

# Rambling for wheelchair users



Pinecone Point

Eva McCracken

We moved back to Scotland in 1978, four years after I was diagnosed with MS. My husband looked forward to golf, sailing and hill walking. I set my sights a little lower and a little less adventurous. The advice at that time was not to over-exercise and most of my energy was taken up at home - we had four children who kept me busy enough. My love of the outdoors was fulfilled by a large garden and many local, short walks suitable for prams (often doubling as a support).

By the time I was 50 my mobility was much reduced and I had now retired. I was still driving and walked with a foldable frame that was light enough to throw in my car. I had never lost my love of walking but I was realistic enough to accept my limitations.

Then I met a man at my MS exercise class who went out every day in his motorised scooter. He would visit his local park or harbour, only a few streets away from his house. In an ancient, second-hand, motorised wheelchair I accompanied him. Soon we were joined by some other friends and by 2001 we constituted a group and registered as the charity Scottish Disabled Ramblers (SDR). Although by June 2004 SDR had ceased to exist, it spawned four independent groups around Scotland that still function and each run an annual programme of rambles. I could be out every week with one or other of the groups but unfortunately no matter how the host behaves, MS carries on and does whatever it chooses. With my reduced energy I now manage about once a month.

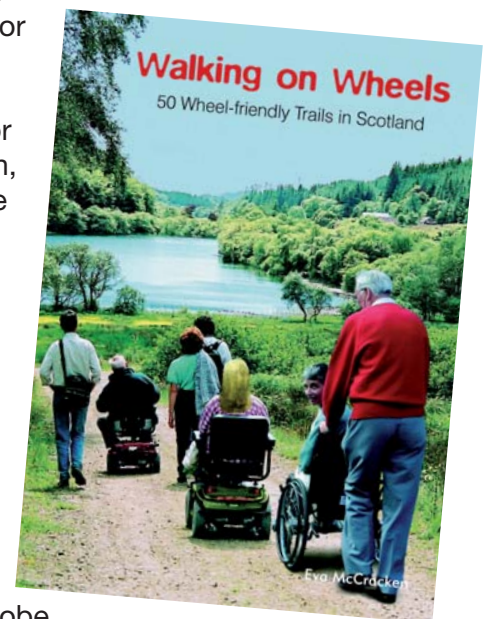
In 2004 my husband came across an AA book on short walks but it gave no indication about barriers to wheels. He suggested I write a book and in April 2006 *Walking On Wheels* was published.

The following years have been filled by trying to promote the great outdoors to those of us reliant on a wheelchair or scooter for mobility. Shopmobility

up and down the country has made our shops accessible. I want to make the possibility of rambling in our beautiful Scottish countryside equally available. I'm very pleased that more and more countryside service providers, such as visitor centres, are providing scooter loan schemes. I'm also aware that new technology means that there is an increasing choice of mobility scooters and cars (with ramps or hoists) with which to transport them, which enables the individual to access the great outdoors.

However, information on wheel-friendly trails is hard to find. This is why I wrote the book and set up the Walking On Wheels Trust. This runs a website that adds new walks that have been audited by someone in a wheelchair or scooter. The most recent addition is the Pinecone Point All Ability path in Tay Forest Park near Dunkeld.

For those of you who, like me, enjoy the wind in your hair, the smells of grass, heather, pine woods, or sea and who like watching the birds or seeking out new wildflowers, then rambling may be for you. To tell the truth, I don't often get the wind in my hair because, living in Scotland, I usually have to wear my woolly hat. And should the sun come out to play, out comes my sun hat. Rambling gives a wonderful excuse to build up your outdoor wardrobe.



*Walking On Wheels* is available from Cualann Press  
01383 733724 / [info@cualann.com](mailto:info@cualann.com) / [www.cualann.com](http://www.cualann.com)  
Walking On Wheels website - [www.walkingonwheels.org](http://www.walkingonwheels.org)