

WALK MORE - feel the difference

Readers turning to their new Yellow Pages phone book will notice, right at the front on page 10, a list of opportunities under the heading GET ACTIVE. One of the suggestions for getting active is Carlisle Health Walks - "programmes of free walks around the area led by trained walk leaders". Which is a subtle way of introducing readers to another of Redspearlands Footpath Group's objects apart from the main one of keeping an eye on Dalston's Rights of Way network. Accordingly, we are pleased to announce that two RFG members are now trained walk leaders, having attended six hours of instruction delivered by trainer Richard Massey, Eden Vale PCT, and Esther Palliser, the City's Physical Activity Development Officer.

So, I hear you cry, what is a health walk? As it says in the literature, a 30-minute walk 5 times a week will:

- make you feel good;
- give you more energy;
- help you sleep better;
- help to reduce stress;
- keep your heart 'strong';
- reduce blood pressure...and,
- help to manage your weight.

It's a safe bet that that at least one of the above will apply to most people, probably two or three if we're being honest with ourselves.

A graph shown to the trainees charted the weight of the average UK adult since 1980. Imagine a landscape format A4 sheet with 1980 is at the bottom left-hand corner. 2005 is somewhere towards the bottom right-hand corner. Weight increase is represented by a vertical scale, with 1980 about 25mm above the bottom edge. I hope you are ready for the next bit because it is truly horrifying; on the vertical scale 2005 reaches 100mm! In old money, if 1980 is a half-inch stack 2005 is a four-inch stack. Even worse, by the end of the decade the projected UK average weight will be represented by two four-inch stacks UNLESS FOLKS DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT, like walking more and feeling the difference.

We Dalstonians are fortunate in having a fabulous network of public footpaths and bridleways within the parish, not to mention easy access to the Lakes, Pennines and Borders. But not everyone is able to cope with slopes or muddy footpaths, which is why the led Health Walks concentrate on street-walking (the respectable sort) to get the regular exercise that benefits people who may, for example, be recovering from heart surgery or a stroke, experiencing a spell of depression, or simply be overweight or sleeping badly.

It is hoped that the Dalston Health Walks programme will commence during May 2005, twice weekly, probably Tuesday and Thursday. Co-ordination will be through Age Concern and (subject to confirmation) Dalston Surgery. However, walkers do not have to be unwell or elderly to join in the fun. Pregnant mums and teenagers stand to benefit as much as anyone else, so look out for the notices we'll display once the scheme is operational. In the meantime, why not walk more and feel the difference? Like the Health Walks themselves, there's nothing to pay.

Alan Lyne