HIghworth and Swindon Walking Club

Newsletter November 2026

It is lovely to see the autumn colours when we are out and about. Some glorious walking weather.

Hadrian's Wall Walking Weekend

We had a lovely 'weekend' walking around Hadrian's Wall from our base in Hexham. The weather was mostly very kind, and we saw some excellent views of the Northumbrian landscape. The Wall itself is very noteworthy but those who were new to the area were very impressed by the scenery as well as the heritage. You will probably have viewed the selection of photographs added to Flikr but I have slipped a couple into the newsletter.







Safety and winter walking

The clocks have changed and the daylight hours are reducing. It is timely to remind everyone that it is especially important to carry an extra layer to keep you warm in case there is a need to hang around in the cold – it doesn't take long to get very chilled, especially if there is a wind chill and conditions are wet.

It is also important to carry a torch (even better with working charged batteries…). It does get dark early on grey days and relying on your phone torch facility is not the recommended approach – you may need the phone as a phone…. Head torches are the best approach leaving you with both hands free to do whatever. If you haven't got one maybe Santa can be asked (assuming that you have been good),

As well as the extra layer and illumination, for longer,remoter walks it is strongly recommended that you carry a 'bivvy bag' or personal shelter – again if there is an issue you may need to hang around in cold, wet conditions. They don't weigh much and again maybe Santa can be approached!

Walking pace and keeping together

It is great to see that we are getting a good turnout for many of our walks. This does present a bit of a challenge for the group on the day – how to stay together so that the front and rear are in contact. I have been approached by a few people who have expressed their concern that if the group is too strung out, they could get lost at junctions or that the leader (if up-front) maybe unaware of issues towards the rear.

We all walk at different paces, but it is not too hard to manage to arrive at a pace that meets the needs of getting back before nightfall!!! and is also comfortable for all, and allows time to take a few photos, to appreciate the view and points of interest. The group can help with this. If the pace is too fast let the leader know – don't just grumble afterwards! It is important to 're-group' especially if the group is becoming extended – and then to wait for the rear walkers to catch breath before moving on. The frequency of re-grouping will depend on the group and the walking conditions. There are no hard and fast rules – but feel free to call for a re-group – a good reason for the leader to be in touch with the 'backmarker'.

The leader should consider asking someone to be a backmarker. The leader and backmarker need to establish communication especially in larger groups so that the walk can be managed for enjoyment and comfort as well as safety and the obvious requirement of not losing anyone! The use of backmarkers is a judgement call – group size, visibility along with countryside are important considerations. A group of 10 walking through open moorland has less need for one than a larger group walking through wooded areas or through routes with various path junctions. Please do help the leaders with this – we are really grateful that they research the route and lead it. The Club relies on our walk leaders. Being backmarker does restrict the ability to move around the group chatting – but experience shows that you will find people drop back to chat with you so there is no real tangible disadvantage to helping in this way. Please help the leader out.

Christmas festivities

The Wednesday meal and walk being organised by Debbie and Sharon is progressing well. Don't forget to contact them to book a place and to sort out payments etc.

We do need a volunteer for the Sunday walk/meal – traditionally early in January when diaries are freer and those of us still working are free to attend. Please do Contact Marilyn or I to volunteer to organise this – help will be available if wanted – just ask.

Enjoy your walking.

Andrew