



Walking for Health: South Brent Walk & Talk

The South Brent walk that starts every Friday at 2.30 pm, and has been doing so since 2006, is perhaps one of our better kept secrets. Following the closure of the London Inn, where we used to assemble, the walk now starts and finishes outside the Newsagent's in the centre of South Brent.

South Brent Walk & Talk is now an accredited scheme within the "Walking for Health" programme which is promoted nationally by Natural England and the Department of Health, run locally by South Hams District Council, and supported by a number of local organisations.

The walks are led by trained, volunteer walk leaders. Currently, the regular walk leaders are Keith Earley, who lives at Didworthy, Brian Maynard-Potts, who lives at Bulkamore, near Rattery, and Beth Finnemore who lives in South Brent and was one of the founders of the walk. The co-ordinator of the programme in the South Hams is Kate Wright.

Health benefits

Walking has a number of proven health benefits, and recent research has shown (perhaps not surprisingly) that walking in the countryside is particularly beneficial. The national organisers of the scheme see it as being particularly appropriate for:-

- those who take little exercise, have high blood pressure, or would like to lose weight;
- those recovering from an illness, operation, or condition affecting their mobility;
- those who feel stressed or depressed, or lack energy, or have difficulty sleeping;
- those who are socially isolated, and the elderly.

Consequently, Walk & Talk has been recommended to some of our walkers by their GP or other health professional.

However, there is no need for walkers on the scheme to be referred or to fit any of the above profiles! Many are happy and healthy but recognise that regular walking helps keep them so, and find, perhaps to their surprise, that it's also good fun.

A typical walk

We generally have about 10-12 walkers, some from South Brent, others from Ivybridge.

Walks are typically 1 to 1½ hours, during which we might cover 2½ to 4 miles through the village and on a mixture of minor roads and footpaths. Inevitably, many of the walks have hills, stiles, some uneven ground, or muddy patches.

Our more adventurous walks take us to places like Cheston, Owley, Bullhornstone, Lutton, Stidston, or Horsebrook. But if you regularly do 20 miles on Dartmoor before breakfast, Walk & Talk is probably not for you!

As far as possible, the walks are tailored to people's abilities, and the weather. We sometimes split the walk to give a less demanding option. No-one is pressured to walk further or faster than they want to.

We often end with a cup of tea or coffee in the village after the walk.

Welcome to new or returning members

New or returning members are always welcome.

The walks are free, and there is no need to book. We are a welcoming crowd, so there is no need to be shy about coming along. The talk is as important to us as the walk. You can make new friends, enjoy the countryside, and feel good!

Please wear suitable clothing and comfortable, supportive footwear. If it's hot, bring some drinking water. If you have any medication you may require, please bring it.

In general, we prefer not to have dogs on the walk, as there can be problems with stiles, cattle, etc.

We leave from outside the Newsagent's in the centre of South Brent, at 2.30 pm on Fridays (not Christmas day). If there are any changes to this plan, we will endeavour to post them on our notice board in the Toll House, Church Street, and on the South Brent page of the Walking for Health website (see below).

Anyone interested in training to become a walk leader would be particularly welcome. The training is free, and has benefits outside the scheme.

The "Outdoor Health Questionnaire"

New walkers are asked to fill in a questionnaire on two sides of A4. This is partly to alert the walk leaders to any health problems they need to take into account in planning the walks. We ask your permission to share this information between the walk leaders.

There is also an opportunity to specify a person to be informed in the unlikely event of an emergency (please bring his/her phone number).

To stay accredited, and attract some national funding, we have to participate in an evaluation programme. So we also ask your permission for the information on your form to be collated on computer for research and evaluation reports (which maintain personal anonymity).

If it is your first walk with us, please come a few minutes early so that you can fill in this questionnaire, and bring reading glasses if you need them.

Contacts and information

Walk & Talk Co-ordinator for South Hams: kate.wright@southhams.gov.uk mobile: 07920 786505.

Walking for Health website: www.wfh.naturalengland.org.uk (then use the "Walk Finder" to locate the South Brent page).