

Reflections on Fell and Moorland Leader Training

Introduction

Hill and moorland leader training is training for those who want to lead hill walking groups on day walks in defined terrain in summer conditions. I recently had three excellent days with [Beyond the Edge](#) for Hill and Moorland leader training. With excellent course companions we had great days out in the Peak District with tuition and skills practice. The 3 day course took place on 3rd September and was based at the Sir William Hotel in Grindelford. We had one instructor for a group of 6 people. The group comprised a mixture of experience we all shared a passion for the benefits of outdoor activities. It's interesting because some of the party were not experienced with the night navigation component of the training.

The Syllabus

The syllabus has many elements which are listed below:

- Walking and route finding
- Navigation
- Hazards and emergency procedures
- Equipment
- Responsibilities of the Leader
- Group Management
- Access, Conservation and Environmental knowledge
- Weather
- Background knowledge

Practice is a key part of the training. Skills maintenance, continual professional development and logging of hill days are an important part of being a leader in the fells, moors and mountains.

The Course

The opening part of the course was a reminder of the role of the [BMC](#), we reflected on the many ways in which the BMC supports the climbing community through training, access, supporting clubs and governing competition climbing. The importance of the mountain training association for underpinning training of instructors involved with a range of outdoor activities. Training is approved and assessed by the [MTA](#) (Mountain Training Association), thus ensuring instructors receive the correct training and are skilled at the right level. Part of this activity is the maintenance and logging of outdoor activities by keeping an activity log which is available to the MTA. For this we use a system called [DLOG](#). Through its local groups the MTA also provides an excellent range of activities to enable maintenance of corporate professional development.



Key Things to Remember for Navigation

Much of the activity was taking it in turns to walk legs on a variety of walks in the peak district. Navigation skills were both taught and practiced over the three days including some rather tricky assessment level points and a night navigation session. For us conditions were brilliant and we had excellent days in the Peak. A couple of acronyms were key things to remember

- Aspect, Angle, Altitude
- Direction, Distance, Details, Dangers

The AAA one referred to looking at the hillside and using the features (i.e. the three AAAs) to match where we are located. An important practice was that when navigating legs we use at least 3 points of evidence to determine location. It's important to become quite disciplined and to stick to this rule. The evidence needs to be robust too!

Basic principles of leadership

We put a lot of thought into our activities and role as a leader. We learnt that one of the first things is our duty of care and to keep one another safe. Time for another acronym
safety – duty of care

- inform
- enthuse
- entertain

Thinking about this was actually quite fun scribbling away was helpful



The planning of trips requires a lot of practice. It's useful to break this into stages i.e.

- month before
- week before
- day before

The section on activity planning considered a whole host of activities including questions about the health and fitness of the party. Ensuring that the party is appropriately equipped and trained for what they are setting out to do. Three things to consider for the party are as follows

- Acceptance of risks statements
- Health questions (e.g. insist on personal medication such as asthma inhalers, epipens etc.)
- Clear terms and conditions
- preparation of route cards with appropriate escapes and identification of risks

At one point I became somewhat bogged down with the need for risk management. It became apparent that many of these issues can be addressed through the planning aspects identified above. After more classroom work it was time to get out again. We practised leading groups, navigation and generally had good discussions when we were out and about on Eyam Moor. It was interesting to multi-task and practice navigation whilst entertaining your party. We tested shelter tents and some different survival aids. Also important were some principles for simply taking care of people for example POMU position of maximum usefulness, this is for helping people across stiles, obstacles etc. protect on downside

Assessment

The assessment for hill and moorland leader takes place over three days and involves the following tasks.

Day 1 lead the group

may be an emergency prepare for an emergency and be appropriately equipped (15-60 minutes)

Day 2 lead group night navigation

Day 3

Reflection and Recommendations

The course worked really well and was relaxed and fun, it helped that the conditions were excellent. We did receive immense value in honing our party leading skills and developing planning and risk assessment. On the night navigation session the inevitable occurred and the spare head torch was required for one of our party. The best part of the course is putting into practice your skills and just being out in the hills training. The classroom sessions were valuable, it's important to take the timeout to cover some of the theoretical aspects such as preparation, planning, risk assessment, weather etc.. but planning a great adventure is fun!

The course does not include the assessment, this takes place on a separate weekend after practicing the skills developed on the training weekend. The key to being successful in this role is ongoing training, logging and practicing/shadowing with colleagues. I certainly have a lot to do but I'm looking forward to that. It's necessary to practise the following

- Micro-navigation – practice finding features e.g. ring contours, assessment level features get the strategy right choose the correct attack point
- Have great discussion points and get information to hand for example on the phone [3 heather types](#) (crossed leave heath and bell)
- A couple of emergency techniques for scenario
- First aid revision

Putting into practice what you've learned is always important even if it's leading a group yourself or helping out with some navigation. On one of our recent evening runs I was involved in a bit of route planning! I'm really grateful to the support of the Association of the British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club for a grant to cover part of the course fees.

Links

- <https://www.mountain-training.org/qualifications/walking/hill-and-moorland-leader>
- <https://peakdistrictwalks.net/peak-district-trig-points/trig-point-challenge/>
- [ethels](#)
- <https://www.mountain-training.org/membership/mountain-training-association>
- <https://www.thebmc.co.uk/articles>
- <https://www.beyondtheedge.co.uk/>
- <https://www.dofe.org/run/expeditionresources/downloads/navigation/>