



ramblers

at the heart of walking

Area News

South Yorkshire and
North-East Derbyshire

www.synedramblers.org.uk

Winter 2015/16

Annual Report and AGM

The Annual General Meeting for 2016 will be held on 23rd January and hosted by Doncaster Group. **The venue is The Methodist Hall, Tickhill, Doncaster, DN11 9HZ.**



The hall is open from 10 am with toilets etc for people to use. **The morning walk starts at 10.30am.** This is a 7-mile walk 'The Historical Landscape Around Tickhill'.

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

Chair's Report

Allen Pestell

The last time I reported I commented on a proposal to restructure both Areas and Groups. This proposal proved to be badly formulated with abysmal consultation. At our AGM our members decided to oppose the changes as laid down, but to continue to talk - as some reorganization is badly needed. As yet there does not appear to be anything

being put forward.

Also at our AGM, the decision was taken to continue looking at new ways in which our area can work and act on your behalf. David Gadd and I, in consultation with area council, looked at how best this can be achieved. National Office is watching our progress and has created a new staff post of Area Support Officer - I was one of the first Area chairs to meet with her.

I explained how area works at present and how it is foreseen to work in future. We sent a questionnaire out to all our Groups asking for their opinions, and on behalf of Area, can I thank those Groups that responded. Not all replies were complimentary but that is as it should be.

I continue to attend as many training courses as I am able, and just having returned from one in Darlington, I would like to say our National Office trainers are improving with every event. If you do have time to attend one I feel that both you and the Ramblers will benefit.

One of the changes to area council which is being considered, is taking on a training role - so hopefully we will soon be asking you to join us.

In March I was asked to represent National Office on a consultation into the removal of pylons in national parks. 500 million pounds was on offer. However, to remove all pylons in our National Parks would cost many times this sum, but it is a start. The part of the peak park presently being considered is Longdondale at the foot of the

Woodhead Pass. I did ask that the Peak Park, Dunford Bridge area be added to the list, and after many meetings I am pleased to tell you that this part has not only been added, but has been accepted as an area where pylons will be removed.

In closing I hope you have all had a successful year of walking and rambling. That is what we are all working for, and hopefully our enjoyment will bring in others to join our association and add more members and more voices to protect our environment.

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.

Membership Report

David Gadd

Membership figures remain flat within the Groups in SYNED, as indeed they do for the figures nationally. I have been unable to establish the Area or national figures for the past 5-10 years, mainly because the method of compiling them has changed, but also because I was not membership secretary for that period.

The figures for each of the nine Groups within SYNED for the past two years are as follows:

	2013	2014	2015
Barnsley and Penistone	204	195	186
Chesterfield & North East D'shire	505	515	476
Chesterfield 20s	22	29	36
Dearne Valley	99	103	104
Doncaster	234	230	232
Rotherham	269	266	272
Sheffield	661	657	616
Sheffield 20s	226	220	231
Sheffield 40s	179	215	230
NATIONAL	107214	107584	107368

Membership across the country suffered a sharp decline several years ago, the reasons for which have been considered at length, but the high-profile national campaigns at the time probably attracted many people to Ramblers in support. Campaigns in recent years have been less dramatic than those earlier campaigns and thus, perhaps, fewer people have joined. Additionally, there are many more walking groups in existence than a decade or two ago.

In more recent years Ramblers have made what many consider to have been some very poor decisions, actions which probably led to many members resigning from Ramblers. In the last few years, successful attempts have been made to mitigate these earlier decisions.

At the moment, the Groups within SYNED are, overall, functioning well. They have successful and popular walking programmes and generally good relationships with, and support of, the respective local authorities. Many of our Groups assist their Rights of Way Departments to monitor and to maintain the rights of way network.

Despite our Groups being largely successful, the membership figures remain flat. Possibly, for some of the reasons outlined above, current membership figures are 'the new norm' and our concerns to raise membership figures are misplaced.

Barnsley 20s 40s Walking Group

Rachel Barton

The Barnsley 20s/40s group has continued to offer weekend walks, mainly on Sundays, as well as evening walks through the lighter nights to its steady membership group. We have had a number of new members in the past year, so a warm welcome to all. The summer period has been a busy period for walks and the social calendar alike with the group holding a particular fondness for a good pub quiz in and around Barnsley town centre at least once a fortnight!

Walks have varied in length and challenge level to attract as wide a range of members as possible, the longest being the Kielder Challenge Walk at 25.3 miles around the entire shoreline of Kielder Water in Northumberland complemented with a number of 3 and 4 mile short walks for our members who prefer something a little lighter going, and for those who prefer to bring along our canine members.

Quarterly planning meetings are now held in the Old No 7 pub in Barnsley on the first Wednesday of the month for the group to encourage both new membership and new walk leaders to help support the group's activity.

The group thanks all walk leaders for their continued support, time and effort, and to all members who support the effective running of the group.

Barnsley & Penistone Group

Christine Holland (secretary)

We provide a programme of both short and longer walks on both Saturdays and Sundays and some occasional midweek walks, thus hoping to accommodate the majority of our members at some stage. The average number of members for each walk is usually between 15/20.

Membership numbers remain fairly static, although our colourful programmes are distributed all around the area into libraries, resource and community centres. At the moment our membership stands at around 186.

Several of our members have been involved in the Big Path Watch and have found lots of paths are very overgrown, this no doubt being the result of financial cuts by the local Council. We know the ranger numbers have been reduced for our area.

We have been trying some different kinds of social activities this year which have been very successful, particularly the wine tasting. These social activities include non-walking partners on a Saturday night and it is hoped they will continue. Partners are also welcomed to the Annual Dinner. We have also had a couple of speakers at our occasional open meetings on a Monday night.

In the spirit of the Tour de Yorkshire about 12 of us recently hired bikes and attempted to do a 12mile ride along the Trans Pennine Trail. A fun morning was had by all - even though there were a few sore legs. Some members who didn't want to ride walked the TPT and gave

encouragement to the bikers.

A group of 7 members completed the Peddars Way and Norfolk Coastal Path earlier this year. They fortunately had good weather and managed to spot plenty of seabirds and wildflowers en-route.

Our thanks go to all the walk leaders who provide an interesting variety of walks, to members with their help in arranging social activities and the Committee members who liaise with Area and the local Council, put our colourful programme together and generally keep the group on the straight and narrow.

Chesterfield and North-East Derbyshire Group

John Preston

Group Membership is staying stubbornly below the 500 mark, and now stands at 480, remaining fairly constant at that figure over the year. Welcome to those who have joined us this year. The group offered over 400 published walks during this last year, including the increasingly popular Chesterfield Walks Festival, with many reported on in the Derbyshire Times and on our improved website.

There was a good turnout for the celebratory 10th anniversary Round Chesterfield Walk this year, with 31 of the 34 starters completing the walk in less than 12 hours, and the local mayors/civic leaders from North-East Derbyshire and Chesterfield on hand to encourage the walkers on their way. Our thanks go to all the walk organisers and volunteer walk leaders without whom the

programme could not exist or continue. Unfortunately, the number of volunteers available to lead walks is reducing, as some of our stalwart members retire or walk less, so more are needed to keep the walks programme going.

The Footpath Team are always looking for more volunteers, 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. The Team continues to complete over 1000 hours of voluntary labour a year for Derbyshire County Council, and has been invited to help with a community environmental improvement project in Hasland. The initiative 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 has got off to a successful start. The number of obstructed paths, either temporary due to crops etc. or more permanent due to physical barriers, continues to be of concern both for CNED and Derbyshire groups in general, especially with the recently presented proposals for consultation by Derbyshire County Council for their Countryside Services which, if actioned, will see a further reduction in care for our footpath network. Alongside other interested groups, we have submitted our responses and await the decision of the DCC to which we will respond accordingly to protect our Rights of Way.

Chesterfield Walking Group 20s - 40s

Jon Hendy - *Chair*

This year, the Chesterfield 20s - 40s group or Chesterfield Young Ramblers kept the same committee as last year. 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 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.

For those weekends when we need to rest our walking boots, and enjoy the scenery at a faster pace - we go on a bike ride instead. The bike rides provide an extra dimension to what the group can offer.

The group also 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 and ask to be added to our mailing list.

Dearne Valley Ramblers

Nigel Hebden (Chairman) and Sue Haywood (Secretary)

Once again we are delighted to report that Dearne Valley is a group in good spirits. We have welcomed several new members recently, including some from as far as Sheffield and Chesterfield who have chosen to join Dearne Valley after coming on some of our walks, which they came across on the internet.

Speaking of the internet, as well as our website www.ramblers.org.uk/dearne-valley, we have a high profile presence on Facebook, Twitter and Flickr, managed by our Social Media Officer, Chris Greig. Chris ensures that our information is bang up to date and as a result, the Group is attracting large numbers of followers. We would certainly credit our website and our Social Media profile with attracting new people to our walks and this does seem to be contributing to an increased membership.

This has been the first full year with our new Chairman, Nigel Hebden and new Treasurer, John Watson (who also ensures our activities are captured in photographs). We started 2015 very positively, hosting a successful SYNED AGM, with an extremely well attended pre-AGM walk at Sprotbrough.

In addition to our regular programme of walks, we have ventured further afield to walk at Malham and Durham as well as at the Moonraker Festival at Slaithwaite. Also our range of social activities goes from strength or strength with events including quizzes, fancy dress parties, theatre

trips and restaurant meals. We have also had success with an event which combines walking and socialising - 'Walk, Talk & Eat'. These meet one Friday each month for a 4/5 mile walk, followed by a pub lunch and as much talking as people want!

Next March, our Group celebrates the 20th Anniversary of its inception and we are planning a year of special events and activities to mark the occasion. There will be fun events including a celebration dinner, a summer BBQ, a calendar featuring some of our best photographs and a commemorative recipe book. While on a slightly more serious note, we have a special birthday meeting in March, with Cath McKay from SYNED in attendance and on the walking front, we plan to walk the entire 97 miles of the South Yorkshire Way, in sections throughout the year. Our volunteer section leaders are busy planning their reccies and all the logistical challenges of linear walking, but it is all coming along very well. We also plan to recreate the first walk ever organised by the Group all those years ago.

We are looking forward to 2016 with excitement, not just because of the birthday celebrations but because we all have such a thoroughly good time on our walks and on our social activities. Long may it continue!

Doncaster Ramblers

David Gadd - Chairman

Our walks programme continues to function well, with good attendances particularly on the Tuesday walks. The committee's overall aim as far as the walks programme is

concerned is to provide a wide variety of walks - from short to long, easy to strenuous, flat to hilly, local to not local. I believe we have successfully done this during the past twelve months. Jim Elvidge has yet again arranged the short Wednesday evening walks in the summer, and the twice-monthly 7-8 mile Thursday walks, organised by Beryl Clarke have continued, but will in future be reduced to once a month because of the shortage of leaders.

Dave Binnington & Bob Carlisle have successfully continued to find leaders for the Tuesday walks and Trevor Jenkins has done likewise for the Saturday programme. This information is then passed on to Owen Evans, our Programme Co-ordinator who pulls everything together prior to sending the details to the printer. Peter Gravestock then arranges distribution of the completed programme. A very slick operation.

The Rights of Way committee continues its excellent work. The committee organises members who volunteer to monitor the RoW in a 5km square every year, and teams of volunteers regularly help the RoW Dept by cutting vegetation back, erecting way markers, repairing or replacing stiles, kissing gates, etc.

Two particular issues that the committee have concerned themselves with in the past year have been the occasional examples of poor leadership, and our image as a walking group. We issued a letter, pointing out that the leader has a duty of care to the whole party, that a back-marker must be appointed and that leader and back-marker should be in contact. We know that some members found this letter to

be amusing, but the committee felt that it was necessary and are pleased to have noted the reduction in problems on walks.

The other issue dealt with by the committee is an attempt to address the perception by some walkers not connected with the Doncaster Group, that we walk very quickly. In photographs and reports of walks we emphasis the relaxing parts of walking like coffee breaks, lunches, admiring the scenery, etc. Word of mouth is obviously needed as well, and the committee would be grateful if any member coming across a comment regarding us as being a fast-walking, non-caring group would explain that we are not.

We continue to support DMBC's Get Doncaster Walking programme by submitting 5-6 walks for each 6-month programme. For a couple of years now these walks have only attracted small numbers, but we continue to support the programme and spread the word about the benefit of walking.

Ramblers Central Office organised a training day at Doncaster racecourse in May, attended by several of our members. Training was provided on a number of topics, including map reading, leadership, rights of way issues etc. Overall, we felt that the quality of the training was very varied. We also provided some 'in-house training' led by Pete Smith, who gave us an entertaining and extremely useful session on first aid based on his considerable experience.

Doncaster Ramblers have established a new website in the past year. We were very aware that the old website needed replacing, but none of the committee felt that they had the skills to develop a new site. The matter was taken out of our hands when the old provider gave us one year's notice. We then made contact with a group of Ramblers volunteers who assist Groups to set-up their own website. A couple of months later, our new website became operational. We are delighted with it. It is much easier to negotiate, our walks - once entered on the central office website - are automatically entered on our site, together with precise details of starting points as well as the weather forecast. Photographs can also be up-loaded by any member with the password. It is worth noting that the website costs the Group nothing because central office pay the hosting fee.

Rotherham Metro

Frank Faries - Publicity Officer

For the second year running, the group has operated without a Chair and Footpath secretary. However, led by our hard working secretary, the group has continued to function normally.

As in the previous 2 years, we increased the number of short walks on Saturdays and on most weekends have offered both short and longer walks. This programme of 28 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.

The shorter walk programme appears to attract new members to the group but additional walk leaders are required to maintain this new structure. 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.

Recently, in October, a coach holiday to Weymouth took place and 48 walkers enjoyed exceptionally fine and sunny weather with a programme of spectacular and classic Dorset walks over 4 days. A further 2 days were free to either to walk on other guided walks or to explore the area independently. These types of trips have proved to be hugely popular and plans are already afoot to organise a walking holiday to Llandudno in the spring of 2017. The group has also enjoyed a coach ramble in July to Bridlington involving both a long and a short walk with a meal in the resort before returning home.

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

The footpath volunteer programme involving our partnership with RMBC Rangers and Rotherham Rambling Club in clearing and improving pathways has continued to flourish. As well as the usual path clearing work, some more ambitious projects have been undertaken and so additional tools and equipment have been made available

by the local authority. This monthly programme is well supported, with, on average, a group of 10/12 people working each day from a pool of about 30. Positive feedback continues and the volunteers' work continues to be recognised by both the local authority and by members of the local community.

The Group has promoted and publicised the Ramblers Big Pathwatch initiative and some of the group have adopted squares in our area. In the Rotherham district, half of the grid squares (134) are completed but it appears that momentum has slowed and we need to keep up the enthusiasm of people who have already joined and encourage more people to participate. The new Footpath warden structure established last year continues to function well.

One of our committee members has prepared an excellent replacement web site, which conforms and links into the Ramblers sites. This is now ready for release.

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 2016.

Sheffield Ramblers

Terry Howard Chairman

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.

Sheffield Walking Group *(20s and 30s)*

Mark Hodgkinson - *Chairman*

Sheffield 20s and 30s Walking group has led a varied suite of 140 walks during the last year in the surrounding areas. Furthermore, we have taken our members to many places around the UK on weekend trips, including a challenge walk to hike the full length of the old Roman High Street in the Lake District. Our furthest ever trip was to the border of Somerset and Devon, where the coastal walking was much appreciated by our members.

As always we have seen many new members attending walks, often introduced to our group via our dedicated monthly new members evenings in the city centre or our monthly pub meet for existing members (anyone interested please see our website for details).

In addition to the walks we have provided a varied social calendar, including our annual Christmas party (at Hagglers Corner) and our summer ball (at Whirlow Brook Hall). The group also expanded our internet presence with the opening of a twitter account.

www.sheffieldwalkinggroup.org.uk.

Sheffield 40s Walking Group

Emma Myers - *Secretary*

Current membership stands at 230, an 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.

About 30 different leaders led about 150 walks in the last year. The group is committed to providing a varied and extensive walks programme and we have subsidised training for walk leaders to encourage more members to lead walks. We have extended our walks archive into a database of walks, to make it easier for new walk leaders. 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. Most months we have at least one social, ranging from meals to pub crawls, beer festivals, swimming trips and blues nights.

Weekends away have always been at the heart of the Sheffield 40's, and 4 weekends were organised for 2015. We use a mix of group booked accommodation and encourage others to join us and make their own arrangements.

The weekends away again proved to very popular and were to Seahouses, Llanberis, Kettlewell and Dent Beer Festival. Info about future events is on our website.

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

Treasurer

Gavin Johns Hon. Area Treasurer

For the year ending 30th September 2015

I am pleased to present the accounts of the Area for the year ending 30th September 2015

During the year the **Area received £6,000** from Central Office and **distributed £6,154 to Groups** in the Area.

The Area spent approx. £800 during the year on administering the Area, including production of the Area News. The Area paid out approx **£564 to Dearne Valley for publicity and walks support equipment**. The Area paid out approx **£252 to Doncaster Group for way markers**. We did not pay out any monies from the Herbert Proctor (deceased) legacy this year.

The Groups have asked the Area for approx. £6,855 for the coming year

We will be contributing £1.500 from our own funds in

line with The Rambler's Reserve policy towards our budget of £7,542 and will therefore be asking Head Office for £6,000, the same as last year.

Our thanks are due to our independent examiner, Mr Andrew Milne.

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