



My name is Joanne Blazey and I volunteer for the Day centre on a Tuesday morning serving refreshments and the lunches. My husband Andrew and I have visited the Isle of Wight many times and have walked much of the coastal path. We both love the island so when I saw an advert on Facebook to walk the island in one go I thought this sounds good, it would be a good way to see the areas we have not visited before and it would be a chance to challenge myself as well as being the perfect way to raise some money for the Day Centre. I just had to convince Andrew. A month of persuading later we were sign up and the training began. Our first walk was along the river Lark from our home in West Row to Barton Mills and back via Mildenhall. Over the weeks the distances increased including walks around both Grafham and Rutland Water. We were ready for the walk on the 29th April having travelled over on the ferry the night before and staying in a Travel Lodge. The start was at Chale on the south side of the island. Our allocated start time was 8.20am along with 200 others. After a safety briefing and a quick warm up we were off heading west towards The Needles. In all 1700 people took on the challenge either walking or running. You could choose to walk half the island or camp at the half way point and finish the next morning, or the full island. Being a bit mad we of course opted to do it all in one go walking through the night. The company that run the challenge had divided the island into eight stops, four being refreshment stops and four with a hot meal. Everything was very well organised with St Johns Ambulance and sports massages also available.



The day started cold but the sun soon came out and we had a lovely walk from The Needles up the west side of the island, discovering some lovely beaches. We reached the half way stage at about 8pm. I was having trouble with my ankle, unable to bend it properly so we waited to have it checked and massaged to try and loosen the calf muscle. Determined to carry on we left in the dark walking through Cowes on towards Ryde. At this rest stop we stayed a while to repair Andrews's feet, they were covered in blisters, and many people were dropping out by now with foot and muscle problems. Tired and achy we continued. It was an adventure walking through the night following glow sticks that they had put out to mark the way. Dawn broke at about 4am as we turned toward the east side of the island. Breakfast was on top of Culver Down. The sun rise was stunning and the view beautiful, though by now we were very tired and every step something hurt. Morning took us from Sandown, through Shanklin and on to Ventnor and the last stop before the final 12km. This proved to be very hard, most of it was along a tarmac road that steadily went up hill and seemed to last forever. We just put our heads down and counted every step as we walking, this gave us the motivation to finish. The joy and the relief at finally arriving back at Chale at 11.42am was incredible, we had made it! I could hardly walk on my left leg and Andrew had blistered so badly on his little toe that the top had come away along with the nail. A trip to A&E was required for that later in the day. Out of 800 people who started the full island challenge 200 dropped out and we finished in 365 place. Andrew raised £1850.00 for the East Anglia Air Ambulance and **I raised £1411.67 for the Day Centre. Thank you every one who sponsored me. We had a great adventure and would we do it again – YES!**