

The Ramblers:

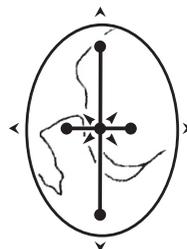
MERSEYSIDE AND WEST CHESHIRE AREA

Founded in 1922

Registered Charity No: 1093577



ramblers
at the heart of walking



ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2017

The object of the association is to encourage rambling and mountaineering, to foster a greater love, knowledge and care for the countryside and to work for the preservation of natural beauty, the protection of footpaths and the provision of access to open countryside.

President: Mr Charlie Walker
Vice –Presidents: Mrs Shelagh Fletcher
Mr Neil Hogan
Miss Irene Shipley
Mrs Vi Williams

Treasurer: Mr Peter Brindley
Footpath Secretary: Mrs Ingrid Donakey
Access Officer: Mr John Mason
Area News Editor: Mrs Pat Sullivan
Auditor: Mr Des Platt

AREA OFFICERS:

Chair: Mr Gordon Bell
Vice-Chair: Vacant
Secretary: Mrs Maggie Hems

CHALET OFFICERS:

Trustees: Mr Rodney Fletcher
Mr Neil Hogan
Miss Margaret Parry

Chair: Mr Peter Brindley
Secretary: Mr Rodney Fletcher

MERSEYSIDE AND WEST CHESHIRE AREA LOCAL GROUPS

Group Chairs and Secretaries post 2017 AGMs

CESTRIAN GROUP:

Chairperson: Mr T. Walsh

Secretary: Mrs H. Holyoak, Oakhurst, Fiddlers Lane, Saughall CH1 6DH

LIVERPOOL GROUP:

Chairperson: Mrs P. Sullivan

Secretary: Ms Janet Hudson, *janetineliverpool@gmail.com*

SOUTHPORT GROUP:

Chairperson: Mr D. Brown

Secretary: Pam Ashton, 7 Argarmeols Road, Formby L37 4BS

ST HELENS GROUP:

Chairperson: Mr H Waring , 8 Berkshire Gardens, St Helens, WA10 3XP

Secretary: None

WIRRAL GROUP:

Chairperson: Mr G Clarke

Secretary: Mrs L Francis, 15 Furrocks Lane, CH64 6EB
info@wirralramblers.org.uk

20's -30's YOUNG WALKERS:

Chairperson: Mr Ed Holden

Secretary: Ellie Farnworth, *eleanor.farnworth@btinternet.com*

PUBLIC RAMBLES:

Chairperson: Mr Neil Campbell

Secretary: Mrs I. Donakey, 43 Holmfield Avenue, Liverpool L19 3PL

Area Secretary's Report

It seems to have been a much quieter year this year, our representatives at the General Council reported it as quiet and amicable, the new CEO, Vanessa seems to be settling in well and the election of Stuart Maconie as the new President has been popular especially with our Northern members; I suppose packed lunches will now consist of Gregs' pies!

The latest thing to come to light is the 800 year old Charter of the Forest signed in 1217 by Henry 111, it gave commoners the rights to walk, graze livestock and collect firewood in the royal forests and on common land. It is hard to think that these rights were granted in the middle ages and have since been seriously eroded by the Enclosure Acts. Here we are 800 years later still trying to affirm our rights to roam in our countryside. This shows that we still need to be vigilant and maintain our rights so if you are asked, please add your name to the list of those wishing to keep our rights of access, to the Charter of the Forest. It must also be evident to many that the land annexed by the lords has not necessarily been well cared for, so there are many more campaigns against abusing our environment which we as Ramblers endorse.

We have a good system of pathways in our Area, most of them well walked by locals in groups or even people on their own, we rely on you and our footpath secretaries to keep an eye on them as you will see in their reports. We rely on everyone to report blocked paths to get

them fixed and to show how much they are valued and used.

Our groups also take walks outside our Area in the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding National Beauty or just interesting places; on day trips, short breaks and longer holidays. As you will see these visits are all open to all members to join in and all will be welcome; our group reports here describe those they have been on this year. Our main difficulty is often getting leaders to take the walks, so if you have a favorite walk why not try showing it to others by leading. We also have a welcome report this year from one of our affiliated groups, it is good to hear from them, it would be good to hear from more and see the greater variety of walks on offer in our Area.

Another ongoing campaign at the moment is to accommodate cyclists on footpaths; there have been several motions in General Council wanting to stop cyclists or relegate them to bridleways which are their rights of way. At the moment, the RA is trying to look at this more on a case by case basis; upgraded footpaths and tracks will take both cyclists and walkers whilst small field boundary tracks wont, we don't want these to be eroded by wheeled traffic. One of our earlier campaigns had been to stop off road vehicles churning up Byways Open to All Traffic(BOATs). Forestry roads are now being advertised as having cycling tracks, people can enjoy them either on bikes or by walking, the thing is to be careful and give room to other

Area Secretary's Report (cont)

forms of locomotion, after all most roads are now far too congested to be used safely by both walkers and cyclists.

Most groups are now looking at giving out information electronically, the only problem with this being that there are so few people with enough expertise and time to man the websites. Dave Beacher is still trying to get an Area website going but with precious little help; some of the groups have just basic websites but all this still needs help from those in the know so we are still appealing for helpers here. The Wirral Group now feel that they can post all their information on their website and dispense with "hard copies" as they have a good website going, however this does penalise the "computer illiterates" who are still members. Most charities will now send out electronic and paper copies of AGM Reports and information to their members, but they need to be informed of the preferred method by their members. They have people with the expertise on how to do block emailing, as does the Ramblers Head Office to those of us who receive regular updates from them, other information has to be obtained from their website or the Walk magazine. If you have not received hard copies of your local information and you want it sent, you will need to inform your Group Secretary, the cost for this is covered as part of your subscriptions. Some of us may prefer hard copies as a lot of information can get buried in spam, besides the print on my i-phone gets too small!

Here's to another year of happy walking

MAGGIE HEMS
Area General Secretary

Liverpool Group Report

Ramblers Liverpool Group has again had a very successful year this is as ever the result of the very hard work and dedication of a small number of members. The four meetings of our General Committee over the year have monitored all aspects of the Group. The reports from the sub committee secretaries have shown good attendance at all our various activities and an increasing public interest in our Group. Our Treasurer has monitored our sound finances.

So as a Group we thank all those people who have organised walks and activities for us all to enjoy: the secretary of the recreation committee for organising all the trips and events especially this past year when his health has often not been brilliant; our secretary for Tuesday rambles for organising this very popular programme and particularly during this last winter for making welcome a young walker with special needs; our secretary for Sunday rambles for running this extensive program, which takes us into four national parks every month, so efficiently, safely and enjoyably and through it bringing us new members some from as far afield as Iran, Pakistan, Canada, Palestine, Hong Kong and China as well as Europe; our social secretary for the sound management of our Thursday evening club nights which give members a further chance to meet and which I know is greatly appreciated by some who cannot do the walks so much anymore. Finally thanks go to all the members of the sub committees who have contributed to the range and success of our activities.

In addition to these thanks, at our October AGM we presented our Tuesday Rambles

Secretary, Beryl Wilson, with the Ramblers Award for Services to Walking in recognition and appreciation of her many years (there was some dispute as to how many decades!) organising these walks and also keeping the walkers happy and in good order.

These activities are the main work of our Group but a fair bit more goes on behind the scenes. Our Group Secretary for the past five years is now stepping down. We thank her for all she has done to look after members and deal with our administration. Our Treasurer has monitored and kept us informed about our finances and kept them in good order and we give him much thanks for continuing this very important work. Our auditor has for many years carried out this mandatory task for which we are grateful. Our Footpaths Officer, new to the role this year, promptly got down to the task and has dealt most efficiently and effectively with enquiries from the public and kept the Group and Area well informed on footpath issues. Thanks go to him for his considerable input.

In addition to our regular Group activities this year we organised Festivals both of Winter and of Spring Walks. These walks, led by Group members, have been popular and well attended so we now intend to continue this as an annual tradition. We will follow the date outline set by the Ramblers and will offer nine walks over this coming Christmas and New Year. The Spring Festival will follow at the end of May and beginning of June. The two programmes will be publicised locally including in the press and on the radio. We are using a small amount of our reserves to advertise these festivals.

In June we had a trip to Hull to join its celebrations as Capital of Culture. We were

hosted by the local Ramblers who led us on a selection of interesting walks on what was the hottest day of the year. If there is interest we will continue these annual walking days to other cities which, apart from taking us to new and interesting places, introduces us to other Ramblers and brings our own Group members together.

One further plan we have in place for the year ahead is to hold a walk leaders' day. The aim will be to gather together our current walk leaders as well as encourage some new ones. We will discuss issues affecting the conduct of our walks, share ideas, revisit our Walk Leaders Guidelines and refresh them where necessary. Finally I can report that the General Committee has again agreed to reward anyone who has done 6 Sunday walks in the past 6 months with a free walk during the winter programme.

Liverpool Group membership stands steady at around 700 people. We know that during the past year over 400 people have taken part in our Sunday or Tuesday walks plus our other activities. So with such a large and active Group there is no reason why one person should have to hold three jobs as has been the case for some time now. We still need a webmaster or manager. Our auditor has informed me that he will step down after this year so we will definitely need to fill that position at the next AGM. None of the officer roles is a job for life so we are asking all members to take a turn at contributing to the running of our successful Group

PAT SULLIVAN
Chair, Liverpool Group

Liverpool Group Footpaths Report

During the last year I have received notice from The Department for Transport and Liverpool City Council of Proposed stopping up of roads and paths in the Edge Hill, Edge Lane, Lodge Lane and Dingle areas of the city, all to enable redevelopment.

I received notice from Ramblers Head Office, Pathwatch, of a footpath with broken fencing, garden rubbish and dense nettles blocking the passage. This path, PROW 45 is across Woolton golf course to Hillfoot Road. I reported this problem to the council via their website. It has now been cleared of rubbish and the nettles cut back. It also now has a footpath sign pointing the way across the golf course.

During August I learnt of PROWs 36 & 37 in Aigburth being overgrown and unusable. I reported this to LCC and received an email replying that they had ordered and paid for a vegetation cut for the whole of the PROW network. This was scheduled to take place in September and October. The paths are now improved.

I received emails from three members of the public concerning a path from Menlove Avenue to Allerton Manor Golf Club. This path has been fenced off for approximately one year. One person had already asked that for an Evidence Pack from LCC to show this path has been used historically without obstacles or prohibiting signage. I have shared their emails, with permission, to each other. They can now add their names and evidence to the pack. I also emailed the manager of the golf club to

inform him of the concern caused to many people. He replied that he had sought advice from LCC and was advised that this was not a PROW. So he has closed it on safety grounds as there is ground work going on in that area. The other PROWs on site have been kept open and in good repair.

On 29TH September I attended a Merseyside local access forum (MLAF) meeting in Huyton municipal building. The Cleveleys to Liverpool section of the English coastal path is now in the 'Proposals in Development' stage. The actual route of the path can now be discussed and agreed with stakeholders including land owners.

The Planning Inspectorate has informed The Gateacre Society that their Right of Way Claim in respect of the path from Acrefield Road to Woolton Park, via Glenacres and Byron Court, is to be the subject of a Public Inquiry starting on 27th March 2018. The venue will be Woolton Golf Club, and anyone with a view to express will be invited to attend. If you have used the path on a regular basis at any time over the past 50 years, and would be prepared to give evidence at the Inquiry as one of our 'witnesses', please contact Mike Chitty as soon as possible. Here is a link to the article: <http://www.liverpool.ndo.co.uk/gatsoc/news17/page32.html>

JOHN MASON
Liverpool Group Footpaths Secretary

Southport Group Report

This has been a mixed year, still with a disappointing turnout on walks. However a number of new walk leaders have been recruited which is helping to take the load off long serving leaders. We now usually have 38 seater coach but sometimes due to low numbers we have a 36 seater, which saves the group £25 each time. But it does mean that there are fewer seats available for anyone delaying their booking until the last moment. Once again the weekends away are proving very successful along with the bi-annual social meals at the Southport and Birkdale Sports club. Future trips are planned to Ripon and the Isle of Man, and a large group from the club are booked on a Ramblers Holiday to Majorca.

As far as money is concerned there is no real problem. Our accounts are still in balance although the number of bookings on the coach is 740 which is a reduction of 75 on last year. However the loss on the coach was only £14 as opposed to £936.83 last year. This is mainly due to walk leaders not claiming expenses. A very generous anonymous donation of £250 has also helped with our bank balances. There is little movement on the social account this year apart from the weekend to Litchfield and the 2 dinners.

Since the last AGM three committee meetings have been held. Minutes have been taken and circulated on the coach. We are worried about the declining membership and low numbers booking on walks and are therefore investigating creating a web page to advertise the walks and membership more effectively.

Next summer's programme is completed in record time, but with many leaders

leading four or more walks there is still a need for others to step-up and try their hand at leading.

This year's Christmas walk will be on Saturday 30th December, and will be in the Ainsdale woods.

The Footpath Officer is pursuing these three issues:

1. Trails such as The Velvet Trail and the Jubilee Trail are in a poor state. The Sefton Rangers have noted it.
2. Fishermans Path Railway Crossing – a chicane with self-closing gates at both ends has been installed. The intention is to make people think about approaching trains rather than crossing in a dream. There is a notice asking people to keep their dog on a lead but no notice asking people not to wear headphones while crossing!
3. English Coastal Path – the section from Freckleton to Hesketh Bank is at the route finding stage. There will be a meeting at Hesketh Bank on 22nd November to inform local people about it. From Hesketh Bank the path will go to the Pier Head, over to the Wirral and on to meet the Welsh Coastal Path.

Membership for the group is now at 177 at the end of September.

All **existing officers** were re-elected by a block vote at the AGM.

PAM ASHTON
Southport Group Secretary

Merseyside Young Walkers Group Report

We have had a good year. There have been some popular weekends away in Bunkhouses in Crainlarich and the Mold Chalet. We also held a camping weekend in Braithwaite in the Lake District which went down well. In October, we joined up with Merseyside Dogs Home and helped them (and some of their dogs) do a sponsored walk up Snowdon. It was great to share our love of walking with new people, some of whom had not climbed a mountain before, and support a good cause.

On the social side, we've had some very memorable events including paddle-boarding in the docks and a social night in a Bavarian-style beerhouse in Liverpool. Our book club also continues to thrive.

In the Spring, we held an on-line survey for our members, asking them for feedback on lots of different aspects of the club. The overall feedback was very encouraging; our members feel that the range of walks we offer is good and they enjoy the social aspects a lot. We were also able to learn things; such as the fact that a large number of our members would prefer to walk on Saturdays sometimes whereas we typically arrange walks on Sundays. This kind of information has been great to feed into the 2018 schedule. The minibus has been ever-popular, in fact it has been increasingly over-subscribed in the past few months; we encourage our members who do not secure a place on the minibus to use our on-line form to arrange lift shares. We will consider our options over the next few months if the very high demand continues.

Thank you to all our members for their support and participation during the past 12 months.

ELLIE FARNWORTH
Young Walkers Chair

Treasurer's Report

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30th SEPTEMBER 2017

The Balance Sheet & Income/Expenditure forms part of this report.

The General Reserve now stands at £4,978.48 (£4,325.56 at 30/9/16)

The Chalet had a very good year and made a surplus of **£525.49 (£802.87 in 2015/16)** which was transferred to the Chalet Reserve Fund.

The Chalet Reserve now stands at £2,743.65 (£2,218.16 at 30/9/16).

The Chalet Improvement Fund now stands at £6,604.78 (£6,604.78 as at 30/9/16)

The Public Rambles had a great year and made a **surplus of £724.58, (£1,162.47 in 2015/16)**. During the year a total of **£401.00** was reimbursed to customers on some trips. The payments were £1 or £2 per customer, thus reducing the potentially large surplus on these trips. Five First Aid Kits **£80.75** were purchased and given to the Walk Leaders. Seven donations of £50 each were made to community WCs which are in areas where members of our Groups/Public Rambles walk.

The Public Rambles Reserve now stands at £7,423.70 (£6,699.12 in 2015/16).

Special Project Fund. It was agreed at the October 2016 Area Committee meeting to refund St. Helens Group **£174** from this fund which they paid the Area towards the St Helens area project in 2015/16. This leaves the SPF balance as at 30th September 2017 as £2,303.64. The majority of this will be spent in December 2017 on the Ron Gordon Way in Aughton.

I would like to thank all Group Treasurers for their assistance in 2016/17. I would also like to thank Des Platt for examining the accounts.

PETER BRINDLEY
Area Treasurer
December 2017

RAMBERS ASSOCIATION - MERSEYSIDE AND WEST CHESHIRE AREA.
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30TH SEPTEMBER 2017

	<u>30/9/17</u>		<u>30/9/16</u>
INCOME			
Subscriptions Received	6,538.20		7,438.08
Interest (Unity A/C)	0.00		15.19
Head Office (Room hire special meeting)	0.00		40.00
	<u>6,538.20</u>		<u>7,493.27</u>
EXPENDITURE			
Area News Printing & post	746.04		1,228.75
Annual Report Printing & post	1,690.90		1,729.60
Stationery/postage/ink/mileage	13.20		24.70
National Conference	0.00		0.00
Footpath Expenses.	2.18		7.05
Group allocations	2,757.20		3,157.08
Room Hire	193.80		135.00
Donations & Subscriptions	72.50		50.00
Conf. & Meeting Expenses	99.46		311.55
Committee Expenses	310.00		170.00
Sundries #	0.00		0.00
	<u>5,885.28</u>		<u>6,813.73</u>
Surplus (- Deficit)		<u>652.92</u>	<u>679.54</u>
CHALET ACCOUNT			
Rents Received	2,675.00		3,057.00
Donations	119.86		72.60
	<u>2,794.86</u>		<u>3,129.60</u>
Electricity charges	691.00	698.00	
Less contributions received	464.48	226.52	570.00
Coal	103.50		226.75
Less contributions received	97.10	6.40	215.10
Repairs		106.66	348.34
Insurance		1,310.16	1,209.95
Rates & Water		287.68	264.23
Sundries		331.95	364.56
	<u>2,269.37</u>	<u>525.49</u>	<u>2,326.73</u>
Expenses			<u>486.11</u>
CHALET IMPROVEMENT FUND			
Coach Receipts	<u>16,858.50</u> #		<u>16,286.92</u> ##
Less Coach Hire	12,600.00	11,260.00	
Publicity and tickets	320.00	320.00	
PR Admin exps	551.17	583.35	
Donations (7 x £50 WCs)	350.00	0.00	
First Aid kits	80.75	157.30	
Room hire	180.00	180.00	
Reckie/Grat/Taxi/Bus /Car pkg	1,651.00	1,618.80	
Customer reimbursements	401.00	1,005.00	
	<u>16,133.92</u>	<u>15,124.45</u>	
Surplus for the year		<u>724.58</u>	<u>1,162.47</u>
SPECIAL PROJECT FUND	<u>1,076.07</u>		
Balance B/fwd	2,477.64	3,303.64	
St.Helens Group	0.00	174.00	
	<u>2,477.64</u>	<u>3,477.64</u>	
Less Steve Prescott memorial	-174.00	-1,000.00	
	<u>2,303.64</u>		<u>2,477.64</u>

#Does not include £1,027 for walks in 2017/18 ## Does not include £1,392 for walks in 2016/17

RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION - MERSEYSIDE AND WEST CHESHIRE AREA
BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30/9/17

	<u>30/09/2017</u>	<u>30/9/16</u>	
<u>Assets</u>			
Cash at bank -Current Account	5,390.55	5,086.61	
Unity Bank	19,690.70	18,630.65	
Chalet	0.00	0.00	
	<u>25,081.25</u>	<u>23,717.26</u>	
<u>Payments in Advance & Debtors</u>			
Selwyns (Coach hire)	0.00	0.00	
Chalet Insurance	0.00	0.00	
<u>Less liabilities</u>			
Advance Coach Bookings	1,027.00	1,392.00	
<u>TOTAL NETT ASSETS</u>	<u>24,054.25</u>	<u>22,325.26</u>	
<u>Represented by</u>			
<u>General Reserve</u>			
as at 1st October	679.54	0.00	
Surplus/Deficit	652.92	679.54	
	<u>1,332.46</u>		<u>679.54</u>
<u>Chalet Reserve</u>			
as at 1st October	-1,197.13	0.00	
Surplus	525.49	802.87	
Transfer to Imp.Fund	0.00	-2,000.00	
	<u>-671.64</u>		<u>-1,197.13</u>
<u>Public Rambles Reserve</u>			
as at 1st October	1,162.47	0.00	
Surplus	724.58	1,162.47	
	<u>1,887.05</u>		<u>1,162.47</u>
<u>Chalet Improvement Fund</u>			
as at 1st October	1,513.89	0.00	
less Improvements	0.00	486.11	
Transfer from Chalet Reserve.	0.00	2,000.00	
	<u>1,513.89</u>		<u>1,513.89</u>
<u>Special Project Fund (SPF)</u>			
As at 1st October	-826.00	0.00	
From St.Helens Group	0.00	174.00	
less payments	-174.00	-1,000.00	
	<u>-1,000.00</u>		<u>-826.00</u>
	<u>3,061.76</u>		<u>1,332.77</u>

Cestrian Group Report

I have recently returned from a holiday in Toronto, Canada, visiting family members. Whilst there I was able to enjoy walks along some of the many trails that have been created all over Ontario, including the Rouge River Park, the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges. I was impressed by the range and accessibility of the trails and the groups and associations using them.

It was also an opportunity to reflect upon the great footpaths network here in Britain and the important work carried out by The Ramblers Association in promoting its availability and use. There are many reasons why we should support the RA and many advantages in belonging to an RA group. The RA mounts regular campaigns to maintain access to our large and historic network of footpaths, such as the Right to Roam campaign a decade or two ago. At the present time much work is being carried out to open up the coastal footpath network. There are also the legal processes to prevent the closure of long established footpaths within estates and farmland across the country. At a club level there is the opportunity of taking part in so many walks in the rich and diverse landscape of our region and of enjoying the company of like minded ramblers.

Over the past 12 months our Cestrian Group has provided walks in Snowdonia, Shropshire, Derbyshire, Anglesey, the Clwydian Hills, The Berwyns, the Vale of Llangollen, the Sefton coast and many locations in Cheshire and the Wirral. Four day breaks this year have taken place in Criccieth (in May) and the White Peak area of Derbyshire (in September). It is nearly 20

years since we walked the Limestone Way., it was the first of the September walking breaks. The Wednesday evening walks have continued throughout the summer. Some were part of the Wirral Festival of Walks. We enjoyed a fine summer evening walk to Hilbre Island, for the first time for a number of years and spotted seals and many wading birds. The mid- week walks continue to be popular especially when there is a pub lunch waiting at the end of the walk.

Wildlife Wanders organised by Mary Jones and Neil Lewis have taken place at Aberduna, Whixall Moss and Woolston Eyes (where the group spotted some rare Black Necked Grebes)

A major achievement this year has been the completion of the third survey of the 1194 footpaths in our patch. (411 miles in total) This started in November 2014 and finished this August. Thanks must go to Rod Warrington for organising each walk and for the provision of maps. Rod has an encyclopaedic knowledge of each of the paths we have walked and of the various issues that have arisen. Thanks must also go to Richard Whitty for his contribution to the project and to the regular members of the footpaths team for their hard work in cutting back and clearing overgrown vegetation. Richard has also been in regular contact with the footpath team at CWAC over various footpaths issues and has organised twice yearly meetings with their officers.

A successful club depends upon a hard working committee and regular meetings have taken place at Mollington Banastre Hotel to deal with club business, including

Cestrian Group Footpaths Report

Our regular maintenance walks every three weeks were continued up to the end of August when our 3rd Footpaths survey of the 412 miles of footpaths in our area was completed. Problems found were reported to CWaC. Since the end of August no footpaths work has been done and we asked CWaC in our October review meeting for guidance in regard to our future programme. We have a continuing dialogue with CWaC on this subject but it is somewhat problematical due to the lack of available funding and manpower to carry out remedial works. Hopefully we will restart our monitoring and maintenance programme in January 2018.

Six Footpath Diversions/Changes have been notified to Cestrian Ramblers by CWaC to which we had no objections. Two other Diversions have been confirmed.

The dispute in Beeston over the route of a footpath has not as yet been resolved and the matter will probably be decided by the Planning Inspectorate.

The situation regarding the footpath closures by Network Rail in Dodleston & Pulford is as yet unresolved. RA Head Office were contacted in 2016 but appeared only able to offer moral support. Network Rail have applied for and received extensions of the footpaths closures across the rail lines until May 2019. It seems unlikely that there will be any increase in train speed on the railtrack in the immediate future. We have therefore requested that CWaC consider the reopening of the relevant footpaths across the rail tracks.

this year's AGM. Committee members have contributed to club affairs by attending Area meetings, maintaining the web site, publicising for our walking programme and managing our finances. A special thanks must go to Helen Holyoak for all the hard work she puts into the club administration. We also hosted the Area AGM at Upton Village Hall in March and provided some of the Area officers with a walk around the Countess of Chester Hospital country park.

Another thank you must go to Mike and Jenny Stelfox for producing the twice yearly programme and to Jenny and Pam Linty for organising the meals out (including the summer evening meal on the barge from the Mill Hotel Chester.)

Finally I would like to thank all those who have contributed in any way to the walking programme of our group especially all our walk leaders.

Tony Walsh
Cestrian Chairperson

Cestrian Ramblers have been in contact with Natural England regarding the North West Coastal Path. In September this year we surveyed the short stretch in our area and submitted a report to Natural England.

As in previous years programmed walks have evidenced footpaths issues in areas outside of CWaC. These issues have been reported to the relevant local authority for attention.

RICHARD WHITTY
Cestrian Group Footpaths Officer
- Nov 28th 2017

Wirral Group Report

2017 has been a quieter year for Wirral Ramblers. Membership has remained steady in the light of increased membership fees and much cheaper and plentiful alternatives, this must be seen as a positive.

Careful management of our Sunday coaches has reduced losses considerably in comparison with last year. However, the number of people using the Sunday coach has fallen again although only slightly.

It is a similar tale for our clubroom meetings. Declining attendances and increased costs will result in a reduction in the frequency of our meetings to once a fortnight in 2018. This change was agreed by a substantial percentage of our regular attendees.

Our mid-week and evening walks continue to be very popular although we do not intend to continue with the B+ walks on Wednesdays. During May, numbers swelled on the evening walks by virtue of our participation in the very successful annual Wirral Walks Festival.

The new website has been a great success with most new members discovering our club via this source. Our thanks go to John Bovill for his early work in instigating this project and then to Terry McKenna for maintaining the impetus and also to our committee members who have had to adapt to the many changes.

We welcomed a new Social Secretary II to our committee this year and the club has benefitted from a regular and varied programme of events organised by Marcela, from canoeing to bowling, orienteering to crazy golf, amongst many other activities, she has kept us all on our toes.

Our usual trip to Nerja was exceptionally well attended this year and a good time was had by all. Our members got together for other trips to Pitlochry, the Yorkshire Wolds and a bunkhouse weekend in Snowdonia.

We've had a busy year concerning footpaths. Steve Martin has created our own database of Wirral footpaths a la Pathwatch. It is intended to maintain this with annual updates and any problems being reported to our Wirral Rights of Way Officer.

The English Coastal Path Project has now reached the Wirral and we will be keeping an eye on its progress.

At General Council this year, two motions were passed opposing the sharing of all of the footpath network with other than pedestrians. We asked the Area to support these motions. Ramblers must not be complacent in view of vigorous campaigns being conducted by organisations such as Cycling UK.

As always, the club, and its members individually, have contributed to and supported many other charities this year; Claire House, Christmas boxes, Macmillan Cancer Research and Epilepsy Action to name just a few.

I am lucky to have a great committee to work with and I thank them all for their involvement. Sarah Head, Steve Martin and John Bovill are standing down this year but I am sure all Wirral Ramblers appreciate the work that they have done. We will be welcoming, John Baker and Terry McKenna into the fold as committee member and website manager respectively.

Ramblers awards this year, were presented to John Ackerman, John Bovill, Steve Martin and Terry McKenna for the effort they have put into time consuming tasks which go largely unnoticed.

Overall, we have had a busy year with our usual full walking programmes, entertaining clubroom evenings and plenty of extracurricular activities. Thank you to all our members who have been involved to make this possible and maintain Wirral Ramblers as one of the best walking clubs.

It just remains for me to wish all our fellow Groups in the Merseyside and West Cheshire Area all the best for 2018.

GORDON CLARKE
Chair, Wirral Group

WIRRAL RIGHTS OF WAY SURVEY 2017: SUMMARY OF REPORTED PROBLEMS										
DISTRICT	Reported Infrastructure Problems				Reported Path Problems					TOTAL
	Signage	Gates/ Stiles	Bridges	Steps	Walking surface	Vegetation	Obstructions	Farm Animals	Litter	
BIRKENHEAD	13	2			4			1		20
BEBINGTON	10	3			5	4	1		4	27
DEESIDE	6				3	4				13
HOYLAKE	7	1	3		1	3	1		1	17
WALLASEY	3				1	1			2	7
TOTAL	39	6	3	0	14	12	2	1	7	84

St Helens Group Report

We held our AGM on 1st November. This found us in a similar situation to last year, ie a group of regular long term members with numbers falling this year from 150 to 140 and few new recruits. Information from General Council and other groups, including across Europe, indicate that this position is far from unique.

The consensus is that we should continue to enjoy our walking, visiting the many areas of beautiful countryside accessible to us and welcoming others who wish to join us. With this aim, we have participated in a Health & Wellbeing Day at St Helens College, and will carry on advertising in the local press and by local poster displays. We will also make more use of our Facebook page and offer more midweek walks lasting about 4 miles or 2 hours, with a pub meal at the end; these have already brought some older members back into the fold, besides being a good starting point for new prospective members. Our group is also looking forward to forging new links with other groups in our Area, by making use of the new Area website to advertise our walks and to see where other groups are going; this can only be a good thing all round.

From January our coach walks will be reduced to one or two a month, with more emphasis on public transport and car outings; this is due to falling support for the coaches, which we cannot afford to keep running half empty. We hope we can encourage more people to support the coaches if they are seen as a less frequent treat, and they might like to bring some

non walkers along, who may become walkers. We will also review some of the venues we visit, to try to include places that can be enjoyed by non walkers as well; we will have had a trip to Chatsworth in December, with an optional walk. The main thing is to balance our books and continue to provide good value for money along with friendship, good humour and the opportunity to walk in places which would otherwise be inaccessible to many people.

An important local task was finally completed during this year, namely the survey of the 120 miles of public rights of way in the St Helens borough; the last of the sheets were handed in to our council ROW officer, James Widdop. He thanked us for our help in this, which he could never have done unaided.

We are still fortunate in having a wonderful asset; our dedicated walk leaders and committee members (some with a foot in both camps, so to speak), and we thank them all.

CAROL WALSH
St Helens Minutes Secretary

Freshfield Group Report

In 2017 Walks Leaders again rose to the challenge of finding routes new to the club, through beautiful countryside that is no more than a two hour drive away. From the Forest of Bowland to North Wales, the Lakeland fells and gentler byways of South Cumbria, the walks offered an amazing variety of views and terrain.

The Lake District of course is always popular. April saw the A Party walkers head out, in bright sunshine, from Braithwaite up onto Outerside, to Sail and then Scar Crag, the perfect lunch spot, before following the ridge to scramble down Causey Pike to Skelgill to join the Cumbria Way to Keswick. At 2,300 feet of ascent over 12 miles it was a challenging walk but the rewards were the stunning views of Skiddaw and Bassenthwaite.

That same day B & C Parties walked the disused railway line out of Keswick to Castlerigg Stone Circle beneath Blencathra, before following different routes, to Ashness Bridge and Surprise view, joining again by Derwent Water for the final stretch to Keswick on the lakeside path where wonderful views opened up across the water to Borrowdale and the fells beyond.

Given the British weather, it's amazing how often we don't get a soaking but not surprisingly it's the days of sun and blue skies that are recalled with the greatest pleasure. The July trip to Aber Falls was such a day. The previous week there had been heavy rain. The force of water coming down the falls was dramatic and we lingered there for a while before turning across the bridge to follow the North Wales Coastal Path up the valley and out onto the cliffs overlooking Conway Bay with Anglesey and Puffin Island ahead, sea

and sky merging into every shade of blue. A glorious day with wonderful views, surely as good a reason as any to go rambling!

LINDSEY PAGE

Secretary Sue Lewis
thelewiss1@sky.com

Public Rambles Report

Once again our Public Rambles year has flown past with another successful season of 11 rambles, taking over 1,200 walks on our Sunday coaches this year. Hopefully some of these walkers will become Ramblers' members and will now be walking with the Area's Ramblers' Groups during the winter months.

The nearer destinations early in season to Lancashire and the Welsh borders were characterised by the usual Springtime muddy farmlands. Our late summer walks challenged our tenacious leaders with crop obstructions and lack of path maintenance making many footpaths impassable. Councils' staff reductions and budget restrictions are now adversely affecting the footpaths we like to walk.

Our other main challenge is finding rambles destinations with adequate parking and facilities for 100 ramblers and 2 coaches. In our endeavours to support community groups, who take on Council responsibilities for public WCs, we have once again this year made £50 donations from our surpluses to support 7 parish council's and independent groups who manage such valuable amenities.

Despite the challenges we have had to overcome, our customers have enjoyed the rambles season and the committee has already put together our 2018 programme of varied walks.

Sincere thanks go to all our Committee members and volunteer leaders who play an invaluable role in maintaining the efficient running of our Public Rambles; and to the Area Treasurer who keeps us on a firm financial footing. We have a new Chairperson this year, Neil Campbell, who has also joined our rambles' leaders team.

The "creative team" and our web master are bringing us into the 21st Century by adopting new technologies to support Public Rambles with publicity and making volunteer time more efficient. We hope to supplement the adoption of on-line rambles' payments in 2018 with on-line bookings from the internet site. Check out our website on www.publicrambles.org.uk.

The Ron Gordon Way path project in Aughton, funded by the Area Committee from Public Rambles surpluses, will be completed by the time you read this report. The project sees path and boardwalk improvements of the woodland section of FP10 between Town Green & Aughton. We are also replacing a stile on the A59 with a kissing gate and installing the two signs "Ron Gordon Way" in memory of Ron. I hope local walkers will enjoy the benefits of the improvements made. Many thanks go to the Public Rambles Committee and Doreen Bird who have made this project happen and also to Aughton Parish Council and Lancashire County Council Rights of Way Manager also the landowner TJ Morris for their support of the project.

We continue to offer varied grades of walks for our 2018 rambles. I would encourage any "more mature" members to consider coming out on our easy grade rambles if their Club walks become too challenging. All Ramblers' members are welcome to book onto the Public Rambles if they are unable to get a seat on their own Club's coach. Our longstanding customers are so friendly that you'll wonder why you've not been out with us before!

INGRID DONAKEY
Public Rambles Secretary

FOOTPATH SECRETARIES

CESTRIAN: for paths in Chester City, South Wirral,
Ellesmere Port and Neston districts
Mr R Whitty, 1 Rosewood Grove, Saughall, CH16AN

LIVERPOOL: for paths within Liverpool City
Mr J Mason, 72 Linkside Road, L25 9NY

SOUTHPORT: for paths in Southport area
Mr T. Roberts, 3 Sulby Close, Southport, Merseyside PR8 4TJ

ST HELENS: for paths in the St Helens MBC area
Mr D. Callan, 9 Cairn Court, St Helens WA9 5QR

WIRRAL: for paths in the Wirral MBC area
Mr S Martin, 12 Brinley Close, Bromborough, Wirral. CH62 6EB

THE CHALET: Secretary: Rodney Fletcher,
39 Church Road, Maghull L31 5PB.
Tel: 0151 531 8427

AREA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2018

The 95th Annual General Meeting will be
hosted by the Area Committee

at

The Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, Liverpool 1

Saturday 17th February 2018 at 2.00pm

To get there by train: Alight at Central Station
turn down Hanover Street, then R down School Lane,
the Quaker Meeting House is behind Radio Merseyside
and opposite the Post Office pub.

We are required to have an Annual AGM to present
and, if agreed, adopt the Annual Report and Accounts.
It also provides an opportunity to raise queries or
questions. This is not just a formal occasion and your
ideas and suggestions help to maintain, develop and
ensure our walking for the future.
