

# WALKING FOR HEALTH



(Credit: Tamar Valley AONB Walk & Talk)

**Now in her seventies, Jean likes nothing more than a stroll with chums in the beautiful Tamar Valley. The walks keep her fit and are a good laugh. Even hubby comes along too. Jean tells us more.**

## How did you get involved?

When my husband I retired to Cornwall in 2003 we walked around a lot getting to know the area. We've always enjoyed walking and would cover up six miles in one outing. But as the years went on we started experiencing various health problems making long walks impossible. For instance, I had a habit of breaking bones whenever I fell which put me out of action for weeks. I had to build up my stamina all over again. Also, high blood pressure made me dizzy at times. You could say I was a 'walking disaster'.

Then I heard that a new walking group in the Tamar Valley was being set up for people who had been ill or who wanted to make new friends. It sounded like just what I was looking for and I went along to the very first one. That was six years ago and I haven't looked back since.

## What happens during a walking session?

We have a 'Walk & Talk' group each Wednesday when participants walk for around two hours in the beautiful Tamar Valley covering between 3½ and 4 miles. It's a very hilly part of Britain so we all know what to expect.

**“A lot of banter takes place as we walk along and a lot of laughs.”**

## What have been the benefits?

We've all got fitter and healthier as the years have gone by and walk faster than we ever did before. My blood pressure is now under control, I'm more flexible and rarely have a problem with dizziness. There are many other benefits: companionship, exercise, fresh air, stunning views and varied scenery. The list goes on...

## Have there been any challenges to overcome?

My right shoulder and arm never recovered completely after a fall several years ago. Fortunately, we don't have many stiles to climb over in the Tamar Valley and when we do encounter one, my husband is there to give me a shove or someone will pull me over from the other side by my good arm. They all know about my disability and make light of it. In fact, a lot of banter takes place as we walk along and a lot of laughs.

## How would you motivate others to get involved? What would you say to them?

After a couple of years I convinced my husband to join pointing out that there are as many men as women on the walks. It must be daunting to join an existing walking group but everyone knows just how it feels to be a newcomer. We do our best to make new people feel at home by walking alongside them and finding out a bit about each other; we then introduce them to others with similar interests. Some of those living alone say the walks are the highlight of their week and many have gone on to make lasting friendships.

## More information

[Tamar Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty \(website\)](http://www.tamarvalley.org.uk)

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