

Sevenside Ramblers – Guidance for Walk Leaders

1 Introduction

This guide is intended for those seeking to organise and lead walks for Sevenside Ramblers. All walks require careful planning and it is wise to make sure that you have covered every eventuality. For New Walk Leaders it may be possible to arrange 'mentoring' or 'buddying' whereby you will learn from an experienced Walk Leader.

2 Planning the Walk

Note: Walk Leader must be a paid-up member of Ramblers.

Choose the route, it can be from a guide book or magazine, if stuck for ideas it can be a route that has been walked before or have a look online. A list of useful websites and links is included in Annex A. Please submit details of your walk via our website see <http://www.sevenside-ramblers.org.uk/submitwalk.html> or contact our Walks Co-ordinator.

When planning the walk consider the following:

The availability of paths or open country; try to stay off roads as much as possible, metalled surfaces are hard on feet and the constant wariness of traffic will diminish enjoyment.

Start and finish points; are they convenient, suitable and easy to find? Are public toilets nearby? Is there somewhere safe to meet?

Transport; there should be somewhere to park cars safely and without causing annoyance or obstruction to others. Is public transport an alternative?

Length and timing; the distance should never be so much as to tax unduly the capability and experience of the group. Always assume a slower speed than your own. In particular allow more time for stiles and ascents; they will slow down the pace of the group.

Terrain and weather conditions; will also affect the walking speed. Muddy or windy conditions will also slow your speed.

Grade of walk; based on guidance from Ramblers see <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/about-group-walks/walks-difficulty.aspx> for more information.

Circular/linear; is the walk linear or circular.

Lunch; is shelter available in bad weather? Pub stop is an option, can it accommodate the number of walkers on the day and can it provide food? Where can walkers sit and eat their own lunch; in the pub grounds or is there a suitable picnic spot nearby? Check in advance; many pubs no longer allow this especially if they sell their own food. Choose a pub (although teashops are good alternative) to go to during/after the walk.

Pub/teashop options more suited to shorter walks. A pub/teashop stop is an option and if convenient, there doesn't have to be a stop.

Alternative and escape routes; prepare a less exposed alternative route for use if the weather is bad before you set out and escape routes to shorten the walk if conditions deteriorate on the way.

Meeting point; the meeting point for Evening, Saturday and Sunday walks is at the Aztec West business park. For sat nav users the Post Code is BS32 4TD. See Annex B for directions.

The meeting point for Friday Ambles is normally the Aldi car park Brook Way, Bradley Stoke, BS32 9DA.

If the leader is not Bradley Stoke based or from the local area, consider obtaining help of someone who can co-ordinate the Bradley Stoke or Aztec West meeting point.

Insurance and Safety:

You're responsible for the safety of your group. Come prepared for the conditions and you need to ask your group if they also have the right kit, come rain or shine.

All walks organised by Ramblers Areas and Groups automatically receive civil liability insurance cover through the Association's national policy. The only requirement is that the designated Leader(s) is a Ramblers member. This is designed to protect leaders against claims for damage to property and for injury or death which might have happened on the walk. Please note that the policy does not provide personal accident cover. Further information about insurance for Walk Leaders is available on the Ramblers Website see <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer-zone/volunteer-toolkits/insurance.aspx>

3 *Pre-walk*

Always pre-walk your routes before leading them – guidebooks have mistakes and aren't always clear or up to date. If possible do the walk with your back-marker or perhaps a potential new leader. Also check the following:

Time taken from meeting point to start point, determines your departure time from the meeting point for the Walks Programme;

Sufficient car parking at start/finish of walk? Public toilets?

Local pub/tea shop for drink/cake/lunch during or after the walk (optional);

Critical navigation points;

Escape route in the event of bad weather;

Total time taken for walk;

Grading of walk; use the Ramblers guidance;

Place for late morning stop, place for lunch, place for afternoon stop (if needed) and rest/comfort stops;

Points of interest (sometimes it's nice to know not just the route but interesting facts about the area);

Wildlife and plant life of note;

Streams/barbed wire/difficult stiles (you may wish to vary a route if obstacles are too great).

4 *The week before*

Be prepared for telephone queries; newcomers may want information about the group as well as the walk. Advise whether dogs are acceptable. This is a judgement call by the Leader as a result of pre-walking the route.

Some callers may want lifts to the meeting point. Be as helpful as possible but you're not under any obligation to do so.

5 *The day before*

Check the weather forecast and review alternative route if necessary.

Check personal walking gear and first aid kit.

If applicable check public transport and pub/teashop stop.

6 *On the day – at the meeting point/start of walk*

Please put together map/directions detailing how to get from the meeting point to the start of the walk.

Be early, be welcoming especially to newcomers.

Try and keep cars to a minimum – it's better for the environment and saves money – so at least 2 and ideally 3 passengers to each car if we can; partly to save the planet and partly because some walks may have small parking areas at their start (so we don't turn up in a massive convoy and then find there is no space to park).

It's good practice to try and ensure new members or visitors are mixed with experienced members who know their way around the area when sorting out cars for the drive to a walk start – remember some people will be completely new to North Bristol and the surrounding area so you'll want to ensure that they meet experienced Severnsiders as quickly as possible

Prior to start of walk welcome walkers especially visitors or newcomers, introduce yourself, overview of walk, points of interest, refreshments and rest stops, estimated time of return.

Appoint a back-marker (preferably, someone who knows the route as well as you) and make sure he or she is known to the party, and that everyone knows the back marker's function: to close gates and to ensure that no member of the party falls behind unseen. However, it is the leader's responsibility to ensure that contact is not lost with the rear of the party through a gap opening up in the middle.

Advise dog-owners to keep dogs on leads.

Count party and start walk.

7 *During the walk*

Set a pace reasonable for the group. Watch for stragglers and reduce the pace if necessary. Don't allow walkers racing ahead to set a pace not suitable for the rest of the group. If you're not at the front, make sure those at the front know when they should stop and wait for others to catch up. The group will soon become spread out and in many respects this is preferable to having everyone bunched up, but try to avoid large gaps occurring by slowing down the pace, and making frequent stops to allow those at the rear to catch up. Don't move on just as the back-markers appear, since their need for a short rest will be, if anything, greater than those at the front. In addition, close up the party for complicated turnings, poor visibility or in woods. In reasonable weather, lunch should not be rushed: for many, eating out of doors is one of the most enjoyable aspects of open-air recreation. About 45 minutes for lunch is recommended. Use the lunch break to give out information, such as details of future walks and events or Ramblers membership. Before leaving your lunch site, clear up litter and check that nothing has been left behind such as walking poles!!!!

Keep talking to your group; whether you lead from the front or not.

Count the group (including yourself) each time you stop, check the group numbers;

Remind people about the route – show them on a map;

Ask everyone to tell you if they are stopping to nip to the loo – or take a photo.

Keep an eye on timings.

Give clear instructions at critical points, tea/lunch stops how long, where to re-assemble.

Always wait at hill tops for everyone to recover and allow sufficient water stops particularly in the summer.

Be alert to problems (individual, weather, road walking etc), involve others in the party if necessary, although there will be times when you need to decide what to do and when leaving it to the group is inappropriate.

8 *At the end of the walk*

Check everyone has returned and can get home.

Thank everyone for coming.

Report any incidents or obstructions encountered on the route to our Secretary or Footpath Officer.

9 Further information

Further information is available on the Ramblers website see

<http://www.ramblers.org.uk/volunteer-zone/volunteer-toolkits/walk-leader-good-practice.aspx>

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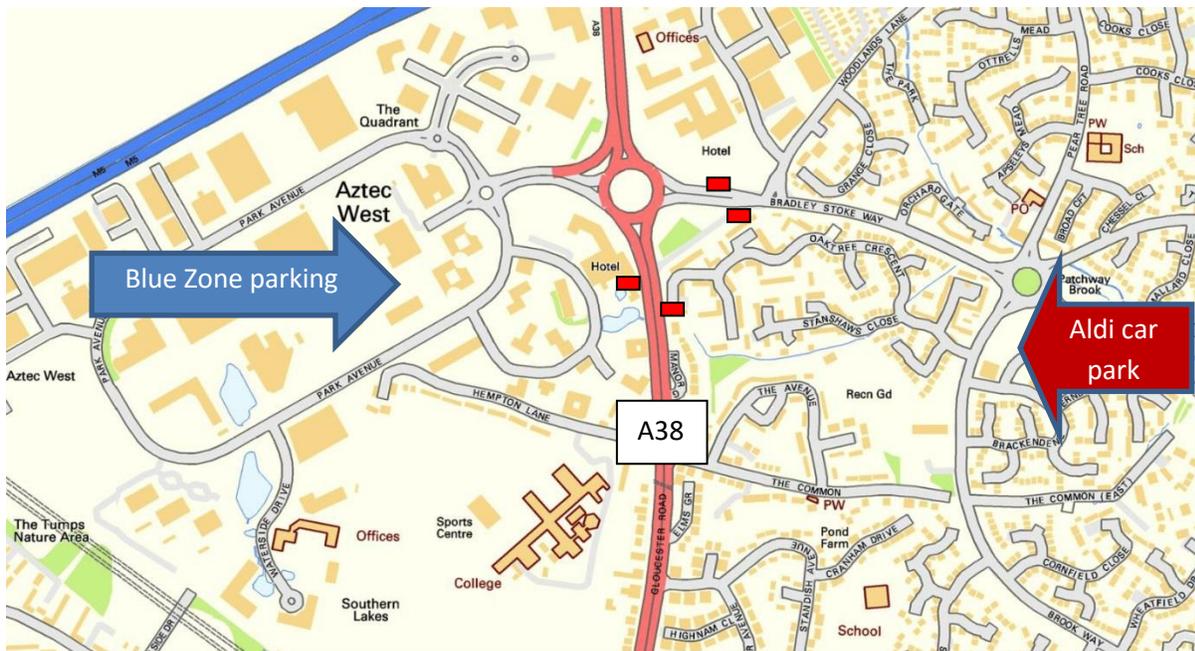
Annex A – Walking Routes - Websites of Interest

Title	Web Link	Notes
Walking World	http://www.walkingworld.com/	<p>On Walkingworld you can find over 6000 routes, contributed by more than 400 walkers from all round Britain. This huge library of carefully prepared guides means you can find a good selection of walks, of varying lengths and grades, pretty well anywhere in the country. The walks come in a unique format making them very easy to follow, with photographs to illustrate every important decision point and a proper Ordnance Survey map.</p> <p>Subscription required.</p>
Walking Britain	http://www.walkingbritain.co.uk/	<p>With nearly 15,000 pages of walking information, including many walk descriptions, "Walking Britain" is dedicated to the footpaths that cross the landscape. The National Parks feature strongly in the lists of walks including the Lake District, the Peak District and Snowdonia, not to mention the Yorkshire Dales.</p>
Go4awalk	http://www.go4awalk.co.uk/	<p>Over 13,545 walks and walk ideas conceived, researched and described by walking experts to make sure you have a really fantastic day on Britain's hills, fells and mountains.</p> <p>Subscription required.</p>
Outdoorswest	http://www.outdoorswest.org.uk/Home/	<p>The OutdoorsWest website, for information on where to go and what to do on paths in the West of England, whether you want to walk, run, go cycling or ride a horse.</p> <p>This website is being set up by Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council and South Gloucestershire Council, working together to compile all the information you need on public rights of way in the area - and we'll also add on other information that might be of interest to you.</p>

Title	Web Link	Notes
<p>Ramblers Routes</p>	<p>http://www.ramblers.org.uk/go-walking/find-a-walk-or-route.aspx</p>	<p>Ramblers Routes - an online library of high-quality walking routes - to give walkers the freedom to walk at their own leisure along safe, inspiring and interesting trails across Britain.</p> <p>Ramblers Routes are created for walkers by Ramblers volunteers and a unique feature is that any route developed by one volunteer is then checked on the ground by another before it's given our stamp of approval.</p> <p>Our growing collection now includes hundreds of detailed routes, from short urban walks intended to introduce new people to walking through to long-distance, challenging hillside walks for more experienced walkers.</p> <p>Each route has an online routecard featuring a wide choice of mapping layers including Ordnance Survey Landranger and Ordnance Survey Explorer maps with the option to print the route and download GPX data. The routecard also includes detailed route descriptions, points of interest and advice on how to get to the start point.</p>
<p>Wiltshire Walks</p>	<p>http://www.walkinginwiltshire.org.uk/walks.php</p>	<p>All the information you need to get walking in the beautiful Wiltshire countryside.</p>
<p>South Gloucestershire Rights of Way – Promoted Routes</p>	<p>http://www.southglos.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/public-rights-of-way/footpaths-bridleways-and-byways/</p>	<p>Many of the rights of way in South Gloucestershire are promoted through leaflets and websites. These routes vary from short circular walks designed to be easily accessible, to long-distance walking routes such as the Cotswold Way and Severn Way.</p>
<p>Walking Bristol</p>	<p>http://www.bristol.gov.uk/page/transport-and-streets/walking</p>	<p>Walking is a great way to enjoy Bristol. It is also the most accessible and cost-effective way to travel.</p>

Title	Web Link	Notes
<p>Cotswold Way – Circular Routes</p>	<p>http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/Cotswold/text.asp?PageId=54</p>	<p>Started to develop a series of short, easy to follow walks on and from the Cotswold Way, designed to guide you smoothly along the National Trail in a series of bit-sized chunks. Each route is designed to be as approachable and convenient as possible – whether you arrive by bus, car or on foot, they all benefit from the high quality standards followed by National Trails across the country.</p> <p>Currently in the process of marking each route with a special way-marker disc (see left) to help you follow the route on the ground. Not every walk has yet been completed, but even when they have we still recommend that you rely on the route cards and use the markers only as a guide.</p> <p>The routes are aimed at walkers of various abilities and are graded according to the number of stiles, steep sections etc. This information is included in each route card, but for all we recommend stout footwear and clothing to suit the changeable weather of the Cotswolds - on Cleeve hill especially, soaking fog can descend in a matter of minutes.</p>

Annex B – Meeting Point at Aztec West



OS Street View Map scale 1:10 000

Evening, Saturday and Sunday Walks

As a result of the popularity of Aldi and the Hollow Tree Pub we have been asked to avoid using the Aldi/Pub car park as our meeting point for walks. Objections have been raised about using the car park for all day parking. Peter Randall has arranged an alternative meeting point at Aztec West, see map above. On entering the business park from the A38 at the first roundabout go straight ahead towards the Management Centre, go left then right and park in the **Blue Zone** area of the car park. For Sat Nav users the Post Code is BS32 4TD.

Cycle racks are also available.

The business park can also be reached via the First Bus 73 route with stops on either side of the A38 depending on direction of travel to/from Cribbs Causeway. The A38 can be crossed at the pedestrian traffic lights and it is a short walk to the Management Centre. The rough location of bus stops are shown by the **red boxes** on the map above.

Friday Ambles

For our Friday Ambles we meet at the Aldi car park, Brook Way, Bradley Stoke, BS32 9DA.