

Nottinghamshire Area Ramblers



Annual Report 2020-21

Covering the period 1st October 2020 – 30th September 2021

www.nottsarearamblers.org.uk



AREA OFFICERS' REPORTS

AREA CHAIR (Jim Norris)

This year included the very sad event of the passing of Alex Staniforth. It seems hard to believe that he is no longer with us. I will miss his wisdom and experience. But most of all I will miss his preparedness to suggest, ever so politely, that perhaps I might be mistaken about my approach on a particular issue.

Since the last Report we have recruited several people to the Area Team. Welcome to Adrian Amer as Vice Chair and Tony Norcross in the vital role of Minutes Secretary. As yet they haven't quite lost that look of puzzlement at the ways of Ramblers. It is always so useful to get another perspective on what we are doing. We have also replenished the Rights of Way Team and the contributions of our new District Co-Ordinators are much appreciated and welcome.

The year has been one of a gradual and tentative return to normality. It has been a strange experience working with people that I have never or only rarely met and then actually meeting them. We have cautiously moved back to having physical meetings – admittedly I have been one of the more cautious. Whilst at the same time we have acquired the flexibility of finding out at first-hand how Zoom works – a useful addition tool. We seem to have come out of it all fairly well and I admire the enthusiasm with which most of our Groups have come out of the bunker, had a good look round and continued with their excellent business.

One thing which has clearly changed as a result of Covid-19 is our interaction with Head Office. Whereas before Lockdown, communication tended to be somewhat limited to traditional means, since Lockdown a myriad of interactions have developed using Zoom. We now find ourselves having meetings with other Areas as part of Cluster, and having Zoom Meetings on a range of issues, such as how to arrange AGMs. In particular I recall a national Zoom Meeting attended by over 100 people, the subject matter of which was Covid-19 Zone Boundaries – remember them! This is a very positive development but I am almost starting to wonder whether you can have too many interactive meetings over Zoom. I think it appropriate to single out Diane Simcoe, who is our Central Office Liaison Officer, for her efforts in listening to us and seeing things from our point of view.

One of the issues that Ramblers needs to address is the relationship between Central Office and "Volunteers". It is clear that the vision of what Ramblers is all about varies very

significantly between the two. Are we a “bottom up” organisation where Central Office needs to recognise that Ramblers is about what “volunteers” and members do? Or are we a typical Charity where Trustees determine what we do, execute it through their Central Office staff and apply this at local level through their “Volunteers”? Both approaches are represented within Ramblers and as with many such debates my suspicion is that the truth lies between the two approaches and with a recognition that our mutual interests are the same. It has appeared at times that Central Office might pay more attention to what actually happens in the real world of Ramblers where their 100,000 members live. Perhaps then there would be more understanding of the significance of issues such as risk assessments for walks.

It is very refreshing to note that we can rely on Sue Jones keeping us up to date with potential and imminent changes in legislation – some of which is of great concern to those of us who care for the countryside. I would also commend her work on our excellent Facebook Page, as well as her campaign with Steve Parkhouse on the mysteries of how to cross the A52.

During the course of the year we have been in regular contact with Jack Cornish and his Team working on the vital “Don’t Lose Your Way” project. I would personally like to record my appreciation of his efforts. Not least his preparedness to recognise that we in Notts are blessed with the efforts of Steve Parkhouse and seem to be somewhat ahead of the game. In addition to his production of Notts Walker. I firmly believe that Notts Walker is one of the key factors in keeping Area going as well as it has during these trying times.

It has been another frustrating year for Chris Thompson. However, the gradual reopening of society after July 2021, has given him and us to have a close look at what we can do to define our involvement in Heritage matters. Towards the end of the year Chris produced a thought provoking paper which gives us the opportunity to see how we can support him further.

This year we did actually have a more meaningful Ramblers General Council, admittedly on Zoom. I must confess that I am not a great fan of sitting through what appear to be interminable complex motions. So for me, having the Council on Zoom consists of all the uninteresting, if essential, aspects of Council without any of the interesting social interaction aspects. Hopefully our own AGM will provide a better balance.

AREA SECRETARY (Judith Anson)

The sad loss of **Alex Staniforth** affected us all. Alex had been a great support to me, organising the AGM for the last three years. His dedication to Ramblers and Area for many years contributed greatly to making Nottinghamshire such a successful Area. The success in re-establishing the Mansfield and Sherwood Group also illustrates his energy and dedication. I miss his wisdom and calm, steady advice.

All Groups should be congratulated in their work during a very difficult year. When national Ramblers membership was falling early in 2021, Nottinghamshire numbers were holding up and this was due to the work of our excellent Groups. There were innovative ideas on how to keep members involved when they could not hold walks and then how to manage walks safely. Most Groups created a booking system, limiting numbers and some are keeping this system as it works for them while others are returning to the previous

arrangements. This is a decision for Groups and their walk leaders. Coach rambles, holidays and socials have now been held with AGMs also held in person.

The **Area AGM** was a great amount of effort for a short time on Zoom but thanks to all those who worked behind the scenes to make it a success. Central Office used our protocol and guidance notes as an example of good practice for other Areas – we had used the Rushcliffe Group's protocol as the base so I need to pass on the credit. I am very glad we are now having an actual meeting as I missed the social contact and particularly the cake.

New **Officers** were voted in at the AGM – Sue Jones as Countryside Officer and Tony Norcross as Minutes Secretary. Adrian Amer was co-opted as Vice-Chair during the year. Rod Fillingham resigned as Area Membership Secretary in October 2020 and I resumed that role. I have also been caretaking the Press & Publicity role since August. Following a successful advert for District Co-ordinators we now have a hard working team of people on Nottinghamshire Rights of Way. I was particularly glad to be able to hand over the ROW Information role.

Area Council was held on Zoom until October 2021 when our first physical meeting was held at Bilsthorpe. While Zoom allowed Area business to continue effectively, all the essential social contact between members was lost. The informal business between Groups and Officers is important. The Officers had a walk in August so we could catch up. The Executive Officers continued to meet on a bench at Vicar Water. The April Council meeting discussed links between Wellbeing Walks – Rushcliffe Move & Mingle and the Rushcliffe and Vale of Belvoir Groups. As mentioned in the Area Treasurer's report Council granted £125 towards this. Southwell Group led a very interesting session in July on the In Case of Emergency (ICE) cards members are encouraged to carry. Although officially outside the time of this report, the October meeting discussed stiles and a paper prepared by Vale of Belvoir.

In early 2021 there was an announcement of the change to the Ramblers logo called **brand refresh**. Four Officers attended the on line presentation and were impressed. We began to draw up a plan for how we could go forward with the changes but everything was put on hold. Although outside the time of this report, the changes are now going forward very quickly. In addition to the new logo Ramblers is changing the national website, the GWEM (walksfinder) and related technology.

Assemble featured in my report last year and I am sure volunteers have their own views. Members who are not volunteers cannot access it. It is intended to be a tool to assist volunteers and some aspects of it are valuable. My report last year also mentioned the failure to update Group boundaries which had been agreed in 2018 but not reflected on the website maps. I am very pleased to report that Central Office worked on this earlier in the year. Since the password to all the original work had been lost the whole exercise had to be redone and the maps are now accurate on the Find a Group website pages.

The new **risk management** rules have caused controversy nationally and we are lucky there has not been a serious loss of walk leaders locally. Although one view is that completing the risk management form is just writing down the recce that all walk leaders would do automatically, the need to keep the written copy for three years was a step too far. Particularly as the names of those attending the walk can only be kept for 28 days under GDPR rules. Unless this is reversed, it seems the rules are here to stay and Groups have

their own way of managing the forms with some Group Secretaries keeping them centrally. Whether this is an insurance requirement or a Central Office requirement is being debated.

The cancellation of **General Council** was a disappointment but the Zoom session was well organised with active participation of the delegates. I am concerned the 2022 GC is also only open to delegates and not visitors and on one day only. This changes the nature of the event which should be where all Areas have the chance to meet and exchange ideas in addition to the official business.

The **Area Cluster meetings** have continued. Although I support the original idea of Areas having a forum to share ideas and learn from others which is facilitated by the Area Support Officers, the last meeting did not follow this. Areas were talked at for most of the time and encouraged to then tell their Groups what Central Office policy was. This approach is being questioned as that is not the role of Clusters or of Areas.

As the Area Treasurer has noted, the hard work in January 2021 of sending out over 400 actual letters to members who did not have an **email address** or had not given email permission was very successful. The number of members we can email about the AGM has increased to 1838 and there are only 296 single or joint members without an email address.

The **2020 photographic competition** was successful and some of the photos have been included in this Annual Report. The presentation to the winner of the 2021 competition will be made at the AGM. Cotswold Outdoor have generously presented a pair of walking poles as the first prize.

Thank-you to the Nottingham Group for hosting this AGM. A Group is asked to come forward to host the **2023 AGM**.



Winner, 2020 Photo Competition – Autumn Leaves by Roger Mellor

AREA RIGHTS OF WAY SECRETARY (Steve Parkhouse)

I started last year's report by stating that it had been an exceptionally busy year. Well it has been even busier this year. We have gained some very good volunteers which has helped a lot. As part of the consultation response for dualling the A46 through Newark working with other user groups we had a major push for better '*paths for everyone*' to make walking, cycling and horse riding safer and more enjoyable on the eastern side of Newark. We followed that with leading the major multi-organisation campaign for a safe crossing under the A52 in West Bridgford/Ruddington.

There are new rights of way connections thanks to our efforts at Bilsthorpe, Moorhouse & Ossington & Warsop where landowners have cooperated with diverting unregistered bridleways. The gap in Hickling BW12 has been filled with a diversion. One new linking FP has gone in at Widmerpool and an Order has been gone to consultation for the rest of the unregistered footpath to be diverted to connect to Widmerpool FP4.

Amongst a long list across the County a raft of claims in North Notts have been made. Misson in the far north of the County alone involved 6 bridleways and 2 footpaths. Two claims have been made at Whatton, one of them providing a connection to FP8 which stops short of the road. The latest claims are for the connection between Boughton & Wellow, another long route from Thrumpton to Radcliffe on Soar and for a footpath just north of Eastwood across the former pit tip linking 2 dead-end footpaths and a gap filler on Kirkby in Ashfield FP16.

On a less satisfactory note, none of the Directs we obtained from the Planning Inspectorate, which set a date for determining claims, have been complied with and 6 are now overdue, in the worst case by 15 months. An official complaint to the County Council on November 3rd has brought some very overdue action with one Order going out for consultation. That still leaves 5 other important paths where a decision should have been made and hasn't been.

The ROW group dealt with:

42 Rights of Way Orders

38 Planning applications

154 Rights of Way issues, broken down as follows:

46 - Signage

37 - Obstruction

19 - Safety

17 - Path ploughed out/covered by crop

17 - Stile problem

8 - Overgrown

6 - Condition of path surface

4 - Bridge problem



Dangers of Crossing the A52!

AREA COUNTRYSIDE OFFICER (Sue Jones)

Activities were somewhat constrained for first half of this year due to lockdowns, but latterly we have been able to meet on site to work on projects as a team. I have been keeping a watching brief on national planning and environmental issues affecting the walking environment in the Notts Area, and working with others on local projects that impact on our countryside.

National issues:

1. Passage of relevant Bills

We have been keeping a watch on the progress of various Bills through parliament over the course of this year:

- The Police, Crime, Courts and Sentencing Bill is at the Committee Stage in the House of Lords. We are concerned about the implications of the section on criminalising trespass.
- The Environment Bill is in its final stages with consideration of amendments introduced by the House of Lords, including legally binding short-term targets for the protection and improvement of our environment, and giving the new environmental watchdog real power to stop environmental damage. We hope MPs will approve these changes so they are enshrined in law. Postscript: this bill was made law in November, more information in the next report.
- The Agriculture Bill received Royal Assent in November 2020, becoming the Agriculture Act 2020. It provides a range of powers to implement new approaches to farm payments and land management, but there are concerns that there is no real commitment yet from the Government on what public access enhancements would be eligible for support. We are observing the progress and assessing if there is a role for Ramblers nationally, and possibly locally too.

2. Planning for the Future

In September 2020 Michael Gove paused the controversial planning reforms in England and Boris Johnson signalled a commitment to protect our green spaces from unscrupulous development by building more affordable homes on brownfield land, particularly in the midlands and north. This brownfield-first approach now needs to be incorporated into the upcoming planning bill.

I emailed Ruth Edwards, the MP for Rushcliffe, to clarify the status of any rights of way on land designated suitable for development, and if the right to build without further planning permission would incorporate a right to build on a right of way. Ruth's reply included the following: "I have been assured that feedback received in the planning reform consultation, including on this issue of footpaths, will be carefully considered.....I do not believe that the proposals threaten to remove footpaths and public right of ways, which I know are loved by local people and ramblers like yourself."

3. Diversion of RoW where livestock are grazing

The NFU and CLA lobbied for legislative change so that farmers would be able to quickly and temporarily divert public RoW where livestock are grazing to protect the public from harm. Fortunately the Government decided not to amend legislation in the way proposed but chose to focus on two opportunities to improve public safety where livestock are present: the refresh of the Countryside Code as a means of reinforcing positive and safe behaviour messages around livestock and public access; and learning from pilot schemes for farmers to provide permissive paths as an alternative – with the legal right of way still available – when livestock are being grazed on the land. The Ramblers support this.

4. Petition to Extend the 2026 deadline for the recording of historic footpaths and bridleways

The Government responded to the petition in February claiming to be committed to protecting rights of way (RoW). They intend to pass legislation to streamline the processes for recording and changing RoW to help local authorities to process applications, and as part of this they will bring into force the cut-off date of 1st January 2026 introduced as a provision in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. However, this date could be extended by for up to five years, and they will discuss this with various stakeholders. Obviously landowners want the earlier date so they have certainty as to where RoW exist. No date has been given for a decision.

Local issues:

1. A52 Active Travel Partnership

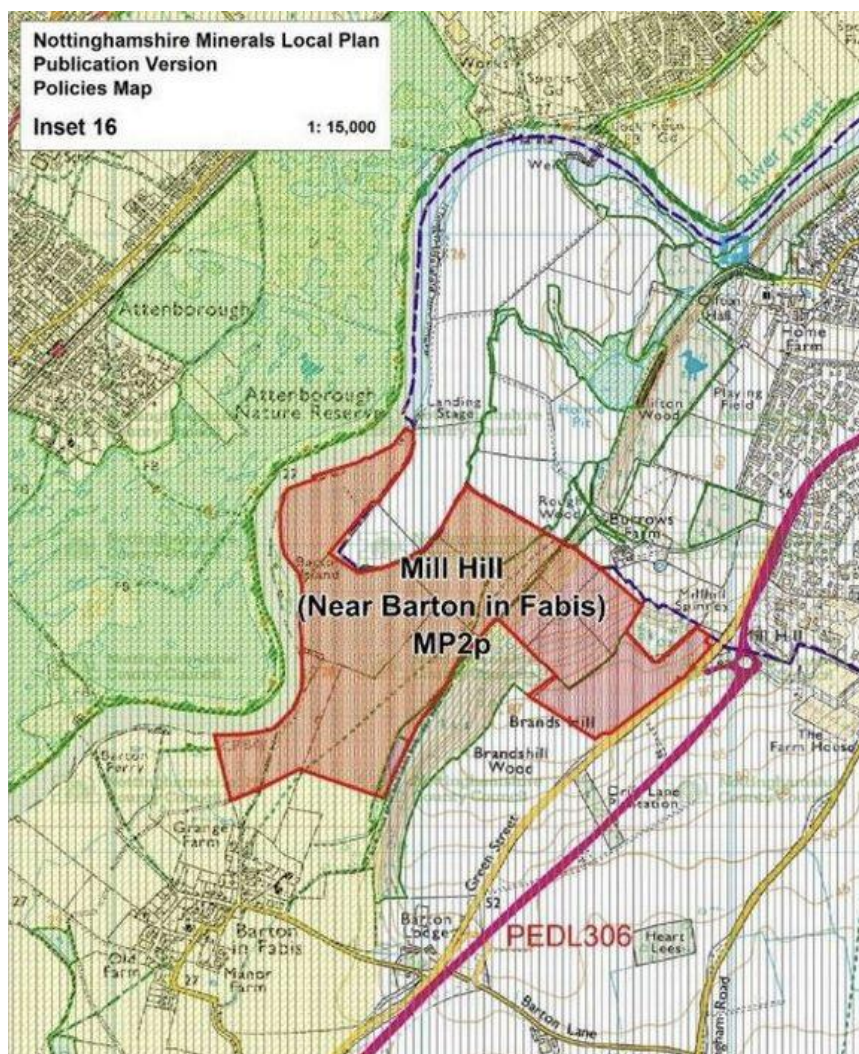
Nottinghamshire Area Ramblers and Rushcliffe Ramblers joined with a range of organisations representing walkers, runners, cyclists, horse riders, school children and disabled users to form the A52 Active Travel Partnership. The aim is to lobby Highways England to improve the safety for people crossing the A52 dual carriageway south of West Bridgford. We produced a comprehensive brief on the issues, including the suggestion that the existing underpass under the A52 is cleaned up and properly connected to the existing

bridleways. We gained a large amount of publicity through media coverage, circulation of a petition on change.org and social media (currently over 2,000 signatures), and contacting local politicians and councillors.

We took Ruth Edwards and Cllr Neil Clarke, Chair of the Transport and Environment Committee, to view the dangerous crossings and the underpass. As a result, Ruth organised an online meeting with representatives of Highways England - now re-named National Highways – and they confirmed they had secured internal funding for a feasibility study to assess the requirements for the crossings. This is a step forward and we very much appreciate Ruth's support with this.

We have concerns however. The report from the study may not be complete until March 2022, and then further funding will be required to action any of the findings. We managed to secure a copy of the project brief, and have requested that we be involved in the activities to help speed up the investment as we have a much better knowledge of the local area than the National Highways team.

2. Proposed Mill Hill Quarry, Barton in Fabis



The Nottinghamshire Minerals Local Plan was finally adopted in 2020. The only new quarry listed in the plan is at Barton in Fabis and is a controversial site for a number of reasons,

including its proximity to Attenborough nature reserve, and the considerable impact on RoW and the surrounding countryside. It has been measured as the most environmentally vulnerable site of any of those considered, and there has been a large amount of resistance to it since the proposal was first put forward in 2014, especially from a very vocal local campaign group and Notts Wildlife Trust. They have the support of 3 MPs, and Ruth Edwards has recently contacted Sir David Attenborough.

The applicant submitted revised plans and further information for the Barton in Fabis site (under Regulation 25), but the general view is they have not sufficiently dealt with the issues raised. After visiting the site with a member of the Barton in Fabis Parish Council, Paul Fenton and I submitted a strong objection based on the negative impact on our enjoyment as ramblers. The full re-consultation has now closed and we await any news.

3. HS2 phase 2b – Birmingham to Leeds

In an interview with the Financial Times on 3rd October, the Transport Secretary signalled a major rethink of the high-speed rail project between Birmingham and Leeds, saying ministers could no longer “blindly follow” plans drawn up almost 20 years ago. An announcement is expected for a delay to the Eastern leg, with priority given instead to an east-west rail scheme between Leeds and Manchester called Northern Powerhouse Rail and nicknamed HS3.

4. Miner2Major

This is a Landscape Partnership Scheme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and is a partnership of local authorities, conservation groups and community organisations. It covers a large area of the county around Sherwood Forest, with a broad remit aimed at celebrating the diverse wildlife, habitats and heritage of the Forest. There are a number of connected projects around nature and heritage/tourism, and various activities and training events. This includes volunteering to run surveys on RoW (193km within the area) and helping to maintain them, and we are discussing how Ramblers may get involved.

5. Planning applications/consultations

There are a number of these we have responded to:

- Strategic and Local Plans - including the Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan Growth Options Consultation stressing the need to focus on active travel, and the Tollerton Neighbourhood Plan Consultation as the village has poor connections to the RoW network.
- Large housing developments - including Gamston Fields/Tollerton (Rushcliffe), and Chetwynd Barracks/Toton (Broxtowe). A strategic masterplan has just been published for the former, and is awaited for the latter.
- Solar Farms - following the refusal of the application for a solar farm at Halloughton near Southwell due to its sheer scale and resultant impact on the countryside, we are awaiting information on other proposed sites in the county. These include Foxholes at Norwell, and Clayworth/Gringley on the Hill as part of the West Burton Solar Project crossing the Notts/Lincs border. Although we are generally supportive of renewables, the enormous size of some of these proposed farms is a big issue. The Ramblers favour less obtrusive locations such as the rooftops of large

commercial and industrial buildings, which also brings generation close to the point of demand.

- Fracking - We raised objections to an application to extend planning permission at a shale gas site at Misson Springs, North Notts, and were pleased to learn it had been refused. IGas recently announced it will not appeal against the refusal and the ugly site, which is next to a nature reserve, will now be restored. This means there will be no shale gas sites in the east midlands.

AREA MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY (Judith Anson)

GROUP	TOTAL AT 1.10.21	TOTAL AT 1.10.20
Newark	151	124
Nottingham	323	309
Retford	92	89
Ravenshead & Hucknall	108	102
Worksop	76	66
Rushcliffe	343	322
Broxtowe	206	177
Gedling	192	190
Mansfield & Sherwood	148	121
Southwell	87	77
Collingham	61	58
Vale of Belvoir	103	101
Notts Derbys Walking Group	192	184
One Step Walkers	244	234
Robin Hood Way	3	3
Not in Group	53	58
Area Total	2382	2215

National Totals: October 2021 – 101,130; October 2020 – 98,717; October 2019 – 102,151; October 2018 – 102,818; October 2017 – 104,694; October 2016 – 105,990; October 2015 – 107,369.

The increase in membership figures both locally and nationally is very welcome. Nottinghamshire membership held up very well when the national membership fell in 2020 which was due to the hard work of all Groups. Looking at the 2021 figures Groups are congratulated on not only retaining their members during a very challenging period when walks were stopped but for the continuing increase. The retention rate of members has fallen to 86.9% but this has been compensated by the new members joining.

Members are reminded they can become Affiliated members of other Groups to be on the mailing list of another Group while remaining a full member of their original Group. Currently this can only be done by ringing Membership Services at Central Office.

As mentioned elsewhere our efforts to increase the email consents has been successful. Our percentage of members who have given email consent is now 58% against a national figure of 50%. There are now only 296 addresses (this includes joint members) who do not have an email address listed. Using the email consent list we are able to email the Notts Walker to 1329 members and 1838 members about the AGM.

Those of you with long memories will be aware of the mapping saga with the agreed parishes being sent to Central Office in March 2018 and no action since. I have now agreed this with James Austin at CO and the correct boundaries now appear on the national maps. People wishing to join Ramblers on line (the majority) are offered Groups on the basis of their postcode and this is unchanged.

AREA TOURISM AND HERITAGE PATHS OFFICER (Chris Thompson)

I do not have to highlight how difficult 2020/2021 year has been to us all. The Mayflower Pilgrim Ramblers Trail was not able to complete its work due to being unable to consult with Partners as they were unavailable. Sadly, also the Mayflower 400 events planned by Bassetlaw Council and other bodies for September 2020 were affected and only a few events took place. It was planned to hold the major events later in 2021, but sadly this did not take place either. This was very sad as a large amount of work was carried out to make this an important historic event. However, there were gains including a Pilgrim Gallery at the Bassetlaw Museum, 40 Grove Street, Retford which is well worth a visit. Also, schools and local community groups conducted events to promote the Pilgrim 400 events.

The continuation of the Mayflower Ramblers Trail is still being undertaken but is now being organised by a separate committee and therefore will not feature in any further Tourism & Heritage Path Officer Reports.

As a result, a reappraisal for this post has started and I have spent most of my time this year in putting together information to set up a report to take to the Area Council for a full discussion in how this post continues. To achieve that appraisal, I have spent the time putting together information to show how the objective of the post to promote Nottinghamshire as a walking county could be achieved. I have continued making contacts within the Tourist industry locally, also putting together basic information to highlight how a tourist and heritage website could be put together including information on the make up of the county in respect to walking opportunities, full information on every town/village in the county to highlight their various historic makeup, looking at the industrial and heritage interests of the county, looking at the various important tourist events that take place in the county. Although at this time this information is only a sample by putting a picture together it is hoped this will assist the Area Council to come to a decision in how we continue with this important role. In addition, I have been walking over the whole county increasing my already wide knowledge of the county by logging walks to include in an area website. It will be very necessary to provide a list of suitable rambles over the whole county to promote our county. During the year, the Area Committee have set up an Area programme of Rambles on the Ramblers Notts Area Website. I fully support this initiative and hope members will contribute by providing further rambles to the website.

One important fact is that the pandemic has seen more people want to enjoy the countryside. I hope therefore as we move into another financial year, we will be able to

reach a decision on how we develop the Tourism & Heritage Path Officer post to take an account of the public's newfound interest of walking and to show the attraction of walking in Nottinghamshire.

AREA COMMUNICATIONS SUB-GROUP (Judith Anson, Chair)

Unfortunately we have only managed to hold one Zoom meeting during the year. This was to agree the self-guided walks on the website initiative and also to begin work on the brand refresh which should have been introduced earlier in the year. The former, under Area control has progressed while the latter is being introduced in a great hurry at the end of 2021. 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. I have included the publicity work in this report as I took it over in August.

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. Sue Jones created a new series – Spotlight on Groups – the first to be featured was Mansfield & Sherwood. Other Groups are encouraged to participate and they should contact me.

Self-Guided Walks – from Neil Stafford

The pandemic, and the suspension at various times of Group Walks, resulted in a much greater interest in self-guided walks. Some Groups circulated details of self-guide walks to their members. But to provide some for the county the late Alex Staniforth, Chris Thompson and Neil Stafford set about developing self-guided walks in Nottinghamshire for the Area website. Whilst there are only two walks available at present, others are in the course of development. But this is an opportunity for any member in Nottinghamshire to share their favourite walk with our membership. You don't have to provide a full text, although we can provide a template if you want to, but a short description and a map of the route will be sufficient. Email info@nottsarearamblers.org.uk with your suggestions.

Notts Walker

Steve Parkhouse is Newsletter Editor. The opening rate continues to be above 60% and Steve receives regular compliments on the content. The focus on the Nottinghamshire Rights of Way work illustrates what makes Ramblers different from other walking organisations. Ramblers protects rights of way for everyone. The A52 crossing campaign which also features on the website and Facebook has generated interest outside Ramblers.

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

Facebook Page – from Sue Jones

We now have a total of 261 followers on the Notts Area Facebook Page, an increase of just under 100 since the last annual report. The most popular posts have been the ones shared about group walks, and tagging these with #walkyourway and @ramblers has resulted in

higher viewing numbers and 'likes' by the central Ramblers Facebook page, all of which increase publicity.

Mansfield and Sherwood Ramblers produced a short Q&A piece about their group, and this was posted on our website and shared on Facebook. I am talking to other groups to see if we can produce a similar piece to increase their publicity

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

www.facebook.com/nottsarearamblers

Publicity

Sadly I am writing this section. Alex made a major contribution to the self-guided walks on the website but there was little other activity due to the lockdowns. With the lifting of Covid rules we were able to have the usual stand at the Southwell Ploughing Match in September. This allowed the eventing tent to be used for the first time since 2019. There was an excellent team on the day and we were almost overwhelmed at times by people wanting to know about Ramblers, ask about rights of way and all the Robin Hood Way books that were there were sold. Thanks to Rod and Jenny Fillingham, Allan Rogers, Neil Stafford, Jeremy Pratt and Southwell and Newark Groups. see photo below, credit to Rod.

Area Walks Day

It was intended to hold an Area Walks Day in 2021 but obviously this was not possible. Members will remember these used to happen each year with a different Group acting as host. As advance planning is required this will be considered as a possibility for 2023.



Our Event Tent at Southwell Ploughing Match

AREA TREASURER (Neil Stafford)

The annual accounts are presented below, with Income and Expenditure categorised in accordance with the Ramblers guidelines.

Income	2020-21	2019-20
Income from Ramblers Central Office	6,978.12	3,053.96
From Group	-	254.39
Grants	1,200.00	
Other	-	455.85
Total receipts	8,178.12	3,764.20
Expenditure		
Group Funding	3,078.12	3,053.95
Newsletters/publicity	115.56	268.68
Campaigns/casework	1,395.57	1,050.32
Meetings (inc. AGM)	537.03	966.48
Admin	25.15	31.74
Other	125.00	
Total payments	5,276.43	5,371.17
Surplus/(deficit)	2,901.69	-1,606.97

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

Summary of financial year for Independent Examiner

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

Main	Self-funded	Total
8,178.12	-	8,178.12
5,276.43	-	5,276.43
5,294.17	-	5,294.17
5,294.17	-	5,294.17

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 2021.

Signed:

A. Bolton

Date:

3.11.21.

Name of examiner:

Andrew Bolton

(Alternatively, if you do not wish to print off this sheet please send in a signed copy of your own Area/Group accounts to GB office).

At the end of the financial year the Area bank balance stood at £5,294.17.

The accounts show two broad functions:

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

Costs of Running Area

Area received £3,900 from Ramblers Central Office in 2020-21. In the previous year no funding was requested due to the level of reserves. The cost of running Area (excluding Group payments) was £2,198.31.

Points to note:

- Grants (£1,200) – secured by the Area RoW Secretary from the British Horse Society in respect of DLYW claims he has made. He has asked that this is retained by Nottinghamshire Area to help cover possible litigation costs arising from the Trent Hills DLYW claim. Because of the RoW Secretary's severe hearing disability professional legal representation may be needed if there is a public enquiry. This money is recorded as Restricted Funds, in accordance with Ramblers Finance Team rules.
- *Campaigns/Casework* (£1,395.57) is the vitally important work of the RoW team. This work continued despite Covid, the most visible aspect being the A52 safety campaign & Landmere Lane right of way claim.
- *Meetings* – includes an annual Zoom licence and £289.90 for the cost of sending letters about the Area AGM (and requesting an email address) to Members for whom CO did not hold an email address – see below
- *Newsletters/Publicity* (£115.56) – the entire expenditure was for our very successful stand at the Southwell Show and Ploughing match in September.
- *Other* payment (£125) was a membership recruitment initiative grant– see below.

Membership Recruitment Initiatives

£425 of Area's funding for 2020-21 was to support Group membership recruitment initiatives. So far £125 has been awarded to Rushcliffe Group, to support their publicity initiative, details of which appeared both in the local press and Walk Magazine. Other Groups are welcome to submit proposals for funding of membership recruitment ideas.

AGM Letters sent to Area Members without an Email Address

As the 2021 Area AGM had to be held as a Zoom meeting, the opportunity was taken to write to all members for whom an email address had not been provided, advising them not only about the Zoom AGM, but also to ask them to provide an email address, in order to reduce both future postage, and environmental costs. 416 letters were sent out. As a result of this exercise the number of members for whom Area has no email address was reduced by 21%. The letters also resulted in a number of telephone calls to the Area Secretary, providing an opportunity to connect with members during what was for most of us a period of great uncertainty. It will doubtless have encouraged a number of membership renewals as well.

Budget for Financial Year 2021-22

From the accounts it will be clear that, due to Covid, Area expenditure was significantly less than the budget forecast. As a result the budgeted funding request for 2021-22 was significantly reduced. I am delighted to report that this Budget has been approved by Central Office.

Acknowledgements

Despite the unprecedented events of the last twelve months, thanks to the determined efforts of the Group Treasurers, all the budget and annual returns were submitted to Central Office timetables on time.



2nd Prize in the 2020 Photo competition 'Out of the Shade' by Charlotte Cunningham

“Above all do not lose your desire to walk. Everyday I walk myself into a state of wellbeing and walk away from every illness. I have walked myself into my best thoughts and I know of no thought so burdensome that one cannot walk away from it. But by sitting still (and the more one sits still) the closer one comes to feeling ill. If one keeps on walking, everything will be alright.”

Soeren Kierkegaard
Danish Philosopher, died 1855
(used at Newark AGM)

GROUP ANNUAL REPORTS

Broxtowe Group (Keith Jacobs)

Broxtowe Group held its last AGM on 23rd November 2020. The AGM was on Zoom and given the constraints, was well attended. It was decided at the AGM that that the small number of members who had not given permission for on-line communications (32 members) would have paper notification, that it is our intention to publish the walk programme online and that they should notify the committee if they specifically required a paper copy. Since then no replies were received, and our programme is now published online with photocopies available. Publicity for rambling activities was considered, and a small survey of members and non-members was undertaken which seemed to indicate that a higher media profile would be helpful in drawing in new members.

Membership has held up well this year, with a small increase in numbers and fortunately few members leaving for whatever reason. We have lost the services of some experienced walk leaders over the year and although we are still anxious to recruit more, there have been a number of new walk leaders stepping forward who have enriched the variety of walks we offer. The committee has given walk leaders the option to book for walks and/or limit numbers, or to return to the less formal arrangements that used to prevail. This does not seem to have caused any problems and seems to function well, with numbers on group walks gradually increasing.

The requirements of Government over the course of the year have been well followed and whenever group walking was permitted, leaders adhered to booking and limited numbers and completed the necessary Risk Assessments. Broxtowe have maintained a regular programme of varying walks (midweek, Sunday and occasionally other days) throughout, and we are pleased to say that those walks were generally well attended. Fortunately, there have been very few incidences of contact with infected persons and only one walk actually had to be cancelled for that reason. Individual members have been sensible and withdrawn from attending booked walks if problems have arisen.

At our AGM (on 29th November 2021), we will consider whether we should continue with the rolling programme of walks that has been in place through this difficult time or revert to our more usual 4 monthly programme.

The more social aspects of rambling have certainly suffered over the last year, but life returns with an away weekend in the Cotswolds, with perhaps more planned. Christmas Lunch after a short walk is definitely planned for this year.

As a group we feel we have 'weathered the storm' quite well and we look forward to the coming year with confidence. That there are changes imminent seems clear, but there is little we can do until details emerge from CO. Other changes include the retirement of 3 members of our committee and our desire is to increase the number of members who are prepared to contribute to the committee in those capacities, but more general ones as well. As a group we feel that there will be more scope in the future to look at recruitment and some of the broader issues that have been in abeyance over the last 2 years, like Walking for Health, footpath maintenance and ROW matters.

Collingham Group (Christopher Adams)

Last year's AGM was by e-mail only. There were no new nominations so the same four elected officers plus the minuting secretary have continued for a further year.

In December we had our two mulled wine and mince pie walks around Girton, but then things ground to a halt because of Covid so our normal New Year lunch did not happen.

We resumed group walks with a walk around Laxton on April 18th which was well supported, and since then we have managed a full programme of Wednesday and Sunday walks. We have stuck mainly to our local area but I have led two walks in Lincolnshire and one in Leicestershire. We also tried a harder walk in Derbyshire but this was not well supported - there seems to be a reluctance to travel too far.

Now that we have the new forms, we have been conscientious about filling in and storing the Risk Assessments although there has been a bit of grumbling in the ranks about "red tape"!

As a group we have amassed a healthy bank balance over the years which stood at £486.00 in September, so the decision was taken to spend some money on 4,000 publicity/recruitment flyers to be delivered to households on our patch. The two bigger villages of Collingham and Winthorpe were delivered commercially, and six smaller villages I delivered the hard way - this has only just happened as I write, and we await results.

This year's AGM again brought no changes among the officers, but we are very pleased that two additional members have come forward to join our committee and give a fresh perspective, so we shall be six for the coming year.

We have signed up a small number of new faces over recent months, so overall membership has remained steady at just over 60.

Gedling Group (Jonathan Ankers)

The committee has met bi-monthly throughout the year on Zoom until recently. The Walks Programme has been kept going, when allowed, on the website and regularly updated. There is a proposal to add other means of informing members of forthcoming walks, which was discussed at our AGM.

This year, as we have come through the Covid restrictions, more members have resumed walking with the group, but still there are some who we have missed seeing and hope their health and confidence improves. Thanks to all walk leaders who have put walks onto the website, and in particular Steven Dobbs who has excelled in filling the gaps. We always need more members to lead walks, even if it's only occasionally.

We held a 'Welcome Back to Walking' day on 11th September, with a buffet organized by Colleen Pilgrim, and a questionnaire devised by Paul Musson to assess the effect of the pandemic on members' attitudes to walking and social events.

Mansfield and Sherwood Group (Brian Tuffnell and Sue Rick)

As for everyone, 2021 has been another year of challenges: lockdowns, tiers and travel restrictions, isolations and more. However, we have managed to host over 60 walks and walk more than 475 miles (760km) and our membership continues to grow. A big thank you too to all our members who have been very welcoming of all the new members and visitors from other groups on our walks. Their friendliness has been mentioned many times and is

much appreciated. Being restricted to our own county, it gave the walk leaders a chance to recce lots of local walks, but as we re-started the walks one of the biggest problems for the walk leaders was finding car parks big enough for all of us as we couldn't car share. A big shout out to all the walk leaders who have given up their time to recce, lead walks & research the local history of the areas we have walked. We welcomed Heather as a walk leader, and we had 15 leaders over the year and more in waiting. We had two 'challenge' walks this year, one from dusk to dawn and one of 20 miles. Our only evening walk we had this year was on a beautiful summer evening where we even managed to keep the pub open for an after-walk drink. A surprising statistic this year was that although most of our walks are at weekends, we have arranged walks on all the days of the week.

We have walks planned up until Christmas and, due to uncertainty of how the pandemic may or may not progress, we have decided not to publish a full programme of walks and are looking to only publishing walks on a monthly basis.

Many of the things we'd planned for the 20th Anniversary had to be cancelled as did our Cotswold Way walk, but we look forward to starting the social programme again and have a few ideas in the pipeline including a long weekend coach trip to Eastbourne in March.

Our Facebook page continues to attract a good amount of interest and we have doubled our followers to over 200. The photographs taken on our walks are well liked and generate a lot of views and feedback.

Newark Group (Carol Wilkinson)

This has been a very interesting year, but we have managed to walk as a group whenever we have been permitted to do so. When we were not allowed to group walk, many of our members walked in twos or small groups in their local area, and members supported each other whenever they could. We arranged to walk with several new members when we couldn't meet all together to tell them more about what we do. We are a fantastic group and as a result have welcomed many new members over the last 12 months, our current membership being 154.

Sadly, we have also lost members in the last 12 months: Carol Bristow and Gerald Birkett were much loved members. A good number of people went to Gerald's funeral and a similar number of people attended Carol's Memorial Service.

As this is our 50th anniversary year, we felt it was appropriate to have a month of Memory Walks in September and this went really well. Each walk was dedicated to specific people and the leader spoke briefly about them at the beginning of the walk.

Our website is really successful thanks to the work that Roger Mellor and Brigid Murphy put in. It is full of very useful information and lots of photographs. Our Facebook page is also receiving more 'hits' and is a really useful tool for getting out information to a wider audience.

The Committee has worked hard during the year conducting many meetings by Zoom when we were not able to meet face-to-face. Two committee members moved away during the year but fortunately at the AGM two of our newer members were elected to the committee. We are looking forward to welcoming them to our next meeting.

We are fortunate to have a good number of members who are willing to lead our walks. They have offered a good variety of walks in Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire. To keep group numbers manageable, we now have two walks on

Wednesdays and one on Sundays. We are encouraging members to car share and have set up a WhatsApp Group to help with the organisation. This seems to be working very well.

As we have so many new members, we are currently looking into putting on a Map Reading course to give people confidence in planning walks. We are aware that some of our regular walk leaders are now 'older' and we need to think about the future of the group.

Our AGM was special too. Jack Cornish from Central Office, the Mayor of Newark and other invited guests joined members at the Robin Hood Theatre. Everyone was given coffee and biscuits on arrival and there was a wonderful display of memorabilia, put together by Marie Legg, for people to look at. Following the AGM business, the Mayor said a few words and this was followed by a most interesting talk by Jack Cornish on 'Don't Lose Your Way'. At midday everyone was given a 'brown bag lunch' and at 1pm 40 people went on a short walk led by Joyce Pedersen.

During the year we were approached by Use Locally, a free magazine which covers Newark and the villages to the east of the town. We agreed to write up a walk for them every other month and this is giving us good free publicity. We were also featured as Charity of the Month which gave us an opportunity to promote our Memory Walks and the Ceilidh. Sadly the ceilidh had to be cancelled. People are still not confident about dancing and hand holding and only 26 people had booked. We will try again in the Spring if Covid numbers permit.

Social events have been non-existent for quite a while now, but we did manage to arrange a Train Walk to Derbyshire which went really well, and we are planning to have a Christmas Quiz in December.

We are also looking forward to a residential trip to Malham next May. This was originally planned for 2020 but has been re-arranged because of Covid.

Pauline Hall and Carol Wilkinson put together a Treasure Trail round the town in conjunction with Newark Creates, and this was launched on the Heritage Day. The Trail has been enjoyed by a good number of people and copies are available in the Civil War Centre.

Looking forward to another great year with Newark Ramblers.

Nottingham Group (Barrie Dale)

This has been another Covid-affected year, restricting our activities earlier in the year. However, the group organisers responded admirably to get the programme underway when it was possible to do so. Numerous issues have arisen, and I have just selected a few that have been important in our considerations this year. We hope to look forward to a more normal year in 2022.

Walks Programme

We did not publish a walks programme this year given the lockdown and uncertainty over the resumption of walks and the unpredictability of the virus. The coach walks did resume their 5 a year cycle when walks recommenced, while the rest of the walks programme was organised on an ad hoc basis dependent on the walks that walk leaders could offer to the organisers, and these were then published online as they were formulated. We hope to have a full programme ready, printed and available for next year.

Coach Walks 2021

Coach walks resumed in May with a restriction of 28 by Skills. The numbers allowed were increased to 38 from July and from August we could have coaches with up to 53 people. There was a day out to Bridlington in August. The coach team organisers managed to adjust charges to reflect numbers allowed and the actual seats taken. They have continued to run these walks successfully and I thank them for their commitment to this complex and important part of our walks programme.

The Coach Finance Officer is stepping down.

Wednesday Walks

These are a very successful part of our programme and are very popular and well attended – averaging between 20 to 30 walkers. To avoid overcrowding on public transport, the group was split into 2 sets catching separate buses with separate walk leaders. Risk assessments were undertaken and registers kept. A pre-booking system was adopted.

Sunday Walks

The numbers on the alternate local Sunday walks were fairly low, averaging 10 approximately, but all ran successfully. These walks tend to suffer from alternative walks being offered elsewhere.

The Sunday walks organiser is stepping down after a number of years' service to the group.

Risk Assessments / Register of Walkers' Contact Details

We have been informed by Head Office that we must undertake a formal Risk Assessment of every walk we undertake. This has to be done by the walk leader when doing the recce of their walk. This, along with a register of walkers' contact details, was initially motivated by the high prevalence of Covid and the safety aspects associated with the pandemic e.g. good practice and NHS Track and Trace requirements. I realise that risk assessments were undertaken intuitively by walk leaders, but as a result of pressure from the insurers contracted to the Ramblers, Head Office want this practice formalised. Thus the Risk Assessments cover all aspects of potential hazards encountered on walks and what steps are taken to diminish them where appropriate. This has caused consternation amongst some leaders and I have had many conversations with members and walk leaders, some of whom are reluctant to lead future walks. This is not confined to our group alone if one reads the various opinions online and on walk forums. This is an ongoing issue.

Membership

We currently have 321 members which has remained stable over the last year.

Meetings held

16th April 2021 – Sub-Committee meeting in the Wednesday Walk organiser's garden in Wollaton (limited to 6 people).

9th September 2021 – Full Committee meeting (first one of year indoors) at ICC building, Mansfield Road.

In addition, to the above, I have kept in touch with members via walking with the group and liaised with Committee and other members by emails and telephone conversations. I have also been in communication with the Area and Ramblers Headquarters as required.

Dates for the diary

Nottingham Ramblers Group AGM – Lambley Village Hall, Sunday 14th November 2021 at 2 pm.

Committee meeting – Thursday 2nd December 2021 at ICC building, Mansfield Road.

Coach walk Christmas meal – Sunday 5th December 2021, followed by pre-booked meal at the Grouse and Claret, Rowsley, Derbyshire.

A-plus walk Christmas meal – Saturday 11th December 2021 preceded by walk (venue to be notified).

Wednesday walk Christmas meal – Wednesday 15th December at the Victoria Hotel, Beeston preceded by walk.

Area AGM hosted by Nottingham Ramblers at the Village Hall, Trowell on Sunday 6th February 2022 at 2pm.

Nottingham and Derby Walking Group (David Hufton)

The year started with COVID Lockdown, which also caused the delay to the 2020 AGM from October 2020 to February 2021. At the AGM our Chair, Secretary, two walk coordinators and communications officer stepped down. The Chair, Communications Officer and Walk Co-ordinator roles were filled, with the Secretary role remaining unfilled, this was covered throughout the year across the other committee members. The Chair elected at the 2021 AGM resigned after 2 months, leaving the Chair role unfilled. I stepped in to the Chair role, initially on a temporary basis, to take the group through to the AGM in November 2021.

We've managed to slowly start-up a regular walks programme using Eventbrite to control numbers and control track and trace, with the initial take up being slow. The interest slowly grew over the year, with 2-3 walks regularly led during the summer months and 2 walks outside that. We have found, like many groups, that we are relying on a small core of volunteers to lead walks, and have unfortunately had to cancel a few walks due to no volunteers coming forward. We are looking into providing a walk leadership/navigation day to encourage new volunteers to come forward.

We have managed to successfully run one weekend away in Pembrokeshire at the height of summer which was well attended, and have a couple of weekends planned already for 2022.

Our 2021 AGM was held in November, with the majority of the committee deciding to step down. With no volunteers coming forward at the AGM, this left the group in a difficult position, with only the Chair, Walk Organiser and Webmaster roles being filled. Following a little coercing post AGM, we managed to fill the Secretary, Communication, Membership Secretary, Social Organiser, Treasurer and General Member roles. Whilst this means the committee is a little inexperienced, it does have a younger presence which is likely to provide a strong foundation going forward.

One of the main actions going forward as a 20's, 30's and 40's walking group is how we can engage with a younger demographic, as it's becoming clear that we're top heavy towards the upper end and above in the age bracket. To this end we're going to engage with Ramblers and other younger groups to see how we can adapt.

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

One Step Walkers Group (Robert Ingram)

This is my third year as Chair of this group. When walks were restricted due to Covid-19 limitations, we made major changes to our website to ensure safe operation of our walks. We have continued to make changes to our website to align safety considerations to Government and Ramblers guidelines. As we must still be cautious about covid 19 infections, we still have safety measures in place:

- Covid safe guidance documents for walk leaders and walkers.
- An electronic Risk Assessment producing a pdf copy for each walk and automatically archived.
- Walk number limit determined by the walk leaders.
- A walk registration system for members and guests.
- A track and trace system in the event of a reported Covid-19 infection (used three times).

We are very lucky to have an excellent webmaster who can make the required changes in good time.

Walks – We have walk coordinators who arrange walks for:

- Saturdays
- Sundays
- Weekdays
- Evenings

Routes are normally planned and recce'd by the walk leaders. We normally have walks on Saturdays, Sundays and weekdays, evenings through the summer and moonlight evening walks every other week through the winter. Walks can be on any day of the week and any evening. We have 73 registered walk leaders, but probably only half that number lead walks on a regular basis.

Walks Attendance – Due to covid 19 restrictions we were only able to walk for 34 weeks since last November. Allowing walk leaders to determine walk numbers has encouraged more people to lead walks. Over the 34 weeks, we have averaged 3.3 walks per week with an average of 10.8 people per walk. We do not have an overall walk number limit, but recommend not exceeding 30 for safety reasons. Walk leader limits generally range from 10 to 30, depending on car parking availability etc. Walk numbers are lower than expected, but this may be because other walking groups have started up in the area.

Accounts – From our last treasurer's statement on 14th October, our true balance was £1450.60. This is due to having less activity with the Covid-19 situation. We plan to have events such as another navigation and walk leading workshop that will use some of this funding in 2022. [Note- the amount of money in our account varies significantly through the year depending on event deposit outgoings and event payment incomings].

Weekends away – We have only managed a few weekend trips this year due to uncertain Covid-19 restrictions.

Holidays – Only one long distance walking trip went ahead this year, the Pembrokeshire Coastal Path.

Socials – We have had limited social activity this year due to continuing concerns about Covid-19. We did manage to have our Summer Party walking event at Bonsal in July with an attendance of 70 people. Our 10-year anniversary dance was postponed in 2020, but is now going ahead on 27th November this year as an Anniversary Christmas dance.

Membership – Current membership is 240, with 9 affiliated members. We continue to get membership enquiries and have a steady stream of new members, but we seem to be losing more than we are gaining.

GDPR – We are fortunate to have a Website Officer who is very familiar with GDPR and ensures 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 months walk leaders, thanking them for their efforts. Current circulation is 251.

Facebook (social account) – We now have 623 members with people posting on a regular basis. This is used to arrange casual socials and sharing pictures of walks and events.

Other Events – We had to cancel our map reading & walk leading workshop for January 2021 and intend to run it in January 2022, if there are no Covid-19 restrictions.

AGM - Our AGM will be held on the 2nd December 2021. We have candidates for each post and expect to have people elected to these positions after the AGM.

Summary - This has been another challenging year due to Covid-19 restrictions and membership numbers have kept up quite well in the circumstances. Finally, a big thank you to the committee and group members who volunteer their time to help us all enjoy the walking and social events we organise through the year.

Ravenshead & Hucknall Group (Brian Culpin)

Another truly difficult year for everyone but, where changing government restrictions have permitted, the group has managed to maintain an active walking programme and social programme within the guidelines issued by government and The Ramblers. Easing of restrictions also made it possible to hold an in-person 2021 AGM, rather than the more impersonal online approach.

After seeing most of our walks for the previous year cancelled or severely disrupted, we again experienced stop-start disruption to our walks programme. Regardless our Walks Secretary continued to produce our Autumn/Winter and Spring/Summer (even if scaled down) Walks Programme in readiness for Covid restrictions being eased. Without members volunteering to lead walks we would not have a walks programme to enjoy, so we place on record our many thanks to them. Especially given they now have to contend with the additional responsibility of keeping a register and contact details of walkers, carry out (and retain for 3 years) walk 'risk assessments', ensure our members stay safe and Covid secure on our walks.

We continued to have a steady flow of membership/walk enquiries throughout the year, mainly as a result of publishing our walks on the Ramblers 'Walks Finder'. Membership has increased by 11 over the last year, and now stands at 114. Although it appears many of these join The Ramblers to support the work and principles, but choose not to engage in

group walking or social activities, a view supported by the fact that only 20 (approx.) members regularly support our walking activities!

The group continues to remain in a healthy position financially, thanks to our treasurer who continues to keep our accounts in order and in-line with Ramblers requirements. It has been a relatively quiet year in terms of finance, with income balancing expenditure. Expenses continue to be kept to a minimum by extensive use of email (where possible) for walks programmes and social activity information, in addition to keeping printing to a minimum. As a consequence, for the coming year we will not be applying for funding, for year ending 30th September 2022.

After 16 months of imposed inactivity our Social Secretary was able to start planning social events once again. The first of these being a BBQ at Bestwood Country Park, held on a glorious July late afternoon/evening and enjoyed by 25 members. Mid-September finally saw a long planned (and many times rearranged) visit to Dale Abbey. The trip included a talk on the history of Dale Abbey, a visit to the Abbey remains and Hermit's Cave. On returning to the village, 21 members enjoyed a sumptuous cream tea outside in the tea room's garden, whilst taking advantage of the autumn sunshine.

Our 2021 AGM took place on Friday 19th November. Recent years have seen a decline in members volunteering to serve on our committee. As predicted, this year was no exception, with the key positions of Chairman, Group Secretary, and Membership Secretary remaining vacant. This, coupled with other less critical roles on the committee also remaining vacant leaves us with just 4 committee members. It is clear, at this point in time, we do not have a viable committee to manage the group. In an effort to encourage members to volunteer for a role on the committee, a letter (from the 2020/21 committee) outlining the situation and the potential consequences, was sent to members earlier this year. The letter was sent out again with 2021 AGM papers, but did not get the desired response.

Retford Group (Sally Fraser)

The past 12 months have been quite difficult for everyone. We have, at times, been close to tearing our hair out! What with changes in Covid regulations, car sharing and parking problems, as well as trying to put together some sort of a walks programme, it has been quite a challenge. Although we have reached a kind of normality, we are still struggling with the walks programme. Our walk leaders seem to be reluctant to commit too far in advance and so it has been decided that we shall continue producing a monthly programme for the foreseeable future. We are not operating a booking system or restricting numbers and this seems to be working well.

We held our AGM at the beginning of November with the Committee unaltered with an addition of one.

Rushcliffe Group (Mike Stock)

I had hoped that this year would have seen the disappearance of the pandemic but it seems to linger on causing some disruption to our social and holiday activities.

We have provided a full programme of walks ably organised by our walks organiser, Lorraine, for members throughout the year. We have continued with the booking system and at the discretion of walk leaders limited the numbers. The walks have been organised on a monthly cycle so we could react to changing circumstances as occurred with the

imposition of Tier 3 restrictions for the borough of Rushcliffe when some walks had to be cancelled or rearranged at short notice.

We have used Zoom for our committee meetings, which proved very popular during the winter! Our arrangements for an online AGM were successful but we missed the spontaneity and social interaction of a normal meeting and of course the tea and cakes! We will be reverting to our usual arrangements for this year's AGM.

We have not held any indoor social activities this year but after some lengthy negotiations, we are having our Christmas lunch at Colwick Hall. Optimistically we are looking forward to having more social events in 2022.

Our holidays and weekends away were postponed in 2020 and rearranged for 2021. Alas, this proved to be too optimistic for Derwentbank and Croatia which have been deferred until 2022, but a four-day break at Dovedale will take place in November. All these postponements have meant more time-consuming work for our holiday organiser Angela.

One of our scheduled holidays actually happened! 23 members descended on Malvern for a weekend of walking, talking, eating and generally having a good time. The participants had the choice of 5 walks between 5 and 12 miles. On one walk, walkers were treated to a fly-past of a lone Spitfire.

During the first lockdown, our Membership Secretary Rob set up and produced a newsletter to enable members to keep in contact with each other. The newsletter proved very popular with the membership, so it is now produced on a regular basis under the editorship of our Publicity Officer Trevor.

Our concern that we would lose members during the pandemic has been unfounded as our numbers have remained steady and, in fact, have increased.

Finally, I would like to thank all the committee members and walk leaders for their hard work.

Southwell Group (Dave Johnson)

Whilst it has been a difficult year for everyone our Group seems to have fared well with the support and hard work of members, especially walk leaders and our programme committee.

We have not reinstated our annual programme but have moved to a quarterly programme with walks on any day of the week depending on the diary of the walk leader. Certainly, during the summer this seemed to work reasonably well, with good numbers and our membership has increased. We even had sufficient interest to programme a walk most weeks.

As we have moved into the Autumn and Winter period numbers have dropped off a little but during October we have managed a mini walking holiday in Norfolk, at the 3rd attempt. This proved extremely popular with 23 members partaking of the delights of the Ffolkes Arms in Hillington, 10 of them on their first trip with us. The usual programme of long and short walks and sightseeing trips was on offer. We have booked trips to the Brecon Beacons and the South Downs for next year.

During October we also arranged a walk on Cannock Chase in Staffordshire, something we have been talking about for a long time. The 120 mile round trip was worth it especially as we got to walk across the River Trent on one of the longest packhorse bridges in the country.

Several members assisted Judith and the Area Team at the Southwell Ploughing match this year. A lovely experience and nice to be out in the crowds again in nice weather.

We have started to hold committee meetings face to face and had a face to face AGM recently, although the numbers were lower than usual. All Officers were re-elected unopposed. We plan on having a Christmas Walk and Social in December assuming the situation allows for it.

Southwell Town Council has again 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 the Post Office in Queen Street.

Vale of Belvoir Group (John Young)

Another year where everyone has had to deal with the host of issues surrounding Covid-19 not only in our daily lives but, as we all know, in our walking activities. As in 2020, our walk programme has been revised a number of times and we now plan and publish the programme a couple of months in advance which works well for everyone. We don't normally operate a booking system for our walks, but we will do so should the walk leader indicate that that is their preference.

Covid-19 has presented a number of challenges for the group not least the walk coordinators and leaders, and I think all things considered we did pretty well. I must thank our committee members & walks leaders for keeping things going in a 'business as usual' manner. We have not had any social events for obvious reasons and will probably not do so for a while yet. However, we do hope to have our annual Christmas Walk with Mulled Wine and Mince Pies which is always enjoyable and outdoors!

Our walks themselves have been pretty well attended and a number of the group went to Bourton on the Water for the annual trip to pastures new. Everyone enjoyed the weekend and thanks to everyone who organised it. In 2022 we are going to Derwent Water which will be great fun.

Worksop Group (Diana Munro)

We are pleased to note that membership of the Ramblers nationally is on the increase and is now at around 101,000+. In Nottinghamshire there are currently around 2,380 members and rising. This trend is reflected in our group as we now have 78 members - 10 more than this time last year. Despite this, out of the 14 Ramblers groups in Nottinghamshire we are still the second smallest – the largest group has 340+ members! It is important to note that the actual number of new members who have joined us this year is about 15/16 as about half a dozen have left us during that time. It is also interesting to note that well over 50% of our current membership have walked with us at some point during the last 12 months.

The November 2020 walks had to be cancelled following Government guidelines and then we were able to sneak in three walks in December before things went belly-up again. All three were very well attended. The walk on 20th December from Hardwick Park proved to be yet again our final one for several weeks but we all thoroughly enjoyed the 'Secret Santa', and the drinks of mulled wine and port, together with mince pies, millionaire shortbread and other goodies afterwards in the car park.

We then got the green light to restart group walks from 29th March 2021, so once we got the Easter break out of the way we were up and running (well walking) again and were able to

get our printed programme out for the beginning of May – a month later than usual. Since then attendance on walks has been excellent, although the few brave souls who did the Dennis Knoll walk on 18th July and the Longnor walk on 22nd July probably need certifying as the temperature was in excess of 25°C! Not to be recommended!

So far it has only been necessary to cancel one walk due to the leader being poorly with the dreaded virus. On the whole, things are very much back to normal as we continue to thoroughly enjoy our walks together as a group, often followed by refreshments and more social time in a pub. Proof that outdoor exercise is good for you!

The Parish Footpath Warden Scheme started in 2010. The aim was for all paths in the Bassetlaw Area to be walked and checked by volunteers at least once a year and any problems found to be reported to Nottinghamshire County Council. The role of the Footpath Secretary was to coordinate the team of volunteers and to issue them annually with a pack of forms, maps and path details to be completed as evidence that the checks had been carried out. This resulted in a significant number of files full of returns and duplicated copies of documents and, unfortunately, very few footpath issues actually being reported. When our Footpath Secretary resigned earlier this year, two huge boxes were collected from his house containing 10 years' worth of accumulated paperwork, the majority of which has now been disposed of. Consideration was given to a more simplified, email-based system of reporting but, following detailed discussion by the Committee, it was agreed to scrap the Parish Footpath Warden Scheme altogether. Instead we will ask all our members to be proactive when coming across any significant issues and to take on a collective responsibility for reporting them direct to the appropriate Local Authority, or to Notts Area Ramblers if the issue is in Nottinghamshire, via their mobile phones or computers.

Robin Hood Way FlexiGroup (Allan Rogers – Primary Contact)

We are only a small Group but all members help with the upkeep of the Robin Hood Way – a nationally recognised trail. Our helpers mainly belong to other Ramblers Groups with half the membership of the FlexiGroup being Affiliated members.

We continue to help with maintaining and reporting on the condition of the Robin Hood Way from Nottingham Castle to Edwinstowe Church. The route travels through 109 miles of Nottinghamshire countryside, villages and towns.

There have been various problems on the route, which together with Nottinghamshire County Council Rights of Way section have been, or are being, sorted. One major problem is at Fountains Dale Lakes and Friar Tucks Well. In this section the wooden bridleway boardwalk has collapsed in places and has been removed. Associated with this is a re-infestation of Japanese Knot Weed in a dam and the watercourse. This has resulted in the drainage of one of the lakes and a temporary diversion of the route and the bridleway. We are attempting to agree a permanent diversion whilst retaining access on a re-defined footpath to Friar Tuck's Well.

The whole of the route of the Robin Hood Way has been surveyed and the updating of the Robin Hood Way Guide Book is progressing. This work is funded by the Robin Hood Way Association with whom we work closely.

There are 18 sections to the Robin Hood Way and 14 circular walks plus the Mansfield to Edwinstowe walk, with a number of 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.

There is no specific budget held by this Group so before expenses are incurred, we request funding from Nottinghamshire Area. This financial year no funding has been required.

Since Covid-19, and the Government and Ramblers restrictions on group activities, no walks or socials have been successfully arranged.

We did have a presence at this year's Southwell Ploughing Match together with representatives from Notts Area and the Robin Hood Way Association.

Currently to become an 'Affiliate member' of Robin Hood Way NE70 Group it is necessary to contact Ramblers membership direct. This will not change any of your other existing details with your original group. We are hopeful that in the passage of time this will be achievable on-line.

I would like to give my thanks to those members and wardens who have continued through difficult times to assist in the maintenance and help safeguard the future of this very popular walk.

End of Report