

### BUMs Report on Midweek walk on Wenlock Edge, Shropshire 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018

Attendees: Lesley and Mike A (Leaders), Sarah, Steve, Ann, Selina, Mike W, Mike H, Colin, Heather and John Foster with friend Philip Ellis, Tony and Lynn, Lynda, Dave Cadman, Cate, Gerry and Hugh.  
19 people and 2 dogs

Weather: beautiful and sunny but chilly

Miles 9.5

Ascent: 1515 ft.

This walk started from the beautiful Wilderhope Manor which is now a Youth Hostel but still owned by The National Trust. It is set in a glorious valley and this un-recced walk promised much. What could possibly go wrong? There was free parking, which we sorely needed for all 5 cars; yes, this was a very large turnout for January. Fortunately the weather was set fair and all agreed this was one of the highlights.....

Meeting up with Hugh is always a bonus and that was another highlight.

There were toilets at the start as well—yes, another highlight.

The planned walk was to be along the Shropshire Way and then about turn on ourselves at Presthope to return on the Jack Mytton Way to Wilderhope Manor. Both long distance footpaths which would be well signed and easy walking or so we thought.

Within a few hundred yards we started to encounter mud, rutted from agricultural vehicles and soon turning into slurry. Not quite over the ankle but it was far ranging with no respite. I was hoping nobody fell over in it, especially if they were travelling in our car. Phew..... we made it through about 2 km of the horrid stuff then coming up to the farm responsible for the slurry. Here the trail petered out. Much milling about and searching maps was suggesting to Mike that we needed to head straight ahead into what looked like a real slurry bath.....I sent Steve off to chat up the farmer (I know from experience that he does this so well) and we were finally told that we had missed the path sign.....readers, you will see from my photos that this 'sign' was not up to the usual Shropshire Way standard. Anyway we only had to retrace our steps 50 metres or so and we picked up speed through more mud, this time a tad firmer.

Finally, respite as we emerged briefly onto tarmac through the lovely village of Easthope. Our fortunes had turned, or so we thought, but as we left the village, back we are in mud, walking across a rather disgusting cropped field which rendered our boots twice as big as they should be and we finally realised the mud was here to stay.

We stopped briefly for coffee and then started on our way through a small wood and onwards to Presthope where we u-turned onto the **Jack Mytton Way**.

For those interested in who was **JM**, it turns out he was a bit of a bad lad or a "Regency Rake" as was. Born 1796 he only lived 38 years, drinking himself to death after having several wives who usually ran away, and fathering a host of children, whilst squandering a not inconsiderable fortune on gambling and wild living. He was a hunter too and I can only assume that is why the path is named after him, that is, coming from Shropshire and riding on the bridle way.

So for a short time we said goodbye to squelching mud as we found a rocky outcrop known as Ippikin's Rock. This area seems to have its fair share of bad 'uns. This rock was the hiding place for swag stolen by a Major Smallwood. For us it was yet another highlight of the day. The group climbed up through the wood to find a view, at last. Lunch was taken overlooking the Long Mynd and Caer Caradoc, in the sunshine, and we even shared pork pies (thanks Lynda) and jellybabies (thanks Aldi).

Regaining the JM path which had now taken the route of an old railway we fell into step once again, on a very long and boringly straight path. The end was nearly in sight and after a short climb back to the road and then along a very nice path, giving views over the Edge, we sighted the Manor again and back to the cars for our return to Bunbury and the Dysart by 4:10. Fortunately we were the only ones at the bar but unfortunately we missed happy hour yet again.

So, a walk of mud and some highlights, including this report which I think you will agree, has more interest within it than the walk.

Although there was a huge turnout and beautiful sunny weather, Mike H has now decreed this to be the muddiest walk ever, bettering Clun though interestingly in the same County.

Well that's one superlative I willingly take.

Off to clean the boots now.

Lesley