

'Walking transformed my wellbeing'

'Walking is man's best medicine', declared Greek philosopher Hippocrates around 2,400 years ago – and we'd have to agree! The impact on physical and mental health can be transformational, as these three members' inspirational stories reveal

Anthony's story

Rambling helped me recover from a heart attack and cope with cancer

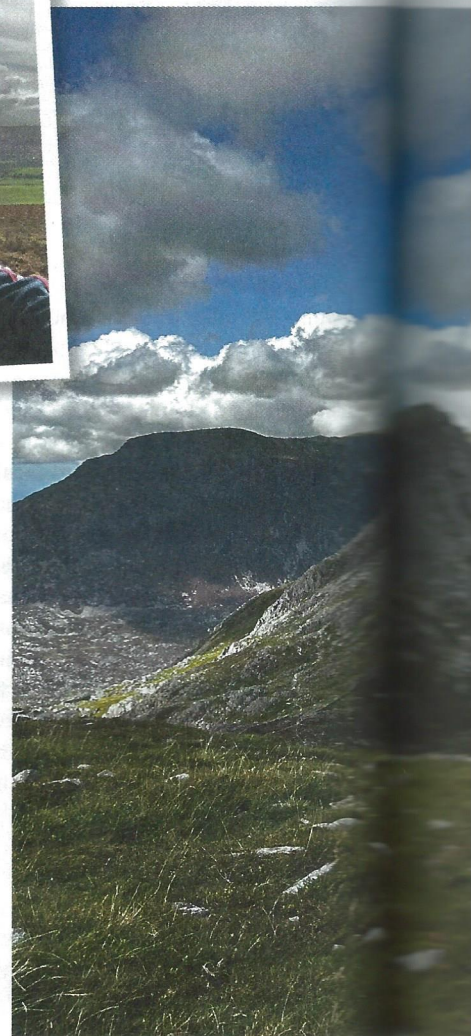
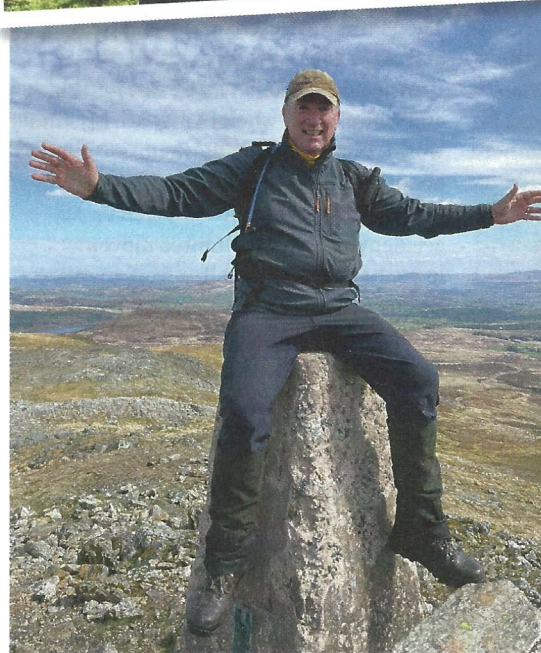
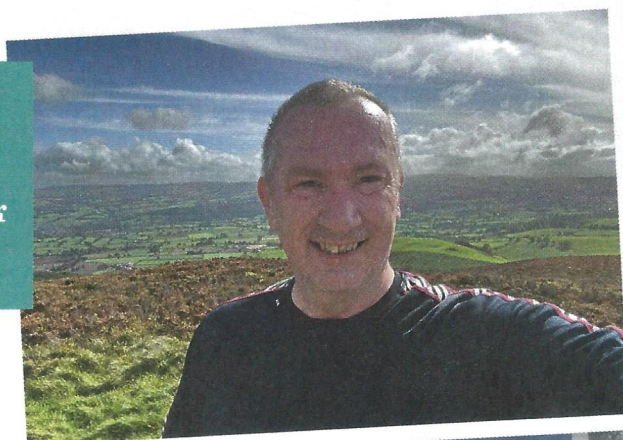
In my early years I walked in the Clwydian Range, because a relative lived nearby. Later, I would walk in Eryri (Snowdonia) with friends. As lads in our twenties, we scaled Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon), Crib Goch, Cnicht and Tryfan.

In 1984 I moved to Manchester for work. As the years passed, I rarely ventured onto the Clwydians, and Eryri was a distant memory.

By 1997, I'd settled down to marriage and a family. One Saturday in May 2015, I thought I had a bout of painful indigestion as I started a work night shift. By midnight, the pain in my stomach was too much. My neck hurt. I was sick. The knot in my stomach grew tighter.

At 5.30am, I drove to hospital, where I collapsed. It was Sunday and the cardiac unit was closed for the bank holiday. The duty doctor examined me and transferred me to Broadgreen Hospital in Liverpool. I owe every hill I climb now to him.

I was numb with fear, thinking I would

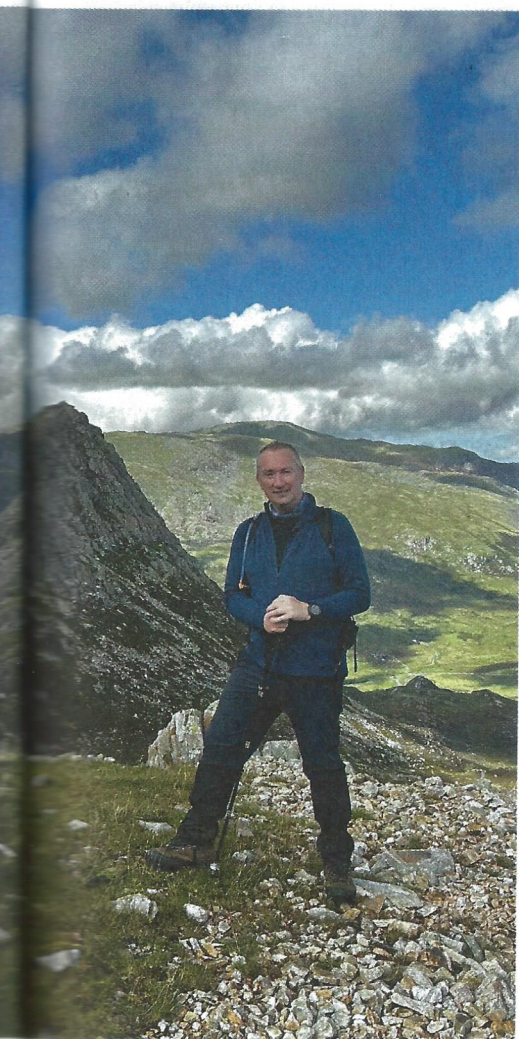


die. The amazing medics dissolved the blood clot that had caused my heart attack and sent me home after three days. The aftercare from the cardiac team was brilliant and I completed a rehab programme at the local gym.

Walking was hard. I had to start again, going slowly, lamppost to lamppost. Moel Famau and the Clwydian Range may as well have been the Himalayas!

In 2016, a scan detected a stage-2 cancerous tumour in the left lobe of my thyroid gland which was removed. In 2017, the right part of my thyroid was removed and I had a deep vein thrombosis (DVT), eventually identified as polycythemia – a form of blood cancer.

The return to work was difficult. Then came Covid-19, lockdown and having to shield. When I was eventually allowed out, I started walking in local fields and, little by little, scaled the Clwydian Range again. Standing on Moel Famau, I saw the peaks



of Eryri backlit by the sun and resolved to climb a mountain.

My first attempt found me on a dank November day, disorientated in mist on Arenig Fawr. Fighting panic, I extricated myself to the nearest bothy. I had the riot act read by my wife, who insisted any further walks in wilderness were to be accompanied.

Making the leap

So I joined the Ramblers. I had no idea of what the organisation did, but it was a start. Perusing the groups, I discovered walks for different abilities – including up mountains. I decided to go to one on the Llŷn Peninsula with Eryri Ramblers. I was nervous, but I shouldn't have been – I was made so welcome. I had a brilliant day and came back buzzing.

The next walk was Moel Siabod. I volunteered as back-marker – a position for which I am eminently qualified, being by far the slowest. This was a real mountain. It was tough, but I did it. I was back! Standing on Siabod, I saw lots more to climb...

The Eryri Ramblers walks came thick and fast – with Roy on the Rhinogydd and Richard on the Glyderau. I'd always wanted to return to Tryfan and the Cantilever Stone and, led by Richard, I did. In 2023, I summited 47 Eryri peaks. My next goal is Yr Wyddfa's South Ridge. I've volunteered to lead some hill-walks and signed up for a mountain leaders' course and first-aid training. I want to give something back.

Joining the Ramblers is the best thing I could have done to help me cope with my illness. It's been hard, but fabulous to be out in all weathers. The views are stupendous. But the best bit is the company – friends made and stories shared on the walks.

These days, I venture out with the Ramblers, walking and climbing the hills as much as I can. Walking has given me so much enjoyment, and a massive boost to my mental and physical health. It's the finest exercise you can do.

📍 From far left: Anthony hitting the heights in Wales – Moel Gyw; Arenig Fawr; Glyderau. Above right: Dee before weight loss; taking part in a 10k run; leading a Wellbeing Walk

Dee's story

I walked off my excess weight, and got my health and confidence back on track



I'm only 5ft [1.5m] tall, and I weighed almost 17 stone [106kg]. It was a lot of pressure on my body. Taking the kids to school, just walking 100m from the car was hard. I couldn't stand for long when cooking dinner.

In 2019, I was on a plane from Cyprus. Another passenger told the steward he didn't want to sit next to such a fat person because I was 'overflowing' onto his seat. It was so embarrassing. I felt heartbroken and cried all the way home. I knew I needed to lose weight, but I didn't know how.

I realised I couldn't have a healthy lifestyle without exercise and eating well – but I wasn't sure I had the strength to do both. I said to myself, 'get under 100kg, then start exercising.' I dropped the weight in six weeks.

Being that big and going to the gym, >