

BUMS Family Walk – Thursday 28th December 2017

Location: Bunbury to Raw Head and back

Weather: Cold and sunny

Party: Mike A (leader), Tony, Lynn, Jeff, Jim G, Mike W, Ali, Dave, Heather, John, Caryle, Ian, Tom, Riley (DNF)

Distance: 12.5 miles **Total Ascent:** 1663ft **Time:** 5 hrs

This year's family walk managed to attract only one additional family member and one dog. There were many notable absentees due to a variety of excuses, especially a virus that has been doing the rounds. It has to be said that the most notable absentee was the designated leader herself, the Social secretary, so it was left to me, virtually a cripple the day before, to lead the walk, fuelled by anti-inflammatory drugs.

My plan was to keep it simple and walk from Bunbury. Having a pretty good knowledge of the local paths I decided to aim for Raw Head and return via a circular route. There had been no planning involved and I guessed it would be 9 or 10 miles. OK, I was 40% out but it was a beautiful day and at least I now know how far it is!

We set off over the fields behind Oak Gardens (with one very minor navigational error) towards Spurstow, over the A49 and then cutting through to a very soggy Beeston Moss and picking up the path to Stonehouse Lane. It was becoming obvious that we were in for a treat, if wading through mud was your favourite pastime. We took the diagonal path, joining the cobbled road below the haunted bridge and then cut through towards the Sandstone Trail where we met Debbie (a valid absentee due to work commitments) walking her dogs. From the top of Peckforton Gap we took the direct route to Raw Head where we stopped on a rocky outcrop, short of the summit for a coffee break and lunch rolled into one. There was an icy wind blowing straight over from Wales so our break was short and dramatic as it was discovered that Riley had become crooked, presumably having chased one too many imaginary pheasants.

We continued walking south on the Sandstone Trail while Tony and Riley limped back towards Coppermine Lane. Before reaching Gallantry Bank we took the track heading past the copper mine chimney and onto Coppermine Lane where we enjoyed the feel of tarmac under our feet, a respite from the mud. We rejoined the Sandstone Trail and also rejoined Tony who has managed to get a family member (Rosie) to take part in the occasion by driving out to collect Riley. We walked over Bulkeley Hill returning to the top of Peckforton Gap. Then we followed the trail back to Beeston, during which time I called The Dysart to confirm the Chip Butty numbers. Lesley had provisionally booked 30, so I could tell they were disappointed with 15 and even that turned out to be an over estimate..

By the time we reached Beeston, it was obvious that my 9 or 10 mile estimate was woefully short of reality. There was also a fair bit of limping and muttering amongst the troops. I had given the Dysart a 3.30 arrival time so it was another tarmac route march from Beeston to Bunbury to make the time. But it was still daylight when we arrived and there was a roaring fire, chip butties and unlimited rehydration available. A number of non walkers also miraculously appeared at this time, obviously feeling very sorry that they missed a great day out??

Mike A.