

Trip Report: Shropshire Hills**Date:** 24th April 2015**Group:** Jeff (Leader), Lynn, Lesley, Mike A, Mike H, Ann, Lynda, Amanda, Hugh**Route:** The Wrekin and Ercall**Total Distance:** 8.5 miles**Total Ascent:** 2200 ft**Weather:** Started fine but hazy with cloud later**Time:** 4.5 hours

The Wrekin had been mentioned on a number of occasions, notably after the recent trip to Caer Caradoc so now it seemed a good opportunity to add this to the tally of Shropshire Hills. This seemed suitable for a Friday walk being pretty local although its surroundings, including its proximity to Telford meant that a limited 8.5 mile circuit was the most practicable.

The 8.30 start at the Pavilion was very promptly attended by all after some late drop-outs following sports injuries and a surprisingly traffic free journey to the starting carpark at Lawrence Hill. Even better, it was free which perhaps explained why it was also heaving with cars. Hugh had already arrived and kitted up and so we were away before 10. As the weather was supposed to become overcast later, after so many days of unbroken sunshine, we did the walk anticlockwise tackling the Wrekin straight away.

The top of the Wrekin was gained pretty quickly up a fairly direct route, where there was an orientation table and trig point. This, unusually, was dedicated to an OS surveyor Andrew H Rochelle who passed away in 2006. Also at the top was a large comms tower with every conceivable dish attached, although strangely, Mike H was unable to get a decent signal on his state of the art devices.

As this was a Friday walk and a relatively short one at that, and the Secretary was far away in South America, the Leader took the opportunity to declare a possibly illegal and unconstitutional supplementary coffee stop. It was possibly also the earliest coffee stop yet. This seemed to go down well in certain quarters. The view was unfortunately very hazy but improved by a few deer grazing on the slopes below the rocks of Needle's Eye.

After refreshment, we set off down the southwestern end of the ridge, across Little Hill and on through pine woods until reaching a lane. Here there was a short tarmac section along the lane to Little Wenlock before turning northeast to head back to the other end of the Wrekin ridge. The

walk now went through a variety of woodlands, from neglected hazel coppice carpeted with thick drifts of bluebells in Wenlock Wood, to the pits and workings of Limekiln Wood. Lesley startled everyone along here with a loud cry from the rear of the group to alert us to a couple of hares bouncing through the bluebells, although they were long gone before everyone recovered their composure.

The terrain didn't lend itself to a lunch break but we eventually found some rotting logs to perch on with some dangerous looking black funghi, in a wood rich in birdsong and ivy covered trees. After lunch, we continued northeast as far as the M54 and then northwest before coming round onto the second hill of the day, the Ercall. A short climb up through old oak forest brought us to the top and a view of the Wrekin ridge, where a final coffee stop was taken. The relatively steep descent from here past the large quarry used to build the A5 brought us quickly back to the car park, where we said our goodbyes to Hugh and set off to the Yew Tree with plenty of time for the customary rehydration therapy.

Jeff