

Trip Report: The Christmas Family Walk

Date: 28th December 2006

Group: Lesley Arrowsmith (Walk Leader), Mike Arrowsmith (Real Leader), Jim Grant, Jim & Jean Walker, Bob Capes, Jenny Roberts, Louise, Caryle and Rob Sinnott, Rosie and Lynn Quinn, Alexa, Matthew, John and Tina Clauson, Eilidh, Caitlin and Anne Bodfish, George Robey, Lucy, Gerry, Shirley and Rachel O'Neill, Zoe, Jack, Sandra and Chris Green, Mike Willis and Selina Green, Frank McHale, Dave French, Colin Christie, **Dogs:** Tilly, Roxie, Fudge, Jakey and Tess, **Chippers:** Amanda Christie and Tony Quinn

Route: The Roaches, a ridge walk following in the steps of Sir Gawain, a Knight of the Round Table as he sought out the beheaded Green Knight at Lud's Chapel.

Total Distance: 6.75 miles

Total Ascent: 1020 ft

Weather: Misty & drizzly AM, hazy sunshine PM

Time: 5 hours

They say that behind every great man is a great woman. In BUMs terms this can be translated as 'behind every route leader there is a navigational expert'. This was the case today as the Leader had her organisational skills, tested to the limit by a party consisting of 33 walkers, the youngest being Jack Green aged 5, and 5 dogs of varying sizes and mental capacity. Her Navigational aid or virtual GPS, Mike Arrowsmith, navigated from the back.

The day started in a miasma of confusion with those who had read the Secretary's Minutes complying with instructions and meeting at Grid Reference 006618, two miles from Leek at Upper Hulme. The rest, the non-compliants met at the Nag's Head to be led to the start by the lead car—a very smart Jaguar (limited room in the back in case anyone is thinking of purchasing one).

Following a group photograph and a head count (which the Leader thought was 34 but can only find 33 names on her list post walk - has anyone noticed a missing child??), the snaking party set off at a smart pace up through two fields to meet the start of a lovely wooded path through and up to the ridge. The fog had descended by now and a fine mizzle was starting to permeate the clothes of those not wearing technical equipment—some of the children's trousers may well be in the bin this morning. The Leader insisted on a coffee break (an unusual concession for a BUMs walk) under overhanging rocks providing limited shelter. Fudge,

the smallest hound, began shivering at this point but the children managed to sustain her by rounding her up and 'organising' her.

Arriving at the trig point minutes later we were not graced with a view at all. Rachel O'Neil ignored the poor view and took some photos of footprints instead. She claimed this was for her art project so we wisely left her to it.

Descending the ridge the party crossed the road at Roach End. Shortly, a right turn to Gradbach brought some lovely woods into view. Sight of a rocky outcrop was the invitation to stop for lunch. The hardcore BUMs were surprised when some of the party produced smoked salmon sandwiches - with very few Pork Pies in evidence, though hard man JG was busy sorting through his dried nuts (ughhh!). During the stop one of the young adults was noted sketching - again the hardcore BUMs found this hard to take until the Secretary started boasting how many pixels his new camera had an unbelievable 10,000,000- the proof is in the photos on the BLOG (Blog Meister to report back on quality during next meeting). Lynn rang the stricken Chairman to describe the scene (which probably made his suffering worse) and Colin was wheeling and dealing on his phone (or so he told Amanda later in the Dysart).

Lunch over it was off to find Ludd's Chapel - not a real chapel but a dramatic and very damp cleft in the rock. Poor Fudge got stuck in the mud and had to be pulled out, rather embarrassingly, by a BUM.

On exiting the Chapel, half the party, whom the leader thought were ahead, were seen to be coming up from the alternative path, having by-passed the church altogether. At this point the Leader realised that she had, momentarily lost control, and the panic started to rise. All was well and the head count revealed no lost souls. During the climb back through the woods to the road some of the smaller members were finding the going a little tiresome so a decision was made for Mike A to lead this group back to the cars via the road (this was actually the official route after all) and the rest retraced their steps back across the ridge taking advantage of the views which offered sight of Tittesworth Reservoir. Quick progress was made until once again the Leader who was engrossed in conversation missed the right turn off the ridge and led the party once again into a split - Colin's party unusually finding an easy route down and the Mike -'trust me anyone can get down here'- Willis leading the bulk of the party down a steep chimney which proved a very hard step for Tilley the dog. All agreed, from the safety of the ground, with no injuries that this was an exciting end to the walk and a taste of what real BUMs do every month!

Back to the cars and off to The Dysart for a 4.00 pm re-hydrate. Our poor Chairman was there waiting for us, crutches akimbo. Dot organised chip butties for 37! Jenny Roberts revealed a secret to Bob, which he foolishly shared with all of us - she was a virgin of the chip butties!! She may have led a sheltered life but she must not be maligned as the way she clambered down that chimney would put some of us to shame and she's the leaders friend too, so there.

Conclusion

The general verdict on the day was of great enjoyment and all want to do it again next year. The leader was surprised that 33 people made it back in one piece, though the secret of good leadership is delegation...thanks to Mike A for map reading and keeping the children going by playing Tig on the way back down the road, Jim Grant for sweeping, Mike W & Frank M for dog watching, parents for head counting your children, all of you for attending, and a special congratulations to Jack, aged 5, a serious BUM in the making. Many thanks to The Dysart staff for the refreshments - I think we really brightened up an otherwise dull afternoon.

Lesley