



Nottinghamshire Area Ramblers



Annual Report 2022 - 23

Covering the period 1st October 2022 – 30th September 2023

www.nottsareamblers.org.uk

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Front page photos:

Major Oak, Sherwood Forest / Chesterfield Canal
 Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Clumber Park / Testing for Gas, Silverhill,
 Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station / Rover Trent at Gunthorpe
 All photos by Dave Hobson, Vale of Belvoir Group

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For the first time in three years Ramblers members and volunteers were able to enjoy walking and supporting our path protection work without the constraints of the pandemic.

Ross Maloney, the Ramblers CEO, came to visit in February, and was warmly welcomed by over 50 members. This was part of his fact-finding mission, which led to the launch of the new Ramblers Strategy in November.

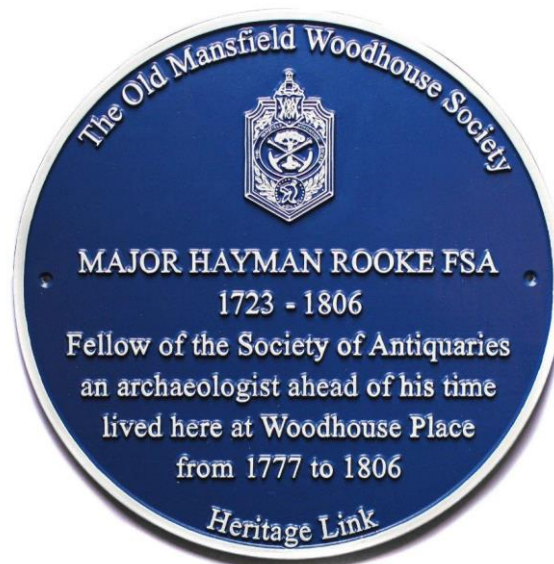
Steve Parkhouse continued his work on claiming lost ways, not only in Nottinghamshire, but also in Lincolnshire. Sadly, constraints on local authority resources continue to delay the processing of those claims.

Thanks to our Area President Paddy Tipping, Chris Thompson, and Nigel Sarsfield, the Notts Guided Walks Partnership was back, with a bigger and better brochure and website.

In July the first Area Day was held at Lady Margaret Hall on the Welbeck Estate.

Sadly the year also saw the demise of the Ravenshead & Hucknall Group. However our 14 remaining Groups continue to prosper thanks to the enthusiasm and dedication that is evident from their reports.

And finally, to celebrate the 300th anniversary of his birth, Major Hayman Rooke has emerged from obscurity, and is now recognised for his part in the history of Nottinghamshire.



AREA OFFICERS' REPORTS

1. AREA CHAIR (Sue Rick)

A big thankyou to Southwell Ramblers for hosting the 2023 AGM at Epperstone and for the 3 excellent walks. Thank you to everyone who attended on the day and well done to the photography competition winners some great photos here; sadly this was the last one.

In December I attended a meeting with Steve Parkhouse at Trent Bridge House with Neil Lewis and Councillor Butler from Nottinghamshire County Council regarding the Ombudsman's decision on the backlog of applications to add routes to the Definitive Map. They were given two years to come up with a plan and make progress.

A group of us were able to meet Ross Maloney, the new Ramblers C.E.O. at the end of February for a short walk and raise our concerns and share our views on the future of Ramblers with him. I also attended a Zoom Midlands/East Cluster meeting in March where he gave feedback on what he'd learnt.

Sadly Ravenshead & Hucknall group folded this year.

I was invited to attend a Communications meeting, the first since Covid struck. Judith and I attended General Council in Birmingham on 1st April which gave us the chance to meet other people from the Regional Cluster groups in person. The day included a question and answer session with the Senior Management team and a workshop session on 'Shaping our Future Strategy'. This was again a 1 day event with no guests which doesn't give new committee members a chance to gain experience at a National Level.

Judith and I were invited to the launch of the Major Hayman Rooke trail at Mansfield Woodhouse Library. At the launch we were shown a short film that has been made about the Major (whom the Major Oak is named after) and all of his achievements. The walk starts at Mansfield Woodhouse Library with the shorter walk 1 mile and the longer walk 1.5 miles. Many thanks to Chris Thompson for his work as Tourism & Heritage officer in helping to develop this trail.

In May the Area had a stall on the Notts County Show at Newark. There was lots of interest from the public and the stiles game went really well. Thanks to all the volunteers for a very interactive and enjoyable day and to the volunteers putting up the tent on Thursday.

The Area Groups day took place in July which included Heart Start training, Major Hayman Rook video and information stand, 3 walks, basic map reading, fuddle, raffle and bring & buy stall. The main aim was to integrate groups more, increase knowledge of what's happening around the County and share what is working well for each Group. The Lady Margaret Hall was a great venue easily accessible by public transport. Unfortunately only 4 groups took part, interestingly most who attended were new members but the feedback from these groups was very positive and I would like to thank all of those who volunteered to help both before and on the day.

I have also been liaising with Central Office on a few matters & participating in the regional Cluster meetings one of the topics being the new walks manager and the new website.

2. AREA SECRETARY (Judith Anson)

The **Area AGM** had another high attendance and thanks to everyone from the Southwell Group for making all the arrangements and organising good weather. Rebecca Dawson, Chair of the Board of Trustees was the key note speaker. Sue Jones stood down at the 2023 AGM and was thanked for her expertise as Countryside Officer. The post has unfortunately remained vacant although a candidate has come forward for 2024.

During the year, Brian Tufnell became the Area Webmaster (ex-officio) and Chris Taylor was able to retire – he took the role on a temporary basis 3 years ago! Thank-you to Chris for maintaining the Website so well. In October Steve Parkhouse also stood down as Area Rights of Way Secretary and Newsletter Editor and the AGM will wish to thank Steve for his expertise and dedication. Nottinghamshire will have a more extensive rights of way network when all Steve's path claims are implemented. Steve's work has been recognised by Central Office. The Notts Walker has also been successful and appreciated by Nottinghamshire members. Tony Norcross had decided to retire as Minutes Secretary and I would like to thank him for his work in this very necessary role.

The AGM is reminded that all **Officers** stand down at every AGM and if any member is interested in taking a post they should contact me. Nomination forms are on the website. To maintain Nottinghamshire as a vibrant Area we need volunteers willing to help. There are other volunteers required; in particular people to assist with rights of way work and an editor for the Notts Walker.

Area Council has had very interesting, informative and lively discussion sessions after each business meeting. In October 2022 Sue Rick led a session on walk leader recruitment with members sharing their ideas. Adrian Amer organised the January discussion on climate change and the Ramblers. In July Neil Stafford presented a paper on solar farms in Nottinghamshire suggesting that planning applications should be opposed where the proposals affected the green belt or long distance rights of way. Members wanted to discuss this in their Groups and it returned to the October meeting. Also in July, Vale of Belvoir led a discussion on the new walks manager and the new Ramblers website to seek views of other Groups and share suggestions. The third discussion in July had been held over from April and asked members to consider how the Area AGM could be enhanced. Suggestions have been taken forward into this AGM. In October the solar farms paper returned with Council being asked to vote on two formal motions. All Groups sent in views or made them in the meeting. The principles of solar farms not being located on green belt land and that long distance paths be protected were supported but the wording of the motions was not and they were withdrawn. Members in Groups were very engaged with the discussion on solar farms and the impact on the countryside as a large number of comments were received. A Special Area Council was held in November 2023 to discuss the new Ramblers strategy and agreed the delegates should vote in favour.

General Council in 2023 was regrettably only a one day format despite the motion presented in 2022. Yet another motion to return GC in 2024 to a two day format was passed but has been ignored by the Board and 2024 is also only one day. There was very limited time at the 2023 GC but there was a presentation on a new Ramblers strategy which was presented to an Extraordinary GC in November. Although the support for the strategy was lukewarm, it was passed. There is no implementation plan or timescale so it is not clear what it will mean for Groups and members.

The **Ravenshead and Hucknall Group** unfortunately closed during the year, following the decision of the Extraordinary AGM to reject a merger with another Group. A number of members had proposed the creation of a Flexi-Group for 23 members which was rejected by Area Council. All R&H members were initially transferred into the Not in Group section of members and encouraged to move to another Group of their choice. Unfortunately, although Area completed all the necessary paperwork in April and reallocated the Parishes to neighbouring Groups, Central Office has still not completed the necessary work. This failure of the paid staff has resulted in volunteers spending valuable time trying to resolve matters. At the time of writing there is no end to this situation and I have asked for confirmation that future issues will be handled more effectively.

The Area Chair has referred to the work we have been involved with as part of the **Area Cluster**. This has been valuable and has allowed Areas to share information and ideas and contact Officers to discuss topics of mutual interest.

Ross Maloney, the Ramblers CEO visited Nottinghamshire in early 2023 and the Mansfield & Sherwood Group arranged a walk and fuddle. All Groups were invited to attend and there was a good turn out of members.

Another **photographic competition** was held during 2022 with prizes awarded at last year's AGM. One of the photos has been included in this report. Thanks to all those submitting photographs and to the Judges. Area Council decided not to continue with the competition as the number of entries was low.

Notts Ramblers and Groups had a presence at the **Nottinghamshire County Show** with interest shown in walking and the countryside. Groups gave out leaflets about their walks and talked about rights of way issues. Thanks to all those Groups who attended and made the event a success. It was decided not to attend the Southwell Ploughing Match in September as there were not enough volunteers.

This has been a **challenging and difficult year** for the Executive Officers who have put in more hours than should required of any volunteer. This has also meant that initiatives have been delayed and planning put on hold as there has not been sufficient Officer time available. I am grateful to all my fellow Officers as we work together as a team to support each other. It is hoped that 2024 will be a better year and that we can move forward with ideas.

Last, but not least, thank-you to the Rushcliffe Group for hosting this AGM. Given the weather and flood alerts at the time of writing, I hope their planned walks can all go ahead after the effort put in by members.



3. AREA RIGHTS OF WAY SECRETARY (Steve Parkhouse)

Applications

Farndon User application
Carlton in Lindrick
Gringley on the Hill
Halam & Edingley
Edwinstowe User application

NCC Orders

Kirkby in Ashfield FP16 unregistered gap under the former rail lines has been dealt with.

North Muskham FP - crossed the East Coast Mainline so we campaigned for a new route including behind the hedge path to access the bridge over the A1. Diversion approved.

The last edition of Notts Walker in January carried a report about the Ombudsman decision against the County Council after the complaint about the very slow progress in processing applications. It hasn't improved.

Babbington (Kimberley) – objections so will have to go to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS)

Nettleworth (Warsop) Landowner wants changes which we support because they would reduce the size of the bridge needed.

Pleasley Vale (Mansfield Woodhouse) – 30 objections to the Order - should be referred to PINS now.

Holme Pierrepont riverside - still waiting for the Order.

Hallcroft Fishery, Retford – One objection to Order – to be referred to PINS.

Cuckney - still no Order

PINS cases

Elston & East Stoke network of footpaths – Inspector found in our favour – have agreed diversion to avoid expensive bridges over the Carr Dyke. Inspector commented on thorough way evidence presented.

West Markham An unregistered footpath with wide views across North Notts.– The Inspector refused to confirm Order – professionals in other user organisations were astounded as it potentially effects 100s of other cases based on Enclosure Evidence. The Ramblers Paths Team have applied to the Board for funding to appeal to the High Court for Judicial Review challenging the decision based on the fact that the Enclosure was based on an Act of Parliament which legally created the route.

Ethel Avenue, Carlton Hill. This is a short 15ft wide lane created in 1894 that a developer had blocked. A complication was that all the residents of 1700 houses had a private right to use part of it in their deeds and could give permission to anyone else. I calculated that this would quickly mean 70,000 people could have permission. The residents of the adjacent estate had a private right to use the rest. We found enough users from both estates, but also argued that the deeds created public access as the qualifying group was huge. The Inspector commended the thorough way the evidence had been presented.

Kneeton to Flintham footpath (Trent Hills). This one was supposed to have started by now but still have no starting date – likely to be written case so will fall to me to do.

We have bright spot that affects the application – The objectors were relying on what they claimed was a legal principal – namely the judge's ruling in a 1964 Quarter Sessions case examining whether there was enough user evidence to include the route on the Definitive Map. The case was lost at that time with the Judge deciding that a 1939 sign was a challenge to use which left insufficient years of use. It was a legal maxim that the matters decided in the hearing could not be challenged subsequently. 1910 Finance Act evidence that only became available in 1968 and only really entered the public domain much later extended user evidence back sufficiently before 1939. A key point of our case is that the matter decided was that there was a sign that challenged use and we accepted that but were introducing new much earlier evidence. A very similar case pitted Staffordshire County Council against a landowners on the same grounds. The judge ruled in favour of the Council and the landowner's legal representatives have now been refused permission to appeal the decision, clearing the way forward for the Trent Hills Order. We still have to wait for the case to reach the top of the Planning Inspectorate pile and then present a winning case.

Kings Clipstone Footpath (2008 application) – PINS have said it is starting but date not yet set. It has already been to PINS once when the Officer failed to include one route in the decision. Having won the appeal I was surprised the Officer did not included the second path in the Order. It was necessary to object to the Order for my own application!

Trent Valley Way

The Rights of Way volunteers have been putting the way-marking training to use by checking and renewing the way-marking for the Trent Valley Way through Nottinghamshire. This was prompted by the Trent Rivers Trust extending the long distance route from its western end at Shardlow by adding 43miles through Staffordshire. The route starts at Alkborough where the Trent meets the Humber.

Solar Array strategy

Our 2022 document provided a draft for the Ramblers national document which was finalised in September 2023. The aim is to get developers to include in the planning application improving the experience of ROW users by creating a new sense of space. Decisions about whether to object or not are only considered once the planning application is made when the whole scheme can be examined.

Serious Problems

With major flooding becoming an annual event due to global warming, massive damage is being done to the ROW network. Coupled with high inflation this is putting huge strain on the County Council's ROW budget.

Examples of recent major flooding problems are Kings Clipstone BW1 closed after part of the farm track alongside the River Maun washed away and problems with the footpath from Holme across the Langford RSPB reserve where an embankment was washed away.

Lindhurst BW – this has had a temporary diversion for a long time as the board walk had rotted away. £100k is the estimated cost of for replacement because of Japanese Knotweed. Supporting the diversion becoming permanent means the money that could be spent dealing with many of the other problems such as the missing bridge on the

Hangmans Lane, Clayworth or the Boots footbridge across the Beeston Canal which none of the adjacent landowners will accept responsibility for.

Attenborough bridleway bridge closed for several years – being dealt with by the Broxtowe Group

Lincolnshire Don't Lose Your Way

After a few months delay whilst I recovered from a hand operation in August the output of applications has accelerated again as the big list of anomalies is tackled. These are huge number of existing routes that don't reach the road or have gaps. By the time you read this 300 applications target will have been submitted in a little over two years.

Rights of WayTeam Additional Comments

The Rights of Way team, led by Steve Parkhouse, has continued to meet via Zoom on a monthly basis. The team includes District Coordinators, Footpath Secretaries and other volunteers from Notts walking groups. Before the post became vacant, the Countryside Officer also attended. In these meetings there was always an update from the RoW Secretary. Additionally, members of the team brought forward issues for the consideration of the entire team. These issues pertained to:

- the scrutiny of planning applications undertaken by the district coordinators
- problems reported on rights of way
- major projects such as solar farms, the redevelopment of the Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station site, large housing developments and so on.

These discussions enabled members of the team to respond appropriately to the relevant authorities.

Team members also corresponded and/or met with the RoW Secretary individually to seek further guidance.



4. AREA MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY (Diana Munro)

	GROUP	01.10.22	01.10.23	Net gain/loss	Affiliates
NE01	Newark	165	164	-1	10
NE02	Nottingham	311	308	-3	4
NE03	Retford	84	80	-4	0
NE04	Ravenshead & Hucknall*	103	0	-103	0
NE05	Worksop	78	69	-9	3
NE07	Rushcliffe	329	332	3	3
NE08	Broxtowe	199	207	8	1
NE09	Gedling	185	176	-9	0
NE10	Mansfield & Sherwood	145	229	84	3
NE11	Southwell	90	85	-5	1
NE14	Collingham	59	61	2	0
NE15	Vale of Belvoir	111	106	-5	0
NE50	Notts Derbys Walking Group	176	156	-20	4
NE51	One Step Walkers	230	210	-20	11
NE70	Robin Hood Way	3	2	-1	2
NE96	Not in a group	66	80	14	0
	AREA TOTAL	2,334	2,265	-69	42
	NATIONAL TOTAL	105,183	104,487	-696	

*This group is now closed. In August 2023 the remaining members were transferred to the Mansfield & Sherwood Group by Ramblers, contrary to the request made by Notts Area to transfer them to NE96. In the meantime, a small number have chosen to resign, a small number have moved group and the membership of some has lapsed. This leaves approximately 63 members who have the freedom of choice to either remain with Mansfield & Sherwood or move to another Group, but they have not yet done so. The request by Notts Area that they are moved en bloc to 'not in a group' still remains as the current situation has funding implications.

	Notts Area	National
2015	2,235	107,369
2016	2,202	105,990
2017	2,203	104,694
2018	2,228	102,818
2019	2,234	102,038
2020	2,215	98,717
2021	2,382	101,130
2022	2,334	105,183
2023	2,265	104,487

The drop of 69 since last year in Notts Area membership numbers looks alarming until you look at the figures since 2015, then it becomes clear that numbers have remained steady, averaging at 2,255.

The national picture is not so good as there is still some way to go before total membership gets back up to and beyond the 2015 level.

5. AREA TREASURER (Neil Stafford)

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

In line with directives from Central Office, from the start of the 2021-22 financial year all income and expenditure related to the Don't Lose Your Way (DLYW) project has to be separated out and regarded as Restricted Funds. This is because the funding of DLYW comes from the People's Postcode Lottery, Cotswold, and other sponsors, and not from membership fees.

Restricted Funds		
Receipts	2022-23	2021-22
Grants	200.00	1,100.00
From DLYW Project	675.00	1,200.00
Total receipts	875.00	2,300.00
Expenditure		
DLYW	352.23	525.16
Surplus/(deficit)	522.77	1,774.84

Main Funds		
Receipts	2022-23	2021-22
Ramblers Central Office	4,434.00	3,950.00
From Group	49.54	
Donations		17.00
Total receipts	4,483.54	3,967.00
Expenditure		
Group Funding	1,884.00	2,950.00
Newsletters/publicity	624.18	442.76
Campaigns/casework	160.90	97.70
Meetings (inc. AGM)	844.01	953.10
Admin	54.98	55.53
Other	80.00	
Total payments	3,648.07	4,499.09
Surplus/(deficit)	835.47	(532.09)

Self-funds		
Receipts	2022-23	2021-22
Socials	139.50	
Expenditure		
Socials	184.63	
Surplus/(deficit)	(45.13)	

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	Restricted	Main	Self-funded	Total
Total receipts	875.00	4,483.54	139.50	5,498.04
Total payments	352.23	3,648.07	184.63	4,184.93
Closing cash balance	3,497.61	4,397.55	-45.13	7,850.03
Net assets/liabilities (funds)	3,497.61	4,397.55	-45.13	7,850.03

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and Group independent examination guidelines, I consider the " Nolts NE "accounts to give a fair representation of the Area's/Group's financial activities for the year to 30 September 2023.

Signed:

A. Bolton

Date:

13 November 2023

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 funds stood at £4,352.42 (excluding restricted funds).

Aside from DLYW, the accounts show two broad functions:

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

Costs of Running Area

Area received £2,500 from Ramblers Central Office in 2022-23. This was less than the anticipated expenditure due to the level of reserves. For various reasons, most notably that no visitors were permitted at General Council, the actual cost of running Area (excluding Group payments) was £1,809.20.

Points to note:

- Restricted Funds - *Grants* (£200) – secured by the Area RoW Secretary from the British Horse Society in respect of DLYW claims he has made. Ramblers has encouraged RoW secretaries to submit expenses claims to the BHS where appropriate.
- Main Funds receipts - *From Group* (£49.54) – are the residual funds following the closure of the Ravenshead & Hucknall Group. This was less than anticipated as the Group spent £140.18 on refreshments and long service awards at their final AGM. This matter has been reported to Central Office.
- Main Funds expenditure - *Meetings* (£844.01) – includes an annual Zoom licence, which continues to be used regularly by the RoW team and Area Officers.
- Main Funds expenditure - *Other* (£80) was the room hire for the visit of the Ramblers CEO, Ross Maloney.
- Self Funds Income and expenditure relates entirely to the Area Day held in July.

Membership Recruitment Initiatives

Area continues to hold £300 to support Group membership recruitment initiatives. Groups are welcome to submit proposals for consideration.

Budget for Financial Year 2023-24

Area reserves are still high in relation to our forecast expenditure in 2023-24. However, expenditure is forecast to rise due to expected inflationary increases in such things as pitches at events, travelling expenses, and postage etc. This was reflected in the budget funding request. I am delighted to report that this Budget and that of all our Groups has been approved by Central Office.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank all the Group Treasurers for their work in ensuring that, the budget and annual returns were submitted to Central Office in a timely fashion.

6. AREA TOURISM AND HERITAGE PATHS OFFICER (Chris Thompson)

Notts Guided Walks Brochure 2023

This year we thank Paddy Tipping Our Area President for assisting in finding grant funding and the opportunity of being able to publish a brochure in addition to our website. This was the first brochure since 2020 due to the Covid19.

We are delighted with the success of this programme and the additional links we have been able to attract. However, we ask please if we can have more support from Ramblers Groups to provide some walks to the 2024 brochure. Thank you. The aim of the brochure is for groups to be able to attract new members. The guided walks programme is now on Facebook, and a lot of work has been carried out to find more contacts in the County to see the handbook fully promoted. We apologise for walk leaders who had walks on our programme in April and May period. It took a longer period to distribute the brochures around the County. Fortunately, after further discussions with Notts Libraries they revised their original decision and in early May agreed to deliver the brochures to their libraries. This quickly resolved our problem in dispatching the brochures. around the county.

We were this year able to also provide a full list of Well Being Walks to enable new starters to go out walking, A list of Notts Wildlife Trust Walks linking the opportunity to enjoy the environment, a list of Nottinghamshire long-distance Walks giving you the opportunity of organising a way to see more of the Nottinghamshire County, and several links to major tourist sites with details of walks they were organising. As you can see, we are doing everything. possible to fully promote walking in Nottinghamshire as well as attract the opportunity of the public to take up walking, with the aim of seeing the groups have more members joining The Ramblers. We will be putting together a further Notts Guided Walks brochure in 2024. One point, we publish a brochure in April then ask the public to constantly look at our website because we are constantly adding further walks to the programme. We thank all walk leaders for their support and to everyone who joined the walks. And lastly, we take this opportunity to thank Nigel Sarsfield from the Notts Derby Ramblers for all his support in designing the new brochure and carrying out all the updates and running the Facebook programme.

Major Hayman Rooke

The Ramblers Notts Area linked with Sherwood Forest Trust and other partners to promote the 300th anniversary of the birth of Major Hayman Rooke. This gentleman is little known by his name, but he is remembered in a way that makes him known to millions of people the world over. He came to Nottinghamshire in 1771 living at Woodhouse Place, Mansfield Woodhouse. During his residence in the area he would have become known as "The

Major” and he was often seen walking in the area of “Queens Oak’ As time went on the locals called this tree ‘The Major Oak’ He was a member of the Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians and a Fellow of the Royal Society. He wrote many articles on archaeology, discovered the Roman Villa at Mansfield Woodhouse, was an expert on trees and was very friendly with the Duke of Welbeck.

During the last year a partnership including the Ramblers Notts Area has put together a Mansfield Woodhouse Major Hayman Rooke Heritage Trail which promotes the town and highlights key buildings that would have been present in the life of Major Hayman Rooke. A brochure is available from Mansfield Woodhouse library, and we hope soon a pdf pamphlet will be available on the internet. In addition, a trail is being prepared to promote the Major Oak with also detailing a sample of the veteran oaks along the route to visit the Major Oak. This work is not completed at this time but will be available soon.

To complete this work a talk was prepared on details of Major Hayman Rooke which resulted in a series of presentations during the year. Also, a film is available called “ A Man ahead of his Time” link

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teX958BuZjbU&t=858S&ab_channel=DenisHill

See also <https://www.nottsarearamblers.org.uk>. We are very pleased to have highlighted the name of Major Hayman Rooke who we all are now aware the important work he did in Nottinghamshire.

Trent Vale Trail

Chris Thompson is a member this committee to see set up a Long Distance Trail from Newark to link Winthorpe, Holme, Collingham, Besthorpe, Gorton, South Clifton, to cycle/walk trail at Fledborough viaduct. This provides then a link to Lincoln. The aim of the Trent Vale Trail is to provide a family friendly walking and cycling trail route and for wheelchairs and pushchairs through this amazing wetland area. Currently the route is fully established to Gorton with works currently in place to establish a bridleway over Clifton Hill into South Clifton. Circular walks are being prepared and there are youtube videos. Please take the opportunity to visit the trail as a cyclist or walker. You won't be disappointed.

Programme of Self-Guided Walks

I am currently putting together a series of self-guided walks. The aim is to provide a series of walks around the County of Nottinghamshire but also taking the opportunity of highlighting the heritage of the County. All the walks will be approved by the Area Communications Committee before being allowed to be included on the website. The aim will be to also highlight in more detail one important heritage item. For example, I have written a walk around Calverton with a special page giving full details of Rev. William Lee an English clergyman and the inventor who devised the first stocking frame knitting machine in 1589. These walks are being prepared with the aim of publishing them in 2024.

May I take this opportunity to ask if any member would like to assist in putting some self-guided walks together you would be very much welcomed. Please email info@nottsarearamblers.org.uk. Please note full assistance will be available to put a walk together. It would be excellent if we can have more support from members to complement our current programme of walks. Thank you.

7. AREA GROUPS OFFICER (Alex Ellis)

My role as Groups Leader has given me an insight into how other groups operate within the Ramblers Strategy. Groups have found since Covid it has been difficult to get back to their full capacity.

I have seen that the Groups I have managed to walk with have great professional skills and are very welcoming to new members and also to myself. Any information I have asked about the Group has been very informative and interesting.

The Groups have no major problems but some feel that doing a Risk Assessment can be off putting to Walk Leaders. In response I do have to say that Risk Assessments are a way of life when you have responsibility for a Group of walkers to yourself and to others hence Risk Assessments need to be done for in case of a serious issue.

Booking on, most Groups are usually following this procedure there are some Groups who just let walkers turn up on the day as booking on is not a compulsory requirement.

Some Groups do have problems getting walk leaders which I feel has to do with confidence in their abilities and do not want to take responsibility for a large group of walkers. I think some training sessions would be a great help seeing what we can offer to help our up-and-coming walk leaders.

It has come to light that most walkers within Groups do not know what Area Ramblers do. I am finding that I enjoy enlightening walkers what we actually do and achieve.

In my capacity I have been walked with Gedling, Nottingham, Southwell, Rushcliffe, Broxtowe, Newark and my Group, Mansfield and Sherwood; more Groups to follow in 2024.

I have been talking to Groups about combining social events Holidays, Walks; all Groups were open to ideas .

I have found getting involved with Groups and their activities is very rewarding. I have been invited to Newark's Sports evening - great fun; Rushcliffe put on a very interesting talk at The Poppy and Pint in West Bridgeford and I will be joining them for their Christmas Walk and Dinner. Newark Ramblers and Mansfield and Sherwood Ramblers put on a joint walk taking in Whaley Thorns, Cresswell Crag and Holbeck most enjoyable with great feedback for future joint walks with other Groups.

Looking forward to meeting the other Groups in 2024 thank you all for your support to myself on your walks and social events.

8. AREA COMMUNICATIONS SUB-GROUP (Judith Anson)

Nott's Area Website www.nottsarearamblers.org.uk

As I have stated in my Area Secretary's Report, thanks to Chris Taylor for keeping the website functioning and welcome to Brian Tuffnell. Brian has already been changing the Website so please look at it and let us have any comments. Articles and photos are always welcome.

Share your favourite walk with your Ramblers friends.

We all have a favourite Nottinghamshire walk. It may include a significant landmark, or a stunning viewpoint. Why not share it by having it posted on the [self-guided walks section](#) of our website. We are not asking you to write it all up. Simply send us a map (to info@nottsarearamblers.org.uk) with an outline of the route, the start location and points of interest, and we'll do the rest.

Notts Walker

Steve Parkhouse has stepped down as Editor of Notts Walker and I am sure the AGM will wish to thank Steve for his effort and time in making the newsletter a success. We are seeking a new Editor but this will not be an elected Officer post and there is no requirement to attend Area Council. Please contact me if you have a creative flair and want to take our newsletter into the next phase.

Facebook Page

For reasons known only to big tech and to the great disappointment of Sue Jones who has worked so hard on it, our Facebook page has been 'banned'. Sue has been unable to find out a reason or even obtain a response. This is extremely annoying as there seems to be no appeal to a human being. It would be interesting to know which bit of the excellent posts caused the problem.

Publicity

The Nottinghamshire County Show at Newark was a great success. I would like to thank everyone who helped putting up and taking down the stand and those Groups who attended to talk to the public about Ramblers and the importance of rights of way.

The new Notts Area publicity leaflets have been well received. I hope a member will come forward as Publicity Officer so we can do more to promote Ramblers in Nottinghamshire.

Membership of Communications Group

Our long serving members of the Communications Group have stood down and we will be seeking to reconstitute the Group when we can fill the vacant posts.



Ramblers Stand at Nottinghamshire County Show *(Brian Tuffnell)*

GROUP ANNUAL REPORTS

9. Broxtowe Group (Keith Jacobs)

Broxtowe's membership has remained steady at about 200, with a few transfers from the erstwhile Ravenshead and Hucknall Group. The committee remains well attended, with all offices (except Publicity Officer!), filled and with members without portfolio as well; 11 in all.

Finances are stable, though the increase in expenses resulted in funds being low in mid year. A sensible cap and claims being dealt with promptly and one at a time will help in this respect.

A full programme of mid week and Sunday walks has been maintained through the year with very few cancellations caused by extreme weather. The new Walks Manager System has functioned well and nearly all walk leaders are confident in inputting their proposed walks in the new way, which has enabled making late adjustments much more flexible.

The group visit to Llandudno in Autumn was a great success despite storm conditions on the last day. Two similar visits are planned for next year, to the Brecon Beacons (Bannau Brycheiniog) and to the Isle of Wight.

Our Facebook site is well used and now contains more information and pictures of walks. Informal What's App groups have centred on midweek and weekend walks which enables car sharing to occur more easily. We are certainly increasing the use of public transport for as many of our walks as we can, though this is not always easy.

A 'Family Friendly' walk on a summer Saturday was well attended and we will be considering more of them in future.

10. Collingham Group (Chris Adams)

This year has not been without its challenges, particularly regarding health issues among our gradually ageing membership which has affected our ability to find enough leaders for both our Sunday and Wednesday program and also our walks have tended to become shorter with 7 miles now our maximum. Nevertheless, we have managed to put on a really good schedule of walks, mainly on Sundays but with a few Wednesdays interspersed, covering Notts., Lincs., and Leics. We have found over the years that members will not travel too far for a walk so all our starting points are less than one hour's drive from Collingham, with the exception of our one Derbyshire walk.

Over the year, in no particular order, we have had walks at the following places:- Roman Lincoln, Donnington on Bain, Riseholme, Skellingthorpe, Fiskerton, Cauntton, Fledborough, Bardney, Harby(Leics), Tealby, Clarborough, Kettlethorpe, Doddington, Plungar, Peak District, Edingley, Farnsfield, Besthorpe, Sherwood Forest and Stapleford Woods. We did have to cancel three planned walks-hopefully this will not recur.

Our membership had declined slightly but has now recovered to 60.

As regards finance, our most recent balance (17th. Sept.) stands at £364.28, a reduction of £51.69 compared with a year ago. Money has been spent on hiring venues for our AGM and our Summer lunch at the Collingham Bowls Club as well as for advertising in village and parish magazines.

Within the last year we also organised a mince pie and mulled wine walk at Girton in the run-up to Xmas and a well attended New Year lunch at the pub in Morton.

Our committee now consists of six plus a minuting secretary. A new member to the committee has enabled us to post our walks on Walks Manager and have a presence on the Collingham facebook page.

Our AGM is booked for Nov. 22nd and I believe all the present committee are willing to continue.

11. Gedling Group

No report received



12. Mansfield and Sherwood Group (Brian Tuffnell)

Walks & Social events.

Another very rewarding year full of walks and social events. As has become the norm, we started the year with a walk and visit to the East Markham Apple Festival. That was quickly followed by a coach holiday in Llandudno where we had three good walks, a visit to a whiskey distillery and a day in Betws-y-Coed and the Llanberis slate mine museum. In November we had a committee meeting that didn't involve any work, just a lovely meal at Refined. Our Christmas party was a great success and made even better with a free bar thanks to a generous Christmas gnome. February saw us attending the local Hospital Troupe pantomime supporting local charities, attend the annual Ashbourne Shrovetide Football Match and have a walking weekend at Ilam Youth Hostel with some beautiful walks around Dovedale. We also hosted the visit of Ross Maloney, CEO, to Nottinghamshire with a walk to the historic Pleasley Vale Mills and a fuddle. In March our second coach holiday of the year was to the Isle of Wight with two great coastal walks and a visit to Osborne House. At the end of the month, we had a visit to the museum at Mansfield fire station.

In April we had a very interesting visit to Pleasley Pit where we had a short walk before having a museum tour and then listening to Songs and Rhymes of The Mines with a pie and pea supper too. We had a behind the scenes Limelight Tour at Nottingham Theatre Royal in June, very entertaining. We helped organise the first Notts Area Day held in Lady Margaret's Hall at Holbeck. Our last walk of July was a short one around Laxton before we went into the National Holocaust Centre to hear a very moving rendition of Broken Instruments, a musical story of a holocaust survivor. August saw us wandering around the beaver enclosure at Idle Valley Nature Reserve to see the work taking place to reintroduce beavers into the wild, having an evening of fun trying to play skittles, our second Alex Staniforth Memorial Walk in Malham and finish the month walking the Bonnie Price Charlie Way over the bank holiday weekend. On probably one of the hottest days of the year in September we had a coach trip to Haworth with a walk to Top Withens and the Bronte Waterfall.

AGM

We had a very successful format change to our AGM with a long and short walk prior to the meeting followed by a fuddle, raffle and bring & buy sale. The meeting was well attended and we had several new members elected to the committee who are keen to volunteer their time and help which has assisted the committee greatly.

Committee Meetings

We have continued to have open Committee meetings where any member can come along and learn about what's involved with running the group. As a result of this we have managed to find a new treasurer and membership secretary.

Publicity

The Facebook site is working very well both for advertising the walks and sharing achievements. The refresh of our website with more up to date content has proved popular. We also have regular updates on our achievements in the local papers & newsletters. In July we had a stall at Warsop Carnival to raise awareness of the Ramblers and our work and aims where John's model stiles proved very popular.

Walk Leaders

This year we have gained several new walk leaders to replace the ones who are no longer able to lead walks. The online walk Leader training has been very helpful and leaders have been supported to do the recces, buddying etc. The Grandparents /accessible walks are gathering strength & we look forward to building on these in the future.

Training

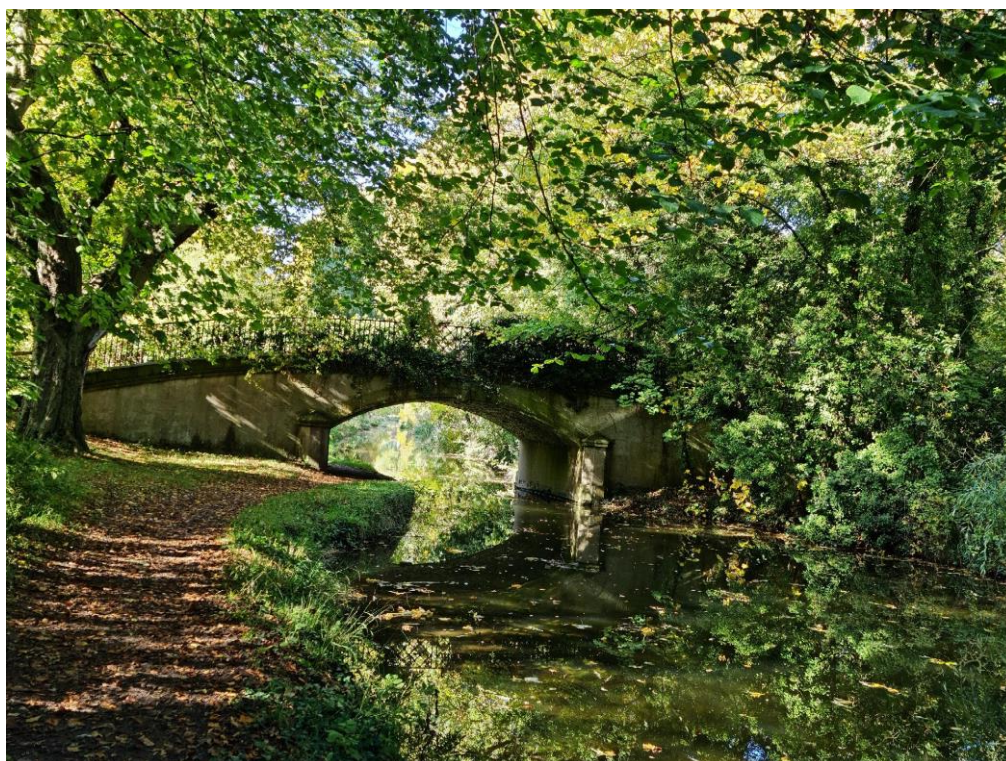
Many of us have attended the online training events provided by Central Office and also completed online training courses.

Membership

It is difficult to get an accurate record of our membership as Central Office erroneously put all of the devolved Ravenshead & Hucknall group into our group despite being asked to put the membership into Notts Area and let the R & H members choose which group they would like to be with. This is still ongoing but it looks like our membership has stayed roughly the same as the year before.

Litter Picking

Our litter picking team have a monthly litter picking walk and over the year have filled over 90 bags of litter. To cope with the number of bags of litter we have now equipped the team with a trolley and to get even more litter, long range litter pickers.



**Winner, Area Photographic Competition 2022
Canal Walk by Bob Ward, Worksop Group**

13. Newark Group (Carol Wilkinson)

This has been a very successful year for Newark Ramblers. We have attracted more members and offered three walks each week, two on Wednesdays and one on Sundays. The transition from GWEM to Walks Manager went very well, thanks to Caroline who worked closely with Central Office, and members are now putting walks onto the system themselves. We have a good number of walk leaders who help us to offer a well-balanced programme throughout the year. Our group could not function without them and we are forever grateful for their help.

We are very often complemented on our website which is full of information for existing and potential members. We now have an extensive collection of photographs from our walks together with a good selection of routes.

The Walking for Health group continues to attract people who are new to walking or who wish to build up stamina before embarking on longer or faster walks. Our thanks go to the walk leaders who give up their time to make sure that this group continues to flourish.

We continue to keep Risk Assessments of all our walks and to help new walk leaders with planning, recces etc. We have recently offered walk leaders an opportunity to meet together to exchange ideas and good practice.

In October, a group of 14 members went to the Lake District on a residential walking holiday. This was very much enjoyed by all those who took part.

Our AGM is a little later this year, at the end of November, as this date worked better for us as a group. It will be held at Southwell WI hall and there will be a shorter and longer walk in the morning.

The committee has worked well together this year and all except the Secretary are willing to stand again.

The articles we submit to Use Locally are a very good way of promoting our group at no cost to ourselves. We shall continue to do this in the future.

We have held a good number of social events this year including visits to theatres, restaurants, quiz nights, a ceilidh, a garden party, visits to the Holocaust Centre and the Framework Knitters Museum, trips to London to walk across Hampstead Heath and to York for a walk along the river to Bishopthorpe as well as a Christmas party. We once again took part in the Christmas Tree Festival in Newark parish church and we shall do the same again in 2023 with the theme of Walking through the Seasons. We were also represented at the Senior Citizens' Fair arranged by Newark MP, Robert Jenrick.

We are currently arranging to plant a tree for the coronation of Charles III in Sconce Park.

Newark Ramblers is a super, friendly group of people who not only enjoy walking together but who support each other whenever there is a need.

14. Nottingham Group (Linda Honey)

In November 2022 we began the year without sufficient committee members, Barrie Dale had completed his three very successful years as Chair, and he was thus standing down. It was suggested to me that I should stand as Chair, I agreed and I was duly voted in to this post, at the December 2022 committee meeting. We also had, and still have three other vacant positions on our committee. (Vice Chair, Area Representative, and Footpaths officer). In the absence of an Area representative, for the time being, I am sending in reports as needed to the Area committee.

Over the course of this year, there have been some important issues to discuss within our group:-

1) SUNDAY COACH WALKS

When I took over as Chair, the main issue was definitely the viability of the Sunday Coaches. This was due to a huge rise in the cost of hiring a coach, due to the spiralling fuel costs, and wage increases for the drivers. Because of this, we had had to change from running the coaches fortnightly, to once a month, to try to ensure we could fill the coach, each time. After having to cancel one of the monthly coaches completely, we are now happy to report that the coaches are now usually full, or almost full and running at a slight profit. We have visited many different areas around the Derbyshire and Staffordshire Peak District. It has been decided to remain running the coaches only on a monthly basis, as we no longer have enough walk leaders to sustain fortnightly coaches.

2) WALK LEADERS

We definitely have a shortage of walk leaders, particularly for the Sunday coaches. All walk leaders are at present, able to go free on the coaches, and able to claim a limited amount for recce expenses. However, as the coach aims to provide four walks of differing lengths each time, it is difficult sometimes to guarantee all four walks can always be offered. We lost some regular walk leaders, who were unhappy about the Risk Assessment demands. We are hopeful that, the recent amendments to the Risk Assessment by National Ramblers, will be beneficial to us. A Saturday training session for new and existing walk leaders was held by our group in November.

Our Annual AGM was held at Beeston Highfields Fire Station, on November 5th 2023, at 2pm. This was an excellent venue for us. The function room can be hired free by registered charities. It is also on a good bus route and the tramline is nearby. A short walk was organised to the venue, for those who wanted to take part in that and a small buffet was also provided.

At this meeting, we were very sorry to lose our loyal club secretary of fourteen years service, Randy Barber, who was emigrating to Australia, five days after the meeting! We were also very sorry to lose our Coach Walk organiser (Martin Moorehouse) who also stood down before the meeting. We are very pleased to welcome our new group secretary, Ian Coates. All our other existing committee members had agreed to stand again, and were voted in again.

In conclusion, The Nottingham group has had another successful year. The monthly coaches have been usually full, or almost full and thus run at a small profit. The Wednesday Public Transport walks remain very popular. We are pleased that we are attracting some new members, alongside our regular walkers. We walk in two groups and usually average about twenty walkers each session.

The monthly Sunday Public Transport walks continue successfully, with differing numbers. Stella's strolls which provide a shorter more relaxed walk of around five or six miles are also well attended, once a month on a Wednesday.

We have had two Youth hostel weekends this year, to Whitby and Helmsley and a six day holiday this June to Cromer.

15. Notts and Derby Walking Group (Rosanna Rapacchietta)

The group established a new committee this year and planned quarterly meetings in person to discuss plans for the continued running of the group. Although a new committee, there are still quite a few roles unfulfilled, including secretary, general member, member engagement officer, communications officer, social coordinator. These roles have been promoted throughout the year on the groups social channels but there has not been much commitment or interest shown in taking on these important roles. It is important for the group to investigate other ways of promoting these opportunities, including Rambler's national website for wider appeal or reaching out to other walking groups.

The committee has focused on improving the walks programme over the course of the year by varying walking locations, start times, parking arrangements and opening evening walks on different days of the week. There has been a good turnout on most walks with new members arriving and non-members attending walks showing interest in our socials and weekends away. Walks have taken place in many different locations including the Peak District areas, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. The walks programme is regularly reviewed and updated with discussions at committee meetings on how to plan for different seasons or events. Updates to the group's information page on Rambler's website now includes links to the walks programme which helps advertise these to a wider audience. Reminders for walk leaders to register on Assemble has been provided to ensure safety measures in place when leading walks, including insurance cover, risk assessments and wellbeing.

The first weekend trip included the Gower Peninsula in April with ten places available. Nine places sold and there was positive feedback from members on the organisation and variety of walks. The second trip in October to Snowdonia National Park also received good turnout and proved to be popular with well organised walks from the walk leaders. To help plan these weekends, the committee weekend organisers created a survey form for members to add their thoughts and suggestions. Overall, the feedback suggested enjoyment of the walks planned in different locations but improvements needed on selecting accommodation, pricing and social aspects.

Membership numbers have remained steady with a slight decrease in numbers. Currently this stands at 165 members. The committee has tried to make improvements by updating communication to new members welcoming them into the group, explaining the benefits of joining and sending reminders to others of expired subscriptions. During walks with the

group, any newcomers have been made aware of membership and the benefits of joining. Financially the group remains stable with a healthy income. There has been a small loss due to a few unsold places on weekends away.

The countersigning process for adding a second signatory to the bank account has been quite time consuming but is nearing completion. In future, bookings for weekends away will be managed in a different way to ensure these problems do not reoccur. The social side of the group has seen some improvements with most walks accommodating lunch stops in pubs or cafes either during or after the walk. There have been a few pub meets this year receiving reasonably good turnout. Weekends away proved popular for members to socialise and meet new people in the group. This is an area that needs more consideration which has fallen slightly behind due to the lack of a committee member to fulfil this post. The group's social channels, including website, Facebook and Meetup have increased visibility with more up to date information, imagery and variety of walks on offer. These are important to maintain regularly for reaching new members and promoting events taking place within the group.

This year the committee struggled to maintain progress due to the limited number of members on the committee. Some important roles still need to be filled and realistically the current committee cannot carry on functioning properly without additional support.

16. One Step Walkers Group (Neil Sherratt)

This is my first year as Chair of this group having taken on the role in December 2022. I have enjoyed my first year.

Group Achievements:

- **Move to Internet Banking**
During this year our group have moved to online banking. Five of our Committee members are digital signatories, providing a robust structure for online processes. The usual Unity Bank safeguards are in place, for any transaction two digital signatories are required. The antiquated use of cheques has now ceased albeit the facility is available if required.
- **Introduction of Recce Travel Expenses**
In line with Rambler's guidelines, to encourage and support walk leading, this year we have made available the option to claim recce travel expenses. We are closely monitoring costs to ensure they do not become disproportionate.
- **Social Events & Holiday events**
This year has seen a great improvement in our social events and holiday calendar. We have had, and continue to have, an excellent selection of social events, holidays & weekends away.
- **2023 Annual Summer Walking Event (aka The Summer Picnic)**
In July 2023 we held our Annual Summer Picnic. This year it was held at Alstonfield Village Hall, in the heart of the White Peak Area. Three walks of varying length were provided for attendees to choose from. The event was well attended and a huge

success, it will be repeated next year at a different location.

- **Tuesday Evening Summer Walks Program**

The Tuesday evening walks program has been a great success this year. The walks have been very well attended, and being relatively short walks, have proven to be a great way of introducing new members to our group.

- **Walk Leader & Electronic Navigation Training Webinars**

This year we experimented with online training webinars and provided two sessions 'An Introduction to Walk Leading' & 'Digital Online Mapping & Electronic Navigation'. Both events were successful and beneficial for our current walk leaders and potential new walk leaders. Both events will be repeated in the coming year.

- **Social Media**

This year we have stepped up our focus on social media facilitated by the professional skills and work of our Webmaster. We have increased the articles on our 'Public Ramblers' Facebook page and have for the first time, created a One Step Walkers 'Instagram' page. We have seen notable increases in our social media following and many new members commenting on the professionalism of our website. We have 960 followers on the Open Facebook Page and 822 members on the Closed Facebook page.

- **Utilising Rambler's Walk Finder**

In addition to our own website to promote walks, from earlier this year we now include all our walks on the Rambler's Walk Finder, supporting not only our own members, but all Rambler's members.

Group Challenges:

- **Move to Internet Banking**

The move to internet banking, has not been without its' challenges. Our current Treasurer was able to facilitate the move to Internet Banking, but unfortunately, recent updates to Unity Bank online have exceeded the capabilities of his computer and software. Sadly, after 13 years in the role, he will be standing down from the 'Treasurer Role' as he can no longer log into the online account. As an interim measure, other Committee members will process any necessary bank transactions.

- **Group Membership Numbers**

2023 has seen a slight reduction in membership numbers for our group. We currently have 206 members with 11 Affiliates. This is a change from 240 members and 6 Affiliates in December 2022. A reduction of 29 members. Our group continues to have regular membership enquiries and new members joining replacing those that have left. We continue to provide a great selection of walks. We shall continue to focus on membership numbers in the coming year.

Other Areas of Business:

- **Walks Programme** – Our group have four walk coordinators who provide a good selection of walks across Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire to meet a

diverse range of abilities. We provide walks on most Saturdays and Sundays, a number of midweek walks throughout the year, and every Tuesday Evening throughout the Summer. All walks are generally well attended. We have 46 registered walk leaders.

- **Finances** – The uncommitted balance in our account as of 12th October 2023 was £719.97.
- **GDPR** – Our Website is fully compliant with GDPR requirements.
- **Newsletter** – We use Mailchimp to distribute our newsletter. We have changed the newsletter from a weekly publication to a more focused, 'as and when required' publication. The newsletter focuses on events and information which might otherwise have been missed by our members. The newsletter circulation is to 262 individuals.
- **AGM** - Our AGM will be held online on the 14th December 2023.

Summary

We have had a successful year with a fantastic selection of well attended walks. Our social events and holidays calendar is very healthy and Tuesday evening summer walks have proven a great success. We have challenges ahead to replace and integrate a new Treasurer, we have a robust structure in place for the interim period. In the coming year we will continue to focus on providing a great selection of walks, recruitment of new walk leaders and consolidating our membership numbers.

Finally, a massive thank you to the Committee and Group Members who volunteer their time to help us all enjoy the walking and social events we have provided throughout the year.

17. Retford Group (Sally Fraser)

We now have the website showing information about our group, walk details etc.

Rambles are generally well attended. During 2023 we have enjoyed re-visiting our local area as well as exploring Derbyshire, the Lincolnshire Wolds and various areas of Yorkshire.

We have continued throughout 2023 with a rolling monthly programme, this seems to be working quite well.

We have managed to recruit new walk leaders but are still reliant on just a few.

We held our AGM in November where we enjoyed pie and peas followed by delicious cakes and trifle. Our long-term Treasurer gave his last report and was presented with a thank you gift from members.

18. Rushcliffe Group (Julie Lloyd)

We have enjoyed a successful and enjoyable year and put the Covid years behind us.

We have seen committed and dedicated committee members retire and we thank them, our existing team and our new recruits for all the work they have completed this year.

We have attended training sessions to improve our knowledge and keep our volunteers safe and mastered changes to the online walks manager.

We have recruited a new band of walk leaders and have completed a full programme of walks. This includes a full complement of Sunday (55) and mid-week (24) walks, holiday (29) and short (4) walks. We have continued with our booking system and continue to encourage car sharing where possible.

Holidays included:

- a spring weekend in Malhamdale, enjoyed by 38 of our members;
- a week in Scotland with a glorious climb up Ben Nevis;
- an autumn weekend in Royal Leamington Spa.

Social events included:

- a Christmas Lunch at the Welbeck Hall in West Bridgford, preceded by our usual short walk to work up an appetite;
- Philip Braund, a journalist, and TV documentary producer, gave a revealing talk about his experiences of producing TV documentaries including the scandalous bits;
- a croquet afternoon at the Nottingham Croquet Club. After some initial tuition to learn the basics, we organised a hotly contested 'round-robin' tournament.

We have been complimented on our publicity by Central Office and continue to be the biggest group in Nottinghamshire. We keep in touch with our members via a quarterly newsletter providing reports on various activities, helpful advice such as reporting issues when on walks, reinforcing guidance from Central Office, notice of events and training and general chit-chat.

Our membership numbers are stable and although there was a slight dip in numbers in 2022, we are just three short of our record number of 336.



19. Southwell Group (Dave Johnson)

All too quickly another year has passed although this time I am able to report on a full programme for the whole year for Southwell Ramblers.

Our customary thanks go to the programme committee for working so tirelessly to compile the weekly programme of walks. Of course, this was only made possible because enough people came forward to suggest and lead walks for us. There is more to going for a walk than turning up at the Leisure Centre, our default assembly point, on the appropriate day and telling everyone else what to do and where to go. The walk must be first identified, then the route devised and ideally a recce carried out. The risks associated with the walk need assessing and then the risk assessment completed and forwarded to me for filing. None of this is a 5-minute job.

I suppose it is understandable that walk leaders sometimes get disheartened when only 5 or 6 people turn up on the walk. Pre-Covid we only programmed walks for every second Sunday and participants would be in the high teens. Over the last 3 years we have devised a scheme where the programme has fortnightly Sunday walks to facilitate those that still work, and walks during the week between the Sundays. Attempting to have 4 walks per month puts a strain on the walk leaders. Our return of the summer Friday evening walks with a visit to a pub afterwards proved to be more popular with numbers up around a dozen. Thanks to all who have supported our walks, including those from other groups and the trickle of new members that have joined us over the year.

I am glad to report that the mini breaks do not seem to suffer from lack of support. Last Autumn we visited England's newest national park, the South Downs and stayed at Abingworth Hall with the usual 2 walks per day on offer and a sightseeing trip for those non walkers. In the spring of this year, we revisited Alnmouth, first visited by us in 2016. Our stay at Nether Grange was extremely enjoyable. Northumberland is a beautiful place to visit steeped in scenic countryside with lots of history. On day 1 we all travelled the short distance to Holy Isle with 2 walks on offer and sightseeing. We have just come back from the Isle of Wight and a stay at the Freshwater Bay Hotel first visited in 2010. And we avoided storm Ciaran. A great place for walking with iconic sights like the Needles, lots of valleys and downs and red squirrels and sea eagles although we didn't see any of the wildlife on the trip.

On the social front we visited Toilethorpe (Stamford Shakespeare Company) Outdoor Theatre, for the first time since Covid and witnessed a highly acclaimed performance of *The Lady in the Van* written by Alan Bennett. The novelty of a lunch time performance was a great success with a shared picnic after the performance was up to the usual standard, albeit inside because of the rain.

Our Christmas walk and fuddle at the end of 2022 was held at the Lowdham Community Hall with a Christmas themed quiz. Our summer BBQ also avoided the worst of the weather and was a great success, nice food to share and a time to relax with friends.

Of course, all of the above would be very lonely for the organisers if no one turned up to the event, so we are grateful to the participants for turning up to all of the events and thanks for their involvement, company, humour and cooking skills.

None of this could happen without the willing volunteers who readily lead walks and organise events. These are time consuming activities, and we are fortunate that so many of our group are willing to get involved in this way, not just committee members.

Finally, we organised the Area AGM in February. The smooth running of the formal event was down to people's help with the room set up. Equally those that led walks proved very adaptable and coped with vast numbers well as did those that served teas. It was a great team effort, hard work but very satisfying. We got lots of brownie points for that one and appreciated the kind words of thanks from the Area Officers. It was a steep learning curve.

20. Vale of Belvoir Group (John Young)

Compared to some of the previous years, 2023 has been much like we used to be before Covid. We have had a walk every weekend, a full programme of evening strolls, a weekend away and a full calendar of social events. Long may this continue and thanks to everyone that helped make this possible.

The group has been able to return to producing a 6 month walk programme. Since Covid we had struggled to do this and this is a great achievement and I thank all those involved with its production. Of course, the walk programme requires walk leaders and my thanks goes to everyone who has helped provide such a varied and enjoyable programme. We have continued the favoured formula of 1 long, 2 medium and 1 short walk each month interspersed with evening strolls in the summer, the weekend away and a programme of social events. From chatting to many members everyone seems happy with this format and we shall continue in this vein as it meets members wishes.

Unfortunately, we are seeing a few of our regular walkers and past walkers suffering from various ailments and injuries or undergoing treatment and I wish them all a speedy recovery and hopefully will see them on a walk sometime in the future.

This year saw the Ramblers introduce new walk programme software and other changes aimed at rebranding the Ramblers. Through all of this, the importance of having an effective means of communicating with our group members has been clear. Our blog goes from strength to strength and we are very grateful to have this excellent publication and method of keeping members informed and up to date with forthcoming walks via the walk programme and a great record of walks completed. Thank you all those who maintain and contributes to the blog. The pictures and commentaries are great!

Our social programme continues, and we had a great night in August at the VBR Skittles event, the lunch in the garden at our Secretary's was enjoyed by those attending. In September a number of our members went to the Alnmouth for the annual weekend away. Thanks to everyone who helped organise the weekend. Next year we are planning to go to Whitby which is always great fun and of course we have our Christmas social in December.

Thank you to all the committee members for their efforts over the last year. Our vibrant group benefits from having such willing committee members and group members who are prepared to assist the committee in running the group. Thank you everyone.

21. Workop Group (Diana Munro)

We currently have a total membership of 72, which includes three affiliated members. Since this time last year 10 new members have joined us but unfortunately, during the same period, more than 10 have either lapsed, resigned or moved group.

Our Facebook page now has 268 followers – up by 79 from last year. All our walk reports are shared to the Notts Area Facebook page. This is the best possible way of raising our profile and spreading the word about our lovely group. In addition, we have a new re-designed flyer, complete with QR code, which has been distributed to various public places in the area

Our walks continue to be well supported with 10/15+ or so on most walks. We often get visitors from other groups, who are always made very welcome. None of our published walks have had to be cancelled during the past year, although we did have to make a few last-minute changes – easily done through the power of email and editing the walk on Walks Manager. Even a walk in the Peak District on an exceptionally hot day in Sunday in July went ahead but with only two walkers!

After the success of three days' walking near Barnard Castle last year, this year 20 of us repeated the experience on the North Norfolk coast in the Cromer/Sheringham area. Despite getting a drenching on the first days' walking, this proved to be again a very enjoyable break, so much so that plans are already afoot for the next Workop Ramblers Getaway in 2024 in Pickering – a trip on the Great North Yorks Moors railway will no doubt feature!

The transfer to the new Ramblers website and the new Walks Manager has gone well, with only a few hitches. Huge thanks must go to the IT folks at Ramblers Central Office for all their hard work in bringing this about. There was a bit of a hiatus when we weren't able to register walkers for a while which means attendance data etc. will be incomplete this year. We did have a recent glitch when Android phone users couldn't do the register, but all sorted now. Fingers crossed, it is working well at the moment. Walk leaders now have the ability to edit their walks and add photos – usually after doing a recce. They have been told very emphatically that they can only use photos they have taken themselves!

At the time of writing, we are looking forward to our annual Christmas lunch on 17th December.

22. Robin Hood Way FlexiGroup

No report received

End of Report

Report photos:

P5 - Newstead Abbey Literati

P8 - Hexgreave Park

P17 - River Leen, Newstead Abbey

P26 - Bishop's Palace, Southwell

All photos by Dave Hobson, Vale of Belvoir Group