

## What is a health walk?

I have been going through some of my old photos and found a few that reflect my ideas of what is a 'Health Walk'. To my mind, the key elements of a health walk are inclusion, friendship and appropriate exercise, but to maintain enthusiasm you also need challenge and accomplishment. This first picture shows all this.

Di (the lady in the red jacket) has MS. That did not stop her from taking on the challenge of a gentle stroll through the frosty countryside, punctuated by a stile. This was not the first stile we had helped her over, and neither was it the last (although she later had to give up walking as her disease got worse).



George (with his back to us) moved into town after a hit and run incident, knowing nobody. He joined the WfH group to meet people and get out of the house, and subsequently trained as a leader. At a couple of walks he complained about pains in his left arm, but ignored instruction to go and see his doctor, so he missed the next walk after being rushed into hospital with a heart attack. He was soon back walking and was trying to give up smoking and alcohol (with help from his friends)

George used to like being back marker, and we realised why one walk when the wind was in the wrong direction and the unmistakable smell of cigarette smoke drifted across the field. After that, we started fining him a pound every time we caught him smoking.

The lady in white is Lillian. She started walking when her husband died – she was 70 at the time and was one of the first leaders trained in the group. By the time she was 80, she was leading 4 different WfH walks every week, distributing walk information leaflets round the doctor's surgeries, libraries and hospital wards (on foot) and walking a mile into town most days for her shopping.

The other two ladies (Margaret and June) regularly do 12-mile hikes with the Ramblers at the weekend but lead health walks during the week because they are more friendly.



The lady crossing the stile here is Marion, the founder of the WfH group in Hambleton, who clearly is not averse to some pretty vigorous stile-hopping.



Here she is again, with Lillian, helping Di over a particularly high stile.

But this is the photo I was looking for, just to prove it's possible!



You can tell what a friendly bunch we are by the way we hold the bar up for her and make sure her bag does not get dirty!