

# **Guide for South Birmingham Walk Leaders**

**The Walk Leader must be a member of the Ramblers' Association.**

## **Planning the Walk**

The start of the walk must have sufficient car parking spaces.

The start should be within a reasonable drive of King's Norton.

Please advise the Walk's secretary whether the walk is circular, figure of eight, or linear; if linear, please advise arrangements for return journey

As a guide walks should normally adhere to the following distances, but for an exceptional walk a modest deviation is acceptable.

Short walks- around 5 miles

Wednesday walks- 7 to 9 miles

Saturday walks- around 12 miles

Sunday walks- 8 to 10 miles

Try to avoid too much walking on tarmac; aim for at least two-thirds on footpaths.

If the leader feels that the walk is more strenuous than usual, he/ she should let the Walk's Secretary know.

Plan morning and afternoon coffee stops, comfort stops and lunch stop.

If possible walk full walk before the actual day of the walk; advise the Footpath's Secretary of the location and nature of any hazards encountered.

Bear in mind the Health and Safety guidelines in the Health and Safety on walks document  
Reasonable expenses incurred in carrying out reconnoitres may be claimed from the Treasurer.

## **On the Day**

### **Meeting**

Be at King's Norton Park at least 10 minutes before the meet time on the programme.

Give all car drivers clear, preferably written, instructions as to how to get to the start point.

The leader and cars with spare seats must wait until the advertised meet time before setting off to the start point.

### **At the start point**

Introduce yourself to the whole group.

Identify and welcome any newcomers to the Group.

Appoint a backmarker; if possible provide him/her with a copy of the route.

Outline to all the length and nature of the walk, and likely times of coffee breaks and lunch stop.

With the backmarker, count numbers present; remind everyone of the rule to keep the people behind them in sight and to pass the word forward if a gap develops.

### **On the Walk**

Stay at or near the front, check often that you can see your backmarker.

Set a reasonable pace, watch for stragglers. If anyone is incapable of maintaining the pace, be prepared to advise them of the route back to the cars and if it is reasonable to do so, allow them to return to the cars.

Signal stops for coffee and other breaks. Normally the first coffee stop would be about one hour into the walk, with lunch normally between noon and 1pm., and then a further short stop

about halfway back to the start point. These arrangements are flexible, depending on the nature of the route; if the after lunch section is short, for example, an afternoon coffee break may be omitted.

### **At the end**

Check that everyone has returned and can get home.

As soon as convenient, advise the Footpath's Secretary of any location and nature of any hazards encountered.

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### **Addendum**

#### **Health and Safety on Walks**

- *Plan road crossings* in advance to be at safe places with full vision. Marshal the group at the crossing point; ask them to wait for your signals and cross first. If the group is large they should cross in smaller groups.
- *No footway or verge*. Walk in single file on the right to face oncoming traffic except on blind right bends. If doing this involves crossing the road, plan in advance where to do it and be prepared to signal cars to slow down. The practice of walkers at either end of a party shouting "car" is well established and essential.
- *Railway level crossings* without signals or gates should be crossed as above. Listen for trains in each direction. Light signals and crossing gates apply to pedestrians. IN ADDITION, if there is a stile or gate at the exit side the group must cross in small numbers to avoid queuing on the line.
- *Animal hazards*; these are dealt with in detail in the following bullet points. A cardinal rule however is to always keep the party together where such a hazard presents itself.
- *Dogs*. If you think that a dog is being really aggressive rather than putting up a show, avoid and complain to the police. Walking sticks/poles are helpful!
- *Bulls*. Non-dairy bulls with cows are allowed in fields crossed by rights-of-way, as are immature bulls. Avoid non-legal Bulls and report infringement to the Police.
- *Bullocks* like to charge people. Don't run or they will think you want a game, but don't ignore them. Turn to face them and they will skid to a halt.
- *Horses*. Always use great care; leave them alone and never feed, pat or stroke. Keep well clear of a horse with its ears back. If they come close and nuzzle, try to stop members flapping their arms about to make them go away; talk in a quiet and friendly voice to show that you are not a threat.
- *New calves, lambs and foals*. Have the group walk well wide of them and do not get between mother and young. Generally discourage any of the party from standing to goggle; walk steadily past and leave the field.
- *Gates* should be left as you find them (i.e. never leave open a closed gate and vice-versa. If there are animals in the field make sure that one member stays with the gate while it is open to ensure that animals do not wander through while the group passes.
- *Thunderstorms*. Keep off high points and away from trees.
- *Insurance*; don't worry, the Ramblers' Association has public liability cover for all its members. A detailed guide is held by the Walks Secretary. Ramblers' volunteers are not individually liable for claims.

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South Birmingham Group

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