

BBC CLUB RAMBLING GROUP

A GUIDE TO LEADING A RAMBLE

GENERAL

The Group holds rambles every 3 weeks in winter and every 2 weeks in summer, which makes a total of about 20 walks a year, plus our Spring and Autumn weekends and a possible week long holiday. We rely totally on our members volunteering to lead rambles on the day and in the area of their choice.

With more members now leaving or retiring from the BBC and moving away from London, the load is falling on fewer regular leaders. This guide has been produced to encourage those who have not led a walk before to give it a try and so make a valuable contribution to the Section.

VENUE

Where you lead a ramble probably depends more on where you live than any other factor. It sometimes takes several visits to clarify the route or check details, so most people opt for their home territory. They may also be more familiar with the public transport or pubs. We usually confine rambles to the area of the Home Counties that can be reached on public transport from central London within about 1½ hours. The length of the walks varies from 10 or so miles in Summer, a little less in Winter to avoid the earlier darkness.



It is possible to lead a ramble having chosen the route entirely from the map and not having walked it yourself. However, whilst usually acceptable in wild open country it is not recommended around the Home Counties, as there are too many potential problems and you could end up with an uninteresting walk with too much retracing of steps. A good rehearsal is invaluable as what may be a quiet car park or pub in the week may be teeming with humanity at the weekend.

Most footpaths around the Home Counties are well used and marked so a map is not essential on the ground but if map reading is not your strong point it is a good opportunity to improve your skills. A map is also useful for getting a "feel" for the route that you have chosen. When you try out the walk you can award plus or minus points to various features. Is there too much road walking? Would it have been nicer to walk past that farm than the sewage works? Can I miss out that housing estate?

Around London 1:50,000 scale (1¼ inches to the mile) Ordnance Survey maps are generally adequate and cover the area you want on one sheet. 1:25,000 (2½ inches to the mile Explorer series) are even better as they show field boundaries & buildings in much greater detail. However, neither is cheap to buy so why not borrow one from the local library.

TRANSPORT

The majority of our rambles start at railway stations for obvious reasons but it is possible to coordinate one or more car drivers to pick up the train passengers, and then drive to a better start point. If this is to be the case, it is advisable to request in your circular that those coming by train let you know beforehand so that you have an idea of numbers and can organize enough transport.



You will need to find out the time the train leaves London. It is helpful if you have the times at major intermediate stations as well, particularly if they connect with the Underground. Times of return trains are also helpful to people wanting to plan the rest of their day. For your own benefit, the number to ring to find out about engineering work on Sundays is useful on the day to save you the worry over what has happened to your missing train. All these facts are usually in the mini timetables available from any station on the line, and are also available on the Internet.



For the car drivers, check where the car park at the start is, whether there is any charge and, if so, is there an alternative. If there is risk of confusion with other parking places describe its location as accurately as you can.

PUB LUNCH?

A pub is not essential for the lunch stop although it has become our normal practice now that pub-grub is so much better and not so many people bring sandwiches. Rambling parties are now also more welcome than in years gone by when 25 people marched in, order a lemonade and a packet of straws and open their sandwiches. However, most pubs only survive on their bar food sales so do not normally allow the eating of own food on their premises, including the garden. Do not forget the sandwich eaters though; is there a village green or a covered bus stop nearby where they can sit down?



Most pubs get very busy on Sunday lunchtimes nowadays. If the one you have chosen is like this, plan to arrive as soon after midday as possible to ease the load on the bar staff (and ensure you get a seat!). This is probably the only critical timing you have to worry about. Can you get from the start to the pub in the time, allowing around 2½ - 3 miles walking an hour?

Having chosen your pub, check with the landlord if he minds ramblers and can he cope on that day? Does he need numbers 'phoned through in the morning, or orders placing in advance? Is there a different menu on Sundays (many only do roasts now)? Make a mental note of whether muddy boots would be popular in the carpeted bar and if there is a place set aside for children and families. If you are planning for the party to eat sandwiches and not stop at a pub, note a couple of places en-route where you could stop and where there is some shelter.

PRODUCING YOUR CIRCULAR

This can either be done by yourself or telephone or email the details to the Honorary or Membership Secretary who will produce it for you. Either way it has to be in the hands of the Membership Secretary at least two weeks before the walk, ideally three. It is courteous to email or phone him/her advising when the circular can be expected.



The important details to include are the start location, start time, travel times by rail, directions by road and if it is a pub lunch. Also include a contact number for those who would like more details from you. A mobile number for use on the day, and an email address, are also useful details to include if available. A telephone number to inquire about Railway engineering works is very helpful. Additional information would be villages passed through, things to see, where the pub is (some people like to come for the afternoon or just for lunch) and whether it will be muddy, if wet, or full of nettles in summer!

If problems with pub or transport result in the walk being more practical on a Saturday, please give both Secretaries as much notice as possible, so that the date change can be advertised to members ASAP.

SAFETY

As leader you will be responsible for safety on the walk. If you intend walking along any road that does not have a footpath, it will be your responsibility to position 'scouts' approximately 100 yards ahead and behind the main party to warn of any approaching traffic, and to ensure they remain together on the correct side of the road for the situation. This is now a requirement of the Section's committee to reduce the risk of accident. Any doubts about the safety of your route should be discussed with a committee member in advance. A small First Aid kit may also be useful, for any minor injuries. You may be asked to sign a declaration that you have read this leaflet.

EXTRA HELP

There is nothing complicated about leading one of our rambles; have you seen any mention of compasses or map references in the above? There is a fund of knowledge within the Section just waiting to be tapped. If you have any problems finding a suitable area or pub (particularly pubs) there is someone at the end of a telephone who can help you. If you would like any more information or even help with the planning or the rehearsal please ring or email the Secretary.