

## NORDIC WALKING, by NICOLA MERRETT

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A rather different presentation was given to members of Penrith and North Lakes U3A recently. Nicola Merrett, who runs a local business in Glenridding called Hiking Highs, provided an illustrated talk with a demonstration of the advantages of using Nordic poles for walking. She explained how she became converted to this style of walking, identifying the various advantages of using the special poles to maximise the benefit of each stride.

Nicola has introduced many well-known people to the uses of Nordic poles, with the well-known shepherd, Joss Naylor of Wasdale, Paul Tierney the ultra runner and another local personality, Sabrina Verjee who held the record for the fastest runner to visit each of the 214 Wainwright tops, each benefiting from Nicola's training. Recently she has been helping a seventeen year old, Archie, who suffers with cerebral palsy but is hoping to climb up Helvellyn in his triathlon challenge for our local Hospice at Home. His use of the poles has been a great help in his training for this challenge event.



Nicola gave us her own experience of enjoying jogging and running but finding she was getting injured and had a bad back until she discovered the beneficial consequences of using Nordic poles. They improved her general fitness, her balance, her breathing and reduced pressure on the hips and knees. Other advantages are encouraging better posture, increasing one's aerobic and cardiovascular fitness, strengthen the pelvic floor and altogether increase a user's speed and general fitness. Additionally, joining a group of Nordic walkers is a good way of sharing a hobby and is socially beneficial. Nicola illustrated this with photos of a recent event when she took a group up Scafell Pike.

Nordic walking is very popular in the mountainous areas of Europe where it has become a sport in its own right with summer races and competitions. Cross country and downhill skiers often take up Nordic Walking in the summer months.

The last part of Nicola's presentation was her demonstrating how to use the Nordic poles and she offered an opportunity for members of the audience to have a go which several people were eager to try. A queue of people then formed to speak to Nicola and to sign up to receive further information about her courses. Nicola answered various questions and was warmly applauded.