

KIRKBY FLEETHAM & DISTRICT ANGLING CLUB LTD SAFETY NOTICE

Welcome to Kirkby Fleetham & District Angling Club Ltd

It is recommended that all members and their guests make themselves familiar with the general risks and preventative measures of angling and its related activities. However, the River Swale has some specific risks that are explained in the following safety notice. For further information, please contact the Chairman or Secretary.

1. The Club, would like to wish you a safe and enjoyable experience on the Club's length of the Swale. Advice on how to fish the river is freely available from members of the Committee.
2. We want to ensure that all members of the Club, especially Junior Members, are safe whilst in and near the river. All members should read and follow these best practice notes which have been prepared by the Committee on the strength of many years experience of fishing the Swale.
3. The Swale is a very fast flowing river and the strength of the current can present a real danger to beginners to river fishing. Although wading is often helpful in fishing a pool, it is not always essential and you should **never** wade unless you are confident and comfortable in your ability to do so.
4. The Swale is subject to major changes in river level, often caused by heavy rain in Swaledale - so even though it might be a sunny day at Great Langton, do remember that a thunderstorm at Reeth can quickly affect the level of the river.
5. If:
 - The colour of the river changes while you are fishing
 - Small sticks and leaves start to float past you
 - The sound of the river changes
 - You suspect for any other reason that the river is about to rise

GET OUT OF THE RIVER IMMEDIATELY

And don't start fishing until you are confident that the river is safe to fish again

6. The banks of the river can be slippery and uneven - take extra care, especially in waders, when making your way to the water.
7. When in the water, plan where you are going to fish and judge how deep the water is before getting into it. Never take big strides when wading - feel your way with one foot while keeping a firm foothold with the other - a wading staff can be very useful as a safety aid.

8. When wading across the current it is much easier to face the current rather than to walk at 90 deg to it - by facing upstream you will reduce the water pressure on your legs and remember that, if you start to wade upstream having entered the river from a downstream direction, the sheer strength of the current can take you by surprise.
9. Never wade in water you feel uncomfortable in - if, for example, the pool you are fishing starts to deepen quickly, don't fish further down than you feel comfortable in doing so. Always keep a safety margin and if in doubt, don't!
10. When you have got to know the river it is easy to become complacent. But remember that the features of the river don't stay the same - they can change overnight because of the effects of high flow rates. What had been a gentle 18" deep run can change into a six foot deep hole - so always approach the river as if you have not fished it before.
11. We **strongly recommend** that newcomers to river fishing wear a buoyancy aid.
12. If you are unfortunate enough to lose your footing and start to be swept away, the first thing to do is, of course, not to panic. Most of the river is not deep and if you allow the current to take you downstream, you will quickly come across shallow water where it is safe to crawl out of the river. Do not start to swim against the current - try to stay calm - and don't believe the old wives tale about your waders filling full of water and dragging you under - it is not true. Your waders will fill with water, but that water is no heavier than the rest of the river - and so you will float downstream. When you are doing so, try to float feet first so you can see where the current is taking you, then you can take evasive action if you are being swept towards an obstruction.
13. Take a whistle with you in your fishing waistcoat and a mobile phone, in a waterproof pouch - available from any camping shop. It is also worthwhile to download the app: what3words which can be used to identify your location.

Most of our members have fished the river for many years and are used to its many moods. Provided you respect the river, you will quickly get used to its moods and you will learn the skills you need to wade the river without putting yourself in danger. But remember - if you ever feel uncomfortable about anything while you are in the river - whether it is the level of the water, current strength or any other reason - get out of the river and stay out until you are happy to start fishing again. It cannot be over emphasised how quickly changes can occur on this river - there are well recorded instances of the river rising four or five feet in as many minutes - so be careful!