



## Some Questions & Answers

**Where can I walk?** Providing it is not private property, you can walk where you choose.

**What is a Right of Way?** A RoW is a footpath or bridleway designated by a waymarker symbol. Not all paths are Rights of Way. A public road is a RoW.

**Where can I get ideas for a walk?** From members, newspapers, local books, maps or simply reverse a known route! It can be enjoyed from an entirely different aspect!

**What if members already know the area?** It doesn't matter. Members welcome new leaders and know everyone has to start somewhere!

**Do I need to buy a map?** No, that can wait!

**What does pioneering mean?** All walks should be walked beforehand to ensure that there will be no unpleasant surprises and to make sure the leader knows the route.

**What if I get lost?** It wouldn't be the first time! If it should happen, smile, say sorry and retrace your steps to a place that you know is correct and resume the walk. If in doubt, don't hesitate to ask for help.

The worst-case scenario is more likely to occur in remote areas where routes are unmarked and the weather is liable to sudden change – and that's not going to be just yet!

**Must I sort out parking and food stops?** Yes, parking is a serious concern, as you must ensure that cars don't cause obstructions, block lanes or field gates. Obtain permission before you tell people to use a pub car park.

Food and comfort stops should also be identified beforehand – members will be re-assured by your attention to detail!

**Don't be put off – leading walks is enjoyable!**



## Advice for Learners

Advice and help is always close at hand.

Walk with the leader on your next walk and ask any questions that you may have. Most leaders will be pleased to share their knowledge and experience.

Get a friend to help you sort out the route and to act as co-leader on the actual day. Then if you make a mistake or are unsure, you can consult with your friend, look knowledgeable and stride out purposefully – No one will be any the wiser!

Choose a short walk to start so that you place fewer demands upon yourself!

Remember that every leader – however experienced – gets apprehensive beforehand about leading a walk.

When leading a walk, don't forget to enjoy it also!

Don't be afraid to ask for assistance!

Don't be afraid to lead a walk!

Other information including the Club Rules may be found on the Club's website  
[www.shfrc.org.uk](http://www.shfrc.org.uk)

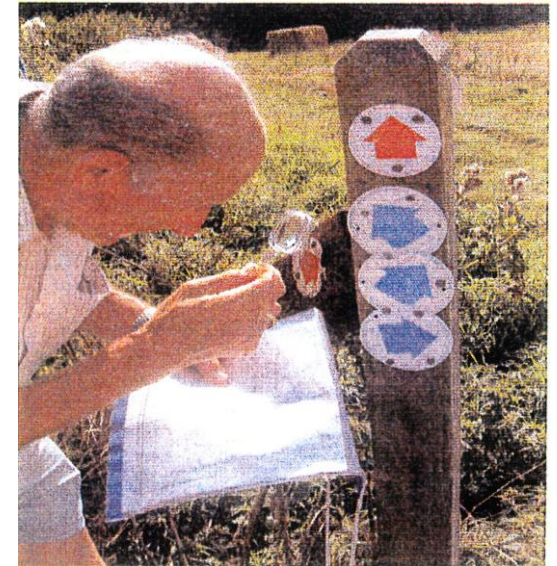
**The club positively encourages all active members to lead walks.**

**New leaders are needed to ensure continuity and variety of walks.**

**Resolve to lead a walk soon!**



## STOURBRIDGE HF RAMBLING CLUB



### Don't just follow! Lead!

If you enjoy walking in the fresh air and countryside, you are a potential walk leader! It's not difficult and can add a fresh interest to your walking activities!

This leaflet has been produced to encourage you to take the extra step and lead members on your very own walk!

## Beforehand

While we don't want to make numerous rules about what leaders can and can't do it is sensible to agree some basic principles to avoid misunderstandings.

### Preparation & Pioneering

- Plan and pioneer your walk in advance
- **Always pioneer your walk with someone else and follow the Health & Safety guidance**
- Seek help at any time!
- Keep to Rights of Way
- Identify any hazards
- Measure the distance
- Assess the grading
- Assess parking facilities. If using a pub car park obtain permission
- Identify suitable places for lunch, breaks etc.

### Book the Walk

- Agree with the Walk Secretary a date for your walk.

### Walk the Walk

- Introduce yourself to the group. Give an overview of the route describing any serious hazards before setting out
- Appoint a back-marker
- Know how many people are walking with you
- Don't let others dictate the pace it's a walk not a race
- Carry a map of the route. If challenged by a landowner smile and apologise!
- Seek help at any time!
- Remind walkers when nearing hazards especially busy roads, awkward stiles etc.
- Strive for a pace that is comfortable for all
- On hot days increase the number of breaks and take plenty of water
- Enjoy the walk!

## Rights of Way

Besides public roads other rights of way in popular use include footpaths & bridleways. Walking across private land without permission is trespassing. Mistakes can occur. If you find that you are where perhaps you shouldn't be, smile, apologise and ask to be shown the right way. However it's better to find out when pioneering beforehand.

## Gradings

Walks should be graded according to the degree of difficulty. Unfortunately people have widely different views and this subject provokes more discussion than any other.

The club grades its walks on the ABC method.

A – Rigorous, B – Moderate and C – Easy  
Categories can be modified by a '+' or '-' which increases or reduces the grading.

Some examples may help to clarify the individual grading:

- A+ High level walks (Snowdonia)**
- A Remote areas (Staffs. Moorlands)**
- A- Areas of difficult terrain (Stiperstones)**
- B+ Hilly areas (Malvern's, Shropshire Hills)**
- B Less severe hills (Clent, Lickeys)**
- B- May include some short sharp climbs**
- C+ Undulating walks (no steep ascents)**
- C Mostly level walks (gentle rises)**
- C- Flat walks (towpaths; no stiles)**

A further factor to be considered is the level of ability or fitness within the group. Clearly a walk that presents little difficulty to a fit person will pose a much stiffer challenge to an inexperienced or less fit walker.

The prime purpose of grading is to try to convey advance information to enable persons to decide whether the walk is within that individual's capability.

## Length of Walks

Leaders are required to ensure that the distance of the walk as shown in the programme is as accurate as possible.

A 10% tolerance should not be exceeded.

Each side of a grid square on an Ordnance Survey map measures 1km; the diagonal across the square is roughly 1.5km. A map measurer can be used for more accurate assessment; alternatively a length of string measured along the route, thence on the scale will provide the distance.

## Reducing the Risks

Much ado has been made about Risk Assessments in recent years! Without realising it everyone carries out numerous Risk Assessments every day of our lives. Crossing the road, driving a car, running a bath each involves a risk that we evaluate and act on accordingly. Risk Assessments are plain common sense, nothing more nothing less!

When a hazard is identified the walk leader must first evaluate the risk and then try to reduce the danger.

- For example, if it is necessary to cross a busy road find a safe place to do so and avoid people bunching up at the side of the road
- If faced with a slippery section with no alternative route, warn people of the danger and ensure that members receive help / support as required
- Walk in single file facing oncoming traffic on a road with busy traffic. Leaders and backmarkers should consider using high-viz vests on busy roads. .

Pioneering with a friend is sensible as a second opinion about a hazard may prove invaluable.

## Map Reading

Although it is not always necessary to resort to using a map as most routes are way-marked, OS maps contain a wealth of information.

Experienced members will be pleased to provide assistance when out on the trail which is the best place to learn or to test your map reading ability. The Club also arranges occasional map-reading sessions. Before rushing out to buy any map ask for advice about the merits of the different scales and which might be most suited for your particular needs.

## Health & Safety

- It is recommended to register your mobile phone to text 999 also to have "what3words" app
- It is advised that all members take their own first aid kit on all walks (Including pioneering)
- Members should carry their membership card with emergency contact details completed
- It is advised that all Members carry a whistle with them in case they get separated from group.