	-	
T/fer from 'Self-funded'	-		Walks related	-	
Donations	-		Walks leader training	-	69.22
Legacies	-		Newsletters/publicity	268.68	311.36
Grants	-		Publication/goods costs	-	
Fundraising	-		Campaigns/casework	1,050.32	1,165.96
Deposit interest	-		Practical work	-	192.00
Investment income	-		Fundraising costs	-	
Publication/goods sales	-		Meetings (inc. AGM)	966.48	874.86
Advert sales	-		Admin	31.74	126.75
Other	455.85		Other	-	818.35
Total receipts	3,764.20	3,001.84	Total payments	5,371.17	6,307.35
Surplus/(deficit)	-1,606.97	-3,305.51			

Self-funded					
Receipts	Current yr	Prior yr	Payments	Current yr	Prior yr
Day walks	-		Day walks	-	
Holidays	-		Holidays	-	
Socials	-		Socials	-	
Deposit interest	-		T/fer to 'Main'	-	
Other	-		Other	-	
Total receipts	-	-	Total payments	-	-
Surplus/(deficit)	-	-			

Summary	Main	Self-funded	Total	Prior yr
Total receipts	3,764.20	-	3,764.20	3,001.84
Total payments	5,371.17	-	5,371.17	6,307.35
Surplus/(deficit)	-1,606.97	-	-1,606.97	-3,305.51

At the end of the financial year the Area bank balance stood at £2,392.48.

In accordance with Ramblers financial directives, the accounts have been subject to Independent Examination, the signed certificate is shown on page 14.

Summary of financial year for Independent Examiner

Summary
Total receipts
Total payments
Closing cash balance
Net assets/liabilities (funds)

Main	Self-funded	Total
3,764.20	-	3,764.20
5,371.17	-	5,371.17
2,392.48	-	2,392.48
2,392.48	-	2,392.48

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and Group independent examination guidelines, I consider the " NE-Nottinghamshire "accounts to give a fair representation of the Area's/Group's financial activities for the year to 30 September 2020.

Signed:

A. Bolton

Date:

29 October 2020

The accounts show two broad functions:

- The costs of running Area
- The distribution of funds to Groups

Costs of Running Area

Because of the level of reserves held at the start of the financial year, no request for Area funding was made to Central Office. The cost of running Area (excluding Group payments) was £2,317.22.

Points to note:

- *Campaigns/Casework* (£1,050.32) is the vitally important work of the Footpaths Officers. Although the amount spent is comparable with the previous year, it is some 15% less than planned, due to COVID-19.
- *Meetings* – although the meeting of General Council scheduled for Bristol in April was cancelled due to COVID-19, this was not before £455.85 in visitors' fees and rail tickets had been paid out. These were subsequently reimbursed and appear as Receipts – Other.
- *Newsletters/Publicity* (£268.28) - £200 of this expenditure is the advert in the Notts Guided Walks programme. The remaining expenditure was much reduced due to the cancellation of promotional events.
- *Practical Work* in the previous financial year was a one-off cost of waymark disks for the Robin Hood Way Association
- *Other* payments in the previous financial year were one-off costs of purchasing a gazebo for use at events, and the hosting of a visit by the Ramblers CEO.

Distributing Funds to Groups

Receipts from Group (£254.39) relate to the planned refund of 82% of funding by Area to one Group who had a funding problem in the previous financial year, as detailed in the 2019 Report

Budget for Financial Year 2020-21

Despite the impact of COVID-19 it was clear that Area funds had been reduced to the point that a Budget for Area funding would be necessary for the forthcoming financial year. I am delighted to report that the Budget for 2020-21 has been approved by Central Office.

Membership Recruitment Initiatives

As part of the budget planning, Area Council approved a proposal to include £425 for membership recruitment initiatives in the 2020-21 budget. This was in response to comments and ideas from Groups for membership recruitment.

To-date, one initiative has been submitted to Area for consideration. Other Groups are welcome to submit proposals for funding of membership recruitment ideas.

Acknowledgements

A big thank-you to all the Group Treasurers for their timely responses to the budget and annual return timetables. Whilst the pandemic has been a challenge for everyone, please spare a thought for our Group Treasurers, many of whom have had the challenge of making refunds to their members for cancelled social activities and holidays.

And finally, in taking on the role of Area Treasurer in November 2019, I would like to thank my predecessor, Jeremy Pratt, for all his support and advice.



Storm clouds gather over the village of Clayworth, North Nottinghamshire.
Photograph taken from the Cuckoo Way beside the Chesterfield Canal

GROUP ANNUAL REPORTS

Broxtowe Group (Keith Jacobs)

Membership of Broxtowe group has increased slightly over the last year, despite the sad loss of several long-standing members. To encourage further recruitment and to re-assure existing members about the future, Broxtowe have circulated a newsletter which includes agenda items for our Zoom AGM to enable some input from all of the membership who will be able to add items or comment on the existing ones. These newsletters have been circulated on-line, but also in hard copy to members who have not yet registered themselves online.

Group finances are in a healthy state and we continue to follow the principle of 'just enough' with funds in hand. Of course, outgoings have been less this year.

Our web presence continues to grow and has proved essential in spreading the ever-changing guidelines on walking and other activities. In common with the rest of the movement we have followed guidelines on numbers and protocols and we have striven to provide a wider range of local and shorter walks and to provide walks on other than our usual days. Individual walk leaders have chosen to limit numbers to 12 or 15, rather than the permitted 30 and many of our walks have been fully 'booked', which indicates a real appetite for more rambling. Walk leaders have found Ramblers guidelines on registration and risk assessment to be perfectly workable; registers kept for 21 days, risk assessments for a year. Unsurprisingly, we regret the shortage of walk leaders at the moment, with those volunteering having to lead more and we certainly continue to encourage new leaders to take up the challenge.

In general, the feeling is that Ramblers Central have done a good job in keeping us informed about how the various changes in Government regulations affect us. The 'letter' from Head Office, explaining why Ramblers were permitted 30 walkers was used on more than one occasion with curious fellow walkers.

For the future, we look forward to providing a full programme of varied walks on different days and we will take up the abandoned programme of residential visits for the coming year. This may include an overseas visit; which Broxtowe have not attempted over recent years.

To conclude, we say farewell to Heather Fortnum, who resigns the Chair after 4 busy years as she moves house to East Yorkshire. Our thanks and best wishes go with her.

Broxtowe will hold its 'Zoom' AGM on Monday 23rd November.

Collingham Group (Christopher Adams)

This Annual Report is very much a case of what we have managed to do despite the circumstances of Covid-19.

Our AGM last year was at the Community pub in Collingham and was well attended with the same committee being re-elected for another year. There was broad agreement that our pattern of Sunday walks (twice a month) and Wednesday walks (once a month) should

continue. The Chair made his usual plea for more walk leaders to come forward but this has not borne much fruit so far.

In the run-up to Xmas, we had our usual mulled wine and mince pie walks which are always popular and then in early January we held our New Year's lunch at the pub in Morton with an attendance of nearly 30.

Our program of walks continued until the lockdown although very wet conditions did lead to cancellations in February.

Sadly, in March our former treasurer and longstanding member David Woodcock died and then in August another member Martin Ball also died and we have passed on our condolences to their families.

Corona meant that we could not hold our normal garden lunch in August but this is very much on the agenda for 2021.

We finally felt able to tentatively restart activities on 19th August and we are now back to 3 walks a month, keeping them short and local as advised. We are being careful about social distancing and keeping track and trace records.

Our committee has met twice recently and we are currently working out how to run our AGM in November when we have many members including the Chair who struggle with IT. Going forward, we are, as usual, short of leaders but our finances are healthy and membership remains steady at just below 60.

Gedling Group (Martin Smalley)

I was elected Chairman exactly a year ago after only a year on the committee, when the group celebrated its 30th birthday. I've been walking with Gedling Ramblers most Thursdays and occasional Sundays, with my wife Marion since becoming semi-retired six years ago and have completely retired now.

We are a friendly group and welcomed several new members on Thursdays until our decent selection of walks was ambushed by the COVID-19 lockdown. Our new programme began on 1st March but after 3 weeks it was abandoned and we had to be content with walking locally in our own households.

We resumed our weekly Thursday morning walks by one I led on 30 July, but had to rely on notifying members by listing the walks on our website. I must pay tribute to our Group Secretary, Jonathan Ankers who has kept this up to date and to the other members of the committee who have agreed to meet bi-monthly by Zoom.

Volunteers came forward to lead for 4 months until a second COVID-19 lockdown meant further cancellations. The rule against car sharing meant that leaders decided maximum numbers based on car parking space, so we only had more than 20 on two walks, but we hope to resume our walks on 10th December.

Sunday walks of various lengths have been organized with an average of 6 members but rarely beyond the county line and not every week up to the latest lockdown. We decided we could not produce a 6-month printed booklet from September and continue to rely on the website to keep members informed. It is regrettable that some of our oldest members

cannot access this, but those who have contacted me or other committee members have been told when and where we have arranged walks, so we can do no more.

Membership numbers have stayed constant, although a few members have passed away and some long-standing members' health prevented them joining us. Any 'healthy walks initiatives' ought to lead to more enquiries to join us.

Mansfield & Sherwood Group (Sue Rick & Brian Tuffnell)

Our Group AGM was held on the 14th November 2019 at the Ravensdale Hotel, Sherwood Hall Road, Mansfield and attended by 16 members. There were a few changes to personnel serving on the Group Committee. The Chairperson, Sue Rick pointed out Committee posts needed filling for the group to continue, stating support and training would be provided. She thanked all the volunteers who have helped to run the Group the past year and all of the participants who have made our walks so pleasurable. We currently have 28 volunteers many of them with dual roles including 26 registered as walk leaders.

The Group had a great start to the new year gaining quite a few new members and it was pleasing to have some younger people attending the walks. The age range of our walkers ranges from five to 90 plus; but even the floods and mud didn't deter them. It was quite ironic that after a winter of very rainy weather we got Lockdown just as the weather started improving, although we did manage to get a lovely weekend away at Hartington Youth Hostel in March.

We re-started Group walks in July after a three-month lockdown and it was good to meet up with people again although most of us were hardly recognisable with their wild unkempt hairstyles. One of the biggest difficulties has been finding car parks big enough to start our walks as we couldn't car share, so most of our walks have been fairly local. Many of our members were still shielding but we have had good turn outs for the walks. We have started doing the Robin Hood Way long distance trail which should keep us busy over the winter as we have to do it with circular walks. We received several messages from people who had joined our walks to compliment us on how welcoming we are as a group, and it was very heartening to hear two of our members say they are so glad they joined the group as it enriched their lives. We were concerned we would lose members due to not being able to go on walks; on the contrary – we have been recruiting new ones!

Our Facebook page has attracted a fair amount of interest. We now have over 100 followers with photographs taken on our walks being well liked and generating a lot of views and feedback. The committee completed their first Zoom Meeting in September which went quite well.

Brian Tuffnell, our Walks Coordinator designed and produced an excellent walks programme for the first half of 2020 and our ever-resourceful Social Secretary, Julie Lawson drew up a whole year's events calendar, but inevitably the advent of Covid-19 curtailed much of what promised to be a full and exciting year.

And finally. At our Group AGM in October 2020, we will be saying goodbye to Alex Staniforth, who has been our Group Secretary for the last 11 years and nine years previous to that as Group Chairperson. The Group would like to thank Alex for all his hard work over those years. Alex was also the founder member of the Group which next year (2021) will be its 20th Anniversary. We will be having some special events to celebrate this milestone.

Newark Group Report (Carol Wilkinson)

What a strange year! We started off with such wet weather that we had to cancel some of our walks and change others for a drier route. And then, we encountered something none of us could have predicted, COVID19 and a complete lockdown.

Once we were permitted to recommence group walks, we put together a programme with slightly shorter walks than normal limited at first to 6 people and then to 10. The committee felt that 10 people, many of whom would be arriving at the starting point in cars, would be much easier to deal with. Limiting the number of walkers gave us the opportunity to put on more than one walk each Wednesday and one walk each Sunday. Over the next few months, we had a least two walks on offer and sometimes three. We started a booking system so that we would know exactly who would be attending. When we moved temporarily into COVID Tier 3 we quickly amended our programme to take out all of the walks that ventured into other Tier groups. This worked really well until this week when we started another lockdown and we had to cancel our scheduled walks until at least 2nd December.

Our AGM was due to be held on 4 November but this has been re-arranged as a Zoom AGM on 10 November. All of the paperwork has been sent out with plenty of time allowed for members to make comments or to nominate new committee members. The majority of the current committee is willing to stand again.

During the year we have had a surprising number of new members many of whom are still working and can only walk at weekends. Currently we have 127 members. To facilitate their needs, we are very keen to put on as many weekend walks as we can. We have also found that we have attracted members from other Ramblers groups in the local area. Some of our members, however, are not keen yet to walk with the group and have been walking locally with friends. This has meant that we have not seen all of our regular walkers but we do keep in touch with a weekly email and a post on Facebook.

Our website goes from strength to strength thanks to Roger, our very capable webmaster. We have introduced on-line puzzles, photos, walk routes and walk reports all of which keep our members up to date and mentally stimulated.

The social events that we had planned for 2020 have been put on hold but we are looking forward to being able to hold some events in 2021. We have a residential visit to Malham booked for the end of March. Fingers crossed; we shall be able to go.

The committee is really pleased with the way the group is operating even in these most difficult times and our thanks go to everyone who helps, committee, walk leaders, etc.

Nottingham Group (Barrie Dale)

This has been an unprecedented year that has involved, after a complete suspension of our programme, a gradual re-introduction of a limited and provisional programme which we have had to adopt. Normal face to face meetings has had to be abandoned and much of the work has involved liaison by email and telephone with the Committee, the Area and Ramblers Headquarters. Below, is a summary of this year's activities.

As Chair, I have been involved/attended the following meetings, COVID-19 permitting:

1. 5th December 2019 Nottingham Group Quarterly Meeting
2. 21st January 2020 Area Council Meeting at Bilsthorpe Miners Welfare & Institute
This enabled me to meet the membership of the area. (Is Bilsthorpe always shrouded in dense fog in the depths of winter?)
3. 5th March 2020 Nottingham Group Quarterly Meeting
4. 3rd June 2020 Covid-19 prevented our quarterly meeting from taking place.
5. 17th July 2020 Sub-Committee meeting

Covid-19 restrictions prevented meetings above six persons from taking place, but Trevor and Jo kindly offered to host a meeting in their garden and, after a couple of postponements, we had a glorious day to make decisions on some pressing issues that arose which needed resolution. (see below.)

The full Committee was involved in choosing the 6 members to attend and in this way, we had representatives from the walk organisers for Wednesday, Sunday and Coach walks. (I would like to thank the rest of the Committee who offered to provide gardens and to attend, showing what an involved and active committee, we have.)

Over the course of the last year, a number of issues have arisen and I will have to be selective in which ones I include or this report will be of excessive length. However, I am conscious that the wider membership may not be aware of the many issues that the Committee discusses on a regular basis and an annual report is probably the main way to keep you informed. I will exclude the regular, inevitable issues that occur and focus on a few substantial issues that have occupied much of our time.

In addition to the extra Sub-Committee we held on 17th July 2020, Randy and I have had numerous communications online with Committee Members to both keep them informed and seek their advice and reach a consensus on pressing issues.

Key issues discussed

a) Walk Leader Insurance The Ramblers had set up a website with very little notice under the heading of Assemble where they expect us to list all the walk leaders, we use to make sure they are all covered for both personal and public liability in the event of accidents and other potential incidents. To my shock I found that very few names were on their list as explicitly walk leaders rather than their other roles within our group. Some of the names that were included were not currently active as walk leaders. This was serious! (The Area Secretary, Judith Anson, was also dismayed at the short notice, stating that other groups were in the same position, i.e., not covered for insurance purposes.) Fortunately, all walks had been discontinued when I found this out (late March) and after our Sub-Committee Meeting on 17th June, we got into our stride and we flooded The Ramblers with the names of walk leaders (plus potential ones). I must thank Trevor and Sue in particular, who got to grips with contacting members for their permission and getting them enrolled on My Team on Assemble.

b) Restarting walks in the COVID-19 era

The complex requirements of restarting walks according to changing Government guidelines and The Ramblers' protocol was not easy, but Trevor, Jo, John, Paul and Hilda were not daunted. An impromptu rearrangement of the programme to meet the maximum numbers permitted on each walk and which walks were feasible took place. (Two coach walks did take place, but take-up and cost resulted in the termination of coach walks until the new year.) David Johnson did some sterling work to keep the website up-to-date with the continued uncertainty, guidelines and which walks were currently being proposed and numbers permitted.

c) Organising the AGM 1st November 2020

After much discussion, Randy and I decided that a Zoom meeting was the best option. This would obviously exclude those who cannot use Zoom but I was pleased to see that in consultation with the Committee, most of them said they be willing to use it. How the wider membership will find this method is difficult to estimate, but it is our only feasible option. Organising a Zoom meeting for the AGM is a complex process and I must thank Randy for his guidance and expertise, given that I had never tried to use Zoom until 19th October 2020. I hope we can arrange collectively for this forthcoming meeting to go smoothly, but we all need to co-operate to ensure this happens. It will be a novel experience for some of us. Randy and I will try to facilitate as many contributors as possible.

d) Christmas Meal (Coach)

It was suggested by John and Jean Berry that the Christmas meal be postponed until early in the new year, given the prevalence of Covid-19. This made sense. This was agreed by the Sub-Committee.

Hope you are all keeping well and that we can return to some form of normality in the not too-distant future. Best wishes Barrie Dale (Chair)

Notts & Derby Group (Maggie Langley)

The AGM in October 2019 was where Rachael Drewery stepped down from Chair after two successful years, having managed a difficult situation with a disruptive influence in the group.

We welcomed four new committee members as secretary, IT lead, general member and membership lead and then I stepped up from secretary to chair. We had a full diary with weekly walks, weekends away, conservation and socials booked up. Weekends were in Oxford, Dolgellau over the New Year with a week in the Scottish Trossachs over Easter planned ... we all know what happened then!

We closed our walks from the 21st March and held our subsequent Committee meetings on Zoom. We opened up walks cautiously using Eventbrite to manage numbers and satisfy Track and Trace in mid-July. After a few minor adjustments we have operated with this system quite well since then, allowing the walk leaders to set the numbers for their walks and we have actually picked up quite a few new members through this time. This may be because other groups have stayed closed and people had more free time to walk ... we like to think we have a good Facebook presence and put on great walks!

Through this difficult last 6 months several of us on the Committee have been working full time, some as key workers and some were able to work from home. Everyone has been great at dealing with all the adjustments, Fiona, our walks leader has had to let her masterly

pre-prepared walks programme completely go and start again creating a week-by-week schedule along with Eventbrite and all the extra communications that has meant. Thankfully one of our seasoned walkers Paul has stepped in to help with this workload, his input has also been invaluable to me and he is stepping in as vice chair this month.

It was important to me to increase NDWG's presence on social media, given that we aim to reach the 20-40 age group. To this end we have engaged the service of one of our younger cohort, an Oxford graduate, Adam, who is assisting Paul and I in getting Instagram and Twitter accounts set up and usable for us.

We continue to put on reduced walks and will aim to keep going as long as Ramblers and the Govt advise, for the health and enjoyment of our wonderful walking group. Our AGM has been postponed until Feb 2021, we had made a Committee decision on 2nd Sept, before we were advised otherwise by Ramblers Central. Our General member Rachel Williams is stepping down this month and we have another new person to the Committee lined up for the role, Rachel has made such a lot of thoughtful and helpful contributions we are sad to lose her, but respect her decision to leave after her year. We will definitely have our AGM in Feb 21, whether on Zoom or live, and will make efforts to encourage people to take on the various roles in the meantime.

We would like to thank Central and Area Ramblers for their continued support and information throughout this unprecedented year!

One Step Walkers Group (Robert Ingram)

This is my second year as Chair of this group. We have completely transformed the running of One Step walkers in the last year, mainly driven by the constraints of COVID-19. The insurance changes, Assemble and Risk Assessments this year were very challenging as data in Assemble and the Insight Hub were not well aligned. This took a lot of time and effort to sort out. These changes have significantly increased the workload for our membership secretary. When walks were restricted due to COVID-19 limitations, we made major changes to our website to ensure safe operation of our walks. This can be summarised as follows:

- Produced COVID-19 safe guidance documents for walk leaders and walkers.
- Produced an electronic Risk Assessment that is easy to fill in.'
- Produced a compulsory walk registration system requiring Ramblers membership numbers to be entered and limiting walk numbers to below 20. Numbers at the discretion of walk leaders.
- Created a track and trace system in the event of COVID-19 infection (only had to use once)
- Only people registered on the walk leaders list allowed on a walk.

We are very lucky to have an excellent webmaster who made the required changes in a short time.

Walks – We normally had walks on Saturdays, Sundays and Tuesday nights through the summer and moonlight walks every other week through the winter. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we are arranging as many walks as we can due to number restrictions and walks can be on any day of the week and any night. We have been managing to arrange about 4 to 5 walks a week, when we have been allowed to walk, but generally demand for

bookings exceeds the available places. Our four walk coordinator roles will be rearranged at the AGM and we will have coordinators for:

- Saturdays
- Sundays
- Weekdays
- Evenings

Walk Attendance – Walk attendance has been an increasing problem prior to COVID-19 as our walks were often attracting around 30 to 45 people. These numbers were discouraging new walk leaders from coming forward. Now walk leaders can define how many people they are comfortable with and this is making walks more manageable for all walk leaders. We have very few walks that are not oversubscribed during this COVID-19 period and numbers allowed to attend vary between 10 to 20.

Accounts – From our treasurer's report, we had a balance of £1962.98 on 30/09/2019. Our current balance is £1288.20. [Note- this figure varies significantly through the year depending on event deposit outgoings and event payment incomings]

Weekends away – We had a few weekend walking trips earlier this year, but had to cancel all arrangements after March.

Holidays – We had a lot of long-distance walking trips planned this year. All were cancelled due to COVID-19.

Socials – Our 2019 annual Christmas meal at the Rose & Crown, Middle Mayfield, organised by the Social Coordinator was enjoyed by everyone. Apart from one or two social events before lockdown, everything was cancelled.

Membership – We had 244 members in December 2019 and 9 affiliate members. We now have 253 members and 11 affiliate members. An increase of 20 members. Other Ramblers members register as affiliate members to receive our Newsletter (due to GDPR requirements). Our membership secretary is very good at encouraging new people to join & follows up those not renewing. We normally hand out Ramblers leaflets with a One Step Walkers leaflet on walks which explains step by step how to join. This has stopped temporarily during COVID-19 restrictions. We have been averaging about two new members a month this year.

GDPR – We are fortunate to have a Membership Secretary and Website Officer who are very familiar with GDPR and ensure all our processes comply with the regulations.

Newsletter – Our Communications and Publicity Officer publishes weekly Mailchimp newsletters reminding members about planned walks and events. We also list the last month's walk leaders, thanking them for their efforts. Feedback indicates this is appreciated.

Other Events – We held another map reading & walk leading workshop on 18th January 2020, which has encouraged a number of members to register as a walk leader and lead walks. This is popular and starting to become an annual event.

Meetup – We have saved £170 a year by leaving Meetup and our membership is still increasing.

Facebook (social account) – We now have 576 members with people posting on a regular basis. This is used to arrange casual socials and sharing pictures of events.

AGM - Our AGM will be held on the 2nd December 2020. Our membership secretary and social secretary are resigning and will not stand again. We have new candidates for each post and expect to have new people elected to these positions after the AGM.

Overall, we have a healthy walking group with enthusiastic members. Finally, a thank you to the committee & group members that volunteer their time to help us all enjoy the walking and social events we organise. I look forward to the group continuing to thrive in 2021.

Ravenshead & Hucknall Group (Brian Culpin)

Try as we might to forget it, 2020 will remain in our memories for evermore, for all the wrong reasons!

Following last year's AGM (and a very wet spell of weather) we were looking forward to a promising year of varied and interesting walks and social activities. Membership enquiries were good, mainly as a result of having a few pages presence on the Ramblers website and publishing our walks on the 'Walks Finder'. Membership remained steady at 103, with new members replacing those that have left for one reason or another. One encouraging factor this year has been the recruitment of a few younger members. We had a varied range of walks planned coupled with a range of social activities to look forward to (annual dinner, BBC tour, weekend away in the Wye Valley & summer BBQ).

The group remains in a good solid position financially, our treasurer continues to keep us in-line with Ramblers requirements, funds remain between 1 to 2 years of expenditure. Having to pay Unity Bank for 'credit handling' doesn't go down too well.

Who would have forecast the arrival and impact of Covid-19? Early in the New Year we were all very much aware of the spread of the COVID pandemic and its devastating effect. March saw the suspension of all group walks, meetings, group and social activities with immediate effect, lasting to the end of June. Our last group led walk, for some time, was on 15th March (Holmewood/Williamthorpe Ponds & Nature Reserve). As it turned out, our entire Spring/Summer programme of walks and social activities was cancelled, without so much as a boot print in the soil!

The committee, who continued to communicate throughout (mainly via email & telephone), decided not to engage with 'small group walks', for health risk and organisational reasons. Our walks programme remained suspended until the end of August. With restrictions being further eased (30th July), and group walks of up to 30 people now permissible, the committee held its first (in-person) meeting, since February, on 6th August. It was agreed to go ahead and produce a scaled down walks programme (Autumn/Winter –October 2020 to March 2021), ensuring we stayed within Government and Ramblers COVID guidelines. It was also agreed to plan for an online AGM in November.

Our first group led walk since March took place on 4th October (Worsbrough Hall), with 12 members. Since then, the virus has returned with rapid growth in infections. We now found ourselves with an uncertain future with regard to up-and-coming Ramblers activity. Rambler's group walks and in-person activities are again cancelled this time for four weeks.

Our 2020 AGM took place online (mainly by email) this year, the process being broken down into 3 stages, ensuring we fulfil minimum AGM requirements. On a sad note, recent years has seen a decline in members volunteering to serve on our committee. This year is no exception, with the (valued) Chairman standing down after 5 years, and no volunteer to step into his shoes. With other roles on the committee also remaining vacant we are now down to 5 committee members.

Occasionally some good things come out of bad situation. During the initial 'lockdown', feedback from members indicated many were walking local footpaths, with some members being unfamiliar with some routes. It was agreed that between myself and the Membership Secretary we would (working within COVID Secure guidelines) put together a 'Compendium of Local Walks' for circulation to our members. Members were asked to put forward suitable walks, which resulted in a Compendium of 13 walks, complete with route descriptions and OS mapping. After overcoming some map Copyright issues the document was finally completed and circulated in October – better late than never!

Retford Group (Sally Fraser)

As with all other activities Covid-19 has impacted on our Group.

Our Walks Programme was suspended for a time and re-started in line with Ramblers Central Office guidelines. This in itself also posed problems. The number of attendees rose as did new and potential new members, not a bad thing in normal times. We are regularly getting in the mid to high twenties on each Sunday.

We made some changes to the scheduled walks due to insufficient parking because of people using their own cars rather than car sharing. The situation at the moment is proving to be a little tricky and we are somewhat making it up as we go along. We are hoping to be able to keep all our members out walking, as we all enjoy being out in the countryside and fresh air having a good old natter.

We held a very different AGM this year, by doing our usual Sunday walk and holding a suitably social distanced meeting in the woodland, fortunately the weather was on our side.

Rushcliffe Group (Mike Stock)

This is not the report that I would have expected to write. At the start of the year, we had planned a full programme of walks, social events and holidays but in late March, our activities came to an abrupt halt with the nationwide implementation of a lockdown to stop the spread of the pandemic.

Before that fateful announcement, 62 members and guests enjoyed an excellent Christmas lunch at the Ramsdale Golf Club. After an excellent meal, as always, our resident poet laureate Pam Duesbury regaled the assembled company with a review of our year. We were also able to hold a skittles match at the Royal Oak, East Bridgford where the Alley Cats took on the Dirty Dozen in a no-holds barred combat. After a titanic contest, the Dirty Dozen ran out winners and the Alley Cats were left to lick their wounds. Both teams retired to the bar and enjoyed a hot supper.

With the lockdown in place, we were keen to maintain contact with the membership. Rob Turner set up the Rushcliffe Ramblers' self-help network to enable members to keep in contact with each other, provide assistance with shopping etc. to those who needed it. He

also produced a newsletter containing general chat, games, puzzles and even a virtual walk. The newsletter was much appreciated by members.

All the planned holidays and social events were postponed. This meant that trips to Derwent Bank, Dovedale and a week's holiday in Croatia have been re-arranged for 2021. This has meant a lot of work for our holiday organiser Angela Dobie in dealing with HF Holidays, sorting out transfers and refunds, which she handled with her usual efficiency. We had high hopes that our weekend away at Malvern would take place but due to additional restrictions being imposed just before the start of the weekend, left our organiser, Karen Lewis with no alternative to cancel the holiday.

On the social side, our trip to the brewery at Burton was cancelled and regrettably our 2020 Christmas lunch.

Once we received that group-organised walks could restart in July, we put in place a programme of walks, set up a booking system, issued guidance to walkers and walk leaders all in accordance with the Ramblers' recommendations. Alan Wilson led the first walk of the programme on 17 July 2020 and by the end of September 2020, we provided 43 walks of varying distances and locations. The programme is updated on a monthly basis. This has meant a lot more work for Lorraine Donovan, our walks organiser which she has undertaken with her usual efficiency.

One unexpected result of lockdown, there seems to be more interest in walking. For some time, we have discussed how we might attract new members. Under the leadership of Trevor Griffiths and in conjunction with Move and Mingle and the Vale of Belvoir Group, we have produced a publicity leaflet promoting the benefits of walking.

We were concerned that we would lose members during the lockdown but our numbers have remained steady and in fact, we have had a slight increase in our numbers. Finally, I would like to thank all the committee members and walk leaders for all their hard work to keep the show on the road in these unprecedented times.

Southwell Group (Dave Johnson)

At the end of May and beginning of June, the Ramblers community began to receive advice about the expected way forward for RA Groups. It was clear that the rest of our annual programme of Sunday walks should be abandoned and that we should consider walking during the week when it was deemed the countryside would be quieter and potentially safer. Also, car sharing was not allowed, and this would have an effect on how far we travelled and car parking facilities in the area we were travelling to. "Small Group Walks" were permitted towards the end of July and our 1st walk was on the 23rd July when 6 of us completed a circular walk from Southwell to the river Trent.

Since then, the guidelines have changed and we are allowed up to 30 walkers. To be honest, we disagree with this, but it does mean that we can be flexible with the numbers of walkers we allow, controlled by the insistence of prebooking a place and adhering to COVID-19 guidelines to prevent transmission.

Until further notice our plan is to offer walks on any day of the week, as and when a leader submits a suggestion. The new system seems to be working very well, with Thursday appearing to have become the day of choice for our walks. Over the last couple of months,

we have had attendances of 15 in the Lowdham/Lambley area, 10 to Welbeck and 7 for historic trail of Southwell, 13 from Fiskerton to Hazelford Ferry, 14 to the site of the Southwell Solar Farm development and 8 to the Collingham RSPB reserve with some 25 different walkers taking part, a number of them from other groups, and encouragingly two new members after the last walk. Walks are planned through October and into November.

When the numbers rise above approximately 8 participants, we walk in two groups separated by 5/10 minutes. We are trying to encourage more members to step up and offer to be walk leaders and are adopting a mentor system for this, initially by asking members who have never led a walk to be a joint leader when we need two groups. How long we can keep offering weekly walks is debatable and probably if it is a wet winter then we could revert to fortnightly walks for a spell.

We used the Zoom platform for our AGM on Monday 5th October. Reports were circulated before the meeting and comments and questions were encouraged to be raised before the meeting so that the Officers could focus on them. We had 12 members attend, we got through the business but it very a very dry affair with little interaction.

Southwell Town Council has displayed flags of all the groups active in Southwell above the shops in King Street and Queen Street. The RA logo is on display above C&C Ltd Interiors, opposite Pinders Opticians, in Queen Street. A colourful display when the wind does not wrap the flags around the flagpole.

Vale of Belvoir Group (John Young)

This year has been a most unusual year for us all in the Vale of Belvoir group as it has been for everyone else! At the start of the year, our walk programme had to be revised a number of times due to the impact of the weather and a number of walks were cancelled. Clearly this was unplanned for, but the group pulled together well to make the best of a bad situation.

We managed to host the Area AGM in February using the superb village hall in Bottesford. Our pre-meeting walks leaders spent many hours trying to find passable paths, which, after many changes proved possible. However, the following week the paths we used for the pre-meeting walks were once again flooded so we were pretty lucky.

However, this weather disruption pales into insignificance after what followed in March, April and the rest of the year. Covid 19 brought about major disruption to all our lives not just our walking lives.

Covid 19 brought about a number of challenges for us as a walking group. The resumption of walking activities presented a challenge as to how to provide & manage small group walks, how to manage a simple but effective booking system and how to just get back out walking whilst complying with the controls and conditions imposed by the Government and The Ramblers.

I think all things considered we did pretty well, and I must thank our committee members for devising the booking system, managing the ever-changing walk programme and generally keeping us all going. It certainly required a focused approach and without them doing what they did, we probably wouldn't have managed to get out as VBR at all. Of course, we must also thank our walk leaders who did what was required in the customary exemplary

manner. Our committee meetings to set in place all these revised arrangements had to be organised very differently to normal. We have met in members gardens when the weather permitted and are now using Zoom for this purpose.

Covid 19 also presented a few challenges with our social programme and weekend away. The social programme was not very social at all and it had to be cancelled as with so many things. As for the weekend away to Selworthy, this was a difficult situation which was managed very well by Sue Rooke - thank you. The members that decided to make the trip to Selworthy no doubt had a good time.

This enforced time at home did have one benefit as our group now has a new modern website thanks to the efforts of Dave Hobson. We continue to publish reports and information on our blog which has served us well.

Everyone has been affected by Covid 19 in some way and let's hope that once we have a vaccine we can safely move on with our lives. At time of writing, we have just commenced the second lockdown period so all walks are suspended. We will continue to adhere to all the guidance, continue to walk (when and where we can) and hopefully get back some form of normality in 2021. Stay safe.

Workshop Group (Diana Munro)

We have experienced a truncated year as a member group of the Ramblers but, despite this, our Group has gone from strength to strength.

Between the beginning of April and the end of June, Covid-19 put paid to any walking activity by the Group, but since the easing of restrictions, we have had pleasing attendances on most of our walks. Visits to hostleries (in groups of six!) at the end of our walks has now become a regular feature after walks for those wishing to partake.

A huge thank you to every single walk leader for submitting their walks, receiving the walks and then leading them. In line with guidance received from Ramblers, we now have to ensure that all participants are fully briefed on the risks (including virus-related risks) at the start of walks and, despite fears on the part of some, this has proven to be a manageable process. An enjoyable highlight of the year was the annual Christmas lunch at the The Shireoaks Inn in Worksop. A good time was had by all.

The Committee has only met twice this year and its functions have been to prepare and circulate the Group's programme of walks for the forthcoming year, to receive regular updates on membership, finance, footpath issues etc. We are deeply indebted to the officers who have given up their time to serve the group with such dedication.

According to the Ramblers Insight Hub, we have 68 members as at 08.10.2020. During the year since the last AGM, 12 new members have joined us, some of whom now walk with us regularly. During the same period 4 members have left. We have no email address for 11 of our members, none of whom have actually walked with us in recent years.

Our Facebook page continues to be quite popular with 99 followers. Hopefully, people enjoy reading the walks reports and Mike's lovely photos. Our page is now regularly shared on Notts Area Ramblers Facebook page, as are those of other Nottinghamshire groups. This is a lovely way of seeing what walks the other groups are doing.

On Sunday 22nd March, 7 of us did the Beeley Wood & Grenoside Walk, led by Tom, which proved to be our last walk as a Ramblers Group for several weeks as the dreaded virus reared its ugly head. Prior to that (November 2019 to March 2020) walk numbers on Sundays Thursdays averaged about 9. During that time, two walks were cancelled due to flooding. Since the lockdown restrictions were lifted and Ramblers walks classified as an 'organised outdoor sporting activity', we have attracted between 8 and 15 walkers on our Sunday walks and between 4 and 16 walkers on our Thursday walks. We were, and always are, very pleased to welcome visitors from other Ramblers groups on several of these walks. Only 4 out of the planned 8 Wednesday evening walks actually took place. Two of these only attracted 4 walkers, whilst the other two attracted 13 and 11 walkers respectively.

Such a shame that our overnight stay and walks from Stockton-on-Tees, 17th to 18th October, has had to be cancelled but we hope to put it in again in next year's programme. Two coach outings, which should have taken place in May and June, also had to be cancelled

Our thoughts are already on planning next year's programme. This may be easier than usual as we have three months' worth of cancelled walks that hopefully we can put in again, subject to the availability of our walk leaders.

Our Group continues to do an annual check of the footpaths in our patch. The few problems that are identified and reported are usually promptly resolved.

Robin Hood Way Flexi-Group (Allan Rogers – Primary Contact)

We are a small group because all interested members already belong to other Ramblers Groups although we have affiliated members.

To become an 'Affiliate member' of Robin Hood Way NE70 Group, call Ramblers membership direct on: 020 3961 3232 – during office hours. This cannot be done on-line, however your contact preferences can be. This will not change any of your other existing details with your original group.

We continue to help with maintaining and reporting on the condition of the Robin Hood Way running from Nottingham Castle to Edwinstowe Church passing through 109 miles of Nottinghamshire countryside, villages and towns. There are 18 sections to the Robin Hood Way and 14 circular walks plus the Mansfield to Edwinstowe walk with 20 wardens looking after these sections and walks. The wardens report any maintenance problems to Nottinghamshire County Council Rights of Way team and ensure that the route is adequately waymarked. Some sections of the route have shared wardens', others single, and this means that some wardens cover more than one section of the route. Additional helpers are always welcome to ensure the future of the walk.

Currently the whole of the route of the Robin Hood Way has been surveyed and an update of the Robin Hood Way Guide Book is being prepared. This work is funded by the Robin Hood Way Association with whom we work closely. It is noted that interest in "local" walks has been very much on the increase since lockdown with a very rapid rise in the number of purchases of the Guide Book, both from the public (91 copies) and bookshops (49 copies),

which has led to the Robin Hood Way Association having to obtain a further supply of Guides in advance of the new updated issue.

As with all parts of the community we are having to abide with, and follow the Government Guidelines as interpreted by the Ramblers which has meant that this year there have been no organised walks or site maintenance work. It has been noted, reported to the Rights of Way section of NCC that the section of the Robin Hood Walk at Friar Tucks Well has an infestation of Japanese Knot Weed on the dam and the adjacent site of the boardwalk. NCC were aware of this which is holding-up the replacement of the boardwalk whilst the infection is be treated. A signed diversion has been marked for the bridleway along this area.

There is no specific budget held by this Group so before expenses are incurred, we request funding from Nottinghamshire Area and are pleased to acknowledge having received funds for waymark signs which have been installed along the route to replace damaged and lost waymarkers. The Southwell Ploughing Match was a victim of the Covid restrictions so there has been little publicity for the Ramblers.



The rolling landscape of the Wolds in the south of Nottinghamshire.
Photograph taken from Cuckoo Bush Hill overlooking the village of Gotham

End of Report