



Ramblers

Worcestershire Area

Annual General Meeting 2025

Annual Report

RAMBLERS WORCESTERSHIRE AREA

NOTICE OF RAMBLERS WORCESTERSHIRE AREA AGM

THE AREA AGM WILL TAKE PLACE ON SATURDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2025 AT 1.15pm AS PART OF OUR AREA MEMBERS DAY AT –

The Wharton Park Golf Club, Longbank, Bewdley, Worcestershire DY12 2QW

IF YOU WISH TO TAKE PART, PLEASE REGISTER YOUR INTEREST IN ADVANCE BY EMAILING THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY hawkinsnoelin455@gmail.com THIS IS TO HELP US WITH CATERING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THOSE ATTENDING.

THE PAPERS FOR THE MEETING WILL BE EMAILED TO YOU IN ADVANCE AND WILL BE TAKEN AS READ SO THAT THE BUSINESS OF THE MEETING CAN BE CARRIED OUT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, AND TO ALLOW QUESTIONS TO BE RAISED IN ADVANCE.

PLEASE NOTE THAT WE ARE URGENTLY SEEKING VOLUNTEERS AS DEPUTIES FOR THE COMMITTEE (SECRETARY/MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY, FOOTPATH SECRETARY AND TREASURER). WE ALSO HAVE A VACANCY FOR AREA CHAIR.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY PARTICULAR VACANT POST, OR WISH TO NOMINATE YOURSELF OR ANOTHER (WITH THEIR PERMISSION) – PLEASE EMAIL THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY BY 1ST FEBRUARY 2023

NOTICE OF MOTIONS –

None to date.

SCHEDULE FOR MEMBERS DAY (speaker timings may be adjusted prior to the meeting)

9.30-10.00am – Arrival/Meet/Greet (please be sure to come booted up and ready) - leisurely 5 mile walk starting from the The Wharton Park Golf Club (ample parking available) with our walk leaders. (more details on arrival at the club).

12.30pm - back at club for a **quick boot change**, a sandwich lunch and cakes followed by teas/coffees – bar area open for those who wish to purchase drinks

1.15pm AGM followed by member questions

1.45pm Introduction of Guest speaker – Gary Farmer - Vale Landscape Heritage Trust

2.15pm – Update on the Rail Trails project – Lyndon Bracewell

2.30pm – Update on Area footpaths across Worcestershire – Simon Mallatratt

2.45pm - A Trustee from Ramblers Central office providing updates on the Organisation's latest strategy.

3.00 – 3.30pm (Approx) - Close of meeting

Worcestershire Area AGM Agenda - 8th February 2025 1.15pm

Venue: The Wharton Park Golf Club, Longbank, Bewdley, Worcestershire DY12 2QW

- 1 Apologies**
- 2 Minutes of 2024 AGM (taken as read)**
- 3 Matters Arising**
- 4 Annual Reports and Accounts**
- 5 Election of Honorary Area Officers:**
 - a) Chair** (Glyn Thomas is standing down - VACANCY)
 - b) Treasurer** (Veronica Hart has offered to continue in post)
 - c) Secretary/Membership Secretary** (Noelin Mallatratt has offered to continue in post)
 - d) Area Footpath Secretary** – (Simon Mallatratt has offered to continue in post)
- 6 Election of Area Committee Members** (to attend Area Committee meetings representing Local Groups, Affiliated Groups and/or individual members)
- 7 Election of 2 delegates to Ramblers General Council 2025**
- 8 Motions**

None received to date
- 9 Any Other Business**

Presentations from Gary Farmer, Lyndon Bracewell (Worcester Ramblers), Simon Mallatratt (Area Footpath Secretary) and a representative from Ramblers Head Office will follow the AGM.

PLEASE NOTE - The Area Committee would welcome volunteers or nominations for any of the above vacancies (and deputy posts). Ramblers Head Office offer information and training to help any new volunteers in these roles. If you would like further information, wish to volunteer for any of these roles, or know of a member who might be interested, please let us know by emailing the Membership Secretary hawkinsnoelin455@gmail.com

RAMBLERS – WORCESTERSHIRE AREA

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 10th February 2024 at the Vale Golf Club, Hill Furze Road, Bishampton, WR10 2 LZ

PRESENT:

Area Officers and Committee Members: Glyn Thomas (GT/Chair), Noelin Mallatratt (NM/Secretary/Membership Secretary), Sue Johnson (SJ/Treasurer), Simon Mallatratt (SM/Area Footpaths Coordinator), Alan Saunders (AS/Evesham Rambling Club), Sheila O'Brien (SoB/Evesham) Jane Vickers (Worcester), Lyndon Bracewell (Worcester), Peter Davies (Bromsgrove), Nicola Hamer (Wyre Forest), Gay Thomas (Redditch Group).

In addition, XX Area members attended – as per the registration list attached to these minutes.

Claire Watkins (Regional Engagement Officer/Midlands and East Cluster) attended as a Ramblers Head Office representative.

APOLOGIES:

Veronia Hart (incoming Treasurer) offered apologies.

INTRODUCTION:

We started the day with a leisurely walk attended by 90 members and completed a 5 mile ramble before a buffet lunch at 1.00pm.

GT welcomed members to the Members day and AGM and gave an overview of the afternoon's events, mentioning the 2 guest speakers and 3 area committee members who would present on various topics following the formal business of the AGM. He felt that the level of attendance helped to justify the existence of the Area as a means to bring together members of our local Groups

GT referenced the great work being done at Group level, thanking all the walk leaders for putting on a varied walks and social events programme. Mention was also given to the excellent achievements of Evesham Rambling Club along with Evesham Ramblers Group in obtaining "Walkers are Welcome status for the town of Evesham. GT also noted the ongoing "Rail Trails" project, which Lyndon Bracewell (Worcester Group) was continuing to develop with assistance from a number of groups in testing walks. The above showed the potential value of Groups working together on walking issues across the county.

MINUTES: 2023 AGM

The minutes were presented as part of the 2023 Annual Report, copies of which had been sent to all members attending. The minutes were taken as read and were agreed by all as an accurate record.

MATTERS ARISING:

None

2024 ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS:

The Annual Report included written reports from Area Officers as follows

- a) Chair report
- b) Area Secretary/Area Membership Secretary report
- c) Treasurer's report
- d) Area Footpath Secretary's report and presentation on his role

The following Group reports were submitted and are included in the Annual Report, which will be circulated to our Group Committees for onward distribution to members, and to Ramblers Head Office.

- a) Redditch
- b) Bromsgrove
- c) Wyre Forest
- d) Evesham
- e) Worcester

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Area Chair - GT agreed to stand as Area Chair and was elected unanimously. However, he advised the meeting that he would stand down in February 2025 and asked for volunteers to come forward to enable an easy transition of duties over the next 12 months.

Area Secretary/Membership Secretary – NM agreed to serve again.

Area Treasurer – SJ stood down and VH, having been nominated, was elected as Area Treasurer. On behalf of the Area Committee, GT extended heartfelt thanks to Sue for doing an excellent job over the period and in particular, helping the committee during the transition phase with the training of our new area treasurer (VH), who takes over with immediate effect. SJ has also offered further help to VH over the next few months while she settles into the role.

Area Footpath Secretary - Mr S Mallatratt agreed to serve for another year.

ELECTION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS:

The following members had acted as Group Representatives on the Area Committee and GT thanked them for their contributions over the year -

Peter Davies (Bromsgrove), Alan Saunders (Evesham Rambling Club), Sheila O'Brien (Evesham), Gay Thomas (Redditch), Lyndon Bracewell (Worcester).

The Secretary would contact these members ASAP after the AGM to confirm that they wished to continue as Group Representatives. If this was no longer the case, alternatives would be sought.

ELECTION OF 2 DELEGATES TO GENERAL COUNCIL:

The next Ramblers General Council is scheduled for the NEC, Birmingham on 20th April 2024. In the absence of volunteers at the meeting, one place was available in addition to the Chair, who confirmed his attendance. This will be offered to any member who agreed to represent the Area.

Note – Lyndon Bracewell (Worcester) has since offered to attend and has been registered.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

None

Date of 2024/2025 AGM:

Dates for the next AGM will be set at the Area Committee Meeting in March 2024.

Signed by (Area Chair)

End of Minutes

Following the AGM, the Members Day concluded with several interesting presentations.

Closing the event, GT thanked everyone for attending, with special thanks to the speakers as follows

- 1) Rick Thompson, Wildlife Writer (A River Avon Year)
- 2) Alan Saunders (Evesham Rambling Club – “Walkers are Welcome”)
- 3) Lyndon Bracewell (Worcester Ramblers – update on Rail Trails project)
- 4) Claire Watkins, Regional Engagement Officer for Midlands/East Cluster – general update on Ramblers strategy
- 5) Simon Mallatratt – Area Footpaths Coordinator – update on his Role and what it entails

End of minutes

Ramblers Worcestershire Area – AGM Reports 2025

CHAIR'S REPORT

Looking back over the year, the Worcs Area Members Day and AGM for 2024 at the Vale Golf Club near Evesham was a resounding success – and we are continuing our tour of golf clubs around the county with our AGM today. Despite our initial concerns over the February weather last year, 90 members turned up for a short walk, some lunch, some interesting talks and the regular AGM business. The number of attendees was a challenge for the walk “logistics”, but careful planning meant that all returned safely to base camp. Last year’s success unfortunately requires a more modest budget for this year’s Members Day although the AGM itself is of course open to all. Thanks are due to Noelin our Secretary/Membership Secretary for all her work in making the 2024 event such a success – no doubt to be repeated this year.

My third and final year as Area Chair has included the usual attendance at the Ramblers General Council (AGM) at the NEC in April. This year’s event proved uneventful, with mostly procedural matters under discussion. I was grateful for the company of Lyndon Bracewell as a second attendee and we were able to have a close conversation over lunch with Ross Maloney, Ramblers CEO. Lyndon was able to demonstrate his work on Worcestershire Rails Trails and the associated website and how this would fit with the new Ramblers strategy of getting people from urban areas out into the country. Sadly, although local walkers are very enthusiastic, nothing further seems to have come of this from HQ.

Under the new Ramblers strategy agreed at the last GC, members will perhaps have noticed a new emphasis in the “messaging” coming out from HQ on the social and health benefits of walking and the importance of improving access - in all respects. We are being assured, however, that Ramblers work on preserving and enhancing the footpath network will continue.

The new Walk Leadership guidance and training seems to have been launched successfully, but anecdotal evidence suggests that local uptake is slow, with some reports that potential leaders are being put off by the “admin” and IT involved. Perhaps we need a local campaign in 2025?

Closer to home, I can report continuing successes for our Evesham and Worcester Groups. Evesham Rambling Club (aided by Evesham Ramblers) with their “Walkers are Welcome” status for the town and Lyndon (Worcester group) with the growing network of Rail Trails and a superb website. The Rail Trails are proving very popular with members and walk leaders I understand – we should hear more later.

Simon Mallatratt continues his great work as Area Footpath Secretary (he prefers “coordinator”). Simon now has a network of contacts on whom he can call for local advice on

any planning applications of concern. Our thanks should go to Simon and his “network” for all they do. In addition, we should thank the various work parties from our groups who go out and clear paths, install kissing gates, repair ditch crossings etc. Unfortunately, their work has been badly (but temporarily we hope) affected by staff losses and budget cuts at Worcs County Council. I’m advised that WCC are hoping to recruit staff and resume a more normal service in mid-2025.

Our Groups continue to offer a wide variety of walks to their members, although a lack of Walk Leaders seems to be affecting some walk programmes. As I have mentioned before, this makes it critical that we adopt the right approach with the new Walk Leader guidance so that potential leaders are encouraged, not deterred.

Our Groups also organise a host of coach trips, walking holidays etc, so please keep an eye or ear out as they often have spare places to fill. One way of publicising things like is via our Area Newsletter – of which I have been editor in chief! We have been unable to issue an autumn 2024 edition due to lack of material, so please try to submit something for early 2025.

I have previously stressed that we need people to come forward in “deputy” roles for each of our key posts (Chair, Secretary/Membership Secretary and Treasurer) – and this remains the case. We are doing our best to bring Groups and members together within our Area and this would be greatly helped if we had more volunteers to assist us on the committee and keep the Area going for the future.

In my own case, I have been involved with the Area committee since November 2016, first as Secretary and also stand-in Footpath Secretary, and more recently as Area Chair. I have finally decided to stand down from the committee. The existing committee will continue to work brilliantly, which we did for quite a few years with no elected Chair in post. My thanks go to all who have put in time and effort over the last eight years to help keep the Area and the committee going. My hope is that somebody will step forward as Chair, but from me it’s “over and out”.

Glyn Thomas, Worcs Area Chair

SECRETARY/MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY’S REPORT

Introduction

For those who may have recently joined Ramblers, your Area committee represents all 5 groups across Worcestershire, and meets on a quarterly basis. In addition, the meetings are open to our Affiliate groups and the following groups are listed as at 27th January 2025.

Arrow Valley Countryside Group

Droitwich Spa 50+ Walking Group

Evesham Rambling Club

Halesowen Ramblers

Malvern Hills and District FP Soc

Single Boots

The Across Wales Walk Association

We are fortunate to have five very active Rambler groups which have provided a healthy programme of walks/social events and holidays (both weekend and full weeks) at home and abroad. Whilst it is great to report that the Worcestershire area is thriving there is some concern for the future! I mention this as we continue to fall short in certain groups, on Walk Leaders. They are the life blood of the various groups, and they all strive to offer a great variety of both short and long walks to suit our demographic.

Whilst the latest data from Ramblers show that we have a healthy percentage of walk leaders in our area (17%), it should be borne in mind that this figure includes many members who are now walking and leading a great deal less than they did. We need “younger” members coming forward as replacements.

Perhaps it's time to ask ourselves whether we, as individual members can step up and take some of the work load off their shoulders. Any walk is a good walk! It can be as short or as long as you wish. There's also plenty of help available to any new walk leader and if you reach out, you will find it all around you. Those who feel they lack map reading skills can grow their skills easily with the help of existing members – it may be a new skill you would like to acquire so why not make 2025, the year to achieve something new. Likewise, you can offer to lead a walk in an area you are familiar with and know well, to allay any anxiety you may have regarding map reading.

Group activities are highlighted in the individual group reports sent out with the AGM documentation so there's no need to repeat these here. However, there are a couple of items to draw to your attention as they are happening in 2025.

1 Evesham Walking Festival - another chance to enjoy a great variety of short and long walks over a 5 day period in June – watch out for more details on the dedicated website [Evesham walking festival](#)

2 The 760th Anniversary of the Battle of Evesham

This should whet the appetite! There is a planned re-enactment of the battle on the weekend of 1st - August – more details are available on “VisitEvesham” website [Battle of Evesham](#)

3 Redditch 40th Anniversary year

The Group is 40 years old this month (January 2025) and as a starter to their year, it plans to repeat its first ever walk by taking a 5 mile circular from Tardebigge to the Queens Head pub in Stoke Prior.

Area events

It’s still an issue to attempt the organising of Area events as the various groups have a busy schedule for most of the year. Avoiding conflicts on dates poses difficulties.

One new idea might be to offer a programme of online “guest speaker” events covering a variety of subjects. If this is of interest to any of our members, please email me with your thoughts and potential topics after the AGM at hawkinsnoelin455@gmail.com

Outreach/Affiliates etc

We aimed to increase our Area committee attendance in 2024 by reaching out to existing affiliate groups whilst also encouraging more input from any individual member who may wish to participate. Sadly this has not yet materialised but we will keep on trying. That said, we must give a shout out this year to **Halesowen Ramblers** (along with members from other Rambler groups) who have been of great help to our Area Footpath Coordinator. As footpaths continue to be the single most important function of any area, additional help or assistance from members in carrying out recces is gratefully appreciated.

Membership information

When considering any changes in membership counts over the period, note that numbers change for a variety of reasons such as

- members switching groups
- members who have resigned over the year
- lapsed members
- deceased members

Also note that when these statistics are compiled, they are simply a snapshot of the numbers on that particular day when the data is downloaded. For ease of convenience, we pull the data at least 10 days before the Area AGM.

Membership statistics at 27th January 2025

Worcestershire Area

	2025	2024
Total members	1,064	1,098
New members	45	63

Here's a further breakdown of above statistics showing individual group memberships

New and rejoined members as at 27th January 2025

Group	AGM 2025	AGM Jan 2024	AGM Jan 2023	AGM Feb 2022
Redditch	7	10	13	5
Bromsgrove	3	5	5	10
Wyre Forest	7	14	2	6
Evesham	8	5	2	15
Worcester	3	19	11	24

(Note that the "rejoined" category has been introduced by Ramblers HQ in 2024)

Member split across all 5 groups as at 31st January 2024

Group	AGM Feb2025	AGM Feb 2024	AGM Feb 2023	AGM Feb 2022
Redditch	180	183	181	183
Bromsgrove	130	143	164	157
Wyre forest	145	147	142	169
Evesham	148	151	147	153
Worcester	361	391	403	412
Non assigned members	100	83	75	68

With reference to my last report at the 2024 AGM, yet again your attention is drawn to the numbers of **non-assigned members** shown above – currently standing at 100. We will email these members after this years' AGM and invite them to join one of our groups across the area, encouraging them to participate more in local Group activities. It's possible that non assigned members may not be aware of what's on offer and it's always good to make them more familiar with activities in the various groups. We may have potential walk leaders amongst them or indeed some future committee members!

Noelin Mallatratt Area Secretary/Membership Secretary

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurers Report 1 October 2023 to 30th September 2024

This year we have made significant progress to reduce our reserves according to the Charity Commission mandate. We held an extremely successful AGM which was free to members. We received an income of **£2665.00** from Central Office, up from **£1543.60** for 2022/23 period. All groups agreed to accept only their minimal allocations as there had been little activity.

Total expenditure for this period was **£ 3126.29** of which, **£1506.00** was paid out to the groups, **£1310.00** on the AGM and remaining expenses were for meetings and other casework.

Our current balance at Unity Bank as of 30th September 2024 was **£835.07** so we have managed to reduce our reserves. As a committee we think it is important that our members receive something back for their dedication and hard work in keeping the regular walks going and for this reason we have agreed to fund refreshments at the AGMs in 2025, and to fund refreshments at the 2 planned Meet and Greet walks this year. In addition, there is designated funding for walk leader training to expand the pool of walker leaders in support of a varied and expanding walk program.

An overview of the income / expenditure is captured below.

Worcestershire Ramblers Area - Treasurer`s report year ended 30th September 2023

`Main` (unrestricted) fund-- income and expenditure relating to charitable objectives

	2024	2023	2024	2023
Main fund				
Opening balance = 1st October	£835.07	£1396.36		
	<u>Income</u>		<u>Expenditure</u>	
Funding from Central office	£2665.00	£1543.60		
Meetings (inc.AGM)			£1370.00	£761.00
Walks related (campaign etc)			220.29	£250.00
Group funding payments			£1506.00	£1552.00
Newsletters/ publicity			--	--
Admin ()			£30.00	£231.78
		£2939.9		
Total	£3400.07	6	£3126.29	£2,794.78
Closing Bank balance 30th September	£835.07	£1396.36		

Future payments

Standing orders to the 5 groups within our area have been set up to be paid quarterly in November, February, May and August, this being the standard funding received from head office based on membership figures for each group. There is a very slight increase of the allocation per member.

Mailchimp subscription has been renewed for another year, at **£193.29**, with it being such an important utility for communicating with members and groups.

Updates from HQ finance regarding ways for areas and groups to receive payments from members or the general public by debit or credit card. Discussions took place with a company called Elavon. HQ is looking to run a pilot with a small number of groups to test their mobile card reader offering. If you would be interested in being part of this pilot, please contact HQ finance for more details. More information about Elavon's services can be found here: <https://www.elavon.co.uk/>

Thank you once again to all the Group Treasurers for their hard work in responding to Central Office deadlines in submitting their budgets and annual returns and in responding promptly to queries raised. It is much appreciated.

The accounts have once again been audited by Paul O'Dell and can be made available on request. I would like to propose the Paul audits our accounts for this coming year. As usual we have made a small donation to Paul for his work in auditing the accounts.

Veronica Hart, Area Treasurer

Full accounts can be made available on request.

FOOTPATH SECRETARY'S REPORT

Detail has been covered in my quarterly reports.

The policy of using a support team to deal with local issues continues to do well and we now have 3 non-Rambler helpers. They are all superbly helpful.

But we have had one major loss – Mike Everitt, a very long-standing active helper of the Ramblers and an endless source of information on paths west of the Severn died recently. I have recruited some help but we need an awful lot more to fill the gap.

In relation to the objectives from my last report, I have developed a system for keeping documents that can be passed on easily to my successors. I simply don't keep anything that is already a document of public record. Any other direct correspondence is always on email and can be handed over by passing on the address. So the process is now completely paperless.

There remain the problems identified last year – it is very difficult to keep checking what has happened to applications we have commented on, and even harder to check that those that have been passed are keeping to their commitments. We need every walker and walk leader to feedback any concerns they might have.

The only other major development is that the application rate has risen hugely. Two a day is now commonplace. With the government drive to high housing targets a lot of small developers are seeing an opportunity to do a little tweaking and reapply for development thrown out years ago. I think we can cope but I will be recruiting someone to help with the paperwork end of things.

We are making a difference – often small but because we try to watch and chivvy, the word gets out that developers in Worcestershire will be challenged if necessary and PROWs matter

Simon Mallatratt, Area Footpath Secretary

FOOTPATH WORKING GROUPS

Groups currently operate in Evesham (ERC), Redditch, Worcester and Wyre Forest and more details of their efforts are given in the respective Group Reports. All members (and non-members) in the Area benefit from the great work that these groups carry out to maintain and improve our local path network. If you would like to help out with this vital work please contact a working party coordinator via your Group or through the Area Committee. If your Group doesn't have a working party – why not start one!

GROUP REPORTS

The reports below are included to show the activities of our various Groups and we are grateful to those who have provided the information. This year we have two reports from some of our Affiliated Groups – good to hear what they get up to!

BROMSGROVE –

Walking this year has been seriously affected by the weather. In the beginning it was very wet and soggy and at the end we were beset by storms and high winds. Notwithstanding, walks did take place on the appointed days but not always necessarily to the locations originally intended! Thus we walked the length and breadth of the county, taking in Bredon, Malvern and Clent Hills as well as canalside walks between Bromsgrove, Droitwich and Worcester and visits to prettier villages such as Bidford-on-Avon, Flyford Flavell, Feckenham and Rowney Green.

Once again this year we hosted the Area Carol Service in December at St Godwald's Church, Aston Fields. Many thanks are due again to Judith & David Rowe for both organising the event and leading the morning walk. It seems that we have now also embedded a 'traditional lunch stop' at The Cross at Finstall prior to processing down to the Church for the Service.

Martin Smith led the Christmas Special walk again around the fields of Hanbury with a stopover at Old Bell Cottage for Mulled wine and seasonal treats. Many thanks once more to Clare & John Stallard for their hospitality in hosting this event.

The Group Dinner evening was repeated at The Swan, Upton Warren, on January 27th and was attended again by some 24 members. We managed to run a Coach Ramble to the Shropshire Hills, centred on Church Stretton, in April with 33 members from both Bromsgrove and Redditch Groups. Sadly we were not able to organise a second Coach trip to the Wye Valley due to lack of support. We did, however, have two Saturday evening Pub Rambles in June & August centred on The Eagle & Sun at Hanbury Wharf and The Tardebigge, with 17

and 19 members attending respectively. Special thanks are due to our leaders, Sandra and John Mason.

A new departure for us this year was a Skittles event held at 'The Fountain at Clent' in May, where 27 members and friends bowled for all they were worth, a good night being had by all.

Eighteen members went on a Spring Week-End Away in March to the HF House in Bourton-on-the-Water, and we had a most enjoyable if slightly truncated Week-End Away in Eastbourne, walking the South Downs. Some 48 members from the combined Bromsgrove and Redditch Groups enjoyed the ups and downs of the Seven Sisters. Thanks go to Sue Upton, Paul and Denise Field for leading the A walks and Martin & Lynne Smith with Jo and Mike Simpson for leading the B walks. We are planning an October trip to Northumberland in 2025 which is open to all members, for more details contact the Group Secretary.

Peter Davies, Secretary Bromsgrove Ramblers

EVESHAM RAMBLERS –

Last year was another successful year for Evesham Ramblers. Despite the mud and wet weather in the early part of the year and the fact that we are a small group with a limited pool of leaders, we nevertheless managed to maintain a full programme of walks, welcomed a number of new faces, enjoyed some successful social events and also made positive contributions to 'Evesham Welcomes Walkers'. A huge credit to all those involved.

As an addition to our normal circular walks, we included two linear 'Rail Trail' walks (Evesham to Honeybourne and Pershore to Evesham) in our programme. These went well, so we plan to include more this year. We also carried out two joint walks with the Evesham Rambling Club, one of which included a visit to the Showborough garden sculpture exhibition. Also noteworthy was a walk and picnic at Bidford where, thanks to Donna and her delicious home-made cakes, we raised £100 in donations to the Macmillan Cancer charity; a great result for a very worthy cause. In addition to our regular Sunday and Tuesday walks, we also continued with a programme of midweek summer evening walks which were followed by a pub meal. This opportunity to socialise was appreciated by many of our members. On quite a few walks, we were also pleased to be joined by new members, as well as visitors and guests from other Ramblers Groups.

As with many Groups, attracting leaders remains an issue. Evesham Ramblers are quite a small group with a limited pool of leaders, so a particularly big thank you is owed to all our leaders, and especially to those who stood in at short notice on several occasions to ensure that a walk could go forward.

A highlight of the year was our walking weekend in the Elan Valley. A beautiful area with some great walks, expertly led by local leader Steve. The weekend was considered a great success by all who attended, so a big thank you to Sheila for organising it. This year we will be going

to the Peak District at the end of September, staying at the Dovedale HF property. An eagerly anticipated event which is already fully booked.

Through the year, we have worked alongside the Evesham Rambling Club and others to help promote and maintain the Evesham Welcomes Walkers (EWW) initiative. Evesham Ramblers led two walks for 2024 Evesham Walking Festival and have signed up to lead seven walks for the 2025 festival. We helped man the EWW information tents at a few local events, including the Battle of Evesham Festival and Love Evesham events, where we were able to promote walking in Evesham and Evesham Ramblers to a wider audience. We had leaflets printed to hand out at these events. We also assisted in two 'Pilgrims Walks' organised by the local Tourist Information office. Evesham Ramblers welcomes this alliance with Evesham Rambling Club as we believe it opens our groups to more walking opportunities.

EVESHAM RAMBLING CLUB –

Evesham Rambling Club offers:

- 10-12 mile walk on the last Sunday of the month
- 10 mile walk on the second Wednesday of the month
- 5 mile morning walk on the third Wednesday of the month
- evening walk on the second and last Friday of the month throughout the summer
- 5 mile morning walk monthly on Saturday from September to March

Our membership presently stands at 143.

In the last twelve months members enjoyed walks covering Worcestershire and the surrounding counties. We held our Annual Dinner at Broom Hall in March and a garden party by the River Avon in June. In November, the club had a walking holiday in Tenerife and this year we are off to Schladming in Austria in September.

Working Party

In 2024 we had little support from the Worcestershire Public Rights of Way Team and most of our activities have been clearing local footpaths and replacing waymark posts. It is unlikely that this situation will improve until mid-2025 when the County hopes to have filled the many PROW Team vacancies.

Circular Walks

We have continued to monitor the state of the footpaths on these routes and have created a new path by the Avon as the original had fallen away into the river.

Evesham Walking Festival

This year's Festival was a great success with nearly 500 walkers attending over the five days. It was pleasing to note that we had people from other 'Walkers are Welcome' towns. The 2025 Festival will take place 25-29 June and included in the programme – 'The Three Towers' led by Evesham Ramblers, three days on the Shakespeare's Avon Way led by Evesham Rambling Club and four days of 'Railway 200' themed walks including three days of 'Rail Trails' from Worcestershire Parkway to Honeybourne and a trip on the GWSR from Winchcombe to Broadway.

Evesham Welcomes Walkers

The website (www.walkevesham.uk) was launched in February.

The Steering Group has been active in signing up local businesses as supporters of Walkers are Welcome and we now have sixteen.

Throughout the year we had a presence at various local events and in August we supported the Battle of Evesham re-enactment weekend and were pleased with the numbers of people who came along to our stand. In September we organised two Pilgrim Walks, a joint event with The Almonry Tourist Information Centre. These proved to be popular.

Two information boards promoting walking in the Vale to be sited on each platform of Evesham railway station have been designed, printed and are awaiting installation. A launch ceremony will be arranged for early 2025 which will include a local walk. We have invited Charlbury, a fellow Walkers are Welcome town and located on the same main GWR line, to join us to celebrate this occasion. The boards have been funded by the Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership. We are actively seeking a site for a third board in Evesham town centre.

We were successful in a bid for funding from 'Welcome to Our Future' for an Evesham Town information tear-off pad which will include the walks within and around the town.

We constructed a wooden Evesham Welcomes Walkers Christmas tree with waymark discs, local walk discs, etc as the baubles. This was on display, along with many others from groups within Evesham, in All Saints Church over the Christmas period.

Five members of the Steering Group enjoyed the Walkers are Welcome Annual Get-together in Mid-Wales in October and have already booked for next year's event which will be held in Bingley in October.

Carl Hedderick, a member of the Steering Group, is now a member of the Walkers are Welcome National Executive.

Alan Saunders

Secretary, Evesham Rambling Club; Treasurer, Evesham Welcomes Walkers

REDDITCH –

2024 has been another very successful year for Redditch ramblers. We are active on a number of fronts: the walking programme; working parties; holidays and socials. 2025 will mark the 40th anniversary of the Group and we hope to mark this with a number of events during the year

Walks programme - During the last year 117 walks have been offered covering 949 miles with walks almost every Saturday and Sunday and a good selection of mid-week walks. There has been a good variety with 66 easy/leisurely walks, 43 moderate and 8 strenuous. It's a very varied programme and each walk is well attended.

Working parties - We have a well-supported working party group. The first part of the year was very successful with work on installing gates and ditch crossings in both Astwood Bank and Hanbury where brambles were also cleared. 8-10 people have turned up for work each time, the record being 14. There have been 9 sessions to date this year.

Unfortunately, the leader at Worcestershire County Council left in the middle of the year, along with other members of the team. The budget has also been cut. Therefore, there is currently no supervision or materials and only clearance work can be undertaken in the presence of Glyn as he is a trained supervisor, which is necessary to comply with insurance. The working party has recently been involved with clearance work in both Redditch and Feckenham.

This situation has affected volunteer groups throughout the county. It is hoped that things will improve in 2025 when new staff are recruited

Holidays and socials - A number of holidays and social events were enjoyed including, holidays to: Okehampton; The Dartmoor Way; Romania; The West Mendips Way; Hay-on-Wye; and a holiday with Bromsgrove ramblers to Eastbourne.

A number of coach trips/walks were offered including a trip to Cotswolds Water Park and socials including a Christmas meal at The Nailers and a Christmas disco at Rocklands.

We have a full programme of holidays planned for 2025.

WORCESTER –

2024 saw an increase in walker numbers and we covered different parts of the county and beyond! The walking year started with a 6.5-mile circular walk, south of Worcester, around Feckenham and closed with a wintry meander through Pensham and the beautiful village of Wick, near Pershore.

Our slightly hillier walks centred around the Malverns and the Clent Hills, whilst rambles allowed us to enjoy the seasonal beauty of snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils around Birlingham in the Spring, the Chaddesley Woods in May, the Severn in July and Bredon Hill in August.

June saw a Worcester Group walking holiday to Arnside, where a group of truly committed walk leaders organised and delivered a total of 10 walks over a 7- day period to 39 participants.

In July, we organised a successful summer walk around Monkwood, ending with a barbecue at the Fox Inn.

The benign Autumn weather enabled us to complete 3 linear Rail trail walks from Droitwich to Bromsgrove, Hartlebury to Kidderminster and Kidderminster to Hagley, all involving rail journeys one way.

The year ended in a festive mood, with a Christmas Lunch at the Bell pub, and also with a walk to Worcester Cathedral, where, replete with home-made Christmas cake , we admired the inspiring Christmas Tree exhibition.

In total, we completed 46 local walks in 2024, delivered by 17 different walk leaders, who our thanks go out to. Thirty of these were on Thursdays, covering more than 6 miles, and sixteen were on Saturdays, covering 7 to 12 miles.

Another important volunteer activity, co-ordinated by Stephen Williams were the bi-monthly works parties, which carried out footpath maintenance work, such as vegetation clearance, installing pedestrian gates, waymarker posts and ditches, repairing steps and handrails, at a number of locations, including Droitwich, Martin Hussingtree, Pinvin, Upton , Cotheridge and Northwich.

WYRE FOREST –

A group of 14 members enjoyed a 5 day walking holiday to Clitheroe in May. They were blessed with good weather and the walks included pendle Hill and Malham Cove. Thank you to Tracey and Sandra for organising and for the advice received from a member of the Worcester group.

We trialled the MeetUp app in 2024 and most members have found it useful. The advantage of using it is that anyone on the app receives notification as soon as a walk is posted/amended and can book a place. (However, members can attend on the day without booking). This proves useful to walk leaders to see how many Ramblers are expected and it is easy to communicate any changes as they occur.

The meetup app is another tool to encourage potential new members to come and try the

Ramblers. It has resulted in new members to our group. Walks are still posted on the website for Ramblers who are not on MeetUp and walks forwarded to those members, who have expressed a wish to receive information, without internet access. This combination has significantly reduced the amount of emails/SMS sent by the group.

Thank you to all members who led a walk last year. Without them we would not be able to enjoy the walks they offer to lead.

HALESOWEN RAMBLERS CLUB -

Halesowen Ramblers club was formed 40 years ago. We are a very active group, currently with a membership of 90, paying a yearly subscription of £5.

Our walks are varied in location and length. We cover an area anywhere within a range of fifty miles. Most walks are within 25 miles from our base. Highlights have included walks around Shrewsbury, Tewksbury, and Worcester. Social activities were curtailed slightly in 2024, but we did manage to have a Crown green bowling event. Towards the latter end of every year, we have a Christmas meal. The Christmas 2024 event took place at the Hagley golf club with fifty members in attendance

We put on three walks per week. Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesdays. To start every year, we walk on New Year's Day and end the year with our famous Bacon Butty walk, just before Christmas. The latter involves an eight mile walk around the Clent Hills and ending at a café immortalized by, Stuart Maconie, who writes for the magazine Country Walking.

We also have two group members holidays each year. In 2024, the group stayed at Tenby, in the Spring, and in the Autumn the group stayed at Porthcawl. Subgroups, also made short breaks in the Lake district and Majorca. We also organize two coach trips a year for walkers and non-walking members. In 2024, we went to Trentham gardens and Windsor.

John Roberts, Halesowen Ramblers committee member

ACROSS WALES WALK ASSOCIATION –

After the celebrations associated with our sixtieth anniversary event last year, it was back to the usual routine of a 'normal' 'cross Wales' That said there's little really 'normal' about this event which is so loved by the faithful who come back year on year to pit themselves against the terrain of this fine principality. This year we were displaced from our regular 'first Saturday in September' slot by one week as a result of a motor rally taking place in Hafren Forest. Indeed, these hitherto unfrequented remote areas of mid-Wales appear to be coming under increasing pressure from such competing events. Either way, we were ultimately gratified by the move as, by all accounts, the weather on our usual weekend was unremittingly foul!

So, after a night in Clun, entrants gathered at Anchor Bridge for the 0500 start; to be met by an utterly spectacular moonless yet starlit sky. Thereafter, by the time CP1 was reached, the skies had begun to cloud over, and the morning stillness was progressively replaced by a strong headwind predominantly from the west. Conditions underfoot were a little wet from heavy rains of the previous week however, on balance, the day was generally favourable and all entrants making it to the summit of Plynlimon got spectacular views of the full width of Cardigan Bay, southern Snowdonia, the Radnor Forest and the remaining four summits of this giant of Mid-Wales.

Of the 70 entrants starting from Anchor, just two entrants retired on the route, this being in complete contrast to the previous year's 24% retirement rate when many entrants suffered in relatively warm conditions.

Fastest home was runner Piers Bazely White who completed the route in a very creditable 10 hours 3 minutes with Sam George arriving 11 minutes later. At the other end of the field, a disproportionate 22 entrants finished within the final hour of the event with last man home arriving at 2246.

Every year since the late, great Nev Tandy's first completion in 1984, certain entrants have completed double crossings, setting out from the coast on the preceding Friday. This year six such entrants attempted this feat with Glen Meek, Brian Layton, Vikki Kemp, Tom Bennett and Stuart Livingstone completing this feat of endurance.

After a night in Aberystwyth University Halls of Residence, we hosted the usual presentation ceremony in the University at which the preceding day's achievements were celebrated with certificates and the usual tales of peoples' varied experiences shared.

Thanks go to the fabulous band of friends, supporters, walkers-turned-marshals and RAYNET who once again made the event possible. Thanks also go to all the entrants who took part.

The sixty-second Across Wales Walk will take place on 6th September 2025. See www.acrosswaleswalk.co.uk and SIEntries for details in early May.

Our numbers have struggled to recover since Covid for reasons unknown: our offering remains unchanged and a permanent fixture in the diaries of our loyal followers. So, if you are yet to sample this classic of the challenge walking calendar, then come and try this 'weekend with a difference!'

Stuart Lamb, Chairman, Across Wales Walk Association

END OF ANNUAL REPORT

(Please note that the full AGM documentation pack will be uploaded to the Area website shortly after the 8th February 2025)