

‘Don't have to be young’: retirees tackle hundreds of kms of English coastline

By [Jessica Howard](#)

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Warrnambool's Andy Finlay, 76, and Glenn Brotchie, 77, together with their wives Mary and Marion, have returned home from a 345km walk across the English coastline, which they tackled just a week apart. Picture by Eddie Guerrero.

They've spent hours walking the fairways at Warrnambool Golf Club, but recently two retired friends took their stride to new terrain – each tackling 345 kilometres of the English coastline just a week apart.

Warrnambool's Andy Finlay, 76, and Glenn Brotchie, 77, together with their wives Mary and Marion, have returned home from completing Wainwright's Coast to Coast walk, which starts at the Irish Sea at St Bee's and finishes at Robin Hood's Bay on the North Sea.

The long-distance route across northern England traverses through three national parks – the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales, and the North York Moors.

The Coast to Coast was another notch in the belt for the Brotchies – retired teachers who moved to Warrnambool in 2017 and have previously ticked off Machu Picchu in Peru, New Zealand's Queen Charlotte Trail and the Overland Track in Tasmania.

Still, nothing quite prepared them for the toll of England's undulating cliffs and slippery stone paths.

The couples averaged 20 kilometres per day over the 18-day self-guided walk, climbing a total ascent of about 7000 metres, and always ending the day with a cold pint at a historic English pub – one of which was heated by a roaring coal-fuelled fire.

On one of the more gruelling days, which saw six tough climbs across the rugged terrain, they were met by David Chadwick, who completed the trail back in 1974 and had in his possession a first edition guidebook hand-drawn by Alfred Wainwright – a British fell walker, writer and the namesake of the Coast to Coast walk.

Upon sighting the walkers, Mr Chadwick opened the boot of his car and then an esky, and said "would you like a beer?".

"And we said 'absolutely', " Mr Brotchie said.

"And the reason he did that was [because] that was the first thing he always did with his late wife after they finished a day's walk."



Glenn Brotchie (left) with a well-earned pint of Guinness, and Andy Finlay on Wainwright's Coast to Coast Walk.

Mr Chadwick put the Brothies and the Finlays up in his home as part of their trips, which coincidentally took place just a week apart. It was a bonding moment for Mr Finlay, a retired litigation lawyer and lecturer, and Mr Chadwick, a former police prosecutor.

"He was great. He was so accommodating," Mr Finlay said. "Everyone was just lovely, really. A number of times we would be in Manchester or somewhere else in England and you'd be looking at a map and English people would come forward and say 'oh, hey are you lost? Let me take you to where you're going'.

"We came away from it thinking – if we can be as half as accommodating to visitors here in Warrnambool as they were to us. That was our resolve."

The adventure took them past the remains of old priories, castles and cathedrals, as well as miles-long dry stone walls and disused slate workings.

On the more challenging stretches, both men agreed it came down to simply putting one foot in front of the other.

"There's an old saying 'failure cannot cope with perseverance', and I think that's what it was all about," Mr Finlay, a [former football coach who was part of Deakin University's inaugural Sharks' team](#), said.

The men also paid homage to their wives, who showed "terrific fortitude and resilience" and often led the way, particularly on the last day when they clocked close to 30 kilometres.



Andy Finlay (left) and Glenn Brothie often paused to take in the sights of the northern England coastline.

They urged anyone thinking about tackling a long-distance route to just do it.

"You don't have to be young to walk 350 kilometres," Mr Brotchie said, just 12 months after he underwent open heart surgery due to a blood infection.

"You can be any age as long as you've got a reasonable amount of fitness." Mr Finlay said there was no better feeling than the exhilaration he felt at the end of the walk.

"I would encourage others to do the same, without a doubt," he said.

Now back in Warrnambool, the pair are already eyeing their next adventure, which for the Brotchies, is the Italian Camino.