

CODE OF PRACTICE

Breakaway Hill walking Club

Aims

The aims of the society shall be:

- i) To arrange trips for its members to various parts of the British Isles providing opportunities for hill walking at all levels.
- ii) To encourage awareness of mountain safety issues amongst its members.
- iii) To organise social events at the discretion of the committee.

Introduction

Hill walking and mountaineering are risk activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

Club Activities

The more experienced members organize club walks. The club does not have any qualified mountain leaders or guides on club walks.

Club activities will include a choice of walks (high, medium and low level) to suit varying standards e.g. inexperienced, competent, experienced. Walks will be devised with the overall experience in the party, the weather, the season and the terrain in mind.

Walks can be altered, changed or abandoned according to changing conditions on the day such as inclement weather, fatigue or injury. Club member participation in any club activity may be affected if they do not have adequate clothing and equipment.

The pace of any walk will be reasonable for the slowest member of the party. No one, except by special arrangement, (e.g. emergency situations), should become detached from the group, and everyone should be aware of the procedures to be followed in case of an accident. On club walks remember to take due care and attention on the descent, especially at the end of the day when concentration and strength may be waning.

Club Members

Be it the remoteness of the area you're in or the nature of the activity you're undertaking the Scottish mountains are always a serious undertaking, particularly so in winter. The individual must decide what he/she is capable of based on his or her own experience, equipment, strength and stamina before undertaking any club activity. If you need advice there are experienced club members who may be able to help.

Whilst experienced club members can offer advice on good practice, it is an individual's own responsibility to judge the value of this and to act accordingly.

Club members should remember that:

- You should always consider how your own actions might place yourself and others at risk.
- You have a responsibility to others to avoid actions that may endanger or threaten them.
- You have a responsibility to your fellow participants. This includes being honest about your experience and ability.
- You have a responsibility to question procedures that you believe to be dangerous.
- You should gain experience in summer before venturing out in winter.

Skills and Experience

Many mountaineers learn and improve their skills from other mountaineers as part of the normal process of gaining experience. The club strongly encourages this and tries to provide a number of opportunities for its members to pick up the basic skills. Please note that no one within the club instructs or leads but many of the more experienced members are more than happy to pass on their knowledge on a friend-to-friend basis.

Experience is gained by spending time on the hill putting your skills into practice. It is highly recommended that everyone take an interest in the navigation, route choice and objectives on a walk. If you're not sure about anything ask one of the more experienced members.

Experience should be gained by progressing from lower level walks towards more difficult objectives (higher level walks). Winter conditions present greater challenges and greater risks, which require a more diverse range of skills. Winter experience should be gained in a similar way to summer experience, starting with easier objectives and progressing to more difficult ones.

Attending courses run by professional instructors allows you to learn and develop these skills relatively quickly. If you would like to find out more about courses then take a look at these websites or speak to a committee member.

<http://www.glenmorelodge.org.uk/>

(Offers a vast range of high quality courses and based near Aviemore.)

<http://www.thebmc.co.uk/safety.htm>

The club owns a number of instructional books and videos, which are available to borrow.

Equipment

Recommended Equipment

(To be carried by each club member)

- Good, purpose built walking boots suitable for the proposed activity
- Sturdy rucksack
- Waterproof and Windproof shell (Jacket and Over trousers)
- Waterproof gloves/mittens
- Hat
- Adequate warm clothing (non cotton - i.e. No Denims)
- Spare clothing (including hat and gloves)
- Adequate food and drink
- Emergency rations e.g. chocolate
- Gaiters (come highly recommended)
- Survival Bag & Whistle*
- Head Torch & Spare Battery*
- First-Aid kit*

(*Available to borrow from the club but we do only have a limited supply)

The club requires everyone to wear adequate footwear (boots with good ankle support) for mountaineering activities. Any member unsure about footwear can seek advice from experienced members or from local outdoor shops.

Winter Equipment

Additional to the above, the following items must be taken when conditions require

- Ice Axe*
- Crampons*
- Hill walking boots suitable for the proposed activity, for the higher level walks a stiffer boot is essential.

Those members who are intending on undertaking a higher-level walk and who are not familiar with the adjustment and fitting of crampons must identify themselves. You should

take your boots with you to the Club Equipment Officer so that he/she can find a suitable pair of crampons. If you are unsure about the fitting or adjustment of crampons, you must seek help from the Equipment Officer or an experienced member.

The committee should ensure that each group has the following equipment as a bare minimum:

- 2 x maps with cases
- 2 x compasses
- Watch
- 1 first aid kit
- Kisser or group shelter
- 2 x survival bags
- 2 x whistles
- 1 head torch between 3
- mobile phone (although frequently there is little or no reception)

Where equipment is kept in a central pool regular inspection must be made and full records of the life and usage of the equipment kept in the club equipment logbook. The club will appoint an Equipment Officer each year to manage Club equipment.

Preparation prior to a walk

Club members are strongly encouraged to carry out sufficient preparations prior to the walks however the committee will endeavour to provide the following:

- To obtain a local weather forecast.
<http://www.mwis.org.uk/index.php>
<http://www.sais.gov.uk/>
(Snow conditions/avalanche forecast)
- To ensure that the proposed objectives of any group are within the capabilities of all its members.
- To decide whether conditions requiring ice axes and crampons, or other specialist equipment, may reasonably be expected on the walk.
- To co-ordinate the advice given on route selection and equipment.
- To have a list of all those members on the walk.
- To ensure that at least one member of each group has navigational and other relevant skills.
- To ensure that the route has been recorded in the logbook and that the log book has been left in a safe place.

Emergency Procedures

Procedure in the Event of an Accident or Illness

Administer first aid.

A decision needs to be made whether or not you need help. i.e can the group get safely off the mountain on their own?

If it is decided that they can't and that help is needed then check for mobile coverage, if there is no coverage then the group will have to split. It very much depends on where the incident has taken place but generally a small, fast and competent group (ideally two people) should descend to the nearest phone to summon help.

They should ensure that:

- a) They know the location of the incident, including a 6-figure grid reference and any local landmarks.
- b) The nature of the injuries, the number of people injured, the number of people in the party, the equipment carried and the time of the incident.

Upon reaching a phone they should make contact with the police through 999. The police will then get in touch with the local mountain rescue team.

The group left behind with the casualty should try and keep warm. Everyone should put their spare layers on and get in the kisser, with the casualty in the middle. A record of the casualties condition should be kept and this should be passed on when help arrives.

If the group is large it may be better getting the majority of them off the hill. If this is the case leave 2 people with the casualty while the rest descend to safety.

The International Distress Signal

Every member should be familiar with the International Distress Signal, it can be used if you need to summon help from other people on the hill:

Six of either - Whistle Blasts Or Shouts Or Torch Flashes

Pause for one minute

Repeat of six whistle blasts, shouts or torch flashes

If a party can hear/see you they will answer with three blasts, shouts or flashes. Keep signalling until help arrives. When in distress do not exhaust yourself by shouting or blowing a whistle for too long a period - take a break and then start again when rested.

If someone gets separated from the group.

It is important that you keep an eye on your fellow hill-walkers and alert the group if you believe someone has become detached from the group.

If a member/members of your group have become separated then return along your route to search for them. Listen out for them and look for any evidence of where they may have gone. If you have a mobile then try and make contact with them. If there is no sign of them then get to the finishing point as quickly as possible. The committee may choose to alert the local police.

If you get separated from the group and if you are on the determined route/path then stay where you are for at least 30 minutes, wrap up warm and signal to alert the group.

If you have wandered from the route then try to return to your last known point and wait there for at least 30 minutes. If you are disorientated and unaware of where you have come from then stay where you are and signal to attract the group's attention.

You should switch your mobile phone on in case the separated members try to contact you, especially if you know someone has your number.

If after 30 minutes no one has come back then you should retreat from the hill, either the way you came or down an escape route. It may be the safest option to continue on the walk as planned. Meet up with the rest of the group at the finishing point

If you have any questions about any part of this code of practice or anything else regarding Breakaway then please speak to the committee or email breakaway@st-andrews.ac.uk