

HRC MEMBERS' HANDBOOK

The aim of this Handbook is to help you to enjoy your walks with Harrogate Rambling Club and understand how they are organised. We want it to promote a spirit of co-operation and enjoyment in our Club, and to promote the development of friendships between our Members. It is based on the cumulative knowledge and experience of past and present Club walkers, and embraces good practice and common sense.

For all walkers

1. The Club provides several grades of walk based on a combination of pace, distance, and height. Please select a grade of walk within your capabilities and remember that you are expected to keep up with the normal pace for this grade. If you are consistently slowing down the group, please consider moving to a group at a lower grade. Conversely, if the group seems too slow for you, think about moving up a grade.
2. Ensure that you are properly equipped with suitable footwear (eg walking boots/shoes) and a rucksack to hold essentials such as waterproofs, packed lunch and liquid. Consider gloves and a hat depending on the conditions. Ideally, you should carry emergency items such as spare food, clothing, map, whistle, mobile phone, personal first-aid kit and a survival bag.

3. Remember that you are walking at your own risk and that you are responsible for your own personal safety.
4. Note that no dogs are allowed on a Club walk.
5. Follow the Walk Leader's instructions, as a matter of courtesy, even if you think you know the route. Please cooperate and keep in touch with your Walk Leader.
6. Keep an eye on those behind to ensure that they are in sight and following you.
7. If you are in difficulty inform the Walk Leader and/or the Backmarker as soon as possible.
8. Keep your mobile phone usage to a minimum during the walk.
9. Follow the Countryside Code, abbreviated as follows:
 - Be safe—plan ahead and follow signs. Your right to enter open land may be restricted for safety, or the protection of nesting birds, etc.
 - Leave gates and property as you find them. Respect the working life of the countryside. Walk in single file through growing crops.
 - Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
 - Avoid any damage and protect the countryside for future generations.
 - Consider other people. Help to maintain a pleasant countryside environment for everyone whether they are at home, work or leisure.

10. Welcome new walkers, integrate them into your group, and share your knowledge and experience with them.
11. Develop your skills and become a Walk Leader. Any Committee Member will be happy to offer you practical advice on how to do this. We can't always rely on the same people, and variety is the spice of life!
12. Show some consideration if you are accepting a lift in another walker's car. Specifically:
 - If the Club Programme mentions a pub/cafe stop on the way home, discuss this with the driver *before* you accept a lift.
 - Remove muddy boots.
 - Offer to contribute to the travel expenses. (Check the current voluntary mileage rate and minimum payment as stated in your latest Club Programme.)
 - Remember that you are accepting the lift at your own risk. The driver's insurance does not usually cover passengers' property.
13. If you are a car driver go to the meeting point in Harrogate (Park Road behind Trinity Church) whenever possible to help those walkers without transport and to minimize the number of cars parked at the start of walks. Remember that one day you too might be without a car.
14. If you are giving other walkers a lift, check your car mileage. Don't rely on the car mileage stated in your Club Programme as it might have been measured over a slightly different route.

15. If you decide to drive directly to the start of a walk rather than the meeting point in Harrogate, inform the Walk Leader or you risk the walk being cancelled without your knowledge.
16. Note that the start time stated in your Club Programme is the time cars will be leaving the meeting point in Harrogate. If you are going straight to the start of the walk, you should make allowance for the journey time from Harrogate.
17. Park and act with consideration for local residents, church-goers, etc.
18. Publicise the Club and its activities. For example, you could submit a write-up on a walk to the local press.

For Walk Leaders

1. Ensure that you are properly equipped with a map, compass, whistle, watch, first-aid kit, and a torch. You should be able to use a map and compass; however, this may not be necessary for very simple walks.
2. The open access provided by CROW (Countryside & Rights of Way Act) has more restrictions for you than you might think. Before planning and carrying out any walks off the existing public rights of way, ring the Open Access helpline (0845 1003298) and ask for the leaflet 'Countryside Access and the New Rights'. Alternatively, visit the Access website at www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk
3. Walk out the route beforehand so that you can be confident in leading the group at a suitable pace in the time available,

allowing for appropriate rests, including lunch and comfort stops.

4. Ensure that you have accurately measured the mileage of the route, preferably by using a map measurer or GPS.
5. When completing your walk slip, make sure that the grid reference and mileage to the start of the walk are accurate. You may find that, when the figures appear in the Programme, they have changed slightly. This is due to the process of validation of data which is part of the Programme production process.
6. Bring your mobile phone with you, if you have one, and keep it switched on until the walk starts. This will enable you to give directions to any car driver who gets lost on the way to the start.
7. Bring a spare OS map with you so that, if the group has to split up for any reason, such as injury or illness, the sub-group can use it to navigate its way back to the start.
8. Remember that Leaders are insured by the Club against any claims for injury or damage that may occur from an incident during a walk that they have led.
9. As a general rule, you should be at the front of the group. However, if you choose to walk amongst the group at any stage, please ask those in front to keep you in sight and tell them where to wait for further guidance.

10. Whenever you come to a gate, check as to whether it is open or closed, then make sure this information is passed to the back of the group.
11. Reserve the right not to accept anyone in the group who is not properly equipped.
12. Appoint a backmarker if there are more than 10 in your group. Inform the group who it is and ensure he/she is aware of a backmarker's duties and, if possible, has a map of the route.
13. Count the number in your group at the start, and continue to check the number during the walk.
14. Maintain the expected pace of the grade of walk you are leading, and stop from time to time to ensure your group is together and complete. This is particularly important at junctions and indistinct turn-offs.
15. Maintain close grouping, especially in hazardous weather such as fog, blizzard or gales.
16. Be prepared to alter the route in the event of bad weather or an accident.
17. Observe standard safety procedures on crossing or walking along public roads.
18. Report footpath obstructions (including the associated grid reference) to the NYCC or Harrogate BC Public Rights of Way Officers, and/or the Ramblers' Association's Group

Footpath Officer. A Report Form can be obtained from our General Secretary or downloaded from the Club website.

19. If a serious accident or health problem occurs during a walk and you decide that the person involved should not be moved, stay with the patient and summon help, quoting the grid reference of your location.
20. Report all incidents worthy of note to the General Secretary. An accident form can be downloaded from the Club website.
21. If you have included a pub/cafe *drink* stop in the Club Programme, you are at liberty to continue the walk after 20 minutes. But remember that, if you have included a pub/cafe *lunch* stop, it takes longer, and you are at liberty to continue when everyone is ready, or at your discretion.
22. If you are unable to lead your planned walk, it is your responsibility to find a suitable replacement Walk Leader to lead that same walk. Try to ensure that the change is communicated via e-mail through the Membership Secretary.
23. Once you have submitted a walk slip you should feel committed to doing the walk even if the weather is poor. However, you have the discretion to cancel or curtail the walk if on the day the weather is hazardous.
24. You may only lead a walk if you are a current member of the Club.

For Backmarkers

1. Ensure that you are properly equipped with an appropriate map (unless you already know the route), and with an agreed means of communication with your Walk Leader, such as a whistle.
2. Ensure that you can read the map, if necessary.
3. Try to remain at the back of the group at all times.
4. Be responsible for checking that gates which should be left open are left open, and gates that should be closed are closed.
5. Ensure that you are fit and agile enough to catch up with the group if separation has occurred. For example, if a walker is in some difficulty you may need to consult your Walk Leader and other walkers.

Your ideas for improvement

This Handbook has been produced for the benefit of all Club walkers. Your Committee will always welcome your ideas for improvement either to the Handbook or any other aspect of the Club.

Please send your ideas for improvement to the General Secretary who will ensure that all ideas are presented to the Committee, evaluated and actioned appropriately. You will find

the General Secretary's details at the front of the Club Programme.

We trust that this Handbook will be valuable to all current and new Club walkers. It will be issued to all new Members, along with a copy of the Club Rules, as part of their Welcome Pack. The latest version of the Handbook will also be maintained on the Club's website at www.harrogateramblingclub.org.uk.

HRC Committee
February 2008