

Chairs report for the 2024 AGM.

Another year of rambling has passed in which we have offered four walks per week with only occasional gaps in the walking programme. The membership report shows that we are maintaining our membership at or near the current membership of 321, and it is gratifying to see well over 50 of the members here this evening.

We have had some changes during the year. Sadly, the Rights of Way working party managed by Fiona Walkers for over twenty years has ended as we could not find a volunteer to take on the task of running the group. Over those twenty years innumerable Rights of Way markers have been put up and faults on footpaths cleared or reported to the council for clearing, resulting in West Berkshire having a well-maintained network of footpaths, thanks mainly to Fiona and her team.

We also made the change to ask Ramblers to use the Booking form to book on to walks. I know this has caused some disquiet, but leaders like to have the list of who will be on their walk. This change has been operational for a few months now and I hope has not put anyone off from joining a ramble.

Your committee personnel has been changing and further significant changes will be made this evening. We have coopted Jonathan Sayers on to the committee as the new Publicity Officer replacing Richard Trimmer who is stepping down after seven years in that role. I wish to thank Richard on behalf of everyone in West Berkshire Ramblers for his years of dedicated service.

We have also been joined by Debbie Bradshaw assisting the Walks Coordinator Sian Williams. We have also coopted Andrew Jackson to the committee.

Our Treasurer Jayne Kirk is standing down at this AGM after several years in post and we are very grateful to Jayne for her work and commitment over those years. Jayne is unable to be with us this evening as her daughter is getting married, the good news is we have a replacement, more later.....

When I took the role as Chair, I said I would do it for three years subject to health, last year I had not found a replacement but felt well enough to carry on and offered to serve for a further year. This year I will be standing down but have found a replacement, more later.

I am pleased to report that the Gate Installation teams continue to upgrade our footpaths removing dilapidated stiles and replacing them with metal gates, we are well into the 330's now. Also, the Power Tool Group continue to support the West Berkshire Rangers in clearing blocked or overgrown footpaths.

We are still faced with the problem of a lack of new walk leaders. There is a sad inevitability that the number of walks in the programme will reduce as the number of walk leaders declines. I urge each of you to consider volunteering to be a walk leader. Its OK to only lead a couple of walks a year, if everyone did that, we would have no gaps and a great variety of walks. We will help you with training and buddying with you on walks until you feel confident, go on give it a go. Equally try to persuade your fellow ramblers to have a go, ultimately planning and leading walks is very enjoyable.

Our Coach Walks programme had a successful year running five coach walks although with the increased costs of coach hire and costs of planning the events the costs exceeded income. Whilst the loss was greater than expected it did help achieve an objective of reducing the

surplus amount of money that had accumulated in the Social Account. Richard Moore has stepped down as a coach walk leader and I wish to thank Richard for his years of service in organising and leading Coach Walks. Richard will instead take over from Neil Lawrence as Chair of the Coach Walk committee and will liaise with Barns our Coach provider. As an active walk leader, we will still see Richard on some of the coach walks leading medium or short walks. Neil Lawrence the outgoing Chair of the coach walk committee will take up a role as one of the coach walk leaders.

We continue to run a programme of social events and walking holidays.

We had a very enjoyable walking holiday in Harrogate in June, run for us by Clwydian Holidays.

Six Ramblers enjoyed a walking holiday in Morocco in September

Looking forward :-

We have a volunteer's dinner on the 20th of November at the Greek Table in the Castle Inn.

A Ramblers Christmas Walk and lunch on the 7th of December at the Vine

West Berkshire Ramblers dinner on 15th January at the Fox and Hounds

An evening quiz on the 28th of March. To change the feel of the quiz we have a new quiz master for next March, and I wish to express my grateful thanks to Richard Fenton for his many years of service as our previous quiz master.

We will be exploring Wilton Windmill on the 10th June

We have a walking holiday in the Elan Valley 14th to 20th June (one twin room and one single room available)

There is the possibility of a trip to Morocco 29th September to 7th October joint with North Hampshire Ramblers, if there is sufficient interest.

I have been asked to reinstate the Wednesday evening walks. One member has offered to become a walk leader to lead the Wednesday evening walks. We tried this last year but there was little take up. To help your committee to provide the activities that you want please take a moment to fill in the questionnaire so your new committee may take your views into account when planning for the year ahead.

Eugene Fitcher
Chair