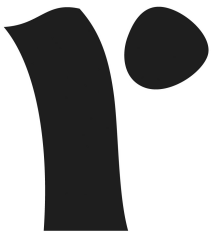


WRITE OF WAY

THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION

LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND AREA

NEWSLETTER WINTER 2009



ramblers
at the heart of walking

21st Annual General Meeting

Saturday 23rd January 2009

St Peters Church Hall

Glenfield

Hosted by the 20s & 30s Group

9.15 for 10.00 start

Lunch provided after formal meeting followed by a
modest walk for those wishing to take part

**THERE ARE EIGHT
GROUPS MAKING UP
THE AREA**

COALVILLE

HINCKLEY

LEICESTER

LOUGHBOROUGH

LUTTERWORTH

MELTON MOWBRAY

RUTLAND

and the

**LEICESTERSHIRE &
RUTLAND 20s & 30s
WALKING GROUP**

**Produced and published by the Ramblers
Leicestershire & Rutland Area**

Editor - Roy J Denney

**33 Clovelly Road, Glenfield Leicestershire LE3 8AE
0116 233 8604**

The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily
those of the RA or its officers

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In a period of rapid change and day by day developments, some of the content of this newsletter may be overtaken by events. As Chairman I have decided not to give a written report at this time but will report on the situation prevailing at the time of the AGM reflecting on the outcomes of several matters in train.

Other Officers will be able to update their reports at that time, if they feel it appropriate in the light of the circumstances.

This is likely to be a very lively AGM with many important issues to be debated so please do try and join us.

Roy J. Denney, Area Chairman

AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

- Blaby Fellwalkers Club
- Shepshed Ramblers
- Measham Parish Council
- Leicester CHA Rambling Club
- Leicester HF Rambling Club
- Loughborough CHA Rambling
- Oadby Hill Walking Club
- Railway Ramblers
- Grasshoppers Rambling Club
- Fleckney Walking Club
- Kibworth Rambling Group
- Leicestershire Footpath Association
- Leicester Hillwalking Club
- Leicestershire Active Life Retirement
- Market Harborough Rambling Club
- Moor & Mountain Walking Club
- Oakham School
(Duke of Edinburgh Award)
- Glenfield Parish Council
- The North Leicester Mountain Club

CHAIRMAN'S CHATTER

We are all members of the Ramblers or organisations affiliated to the Ramblers.

As such we presumably have the same aims and ambitions and basically want to walk for whatever reason and contribute to preserving the places we can walk.

Members of the Ramblers are entitled to walk with any Ramblers group regardless of where they live or to which group they are nominally affiliated.

The great majority of members do not associate themselves with any particular group notwithstanding that they are allocated to one, but if they do decide to turn out we must make them feel welcome. The Ramblers as an organisation does not have too much trouble recruiting members but retaining them is not an area where the organisation stands out as being particularly successful and it is down to us to help. As such whenever new members join any organised walk, we must make every effort to get involved with them both during and after walks and make them feel wanted.

As an area, we put on 1000 walks each year discounting those put on by affiliated walking groups and there should be something available whenever a member wishes to go out, if we look at the programme of the groups and our affiliates as a whole.

Affiliates share our ambitions otherwise they would not have affiliated. Some have done so just to support our campaigning efforts but others would actively welcome Ramblers members to join their own walks.

As such we are happy to give contact details and print articles showing their activities.

Amongst our current affiliates, the Kibworth Rambling Group put on walks most Wednesdays and any Ramblers member is welcome to go along. Their walks vary in length broadly within the 4 to 10 mile spread. Information can be obtained from their programme secretary. Contact details can be provided.

The Railway Ramblers also offer something a little different. They welcome any non-member on up to two of their organised walks each year - after that they hope you would see the benefits of joining them in addition to being a Rambler.

Full information about the Club can be found at www.railwayramblers.org.uk

Leicester C.H.A Rambling Club have a programme of walks moving round most days of the week and quite apart from being affiliated to us have many members in common. They would be happy for our members to join them although I am sure that if doing so regularly, they would like to see you join them. The Countrywide Holidays Association, have their head office in

Manchester and amongst other things, offer good value holidays aimed at the walker. Countrywide Holidays is a specialist walking holiday company with many years experience and owns and operates Guest Houses around the country, all located in areas of outstanding natural beauty providing ideal bases for walking, touring or just relaxing.

HF Leicester welcome you on any of their walks.

Similarly the Oadby Hillwalking Club have a number of members who are also in the Ramblers. They would make any other ramblers very welcome on their walks and details can be provided. They walk the 1st Sunday of each month usually in the Peak District, Cotswolds, Chilterns, Wye Valley or Welsh Borders. Coach leaves Oadby normally 8.00 returning about 19.30 and the fare for guests is normally £10.

I trust members will primarily support the walks of the Ramblers Groups but if you want a change of scenery or company, these affiliates would make you welcome and on building bridges with them, more of their members may also join the Ramblers.

Amongst our affiliates we do have some Parish Councils who are members partly in recognition of the work we do to help keep their footpaths usable and partly for the help and expertise we can provide when they are faced with disputes. We are in the process of circulating all other parishes to try and drum up more affiliated members and if any Rambler has contacts with their local Parish Council please try and sell the benefits of getting involved with us.

In difficult times for the economy renewal rates by individuals falls back but our costs do not, so any additional revenue sources will help us to fund our activities.

Costs continue to rise and the Ramblers are feeling the pinch like every other organisation. The area and groups have cut back where possible and two other possible areas of cost savings will be discussed with the members at the AGM.

Providing a meal to members who attend makes the arrangements more difficult and uses valuable resources and we wonder whether members really feel this is needed. In addition the biggest expense we have is this newsletter. We have reduced it from 5 a year to just 2 and do feel we need a way of communicating with the local membership but could it be done any more cost effective way? Could we make more use of the web site and email?

Finally it has been decided that the area will stage an annual walk in memory of Larry Ball and suggestions as to the format will be aired at the AGM.

**21st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
LEICESTERSHIRE & RUTLAND AREA**

- 1 Chairman's Opening Remarks & Welcome
- 2 The President
- 3 Apologies for absence
- 4 Approval of the minutes of the 20th A.G.M, 24th January, 2009 (page 7)
- 5 Matters arising from those minutes not otherwise on the agenda
- 6 Presentation of annual reports
 - a) Presentation of accounts and Treasurer's report (19)
 - b) Adoption of the accounts
 - c) Other officers' reports
 - Chairman - Secretary(10) - Membership Secretary (14)
 - Countryside and Access Officer (13) - Newsletter Editor (15)
 - Footpath and Survey Secretary (10) - Webmaster (32)
 - Publicity Secretaries, Campaigns Coordinator (15)
 - d) Adoption of Officers' reports
- 7 **GUEST SPEAKER**
Edwin McWilliam, Countryside Policy & Promotions Officer, Leicestershire County Council

FOLLOWED BY A 15 MINUTE BREAK
- 8 Any motions previously notified, including any for National Council
- 9 Election of President and Vice Presidents
- 10 Elections of Honorary Officers (Chairman - Vice Chairman - Secretary - Treasurer
Membership Secretary - Countryside and Access Officer - Publicity Secretary - Newsletter Editor
Footpath and Survey Secretary - Webmaster - Campaigns Coordinator)
- 11 Elections of further members to serve on Area Executive Committee
 - a) Representatives from groups (Coalville, Hinckley,
Leicester, Loughborough, Lutterworth, Melton, Rutland,
Leicestershire & Rutland 20s & 30s Walking Group
 - b) Up to two representatives of Affiliated Organisations
 - c) Up to two 'elected' members from the floor
- 12 Election of Representatives to General Council (2)
- 13 Appointments
 - a) Confirmation of appointment of an Auditor/Independent Financial Examiner
- 14 Date, venue, hosts and format of the next AGM
- 15 Open Forum -
Amongst items which will be discussed are the frequency of newsletters and a possible electronic alternative, the introduction of a Larry Ball Memorial Annual Area Walk and catering at AGMs

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Leicestershire and Rutland Area of the Ramblers' Association held at the Wycliffe Rooms, Lutterworth on Saturday, 24th January, 2009 at 10.00 am.

Present

David Taylor MP	President
Mike Statham	Vice President
Tony Andrews	Vice President
Roy Denney	Chairman
Brian Gaunt	Treasurer
Michael Parr	Secretary
Stan Warren	Footpath & Survey Secretary
Martin James	Membership Secretary
Bob Woodward	Countryside and Access Officer
Eddie East	Assistant Publicity Officer
Helen Johns	RA Trustee

42 other members of the association were present and are listed on the attendance sheet.

Apologies for absence were received from: David Siddons, Terry Bates, Bob Collins, Christopher Tipper, Larry Ball, Alan Loasby, Kay Gosling, Malcolm Burdett and Fiona and Peter Proudlove.

1. **Minutes** - the minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2008 were confirmed as a correct record. Prop. Stan Warren, seconded Brian Gaunt.

2. **Matters arising** from the minutes. None.

3. Presentation of annual reports

a) Accounts and Treasurer's report. The accounts have been circulated in "Write of way". They conform to the RA accounting convention and have been approved by our auditor, Christopher Tipper. The accounts were adopted. Prop. Martin James seconded Mary Rooks.

b) Chairman's report. Roy Denney thanked the members of the Executive Committee for their work and appealed for volunteers to take up several vacancies on the committee.

c) Secretary's report. Michael Parr reported on the work of the Leicestershire Local Access Forum and the various consultations in which members had been involved.

d) Membership Secretary. Martin James reported that he was unable to make a full report due to the problems at central office where a new computer system was causing many problems, these were apparently being overcome, but it was a slow process and causing not a little embarrassment as members who paid by standing order were being asked to pay again.

e) Countryside and Access Officer. Bob Woodward reported that the proposal to extend Bardon Quarry was likely to be submitted for planning permission later this year in the meantime there will be a further opportunity to comment. The Future of Charnwood Forest consultations will be featured in the next news letter, meanwhile it is possible that the area may get some protected status as a regional park. It was suggested from the floor that a close eye should be kept on proposals for housing development in the NW Leicestershire area.

The status of footpaths covered by the National Forest tender scheme was raised. The new tender scheme places greater emphasis on this and other environmental issues. However, under the old scheme only one area is known to have reverted to closed access after a change of ownership.

The proposed eco-town "Pennbury", our position is that until there is more detail we will not make a comment.

d) Newsletter Editor. Roy Denney reported that he welcomed contributions about walking and members' activities both in and out of the county.

e) Footpath and Survey Secretary. Stan Warren reported that the footpath at Hicks Lodge which ended one field short of the road had been extended. A public enquiry into the footpath at Carlton Hayes was likely in April. The level-crossing which was closed at Barrow-on-Soar will remain closed until a site for a foot/horse bridge is found. Temporary closures are becoming a problem and the question is being raised at LAF. The four-year programme of footpath surveys had been completed in December.

f) Campaigns and Publicity Coordinator. Roy Denney pointed out that walking the pathways of the area is in itself a form of campaigning, but we need to be able to provide evidence of this usage whenever a path comes under threat and asked groups to keep a record of where they do go on their organised walks. In addition he asked that whenever possible groups should include those little walked paths in their programme. If we do not loose them we may loose them. He also reported that the coastal access proposals were going through parliament. It involved a corridor round the coast which would be adjusted for coastal erosion. David Taylor asked for comments direct to him as he was on the committee that was scrutinising the bill in parliament.

g) There was no report from the Publicity Officer due to ill health.

The meeting agreed to adopt all the reports. Prop. John Williams Seconded Tony Andrews.

4. **Helen Johns**, Chairman of the RA's Campaign Sub-committee spoke about he need to promote ourselves. She suggested that we should endeavour to win hearts and minds without being confrontational. The RA central office was pursuing a campaign to "Get out there" aimed to involve as many people as possible in walking both members and non-members.

In the discussion afterwards, members expressed concern that the RA was withdrawing from purely local problems, it was explained that resources were limited and that it was necessary to operate in a broader environment.

5. **Motions** previously notified. None.

6. Election of Officers

a) Chairman. Roy Denney was proposed by David Taylor, seconded by Ellen Sandeman.

b) Vice-chairman. There were no nominations for this post and it was agreed to leave it vacant for the time being.

c) Secretary. Michael Parr was proposed by Martin James, seconded by Stan Warren.

d) Treasurer. Brian Gaunt was proposed by Roy Denney, seconded by Stan Warren.

e) Membership Secretary. Martin James proposed by Mary Rooks, seconded by Jackie Seager.

f) Newsletter Editor. Roy Denney was proposed by Michael Parr, seconded by Mary Rooks.

g) Footpath & Survey Secretary. Stan Warren proposed Roy Denney, seconded by John Williams.

h) Campaigns and Publicity Coordinator. Roy Denney was proposed by Michael Parr, seconded by Stan Warren.

i) Countryside & Access Officer. There were no nominations for this post. The role of National Forest representative normally carried out by this post will be undertaken by Bob Woodward until a replacement is found.

j) Joint Publicity Secretaries. Eddie East and Bernard Timson were proposed by John Williams, seconded by Tony Smith.

There being no other nominations all of the above were elected.

7. Group representatives

The following have been nominated by their respective groups to serve on the Executive Committee.

Coalville

Bob Woodward

Hinckley

Tony Smith

Leicester

Terry Bates

Loughborough Rutland	John Samson John Williams	Lutterworth L&RWG	Yvonne Coulson Karl Pigginn	Melton	Karen James
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All the above nominations were confirmed.

Ellen Sandeman and Mary Rooks had stood down as members of the Executive Committee without portfolio and were thanked by the President for their work in the past. There were no nominations from the floor to replace them. Neither were there any nominations from affiliated groups who can have two such members on the Executive Committee.

8.Appointment of auditor

Christopher Tipper was proposed by David Taylor, seconded by Martin James.

9.Appointment of representatives to General Council

It was agreed that the representatives should be Martin James and Eddie East and that Stan Warren and Jackie White should attend as observers.

10.Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next AGM should be on 25th January 2010 and that it would be hosted by the L&RWG.

It was also agreed to invite Andy Poole of the Leicestershire Rights of Way Team to speak.

Given the poorer turn outs when we go to the furthest extremities of our area, there was discussion about whether to continue rotating these events or to find a regular central location. It was decided to continue rotating for the time being. It was also decided to continue following the meeting with a walk.

11. Photographic competition

The prize for the best photograph submitted to the newsletter over the last year was awarded to John Samson of the Loughborough group. The President also thanked him for his work as webmaster. Pictures provided by Ash Kotecha (Coalville) and Tony Negus (Hinckley) were also commended, but the final choice came down to John Samson and John Forgham (Leicester) who came a good second.

12. Following a short open forum, the President thanked the Lutterworth Group for their hospitality and the Chairman thanked the President for conducting the meeting, before the meeting formally closed at 12.45pm.

MWP 25.01.09

AGENDA ITEM 8 Motion to amend constitution

Following the death of our former President, Larry Ball, the question was asked as to how we elect Presidents and Vice Presidents. This showed up an anomaly in our constitution which says members can elect a President at the AGM in recognition of services to the Ramblers but does not cover any election of Vice Presidents. The President becomes a member of the area executive committee. We actually have 3 VPs and the constitution needs to reflect this practice. I therefore propose an amendment subject to subsequent approval by the Board of Trustees.

The present constitution states that the AEC shall be made up of various personages and includes clause (e) The President: The members at an annual general meeting are authorised to elect an Honorary President as an appreciation of service rendered. If so elected the person in question is an ex-officio member of the AEC, with full voting rights.

I propose this clause be extended as follows-

e) The President: The members at an annual general meeting are authorised to elect an Honorary President as an appreciation of service rendered. If so elected the person in question is an ex-officio member of the AEC, with full voting rights. The members may also elect up to four Vice Presidents, again as an appreciation of services rendered, but if so elected they shall not be members of the AEC except only if they are elected to that body by virtue of another position

Proposed by Roy Denney - Area Chairman
Seconded by Michael Parr - Area Secretary

OFFICERS' REPORTS

Area Secretary

The area Executive Committee has met four times during the year. It held one area wide event the quiz.

Helen Johns, the Trustee who spoke at our last AGM, has been appointed our official contact with the Board of Trustees. She has been in regular contact with us especially regarding the membership computer. This contact is particularly important now that we do not receive regular mailings from head office and have to rely on noticing decisions on the Internet

A circular letter was sent to all Parish Councils in Leicestershire in September, inviting them to become affiliated members of the RA. The letter pointed out that we are often involved in supporting PCs and local groups in disputes over footpaths and that we have an unrivaled knowledge of the ins and outs of footpath matters.

Our existing affiliated members were asked to comment on RA members joining their walks. The results are listed in Write of Way.

I attended a seminar in Birmingham to launch the new branding of the Ramblers.

Michael Parr

Footpaths & Survey Secretary

Plenty of activity to report again this year, in spite of budgetary concerns – my free bus pass is essential if we are to maintain our involvement in protecting local footpaths without having to make cuts in other areas.

The best news of the year must be that the path across Carlton Park at Narborough is now open and well-used. I was surprised at its variety and seeming remoteness when I walked it for the first time at the opening ceremony. Other major gains for the network are the paths on the former Hicks Lodge opencast site near Oakthorpe, and the link through Stinking Wood between Markfield and Ulverscroft. Wood Lane at Wardley has now been put on the map, and a little-known county road at Burrough-on-the-Hill now has bridleway status, and so will follow suit.

The problem at Swannington was the subject of a protest in the summer, where 137 people (including three RA Area Officers) gained access to the blocked route, and several of us spent some time discussing the matter with the local police as a consequence. The date for the Public Inquiry has now been fixed as 23rd February at Snibston, where it is to be hoped that the public interest will prevail. Our claimed route at Groby comes before the DCRB of the County Council later this month, so at the time of writing we do not know if the Order will be made.

The amended, and hopefully better maintained, network south of Cossington has now been brought into use, which should facilitate the link from the village to Watermead Park, where lottery is being spent in improving access, not least by levelling bridges over the locks at both Thurmaston and Birstall.

Our efforts over the footpath adjacent to Donington Race Circuit look to be heading towards a permanent diversion which, if a little longer, will give us some fine views over Donington Park and the River Trent.

In the city, we were unable to help save the Bowstring Bridge, but the definitive map continues to grow, as routes which have had a legal event recorded are being added, before those crossing council-owned land are tacked by deed of dedication by the landowner. The current length on the map now stands at 63km.

The level crossing at Barrow-upon-Soar remains closed, but I hope to get some good news at a meeting with Network Rail at Derby later this week – hopefully the plans for the replacement footbridge will be unveiled.

We have dealt with many other diversion proposals at our six-weekly meetings. Most of them are acceptable, but we may have a few battles to fight over those which are less so. I am always willing to receive calls and comments on any which local members feel strongly about.

Major Planning Applications for Bardon Quarry and Minorca Open Cast are imminent. Both will lead to disruption and diversions – in the former case for more years than I can contemplate – but restoration plans show a willingness to improve access for all classes of user.

Although Pennbury has receded from the radar for the moment at least, there are major housing developments queuing up to explode across the Leicestershire Countryside when market conditions are favourable. Loughborough and Shepshed will get closer together, as will Thurmaston and Hamilton, Coalville and Whitwick, Leicester Forest East and Enderby. There may well be other plans of which I have yet to hear; particularly now the government has increased its targets. Of course, we should be able to retain the rights of way in these areas, and possibly gain a few extra links to encourage the new county residents into the countryside, but we shall lose the countryside itself.

On the survey front, 2009 sees the start of a new four-year cycle of checking the network in Leicestershire and Rutland, so all 5km squares surveyed in 2005

should be done again by December 31" this year. To my horror, this was a grand total of 42, but we have already completed 35 of them, and the remainder is in progress with every chance of completion unless the weather becomes completely unsuitable.

Checking the database this morning (October 11) shows ongoing improvement, but the aim of a perfect network is still some way away, as you can imagine. A breakdown shows the following:-

Of the 8029 links, 80.1% are in good condition, 17.2% passable but with problems, and 2.5% blocked. The mathematically minded will notice 0.2% unaccounted for; these 15 links have either been created or significantly diverted since that area was last checked.

There are a total of 2117 problems on file, and I have analysed these in two ways.

By type of obstruction:-

Surface, including overgrowth and non-reinstatement	962
Boundary, i.e. fences, broken stiles, footbridges	487
Signposting, but not including missing waymarks	612
All the rest, such as buildings, junk, uncrossable roads	56

By area:-

Blaby	131
Charnwood	164
Harborough	441
Hinckley & Bosworth	375
Melton	448
North West Leicestershire	435
Oadby & Wigston	9
Rutland	114

I have welcomed some new surveyors to the ranks, which will ease the load on the stalwarts, and possibly allow us to explore new routes, such as county roads, highways maintainable at public expense, city paths, permissive paths and National Forest Access Sites. We could even start looking for Lost Ways!

The schedule for 2010 is much lighter, and several have already been allocated. Those squares remaining are:-

	SP78NE	Dingley
SK20NE	Newton Regis	SK21NE Church Gresley
SK30NW	Appleby & Twycross	SK31NW Blackfordby
SK52SE	Hoton	SK61NW Seagrave
SK70SW	Billesdon	SK70NE Owston
SK72SE	Scalford	SK83NW Bottesford
SP48NE	The Claybrookes	SP49SW Hinckley
SP58NW	Ashby Parva	SP68SW North Kilworth
SP68SE	Sibbertoft	SP78NW Market Harborough

Any volunteers to check the paths in these areas would be welcomed — feel free to contact me.

Stan Warren

Countryside and Access Officer

On the development front, Pennbury did not make it to the final shortlist of eco-towns. This was a relief, but it should be remembered that this is the second attempt to create a major development on this site, as soon as the housing market stabilises, expect a third try. Meanwhile, there have been a number of only slightly smaller developments around the periphery of Leicester which will require vigilance.

Plans to improve M1 junction 19 have moved a step closer with the publication of a preferred option. The M1 widening in Leicestershire has run out of money and is now on hold, although improvements to junction 21 are likely.

The Connect 2 bid for funds to improve paths in and around Watermead Country Park was successful. Work has already begun on tarmac paths and bridge building etc.

The Leicestershire Local Access Forum met regularly and considered issues including:

- Pennbury
- Proposed extension to Bardon Hill Quarry
- The disposal of selected County Council Country Parks
- A policy for Gating Orders
- Temporary footpath diversions (especially at Donnington Park)
- River Soar and Grand Union Canal Strategy
- Local development frameworks
- Barrow-on-Soar bridleway rail crossing

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan entered its fourth year and we made copious suggestions about how the network could be improved in three areas around Charnwood, Broughton Astley and West Leicester.

A full account of the forum's work is available at www.Leics.gov.uk/laf

Michael Parr

National Forest Representative

There has been a 12% increase in woodland cover since 1995 with about 1500 Ha of new wildlife habitat created. Public awareness and visitor numbers have greatly increased. The plan to 2014 sets out the difficulty in funding and acquiring new land for planting, but sets a target of about 200 Ha per year. The review determined there was a need to consolidate progress and improve further, site quality and facilities for visitors. To this end, there is now a youth hostel, a long distance trail, horse tracks and Cycle routes are to be created, uniform signage is to be promoted and better transport links sought.

A library of about 85 walks were established on the NFC website and the RA were asked to report back on any Forest areas with access problems to help keep the system open. Another 11 Walk Guide leaflets have been completed, all available on the web site but more short family walks are required. Please contact myself, or Sam Lattaway at NFC if you have any good routes to offer.

A Long Distance Trail Project Manager has now been recruited with a 12 months window to plan the route and determine the budget. Five new Tender Scheme sites have been negotiated. The new cycling route round Conkers is now usable and is of 8km in total. A project to create a Cycle Centre at Hicks Lodge is also underway.

This year's Walking Festival was a great success with the RA leading several walks in the programme. Next year the event will be 22nd May to 2nd June 2010.

Robert Woodward

Membership Secretary

Would you like a challenge in your life?

Have you ever felt the desire to be moaned at by people you don't know? Do you think that you would enjoy looking at list of names, addresses and dates that serve no purpose (because they are wrong)? Spend countless hours running around in circles getting nowhere? Then read on because this is the job for you. The Ramblers' Membership Secretary. There is a choice of two roles, one at Group level and, for the very sick and demented, one role at Area level.

To perform each role you will need to have the patience of a saint, the use of a phone (preferably one that BT has forgotten to bill you for) and loads of spare time. As part of the extensive remuneration package you will receive regular FREE circulars (oops sorry this incentive has now been withdrawn, you will now have to spend some more of your spare time trying to find them on the Ramblers' web site). Interested? I wish somebody was.

Over the last 20 months your Membership Secretaries have had a torrid time. Things were simple and easy back in 2007, the grass was green, I know this because I got to see it occasionally, and happy membership secretaries went out on group walks and got to chat happily with other members. Then in January 2008 Central Office decided to install a new CRM (Customer Relations Management) system. The reliable fortnightly reports of new members dried up, the monthly ones never materialised either. It was a lonely time for the poor Secretaries.

Soon though people started to communicate with them, things like 'I've joined the Ramblers but I've not received anything from my local group' and 'where is my free magazine'. They were quite correct they had joined the Ramblers but nobody had informed the poor old Membership Secretaries. As you can imagine the Secretaries started to ask Central Office questions, so many questions that it upset the full time staff who decided not to reply any more. The membership secretaries were just left to deal with everything on their own. One poor secretary complained to head office about the situation and was immediately exterminated, well declared deceased, a kind of "let that be a lesson to you".

After 12 months the reports of new members appeared again. "At last" thought the Secretaries but then they realised that the information in them was b*****t, (basically they smelt pretty bad).

Jump forward to August 2009. The reports have improved greatly, some of the

figures on them are nearly believable. Time for the Secretaries to rejoice. Using the latest figure Leicestershire & Rutland Area has 1954 members.

September 2009 Central Office realise that all of Septembers renewals have been sent out wrong, oops. Now anyone would have thought that Membership Secretaries would have been told of this mistake. No Central Office hid this little bit of info on the web site. The poor old Membership Secretaries were left to take the wrap again.

Now things are returning to normal, people are starting to understand how the system works. Guess what. I have just been told the report format is to change again by Christmas. Happy days.

On a more serious note your Membership Secretaries have worked relentlessly throughout the last couple of years and I would like to thank them for all of their help and patience. Maybe you'd like to thank them too.

Martin James

Campaigns Coordinator

Campaigning work during the year has all been channelled through the footpaths activities and the work of various officers on the Local Access Forum. Those officers working in this area have kept in touch with each other by email without the need for additional meetings.

Roy Denney

Newsletter Editor

I have little to report given that the fruits of my labours are self evident. I would like to thank the contributors and ask them to keep material coming. Your committee have agreed to cap the size of future newsletters in the interests of economy so hopefully I will have such an embarrassment of input that I will have to exercise some editorial choice. At least that way you will hear less from me wearing my Chairman's hat. We do get many appreciative comments about the newsletter, particularly from the membership which is not close to the groups, but we do need to be sure we are fulfilling the wishes of the members so the way forward will be discussed at the AGM

Roy Denney

GROUPS' REPORTS

RUTLAND

This year all our fortnightly Sunday walks have been well supported and we continue to enjoy the presence of walkers from other areas. In March members from the Lutterworth Group joined us for a walk in the Kings Cliffe area.

Our Annual Dinner in March at the "Whiper In Hotel" in Oakham produced a record attendance. Our speaker, Jill Collinge, a Blue Badge Guide, gave a talk with slides called "Curiosities of the Counties" proving that, even if you have lived in the area all your life, there is still much to discover.

We took part in the RA "Get Walking Day" and managed to entice a few people to come and join in. During September a weekend in Derbyshire was very well supported.

Thanks to the willingness of members to lead walks we look forward to more enjoyable walking in 2010.

Joy Coleman

COALVILLE

It is difficult to believe that 2009 is already drawing to a close, and another busy year for the Coalville Group.

A number of our members took part in our annual weekend away at the end of September once again enjoying reasonable weather, and an excellent selection of walks to suit the diverse range of experience and abilities within our Group. The summer season saw the now anticipated success of our Wednesday evening walk programme, and October will see the inaugural "Holly Week" remembering Holly Ward who died in 2008, one of our most respected local walkers, author of several books of local walks which will be featured heavily during the week.

As with all Groups, our Committee has spent much time over the last few months discussing the financial situation and funding changes announced by Central Office.

With walking very much at the centre of all our activities, it is a matter of considerable concern that these changes will inevitably begin to affect how the Group is run, and particularly the amount of publicity and information we can offer to potential new members. The Committee will be working hard to ensure that these effects are minimised over the course of 2010.

Ken Storer.

HINCKLEY

Another successful year for the Hinckley Group, with a good range of walks and venues, to offer something for everyone. One innovation has been to introduce a figure 8 walk on the first Thursday of each month. This is to include members who are unable, for any reason to complete a full 8 miles, which is the normal length of our Thursday walks. They can either do the morning and drop out at lunchtime, or join us at the pub for a shorter afternoon walk. This is proving quite successful.

Our annual lunch, held at Ullesthorpe Court, was well supported and very enjoyable. Our new social committee are planning a new format for next year, holding the dinner at a different venue, on a Saturday night, rather than on Sunday lunchtime after a walk. Watch this space !

We enjoyed another photograph competition, with some superb entries, followed by a challenging quiz. The new committee planned a slide show in March, where Carolyn and Paul Wileman entertained us with slides from their trip to Jordan, Jean Davies and Tony Negus took us to Kenya, then we enjoyed a trip round India, with Val and Richard Nicholls. A memorable evening!

Hinckley has been involved with the Leicestershire Walking Festival, offering three walks for the programme. We had an excellent August Bank Holiday

weekend in Abergavenny, and a group of our members will shortly go to The Long Mynd Hotel, near Church Stretton. Lets hope they have good weather.

We are very pleased with the improvements to our web site, and have enjoyed looking back at photos from the past, when we were all slim and youthful looking, in the section called "Do You Remember When ?"

A very big thank you to all our members, for their continued support.

Wendy Martin

LEICESTER

Our walks programme continues to attract more and more people. It's good to see the numbers on the coach rambles continue to increase, and since the last Write of Way we have spent happy hours rambling in the Wye Valley, at Hunstanton, the Kinder Scout area, and Woburn Park to name but a few.

Our evening walks have suffered a little this year as the organiser of them was unable to take part in any walks for health reasons, and the traditional meal for Tuesday walkers at the end of the Summer season failed to materialise this year.

A follow-up to the Map Reading Course - an afternoon of practical map reading round Hungarton - attracted only two members, which was rather disappointing and quite surprising, as many members have commented how poor their map reading skills were.

It had been felt for some time that a course in Walk Leadership (excluding map reading) would benefit many existing and potential leaders, but after due consideration it was concluded that putting on such a course would not attract many participants. Instead we have produced a Walk Leaders' Handbook which contains everything that would have been included in a course, and this has been made available to all leaders in the Group.

Our membership has shown a steady if slow increase, and this has been principally due to people finding our walks on the Internet, both on our own group web site and on the Find-a-Walk section of the Ramblers' web site.

David Siddons

20s & 30s WALKING GROUP

Another successful year for LRWG, with a steady supply of new members coming along, most of them finding the group through our web site when searching online. Regular walks have been held on Sundays, with evening walks in the summer time every Wednesday and every other Tuesday from May to August. A few Night Hikes have also been held in the dark to keep up interest in evening walks through the winter season.

We have once again had many trips away. In February we visited Hurdlow in Derbyshire for a weekend. Over the Easter holiday we had a 5 day trip to Trefin, on the Pembrokeshire coastline in Wales. For the May bank holiday we visited Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland. In June we had a weekend away in Kettlewell, Yorkshire. In August I ran my camping trip to Cromer in Norfolk, for a second year

running with new coastal walks. A weekend to Llangollen in Wales was held in October and a weekend away to Beverley in East Yorkshire was held in November.

In addition to the walking/social weekends away, the Navigation Training Course ran for a second year to train and encourage new walk leaders within the group.

Also as usual, a large amount of social events including a meal most months, barbeque, skittles evening, August bank holiday karaoke party, Halloween fancy dress party, trips to the theatre and cinema, Alton Towers Water World, Fan Club Night Club with its 70's, 80's and 90's rooms, beer festivals, laser quest, singalong evenings, Christmas party and New Years Eve party.

I think that covers most of it. Sorry if I have missed anything!

Karl Piggin

LOUGHBOROUGH

The Loughborough and District Group came into existence in April 1988, since when we have planted enough small footsteps to take a rambler perhaps a quarter of the way to the moon. We therefore celebrated our 21st anniversary in the spring, starting with a remake of our first walk. Setting out from Mount St Bernard Abbey we could now enjoy some of the pockets of Leicestershire access land denied to us on the first walk. This was followed by an anniversary luncheon in Burleigh Court, addressed by our Area President, David Taylor. Our walks programme is spilling over into a new page, as we have enjoyed walks on almost every Sunday, plus weekly summer evening walks. Many of these walks are thanks to generous offers from Malc Burdett and other members of the Coalville group. We now look forward to regular monthly Saturday walks in our winter programme in addition to the weekly Sunday walks. We would like to thank Mike Bursnall, who has stepped down as Programme Secretary, for all the fine programmes he has put together over the past 18 years, and welcome Jane Trevarthen into this vital role.

This year's joint coach ramble with Coalville took us to the fine scenery and fearsome winds of the Long Mynd. This year our weekend trip was to Llandudno, thanks yet again to Sarah Puxley for all the hard work that paid off as always, with a range of walks from sunny coastal walking to a rain-drenched clamber over the Glyderau.

In other news, the Soar Feet team celebrated another win (our 7th) in the 2008 Area Quiz. The 2009 slide show took place despite deep snow, and included a Ramblers' Holidays hutting trip in the Ötztaler Alpen, an insight to Iran and (a last-minute offer from Trevor Martin of the Hinckley group to replace a snowed-in speaker) the Simien Mountains of Ethiopia. Our next slide show will be on Friday, 5 Feb at 7.30 pm in John Storer House; the programme will appear on <http://go.to/lbra> at a later date.

John Samson

AT THE TIME WE WENT TO PRESS REPORTS WERE NOT AVAILABLE
FROM MELTON OR LUTTERWORTH GROUPS.

ABERGAVENNY Hinckley Ramblers' Trip.

12 Ramblers travelled to the Black Mountains on the Welsh border for a bank holiday weekend in Abergavenny. Stopping off in Monmouth on the way down, they planned to follow part of the Offa's Dyke path, high above the town.

Led by Tony Smith, who had organised the weekend, they left the town, passing the lovely buildings of Monmouth School, to cross the river bridge. Following the banks of the River Monnow, they encountered vast tracts of Himalayan balsam, a plant which is taking over from the native plants on many of Britain's rivers.

Reaching the village of Redbrook, they stopped for refreshments, before beginning to climb steadily uphill to reach the ridge, and the signs for Offa's Dyke path. A wooded slope led them to the top of the hill, known as The Kymin. Here, they admired two well known buildings, The Round House and the Naval Temple, built by the business leaders of Monmouth in gratitude for Britain's successes at sea. When Lord Nelson visited the area in 1802 to have lunch in the Round House with Emma and Sir William Hamilton, he declared that the views from The Kymin were some of the finest he had ever seen. The ramblers could see Monmouth far below, and the steep hillsides rising on the other side of the river. The group followed a steep path down through the woods, pausing to watch a beekeeper in full protective clothing, tending his hives.

Next morning, they left The Park Guest House in Abergavenny, to meet in the small village of Pont-Rhys-Powell, as Tony led a walk up over Hatterall Ridge, a continuation of Offa's Dyke Path. Toiling uphill in warm sunshine to reach the trig point, they enjoyed stupendous views over the Vale of Eywas, and over to Sugar Loaf. A steep downhill slope led them eventually past the atmospheric ruins of Llanthony Priory, where Christian worship first took place over 1400 years ago. The present remains date back to the Norman period, when Sir William De Lacy established the priory in about 1118.

After a quick drink at The Half Moon, an old coaching inn, where they enjoyed relaxing in the garden, the ramblers returned to Llanthony Priory, to explore the ruins. Here they met a wedding party, waiting in eager anticipation for the bride to arrive. Tony led the group across the river, then they followed pleasant wooded paths along the Vale of Eywas, to reach the cars, after another perfect day.

Sunday morning was warm and cloudy, as Jean Davies and Trevor Martin led the group from Llanfoist, this time to ascend The Blorenge, a picturesque mountain with a fine high plateau. The path went very steeply uphill through woods, and through a tunnel, which was used to transport iron from Blaenavon, to the top of an incline, where it was loaded onto barges at the canal wharf, to be taken to Newport.

The path continued upwards, to emerge in a fine basin called The Punchbowl, with a large pond, fringed by reeds, where they stopped for lunch. Reaching the top, the group contoured round the summit plateau, eventually reaching a trig point and the Foxhunter Memorial, a memorial stone, to the horse which won the Olympic show jumping contest in 1948.

Mist and rain were closing in as they headed down from the summit, seeking a path which led across the moorland. Although clearly marked on the map, it was not visible on the ground, so Jean quickly sorted out another route. This was quite clear until they entered woodland, and again, the path they needed to follow was not there. Another path, with head high Himalayan balsam on each side, seemed to lead the right way, but after following it for some time, it veered off in the wrong direction. Eventually Trevor left the path to find an alternative route, and came back shortly afterwards to lead the group out onto the road.

That night, the group ate in The Skirrid Mountain Inn, reputed to be the oldest inn in Wales, with a history which can be traced back to the Norman Conquest. A beam under the staircase

bears the chafing marks left by the rope used to hang 180 people when James II sent Judge Jeffries, known as "The Hanging Judge", to punish the locals for taking part in the Duke of Monmouth's failed rebellion. The ghosts of some of the victims are reputed to enjoy haunting the inn.

The friendly landlord gave his bunch of keys to the group, and invited them to explore the rooms upstairs, so they saw the cell where prisoners were kept before meeting their fate on the end of the rope, then visited the three suites of rooms, each with its four poster bed, where guests can stay for £90 per night.

Monday morning was wet and windy, so the party split up, with six ramblers doing a 5 mile walk to the summit of The Skirrid. A pleasant zig zag path led them gently to the top, though unfortunately the summit was shrouded in mist, so they couldn't see the superb views described in the walk summary. A very steep path down saw the group descending gingerly from one clump of heather to another.

They all got down safely, to meet a path which contoured round the side of the hill. Eventually, they reached The Skirrid Inn, busy with lunchtime customers, then continued to the churchyard, to eat their sandwiches. A very pleasant lady arrived to make tea, so they enjoyed tea and cakes, and a short history of the church, before heading back to Hinckley.

An excellent bank holiday break for everyone involved.

Wendy Martin

THREE PEAKS - The Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge

About eighteen months ago a few of us were thinking about having a go at this challenge. This involves a walk of about 24 miles and over 5000 feet of ascent while meandering over Pen y Ghent, Whernside and Ingleborough. A date was decided on and that organizational wizard Jenny Mann set about sorting out the logistics.

Friday 17th July saw nine of us making our way north for a five o'clock rendezvous at Ribblesdale. The weather was atrocious and the journey through Bradford a nightmare. Being a little early I popped into the Pen y Ghent café at Horton in Ribblesdale for a pint mug of tea and picked up a challenge registration form. On then to Ribblesdale where we were staying in one of the bunk houses belonging to the Station Inn. To say it was basic is being very kind, I'm sure bunk houses in general are better than this hovel but it was only for one night and we decided it was all part of the team bonding exercise!!! The meal and drink in the hotel cheered us all up as we watched the horizontal rain flying past the windows.

Saturday saw us up at 0500, it wasn't raining and the wind had abated, porridge, toast, tea & coffee for breakfast and we set off for the car park at Horton. 0620 the registration form posted through the café letter box and we were off. By the time the first few reached the summit of Pen y Ghent we had split into two groups and that's how it stayed for the rest of the day. Descend to Hull Pot Beck and the first problem of the day, how to get across the swollen watercourse as most of the rocks were submerged but we managed with not more than an average two wet feet per person. I had even managed it without damp tootsies and was just congratulating myself on this achievement when I went into a boggy bit up to the knees and could feel a cold trickle in the boots. We were a group of five but had become separated whilst faffing about at the beck. Once we all got together again we found out that Anne had gone in up to the waist, dragged herself out and a few metres further on did the same again, not a pleasant experience, we stayed together for the rest of the boggy section. There were further streams to cross but luxury of luxuries they had bridges!

Ribblesdale, time for a drink and a quick snack before starting the long ascent of Whernside. Along the side of the magnificent viaduct, up towards Blea Moor, Knoutberry Hill and the summit. Touch the Trig, long gradual descent to the farm at Philpin, drink and bite to eat at the refreshment hut and start off towards Ingleborough. A longish walk towards what looks like a

wall but as you get closer a very steep path becomes apparent. I have never struggled so much on a steep path before, no energy in the legs. Half way up I started to feel light headed and thought I was going to faint! A minutes rest and I was ok, got to the top and found Penny sat down with Bob standing beside her. They had been forging ahead for a quick time but Penny had gone as white as a sheet and almost collapsed.

Thinking about these problems later we came to the conclusion we had not been eating and drinking enough producing a combination of dehydration a low blood sugar levels. The embarrassing thing being we were carrying everything we needed to prevent these problems but the stops had been so short we had not consumed enough of the vitals required when walking in the hills!!

A gentle slope in the cloud took us up to the Ingleborough Trig and it was generally down hill for the last 7K. Needed to use the compass and some pacing to find the correct path off the summit although the cloud did thin as we reached the point where the path began. Magnificent views of vast areas of Limestone Pavement as we descended for the last time. Eventually the sign board at Horton station hove into view, a short walk then to the café, get your time card and clock off, followed by a pint of tea. Penny Whitford, Bob Powell and Don Moore finished in about 8hrs 20, Anne Whichcord and myself came in ten minutes later. It was then time to sit in the sunshine, drink several pints of tea, chew the fat whilst the reality of what we had all achieved sank in, stroll around the village and wait for the rest of the group to finish.

Don Brown appeared at about 11hrs and mentioned that Pat was having problems with one of her knees. 11hrs 57 Pat Brayshaw, Jenny Mann and Ash Kotecha finished just inside the twelve hour deadline. We then set off for the youth hostel at Ingleton where we would crash out that night. On the way we went through a heavy prolonged shower and felt very glad we didn't meet it while out on the hills. A hot shower in a clean and pleasant building began to return us to a state of normality and a good meal at the pub up the road completed the process. I don't think anybody had much trouble going to sleep that night.

Returning home on Sunday morning we drove through a series of showers. How lucky had we been on Saturday with the weather, a dry cool day with broken cloud and a gentle breeze, ideal for walking.

Lastly many thanks to Jenny for organizing a great weekend.

Chris Mortimer, Leicester

Editors note

They were indeed very lucky with the weather. I have walked the circuit several times and have climbed those peaks more times than I care to remember and have rarely had good weather given these hills catch the prevailing winds. I can remember standing in wet stocking-feet in the slate-floored Golden Lion in Horton after one circuit, when I had changed the colour of half the floor to such an extent that the landlady asked me if I would return the next day and clean the other half.

Seriously, if any properly organised group of the Ramblers wants to go walking in that area again, my own club have accommodation nearby which I could make available. It is far better fitted out than many youth hostels and considerably cheaper to members' guests.

It is near enough that we sometimes walk the three peaks right out of the front door. You tackle them in a different order (normally Ingleborough up Clap Beck then Whernside and then Pen-y-Ghent) and the walk actually becomes 29 miles and you do not of course get the magic certificate.

We also have a cottage in Little Langdale in the Lakes which sleeps 15 but all in one dorm unlike the Dales cottage which sleeps 22 in a number of dorms. If anyone want to know more give me a ring or visit <http://www.yorkshireramblers.org.uk>

BOOK REVIEWS

Michael Parr would like to commend a book to you written by his namesake but no relation. It originally dates from the era when titles were neither imaginative nor short. The book in question is:

A walk from Leicester to the East Coast, and a few thoughts, delights and impressions by the way. Albert Parr, Leicester, Gee & Co., 1915.

On Saturday 11th April, 1914, having planned it all the day before, Albert Parr set out at 4am to walk from Belgrave to the East Coast. He walked up Harrison Road “on the side opposite the houses” and on in the pouring rain with his brolly held high, through Humberstone and Scraftoft to John-O-Gaunt, where there was a traffic jam of carts delivering churns of milk at the station.

Albert has a florid style, taking half a page to light the kitchen stove before he left, but he describes a world that was about to change before the year was out. As he strides out through Twyford, Cottesmore and Clipsham arriving in Bourne after dark and with a swollen knee, he passes “working swains” who doff their caps to the vicar and barefoot children eating bread and lard. There was no room at the inn at Bourne, it was full of “tourists and holidaymakers”, so a waiter took him home to his mum's.

The next day he managed to limp as far as Fosdyke on the Wash, but he was disappointed to find that it did not look like the seaside at all and he pressed on to Boston and a train back to Leicester. On the way he cut out the bends in the Welland by walking up to his waist in the river. I would not have liked to sit next to him on the train.

The final forty pages are taken up with his thoughts on life and copious quotations from William Cowper and other poets. For all his verbal diarrhea, I had to admire his fortitude, it must be at least forty miles to Bourne as the crow flies, he found relief for his aching feet by dipping his boots into streams and letting the water squelch out through the lace holes. No Vibram soles, no Gortex lining.

This facsimile reprint is by Reprint, a Loughborough based local history publisher and is available at www.reprint.com £6 postage free. Their list is full of interesting local books that have been long out of print.

I would also like to commend another book to you. Mountain Magic is a personal selection of over 150 of his favourite photographs by Van Greaves, representing the best of the images he has captured during 40 years of walking and climbing in the mountains of Britain.

It unsurprisingly includes Snowdon, Scafell, Ben Nevis, the Torridon peaks and the Cullins of Skye, but also many lesser known hills and viewpoints which make this book something for those of us who love the mountains to really enjoy and bring back memories of our times on the hill. No less interesting are the author's comments on the hardships endured and the patience required in capturing these dramatic images. It has often involved pre-dawn starts from overnight wild camps on the hills, to capture the elusive mountain light. From glorious summer sunsets over Snowdonia and dawn over a ridge in the Lake District, to the mighty Ben Nevis in a stinging winter squall, Mountain Magic is full of extraordinary images in all kinds of lighting and weather conditions. As Van says in his introduction: “There seems to be a greater range of light and atmospheric conditions in Britain than can be captured by a photographer in the greater ranges, such as the Himalaya, North America, the Alps and Scandinavia ...

I can commend this book to you – it is truly spectacular and as a lover of both photography and the mountains I will enjoy it for years. Examples of his pictures can be seen on his web site www.vangreaves.com

Roy Denney

MOUNTAIN MAGIC by Van Greaves Frances Lincoln ISBN 978-0-7112-2858-0

RAMBLERS' WAY AHEAD

The organisation has been through a difficult time in this period of financial uncertainty. The national treasurer has completed an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the financial situation and in his preliminary report to trustees, he has made a number of recommendations to improve financial management, which are being implemented. His substantive report will be made available as soon as possible.

The Board has approved a balanced budget for 2009/10, ensuring financial stability for the Ramblers, the first balanced budget for many years. In addition they have agreed that it wishes to relocate the central office out of London, and work will start now looking at options. The downside of this is that they are imposing very strict budgets on Areas and Groups and as we go to press this is a very hot issue which leaves many of us not best pleased.

Communications have been seen as a problem in the recent past and a protocol for responding to enquiries from volunteers to staff within a ten day period will be put in place, so that volunteers can know the standards they should be able to expect. The Board also confirmed the organisation's commitment to traditional areas of campaigning which had also been an expressed area of concern. They noted a number of recent campaigning successes on access and public paths.

The last few months have been an unprecedented time for our organisation. We have faced a serious financial situation and have had to take difficult and unpopular decisions very quickly. We are aware of the unhappiness felt by some of our most active members and we have listened to the comments received from them. The board are also grateful to those active members who have contacted us to show their understanding and support for the actions we have had to take.

The Ramblers will, in due course, emerge from the current straitened times. Our collective task, to be undertaken by all of us who are committed to the Ramblers, is to build a stronger campaigning organisation and increase our membership, so that we are better able to play an active role.

Campaigning continues, at the heart of our work. We have been told by several members that they are disappointed that we are turning away from our traditional work in protecting footpaths and campaigning for greater access to the countryside. The board think this is a misunderstanding. They have no desire to de-prioritise this work. It is clearly set out as the first of our four key aims in our strategy Fresh Air, Firm Ground. In fact, there are a number of fantastic campaigning achievements recently under our belt:

Our coastal access campaign is on the verge of a significant milestone, with the Marine and Coastal Access Bill about to become law. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) section 3A Order (to amend CROW as it applies to coastal land) is now out for consultation, earlier than expected – thanks in part to our campaigning. A path has been added to the definitive map in Shiplake, Oxfordshire, with clear benefits for local people; this was a local campaign supported nationally.

Our Rights of Way Improvement Campaign, focussing on funding, has got off to an excellent start, with support from Natural England, the Local Government Association and others, and with four local authorities signing up already. Our petition on the No 10 website to repeal the 2026 cut-off date for Rights of Way attracted 6,500 signatures, and we are hoping soon for recommendations from the Stakeholder Working Group, on which we sit. Somerset Ramblers, with help from central office, have held a useful meeting with the Cabinet Member for the Environment, who has made commitments to involve the Ramblers in discussions on budgets for rights of way and access. The actions in our 2006 rights-of-way strategy are being taken forward. This coming year, we intend to help to get 500 public paths unblocked, opened, or

marked on definitive maps. We look to our knowledgeable paid staff and our active volunteers, working together, to achieve our aims.

Particular priorities for the Ramblers for the next twelve months will be maintaining pressure for coastal access and in contributing to the review of access legislation (England and Wales).

Making walking accessible to all. We are aware that some people believe we have shifted our focus from the needs of committed walkers in countryside areas to those who have not previously gone walking, particularly people in urban areas. We believe that this too is a misunderstanding. We do not intend to reduce our focus on our core area of work.

Our work on accessible walking began several years ago, and long predates Fresh Air, Firm Ground. Nevertheless we are proud to endorse this. We need to overcome all barriers to walking, whether physical (blocked footpaths, etc), legal, social or cultural.

We have also received project funding to launch pioneering initiatives in some UK cities and we are excited by what these projects have already been able to achieve. Because the funding is project-based, it does not take resources from other work (indeed, it helps contribute to our general overheads). This work is fully in line with our charitable objectives.

An organisation which is well run. One of our strategic aims is to ensure that the Ramblers operates as effectively as possible to maximise its resources. There have been failures here. A new membership database was necessary, but its introduction has been enormously difficult. We apologise for the problems this has caused. The situation is now much improved, especially regarding financial backlogs. Currently, there are just 52 new member applications waiting to be processed, the oldest of which is one week. We have some way to go but are making progress and will continue to monitor things closely. In particular, we are now addressing the matters of particular concern to membership secretaries.

Area and group officers and members are, rightly, angry when their letters and emails to our London office do not bring about prompt replies. There may be good reasons why this happens, to do with staff workload and priorities. Nevertheless, lack of response is unacceptable and we propose to remedy the situation. We are - with the support of our senior staff - going to introduce a new protocol, which will require responses to members' communications within a 10 day period. We will be providing more details about this as quickly as we can.

The financial situation. Our hon treasurer took office at General Council 2009. He was the founding Secretary in 1987 of the Charity Finance Directors Group and is Secretary (effectively the Chief Operating Officer) of the Institute of Cancer Research. As an 'outsider' prior to April 2009, he was asked by the trustees to look in detail at the financial situation of the organisation over the past two years and to identify what can be done to ensure that the Ramblers procedures for financial management are stronger in the future.

In his preliminary report to trustees, he identified a number of improvements which we are now putting in place to safeguard the future. His substantive report will be made available to members as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the substantial changes we made in May have stopped the immediate financial crisis and put our finances onto a secure footing.

Location of central office. Over years, many members have suggested that the organisation could save money by relocating away from London. This is not a straightforward matter, and a move would incur short-term costs (and also the possible loss of key specialist staff) but would reduce overheads in the longer term. Moving closer to the organisation's historic roots in the northern cities would be welcomed by some. In the short-term the trustees have decided to maintain the London office, but an opportunity will arise in 2015 with a break clause in the Camelford House lease. The trustees have discussed this, and are at present minded to make

such a move. However, this is a big step, which must be taken in possession of all the facts. The senior staff have been asked to look in detail at the implications and report back.

Electronic communications. Faced with a large financial shortfall, we took the decision to abolish paper-based communication with active members and to use electronic communications instead. This is much more efficient in staff time and in money, and we believe that this is the way forward. Nevertheless, the implementation has been controversial, and some people have felt excluded from information they used to receive. We propose to review whether arrangements can be introduced for members without email access. We will welcome a debate on this at next year's General Council.

Better communication. The trustees accept that communications with active members have to be improved. As one part of this, our Chair and Chief Executive are undertaking to organise special regional meetings, in order to be able to communicate the trustees' thinking directly and to listen to comments and concerns. These events will start shortly. This will be addition to the scheme set up in May whereby trustees are contacting individual Area chairs regularly to give updates and listen to views.

Looking to the future. We have come through difficult times in recent months. We have a great deal to celebrate from past successes but a great deal still to achieve. We have to stay true to our roots, but we must also ensure that new generations of walkers will want to join us. We have to make full use of our resources as well as possible. Central to this is acknowledging the contribution made by our active members.

We have to rebuild our strength together.

BOTH WAYS ON THE BUS SOLO Joyce Clarke

I've always liked a bit of a challenge, so I decided to set myself one, and the Leicestershire Round sounded just up my footpath. I must admit I'd already had a bit of practice by previously walking the Cloud Trail and the Ivanhoe Way both ways, but the Leicestershire Round sounded a little more demanding, and as I had no records to beat and nothing to prove, I ventured out on days that looked settled, when I had nothing else pressing to do and generally, if I felt like it. Consequently, it took almost fourteen months to complete consisting of twenty one separate days between July 2008 and August 2009.

As I'm keen on helping to save the planet, it seemed sensible to travel to the venues by bus. I kept a little log which has helped to jog my memory.

I had to start somewhere, so I decided on Mountsorrel. As I live Ashby side of Coalville, it was not a great distance away and is easily reached in one bus journey. The biggest test was juggling the bus times; easy enough when there is only one bus to catch each way, but the eastern side of our county can prove to be rather sparsely served by public transport, so on three occasions I will admit to taking the car to the furthestmost points of Launde Abby and Hallaton areas. The No. 747 was very handy for Belton-in-Rutland. Another reason, of course, is that it would have left very little time for walking if I had to mastermind six lots of connecting buses. However, on two occasions I did just that - X2 from Coalville to St. Margaret's, X4 to Fleckney and the 44 to Thorpe Langton. This was the first week in December, and I found it necessary, (partly from choice because I didn't want to hang around at a bus stop), to walk from Fleckney to Kilby along an unlit road in the dark. I arrived home at 7.35pm having been out since 9.10am and walked only 4.5 miles each way of the route. Five weeks later, three buses again - X2 to St. Margaret's, X3 to Market Harborough and the 44 to Foxton, this time covering only four miles each way, but I managed to knock off 1.5 hours from the "time away from home" time. So all was not lost.

The way I tackled the route both ways was to take the bus to Point A, which could be a main road, a village or even the next village, and then join the Round at the place where I had last left it. Having already checked the return bus times back from that spot, I then walked for X number of miles noting the time by my watch of starting off from the bus stop. When I reached a convenient place, eg a village, a stream, a farmhouse, a pub and sometimes a clump of trees in the middle of a field, I would then stop walking and turn back along the same route.

In theory, the return journey should take less time, as it is fresh in the mind and you get a complete change of scenery and know where the problems might lie. This stage of the walk was usually a good time to have a sandwich, a coffee and a double check on the map and bus timetables.

Most days were problem-free, but as all ramblers know, things can happen, like the day between Frisby and Rearsby when a herd of bullocks came galloping towards me and I had to make a hasty detour under a barbed wire fence on to a fairly busy railway line and walk along it to get into the adjoining field. Sticky, wet mud that creeps over the tops of your boots, shorts not long enough to stop the nettles stinging your legs, buses that don't turn up, getting lost in Bosworth Park, being 'seen off the premises' by over-protective sheep with lambs, or by a bull with cows all hovering around the stile that you need to cross over. Braver people than I would not turn a hair, but I could see not good reason looking for trouble. That day was aborted.

One memorable day was in July 2008 when, by chance, I met up with Chris Ambrose in Frisby and she very kindly gave me a lift to Rearsby where I caught the bus to Leicester.

Unfortunately, the bus broke down on Melton Road, which meant an extra mile walk to St. Margaret's. Another chance meeting occurred in November 2008 somewhere between Belton-in-Rutland and Hallaton when I came across a group of beaters and recognised an old school colleague last seen in 1962. He plied me with a sandwich and a large bottle of beer, which gave me a headache for the rest of the afternoon.

The 'bad' bits have now paled into insignificance, but the memory of our outstanding Leicestershire countryside will remain with me.

The experience of completing the Round by myself is quite satisfying, and I feel fortunate to have been able to do it. It really is a beautiful walk.

SOMEONE ELSE ON A BUS

Following his piece in the last newsletter Stan has received the following note from John Bastow.

“Thanks for article in the summer edition of Write of Way. Recently I boarded a 747 in Bushby (where I live) and travelled as far as Belton in Rutland. I then walked home via Launde, Tilton on the Hill (pub), Cold Newton, and Ingarsby. Of course the possibilities are endless.. So, now that I am retired, I shall definitely be using the 747 again. Thanks again for the suggestion.”

Stan would also like to point out two bits of good news on the 747; occasionally timetables do appear at SMBS in the racks, and it appears that the last two journeys (at 1822 and 1922 from Uppingham) do come through to Leicester.

Changes to our Footpath Network since the last edition of Write-of-Way

The network continues to change, and again I will attempt to describe the diversions etc. concerned, the effect of which is usually quite minor.

Leicestershire

April 20th 2009 – diversion of two paths just to the north of Conkers after land restoration.

April 30th 2009 – dedication of new footpath parallel to the Leicestershire Round bridleway running west from Bagworth towards Crown Farm and Nailstone.

May 5th 2009 – formal diversion of path from Queniborough to Gaddesby through Coles' Nurseries onto route used since the irrigation pond was made.

May 7th 2009 – small diversion of little-used path from South Croxton Road to Barsby around the edge of Coles' Nurseries at the western end.

May 8th 2009 – hard fought for addition of the claimed route across Carlton Park at Narborough, linking Forest Road and Ten Pound Lane.

June 3rd 2009 – rationalisation and diversion of paths south of Cossington, but including formalisation of extra link to canal towpath, and giving a continuous bridleway route from Cossington to Meadow Lane, Syston. Should facilitate creation of Connect2 cycle route from Watermead Park to Cossington.

June 19th 2009 – formal creation of right of way over footbridge crossing A511 at Coalville.

July 7th 2009 – diversion to headland of part of long path from Goadby to Hallaton, near Pine Tree Stud. Also diversion to north of the latter.

July 9th 2009 – very small diversion in garden at Griffydam, on the notorious 'aggressive dogs' property.

July 14th 2009 – very small diversion of path leading east off Main Street, Barsby, avoiding awkward steps in favour of sloped access drive.

July 16th 2009 – small diversion of tarmac path from Church Lane to Chapel Street in Barwell, due to development of Community Centre.

July 17th 2009 – diversion of path from Barkby to Syston, due to housing development at the north end.

July 24th 2009 — minor diversion of village path in Appleby Magna due to horse paddock being fenced.

July 28th 2009 — very small diversion of village path in Muston to allow residential development.

July 29th 2009 — addition of short tarmac path from Humphrey Close in Loughborough to join the Burton Walks route past the Grammar School.

July 30th 2009 — addition of tarmac path in Hathern, claimed in 2001.

July 2009 — route dedicated in December 2006 finally brought into use, replacing the dead-end route in Stinking Wood, Ulverscroft. An attractive and useful link from the Leicestershire Road east of Markfield to Ulverscroft Lane north-west of Newtown Linford.

July 2009 — bringing into use of diversion confirmed in December 2008 due to housing development at Poplar Road, Shelthorpe, on path leading to Woodthorpe.

August 6th 2009 — confirmation of temporary diversion (albeit for 35 years) of bridleway from Gibbet Hill, Shawell towards Cotesbach, to permit extension of gravel extraction.

August 13th 2009 — diversion of path from Thorpe Satchville to Great Dalby where it crosses Klondyke Lane, virtually eliminating any road walking.

August 21st 2009 — extinguishment of urban path in Hinckley Town Centre, which has never been available for use in living memory, and was parallel to a well-used path less than 30 yards away.

September 3rd 2009 — diversion of long path from Somerby to Cold Overton, at the Cold Overton end, which should resolve awkward ditch crossings.

September 3rd 2009 — small diversion of path running west from Knossington.

September 4th 2009 — extinguishment of short path from Wanlip Road to A607 (formerly A46) at Syston, which was made redundant many years ago by an alternative to the east of the A607.

Rutland

April 21st 2009 — small diversion of path heading north-east from church at Whissendine to accommodate the Natural Burial Ground.

April 28th 2009 — small diversion of Rutland Round approaching Oakham from Barleythorpe Road to allow for school redevelopment (NB this route is closed temporarily west of Huntsman's Way because of the construction work)



See also the Area's web site
<http://leicsra.org.uk>
(Web master John Samson 01509 557689)

and the Ramblers national web sites
<http://www.ramblers.org.uk>
The Ramblers walkfinder web site

[http://www.ramblers.org.uk/areas_groups/
groupswalksfinder.htm](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/areas_groups/groupswalksfinder.htm)

WEBMASTER'S REPORT

The Leicestershire Area web site is now as given above. If you have any bookmarks or links to the (now defunct) geocities site please update them.

At the moment the site contains links to group sites and group contacts, a calendar of Area events, a colour version of Write of Way and some links. Any suggestions for content are welcome (but not as welcome as offers of content).

Please send these to the webmaster at j.h.samson@lboro.ac.uk.

John Samson

YOUR AREA NEEDS YOU

Having served three years our Treasurer has indicated that he would like to stand down at this AGM.

We are therefore looking for someone to take his place. Under our constitution anybody doing so is only allowed to serve for 3 years so it cannot be a life sentence.

At present it involves attending 4 evening meetings each year being held on Thursdays in Glenfield and it is highly unlikely this will increase.

Comprehensive guidelines are provided by our central office but some knowledge of at least simple book-keeping is an obviously an advantage.

Please give Brian a ring to learn more about this rewarding role if you are at all interested and with no commitment at this stage.