

RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION – EASTLEIGH GROUP

NOTES FOR THE GUIDANCE OF LEADERS (Part 1)

INSURANCE: Leaders who are fully paid up members of the RA are covered by Civil Liability Insurance, designed to provide cover for, amongst other things, claims against leaders of RA walks by members of the walking party who have suffered injury or damage to their property on the walk where such injury or damage has **arisen as a result of a negligent act by the leader**; or claims by representatives of the deceased in the event of someone being killed.

The RA advises that wherever possible the leader should have walked the route first and should have noted, (if relevant) in writing, any potential hazards, i.e. broken/unsafe stiles, roads, fallen trees etc.

The success of the group in attracting and retaining members very much depends upon the quality of rambles provided and the following notes will hopefully give you some guidance on planning and leading a ramble.

1. Preparation

IMPORTANT : If any road walking or railway crossing is involved be sure to see also Part (2) ROAD WALKING.

- a) Plan the route carefully on a map (an O.S. 1:25,000 Explorer, 2½ inches to the mile is best but an O.S. 1:50,000 Landranger, 1¼ inches to the mile, is usually quite adequate.) Use only rights-of-way and areas open to the public. It is essential to avoid trespass.
- b) Measure the distance and estimate the duration of the ramble. (An average party will walk, on level ground, at a rate of approximately 2½ miles or 4 kilometres an hour but on hilly ground the rate will be slower.) Allow about 10 – 15 minutes for a refreshment stop, about 30 minutes for a picnic lunch stop and about an hour for a pub based lunch stop.
- c) Endeavour to pre-walk the route, but not too far in advance, to ensure it is clear of obstructions (see “Insurance” above) and to check for suitable refreshment stops. If you have any problems try to look at the definitive footpath map held by the Rights-of-Way Section of Hampshire County Council’s Countryside and Community Department in Winchester, also available on the internet,* as is that of West Sussex. Note the locations of any obstructions to rights-of-way (grid references are very helpful) and inform the group’s footpath officer who is available to give advice and assistance to rambles leaders on footpath related matters, but should be given the fullest information possible.
- d) If you wish to use a private car park belonging to a public house, church, parish council or any other body or individual either as a temporary meeting place or as a place where cars may be parked for the duration of the ramble, please seek prior permission from the owner(s).
- e) If you intend to use a public house as a base for a lunch time stop, confirm that a small group would be welcome, and arrange to contact the pub with numbers on the day. Also ask if some of the party may eat their own food in the gardens / grounds. Always respect the landlord’s wishes on this matter.
- f) Submit details of the ramble to the Rambles Secretary, preferably electronically using the template provided on the group web-site, otherwise using the “Programme entry form” available from the Rambles Secretary. Ensure information is given on any costs likely to be incurred e.g. ferry tolls, entrance fees etc. and reveal if it is your intention not to use a public house as a base for a lunch time stop.

* <http://www.eastleighramblers.org.uk>

2 At the meeting place.

- a) If you have entered in the programme two meeting places for the same ramble, please ensure that you are present at the earlier one. The group uses Southampton Parkway Station or some other meeting point in the borough accessible by public transport in order to ensure that those members who do not have access to cars can be given a lift, also car sharing cuts costs on long journeys, is more environmentally friendly, and enables those uncertain where to go to seek advice from the leader.
- b) Before you start walking introduce yourself (for the benefit of newcomers), give a brief outline of the ramble and disclose if there are any significant changes to the published itinerary e.g. if you intend to get back considerably later than could reasonably be expected.
- c) If a public house is to be used as a base for a lunch time stop remember to phone ahead and advise pub of numbers, and let the party know if the landlord will allow them to eat their own food on the premises.
- d) Check if there are any newcomers present and ask them to give their names and addresses sometime during the ramble so that you may arrange for a programme and introductory letter to be sent them. Introduce newcomers to the party.
- e) If the party is larger than ten – twelve in number, ask for a volunteer to act as a backmarker. Introduce the backmarker and explain his / her function to new members.

3 During the ramble

- a) Note the location of any obstructions to rights-of-way. (Grid references are very helpful).
- b) It is the general rule that **the leader should be at the front** of the party, and party members should be asked not to walk ahead. However, this does not prevent the leader from dropping back from time to time, in order to speak to

party members, or encourage the slower ones – in this case those in front should be asked to keep the leader in sight, and told where to wait for further instructions.

It may sometimes be necessary for the leader to ask faster walkers to slow down. Point out that, in the end, the party cannot progress any faster than the pace of its slowest member.

- c) The **backmarker** should always remain at the back of the party, if necessary giving encouragement to slower members, and making sure that gates have been closed. The backmarker should notify the leader if any member seems to be having difficulty in keeping up. In an emergency the backmarker could use a whistle – one long blast should suffice – or mobile phone to indicate that the leader should stop.
For a change, the leader and backmarker can swap positions during part of the walk.
- d) At frequent intervals, and especially at turning points, **look back** to make sure that all the party members are in sight. Try to avoid large gaps occurring, and if necessary slow down the pace. At crucial turning points, or in poor visibility, wait for the backmarker to arrive or come into sight before continuing.
- e) Have **rest stops** at suitable points, especially after hill climbs, on reaching roads, after long straight or difficult sections. It can be surprising how much a party becomes stretched out at times, especially if it is a large one, and these stops allow everyone to catch up. They also provide the leader with an opportunity to talk to party members, and for them to change walking partners.
Do not move off as soon as the backmarker arrives. Wait a few minutes to allow the slower members a rest – they probably have greater need!
- f) On re-starting after rest and refreshment stops, **re-count** the number of party members. Keeping track of party members is particularly important in the hills.
- g) At intervals **check the time** to see whether you are on schedule. If you are running very late you may need to take a short cut, especially if you might otherwise miss the opening hours of a pub or tea-room, or your bus or train, or light is fading.
- h) When negotiating an **awkward obstruction** such as a dilapidated stile, a wide ditch, or a stream without a bridge, wait to give assistance if required. Members should be asked to continue a little way ahead to avoid causing embarrassment to the less able-bodied.
- i) Make sure that any **dogs** are on a lead when reaching roads; on any land with livestock or game; or in terrain where careful footwork is needed. If necessary remind the owner that farmers may claim a valid defence if they shoot dogs caught worrying livestock.
- j) On reaching **points of interest**, wait for the party to catch up, then briefly impart any knowledge you may have. This also provides an opportunity for slower walkers to have a rest without drawing attention to themselves.
- k) In fields **where crops have not been cleared from rights of way**, providing you are sure of the correct line, ask the party to follow you in single file through the crop. This is preferable to going round the edge of the field, since it reinforces the right of way. When not on a right of way care must be taken not to damage growing crops.
- l) When **entering buildings** such as pubs, tea-rooms or buildings of interest, ask the party to remove or cover muddy boots – some walkers carry plastic bags for this purpose.
- m) Before your party members set about getting their refreshments, let them know the **re-start time** and, if necessary, where the meeting point will be. It may be advisable to do this a little way before reaching the lunch point, as people may otherwise dash off before you have made your announcement.
- n) On no account should party members be permitted to eat their **own food** or drink inside a pub, café or tea-room, without the permission of the landlord or proprietor – otherwise this gives walkers a bad reputation.

After the walk

- a) Report immediately to the Group Secretary any serious accidents to members of the party or any problems experienced during the ramble that may have a legal consequence. The Secretary will require details such as;
 - date and time of accident
 - full name of injured person; nature of injury; age
 - place where accident occurred
 - a brief description of the circumstances
- b) If you have not previously done so, report the locations of any obstructions of rights of way (grid references are very helpful) to the footpath officer.
- c) Pass on to the Membership Secretary the names and addresses of any newcomers on the ramble.
- d) Inform the Rambles Secretary of the number of persons (including yourself) who were on the ramble.
- e) Plan your next ramble for the group.

LEADERS PLEASE NOTE

Many of the “guidance notes” here are reproduced from “Navigation and Leadership”, a manual for walkers. It is published by The Ramblers’ Association, is very comprehensive and good value at £4.00.

WE WISH YOU MANY YEARS OF ENJOYABLE RAMBLING AND THANK YOU FOR BECOMING A RAMBLES LEADER FOR OUR GROUP.