

FOR BEGINNERS

Stay healthy by walking but remember, keep safe

Top tips to help you avoid bad weather or getting lost on the fells

By Vivienne Crow



ABEGINNERS' guide to walking? How hard can it be? You just put one foot in front of the other, don't you?

If you're going for a stroll in the park or a half-hour amble along a popular riverside path, that's probably true; but if you're planning a longer outing or are thinking of heading on to the fells, there are many more things to consider.

A good starting point is to join up with people who know what they're doing – friends who go fellwalking regularly or a local walking group.

Graeme Bell, chairman of the Carlisle and District Rambling Club, says would-be walkers can gain experience by going out with other people.

"Even if you find you don't like walking in a group, it'll give you a good grounding in what you need to know about the hills," he says.

His first piece of advice is to start off gently. "Don't be too ambitious, find out what your limitations are."

"There are some fairly gentle walks around the Lakes, like Walla Crag; don't try and climb Scrafell Pike the first time you're out."

"People underestimate walking – they walk to the supermarket, they walk into town, so they think, 'well, I can walk,' but that's misleading. It can be harder than it sounds."

One of the first skills that walkers need to learn is how to read a map and use a compass. The Ramblers' Association suggests you gain experience by walking a route from a guidebook while attempting to follow it on the map, relating what you see on the ground to the map. You should choose an easy, safe route and go in good weather so that you can clearly see the surrounding countryside.

Mountain leader Veronica Dunn, who runs navigation courses in the Lake District, echoes this. "The best place to practise is somewhere you already know your way around," she says. "But actually take the map out with you. You'll find paths you didn't know were there and, if you go wrong, at least you're not completely lost."

She also adds that walkers must be prepared is the key to an



Picturesque: Walkers climb the Birkside path from Thirlmere to Helvellyn. Remember the weather can change very quickly

PICTURE: VIVIENNE CROW

be properly equipped, especially if heading on to the high fells.

"Don't rely on the weather up high being the same as it is in the valleys," she says. "Make sure you've got decent footwear and clothing."

Many outdoor instructors and guides advocate the use of the layering system to prevent hypothermia, which, in our unpredictable climate, can be a danger at all times of the year. This involves:

- A base layer to 'wick' sweat away from your skin. Cotton T-shirts are unsuitable because they capture the moisture from your sweat and hold it against your skin long after you've stopped perspiring. This is not only uncomfortable, but will force your body to increase its heat production and leave you shivering.

- An insulating layer such as a fleece, which retains heat by creating a layer of still air around your body.

- An outer jacket made from a material that is windproof, waterproof and allows your body moisture to escape.

Being prepared is the key to an

FACT FILE

Local walking groups

- Carlisle and District Rambling Club. Contact Alan Nash on 01228 526263 or Geoff Entwistle on 01228 512765.

- Whitehaven Rambling Club. Contact the membership secretary on 01946 822438 or visit www.whitehavenramblingclub.org.

- Workington Rambling Club. Contact David Oldfield on 01900 824519.

- Ramblers Association Carlisle and North Cumbria Group. Contact 01228 529650.

- Ramblers Association Penrith Group. Contact 01768 863155.

- Ramblers Association Lake District Area Group. Contact 01539 723705.

- Ramblers Association West Cumbria Group. Contact 017687 75755.

- Keswick and District Rambling Club. Contact Mrs Allison on 016973 71397.

Navigation courses

- Ullswater Community College in Penrith runs navigation courses (£26 - £27.50), including one specifically for women. Phone 01768 864120 or visit www.ullswater.cumbria.sch.uk.

- The Lake District National Park Authority runs practical 'map and compass' workshops on the fells throughout the summer (adults £5, children £3). Phone 0845 272 0004 or visit www.lake-district.gov.uk.

- GPS Training, based at Redhills near Penrith, offers navigation courses using a map and compass (£49 for a one-day course) as well as GPS (£65). Phone 01768 885855 or visit www.gptraining.co.uk.

Weather forecasts

- Always get an up-to-date weather forecast before setting out. The Met Office issues five-day fell forecasts for the Lake District. Visit www.metoffice.gov.uk. More detailed, three-day forecasts for the Cumbrian fells are available on www.mwis.org.uk.

- The Lake District National Park Authority also runs a Weatherline on 0870 055 0575.

Inside story



NAME: Bryce Poisel

AGE: 24

HEIGHT: 170cm

WEIGHT: 76kilos

CLUB: Workington Town

HOW OFTEN DO YOU

TRAIN: Every day. I do a lot of cardio work on the rower or by running and plenty of weights. I was going on the rower heaps while I had an ankle injury.

DO YOU HAVE A

SPECIAL DIET: I eat pretty healthy, but it doesn't always work! I drink protein shakes and eat plenty of chicken and eggs.

FAVOURITE FOOD:

Chicken fritzels

HATED FOOD: I'll eat anything really

BEST PLAYER PLAYED

WITH: The New Zealand player Ben Roberts. Me, him and the Everton player Tim Cahill all grew up together in the same area.

BEST PLAYER PLAYED AGAINST: Sonny Williams

FAVOURITE SPORTSPERSON: Cobi Bryant. He's a great basketball player

SPORTSPERSON YOU

WOULD MOST LIKE TO

MEET: David Beckham.

He's a real trend setter, it'd be great to spend a day with him to see how crazy his life is.

WHAT SPORT WOULD

YOU LIKE TO PLAY IF

YOU WEREN'T A RUGBY

PLAYER: Basketball, but I'm too short. I guess it's a case of wanting what you can't have. Either that or football.

WILL YOU CONTINUE

TO EXERCISE WHEN

YOU RETIRE: Probably not! I'm sure I'll do something but I'll probably just spend most of my time in the pub! I'm a big vodka man.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY

MOST ABOUT BEING FIT:

Just looking good and feeling good.

INTERVIEW:

PATRICK HILL

cycling/the great outdoors

My magical cycle ride – 136 miles in eight hours



By Carol Westmorland

ANYONE who regularly reads this column will know I am a dedicated road biker who particularly loves hill climbing and distance cycling.

I am from the school of science when it comes to preparation. I strongly believe that preparing the body will not only have you mentally prepared but make the physical task achievable.

I eat to live. Whatever passes my lips has a job to do. I limit my choices to allow my body to tell me what it needs. My fuel of choice is pasta, rice, bread and my favourite – mashed potatoes. I keep my food plain which allows me to eat more. I also eat a lot of dried apricots, peaches and bananas.

I have often wondered what must go through the minds of the cyclists I pass as they lumber up the Renwick to Hartsdale road during their Sea to Sea. Always good humoured but invariably taken by surprise.

Hartsdale climbs to 1,920 feet and will therefore be memorable to the 15,000 plus people who participate yearly in the UK's most popular cycle route The Sea to Sea.

Paradoxically they seem to think that a mountain bike is more useful on the road than the aptly named road bike. Wrong. Personally I would return to the bike shop and ask for a faster one.

As soon as the body is put under extra physical pressure it heats up. An effective cooling system is achieved through training. Anyone unaccustomed to physical exertion needs to be very wary of overheating. Unfortunately, inexperience can bring with it a certain need for comfort. Ascending in light breathable fabrics and descending

in a windproof/waterproof lightweight is ideal. Having to get off and walk your bike up the climbs can be avoided if it has been caused by overheating.

The perfect waterproofs are high visibility and lightweight. They can be folded up and put in your back pocket. Cycle tops all of the ascents total a little under 9,000ft adding any unnecessary weight can be regrettable.

My chosen Sunday was accompanied by gale force south westerly wind and driving rain. After a 3am wake-up and a big bowl of muesli we are off. With a 5am (tradition dictates) back wheel dip into the Irish Sea I'm away. With a back light flashing, my helmet firmly in place and a high visibility jacket I feel very safe.

Forgive me but as a road cyclist I choose the quickest route along the A66 and quickly found a steady pace joining the A686 to go up Hartsdale from Melmerby. I came into my own once I dropped into Garrigill and came across my first Sea to Sea cyclists.

Sadly they were already on foot having just started day two from Garrigill. Overdressed and possibly under nourished it seemed a great shame.

The route to Nenthead along to Allenheads to Rookhope was breathtaking not only the scenery but in effort. With the sun beginning to shine I was making good progress.

The road was an honey pot with cyclists battling to stay upright in the increasingly exposed terrain. Climbing out of Stanhope quite literally opened my eyes. Crawley Banks has been used for a Cycling Time Trials National Hill Climb and quite rightly too.

Onto Waskerley Way I passed many cyclists plugged in to iPods which I would have thought was a risky business. Hills over I dropped downhill all the way to the sea dipping into the North Sea at 1pm. With well earned, fish (husband) and chips (me), on the Prom after my enjoyable eight hour.

■ Carol Westmorland is a champion cyclist who tries to ride every day for at least two hours. She holds the 2004 National 12-hour Championship with 243.19 miles and the 2006 National 24-hour Championship with 445.41 miles. Her personal best for 10 miles is 23 minutes 18 seconds.

Forget hoodies, I was threatened by a stupid dog owner

IF YOU believe the national tabloids, the biggest threat to an individual's safety comes from teenagers wandering the streets in hoodies.

Guidebook writer VIVIENNE CROW shares her love of the great outdoors



fact, they seemed as oblivious as their pet.

"Excuse me, did you know your dog could be shot for chasing sheep?" I was polite despite being annoyed.

"He wasn't chasing sheep. That's just what sheep do when they see a dog; they run," was the uninformed response I got from the woman.

We soon saw the culprit – a small dog darting about, poking its muzzle into tufts of grass inquisitively, oblivious to the alarm it was causing.

We watched it for quite some time and assumed that it had escaped from its owners, but eventually, a couple of walkers appeared – it was their dog. They made no attempt to put a stop to the mayhem it was causing; in

and diving in a vain bid to protect their nests.

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Ewes and their lambs, grazing peacefully a few seconds before, were running as fast as their legs could carry them and the lapwings were in a flap, swooping

angrily storming over to where I was sitting. Towering over me and jabbing his finger in my face, I felt small and vulnerable.

"You people ought to mind your own business," he shouted.

So, whose business is it when farm animals are in distress on the open fell?

Whose business is it when the nests – and chicks – of bird species that are in serious decline are destroyed simply because one or two dog owners don't care enough to keep their pets under control?

"I care about this place," I explained calmly.

"I want to be able to come up here in 20 years and still be able to hear the curlews and the

lapwings. We should look after an environment like this."

Big mistake! This man had obviously heard the word 'environment' once too often.

"Oh! Go hug a tree! You bloody people..." His tirade, fiercer now, continued for some time.

I later discovered the reason for his defensiveness; he knew he was in the wrong.

At the start of the path he and his companion had just come up was a sign clearly explaining why dogs should be kept on a short lead during lambing and ground-nesting season.

I'd put their behaviour down to ignorance, but it was worse than that; they simply didn't care...