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at the heart of walking

# Area News

South Yorkshire and North-East

Derbyshire Area

[www.synedramblers.org.uk](http://www.synedramblers.org.uk)

*Winter 2014/15*

## Annual Report and AGM

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**The Annual General Meeting for 2015 will be held on 24<sup>th</sup> January** and hosted by Dearne Valley Group. **The venue is St Mary's Church Hall, Main Street, Sprotbrough, Doncaster, DN5 7RF.**

**The speaker will be Richard May a member of the Ramblers Board of Trustees.** Richard will update us on what is happening at national level, including the proposals for a new vision and those stemming from the governance review.

Richard has been a member of the Ramblers for about ten years. After attending his first General Council in 2006 he was inspired to create Norfolk's 20s and 30s walking group which now has an active programme of walks and a lively social programme. He has also been Norfolk Area News Editor for the last ten years. When not walking, Richard runs an IT consultancy.

There are regular bus services between Doncaster and Sprotbrough, and parking on the roadside around Sprotbrough is available.

Hall is open from 10 am with toilets etc for people to use. **The morning walk starts at 10.30am.** This is a 5 miles easy walk through the grounds of nearby Cusworth hall, and will be led by Chris Greig.

Refreshments are available from 1pm and **the meeting will start at 2pm prompt.**

## **Chair's Report Allen Pestell**

Another year - another good summer for walking and rambling. It has been a busy year for me, attending more training than I had when I was still working. One day's training was in York, another day in Wrexham, and lately a day in Leicester.

The latter day was perhaps the most important. The Ramblers are carrying out a consultation with us, its members, on root and branch restructuring, which will have far reaching consequences for all of us.

Firstly, on the issue of one member one vote - I know this has been raised in the past, but why should not all members have a say in who they want on the board, not just those few at General Council. Secondly, the restructuring of Areas and Groups - bearing in mind as you rise from your seats that this is only the draft stage. Areas will all have the same constitution not as at present each having its own.

Areas will do everything that Groups do not do. At present each Group has its own officers. However, although Sheffield and Chesterfield are so large that this is not a problem, some of the smaller Groups do struggle to fill offices. This burden will be taken off them (if they wish) and passed to Area. I can see that if this comes to pass, the area ACROW Sub Committee will need to change.

Groups will not have a Constitution as they do now, instead they will have a Partnership Agreement. Membership will no longer be just in Groups but if a member so wishes he/she may become an Area member. Money will still be given to the Groups by the Area, but there will be a new way of calculating the amount, which at present is so much per member.

Now I know some of you will be biting the bullet all this is still only in the consultation stage, so please wait to see the document before you bend my ear on the phone. If nothing else it promises to be an eventful year!

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

Last year we reported the setting up of the Sheffield Moors Partnership and the land management of the moors from Wyming Brook to the Eastern Moors. These moors are currently undergoing changes both ecological and visual. The moors currently under change are the Sheffield Moors, Burbage, Houndkirk and Hathersage.

The most notable will be in the Burbage Valley, this scheme will involve the removal of the conifer plantation during

the winter of 2014/15. During this period a temporary access road will be built from the Hathersage Road to the lower end of the plantation, and will be in use Monday to Friday, during felling and removal. So as not to reduce access to the valley, a temporary footpath diversion will be put in place at the lower end of the valley.

Other planned schemes are to reduce the number of grazing sheep on the moors, and also the introduction of cattle. As the whole of these moors already has perimeter stock fencing this will be made cattle secure and additional access points put in place. Additional tree planting of the native type will be introduced at several places, near Sheephill Road and near Millstone Edge. Tree thinning will take place in the Surprise View area and there will be additional native tree planting near Burbage edge.

The whole moorland scheme has been carefully planned to give these moors a pleasant visual aspect of open wild moors.

This year the National Trust has introduced concessionary bridleways within the Longshaw Estate. These will run from the Grindleford Road behind the Longshaw Lodge to the Wooden Pole path towards the Froggatt Road. The other route is in front of the Lodge and then onto the road just above the Grouse Public House. These are concessionary bridleways, and as such will be subject to monitoring and review, and adjustments will be made as and when required.

The Long Causeway at Stanage has been repaired and made more accessible for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. The Pack Horse paving is to be preserved as a feature, and once all the repair work is completed, the route from Dennis Knoll to Redmires via Stanage Pole will be closed to all motorised vehicles.

As you can see there are many changes taking place on our local moors and in the year of the 10th anniversary of the CROW Act in our region, we have much to celebrate, but we still have to be vigilant: making sure we can keep the hard won freedoms on our moors now and in the future. Good roaming to all.

## **Barnsley & Penistone Group**

### **Carol Wood - *Secretary***

The group continues to provide weekend walks on both Saturday and Sunday. They vary in length and difficulty in the hope that we can provide walks suitable for all our members within our annual programme.

We also have bi-monthly open meetings and bi-monthly socials with speakers who entertain us on a variety of subjects.

Our membership remains fairly static at approximately 250 and the average number on a walk is around 15.

The weekends away exploring other parts of the UK are always very well supported. Together with a mystery coach trip and a coach trip to North Yorkshire for various

walks, which were again very well supported by the group, as is our annual dinner. All these are open to members' families, who may not walk regularly but are interested in Ramblers and like to support our activities.

Members of the group engage with the local authority over local paths and represent Ramblers at meetings. We are aware that due to financial constraints only urgent path work is now being undertaken.

A group of 8 members from Barnsley and Penistone Ramblers successfully completed the 103 miles of the Cotswold Way, despite the heat!!

The group would like to thank all the walk leaders and the Social Secretary for their hard work during the year in providing an interesting and varied programme of walks and social activities.

## **Chesterfield and North-East Derbyshire Group**

### **John Preston**

Group Membership now stands at 525 having remained fairly constant over the year. Welcome to those who have joined us this year.

The group continued to grow the number of published walks available during this last year towards almost 500 walks, with many reported on in the Derbyshire Times new community "Times 2" section. The ever popular Wednesday walks programme continues to expand with short, medium and longer car based walks to compliment

the short and longer bus rambles. Our thanks go to all the walk organisers and volunteer walk leaders without whom the programme could not exist or continue.

The number of helper guides for the visually impaired walks on a Saturday each month has improved after last years' appeal for help, so thanks to those of you who were able to assist.

More help is always needed to volunteer with the Footpath Team; they are always ready to welcome anyone who can put their skills to repairing gates, stiles or steps, general footpath reclaiming and clearing, or just surveying a local footpath - just contact our Footpath Secretary.

This year the Team completed over 1000 hours of voluntary labour for Derbyshire County Council. Work has been carried out to improve the route information boards for the Chesterfield Round Walk in preparation for the Tenth Anniversary walk during the Chesterfield Walking Festival next year (May 2015). The Footpath team continues to work with both Derbyshire CC and Chesterfield BC to ensure the accuracy of their Definitive Maps of the Public Rights of Way.

A new initiative has also commenced to co-ordinate the walk groups in Derbyshire to improve the relationship with Derbyshire County Council and protect the footpaths as best as possible in the face of the cuts to the DCC budget. The number of obstructed paths, either temporary due to crops etc. or more permanent due to physical barriers, remains a concern both for NED and Derbyshire groups in

general. Damage to ROW by off-road vehicles continues to be monitored throughout our area.

## **Chesterfield Walking Group 20s - 40s**

**Jon Hendy - *Chair***

This year we elected a new committee and refreshed the wording on its website. The group's record number of organised weekly walks (including a record number of Wednesday evening walks) have helped to attract a number of keen and enthusiastic new members, and walk attendances are gradually increasing. The group has found two new walk leaders this year, but more are always welcome.

The group operates a very flexible walk programme, aimed primarily at walks in between 4 and 10 miles at locations around Chesterfield and the Peak District. Walks are arranged one or two months in advance, but there is scope to swap, chop and change to fit in with our busy lives.

To supplement our walks program we have also run the occasional bike ride for members who enjoy viewing the scenery at a faster pace. The group organises an ever-expanding array of social events, and will investigate more weekends away over the coming year.

For new members wanting to join this fun and friendly group why not email -

**[chesterfielddyounggramblers@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:chesterfielddyounggramblers@hotmail.co.uk)**

and ask to be added to our mailing list.



## **Dearne Valley Ramblers**

**Sue Haywood - Secretary) & Paul Smeaton - *Chairman***

Over the last year we have greatly expanded our social calendar and now have many social strings to Dearne Valley`s bow. We have continued our coach trips, and birthday dinner evenings. We have started quiz nights, and had nights at the theatre. We have also had guest speakers.

The numbers of people on our walks are increasing greatly and we have broken a few records recently.

Dearne Valley broke new ground this year by appointing, with central office approval, a Social Media Officer to deal with all aspects of our various electronic contact systems. This seems to be working remarkably well due to the sterling efforts of our new officer Chris Grieg.

Sadly, over the last year, we have lost two more of our old members namely, Rita Prew and Len Keetly, who were both strong supporters of our group.

Whilst not increasing our numbers greatly over the last year or two Dearne Valley is certainly becoming stronger thanks to commitment of its members.

## **Doncaster Ramblers David Gadd - *Chairman***

Numbers on the walks continue to be high, with 20-30 members on many walks. Obviously the weather and the location of the walk can affect numbers, but overall we are

obviously satisfying many members with the selection of walks on offer. The summer 4-5 mile Wednesday evening walks continue to attract good numbers, including some people new to walking. The Thursday 6-7 mile walks, using public transport, continue to attract walkers. This year was the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Thursday Group and this was marked by a walk and celebratory lunch at The Pastures in Mexborough. The Tuesday and Saturday moderate walks continue to provide walks in most locations within an hour or so's drive from Doncaster. Since we moved to having three people co-ordinate these walks, and pointed out that if most members lead a couple of walks the programme will be filled more easily, the problem of finding leaders has eased.

We have had two successful Christmas walks followed by lunches, at Barnburgh and at Sykehouse. We had a successful coach trip to Robin Hoods Bay in June, despite the dreadful weather, and a successful weekend away to Church Stretton in September.

We are grateful to our advertisers for supporting the walks programme. Obviously their payments contribute considerably to the cost of printing. It is noteworthy that Ramblers Worldwide Holidays now pay for a full-page advert in our programme. Three year's ago central office, with Tom Franklin as Chief Executive Officer, made a 3-year agreement with HF, in the process excluding RWH. The Ramblers - RWH link had been in existence since 1947, with RWH contributing about £400,000 p.a. to the Ramblers. However, at the following General Council, delegates made

it quite clear to the executive what they thought of Ramblers' treatment of RWH, with a unanimous vote of no-confidence. Tom Franklin left shortly afterwards. He was replaced by Benedict Southworth, who appears to be re-aligning Ramblers to be doing what most members think it should be doing.

We continue to provide, independently of our programme, a number of walks for the Get Doncaster Walking programme. Attendances on GDW walks have diminished but while DMBC continues to put these walks on, primarily aimed at getting non-walkers walking, we hope to support them.

The committee has been more active than in the past regarding seeking publicity. We have had a number of items published in the Doncaster Free Press this year, although sending an article doesn't necessarily mean that it will be published. The most notable item was a half-page photo in the DFP of a maintenance team standing proudly around a magnificent new kissing gate at the end of Castle Fields in Tickhill, which replaced a particularly old and rickety stile. Another team installed another kissing gate, at the top end of Castle Fields. These two structures will enable older people and/or people who find it difficult to get over stiles, to complete a lovely local circuit. We were also represented at Health Day at the Crompton factory on the Wheatley Hall Road. This event was to mark the establishment of a total non-smoking policy on the site. We had our photograph display, showing, we hope, the

joys of walking as well as the efforts we make to help DMBC maintain the public rights of way network.

It is now almost two years since we established a distinct RoW Group and the details, both of the system for walking and reporting on footpaths, and of the follow-up procedures were established. The vital task of checking footpaths, and the subsequent repair and maintenance work which inevitably follows, is carried out by some 30 members of the group. Close collaboration between our RoW Group and DMBC RoW Dept has been essential, and had this not occurred, progress would have been very limited. Meetings in the Spring with DMBC concerning repairs and maintenance have resulted in a significant increase in the number of volunteer sessions, all of which have contributed to improvements in our local footpaths.

By the end of 2013 we had walked and reported on over 500 of the 590 paths within the DMBC area and carried out numerous repairs and improvements. At this stage in our second year we have not made such good progress in walking our footpaths, mainly as a result of members preferring to start the checking process later in the year. However, we do expect to achieve a similar target by the end of 2014. Volunteer work to repair and maintain paths has increased significantly since the early Summer months and a more regular monthly programme has been set up for the Winter period. We anticipate that by early in 2015 the list of outstanding repairs will have fallen substantially.

A new roundel has been agreed to be attached to maintenance work, to publicise Doncaster Ramblers work to the public

## **Rotherham Metro Frank Faries**

Our Chair, Ivor Wilson resigned at the end of last year after 6 years in the role and the Group thank him for his leadership during this time, and for compiling the year's walking programme. As a replacement was not found, the tasks of the Chair have been shared by committee members, allowing the group to function efficiently over the short term. As in the previous year we increased the number of short walks on Saturdays, and on most weekends have offered both short and longer walks. The short walks of around 5/6 miles, often local to Rotherham, have continued to be popular, and on average we have around a total of 30 walkers on both these Saturday walks. To maintain this programme in the future we need more Walk Leaders and the Walk Leader Training Course held in June furthered this aim. The usual Wednesday format has been continued with alternate short and long walks.

Our membership has remained static at around 270 members but with a steady flow of new and active walkers replacing those who leave.

In March a coach holiday to the Isle of Wight took place and 51 walkers enjoyed fine weather, and an excellent programme of walks over 4 days. The initial walk

preparation was carried out by 2 members of our group, but in addition 3 of the walks were led by the Isle of Wight Ramblers. The success of this trip has prompted the planning of a similar trip, this time to Weymouth, next October. The group has also enjoyed a coach ramble to Malham and recently, a walking weekend in Reeth, with some excellent walks in the late summer sunshine.

The bi-monthly Social Programme continues to attract good support covering a varied range of walk-related topics and interests.

One of the big successes of the year has been the continuation of the footpath volunteer programme involving our partnership with RMBC Rangers and Rotherham Rambling Club in clearing and improving pathways. After overcoming some hurdles in dealing with the local authority, the monthly programme is now well established, with, on average, a group of 12 people working each day from a pool of about 30. Positive feedback continues and the quantity and quality of the volunteer's work has been recognised by both the local authority and by members of the local community.

Ken Whetter, secretary of the Footpath Committee resigned after 13 years and although he will continue to serve on the committee, meetings will be chaired by members of the committee in rotation. Ken is now Chairman to the Local Access Forum. The group would like to acknowledge Ken's extensive knowledge of footpath issues and thank him for his commitment to the work. Our

group has focused on recruiting footpath wardens followed up by a training evening. Here, the role of the Footpath Warden was explained and individual area maps were issued along with reporting information. The evening was well supported with 23 out of a total of 35 wardens in attendance.

The committee wishes to thank all our members for continuing to support the walking programme and giving up their time to help with the footpath volunteer programme and other activities organised by our thriving group.

We look forward to another successful and enjoyable year of walking in 2015

## **Sheffield Ramblers Chairman's Report**

**Terry Howard**

This year was the tenth year of the introduction of the "Right to Roam" in the Peak District National Park, perhaps something many ramblers take for granted. But it was the culmination of a campaign that ramblers had worked for, well in excess of one hundred years, and we were part of it. It is to be celebrated and not forgotten or taken for granted. Our group certainly enjoys this right with many walks organised over previously "forbidden" moorland.

Our walks programme has continued to be imaginative and inclusive with large attendances on most walks, a credit to the walks leaders. The "putting together" of the

programme has again proven to be a winner and those members involved deserve our grateful thanks. Unfortunately, our “Walking Out” programme may well have run its course with both a fall in numbers attending and volunteers to lead walks. It has proven to be a highly successful initiative and has drawn in many new members, but this source of new members seems to have dried up. This may be due to the fact that we expected people who attended these walks regularly to consider being members. However, the new walks programme should include more shorter walks which again will be open to all walkers, members or not.

Membership - certainly those attending walks, seems to be mainly those with bus passes. This has to be a major concern, but the Group alone cannot address this when we have two other Groups in Sheffield of the none-pass age. However, we were younger once, and we were fully involved in the Ramblers campaigns. I have to ask, are there younger members who are prepared, and can carry on with present and future campaigns? I hope so.

We have now started with the “Lost Ways” project and we will be enlisting the support of all members to fill in footpath claim forms for all those paths which have not been recorded on OS maps. We have eleven years left to make these claims then after that those not claimed will have gone forever.

Over the years we have volunteered to do footpath work with varying degrees of success, but it was never long lasting. The new “Fix it” volunteers have done some



excellent work on several paths around the City and hopefully will continue and attract new volunteers. The Public Rights of Way Unit has expressed their gratitude for the “professional” work this team of volunteers do.

Lastly, the Group Executive has worked extremely well over the last year and deserves our thanks. It is interesting to note that all decisions are made by consensus without the need to vote. Long may it continue.

## **Sheffield 20s and 30s Walking Group**

**Gary Dickson - *Chair***

### **A Year in the Life of Sheffield 20s and 30s Walking Group**

**Walks:** Over the last twelve months we’ve put on around 160 walks in the local area covering distances and difficulties to suit all abilities - a 14% increase on last year. The total length of these walks comes to 1,517 miles - equivalent to walking Lands End to John o’ Groats 1 & 3/4 times, or from Sheffield to Lisbon by road... or just over one and a half Proclaimers songs.

Although we’ve lost a few walk leaders (not literally I hasten to add), we have gained even more and so nearly 1/5 of walks were lead by new leaders. Also we’ve put eight people through basic navigation courses and have had four brushing up on their first aid skills too.

**Weekends:** Not content to just walk in The Peak and South Yorkshire, return visits have been made to our favourite further flung fields of Snowdonia, the Lake District, the

Yorkshire Dales (where we combined our walking with music and beer at the Dent Festival, alongside the 40s Group), and the Northumbria Coast (a weekend which included a kayaking trip on the River Tweed). This year we've travelled further than before with our first overseas walking trip to the Isle of Man with everyone managing to make it to the summit of Snaefell (and only a few using the tram to do so!). We will also be having a four day get away over New Year - our first for several years - in the North Pennines, with our fingers crossed for a wee bit of snow.

Having met like minded people through the group, members have organised their own "unofficial" walking weekends too, including taking some of us on hikes up the Yorkshire and National Three Peaks and even to the summit of Mount Olympus.

**Social activities:** The social side of things seems to be playing an ever-increasing role in the group. We've had our best Christmas Party in a brewery, our Summer Ball at Kenwood Hall, archery sessions, an Alton towers day out, our own It's a Knock Out Cup and of course the ubiquitous pub-crawls. Our monthly "new members meets" have proved a popular way for people interested in joining to introduce themselves without fear of being "the only newbie" in the room and have helped maintain our membership at a steady 200+.

**And more** Keeping pace with technology, we also now have a mobile friendly version of our website, and (unsurprisingly for a young person's group) Facebook is

becoming an increasingly important tool for keeping members up to date with what's going on and last minute changes.

And finally, as the group reaches its 12th year, we are also pleased to report a few more "walking group babies" from couples who've met through the group.

A great year has been had by all.

**[www.sheffieldwalkinggroup.org.uk](http://www.sheffieldwalkinggroup.org.uk)**

## **Sheffield 40s Walking Group**

**Bev Kenyon - *Secretary***

Current membership stands at 224, an amazing increase since last year. This means the group is growing and retention is high. It also means we have healthy numbers on walks and at socials. Communications within the group are effective and all members have been added to the hotmail account and the website is functioning well.

Facebook members continue to grow.

We currently have 58 walk leaders. The group is committed to providing a varied and extensive walks programme and is looking into subsidised training for walk leaders to encourage more members to lead walks. We are extending our walks archive into a database of walks, to make it easier for new walk leaders. We are also considering bringing in a system of buddying prospective walk leaders to build up their confidence - one advantage of this would be a wider range of alternative walks. During the summer months we were able to offer evening walks, which proved

very enjoyable and we would love to offer more in the coming year.

The group continues to enjoy regular social activities and we are committed to ensuring that all tastes are catered for. Weekends away have always been at the heart of the Sheffield 40's, and 6 weekends were organised for 2014. We are looking into the possibility of seeking places which offer a variety of accommodation types. The other four weekends, which again proved to very popular, were to the Howgill Fells in March, Llanberis and the Dent Festival in June, and Clun in the Shropshire Hills in August. We have already started to plan ahead for the 2015 weekend away calendar. We have booked to go up to Seahouses, Northumberland in May and will be going back to Llanberis. As always, further info will appear on the website so members are informed.

The accounts are healthy and no problems are anticipated for the coming year. Weekends away were successful, leaving accounts in the black.

The primary function of the group is to go walking and we anticipate many opportunities to indulge our passion.

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