

SOAR FEET

Winter 2018/19

Newsletter of the Loughborough and District Ramblers.

If all goes to plan, you should be reading this edition of Soar Feet in early January. I trust you all had a great Christmas and wish you a happy and healthy 2019. After the excesses of the festive season, it's a perfect time to wax those boots and get out there walking; good exercise and good company!

Loughborough & District AGM and Social

The AGM was held Ronald West Court on 7th November and chaired by Dave Twigg and attended by sixteen members of the group. Christine Wells stepped down as Secretary after five years in the post. Two new committee members, Lynne Atkinson and Karen Chapman, were elected. The full committee is as follows:

Chairman:	Position unfilled
Secretary:	Lynne Atkinson
Treasurer and Area Rep:	John Howells
Programme Secretary:	Sue Bicknell
Footpaths Officer:	Stuart Tyler
Social Secretary	Sue Mears
Webmaster	Dave Twigg

Other Committee Members: Margaret Machin, Heather Jenkins, Karen Chapman

The position of Chairman is unfilled for the second year and will continue to be rotated between members of the committee for the purpose of running their meetings. John Howells has also indicated his intention to step down as Treasurer at the end of this year. If anyone is interested in filling either of these roles going forward, please talk to members of the committee if you want more information on the commitment involved.

After the meeting, there was an excellent buffet. Thanks to Sue Mears for organising the food and the venue. Also, thanks go to John Sampson who, as a backdrop to the social component, had put together a slideshow of photos he had taken over many years of walking with the Loughborough Ramblers.

Happy New Year 2019

Dates for the Diary

Skittles Supper

We plan to repeat last year's successful skittles evening on **25th January** at the Soar Bridge Inn in Barrow upon Soar. Details of menu options and how to book a place are on page 3.

Booking deadline is 16th January 2019

Leicestershire and Rutland Area AGM.

Loughborough is one of eight local Groups forming the Area.

Saturday 26th January, from 09.15 to start at 10.00 am at The Linford, Newtown Linford.

The guest speaker is Julie Attard, Project Officer Charnwood Forest.

There will be a five mile walk after the meeting.

First Aid Course.

The Area Group is putting on a first aid course on 23rd January, 1:00 – 4:00 pm in Newtown Linford. At the time of going to press, spaces were still available. If you are interested, please contact Lynne Atkinson lynneatkinson@btinternet.com for availability and details. Even if the course is full, it will be useful to gauge interest for requesting an additional course.

Grey Seals at Donna Nook; coming to a beach near you!

A thank you to John Harper for alerting us to this impressive wildlife display, only a two-hour drive away.

Britain is home to 38% of the world population of grey seals, many on Scottish Islands but also at four important sites on the English East coast including the Farnes, Horsey, Blakeney and the very accessible site at Donna Nook, a reserve managed by the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. Every year during November and December the seals congregate on this short stretch of coast line and give birth. The pregnant cows come ashore with two objectives; to find a safe place to give birth and to mate with a suitable male. This means that there will be a large number of mature bulls battling it out to mate with the maximum number of females. Seal counts are periodically updated on the website (<https://www.lincstrust.org.uk/get-involved/top-reserves/donna-nook>). This year, the first cub was born on 22 Oct. The week before we visited, on 23 November, the count was 639 bulls, 1590 cows and 1611 pups. It is estimated that the total number of pups born at Donna Nook in 2018 was 2063.



New-born grey seal pup

The new-born pup weighs around 14kg, and actually looks fairly scrawny relative to the older pups which have been suckled for 18 days and tripled their birth-weight. After this time, they are left to fend for themselves.



Mother and pup

The pups cannot go to sea until they are five weeks old, during which time they moult their white fur in favour of the first adult water-proof coat. Until then, they live off of their fat reserves. In late November, pups at all stages of development were evident on the beach. Generally, most pups have left the beach by early January.

While suckling their young, the females do not feed, also relying on reserves of body fat. After weaning their pup, females are available to mate with their choice of competing males before returning to the sea to feed. Implantation of the embryo is delayed so that its development is suspended for three months while the mother has the opportunity to regain its normal body weight.

The land is actually owned by the MOD and you may also be treated to occasional training runs by the jets from RAF Donna Nook; the seals are totally unphased by the noise.



Donna Nook 'flypasts'. The birds are lapwings, not sure about the jet!

Donna Nook is accessible for a day trip but the proximity to the Market Town of Louth makes a short break or overnight stay an attractive prospect. The rolling countryside of the Lincolnshire Wolds provides some worthwhile walking options. Snipe Dales Country Park and Nature Reserve provided a good afternoon's walking on varied waymarked trails, good underfoot for November walking.

If possible, it is best to avoid the weekend as the narrow lanes and car parks become congested during peak seal-viewing season.

A colour version of Soar Feet with active links is available to download from the Loughborough Ramblers' website. The website is also the place to check for any last-minute changes to walks enforced by the weather or local conditions.

Plans for future paperless communication

At the December meeting of the new committee it was proposed that, from 2020, all communication to members should be electronic, utilizing email and the websites of the Group, Area and National Ramblers. We will seek the agreement from our membership at the 2019 AGM.

The decision to move to electronic communication will reduce costs, our volunteers' time and, most importantly, enable your group to communicate more efficiently.

Your committee welcomes your comments on the way forward so, if you have any recommendations, please send them to Lynne Atkinson lynneatkinson@btinternet.com by 31st January 2019.

Please register your contact preferences to receive emails.

Walks programmes, the Soar Feet Newsletter, social events and any important walk changes are posted on the Loughborough Ramblers' website. From time to time it is useful to email the local membership, and this will become increasingly important if we are to move to paperless communication.

In the last edition of Soar Feet, we encouraged you to "opt in" to emails from the Ramblers. Whilst some of you did follow this advice, there are still quite a lot of our members who have not done so.

As we indicated then, in order to comply with the new Data Protection rules, we need to adhere to the Contact Preferences that The Ramblers Association have on record for you and this is particularly important with respect to sending emails. Therefore, in order to continue receiving occasional and pertinent emails from the Group, please check that you have opted in to receive emails from Ramblers.

To check this, go to the Ramblers website (www.ramblers.org.uk). You will need to Login (top of page).

Then go to My Account > Update Profile > Contact Preferences.

If you wish to receive emails from the Group, you need to tick the 'Email' as a Contact Preference, then click 'Update' at the bottom of the page.

Skittles Evening and Supper

25th January 2019 at 7pm

At The Soar Bridge Inn, Barrow upon Soar, LE12 8PN

£10 per person - Pay on the night with cash!

Menu choices

Chicken Breast & Chips

Steak & Ale Pie & Chips

Veg. Lasagne & Garlic Bread

If you would like to go, please contact Sue Mears with your menu choice.

Please Note : the closing date for choices is Wednesday 16th January 2019

susanmears16@gmail.com

07545395817

01509231350

Area Quiz Evening

On 2nd November, a Loughborough team of two (Dave Twigg and John Samson) headed out to Barwell for the annual area quiz, hosted by Hinckley. Joining forces with Chris and Penny from Hinckley, we scored just under 50%. With the unusually challenging questions this year, this was enough to win the trophy. Start cramming now for next autumn's quiz (details not yet known); contact John Samson if you'd like to compete.



Creating a programme

Sue Bicknell, our Programme Secretary describes some of the tricks of the trade of putting together the walks programme.

Twice a year a programme of walks drops on the doormat. Do you ever wonder how it is put together? Here are a few secrets.

As programme co-ordinator I make a point of learning others' walking quirks; their preferred walking distance; days they can attend; areas that are familiar with; and other idiosyncrasies, such as liking breakfast first, tea after or hills and long distances. The Group are lucky that most members using our programme are also willing to lead a walk. I cosy up to new members and sound out their attitude to leading and can offer some hand holding for nervous beginners. The secret is to make it a short walk, near home and try and use footpaths that are known to you.

Regular group walkers are the backbone of the schedule and on the advertised submission date, a plethora of requests arrive 'save me this date', 'put me down for a Saturday in May', and sometimes actual walk details.

Having gathered walk submissions, they need to be scheduled. Longer walks between Sat and Sun and shorter walks between Tues, Wed or Thurs to give the maximum opportunity for members to join in. It sometimes involves negotiating between leaders to get a balanced programme. Some like to go to the Peak District or new areas further afield while others want a shorter walk near Loughborough and a pub or

teashop afterwards. The walks have to cover the whole area around Loughborough and not be duplicated. In the final days when filling in the last few dates, I get out the map and look to see where there is a gap as the result will influence who I approach to fill the date.

Although walk details are the leaders' domain, I do check that meeting places are suitable, map references and postcodes lead to the right spot and, using my own experience, may suggest a café or WC stop. The result should reflect members needs at all times and any suggestion of a different distance, mode of walk or timing are always welcome. I don't want the resultant programme to be my ideas of what I like. It has to reflect what others seek from their membership.

As a result, this winter we have a series of walks through the historic World Heritage area of Derwent Valley to add interest; some walks utilising roads and semi-permanent surfaces to dodge too much mud; special access permission to view nature at its best; and others that use an interesting teashop, farm or architectural feature. My own quirk is to find new routes in the National Forest as it develops.

There is always something novel to discover or photograph.



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Meet the Members: Christine and Ted Wells

Christine was the Secretary of the Group for five years until she stepped down at the last AGM. Ted currently edits Soar Feet. Christine writes:

We joined the Loughborough Ramblers, coming up for ten years ago, in July 2009. As we were still working at that time, we initially joined the evening walks which are a feature of the Summer Programme. Following early retirement in 2011, we started walking more regularly and still strive to do this, although retirement is 'so busy' that there always seems to be many things to occupy our time!

Ted was born a cockney, at "Barts" in London, and his earliest rambles (albeit, initially in a pram!) were walks around Regents Park. The family moved from Camden Town to Bedfordshire when he was five. I was born and bred in Northampton. Neither of us were particularly brought up to walk regularly, apart from occasional Sunday afternoon outings and clifftop walks on family holidays.

We met in Leeds where we both went in 1972 to study Biochemistry. It seemed a long way north at the time! Over the course of the following six years, however, we fell in love with the Yorkshire Dales (as well as each other!). We also walked in the Lake District and enjoyed weekends in mountain huts owned by the university in these areas. Of course, several beers at the end of the walk were always an important part of these walks and that still remains the case, although to a more moderate extent!

Having both completed a degree and PhD in Leeds, we moved to Leicestershire in 1980 when Ted took up a research post in industry. I worked in the Biochemistry Department at Leicester University; initially in a research post, then as a lecturer. Latterly, teaching was my predominant role.

During the years that we brought up our two children, we did strive to get them out walking (and cycling) when we could, both locally and further afield and on family holidays. It is fair to say, however, that we have taken up walking more regularly since they have flown the nest and particularly since retiring.

As well as walking locally now, we have enjoyed many walking holidays in recent years, including some long-distance footpaths. Our first such footpath was the Dales Way (from Ilkley up to Windermere) which was a real trip down memory lane as it took us back to many of the areas we had enjoyed in the 70s. We also did the Coast-to-Coast and would thoroughly

recommend both of these walks. We have been fortunate enough to walk abroad; the Inca Trail to Macchu Picchu in Peru, part of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela as well as walking holidays in Cuba, Turkey, Italy, and The Canaries to name a few.

A well-earned pint at the Bay Hotel



Retirement has also seen us take up playing bridge (apparently, we now fulfil our childrens' stereotype of a retired couple) and travelling as widely and as often as we can manage to fit in. An exciting new phase of our lives started in July with the arrival of our first grandchild; at six months she already has Ted completely wrapped around her little fingers! Retirement gives us the luxury of spending more time with our family, both young and old.

Muddy Boots Award

Last year's award went to Margaret Machin for her walk from Wymeswold on 11th April 2018.



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Emergency Information Tags

Recently, a number of accidents and medical emergencies have been witnessed by some of our members while walking with other groups and on walking holidays. Although none of these have been on our own walks, the committee have sourced a supply of emergency tags that individuals can clip to the outside of their rucksacks. These are discreet but easily accessible and can contain emergency contacts and as much medical information as you feel appropriate. In an emergency, the external location saves time and any discomfort on the part of your fellow walkers in having to search for such information. If you want to carry one, talk to a committee member who will probably have them available when attending walks.

Your Soar Feet

I hope that you find something of interest in this newsletter. It would be great to receive suggestions of what you might like to see included, but also possible contributions; an interesting find or a quirky/amusing photo taken on a local walk?

Please send to ted.wells12@gmail.com.