

Newsletter of the Loughborough and District Ramblers. Winter 2017 / 2018

This year at the Group's annual general meeting I stepped down having completed five years as Chairman. During the last four of those years I have also edited Soar Feet but have been persuaded to complete one last edition. Therefore I hope you will indulge me if at the beginning of a new year I include some personal reflections and comments, not only on events in 2017, but also the previous five.

A major concern with relatively small numbers attending weekend walks has always been the retention and recruitment of members. We have therefore joined in the Ramblers' various campaigns and even one year had a stall on Loughborough Market. These had limited success but our post and business card campaign, inviting anyone interested in walking and the countryside to join us, had a greater impact. More recently we have again participated in the National Forest Walking Festival and led walks as part of the Charnwood Borough programme, both of which resulted in valuable publicity, the opportunity to encourage others to get out walking, and a few new members. It is also fair to mention that this participation has on occasions resulted in additional demands on leaders when attendees turn up unprepared. However, as nice as it is to walk with friends of similar ability, if that's all we do the Group will get smaller and older and eventually collapse. So it is pleasing to report that recruitment in the last few months has been particularly encouraging. Membership has now generally stabilized which above all is due to the fact that the Group is friendly and tolerant, and welcoming to all. However, the cost of membership remains a block to some and I believe we need to do more to publicise the national role of the Ramblers Association who are the major recipient of fees. The Loughborough Group, in common with others, has a high proportion of members who never participate in local events but support our aims and objectives. Soar Feet and other methods of communication are therefore important to let all our members know what we are doing and it's pleasing to report that Ted Wells will be taking over the role of Editor. Similarly, thanks to another volunteer, Dave Twigg, our web pages were given a make-over in 2017 and I hope you find these both informative and helpful.

Five years ago the Group only offered walks on Sundays and in the evenings during May, June and July. We now offer a full programme consisting of a 10-15 mile walk at weekends and a shorter midweek walk throughout the year. These walks vary not only in the areas visited but the days of the week on which they are offered. I am genuinely excited by the range of walks and venues (and

*Happy
New Year
2018*

tearooms) on our latest programme. Thanks are due to new walk leaders who introduce different venues and challenge established walk leaders to do the same. Particular thanks also to Sue Bicknell for dragging it all together. Do see 'Meet the Member' in this edition where Sue is featured. In the past year work has continued in monitoring planning applications affecting footpaths in our area and reporting problems and thanks for this work is due to Stuart Tyler our Footpath Officer. Another achievement in the last few years has been the reintroduction of a group holiday. This year we had a successful trip to the Yorkshire Dales thanks to Sue Mears for her organisation. Each time we go away we learn more about organising such holidays and they gradually improve and I believe become more inclusive. I'm now looking forward to our next holiday in the Brecon Beacons in May and, although applications for this have closed, it may be possible to squeeze someone in so contact Sue if you are interested.

When I became Chairman of the group I vacated the position of Treasurer. However, I need not have had any fears as our finances have been well managed as the Group has also been fortunate in providing successive Area Treasurers. John Howells our current Treasurer simply gets on with the job in an efficient and unobtrusive manner as does our Secretary Christine Wells. Following the Annual General Meeting Christine will be helped out by Gill Coates who will take over the role of looking after membership records in a non-committee post. The Committee in 2018 is completed by Margaret Machin and Heather Jennings who voice the concerns and opinions of members in addition to distributing the newsletter and programme, and who are on hand to help out whenever needed. So we can be grateful for a great committee. All that is now needed is a new Chairperson so if you are interested please contact Christine.

Meet the Member - Sue Bicknell



Sue is our current Programme Secretary, she writes-

My life has centred around sporting activities, starting at age 5 with the Leicester Forest Cycling Club family ride every Sunday including a stop for a picnic lunch and game of rounders or cricket. During the week it was swimming where I became county record holder (for 10 years) and faster than the boys. In my teens I extended cycling to long distance rides attaining 250 miles in 24 hours and again beating all the boys. At school I played hockey and captained the school team. Later I tried cycle racing both on the road and track and took on the task as secretary of the organising committee for the world championships held in Leicester.

Later my interest turned to running, particularly off road, and I discovered orienteering. For close on 40 years I have competed most weekends and holidays in orienteering events, fell races, mountain marathons and trail runs. I also joined the Long Distance Walkers Association (LDWA) although I tended to run most of their events. I have been orienteering British national champion more than once, won the French championships and come 2nd in China and Australia. In 2018 I'm taking part in the World Masters Championships in Copenhagen. When marathon running became fashionable I took part in the 2nd London Marathon where I had the distinction of starting on the front line.

Between times I qualified as a Chartered Company Secretary and accountant and progressed to be Finance Officer of Coventry University and then Regeneration Manager for Coventry. After taking a late gap year and travelling to remote spots, I joined the United Nations Peacekeeping Division as a humanitarian co-ordinator and began to work in challenging countries during their worst times. I set up a UN office in Somalia, negotiated with warlords, avoided kidnap and hopefully assisted aid agencies in their efforts.

In more recent years – advancing years – I've continued to compete in orienteering events most weeks but have reduced the running and even the long LDWA walks. Loughborough Ramblers Group has taken their place and I enjoy the continued opportunity to be out with likeminded people, pursuing an activity to keep fit and making use of my map reading skills. I particularly enjoy taking a walk in new territory that I have discovered through orienteering. Long may the enjoyment of the outdoors and the companionship continue. The accompanying photo was taken while trying out snowshoeing in Finland in early 2017.

Area AGM

9.30am. Saturday 27th January 2018

**St. Peters Church Centre,
Glenfield, LE3 8DP**

Guest Speakers: Peter Tyldesley of Bradgate Park

The meeting will be followed by a short walk at
1.30pm.

(If joining the walk bring a packed lunch)

WOODLAND INFORMATION



A compass was needed to follow this minimalistic sign seen at an entry to the Peter Elderfield Memorial Wood, Whitwick, on the pre AGM walk, 11th November.



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Muddy Boot Award

This year's winners: A late entry, John and Vicky Howells for their three Langtons walk
1st October 2017

Photo: John maintaining signs on the National Forest Way

A near miss

This year it was Loughborough's turn to host the Area Quiz and, as often the case, to defend the trophy. The quiz took place in the Linford, at Newtown Linford, with Roy Denney, as usual, the quizmaster. Loughborough fielded two teams, Soar Feet (Dave Twigg, John Samson, Sue Bicknell and Sue Mears) and the Deadly Duo (Stuart Tyler and Debbie Wright). Soar Feet managed a very close second, at 156/210, with The Strangers from Hinckley scoring 159/210. Never too early to start revising for next Autumn's quiz - contact John Samson if you'd like to compete.

An Invitation from Coalville Ramblers

Members of Loughborough Ramblers are welcome to join us on our weekend away.

When: 14th – 17th September, 2018

Where: The Sands Hotel, Sandown, Isle of Wight.

Cost: £245. Three nights half board accommodation plus coach transport. (£50 deposit)

Further information: Martin Pyatt,
17 Stamford Drive, Cropston,
Leics., LE7 7HJ.
Tel: 07766 801289

(NB. We only recently received this invitation but bookings close soon.)

Walk Leaders

Please note records of attendance should now be passed to Gill Coates (gill.tonycoates@btinternet.com)
NB. There is a prepared form to help leaders on our web pages.



Jan Savage distributing Christmas cheer. Swithland Woods / Bradgate Park walk, 20th December.

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New Year's Skittles Celebration

Friday 2nd February, 7.00pm start. Soar Bridge Inn, Barrow upon Soar

Menu Choices:

Chicken Breast and chips or, Homemade Steak & Ale Pie and chips or, Veg Lasagne and garlic bread

Cost: £8-50 per head to include supper and room hire. To be paid in cash on the night.

To book your place/s please return the slip below or contact Sue.

Email: susanmears16@gmail.com Tel: 01509231350 Mob: 07545395817
Address: 7 Westmorland Avenue, Loughborough, Leicestershire, LE11 3RY

Skittles Reply Slip

Name _____

Number of Places Required _____

Menu Choice _____

Preferred Contact details:

Email _____

Phone _____

Mobile _____

Address _____

There are limited places so please reply early. Many thanks. Sue