

Lancaster RA Guide for Leaders



V8 2025

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the Lancaster RA Leader's Guide, version 8, September 2025. It is designed to draw together information useful to leaders and should be especially useful for new leaders and those considering leading walks in the future. Much of the information is taken from the national RA website (<http://www.ramblers.org.uk>), policy, advice and volunteer sections and existing documents pertaining to Lancaster ramblers. The website is useful for additional information. The pack is complemented by the small pocket leaflet "Walk Leader's Checklist", copies of which are also available within the Group. The Guide brings together many aspects of walking and leading.

Good leaders are key to our enjoyment of group walks and the Guide we hope will help us to develop as leaders. It is seen as an active document that will develop with time and input from experienced leaders. It is by no means cast in stone and should be thought of as a communal document to which we can all add with our ongoing experience.

Much of the document may already be familiar to you, the protocol for volunteering to lead walks is an on-line system – see section 5, Specifics for Lancaster RA Walks. Aspiring leaders should find plenty of interest to them. The Additional Comments section we see as a common repository for snippets of information and thoughts gleaned through experiences that we can all share.

Much of the information is general and applicable to led walkers as well as leaders but the walkers always expect the leader to know these things! The RA run Volunteer courses on many topics in various parts of the country including ones on planning and leading walks – see the RA website for further details.

2. The Role of the Leader

The role of the leader may be summed up as sharing your enthusiasm and passion for walking by leading people on group walks in a welcoming, safe, responsible and enjoyable way.

The following skills and experience are useful:-

- Passion for walking and an empathy with all the charitable aims of the Ramblers.
- Previous experience of walking your local area/community.
- Good communication skills and a friendly nature.
- Leadership abilities to keep a group together and remain calm during unforeseen circumstances.

The duties of the leader in planning the walk, at the start, during and after the walk are discussed in the following sections.

3. Mentoring Scheme

The mentoring scheme supports new leaders and those wanting a refresher. The mentor and mentee will be matched according to the type of walk they wish to lead, initially, Wednesday for moderate walks and Saturday for more strenuous walks.

The Programme Secretary (2025, Judy Steele at walks@lancasterramblers.org) marries up a volunteer experienced leader with a new or novice leader for one-to-one training. This typically will take the form of the mentor assisting the mentee in planning a walk to lead and then accompanying them on the recce. The mentee should take charge of the walk and the mentor will guide, correct and discuss points as necessary. Discussion points during the walk will include:

1. Points in Section 5 below, pages 10-15 (Leading the Walk).
2. Equipment the mentee possesses and the requirement to purchase any missing items.
3. Any qualifications the mentee possesses, eg First Aid, medical training etc.
4. Confidence in aspects of walk leadership – handling a large group, arranging walkers into cars, what to do in an emergency etc.
5. Proficiency in navigation – map reading and use of the compass. Give ‘on-the-job’ training as necessary.
6. Check that the volunteer leader fulfils the Ramblers Central Office leader training requirements (see later, section 4) and answer any questions.

If necessary, a second accompanied recce can be organised or the mentor discuss, ahead of time, a planned walk that the mentee has devised and offer comments. This is particularly important when the mentee decides to plan a walk in an unfamiliar area and can take place a period of time after the mentee has led walks in familiar territory. Deciding on a suitable walk can be one of the more difficult aspects of walk leadership – getting the length and grading correct, not repeating walks previously done in the recent past, incorporating a variety of terrains, minimising road walking etc.

The mentor will accompany the mentee on the day of the recce walk and can act as backmarker or position him/herself near the front of the walk for assistance if required. The mentor is there to provide reassurance and act as a back-up if needed and will assist if anything out of the ordinary occurs.

For previous leaders who would like a refresher course, the same protocols can be used but it is likely that the person may wish to concentrate on certain aspects of leadership from their past experience. In this case, the walk may not need to be an actual recce but just a shorter walk to, perhaps, concentrate on map and compass work and discuss other aspects generally. Alternatively, it could be an on-line collaboration on planning a walk followed by a video/phone call to discuss. A recce could follow if required. The mentor will be happy to respond to these mentee requests.

4. Ramblers Central Office Training

Ramblers Central Office have introduced an updated approach to walk leader training, one that recognizes skills and experience and incorporates on-line training.

Ramblers Central Office sent out an e-mail to Leaders in July 2025 as follows:

“Ramblers walk leaders help thousands to enjoy the outdoors together. Their passion and commitment are what make Ramblers walks so special.

And so it's important that we, as a charity leading hundreds of walks each week, are meeting our duty of care to you as volunteers, and to the people who walk with you. It is with that in mind that we are asking all walk leaders over the coming months to share with us their experience or take part in Ramblers Walk Leader training.”

They are asking all walk leaders to record with Ramblers their existing experience and qualifications or to complete their walk leader training.

What this means for Lancaster RA Leaders

Since May 2024, all new walk leaders have been required to read the Walk Leader Handbook and complete online training before leading their first walk.

If you're a leader who fulfils the criteria as below, you can choose to record your experience or qualifications by filling out a simple, personalised online form . The link is sent to you from Central Office and is personalised to you, meaning you won't need to fill in your personal details, only your qualifications or experience.

To do so, all you need to do is confirm:

- you have read the Walk Leader Handbook and have either:
- led 12 walks over the last three years for Ramblers groups and/or Ramblers Wellbeing Walks; or
- have a qualification (Lowland Leader Award, Hill & Moorland Leader Award or Mountain Leader Award) from the Mountain Training Association.

It is not mandatory that you complete the on-line training but it is recommended that you do so.

If you're a walk leader who has completed the training since it was updated on 15 May 2024, there's nothing you need to do. Thank you for taking the time to complete the training.

If you're an existing walk leader who has not yet completed the training since it was updated in May '24 and do not fulfil the criteria above, you will need to complete the training modules.

Please speak to your Walks Programme Coordinator (Judy Steele, 2025) if you're unsure what action to take or if you have any questions.

Ramblers Central Office would like all walk leaders to have completed the training, have their record updated through the self-assessment process or their experience and qualifications confirmed by their Walks Programme Coordinator (Judy Steele, 2025) **by 31 December 2025**. If not, you will be removed for the Leaders List at Central Office and have no insurance cover. You will not be eligible to lead walks for the Ramblers, including Lancaster Ramblers.

The Training Modules Are:

- **Walk Leader Handbook (walk-leader-handbook.pdf)**

The Walk Leader Handbook sets out 8 guiding principles that will help you lead walks with confidence. It takes you through what a walk leader needs to consider when planning and leading a group walk and draws on best practice from within Ramblers.

- **Preventing and Managing Incidents (Preventing & Managing Incidents)**

Preventing and Managing Incidents is our e-learning for Walk Leaders. Whatever types of walks you lead, this course will help you plan and lead walks with confidence – knowing you have done everything you can to minimise the risks of an incident. Valid for 3 years

- **Walk Leadership Foundations v.3 (Walk Leadership Foundations)**

Walk Leadership Foundations is an interactive, online course that will give you the skills and knowledge to lead group walks with confidence.

You'll hear from experienced Walk Leaders about what makes a great walk, get tips on how to plan your route, learn how to handle some of the scenarios you might face on the day and get tips on how to keep your group safe and happy.

Whether you are new to walk leadership or have been volunteering for some time, you'll discover lots of tips and advice to help you lead fantastic group walks. Valid for 3 years.

You can access them online, they take just a couple of hours to complete, and they have been designed alongside experienced walk leaders.

If you're not able to complete the training online, physical copies of the Walk Leader Handbook have been sent to group chairs, and an interactive presentation has been distributed which will cover all the key points from the training modules, Please see the Walks Coordinator (Judy Steele, 2025) for details.

5. Planning a Walk



General Information

There are several stages in planning a walk.

- How long the walk is to be, how many miles?

The length of the walk is intimately connected with the amount of climbing, time available and the terrain.

Think about how far you are able to walk in the time you have. The average walker takes an hour to walk 3 miles, and around an extra 30 minutes to climb 300 metres (1000ft) (Naismith's rule), but you should adjust this depending on your fitness levels. Perhaps figures of 2.5 miles/hour and 40 minutes per 1000 ft may be better values with which to work. It isn't just hills that will slow you down; mud, uneven path surfaces, stiles, high winds and poor weather will have an impact. A group of walkers is often slower.

- How long is the walk to be? How many hours? How Fast?

Lancaster Wednesday day walks / evening walks and afternoon walks typically average around 2 – 2.5 mph walking speed, excluding pauses at stiles, gates etc and coffee, lunch and other planned stops, and around 1.5 – 2 mph including these stops. Saturday walks are at a similar walking pace, or slightly faster, and the conditions are often rougher. Typical distance and times are given on the next page.

It's important to plan time for rests, breaks and any sightseeing, so that you don't feel rushed.

Don't forget to include extra time for a change of plan, or unexpected problems such as bad weather, tiredness or injury, or a blocked path. Plan in 'escape routes' and always check the weather forecast on the day. Could there be any difficult stream crossings if it rains all day? Changes of plan are minimized by first recceing the walk but things can change on the day. Preparation of a route card on the recce is useful for the walk itself so that one can keep track of progress and time (see below).

- What time of the year the walk is to be led?

The same walk on a nice summer's day is very different to it on a wet, windy and cold winter's day. Is there enough daylight in winter for the walk especially if there is a last minute change of route.

- Which area have you chosen for the walk?

This will determine the terrain and type of path – fields, moorland, mountain, woodland, farm tracks, narrow lanes etc. Also, check that it is not too far to the starting point in time and distance.

- Climbing and terrain

Once you have decided on the place, you should consider the type of terrain that would suit you and your group's fitness best and how long you want your walk to be.

- Check for suitable car parking, public transport options, refreshments and toilet facilities. Not all need be present but car parking is very important.

- Is there a special reason to visit at a specific time?

For instance, propensity of daffodils, bluebells etc or to coincide with a special event of interest to ramblers.

- Try to ensure an interesting walk with a varied selection of terrain and features and a minimum of road walking. For some walk ideas see page 26.

- Unless the route is very familiar to you in a recent time frame, always recce the route first. Note any critical navigation points, hazards or potential problems, adjusting as necessary. If you have a GPS, the Tracking facility may be found useful on the day of the walk if it is the same as the route of the recce. It is often worth examining these on a large-scale map

– typically on-line using MARIO for Lancashire. ([mario \(arcgis.com\)](http://mario.arcgis.com))

or the Westmorland and Furness Definitive map ([Map \(highway-iams.uk\)](http://map.highway-iams.uk))

or the Cumberland Definitive map ([Public rights of way in Cumbria | Cumberland Council](http://publicrights.cumbria.gov.uk))

or the North Yorkshire Definitive map

(http://maps.northyorks.gov.uk/connect/analyst/?mapcfg=Out_and_About).

In this way routes through farms etc may be more clearly checked. The use of the OS ([Online maps & routes for walking, cycling and running | OS Maps](http://www.os.uk)) for OS members is also useful for printing fully up-to-date 1:25,000 maps or in a larger size for easy use on a walk. The only down side is that several A4 sheets may be required but clarity is much improved.

- Check timings, rest and toilet points, escape or alternative routes and mobile phone coverage.

- Route cards

Most walks can be memorized or highlighted on a map but, especially if you are undertaking a more demanding walk, consider making your own route card. You can note the location of checkpoints along the way (features or grid references), times before checkpoints, bearings and 'escape routes' in the event of an accident or poor weather.

Route cards have the added advantage of letting you know whether you are up or down on time throughout the walk. Always add more information than you think you might need rather than insufficient.

If using Access Land, check temporary closure information – fire, shooting etc. Check the Natural England website at <https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land/use-your-right-to-roam>.

Note that game shooting is illegal on Sundays but opinion is divided if deer are considered as game.

If walking on Military land, check the following links:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-access-to-military-areas> and also from the RA website: (<http://www.ramblers.org.uk>), Go walking; Advice; Safety; Walking on Military Land or directly at: **Walking on military land - Ramblers**

- It is often desirable to have an easy end section to a walk – a stiff climb at the end of the day may not go down well.

- **EmergencySMS.** Although we all hope that an emergency situation will not occur it is as well to be prepared. Ensure you carry a mobile phone and you are registered in advance for emergencySMS. Any mobile phone is fine.

If you get into trouble in the hills and need to contact the emergency services for help then sometimes you can find yourself in the situation where you can just about get a signal but it's not enough to make a call. That's where **emergencySMS** comes in.

Originally developed for people who cannot make voice calls because they have a hearing loss or a speech impairment, the authorities have now accepted that it's valid for use in situations where you have marginal coverage too.

Essentially you just send a text to 999 asking for help however you must **register your mobile phone** with the service before an emergency happens.

Go to the website for more details (**SMS to the emergency services | EmergencySMS**). They emphasise the need to say in the text which service you need, what the problem is, and your location.

So, if you broke your leg climbing Scafell Pike you might text: **999** then

Police / Mountain Rescue. I have broken leg. Scafell Pike OSGR NY212077

If you have an 8 or 10 figure grid reference, so much the better.

What happens next?

The emergency service will either ask for more information or will tell you that help is on the way. Don't assume that your message has been received until the emergency service sends a message back. It will usually take about two minutes before you get a reply. If you don't get a reply within three minutes, please try again or find other ways of getting help.

It is quite common to be in the situation where only SMS works so it's well worth while registering for this service: it could help get you out of trouble one day.

To register mobile phone for "emergency SMS". To register, text 'register' to 999. You will get a reply – then follow the instructions you are sent. IMPORTANT: an SMS text requires a signal from your mobile phone home network, unlike a voice call to 999 (or 112) which can use other networks. Also, a voice call to 999 (or 112) is faster. For both these reasons, **a voice call should always be the preferred option.**

The use of the What3words APP may be useful. Every 3 metre square of the world has been given a unique combination of three words. Details may be found on-line.

<https://what3words.com> You must speak very clearly to the emergency services when quoting the What3words reference.

Specifics for Lancaster RA walks

On-Line Leaders Booking System

Lancaster Ramblers use an on-line booking system for volunteering to lead walks. The link will be sent to new leaders. See the Walks Coordinator (2025, Judy Steele). Full details of use are given in the link. Please remember to complete all sections and to give a short description of your walk, eg, undulating, steep 600ft initial climb, no steep climbs, 1 steep rough descent, many stiles, no stiles, etc. as well as a description of the area to be walked. Also, please add the actual feet of ascent (as well as the grade). Catherine Corless needs all this information to add the walk to RA central office's Walks Manager.

Please do not share it with others, because anyone with it can edit our walks document. Please book the walk at least 6 weeks in advance, if possible, to aid notification of members.

Choose a walk that is suitable for the programme and that complements other walks in the programme.

In addition, a Lancaster Ramblers' Risk Assessment form will be automatically sent to you a few days before the walk takes place for completion. It is also available from the leaders booking link.

The following details should be noted and considered:

- Wednesday full day walks – 6-8 miles (4 – 5 hours)
Wednesday dual walk days (Typically 1 per month) Walk 1. 6-9 miles (4 - 5 hours)
Walk 2. 5-6 miles (4 - 5 hours)
The two walks do not need to start from the same place. The two leaders should liaise together, if required or desirable.
Saturday/Sunday, full day walks – 7-12 miles (5 - 7 hours)

Short Saturday walks – 4-5 miles (2-3 hours). This walk is typically independent of the Saturday full day walk

Evening Walks – 3-4 miles (1.5 – 2.5 hours). Late Spring and Summer only.

Note: Walks outside of these guidelines may be offered but please do so where there are gaps in the programme, say within 4 weeks of the walk date.

- As shown in the Lancaster RA walk programme, climbing grades are as follows;
1 – 2000/3000 ft.; 2 – 1500/2000 ft.; 3 – 1000/1500 ft.
4 – 500/1000 ft.; 5 < 500 ft; 6 – fairly flat.

Note that historically the climbing grades were estimated from OS maps using contour lines. More recently OS on-line have introduced a walk planner which calculates the metres of ascent automatically. It uses one metre increments whereas map contours are in 10m intervals and so will often indicate a higher value than would previously been expected. Please bear this in mind when indicating a walk grade.

- Degrees of terrain difficulty are as follows:
A – Very strenuous walking, including scrambling or very rough moorland
B – Strenuous walking, possibly steep or rough moorland
C – Moderate walking, possibly including some climbing
D – Easy walk (with respect to terrain)
- For the range of walks we do, combined with the mileage, the following grades pertain to the walks as follows: Typically these are:

Wednesday full day walks – 6-8 miles, grades – C4 to D6 typically (up to C3 or B4).

Where there are 2 walks Walk 1. 7-9 miles, C3/B4 to D5

Walk 2. 5 – 6 miles, C4 – D6

Saturday/Sunday, full day walks – 7-12 miles – A1 to C4

Saturday short walks – 4-5 miles - D5-D6

Evening Walks – 3-4 miles – D5 to D6

- Areas:- LD – Lake District; L – Local; B – Bowland; YD – Yorkshire Dales
HENP – Howgills, Eden, North Pennines; RV – Ribble Valley
- Everyone under 18 must be accompanied by an adult with parental responsibility. In all cases leaders must be satisfied that the person under 18 and the responsible adult fulfil the other requirements for suitability to walk. Young children should only be allowed on the walk if it is suitable for them.
- People with special needs must be accompanied by someone responsible for their direct care (who needn't be a Ramblers member).

- We regret that only registered assistance dogs are allowed on the walks.
- The use of mobile phones on walks is discouraged and persons should be sensitive to the wishes of fellow walkers. If a call needs to be made it should be done so discreetly at a break time and away from the group. Emergency calls are an exception, of course.
- Smoking or vaping on the walk is strongly discouraged and persons should be sensitive to the comfort of fellow walkers. It is tolerated at break times if done discreetly, downwind and well away from the group.
- The minimum number of walkers on an official Lancaster RA walk is 3 fit, adult persons. To be covered by Ramblers Insurance, a walk must be a recognised Ramblers activity, i.e. in the Walks Programme or on the web site.
- Be prepared with alternative walks for the cases of bad weather or insufficient cars for transport.
- Check the fitness and equipment of walkers and be prepared to turn inadequately equipped walkers away. Typically, discuss first with a senior group member / committee member.
- Be prepared to answer queries from potential attendees.
- We are encouraging all of our walkers to carry a laminated tag or equivalent which gives information for an emergency; contact telephone number and any critical medical conditions. Tags can be obtained from Brian Jones (b.jones@physics.org or 01524 732305).
- Costs of making a 'recce' are chargeable. There is an expense claim form on the Group Web Site, <http://www.lancasterramblers.org.uk/Volunteer%20expenses%20form.pdf> . Just claim from the Treasurer. David Todd, (d131todd@yahoo.co.uk) and check the rate (up to 30p/mile as of April 2024).

Successful Walks and Walk Scenarios

What makes a successful walk? In summary:

- Everyone gets back safely
- Points of interest
- Variety of scenery
- Walk is appropriate to the group

- Timely breaks
- Everyone feels comfortable and included
- Good back marker to help with the pace
- Flexibility. Divert if necessary

At a Leaders Day meeting in 2025, a few safety issues and common scenarios to consider on the walk were discussed – See also additional, more comprehensive, details in later chapters (6 and 12).

Safety

- Walk risk assessment – must be completed for every walk
- ICE cards – business card size is also available. Keep in an accessible position.

Scenarios

- **Cows**
Stick together and put nervous walkers in the centre of the group. Walk silently and calmly. Deviate from the path to avoid the cows. Do not run – you are likely to spook the cows.
- **Dogs**
Four dogs loose in a farm yard – shout and see if a farmworker can restrain the dogs. Seek an alternative route. Report the farm for having uncontrolled dogs on a PRoW.
- **Slow walker**
At the start of the walk, explain the distance and terrain so people know what to expect. Check with the slow walker whether they need some support – blisters, food, drink, etc. Get an experienced walker to walk with them. It may be that they are not as fit as they were. Talk with other experienced walkers in the group and see if they can take the slow walker back, or take the whole group back on a short cut.
- **Accidents**

Serious incident - keep the person warm and call emergency services with all the information. Decide whether or not to split the group. Three or four stay with the casualty and the rest of the group go on.

- **Obstacles**
Swollen water course; awkward stile; locked gate; fallen tree. May need to deviate from the path to find a safe alternative. Provide support where necessary – people need to be placed on either side of the obstacle. You may have to turn back and find an alternative route. If there is an obstruction on a PRoW, please send a photo and the grid reference to the Footpath Secretary (footpaths@lancasterramblers.org.uk), who will report it.

- **Vertigo**

Narrow ledge with a sharp drop on one side and a cliff on the other. Participants should have informed the leader about their vertigo. Walk leader can advise about vertiginous sections of the walk before setting off. Stay calm and help the person to calm down. You could form a sandwich with the person to help them get across the path. They could crawl on hands and knees. They could face the cliff and have people either side to help them get across. You could seek an alternative route, but this may not be possible. Always remember that fear is personal.

- **Assistance Dogs**

People who assist walk participants do not have to be Ramblers' member. Someone with a guide dog, should be fine, but they need to be aware of potential issues such as stiles and livestock. If someone has an assistance (e.g. emotional) dog – ask for verification that it is an assistance dog and insist it is kept on a lead and under close control. If in doubt – no dogs! As stated previously normal companion dogs are not allowed on Lancaster Ramblers walks for livestock, stile and member reasons – not everyone likes dogs.

Finally, we want some walkers to join us on the walk.

Getting people on walks and publicizing the walk

- Website – Judy Steele keeps the walks programme up to date. Add details to the description on the input document so that people know what to expect and to come prepared.
- Catherine Corless adds our walks onto RA Central Office Walks Manager (RA Central Office Website / Go Walking / Find a Group / Lancaster group) Contact details for the leader (telephone number and e-mail address) and the meeting point time and Lidl location are given.
- Facebook – please send photos to Jean Walker (jeanwalker281@gmail.com) before the walk or to Maureen Leach (leachmaureen48@gmail.com) after the walk.
- WhatsApp group for walk leaders – see Judy Steele or Claire Bleazely.
- Catherine Corless is press & publicity officer – she prepares a walk programme for local libraries each month; coordinates Lancaster Guardian reports – encourage walk participants to write brief reports and send them to Catherine Corless (catherine.corless@btinternet.com) for sending to Lancaster Guardian - a template is available.

6. Leading the Walk

- The leader is in charge and is responsible for the safety and enjoyment of the party.
- Leaders are covered under the RA group insurance for any accidents as long as they are formal RA walks, the leader is a member of the RA and the cause of the accident is not down to gross negligence on the part of the leader. Details are available on the RA website (from Home, search Insurance matters). Leaders must complete an RA Risk Assessment form.
Lancaster Ramblers have an on-line one which is automatically sent to the leader a few days in advance. It can also be obtained from the Walks Programme for Leaders link (see previous). After completion, it is automatically stored in the cloud. A completed Risk Assessment form is an RA insurance requirement.
- Your regular car insurance is not compromised by accepting donations as long as it is not for profit. The suggested donation complies with this ruling.
- Check the weather for the day for the locality of the walk the morning of or the day before the walk.
- If travelling by car please take a change of shoes and a bag for muddy boots at the end of the walk as a courtesy to the driver.
- One should always carry a map, compass, whistle and mobile phone. Depending on the details of the walk, consider seriously taking the following items:
First Aid Kit, GPS (if available), torch, bivvi bag, spare batteries and perhaps extra water. Do not rely on other walkers having them, you are in charge.
- New members should have called the leader to discuss the walk and requirements for the day. – boots, food etc. Their experience and suitability for the specific walk should be determined. If it is thought that they may be better suited to an alternative walk on another occasion, please say so. It will be better for all parties.

Meeting Arrangements:

Meet in the Centre of Lancaster: Lancaster RA walkers meet (currently, 2024/5) at Kingsway Retail Park (Pizza Hut. Lidl etc) car park (the departure time is given in the programme, please meet at least 15 minutes prior to this time) and depart at the designated time using the minimum number of cars. Normally this means leading a circular walk. Use of public transport, entirely or in part, means you can also walk a “linear” route from A to B rather than having to end up where you started from, just

to return to your car. Don't forget to check public transport times (and any disruptions to services) before you head out if public transport is used. Don't forget any bus passes or rail cards.

By prior arrangement with the leader, a walker may elect to meet the group at the start of the walk, eg if he/she lives close to the start point. Please arrive 10 minutes or so before the time the leader expects to start the walk. Details will be communicated by the leader to the walker.

New members should be encouraged to meet at the starting point in Lancaster rather than at the start of the walk unless they live close to the start point.

Before the Walk

- **Central Lancaster Meeting Place:** Prepare copies of written, unambiguous instructions to the starting place for drivers. Please include a grid reference for the parking place and your mobile phone number.

At the Central Meeting Point

- On the day, at the meeting point meet and greet members, especially new people. Check their membership status (verbally, no need to show cards). Non-members can join the walks on up to three occasions after which they are expected to join.
- For new walkers, tactfully check their ability, gear, food and drink. Do not let them compromise the party. If in doubt, the offer of an emergency details tag may enable information to be obtained in a discrete way.
- We are encouraging all of our walkers to carry a laminated tag, or equivalent, which gives information for an emergency; contact telephone number and any critical medical conditions. Any new group members should be issued with a tag by the leader.
- Those with mobile phones are encouraged to use the ICE facility (In Case of Emergency).
- Arrange travel into cars and consider return groupings. If possible, try to minimise excess travel by grouping drivers with brought passengers, those not wishing to stay for a drink (tea/coffee) after the walk, those with cars in the car drop-off point and those wishing to travel back to the centre of Lancaster. This is often easier said than done and the leader often gets the "short straw".
- Since free, all-day parking is not possible at the Kingsway Retail Park, car drivers not using their cars need to park elsewhere. The location will be suggested by the leader but typically for trips north we now use the Park 'n' Ride, trips east we use the Park 'n' Ride or Bull Beck Picnic site near Caton and for trips south we use Barton Road or

another suitable location. Make sure that each car driver knows the start location and the route to the start.

- Anyone wishing to go directly to the start of the walk should contact the leader in advance. They are warned that the party may not set out so they go at their own risk. Take their mobile number so that they can be contacted. Also consider the amount of parking at the start, shared cars departing from the meeting point should have priority. Have a back-up plan if parking is tight.

At the Start / Before Setting Off on the Walk

- For large groups, eg 10 or more, always appoint a strong walker as back-marker and keep in contact with him/her throughout the walk. Ideally, they should have a map/compass or map GPS and be familiar with the route, if necessary, via a briefing or handing them a paper copy of the route (1 page).
- Give the group a brief summary of the walk.
- Do a head count, check the time and after walking a few yards check that everyone is following. Do this after each major stop.
- Note that groups of people in general, and walkers are no exception, feel safe in a group and are often less safety conscious, especially with regard to road traffic. Leaders should be aware of this.

On the Walk

- When on the walk, lead from the front but keep the backmarker in sight so that the party does not become strung out. Set a pace to suit the capabilities of the party and the advertised walk grade.
- Do not let fellow walkers distract you from accurate navigation – it is all too easy to miss a fork in the path, or stile in a wall, when chatting.
- Stop after stiles (or group of stiles) to check that everyone is over safely. Do not pressurize the party to get over quickly, slipping can cause nasty bruising and scarfing of the legs.
- Stop at all junctions to ensure no-one goes the wrong way.
- Regularly check the route using a map / compass / GPS as necessary.
- Monitor the condition of all walkers, especially the slower ones.
- If a member of the party starts to lag they may get discouraged which will make the situation worse. Another member of the party, as well as the backmarker, should be asked to walk with them.
- Ensure everyone behaves responsibly – leaves gates as found (usually shut), shout “Gate” where the gate needs to be shut. Go single file through crops, don’t climb gates (but if you have to, do so at the hinge end). Do not allow anyone to climb walls and stick to the PROWs.

- **Road Walking.** This should be kept to a minimum and walkers should stay alert at all times. From the Highway Code, update Sept 2021, **Rules for pedestrians (1 to 35) - The Highway Code - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)**.

Rule 2

If there is no pavement, keep to the right-hand side of the road so that you can see oncoming traffic. You should take extra care and

- be prepared to walk in single file, especially on narrow roads or in poor light
- keep close to the side of the road.

It may be safer to cross the road well before a sharp right-hand bend so that oncoming traffic has a better chance of seeing you. Cross back after the bend.

Rule 5

Organised walks. Large groups of people walking together should use a pavement if available; if one is not, they should keep to the left. Look-outs should be positioned at the front and back of the group, and they should wear fluorescent clothes in daylight and reflective clothes in the dark. At night, the look-out in front should show a white light and the one at the back a red light. People on the outside of large groups should also carry lights and wear reflective clothing."

This is an unclear area for our walks, since large is not defined. Obviously, where there is a pavement, on either side of the road, this should be used. Also, everyone in the group must use the same protocol. A single lane road needs more care than a two lane road. Our advice is to obey the Highway Code and take all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of the group. Everyone must use the same protocol. The Leader is in charge. Stay alert to the dangers. Highway Code 2022 does not clarify this point. **Typically walk on the right hand side where there is no pavement.**

Take care crossing the road. If a car is heard coming from either direction then anybody should call "Car" so that all the party can hear and move into single file at the side of the road. Remember that "Car" is not necessarily singular. Always check behind you if a vehicle passes from the rear to ensure that another car is not following.

In all cases the walkers should be alert to vehicle approach, minimize the width of walkers on the road and take responsibility for one's own and companions' safety. The busier the road, the more important this is. The "Group Syndrome" of safety does not apply, you are not extra safe in a group, you must be alert to danger. Talking is a distraction that can be dangerous, it is much safer not to talk on busy roads.

- **Leaving the party:** If a walker needs to leave the party for any reason, typically medical, he/she must inform the leader in person. The leader will agree with him/her the best, safest route back to the cars or transport back to Lancaster /

home. The leader will also decide if 1 or 2 other members of the walk need to accompany the walker back to the cars / transport stop. The returning party may need a map and compass or GPS. Walk members are not allowed to leave the party because they wish to pursue another route unless it is for safety or ability reasons. In this case, the leader will then discuss the next course of action, as above. If an individual insists on leaving for other reasons it should be made very clear that the individual is no longer a member of the party and the group has no further responsibility for them. They cannot assume they will have transport back to Lancaster.

- Be alert – have escape or alternative routes, check the weather, time, party condition. **Do not hesitate to turn back or change the route if necessary.**
- Watch out for hazards – cows, calves, bulls and bullocks (see later), slippery downhill slopes, stream crossings, roads. Notify the party and take control as necessary.
- Be aware of walkers getting ahead of the leader – they would then dictate the pace and maybe the route! This can be relaxed when ascending a hill but make sure everyone knows to wait at the top. In the same vein, do not stop to talk in the middle of the party.
- Keep in regular contact with the back marker.
- Deal with any questions and issues with good humour and patience.
- Emergencies – see later. Phone 999 or 112. Police / Mountain rescue.

After the Walk

- Settle up the travel donation with the car passengers, including any car parking charges. Try to ensure drivers respect “honesty” box charges.
- Make sure everyone has returned and leaves at the end of the walk – don’t leave anyone behind!
- Arrange to meet at the tea shop if desired. On mid-week walks especially, the leader should suggest a tea shop but go with the flow if an alternative is generally preferred. This is optional for the leader, as it is for the other walkers of course.
- Report any incidents or accidents to the Programme Secretary (2025: Judy Steele, walks@lancasterramblers.org) who will help you to fill out a form. If it is of a serious nature requiring outside assistance then the report has to be compiled in more detail.
- Report any footpath defects to the Footpath Secretary (footpaths@lancasterramblers.org.uk).
- Review the success of the walk at the end of the day – could any improvements be made or lessons learned for next time?
- If you or anyone on your walk enjoys taking photographs you can send some (showing walkers plus scenery) to **photos@lancasterramblers.org.uk** for publication on our web site and social media.
- As stated above (section 5), we would like to get reports of our activities into the Lancaster Guardian ‘Social

Scene'. These are only short items of 150 - 300 words or so. If you, or someone on your walk, can draft a suitable interesting description of your walk please send it to Catherine Corless, Press and Publicity Officer (catherine.corless@btinternet.com) for sending to Lancaster Guardian - a template is available. There is a Tuesday deadline for the Thursday paper. See also p13.

Additional comments

- At most times there will be other experienced leaders on the walk to whom you can seek advice if necessary but you must be prepared to "go it alone" or take an experienced leader with you. Tailor the walk to suit your capabilities.
- No radios should be played on the walk or during breaks.
- Use of walking sticks or poles. Please ensure that these are used safely and do not walk with the poles pointing backwards where they could injure a following walker. If they are not being used, keep them in a safe position (vertical).
- How do I deal with obstructive/difficult behaviour on a walk?
Different types of people go on walks and difficult behaviour is rare but it can occur. As a walk leader it's important that you feel confident in dealing with situations as they happen; after all, you're responsible for the enjoyment of the overall group. Speak to the person in a calm and professional manner. Try not to put blame on the person as other issues might be affecting their behaviour. Try to be open and listening but also be assertive that disruptive behaviour won't be tolerated. If you feel that the situation isn't being resolved, you have the option to tell the person to leave the group walk. Discuss with a senior walker or committee member if necessary.
- How do I deal with someone showing inappropriate behaviour? The first thing to remember is that your group is there to support you. If a walker reports an incident to you, treat the incident as confidential and report it to a committee member, keeping confidentiality.

7. Public Rights of Way

In England and Wales we have over 140,000 miles of public rights of way, providing the ability to walk recreationally and to get from one place to another on foot, sometimes by using paths which have been walked for thousands of years. These public rights of way should be maintained by your local Highway Authority and are recorded on official maps (called definitive maps) in England and Wales. Public rights of way are not just footpaths - there are bridleways and byways which the public has a right to use. Unfortunately, not all public rights of way are recorded on definitive maps or shown on the Ordnance Survey, and neither are other paths which are open by permission or under other arrangements. The Ramblers work to protect public rights of way and their Lost Ways project (Don't Lose Your Way) works to return these paths to the public domain.

Rights of way and cattle



The RA works to ensure that walkers are not exposed to unnecessary risks caused by cattle kept on land to which the public has access.

Farmers are allowed to keep cattle in fields with public access, but legislation bans the keeping of bulls in fields crossed by rights of way, unless they are less than 10 months old, or not of a recognized dairy breed. Beef bulls in such fields must be accompanied by cows or heifers

Whilst the law on bulls is specific, incidents in which members of the public are chased or injured by cattle are far more likely to involve cows with calves.

Walking near livestock

The countryside is an inspiring place to walk but it can also be little daunting when cows and bulls are grazing near your path.

However, the countryside is a working environment and it's important to be mindful and respectful of farms and farm animals, particularly during spring when cattle are rearing their young.

Dogs are a major annoyance to livestock. Although our Group walks do not allow dogs, be aware of other dogs nearby.

Here's some advice from the RA experts on what to do when walking near cattle or other large farm animals:

Do

- Stop, look and listen on entering a field. Look out for any animals and watch how they are behaving, particularly bulls or cows with calves.
- Avoid getting between cows and their calves.
- Be prepared for cattle to react to your presence.
- Move quickly, calmly and quietly, keep together and if possible walk around the herd.
- If they try to get too close, clap your hands loudly.
- Remember to close gates behind you when walking through fields containing livestock.
- Report any frightening incidents or attacks to the landowner, the highway authority, the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), and also the police if it's of a serious nature.
- Keep the Lancaster RA committee informed of any problems you experience.

Don't

- Don't put yourself at risk by walking close to cattle.
- Don't startle them
- Don't panic or run – most cattle will stop before they reach you; if they follow just walk on quietly
- Don't try to stroke or feed them, they are not pets.
- Don't stop to rest in the field with cattle, especially bullocks, they can be very inquisitive

So what do you do when cattle are obstructing the path? Find another way, by going around the cattle. If cattle are blocking a path through a field, you're well within your rights to find a safe way, away from the path to avoid them. You should then re-join the footpath as soon as possible – and when you consider it safe to do so.

Encountering dogs while walking

Many dogs will be friendly towards unfamiliar people they meet and won't show any signs of aggression when approached, but there may be some who will behave aggressively if approached too closely.

The RSPCA has produced a helpful leaflet on what you do when you meet an unfamiliar dog. In particular, the RSPCA advises that you should do the following if faced by an aggressive dog:

- Stay calm
- Talk to the dog calmly in a pleasant tone of voice
- Get something as solid as possible between you and the dog
- Watch the dog – but do not stare into his/her face
- You may need to move, either behind something or to get away from the dog
- Do not make sudden movements or run, just walk slowly away from the dog

In the event of an attack the RSPCA advises you should:

- Fend the dog off rather than try to fight back

- Do not scream or shout
- Continue to walk slowly away, backwards or sideways

If you're bitten or intimidated by a dog when you using a public right of way always report the problem to both the police and to the local highway authority.

Walking near Horses

When walking in places where horses are grazing it's best to exercise the same caution as when walking near livestock and avoiding walking between mares and their foals.

Horses which chase people or otherwise act aggressively should be reported to the local authority.

Walkers may also come across horse riders away from fields and open countryside for example on bridleways and rural roads. Although horse riders don't have priority over pedestrians on bridleways (cyclists must give way to walkers and horse riders) use your common sense and be mindful of other path users and follow the Highway Code when walking on roads.

Here are some simple tips to follow to ensure you stay safe when walking near horses on paths and roads:

- Don't walk too close behind a horse and its rider, or a horse on a leading rein
- Give horses a wide berth when overtaking on foot
- Don't shout or make sudden movements near horses
- If approaching from behind let the rider know you are there

This information also pertains to donkeys.

8. Report path or access problems



Can't walk where your map says you should be able to walk? When you're out walking you'll sometimes come across a broken stile or overgrown hedge obstructing a footpath. Or occasionally you might be blocked from walking on access land. By reporting these types of problems you'll be helping out the next walker that comes along.

Report the problem to the Footpath Secretary at **footpaths@lancasterramblers.org.uk**
Please state the following:-

- a. Accurate grid reference for the problem (ideally 8 or 10 figure)
- b. Route one was taking
- c. Location – to where is the problem close, eg farm, road etc
- d. Nature of the problem
- e. Include a photo of the problem if at all possible. This is very useful.

The footpath secretary will typically check the above on the map, or occasionally in the field, add parish and footpath number to the report and send it to the local authority. Report problems in and out of our area. For problems outside the area, the issue will be sent to the local RA footpath secretary.

9. Navigation

Map Reading



Maps are simply an accurate picture of the ground as seen from above, scaled down from life size, and with symbols to show particular features and landmarks.

The Basics

- On a 1:25 000 map, such as an OS Explorer, one unit of length on the map represents 25,000 units on the ground. So 1cm on the map represents 25,000cm or 250 metres on the ground. On a 1:50 000 map, 1cm on the map represents 500 metres on the ground.
- To find out what features the different symbols represent, for example buildings, different kinds of church, electricity pylons, roads and railways, woods, orchards, scrub or marsh and so on, consult the key shown on the map. The best way to learn these symbols is to relate them to the way they appear on the ground.
- Some map markings on the map do not show up on the ground, such as council boundaries, contours and grid lines.
- Rights of way marked on maps will often be visible as a distinct path or track on the ground with stiles, but in less well-walked areas the path may not be visible. Footpaths and bridleways are marked as green dashes on OS Explorer maps and magenta on OS Landranger maps. In some places arrow waymarks may be present.
- Do remember that, although a good map will remain useful for at least a few years, the landscape is ever-changing and you should not be surprised if some features on the ground do not agree with your map.
- The presence of a stile does not necessarily imply a PRow, it may be just for farm use.

Calculating distance and height

To measure the approximate distance of your route, take a piece of thin string and lay it carefully along the exact route on the map, then lay it straight along the scale line on the map's margin. With practice, you'll soon learn to estimate the distances involved by eye, but don't forget the extra effort of climbing hills when calculating how long the route will take to walk.

Contours are lines connecting points of equal height above sea level that show the relief of the land. Together with spot heights, they portray the shape of the landscape, its height, the form taken by hills and valleys, the steepness of slopes, and so on. On OS Explorer maps, the interval between contours is five metres in lowland areas and 10 metres where mountainous. At random points along many of the contour lines a number is shown to indicate its height, always printed so that the top of the number points uphill. Every fifth contour line is printed more thickly than the others. The closer together contours are, the steeper the ascent or descent for the walker.

Spot heights – shown as a number beside a dot – appear at strategic points, including along roads where they level out at the top or foot of a hill. These can be a useful guide where there aren't many contour height numbers.

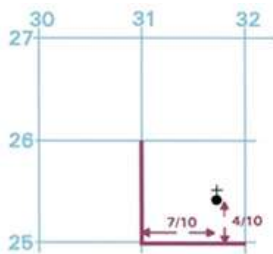
Grid references

All OS maps are crisscrossed by vertical and horizontal grid lines (coloured blue on OS Explorer maps) which are 4cm apart on 1:25,000 scale maps and 2cm apart on the 1:50,000 scale. A grid reference uses six figures to identify a particular **area** on a map that is 100 metres square. The first three specify the vertical lines (the eastings) and the second three the horizontal (the northings).

So with the grid reference TQ303782, TQ indicates the 100 **km sq** of Britain designated by Ordnance Survey's National Grid as 'TQ', and the location is 30 squares and three tenths east and 78 squares and two tenths north. GPS devices will often give a position to **8 figures** (**4 + 4**) or 10 figures (5 + 5), however the fifth position will probably fluctuate with signal strength.

Grid references in our area start SD and in the mid-north Lakes, NY.

How to take or locate a six-figure grid reference



What is the grid reference of the church in the example above?

- Identify the 1km square containing the church. Do this by selecting its left and bottom sides (imagine a letter 'L' bounds the square).

- Take the numbers on the edge of the map for the corner of these two sides (horizontal and then vertical). This gives: 31_25_ (Thus: 3125 is the four-figure grid reference of the square).
- Now an extra figure must be added to each pair of numbers to specify to the nearest 100m where the church lies within the square. Estimate, or measure, the number of tenths (100m) the church lies from the two sides, once again starting from the corner and working away. It is seven tenths from the corner horizontally and four tenths from the corner vertically, so the 6-figure grid reference is: 317254.

Note: Horizontal (eastings) numbers first then Vertical (northings) numbers second.

To find a point on a map using a six-figure grid reference, simply do the reverse. Remember to start with the eastings (the first three figures) and then move up the northings (the last three). **A helpful reminder is the saying: 'go along the corridor and then up the stairs'.**

- See more at: : [Navigation - Ramblers](#)

Types of maps



Ordnance Survey maps

The best and most comprehensive maps of Britain for walkers are Ordnance Survey (OS) Explorer maps at a scale of 1:25 000. These are divided into sheets covering the whole of Great Britain. **Online maps & routes for walking, cycling and running | OS Maps**
Membership is required

They give a clear depiction of the physical landscape, detailing a range of geographical features, landmarks, field boundaries, valley contours, summit heights, rivers, roads, railways, villages and towns.

Most importantly, they also show public rights of way and open access land in England and Wales, 'core paths' in Scotland, many long-distance trails and off-road cycle ways.

They also contain lots of extra information for visitors, including information centres, pubs and tourist attractions.

OS also publishes another range of maps known as Landranger maps. At a scale of 1:50 000, these are less detailed than the Explorer maps. They have the advantage of covering a greater area on each sheet and some experienced navigators prefer them, but they may not

give the all of the detailed information, such as field boundaries, that will help you on your walk. For leading walks an Explorer map, 1:25,000 is much preferred.

Digital maps

Ordnance Survey Explorer and Landranger maps, and some Harvey maps, are now available in digital form. There are also a number of websites which offer map extracts online. In our area the following are useful:

Ordnance Survey: **Online maps & routes for walking, cycling and running | OS Maps**

MARIO for Lancashire: **mario (arcgis.com)**

The Westmorland and Furness Definitive map (**Map (highway-iams.uk)**)

The Cumberland Definitive map (**Public rights of way in Cumbria | Cumberland Council**)

The North Yorkshire Definitive map

(**http://maps.northyorks.gov.uk/connect/analyst/?mapcfg=Out_and_About**).

With these, several maps can be printed if required, at large scale to show the paths around farms, correct side of walls etc. You may need to spend time studying them to understand and use the features, especially with MARIO.

Most commercial digital mapping packages allow you to:

- View and print maps flexibly to suit the needs of your walk. Manually marking grid lines on them can be useful when checking your location.
- Overlay your own route onto maps.
- Calculate route distances, changes in height and walking times.
- Integrate with commonly used GPS devices
- Upload and edit routes as traces recorded on a GPS. Upload and edit other people's routes, for example from online route libraries. (Most systems now support common formats for exchanging routes, like GPX).

For smartphone users there are an increasing number of apps which allow you to get high quality maps directly on your phone – though make sure that the system doesn't depend on your phone finding a high bandwidth signal, as coverage can be patchy in some rural areas.

Even if you are using a GPS device or smart phone to navigate your way, it's always best to pack a paper map too, particularly in remote areas, where signals may be a problem.

Harvey maps

No other map publisher covers all of Britain like Ordnance Survey (OS), but there are a few specialist publishers that produce maps specifically for walkers. The most important of these is Harvey, which makes original and detailed maps of popular upland areas and long-distance paths at 1:25 000 and 1:40 000 scales.

Using a compass



Learning how to use a compass is a skill that everyone who enjoys the outdoors will find useful and can be essential if you walk in isolated areas or in more challenging conditions.

To navigate successfully you will need to use your compass alongside a map – so first make sure you are comfortable with reading maps. In urban areas and lowland countryside in good visibility, good map readers can navigate well without using a compass.

For walking an orienteering compass is recommended, eg Silva, with a rectangular base (like the below), which is marked with km/m scales that can be seen even in poor light.

Uses of a compass

A compass helps you to:

- Know which direction you are travelling in – this is called your heading
- Align or orientate your map with your surroundings – setting the map
- Work out which direction an object or destination is from you – its bearing
- Follow a straight line of travel – called following a bearing

Main features of a compass

- Baseplate - the plastic base
- Compass dial - also known as the compass wheel, with a mark every two degrees covering 360 degrees, and the four main compass points N-S-E-W
- Magnetic needle - red end for north, white for south
- Compass lines - on the bottom of the base. These are also called 'orienting lines'
- Orienting arrow - fixed and aligned to north within the dial

- Index line - extension of the direction of travel arrow
- Direction of travel arrow - the big arrow at the end of the baseplate
- Map scales 1:25 000, 1:50 000 and metric measurer (known as Romer scales)

Magnetic north

The key thing about the compass is that the needle always points to magnetic north. This is slightly different from grid north, and the difference between them varies in different areas of the world and over time. Information about this 'magnetic declination' is usually printed on walkers' maps. Over short distances it should make little difference to your navigation but if you are walking on a single bearing for a very long distance in open countryside you need to compensate for it in order to navigate accurately. For our area it is currently ca 15 minutes E of N (2023), negligible for most purposes.

Magnetic N, Grid N and True N information is printed on the bottom right of OS maps.

Checking your heading

- Hold the compass in front of you with the direction of travel arrow pointing in the direction you're walking
 - Rotate the dial so that the N aligns with the red end of the compass needle
 - The figure on the rim of the housing at the index line is your heading
-
- **Setting the map** An excellent use of a compass is to help you set the map, aligning it so that it corresponds to the surrounding landscape. This makes it much easier to relate the map to what you see on the ground.
 - Put the map as flat as possible in front of you
 - Put the compass anywhere on the map
 - Turn the map and compass until the needle on the compass aligns with the north-south gridlines on the map, with the red needle pointing to the top of the map.

Following a bearing

- Find a distant feature on the map that you want to walk towards
- Identify this feature on the ground
- Put the compass on the map so that orienting lines on the compass point line up with your route towards that feature, as it is shown on the map
- Without moving the map or compass, rotate the dial so that the orienting arrow points towards north on the map - the figure on the rim of the housing at the index line is the bearing you need to follow
- Take the compass off the map and hold it with the direction of travel arrow pointing straight ahead away from you
- Rotate your whole body, including the compass, until the red end of the needle lies parallel with the orienting arrow

- The direction of travel arrow should now point towards your distant feature
- Walk in the direction indicated by the direction of travel arrow until you reach your destination, checking your bearing along the way

The same technique can also be used to check the direction of a path on the ground after taking its bearing from the map.

Advanced techniques include using a map and compass with a pencil to locate your exact position by taking bearings from two or more distant landmarks, known as resectioning.

It is often best to document any important bearings at the time of the recce rather than on the walk itself.

In many cases the bearing can be estimated from the map (N – 0, NE – 45, E – 90, SSW 202 etc) and it is a good idea to check that the path one is following does match the bearing you should take, especially at a fork in the path. In mountainous area bearings need to be taken more accurately especially when the path is indistinct and there is only one route down.

Remember, if there is an internal conflict between one's brain or gut feeling and the map/compass, the latter is nearly always right.

More information

For further information try the RA article on navigation or check out the Ordnance Survey guide to using a compass.

Using a GPS device



A GPS (Global Positioning System) device is a hand-held receiver that picks up signals from satellites circling the earth, enabling you to locate your current position to an accuracy of 10-20m. Most modern GPS devices can then show that position on a map and, if you have stored a pre-programmed route, help you navigate along it.

GPS devices are similar to the SatNav devices now used by many drivers. However, while SatNavs use information about the road network to navigate step by step towards your destination, there is no equivalent “dataset” of information about off-road paths and access areas for walkers. So although the GPS can help you find your way, it won't give step by step instructions like SatNavs. Many GPS Apps are available for Smart 'phones.

Many walkers find GPS devices a useful gadget but they aren't a substitute for traditional maps and compasses in outdoor navigation. This is because:

- To use a GPS successfully you will already need to have a reasonable understanding and experience of map reading and navigation.
- GPS can't be relied upon, especially in remote areas where accurate navigation is safety critical. The signal may fail in particular conditions, the device may fail, or the batteries may run flat, particularly if you're unexpectedly delayed. Carry spare batteries.
- However they are very useful in confirming your exact position on the map from the cursor position or even from 10 figure grid reference they display.

Walking guidebooks and Walk Ideas

Guidebooks have been around in some shape or form since antiquity. There are several guide books available from Lancaster booksellers detailing walks in our areas including some devised by Lancaster Ramblers. Contact the Lancaster RA Secretary for details.

In addition look at potential walks from online OS maps and plot routes and from OS paper maps.

Ramblers Route Finder (**Find a walk or route - Ramblers**)

Lancaster Ramblers Walk Archive (**Walk Archive (lancasterramblers.org.uk)**) also gives details of walks undertaken previously by members.

Also, there are many walk routes available on the internet, including some with downloadable routes for GPS devices (GPX). Recommended examples are: where2walk, walklakes and walkingenglishman. In many cases these can form the basis of your planned walk but will often need modification to suit your requirements of length, grade etc. Looking up a location on Google (or equivalent) may give suggestions of walks in the area.

10. Types of Paths in England and Wales



A right of way in England and Wales is a path that anyone has the legal right to use on foot, and sometimes using other modes of transport. Legally, a public right of way is part of the Queen's highway and subject to the same protection in law as all other highways, including trunk roads.

Footpath

- On a footpath, the right of way is on foot only. A wheelchair or Tramper may also be used legally but there is no requirement for their use to be possible.

Bridleway

- On a bridleway, the right of way is for walkers, and those travelling on horseback and on a bicycle.

Byways open to all traffic (BOATs)

- You can walk, ride, cycle and drive vehicles, including motor vehicles, on these types of paths
- Although legally open to all types of vehicle, BOATs were defined by parliament as routes used mainly on foot or horseback, and it is this which distinguishes BOATs from unclassified roads.

Restricted Byways

- Rights of way for those on foot, horseback, bike and horse-drawn carriage
- These routes cannot be used by motor vehicles

Green Lanes

- The term 'green lane' has no legal meaning, but is symbolic of the often ancient, unsurfaced tracks that form part of the rights of way network
- In law many green lanes are classed and recorded on the definitive map as BOATs, but some may be footpaths, bridleways or restricted byways.

White roads and Other Routes with Public Access 'ORPAs'

- If you look closely at an Ordnance Survey (OS) map you will see lots of uncoloured tracks - these are sometimes referred to as white roads
- It's not always possible to tell whether white roads carry public rights - some white roads will be public and some private
- Those which are deemed public (because they are maintained by the highway authority) are shown on OS maps with green or red dots, and referred to in the key as an ORPAs (Other Routes with Public Access)
- It's not possible to tell if they have other rights, i.e. for users on horseback or in a vehicle but there will at least be a public right of way on foot

Permissive paths

- Permissive paths are not rights of way but paths which an owner has given the public permission to use
- The permission may be granted on a long-term basis but it can be withdrawn at any time

Towpaths

- These are paths which run alongside canals or navigable rivers, originally used by horses towing barges
- Whilst some are official rights of way, those that aren't are usually available for walkers to use
- Most towpaths are managed by the **Canal and River Trust** who encourage walkers to use them. The towpaths around Lancaster are referred to as "green corridors" and the public is encouraged to use them.

Cycle tracks

- These are usually specially created paths, over which there is a right of way on pedal cycle and possibly also on foot
- Off-road multi-user paths are also available to walkers - these often form part of local cycle networks or the National Cycle Network promoted by the charity **Sustrans**
- Legally they may be defined as public rights of way, roads from which motor traffic has been banned, or permissive paths
- Some local networks of multi-user routes are known as greenways and may combine off-road paths with sections of quiet or traffic-calmed roads
- These may not be marked as ProWs on Ordnance survey maps.

Know your signs



Here are some common signs you're likely to come across while out walking and what they mean:

Footpath



You have the right to walk and take a mobility scooter on these paths. They are marked along the route with a yellow arrow, and on an OS map with a green or a pink short-dashed line.

Bridleway



You have the right to walk, take a mobility scooter, ride a horse or cycle on these paths. They are marked along the route with a blue arrow, and on an OS map with a green or a pink long-dashed line.

Restricted byway



You have the right to walk, take a mobility scooter, ride a horse, cycle or travel in a horse-drawn vehicle on these paths. They are marked along the route with a plum-coloured arrow, and on an OS map with a green or a pink dotted and dashed line.

Byway open to all traffic (BOAT)



You have the right to walk, take a mobility scooter, ride a horse, cycle on these paths as well as travel in a horse-drawn vehicle or drive a motor vehicle. They are marked along the route with a red arrow, and on an OS map with a green or pink line made up of crosses.



National Trails

Identifies 15 long distance routes in England and Wales. All are open for walking and some trails are also suitable for cyclists, horse-riders and people with limited mobility.



Scotland's Great Trails

Identifies 26 long distance routes in Scotland. With the exception of the Great Glen Canoe Trail, all are open for walking and some trails are also suitable for cyclists, horse-riders and people with limited mobility.



Open Access land

Just over a million hectares of mountain, moorland, heathland, down land, common land and public-owned woodland in England and Wales is available to people to walk, run, explore, climb and watch wildlife, without having to stay on paths. Visit the **Natural England website** for maps and any current restrictions in place.



Negative access symbol

May be used to mark the end of area-wide access although other access rights may exist, for example public rights of way.



Home Zones

Home Zones – where roads and streets have been physically altered into more community-friendly spaces – give equal priority to drivers and people on foot or on bikes, with traffic-

calming measures, very low traffic speeds and clear signs to alert and remind drivers to act with greater care.



Quiet Lanes

Local authorities can designate roads as Quiet Lanes to make them safer and more attractive to walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Quiet lanes are usually minor rural roads connecting local villages and communities – and often also footpaths and bridleways – where drivers are expected to adhere to lower speed limits.

Basics of rights of way law

Detailed information can be found in ***Rights of Way: A guide to Law and Practice*** (otherwise known as 'The Blue Book'), the definitive guide to rights of way law in England and Wales.

Details and FAQs may also be found on the Ramblers website. [**Rights of way law - Ramblers**](#)

Am I trespassing?



Many of us will have come across a “No Trespassing” sign while out walking but what does it mean and what are the consequences of ignoring such a request?

Before the creation of access to open countryside in England and Wales, trespassing was a pretty straight forward matter to work out. If you strayed off a right of way or used it for reasons other than passing, you were trespassing. But thanks to years of campaigning we can now explore stunning landscapes off footpaths, providing they are mapped areas of open countryside - mountain, moor, heath, down and common land. This is open access land. On open access land you don't have to stick to any footpaths, trails or other rights of way; you can walk wherever you want.

So how do these new freedoms affect trespass laws? Below is a brief guide to how trespassing applies in England and Wales.

Can I walk wherever I want on open countryside without trespassing?

No, even with the new freedom to roam in open countryside there are restrictions. First of all to qualify the land must be uncultivated mountain, moor, heath, down and common land, which has been officially mapped. This land is shown in yellow on Ordnance Survey Explorer maps. If you stray off this into domestic spaces, farmland or gardens you are trespassing. Land managers also have the right to close off areas of land for 28 days.

Can you be imprisoned or prosecuted for trespassing?

That depends. In most circumstances trespassing is still a civil rather than a criminal matter. A landowner may use 'reasonable force' to encourage a trespasser to leave but not more than is reasonably necessary. Unless damage to the property can be proven, a landowner could probably only recover nominal damages by suing for trespass, although you might have to meet their legal costs.

A notice saying "Trespassers will be prosecuted" aimed at deterring people from using a private drive for instance is usually meaningless. Criminal prosecution could only arise if you trespass and damage property. Trespassing with the intent to reside may be a criminal offence under some circumstances. It is also a criminal offence to trespass on railway land and sometimes on military training land.

Right to roam & Open Access

In a nutshell, the right to roam is the freedom to walk on open countryside away from any paths. It means being able to walk freely, explore the natural environment and find your own way. The RA access guide gives more information.

Where you can walk in England and Wales - Ramblers**Where can I walk?**

In England and Wales, you can walk in areas that are defined as open access. When you're out walking, you'll see the open access sign, meaning you're free to roam.



There are over 3 million acres of land in England and Wales that are open access, meaning walkers can enjoy these areas on foot unhindered. On open access land you don't have to stick to any footpaths, trails or other rights of way; you can walk wherever you want. However, there are specific access entry points and access points across walls / fences. See MARIO in Lancashire. You should not climb over walls, cross only at stiles / gates.

Find open access places

The simplest way to find open access land is to get hold of a map. All **Ordnance Survey** Explorer maps show access land in yellow wash.

The first thing you'll notice is that there's a mixture of large and small patches all over England and Wales. You can also view **Natural England's** Access Maps, where you can also find out about any temporarily closures, for example to protect ground nesting birds (<https://www.gov.uk/right-of-way-open-access-land/use-your-right-to-roam>).

What type of land is included?

Most mountain, moor, heath, down and common land in England and Wales is open access.

Mountain is land over 600m/1,969ft above sea level and other upland areas of rough, steep land with crags, scree, bare rock and associated vegetation.

Moor is unenclosed areas of semi-natural vegetation, including bog, rough acid grassland and calcareous grassland.

Heath is unenclosed areas of nutrient-poor soils that support acid-loving plants such as heather, gorse, bilberry and bracken.

Down is semi-natural, unimproved grasslands in chalk or limestone areas, perhaps also supporting scattered scrub.

Common land is land registered as common under the Commons Registration Act 1965.

Since being introduced it has also been extended to include most woodland managed by the Forestry Commission and National Nature Reserves managed by Natural England.

11. Countryside Code for the public

The Countryside Code: advice for countryside visitors - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
and The Countryside Code - Ramblers

Respect other people

Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors.

- Respect the needs of local people and visitors alike – for example, don't block gateways, driveways or other paths with your vehicle.
- When riding a bike or driving a vehicle, slow down or stop for horses, walkers and farm animals and give them plenty of room. By law, cyclists must give way to walkers and horse-riders on bridleways.
- Co-operate with people at work in the countryside. For example, keep out of the way when farm animals are being gathered or moved and follow directions from the farmer.
- Leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available.
- A farmer will normally close gates to keep farm animals in, but may sometimes leave them open so the animals can reach food and water. Leave gates as you find them or follow instructions on signs. When in a group, make sure the last person knows how to leave the gates.
- Follow paths unless wider access is available, such as in open country or registered common land (known as "**Open Access**" land).
- If you think a sign is illegal or misleading such as a 'Private – No Entry' sign on a public path, contact the Footpath Secretary.
- Leave machinery and farm animals alone – as a general rule, don't interfere with animals even if you think they're in distress. Try to alert the farmer instead.
- Use gates, stiles or gaps in field boundaries if you can – climbing over walls, hedges and fences can damage them and increase the risk of farm animals escaping.
- Our heritage matters to all of us – be careful not to disturb ruins and historic sites.

Protect the natural environment

Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home

- Protecting the natural environment means taking special care not to damage, destroy or remove features such as rocks, plants and trees. They provide homes and food for wildlife, and add to everybody's enjoyment of the countryside.
- Litter and leftover food doesn't just spoil the beauty of the countryside, it can be dangerous to wildlife and farm animals – so take your litter home with you. Dropping litter and dumping rubbish are criminal offences.
- Fires can be as devastating to wildlife and habitats as they are to people and property – so be careful with naked flames at any time of the year. Smoking is not permitted on Lancaster RA walks. Sometimes, controlled fires are used to manage vegetation, particularly on heaths and moors between 1st October and 15th April, but if a fire appears to be unattended then report it by calling 999 / 112. Some areas can be closed to the public if there is an extreme fire risk.

Enjoy the outdoors

Plan ahead and be prepared

- You're responsible for your own safety and for others in your care – especially children – so be prepared for natural hazards, changes in weather and other events. Wild animals, farm animals and horses can behave unpredictably if you get too close, especially if they're with their young – so give them plenty of space.
- Check weather forecasts before you leave. Conditions can change rapidly especially on mountains and along the coast, so don't be afraid to turn back. When visiting the coast check for **tide times** don't risk getting cut off by rising tides and take care on slippery rocks and sea-weed.
- Part of the appeal of the countryside is that you can get away from it all. You may not see anyone for hours, and there are many places without clear mobile phone signals, so let someone else know where you're going and when you expect to return if you are receiving a walk.

Highway Code for walkers



As well as the **Countryside Code**, parts of the Highway Code – which applies to road users in England, Scotland and Wales – are also relevant for walkers.

Pedestrians are the most vulnerable road users along with cyclists, motorcyclists and horse riders. It is as important for walkers to be familiar with the rules of the Highway Code, and therefore not put themselves at unnecessary risk, as it is for car and other vehicle drivers to be considerate of those on foot.

Except for motorways and slip roads, all public roads are open to walkers. Even if you plan on walking off-road though, many walking routes will include at least some road walking if only to link between footpaths or areas of open access so it's important to take care, especially on country roads with no pavements where traffic could be moving very fast.

See section 5, page 12, Highway Code.

Level Crossings

If walking in a group, don't just follow the person in front. Ensure the person in front of you has cleared the crossing area and is over any stiles or through gates at the crossing before you start to cross. The leader should manage the group by acting as, or delegating, a

watcher who looks and listens for trains and ensures that all individual walkers cross and leave the railway safely. Everyone is responsible for their own safety and should always stop, look and listen before crossing. No one should ever stop on a crossing.

12. Personal safety



General safety rules

Walking isn't without risk, but statistics show it's safer walking in the countryside than on a city street. Personal attacks and assaults from strangers are rare, however you should take care and follow these basic rules to keep safe.

- Make sure you've got plenty of food and drink and wear suitable clothing
- Check the weather forecast before you set out, take a waterproof and keep an eye on the sky
- Don't take risks by attempting long or difficult routes without preparation
- Take a map and know how to read it
- Be aware of any 'escape routes' if you're walking long-distance paths and need to cut the walk short
- Tell someone when you expect to be back

If you're worried about security when walking alone in quiet places, this advice may help:

- Change your route if you feel unsafe for any reason
- Consider taking a personal alarm
- Avoid using headphones to listen to music if this stops you from remaining alert
- Make sure someone is aware when you plan to be back and where you are going

Walking on roads

Stick to the Highway Code when walking on roads, and always use the pavement, if there is one. Cross at a designated point and make sure drivers can see you. If the road has no pavement, try to walk on the right, facing oncoming traffic and cross to the other side when on sharp right-hand bends. Try to be more aware when walking on country roads, because traffic may be moving very fast.

Mobile phones

It's always a good idea to carry a mobile with you, which you should fully charge before setting out. If you have to call the emergency services, make sure you keep your mobile on, so they can call you back. However, remember that there may be no coverage in some hilly and remote areas.

Group walking

When you walk in a group, don't just follow the person in front - try to look around you and be aware of what's going on. It's important to take responsibility for your own safety.

Mountain and hill walking



This section is of general interest regarding most Lancaster RA walks but may be useful if you are on a strenuous Saturday walk or a walking holiday.

If you're walking in mountainous regions, like North Wales, the Lake District, the Pennines or the Scottish Highlands, be prepared for more challenging weather - especially in winter. It is important to be properly equipped as conditions can vary dramatically from valley to mountaintop, regardless of the season. Walking on an exposed mountainside, you can quickly become susceptible to wind chill. The combination of high winds and cold air can dramatically lower your body temperature to potentially fatal levels of hypothermia.

Essential equipment

Warm and waterproof clothing, a map, compass and good navigation skills are essential, and in addition to the **standard equipment** for country walks, you should also carry:

- A survival bag - a heavy-duty bag that keeps your body insulated from the cold in an emergency.
- A torch and spare batteries
- A whistle (six blasts of a whistle or six flashes of a torch is the international distress signal)
- Additional warm clothing (including hat and gloves)
- High-energy rations (such as mint cake, chocolate, or dried fruit)
- Water purification tablets (not required on Lancaster RA day walks)
- A first aid kit
- An ice axe and crampons when there is snow or ice on the hills (on Lancaster RA walks only if the leader notifies the walkers of this requirement).

Sensible precautions

Be sensible about not over-reaching yourself on a mountain hike. Don't push yourself or your party beyond your limits, and cut your walk short if you are tiring or the weather is worsening and you are not confident of your skills or equipment.

Leave a **route card** or other indication of your likely location with a responsible person, and notify this person immediately of your safe return.

If a real emergency occurs, the international distress signal is a group of six loud blasts of a whistle, to be repeated at one-minute intervals. The emergency number in the UK is 999 / 112 (112 is preferable for mobile phones) and you should ask for the police who will notify the mountain rescue.

Additional equipment

If you're likely to meet heavy snow or ice you should wear a pair of heavy-duty winter walking boots that can be fitted with crampons. These are metal spike attachments that give a better grip in icy conditions and not all boots are suitable for them. You should also carry and know how to use an ice axe.

You'll need to learn how to use axes and crampons properly - in the hands of a novice they can cause rather than prevent accidents.

Many hill walkers also carry an emergency shelter (2-10 person), or bothy bag. This is rather like a tent without poles, made of lightweight waterproof nylon that's big enough to sit inside. See an example of an 8-10 shelter and a bothy bag on the Cotswolds Outdoor website [Bothy Bags & Group Emergency Shelters | Get Free UK Delivery Now | Cotswold Outdoor](#). They're available in a range of sizes and you should carry one that's adequate for the size of your party. When used by two people or more they have the advantage of allowing you to share body heat and can warm up very quickly.

Food and drink



Keeping your energy levels up

It's important to take plenty of food and water with you when out walking to keep hydrated and keep your energy levels up, especially on longer walks.

Being prepared will help make your walk more enjoyable so here are few handy tips:

- Carbohydrate-rich foods, fats, and healthy sugars are a good source of energy and will help you keep the pace and prevent exhaustion from setting in.

- Go for foods that provide long-lasting energy, rather than a short-term sugar-rush. A Trail mix, which combines nuts and dried fruits, or energy bars are an excellent, high-energy snack.
- Fresh fruit also has a high water content so can help to keep you hydrated. Bananas are high in potassium and natural sugars and harder fruit like apples and pears are compact and easy to pack. Pack softer fruit with care at the top of your rucksack to avoid it getting squashed and take plastic bags to avoid anything leaking into your kit. Chocolate gives you a good boost of energy so it's always handy to keep a couple of bars on you.
- If you're going on a longer walk, it's better to snack on small amounts throughout the day rather than eating one big meal. This will help you keep your blood sugar levels up and avoid painful cramps.
- Adapt to suit any personal medical issues.

It's important to remember to take all your litter away with you – including fruit peels, skins and cores - to avoid spoiling the beauty of the countryside, and causing unnecessary harm to wildlife and farm animals.

Staying hydrated

Staying hydrated is one of the most important things to do when going walking.

Dehydration can lead to tiredness, cramps and headaches and could be dangerous, so take plenty of water with you, particularly if you're going on a long walk or are walking in remote areas.

A few helpful tips:

- The Department of Health recommends that we should drink about 1.2 litres of fluids a day. If you're exercising you may need more, particularly in warm weather. Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink, as this is one of the first signs of dehydration. Rather take regular sips as you go along.
- Plain tap or still mineral water is your best option. Fizzy drinks are not good for quenching thirst as they are difficult to drink quickly. Fruit juice and non-diet soft drinks contain sugar which will boost your energy but aren't as effective as water at keeping you hydrated.
- Isotonic and sports drinks are formulated to improve the rate at which water is absorbed, but water is still the healthiest option and best way to rehydrate.
- Avoid drinking unboiled or unpurified water from streams. Bring plenty of water with you.

Thunder and Lightning



Thunder and lightning is a potential hazard which should be taken seriously when walking outdoors. It's wise to familiarise yourself with what to do if you encounter a thunderstorm.

Direct lightning strikes are rare. Partial strikes are more common, either through induction from a nearby object or from the ground. Reducing surface contact with the ground or object will reduce the power of the strike.

Here are some safety tips to reduce the risks:

- **Plan ahead.** Always check the weather forecast before starting a walk. We recommend checking the Met Office and Mountain Weather Information Service. If storms are forecast, consider cancelling the walk or altering the route to one at a lower elevation, or on less exposed ground. Be especially cautious after a prolonged period of high humidity.
- **Monitor the weather.** Weather forecasts are mainly accurate, but they can't always predict the exact time and location of storms. Keep an eye on the build-up of clouds – if they start to become menacing, it's time to review your plans. On warm days the danger will increase during the day as the heat builds.
- **Be aware.** As a storm approaches, its distance can be estimated by measuring the time between lightning flashes and the rumble of thunder. Lightning appears almost simultaneously, while thunder travels at 1 km per 3 seconds. So, a three-second delay between lightning and thunder means that the storm is about 1 km away; a six-second delay means that the storm is about 2 km away.
- **Lose height first.** If you get caught by an approaching storm, try to put higher ground between you and the storm. Lightning strikes are more frequent on summits and other projections because lightning takes the shortest route to earth. The higher and more exposed you are, the greater the danger. Only descend if it's safe to do so; scrambling quickly on uneven terrain can be particularly hazardous in rainfall.
- **Find a safe place.** It's safest to find the lowest open ground rather than taking shelter in caves or under trees - these will put you at risk if struck by lightning, as the lightning takes the quickest route to the ground. Ideally crouch or sit on the ground and aim to ensure that there is higher ground above you.

- **Minimise contact with the ground and any conducting objects.** Ideally crouch or sit upright on top of insulating material such as rucksacks or sleeping mats, with hands on knees rather than touching the ground. Although they don't significantly increase the risk of attracting a strike, it's wise to lay metal items aside until the storm passes e.g. tools or walking poles. Avoid metal fences. If in a group, try to space out slightly.
- **Help others.** It is safe to touch someone who has been struck by lightning and provide them with CPR and First Aid. Anyone struck by lightning should always seek medical advice.
- The standard lightning safety guide is the 30-30 rule. The first 30 represents 30 seconds. If the time between when you see the flash and hear the thunder is 30 seconds or less, the lightning is close enough to hit you. After the last flash of lightning, wait 30 minutes (the second 30) before leaving any safe shelter.

Insects



With over 20,000 different species of insect in the UK, it is important to know which ones can harm you and how best to deal with any potential bites or stings.

Ticks

Ticks are tiny blood-sucking arachnids which can be found in areas of dense vegetation, such as long grass or bracken. They can attach themselves to you and feed on your blood by biting through your skin. Ticks are known to carry a variety of diseases. The most serious of these is Lyme disease, which can be transmitted through the bite of an infected deer tick.

If you are planning to go walking in an area of dense vegetation, consider taking the following precautions:

- Wear trousers and long-sleeved shirts and keep cuffs fastened and trousers tucked into socks.
- Wear shoes or boots rather than open sandals.
- Use insect repellent: DEET or Permethrin can protect against ticks for several hours.
- If you find a tick, remove it quickly, preferably with a specially-designed tick removal tool. These are better than tweezers as they avoid the risk of squashing the tick and releasing fluids into your skin. In an emergency you can use a thread of cotton looped around the tick's mouthparts, which you then pull steadily upwards.
- After your walk, carefully brush all clothing and examine yourself for ticks. Pay special attention to their favorite feeding places: the backs of knees, around the groin, under the arms and the scalp.

If part of the tick breaks off or you think any part of it may be left in your skin, consult your doctor immediately. If possible, take the tick with you folded in sticky tape so that it can be sent for analysis. If you feel ill after a walk, remember to tell the doctor that you may have been bitten.

Mosquitoes, midges and gnats

Bites from mosquitoes, midges and gnats will often cause small itchy bumps on your skin.

There are many over-the-counter treatments available, which can be used to alleviate the itching. These include Benadryl tablets and antihistamine creams that can be directly applied to the bite. Tea tree oil can also be an effective anti-inflammatory.

Insect repellents containing DEET are good for discouraging most types of biting insect and are a good idea if you're walking in areas where midges are likely to be a particular problem.

Horseflies

Horsefly bites often result in a painful welt which can itch for a few days. Horseflies cut the skin when they bite, rather than piercing it like a mosquito. Make sure you keep the bite clean while it heals in order to prevent infection.

Bees, Wasps and Hornets

Being stung by a wasp or hornet can be painful and cause unpleasant swelling that should go down within a few hours. Do not antagonize these insects since they will often just go away.

If you are stung by a bee then the stinger may remain in your skin. The safest way to remove it is by scraping something hard, like a credit card, over the skin. Do not attempt to pinch it out as this can squeeze more venom into your skin.

15. Emergencies and First Aid

The following notes from a Bowland Mountain Rescue half-day course will be useful.

What to do before the rescue team /Helicopter arrives.

Basic Principle: The 3 "Ps"

- Preserve life
- Prevent worsening
- Promote recovery

First questions to ask (yourself and others):

- Is the scene safe (assess risk to self and others)?
- What has happened?
- How many people may be hurt?
- Is help required?
- Should I/We enter the situation?

In more detail:

1. Ascertain what has happened by asking other group members – eg. Ted fell from the rocks and banged his head, eg. Ted just collapsed in front of me etc. The latter could be a Cardiac Arrest (no respiration and no pulse in the neck), the former a trip and a banged head knocking him unconscious.
2. How many casualties are there – check the rest of the party are OK.
3. Are there any First Aiders or medical personnel in the party?
4. Leader takes charge or nominates someone.
5. Person in charge enlists help from other specific persons – not a general request for specific help, eg Jim, please phone for emergency services – Jim phones or arranges for someone to phone if he cannot do it. **See CALL FOR HELP (999) below.**
6. Approach the patient from the feet end – better sight and hearing for the patient
7. Talk to the patient in a calm voice, give name and ask if they can hear.
If YES, ask where it hurts. Ask for neck pain. Continue as (A) below:

If NO continue as (B) below. Use the **ABC** approach.

A – Airway.

- Check casualty has a viable airway. Open mouth and check for a clear airway. Remove any obstruction (eg false teeth)
- Chin lift and head tilt back (use a helper)
- Listen (without compromising safe distance guidance)

B – Breathing

- Is the casualty breathing? Remember patient response for neck pain given above. Look, listen and feel for breaths. With hands on both lungs, is there any movement?
- Look, feel and listen for 10 seconds. There should be a minimum of 2 breaths
- If breathing is absent or lower than 1 breath per 10 seconds begin immediate CPR
- **Call for HELP (999)** – see below
- **Give CPR**, Ensure the patient is lying on their back on a flat surface with arms by their side. Give chest compressions by pushing firmly in the middle of their chest and then releasing. Push at a rate of 100-120 pushes per minute (Rhythm- ‘Nelly the elephant’) Push approx. 5-6 cm depth (a third body depth). It is very hard work and a team should be employed. Count down from 5 at the change-over to maintain the rhythm. Change-over is typically every 2 minutes. This should be continued if possible until the emergency services arrive, typically by helicopter. This could break

a rib or ribs, especially in the elderly. Continue regardless, a broken rib will heal, death will not.

- Rescue breathes are NOT advised

If breathing is detected, put in recovery position. Put arm across chest, lift leg up to form a right angle at the knee and carefully tip the patient onto the far side.

C – Circulation

- Check for blood loss- visual
- Check for blood loss – physical. Put on protective gloves (from First Aid kit of one of the group members. From the head down gently feel for fluid, open any cuffs, check gloved hands for signs of blood. If found continue as C1 below.
- Check pulse or observation of color and temperature of hands/fingers.
- Treat as you find

(B) **If NO**, ie there is no response, ask them to open and close their eyes if they can hear. If yes continue as (A) above. If not, pinch ear lobe or forehead between eyes to see if they respond.

If YES, continue as (A) above.

If NO, they are unconscious. Check breathing as A and B above.

CALL FOR HELP (999)

Call for help_ 999 ambulance or police/mountain rescue. ATMIST / Grid reference, eg SD***** (6 -10, the more the better) or nearby location or What3Words.

A – Age, name and DoB of patient

T – Time of incident or onset of symptoms

M – Mechanism of injury or medical complaint

I – Injuries, examination findings

S – Signs

T – Treatment given

Use of What3Words. The app. <https://what3words.com> needs to be installed on your smart phone or tablet ahead of time. The 3 word sequence shown indicates your position to 3 m square. Emergency services are familiar with this location device. Ambulances will not go off-road.

DO NOT MOVE YOUR LOCATION unless agreed with emergency services

If you lose the phone signal, or there isn't one shown, try **emergencySMS**. You need to register your phone (any mobile phone) ahead of time.

If you get into trouble in the hills and need to contact the emergency services for help then sometimes you can find yourself in the situation where you can just about get a signal but it's not enough to make a call. That's where **emergencySMS** comes in.

Originally developed for people who cannot make voice calls because they have a hearing loss or a speech impairment the authorities have now accepted that it's valid for use in situations where you have marginal coverage too.

Essentially you just send a text to 999 asking for help however you must **register your mobile phone** with the service before an emergency happens.

Go to the website for more details (**SMS to the emergency services | EmergencySMS**). They emphasise the need to say in the text which service you need, what the problem is, and your location.

So, if you broke your leg climbing Scafell Pike you might text: **999** then

Police / Mountain Rescue. I have broken leg. Scafell Pike OSGR NY212077

If you have an 8 or 10 figure grid reference, so much the better.

What happens next?

The emergency service will either ask for more information or will tell you that help is on the way. Don't assume that your message has been received until the emergency service sends a message back. It will usually take about two minutes before you get a reply. If you don't get a reply within three minutes, please try again or find other ways of getting help.

It is quite common to be in the situation where only SMS works so it's well worth while registering for this service: it could help get you out of trouble one day.

To register mobile phone for "emergency SMS". To register, text 'register' to 999. You will get a reply – then follow the instructions you are sent. **IMPORTANT:** an SMS text requires a signal from your mobile phone home network, unlike a voice call to 999 (or 112) which can use other networks. Also, a voice call to 999 (or 112) is faster. For both these reasons, **a voice call should always be the preferred option.**

Common Emergencies in the Outdoors (Medical)

- Heart Attack
- Angina
- Cardiac Arrest
- Stroke
- Diabetic Coma

- Asthma
- Anaphylactic Shock

1. Heart attack

- Patients have persistent, vice-like chest pain which may spread to their arms, neck, jaw, back or stomach. May be like bad indigestion, there may be postural and breathing changes. Same feeling as cramp.
- **Appearance:-** Skin looks grey and there is sweating. Looks like they believe they're going to die – unmistakable.
- **Describe the pain?** No hints. "stabbing/dull / comes and goes / elephant / crushing"
- **Treatment:**
 - a. Reduce effort on the heart- sit/lie down
 - b. 300mg Aspirin. Allergic?- give it.
 - c. Keep warm
 - d. Reassure constantly
 - e. **Call for help (999)** and inform that aspirin given.

2. Angina:-

Shortage of breath-chest pain caused by over excursion.

Heart muscles can't get enough nutrients hence cramp.

It is a possible known condition for the patient and they may carry their own medication. Pain eases with rest. Ask patient if can they continue (at their own slower pace) or **call for help (999)**.

3. Cardiac Arrest. See above, CPR.

4. Stroke

To check if someone is having a stroke, carry out the FAST test.

Face: – Is there weakness on one side of the face?

Arms: – Can they raise both arms?

Speech: – is their speech readily understood? Ask for their address.

Time: - Time to call 999 if any of these actions are unsatisfactory.

5. Diabetes / Diabetic Coma

- Persons with Diabetes type 1 or 2 usually are aware they have it. Type 1 sufferers will typically carry insulin and often glucose tablets with them. The most common form of problem is low glucose levels (hypoglycaemia) – missing meals, low carbohydrate consumption, more activity or exercise than usual leading to a diabetic coma.
- **Symptoms:** mumbling / stumbling / grumbling / erratic behaviour.
- **Treatment:** Give a sweet drink, glucose tablet or something sweet to eat. The patient should recover fairly quickly. Then give carbohydrates – sandwich, cake etc – and water to drink for longer term stability. Sit down and keep calm. Rest and keep warm. Ask patient if they can continue (at their own slower pace) or **call for help (999)** if there is no improvement.
- There is also hyperglycaemia where glucose levels are too high, often due to a lack of insulin. Symptoms include thirst, dizziness, feeling sick. If the patient cannot administer insulin **call for help (999)**. Give lots of water (unsweetened) to drink (cup every 15 minutes). Rest patient.

6. Asthma

- Triggered by pathogens in the air which irritate the bronchioles in the lungs preventing gaseous exchange. Occasionally triggered by exercise by inhaling cold air. Expiratory wheezes.
- Often pre-existing condition, patient has blue (reliever- during attack) and brown (Preventor-regular) Salbutamol medication. Patient may appear cyanosed or blue in colour due to reduced oxygen levels.
- **Treatment:** Patient should take extra 'puffs' on blue medicator. Encourage to breath out as much as possible to assist in gas exchange. Sit down and rest until patient recovers and continue at a pace to suit the patient.
- If no change or patient cannot continue - **Call for help (999)** – can be life threatening.

7. Anaphylactic Shock

- This is due to a severe allergic reaction, eg to a wasp sting.
- Patient often knows about the issue and carries an adrenalin injector. Assist in locating if this is the case. Time is of the essence.
- Sit or lie the patient down in a sheltered position insulated from the ground
- Call for Help (999) if no treatment is available. Severe cases can result in death very quickly. Milder cases can slow breathing and lead to red blotchy rashes, itchiness and swelling on hands feet or face.

Common Emergencies in the Outdoors (Injury)

- Head injuries (due to a fall|)
- Leg injuries (lower and upper - walkers/runners)
- Arm and collar bone injuries (mountain bikers but also walkers who trip)
- Chest injuries (falls from height/mountain bikers)
- Neck and Spine (all the above)

From Mountain Rescue statistics 75% of all incidents involve lower leg injuries & defensive injuries (hands and arms).

Treatment: Sit or lie the patient down in a sheltered position insulated from the ground by a mat or survival bag. Keep calm, reassure the patient and checkout the situation.

a. Head injuries

- Stop bleeding by bandage/pressure. Scalps bleed a lot.
- Loss of consciousness in minutes.
- If unconscious, protect airway-jaw thrust-chin lift. See above.
- When conscious ask questions
 - What day is it?
 - Where are you?
 - DoB? or When is your birthday?
 - Repeat after 10 minutes and compare responses (use a notebook).
- If minor, return patient to car and escort home (suggest seeking medical check later) or to A&E.
- If more serious **call for help (999)**.

b. Leg injuries - concentrate on distal (away from the centre, extremities??)

- Bleeding:- treat by bandage/pressure. Ignore cleanliness, hospitals do it
- Deformity:- white skin - straighten it into normal alignment - painful 2-4hrs
- Blood supply:- check supply of blood to extremities, hands / fingers and lower leg and toes (if appropriate) Skin should be pink and not blue. Press fingernail with your nail. It goes white and should return to pink in 2-3 seconds.
- Splinting:- use adjacent leg or Karrimat or other suitable implement.
- Sprain - wrap adhesive dressing to ankle.
- Swelling:- rapid – probably due to blood flow and likely to be a break, if slow – probably a sprain
- Normal or abnormal movement or any grating sound or sensation produced by friction between bone and cartilage or the fractured parts of a bone

Examine limb. Can patient move limb unaided? No - suspect fracture: Yes - suspect sprain.

Can the casualty walk? Willing to try? Help to stand on good leg, weight bare, prop either side. Move to sheltered location- supporters cross hands scenario to form a seat to move patient. Use of a bivi bag to carry as an alternative

c. Defensive injuries (Hands & arms)

Examination and treatment similar as for leg injuries. Plus splint via jumper/fleece. This is an alternative to a triangular bandage. Check weather conditions for best option.

d. Chest injuries

Probable bruising.

Treatment: Sit or lie the patient down in a sheltered position insulated from the ground by a mat or survival bag. Keep calm, reassure the patient and checkout the situation.

e. Neck and Spine

Often after a fall. Could be very serious. Move as little as possible. Insulate from the ground by a mat or survival bag as far as possible. Keep calm, reassure the patient and checkout the situation. **Call for help (999).**

Common Emergencies in the Outdoors (Environmental)

- Hypothermia
- Hyperthermia

Hypothermia

- **Definition:-** loss of heat faster than it can be generated. Patient cold
- **Symptoms:** Patient may be shivering, pale or mottled colour on skin and cold to touch (stomach cold to the hand). May be disorientated. Similar to Diabetes above.
- **Treatment:-** Stop, insulate/warmth, put on windproof clothing, hat and gloves. Increase food and warm drink intake. If available use a Bivi bag or a multi-person emergency shelter. Other persons in the group can share body warmth (all equivalent to 1Kw heater).

With a single Bivi bag, cut holes in the side near the bottom (say 6-8 ins from the end) on one side and feed over the head of the patient. Line up the holes with the nose and mouth.

Sit the patient on a karrimat to insulate from the ground. Call for help (999) if there is no immediate improvement - life threatening.

Hyperthermia

Patient suffering from excess heat. Patient hot

Symptoms: tiredness, stumbling, lack of coordination, dizziness, shivering and trembling.

Treatment: Stop and rest person in the shade (and a breeze if possible). Give water to drink. Wet skin with cold water and a damp cloth. Loosen any tight clothing. Give the patient plenty of space.

Other things to consider

- Hypothermia of other group members stood around in the cold. Leader considers whether the group with the exception of those attending to the patient (min 3 persons) continues with the walk or returns to the cars and go home (min of 1 empty car remaining of course). Existing or new nominated leader is in charge.
- Ensure there is plenty of light on the scene - Highlight the scene with hi vis or torches.
- International distress signal is 6 blasts on a whistle. Most useful with a very small party in case anyone with First Aid experience is in the locality.

Helicopter rescue:- Don't wave – everybody does that

Stand with back to wind – arms stretched

Make 'H' on ground with rucksacks

Protect eyes on landing

Cover the casualty for protection.

The person in charge of First Aid treatment (Leader or nominee) should keep a written record. Below are suggestions - depends on the individual situation.

SAMPLE

- S – Signs and symptoms
- A – Allergies/Age
- M – Medication
- P – Past Medical History
- L – Last Meal
- E – Events (what happened)

and **ATMIST**

- A – Age
- T – Time
- M – Mechanism of injury
- I – Injuries
- S – Signs and Symptoms
- T - Treatment

In addition:

- Name / address / DoB / NoK of patient – check ICE card that all walkers should carry.
- Pulse and respiration rate- note time taken / repeat every 10 minutes
- Appearance
- Pain score 1-10
- What given and when including medications

In addition, Ramblers have formed a collaboration with St Johns Ambulance and offer first aid training courses. St Johns Ambulance have a series of presentations and links to their First Aid courses.

Get first aid advice | St John Ambulance (sja.org.uk) or their First Aid advice app. **Free Mobile First Aid Apps - St John Ambulance | St John Ambulance (sja.org.uk)**

Ramblers recommend that every walker carries a first aid kit. A variety of kits are available on the High Street and online from organizations such as St John Ambulance, above.

Get first aid advice | St John Ambulance (sja.org.uk)

First Aid kits

From the Ramblers web-site go to “A Walking First Aid Kit – what do I need to bring? **A walking first aid kit – what do I need to bring? - Ramblers**

Notes are also available on the Lancaster RA website, Information, Leaders and Walkers Guides.

Specialist outdoor activity kits may contain items more appropriate for walkers, but in any case Ramblers recommend the following items be included:

Low adherent dressings/gauze swabs, triangular bandage(s), wound dressings (various sizes), woven bandage(s), latex free plasters, Compeed (or other) blister plasters, foil survival blanket, micropore tape, antiseptic wipes, nitrile or vinyl gloves, scissors, safety pins, tweezers and pain relief tablets, eg paracetamol or ibuprofen

Ramblers also offer occasional first aid training courses, open to all members. Lancaster Group may also arrange training for our group members.

If you are a qualified First Aider, make yourself known to the leader if an accident occurs.

14. Final Comments

We hope you have found this manual useful. If you notice any errors or omissions or wish to comment, please contact Neil Herbert (2025. footpaths@lancasterramblers.org.uk).

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