

Annual Report – 2022

Following the 47th AGM of the Dorset Area on November 27th November 2021, the Area went into abeyance, as the post of Secretary had not been filled. This has meant that some area activities have ‘paused’ temporarily. Abeyance is neither a formal nor constitutional ‘state’: the Area Officers who were appointed at the 2021 Area AGM all agreed to continue in their roles and have co-ordinated activities across the area, including Finance, the website, Footnotes, etc., and the Area Footpath Committee has continued as before. Those officers work closely with the Regional Engagement Officer for the South West, and take part at a national level (e.g. Regional Cluster Meetings) and Dorset Area had delegates at General Council. Members are kept updated via Dorset Area Footnotes. We thank Nicky Wilson of the Ramblers for her ongoing support and encouragement.

+++++

General Council 2022

The annual general meeting of the General Council of the Ramblers took place on Saturday, 9 April, 2022 at the National Exhibition Centre in Marston Green, Birmingham. The meeting started at noon and finished at 1700 hours, and because of the time, was restricted to formal business and motions. Margaret Kettlewell and Mike Heckford attended from Dorset with other delegates, from Areas and affiliated organisations, plus Central Office staff.

Summing up the day, the delegates stated that ‘this General council was certainly different, and it will be good to return to the two-day pre-pandemic format as quickly as possible. It was frustrating for us and certainly for the representatives of Areas, who had submitted motions that were not debated and begs the question as to whether the present standing orders concerning time allocated to movers, seconders, and questions should be reduced. Overall, a long but interesting day’.

Each Ramblers Area, and each national organisation affiliated to the Ramblers, is entitled to appoint members of General Council. Whilst Groups and individual members are not directly represented, they can influence the policy of the Ramblers via their Area's Council members. Trustees, the Ramblers president, vice presidents and members of the Motions Review Committee are also members of General Council.

+++++

Annual Area Picnic

The Area Picnic 2022 was due to take place on Sunday July 17th 2022 at Chardown Hill, West Dorset. However due to the very hot weather, the decision was taken to postpone the event, until Sunday October 2nd. Unfortunately, high winds and rain were forecast, therefore regrettably it had to be cancelled. Thanks go to all of the walk leaders who recced and re-recced their walks. The event is rescheduled for 2023

+++++

TREASURER’S REPORT

The Ramblers’ financial year finishes on 30 September and the 2021/22 annual accounts for the Dorset Area have been audited and submitted to the Ramblers Central Office.

After all payments had been made, the Dorset Area accounts remain robust although a lower budget, which also includes all Group budgets and basic payments, has been agreed with Central Office for 2022/23. The accounts for 2021/22 show a £816 surplus.

For the third year running, expenditure during this financial year has largely been affected by the restrictions on Area Officer activity, partly owing to the coronavirus pandemic, but mainly due the Area failing in attempts to find an Area Secretary and sadly going into abeyance, with meetings apart from one Area Footpath Committee meeting, being held on Zoom. It is hoped after this year's AGM, that someone will come forward to fill the Area Secretary vacancy and we may be able to return to normal.

As I have mentioned in previous reports, I continue to act as the treasurer for the Wessex Wanderers, an organisation that organises walks using train services on the Bristol to Weymouth railway line. The Wessex Wanderers became a flexi-group administered by the Dorset Area during the past year.

In conclusion, may I thank all the Group Treasurers for their hard work in supporting me during the past year and also may I thank Martin Ford-Horne for auditing the Area accounts, an important job, which he has done for many years.

Mike Heckford
Dorset Area Treasurer

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

At the end of October 2021, national membership was 101173 and at the end of October 2022 it was 102029. At the end of October 2021 Dorset Area membership was 1421 and at the end of October 2022 it was 1427. These are both pleasing, if small increases at 0.8% and 0.4% respectively. Thus Dorset's increase in membership was about half that nationally but a relevant factor is that the average age of members in Dorset is a little higher than that nationally, so sadly we probably lose a slightly higher percentage of members, offsetting the numbers of newly joined members.

Dorset Area now includes six constituted groups and two flexigroups, the latter being the Wessex Wanderers and the Bournemouth Happy Mondays Walkers. The figures above include membership of the Bournemouth Happy Mondays Walkers but have not yet started to include membership numbers for Wessex Wanderers, although it is worth mentioning that most, if not all, members of the Wessex Wanderers flexigroup are currently members of other Ramblers' groups. The Happy Mondays flexigroup have increased their number of members by nearly 50 percent in the last year. The 4050 Group have increased their numbers and North Dorset Group has one more member but the other groups have each lost small numbers of members.

Margaret Kettlewell
November 2022

+++++

Publicity Officer

This post is vacant

EDITOR – DORSET FOOTNOTES

As with everything Ramblers, Footnotes has had an interesting 2022 with Footnotes going full colour and increasing the numbers for E-Footnotes. A GDPR approved website edition is now available for posting on the Group and Area Websites.

Advertising interest now rests solely with Ramblers Worldwide Holidays; the impact of social media advertising has reached deepest Dorset.

Producing Footnotes is a team effort, so a big thank you to all the contributors who make my job much more manageable. Stewart Borrett of Amber Graphics organises the printing and distribution,

which can vary by month. The printers always surprise me with the speed of their turnaround from my ramblings to the printed word. Finally, a big thank you to the Dorset Group Footnotes distributors who 'lick' Footnotes and 'click' E-Footnotes to the wider membership.

We are rapidly going digital, saving on all that licking, and eventually releasing Footnotes from the tyranny of the 4, 8 or 12 pages required by a printed edition. The reduced number of printed copies allowed us to go FULL Colour for Footnotes. Great you might think, but the tyranny of choice creeps in; there are the Ramblers brand colours and then how do you use colour for the headings, sub-headings, highlighting etc. This will be an evolving feast.

In 2010 we were printing and distributing 1750 copies of Footnotes, now we are printing and distributing 980 copies. The following 'Distribution letter' extract tells the story with the current print numbers and the 'reduced from' numbers (2022):

North Dorset Group – 10 copies (reduced from 190)
South Dorset Group – 50 copies (reduced from 340)
West Dorset Group – 10 copies (reduced from 170)
East Dorset Group – 895 copies (reduced from 975)
Ramblers Association no longer receive any copies (reduced from 50)
Dorset Area Treasurer and Footnotes Editor each receive ten copies

The registration of e-mails at Group Level has also allowed the rapid dissemination of urgent information to the Membership, a facility that we must use sparingly.

The deadline for the next edition is January 1st, 2023. I am always looking for contributions - so make sending me a snippet or two a New Year resolution.

In conclusion, Footnotes is still going strong, and I am enjoying my time as Editor. Each year brings new challenges, but that is what keeps the job interesting.

Doug Pigg
Dorset Footnotes Editor

+++++

AREA FOOTPATH SECRETARY'S REPORT 2022

The Area Footpath Committee has been dealing with applications, path orders and other legal procedures, which in most part emanate from Dorset Council Definitive Map Team, and a smaller number from Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council. The footpath secretaries responded to twenty two applications for diversions, extinguishments or modifications involving 25 public rights of way, and five pre-application consultations, involving five public rights of way.

Several Orders are currently with the Secretary of State for determination, and we are awaiting further information relating to start dates, and procedure. We assisted at a Public Inquiry at Melbury Osmond in September, and are awaiting the decision from the Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

The Committee decided to hold the two 'winter' meetings via Zoom, and the two 'summer' ones in person. We felt that, for a number of reasons, this makes sense, as the footpath secretaries hail from all corners of Dorset, and with the increased cost of fuel and paucity of public transport, it is our small contribution to reducing our carbon footprint.

Don't Lose Your Way

The major development this year has of course been the announcement in February, of the repeal of the 2026 'cut-off date' for submitting applications for rights of way to be added to the definitive map.

The DEFRA statement reads:

‘We will repeal the 2026 cut-off date for recording historic rights of way, as set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, to allow more time for paths to be identified and added to the public rights of way network, as well as providing the ‘right to apply’ for landowners to divert or extinguish rights of way in certain circumstances. These measures, along with accompanying guidance, will be implemented as soon as reasonably practical.’

It should be noted that this has not yet been enacted,

During the year there was a change of personnel at Ramblers central office managing the Don't Lose Your Way (DLYW) project. The hand-over inevitably meant a slowing down of the progress while the staff familiarised themselves. June saw the arrival of the new team members, and we were introduced to them at the monthly Zoom meetings for DLYW co-ordinators, which they now run.

There is now a recruitment drive for research volunteers, and I have received enquiries from several interested volunteers. As this is an evolving process, we have yet to establish in which areas these volunteers would be best placed to focus, within Dorset.

Coastal Access/England Coast Path

Our Coastal Access Officer Mike Beams continues to be somewhat frustrated at the lack of progress with the Dorset section of the England Coast Path, albeit we were the first to have a section opened for the Olympics in 2012.

Lyme Regis to Rufus Castle: the Planning Inspector's report has been with Defra since 2015, but a Habitats Regulations Assessment is outstanding, which has been delayed due to various unforeseen circumstances. It is hoped some progress will be made in 2023.

Lulworth to Kimmeridge, discussions are ongoing between Defra and the MoD to agree routes that can go through the ranges (when open) and an alternative route, landward of the ranges when they are not open to the public.

Kimmeridge to Highcliffe, this stretch was published in 2017 and finally approved this year following a report by the Planning Inspectorate, However, since then a deficiency has been identified in the determination process relating to Chapter 6 of the report. Accordingly, the Secretary of State has consented to the quashing of the approval of Chapter 6 of this coastal access report by means of a High Court Order. A decision regarding the determination of Chapter 6 will be made by the Secretary of State in due course. Grants are now being applied for, to complete the works on the ground, for the reports that *have* been approved so that as much as possible of the stretch can be opened.

The Area Footpath Committee comprises the Group Footpath Secretaries, the Countryside Secretary, and the Coastal Access Officer, and is chaired by Dorset Area President, Laurie Fairhurst.

Our continuing thanks go to the Committee, without whose members and work, many of the routes we take for granted would not have been possible.

The Dorset Jubilee Trail (JT)

As you will be aware, Rosemary Bramah died suddenly on December 11th 2021, and I have inherited all of her files she amassed, and compiled in her role as Jubilee Trail Co-ordinator. As members will know, a commemorative event took place in September, which celebrated not only the work of Rosemary, but also the Jubilee Trail, the length of which was walked over the period between September 24th and 27th, with walks being led by the groups in Dorset. Rosemary's son and daughter took part, and thanked all concerned.

Currently, we are still without a co-ordinator, despite advertising widely. We thank Stacey of the Dorset Young Walkers for managing the Twitter account; Sue Blake for her extensive background knowledge, and Mike Heckford for managing the Jubilee Trail Guidebook sales.

Jan Wardell
Area Footpath Secretary

COUNTRYSIDE SECRETARY'S REPORT

The role of the Countryside Secretary is to pursue the Ramblers fourth charitable objective of protecting the countryside and green spaces from harmful developments, so that walkers can enjoy their tranquillity and beauty. One of the key aspects of the job involves monitoring planning applications so that representations can be made about any proposed developments which are either going to impact directly on the rights of way network, or on the wider countryside.

Planning applications

This last year has seen a dramatic change in respect of us learning about planning applications which may impact on public rights of way. It appears that the Dorset Council definitive map team thought that we were being consulted directly about such planning applications. As a result of that discovery and a conversation between rights of way staff and planning staff, we were rewarded with a meeting with a planning officer and she readily agreed that there would be no problem in consulting us about those applications on which planning officers consult the senior rangers. The simple addition of our email addresses to the list of consultees has resulted in us receiving automatic notification of all planning applications for sites crossed by rights of way, or where there is a right of way nearby. This started on 20 June and by 30 September we had been notified of 164 such applications and commented on 18 of these (including one formal objection). Between 1 October and 20 June (i.e. before the new system kicked in) we commented on or objected to approximately 20 applications.

Our aim in making these comments and objections is to ensure that public rights of way are properly recognised and that they are not simply 'diverted' on to pavements, ensuring that residents will be able to use them to access both local facilities and the wider path network on foot. Notable applications this year have included that for 108 dwellings at St. George's Road, Dorchester which drew objections from Network Rail because it would increase the number of people using a footpath level crossing over the Weymouth to Waterloo line, an oil well at Athelhampton and a major development at Newton's Cove in Weymouth which would impact on views from the England Coast Path.

I would like to thank Jan Wardell and all the Group Footpath Secretaries for their assistance, in dealing with the planning applications.

Planning policy

We responded to a Dorset Council consultation on the 'Local Planning List'. This list sets out what Dorset Council asks applicants to provide as part of their application. The requirements as regards showing public rights of way on the plans were, in our view, inadequate and we have made comments to that effect.

Dorset Council received over 9,000 responses to the first consultation on the new Local Plan (on which we commented last year) and they have come under severe pressure from the public, and from campaigners, to re-think the plan. The Leader of the Council has now said that the council is "reshaping" the plan to try to reflect those comments (which included making sure that the target for number of new homes reflects the needs of Dorset, not government targets, and tacking climate change). This means that the timetable for the plan has been adjusted with adoption not taking place until 2026. It also means that the Council is having to discuss with central government how Dorset can be protected from unplanned development in the interim.

We also commented on the BCP Local Plan “Issues and Options” consultation earlier in the year. They say they will continue engaging with local communities and organisations this year and that the feedback and evidence will be used to shape the priorities for the Local Plan and will inform the next stage of plan preparation. The BCP draft Local Plan should be published in 2023.

National Grid VIP

This is the massive project to remove the pylons and bury the high voltage cabling across the AONB in the vicinity of Hardy’s Monument. Because of the interest from members four separate site visits were arranged this summer for Dorset Ramblers. All of the pylons covered by the project have now been taken down making a very significant improvement to the south Dorset landscape. You can read all about the project here: [Dorset – A National Grid Visual Impact Provision Project](#), and see a photo of one of the visits [here](#).

North Dorchester Garden Community

This rather attractive title is the name being given to the proposed 3,500 dwelling development on land to the north of Dorchester, beyond the river Frome and between Charminster and Stinsford. We were invited to attend a workshop at which the proposal was discussed. There is much opposition to this development: Dorchester Town Council is opposing the scheme and Wessex Water has indicated its opposition because of the impacts on the public water supply. It is clear that efforts are being made to ensure links for walkers and cyclists between the new development and Dorchester to try to limit reliance on cars, and to ensure that there is much green space incorporated into the scheme, but there can be no doubt that such a development would change the landscape north of Dorchester beyond recognition. We will continue to monitor the proposal as it develops.

The Local Access Forum (LAF)

The LAF is a statutory advisory body which authorities such as Dorset must appoint to advise them on access issues. I was re-appointed to the LAF this time last year, representing the interests of walkers, and was subsequently appointed as vice-chairman. The main issues which the LAF is tackling at the moment are shared-use routes, access to access land (which is very difficult if not impossible in some places) and the new Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Dorset Council (the draft of this is presently awaited). I continue to be the LAF link to the *Dorset AONB* and so attend their twice-yearly Board meeting and receive regular updates in particular on the “Farming in Protected Landscapes” initiative. This investment allows farmers and land managers to work in partnership with the AONB teams to improve public access, and deliver bigger and better outcomes for the environment, for people and for places. So far the improvements to access resulting from this have been modest.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you would like further information on any of the matter discussed in this report.

**Janet Davis, Area Countryside Secretary
November 2022**

GROUP REPORTS

East Dorset

What a relief to be back to normal, whatever normal is. We have enjoyed a varied walks programme, co-ordinated by Clive , roaming over the Purbecks, Cranbourne Chase, the New Forest and all points in between. We need to say a special thank you to our walks leaders and their co-ordinator, Margaret.

Another big thank you is to Kevin, our Social Secretary for a delicious Winter Meal at the Bridge Hotel in February, a coach trip to Wells, shared with members of the local Caprow Group and a day trip to the Isle of Wight. In Wells we had a choice of two walks or a gentle walk around Wells, enjoying the cathedral, the market and the historic buildings. 16 members embarked on the trip to

Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight and, blessed by the brilliant weather, we trekked from Alum Chine up to the Needles Battery, even further up to the Tennyson Memorial, down to Freshwater for lunch, then a gentle walk back to Yarmouth. We finished with a fish and chip supper in Lymington.

June 26th was Purbeck Plod day and what a great day it was – admittedly, the numbers were lower than previously but that could have been because we advertised later than normal and Julia’s House were holding a fund-raising walk over a similar route on the same day. There was a lot of positive feedback from entrants and our volunteers worked their socks off to ensure the event went well. Thank you to all the volunteers, some of them new to the event, and hopefully they will volunteer again next year.

How to ensure that East Dorset Ramblers continues to be a successful group? New walks leaders will be welcomed with open arms and there are several vacancies on the committee, so fulfilling a role could be the way you contribute to our success.

+++++

North Dorset

This has been another year in which we have been walking under the regulations concerning Covid but these are now mainly relaxed. Covid has not deterred some of our senior members from walking and leading. Our membership has remained at about the same level over the year (between 170 and 180) with some welcome new members replacing those who have left us. With the easing of Covid restrictions we have held walks further afield than we did in 2020 and 2021.

North Dorset Group has had walks on most Wednesdays and some Sundays. Members decided that the Group would continue to have a booking system for walks and the number permitted on a walk would be decided by the relevant walk leader. We must again thank Edward Johns for his work in keeping the walk programme as full as possible. Over the years that Edward has been organising the walks there has been many changes imposed by Central Office and Covid. We are fortunate that we have a member dedicated to following the latest requirements. Edward informed us at the 2021 AGM that this would be his last year organising the walk programme and he is standing down at this year’s AGM. A volunteer has been co-opted onto the committee to take over the role and will be formally ratified at the AGM. He has already produced his first two-month programme.

We continued to operate a booking system for walks which has recently eased and is now at the discretion of the leader. Leaders have found that booking has two significant advantages: firstly if everyone is present before the start time the walk can get going early, and secondly the leader is aware if someone has been held up on the way to the walk and can hold the start until they arrive. In April we held an Information Day where committee members ‘showcased’ their responsibilities. This was, in hope, that members would consider joining the committee later. We have repeated our Walk Leaders course organised by Sarah Dawkins. Social events have included a walking holiday with HF organised by Linda Manaton and an evening meal organised again by Sarah Dawkins and Sheila Davis. Nearly all who attended the Walk Leader course are now leading walks for us.

Our secretary and membership secretary for the last eight years, Sarah Dawkins, declared her intention at the 2021 AGM of standing down at this year’s AGM. At present (before the 2022 AGM) no one has come forward or been nominated to fill these roles. The North Dorset Group chair Bruce Marriott has been researching possible ways forward should no one volunteer since a secretary is required to meet the needs of the constitution.

Two of our members have served on the committee for many years. Richard Turner our treasurer who has kept us financially viable in this challenging year was chair at one time. Jan Wardell has served for many years as footpath secretary. Jan was also instrumental in setting up and the operation of our original website and continued with our input to the latest Ramblers website since.

Our 2022 AGM was again held face-to-face on Wednesday 26th October.

+++++

South Dorset

This is our annual chance to highlight our successes as a friendly Ramblers group over the past 12 months, and to identify some of the things that we will be doing over the next twelve months.

Our committee members are not only involved in their own roles within the group, but also all have contributed greatly to the wider discussions about what we should do, and how to ensure the South Dorset Ramblers' success.

We are always looking for new committee members to make sure that we reflect the interests of our members and observers (from the membership) are welcome at our meetings. They are not able to vote but can, as long as they give advance warning, raise any issues that they would like to be discussed by the committee. Members are also welcome to contact any of the committee members with any issues that they would like to be raised. We have four meetings a year.

There are many volunteers who are not necessarily on the committee but contribute in other ways: by leading walks, helping to recce walks, 'auditing' our accounts, campaigning, maintaining our websites and all of the other essential things that allow the group to function well.

It has been good to see several new walk leaders over the past year – this has lessened the impact of losing some of our most experienced walk leaders post-COVID. However, we can never have too many walk contributors and new leaders are always encouraged. We have run themed walks in the past (e.g., local industrial archaeology or wildlife) and we hope to run some of these type of walks again. There are training courses for Walk Leaders on the Ramblers website, and we can also run local training if anyone is interested – this worked well with two of our newer walk leaders.

Highlights of the past year:

- Our walks programme: we have provided an extensive and varied walking programme. We also contributed three walks on the Jubilee Trail in September as part of Dorset Area Ramblers' celebration of Rosemary Bramah's role in setting up and maintaining the Jubilee Trail.
- Our social programme: in addition to the social activities, we have organised a walking holiday in Montenegro, a long weekend walking in the Quantocks and visited the VIP project to hear and see progress on the removal of 22 pylons from the Dorset AONB.
- Our path protection work
- Our involvement on walking-related committees run by local councils such as WeyTAG and 'walking for health'

Although it was not directly linked to Ramblers, one of our members has been heavily involved with Ukrainian refugees in our area. Amongst other things she has been taking the families on walks around our area and we have had at least one refugee join us on one of our walks.

We have a good year planned ahead with:

- Our annual walking holiday which will be in the Shropshire Hills in May.
- An additional weekend away in the Dartmoor area in June.

+++++

West Dorset

The WD Committee have met twice during the year; in March and October and then convened the AGM earlier this month. 18 members attended the AGM, and a group of 9 enjoyed a misty five-mile walk around Chedington and South Perrott prior to the pub lunch and the meeting. It was good to meet in person again.

This year we have managed to provide a fairly varied walking programme of shorter, slower-paced walks and longer faster-paced walks. We usually manage at least one walk a week. Unlike a lot of groups, we run our walks on different days of the week. We have had some new walk leaders this year but as usual, we are always on the lookout for more. The club depends on walk leaders and volunteers to take named roles, so the more we have the better.

At the end of October our membership stood at 211. A lot of these members do not walk but we have had a number of new members this year some of whom we haven't yet seen.

The treasurer reported the balance of our unrestricted funds as at 30 Sept 2022 to be £496.77 and the 2021/22 accounts were submitted to the Area Treasurer, Mike Heckford, on 7 October 2022. The new treasurer has plans to introduce online banking.

During April 2022 a group of 21 went to Hope Cove, near Kingsbridge for a 4-night stay. They were able to organize one walk each day, but although the weather had been breezy it was felt to have been a good holiday.

In October a group of 17 stayed for 4-nights at the HF Hotel Nythfa House, Brecon and were able to walk on the Brecon Beacons, along the Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal and around a couple of hillforts. Most people also visited the cathedral, art gallery and the canal basin in the town and some made use of the indoor (but cold) swimming pool.

We offered two walks each day led by the five Ramblers Walks Leaders who managed these activities. We joined in with the HF activities in the evening and our folk won the skittles and the quiz competitions!

All roles on the Committee for 2023 have been filled and the Chairman thanked everyone who has taken responsibility for any aspect of the group's activities during the year. The ongoing support from Area personnel is appreciated.

We have 19 signed up for a Christmas meal together at the Kingcombe Centre following a short walk across the Trust's land.

Bridget Trump, WDR Secretary
16 Nov 2022

+++++

Dorset 4050 Walkers Group

Committee

Due to the coronavirus restrictions, our first AGM since 2019 took place on 7th November 2021 where a new committee was elected. Our 2022 AGM is being planned for late November/early December where members can stand for election and vote to shape our next committee

Membership

The Group membership has increased again in 2022 from our previous high of 80 to 83. As always there has been turnover of membership but the fact is that we have seen an influx of 19 members with many regular new faces, as well as several who join us frequently from the other groups. As such, our Group remains in a healthy state.

The Group continues to keep an up-to-date web page, which has helped attract walkers from multiple groups within and beyond the county, and we receive a regular flow of new member enquiries.

An active Facebook page also posts many photographs, with in excess of 5000 photographs posted of our walks sharing our experience with our Facebook following of over 400 people.

The group now has an active "4050 local social WhatsApp Social group", where get togethers for events such as cinema visits, live shows, meals out etc. are being continuously arranged.

Walk Programme

2022 has been a very active year; since our last report the Group has arranged 56 walks, primarily on Sundays and with most reaching the 20 -person maximum we have introduced in the post-lockdown period.

The Group has continued to offer away-weekends during 2022, with a well-attended weekend in Worcester that included walking the Malvern Hills, and our annual Porlock/Exmoor trip to West Somerset in late June/early July, coinciding with the Porlock 'Weirfest' live music festival. Over the 4-day period we had a record attendance with almost 20 people per walk.

Finance

Despite an active year in 2021-2022, the Group had very little movement in its finances during this period, opening and closing the year with a positive balance of £956.14. The Area Funding allocation to the group was £167.00. However, given the positive cash reserve held, the committee agreed to donate this to the Area's Jubilee Fund. No meeting or walk leader expenses were incurred during the year and social events were self-funded by members, but we are actively reviewing appropriate channels to put some of our funds to good use in 2022/23 in support of members' activities, including a subsidised lunch for walk leaders, as in past years.

Challenges

Our main challenge in recent years has involved walks being led by a very small number of leaders. A further two new leaders have been recruited during 2021/2022 on top of the two gained in the previous year. This has helped to further ease some of the pressure to maintain a weekly schedule. Their enthusiasm and energy has been crucial, and as ever one of our group's key objectives is to continue to find further volunteers to grow the variety of our programme.

+++++

Wessex Wanderer Rail Walks

Exploring the countryside, seaside, market towns and sites of interest along the beautiful Heart of Wessex (Bristol/Weymouth) railway line.

The Wessex Wanderer Rail Walks programme normally offers free public guided walks which start from stations on the line. The programme consists of circular and linear walks of various lengths to suit all tastes and take place from May to October each year.

Whether you are travelling north or south, the start time of the walks takes into account train times in both the directions and the walks are led by enthusiastic and experienced volunteer Leaders who are members of the Ramblers.

From a modest start of 6 summer walks, the programme gradually developed, and it had been hoped to have a bumper programme of 40 walks to celebrate 25 years of walks, in 2020. But we know what happened then! As we began to recover from the effects of the pandemic we were able to offer a modest number of walks in 2021 and eighteen walks were offered in 2022.

We now look forward to the 2023 programme which we are planning to commence in April.

+++++

Bournemouth Happy Monday Walkers, and Dorset Young Walkers' Group.

Reports for these Groups were not available at the time of printing.

+++++

Report compiled and edited by Jan Wardell
Area Officer
November 2022