

Trip Report: Not The Sandstone Trail

Date: 27th January 2012

Group: Jim W (leader), Jean, Ann, Amanda, Tracey, Lynn, Colin, (Jigging) Jim G, Olly and Roxie

Route: Peckforton Hills avoiding where possible the Sandstone Trail taking in Bulkeley Hill, Bickerton Hill, Larkton Hill and Rawhead

Total Distance: 15.5 miles

Total Ascent: Unknown

Weather: Unknown

We met at the Pavilion as normal but instead of driving to a start point, we commenced walking direct from the car park. This had several advantages:

No pressure on the leader to find toilets for those with a pre walk nervous bladder problem

Everyone got longer in bed

Not having to pay for petrol and parking meant more cash to slake thirsts at the Dysart

Over the years we have become accustomed to 'unusual' excuses for late call offs, and our newly elected Chairman, Lynda, has already made a bid for the lame excuse of the year award. Apparently the stress of the new job as Chairman has addled her brain to such an extent that she forgot one of the earliest rules of cooking which is dishes left in an oven/microwave are hot, and should not be removed with bare hands. Apparently with bandages on 4 fingers she now looks like a cartoon character (her words not mine!).

A local start did not mean that we dispensed with the customary faffing and Jean took the prize for this being late trying on new gaiters.

Anyway we eventually set off through fields and over styles to arrive at the haunted bridge near the Sandstone Trail. This early part of the walk allowed Tracey to show off the stile climbing skills she has taught Olly since their last outing with us.

The mood was joyous helped by the good weather and the scenery, but quickly turned a bit darker when a detour led the group to the bottom of the fearsome railway. This is one of the hardest climbs around with the ground consistently getting steeper, and to everyone's credit the summit was reached with no crisis.

At the top coffee was taken, and a strategically placed rope swing allowed Jigging Jim G to demonstrate trapeze skills and probably reduced his chance of fathering any further children.

Moving on towards Bickerton Hill one of our 'louder' members pointed out at various intervals just when we were on the Sandstone Trail, a feature which was repeated several times during the day. The leader had thoughtfully carved out seats in a fallen tree for the group to take lunch, but as this was at the bottom of the next climb it was decided to postpone it for a short time. Instead Lynn posed for a picture which will be in contention for next year's calendar, although some of the more daring (female) members suggested that the calendar should replicate the famous WI one, and kit should be removed.

For this portion of the walk we were fortunate that Colin with the benefits of technology was able to give us regular updates on the Andy Murray match. With half of the group being Scottish, and in fact representing two thirds of the entire Scottish contingent in Bunbury, this was a welcome diversion.

Lunch was taken at the top of Larkton Hill with its far reaching views across to Liverpool. Lynn took the opportunity to gloat by texting Tony hard at work in Liverpool. Now we have had some fairly bizarre experiences at BUMS lunches in the past, but another first happened this time when Ann alongside her sandwiches pulled out a copy of the Times newspaper and proceeded to read it. Now that's what I call a posh bird!! We set off again back towards Bickerton Hill when something very strange happened. At the exact moment when Andy Murray lost his match the previous impeccable weather broke and it began to rain. I always knew God was Scottish.

This rain and increasing fatigue meant that a planned route through Primrose Hill was abandoned and to the chagrin of one of our group we once again had to join the Sandstone Trail to make our way back. A final steep climb up the hill leading to Peckforton Castle again proved no obstacle to everyone and soon we were making our way back across the fields to Bunbury.

As we got closer to the Dysart spirits lifted, none more so than Amanda's who actually broke into a run in an effort to get there quickly. The demon drink does strange things to some people!

Rehydration completed in the Dysart led to a general conclusion that this was a successful day out.

Jim W

PS for an explanation of 'Jigging' Jim Grant see Facebook for his Burns Night exploits.