

Protecting our footpaths since 1887



Leicestershire Footpath Association Annual Report 2025



www.lfa.org.uk

Chairman's Report

As Chairman, I am very happy to report that the LFA has made considerable progress in 2025. We have enjoyed success in several areas: we have achieved a small increase in our membership; our relatively new committee members have made a very positive impact on the work of the committee; we have produced a very impressive and widely distributed summer edition of the LFA Journal; we have embarked on a campaign to improve the Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Leicestershire and, finally, we are in the process of putting pressure on our councillors and our local MPs to improve the safety of road crossings in our county where they meet our footpaths.

We have made special efforts to publicise the work of the LFA. Janina Holubecki produced an excellent LFA summer journal, which members distributed in libraries, council offices, information centres, cafés and pubs throughout the county. An LFA membership form was included in the back of the journal, which was the source of some of our new members. Every LFA member also received a spare copy to give away, thanks to Lynne King's mastery of the postal system.

As well as the addition of Associate members, we also have had two new Full members of the committee, Steve Charlish and Gerald Cave. Janina is now our journal editor and is full of new and exciting ideas to promote the LFA. Steve has spearheaded our campaigns on the Improvement Plan and the safety of road crossings. Gerald is a long standing and Life Member of the LFA. They have been an invaluable asset to our committee.

In our efforts to make the County Council's Improvement Plan more ambitious, myself and several other committee members have attended engagement sessions with the Rights of Way Team at various venues around the county. We have also had several meetings at County Hall with councillors and council officers, where we have made the case for extending the network – not just maintaining it. For example, creating new footpaths, restoring old paths and utilising disused rail lines. These are glaring omissions in the current Plan.

Although we can't claim significant success in this effort, we have at least made our voice heard. I think it is fair to say that, as a result, we have raised the profile of the LFA in the corridors of power. We are certainly now quoted in council documents on the subject of the Improvement Plan and also on our campaign regarding the need to improve the safety of dangerous road crossings. In this work, we owe a great deal to Steve Charlish, who, amongst other valuable contributions, has submitted a comprehensive list of at least twenty of these crossings to the Highways Department.

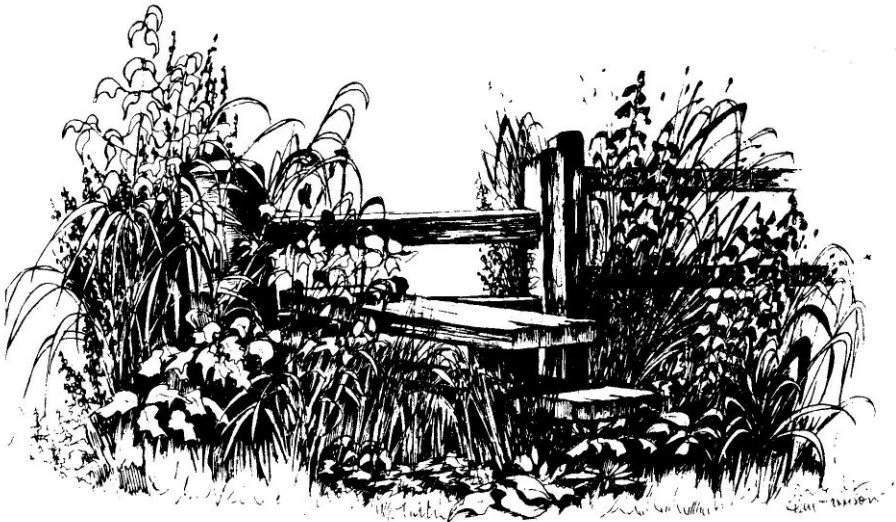
As part of the dangerous crossings campaign, we have encouraged members to write to their MPs. Following my own letter to my Leicester South MP, Shokat Adam, I was invited to a meeting with him at his De Montfort Street office. In December, I attended this meeting armed with two very knowledgeable committee members, Steve Charlish and Dave Pollard.

As residents of Mr Shockat Adam's constituency and representatives of the LFA – a well-established organisation with a long history – the MP knew it was in his interest to listen carefully to the points we made. We gave examples of some very dangerous crossings, where walkers take their lives in their hands as they try to cross busy roads, with cars often speeding by in excess of 80 miles per hour. We stressed the need for ring-fenced funding from central government to local authorities to better tackle what is, in fact, a national issue. The MP assured us of his support and gave us his undertaking to use the House of Commons library to obtain data about fatalities on these roads. He also agreed to write to the Highways Department about our concerns about this important issue. This proved to be a very productive and encouraging meeting. Campaigning for our footpaths is part of our constitutional remit and this year we have given it a new impetus.

Our officers and committee members work hard to keep the ship afloat and moving forward. They deserve much credit. The LFA continues to plan and lead walks throughout the county on most days of the week. We are able to do this thanks to the commitment of our walk organisers and lead walkers. The Leicestershire Round continues to be excellently monitored and safeguarded by David Williams and his team of wardens. We are in the early stages of plans to extend the Round in anticipation of our 140 year anniversary in 2027.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all committee members for their invaluable contributions and to all our members for their continued support. The LFA is alive and well and looks forward to an exciting year ahead with new ideas and fresh enthusiasm.

Simon Constantinou



Vice Chairman's Report

It has been an interesting year: a year where my services have not been required as our Chairman has made all our meetings. We have seen an influx of active members to the committee; very welcome, as a number of us are of an age where the body cannot match our mind's ambitions. Members of the LFA have joined the LLAF (Leicestershire Local Access Forum) at County Hall and, through that, have established a dialogue with the Rights of Way and Highways teams there. The Access Forum is a statutory body set up under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act to advise all levels of local government on footpaths, open spaces and access to the countryside. As a result, we have been invited to identify dangerous crossing points.

As for the area we most like to walk, Charnwood has enjoyed a grant of several million pounds to enhance and protect it and educate people as to its uniqueness and importance. This should encourage people to protect it from over- and inappropriate development. As part of that process, the map we produced last year has been donated to the Charnwood Forest Board, who have given a copy to every primary school that has outdoor learning classes.

The Forest Board are working towards getting international acceptance of the importance of the area for its ancient geology and the evidence within it of the very earliest life on the planet. This exceptional geodiversity, including more than 40 rock types and internationally significant fossils – such as *Charnia*, the first fossil described from the Precambrian – has triggered biodiversity and cultural heritage initiatives, highlighting rare species and historical sites. LFA members may have noticed new interpretation panels and visitor information hubs at key sites. These installations encourage exploring on foot and direct visitors to less crowded areas to take pressure off the honeypots.

The Geopark scheme has helped fund roadside paving and the development of new trails including the creation of new permissive footpaths and the rebranding of walking routes – a good number of which were contributed by LFA members. Efforts are underway to improve public transport to access the Geopark in the making. The Board is developing a new website that will serve as a central information source for visitors, teachers and volunteers. The Geopark website will have information on sites, walks, and local businesses, while supporting sustainable economic development.

One of the routes being created aims to be a through route from within Leicester to Loughborough via Charnwood, and it is hoped one stretch of it will be named the Stan Warren Way to commemorate the work our late Footpaths Secretary did to assist in the early days.

The Geopark has received approval from the UK National Commission for UNESCO to apply for Global Geopark status and the evaluation process will take place during the coming year.

Roy Denney

Secretary's Report

The committee has met 4 times since the last AGM. We welcomed Steve Charlsh and Gerald Cave as new committee members and Trustees and we have benefited considerably from their involvement along with our Associate members who have contributed significantly to our discussions and project work. Our new editor, Janina Holubecki, has produced an exciting, interesting first journal and is passionate about our communication links with members and other organisations. We are grateful for her skills and contribution to our work. Steve Charlsh has taken on the mantle of campaigning on behalf of the LFA and, along with other committee members and Associates, has made an impact with Leicestershire County Council and other key groups and individuals – particularly driving forward our push for safer crossing of major roads. The project work stemming from that will continue in 2026.

The first aid course held in 2025, at the request of members, was well attended and we now have first aiders in all the walking groups. Congratulations to everyone who attended.

Our project to review all of the 32 walks based on the Leicestershire Round is now almost complete. Janina Holubecki has agreed to continue updating any walk description that needs minor alterations as you, our eyes on the ground, notice any changes needed when development impacts one of the circular routes.

David Williams continues his unstinting work with wardens and the task team to maintain our treasured Leicestershire Round and we will have exciting news in 2026 about extending it to celebrate our 140th anniversary in 2027. Thank you, David and the teams.

My thanks go to all our walk organisers for their tireless commitment in organising the walks programme and all our members who very kindly lead walks. Bill von Anrep has taken on the organisation of Saturday walks and will continue to do so in 2026.

Finally, a plea to let us have an email address for you so that we can be in touch should the need arise.

I hope you enjoy reading all the exciting reports from our very busy 2025 and wish you all safe, enjoyable walking in 2026.

Cindy West



Diversions Secretary's Report

In 2025 I dealt with 16 applications where the County Council made a Diversion Order and 15 where a Diversion Order was confirmed. In many cases this was a reflection of how applications for diversions go through the system as the Council made and then confirmed an Order. The trend seems to be for fewer applications at present, as I was only consulted by the County Council on 9 applications. In addition, district councils consulted me over 6 planning applications with implications for rights of way. My normal approach is to say that we would expect rights of way to be unaffected by development, though frequently there will be a minor diversion to accommodate new housing.

One issue that came up relates to Network Rail, who wish to extinguish or divert two footpaths that cross track in the Bardon Hill area. Steve Charlish and I attended a site meeting with Network Rail, and it is clear that both sides have quite different views of the level of risk presented to users of the footpaths by train movements and the nature of Network Rail's proposed diversion. The County Council has yet to receive a formal application from Network Rail so I am keeping a watching brief on this. The same applies to one or two proposed major housing developments, which I will be examining to ascertain the implications for rights of way when there is a formal application.

I reported to the last AGM that LFA would be represented in the 2025 National Forest Walking Festival and I'm pleased to say that both walks (a Wednesday and a Thursday walk) went off smoothly. I was particularly pleased about that, because I led them both. I am currently in the process of expanding our contribution to the 2026 Festival and in addition to two Wednesday and two Thursday walks, we will be offering a Tuesday and a Saturday walk as well. I am very grateful to those LFA members who have volunteered to lead walks and really impressed by the response from all groups. I see this as an opportunity to promote LFA to the wider public and hopefully attract some new members.

Dave Pollard



Footpath Crossings Campaign Report

Let's talk politics and footpath crossings. Near to King's Lynn, I noticed a stretch of 70mph road with footpath crossing signage. This got me thinking: why do these warnings not appear in Leicestershire? I decided to request signage on two crossings with the County Council and National Highways. One on the A511 Ashby Bypass near to the Smisby Island and the other on the A46 at Ratcliffe on the Wreake. The A511 crossing was rejected almost immediately.

I decided to write to Amanda Hack, Member of Parliament for NW Leicestershire. Within a few days, it was agreed that she would forward an appropriate letter to the Head of Highways at Leicestershire County Council (LCC) and the Minister for Roads at the Department of Transport. The LCC response was reversed for the A511, therefore the road will be signposted with pedestrian warning signs – a small victory! And a big thank you to Amanda Hack MP!

However, on the A46, the National Highways have refused outright to make this dangerous footpath crossing in Leicestershire any safer because of the potential costs to the public purse. On the 23rd of October 2025, I emailed a letter to all County Councillors regarding the absence of safety improvements for footpath crossings on major roads in the Local Transport Plan (LPT4) and the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan (PRoWIP).

All our documentation was added to the minutes of the Cabinet meeting of LCC, 28th of October 2025. The LFA was thanked for the voluntary work we undertake and the petition we have submitted. The Highways Department will now conduct a review of the crossings we have identified. However, based upon the high cost, LCC Highways Department view our list as an aspirational list, rather than as essential work.

This is why we need to secure a national debate on safer footpath crossing of major roads into the House of Commons, which could lead to more funding for pedestrian safety. So far, we have failed to obtain a debate, but the work is progressing. We are calling for a minimum of best practice on the most dangerous road footpath crossings, using an integrated approach: including Pedestrian Instigated Flashing Warning Light Alerts (PIFWLA) like those at schools; countdown signage to the actual crossings; sufficient vegetation clearance with levelling of verges in the vicinity of the footpaths; a dropped kerb and white line markings where the actual crossing is; and a speed controlled area extending in either direction away from the crossing.

Additionally, we want to put pressure on both Highway Authorities to get them to do a lot more than they do now with rural footpath crossings on major roads of Leicestershire. They spend millions on improving the roads and zero on pedestrian footpath crossings. This campaign is at an early stage to improve safety standards for footpath crossings, but this will develop in the fullness of time. We are currently looking for more evidence and to build up a presence in the media.

Steve Charlish

Membership and Communications Report

Membership fees are due on 1st January each year and a reminder and invitation to renew is included with the Annual Report. The people who had not renewed by March were reminded via a letter in the post and most of them paid their membership fees, leaving only 16 people who did not renew. Fortunately, at the time of writing, 2025 saw 24 new people joining the LFA. Hopefully, over the coming months, even more people will express an interest in joining us.

LFA Journal 2025

In the summer, as part of our drive to recruit new members and raise the profile of LFA, we printed 1,000 copies of the Journal and made a lot of effort to get it out to people in the community who might be interested in joining us and walking our beautiful county.

Each LFA member received 2 copies: one for them and 'one for a friend' (or local library/community centre etc.) We kept the publication size down to 20 pages so that we could send two copies for the usual 100g Second Class postage.

The 4 walk leaders each received 50 copies to distribute between members of their walking groups – to be taken to local libraries, community centres and village halls etc.

The remaining 400 Journals were distributed by members of the committee to various venues including: The 1620s House; Bosworth Battlefield Centre; Richard III Visitor/Tourist Information Centre; Leicester Guildhall; Leicester Central Library; Attenborough Arts Centre; Stoneywell (National Trust); Charnwood and Melton Mowbray Museums plus community centres, council offices and several pubs.

The Journal was also added to the LFA website as a PDF download.

Parish Council Membership

In the past, we have had over 20 Parish Councils (PCs) as members of LFA. By 2025, this number had dwindled to just 5.

The LFA has a long history of collaboration with PCs: they have excellent local knowledge and cover the whole county. Given that we have so many joint concerns regarding rights of way, it was decided that all Leicestershire PCs should be deemed Partner Organisations of LFA. As such, 164 councils will now receive regular electronic communications on relevant LFA matters via their umbrella organisation, the Leicestershire & Rutland Association of Local Councils (LRALC). No membership charges will be levied and, as partnership organisations they will not have voting

rights. (Parish Councils are, of course, still able to become Full members if they so wish.) By opening up these channels of communication, we hope to work together more closely in future.

Promoting The Leicestershire Round Short Walks

As most of the 32 walks have now been re-written and the new versions uploaded to the website, it seemed a good idea to create some publicity around this LFA project and, through it, potentially recruit new members.

In September, an article was sent to 13 local magazine publishers (some producing separate editions for more than one village) together with 2 photographs taken on the Leicestershire Round – chosen specifically for each publisher's distribution area.

More than half of the magazine publishers used the article, with several including it in more than one of their editions.

Website

As of March 2025, the LFA website www.lfa.org.uk is being managed by local firm Sitewide Web Design in Glenfield for a monthly fee. A committee member checks the website regularly and forwards any enquiries to the appropriate person for follow-up.

Email Communication

Finally, a plea from Membership and Communications: if you have an email address and have not already given it to us (or you need to update it) please email the Membership Secretary at: lfa.members2021@gmail.com

There have been several occasions in 2025 when we wanted to communicate widely with LFA members as a matter of urgency – for example regarding the RoWIP Consultation (See page 2) – and we found that we only had an incomplete list of members' emails.

THANK YOU!

Lynne King and Janina Holubecki

LEICESTERSHIRE FOOTPATH ASSOCIATION
FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2025

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
<u>SUBSCRIPTION INCOME</u>		
Members' subscriptions	1,146.00	1104.00
Members' additional donations	23.00	18.00
Parish councils' subscriptions	30.00	66.00
Members paid in advance	0.00	6.00
Parish Council donations	0.00	0.00
	<u>1,199.00</u>	<u>1194.00</u>
<u>OTHER INCOME</u>		
Badges Sales	108.50	138.00
Leicestershire Round book sales	1,123.97	1635.90
Ramblers Travel - Walking Partnership donations	80.00	200.00
Gift Aid - tax reclaimed for previous year's subs	193.40	239.50
AGM meal receipts	£0.00	220.00
Charnwood Forest Maps	101.67	512.74
	<u>1,607.54</u>	<u>2946.14</u>
Total Income	2,806.54	4140.14
Less Total Expenditure	<u>2,715.30</u>	<u>1728.88</u>
Net Gain / Loss	<u>91.24</u>	<u>2411.26</u>
<u>SUMMARY OF FUNDS</u>		
NatWest Current Accounts opening balance	7,242.09	4823.33
Cash In Hand	0.00	7.50
Net income / deficit for the year	91.24	2411.26
Less Cash In Hand	0.00	0.00
Closing Balance at 31st December 2025	<u>7,333.33</u>	<u>7242.09</u>
NS&I Savings Account opening balance	5,424.21	5382.56
Interest received	54.39	41.65
Closing Balance at 31st December 2025	<u>5478.6</u>	<u>5424.21</u>
Cash in hand	0.00	0.00
Total Funds at end of year	<u>12811.93</u>	<u>12666.30</u>

<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
<u>AFFILIATION FEES & DONATIONS</u>		
Ramblers annual subscription	77.00	73.50
Open Spaces Society annual subscription	45.00	45.00
Nottinghamshire Footpath Society affiliation	5.00	5.00
 <u>ADMINISTRATION COSTS & OTHER EXPENDITURE</u>		
Printing & Stationery	98.61	25.02
Postage	349.59	359.90
Computer costs (ink cartridges, etc)	0.00	80.21
Annual Report, Newsletters/Journals	1051.95	408.15
Insurance annual premium	356.28	336.28
AGM meals and refreshments	68.00	287.82
WIX.com Website Fee	129.60	108.00
LFA Website -Sitewise	410.00	0.00
Committee Expenses	20.69	0.00
First Aid Training	90.00	0.00
First Aid Supplies	13.58	0.00
Total Expenditure	<u>2715.30</u>	<u>1728.88</u>

I have examined the detailed accounts of the Association and confirm that this is a full and accurate presentation of the income and expenditure amounts for the headings shown and that the closing balances agree with the bank statements as at 31/12/2025. Mrs Fiona Bradley FMAAT FIABBA MA

F Bradley

I declare that this is a full account of the Association's financial activities in 2025 and confirm that the closing balances shown above concur with the respective NatWest and NS&I statements as at 31/12/2025 Lynne King, Treasurer

L King

Leicestershire Round Report

The Leicestershire Round was devised in 1987 by LFA members, with the support of Leicestershire County Council, to celebrate the centenary anniversary of the association. The 100+ mile route is arguably the premier walking route in the county, and passes through some of Leicestershire and Rutland's most scenic countryside.

Volunteer Warden Scheme

The volunteer warden scheme was reintroduced thirteen years ago with the intention of making the Round as trouble-free as possible for fellow walkers. Each warden, some as couples, have adopted a section of the route, visiting it at least once a year and reporting any issues affecting their section, which are then passed onto County Hall and are either dealt with by their contractors or the Leicestershire Round Task Team.

Part of the role of warden also includes, if possible and they feel safe to do so, cutting back any vegetation causing problems around stiles and gates, and placing/replacing Leicestershire Round stickers on the appropriate directional discs (usually sited on yellow topped waymark posts).

Currently, there are 23 LFA members (including Carlton Parish Council) and 3 non-members acting as wardens. Recently, for a variety of reasons, three wardens have indicated their wish to stand down: I am grateful for their support of the scheme over the years. Fortunately, one LFA member has already offered to take over one of the sections.

At the time of writing, the wardens have reported 24 incidents affecting the route in 2025. They include fallen and rotted waymark posts, an unsafe footbridge, electric fencing across the right of way without the usual safety measures, a suspected unofficial diversion, plus crops, vegetation and barbed wire causing problems. Also, following an email to the LFA website regarding walkers trespassing on private land at Claybrooke Mill, the volunteer warden for the area, Pete C, was able to offer advice to the owner and subsequently inform the County Council.

Leicestershire Round Task Team

Launched in 2019, with the remit to enhance the work of the volunteer wardens and carry out tasks to solve minor problems affecting the Round. Although an LFA initiative, the scheme operates under the guidance – and with the permission of – Leicestershire County Council. LCC has provided a number of tools to assist with the team's endeavours and covers the team for insurance purposes. This year the Council has provided another two scythes.

Operating at least once a month, the team has cleared vegetation, including gorse on Burrough Hill; reinstalled 8 fallen waymark posts and replaced and fitted directional discs.

Currently, there are 12 team members, with 1 member stepping down this year due to health issues. My thanks to him for his help and support over the years and I wish him well.

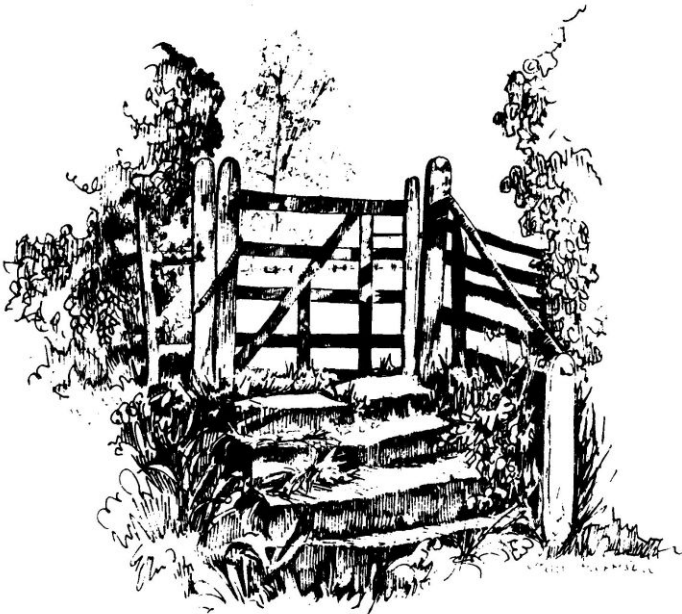
An Appeal

As you know, the Leicestershire Round is a popular long-distance route that attracts walkers from near and far. With members of the LFA having devised the route, I believe the Association has a duty to look after it and make sure all who walk it enjoy it and do so safely. At present, the sections that require wardens are in the Charnwood and Sharnford areas. **If you would like to get involved in the warden or task team initiatives, please get in touch. Contact details are on page 20 of this annual report.**

And finally...

My grateful and sincere thanks to all members, past and present, of both schemes. My thanks also to the LFA Chairman and committee for their support.

David Williams



Tuesday Walk Report (Rick's Ramblers)

Rick's Ramblers completed another year of excellent walks with great camaraderie. My gratitude as always to Barbara. She is full of ideas, supportive with everyone and a top wingwoman. I've been out of the loop at various times this year due to left hip and right knee replacement surgery. (I may now be nearly bionic!) Barbara has been at the helm; leads extra walks if the need arises and willingly helps others to plan walks.

Tuesday walkers have enjoyed walks across the county from varied venues. We have been treated to spectacular scenery and interesting terrain, usually with clement weather. The Mud Trophy has not been awarded this year!

It's not always straightforward to find a pub or garden centre to cater for a large group on Tuesdays, so we all appreciate the efforts our leaders make. Most walkers complete the 5 miles, but a number of us feel more confident walking up to 3 miles. Thanks again to leaders for preparing shorter routes (to include a coffee stop, of course!)

It has to be said that we are not just a walking group! Our social gatherings have included an excellent long alley skittles evening, hosted by Josie and assisted by Vivienne. Not a huge amount of skill in the alley, but lots of laughs and fantastic food!

Christmas dinner at The Shires was a happy occasion, as always. Those who wished to work up an appetite were led on a pre-lunch walk by Dave. Andy organised our festive meal... not an easy task. He has also arranged Rummikub evenings... lots of fun for all participants. His hard work and humour is much appreciated. There are also several members who play pool together on a regular basis... always highly competitive!

One of our annual favourite walks is from Bradgate Park. We aim to get to the top at Old John, not just to admire the view, but to be rewarded with a tot of Marie's much anticipated, home-crafted sloe gin! A visit to the Memorial Wood to pay our respects to Rick Satchwell is a must.

We have to say farewell to Lynn and Martin as they move to pastures new; they will be much missed, but we hope they will join us on a walk in the future. Sadly, we no longer have Dave Smith with us. An LFA member for many years, he died earlier this year. He is much missed.

Rick's Ramblers look forward to more adventures in 2026 and hope that we can remain healthy and strong.

Carolyn Scott

Wednesday Walk Report

Our year has included 50 walks with 29 walk leaders at 41 different pubs (or similar) and we've covered ground from East Leake to Leire; Donisthorpe to Tugby with regular numbers of walkers joined by a few new members. There's been quite a lot of weather about, with very hot, dry weather in the summer – providing one challenge of needing hats and hydration – while other seasons have confronted us with far too much liquid in the form of rising floods and farm gates deep in mud.

Throughout the year, we frequently comment on how fortunate we are that Leicestershire is so noticeably better signposted than other counties, with the yellow-topped footpath posts providing guidance that works well through fog, rain and foliage. The choice of colour is, at once, distinctive and yet sympathetic to its rural setting.

Our Christmas buffet raised £603 for LOROS; while our summer BBQ raised £550 for Faraja Support – a charity run by Helen and Mike Ross (a Wednesday walker) that provides a home-from-home for eleven children in Tanzania. Both events are a great opportunity for all the Wednesday walkers, both past and present, to meet and catch up on each other's news.

This year Les Parris died in June; he had been a stalwart of Wednesday walks and of the LFA for 20 years and had been not only walking but also leading until quite recently.

Averil Brooker and Anne Constable

Thursday Walk Report

The unpredictability of our weather saw us enjoying a bright and icy start to our walking programme, only three days after the serious flooding in Leicestershire that saw many local roads under water. We set off from The Shoulder of Mutton in Foxton for an invigorating walk towards Gumley and then on to Smeeton, pausing a short while to note the recently planted Smeeton Westerby Conservation Area.

Our walks in February saw us battling rain, hoar frost and persistent fog, with the ever-present Leicestershire mud clinging to boots and sticks. Spring arrived in Church Langton with warm sunshine – 17 degrees – but disappeared the following week when we walked from the Curzon Arms and experienced a range of weather, including hail stones, all within a couple of hours.

But spring reappeared in fine form for the equinox, which we celebrated with a walk from the Belper Arms – reputedly the oldest pub in Leicestershire. The route took us through the Queen Elizabeth Diamond Forest and the open fields that had been wet and muddy only a short while before were caked dry. Then came sunshine and warm April temperatures. We found some

alternatives to pubs for the start points of our walks – Farndon Fields Farm Shop and Mini Meadows near Welford.

In May came soaring temperatures and abundant blossom of blackthorn and hawthorn, together with flowers of the horse chestnuts and the cow parsley framing our rural lanes. New faces joined us for a walk through Bradgate, celebrating the National Forest Walking Festival. The hot summer continued and, sadly, our walk from The Shires had to be cancelled – but four stalwarts walked from the Curzon Arms in the heat and were rewarded with a delightful walk in shady woods. We had a day of drizzle when we walked past Thornton reservoir; lower than usual, on through fields of wheat, barley and pasture with grazing alpacas and llamas and ripe blackberries on bushes.

The fourth heatwave of the summer had passed by the time we walked from the recently reopened and refurbished Shires at Peatling Parva. The walk was lovely, but we were not the only ones to be disappointed by the pub under its new ownership. Hopefully there will be some improvement and we can continue to enjoy walking from this South Leicestershire village.

So, schools went back, the nights drew in and the hottest summer on record slipped away. We had a new leader for our first September walk from Ullesthorpe and found ourselves sheltering in a ditch from heavy rain, thunder and hail – but our leader seemed undeterred. We changed course when we met a bellowing bull with cows and calves in the fields around Countesthorpe, but forgot the experience the following week when we walked from Somerby through glorious undulating countryside, followed by the usual great food at The Stilton Cheese Inn.

We braved storm Benjamin in October and the rain of November. All too soon came December and the end of another companionable year, walking together in our lovely Leicestershire countryside. Our thanks go to our organiser, Diane, for all her efforts on our behalf.

Sue Lyons

Saturday Walk Report

The Saturday Walkers is not a large group, but we do have enthusiasm. Generally, walks are 8-10 miles and, where we can, we will incorporate a shorter walk for those that are less capable by meeting the group further along the trail. Group numbers vary, but there is always a hard core of walkers that is likely to go out walking in most weathers.

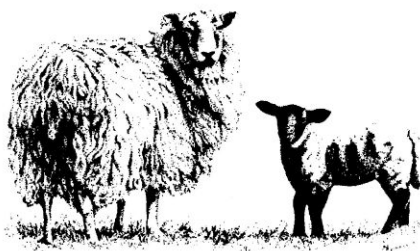
We have walked in some remote and interesting places over this last year as we try and seek out the less used footpaths in the corners of the county. We have a habit of pruning bushes near stiles and reporting issues along the footpaths to the County Council quite frequently, with good positive results. One pre-walk I did, we reported 13 issues, including barbed wire obstructing the

footpaths in 3 places. I was assured that all the items had been dealt with and, when we did the group walk, we saw that the work was indeed all done. So, it pays to submit issues to LCC.

Incidentally, on that same walk, we visited the Leicestershire Handmade Cheese Company, Café and Cheese shop at Upton, where we tasted some magnificent handmade cheeses. We shall be going there again!

Several of the Saturday group are currently doing the Leicestershire Round. At the time of writing, we have done 7 sections of the Round, and we have been strictly following the Heather MacDermid guide to the Leicestershire Round. **At the Annual General Meeting of the LFA in February, we will be announcing some exciting news about the Leicestershire Round, so please make sure you come along and attend.**

Steve Charlish



LFA LIFE MEMBERSHIP

The award of **Life Membership** of the LFA has been in place for many years in order to acknowledge outstanding contributions to the Association. The current criteria used for the award of Life Membership is specified as “**significant contribution to the Leicestershire Footpath Association**” This allows flexibility for the award to be given to any member who has completed significant projects for the Association or shown outstanding commitment over time with long service to the LFA. The award is given only at the discretion of the committee who are solely responsible for bestowing the award. Any member may put forward nominations for consideration. The committee will consider the award annually, but not necessarily make an award every year.

Current Life members are:

Ken Brockway; Gerald Cave; Clive Fennell; Brian Jenkinson; Heather MacDermid

Cindy West, LFA Secretary

MINUTES OF THE LEICESTERSHIRE FOOTPATH ASSOCIATION AGM

HELD ON 22 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 11.00 AT WYGSTON'S HOUSE, LEICESTER

1. Present: S Constantinou (Chair), B Constantinou, M Stevens, D Few, R King, L King, J Holubecki, J Wilson, G Cave, R Whittle, K Piggan, F Brookes, K Brockway, J Thompson, R Denney, B Rowlinson, S Rowlinson, P Dilkes, E Merrall, A Donkin, I Donkin, D Williams, S Charlish, P Troake, J Troake, A Geary, A Jethwa, L Lord, J Hand, S Gordon, D Pollard (minutes).

2. Apologies: C West, G Jones, D Hinds, A Constable, T Brooks, A Thomson, N Barker, S Lyons, D Rogers, P Moore, A Brooker, A Bandy, L Bandy.

3. Chair's opening remarks: S Constantinou thanked everyone for attending and asked committee members to introduce themselves. A Thomson has stood down from the committee and was thanked for his contribution to the LFA over the years, including 4 years as chair. R Denney reported that Stan Warren died recently. He had been an LFA officer.

4. Minutes of last AGM: accepted as accurate, prop. J Troake, sec. K Piggan. There were no matters arising.

5. Officers' reports:

Chair: S Constantinou reported that the LFA has had a good year and some significant improvements had been made. The introduction of Associate committee members has been valuable and added creativity. LFA has arranged for first aid and CPR training, which 13 members attended, and more training will be provided if there is the demand. The updating of the 32 walks for the website has continued.

Diversions Secretary: D Pollard explained that he has expanded his role by trying to get LFA involvement in planning applications where a right of way is involved. We have now become involved in the National Forest Walking Festival in May.

Editor: R Denney publicised the Walkers Guide to Charnwood Forest, copies of which are still available.

Leicestershire Round: D Williams invited members to join the task team to help with its maintenance; also to become volunteer wardens.

General: On walks, numbers vary. The Thursday group has shrunk a little, but numbers on other days remain steady. The Tuesday group offers walks of different lengths.

The reports were accepted, prop. R King, sec. D Few.

6. Treasurer's report. L King reported on a healthy financial position, although membership has dropped. LFA has reserves of £12,666 and made a surplus of £2411 during the year. She explained how the Charnwood Forest maps were paid for and are now making money. It is intended to

donate maps to schools who take school groups into the Forest. She confirmed that we have liability insurance that covers the trustees and walk leaders for negligence. The report was accepted, prop. J Holubecki, sec. D Williams. It was agreed to keep the subscription for 2026 at £6, prop. L King, sec. K Piggin. It was also agreed to subscribe to: the Ramblers, the Open Spaces Society, the Nottinghamshire Footpath Association and (additionally) CPRE, prop. L King, sec, R Denney.

7. Constitution: R Denney introduced this item. Other than modernising the language, the only substantive change was to reduce the quorum to 5% of the membership for AGMs and EGMs. This was accepted, prop. L King, sec. R King.

8. Election of officers:

Chair: Simon Constantinou

Vice-Chair: Roy Denney

Secretary: Cindy West

Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Lynne King

Diversions Secretary: Dave Pollard

Prop. D Williams, sec. J Troake

9. Election of committee members:

Dilys Few was re-elected and Gerald Cave and Steve Charlish were welcomed onto the committee, prop. B Constantinou, sec. J Troake

The formal meeting closed at 11.30.

OPEN FORUM

1. There was considerable discussion centering on the County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan, initiated by S Charlish. It was agreed that LFA should respond formally to the survey. R Denney said there were 10 priority projects, details of which could be circulated so that individuals could make representations. We also discussed the possible use of disused railways.

2. S Charlish advertised the trip to King's Lynn, which he is organising for May to enable walks on the new section of the Coastal Path.

3. K Brockway asked that the Annual Report should record who the LFA Life Members are.

4. The County Council is advertising for volunteers to assist the rights of way team, in particular for historical research.

Meeting closed at 12.30

LFA Officers, Committee Members, Associates and Roles

Secretary and Trustee Cynthia West, 3 Hillsborough Road, Glen Parva, Leicester LE2 9PR

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Chairman and Trustee Simon Constantinou

Vice Chairman and Trustee Roy Denney

Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Trustee Lynne King

Diversions Secretary and Trustee David Pollard

Committee Member and Trustee Dilys Few

Committee Member and Trustee Steve Charlish

Committee Member and Trustee Gerald Cave

Leicestershire Round Volunteer Co-ordinator and Associate David Williams

Tuesday Walk Organiser and Associate Carolyn Scott

Wednesday Walk Organisers and Associates Averil Brooker, Anne Constable

Thursday Walk Organiser and Associate Diane Billings

Saturday Walk Organiser and Associate Bill von Anrep

Journal Editor and Associate Janina Holubecki

Associate Barbara Constantinou

To contact a specific committee member, please email lfa.members2021@gmail.com

and put FAO and their name in the title of your email.



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Line illustrations by Jean Harrison, from previous LFA publications. Photographs by Janina Holubecki.