



ramblers
at the heart of walking

THE WEST RIDING

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rambler

Journal of the West Riding Area of the Ramblers' Association

COVER PHOTO: Wildflower meadows in Calderdale – (Caroline Spalding)

A candid admission from Ramblers Trustees

The West Riding AGM took place on a very blustery Saturday in February and whilst attendance was disappointingly low, we welcomed two Trustees Thelma Brown and Rebecca Dawson, as well as Sara Murray – a Project Delivery Officer based in the North. Sara will be delivering training programmes for walk leaders after a successful pilot scheme was completed in Scotland.

Rebecca Dawson informed us that the process to appoint a new CEO was underway and an interim CEO should be in place by the time of publication. Business continues, with two new posts having been created in the legal advocacy team, providing additional resources and the *Don't Lose Your Way* campaign is now in its implementation stage. An online platform was launched in February to allow people to look at historic maps and highlight lost rights of way. With good media coverage, the Ramblers hope to encourage members of the public to get involved with the scheme before the 2026 deadline.

Rebecca reported that good progress has been made on the digital transformation; the Pathwatch App is due for an overhaul to render it easier for its reports to be imported into systems used by local authorities. The new version will provide progress updates to users once a report has been filed. Assemble, the volunteers' website, is being rolled out area by area,

acting as a communications portal for volunteers across the country. Rebecca also reminded us that volunteers other than membership secretaries can request access to the Insight Hub to obtain data and statistics on membership within our area.

Thelma spoke of the hope that the Ramblers membership should soon see a net increase of new members joining, whilst accepting that most new members are of an older age, usually at the point of retirement. Funding sources such as the Peoples' Postcode Lottery are much appreciated, but cannot be depended upon for the long term, therefore membership fees remain the most important source of revenue. She believes the staff at Central Office are very committed, however, things aren't completely "joined up" and with a high turnover of staff there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that we as members and volunteers feel we are receiving the service we require. She stressed that problems cannot be addressed if Central Office are unaware, therefore when assistance is required, we must be specific.

I asked the Trustees whether the Ramblers have a clear brand and a defined strategy for attracting new members. I asked because it strikes me that the Ramblers haven't determined what their USP is, and therefore lacking

a message to convey to prospective members. The honest response from Rebecca was that currently they haven't a brand but they are actively going through a branding process. They are asking themselves "Who are we? Who is our ideal member? How can we communicate this message?"

I welcomed the candid reply; it shows an acceptance of the problem and that steps are slowly being made to address it. Without a brand and a clear message, it is very difficult, almost impossible, to attract new members to join – why would they? Rebecca hopes the branding process will complete this year. We must wait and see the results – the future of the Ramblers certainly depends on its success.

Caroline Spalding

We are very sad to announce the death of John Lieberg who died peacefully at home on 28th February. John was the secretary for the Huddersfield Group for many years, as well as Membership Secretary and Publications Secretary for the Area. In addition to co-editing this publication, John also authored (with Douglas Cossar) Country Walks in Mirfield, Emley, Thornhill and Denby Dale. A full obituary will be printed in the next edition of the West Riding Rambler.

Castle walks



Barden Tower - Colin Speakman

Walkers in Yorkshire occasionally have the pleasure of coming across a castle, or the remains of one. Castles, strongholds against potential attackers, guard key locations and oversee the surrounding land; they are usually based on a motte (mound) and bailey (courtyard). After the 15th century the need for defensive fortresses reduced markedly as manor houses provided sufficient protection.

Integral to the history of the region, castles can provide a focus for an interesting country outing. Below are two favourite walks, followed by a few other suggestions. The castles covered in these walks are either substantial structures with little or no internal access, or simply ruins.

Walk 1: This straightforward eight-mile walk from Kirkby Stephen railway station and back takes in two atmospheric castles, using well-used and mostly level bridleways. (Public transport: Kirkby Stephen station)

Pendragon castle (782026) is in a location with superb views four miles south of Kirkby Stephen station, alongside the quiet road bisecting Mallerstang. Together with Lammerside it secured this remote northern valley from the 12th century onwards; it was restored in the mid-17th century by Lady Anne Clifford. Legend has it that the castle was built by Uther Pendragon, father of King Arthur. Although this is rather doubtful, these special ruins have a mysterious aura all of their own. Pendragon castle is privately owned but careful access is permitted, as explained by a notice board at the gate.

Lammerside castle (772047) is 12th century but was rebuilt in the 14th century. It is situated in splendid isolation two miles south of the railway station, on the way to Pendragon. The fortification was abandoned in the seventeenth century when the owners moved to the castle-like manor house at Wharton Hall (771062), which is handily on the route of the walk.

Walk 2: This four-mile stroll features two contrasting castles, and could be combined with a visit to Harewood. (Public transport: 36 bus from Leeds)

Harewood castle (321453) is adjacent to the grounds of Harewood House, but it is freely accessible for walkers. The 12th century castle, which is enclosed by trees, has been restored by English Heritage in recent years. Although it is on the Ebor Way and near the Leeds Country Way it is surprisingly little visited.

Rougemont castle (296463) is located across fields west of Harewood bridge. It was an early medieval earth and timber ringwork fortress on a curving bank of the River Wharfe. The scant remains are not accessible to the public, but a footpath runs close by in woodland, where there is an information panel. Rougement was abandoned in 1366 in favour of Harewood castle. The following two intriguing castles could enrich other walks:

John of Gaunt's castle (219546) near Fewston was a 14th century hunting lodge, and what little remains is now out of bounds to the public. Nevertheless, the adjacent footpaths, including the Dales Way Harrogate Link, give fine views of the re-established Beaver Dyke reservoir in Haverah Park. (Public transport: 821 Sunday bus)

Barden Tower (0512973) is an imposing 15th century fortified manor house located on the Dales Way, beside the River Wharfe; in 1649 the indefatigable Lady Anne Clifford restored the Tower, which is now owned by the Duke of Devonshire. Although the interior is fenced off the building is well worth a detour in this prime walking country. (Public transport: 74A bus from Ilkley)

Castles on the tourist trail allow access to internal structures, sometimes with guides; they could take up most of a walker's day out, however. Such town centre attractions include Richmond and Skipton. Bolton (in the appropriately named village of Castle Bolton) and Middleham castle which is run by English Heritage, are both within fine countryside for walkers. Middleham was an important power base in the North from the 12th century onwards. (Public transport: 159 bus from Ripon; Sundays 859)

In an urban setting: on the southern outskirts of Wakefield the mound of the recently excavated remains of Sandal castle gives good views of the surrounding area. A friendly café is within the grounds, which are open to the public, and a permissive path allows access to a nearby nature reserve. (Public transport: Wakefield Line trains and various local buses)

Finally, before venturing into the heart of the remote Bowland fells, please note that Langden castle (605503) is a shooting hut and Raven's castle (695613) is a pile of rocks!

Jim Vickery



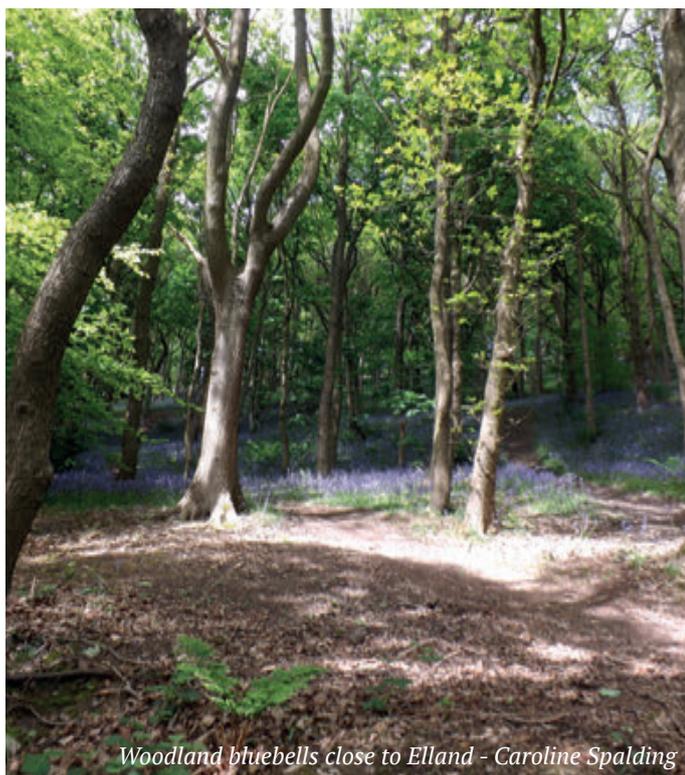
Bluebells in Spring

Bluebells, above Middleton - thanks to Colin Speakman

Woodland walks are wonderful all year round: protection from the elements in winter, dappled sunlight filtering through golden leaves in the autumn, and of course in late spring they are awash with bluebells and wild garlic.

Here's a quick guide to some beauty spots in the region.

Recommended by many, Middleton Woods close to Ilkley is a good place to start. Just a short walk from the town centre and rail station; a venture northwards returning via Bow Beck Gill and the village of Denton provides a short loop, however the map shows acres of moorland further north to entice those looking to cover a longer distance, for example a climb to Beamsley Beacon.



Woodland bluebells close to Elland - Caroline Spalding

From Bolton Abbey the Dales Way follows the river leading to Barden Tower, with the option to climb to Simon's Seat, returning via the Valley of Desolation. Routes are available to download from the Bolton Abbey website.

Cromwell Wood and Elland Park Wood, close to Brighouse are beautiful and if you follow the Calderdale Way from Shibden Dale to Brighouse itself, you can appreciate flowering laburnum, wisteria and wildflower meadows along the route later in May.

Grass Woods, close to Grassington is protected by Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and a place for bluebells, wild garlic and yellow pimpernels. An easy route leaves Grassington by way of Cove Lane, meeting the woodland where a huge variety of pathways await. A return along the river Wharfe comes highly recommended.

The trees of Skipton Castle Woods include oak, ash, lime, alder, hornbeam and beech. Maintained by the Woodland Trust, on arrival visitors can view site maps with suggested walking routes. Once a hunting woodland, this ancient woodland is now an ideal place for keen ornithologists, with up to 28 species of birds a regular site, according to its website.

The attractions of Temple Newsam (Leeds) and Nostell Priory (Wakefield) are an option if you wish to combine a walk with a day out with family and friends. Temple Newsam has "trailways" through its North Plantation and Bell Wood. Nostell Priory is known for its vast library and Chippendale furniture, but with 300 acres of parkland, there will be something for everyone in its gardens, woodlands and wildflower meadows.

And finally, Hardcastle Crags located north of Hebden Bridge offers numerous routes. Enjoy the wild garlic of neighbouring Middle Dean Wood leading to Lumb Hole Waterfall or climb out of Hebden Dale up onto the moorland for some spectacular views.

Caroline Spalding

Safeguarding Our History

One of the great advantages of living in Britain – or at least in England or Wales – is our amazing rights of way network, the wonderful heritage of public footpaths and bridleways recorded on that unique document the Definitive Map.

Our footpath network is also an amazing record of our history and cultural heritage. Every footpath has a story, a purpose. They were created by human feet, or in the case of bridleways by a combination of feet and hooves. The many reasons why they were created is part of our history and identity.

Uniquely our paths have both a physical and a legal reality.

They are there, on the ground, whether a beaten path across grass or in a wood, an ancient track enclosed between walls or fences which were constructed a mere two centuries or so ago, a deep sunken lane or hollow way, a packhorse way climbing a steep Pennine hillside, or a broad green lane over the edge of moorland. When you look at any English landscape, often the oldest signs of human habitation and activity to survive, inscribed into the landscape, evidence of centuries or in some cases even millennia of human occupation. These might include routes between villages, parishioners' ways between a village or hamlet and the church, a paved way leading to the mill, or a longer route connecting villages and towns, or even a military marching road built by Roman army engineers to secure the defence of their rebellious colony.

Some were specifically created for leisure routes, including riverside walks and routes out of towns and cities or at the time of Enclosures to open commons or woodlands, as recreational routes for



Walkers on a pre-enclosure bridleway leading from the village of Thorpe to Linton Church, Upper Wharfedale – Colin Speakman

villagers. Many other ancient ways were metalled and eventually covered with tarmac, and are now lanes and minor roads between towns. Some have become major trunk roads, such as the prehistoric Great North Road now the A1(M). But others have, over the years, been downgraded back to bridleways. When the great network of turnpike roads was constructed in the 18th and 19th centuries, many pre-turnpike roads became neglected and eventually returned to grassy tracks but keeping their ancient right of passage.

Each and every path you walk in the Yorkshire countryside is a shared experience with your ancestors and predecessors. You are literally treading in the footsteps of farmers, mill workers and miners, priests and monks, pilgrims and migrants, or in more recent times of people who have simply walked from their homes for pleasure. Whilst the purpose for which paths are now used has changed, their value to society has not. Even though there is now near universal car-ownership in rural areas, footpaths once vital to get to church, work or school are now precious for our health and well-being. Rural and city dwellers alike have access to the complex network of path and bridleways which form the finest way of experiencing our landscape heritage.

The other dimension is that of their legal status as a public right of way on foot or foot and hoof. An ancient principle

of English law, going back to the time of King Alfred, is that “once a highway always a highway” so that if it can be proved that people had once enjoyed free passage along a route – which does not have to be physically visible on the ground – that right of way remains. If it can be proved by documentary or other evidence and recorded on the Definitive Map this is final proof that at the time of the map being prepared a public right of way existed.

The Definitive Map of Rights of Way was based on evidence collected by local communities, including Parish Councils, county by county in the 1950 and 60s, and recorded by County Councils. As well as historic evidence was proof based on another piece of ancient English law, that if it can be demonstrated that a footpath has been used without restriction or hinderance for an uninterrupted period of 20 years, this is also evidence that a right of way exists. On the other hand, if it can be shown that a footpath was only used by permission of the landowner or it had been legally closed then that right of way is not deemed to have existed.

In our own area much of the evidence for the existence of many footpaths now on our Definitive Map was collected by members of the West Riding Ramblers. It was not an easy process and there had to be a long succession of legal hearings whereby landowners, who could employ expensive lawyers, sought to get paths wiped off the Draft and later the

Provisional Maps.

There were some famous victories. For example, in Haverah Park on the outskirts of Harrogate, our then Joint Area Footpaths Secretary Corrie Gaunt took on both the County Council and the local Water Board using evidence going back to the 17th century to prove public paths went through the Haverah Park Estate.

This now forms part of the Dales Way Harrogate link. But in many cases, there were not enough local people or RA or Open Space Society volunteers around to stand up to local landowners to do the research and give evidence. Many fine paths were lost.

Sadly in 2026 the ancient law of “once a highway always a highway” is about to be overturned. It seems incredible now that the Ramblers Association – the great champion of our rights of way – were, it is said, prepared to trade this ancient right away in order to secure the 2000 CROW Act, assuming that a quarter of a century was adequate time to record all missing paths and research all the evidence. Once again, the rich and powerful have gained a major victory. The guillotine on being able to gather that vital historic and user evidence to record those missing paths is now dangerously near.

Colin Speakman

Ramblers step up a gear nationally in the fight to save paths for the future



Posters can be downloaded or ordered directly from Ramblers Central Office

On February 11th a massive new push was started to get the public actively engaged in the Ramblers Don't Lose Your Way campaign.

A new online mapping tool was launched that enables members of the public to compare current and historic maps, to identify paths that have potentially been lost. This is an excellent resource which should remove much of the time-consuming and potentially difficult research that has been required until now to identify ancient pathways.

The online mapping tool splits the country into 150,000 1km squares and current and historic maps can be compared side-by-side. The promotional material states: “Users simply select a square, do a quick ‘spot the difference’, mark on any missing paths and click submit.” The site can be found here: <https://dontloseyourway.ramblers.org.uk/>

Some paths may be in current use, but others might be overgrown – it's these such paths the Ramblers are keen to have recognised. A document issued by the government back in 2008 states that *if a way is omitted from the definitive map proof, it's not evidence that the public has no rights of way over it.* The definitive maps were first drawn up by certain local authorities known as surveying authorities after legislation passed in 1949 requiring them to do so. The reason was to establish a legal record of the existence of rights of way at the date of the map and surveying authorities have the duty to keep the definitive map under constant review. However, January 1st 2026 has been set as the cut-off date when “all rights of way over footpaths and bridleways outside Inner London which existed before 1949 and which have not been recorded on definitive maps will be extinguished.”

The Ramblers hope to identify about ten thousand miles of “lost paths” via their online mapping tool, which can be used by all. Once the country has been mapped, they then hope to recruit volunteers to make applications to relevant local authorities to have the rights of way recorded on the definitive map.

The Ramblers are asking all members

to do what they can to support this campaign, both practically and in sharing the message to the wider community. Volunteers will have received promotional packs with suggestions for posts on social media but all members can request printed posters to put up in your area to advertise beyond Ramblers members. Posters can be requested by emailing DLYW@ramblers.org.uk stating your contact name and address and the quantity required.

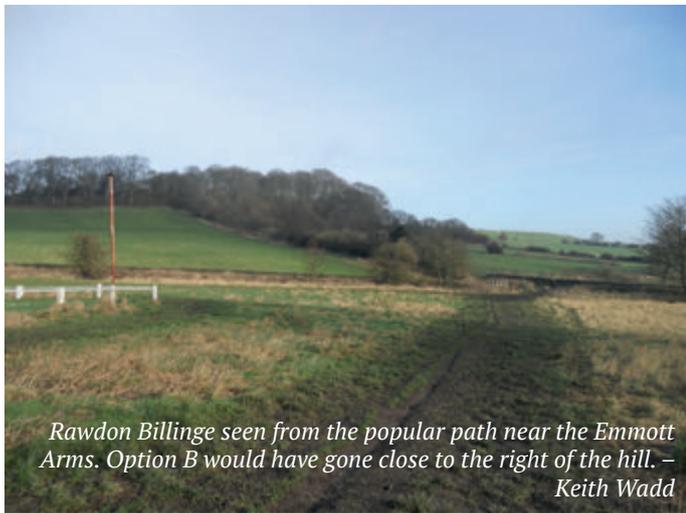
Finally, the Ramblers centrally, as indeed do I, want to hear stories about your favourite pathways – perhaps certain routes have become central in your memories and personal history, perhaps paths have changed or developed over many years, perhaps some lost to coastal erosion? Maybe some routes have passed down through the generations of your family, so that a walk you once did with your grandparents has become one you now do with your children and grandchildren. The Ramblers would like to hear your stories by email: campaigns@ramblers.org.uk and we ask too that you share your stories with us here at the WRR.

Caroline Spalding

Proposed new road to airport abandoned

Good news for walkers! It was announced in January that the proposed new road to Leeds/Bradford Airport has been dumped. As a result, a surprisingly attractive stretch of countryside on the edge of built-up Leeds, Horsforth and Rawdon has survived intact. And of course, its many pleasant public paths have survived too.

There were three proposed routes for the new road. Option C would have involved widening the roads on the existing A65/A658 route, upgrading of junctions and new roundabouts. 10 rights of way would have been affected. Option B would have left the A65 at a new roundabout near the crematorium, cross attractive open countryside before reaching Layton Road (between Rawdon and Horsforth), then continue northwards again through open countryside to the east of Rawdon



Rawdon Billinge seen from the popular path near the Emmott Arms. Option B would have gone close to the right of the hill. – Keith Wadd

Billinge, a well-known local hill and viewpoint. It would then cross Bayton Lane and join the A658 at Victoria Close near to the airport. 9 rights of way and many fine views would have been affected. Option A would have followed the same route as Option B to Layton Road, then swung north-east to cross Bayton Lane almost immediately, then north to join a widened Scotland Lane. It then crossed the open countryside of Carlton Moor to a junction with the A658 near to its junction with Otley Old Road. 17 rights of way would have been affected. All the three options would have impacted on the Leeds Country Way.

The proposed airport road and its three optional routes have been abandoned because the detailed consultation by Leeds City Council revealed “no clear backing for any of the road options”. Furthermore, since the consultation Leeds City Council has declared a Climate Emergency committing the city to become carbon neutral by 2030. A “fundamentally revised approach to the surface access proposals to the airport and the NW Employment Hub has been instigated”. Further “feasibility work” is likely to be carried out on the parkway station (on the Leeds-Harrogate railway line) and spur road proposal. The latter proposal appears likely to affect countryside and rights of way (including the Leeds Country Way) near Dean Grange Farm but will not have the major impact of any of the three proposed options.

The Ramblers played a significant part in the Leeds City Council consultation process. A small group of Ramblers officers which included Richard Smith, Lee Davidson, Mike Willison and Martin Bennett submitted a detailed joint response on behalf of the Ramblers and attended public consultation meetings. At one of the consultation meetings Leeds Council officers admitted that they had no idea how many rights of way would be affected. Many thanks to Richard, Lee, Mike and Martin. They have done a very good job for the local walking community,

Our new President – Keith Wadd

Many of us will know Keith Wadd. He has been a member since 1987 and has been actively involved at a local level, previously being Area Secretary, Chair and Vice President. Nationally he sat on the Board of Trustees 2011-2014 and with Jerry Pearlman and Mike Church founded Concerned Ramblers in 2010, urging

the Ramblers nationally to encompass path protection and maintenance into its remit.

At the AGM Keith told us he was proud and honoured to be elected and that he is committed to ensuring a flourishing area and the national cause. He said that the serious walking community needs the Ramblers to be a strong organisation, to protect the things we hold dear – our paths and our right to roam. We need to speak up to protect the interests of ramblers and therefore nationally the Ramblers need to keep prospering.

He said the West Riding is a good Area, with capable officers and few vacant positions, however we have lost a third of members since 2005, this the inevitable result of an ageing membership. We are not recruiting and keeping enough new members and we cannot continue the status quo. He cited the example of Harrogate’s numerous walking groups; some offering seven walks per week. Their walks are no better than the Ramblers’ walks but with the Ramblers national focus currently on walking for health and friendship, we are simply competing with other walking groups and with no point of distinction. We need, he said, to contemplate serious changes – locally and nationally.

He made a personal appeal for the Ramblers to take their time in appointing a new CEO. A Chief Executive has a very important role and he stated that the Trustees have a duty to appoint the right person to deliver the future objectives of the Ramblers and to look after our members.

Earlier Keith had spoken of a perceived lack of expertise at Central Office – the staff, in his opinion, are capable but not experts in the field. He put it to the trustees that volunteers require specialist support from Central Office. Thelma Brown responded to say that the advocacy team has been strengthened, but positive changes won’t happen with a continued high turnover of staff and that those with more experience do need to be retained.

Keith has published several walking books for the West Riding Area and continues to write and publish on a variety of topics. Previously Co-Editor of this publication, Keith still contributes many columns for the West Riding Rambler for which I, as Editor, would personally like to extend my thanks.

Caroline Spalding

Publications made £35,000 for Area in last 20 years

Derrick Watt, Area Treasurer, noted in his annual report to the Area AGM in February that over the last 20 years the Area’s publications have contributed an estimated £35,000 to West Riding Area funds. In Derrick’s words: “the writing, publication, and sale of the Area books has been a great success story.”

The impressive list of West Riding Area publications includes:

“Kiddiwalks” (first edition) 1975

“Family Rambles around Bradford” 1986, anonymous but edited



Bluebells in Middleton Woods, Ilkley – Dr Dorian Speakman

by Hugh Thornton

“West Yorkshire Rambles” 1987 Douglas Cossar

“More West Yorkshire Rambles” 1989 Douglas Cossar

“Ramblers’ Leeds” 1995 Douglas Cossar”

“Kiddiwalks” 60th Jubilee Edition 1995 edited Douglas Cossar (also included contributions by Pat Bridgewater, John Lieberg, Bruce McGreevy, Ruth Nettleton, Will Sutcliffe, Margaret Taylor, Keith Thomasson, and Faith Tillotson)

“The Airedale Way” 1996 Douglas Cossar

“Ramblers’ Wakefield” 1997 Douglas Cossar

“The Bronte Way” 1997 Marje Wilson

“Ramblers’ Bradford” Volume1 1999 Douglas Cossar

“Ramblers’ Leeds” Volume 1 East 1999, Douglas Cossar

“Ramblers’ Leeds” Volume 2 West 2000, Douglas Cossar

“Country Walks in Mirfield, Emley, Thornhill, & Denby Dale” 2000 Douglas Cossar/John Lieberg

“The Wakefield Way” 2004 Douglas Cossar

“Kiddiwalks” 70th Jubilee Edition, 2005 edited Douglas Cossar

“Country Walks Around Harrogate” Volume 1 East 2007 Douglas Cossar

“Country Walks Around Harrogate” Volume 2 West 2009 Douglas Cossar

“Stepping Out From Leeds and Bradford” 2011 Keith Wadd

They are all books of walks in the richly varied landscape of West Riding Area, and they have done much to lead people not just to the attractive countryside of the Pennines and the Yorkshire Dales, but to the paths and the beauty that are almost literally on the doorstep of West Yorkshire’s towns and cities. Nearly all of the books have been written by Douglas

Cossar, and we are immensely grateful to Douglas not only for the large amount of money the books have contributed to Area funds, but because the routes he devised are a delight to walk and their description in his books such a pleasure to read. He not only wrote the books; he took responsibility for their printing and their distribution to bookshops etc. Douglas was deservedly made an honorary vice-president of West Riding Area in 1999. We are also very appreciative of Hart & Clough Ltd. of Cleckheaton for designing and printing the books so attractively.

“The Airedale Way” (1999) describes a splendid long-distance walk from the arches beneath Leeds station to Malham Tarn. It would be really good if some of us could “adopt” The Airedale Way and enable it to become officially designated and properly signed - that its route is through the territory of more than one local authority is an inconvenience, but should not be a major impediment.

The preamble to the 1995 edition of Kiddiwalks commented “Regular walks are a very important part of Ramblers’ activities. As well as ensuring that local footpaths are used, they provide healthy recreation and the opportunity to make new friends.” Of this there is no doubt and one heartily agrees. But the West Riding Area publications show that walking is even more than this: each walk is a journey of discovery into a landscape with an interesting history and fine views.

We are now, at least for the time being, at the end of the road for West Riding Area publications. Derrick Watt in his 2018/19 report notes that book sales have been poor over the last three years, there are no new publications in prospect and there is competition from electronic media. One hopes, however, that the present situation will merely be a hiatus and that, whether printed word or electronic, our publications will continue to be an inspiration and valuable guide for walkers in our Area.

Keith Wadd

Kex Gill Latest

Commencement of work on the re-aligned A59 at Kex Gill on Blubberhouses Moor scheduled for spring this year has been delayed. Despite encouraging feedback from the Department of Transport, North Yorkshire County Council is still waiting to hear if the £40 million scheme will gain government approval (information from Harrogate Advertiser, 13th February 2020). Still time to walk the bridleway.

Keith Wadd

Flood damage to riverside paths in Nidderdale

Reports are coming in of temporary closure for at least six months to some riverside paths in Nidderdale because of flood damage. Full details not yet available but thought to include the popular Pateley Bridge to Glasshouses path. Walks leaders are advised that throughout our Area riverside paths may be damaged/closed.

Keith Wadd

Taking the West Riding Forward

Last year's brainstorming session uncovered many good ideas and local groups are now following their own initiatives.

We are keen, however, to initiate some area-wide initiatives so that all groups can work collaboratively to drive the agenda of increasing membership. There is strength in numbers and we can draw together our best practices to determine the routes we follow.

To that end we had scheduled a follow up meeting to be held in Ilkley at the Clarke Foley Centre on Saturday May 2nd. However, unfortunately due to the present circumstances regarding Covid-19, we have had to cancel the planned event. Nonetheless, we hope that the pandemic will pass and life will return to normal, so we fully intend to reschedule the event at a later date.

The sole purpose will be to debate suggested area-wide initiatives and to come away with a definitive plan of action. We all share a passion for walking and want to do our bit in preserving the future of the Ramblers, and with the admission that centrally they are without a defined strategy, we need to work to define ourselves here in the West Riding.

The proposed ideas for debate are:

Design and production of a new West Riding membership leaflet – to showcase our USPs, namely the path maintenance work we do

Approaching universities – holding stalls at Freshers' Fairs

Advertising on meetup.com – this works well for Take a Hike and we have provision to advertise across all groups – we need

support, cooperation and organisation from volunteers to administer this process

Partnership work – footpath maintenance. Whether working with Yorkshire Water (offering to maintain permissive paths around reservoirs in exchange for Ramblers advertising), Nidderdale AONB or Peak District National Park, or locally based groups – such as Shibden Valley Society (in Halifax) to encourage mutual cooperation with the hope of appealing to new members with shared passions and concerns.

Preparing for the future: Succession Planning. Unfortunately, it is inevitable that our current footpath officers will one day step down from their roles. We need to ensure that newcomers to the roles inherit the knowledge and expertise our officers currently have. Proposals include 'buddying up' i.e. those interested in the roles in future shadow the work of current officers to get a head start

Creation of a West Riding Area Walking Festival – is this feasible? Have we volunteers willing and able to organise this time-consuming but ultimately enjoyable event?

Creation of a West Riding Way – a footpath linking all the local areas together. Questions as above – it would require time, energy and resources i.e. knowledge and expertise.

Creation of a new group for walkers in their 20s and 30s. Take a Hike proves this can happen and is still successful to this day. Can we create another one?

Whilst we sit out the virus, can I ask people to start considering the above points in advance of when we can confirm a rearranged date for the event.

From the editors...

We want to hear from you!

Please be aware that all group walks and events were cancelled indefinitely from March 18 2020 and we await instruction from Central Office as to when the walks programme can resume.

But we still want to hear from you!

Perhaps your walking habits have changed because of these strange times. Have you discovered a hidden gem or serendipitous delight of a route on your doorstep that you'd like to share with other readers?

We would love to have reader contributions so please do send your suggestions to the Editor editors@ramblersyorkshire.org