



The Ramblers' Association

Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area

Note that, for data protection reasons, personal information has been removed from this version of the report. Use the website email facility to send a message to the Area Secretary, who can forward it to the appropriate individual.

Annual Report

1st October 2020 - 30th September 2021

Annual General Meeting: 2.00 pm on 5th February 2022. Please participate by Zoom video-conference if possible or alternatively attend in person in the Main Hall, Stoke Mandeville Community Centre, Eskdale Road, Stoke Mandeville, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP22 5UJ

Join us for our Area AGM to find out what Ramblers is doing for *all* walkers!

To minimise the risks associated with covid-19 transmission in an indoor environment those who are able to participate via Zoom are urged to do so. If you will be attending by Zoom you will need to pre-register. If you plan to attend in person it would also be useful to hear from you in advance, so that we can space chairs appropriately and advise you of any last minute changes of plan; in either case please contact the Acting Area Secretary by email at johnandjean@thamesinternet.com. You must not attend in person if you have covid-19 symptoms. If you choose to attend you must wear a face covering in the hall and, particularly if not fully vaccinated, you might wish to help protect others by obtaining a negative lateral flow test.

This is your opportunity to exercise your democratic rights and make your views known on matters of concern to you. After the formal business of the meeting, as per the agenda on page 2, we hope to hear from a Ramblers Trustee, though this had not been confirmed at the time of writing.

We have a number of vacancies for Area Officers, including for the Area Secretary. As Area Secretary you would work with the Area Chair to arrange meetings of the Area committee and the AGM; this includes preparing agendas, booking rooms and sending out invitations. Other duties include taking and circulating accurate minutes of meetings and ensuring Area records are kept up to date and safe. Keeping in touch with announcements from the Ramblers' office and sharing news (including of key organisational policies) with the Area committee and groups is an important part of the job, with the opportunity to learn more about new aspects of the Ramblers' work. Any offers of help, or enquiries about what is involved, are welcome; please contact the Acting Secretary at johnandjean@thamesinternet.com.

At the Area AGM we elect our two members of Ramblers General Council, who are entitled to speak and vote at the annual General Council meeting, provisionally to be held at the NEC, Birmingham on 9th April 2022; expenses are paid by Central Office. Areas are encouraged to seek candidates from all parts of the membership, in line with our values of being inclusive to all and welcoming people from diverse backgrounds. If you wish to put your name forward or to find out more about what is involved, please contact the Acting Area Secretary.

**Agenda for the Annual General Meeting
at 2.00 pm on Saturday 5th February 2022**

1. Apologies for absence
 2. Minutes of the AGM held on 6th February 2021 (incorporated in the Annual Report, pages 3-5)
 3. Matters arising from the minutes
 4. To receive the Annual Report and Accounts:

(a) Chairman's Report (b) Acting Secretary's Report (c) Treasurer's Report and Accounts (d) Footpath Secretary's Report (e) Membership Secretary's Report (f) North Bucks rRIPPLE Report (g) Access Officer (h) Press Officer's Report	- p6 - p6 - p6-8 - p9 - p10 - p10-11 - p11 - p11	(i) News Editor (j) Publicity and Area Web Site (l) Member and ALO Reps (m) Countryside Secretary (n) Local Group Reports	- p11 - p11 - p11 - p11 - p12-15
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 5. To consider any motions of which due notice has been received (in writing, by the Acting Area Secretary, not less than 7 days before the meeting, i.e. by Saturday 29th January 2022)
 6. Election of Officers:

(a) *Chairman (b) *Vice-Chairman (<i>vacant</i>) (c) *Secretary (<i>vacant</i>) (d) *Treasurer (e) *Footpath Secretary (f) Membership Secretary (g) North Bucks rRIPPLE Coordinator	(h) Press Officer (i) Access Officer (<i>vacant</i>) (j) News Editor (<i>vacant</i>) (k) Countryside Secretary (<i>vacant</i>) (l) Publicity Officer (<i>vacant</i>) (m) Walks Editor (<i>vacant</i>)
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- Nominations are invited for all posts
Only those marked * are required by the constitution to be elected at the AGM
7. Election of Executive Committee Members not appointed by Local Groups:
 - (a) Not more than 5 representatives of Individual Members
 - (b) Not more than 5 representatives of Local Organisations affiliated to Ramblers
 (In recent years none of the places in the latter category have been filled)
 8. Appointment of Independent Examiner
 9. Appointment of two Council Members to serve from the 2022 General Council AGM
 10. Any other business
 11. Speaker
 12. Questions and discussion

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 2.00 pm on Saturday, 6th February 2021
by zoom videoconference**

[Note that, for data protection reasons, personal names have been omitted from this version of the minutes, whilst they are retained in the file copy. The relevant names can be revealed at the meeting on request.]

25 members of the Area and one guest were present.

The Chairman introduced the Annual General Meeting and welcomed those attending.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from three members.

2. **Minutes** of the AGM held on Saturday 1st February 2020 were agreed as a correct record. The Acting Secretary apologised for the incorrect date on the agenda in the annual report, which has been corrected in the file copy.

3. **Matters arising** from the minutes. There were no matters arising not considered elsewhere on the agenda.

4. Annual Report and Accounts

The Chairman displayed the Annual Report which contained reports from Area Officers. Additional comments made during the meeting included the following:

(a) Chairman's Report:

The Chairman commented that a normal first half year was followed by the pandemic, which had encouraged people to discover their local paths though this, combined with wet weather, has led to extremely muddy conditions.

(b) Acting Secretary's Report:

Nothing to add to written report.

(c) Treasurer's Report and Accounts:

The Treasurer explained the circumstances of the accidental deposit from Oxfordshire County Council. He thanked the Independent Examiner for his examination of the accounts, conducted electronically this year. The meeting was asked to approve the accounts (duly proposed and seconded). Carried nem con.

(d) Footpath Secretary's Report:

The Footpath Secretary was thanked for her 35 years as Area Footpath Secretary. The proposed liaison with the Chiltern Society remained under discussion. She stressed the need for lobbying for local authorities to maintain their rights of way budgets and to publicise our campaigning.

(e) North Bucks ramblers Repairing & Improving Public Paths for Leisure & Exercise (NB rRIPPLE) Report:

Nothing to add to written report.

(f) Membership Secretary's Report:

Nothing to add to written report.

(g) Access Officer's Report:

No report had been received.

(h) Press Officer's Report:

Nothing to add to written report.

(i) News Editor:

Nothing to add to written report..

(j) Publicity Officer:

Nothing to add to written report.

(k) Area Web Site:

Nothing to add to written report.

(l) Walk Descriptions:

Nothing to add to written report.

(m) Individual Member Representative and Affiliated Local Organisation reports

Nothing to add to written report.

(n) Planning and countryside

Nothing to add to written report.

(o) Local Group Reports.

Chilterns Weekend Walkers the new Chair reported that plans were under way to resume walks when permitted. The transfer of Hike MK to a flexigroup remained under discussion, though it was noted that group membership had grown. Milton Keynes Group was ready to restart walks when permitted.

5. **Motions:** to consider any motions of which due notice has been received (in writing, by the Area Secretary, not less than 7 days before the meeting, i.e. by 30th January 2021):

None had been received.

6. Election of Officers

	<i>Elected</i>	<i>Proposed by</i>	<i>Seconded by</i>
Chairman		All duly proposed	All duly seconded
Vice-Chairman	<i>vacant</i>		
Secretary	<i>vacant</i>		
Treasurer			
Footpath Secretary			
Membership Secretary			
Press Officer			
Area Access Officer			
Walks Editor	<i>vacant</i>		
NB rRIPPLE Coordinator			
Area News Editor	<i>vacant</i>		
Countryside Secretary	<i>vacant</i>		
Publicity Officer	<i>vacant</i>		

The Chairman stated that he had approached various members to take on the vacant roles; some had suggested they might do so at a later date. In the absence of nominations for the post of Secretary, the Treasurer agreed to continue as Acting Secretary until a replacement could be found. One person might be willing to take the role of Vice Chairman if another volunteer could not be found.

7. Election of Executive Committee Members not appointed by Local Groups

(a) Representatives of Individual Members

One member (duly proposed and seconded) was elected.

(b) There were no nominations for representatives of Affiliated Local Organisations.

8. Appointment of Independent Examiner

The incumbent, having indicated that he was willing to continue in post, was appointed (duly proposed and seconded).

9. Appointment of two Council Members to serve from the 2020 General Council AGM

Proposed and seconded and agreed by those present that two named individuals be appointed. Both accepted nomination with reluctance in the absence of other volunteers, and it was agreed to seek replacements.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The formal business of the meeting concluded at 2.45pm.

11. Speaker

Following a video presentation by the Chair of the Board of Trustees and Interim Chief Executive, the speaker, a Ramblers' trustee and treasurer introduced himself and said that a move to Guildford from the Lake District had given him an enhanced perception of the importance of Ramblers' footpath work. He drew attention to the success of Don't Lose Your Way in identifying candidate paths for claiming. He discussed ongoing campaigns and plans. The pandemic had stressed the importance of walking in towns as well as in the countryside; permission for group walks had illustrated that Ramblers is viewed as a responsible organisation. We need to get more people to join and become involved, to increase our "clout" with government.

12. Questions and discussion

Topics raised included: how to retain new members who have been unable to access group walks; the desirability of family membership; possible move of the office outside London; two tier membership for those who do or don't want to walk with groups; risk assessment potentially discouraging leaders; other countries have larger membership of equivalent organisations.

The speaker thanked the Area for inviting him to attend and those participating in discussion for their ideas. The Chairman thanked the speaker, and all our volunteers. He was thanked for his organisation of the meeting, and closed it at 3.45pm.

Area Annual Report 1 October 2020 - 30 September 2021

Chairman's Report

In a similar vein to the Ramblers 2019-2020 year, 2020-2021 has been disrupted by the impact of covid-19 and enforced restrictions as the pandemic continues. The Area AGM was held online for the first time in February 2021. The committee continued to meet online until the end of the Ramblers' year in September.

The continuing and increasing impact of the preparation work for HS2 construction has led to more path closures and diversions throughout the year. While local communities are given some additional information directly, it remains difficult to understand at a glance which paths are currently open or closed and whether or not there is a diversion in place. HS2 has launched a new website which summarises the impact of work in the immediate future, but this is often light on detail required for walkers to plan a route.

The spring of 2021 allowed a resumption of Ramblers activities. The lockdowns appear to have rejuvenated an interest in walking and the outdoors for many people and we have welcomed many new and returning members, with most groups and the area overall experiencing a growth in membership over the previous 12 months, almost recovering to pre-pandemic numbers. The activities of North Bucks rRIPPLE go from strength to strength, with their 250th gate installed during the year!

The past year has seen the launch of a Ramblers central initiative to bring Areas together to share knowledge and experiences through geographical regional clusters. These have proven a useful and more frequent link to other Areas to share ideas and explore new ways of working. On a personal note, this will be my 10th year as Area Chair with another member serving as Area Treasurer and/or Secretary over the same time period. I look forward to finding new volunteers to join us during the year ahead.

Acting Secretary's Report

Having served as Acting Area Secretary in addition to Area Treasurer for almost nine years since we failed to fill the post of Secretary at the 2013 AGM, I remain keen to find somebody willing to take over from me; we appealed for volunteers in the December issue of *South East Walker*.

I am aware that many of our groups have been finding it difficult to recruit new leaders and fill their walks programmes. This may, in part, be due to a reluctance to make long term commitments while the pandemic continues, but I share the concerns of some that perceptions of increased bureaucracy, such as the requirement to make and retain written "risk assessments" may also be having an influence.

Treasurer's Report

The accounts are prepared on a receipts and payments basis, in line with Central Office recommendations, showing actual receipts and actual payments during the accounting year, October 2020 to September 2021. Thus gift aid on this year's eligible donations, £437.54, received in October 2021, will be included in next year's accounts, whilst the gift aid of £406.27, shown in this year's accounts, was for donations made in the previous year. The payment of £75 is for room hire for the 2022 AGM.

Up to date accounts are circulated to committee members prior to each meeting of the Area Executive Committee for scrutiny and subsequent approval at the meeting. Two signatories are required to make any withdrawals by cheque or internet banking from the Area's bank account. Current cheque signatories are

the Chairman, (former) Vice-Chairman and Treasurer while, in addition to those, the Membership Secretary is authorised for internet banking.

Ramblers' accounts are required to show expenditure under headings relating to our charitable objects. The fact that we had no expenditure under two such headings ("Countryside" and "Access") should not be taken as meaning we were inactive; rather this, and the low level of governance expenditure, reflect the negligible cost of email communication and the generosity of officers and other volunteers in not claiming expenses to which they may be entitled.

Our expenditure under the "Rights of Way" heading has increased, with practical work being undertaken by the NB rRIPPLE team resuming after covid-19 lockdown; income under the "Donate-a-Gate" scheme has also decreased slightly. Donations are treated as restricted funds, to be used only for replacement of stiles by gates. Our other main expenditure is on funding to groups and for our share of the costs of *South East Walker*.

Our budget request for funding this year was for £5000 but, as anticipated expenditure by the Area and its groups was reduced because of the pandemic, we were able to tell Central Office that we did not require the final quarter's funding payment. Most groups only took half of the funding they initially requested, for which we are very grateful. Even so, our main fund reserves at 30th September 2020 stood at 114% of annual expenditure excluding payments to groups, above the recommended range of 40-100%. Reserves percentages this year, at both Area and group level, are likely to be misleading because of the effects of the pandemic on expenditure.

I would like to thank all the group treasurers for notifying me of funding requirements (and, in most cases, agreeing to reductions) and for completing their end of year accounts and annual returns. Also, I thank the Area independent examiner for scrutinising and checking the Area accounts, and group independent examiners for similar work at group level.

The following table gives a brief summary of group main fund income and expenditure. Self funded activities such as socials and coach trips are not included. Columns are (A) main fund balance at start of year + (B) funding via Area + (C) other main fund income – (D) walks related expenditure including programmes – (E) other main fund expenditure = (F) main fund balance at end of year. (G) is any funds designated for particular use in future years and (H) is reserves (F-G as a percentage of D+E).

	A	+	B	+	C	-	D	-	E	=	F	G	H
Amersham	1635		200		20		0		32		1823	699	3512
Aylesbury	703		169		10		95		14		773	200	526
Chiltern YW	695		219		143		0		0		1057	477	∞
Chilterns WW	440		0		0		53		53		334	0	315
Hike MK	63		0		0		0		0		63	0	∞
Hillingdon	765		200		0		0		325		640	450	58
Milton Keynes	245		162		0		0		35		372	0	1063
NW London	515		240		0		86		30		639	0	551
Wycombe	188		220		0		207		84		117	0	40

Note: The accounts, as approved by the Independent Examiner, are reproduced on the following page.

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th September 2021

	Year ended	30/9/21	30/9/20
INCOME:			
Funding from Central Office		3750.00	3900.00
Refund of deposit for AGM hall booking		0.00	150.00
Donations to restricted (Donate a Gate) fund		5616.22	5830.00
Gift Aid on donations		<u>411.27</u>	<u>576.78</u>
Total income		9777.49	10456.78
EXPENDITURE:			
Funding to Groups		1411.50	2815.50
Promoting Walking (South East Walker)		1056.02	1253.96
Rights of Way: main fund		760.26	68.70
restricted fund (gate installation)		7288.76	4015.47
Governance: Area committee meetings		0.00	105.00
Area AGMs		75.00	0.00
Annual Report		0.00	8.00
Bank charges		<u>0.60</u>	<u>3.00</u>
Total expenditure		10592.14	8269.63
SURPLUS / DEFICIT for year:			
main fund		446.62	-204.16
restricted (Donate a Gate) fund		<u>-1261.27</u>	<u>2391.31</u>
Total		-814.65	2187.15
Funds brought forward from previous year		4882.39	2695.24
Funds carried forward to next year		4067.74	4882.39

BALANCE SHEET

Assets:			
Main fund balance in bank at 30 th September		2155.28	1708.66
Restricted fund balance in bank at 30 th September		<u>1912.46</u>	<u>3173.73</u>
Total assets		4067.74	4882.39
Liabilities:			
		<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
Total liabilities		0.00	0.00
NET ASSETS		<u>£ 4067.74</u>	<u>£ 4882.39</u>

NOTE: To avoid giving a distorted view of the previous year's figures by comparison with those for the current year the sum of £55000 accidentally transferred to our bank account by Oxfordshire County Council and later repaid to them has been omitted from last year's income and expenditure above.

Treasurer

28th October 2021

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S STATEMENT:

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and Group independent examination guidelines, I consider the Buckinghamshire, Milton Keynes and West Middlesex Area accounts to give a fair representation of the Area's financial activities for the year to 30th September 2021.

Independent Examiner

28th October 2021

Note: signed copy available for inspection on request.

Footpath Secretary's Report

Local paths continue to be extremely popular following the pandemic lockdowns, and our work in checking them and reporting problems remains as important as ever.

We ask our path checkers to walk all the paths in their parishes at least once a year and to report problems. They will also be consulted about any proposals for path changes. New volunteers are always welcome and are invited to discuss what is involved with me, or with their group footpath secretary.

In (the former) Aylesbury Vale District we checked 39 out of 111 parishes. Out of 2,185 paths, 732 (33.5 per cent) were checked and our volunteers walked 592 kms and reported 182 problems. This took at least 607 volunteer hours, where time estimates were given. The most common problems were poor stiles and gates, missing waymarks and signposts, and ploughing and cropping. We now have 16 checkers, and are eager to find more.

In (the former) Chiltern District 14 out of 18 parishes were checked, some partially. Over 200 problems were identified and reported to the highway authority. The main problems were overgrowth, waymarks and signposts, stiles and gates, and a few fallen trees. There was a successful path-checking day in August covering about 50 per cent of Little Missenden's paths, which were suffering badly from overgrowth. A workshop is planned for next spring to share best practice, as there is considerable variation with how checking is conducted and reported. There were quite a few proposed path-changes and path-checkers provided information to the Area footpath secretary.

In (the former) South Bucks District part or all of six parishes were checked and 23 problems were reported, the most common being broken or missing signposts, rubbish-dumping and poor surfaces. We urgently need a new coordinator here following the incumbent's retirement.

In (the former) Wycombe District we received returns for 15 out of 28 parishes; 82 per cent of the paths in those parishes were checked and 56 problems were reported. Volunteers spent about 244 hours checking paths and reporting problems. After the year's end, our coordinator stood down at the group AGM and a replacement has been found. The retiring coordinator has served in the role for 32 years and we are indebted to him.

In Milton Keynes, 17 of the 48 parishes were checked in whole or part, and 134 problems were reported. Volunteers spent nearly 100 hours checking and reporting. The most common problems were missing signposts, poor gates and stiles, overgrowth, and cropping.

HS2 continues to dominate the work of both the Hillingdon and District Group and the Aylesbury and District Group. In Hillingdon, the group has been working with Hillingdon Council to ensure that path diversions brought about by HS2 are properly defined and waymarked, but it has been, and remains, an uphill task.

There were 31 path-change proposals during the year and we objected to nine of them, most of which were proposed on spurious grounds of 'privacy and security'. The proposal to divert Turville footpath 24A onto a zigzag route was withdrawn in the face of many objections; the rest have yet to be determined.

Our former Access Officer, who has represented walkers on the Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum since its inception, stepped down and was replaced, in November 2021, by our Aylesbury and District path coordinator.

I should like to thank, the coordinators for all their help in analysing path check, corresponding with path checkers, checking their own parishes, and generally giving me welcome support and assistance. We are indebted to all our path checkers for their vigilance on paths in their patch and for their advice on path changes.

Membership Secretary's Report

The table below shows the total membership of the Ramblers, our Area and its constituents at 30 September 2021 and at 30 September 2020 for comparison. Area Membership relates to those members who have joined the Area in recent years and opted not to be allocated to a group. Non Group Members are those members who joined prior to the 1990s when members were not allocated to a group by default and who did not opt to join a group.

	2021	2020	Difference	% Difference	Gains	Losses
<u>Ramblers</u>	101,130	98,717	2,413	2%		
<u>Area</u>	2,265	2,239	26	1%		
<u>Groups</u>						
Amersham & District	366	374	-8	-2%	39	47
Aylesbury & District	247	235	12	5%	29	17
Hillingdon	327	318	9	3%	41	32
Milton Keynes & District	249	231	18	8%	39	21
North West London	206	199	7	4%	42	35
Wycombe District	276	279	-3	-1%	27	30
Chilterns Weekend Walkers	288	312	-24	-8%	23	47
Hike MK	53	50	3	6%	26	23
Chiltern Young Walkers	135	115	20	17%	31	11
	2,147	2,113	34	2%	297	263
<u>Individuals</u>						
Area Membership	44	50	-6	-12%		
Awaiting Allocation	2	1	1	100%		
Non Group Members	71	75	-4	-5%		
	117	126	-9	-7%		
<u>Affiliated Clubs</u>	5	5	0	0%		

It is good to see the Ramblers and Area membership recover after last year. Some groups did better than others.

Footpath improvement by North Bucks rRIPPLE (ramblers Repairing & Improving Public Paths for Leisure & Exercise)

When free from covid lockdown restrictions we've been out as frequently as possible, and at times weekly, although we've tended to limit ourselves to a single gate installation per outing with double gate installations a rarity. Between October 2020 and September 2021 we've installed gates 223 through 256 i.e. 33 gates. Our 250th gate was a Donate a Gate (DaG) sponsored by Haddenham, Dinton & Stone Simply Walk. The route from Dinton Castle on the A418 down to Eythrope via Starveall Farm is now fully gated. The cost of gates has risen and our requested donations are now £350 for a Marlow pedestrian gate installation and £500 for a Woodstock kissing gate.

People and some parish councils remain as keen as ever to improve their local networks and get rid of some of the numerous difficult stiles that continue to plague the county, restricting access to the countryside for the less able. We continue to encourage an individual in specific parishes to become our local champion. Their remit is to identify potential stiles that could be converted to gates and to identify

landowners and gain their agreement. In Chearsley recently we rebuilt three timber kissing gate corrals which were too tight to negotiate and in Westlington we added a third step and a hand post to a notoriously awkward stile that the farmer refuses to let us convert to a gate.

Within the Ramblers we remain one of very few totally self-sufficient footpath maintenance groups. We have our own Land Rover Discovery 1 4x4 vehicle, trailer, power tools and two full sets of hand tools. For £200/annum we have a storage site at Chinnor RFC in Thame, for gates, posts and tamping-in stones.

Our quarterly Activity Reports, detailing each and every stile to gate conversion, as well as other improvement work carried out, can be found on our web page:

www.bucks-wmiddx-ramblers.org.uk/donate-a-gate.

North Bucks rRIPPLE Co-ordinator

Access Officer

We thank the previous the previous officer who, after serving in this capacity since 2002, resigned during the course of the year. He also served as a member of (and as Chair for some years) of the Buckinghamshire Local Access Forum, to which he was elected to serve the interests of walkers generally rather than as a representative of Ramblers. Whilst another of our members now serves on the LAF a replacement Access Officer would be welcome.

Press Officer's Report

With the Chiltern Society we issued a press release celebrating the proposed creation of a public footpath, at our instigation, through the Berkeley Homes development site at Abbey Barn Park, High Wycombe. This was in exchange for our agreeing not to object to the diversion of High Wycombe footpath 59 which crosses the site.

Please remember that I am always ready to publicise Ramblers' issues throughout our territory.

News Editor

This post was not filled at the 2021 AGM. The Acting Secretary has endeavoured to ensure that sufficient material has been forthcoming for our Area's page in *South East Walker*.

Publicity and Area Web Site

The post of Publicity Officer was not filled at the 2021 AGM. Any publicity effort in our Area is, therefore, coming from our groups. Lawrence Jones, who has continued as Area Webmaster in the absence of other volunteers, remains willing to advise groups on publicity matters.

Representatives of Individual Members and of Affiliated Local Organisations

The inclusion of such representatives on the Area Executive Committee is specified not just in our own constitution but also in the Model Area Constitution approved as part of Ramblers' constitutional documents. In recent years none of our local organisations have appointed representatives. There is no formal definition of the role of "representative of individual members" and we have used it as a means of adding useful additional individuals to the Area Executive Committee, either by election or by co-option.

Countryside Secretary

This post was not filled at the 2021 AGM. The Footpath Secretary has made representations, where appropriate, on planning applications directly affecting rights of way. Broader issues are handled on an ad-hoc basis, or by our groups.

Reports from Groups

Amersham and District Group

Our Group has had a very good year, despite the curve balls thrown at us by covid regulations. We held a Christmas lunch, albeit outside in the wind and rain, and our Group holiday to the Isle of Wight went ahead as planned. We appointed a new Group Programme Coordinator, whose technical knowledge and patient demeanour has enabled us to convert to a fully online walking Programme and discontinue the paper version we have historically produced. Most members are able to upload their own walk onto GWEM, but help and support is available if needed. Our dedicated walk leaders and Programme coordinators have enabled us to offer some 50 walks, either leisurely or moderate, over each 3 month period. We have increased the number of path checkers and held a successful path-checking day. The only hindrance has been the requirement of a Risk Assessment, which has deterred about 20% of our leaders from returning to leading walks. Our Group has emerged from lockdown in pretty good shape and we look forward to 2022, our 50th year, with confidence and enthusiasm.

Chairman

Aylesbury and District Group

The covid-19 situation continued to have an impact on group activities as we entered the new financial year in October 2020. The start of the new financial year saw the continuation of our Small Group Walks programme with members able to book a place online using a spreadsheet-based system. This was paused again on November 5th with the second national lockdown and the cancellation of all walks until 2nd December.

Our AGM was held on Zoom on 4th December with a healthy number of members joining us.

After a few weeks of being allowed to walk together in small groups during December, activities were once again suspended until 29th March. Over the next few months of Spring into Summer, we were able to increase group sizes until we were finally able to launch a full walk programme in August 2021.

We have struggled to attract as many walk leaders as in the past in part due to some of the new requirements for risk assessments etc but have had number of new members who have started leading for us which is great.

We held a Summer BBQ which had to be postponed twice but which was thoroughly enjoyed by those who were able to make it. There were also two group holidays – a small group walked the West Highland Way at the end of June and a large group walked in the South Downs in September. Both holidays were blessed with fantastic weather conditions.

Chair

Chiltern Young Walkers

This year has been yet another unusual year with the ongoing pandemic. However the group has continued to put on walks and other activities whenever the restrictions have allowed. In total we ran 54 walks despite a break in the walks programme from January to April due to covid restrictions. We also managed to run a weekend away this year in the Cotswolds.

The group benefited from walking being a relatively safe activity being outdoors and so, in the interest of people's physical and mental wellbeing, we hosted walks with social distancing in place and limited numbers. The lockdowns appear to have rejuvenated an interest in walking and the outdoors for many people and we have welcomed many new members, along with returning members, which has swelled the group to our current level.

We are looking forward to putting on a range of walks and socials in the next year and hope to maintain the momentum in growing the group. The group has only had such a successful year due to the work of our volunteers and particularly our walk leaders so I would like to say a big thankyou to everyone who has contributed to our success this year.

Chair

Chilterns Weekend Walkers

Despite covid preventing walks from running up until April 2021, CWW enjoyed a successful and smooth year and “return to normality”. Numbers on pre-book walks were a little low initially, with many spaces on them still available, but this was short-lived and Summer weekends typically offered a walk on Saturday and two walks (a longer and a shorter one) on Sunday. There was one week with eight walks held over six consecutive days in late May and 67 people out walking! The group organised two trips away and a 15th Anniversary Party in September, plus a Navigation Training Day.

Regarding membership, CWW currently has 301 full members with an average age of 58. Membership numbers have fallen from the previous year by 8%, which given the covid situation, is very encouraging. Finally, we have had record numbers of volunteers coming forward at our recent AGM to join the Committee for the next year. This in itself, is a testament to the level of health, morale and faith in the future of CWW.

Chair

Hike MK

The group has reconstituted itself as a flexigroup, and continues to run a programme of walks.

Hillingdon and District Group

Last year was the year when we in Hillingdon got back on track with our walking after the hiatus caused by covid. This success was largely down to our walks organisers and leaders who ensured that we complied with both Government and Ramblers requirements. We also held our first walking holiday since pre-covid days with a very successful week spent in the hills surrounding Llangollen in North Wales.

The effect of HS2 on our walking in the Ickenham, Ruislip and Harefield areas is now noticeable. We are keen to ensure that the inevitable footpath closures and necessary diversions are always clearly marked so that walkers are not too inconvenienced.

During our AGM last year, we received a suggestion from one of our members that perhaps we ought to change the name of our group in order to show that we don't simply walk in and around Hillingdon. Members were asked for suggested names, which were duly considered. The final consensus was to leave the name as Hillingdon and District Ramblers as the web-site shows the breadth of areas in which we walk.

It is pleasing to see that our membership numbers have remained fairly stable.

We are hoping that in 2022 we will be able to re-commence our Golden Jubilee celebrations, held over from last year.

We are always on the lookout for members to join our Committee. Current Committee members have to take on multiple roles, and we would like new members, in order not just to lessen the load on the existing Committee members but also for the new members to bring with them fresh ideas to help Hillingdon Ramblers to continue to flourish.

Acting Chairman

Milton Keynes and District Group

This year we were able to pick up our activities as guidance allowed. This was limited to walks and an in-person AGM. We have lost a significant number of prolific walk leaders, some through personal life changes and other through the additional burdens placed on them when leading a walk. Our most prolific leader left the Ramblers.

The Milton Keynes Parks Trust walking festival was held, and we were able to support it by putting on some walks.

We once again have grown our membership, despite the limitations. We did note that membership fees did not increase at this time.

Without a footpath secretary our path checking results were incomplete but those available submitted on time.

At the AGM our secretary and Area representative stepped down. We thank both for their hard work. Another member has volunteered to become secretary. We remain without a Footpath Secretary or Area representative.

In 2022 we are planning a break in the Cotswolds, pandemic permitting.

Chairman

North West London Group

Following an unsuccessful appeal in the September issue of *South East Walker* for volunteers to help run the group and lead walks the AGM in October passed a motion to close the group. Members are being invited to transfer to other groups or to remain as non-group members of the Area.

Wycombe District Group

Another Ramblers year has passed and despite a difficult part of the year we are pleased to have a nearly full programme and ideas for social events in the near future.

The committee has continued to meet on a four monthly basis , initially via zoom, then in one member's garden and finally inside. Our walks organiser was co-opted onto the committee and has been a keen and energetic member. We have also been fortunate that another member, although not a committee member, has updated and brought the website alive so for the first time in a few years it is fully functioning and has been an essential part of our walks programme booking process.

Official Ramblers' walks commenced again in April and, although the numbers partaking were initially low, steadily these have increased and now on Wednesday, which is the most popular day, there is a healthy turnout. Most walk leaders are not requiring walkers to book and the current programme October to January has a good content of walks on Wednesdays but some gaps at weekends, principally in December.

Thanks go out to all the walk leaders who continue to volunteer and we hope that new leaders will come forward and possibly leaders who have not led walks for some time will assist in the near future.

On the social side a weekend away has been planned to Selworthy in April next year and the committee are looking at the possibility of future weekends away, or if there is the demand, a weeks walking holiday abroad. There is still the possibility of a festive meal, probably in January if there is enough interest from members.

Retiring Secretary

Elected Members of the Area Executive Committee October 2019 - September 2020

Chairman	
Vice-Chairman	<i>vacant</i>
Secretary	<i>vacant: the treasurer has continued as Acting Secretary</i>
Treasurer	
Footpath Secretary	
Membership Secretary	
North Bucks rRIPPLE	
Countryside Secretary	<i>vacant</i>
News Editor	<i>vacant</i>
Publicity Officer	<i>vacant</i>
Walks Editor	<i>vacant</i>
Press Officer	
Access Officer	<i>(resigned August 2021)</i>
Representatives of Individual Members	
Representatives of Affiliated Local Organisations	
<i>vacant</i>	
Group Representatives	
Each of our groups is entitled to appoint two members of the Area Executive Committee, and substitutes are welcome to attend meetings of the committee.	

Area website: www.bucks-wmiddx-ramblers.org.uk

Groups

Walks and other activities within our Area are organised by our seven groups and one flexigroup:

Amersham and District Group	https://www.amershamramblers.org.uk/
Aylesbury and District Group	http://www.aylesbury-ramblers.org.uk/
Chiltern Young Walkers	https://www.chilterns2030s.org.uk/
Chilterns Weekend Walkers	https://www.chilternsw.co.uk/
Hillingdon and District Group	https://www.ramblers.org.uk/hillingdon
Milton Keynes and District Group	http://www.mkramblers.org.uk/
Wycombe District Group	https://www.wycomberamblers.org.uk/
Hike MK (flexigroup)	https://www.hikemk.org.uk/