**The Chair’s Review of the Year for the AGM 27th November 2022
1st October 2021 to 30th September 2022**

This is a brief overview of the Group’s activities for our reporting year - 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2022; more detailed reports have been written by those directly involved in specific aspects of the Group’s activities during the year. The headline is that we’ve gradually been able to return to more like our normal activities this year which has been a huge relief!

Your Committee – myself, Gill Bunker, Peter Engledow, Sara Waldron, Mary Knight, Alan Leadbetter, Roy Carter, Mike Hyland, Sarah Feal and Norman Corrin – met formally three times during the reporting year. We continued to meet virtually using our Zoom account; it’s convenient, saved personal time and travel costs as well as being environmentally friendly.
25 members attended the 2021 AGM held at Ellesborough in November organised by Dave and Lynn Yorston. All the existing Officers and Committee members were re-elected with Sarah Feal joining the Committee for the first time. I extend my thanks to them all for their support and commitment this year.

Our Group Secretary, Gill continued to do an outstanding job. As well as organising the Committee and AGM meetings and dealing with LDWA NEC matters, she produced the excellent weekly Update emails. Gill also looks after the BBN website, Facebook page and WhatsApp Group. This year she’s also been instrumental in the organisation of our LDWA 50th anniversary events, of which more later. We are so lucky to have such a dedicated, efficient and organised Group Secretary. Our grateful thanks to Gill for all she does for us and the LDWA.

Following discussion at the AGM and considering other feedback, the Committee decided at its January meeting that we should stop producing a BBN Newsletter as it had pretty much been superseded by the weekly Update. It was time consuming to produce and contributions had been thin on the ground. We felt that BBN and LDWA NEC news could be cascaded quicker using the Update email and it could still include articles and news from members about their exploits and the like.

Many thanks to Treasurer Peter Engledow for continuing to look after our finances so well. It’s been the busiest year for a while with income and expenditure for challenge events back on the books and two LDWA 50th anniversary events. We’ve made a few donations this year – to Stepney City Farm for use of facilities on a social walk, Thames Valley Air Ambulance for the Pick & Mix, Bedford Walking Festival, the Greensand Ridge replacement bench project and to the LDWA website fund.
Please let the Committee know if you have any ideas for donations we could make – they must reflect the activities of our Group and the LDWA.

As well as being our Treasurer, Peter is our rep at the national Local Group meetings; he also looks after our Twitter account and the Peco online BBN shop for Group badged gear.

Sara Waldron, Social Walks Secretary, continued to coordinate our social walks programme which picked up nicely following the relaxation of Covid rules.  The system of having available walk dates on the website seems to work well but we continue to need leaders, new and experienced, to satisfy demand – so please consider leading a walk for the Group in the coming year.
Sara also inputs our walk details onto the website and keeps our Group’s social walk information in Strider under review. Thank you, Sara, and everyone who led a walk during the year, especially those who led for the first time, and thanks to everyone who came out to walk.

Sarah Feal has taken on the job of adding our Group’s social walk GPX files to the website walks database. This is a fairly new venture by the LDWA and walk leaders are encouraged to pass on their GPX files to Sarah to upload.

We are pleased to have had some ‘Easy Amble’ social walks during the year. The original idea of Phil Hastings, these came about a bit by accident when, after hip replacements, Phil couldn’t walk the distance or pace of normal social walks. At the end of the first Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, Phil offered to devise and lead some shorter routes (max 10 miles) and slower pace (2.5-2.7mph) that he could manage himself. It’s apparent that there’s still a demand for these walks for those who are feeling the effects of age and/or injury or illness, members who for whatever reason prefer to do a shorter walk on that particular day and for potential new members who want to try an easier LDWA walk first before committing to join. It’s been fantastic that other members have embraced the concept and led an Easy Amble this year.

It has made us much more aware of the needs of those who, for a variety of reasons, aren’t physically able to do what they once did but who enjoy the ethos and camaraderie of the LDWA and want to continue to be as active as possible.
In conjunction with Essex & Herts Group, we submitted a write up about the Easy Amble concept to the LDWA’s Inclusion and Diversity lead who was very impressed!

Membership matters - Alan Leadbetter has looked after our new member notifications and Norman Corrin made contact to welcome them with a phone call and/or a letter. We’ve continued to get quite few new Primary and Associate members each month this year and this is such an important job in establishing communication, thank you both.

Challenge Walk Co-ordinator, Mike Hyland, has had a more ‘business as usual’ year, liaising with our Challenge walk organisers, the SiEntries team and event entrants. Mike is also a master at managing event waiting lists and makes sure that our events are as full as possible giving minimal ‘no-shows’ on the day. Thanks for your fantastic work Mike.

We were relieved to be able to put on our three challenge events again during the year – the Shillington Shuffle in November, the Hannington Hike in March and the Pick & Mix in May. All were well supported and we received a lot of very encouraging and positive feedback. Huge thanks to all the organisers, route checkers and marshals for making these such good events.

We have reviewed our checkpoint hygiene and food safety practices in the light of Covid 19 and updated LDWA guidance and have promoted the Food Safety Level 1 and the Food Allergy and Intolerance on-line training course.
We were delighted to be able to run a BBN Checkpoint (CP) for the LDWA Trans-Pennine 100 event in June. Thanks to Mary Knight, our 100 Checkpoint Organiser, and her team who saw walkers though a very well run CP2 at Penistone. Mary’s calm and organised approach was invaluable on what was a very busy CP.
Well done also to Dave Findel-Hawkins and Merrian Lancaster who gave everyone, literally, a right royal welcome at Elsecar, the last CP – you’ll have to see the pictures! I should also say here that Dave provides the first point of contact between future 100 event organisers and the Group about possible checkpoints – many thanks to him or doing that job.
Congratulations to all BBN members who took part in the Trans-Pennine Hundred whether you completed or not – by all accounts it was a tough event.

We put on two events to celebrate the LDWA’s 50th Anniversary.
The first event was on Saturday 18th June when we resurrected the twice postponed Midsummer Meanders plan to put on a day of walks with refreshments and lunch based at Woburn Village Hall. And what a day it was! Over 50 members, past and present, enjoyed a choice of two short (4 mile) or long (8/9 mile) routes in the morning and afternoon. Our catering dream team - Mary Knight and husband Dennis, produced a most delicious ploughman’s lunch with all the trimmings followed by strawberries and cream. We rounded the day off with tea and cakes. The walks were led by Sara Waldron, Gill Bunker and myself. Thanks to everyone who came, baked a cake, helped in the kitchen and helped to set up and clear up. Thanks also to Steve Clark who was our official photographer - you can see some other photos and a link to Steve’s here [Beds, Bucks and Northants LDWA - Midsummer Meanders - Saturday 18th June 2022](https://ldwa.org.uk/BedsBucksAndNorthants/W/8278/midsummer-meanders-sat-18th-june.html).or here [LDWA at 50: BBN's Big Walk meanders | Flickr](https://www.flickr.com/photos/195869150%40N06/albums/72177720301259710)
We had a huge amount of great feedback, especially from those who came and now find it difficult to walk longer distances. We wanted the day to be as inclusive as possible – a few people just came to chat with acquaintances old and new and that was great!

The second event on Saturday 30th July was a linear walk along the Grand Union Canal through our area, appropriately named ‘A Grand Union of Three Counties! This was organised by Gill Bunker, Sara Waldron and Sarah Feal. Walkers met bright and early at Leighton Buzzard Station to board the coach to Stoke Bruerne, although unfortunately a rail strike put paid to any use of the railway to get there! Of 23 walkers on the day, 13 members walked the whole 27 miles back to Leighton Buzzard with others clocking up between 4½ and 18½ miles in various opt in and out sections during the day.  Thanks also to Dianne Sutton who led the 16½ milers to Milton Keynes centre. The weather was good and it was a very enjoyable day for everybody – possibly helped by three of our four stops being at canal side pubs! Walkers also got a certificate! You can see some photos here [Beds, Bucks and Northants LDWA - A Grand Union of Three Counties - Saturday 30th July 2022](https://ldwa.org.uk/BedsBucksAndNorthants/W/8516/grand-union-canal-sat-30-july.html)

Our thanks again to Roy Carter for organising another brilliant Group holiday based this year on the Isle of Man at the end of August. With 5 days of interesting walks the trip was a great success and thoroughly enjoyed by the 17 members who went. During the week we looked forward to seeing some fantastic pictures of their daily exploits on the BBN Facebook page.

Dave and Lynn Yorston have taken a well-deserved step back this year from their long-standing role as ‘SS event’ organisers (since they took over from John Nickerson in 2011) and maintaining the Group’s equipment list. I’m pleased to say that they are happy to continue to organise the, now annual, Pick & Mix and Dave will continue to look after the SS event finances. Our thanks go to them both for such a long and loyal service to the group.

Dave and Lynn have also been responsible for the storage of group equipment and maintenance of the list of items held, and I am delighted to say that Dave Findel-Hawkins has agreed to take this over.  Thank you, Dave.

Thanks to everyone who has participated in any way in a Group activity or event and for your support in the last year.

**Terry Brown
BBN Chair**