

# THINK NATURE HEALTH WALKS



## WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the Think Nature Health Walks newsletter for **Winter 2024!** I hope you all had a lovely restful festive break, and have managed to get out and about despite all the snow and storms. A few snowdrops have been emerging, suggesting that Spring is on it's way!




**WALKS & WANDERS  
AROUND  
HELMSDALE**

Join us for a series of accessible walks around Helmsdale and District with our trained team of friendly volunteers. Along the way we will share local stories, and engage in mindfulness exercises. Each walk will end at Timespan, where Community Carholders get discounts at the Riverside Cafe and access the People's Mobile Archive and Youth Library with free museum entry and digital exhibits for local residents. We look forward to seeing you on one of our walks!

**SATURDAY 27TH JAN  
11.30AM-12.30PM**  
**EMIGRANTS' MONUMENT AND CASTLE PARK**

Meet at Timespan\* 11.20am  
Easy-Moderate; pavement and grass; steps

This route is a well-trodden local walk, and it's great for beginners and for blowing away the winter blues. The walk begins at Timespan, crosses the old Telford Bridge, up the riverside path to Castle Park, along to the Emigrants' Monument, proceeds around the park, and back to Timespan. We'll be sharing the history of the old harbour built in 1818 for the herring trade and the tragic triple murder plot at the castle in 1567 that inspired Shakespeare to write Hamlet!

The walk will be followed by the screening of a short film in Timespan entitled "Coronation Celebrations in Helmsdale and Golspie, 1937"

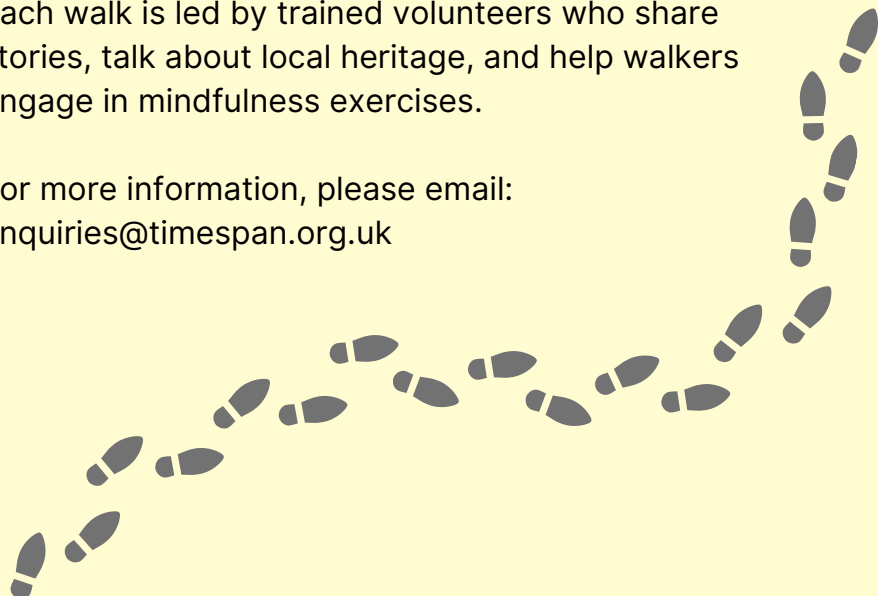
If you require help with accessibility please contact us at 01431 821327 or email [enquiries@timespan.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@timespan.org.uk)

\*Timespan, Dunrobin Street, Helmsdale, KW8 6JA

## Helmsdale: New Group Launched!

Delighted to announce that a new walking group has started in Helmsdale in partnership with Timespan. Each walk is led by trained volunteers who share stories, talk about local heritage, and help walkers engage in mindfulness exercises.

For more information, please email:  
[enquiries@timespan.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@timespan.org.uk)



## **A sunny start for walks and wanders around Helmsdale, Jacquie, Health Walk Leader:**

"The sun was shining on Helmsdale for Timespan's first in a series of accessible walks and wanders around Helmsdale, part of the People's Mobile Archive community wellbeing initiative. The walks are supported by Paths for All Health Walks, with many other groups active around the Highlands. The first walk took place last Saturday, and there was a great turnout, with people from the local area and neighbouring vicinity coming together to enjoy leisurely walks with lots of chit-chat and smiles.

The destination of the first walk was Castle Park and the Emigrants' Monument, located on the south side of the river and the site of the renowned Helmsdale Highland Games. The group led by Jacquie and Simone began the walk by crossing the old stone coaching bridge designed by the famous Scottish architect Thomas Telford and learned that Donald Sutherland, a boy from Helmsdale, was the first person to cross the bridge when it was completed in 1811. Attention was paid to the terrain underfoot with fewer leaves than expected and supportive handrails on the path ascending to the park, and regularly placed benches provide optional resting points.

The group paused at the Emigrant's Monument, reflecting on the long and arduous journeys endured by those early emigrants from Kildonan who sought a new life in Canada. After walking a little further, there was time to stop and look back at the site of the now-demolished Helmsdale Castle, where an infamous triple poisoning plot took place in 1567 and is thought to have inspired Shakespeare to write Hamlet. The final site visited was the impressive Helmsdale and Kildonan War Memorial clocktower, which has its centenary anniversary this year, before returning to Timespan to watch a short archival film of Helmsdale in 1937. The group enjoyed getting out and about, and we are already looking forward to the next walk on Saturday, 24th February, where walkers can engage in gentle stretching exercises before proceeding to Helmsdale Harbour to hear some fishing superstitions!"



## **Hear what the Helmsdale walkers had to say after their first walk:**

- "I've recently moved to Helmsdale, read a lot about the area, I'm looking forward to finding out about the local history."
- "I find it really hard to get outside in the Winter months."
- "Jacquie makes the history very interesting I enjoy walking and history, I will be coming on the next walk."
- "Thank you for the stories, local info, and company. See you all at the next one end of Feb."
- "The walk was excellent, gentle pace, and great to be in company."

## The Plock Walks Are Back!

The walks at the Plock in Kyle of Lochalsh are restarting again from Wednesday 7th February 11am - 12pm. Meet new people, discover new spaces and places, and enjoy your time in nature.

Kyle and Lochalsh Community Trust would love to welcome new volunteer walk leaders, for more information please email: [heather.beaton@lochalsh.uk](mailto:heather.beaton@lochalsh.uk)



## Baby & Toddler Buggy Walks

"This group helps me to get out of my house. I feel much better after Buggy Walk. I have other mums to talk to." - Walker, Hilton Buggy Group

"I have noticed that it is easier to open up when we are on Buggy Walk." - Walker, Hilton Buggy Group

We currently have Buggy Walks running in Dornoch and in Hilton, Inverness. If you would like support with encouraging parents / carers and young children to join your walks, or if you wish to set up a Buggy Walk in your area - please get in touch: [isabel@highlandtsi.org.uk](mailto:isabel@highlandtsi.org.uk)



## Lochalsh & South Skye Walks

Walkers enjoying a beautiful sunny walk from Balmacara heading towards Kyle on the west coast.

# Wick & Castletown Walking Groups

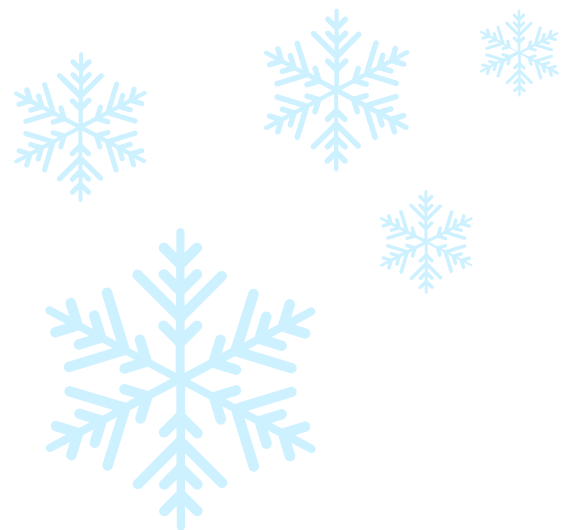
Out enjoying Christmas lunches in December!



## Tongue Walking Group

Walkers on a rainy day at Borgie Forest, and you can see how deep and fast flowing the river was. "We still try to get out whatever the weather but of course the safety of the walkers and the leaders is always a first consideration." - Ruth, Tongue Walk Leader

Towards the end of 2023, the Tongue Walking Group also enjoyed a Christmas meal at The Pier Café in Lairg.



# New Project Leaflets & Posters



[Trifold Leaflet](#)



[Walker](#)



[Volunteer](#)

Click the buttons above to download copies of the new project trifold leaflet, and the walker and volunteer posters. If you would like paper copies of these for local display boards, GP practices, community spaces, offices, etc. then please get in touch and I can arrange to get them posted to you for free. I can also help with designing bespoke posters for your local walking group so please contact me to discuss: [isabel@highlandtsi.org.uk](mailto:isabel@highlandtsi.org.uk)

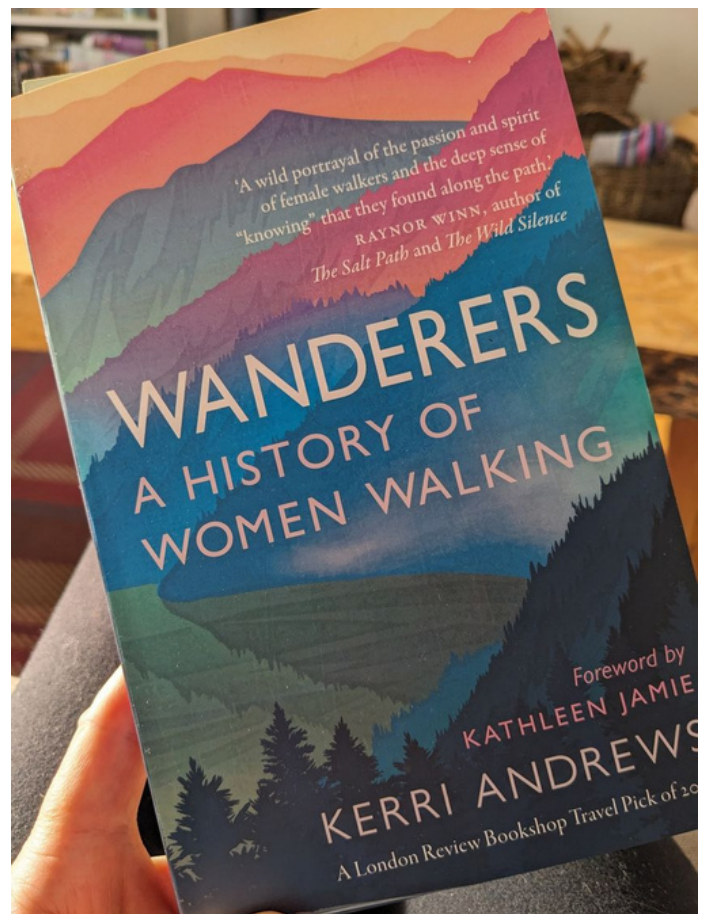
## Walkers Book Group


Inspired by [Velocity's Active Health team](#) who [recently shared on their Facebook page](#) what they have been reading - 'Wanderers: A History of Women Walking' by Kerri Andrews.

I would like to invite walkers and volunteers across the Think Nature Health Walks project to **join me for a quarterly online walk-themed book group!** Please read the chosen book ahead of time and then you can join us for an informal blether about the book.

**First meeting: 10.30 - 11.30am Monday 15th April 2024 (online)**

We will discuss 'Wanderers: A History of Women Walking'. To register your interest, please email: [isabel@highlandtsi.org.uk](mailto:isabel@highlandtsi.org.uk)





## Ranger Guided Walks 2024

**Thurso East to Castlehill Walk**  
 Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> January, 10am – 2.30pm. Booking code ACT001588

Join the ranger on this first guided walk of 2024, to help blow away those festive cobwebs. We will walk along the coastal edge from Thurso east to Castlehill, in Castletown. Enjoy the joys of winter coastal walking and let's see what we can see on this 9km guided walk. Over 18years only. Dogs are not welcome on these walks. Booking is essential. There is no charge but a kind donation on the day is very welcome to help us to continue providing such activities.

**Poulouriscaig Loop Walk**  
 Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 10am – 3.30pm. Booking code ACT001590

Take an 11km guided walk with the countryside ranger over the hill ground to visit the deserted clearance village of Poulouriscaig. Discover this hidden gem of a place and the fantastic surrounding high cliffs and hill lochs. Some rough ground to cover so a reasonable level of fitness, suitable walking gear and packed lunch are essential. Over 18years only. Dogs are not welcome on these guided walks. Booking is essential. There is no charge but a kind donation on the day will help us to continue to provide walks like these.

**Borgie Glen to Naver Bridge Walk**  
 Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> March, 10am – 3pm. Booking code ACT001589

Enjoy an 9km guided walk with the countryside ranger, passing through forest, hill ground and the coastal edge. First visit 'The Unknown' hidden sculpture, then head out, passing hill lochs and on to the coastal edge. Lots of wonderful open countryside, stunning views and also enjoy your packed lunch by a lovely, scenic hill loch. Some rough ground to cover so a reasonable level of fitness and suitable walking gear is required. Over 18years only. Dogs are not welcome on these walks. Booking is essential. There is no charge but a kind donation on the day will ensure we can continue to provide such activities.

Please use booking code at - <https://booking.highlifehighland.com/>  
 Under - general activities link

Further info: [paul.castle@highlifehighland.com](mailto:paul.castle@highlifehighland.com) 07827 281481

High Life Highland is a company limited by guarantee registered in Scotland No. SC407031 and is a registered Scottish charity No. SC202581.

# Highlife Highland Countryside Ranger Events

The HLH Countryside Rangers regularly deliver guided walks and other events (online and in person) across the Highlands. You can follow their local Facebook pages to be kept in the loop as well as looking at the wide range of events listed on their Eventbrite booking page. Please click the button below for the link.

[HLH Countryside Ranger Events](#)

## Composting Workshop (online)

Do you enjoy getting out and about walking? Perhaps you are looking for other ways to enjoy being active outdoors? You might want to spend some time in your garden this Spring. Now is a perfect time to join an online workshop to learn about all things composting! Run by Lochaber Environmental Group and tickets by donation.

[More information here](#)



**HIGHLAND COMMUNITY WASTE PARTNERSHIP**

**ONLINE COMPOST CLASS**  
**TUESDAY 27TH FEBRUARY**  
**7 - 8.30PM.**

Do you want to learn how to compost?  
 Our online composting class is available to book now.

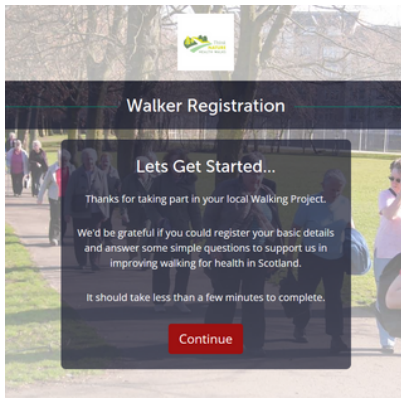
**Keep Scotland Beautiful** | **LOCHABER ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP** | **COMMUNITY FUND**



## Free Training for Walk Leaders

- Walk Leader Training
- Dementia Friendly Walk Leader Training
- Strength and Balance Workshop for Walk Leaders
- All Ability Health Walk Leader Training

For further information on any of the training courses above please get in touch: [isabel@highlandtsi.org.uk](mailto:isabel@highlandtsi.org.uk)

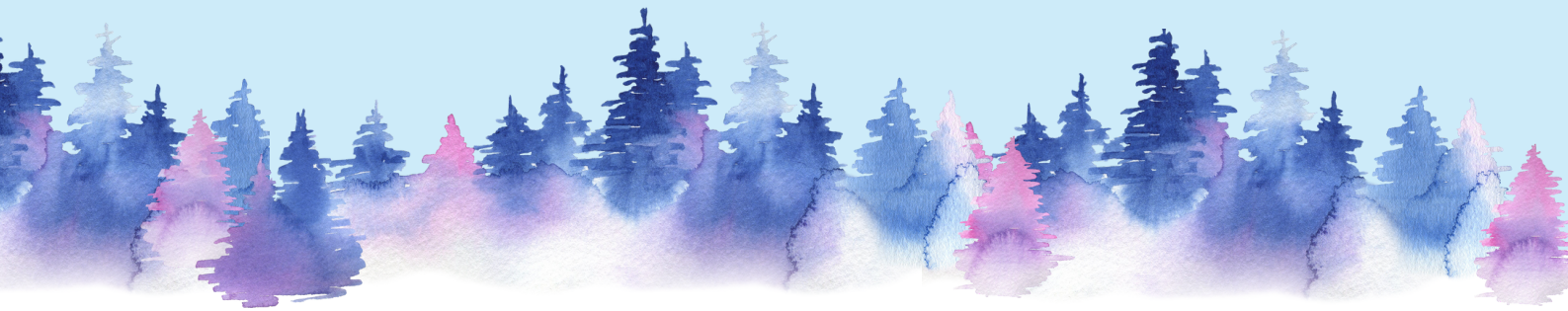


## Volunteer Reminder

Please ask new walkers joining your group to register, either by using the online link or by completing a paper form. Any questions, please get in touch.

## NEW - Project Social Media Pages

You can now follow the **Think Nature Health Walks** project on social media - find out about local opportunities, news and other walking groups!



## Isabel McLeish Health Walk Coordinator

Please get in touch if you would like any further information or support, or if you would like to feature an article or photo in the next edition of the newsletter (please email me by the end of April).

Email: [isabel@highlandtsi.org.uk](mailto:isabel@highlandtsi.org.uk)  
Phone: 07385 380642



*Photo credits: Charlotte Mackenzie, Jacquie Aitken, Heather Beaton, Beverly Madley, Ruth McDonogh, Pat Groves, Jodi & Lisa (Velocity Active Health), Isabel McLeish*

