

WALKING ON WHEELS

50 Wheel-friendly Trails in Scotland

Eva McCracken

Introduction by Cameron McNeish, President,
Ramblers Scotland and Editor of TGO

Note for the Reader by Anne Begg, MP

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144 pages

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50 maps and 50 photographs in colour

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Walking on Wheels is a map book with a difference. It is the first book of its kind - a guide for wheelchair and electric scooter users who wish to enjoy the Scottish countryside. The need for information on trails that can be accessed by the less able-bodied in wheelchairs or electric scooters has not been addressed here before and this book attempts to give the reader accurate and relevant information. This is not a scientific treatise on the 50 paths and trails. Rather, the author has drawn on her own personal knowledge of the paths and trails and her own professional experience to

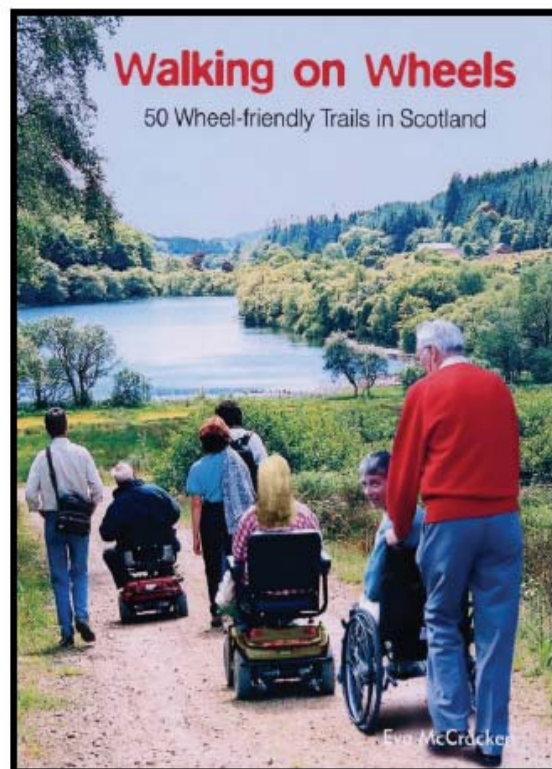


'A truly liberating book!'
Anne Begg, MP

provide the reader with a practical guide to the degree of difficulty and the sights and attractions which the wheelchair or electric scooter user might encounter on each route.

Eva McCracken had been a keen walker before Multiple Sclerosis resulted in occasional and then more frequent use of a wheelchair. In 2000 she discovered the joys of exploring the outdoors using her electric wheelchair and her electric scooter. For the past five years she has collected information on trails accessible to wheelchair users here in Scotland and has selected the top 50 routes, all with varying degrees of difficulty.

Eva practised as an Occupational Therapist north and south of the border in health and social care settings. Having lived with benign MS for twenty years she retired from clinical work in 1996. In 2000 she founded the Scottish Disabled Ramblers which, since that time set up four regional groups in Scotland.



'Everyone should be able to enjoy our glorious countryside and Eva has done a wonderful job in suggesting areas that can be visited by those unable to explore on foot.'

Roger Smith, guidebook writer and former editor of the walkers' magazine, TGO.

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Review of Walking on Wheels, by Eva McCracken

It is apparent right from the start that this little book about walks for disabled people is written by someone who knows what they are doing. Inside the front cover is a very useful key to the suitability of routes – easy, shown on the maps by blue dots, difficult, in yellow and challenging, in red. Not just the surface, but the things able-bodied walkers may not think about much – or at all, like gradients, cambers and width; not much use being a flat tarmac surface if you can't turn your wheelchair or scooter around. As a new wheelchair user I am learning how much these things matter; a recent visit to a Perthshire beauty spot I remembered well from my hillwalking days as a nice flat track had to be abandoned because what were quite small stones in my walking days now became mini-boulders, and in Portugal last year the charming cobbled streets took on quite another aspect as I bumped and jolted over them. Having been frustrated in Perthshire, this book has come like a shot in the arm, and I look forward to trying out some of the walks.



The book is born out of the determination of the author, Eva McCracken, not to abandon the delights of her beloved hillwalking once she was confined to a wheelchair. She has listed fifty walks in Scotland in seven different areas, and has carefully audited all of the routes in the book to a very high standard, not only for the suitability of the trail but for many other factors that disabled people will need to know. Each page has a description of the walk and map references, distances, availability of toilets (even whether there is room for a wheelchair to the right or left of the toilet) with website details and/or telephone numbers of relevant organisations and people – Forestry Commission, Visitor Centres, Rangers and Access Officers, for instance. On the facing page there is a map of the area, showing the walk marked as easy, difficult or challenging (no such thing as very difficult, I noticed!) and a photograph. Some walks are through forested areas, some through more open country, some along canal towpaths, all with detailed notes where necessary about access, gates, and roads which may need to be crossed. I was very impressed by the walks around the Loch Morlich area in the Cairngorms, where I often walked in pre MS days; not only were they well covered, but I found a track I did not know about, and more to the point found I could borrow a scooter from the Visitor Centre! I thought my days on the

Glenmore Forest tracks were just a wistful memory, but thanks to this book I shall be back there again as soon as possible. Thank you, Eve McCracken. Many disabled lovers of the outdoors will bless your name.

I have looked to see what could be in the book that has been omitted, but cannot find anything, other than the understandably limited coverage. It would be good now if other wheelchair walkers were to audit paths in their area and pool the information for a second edition, but it would be very important to maintain the same high standard. I am sure that not only will there be a demand for a second and enlarged edition, but a clamour from south of the border for someone to do the same for England.

The book is published by the Cualaan Press, ISBN 0-9544416-8-0, and costs £10.99. Proceeds are going to the Walking on Wheels Trust.

John Berridge