



www.warwickshireramblers.org.uk

The Charity Working for Walkers

Annual Report and Accounts for the year 2024/2025

The Ramblers' Association is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales. Company registration number: 4458492.

Registered Charity in England and Wales number: 1093577.

Registered office: The Ramblers, 13 Dirty Lane, London SE1 9PA.

**Notice of Annual General Meeting
on Saturday 28th February 2026
at Fentham Hall
Hampton in Arden, B92 0AH**

Refreshments and lunch:-

Tea and coffee will be served between 10.00 and 10.30. The meeting starts at 10:30 am.
Lunch will be provided immediately after the meeting.

Afternoon Walks: After lunch there will be two walks - of about 3 miles and 5 miles

**To assist the caterers,
please book your place at the AGM by 7th February,
by emailing Janet Lockett at jdlockett01@btinternet.com**

Request for Nominations

Management of the Area is vested in an Area Council which meets quarterly and consists of:

- The Honorary Officers - as shown in the Annual Report on page 3
- Two representatives from each Ramblers Group in the Area
- Six Members representing individual members or affiliated clubs
(Up to two additional members may be co-opted by Council)

Members are invited to nominate Officers and Individual Members of Council for 2025/2026. Nominations, signed by the proposer and seconder, must be received by the Area Secretary not later than two weeks before the AGM.

Any motions for the Annual General Meeting should be submitted in writing, and must be received by the Area Secretary not later than two weeks before the AGM.

Please email nominations and motions to jdlockett01@btinternet.com.

Meeting Agenda

Meeting: starts at 10:30 a.m.

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of the last AGM.
3. Matters Arising from the Minutes.
4. Adoption of Annual Report & Accounts.
5. Matters arising from Annual Report & Accounts.
6. Any Motions received by the Secretary.
7. Election of Officers for 2025/2026
 - Chairman
 - Secretary
 - Treasurer
 - Footpath Secretary
 - Countryside Secretary
 - Membership Secretary
 - Publicity Officer
 - Election of six independent members of Area Council.
 - Appointment of Auditor.
 - Any other Business.

Guest Speakers: Janet Gee (Ramblers Trustees)

Rick Thompson (author)

Area Officers 2024/2025

Chair	Dr Peter Rookes	pjrookes@gmail.com
Secretary	Janet Lockett	jdlockett01@btinternet.com
Treasurer	Ann Hebden	annhebden212@gmail.com
Footpath Secretary, Countryside Secretary & Access Officer	Michael Bird	mabird.b43@gmail.com
Publicity and IT Secretary	Andy Page	andypage0203@gmail.com
Area Membership Secretary	Nick Hillier	nick_hillier@hotmail.com

Local Ramblers Groups

WK01 City of Birmingham	https://www.ramblers.org.uk/city-of-birmingham
WK02 Coventry	https://www.ramblers.org.uk/coventry
WK03 Mid-Warwickshire	https://www.midwarksramblers.org
WK04 Rugby	https://www.rugbyramblers.org.uk
WK05 Stratford Upon Avon	https://www.stratfordramblers.com
WK06 Southam	https://southamramblers.org.uk
WK07 Solihull	https://www.solihullramblers.org.uk
WK08 Sutton Coldfield	https://suttoncoldfieldramblers.org.uk
WK09 Castle Bromwich	https://www.castlebromwichramblers.org.uk
WK10 South Birmingham	https://www.sbramblers.org.uk
WK51 West Midlands Walking Group	https://www.wmwg.org.uk
WK53 West Midlands 40+	https://www.ramblers.org.uk/west-midlands-40-group

Area Officers Reports

Area Chairman's Report

2025 has been a brilliant year for Warwickshire Ramblers. We started the year with our awesome AGM at Long Itchington, which almost 100 people attended, and we were privileged to have two interesting speakers: Tom Heap of 'Countryfile' fame, who sold over 30 copies of his book 'Land Smart', and Lucy Robinson, Chair of Ramblers' Trustees. We enjoyed delicious food and lovely countryside to walk in. Our special thanks go to the Southam team who organised the event so efficiently.

The main themes during the course of this year have been the Ramblers Governance Review, Walk Leader training and the Ramblers 90th Anniversary.

1. Governance Review

Discussions on the way forward took place initially in a joint trustee/volunteer/staff working group which met through 2024, followed by a series of focus groups, leading up to the General Council in April. Further focus groups were convened to look specifically at Areas and Groups, and a full set of proposals were shared in a pre-consultation over the summer, to which we responded.

There are broadly 3 issues being considered -

- a) Areas and Groups, which are at the core of what we do as Ramblers. Challenges include arbitrary boundaries between Areas, and recruiting volunteers and committee members. The proposals seek to simplify the bureaucracy for Groups and Areas allowing a more flexible approach, reflecting local geography and population, achieving a balance of autonomy and accountability
- b) It is suggested that composition of the Board of Trustees constrains strong diversity of skills, knowledge, background and experience. It is proposed to transition to a Board structure with the necessary mix of skills and experience to make effective decisions.
- c) General Council and the AGM engages only a small section of membership. There are few effective mechanisms by which the wider views of members are sought and heard. It is proposed to redevelop General Council, and develop other means of hearing member views, celebrating the work of volunteers, and creating a forum for transparency in leadership.

There will be an Extraordinary General Council meeting on 6th December which Chafika Gutknecht and I will be attending to discuss further proposals arising from the consultation.

2. Walk Leader Training

Members of the Area Council had some useful discussions with Ramblers' Central Office over the issue of walk leader training. We are very grateful to our members who regularly lead walks and we are aware of the efforts that all groups make to encourage new walk leaders, including mentorship and buddying systems. Central Office have produced a new virtual training package which we believe will give new walk leaders confidence.

The revised requirement is that all Walk Leaders will need to confirm they have read the Ramblers' Walk Leader Handbook and either complete two online training modules (Walk Leadership Foundations and Preventing and Managing Incidents) or confirm that they have led at least 12 walks for either Ramblers groups or Ramblers Wellbeing Walks (or both) over the last three years.

The core of this refreshed approach is recognising our skills and experience as an alternative to training, and to make sure we are conforming to current health and safety standards.

It is important to recognise that, as walk leaders, we have a duty of care. I have undertaken the online training and even as an experienced walk leader found it very useful. Some of our groups have arranged group training sessions, which is a helpful approach. Some have also arranged navigation training and first aid sessions, which enables new walk leaders to feel more comfortable. Groups might like to include the costs of these sessions in their budgets. Area Council are considering arranging these sessions for groups who are unable to do so themselves.

3. Ramblers 90th Anniversary

Our Area Council felt that it was a lovely opportunity for Warwickshire groups to celebrate together with a walk and a picnic. On Saturday 27th September, there were two walks: one

led by Janet Lockett, and the other, the Warwick Millennium Way circular walk, was led jointly by Barry Durman, Millennium Way Chair, and myself. After the walks, we joined together in the Friends Meeting House beautiful grounds, where we had our picnics and cut a celebratory cake. As I had recently completed all 44 of the Millennium Way Circular Walks, Barry presented me with my celebratory badge.

These Millennium Way walks are easy to follow from the detailed instructions, so there is no need to recce them. We are also fortunate to have 36 Rail Trails in Warwickshire. Some of these are circular, starting and finishing at the same railway station, and others are linear, starting at one station and finishing at another.

General Council

Chafika Gutknecht and I attended the General Council, which is the national AGM of the Ramblers, at the NEC in April. Janet Gee from Warwickshire was elected as a Trustee, so we look forward to Janet attending our Area Council meetings.

There was a helpful presentation on delivery of the Ramblers' Strategy, and approval of the following resolutions –

- Introduction of gender neutrality into our Standing Orders
- Campaign for legislation to oblige highway authorities to record Cycle Tracks on their Definitive Map
- Lobby for legislation which removes or adapts barriers to access on public paths
- Act on the climate emergency by aligning our mission with efforts to preserve and restore the environment and its natural inhabitants
- Commission a suitable email sending solution to address the lack of an integrated email sending solution for Area and Group officers.

We are delighted that our Area membership has increased by 57 to 3,046. We do though have a concern about the number of members we lose during the first year. Obviously, it is the first few walks which make the difference. Many groups make great efforts to put new walkers at ease and make them feel welcome – thank you, this is so important.

There is an increase in groups using social media as a means of promoting their activities. Particular thanks to John McGeogh at South Birmingham who regularly posts on Facebook, their 3 weekly walks with great photos.

We thank, Claire Watkins, our Community Development Officer, and her colleagues, for arranging Cluster meetings, giving us an opportunity to hear the views and experiences of groups outside of our own area. It is important that we do give time to discuss the challenges that groups face, as well as the successes. The Cluster packs are a useful resource for keeping up to date with the latest news and developments.

In conclusion, I want to thank officers of the Area Council for the diligent way in which they carry out their roles, and to the group representatives who regularly attend Council meetings,

reporting on the activities of their groups and joining in discussions to enable us all to benefit from each other's experiences. Also, thanks to group officers across the Area, walk leaders who enable our programmes of walks and social activities to take place, and maintenance teams who go out to repair and replace bridges, stiles and kissing gates.

My particular gratitude to Janet Lockett, our Area Secretary, who conscientiously produces timely agenda papers and minutes of our meetings, and carries out the necessary follow-up action, and to Michael Bird, our Area Footpath and Countryside Secretary, for his diligent and skilful participation in planning consultations. Much of his success is due to the high regard in which he is held by planning officials.

I look forward to seeing many of you at our AGM in Solihull.

Every blessing

Peter

Dr. Peter Rookes

Area Secretary's Report

Many thanks to everyone at Southam group who helped with organising our AGM in February – they did an excellent job after experiencing some unexpected challenges during the planning stage (see WK06 report). Our speakers were Tom Heap (broadcaster) and Lucy Robinson (Chair of Ramblers trustees). They both gave very interesting talks. The meal after the business meeting was well-received, and the rather muddy local walks after the hot buffet lunch were enjoyed by those who did them.

Our quarterly Area council meetings at Meriden Village Hall have been well-attended and informative, with some lively discussions at times. Thanks to all the executive committee and representatives from Groups who have contributed to these meetings and to communications between meetings.

I have attended several Cluster meetings that Claire Watkins has organised on Zoom, and heard of the successes and difficulties experienced by other Areas in our Region (Midlands and East of England), and about the progress of some of the national projects.

Our walks and picnic in Warwick to mark 90 years of the Ramblers (and Dr Peter completing the Millennium Way walks) were enjoyable and well supported (especially considering many groups had holidays away that weekend).

Janet Lockett

Area Treasurer's Report

Accounts for the Warwickshire Area of The Ramblers' Association

Charity No. 1093577, Company No. 4458492

Income and Expenditure for year to 30th September 2025

<u>Income</u>	This year	Last year
Funding from Central Office	£5094.50	£8300.00
Bear Group	£ 0.00	£881.88
DLYW	£ 0.00	£500.00
AGM Room Hire Refund	£ 111.00	£0
Total income	£5205.50	£9681.88

<u>Expenditure</u>		
Group funding	£5094.50	£5535.00
Annual Report	£ 103.80	£ 108.30
Room hire	£ 150.00	£ 171.00
Travel	£ 73.35	£ 128.25
AGM	£1492.67	£ 627.00
Subscriptions	£ 80.00	£ 65.00
Admin	£ 0.00	£ 0.30
DLYW	£ 49.63	£ 60.11
Total expenditure	£7043.55	£6695.46

Surplus / Deficit	-£1838.05	£2986.42
-------------------	-----------	----------

Balance sheet at 30th September 2025

<u>Assets</u>		
Cash at Bank	£4157.60	£5995.65
<u>Funds</u>		
Opening balance	£5995.65	£3009.23
Surplus / Deficit	-£1838.05	£2986.42
Closing balance	£4157.60	£5995.65

Funds have decreased this year. The only significant spending has been the cost of the AGM and room hire for quarterly meetings.

Given that Area still has a relatively high bank balance, no funding was requested for the year.

Ann Hebden, Area Treasurer

Independent Examiner's Report

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and Group Independent Examination Guidelines, I consider the above accounts to give a fair representation of the Area's financial activities for the year to 30 September 2025.

Paul Drake

Area Footpath Secretary's Report

Area Footpath Secretary's Report

We have enjoyed a reasonably successful year on the footpath front. The most notable success came in June when the Department for Transport's National Transport Casework Team made an Order stopping up Wills Pastures E Road (E2424) some 5 miles south-east of Southam. Yes, there are A, B, C, D and even E Roads! although most E Roads in Warwickshire are no more than cart tracks and are not shown on the Definitive Map as Public Rights of Way (PROWS). Back in 2005 Ramblers Warwickshire Area claimed many of these E Roads as Bridleways. These outstanding claims, all based on historical evidence, have still to be determined by Warwickshire County Council.

However, thanks to HS2 cutting through Wills Pastures E Road, E2424 is now to be reclassified as a Public Bridleway and diverted to pass under HS2's Lower Radbourne Viaduct. Area welcome this change of plan as replacing E2424 will put the proposed new bridleway on the Definitive Map and at the same time also close a 200m gap in the Definitive Map between cul-de-sac Bridleways SM116 and SM95. The Plan also proposes to link the diversion under the viaduct with Bridleway SM96 and Footpath SM96a which are also to be diverted under the nearby Upper Radbourne Viaduct. All in all, a great improvement to the impoverished PROW network in this area, and Warwickshire County Council Rights of Way Team are to be congratulated on negotiating such an advantageous outcome from HS2.

In November last year the British Horse Society asked Ramblers Central Office if Ramblers would consider seeking a direction from the Secretary of State for the Environment, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, requiring Warwickshire County Council (WCC) to determine our outstanding Lost Path Claim, dated 19 June 2005, for a Byway running from Kineton Road, Wellesbourne, to the end of cul-de-sac Bridleway SD311. As our claim would be particularly useful to horse riders and cyclists and is in an area which is by no means over-burdened with bridleways, Ramblers Warwickshire Area were happy to acquiesce and a direction from the Secretary of State was sought and granted on the 9 July 2025 requiring WCC to determine our claim within 6 months! Inevitably in the meanwhile a developer has applied for planning permission to build housing on the land which, if WCC determine the claim in our favour, will present the developer with some interesting complications!

The one drawback this last year has been a noticeable reduction in the number of Definitive Map Modification Orders (lost path claims) and Highways Act Path Orders issued by Warwickshire County Council Legal Team. During the year we have received only 2 Highways Act Path Orders to enter on our Area Database. This is a very evident reduction on previous years and it would be interesting to know what is causing this sudden hold up?

With 72 entries recorded in the Area Data Base for the last twelve months there is obviously much more that I could have commented on. Many of these cases were successfully resolved,

others not—but all of these 72 cases were pursued in consultation with the appropriate Ramblers Local Group and, once again, I must thank all nine of our Group Footpath Secretaries for their help and forbearance throughout a very busy year.

Michael Bird – Area Footpath Secretary

Area Countryside Secretary's Report

While we had a good year on the footpath front, for countryside protection it has been a disastrous year. Last year the Government so drastically altered the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) that it now over-rides almost all of the carefully considered countryside protection and Green Belt policies included in existing Local and Neighbourhood Plans. Add in the Government's so-called devolution of local government which will do away with our District and Borough Councils, replacing them with distant Unitary Authorities remote from local issues, and we can say goodbye to any pretence of local democracy or concern to protect the countryside.

I was asked at the last Area AGM to explain the difference between Ramblers footpath and countryside work? Well, my Quarterly Report to Area Council is headed Footpath and Planning Report, and that just about sums it up. For both aspects we rely on consultation—statutory consultation under the Highways Act from Warwickshire CC on Path Orders and rights of way matters, and non-statutory consultation from the five District and Borough Councils within Warwickshire under the Town and Country Planning Act on planning applications affecting footpaths. Birmingham, Coventry and Solihull are already Unitary Authorities and we don't yet know if Warwickshire will become one too, or be divided into separate North and South Unitary Authorities? But, whatever the outcome of local government devolution in Warwickshire, I fear that any reorganisation will probably result in us losing our non-statutory consultation status.

Non-statutory consultation status is a privilege granted I believe because our local authorities understand that as a National Charity Ramblers speak on behalf of all path users and not just our own members. Campaigning for retention of this very valuable consultation status—particularly at the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) stage for the scoping of a proposed planning application—is something that Ramblers Central Office urgently need to be giving full attention to right now!

As for the revised NPPF, the newly created concept of Grey Belts within Green Belts has been a godsend for developers. Suddenly they are all claiming that their Green Belt site is Grey Belt! Even a solar farm application, deep in the Rugby Green Belt on good agricultural land miles from anywhere, had the impudence to claim in their Planning Statement that their site now qualifies as Grey Belt—a thoroughly audacious example of what the CPRE President Mary Ann Ochota recently described as *"Grey Belt abuse"*. And as for the benighted planning agency

who attempted to assert that their client's thrice refused site was only "*washed over by green belt*"—words fail me!

Michael Bird – Area Countryside Secretary

Area Membership Secretary's Report

I reported last year, that in October 2024 we had 2989 members. This year, as of 5th November 2025 we have 3046 members a net increase of 57.

Normally at this time I would give a breakdown of the membership by group but an issue is that as an Area we have 268 members who are members of Area and have not been allocated to a group. If it were possible to reallocate these it would have quite an impact on some groups. I have spoken with Ramblers Central Office (C.O.) about this and whilst they don't appear to be able or willing to do anything retrospectively, going forward new members should be allocated properly. Having said all that, knowing how many members there are in an individual group, maybe a bit of an academic exercise in that most groups now tend to communicate via their websites, and I am sure that individuals will walk with the group that best suits their circumstances.

As people leave the Ramblers, we need to recruit 10% new members to just maintain our position. It is interesting to consider whether it is practical to lower that figure by improving our membership retention rates. In that respect a situation that always intrigues me is how soon after joining the Ramblers people leave. Since August 2025 and up to November 2025, we have lost 177 members, 53 of these only joined in 2025 and a further 34 only joining in 2024. As to why that should be so is anybody's guess but it could be that the Ramblers was never the right organisation for them as individuals and not offering what they expected.

Nick Hillier

Publicity Secretary's Report

After abandoning the increasingly unpleasant Twitter/X last year we opened an account on the open source Bluesky platform. Whilst Bluesky overall is successful it hasn't yet taken off for the UK outdoors movement. But please do give us a follow if you are on it too and we can help grow it.

Standards on Facebook are now deteriorating but there is still room for sensible discussion. In particular, thank you to our South Birmingham and Sutton Coldfield Groups for the fantastic work they do on it promoting the many beautiful walking opportunities in our area.

With very little credible campaigning material coming from Ramblers head office we have used our social media accounts to support the CPRE campaigns on solar panels. They have run a successful campaign to get the government to mandate solar panels on all new buildings and are now campaigning for more solar on car parks and government buildings rather than in unspoilt countryside.

Andy Page

Group Chairs' Reports

WK01 City of Birmingham

Our 45th AGM, and my first as Chairperson; much to learn and to celebrate with our membership which has grown to 396.

Sadly, two of our committee's long-serving members, Steve Brittain, and Kate Chester, our Treasurer, have stepped down from their duties. We are all grateful for their valuable contribution and wish them well. On a happier note, the committee is delighted to welcome four new members, one of whom will serve as our new Treasurer.

Organising and coordinating walks keeps our walks subcommittee of five very busy, with twice monthly meetings. A hefty commitment for all of us, as we continue to offer two coach walks every month, and regular, shorter, more local, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday walks, mostly accessible by public transport. The long waiting lists for all our walks attest to their popularity, and none of them would be possible without our team of dedicated leaders.

As our coach walks continued to attract sufficient numbers to cover the costs, we decided to lower the fee per person from £20 to £15 from October. We will review the situation during the winter months when the weather can affect walker numbers significantly.

We also led two walks for Heritage Week; both on rainy days, but enjoyed and appreciated.

The Easter break in Ilfracombe was a great success, as was our September long weekend in Sedbergh. Both were much appreciated as ever. Regretfully, Sedbergh will be our last in this format as the increase in costs and resulting drop in take up no longer make it financially viable. We will continue to plan other long weekends away in the spring and autumn, as they enable us to explore different locations and offer so much socially by bringing together all generations of our members.

Our social committee organised Christmas walks and meals in December, as well as visits to the Red Cone and Glass Museum in Stourbridge in April, and Trentham Gardens mid-June. All were well-attended and much enjoyed by all.

The Tuesday coffee mornings attract a good crowd every month and have their own Christmas meal coming up in December.

Looking ahead: aiming to encourage younger members to take on walk leading roles, and hopefully lighten the burden on our existing leaders; we have run some map reading sessions with a small group of volunteers who should gradually add to our team of leaders.

First Aid training is on our list for January 2026, with twelve members already signed up.

I very much appreciate the support I have received from everyone in my role. My thanks to my fellow committee members for all their hard work, to our leaders, and to our faithful membership for their continuing support.

Chafika Gutknecht - Chair

WK02 Coventry

At our AGM in November (and immediately afterwards) we appointed a new Chair, Minutes Secretary and Treasurer. Sadly our previous treasurer succumbed to cancer in July – Derek will be much-missed.

We have had a reasonably successful year and have offered walks most Sundays, though the shortage of walk leaders means there have been some gaps in our programme. One walk had to be cancelled because of rain and flooding. We usually have around 12 walkers for our 'long' walks of up to 10 miles. We had one more challenging walk in the Peak District that attracted 10 walkers. We have also managed a few 'medium' Sunday walk of around 7 miles.

We have a new coordinator for the monthly walks using public transport on Tuesdays and these have mostly been well-supported, despite having a very small group of walk leaders to assist. We didn't have any summer evening walks this year.

Some new members have joined us, but several others have left, so our membership numbers have declined slightly to around 240.

Our Footpath Secretary has monitored problems and commented on development plans where they affect footpaths in our area, both in North Warwickshire and the City of Coventry.

The countryside access working party has continued to clear footpaths when they are made aware of problems and have done some construction jobs.

Several of our members had a holiday in Aberystwyth, where we stayed in university accommodation. We are indebted to the local Ramblers group who gave us a choice of walks on each of the three days we were there.

Thanks to all our committee members, other officers and walk leaders, without whom we would not have a walks programme. We will try to increase the number of walks offered next year.

Janet Lockett – Secretary

WK03 Mid-Warwickshire

We end this walking year in the 90th anniversary of the Ramblers, recognising the opportunities of walking, from the legacy trodden by the footsteps of others. As ever we have had a varied walks programme led by a loyal group of leaders. Unsurprisingly, the group were nearly always out facing the vagaries of the weather - through the wet winter followed by the dry weather in spring and hot summer. A number of the group enjoyed a walking week away in the Lake District in June. Plus, there was also time to shed boots for social events such as the annual Christmas lunch, pantomime or barbecue.

The overall membership of the group has slightly fallen this year, but the number of regular walkers remains stable. A first aid course is organised for the start of next year, to help build our walkers' skills in preventing and managing accidents. The Ramblers online leaders training is also valuable and encouraged. Furthermore, we will always try and train and mentor new walk leaders where possible, and encourage new leaders to come forward.

The WhatsApp group created just under three years ago has very active engagement, it is another form of keeping in touch with regular walkers and has been found to be very effective for quick communication. Though, we appreciate that not everyone wishes to be in the group, or is able to, and we have our email distribution group alongside.

After struggling to find new committee members for several years, Tony Ison and Brian Perry have come forward to be elected as Secretary and Treasurer respectively. Jill Fitzmaurice will remain on the committee. Bill Burton will stand again for the Membership and Footpath Officer roles, as will Alison Tyler and I for the Programme Secretary and Chair respectively. The committee may have turned a corner, but we still invite more volunteers to ensure that there are successors in place for officer roles.

I thank all the committee for their commitment and hard work over the year, and all the walk leaders without whom we would not have a thriving programme and group.

Alice Sin – Chair

WK04 Rugby

Another year behind us, 'water under the bridge' — and time to reflect on events, deeds, achievements and maybe disappointments.

The 'Core' has to be the Walk Programme and again we are indebted to The Pinks Family for both organising and leading a huge number of both weekend & midweek morning walks for which they have been responsible. Equally popular have continued to be Wednesday evening strolls from late into April through August, 4 to 5 miles, with a variety of leaders. Other WLs have chipped in, near and far, short and long, including a New Year's Day walk at Hatton Locks and joint ventures with Wellingborough and Lutterworth groups.

Coach trips to The Roaches and Church Stretton provided some superb walking options in challenging terrain, for both walkers and coach driver (!), while some empty seats have raised the question of future viability when recce expenses need to be covered. Luckily we were treated to large doses of sunshine on both occasions, even if a little raw on the Long Mynd. The celebratory Cream Teas always go down well.

Brecon Beacons [HF] were the backdrop for our April residential weekend [Fri. - Mon.], a meticulously researched programme of walks including waterfalls and Pen y Fan as well as the beautiful open countryside on the Usk Valley Trail and Talybont Reservoir. Our Harrogate weekend walking in early September required journeys out of town, with Nidderdale, Stainburn Moor, the Dales Way, Wetherby, Harewood Park, the Knaresborough Round and Brimham Rocks all fulfilling high expectations.

The Path Maintenance Team have been stretched to perform their deeds and desperately need help on one Tuesday each month; in August they repaired a footbridge between Wolston and Ryton-on-Dunsmore; in September 0.4 miles of vegetation was cut back at Kings Newnham.

A Social Secretary would be a valuable addition to the Committee, which otherwise meets quarterly with great commitment. AGM attendance showed a slight increase again - full bar and buffet provided by Gillendy Catering; Barry Durman, Chair of the Millennium Way regaled us for over an hour, his colourful presentation enabled by the technical wizardry of Mayuresh Shah. He also presided over an annual favourite - Soups, Puds and Pics.

Notwithstanding the encouraging 0.29% increase in membership across Area, we await the renewals of lapsed members to maintain our own level of 230+ members. Of concern is the need for First-Aid and navigation training, together with current walk leaders taking up the online training modules to earn the beautiful certificate ... a work 'in progress'. We do not have a Facebook group, but a WhatsApp group helps support car-sharing.

Much to celebrate, much to lament.

David Shaw – Chair

WK05 Stratford upon Avon

This year our membership continues to be around the 300 mark, currently standing at 309. We have welcomed a number of new members who are walking with us regularly.

Our weekly rambles continue to be on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Sundays and are well supported by members; there can be up to 40 people out walking on a Tuesday. The introduction of the walk leader training requirement might have threatened this timetable, but the enthusiasm of our leaders has resulted in 56 leaders qualifying already under the new system. 15 had led more than 12 walks, 11 have attended group in-house training sessions and 30 have completed the online training modules. So we are confident that with the help of our walks co-ordinators, we can sustain our current level of walks, which is in excess of 200 per year.

We completed the Geopark Way in 2024 and this year have been walking the Shakespeare Way from Stratford to the Globe Theatre – there are still two sections to complete in 2026, but the walk has been thoroughly enjoyable to date. Next year we are staying closer to home for our long-distance trail and are planning to walk the Heart of England Way, with already 23 members signing up for the walk. We have found that car sharing for these walks has worked well – the cost of coaches now being prohibitive.

During the Summer we have organised some short walks on a Monday evening followed by a pub visit. These have proved popular and included a town trail quiz in Warwick and an out-of-hours visit to Charlecote park. Again, over the Summer, we have enjoyed longer one-off day walks in the Chilterns, Wye Valley and at Kinver Edge.

Three holidays have been arranged this year to Selworthy, Elan Valley and Church Stretton. These were a great success, and have resulted in photos taken at Selworthy being used by HF for publicity. HF holidays to St Ives and Derwent Bank have already been organised for 2026.

Our dedicated path maintenance group, thanks to a new co-ordinator, has taken on more work and now goes out regularly on a Monday morning throughout the year.

Social events have included the Annual lunch held at the Golden Cross in Ardens Grafton, and a Fish and Chip supper.

We regularly post photos of our walks on Facebook and continue to advertise in local magazines.

We are hoping to continue the success of our group in 2026, walking sociably through the lovely countryside which we are fortunate to be able to enjoy.

Aileen Hathaway - Chair

WK06 Southam

Southam Ramblers have been very active over the last year.

It was Southam's responsibility to host the **Warwickshire Ramblers AGM** in February 2025.

This required a lot of work initially by our Committee members to select a venue (Grange Hall) with the right facilities. Unfortunately, due to adverse weather and damage to the roofing our original choice withdrew its availability. By then another candidate was on the horizon, Southam Football Club. Richard (Secretary), Jeff (Treasurer) and myself (Chairman) spent time investigating its facilities and it seemed ideal. Unfortunately again, although we were eager to use the club it seemed the owner was not so eager. Richard spent many hours trying to obtain responses, but to no avail. Eventually we couldn't wait any longer for commitment by Southam Football Club and had to switch to our other option, Long Itchington Village Hall. This required several visits to confirm all our requirements before we could commit and required several members of our Committee getting involved.

For the day of the Warwickshire AGM most of Southam group volunteered to assist in one way or another. This was great to see. The day passed brilliantly due to the preparation and commitment of the volunteers. I can't thank everybody enough for all the effort put in.

Since February when one of us meet other group members or the Warwickshire committee we receive glowing praise for the whole day. A job really well done.

Southam Ramblers 40th Anniversary.

To celebrate our 40th it was decided to add additional walks around 'The Harry Green Way'.

Harry Green was our original Chairman and a circular walk from Southam was named after him. We thank all the people involved in arranging this. These additional walks were great, everyone enjoyed them. A great way to celebrate.

Summer Evening walks - renamed

Our Thursday evening walks, during the summer, from the centre of Southam were repackaged as 'Paths and Pubs', with the incentive of visiting a pub after the walk. Attendance this year was a great improvement on last year. Thanks to everyone involved, another great effort.

Fortnightly Walks – Wednesday morning

We continue to run our fortnightly walks with great success. On average we get about 25 members per walk. We have investigated running weekly or weekend walks but we just don't have sufficient Leaders. Having sufficient Leaders is becoming a continual battle. We are finding due to the age of the group, older leaders are no longer able to walk like they used to, so we are losing them as Leaders, but fortunately, we are getting a few new members walking and some are able to lead.

Gordon Smith - Chair

WK07 Solihull

It has been my pleasure taking on the role of Chair of Solihull group this year. I have been well supported by the committee members who are conscientious, proactive and committed, which has allowed me to settle into my role, so a big thank you from me, to the committee.

Our group membership currently stands at 366 members which generally remains consistent. We aim to keep members up to date with our activities via our Website, our WhatsApp groups and our Facebook page. Thank you to all our members for your continued support of the group and the Ramblers Association.

My heartfelt thanks go out to our walk leaders who provide varied and interesting walks for us all. I thank them for their time researching appropriate walks and undertaking reces in order to provide walks for our walks programme.

We have been fortunate to generally be able to offer our members 3 walks per week, a short/medium walk and a long walk on Tuesdays and a short walk on Saturdays. Long walks have also been offered occasionally on Sundays. During the summer, various evening walks were added to the programme too. Walks are well attended with on average 20 walkers on our short walks and 13 walkers on our long walks. Over the last year we have led 136 walks with a total of 3559 people participating!

One of our biggest challenges is having enough people to lead regular walks for our group. Walk leaders are our greatest asset. Sadly, the introduction of mandatory online walk leader training, whilst being a good thing, has hindered the enthusiasm of some leaders. As we really don't want to lose any walk leaders, we have organised an in-house training session in December which we hope will be well attended, resulting in more qualified leaders.

We also encourage regular walkers to consider becoming a walk leader. Members of the committee are happy to support new leaders by being a 'buddy' to do some navigation/map reading and/or recce walks. This year we have recruited 7 new walk leaders who have successfully completed the online training. Prospective new leaders are also welcome to attend the group training session.

Our team of 16 Bramblers, work hard keeping Solihull and Warwickshire Councils' footpaths accessible to walkers by repairing or replacing waymark posts, bridges and kissing gates as well as strimming and general maintenance works to ensure paths remain open. Thank you to every member of the team, we do all appreciate their efforts.

I also want to thank our members who have taken the time to organise walking holidays and weekends away for our members. In April, 41 ramblers had a very enjoyable spring weekend away at the Warner's Holme Lacy Hotel in Hereford. Then in May, 21 ramblers travelled to Italy to enjoy a week of walking in the beautiful coastal hilltop area of Cinque Terre. Our autumn weekend away in September was via coach to Llandudno for 31 ramblers with a stop off at Portmeirion.

This year we have endeavoured to offer a social occasion for our members each quarter. In January we had our traditional post Christmas/New Year event. 51 members had a 3-course meal at the Robin Hood Golf Club with an after-dinner speaker. In March we organised an enjoyable curry night at Spiceworld for 34 members. Then in June we offered an evening walk followed by a meal at The Black Boy which was attended by 40 members. And lastly in October, we organised a skittles night with fish & chips supper which was enjoyed by 30 members.

We are trialling a revised format for our AGM in November this year. Instead of an evening meeting, we are meeting on a Saturday morning for the formalities, followed by a light lunch and then a choice of two walks. We hope the new format will result in a good turnout of members.

Group challenge – I am committed to walking the 44 circular walks of the Millennium Way over the next 2-4 years and I will be encouraging group members to join me.

Finally, Solihull Group look forward to hosting the Warwickshire Area AGM on 28th February 2026, a date for your diary!

Val Gibbons - Chair

WK08 Sutton Coldfield

As we approach thirty five years since the group was formed, we can reflect on another active year for Sutton Coldfield Ramblers. We have continued our programme of Sunday and Thursday walks and popular shorter evening pub walks in the summer months. Travelling further afield, we had coach walks to the Peak District and Llangollen. We have planned Christmas walks around Ludlow - a new area for the group - with the meal afterwards at Fishmore Hall.

We enjoyed well-supported spring and autumn breaks to Bourton-on-the-Water and the Mumbles respectively, with an excellent choice of self-guided walks each day and lively evening entertainment, showcasing our members' considerable talents! It was lovely to have friends, who no longer walk regularly with us, join these holidays. A small group of Sutton Ramblers completed the last stage of the Francigena route in Italy, walking from Siena to Rome. Next May a group will walk the Camino from Porto to Santiago.

Social events have included a Curry Night; a fascinating tour of the Birmingham Symphony Hall followed by lunch and an interesting guided tour of Castle Bromwich Hall Historic Gardens. We are having a buffet supper following our AGM.

Our 'new' website has functioned extremely well during the last year, keeping members updated with walk details; maps of walk routes completed, with photos; a useful section of mapping tools and PROW maps for surrounding counties. New members have commented on how much helpful information is available. We also have a very professionally produced bi-monthly newsletter containing reports, photo gallery of walks, articles and dates for the diary. There are over 800 followers of our Facebook page which provides useful publicity for the group. Our membership has remained steady - currently around 225.

Birmingham City Council planning department has consulted our Footpath Officer regarding plans for the network of walking routes within Langley Sustainable Urban Extension, and connecting the development to the local area. This has involved a considerable amount of time and effort. The Footpath Working Party has continued to maintain local footpaths with support from the Staffordshire CC Outreach Officer.

Our pool of walk leaders has diminished this year: partly due to older members not wishing to continue leading, but also the Ramblers' new training requirements for existing leaders have had an impact. Encouraging and supporting members to become leaders will be a major focus in the coming year and beyond.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all our volunteers for their hard work and continued support: committee members, walk leaders, organisers of holidays and social events, footpath workers, those who offer car-sharing to walks and to all our members for their enthusiasm for walking and companionship.

Barbara Twort – Chair

WK09 Castle Bromwich

Membership

Our membership has dropped to 60, our lowest number ever. However about 50% of our members have walked with the Group over the past year, and about half of those on a regular basis. We have recently had some expressions of interest from prospective members, so hopefully our numbers will begin to rise again soon.

Walks

The good news is - attendance on Sunday walks has grown and has got back to our historic average of 14, however, a shortage of walk leaders has meant that only 70% of the programme was filled. Our monthly Tuesday morning walks fared better with the average number of walkers being the same as last year. On the downside, our Summer evening walks programme was only half filled, again due to the shortage of leaders.

The Ramblers requirements for qualification to lead walks has not helped. Despite this we have 10 members who have either completed the online training or led 12 walks in the past 3 years, with a further 8 due to take part in an offline session that we are organising.

Walking Holidays

Two walking holidays were held during the year. We stayed at Basingstoke in Hampshire in the Spring, enjoying chalk stream and Greenham Common walks.

In September we stayed at Sandown on the Isle of Wight with walks including St.Catherine's Point and the Needles. On the Saturday night we all dressed in White for Wight and enjoyed some disco dancing.

Social events

We held a number of social events throughout the year:-

- A Social night following the AGM with a mini quiz, fish & chips supper and a raffle
- A successful, well attended Christmas Meal with music and dancing at The Dog in Water Orton
- A New Year walk and meal at the Red Lion in Knowle
- Bowls nights at Resorts World
- A Northern Soul river cruise from Stourport.
- A cinema visit to watch The Salt Path

Thanks go to our energetic Social Secretary, Pauline for organising these, with others in the pipeline.

Publicity and Communication

Our website continues to provide an attractive advertisement for our Group and we have also supplied local facilities such as libraries and community halls with our publicity leaflets and posters which have attracted some interest from potential members.

Members receive a quarterly newsletter. This has been edited by Allan for the past 12 years. He has now decided to call it a day and will be replaced by Brian. Allan will, however continue to be our Webmaster and Rambles Secretary, for which we are very grateful.

Conclusion

Despite having a small membership, the Group continues to be very active in providing many walks and social events for its members, much of which is due to the input of a relatively small number of people. We are trying to encourage more members to take on responsibility, particularly in leading walks

David Threlkeld – Chair

WK10 South Birmingham

It has been a fairly difficult year for SBR with myself being voted into the vacancy as Chair and getting to grips with what was required in the position and then having the bar raised with reference to Walk Leaders. Taking the position has proved easy on the group front as all the committee and some of the members have helped no end. However, on the Ramblers front, as all Chairs must have had, the problems have been many.

The membership has risen slightly to 343 through the year and I am sure that is mainly due to the amount of walks that have been run, and the range of walks.

There have been 3 or 4 walks done every week ranging from the mini walks of around 3 miles, through the short walks up to the Sunday walks of between 8 and 12 miles. Every walk has been well attended and enjoyed. We now are looking to 2026 and trying to ensure our walks program does not suffer.

As well as the annual summer party at a member's home, we have run three trips to the coast two of which were for a couple of days but all were very well organised and attended, with several walks each day. The trips were to Tenby, Whitby and Abergavenny.

A good year for the group who now look to 2026 and the future with anticipation.

Tony Denman - Chair

WK51 West Midlands Walking Group

It has been another positive year for WMWG, with lots of great walks all across the Midlands and beyond.

Weekends away have continued to be very popular, with successful trips to a diverse mix of familiar and less familiar locations including Ilfracombe, Ruthin, Berwick, Anglesey and the Somerset Levels. The highlight, however, was probably our trip to Norway in June, walking in the spectacular surroundings of Alesund and Geirangerfjord and staying in the first ever WMWG accommodation to have hot tubs with fjord views (which was handy after our 30-second dip in said fjord)!

We have also had a good calendar of social events, including meals, theatre, ice hockey, a games night, canal boating (in celebration of the group's 25th anniversary) and an evening in the lock-up at the police station! The club also welcomed its second mascot, in the form of Tiggy the Norwich terrier...

Membership overall is broadly stable, rising slightly over the year, with lots of new members joining and numbers attending walks have generally been healthy.

We have had some success in getting new people involved in walk leading and organising events, which is always something of a challenge but hopefully rewarding for those who give it a try. We do, unfortunately, face a significant challenge arising from head office's plan to bar leaders who have not completed the mandatory walk leader training by the end of this year, which could have a significantly adverse impact on our ability to put on walks and events. We therefore issue a plea to all leaders to please make sure they either do the training or self-certify as soon as they can!

Over the coming year, aside from hopefully running more great events, we are planning to offer subsidised first aid training in order to give members confidence to help in the event of medical incidents arising on one of our walks.

As ever, thanks go to everyone who has helped out with the running of the group, whether that be by serving on the committee, leading a walk, organising a social event, running or assisting with a weekend away or anything else! We can only put on the events we do because of our members volunteering their time and effort for the collective benefit.

Chris Thomas – Chair