



# ANNUAL REPORT 2015

## SHEFFIELD RAMBLERS GROUP

### Sheffield Ramblers Chairman's Report

*Terry Howard*

In looking at our recent membership numbers we have seen a steady decline. However, we shouldn't see this as negative as Sheffield has more Ramblers Association members now than we have ever had, well in excess of a thousand. This is due to the two other Ramblers Association Groups, the 20s – 30s and the 40s - 50s groups. Although we don't see a progression from one group to another as members get older, instead they stay with the group they originally joined. Thus our reduction in numbers. During the year, the Sheffield Groups have met to consider matters of joint interest, and how we relate to each other. One thing that came out of the meeting was an agreement of free movement between Groups, particularly on walks.

Sheffield Group's traditional way of publishing its walks in booklet form is about to change - mainly because of constant changes in public transport. The increase in the latter means that change it is inevitable whether we like it or not. Our immediate concern has to be how we help and accommodate those members who are not "online" yet. I personally will be sad to see the walks booklet go but what's the point of a walks booklet that is practically out of date shortly after printing.

The Big Pathwatch seems to have progressed reasonably well with Sheffield having a good coverage from information received so far, especially from the younger groups. So thank you all who have contributed to this initiative. However, fixing the identified problems, and the continuing task of improving our rights of way, has yet to be done. The contribution of our "Fix It" team in improving our paths, has to be acknowledged, so many thanks to them for their commitment and hard work.

We are all well aware of threats to our paths and access because of much reduced funding, but we must not simply accept this. Apart from giving support for our paths we must protect, and possibly enhance access. This has been done by supporting initiatives to get the Councils to show all their woodland as "open access" on all OS maps. In Sheffield we have tried to get all urban green open space shown as "open access", but this was not possible because Councils are being forced to free land for housing development. However, we have an agreement with our Council that when any of their land is to be "disposed" of we will have the opportunity to suggest new rights of way over it. Two latest examples are Woodseats Farm in Bradfield and off Sheephill Road near Hathersage Road (*shown on the SYNED Area website*).

In conclusion I would like to thank all those members who contribute to the work of the Ramblers, committee members, walks leaders, and those who carry out work in the name of

the Ramblers on various committees and bodies. Without them what we enjoy would not be possible. Our urban and rural countryside has much to be enjoyed. It can be inspirational and it can be challenging but it still needs someone to look after it.

## **Area Access Officer's Report**

### ***Les Seaman***

This last year seemed to be the calm before the storm, all organisations that have responsibilities for looking after our countryside have had their budgets cut, and are expected to carry on as before. It appears to the general public that they are managing to keep going without too much disruption, but there has been major reorganisation taking place within all these statutory organisations. It is with the help of volunteer groups of the ramblers and the wider access movement, and hard dedicated work put in previous years. Budget cuts have not hit the ability of countryside lovers to access all those wonderful places we fought so hard for. But it is early days and if future budget cuts continue we will see areas of restrictions and delays in our expectations to access the countryside we have come to expect.

The landscaping of the Burbage Valley has come along as planned and nature will soon restore this area to its natural beauty. Rod Moor is a long running saga that needs constant attention, an intransigent landowner and tenant farmer are making reasonable access very difficult.

The opening up of Lady Cannings Wood to multiuse is having its pitfalls and they need to be dealt with sooner than latter, to make sure no one group can make other users feel that they are being rode roughshod over. So watch this space on resolving these issues. The Bridleway from Redmires to Dennis Knoll is now a pleasure, that some of us remember in years gone by -quite and peaceful without vehicle access.

Stanage Edge and the surrounding moors are much loved by ramblers, climbers and people who love the wild open aspect of this area. The National Park Authority have asked the Stanage Forum to come up with a plan to make sure the North Lees Estate can be maintained for all users both recreational and commercial, without one submerging the other. The Ramblers need to be represented on this group so that access and freedom to roam is maintained. This is a situation that has come about because of budget cuts, and the impact of issues raised at the beginning of this report.

We are certain there will be many more areas of concern in the next months and years, but like the early access campaigners, we must find ways of keeping our access to the moors and our freedom to roam. So be vigilant and enjoy these freedom so hard fought for.

## **Coach Rambles**

### ***Liz Savage***

This year we have had the usual 4 coach Rambles. The 3 Sunday Rambles have each provided A and B walks in the Shuttingsloe, Goathland/Whitby and Malham areas. The Tuesday ramble also had two walks in the Tittlesworth and Roaches area. All the walks this year have had good weather and the most recent trip to Malham was a day of perfect September sunshine.

A big thank you goes to all the walk leaders who worked hard to recce and lead excellent walks – Judy Gathercole, Susan Rushworth, David Goodchild, John and Joan Taylor, Val Coleman, David Hogg, Cath and Malcolm Mackay, David Woodhead and Roy Barber. The coach rambles have been subsidised this year and this has kept the cost down to £10. We are planning more coach rambles for next year and **welcome suggestions for destinations for future years.**

## RAMBLERS 'FIXIT' NEWS

*Jan Randall*

Its ten a.m. on the first Monday of the month; so its 'FIXIT' day. The Ramblers Footpaths and Rights of Way group will be ready to start work on the reclamation or improvement of a path somewhere in the Sheffield area..... We will meet up at a pre-arranged parking spot with Tony Andrews and Dave, one of his rangers from the Rights of Way at the council. Our group will have brought any tools we consider necessary for the job, some our own and some bought with Ramblers money allocated for tools. Tony will have arranged to bring materials for the job, or heavyduty machinery for a particular job. Occasionally we do need a railer, mini-digger or chainsaw.

We have been active as a group for three years last February and have become very enthusiastic about the varied jobs that we do. Our team, about ten in number (when everyone turns up) has the skills needed to tackle, not only improvement jobs, but also construction jobs such as step-laying and small bridge construction. Everyone who contributes gains satisfaction from our efforts, occasionally becoming rather perfectionist with the aesthetics of the job!

Our group is approximately half male, half female - everyone finds a task which suits them. We work well as a team, and sometimes have a sociable drink at the end of the job.

Our future aims are to continue as a group, but we would like to develop various aspects of the groups work. It would be good to publicise the paths we have worked on, to encourage other walking groups to use them. We would like to circulate details of paths now more easily accessible to other walking groups, incorporating the paths information on walking route suggestions. Any offers to do this?

Current dilemmas, which have cropped up with our groups work, are that paths cleared can very quickly become overgrown again. We are currently discussing whether we should have a system of visiting past sites, and also timing the cutback seasonally so that paths stay clear for longer.

A development of our group would be to recruit further workers who would like to help occasionally, without committing regularly, when there is a job requiring a larger workforce. Anyone out there interested- **please contact Jan (co-ordinator of the group) Tel: 0114 2665063**

*Some areas worked on to date:*

- **Spout House Wood** south of More Hall Reservoir is our current job. *Re- claiming a path waymarked but not used for several years, hence a jungle! This is one we would like to publicise when completed. Rights of Way Dept. are going to improve the waymarking.*
- **Ringinglow 1** - Sheffield Round Walk leading down to The Limb Valley. *Drainage of*

*impassable swampy area.*

- **Ringlow 2** - Path down to The Porter Valley. *Widening, levelling and surfacing with hardcore.*
- **Agden Reservoir** - *Path cutback.*
- **Roscoe Bank** - *Widening, levelling, surfacing with hardcore.*
- **White Lee Moor** - *path clearance*
- **Blindside Lane** - Bradfield - *Path re-construction and mini bridge.*
- **Dungworth** - *Path cutback and steps.*
- **Lodge Moor** - *Cutback of ginnel.*
- **Totley, Victoria Road** - *Step-building (several flights) and redefining path/cutback.*

Any suggestions for paths needing attention, please make contact with Jan, co-ordinator of the group - **Tel 0114 2665063**

## IT AND Web ADMINISTRATOR

### *Dave Jefferies*

There have been no major changes this year. However, there will be some work needed before the AGM to support the new version of the walks programme with its 3 monthly list of walks.

## MEMBERSHIP

### *Malcolm MacKay*

The group membership at the end of August 2015 was 615 individuals, 54 fewer than a year earlier, despite 33 new members. This follows a net loss of only 4 in the previous year.

Since our peak membership of 927 in 2005, we have shrunk by 31 members each year on average with the last five years a little higher at 34 per year.

Overall, the Ramblers are doing well in Sheffield as the 20's to 30's, and the 40's walking groups each have over 200 members. These groups were founded in 2002 and 2007 and have attracted younger recruits that in earlier years could have added to the numbers of the only Ramblers group then available to them in Sheffield.

## RAMBLES REPORT

### *Rambles Committee*

As in previous years we have had some very good walking during the year and numbers generally have been good, particularly on Tuesdays. Wednesdays and Sundays seem to have dropped a bit over the summer but we are hoping that, now a lot of people are back from holidays, they will pick up again. A few regular walkers from those days have moved across to Tuesdays. They are missed, but that is exactly why the Tuesday walks were started in the first place and now some of the Tuesday walkers are wanting more leisurely walks and some have been put in for a few Thursdays later in the year. That is entirely without the help of the Rambles Committee and it is good to see members willing to provide what is needed by fellow walkers.

The walks entry system continues to work well but we are still short of walks for 2016 as I write this at the beginning of October. We are particularly short of walks for the winter months so it looks as if our first 3-monthly mini programme could look a bit sparse, which will be a shame.

Most of you will know by now that we are not producing an annual printed programme for this coming year. You will all get by email, collect at the AGM, or be sent by post our first mini programme, a leaflet giving information about the group and a letter explaining the changes along with the Area Report. These changes have become necessary as the 2015 programme had over a third of the walks changed in some way (often because of bus changes) or new walks added. It made the programme very unreliable as a reference and we hope the new way will work better. Give it a chance for a while then let us know what you think. We hope at least we can keep everyone more up to date in 2016.

## RIGHTS OF WAY

### *David Woodhead*

Over the last twelve months we have continued our regular meetings with the rights of way officers in the Sheffield City Council. We have been consulted on all rights of way and access matters. However, it is a matter of concern that the Rights of Way Unit as only one full-time member of staff. The others are now working two or three days a week. This will mean processing the backlog of claims for rights of way before the 2026 deadline, will be a struggle, on top of the day-to-day footpath matters. It looks like quite a bit of the clearing of paths will have to be done by volunteers like our "Fix it" team.

In the spring I surveyed the Sheffield Country Walk, replacing signs that were missing mostly on lampposts, which had been replaced under the Streets Ahead Scheme.

We are concerned about the closure of the path across the railway line into Wharnccliffe Woods at Ewden Beck. While this is not a right of way it has been walked for over sixty years at least. This closure has been brought about because the Forestry Commission requested Network Rail to make the crossing suitable for large timber trucks. This meant twelve foot wide gates been fitted to keep other vehicles out. Ramblers Central Office and the local MP (Angela Smith) have been asked to help to try and get it reopened but the outlook is not good.

When members find a blocked path within the Sheffield boundary, we ask them to report the matter directly to the **Rights of Way Unit Tel: 0114 273 4448 or Email: [PublicRightsofWay@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:PublicRightsofWay@sheffield.gov.uk)** and let me know you have done so.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT REPORT

### *John Brightmore*

A welcome introduction this year has been the half-hourly TM Travel service 218 to Bakewell and Chatsworth providing a much-needed enhanced service to these destinations. This has been supplemented by First's 240/241 (operating until the last Sunday in October), which has provided an hourly service to Bakewell via Ringinglow at weekends and Bank Holidays. First has also introduced the 273 to Ladybower and Castleton.

Due to Budget cuts South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive decided to stop printing Bus Timetable Leaflets (to allegedly save £188,000), close all the Information Centres, and also to stop selling Travel Passes and Tickets.

Bus timetables can be accessed and printed off on line at [www.travelsouthyorkshire.com](http://www.travelsouthyorkshire.com) but many older people do not have internet access and it is far easier to carry timetable leaflets with you for reference. Operators First and Stagecoach are providing their own Timetable Leaflets, but those produced so far are kept in racks behind the new Information Kiosks. People have to ask for them, which means they need to know they exist! This is in sharp contrast to West Yorkshire and Derbyshire where Bus and Rail Timetables are widely available for people to take.

By the time this report is read there will have been wide changes to Sheffield Bus Routes. With no timetable leaflets and further budget cuts to come, there could be even further reductions in timetable information, and consequently a reduction of the available use of the OAP passes.

Full marks however to Derbyshire County Council. Their excellent comprehensive Timetable Books for the Peak District and North East Derbyshire (£2.50) are now on sale at Sheffield Tourist Information Centre on Surrey Street. These can be carried with you and can be used to plan walks and bus trips without having to go near a computer!

Happy Travelling

## Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group

### *Christine Hewitt (Chair)*

Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group had been out on some 43 walks during the year plus a coach ramble to Hebden Bridge with our friends in the Hearing Impaired Walking Group. Like 2014 it again amounted to nearly 300 miles of walking. In addition to all this local walking 30 members and 2 guide dogs have just enjoyed a Group holiday on the Isle of Man where we were very ably assisted by members of The Isle of Man Footpath Conservation Group who devised and lead walks for us. That group is affiliated to Ramblers as is SVIWG. Wherever we have gone on holiday we have always had an unfailingly good response from local groups like this.

This year's fund raising effort on behalf of Sheffield Royal Society for the Blind was a walk across Morecambe Bay on 20<sup>th</sup> September. We thought it would be a change from climbing mountains! Some 30 people participated in this event.

We have again been trying to recruit more members, both visually impaired and sighted guides. As Chair I was interviewed on BBC Radio Sheffield and that resulted in a small response. We are particularly keen to reach visually impaired walkers so if you are aware of any who do not know about the group – please tell them about us and give them my phone number 0114 2366685.

We continue to rely heavily on Ramblers Sheffield Group for leaders for our walks and as sighted guides and we are very grateful for all the support the Group gives us. We thank you all sincerely for your continued support. Yet again John Bater will soon be putting together

the programme for next year 2016. If you think you can lead just one walk for us, on either a Wednesday or a Sunday during 2015, please contact him on 0114 2334080.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

*Jackie Knight*

### **Treasurers Report - year ended 30th September 2015**

We received £2,035 from Area for the year. This has proved to be more than adequate for the groups needs and we end the year with a balance of £1,712 in the bank adjusted to £2,002 (Main Account £1,628 + Self Funded £374) once account is taken of outstanding receipts (an increase of £552 over the previous year).

We spent £671 on producing and delivering the annual walks programme.

Hire of meeting rooms and refreshments including a walk leaders meeting totalled £256.

Group administration costs including web hosting charges totalled £134.

We spent £71 on FixIt tools.

Sales of Sheffield Country Walk booklets amounted to £286.

We received £100 from Ramblers holidays in respect of member's bookings.

We paid out £2,218 on coach trips and coach walk recce costs and received £1,570 in payments – however the £400 cost of the last trip of the 2013/14 season was paid in 2014/15 so taking account of this £1,818 was paid out for 2014/15 trips (£248 deficit) so we have not covered our coach ramble costs directly this year. However this was planned as we agreed that the cost of every trip should be subsidised for 2014/15 at £10 per person with free seats for walk leaders and back markers and reimbursement of coach trip walk recce costs (£158). The deficit has again been covered by the balance in our self-funding pot although this now stands at only £374.

We have submitted a request for funding of £1,950 from Area for 2015/16 – we are awaiting the outcome of this request.