



**Minutes of the 2024-2025 Annual General Meeting 1st February 2026 held at
Broughton Bowls Club, 26 Whittingham Lane, Broughton, Preston, PR3 5DA**

Present: 42 signed-in. (Chorley 12, Preston 12, Fylde 5, South Ribble 4, West Lancs 2, Garstang 1, Area (no specific group) 2, not specified 4).

Before the AGM, Robb Radford thanked everyone for attending, commenting that it was a pleasing turn-out. He also thanked Chorley's Angels for providing the excellent First Aid course held during the morning, and to the Preston Group for leading the morning's walk.

1. Apologies for absence

Lesley Dodgson, Ann & Malcom Reading, Ken Sharp, Lavinia Tod, Lindsay Seed, Ramlah Eaton

All proposals were voted on a simple show of hands.

2. Minutes of last AGM 2023-2024

The minutes of the 2023-2024 AGM were accepted.

3. Matters arising

None raised

4. Annual Report and Statement of Accounts

Robb Radford as Chairman gave an overview of the Annual Report.

- Mid Lancashire Area continues to support eight Ramblers groups, each providing regular walks locally and beyond. Membership has slightly increased by 1.3% to 1,164 members. Our financial situation remains stable with a fund of £5,177 at year end which is a minor increase in last year's position.
- Footpath maintenance faces challenges with LCC staff reductions; reporting and repairs are slow, although some improvements like replacing stiles with gates have progressed. LCC prioritize repairs based on volume of reports, favouring popular and urban areas.
- Commenting on the Countryside Service, Robb reported that LCC Ranger service remains minimal, volunteers handle basic tasks, but major repairs require contractors.
- Regarding Coastal Access, some sections of the Lancashire Coastal Path have opened, but gaps remain due to lack of bridges and unresolved objections.

Progress on further sections is slow, with no new sections opened in 2024-25.

Concern persists about maintenance of boardwalks and other wooden structures.

- As far as Open Countryside Access is concerned, usage of access land is light: lack of clear signage and access points is a barrier.

Many signs are faded or missing, with apparently no funds for replacement.

- A full and varied programme continues to be offered by the groups within the Area.

Walks are published on Rambler's website and on Area /Group webs.

- Membership has grown by 1.3% over the past year, with the Chorley, Preston and Area showing increased membership with the remaining groups showing a small decline. At year end we had a total of 1,164 members in Mid Lancashire.

		Sep-22	Sep-23	Sep-24	Sep-25	Change Sep-25 vs Sep- 24	Difference	Paid Up to Sep- 25
ML01	Chorley	367	366	341	358	17	5.0%	355
ML02	Fylde	197	184	179	162	-17	-9.5%	161
ML03	Garstang	45	32	25	26	1	4.0%	26
ML04	Preston	149	136	143	152	9	6.3%	151
ML05	S Ribble	117	111	117	111	-6	-5.1%	109
ML06	W Lancs	147	143	148	146	-2	-1.4%	145
ML50	HoL	79	76	86	83	-3	-3.5%	83
ML51	LWW	37	29	33	31	-2	-6.1%	30
ML96	Area	38	42	77	95	18	23.4%	93
	Total	1,176	1,119	1,149	1,164	15	1.3%	1,153

- The Mid Lancs area website continues to be our main communication link with many group members. The webpages contain a wide variety of information and guidance along with walk programme information across the Area and event notifications. Ian Bridge has now taken full control of our IT.
- The financial position remains healthy with a slight increase in a fund to £5177.77 at the year-end due primarily to increased funding from Central Office.
- Individual group reports highlight successful walks, challenges with leadership, and ongoing efforts to improve footpaths and engage with local communities.

5. Election of Honorary Officers

Robb mentioned the number of vacancies that were looking to be filled, but unfortunately had no volunteers.

The following list of officers were elected en-bloc, proposed by Eric Crichton and seconded by Barry Rutledge.

President	No Nominations
Vice President	No Nominations
Chair	Robb Radford
Vice Chair	Eric Crichton
Secretary	No Nominations
Membership	Joy Taylor
Treasurer	Kitty Smith
Treasurer Support	Paul Coupland
Footpaths	David Kelly
Publicity	Kevin Matthews
Webmaster	Ian Bridges
Walks Programme	Eric Crichton
Area Access Officer	David Kelly

6. Appointment of Independent Examiner

Proposed independent examiner is Kirstie Garner Deda (Licensed AAT accountant). This was accepted by a show of hands.

7. Consideration of Motions of which notice has been given in writing

None received.

8. Approval of Motion for submission to General Council

None received.

9. Any Other Business

One member commented on the ageing membership of our Ramblers groups, and the need to attract younger members. They suggested that the approach taken at Yarrow Valley Park had been successful in attracting children to walking and outdoor activities. The only problems that could be seen with this is that this would need to be done in school holidays or at weekends, and that if parents were not involved then DBS checks would be necessary for walk leaders. Barry Smith highlighted that their health walks were down as family-friendly activity, and that this is a 'tick' option on Walk Manager.

Another members asked if and how they should report broken stiles. It was suggested that the best way to do this was to take a digital photo and email to PROW reports at the LCC. We may well put a link on our website to enable members to do this. It is more impactful if members report the same stile on different dates. LCC have a public rights of way map, which enables reporting.

10. Presentation by representative of Board Of Trustees: Mark Chung

Unfortunately, Mark was unwell and therefore not able to attend the event. However, he was kind enough to send a written presentation, which Robb converted into summary slides:

- The work of volunteers is much appreciated. Mark thanked all volunteers, who are central to the organisation, and help to deliver thousands of weekly walks
- Each year 100,000 walks are delivered by 40,000+ Ramblers Groups, and a further 50,000+ Wellbeing walks
- 7,500 Walk Leaders are trained or recorded. Walk Leader training remains a hot topic, and in-person sessions are available for those without internet access, in addition to the online training.
- As far as campaigning and advocacy goes, the Access to Nature Bill; Land Reform Bill (Scotland); and the Repeal of the 2026 cut-off for lost paths are all in the news.
- Regarding Finances and Membership, £10.1 million has been raised including from membership subscriptions, Gift Aid, partnership and fundraising; around 6% above forecast. Membership currently stands at around 106,000.
- Ramblers Governance changes have been discussed this last year, more specifically consultations have been held on Governance reviews. This includes amongst other things, trustee election changes. A workshop was held in December 2025, and decisions will be made at the AGM on 25th April 2026. The Area is encouraged to send 2 representatives.
- Mark's 5-year term as Trustee finishes this year, and he thanked everyone for their support. He has been the only Trustee for the North of England, and encourages anyone wanting to stand to do so. There is a need for younger Trustees; more diverse representation, and from Northern members. Anyone interested is encouraged to contact Mark.

11. Talk on 'Lancashire: A Journey into the Wild; by John Lamb from the Wildlife Trust for Lancashire, Cheshire & North Merseyside.

His walk covered the work of the Trust, with their 40 nature reserves and 180 staff, and gave us some ideas for future walks, and interesting features of our Area.

Lancashire has over 90 waterfalls, and 300 hectares of mossland.

John's talk covered a lot of the information in his book, and can be summarised into a number of areas of similarities.

Upland Fells & Moors – Angelzarke Moor has a Neolithic burial chamber in Severn Cotswold style, and is the only one outside its 'natural' area.

The County Stone can be found on Leck Hill.

White Spout is the only named waterfall in Lancashire. There are many walks along our various rivers, including the Douglas Way; Hodder Way; Ribble Way; Wyre Way and the Lune Valley Ramble.

Lancashire has some of the most ancient woodlands in Europe including Calf Hill and Cragg Woods. Although there is no public access, the boundaries are walkable.

The most accessible woodlands include Spring Wood, Whalley; Fairy Glen, Parbold; and the Yarrow Valley Country Park.

Unimproved grasslands include Mytton Meadows which have not been mowed since WW2, and some parts of Cuerden Valley Park.

Lancashire has 2 lakes, Hawes Water near Silverdale and Martin Mere, although these are not all natural now.

Lancashire and Manchester have the second largest lowland peat deposits in Britain, which is where Horace the Elk (now in Preston museum) was preserved. Holland Moss at Skelmersdale provides the ideal conditions for the bog myrtle (which is a natural insect repellent).

32% of Britain's Limestone Pavement formed in the Ice Age can be found in Lancashire, such as Warton Crag and Silverdale (the latter was an Iron Age hill fort).

Meanwhile Lancashire has a long coastline. The Criffel Boulder at Crossens is the start of the Lancashire Coastal path. This came down from Dumfries and Galloway on the shifting ice.

The county also has saltmarsh at Banks Marsh, which supports black-tailed and bar-tailed Godwits.

The Lancastrian Whitebeam only grows on the Lancashire coast.

Robb thanked John for any extremely interesting talk.

Joy Taylor, April-26