

Buckden House

Land based activity – Operating Guidelines

Low Level Activity – Valley Heads Walk

Hazards

In addition to the hazards that you identify at the time, please note the following:

Cars can appear very suddenly along the narrow roads in the village and on the stretch between Hubberholme and Buckden. Be alert and keep your presence on the tarmac to a minimum. Follow the route in front of the Buck Inn and between the houses. Be aware of blind bends / hump back bridges. Mountain bikes can also be encountered on Buckden Rake. Farm vehicles and machinery can be encountered on many parts of the route.

Barbed wire exists on a number of fences and walls alongside the footpaths that you will be following. Brief your group beforehand so that they can take extra care, especially when congregating near stiles and gates.

Steep slopes and crags exist along the walk. They can present problems of slipping and falling, especially when descending to the stepping stones at Cray and the track down from Scar House. Do not allow any one to climb or scramble on or above the crags. NEVER allow anyone to run downhill; control is quickly lost and injury guaranteed.

Streams and rivers in the area can rise rapidly and unexpectedly after heavy / continuous rain or snow melt. Be aware that streams and rivers are powerful in spate; youngsters will be swept off their feet long before adults. Wet rocks will be slippery. Footwear **must** be worn if paddling due to glass and sharp rocks. Do not allow swimming in pools, there may be underwater hazards and the water extremely cold. Be aware of waterfalls immediately downstream of the stepping stones at Cray and of the deep / swift water in the River Wharfe.

The Stepping stones at Cray are extremely dangerous if water levels are high. Be prepared to turn back and return to the Centre via your outward route; **if in any doubt do not cross**. Even in low water conditions they can be slippery.

Caves, open shafts, and potholes exist throughout the limestone areas. They can appear suddenly, or be concealed in shakeholes or amongst boulders, or covered by planks. Some are very deep. There are no fences or warnings. Cave entrances can appear inviting but can have pitches (drops) immediately inside. *Keep out of all caves*. DO NOT allow running ahead, or hide and seek games, or unsupervised activity in these areas. NEVER throw stones down open shafts. There may be cavers down below who have descended from another entrance. **Note that open shafts / potholes do exist along the walk**, especially between Cray and Scar House.

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Getting lost in this area can be dangerous, due to featureless moorland, steep slopes and crags, streams and rivers, and open shafts / potholes. For this reason you must keep to the route identified by the phototrail. You **must not** head for Buckden Pike, Strans Gill or Yockenthwaite. When walking from Cray to Scar House you **must** stay on the lower terrace, see '*Caves, open shafts, and potholes*'. Should you need to abandon or shorten the walk consider returning to the Centre via your outward route or taking the lower path descending to Stubbins Bridge from Cray.

The Church and graveyard in Hubberholme is an attraction with its many carved mice in the pews. Visitors are welcome at most times. Be aware to the sensitive nature of the building and grounds, unsupervised exploration is discouraged.

Emergency access by road is at Cray and Hubberholme. There is limited mobile phone coverage and access to public telephone. However there are farms and pubs at both these locations.

Operating guidelines

Clothing for staff and students should include a warm sweater and waterproofs, and if appropriate hat and gloves and / or sun protection.

Please abide by the country code, remembering to leave gates as you find them, NEVER to climb drystone walls, to leave no litter and not to disturb wildlife and farm animals.

Carry out regular checks to ensure that everyone is accounted for; consider the use of a buddy system.

Staff

Leaders should have prior personal experience of the area and route, and be confident in their ability to manage the walk safely and educationally. First Aid competence is required and a first aid kit and polythene survival bag **must** be carried. This is the absolute minimum. Spare clothing and mobile phone may well be useful. In bad or forecasted deteriorating weather a Group Shelter should be carried.

The maximum number of students in a group is 10. There must be a minimum of 2 staff with each group.

December 2017