

WALKING AND KICKING MY WAY BACK TO HEALTH

By Paul Westley

Some months ago I found myself back in the UK having lived in retirement in France for the previous ten years. By chance I was living near Chipping Norton, an area totally new to me, facing new challenges and at a time in my life when I needed that 'something' that would benefit me both physically and mentally.

Surfing the internet, I noticed that a Thursday morning 'Walking Football' session was offered at Windrush Leisure Centre in Witney and subsequently, rather nervously, attended. Warmly met by the staff and participants, that initial session has led to a weekly 'pick me up' that is better than any medicine or therapy!



Having been actively involved in sport for most of my life, a life threatening accident has left me, amongst other things, with a reconstructed leg and accompanying intermittent severe pain and nerve damage. Coupled with a titanium plate keeping the other ankle secure, enforced inactivity had led to a great loss of general fitness and muscle strength.

Spending considerable time lying on your back, in a wheelchair and then on crutches also has a detrimental effect on mental well being in terms of confidence and self worth.

The Walking Football sessions at the Windrush Leisure Centre (Thursdays 10am – 10.50am), Chipping Norton Leisure Centre (Mondays 5.40pm – 6.30pm) and now at Charlbury Community Centre (Wednesdays 10am -11am) have given me the opportunity to become physically active again, at my own pace, in safe surroundings and with a group of people from all backgrounds who share much the same motivations.

If you would like to know more about Walking Football in West Oxfordshire, please contact Roderick.Noble@gll.org . Alternatively, you can visit oxfordshirefa.com/play/walkingfootball