

Questions and Answers from White Cliffs Ramblers Walk Leaders' Forum
Saturday 1 March 2014

Q1. How do we avoid members of the walk becoming discouraged when there are large numbers on the walk and they perceive they never get a rest?

- It is harder walking at the back and if new walkers wish to walk up at the front with me your most welcome to do so.
- At first stop, invite new people to "walk with me" if they seem to be lagging.
- You may be happier on a short walk.
- The back marker needs to be a good walker.

Q2. When taking a refreshment stop on a walk how should the leader deal with it. Do those at the back know? Should the leader give a verbal warning a couple of minutes before you start again?

- On your recce you should pick a suitable half-way point to the target stop (shade, comfort stop, good view etc)
- Verbal warning that stopping in 5 minutes, also short warning 2 minutes before setting off again.
- Remind people have you got your sticks, gloves etc.
- Check numbers before setting out.

Q3. Do you think in winter time (Oct – May) that walk leaders should carry a survival bag/space blanket? Please discuss.

- Depends on where you are walking and who with.
- Use common sense.
- Should be carried in winter weather
- Two or three members of the group who have a survival bag/space blanket can use these together to provide shelter in the event of an accident and as a marker should you require assistance.

Q4. We make the assumption that walk leaders when organising their walk carry out the table top planning and in many cases walk the route to assess the grade pace and time needed to carry out the walk. How does the walk leader deal with a group member who walks ahead of the leader and "forces the pace?" When if ever should walkers get ahead of the leader?

- The Leader sets the pace and at the beginning the walk leader should remind everyone that he/she sets the pace and everyone should stay behind him or her unless express permission is given eg climbing or descending a hill. If ascending an hill the walk leader should indicate where the faster walkers should wait at the top.
- The walk leader should check to see if walkers are falling well behind – if so, the pace is too fast.

- A walker should be able to tell the leader if they find the pace too fast and the leader can then invite them to walk at the front.

Q5. If a large number attend a walk is it fair for the average pub to be expected to cater, for those who wish to lunch, without prior warning? Should we encourage more walks with packed lunches and without access to a pub?

- Must pre-book lunch which makes it much easier for the leader and the publican.
- If a pub is used in any way walkers should always at least buy a drink. It is unacceptable to use the facilities of a pub or other lunch stop without at least buying something.
- Sandwich walks to be included, especially in summer with a possible coffee at 11am or 2pm at pub.
- Good to support local pubs.
- Walk leaders may invite all walkers to coffee or tea at the end of a walk if they wish to do or it is practicable. In this way new comers to the group feel included should they wish to take up the offer or not.

Q6. What is the best way for the back marker to communicate with the leader? Please discuss.

- Whistle or mobile – whistles are best.
- Walkie talkie good for large numbers.
- Visual communication – benefit of back marker's reflective jacket to leader
- Leader should not let the gap between walkers at the front and back get too large.
- Give back marker a copy/map of the route.

Q7. Should a newcomer to the group or one who is trying to get fitter expect the mileage shown on the programme to be that which is walked on the day? What variation to the mileage shown on the programme is acceptable?

- The walk should be marked as the maximum mileage in the newsletter with up to half a mile difference acceptable but more is less acceptable.
- This should also be on the walks page on our website.
- Needs to be an accurate MAXIMUM mileage.
- If through circumstances beyond the control of the leader the walk needs to be extended by a mile or more it should be notified by the group email and announced at the beginning of the walk.

Q8. A new walker(s) decide to join your walk. What additional information do you think you should give?

- Visually check walker for suitable footwear especially.
- "Have you walked with the Ramblers before"
- Welcome at introduction to the group. Ask members to make a special effort to speak to them.

- Give out membership leaflet(s)
- Hot day – do they have sufficient water

Q9. If an incident should occur on a walk, let us say an heart attack, how does the walk leader summon help and indicate the location to the emergency services if the incident occurs well away from a road or other habitation? Please discuss and make suggestions

- Use mobile phone to summon help (999 or 112)
- Map is essential.
- If no signal, send two people to nearest residence with a description or landmark to point helpers, one returning to liaise with walk leader.
- First Aid Certificate for walk leaders (a course may be available).
- GPS for ambulance.
- Call for an ambulance (they will decide if it essential to call an air ambulance – this can depend on distance to nearest road/access and weight of person).
- What you do does depend on circumstances.
- In our age group, heart attacks are more likely and the patient needs to get to hospital as soon as possible **Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is a first aid technique that can be used if someone is not breathing properly or if their heart has stopped.**
- Chest compressions and rescue breaths keep blood and oxygen circulating in the body.
- If someone is not breathing normally and is not moving or responding to you after an accident, call 999 or 112 for an ambulance. Then, if you can, start CPR straight away.

Q10. What ideas do you have for alleviating the growing parking problem at the start point of walks?

- Start walks near public transport.
- Consider having walks starting a little later.

Q11. The group have recently carried out a number of linear walks using the local bus services. Please discuss the pros and cons of this and give your ideas on good practice.

- Pros: more choice, more interest, less carbon footprint.
- Cons: interruptions in public services especially on Sundays.
- Numbers on busses which do not always run at same time as trains.
- RH & D Railway a novelty.
- Good idea to meet at a railway station.

Q12. With weather patterns becoming more variable and in some cases severe discuss the circumstances when a walk leader should cancel or curtail a walk. Should this be the walk leader's decision or a group decision on the day?

- Walk leader makes the final decision if the conditions in his opinion become far from the norm – eg high winds, torrential rain.
- If you cancel prior to the day in question you MUST inform all members through the group email system and turn up at the start point of the intended walk to let people know it has been cancelled. The only exception is if snow etc prevents you from getting there (you could telephone a nearby member if one exists)

Q13. What information should you give to the group prior to the commencement of a walk.

- Introduce new member.
- Brief summary of terrain and direction of walk.
- Inform about hazards, include toilet stops.
- If you have a pub stop, offer menu and take order or inform people of choice of food.
- Count walkers.
- Appoint a back-marker and ensure they have a copy of the route/map and high-vis jacket.

Q14. How do you keep people in single file on a road?

- Inform people at the introduction of any roads.
- Plan route so that roads are used as little as possible.

Q15. You are leading a summer walk and the day in question happens to have a heat warning what do you need to tell your group of walkers. What precautions do you need to look out for, what might you do about the route or after the lunch stop.

- Bring extra liquid.
- Bring sun block and hats.
- More drink stops in the shade.
- Refill bottles at lunch stop.
- Wear a wet hat.

Q16. You are leading a walk and a newcomer appears with a dog. What would you do?

- If it states “no dogs” on the programme then the leader should ask for person to leave the dog or otherwise keep dog on the lead/under control
- The person must be capable of lifting the dog over a stile.

- The person should telephone the leader beforehand to find out about policy on the walk in question. WELL HE CLEARLY DIDN'T!

Q17. How do you measure the pace of the walk and how do you know you are walking at the pace indicated in the programme?

- Walk the route in advance and time the route, using waymarks to measure pace – average 2.5 miles per hour.
- On the map measure total distance and divide against waypoints to check time against distance.
- On the walk, stop at regular points to assess whether slow walkers are keeping up and if necessary adjust the pace of the walk
- Check pace via GPS if available.

Q18. Terrain – steep hills, how long to allow per person to get over a stile

- One estimate is 15 seconds per person – it depends on the condition of the stile

Q19. You are new to the group. What would discourage you from coming on a walk again/what would encourage you to walk with us?

- Introduction is important
- Too fast a pace
- The leader should explain what the route is
- Not made to feel welcome