



# Pole to pole on the Heath

Nordic walking is the new sporting craze sweeping the nation and where better to try it out than on Hampstead Heath, says the Ham&High's new fitness columnist **Matt Roberts**

**I**F YOU'RE a regular user of the Heath, you may have seen the small groups of people in their 30s, 40s and 50s (and older!) walking with what appears to be a pair of ski poles.

Or perhaps you've seen the woman on her way to work in the morning, pushing herself along at speed with poles down Hampstead High Street.

A bit novel perhaps, but these trendsetters are Nordic walking, a simple yet innovative exercise concept that offers the calorie burn of jogging with none of the jarring on the joints.

Nordic walking was conceived in Scandinavia where super-fit elite cross-country skiers have been keeping their upper body in shape by walking and running with poles for the past 80 years.

The total body work of the arms, back, chest and stomach combined with the effort of the legs and buttocks means that Nordic walking burns an amazing 20-40 per cent more calories than ordinary walking.

More than that, the poles take some of the load off the knees and hips and as the poles push you along, most Nordic walkers say that Nordic walking feels noticeably easier than walking even though you're using more muscles and burning more calories.

Martin Christie introduced Nordic walking to the UK in 2003.

Having worked in the fitness industry for many years, he maintains that more than any other exercise, this is beneficial and accessible for everyone.

Members of his class include those who have regained their strength and fitness after breast cancer surgery, while there are also opportunities for individual training for an ultra-distance challenge event.

Nordic walking is an exercise that is great to share and it is not unusual for sessions to attract husbands and wives, or groups of friends.

As well as training new instructors for Nordic Walking UK, Christie runs classes



Pole position ... Nordic walking on Hampstead Heath.

on Hampstead Heath, from our Hampstead branch.

There's no-one who can't benefit from Nordic walking. You just have to enjoy being outdoors and not mind a bit rain.

While day-time classes are most popular, participants in the evening classes are provided with head-torches so there really is no excuse.

**□ For details of classes and free taster sessions or to arrange for a private group session, contact Matt Roberts Personal Training Hampstead on 020-7433 3301 or [hampstead@mattroberts.co.uk](mailto:hampstead@mattroberts.co.uk). For more information on Nordic walking, visit [www.nordicwalking.co.uk](http://www.nordicwalking.co.uk).**