



NEWSLETTER March 2024

Chairperson Report

The year has started well with a number of satisfying outcomes for the group. At the time of writing the walks have all gone ahead as planned with some really good attendance levels. The shorter and slower walks are proving to be very popular. Because of their success they will be included in the programme of walks for the foreseeable future. We also intend to include some evening walks in the summer programme again this year.

Along with being a registered charity, the West Lancashire Footpath Group has an annual insurance policy and affiliated membership to Ramblers.

We have a number of policies in place that aim to ensure that walking with the group will be safe as well as enjoyable. We have now published the following policies on our website.

- Health & Safety Policy
- Walk Leaders' Advice including: Risk assessment, Incident Reporting and Attendance Register.
- Safeguarding Policy
- Social Media Policy

Walk leaders need to look at the leader information pack please. A paper copy can be supplied via Gwen if needed.

We have a combined membership/ in case of emergency (ICE) card. Ask any committee member for one.

There have been some problems with the website during January and February, currently it is operating satisfactorily. To alleviate one of the problems we have arranged for the membership application /renewal form to be available on the Facebook page.

On the 28th February walk in Sollom and Bretherton, Eddie was busy birdwatching whilst walking and he gave us an impromptu update of what was happening around us which was very well received and appreciated by the walkers.

Below is his record of the birds he recorded.

	Name of Bird	Minimum number seen	Notes
1.	Blackbird	4	
2.	Buzzard	4	These were all flying together which indicates they may have been a family from last year that has successfully over-wintered.

3.	Chaffinch	2	
4.	Carrion Crow	1	I only saw one but heard a few calling. It looked like we were in Jackdaw territory so maybe that's why there were so few.
5.	Dunnock	2	
6.	Goldcrest	2	
7.	Goldfinch	20	
8.	Canada Goose	1	On the canal
9.	Black-headed Gull	Present	There were quite a few hundred in the fields. I couldn't see any other gulls on my photos.
10.	Lesser Black-backed Gull	2	
11.	Herring Gull	2	
12.	Jackdaw	7	There were probably more Jackdaws. It looked like they roost in Sollom.
13.	Kestrel	1	
14.	Lapwing	45	I counted this number on my photos after I got home
15.	Magpie	2	
16.	Mallard	7	
17.	Moorhen	1	On the canal
18.	Nuthatch	1	
19.	Oystercatcher	2	
20.	Ring-necked Pheasant	3	
21.	Collared Dove	2	
22.	Feral Pigeon	1	There were a lot more hybrid pigeons present. I noticed there was a dovecot in one of the gardens and it appeared the local wood pigeons and the doves had been mating.
23.	Stock Dove	1	This type of pigeon is usually found in large groups in fields but I only saw the one flying by
24.	Wood Pigeon	7	
25.	Redwing	40+	A group of these birds flew over us. Probably gathering for their migration back to Europe. They'll be gone soon.
26.	Robin	5	
27.	Rook	1	
28.	Skylark	2	
29.	Mute Swan	1	
30.	Green-winged Teal	1	It's likely there were a lot more ducks on the lakes in the fields but this is the only one I was able to identify from my photos.
31.	Song Thrush	1	
32.	Blue Tit	3	
33.	Coal Tit	1	
34.	Great Tit	5	
35.	Long-tailed Tit	1	

36.	Wren	4	
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Committee issues

Because of intermittent problems with the “contact us” and the “join us” tabs on the website the email for the committee is:

westlancashirefootpathgroup@gmail.com

As mentioned in the December Newsletter, Peter Fletcher would like to relinquish his role as treasurer after many years of service. If anyone would be interested in taking on the role please contact one of the committee members, in person, by phone or via

westlancashirefootpathgroup@gmail.com

The walks programme

Facebook has continued to be a valuable advertising space for the walk programme. We post it on our own Facebook page and a number of others. Facebook has resulted in a number of new members.

Volunteer leaders are essential to the viability of the group and the walk programme. To be a leader for the group you have to be a paid member. Please contact Gwen or another member of the committee if you would consider leading a walk.

As part of the recce for walks the leaders always try to identify a suitable parking area. Sometimes negotiating with public houses etc. to use their car park. If available it is nice if some members take the opportunity to have some refreshment in the venue after the walk, an easy way to say “thank you”.

The programme always includes Post Codes, Grid References and What 3 words to specify the starting point. There is often discussion about which is the best, easiest or most accurate of these. Each has its benefits and it very much depends on how individuals are accustomed to planning their journeys. Below is a paragraph from our Dec 2021 Newsletter explaining why what 3 words is now included in our programme.

What3Words

Up to now we have given the starting point for walks using a postcode and a grid reference. Members have usually managed to find where we are! However, both systems have drawbacks: postcodes cover a small locality so may not identify the start precisely and are also of limited use in rural areas. Grid references assume you have the right map and can read a six-figure reference. A single mistake in a digit means you are lost! The What3Words system is now being used widely, including by the emergency services. It requires you to download the What3Words app to your phone. The whole world has been divided into 3m squares: each square has a unique combination of three words.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the start time on the programme is the departure time not the “meeting” time. Don’t forget you have to get your boots on!

It has come to our attention that a number of railway stations are now charging for and monitoring the use of their car parks, even for rail users. You may want to check. Who would have thought that, ANPR, would become such a familiar mnemonic to so many of us?

The walk programme is sent out by email to WFLG members. It is also available on the webpage and Facebook.

www.westlancsfootpathgroup.org.uk

The full walk programme for the next quarter will be sent out with the Newsletter. But please remember that late changes will be shown on the web page and Facebook if they become necessary.

Footpath Officer Report

Six new issues have been reported to Public Rights of Way (PROW) during January and February. The details and pictures are available on the reported problems tab on the website. The tab provides updates and outcomes.

In July 2023 we reported the bridge on footpath FP0805022, part of the Royal Oak walk, Bickerstaffe. The bridge was repaired in July although PROW didn't notify us at the time. Some of the group members remember that this bridge was installed after lobbying by Rev Michael Smout, a dedicated former member and Chairperson of West Lancashire Ramblers. We haven't been able to find any photographic or documentary evidence to confirm this. If anyone has any more information the committee would be pleased to hear from you.

Communications with members.

The newsletter, website and email are now well established for our communications to members. The Facebook page is proving popular although there is some confusion over joining the Facebook page and becoming a paid member of the group. Chris and David follow up on this if non- members attend walks. We are looking at the viability of including a link to the membership form on the Facebook page. It will continue to be used for diary updates.

Our email address is:

westlancashirefootpathgroup@gmail.com

A link to Facebook is attached which will invite you to join the group. At present the group is private.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/267065369061420/>

Committee from 12 November 2023

Chair: Gaynor Culshaw

Secretary: Mary Ellis

Treasurer: Peter Fletcher

Membership Secretary: David Worrall

Walk Coordinator: Gwen Veevers

Website Manager: Chris Rimmer

Footpath Inspectors: Doreen Bird and Gwen Veevers

Registered Charity Number 511764