

Location: Stiperstones, Shropshire - Friday 29th September 2017
Weather: Breezy and cool but dry with sunny spells
Party: Jeff (Leader), Lynn, Amanda, Lesley, Janet, Mike W, Selina, Sue, Debbie (plus Ellie and Spot)
Distance: Distance: 9 miles
Ascent: 1600 feet

The group set off from the Village Hall Car Park at Snailbeach in Shropshire at around 9.30 after a very wet drive from Bunbury. However, the weather cleared on arrival and set fair for almost the whole walk until we were within a kilometre of the car park on the return.

The walk started off through a sleepy Snailbeach before turning fairly steeply up through woodland to reach a reasonably level area at the top of Resting Hill. We passed the remains of the former lead mining industry along the way, notably a large chimney in the woodland on the way up. According to their website, Snailbeach is a very important part of Shropshire's industrial heritage and is protected as a scheduled ancient monument and is the most complete collection of mine building remains in England. Apparently it was once one of the most productive lead mines in the world and many restored buildings spread out on many levels are linked by a circular walk. However BUMS were not there for industrial heritage or culture in any shape or form and we walked straight through heading for the hills.

Once out of the woods the beauty of the surrounding landscape became clear, Long Mynd off to the left and Corndon Hill to the right, the day providing great visibility and clear sunshine with scudding clouds etc, I am sure there must be something about this in A. E. Housman but I'm blown if I can find it.

Onwards across Blakemoor on the Shropshire Way, we entered the Stiperstones National Nature Reserve and passed by the Devil's Chair before finding shelter behind one of the outcrops, for the morning coffee stop, a welcome break from the rather knobbly track over the quartzite ridge. The shelter was welcome as it coincided with a less pleasant spell in the weather. Refreshed, and more rough walking later, we descended past Cranberry Rock and over a lane to walk through Nipstone Rock Nature Reserve, ending up below "The Rock" before turning northwards and along the flank of Stiperstones, through fields and pine forest. This turned out to be a very wet route into the aptly named "The Bog". Lunch was taken here, again in old mine working remains, in particular the remains of the Miner's Institute.

Further googling reveals that commercial mining started at the Bog in the 1730s making it one of the oldest mines in the area. Miners laboriously dug out tunnels by hand along the veins of ore. Lead mining at The Bog continued for almost 200 years with several small mines operating between it and Snailbeach, before stopping at The Bog in the 1880s, but the mines were re-opened in the early 1900s to extract barytes, a mineral found with the lead ore.

The path now followed some easy tracks and bridleways towards Stiperstones village, with a steep descent in the final stages resulting in a bum plant from the Leader. Some tricky navigating after the village and a missed turn later, we traversed the side of Oak Hill towards Crowsnest before regaining tarmac for the final km into Snailbeach and the cars, from where we returned to the Dysart for the necessary refreshment.

Jeff