

# Once a Walk Leader, always a Walk Leader...



Daren Borzynski started his new post as West Dunbartonshire's Health Walks Coordinator earlier this year.

In this blog, written in January, he shares his experience of how stepping out around his hospital ward, with the incentive of [Paths for All's Exercise Alley](#), aided his recovery following a major operation.

I may be an active walk-leader but I can also be a bit of a bug-magnet so having some abdominal pain at the start of December didn't worry me too much, to begin with. But if it wasn't for my wife dragging me to the GP, this blog could be very different ...

So, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December I quickly progressed from a seat in the GP surgery to a bed in the Royal Alexandria Hospital in Paisley (RAH) and the next day underwent surgery for a perforated bowel needing a sigmoid colectomy and washout via midline laparotomy. Very technical... and if you're squeamish you should maybe skip to the next paragraph! Still here? Well, basically I was cut open, had part of my large intestine removed then stitched back together...oh and my insides were washed out.

To be honest, the first few days post-op were a real struggle, especially for motivation. Day 6 was probably my real turning point. Good news...my CT scan showed that internal healing was progressing slowly. Not so good news... there had been a small leak and it looked likely that I would need another op keeping me in over Christmas and possibly another op later down the line. I wanted to be home getting organised for Christmas and planning for the New Year when I was about to start a new post at work, as West Dunbartonshire's Walking for Health Coordinator.

After the scan, my Laparotomy Nurse Maggie Clark and I chatted again about my condition and about our common interest in Health Walks - Maggie had trained as a Walk Leader too - and then it happened. I decided that afternoon that I would make a monumental effort to get well - or at least well enough so that another operation wouldn't be such a struggle.

So off I went, starting to walk around the ward; I checked it was about 100 steps a lap. On my laps I noticed the Paths For All Exercise Alley, a welcoming extra incentive, to use the time sitting beside the hospital bed to do my chair exercises.

Day one, I only managed about 1600 steps, nothing near to what I would normally do, but I was so pleased with myself that I had started. Over the next few days, I gradually increased the step count and kept up my strength and balance exercises. With encouragement from the ward staff, I could feel my health, strength and especially my mental health improving, even with the possibility of another operation still looming.

Next ward round, my consultant could see improvement in my health, delaying a decision on any new operation to see if the leak would recover on its own; after all I wasn't acting like someone that was unwell... I was now walking 8000 steps around the hospital ward, and in my socks!

**Once a Walk Leader, always a Walk Leader as my endeavours had encouraged a few other patients to join me for a lap here and there - I was told that I was becoming the talk of the ward.**

December 17<sup>th</sup> was my next scan (my 4<sup>th</sup> since coming in but who's counting!). After what seemed like forever, the results were positive, and I could go home. Everything seemed to be improving and I was going to be at home for Christmas and with my family - I had never been away from them for this length of time before.

When I trained as a Walk Leader all those years ago, I could never have imagined the use I would put it to. Walking helped me in so many ways over the last 6 weeks; with my physical health and especially my mental health. Having an understanding and supportive consultant also helped.

With all this hopefully behind me, I'm looking forward to my new work challenge and using my personal experience to help others see the recovery benefits to getting on your feet and getting walking.