

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR WALK LEADERS

Maps, Booklets and Books are available from Finbar Finn – see 'Contact Us' Page

1 Choosing the Walk

- 1.1 To lead a walk there will need to be at least two people – one to lead and the second to walk as a 'back marker' whose role will be to ensure that no one gets left behind. Both individuals will need to 'recce' the walk – i.e. walk the walk prior to the actual event to ensure they know the route, identify any potential hazards and establish that it can be done in time.
- 1.2 Walks should be no more than 5 miles in length for Sunday walks (3 miles for evening walks) and hopefully through some interesting countryside or village(s).
- 1.3 Briefing points of historical or environmental interest are always welcome.
- 1.4 Plan the walk carefully on a map (an O.S. 1:25,000 Explorer, 2½ inches to the mile is best but an O.S. Landranger, 1¼ inches to the mile, is usually quite adequate). Use only rights-of-way, permitted paths and areas open to the public. O.S. Maps are available from the Shamblers Library. Instructions on how to read co-ordinates are given on the legend on every OS map. This facility may be needed – see below 3.1. Busy roads which need to be crossed should be identified – see 3.2 and 3.3 below.
- 1.5 Average walking speeds on level ground is normally 2 miles per hour whilst on hilly ground it will be slower.
- 1.6 The walks should start and end where there are toilet facilities available and normally a pub is chosen. It is important that the publican is told at least 2 months in advance that we intend to start and end the walk there and request that the toilet facilities be open at 10 00 am.
- 1.7 If the publican asks for numbers, be on the conservative side - approximately 10 in winter and 15 in summer. Those walkers who would like lunch after the walk, should contact the secretary – at least a week before the walk, who will then advise the publican.
- 1.8 The walk should end at 12 30 approximately, to allow individuals to take off their boots and get a drink at the bar before lunch at about 1 pm.

2 The Walk

- 2.1 The Walk Leader and the back marker should introduce themselves and ask if there are any new walkers (to make them feel welcome) and encourage more established members to do the same.
- 2.2 It may be necessary for the back marker to contact the walk leader – for example where the former loses sight of the latter. Under these circumstances, both should carry their mobile phone and have each other's number. However, there may be areas where mobile phone coverage is not available, when the back marker should use the whistle supplied by a member of committee.
- 2.3 The walk leader should give an indication of any adverse terrain which might be encountered – e.g. muddy places, bridleways which will contain holes made by horses' hooves, wonky stiles. When these are reached the walk leader should remind party members.
- 2.4 The walk leader should ensure that the walkers are kept reasonably close together. Rest stops should be made periodically at points of interest and this will allow the slower walkers to catch up and get their breath back without drawing attention to themselves.
- 2.5 **We always have a rest stop approximately half-way round where walkers may have some light refreshment and a drink which they have brought. Shorter rest stops are particularly important after hill climbs, on reaching roads, after long straight or difficult sections. Please do not move off when the back marker catches up as the slower walkers probably need a rest to catch their breath.**

- 2.6 Re-count the party members to ensure that all are present after a stop.
- 2.7 In fields **where crops have not been cleared from rights of way**, providing you are sure of the correct line, ask the party to follow you in single file through the crop. However, if the field has just been ploughed, it may be preferable to walk around the edge of the field – especially if it is muddy.
- 2.8 Always **check the time** to ensure you are on schedule.
- 2.9 Dogs must be kept on a lead at all times.

3 Safety on the Walk

- 3.1 It is important that the walk leader has an OS Map with him/her and can read co-ordinates. This will assist in identifying the services where help is needed. Do not rely on battery powered navigation systems as these can let you down when most needed.
- 3.2 **Walking Groups.** When walking on a road you should always walk on the pavement – where one is provided, otherwise walk on the right-hand side of the road in single file so that you can see the oncoming traffic. It may be safer to cross the road well before a sharp right-hand bend so that the oncoming traffic has a better chance of seeing you. Cross back after the bend. This is the advice which everyone agrees on.

There are reflective jackets and whistles available and a member of the committee will ensure that they are brought to every walk, though an email to the secretary (see 'Contact Us' page) would be prudent.

- 3.3 The walk leader will need to work out how to get large numbers of walkers across busy roads. On a bend it may be preferable walk round and then back again. When negotiating an awkward obstruction, such as dilapidated stile or wide ditch or a stream without a bridge, wait to give assistance if required or ask another member of the group to do so. Members should be asked to continue a little way ahead to avoid causing embarrassment to the less able-bodied.

4 After the walk

- Date, Time and place where the incident/accident occurred
- Full name of the injured person, nature of the injury and age
- Brief description of the circumstances

Report the locations of any obstructions of rights of way (grid references are very helpful) to the secretary.

Please return all material borrowed from our library to a committee member.

5 Finally

Please enjoy the walk! Enjoy discovering it on the recce, walking it with the group and at the end seeing the smiles of satisfaction and enjoyment of all the walkers who have discovered new friends, a bit of history and more knowledge of the countryside around them. And finally, thank you for leading the walk.

Many thanks to Peta Jellis, who wrote the original document on which this development has been based and who was one of the original founders of the Northampton Shamblers.