

BUMS Walk – Wednesday 26th May 2021

Location: The Whitegate Way

Route: Whitegate station –Delamere Forest – Whitegate Station

Weather: Dry but with little sun

Party: Mike A (leader), Lesley (co-leader), Mike & Selina, Ann, Heather, Steve & Sarah, Chrissie, Dave C, Jon & Tina, Jeff & Debbie, Jane Turner (new member) + Spot & Ellie and Leo (guest mutt)

Distance: 13 miles **Total Ascent:** 400ft **Time:** 5 hrs

The second post lockdown BUMS walk and as part of the grand experiment, this was the first midweek walk to take place in the middle of the week. The last Wednesday of the month is the new Friday, and time will tell if it was such a good idea!

As Covid rules dictate (though no one seems really certain if they exist) we assembled at the Whitegate Way car park in our one car per household ready for a lengthy but undemanding ramble through the Cheshire countryside. For Ellie, however, the prospect was a tad too demanding and she had her mistress make special arrangement to have a car placed at the half way point to ferry her and Spot homewards.

We set off heading north west on the Whitegate Way, the relic of a railway line from a bygone age which unsurprisingly is fairly flat and also, considering the recent weather, was unsurprisingly wet. Almost at the end of the route, a path turns off left, indicating the Oakmere Way. This is a multi-user bridleway linking Delamere Forest with the Whitegate Way and was completed as recently as 2014.

There is the odd bench along the route and we took full advantage of one to take a coffee break. The bench couldn't accommodate 15 but we all found somewhere to sit or stand and enjoy the views of the nearby sand and gravel quarry.

On reaching Delamere Forest, an unscheduled, additional mile detour was added by the co-leader so as to take in the new visitors centre, which provided toilets plus picnic tables . The detour to the visitors centre was also much appreciated by Chrissie, who had left her sandwiches on the kitchen table at home. At this point we said farewell to Debbie and dogs. I'm sure the £8 parking fee was money well spent as far as Ellie was concerned.

After lunch we briefly retraced our route to cross Station Road and take the forest path heading in the direction of Norley. This is a section of the Delamere Way, one of a myriad of long distance footpaths which criss cross the forest. We then headed east along Gallowsclough Lane to Stonyford and then onto Cuddington Lane where we picked up a bridleway taking us back to the Whitegate Way. We very soon reached the Oakmere Way junction and then retraced our route back to the car park.

The only drama was provided by Leo, who became very excited by a small grey squirrel and at one point managed to get it in his jaws before letting it escape up a tree. Pleased to report no animals were harmed in the making of this walk!

A good number of the party were soon back at the Dysart for rehydration even though it was only 3.30 pm however after a 13 mile walk, rehydration is well justified.

Mike A.