

Report of Area AGM held on 18 February 2012

The chairman, Pat Crabb, welcomed 61 members to the meeting at Holt Village Hall hosted by West Wilts Group, who had 33 of their members attending.

Following complaints from several members of the public, Alan Roberts, area footpath secretary, said he had spent time recently trying to understand the recent changes to the accessibility for walkers on the privately owned Longleat estate. Several members contributed to the discussion, particularly airing concerns about led walks which were due to take place shortly. Areas known to be still open are around Heaven's Gate, Nockatt Coppice car park and Shearwater. Although there is a legal procedure for claiming, as rights of way, paths which have been used by walkers for over 20 years, the Longleat Estate has used legal means to prevent this. Alan said he would try to work with the estate managers to come to an agreement on access and the means by which it could be made known where walkers may go.

The resignation of the area secretary, Karen Scriven, because she is moving to Yorkshire, means that the post is vacant and a volunteer to take on the job would be welcome. Contact Pat at pcrabb19@btinternet.com. Other officers were re-elected for a further year.

After a break for coffee, John Farrow of the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust, gave an interesting and amusing talk entitled "The Canals of Wiltshire" illustrated by some excellent photos and other graphics. He said that the Trust hoped to create a towpath along the whole length of the canal in the next five years and that volunteers would be appreciated for a range of tasks. Contact the project manager at tim.pyatt@wbct.org.uk

In the afternoon Peter Mundy led 12 people on 5-mile walk including Great Chalfield Manor in pouring rain.