

LWR NEWS & VIEWS

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STEVE RAWLINGS STEPS DOWN AS WEST RIDING CHAIR



Steve Rawlings (LWR) – Outgoing Chair



Helen Wood (Leeds Ramblers) – Incoming Chair

At the AGM of the West Riding Area of the Ramblers, held on Saturday 31st January 2026, LWR member, Steve Rawlings, stepped down as Area Chair. Steve has held the position since January 2025.

This year the AGM was moved from Ilkley to the St George's Conference Centre in Leeds City Centre. This was to facilitate easier access for all the groups from across the area. Mike Briers, Antonia Woosnam-Savage and Chris Tye attended from LWR, together with representatives from Harrogate, Take A Hike, Bradford, Leeds, Huddersfield, West Riding Coach Rambles and Wakefield, plus many others.

Apart from the normal business of the AGM, where Helen Wood was elected as the new Area Chair (the first woman to hold the post), the main topic of discussion was proposals from HQ to revamp the organization structure from top to bottom

Steve told the AGM that the overall aim of the Ramblers was to streamline the organization, make it less bureaucratic and more democratic. The biggest impact on most members would be proposed changes to Areas and Groups.

There are 59 Areas in England, Wales and Scotland including the West Riding. Of these 10 are 'in abeyance' and 60 groups receive their funding direct from HQ.

The initial proposal was to scrap Areas completely with funding going directly to the groups.

Where appropriate, informal regional hubs could be formed to cover areas of mutual interest (e.g. footpaths, maintenance, training, publicity).

The Ramblers have been consulting on these proposals, nationwide, since July 2025. Their original plan was to hold a Special Group Meeting (SGM) to ratify these proposals on December 6th 2025 but in September they withdrew their proposals to terminate the Areas. A new draft set of proposals is now scheduled for February 25th for approval at a national AGM to be held in April 2026, where Helen and Mike Briers will represent West Riding Area.

Helen said that she had attended the SGM held in London on December 6th. The main proposals are:-

- Reduce the Board of Trustees from 16 members to 12
- Of these, 4 would be directly elected by the membership, with 1 more elected for Wales and 1 more elected for Scotland
- The General Council is abolished
- This will be replaced by 6 Regional Forums
- The future of the Areas will be decided after April.

Watch this space – we will keep you posted. In the meantime – Keep Walking!

UPDATE ON WRITTEN RISK ASSESSMENTS



Over a UK wide Zoom conference held on January 28th, Ramblers HQ provided Mike Briers with an update regarding the requirement for risk assessments.

This was as follows

- Walk leaders need to identify the likely hazards on a walk and the steps they need to take to mitigate them.
- The most common way to do this is by a written risk assessment which can be added to following a recce.
- It is also good practice to add all additional risks that were identified during the walk to your risk assessment after the walk, as a reference for the next time and to make a note of any actions you took.
- It is good practice to keep a copy of your risk assessment for a period of 3 years.

During the Zoom call, the presenter used a case study of good practice which had been developed by Ian Haigh for the A(S) group. Congratulations Ian.

Ian has developed a new section on the LWR website called 'Guidance'. Within it you can readily find all the documents and guidelines you are most likely to need as a leader or as a walker, including the excellent A(S) risk assessment guidelines which can be applied to any group.

	ONCE A YEAR DAY Tuesday May 5th The Wheatley, Ben Rhydding Special Guest Johnno Ellison, Author Walking the Wharfe Q & A Session Watch out for further details	
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LWR ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



Following the AGM held on November 21st 2025 the committee sought feedback on members' opinions of the new format. Some gave verbal feedback at the meeting, others on walks and a number sent very detailed emails. For all those who submitted feedback, the committee is very grateful.

Overall, feedback was very positive with members saying that they liked:-

1. The pre-AGM communications
2. The venue
3. The timing
4. The easy access to public transport
5. The catering
6. The pre-AGM walk
7. The pre-AGM church tour
8. The opportunities to mingle
9. Being able to have a drink and go home on the train/bus

A number of members suggested that we should book the same venue (All Saints Church Hall, Ilkley)) again for the 2026 AGM.

With the current debate at national level regarding the future of Areas and Groups, the committee are holding any decisions on the 2026 AGM until the position is clearer. However the aim in 2025 was to trial new ideas with the AGM. A tripling in attendance and positive member's feedback has given strong pointers to what members enjoy and this will not be ignored.

WEST RIDING COACH RAMBLES



All LWR walks take place on a Tuesday and a Thursday, which means many members often walk with a different Ramblers group at the weekend. Many members may not be aware of the West Riding Coach Rambles on a Sunday, so we asked Sally Grady, their Secretary, to provide some details about their activities and, in particular, easy means of access for members who live in the LWR area.

The great advantage of coach trips is that somebody else does the driving, particularly on the way home, no parking issues and they may take you further afield than you normally go at weekends, in the company of fellow Ramblers.

The first outing in 2026 is to Buxton on Sunday March 1st with 3 levels of walk on offer with a pub meal to finish with before returning. Pick-ups are in Leeds, Thornbury Barracks (near Owlcoates shopping center) and Bradford, with extra pick-ups upon request. Free secure parking is available at Thornbury .

Future dates in 2026 are:-

March 1st – Buxton/Peak District

June 7th – A coastal walk in Staithes/Saltburn area

September 13th – Visit to Rosedale, North Yorkshire (pictured above)

December 6th – Yorkshire Dales (provisionally Malham)

Average cost of a trip is £16/17 but does not include meals.

As well as day trips, the group also organize longer holidays. Plans are in progress for a self-drive holiday to Grange-over-Sands in late September and a coach holiday in April 2027, to Melrose in Scotland.

The group have a dedicated area on the 'Ramblersyorkshire' website or you can contact Sally Grady directly at coachrambles.sally@gmail.com

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

I was walking with Leeds Ramblers when a member of their committee, William Gale, asked me to pass on his thanks to LWR for the warm welcome he received when he joined us for a couple of walks recently. He said that everybody he met was welcoming and friendly, with many people introducing themselves and having a chat.

Joining any new organization is never easy and LWR members, in all our groups, always offer a warm welcome

New members are the lifeblood of any voluntary organization and once they join, we want them to stay.

We are introducing a new feature to make sure you know who they are.

Membership Secretary, Helen Hartley, will supply me with a regular list of new members. We will print their names, their home location (e.g. Otley, Skipton, and Ilkley) and, if possible, the group they walk with.



You can make them feel welcome by:-

- If you are a leader, introducing them to the group
- If you are a walker, introduce yourself and have a chat
- Learn a little about them and any shared interests
- If they are new to the area, they may value your advice on shops, pubs, tradespeople etc.
- Check in on early walks that they are settling in and any concerns
- Make sure they are aware of social events and coach trips
- Do they need a lift or open to car sharing?
- If you go a pub or café at the end of a walk, make sure they are invited and know where to go. Make sure they are not left on their own when you get there.

The following people have joined since the last LWR AGM

NAME(S)	HOME	JOINED
Lucia Smith	Ilkley	Nov 25
Trevor Faulkner	Ilkley	Jan 26
Maxwell Smyth	Ilkley	Nov 25
Jackie Squire	Ilkley	Jan 26
Duncan & Chris Watt	Otley	Nov 25
Nick Winckles	Leeds	Nov 25
Ruth Batterley	Keighley	Jan 26

Thanks for joining LWR. You are all very welcome.

NEW WALK LEADER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS GO LIVE ON MARCH 2nd 2026

Ramblers HQ originally proposed that the new requirements would go live at the beginning of January 2026. This has now been pushed back until March 2nd. After this date all walk leaders will have to be members of the Ramblers and completed the mandatory training requirements.

With 94 qualified leaders, LWR are in good shape to cover all our 6 weekly groups. It will be the responsibility of walk coordinators to ensure leaders are qualified.

Our offer to help train walk leaders for other groups was well received and we have been approached to ask if we will be doing this again. It is probable that LWR will run another training course later in 2026 but first priority will be for members of our group.

NEW WALKERS HANDBOOK ISSUED BY RAMBLERS

All those members who have completed the recent Walk Leaders training, will be familiar with the walk leaders' handbook which forms an integral part of the programme.

Ramblers have issued an updated handbook. The old handbook did not have an edition number. The new one does and it is **December 2025, Version 1.3**. Please make sure you are using this edition which can be found in the guidance section of the LWR website,

JACK JOWETT RIP

It is with great sadness that we recently learnt of the death of Jack Jowett at the age of 98. A feature about Jack and a photo appeared in the previous January newsletter. He was the inspiration behind our current footpath maintenance team and all walkers in Wharfedale owe him a debt of gratitude for his legacy.

Jack died on 16th December 2025 and his funeral at Rawdon Crematorium took place on January 8th. Unfortunately LWR were not informed of his death until January 31st and we were not represented at the funeral.

Our sympathies go to his wife, Pat, family and friends

A full tribute to this dedicated man will appear in our next edition

The LWR Committee have also agreed to place a plaque honoring Jack's legacy at a suitable location selected by the Footpath Maintenance Group. More details will be provided when available.