

Wessex Wanderer Railway Walks FlexiGroup Annual Report 2023

The annual End of Season meeting was held in Bradford-on-Avon on the 29 October 2022 and which was attended by fifteen Ramblers members. Joy Harrison, Programme Co-ordinator, chaired the meeting.

The decision was made to begin future programmes in April with less emphasis on the busier times in July and August, although Leaders are free to lead then if they so wish. There were subsequently twenty-three walks offered for the 2023 programme, including from two Leaders who had not led for the WWWs before.

It was agreed that I would once again organise a Winter Get Together which would be the first since 2019. This took place in February 2023 at the Toby Carvery in Trowbridge. As with the End of Season meeting the aim is to find venues which are as much as possible equal distance south and north along the line. However, post Covid this proved a problem as several venues we have used in the past no longer offer what we wanted.

Through my contacts at Great Western Railway, they offered rail passes to those Leaders who required them, one to pre-walk and one to lead on the day.

Unfortunately, changes to the train services and connections along the Heart of Wessex Line introduced in May 2023, were in many cases detrimental to the running of our programme. Not least that some walks had to be modified to enable the usual co-ordination of the 'down' and 'up' trains.

Several walks were cancelled due to the Rail Workers ongoing industrial action and the numbers joining in the walks were mainly on the lower side, the weather also being a factor.

In place of printed programmes excellent coloured flyers and posters were created. Whilst printed programmes remain popular, we no longer have the resources to have them printed and distributed as we did in the past. However, a PDF version of the programme was posted on our website for downloading if required.

Copies of the flyers and posters were sent to Leaders and other members for distribution to various outlets. However, advertising needs to be addressed if we are to attract more walkers especially non-members of the Ramblers, which we have done over the years, and those who do not find out about us via the internet.

Ken Mill, Severnside Group's current Webmaster, agreed to take over the management of the WWW website and has made a splendid job of creating and keeping it up to date.

Severnside Community Rail Partnership have a link to our website and TransWilts posted details on their Facebook page. At the time of writing, the newly formed South Wessex CRP is yet to have the promised link added to their website.

Thanks to Joy for continuing as Programme Co-ordinator, to Judith Anderson for taking the notes of the 2022 meeting, to Val Smith for booking the venue for the meeting and dealing with the caterers, to Alison Ridge for posting the walks on Walks Manager, to the Leaders and those who helped to proof read the 2023 programme, to Ken Mill, GWR, the CRPs, Mike Heckford who deals with the Group's finances and Dorset Area for hosting the Group.

The 2023 End of Season meeting is booked for Saturday 28 October, again in Bradford-on-Avon, when we will begin to organise the 2024 programme, which will be the twenty-ninth year since the programme began, albeit it in a very modest way.

Two walks have already been offered, which is very promising, and we look forward to continuing to produce a WWW programme for the foreseeable future.

Sylvia Popham
Assistant Programme Co-Ordinator
Wessex Wanderers Railway Walks Group