



the Ramblers Surrey Area

Annual Report and Accounts Year Ending 30th September 2015

Area Website: www.surreyramblers.org.uk

ID: Surrey Password: boots 42

Surrey Area Officer Reports

Area Chair's Report:

It has been a busy year for Ramblers. The three subjects which dominated my year were Governance/Vision, the Big Pathwatch and finding a replacement for me. Before I deal with them I wish to report that I represented Surrey Area at both David Sharp's and Denis Holmes' funerals. David died in April. David was very appreciative of the card and cheque we had given him at Christmas on his retirement as President of Surrey Area. Denis died very shortly after our AGM so was rather a shock to most of us who had seen him at the AGM.

David Leedham's position as Area Webmaster was rather ambiguous as he was not an Officer. I was happy for him to become an Officer and sought and gained approval at the Area Council meeting in January. David was elected at the AGM in February.

In November 2014 Central Office produced a paper called "How we are run" which was forwarded to Group Chairs who were asked to distribute to members of their Group as I felt that a lot of members had no knowledge of the structure of the Ramblers. It also helped members who completed the Vision and Governance Surveys. I did both surveys on behalf of Surrey Area. I used our Governance Committee's report and the views expressed at a meeting held in December 2014 to complete these surveys. No action has been taken as the Board of Trustees feel that more time should be allowed for Areas and Groups to discuss the proposals. I would like to thank the members of the Area Governance Committee, namely John Nathan, David Ross, Graham Butler, Brian Reader and Keith Bagot.

In January 2015 we had to choose delegates for General Council. Denis had volunteered. Rodney Whittaker took his place. Basil Minor and Graham Butler also attended.

In February Graham Butler and I attended a meeting in Redhill with Clara Jones and Andrew Millard from CO on Walking for Health. MacMillan Cancer was represented too. Ideally Ramblers would like Walking for Health people who felt they could do longer walks to join Ramblers. Unfortunately this has not happened. A lot of Surrey Groups do short walks but very few have come over from Walking for Health.

In February I went on a very enjoyable walk with Sutton & Wandle Valley Group to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the formation of the Ramblers. This was reported in the Sutton Guardian and was a good advertisement for Ramblers.

I represented Surrey Ramblers at the 150th anniversary of Leith Hill Tower. The National Trust had put on an interesting display in the Tower and there was a short walk after the ceremony.

I attended a Volunteer Development Day at Croydon College in June. There were various workshops and I did the one on Rights of Way which proved very informative. David and Jackie Leedham, Nigel Woodhead and Derek Bunn also attended but we were in different workshops.

The Big Pathwatch was launched in June. Apart from walking out one square (I know others have done more!) I have not been involved in this although I do think it is a good project.

Area Council agreed with me at the June meeting that the roles of President and Vice President should be dispensed with though they could be reinstated at a later date.

Central Office requested Surrey Area's assistance in a joint project with the Forestry Commission to survey paths in Mole Valley's woods. As well as Mole Valley Group members Brian Reader and I surveyed some woods. In the event the paths in my section proved to be well maintained bridleways and I have not heard of any results.

We had 6571 members at the end of September 2015, a gain of 83 members since September 2014.

Finally I would like to thank all the Surrey Officers for their support since I became Chairman.

Lynette Long - Area Chair (until Nov 2015)

Area Footpaths and Access Secretary's Report:

I was delighted that so many Surrey members stepped forward to volunteer for BVPI and Volunteer Path Warden training. With local authority budgets continuing to be cut (see below), I am convinced that maintenance of our paths in Surrey will depend more and more on volunteer effort, and that Ramblers will lead the effort to provide it. My thanks as ever to the Local Footpath Secretaries who spear headed this effort but also to all others such as our many group working parties. While individual group reports will probably mention their working party achievements, I am aware of over 2000 man-hours of such working party efforts during the year.

Path Issues

The major issue this year has been Banstead Footpath 125. George Seaborn, still Reigate & Banstead LFS in the absence of a successor, first showed me the path a year ago long blocked by the landowner. Discussion with Surrey County Council (SCC) revealed a long history with the Borough (then responsible for paths) failing to win a court action and then failing to follow up on undertakings. SCC (which had long ago taken over the legal responsibility) was unwilling to act until it had the file of papers from the Borough archives. After providing to them substantial detail including photos, Central Office agreed to fund necessary legal action to re-open the path. A letter from Benedict to the SCC Chief Executive brought a rapid response with Reigate & Banstead soon declaring they had destroyed all their papers relating to the matter. SCC have also now consulted their lawyers who wrote to Benedict saying that:

- They were determined to secure clearance of the path
- Steve Mitchell, SCC Right of Way and Access Manager, would be writing to the landowner as a precursor to legal action if necessary.
- assuring us that 'this obstruction of a public path is being taken very seriously by the County Council.

SCC has now arranged a meeting with the landowner to discuss the matter in detail.

BVPI 178 (Best Value Performance Indicator)

The biannual BVPI exercise was undertaken again by Surrey Ramblers in November and May. There are currently 58 trained Ramblers volunteers actively taking part with good coverage of all areas of Surrey with 11 new volunteers completing training in September. Altogether, we will have undertaken the survey on over 400 paths which saves SCC hundreds of man-hours. 81% of paths were found 'easy to use' in November and the figure for May went up to 85%%, both improvements on last year. We started recording the Number of hours taken in May and the total was recorded as 215.

Reporting of and resolving PROW problems

I'm pleased to report that SCC has finally installed and rolled out its Countryside Management Access System (CAMS). This is standard software used by a number of other counties, and should be used by all members to report PROW problems of any kind which require SCC action. It not only improves our ability to check progress on problems we have reported but more importantly greatly reduces the amount of time SCC has to spend on getting the problem solved.

The SCC Head of Maintenance & Enforcement said she had attended a meeting of PROW officers in the South East where there was general agreement that, after the budget cuts of recent years, all councils were doing less enforcement work.

Steve Mitchell, the head of Access and Countryside, told the annual Access Forum meetings that the PROW maintenance budget has been cut by £125,000 for the current year. He also reported that responsibility for the 1200 bridges on the PROW network in Surrey were being passed from the Structures team in Highways to Countryside Access for a 2 year pilot period.

We already have 2 instances of 'temporary' closures of PROWs owing to 'unsafe' bridges, one in Woking/Guildford for 18 months so far. The other is in Tandridge which has been subject to successive temporary orders for over 4 years. Meanwhile the landowner (as is his right) continues to drive his tractor over the bridge regularly. Advice on remedies has been requested from Central Office. We are told that Structures had stopped funding these repairs and hope that Countryside Access may do better.

The Big Pathwatch Project

This is a major project for the Ramblers and is sponsored by Ramblers Holidays in the sum of £300,000. It aims to survey all 144,000 miles of PROWs in England & Wales. Excellent publicity was obtained for the project at its launch in July including an item on the BBC 'Today' and 'Countryfile' programmes in addition to major national press coverage. By the end of September 12,560 people had registered to check paths, over 68% new to the Ramblers. Surrey Area had by this point completed about 40% of its paths but 57% of the 'Sample Squares' necessary for a statistically valid result.

Role changes

We had the sad news of 2 LFS dying shortly after the March 2015 Footpath & Access meeting, Alan Lewis in Mole Valley and .Duncan Lawson in Kingston. Happily, others have rapidly stepped into the breach, Rob Alcock and Pat Womersley in Mole Valley and David Cooper in Kingston. Maureen Gullett also took over from Susan Anderson for Epsom &

Ewell at the beginning of the year. At SCC, Mary Ann Edwards started in July as the Reigate & Banstead/Tandridge Rights of Way officer so the department is up to strength again. She was previously working for West Sussex as an Access Ranger so she has lots of experience.

Rodney Whittaker – Area Footpath & Access Secretary

Area Webmaster's Report:

Surrey Area website visits have grown from about 900 per month in October 2014 to 1400 per month in September 2015. Although an increase is welcome this is still a fairly small number of visits.

In January 2015, the website software was upgraded to the latest version. This was a major change requiring the website to be rebuilt from scratch. The main benefits of the upgrade are a) reduction of the vulnerability to hacking, and b) a “responsive” layout, which means that the site will look good and work as designed on devices with small screens such as tablets and smartphones, as well as desktop PCs with large screens.

The front page photo, which is also used on Facebook, is updated four times each year in line with the seasons. Any contributions of photos from members, epitomising a season and suitable for the panoramic format used would be very welcome.

The “Find a Walk” section of the website has been enhanced. All group walks for the week ahead are listed in a tabular format. There is also a direct link to the Group Walks and Events Manager which is useful for searching the walk database for particular locations or types of walk.

A booking system for leader training courses was introduced to the members' area and used for booking courses in 2014-15. The system is working well and will be used for any courses run next year.

Membership numbers for each group are added to the website monthly. There is also a chart showing the membership trend for each group over the last six years.

News items added to the front page this year include subjects such as The Big Pathwatch, AGM details, Ramblers Shop, South East Walker and Leader Training.

Technical advice and assistance has been given to several Surrey Groups, as well as Essex Area, during the process of upgrading their websites.

The Surrey Area Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/SurreyRamblers>) has gained a few more likes – there are now 114 - but again needs more contributions from members. Anyone with a Facebook account can post to the page.

Report by David Leedham – Area Webmaster

Area Membership Secretary's Report:

1.Surrey increased its membership by 83 from end September 2014 to September 2015 when there were 6871 members. This is better than the national figures which show a loss of 310 members.

There were 740 new members in Surrey during the year and 100 members reinstated.

END OF	ACTIVE	NEW	REINSTATED
2014			
September	6788	48	16
October	6808	51	7
November	6828	45	11
December	6817	66	9
2015			
January	6848	86	10
February	6864	68	7
March	6857	57	11
April	6858	60	9
May	6840	55	5
June	6810	47	2
July	6828	52	10
August	6835	63	11
September	6871	90	8
TOTAL	+83	740	100

BREAKDOWN OF MEMBERSHIP TYPES

	30.09.2014	30.09.2015	+	-
TOTAL MEMBERS	6788	6871	+83	
ANNUAL INDIVIDUAL	3118	3228	+110	
ANNUAL JOINT	2075	2105	+30	
ANNUAL CONCESSION- INDIVIDUAL	797	761	-36	
ANNUAL CONCESSION -JOINT	561	541	-20	
LIFE INDIVIDUAL	82	80	-2	
LIFE JOINT	10	8	-2	
LIFE CONCESSION-INDIVIDUAL	84	87	+3	
LIFE CONCESSION-JOINT	61	61	-	

Figures taken from the monthly update from Central Office. The breakdown between groups is tabulated on the Surrey Area Website on a monthly basis.

2. Seven groups increased their membership this year including East Surrey Walkers, Epsom and Ewell, Farnham, Godalming and Haslemere, Guildford, Surrey Young Walkers and SABRE. Congratulations to East Surrey Walkers who won the Recruitment Cup with an increase of 50 members.

3. Annual Concessionary members have fallen by 56 during the year.

4. The Area Group 96 continues to grow and increased by 43, although there were 73 new members during the year making the total 104. There is evidence that some members transfer to local groups once they have tried them out. Central Office intends to continue recruiting to the Area group although they have changed the wording on the online recruitment page to make it less easy to sign up for this group.

5. Central Office continue to develop the Induction Pack/ Toolkit for Membership Secretaries.

Report by Anne Jamison. Area Membership Secretary

Area Publicity Officer's Report

This year (2015) we updated our area leaflet "Get fit and meet people" an exclusively Surrey Area leaflet usable by all groups in our area. We hope to print a further 500 of these soon.

We also produced our first Beer mat, which may be updated by the new publicity officer in 2016.

I have continued to provide items each month for various publications, including items for Surrey Life Magazine, some of which are yet to be published. I provided press releases to Surrey area publications for the Winter Walking Festival

The area video/computer projector was used 7 times this year, by a number of groups including, Farnham, Godalming and Haslemere, Epsom, most groups using it for their AGM.

The area display screens were used twice, as was the Gazebo and display material but the books not by any groups, we are planning to sell off the small stock of books at half price (to compete with the internet suppliers like Amazon), we are not planning to restock and compete. They will be on show to buy at the area AGM

I am leaving my post as Area Publicity Officer at the AGM in February, and thus will no longer hold the Area books, Gazebo, screens, projector and such like.

The Area does not have a budget for publicity and throughout my term first as Joint Publicity with the late Denis Holmes and then on my own I always found getting approval for anything an uphill struggle, together with my time, so it's now the opportunity for someone else with new ideas and momentum to take up the challenge.

Most if not all groups do not want area publicity material, only their group specific material and for that they have their own Publicity Officers, so most work is no longer needed or is already catered for by the Website.

Despite some seeing no point in being on the internet, I was the first to start an Area website over 8 years ago and an Area Facebook page shortly after, they were primitive but got us started, and now are far better looked after and improved by David Leedham. I hope more people can feel the need to use it, now that the internet is such an integral part of our operations.

Good Luck to my successor.

Report by Bob Hayward, Surrey Area Publicity Officer.

Acting Area Secretary's Report:

The Area operates through an Area Council which consists of Area Officers and group representatives and occasionally we have individual members who can be elected by the Area AGM. The Council meets 4 times a year and reports from Officers and provides an opportunity to discuss how groups can assist the growth of the Association.

I have continued as Acting Area Secretary, appointed by Area Council, to provide what is mostly a secretarial role of taking minutes and issuing paperwork for the meetings as well as providing Area Officers with background knowledge when matters of policy are discussed.

As already reported, The Area has lost some key personnel in this last year and in a very short space of time:

Denis Holmes: A former Area Chairman, a former Local Footpath Secretary, and also as joint Publicity Officer with Bob Hayward. Denis will be remembered for his work with SCC's countryside team on the re-launch of the Greensand Way. He will also be remembered for his work at the Hindhead Tunnel Inquiry where he secured an extra underpass to take walkers and riders safely underneath the new road.

David Sharp: Our Area President, and a national Vice-President for many years. David's work over many decades on producing publicity material for both the national Association and Surrey Area will be well remembered. David, of course, was instrumental in getting the Thames Path established as a National Trail in 1996 after a 20 year campaign.

Margaret Sharp died a few weeks after David. Margaret was always supportive of David's work and herself was a key figure in Richmond Ramblers. She and David helped to form West London Group (Bucks Area) back in the 1960s. She edited and updated many of the London Transport walks books that they used to publish.

Alan Lewis, our former Area countryside Officer and was the local Footpath Secretary for Mole Valley district

Duncan Lawson who was the Local Footpath Secretary covering Kingston Borough.

Report by Graham Butler, Acting Area Secretary

Area Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts:

RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION - SURREY AREA

Receipts and Payments Account for 1 October 2014 to 30 September 2015

30.9.14		30.9.15	Notes
£	INCOME	£	
16,641	Central Funding	16,000	
15	Interest	17	
400	Donations	400	
-	Other	49	Collection for the late David Sharp
<u>17,056</u>		<u>16,466</u>	
	EXPENDITURE		
10,141	Group Funding	9,554	
	Group (other)	400	
333	Administration	65	
133	Campaigns & Casework	75	
957	Walk leader training	225	
3,105	Newsletters & Publicity	2,828	Net cost of South East Walker
501	Meetings including AGM	654	
<u>15,170</u>		<u>13,801</u>	
<u>1,886</u>	Surplus in year	<u>2,665</u>	

Balance Sheet as at 30 September 2015

30.9.14		30.9.15	
£	NET ASSETS	£	
15,686	Bank Account	18,306	
107	Cash	153	
<u>15,793</u>		<u>18,459</u>	
	REPRESENTING		
13,907	General Funds	15,794	
1,886	Surplus	2,665	
<u>15,793</u>		<u>18,459</u>	

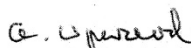
Treasurer's report

- Our surplus for this year is £2,665, compared with last year's £1,886, and our general funds have grown to £18,459.
- The bulk of our expenditure provided funding for our Groups. It also covered Surrey's contribution towards the quarterly publication South East Walker and funded walk leader training.
- Net funding from Central Office, after deducting payments to Groups, was approximately £6.5k and the same as the last two years.
- There was a slight reduction in funding to groups of approximately £590 compared to last year.
- There was another generous donation of £400 from the Long Distance Walkers Association which will be put towards the installation of kissing gates in Surrey.
- For 2015/16 our budget bid of £11k is £5k less than last year. This has been done to bring our reserves nearer to Central Office's recommended level.


 Jackie Leedham, Area Treasurer

Date: 28/10/15

Having carried out procedures in accordance with the Area and Group Audit Guidelines, I consider the Surrey Area accounts to have been properly prepared and to give a true and fair view of the Area's finances for the year to 30 September 2015.


 A Upward, Independent Examiner
 51 Hazon Way, Epsom, KT19 8HD

Date: 29 October 2015

Local Group Reports

CROYDON

Croydon Group finished the year with 902 members, over 100 of our members lead walks! We organised well over 400 rambles during the year, *plus* those taken on holidays and hostel weekends. The walks ranged from 1 mile to 23! There were two coach rambles, to Cambridge and Letchworth and our annual walk with the London Blind Group. Five walking holidays were organised in the UK at: - Bournemouth, Limpley Stoke, Isle of Sheppey, Tanners Hatch and Salisbury. There was one holiday abroad, Mezand Massif, France. We owe a big vote of thanks to all of our walk leaders and holiday organisers.

For a more relaxed time there have been many visits to places of interest and quarterly tea and cakes in central Croydon. We do make great efforts to keep in touch with members who are no longer able to walk with us and organise an annual get together for those members, always a sell-out. The get together this year celebrated three birthdays, two 80s and one 90! We must thank our Fellowship Secretary for all the cards sent and phone calls made during the year. Other sell-outs included our pre-Christmas quiz and our post-Christmas lunch at a restaurant in Godstone.

We ran a further New Leaders Workshop, this time raising the number to 20 would-be leaders and over the year have welcomed 13 new walk leaders onto the list. We ran a first aid session led by a trainer from the British Red Cross, a new venture for us, which was also a full house.

Our Treasurer has continued to keep an eagle eye on our accounts and we are budgeting for next year to continue with our training courses.

As a group we continue to take a keen interest in our local footpaths and environment. We have an active footpath maintenance team who are out each month doing battle with encroaching vegetation and crumbling stiles. This year has featured the installation of several metal kissing gates, hopefully meaning less maintenance for the future and making access easier to a wider number of walkers. We also have been taking an active part in the Big Pathwatch project and hope that its findings will help highlight just how good our footpath network is.

We continue to publicise our walks, and the Ramblers in general, in local libraries etc. but were very disappointed when the Croydon Visitors Centre at East Croydon Station was demolished as part of a big new development. It was an ideal location with great "footfall" as they say in publicity circles.

We finished the year with our AGM and an attendance of 127. We were very pleased to welcome Teri Moore, one of Ramblers Trustees who came along to observe our gathering and look forward to joining her for a ramble in February.

We have an elected committee of nine members, with a group of backroom helpers that keep our group running, dare we say smoothly, and we owe them all a great vote of thanks.

Peter Roud, Group Chairman

EAST SURREY WALKERS

East Surrey Walkers has enjoyed considerable success this year. We offer a full programme of walks, there are 50 per quarter and this year we have 20% more walkers!

We have had a few additional walks this year and two stand out. In May we held the David Woodcraft commemorative walk and in June, in conjunction with St Nicholas Church, Godstone, a walk "In the footsteps of Walker Miles". This attracted 50 walkers many of whom dressed in Victorian costume.

As always we extend a huge vote of thanks to our walk leaders who take time to plan their walks and surprise us with the wonders on our doorstep.

Our walk repertoire can be expanded further if more members volunteer to be leaders. We will support prospective leaders with mentors and the offer of leaders training.

Currently, membership stands at 354, a 16% increase this year. We are proud of our reputation for being an inviting and friendly group. Our membership secretary welcomes and keeps in touch with members.

Our publicity officer has created our new boots logo, updated our posters and Facebook and Streetlife have now put us well on to the social media landscape. Helen Whiteley has taken on a newly created role as website editor to ensure our website is regularly updated with our website administrator Brian Smith.

Social events this year have included the annual dinner, the anniversary dinner and a skittles evening. Thanks are due to our social secretary Barbara Bulman her team of helpers. Group holidays have also been successful and in many cases have been oversubscribed: this year we have travelled to Turkey, Hadrian's Wall and Dorset. In 2016 a visit to Spain is already fully booked.

Tony Pearson our local footpath secretary reminds us that the main aim of the Ramblers is to protect places for walking, enjoyment and health. We have a stalwart and hard- working team, Ken's Krew who work alongside SCC to maintain paths and install kissing gates. Ken Clare was presented with a "photo book" at our AGM in recognition and appreciation of his work.

Pat Thorn, our Welfare Officer retired at the AGM, she was thanked for her outstanding work and the baton has now been passed to Barbara Bulman. Helen McDonnell joins the committee as secretary for the coming year.

We forward to another exciting year for East Surrey Walkers.

Denise Birkett - Group Secretary

EPSOM AND EWELL

We have had 65 new members this year and 7 members reinstated, total membership at the end of September 2015 was 388 which was 39 more than at the same time in 2014.

The group continues to organise walks on four days each week and these vary in length between two and twelve miles. Since we began our Thursday walks of two or two and a half miles these have continued to grow in popularity and are now the second most popular walks.

Our Tuesday walks continue to be the most popular with an average of 28 walkers although on some walks there have been over forty.

The Big Pathwatch. Some of our members have participated in this project and it is encouraging that the publicity it has generated has resulted in an increase of membership nationally.

Throughout the year we have had a number of successful social events which were all well attended.

Our Christmas Lunch was held at Reigate Manor Hotel and was attended by 80 members, it was an enjoyable afternoon.

In April a group of six members installed a Kissing Gate at Chapel Hill in West Humble. This was to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of Epsom and Ewell Group which we celebrated in 2013. Later in the year one of our Tuesday walks incorporated a visit to the kissing gate to "Christen" it!

In June this year we had a very successful group holiday to Saltburn on Sea in North Yorkshire organised by Bob Hayward. Apart from good walks in the Yorkshire countryside other highlights included a ride on the North Yorkshire Moors Steam Railway, a visit to Goathland, the village used in the making of "Heartbeat", and a walk ending in Whitby where there was an opportunity to visit Whitby Abbey where Bram Stoker found some of his inspiration to write "Dracula".

In July Bob Perkins arranged a coach trip to Chichester and Emsworth with a walk from Fishbourne to Emsworth on the coastal path. The walk was divided into three sections with the opportunity to ride on the coach if one didn't want to walk all sections.

In August our Chairman Bob Hayward and his wife Dorothy held an afternoon garden tea party at their house. An enjoyable occasion with homemade cakes, scones and finger sandwiches and an opportunity to explore their interesting garden.

September saw our last outing of the year, it was a very memorable one organised by Jenny Lampin to Bletchley Park. Although not planned as a walking outing the grounds and buildings of Bletchley Park cover a large area so it was good exercise as well a very interesting visit.

The large and varied Walks Programme and the various social events we have held during the year would not have been possible without the willingness of members to give their time to organise these things.

Tony Gullett – Group Secretary

FARNHAM & DISTRICT

At this year's AGM, Sue Ford stood down as Treasurer having completed 3 years, Chris Hodge stood down as Membership Secretary and David Ross stood down from the Committee as Footpath Secretary Representative. Sue is replaced by Gillian Smith and Chris by Glen Shearer. David continues as a Footpath Secretary but is replaced on the Farnham Committee by Tim Devis. (These changes occur after the period of this report).

We have just completed our most comprehensive Footpath Maintenance season yet, running five winter smaller team tasks and eight large full day tasks. We shall have achieved the removal of 12 stiles, replaced with 12 new kissing gates, installation of four long boardwalks and several shorter ones, new sleeper bridges, new fingerposts and waymark posts, several sets of new steps and handrails, refurbished four existing timber kissing gates, refurbished stiles and several miles of vegetation clearance. We have worked in Puttenham (twice), Shackleford, Dockenfield, Peper Harrow, Normandy, Rowledge and Farnham. We had an average of 14 Ramblers on each of the tasks.

A big thank to John Plympton for coordinating this work and to our main team leaders; Mary Stuart-Jones (also main first aider), David Ross and Alan Keeley - also to our 19 Footpath Wardens for their hard work and reports during the year.

We led 428 walks last year. This includes Tuesday evenings in the summer focussing on those at work. There were also 4 litter picks, 3 family walks, a butterfly walk, a walk with the London Blind club, 3 fish & chip walks and a bell ringers walk. In addition, there were Saturday specials from Bushy Park, Walbury Hill, walking the Thames from Hampton Court to Richmond and a Real Ale Trail "The Leatherhead Lurch". We had 250 Ramblers during the Festival of Winter Walks and a walk on every day including Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

We held a Walk Leader's Training Course – just 7 attendees but nonetheless well received. Decisions now required in conjunction with Area as to whether to continue in 2016.

Our membership grew from 500 to 508. We had regular and good publicity in the Farnham Herald and in South East Walker. We manned a stall at The Bourne Show to publicise Ramblers and to help in recruitment. We appeared on ITV Meridian as part of their Election coverage.

We continue to be in a healthy financial position even though we have had significant expenditure on rebuilding the website and other PR related costs. Our accounts are disproportionately influenced by our holiday deposits and related members payments but, excluding this, our base assets currently stand at around £4900. For another year, we did not ask for money from Central Office with social and other events generating a small profit.

At our Spring Social in March, over 90 members heard Nick Baxter, one of our members; give a very interesting talk entitled Surrey's Remarkable Range of Habitat about our local area and its inhabitants. Nick explained how the area has changed over many years, how it continues to change and the forces both good and bad driving that change.

We had about 90 members at our AGM where John Hemsley stood down as Chairman after 3 eventful years. John agreed to remain on the Committee for one year to assist in the transition to a new Chairman. Mike Desborough was replaced as Publicity Secretary by Graham Noakes and Geoff Hooker took over from Gerald Turner as Rambles Secretary. Chris Hodge agreed to stay on for a 4th year as Membership Secretary

6 well attended Christmas Lunches were held at the end of walks over the holiday period and 79 members attended a very enjoyable Quiz night in October organised by Chris and Sue Hodge. Members organised 2 very successful holidays during the year. The first was to Canterbury with 45 Ramblers and the second to Swanage with 48 Ramblers.

Alan Buttery – Group Chairman

GODALMING & HASLEMERE

G&H AGM was held on the 21st Nov with 83 members in attendance. Barry Holland stood down as chair after three year tenure completed. Also standing down are Roger Chaddock and David Morris. The AGM elected a new Chair (Jenny Caddy) and two new committee members (Brenda Gingell and Margaret Baker).

Godalming & Haslemere have had another busy year, with 238 regular walks plus a number of specials. The Walk Programme is our major achievement and I want to thank all of the leaders, compilers and the many others who have contributed.

Our specials such as the IOW, Breakfast, Supper, London days and the Christmas Lunch walks are all thriving, thanks to the organisers of those events.

Membership continues to grow, rising by 27 to 441 in Sept 2015.

Surrey County Council has had some staffing problems this year which curtailed our work party activity a little. We carried out 66 man days of work and completed 6 field gates, 1 kissing gate, replaced 5 stiles and removed another, installed a sleeper bridge, 18 way mark posts, 1 handrail and 2 steps and cleared 100s of metres of path. SABRE group have asked for our assistance in setting up a similar work party system.

The social programme has been a busy one. There was the New Year lunch at the Clockhouse. The Photo evening was not held in 2015 but we will be re instating it in March 2016. We have a social evening and quiz coming up on Friday 27th Nov.

As a new venture this year we hosted a visit from the Chinnor U3A walking group who stayed in the Godalming area and joined us for walks, a quiz and a skittles evening. We will be making a visit to Chinnor in 2016.

Jean organised a very successful day's walking for the London Blind Ramblers Group. Thanks to all the volunteer guides who helped out and to Jan & Paul for the tea in their lovely garden afterwards. Heather Dillon and Jenny Winter have generously agreed to take on this task from 2016 and next year's walk will be on 22nd of May.

We had one group holiday this year with HF to Norcia in Umbria. This was another successful trip with an excellent if eccentric hotel.

The coach trips this year were again organised by Beila and take up was 100%. There was an overnight outing to Rye and Hastings which was very successful.

The footpath secretaries (Ian, Jean, and David) monitor activities in the area and around to make sure paths are kept open. Ian continues to try to convince the NT to reopen a path at Winkworth and he has also successfully negotiated a new temporary path around the building work at Milford Hospital. He is even trying to get a brand new path between Mares Hill and Brook.

G&H took a stall at The Blackheath Fete where we raised a record amount of money and helped raise our profile in that part of Surrey. We also attended Brook Fete where we more

than covered our costs. For 2016 we will be back at the Haslemere Charter Fair at the early May Bank Holiday.

I am pleased to report that we have had some new leaders taking up the pleasurable task of organising and leading our walks.

Barry Holland Chairman G&H Ramblers

GUILDFORD

Thank are due to all the committee members, and to Colin Selvin for his work on clearing footpaths and to all the many walk leaders for their invaluable support. Phillip our Secretary has continued to attend meetings of the National Trust Tow Path Users Group and raised issues of concern. Keith Chesterton continues to represent us at county level, where I have been informed he is well known. Kay Hiatt has managed to get an article every fortnight or so into The Guildford Dragon.

Particularly thanks are due to Phillip Mansley for the many years of hard work that he has done on our behalf. Phillip decided to stand down from the committee at the AGM. Lynne Davis was elected to replace him. Bob Gifford was elected to fill the vacancy on the committee. Phillip still has the burden of looking after the 2015 Christmas festivities after which he will still continue as a walk leader.

According to Surrey Area Membership Secretary our membership rose by 4 to 329 members at the end of September relative to 2014. This rise though small is a welcome sign after several years of decline.

There were two attendance records broken for the year ending 30st of September, with both the number of walks (122), and the attendance figures (1931) being the highest ever recorded by Guildford Ramblers. The walks varied between 3 and 15 miles; the average number taking part was 22.6 in midweek and 10.6 at the weekend. 300 people were recorded as going on at least one walk of which only 135 had been Guildford Group members. The total distance covered by participants in the Group's walks was 12,511 miles. 40 members had led walks, 9 new this year. It is also suspected although not recorded that the greatest number of pub lunches were consumed.

The Group took part in Guildford Walkfest 2015 leading 7 walks in this programme, the 9th year it has been run and which has been quite well attended.

Footpath Working Parties: Colin Selvin organised the year's work: with good support from SCC. Volunteers had turned out every month of the year, worked on a total of 2.75 miles of path, erected fingerposts, waymark posts etc., replaced 6 stiles, built 8 metres of boardwalk and cut 21 steps into a steep path to make it safer.

The Group has tried to vary the mid-week walks programme again this year by having walks on a few Tuesdays and Thursdays. Unfortunately this did not prove a great draw to previously inert members, as all who attended had walked frequently on a Wednesday. Some complaints were received that by choosing another day of the week the regular

walkers who set Wednesdays aside were deprived of a walk. Additional mid-week walks are programmed as an experiment in the coming months by adding a mid-month Monday walk, each of which will be somewhat different.

The bat evening walk in September drew a reasonable number of people, who saw upwards of 3 dozen bats. The walk will be repeated in 2016 and by organising it in advance we hope to get along a specialist with a detector. The joint fish & chip evening walk led by Damian Wheeler was most enjoyable. Those attending were all regulars with either Godalming & Haslemere or Guildford groups.

There have been two social events both organised by Phillip – The Christmas Lunch at The Princess Royal in Dunfold not far from Seal was very well attended but we had to share the dining room. This Christmas the whole of the cafe at Roker's which is highly recommended has been booked. The other social event was the summer evening walk in August also organised by Phillip followed by dinner at The Parrott in Shalford.

Our walking break organised by Phillip on the Isle of Wight was very well supported (32 persons) and we were able once again to run two led walks on all 3 walking days.

Names are being taken for next year's break in May at Hay-on-Wye which we hope will once again have sufficient numbers to allow a full programme.

We had a stall organised by Kay at the June Guildford High Street Farmers Market. The occasion went well and we managed to recruit new members.

Special mention is given to Keith Chesterton's feat, to mark his 80th year, of walking from the Admiralty in London to the Naval Yards in Portsmouth along the route of the naval semaphore towers.

Also completed this past year was the Thames Path Walk ably led by Chris Cheverst.

Basil Minor – Group Chairman

KINGSTON

The Group's membership at the end of September 2015 stands at 608 (Sept. 2014 631)

Another good year with 162 walks on offer and whilst there were five 'SORRY, NO LEADER, NO WALK' entries, I think some of these were actioned and thanks to those leaders who took over these gaps.

After last year's plea for more leaders, I am delighted that we have gained 16 new leaders, but sadly we lost Duncan Lawson a few months ago.

So we welcome Ray Dickenson, Steve Corr, Antoinette Coll, Barbara Crow, Des Garrahan (Ramblers Chairman), Helga Foster, Maria Soares, Leslie Packer, John Ayles, Malcolm East, Paul Draper, Richard Wass (Epsom and Ewell), Angela Horrocks, Maggie Wheeler, Mike Johnson and Caroline Loewenstein with open arms.

We welcome to the Committee Paul Draper, our new Webmaster, and David Cooper, our new Footpath Secretary. Another special thanks goes to Brenda Horwill for organising the Kingston Ramblers stand in the Surbiton Festival on Saturday September 26th.

Lastly thanks go to Ruth O'Keeffe and Margaret Taylor for organising the refreshments for this evening and finally a thanks to Linda and Michael Hargrave for hosting our committee meetings.

Some of our members have been taking part in the RA's ongoing Big Pathwatch initiative which aims to get all of the Rights of Way in England and Wales walked and checked. The survey closes at the end of the year. 38 of the squares allocated to Kingston group by Surrey Area have not yet been surveyed.

Martin Lake – Group Secretary

MOLE VALLEY

Membership at the end of the year stood at 423, virtually unchanged from previous year at 424.

A total of 196 walks were organised which included a mixture of half day and full day ranging from 5 miles to 12 miles, mainly circular walks in Mole Valley Area, There were 4 in London, 10 in Sussex and 1 each in Kent and Hampshire. There have been 40 leaders this year. The group has recorded a total of 322 ramblers attended with some from other Ramblers groups and some non-RA members. Wednesday half day walks are still the most popular.

A varied number of Social Events were organised and the Christmas Lunch was held at the Tree on Box Hill and the New Year Lunch at The Drummond, Albury. A Skittles Evening was organised and a coach outing to West Sussex Including 2 linear walks of different length to Uppark and Stanstead House. A group holiday was organised to Peveril in the Peak, a HF Holidays guesthouse, in Dovedale, Derbyshire. Amongst the party were 7 Octogenarians and all managed some of the walks

The Group has had continuing involvement in the organisation of Walk Leaders courses across Surrey Area and new Mole Valley leaders have attended these courses.

The groups' website and been totally reworking. It is now hosted by RA, incorporating an extensive photo gallery and full integration with GWEM. Active involvement of new Webmaster and website subcommittee in keeping content updated and relevant.

There has been a changes of senior group Officers. Main change happened after end of year. Tricia Goodwin stepped down after 3 years and Gordon Lewis was elected as new Chairman at November AGM. Bob Alcock has had to take over as Mole Valley district Footpath officer following the death of Alan Lewis. Rod Romero, as group walking environment, has been monitoring various planning applications which are in around the borough.

Gordon Lewis Group Chairman

REIGATE

It is great that in 2015 the Ramblers Association has received so much publicity – in respect of the Big Pathwatch and Countryfile's "Children in Need" campaign. By comparison, our own spot on a local radio station, Radio SUSY, in March would not have reached so wide an audience – but it did put the name of Reigate Ramblers out on the airwaves of Surrey and Sussex.

Membership remains fairly stable. However we do have a critical shortage in the number of leaders prepared to lead walks for the programme of one midweek and one weekend walk per week. In our current programme requests for "Pop Up" walks has been inserted everywhere there was a gap – five gaps in total. This is proving successful but should not be allowed to become the norm. The average number of walkers out on a walk increased in the past year. There has been 84 Reigate Ramblers out walking and 133 visitors or members of other groups have walked with us.

At last year's AGM a suggestion was made that we try an afternoon walk – which we did and proved very popular so we shall continue to offer the occasional afternoon walk – hopefully ending with tea.

Staffing difficulties at Surrey County Council has meant that our regular footpath maintenance and clearance work has been curtailed. However we have been out cutting back vegetation in Smallfield, Earlswood and Outwood. We have also implemented the procedure for reporting problems to SCC and this has been effective.

Our social events have all been great fun – a skittles night, a quiz night, New Year's lunch and summer dinner. Dates for social occasions next year were advised.

At the beginning of October we went away for a long weekend to Romsey – this was enjoyed by 35 members. Once again the Committee had worked hard to organise the holiday – finding the hotel, leading the walks and organising the entertainment – but it was all made worthwhile seeing the appreciation shown by our members.

Sally Wallace – Group Chair

RICHMOND

The most notable events were the deaths of David Sharp in April and Margaret Sharp who died shortly after. David was a towering figure in the Ramblers, both nationally and locally. He was largely responsible for developing the Thames Path and was a key figure in creating the Capital Ring and the London Loop. David and Margaret were instrumental in setting up the Richmond Ramblers Group in 1982. Our committee decided that we should have our own memorial to both David and Margaret. This would be a bench along the Thames Path near the Sharps' home, with a suitable plaque.

The Group had a reasonable year in which our membership fell slightly. We continued to attract a healthy number of new members (about 50). Our publicity made use of local radio, Facebook, Twitter, posters and leaflets. We also gave away free copies of our guidebook describing rural walks around Richmond. Our re-launched website is attracting an increasing

number of hits. However, we lost too many existing members (about 80). Ten members are also walk leaders for Richmond Health Walks.

Our walk programmes covered Greater London and all surrounding counties. They included long (12 miles) and short (3 miles) walks, country and city walks, evening walks, park and riverside walks, mindfulness walks, poetry walks and a family nature trail. Some members attended walk leader training courses organised by Surrey Area. We organised a full number (155) of mid-week and weekend walks averaging 3 per week over the 12-month period. The number of walkers on the individual walks varied between three and thirty. An analysis of the walk reports showed that 40% of the attendances were from other Ramblers groups and less than 4% were non-members. The weekly Nordic walking sessions continued throughout the year.

The Group Treasurer reported an apparently large surplus for the year because our stamp stock of some £500 was now counted as an asset. The stamps were purchased in advance in the previous period just before a large rise in postage.

The AGM was combined with our Christmas party and held in late November. The New Year Lunch was held once again at the Horton Park Golf Club in January. David Ferguson organised trips to Arras to visit sites of World War I Interest and to the town of Fontainebleau which is twinned with Richmond-upon-Thames.

We had a useful discussion with Zac Goldsmith, the Richmond Park MP, who has since been selected as the Conservative candidate for Mayor of London.

Vic Lewis Secretary, Richmond Group

SABRE

SABRE has walked its way through a successful year. At the beginning of the year we were awarded the Surrey Ramblers Recruitment Cup for being the fastest growing group in Surrey for the second year running. Our membership numbers are now 211 members, an increase of 49 over the past twelve months (30%). Special thanks must go to our growing band of walk leaders with sixteen more walk leaders than last year.

Walks this year include SABRE's fourth anniversary day of walks, The Shipwrights Way and The Vanguard Way. We enjoyed historical themed walks at Salisbury and Oxford and a walk to include Brighton taking in the famous Brighton Pride Carnival. We will also be doing a joint walk with The London Sports Club for the Blind.

Some of our members have, as individuals, taken part in exceptionally tough walks for charitable causes. They include a 100km walk from London to Brighton in aid of the British Heart Foundation and another being a 100km walk along the South Downs for Oxfam's Nepal Appeal.

Notable social events this year have been our annual BBQ a visit to the Clink restaurant in HMP Highdown Sutton, a Mad Hatters Tea Party at Tillings, Gomshall, a great evening playing Top Golf in Addlestone, our annual SABRE Christmas Lunch and SABRE/SAWW Christmas Dinner.

Walking holidays held this past year: the first on the Isle of Wight then later in June in Devon and finally September saw us in Sedbergh in the Yorkshire Dales.

Another contribution to our continued growth is that we promote our group on the internet via our own website, our group page on the Ramblers web site and social media including Meetup, plus word of mouth and recommendation from our members.

Our finances remain healthy with a balance of £498.52 at the end of September 2015. As our membership continues to grow our funding from Ramblers increases and in the past year we had an increased contribution from social events.

So that we can continue to grow on the firm base that we have built over the past 4 years we look forward to recruiting more walk leaders and enthusiastic committee members to carry on with our varied and interesting walks and social programme.

Nigel Woodhead SABRE Chairman

SAWW (Surrey Weekend Walkers)

Surrey Area Weekend Walkers was set up in 2003 with a very defined purpose to be the follow-on group from the highly successful Ramblers 20's and 30's group now called Surrey Young Walkers. . It encouraged people in their 40's and 50's to become Ramblers members (an age band that was sadly lacking in the Ramblers who are mostly retired people) .

SAWW became the first Ramblers mid-age band group in the country and has inspired some 13 other groups to start up around the country.. It was originally so successful it had to close its membership down to new members as we had so many people on our walks (even though we were offering 3 walks every weekend).

Recently (for 3 years) SAWW shared a program with the new all age banded SABRE group that was set up as a follow-on group from SAWW. This meant SAWW rather lost its purpose as an age banded group and SABRE leaders led most of the walks.

In the last year your current committee has re-established SAWW as its own age banded group with an active walks program. We have attracted new Ramblers members (in the target age band) , although we have lost quite a few established members who have transferred to SABRE . We currently have 242 members. We have a new SAWW website that is suitable for smartphones as well as pc's and have started a new Meetup group to promote SAWW which has over 700 members.

I personally will be leaving SAWW after the AGM. I promised to be Chairman this year to re-establish SAWW as an age banded group. This we have achieved with lots of our walkers in the target 35 to 55 age band.

It is therefore with regret that I have to inform you that we have had no nominations for our 2016 committee posts and without a committee this group cannot continue

We also now have insufficient leaders to offer a viable SAWW program to our members and our current program is blank

I would therefore suggest this group is liquidated in accordance with the Ramblers rules.

I'd like to thank all past SAWW Chairmen and Chairwomen. SAWW committee members , our fabulous walk leaders and all our members past and present for supporting this group through the last 12 years .

Gavin Dulley - SAWW Chairman

SURREY HEATH

2015 has been a notable year for Surrey Heath Ramblers because it marks the twentieth anniversary since the Group was set up. In recognition of this milestone, an informal get-together of members old and new was held at the Hartley Wintney Golf Club on the 9th August. In the relaxed and comfortable surroundings of the club, members were able to reminisce about past walks and holidays, aided by a plentiful supply of photo albums and some entertaining videos. In addition to a buffet, an appropriately decorated celebratory cake was ceremonially cut by the Group's current Chairman, Keith Bagot and his predecessor, John Ray, before it was sliced up and served round to all the members present. Other social events supported and enjoyed by the membership were the 2014 Christmas Lunch, a quiz night in February of this year and the Group's annual dinner in April.

The Group's walking programme featured 91 walks, with a mix of both long and short ones in a considered attempt to cater for the needs of as many members as possible. Included in the programme was a walk with the London Blind in April and one to Wellington College in June, where the interesting interiors to some of the buildings were visited in addition to the spacious and well-appointed grounds. In early July, 35 members went by coach to Brockenhurst for a day's walking and such was the favourable response that the Group hopes to repeat the venture next year. A Group holiday in July saw 12 members sail to Norway to take in the scenic delights of that country and a trip to the Wye Valley is planned for October, with 35 members down to go.

Surrey Heath's working party commitments were late starting due mainly to work pressures on a reduced number of countryside staff at Surrey County Council. However, in May, a day of way marker installation and clearance work was carried out on Bagshot Heath, with a day in September spent replacing stiles with wicket/kissing gates at Pennypot Lane, with more improvements to follow at the same location during October and December.

In terms of supporting walking, the Group has written to its local MP, Michael Gove, inviting him out on a walk, but so far nothing has materialised, least of all an MP. BVPI inspections have been undertaken and reported on, while Central Office's Big Pathwatch initiative was brought to the attention of the Group's members via its newsletter.

There have been no changes in the members serving on the Group's committee, nor are there expected to be in the foreseeable future.

Membership of the Group has declined to the 230 mark, which is a disappointment given that we are, by all accounts, a friendly group to walk with. The reduction is also a cause for concern because now that new members of the Ramblers can be allocated to Areas, Surrey

Heath runs the risk of struggling to make good its losses. A restricted inflow of newcomers to the Group means that the pool of potential walks' leaders is inevitably smaller, while the age profile of those already doing this vital job will continue to rise if younger members are not coming through in sufficient numbers to offset the march of time. Over the longer term, this is bound to have an adverse impact on the walks' programme a group can offer and poses a question about the part groups will play in the future structure of the Ramblers' organisation. "Surrey Matters" published by Surrey County Council recently listed 76 walking organisations within the county and even when Ramblers' groups are removed from the list, it still leaves walkers with a fairly wide choice on which to base their walking options. And this ignores the social opportunities that new members will miss by not being allocated to groups. Surrey Heath cannot be alone in identifying these issues with the policy the Ramblers has adopted and it would therefore seem timely for it to be reviewed.

John Russell – Group Secretary

STAINES

Membership at end October was 294 as compared with the previous year's figure of 306. Although we have had a steady stream of new members, nevertheless we do lose members as people leave for a variety of reasons. New members receive a welcoming letter and a copy of the current programme.

We had 33 members lead walks during the year but only 8 were women. 6 members lead 50% of the walks.

New fliers were printed for inclusion in the Ramblers recruitment leaflets to reflect the change in contact details and distributed around the area in a variety of locations including libraries and surgeries. Short walks designed to attract newcomers have had limited success but have been well attended by existing members. Similarly, joining in with the local Walking for Health group has not proved significantly helpful.

A short article on our 25th Anniversary walk and celebrations was written and appeared in the Surrey Advertiser along with a photograph of the cake, and a fuller article was printed in the South East Walker.

We have opened a new bank account at Barclays called the Staines Ramblers – Social A/C which is for our holidays and events such as the Christmas meal. There are two reasons for this. One is that all the funds for these events (receipts and payments) cancel each other out and therefore are of no interest to the Ramblers. The other is to prevent the loss of cheques in the post as happened last October

There were three holidays this year. The first was to Arnside in early June, staying at the Parkside Guest House (Grey Court Holidays) and organised by Bill Grace and attended by 37 members. The second was with Bath & West Country We stayed at the Hatherley Manor Hotel, situated near Gloucester and Cheltenham. The third was in early October staying at the Durrant House Hotel in North Devon near Bideford. This was attended by 38 members and friends of members and was organised by John Gridley.

Neil Meek our footpath officer dealt with several local issues. FP 18 Staines (Moor Lane to Staines Moor over the railway line) – this right of way will remain closed at least until August 2016 as Network Rail have appealed against the local Council decision to re-open it. A diversion is in place.

FP17 Staines (along the Wraysbury River) which had been illegally diverted has been re-instated following intervention by Luke Dawson ROW Officer Surrey County Council (SCC).

Three new footpaths were created in Sunbury in August and included in the Definitive Map. These were Footpaths 83, 84 and 85 Sunbury. However, FP85 was promptly closed for at least six months because of the expansion work at the Spelthorne Recycling Centre at Charlton village.

The Proposal by Brett Aggregates for the extraction of gravel from their Manor Farm site at Laleham was granted by the SCC (as expected) in October 2015. The schedule for the work to commence with any effect upon the right of way, FP30 Staines, through the site has yet to be announced.

Ramblers Big Pathwatch: Unfortunately, due to an oversight, the allocation of squares for the Staines Group to survey was not issued. The Group Committee had in fact concluded that it would be left to the individual members to complete the squares.

On the social side the regular pub evenings and coffee mornings continue, which we all enjoy, together with the occasional social meals out and a well attended Christmas Meal.

Margaret Daborn, Group Secretary

SUTTON & WANDLE VALLEY

Membership at the end of the year was 499 which compares with a figure of 506 at September 2013.

The Group provided 252 walks of which ten were not included in the printed programmes but instead notified to members by email. In addition the weekly short walks around Beddington Park were continued and there were coach trips to Rochester and Winchester. The number of walks was fifteen less than in the previous year. The wettest winter on record had a major impact on walking conditions and many walks had to be curtailed or altered or in some cases a different walk offered. However just one walk was cancelled entirely and this is a testament to the ingenuity of the walks leaders. A further four walks had to be cancelled because leaders were indisposed. There was a further small reduction in the number of leaders, 35 compared with 37 in the previous year, and this is the lowest number of leaders since 2009/10. The number of walks easily reached by public transport decreased slightly from 189 to 183, 76% of all walks. There was a significant change in the pattern of walks with an increase in midweek walks but falls in Saturday and Sunday walks. This continues the trend of previous years as regular walks now take place on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Midweek walks constituted 63% of total walks, the highest ever. Overall, the average number of walkers attending each walk was 13.8 compared with 13.5 in the previous year.

The two national walking festivals, the Festival of Winter Walks and Get Walking Week were well supported by our leaders who put on a total of fifteen walks between them.

The Group planned to run stalls at the Environmental Fair at Morden Hall in July and the Carshalton Fair on August Bank Holiday but unfortunately the latter stall had to be cancelled because of the atrocious weather. There was a lot of interest at Morden Hall with a good take-up of leaflets and programmes but did not lead to an increase in membership.

The Group maintained the number of social events in the programmes with twenty seven in the year, the same as in the previous year. These included meals, films, a barn dance, a Christmas get together and no less than nineteen tours around museums, houses and even a cemetery. The New Year luncheon at the Rubbing House on Epsom Downs was very well attended and in general the social events were all well supported and it is hoped to continue to supplement the walks programme in this way.

Our annual walk with the London Blind Walkers' Association was organised and the walk was a success with fifteen Group members accompanying members of the Association.

Peter Rogers –Group Chairman

SYG (Surrey Young Walkers)

This year SYW has had another successful year, with members receiving a monthly newsletter and updates on key events that have happened throughout the year. We started the year with a change of name from Surrey Under 40s Ramblers to Surrey Young Walkers.

With this we spend most of the year creating a new website which was re-launched at our AGM on Saturday 24th October 2015. The new website is designed to be easy to use on tabs/mobiles and any type of computer. The website other main feature is that we now only allow members to log in using their membership number or social media log in e.g. Facebook. This means that only members see all events and that it reminds members when they haven't renew their membership, for us it also means that we have less work with updates.

We have had a full programme of events though-out the year on every weekend – members had a walks/socials or even both some weekends. We had number of weekends away over the course of the year. We went to Jersey in late May for an extra long weekend, then a camping trip to Ivinghoe. Off to Cambridge in September for a D.I.Y break and rounding the year off with Xmas Party weekend in Bath.

We also had a number of feature walks though-out the year, we did the first two parts of the North Downs Way ending in the pub in Merstham after walking 25.5 miles. Our bonfire walk around Brockham this Saturday which starts and ends in the dark stopping in the middle to watch the fireworks.

To encourage members to continue to support SYW by leading walks, organising social events and serve on the committee, we once again held a Contributor evening which was well received. This year we focused on awarding new walk leaders in an effort to encourage more members to lead walks. The efforts seem to be working as there have been quite a few new walk leaders leading walks on the programme this year. We hope that in the year ahead this trend will continue.

I'd like to express my sincere appreciation to all of the committee of the past year. Some roles on the committee are more time-consuming than others so thank you to those who have put in a lot of hours towards the successful running of SYW. Also, to all the members who support SYW by leading walks and organising social events, without everyone playing their part as volunteers it wouldn't be the great group that it is, so a huge thank you to you all.

Holly Matthews, SYW Chair

WOKING

Active walks programme with a full day ramble nearly every weekend. (usually Sundays) plus a half-day short ramble midweek (the day is variable). Attendances varied from 16 to zero. 66 out of 200+ Woking members attended rambles throughout the year, and we had 127 visitors from other Groups. We continue to encourage car-sharing from Woking to rural car parks. We still have too few walks leaders, but there has been more interest in and more members attending the Area's walks leaders' courses.

One unusual event in July was a 25-mile overnight walk from Petersfield to Amberley along the South Downs Way. Everyone finished! We also organised a Big Pathwatch Day instead of our normal ramble one Sunday in August, but weather and attendance was poor.

16 new members joined during the year, but there was still a net loss of 8.

Footpath Secretary keeps members updated on rights of way matters via Group Newsletter. Biggest problem is Pigeonhouse Bridge over River Wey near Ockham Mill – the bridge abutments were undermined during the floods two winters ago and Surrey County Council deemed the bridge unsafe for public use.

We conducted a survey of members during the year to find out what they wanted from the Group. Most notable finding was from members now either too old or with health problems that made even a 5 mile walk too long for them. Group Committee will be addressing this with introduction of shorter, slower, easier walks.

Brian Reader – Group Chairman.

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AREA OFFICERS (as of January 2016)

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