

Wellington Walkers are Welcome- 2017 Walking Festival Report

The Festival, held from 11th to 17th September, was very successful with a total head count across 26 events of about 450. In addition, there was a full house for a film showing. The walks ranged from gentle tours of Attingham Park's Deer Park and Windy Ridge garden in Little Wenlock to three all day walks. The most strenuous used the Ironbridge Way and the Shropshire Way to walk from Woodside to Wellington. Most of the walks were themed, including tours of Dothill Local Nature Reserve, the Madeley Heritage walk a fungus foray in Apley Woods and the industrial archaeology of the Ercall. Some walks, such as the tour and walk from Wappenshall, the Health Walks in Wellington and Shawbirch, an exploration of the watercourses of the Wrekin and the quiz are well established in the programme. New events this year included the Murals of Wellington, the Madeley Heritage trail and a film night, hosted by the Clifton project. Besides the quiz, there were two other successful indoor evening events. We were honoured that our talk on the Shropshire Way was chosen by the Shropshire Way Association as the launch event for the newly way-marked Southern part of the Main Route of the Shropshire Way and drew attendees from all over Shropshire.

Wellington Walkers are Welcome are very grateful to the leaders who gave their time and expertise freely. We are grateful too to the organisations who supported us by supplying leaders or hospitality - The Shrewsbury and Newport Canals Trust, The Friends of Dothill LNR, Walkabout Wrekin, Shropshire Wildlife Trust, the National Trust, Wellington LA21, The Shropshire Way Association, the Clifton Project, the Friends of Apley Woods and Wrekin College. We also had financial support from the advertisers in the festival leaflet and from Wellington Town Council.

To gauge the reception we again used an online feedback survey. Of the 63 forms received (a considerable improvement on the 40 from last year) most rated the experience as "excellent" with most of the rest at "very good". We are disappointed that 2 rated an event "not up to expectations". One of these related to some speakers at the launch, and one to a standard walk when interpretation had been expected. (This was not the event when one of our representatives found herself leading as the planned leader was unwell that day, that action attracted considerable praise.) Other than this, there were no real criticisms, some good suggestions for next year and many comments praising the leaders. We particularly liked this comment "I felt that the walking festival was really well run, so I would like to congratulate the organisers. It was really great to get the reminder emails, with clear details on how to contact the WWAW representative if there was a problem on the day. I am very grateful that there was a really friendly and welcoming atmosphere in all of the events that I attended. I was impressed that the attendance was very high on the bookable walks." A small majority of the respondents were male and most were in the 60-79 age group. Although none of the respondents were younger than 18 some of the walkers were in that age group. Most of the respondents were local with just under half from Wellington itself and only 2 from outside Shropshire. (One of these drove over from Rugby, having picked up a leaflet in the Ironbridge Gorge.) Most had taken part because of the festival leaflets, but word of mouth, posters, website, facebook and a roadside banner had all attracted walkers. 63 out of 450 is not a very high proportion and we believe that male and Wellington are over-represented in the forms. Nevertheless, the responses give us encouragement for next year's festival. As the forms show, we have many loyal local walkers who attended four or more events.

The survey results:

Gender

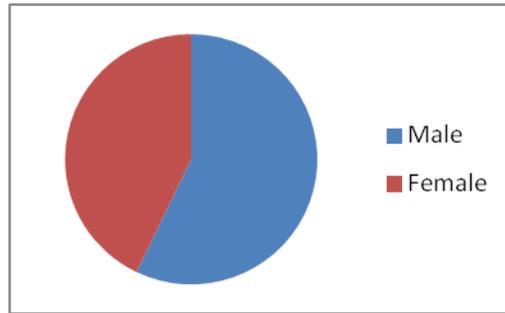
Male

Female

36

27

63



Age

18-34

35-59

60-79

80+

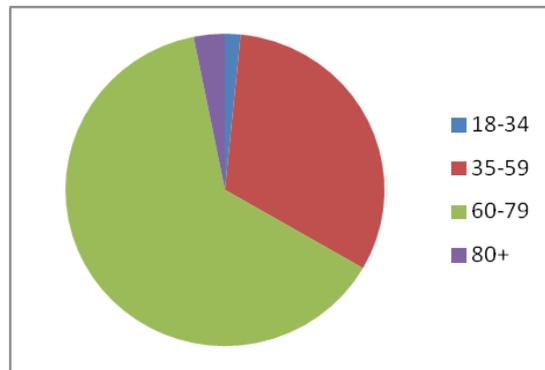
1

20

40

2

63



How Many ?

Just the one

Two

Three

Four or More

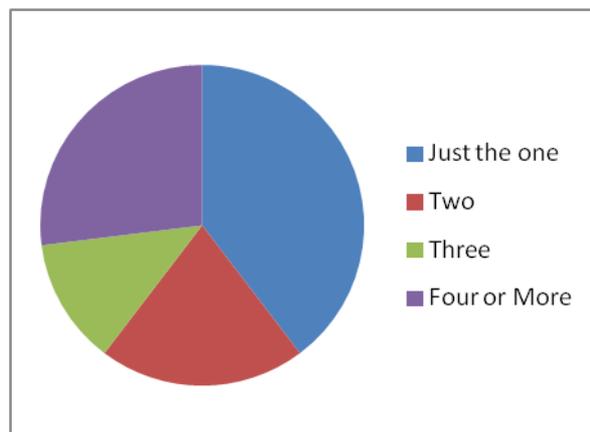
25

13

8

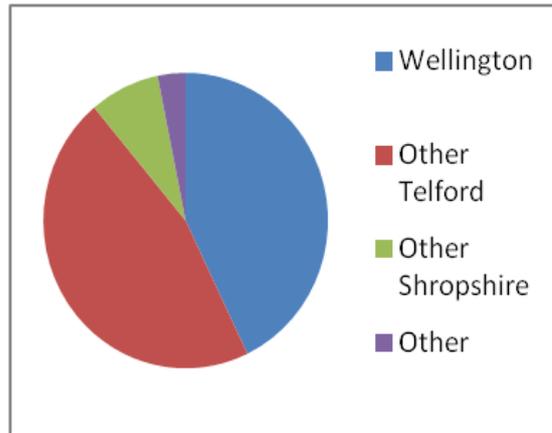
17

63



From
Wellington
Other Telford
Other Shropshire
Other

27
29
5
2
63



Rating
Excellent
Very Good
Good
Not up to
expectations

43
15
3
2
63

