

Programme Coordinator's and Walks Organiser's Report 2021

Our optimism at the last AGM proved ill-founded and we were forced to cancel the winter walks programme in mid-December when a new lockdown was announced. We decided to invite members to take part in a survey on whether they were likely to return to group walks when they were allowed again, the kind of walks they would go on and what forms of transport they would be willing to use. We were delighted by the response (133 members completed the survey) and we used the results to help us plan a programme that would appeal to as many people as possible when the restrictions were lifted.

We were able to resume group walks after Easter but decided to produce two-monthly programmes as the situation remained unpredictable. We decided to leave it up to the leader's discretion to set a limit on numbers and initially all walks needed to be booked in advance. Fortunately, most walks were not oversubscribed so most people were able to go on the walks they chose. Gradually over the year we have been able to return to a more normal way of running group walks and members are free to just turn up on most walks on the winter programme but we clearly have to keep the situation under review.

Thanks to our loyal team of walk leaders, we have been able to offer a full and interesting programme with two walks available on most weeks. Initially, many walks were local but many members were clearly keen to get out into the countryside and over the summer and autumn we ventured further afield and also increased the distances. There have also been a number of 'special' walks that were highlights of the programme: Howard Densley led a long and hilly walk around Godalming to mark his 80th birthday; Tom Berry repeated the walk he first led for the group 50 years ago; there were two very well-attended joint walks with the London Blind Ramblers and we contributed four walks to the festival to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the London Loop.

We are extremely grateful to all our leaders without whom none of this would be possible. Apart from offering so many interesting walks, they have also cheerfully dealt with the added bureaucracy of risk assessments, bookings and NHS test and trace requirements.

Looking ahead to 2022, we are keen to encourage new leaders to come forward so we can continue to offer a full and varied programme. We are therefore planning to hold a meeting for potential new leaders, build a resource tool-kit to support them and hopefully run a practical map reading and compass workshop in the summer.

Carolyn Oxley (Programme Co-ordinator)

Jackie Gower (Walks Organiser)