



ANNUAL REPORT 2016

SHEFFIELD RAMBLERS GROUP

SHEFFIELD RAMBLERS CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Terry Howard

Sheffield Group maintains its profile within the City as an organisation which contributes to the life of the City. Our varied walks programme can boast that we offer walking opportunities for all people who want a walk which suits them. There are the shorter Tuesday or longer Wednesday walks or the varied Sunday walks. Occasionally there are Thursday or Saturday walks along with the "Walking Out" walks which cater for new walkers, those from the Cities Health Walks or for those who just want a short "amble".

Access and footpath work continues to address those matters which affect our countryside and footpath matters. Of note is our objection to the motorway service station on the M1 at Smithy Wood along with the closing of the railway crossing onto Wharncliffe.

We have two "working" teams one involved in footpath repairs, the "Fix It" team, and the "Lost Ways" team, working on restoring lost rights of way. Both vital for the future of our rights of way network.

Members have been involved in organising and running Sheffield's Walking Festival via the Walking Forum. It is reasonable to say that without our member's involvement in both these initiatives they wouldn't happen. Similarly, we support "Sheffield, The Outdoor City" initiative. We also encourage members to be involved in the work of the two Local Access Forums which cover our area.

On what appears to be a negative matter, membership of the Group looks less than encouraging but taken with the increase in membership of our two younger Sheffield Groups does look encouraging. We are starting to work closer with these two Groups but still much has to be done. Through Area's involvement in "Governance" it should help and enable closer working links between us all.

We now have a regular online newsletter as well as our walks programme being on line. The online programme has addressed many of the problems associated with organising walks but we must be considerate of those not online.

It is impossible to list all the contributions made by individuals to the work of the Group and making the walks programme "work" but thanks must be made to them all. Without them what would you have? So sincere thanks to all.

AREA ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT

Les Seaman

There are not many issues that confront users of open access land and more challenging than the change of land ownership. The moors west of Sheffield namely Hallam, Moscar, Bamford and Derwent which were known as the Moscar Estates have been sold on to the Haddon Estates. As these moors are open access and therefore covered by the Crow Act we have our freedom to roam, we shall have to see if the moors management closures will be the same as previous owners, and access by footpaths to the edges at Stanage and Derwent will continue during any closure regime.

The Sheffield Public Rights of Way unit covering both footpaths and access to the Sheffield moors and the Peak District National Park Authority are under budget constraints (nothing changes), but both authorities are trying their very best to maintain their statutory duties to both footpaths and open access. With the commitment to Access For All the provision of more bridleways for horses and cycle users has been progressed, a number of new routes have been implemented across the local moors. With the expansion of these facilities comes the added problem of some but not all mountain bikers straying onto the adjacent moorland (which is illegal). Education of the users is required to keep within the law. The Sheffield Moors Partnership is well aware of these potential problems and all ramblers using open access land should report any incidents of this nature to either the Sheffield or Peak authorities.

We must continue to use the open access land and give our support to both Sheffield and the Peak District authorities and at any opportunity lobby our local Members of Parliament to get central government to increase funding to the National Parks, and also show that these moors are essential for both health and recreational benefits.

Good roaming,

COACH RAMBLES

Liz Savage

This year we have had 3 coach Rambles. The Sunday trips in April and September took walkers to Ingleton and Arnside and in June the Tuesday trip visited Hartington. Unfortunately the trip planned for May had to be cancelled as there too few bookings and while the other Sunday trips were well attended numbers were unexpectedly low on the June Tuesday trip. The cost this year was £11 per person.

Each of the trips had A and B walks and a few members were able to do their own shorter or longer walks. The Ingleton walks went up and around Whernside. The B walk was led by Cynthia and Barry Ashton and the A walk by David Hogg and Liz Savage. David Woodhead and Terry Howard led A and B walks around Hartington and the A and B walks from Arnside were led by Susan Rushworth and Jan Randall and by Judy Gathercole and David Goodchild.

Thank you to all the leaders for their time in recycling and leading walks.

We are planning next year's walks and open to ideas for good walks with up to 2 hours travel and somewhere with pubs and cafes for meeting after the walks.

RAMBLERS 'FIXIT' NEWS

Jan Randall

Sheffield Ramblers 'FIXIT' Group (Rights of Way and Path Maintenance)

The FIXIT group continues its work on public footpaths in the Sheffield area and makes a valuable contribution to keeping paths accessible for walkers and improving paths which could be hazardous, through lack of workforce and funds.

We work closely with The Rights of Way Department at Sheffield Council and through offering skills and labour free of charge, help them to achieve improvements which might otherwise be impossible through lack of workforce and funds.

Our team are reliable, hard-working and like to do a good job! We work on the first Monday of every month for a full morning. Communication is through the blog on the Sheffield Ramblers Website Homepage. The blog will give a description of the job to be tackled, the venue and directions to the site at which we are working. It will suggest suitable parking and stipulate what tools and suitable footwear for the job in hand.

Tools are acquired through fund-raising, donation and help from Sheffield Ramblers funds. We all bring our own tools as well.

Any member of the Sheffield ramblers can put forward suggestions of paths needing attention on the blog. It would help us tremendously if you did ! but please be specific as to the location. We have to view and assess the job before putting it into our work schedule.

New members of the team will be made welcome and given jobs where they can contribute according to their skills and strength.

Please contact any regular member of the current group:

Cynthia and Barry Ashton
Joan and John Taylor
Chris Dauris
Lis Savage

David Hogg
Laurence Turner
David Kayley
Jan Randall (co-ordinator)

IT AND Web ADMINISTRATOR

Dave Jefferies

Everything has been pretty quiet with just some minor tweaks to make some of the automated emails look better. Late changes to walks are now emailed out if there has been a change within 10 days of a walk (i.e. after the first reminder). Emails are sent out each month listing dates on Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday in the

following three months without walks, and this does seem to have encouraged leaders to fill the gaps.

We had one hiccup when our web provider changed something that stopped our automatic emails from working. This naturally had to happen when I was moving house so took longer to sort that I would have liked.

There are no plans for significant changes for next year.

MEMBERSHIP

Malcolm MacKay

The group membership at 31st August 2016 was 605 individuals, ten members less than a year earlier.

We had similar numbers in 1991.

Peak membership was 927 in 2006 with a steady decline since then. The other Ramblers groups in Sheffield continue to thrive and to attract younger members, the purpose for which they were established.

RAMBLES REPORT

Rambles Committee

Once again, we have had a good year of walking with good numbers, particularly on a Tuesday. The Wednesday group has seen several new members lately and we have had several days when people have commented that there are more men than women out – it's getting quite like the old days!

The Walking Out programme has been revised this year and, while not reaching the high numbers from its heyday, has proved popular with members and will be continued next year.

I think people have kept abreast of new walks and changes to the walks through our new on-line systems where they get an update email 10 days and 2 days before every walk. Any last minute emergency changes can be sent out right up to the morning of the walk if the walk is edited on-line.

There is one major issue with the new system, however - we are often short of walks! Some people like to put their walks in well ahead and have already entered all walks for 2017. Others prefer to take advantage of not having the deadline of the printed programme to leave it until a little nearer the time. The problem comes when we (and I admit I'm guilty of this, too) leave it too long and we have gaps in the programme, often until the last week or two. This is especially a problem for people without on-line access. We prepare a three monthly programme, which they can ask a friend to print for them or ask us to send. The last one went out with nearly all November and December empty!

So if you do like to wait to see what else comes up in your diaries please try to set a deadline of at least three and a half months before your walk. Of course, if there are still gaps, we will still be very grateful for any last minute entries!

Enjoy your walking in 2017.

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 most are now working two or three days a week

On the closure of the path over the railway line at Wharncliffe Woods reported last year although a meeting was held with RA Central Office, Network Rail and the local MP(Angela Smith) there has been no progress.

We raised concern about plans to place a temporary diversion on 68m of footpath SHE/318 Which is between Twentywell Lane (Dore Station) and Bradway for a 14 month period as work is carried out at Dore Station. But we have received confirmation that there will be access at all times throughout the duration of the works.

Two new paths have been added to the definitive map at Hunshelf Bank Stocksbridge. Footpath No 76 from FP No STO/ 7 (SK 279999) to FP STO/ 40 (SK 283989) and Footpath No 77 from FP No STO/ 6 (north spur) (SK 286989) to FP No STO/ 8 (SK 289989) at Holly Hall.

There is to be a new multi use route linking Stocksbridge and Deepcar which will run along the north side of the river.

If 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** and let me know you have done so

PUBLIC TRANSPORT REPORT

John Brightmore

Provision of public transport to rural areas in Britain would appear to be in somewhat of a crisis at the moment. Buses in Britain were de-regulated in 1986 by the government led by the late Margaret Thatcher. Bus operators and local authorities have to work to the terms imposed by the 1985 Transport Act in which services on which operators cannot run at a profit have to be subsidised by the local authority. Due to cuts in grants to the local authorities are providing less money to support Public Transport. North Yorkshire and Cumbria have completely withdrawn support for bus services and as a result the services to many areas in the North York Moors,

the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District have been decimated, and Shropshire probably has the worst bus services in the country.

In our area, Derbyshire County Council, who until now have done a very good job in providing support, are proposing to withdraw support entirely from October 2017. This could see many services either disappear or become Dial a Ride services. However, as far as I can tell, I don't think this would affect services from Sheffield into the Peak District too much, but all will be revealed in October next year.

South Yorkshire Transport Executive is consulting on changes they are proposing to make to rural services around Penistone at the moment. These services are being run on an emergency tender by Stagecoach due to the collapse of Barnsley firm Tates Travel, earlier this year.

Finally, despite all the doom and gloom, may I give a word of praise to Paul Hopkinson and his staff at TM TRAVEL, who run the popular 218 bus service to Bakewell and Chatsworth. Patronage on this service has increased dramatically and newer double deck buses have been provided and these have been used on most service on this route this summer, giving a much needed increase in capacity. The 09.25 No 65 bus service to Buxton which is well used by walkers is now also usually operated by a double decker and TM TRAVEL always have plenty of timetable leaflets available on their buses and in the travel centres – well done to them.

SHEFFIELD VISUALLY IMPAIRED WALKING GROUP

Christine Hewitt (Chair)

Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group is unique. It is still the case that if you Google “visually impaired walking group” SVIWG is what you get and no other. We receive a number of enquiries each year from other parts of the country asking for information and advice about how to set up and run a group for visually impaired walkers. A key element of the advice we give is “get your local Ramblers Group on side. You will need their help and support”.

With help and support of members of Sheffield Group Sheffield Visually Impaired Walking Group has been out on some 44 walks during the year. And we have enjoyed our annual coach ramble with our friends in the Hearing Impaired Walking Group. This time we visited Lyme Park – selling all 53 seats on the coach (but please note that this trip is subsidised by a contribution from the funds of the 2 participating groups). All of this again mounts up to nearly 300 miles of walking.

In addition, 31 members and 3 guide dogs have just enjoyed a Group holiday in Berwick upon Tweed. The Chair and Walks Secretary of Berwick Ramblers devised and lead a couple of walks for us, one along the banks of the Tweed and another on the coast. We have always had an unfailingly good response from local Ramblers Groups like this. And it was very enjoyable being able to do some coastal walking – not something we do much given that Sheffield is about as far from the sea as you can get in the UK.

The Group also celebrated the 80th birthday of Betsy Wilson, one of our key founder members and Chair of the Group for its first 10 years. Betsy's birthday was marked by a Peak and Northern Footpath Society signpost in the Rivelin Valley.

We are always looking to recruit new members, both visually impaired and sighted guides. 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. John Bater will be putting together the programme 2017. If you think you can lead just one walk for us, on either a Wednesday or a Sunday during 2017, please contact him on 0114 2334080.

SHEFFIELD WALKING FESTIVAL

Judy Gathercole

In September 2016 Sheffield held the first Walking Festival of what we hope will become a permanent feature in Sheffield's list of annual events. The festival took place over nine days and featured at least three walks every day. The walks varied from 2 to 3 miles along local valleys to 15 miles over Margery Hill, though most of the longer walks were around 10 to 12 miles. Members of our group led 10 of the 28 walks. A lot of the walks, particularly the shorter walks, had a theme and helped give people an insight into our amazing city and its history, wildlife and culture.

The festival was organized by the Sheffield Walking Forum and was supported by the Outdoor City which developed and hosted the website and produced the leaflet for the festival. We were very aware this first year that the publicity was out too late so, hopefully, next year we will get it out much earlier and be able to attract more visitors to the city. This will also give local people the chance to stay at home and join in rather than book a holiday away!

418 people took part in 28 walks averaging around 15 per walk. The feedback from the walkers has been excellent with many of them asking that it becomes an annual event. So the dates for 2017 have just been set and are the 9th-17th September so put them in your diary and come along and join us.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Ramblers Association – Sheffield Group SD3

Treasurers Report - year ended 30th September 2016

We received £509 from Area for the year having agreed not to request 3 of the possible quarterly payments. This has proved adequate for the groups needs and we end the year with a balance of £1,730 in the bank adjusted to £1,148 (Main Account £910 + Self Funded £238) once account is taken of outstanding payments and receipts (a decrease of £854 over the previous year).

We spent £398 on producing and delivering the annual walks programme.

We spent £76 on walk recce costs.

Hire of meeting rooms and refreshments including a walk leaders meeting totalled £392.

Group administration costs including web hosting charges totalled £343.

Sales of Sheffield Country Walk booklets amounted to £290.

We received £240 from Ramblers holidays in respect of member's bookings.

We paid out £1,350 on coach trips and received £1,214 in payments – so we have not covered our coach ramble costs directly this year. The deficit been covered by the balance in our self-funding pot although this now stands at only £238.

We have submitted a request for funding of £1,000 from Area for 2016/17 – we are awaiting the outcome of this request.

Jackie Knight

October 2016