



## WHITE CLIFFS WALK LEADERS GUIDE

February 2014

This guide is divided into the six categories as per the RA Walk Leader's Checklist published by The Ramblers (Ver. 1.3 March 2011), which has been tailored for use by White Cliffs Ramblers Walk Leaders.

- INTRODUCTION
- BEFORE THE WALK
- THE DAY BEFORE
- ON THE DAY
- ON THE WALK
- AFTER THE WALK

Before you agree to lead a walk you should

- Be familiar with the expectations and responsibilities of Walk Leaders to be able to offer a friendly, safe and enjoyable walk
- Understand the terms of the insurance cover – available on [www.ramblers.org.uk](http://www.ramblers.org.uk)

The Ramblers Association have issued guidance to help walk leaders decide for themselves how to lead their walks - most of which is currently practised by Ramblers groups. With over 500 Groups leading walks every week it is difficult to list prescribed requirements as there are many different types of terrain requiring various safety and leadership skills.

Further help and advice for those wishing to lead walks may be found at the following link.

[www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/Volunteer) and click on Walks Leader

Ideally you will have already participated in a Walk Leaders' Map Reading and Navigation Course. Contact the group for further information on courses or visit our White Cliffs website at [www.whitecliffsramblers.org.uk](http://www.whitecliffsramblers.org.uk)

The White Cliffs Library also has various pamphlets books and CDs available on leadership and navigation skills including a CD on the art of outdoor navigation. Please contact our Librarian, Tony Thorn. Many other aids to map reading can be downloaded from the Ordnance Survey site at <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/support/free-resources.html>

[Map reading: videos with Simon King and booklets to download](#)

This site is well worth a visit and is free to use!

## Maps

You will hopefully already be confident with reading an Ordnance Survey Map. At present, the best maps to use in our area are OS Explorer Maps with a scale of 1:25,000

138 Dover, Folkestone & Hythe  
150 Canterbury and the Isle of Thanet  
and possibly  
125 Tenterden and Romney Marsh  
137 Ashford  
149 Sittingbourne and Faversham

Again, you can borrow these from our library. If you don't already have one of these maps, they can be bought on-line cheaper than shops or borrowed on-line from The Ramblers at <http://www.ramblers.org.uk> and key in map library for lots of map information

Some hints and tips about these maps and why they are the best to use:

- they will show you the detail you need, for example which side of a hedge or boundary the path should be
- they show areas that are free to roam - open access (edged in light brown)
- If you have an old map, check the date – you may find that when you walk the path it has changed from the old version on the map.

To make your OS map last, either buy a laminated one, or before you use a new one iron it completely flat and then cover with transparent 'Fablon' on a nice flat table – you'll probably need four hands to do this but it is worth doing in the long run. If you have the use of a laminator, cut a map into A4 sizes and laminate it.

If you scan and print a section of map to take with you on a walk, beware that the detail may not be as clear and you will need a backup of the OS map with you.

Another advantage of laminating or covering a map (apart from the rain) is that you can use a 'Chinagraph' pencil in colour to mark the map. To remove the colour, wipe off with a little white spirit.

- **Equipment** You will need a good map of the route and basic items in case of an accident – a first aid kit and a mobile phone.
- **Time** The time commitment is entirely up to you, but our leaders tend to volunteer to lead about two walks on each programme.
- **Training** Our group has many experienced walk leaders who can help you in the role. Many walkers who lead walks for the first time, do so alongside another member of the group who is an experienced leader. From time to time formal training courses are offered.
- **Insurance cover.** Walk leaders must be members of the Ramblers' Association. This ensures that walk leaders who lead walks as part of a recognised group activity are fully covered against public and third party liability. **Please see Appendix 4** for further information.

## INTRODUCTION

This checklist is based on advice from the Ramblers Navigation and Leadership, a manual for Leading Group Walks together with the White Cliffs Ramblers own guidance. Walks are led in different ways according to Group practice and the nature of the walk. For more guidance about leading walks see [www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer) and click on Walk Leader.

## BEFORE THE WALK

### Choose the route

- Consider the location, length and timing, whether linear or circular.
- Consider season, terrain, climbs, likely ability and fitness of the group
- The route you chose may be one you already know, taken from a map or guidebook. Consider points of interest on the route.
- Explore Kent website at [www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent](http://www.kent.gov.uk/explorekent)
- Robert Peel's walking routes of nearly 100 Kent walks available at <http://www.kentramblers.org.uk/KentWalks/index.htm>
- Whatever route you choose you should still pre walk it out using an OS map, to allow for changes since publication and changes to the physical topography
- Alternatively you could construct your own walk. An OS Map scale 1:25,000 will provide a multitude of routes using public rights of way.

In addition, access may be possible through parks, woodland, common land and open access land. Permissive paths, often shown on maps, may also be used, as well as land owned by the National Trust, Woodland Trust and the Forestry Commission. Always try to keep road walking to an absolute minimum unless winter conditions dictate otherwise. However should you need to walk along a busy road a HiVis jacket should be used by the leader and back marker. It is essential that you keep to official rights of way and do not deviate, unless you encounter an obstruction that was not encountered when the route was recce'd.

- Bridleways have no stiles, but on the other hand may be churned up by horses' hooves or even off-road vehicles
- On a footpath every field boundary (and these are marked on the map) is a potential stile.
- Just because there is a path marked on the map, it doesn't mean that you can see anything on the ground, or even that the path is passable. You should remember that the green dotted lines you see on a map are *rights of way*. *That is, you have a right to walk along them, but don't expect there to be a physical path there.* Of course, in most cases, there will be some indication, and in most counties there are "waymarks" – signposts which indicate the existence and direction of the right of way.
- The ability to read contours is very important. Every time you pass from one contour to another, you have gained or lost 5m in height on a 1:25,000 and 10m on a 1:50,000 that's equivalent to about two flights of stairs in an average house. If you want to avoid steep ascents or descents, avoid crossing contours too frequently. By 'contouring' (following a path which more or less follows a contour), you will avoid going up and down. Bear in mind too, that even if you never cross a contour, you will almost certainly be going up and down 5 metres or less. On the other hand, the best walks are usually high-level walks, so you may deliberately look for hills to climb. It all depends on what type of walk you are planning.
- Look out on maps for any undesirable distractions and try to avoid them. For example: housing estates, sewage farms, factories, main roads and especially motorways (it is amazing how distracting the noise can be from a motorway even a mile or so away).
- The object of most walks is to enjoy the countryside, so try to plan your route so that you get good views. Walking along a ridge is generally more enjoyable than walking in a valley. But there are exceptions of course – walking along most of the Derbyshire dales can be very pleasant. If you can plan a route which gets you fairly quickly onto high ground, then stays on it with good views all round before descending again to the start point, you won't go far wrong.

- If possible, it is a good idea to have some goal for the walk and know a little history regarding buildings and features on the route. It may be to get to the top of a prominent hill, or to reach a particularly interesting ruin and a tale to the group always goes down well! This makes the walk more interesting than if it is merely a featureless circular walk back to the pub.
- Once you have planned your walk, consider which is the better way round to do it – clockwise or anti-clockwise. One way round may give better views than the other, and you should try to avoid a long uphill slog at the end of the walk. You may not be able to decide this point until after you have done the walkout.
- You can also buy a “map measurer”, which is a little wheel that you roll along the route on the map, and you simply read off the distance from a dial. Marking off on the edge of a piece of paper or using a map measurer will give you a pretty accurate measure provided there are not too many turns and short lengths of path on the route. Both give more accurate results when the route comprises many long relatively straight sections.
- If you are fortunate enough to have one of the mapping programmes on your computer, the job of planning the route is made very much easier as you simply plot out the route on the computer screen and the software computes the distance for you. It will also give an indication of how much ascent is involved.
- It is important to keep to the advertised distance for the walk. If someone comes along expecting a walk between 5 and 6 miles, and ends up having to walk 7 miles, they may well be put off coming again. Likewise if a walk is advertised as ‘strenuous’ and 14 miles long, and ends up being a stroll across flat fields for 10 miles, your group could feel let down.

**The White Cliffs Ramblers requests that the distance you publish for the walk is the MAXIMUM intended and the route should ideally be within 0.5 to 1 mile of this maximum.**

- It is a good idea to plan an ‘escape route’ for your walk. This enables you to cut short your walk in the event of bad weather, accident, darkness descending etc. It’s just a matter of finding paths or even roads which cut out part of the walk.
- If you have spent plenty of time planning the route, you should be able to memorise it on the map. If you are using a laminated map, you can trace out the route on it with a permanent OHP felt pen (easily erased with methylated spirit later). Don’t use the non-permanent type of marker – it will simply wash off in the rain.

- Check transport options, such as public transport or car parks for central meeting point, refreshments and toilets.
- Whichever option you choose, consider the suitability of the start and finish points. If transport is by car, is the car park large enough to accommodate the group without inconveniencing local people? You will need to ensure that the date is not a “market day”. Do not park near a church as you never know when there is going to be a funeral.
- You may also wish to consider a figure of eight walk. The lunchtime pub may have sufficient car parking (always ask first). This may be useful especially on weekdays. This type of walk also helps newcomers to the group who may not be up to a full day’s walk.
- Also worth considering are village hall car parks, station car parks and private school car parks, but you will need to obtain the necessary permission.
- Good places to start walks and parking: for private car parks we levy a charge of 50 pence per head to go to the owners of the parking.  
**See Appendix 1 for John Polden’s updated information**
- Country picnic sites are locked overnight and may not be open in time for your morning start.
- If using public transport check that the service is running and have backup plans in case of problems
- We usually stop at a pub or café at lunchtime. Please patronise, if possible, the current hostellers from our Newsletter and let them know of your proposed visit. Check if the pub you choose offers food on your walk date
- It’s unfair to the pub for a large number to arrive without proper notice. Many walk leaders produce a menu at the start of the walk so that pre orders can be taken and the pub is then able to prepare the lunch in advance. This alleviates the need for a long wait whilst the pub reacts to the arrival of a large group. **See Appendix 2 for an example**
- Ideally the pub should be contacted 1 - 2 months beforehand and re-confirmed 48 hrs before the walk. Get to the pub on time (there may be a second sitting). At weekends refreshments may be more difficult but you may find a pub willing to do a light lunch at 12.15/12.30pm prior to their popular 1pm sitting. You will be able to ascertain timing from your recce. Allow an hour. Remember to confirm the time and place for re-grouping before walkers disperse.
- Try to identify an area nearby where people can eat their packed lunches

- It's not generally encouraged but occasional picnic walks are acceptable in summer
- We wish to support pubs which offer facilities – toilets, accommodation in bad weather.
- Liaise with the Group's Walks Secretaries (Tony Bristow for long walks and Anne B for short walks) to choose a walk that is suitable for the programme and that complements other walks in the programme. Ideally each programme will have a good variety of walks
- Agree the date of the walk so that it can be published in the walks programme and be committed to it (see Publicising the walk)
- Familiarise yourself with the route before leading the walk, looking out particularly for hazards, places where it is easy to miss a turning, good places to stop for rests or shelter, and refreshments en route
- Please report any dangerous hazards you find to KCC giving at least three weeks' notice of your intended walk (for example an electric fence across a path).  
**See details of how to report any footpath problems in Appendix 3**

### Grading Walks (RA guidance)

White Cliffs Ramblers uses the following grading for our walks. These are subjective and depend very much on the fitness of party. In Kent 2.5 mph is a fairly good overall pace for the average walking group and 3.5 is really getting a move on and would make the average walker feel challenged.

Easier Short Walks Shaded Grey	
Easy	less than 2.5 mph
Moderate	2.5 – 3.0 mph
Fast	3.0 – 3.5 mph
Very fast	over 3.5 mph
1 = flat	
2 = flat with small inclines	
3 = flat with some small hills	
4 = undulating with some steeper hills	
5 = mixed small and steep hills	

### RADO = Registered Assistance Dogs Only

For up to date guidance go to <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/> and search for dogs on walks

The group's Walk Programme Secretary may be able to advise you on suitable walk lengths. Remember, in winter, shorter days will mean shorter walks; never plan to finish a walk in the dark. A walk planned in the autumn for the winter programme may turn out to be much more difficult especially where paths cross large open fields which may have been winter ploughed!

We have experienced two very wet and muddy winters. Please take cognisance of this when planning your walks. Twelve miles across lakes of mud, arriving back in the dark are NOT advisable. Choose routes that incorporate more hard surfaces. Remember it gets dark by 4pm for the mid-winter months. Avoid being caught in a wood at last light with a mile or so to go!

### **Recce the route (preferably with a backmarker)**

Backmarkers are vital to the organisation of our walks. It is a good idea to keep a list of those backmarkers who are not currently walk leaders and make them feel they are a vital part of the group organisation. They could be issued with simple guidelines and hi viz jackets. Many regular walkers would be happy to be a backmarker because there is a low level of responsibility. They may then have a go at leading.

- Walk full route, noting critical navigation points, hazards and problems, adjusting route if necessary. Check timings, rest and toilet points, escape or alternative routes, any access restrictions.
- Note any path or access problems to report  
**see Appendix 3 giving at least three week's notice.**
- **Complete the recce/risk assessment sheet as you go along (Appendix 4) which has been amended for the White Cliffs Ramblers**

### **Publicising the walk**

- In order to be recognised as Ramblers walk the walk must be submitted to the Programme Co-ordinator with the nominated leader identified, so that the walk is publicised on-line, ideally on Group Walks Finder, and/or in print.
- Submit your walk to the Walks Secretary. Tony Bristow will need to have your walk details well in advance –as the Newsletter & Programme are published three times a year and the cycles are currently:

1 December – 31 March

1 April – 31 July

1 August -30 November

Information that Tony needs:

Date of walk (give alternative if possible)

Location and map reference

Start time  
**Maximum** Mileage  
Lunch stop  
Name of leader  
Contact phone number  
Pace (easy/moderate/fast/very fast)  
Terrain  
Other information for example Registered Assistance Dogs Only (RADO)

### **Instructions for cancelling a walk**

- Ideally you will have recce'd your walk with your backmarker who will also have a copy of the intended walk. If for unforeseeable reasons you cannot lead your walk, your back marker may be able to and appoint a substitute back marker at the start of the walk. Never underestimate the importance of a Back Marker.
- If a walk has to be completely cancelled, it is **your responsibility** to advise the walk secretary. You (or a nominated person) must go to the start of the walk to advise anyone who has not seen the notice either by email or our website that the walk has been cancelled. There is only one exception to this when there is severe snow or ice making it impossible to get to the start.
- Once a walk has been published, **under no circumstances should it be swapped with another** since the information is available to the wider public and we have no control over who may turn up.

### **THE DAY BEFORE**

- Check weather forecasts, [BBC](#) or Meteorological Office websites for appropriate area, and review route if necessary. Be prepared to cancel if weather is too bad.
- Recheck public transport and forewarn pub/café if you plan to stop there
- Check personal gear and first aid kit.
- Charge mobile phone
- Be prepared to answer queries from potential attendees

Remember good preparation by the walk leader in advance makes the day enjoyable for everyone.

## ON THE DAY

- Be early and welcoming, particularly to newcomers
- **You may think there is a lot for the Walk Leader to do on the day, but don't forget you can delegate!**
- Where necessary, help people park cars considerately for neighbours and each other
- From time to time it is a good idea to encourage all walkers to have information with them when they walk in case of any emergency.- a card in the rucksack with the following information:
  - Name
  - Address
  - Please contact my
  - Phone No
  - My doctor's phone number
  - My blood group is
  - National Insurance number
  - (List of medication needs/allergies)
  - Also to encourage everyone to take their own emergency items such as survival bag for winter, blister remedy etc.
- Invite declarations from anyone who may have difficulty completing the walk. This allows anyone with a medical condition to bring it to your attention in private.
- Discreetly check the fitness and equipment of the party and identify anyone with particular needs. Be prepared to turn inadequately equipped walkers away
- Hand out membership forms to non-members and explain the work of the Ramblers.
- Appoint a backmarker if you don't already have one. Make sure they have a copy of your route and if possible a whistle for emergencies. Having a back marker who can communicate by whistle with the leader is very advisable (especially with large numbers of walkers)
- Introduce yourself and the backmarker and give details of the walk – the route, estimated return time, refreshment stops, points of interest and any hazards to be aware of
- Highlight your expectations of walkers and any places where particular care is needed.
- HiViz jackets (obtainable from John Polden) for leaders and back markers are necessary on busy roads.

- Although leaders may know a route without the use of a map it is advisable for leaders to carry a map should they need to indicate their position to the emergency services. Walk leaders should use their best endeavours to set the pace and not allow faster walkers to disrupt their plans.
- Circulate the menu tick sheet for lunch (if appropriate) and inform group of the pub's policy regarding those who bring their own packed lunch.
- Explain the work of the Ramblers to any non-members and take details of anyone interested in joining. If possible give them a group programme with an application form to join the Ramblers.
- Mention that there will be a drink and comfort stop and the approximate time for this – newcomers need to know.
- Mention to new walkers not to walk in front of the leaders and reminder all walkers to tell the back marker if you are stopping to go to toilet. Always walk on the right side on roads unless there is good reason not to do so. Walk in single file over cropped fields and roads.
- Keep to the advertised length/pace, or if not able to do so, for reasons not apparent when the programme was published, inform everyone at the start of the walk so that newcomers may have the opportunity to decline the walk. You should keep within 0.5 to 1 mile of the advertised walk. If this is not the case explain to the group the reason why and ask if everyone is happy with the change.
- Remind walkers to have their water and emergency rations with them.
- Warn walkers (especially in forest car parks) not to leave anything visible in their cars and ask them to do a final check that their cars are locked!
- Adults accompanying children under 15 years must be reminded that they are responsible for them and check that unaccompanied 15-17 year olds have permission to attend.
- Count the party and signal the start of the walk

## **ON THE WALK**

- Stay at the front and check frequently that you can see your backmarker or have communication with them
- Set a pace to suit the fitness and capabilities of the party and the advertised grade of walk

- Check your route frequently if necessary using compass and/or map  
Highlight any points of interest and make a point of chatting to newcomers
- Manage the party's pace over stiles, through gates and across roads. Periodically count the number to ensure everyone is present
- Be alert to problems with the weather, road walking or crossings over roads with the party
- Encourage slower walkers and particularly slower newcomers to walk at the front
- Give slower walkers who arrive after a stop time to recover and catch their breath
- At lunchtime you may need to ensure walkers do not enter the pub in muddy boots – extra plastic bags are useful
- After lunch, recount the group and ask if everyone has paid for their refreshments and collected their walking poles etc
- Wait for the last person to catch up with the group, then time the rest stop from there.
- Stiles – wait for the group, or do so after the last stile if several are in sight. When waiting, move away from the stile so people can get over quickly.
- Plan the walk to incorporate adequate cover for comfort stops during the stops. People can get left behind on unscheduled comfort stops. Tell the back marker if you need an unscheduled stop.
- Rest stops after hills. People need to do their own pace.
- Contain the group – keep them together
- On hot days – people get more fatigued so need more drink stops.
- People may wear too much – get too hot – stop to adjust clothing.
- Pace – if walk is supposed to be easy/moderate, make sure that it is.
- Inform group if the morning is to be long, have more refreshment breaks.
- The leader should declare the drink stop and say for how long. Make sure everyone – especially at the back – is aware.

- The leader should give prior warning a couple of minutes before leaving. Ask the group to check they have taken all their belongings.
- Count heads before leaving rest stop
- If necessary, politely remind people to take banana skins, orange peel etc with them.
- Try to arrange some refreshment breaks where there is cover for comfort stops
- Member who goes ahead – leader requests member to stop and wait for the rest of the group to catch up.
- The walk member can get ahead if the leader advises so eg when crossing road/railway line. Leader waits for all to cross and instructs members to wait at a place of safety.
- Tell those ahead that others cannot maintain/regain the pace eg time it takes to cross stiles. This should be respected.
- You can go ahead of the leader if the leader says so – eg steep hills, ascent and descent.
- Complaints from walkers puts people off and upsets new leaders. This is bad manners and should be actively discouraged
- Frequently check that you can see your backmarker or have communication with them. Allow for re-grouping as required.
- Set a pace to suit the fitness and capabilities of the party and advertised grade of the walk.
- Check your route frequently if necessary using the map and/or compass.
- Make a point of chatting to any newcomers.
- Highlight any points of interest.
- Manage the party over stiles, through gates and forests, in poor weather and across roads. Periodically count the number to ensure everyone is present.
- Be alert to any problems with individuals, weather, road walking or crossings.
- Importantly – enjoy the walk!

## AFTER THE WALK

- Check everyone has returned and can get home and thank them for coming.
- Report number of walkers to Jane (via [www.whitecliffsramblers.org.uk](http://www.whitecliffsramblers.org.uk)) or tel: 01843 862754
- Encourage non-members to join.
- Report any path or access problems see Appendix

WHAT TO DO IN A MEDICAL EMERGENCY	
	Stay calm
	Dial 999 on your mobile and ask for an ambulance. But if you are well away from a road or in an inaccessible location, then always ask for the police, who will contact the nearest rescue service or coastguard
	Tell the emergency services what's wrong – answer their questions clearly
	Give an accurate location, including the National Grid reference and any prominent landmarks
	If you are uncertain of your position, the rescue service may ask you to send them a picture message of what you can see
	Be patient as calls are prioritised and will be handled as quickly as possible
	If there is no signal on your mobile, send two people for help, if possible. Alternatively used six quick whistle blasts or torch flashes, repeated after a one minute interval, to give the emergency distress signal
	The Y sign either with arms or stones etc. on the ground for helicopter assistance – much better than waving, particularly when there are many people in the vicinity

### **And finally, a reminder for all walkers, new and old:**

Here are a few things that help to make our walks enjoyable (and to remind our older members!)

1. Car share whenever possible to save space in village car parks.
2. Aim to be at the start at least 15 minutes before, to have time to put on boots, listen to notices and carry out any other pre walk tasks. We try to leave on time.
3. Please do not walk in front of the leader. He/she is setting a pace suitable for the length of the walk and ability of everyone present.
4. If the leader stops, perhaps for drinks or to let the group gather together again – please do not walk on, even if you think you are the fastest walker on the planet and know exactly where the leader is going next. We have sometimes wasted time looking for people lost in the woods or who have taken a different route.
5. Look after the walkers behind you and make sure they know if you turn off the path.
6. Always let the leader know if you decide to leave the walk.
7. Walk in single file across fields and obey the country code.
8. Cover boots with plastic bags or covers before entering pub or leave boots outside.
9. Be courteous to pub staff and locals – we enjoy a good relationship with most of them.
10. Don't eat your own food and drink on the premises unless permission is given and, if you use the facilities at the pub, then, at least buy a drink please.
11. Always carry some food and a drink. The pub may unexpectedly be closed, or very busy or adverse weather may prevent us getting there.
12. Walk quietly, especially through villages, near properties, golf courses or nature reserves. Too much noise disturbs farm stock, wildlife and gets us a bad name

Thank you for your co-operation!