

Location: Brown Clee Hill, Deepest Shropshire, Friday 25th January 2019
Weather: Mild, breezy on the top, a few spots of rain
Party: Jeff (Leader), Debbie (plus Ellie and Spot), Mike A, Lesley, Richard (guest), Della, Tony, Lynn (plus Riley), Jim, Sue, Mark, Colin
Distance: Distance: 10.2 miles
Ascent: 1500 feet (OS website reading)

After a one and a half hour drive, the last few miles of which was down single track roads across Corvedale, we arrived at Abdon Village Hall, no sign of the village, no sign of the Hall, but at least there was a carpark. Apparently the missing village was due to a mini ice age in medieval times, causing its abandonment, leaving only the church standing today. Brown Clee Hill stood before us, or at least we assumed it was there as most of the clag in Shropshire had gathered round the summit.

The route started across fields and after a diversion involving some barbed wire and athletics we gained the BUMS favourite Shropshire Way, contouring round the hill towards the north-east, passing one of those red phone box book exchanges on the way.

A stretch beside some coniferous woodland followed before we arrived at the old cable railway that used to transport the dolerite stone from the quarry at the summit, down to the branch railway line at Ditton Priors about one and a half miles below. Before the dolerite quarry coal and iron ore were mined here, the latter allegedly forged into cannon balls in Corvedale and fired from Nelson's ships at Trafalgar. Factoid. After inspecting the remains of the drum house at the top of the cable railway, the group stopped for coffee in partial shelter offered by the shell of another building near the top of the hill, probably the old crushing plant.

After coffee the group moved on to the orientation table at the top of Abdon Burf (as this part of the Brown Clee Hill system is called). Apparently you could see Wolverhampton on a clear day, but mercifully it wasn't. At 540 metres, there are no hills higher than this to the East until you reach the Urals. The orientation table disoriented the leader so successfully that we set off at 180 degrees to the planned onward course, albeit briefly. Back on track and the Shropshire Way, we headed to Clee Burf past the memorial to the 23 allied and German airmen who lost their lives crashing into the hill system in WWII. Apparently the first was a Junkers 88, 1st April 1941, followed by two Wellingtons amongst allied losses.

Members of the group were becoming restive and beginning to demand lunch at this point so after descending across moorland to some more coniferous woodland, lunch was enjoyed at the top of a path marked as "the Toot" on the map, which was more of a part time stream bed. After lunch we descended a muddy Shropshire Way to a lane, and after a short burst of tarmac turned north west onto another BUMS favourite, the Jack Mytton Way. We followed this through several fields with a variety of levels of Shropshire mud before regaining the moorland and arriving at Nordy Bank fort, a well preserved late bronze to early iron age hill fort and Scheduled Monument, enclosing 3.2 hectares.

The final mile or so back to Abdon involved some more Shropshire mud and undergrowth before rejoining the lane to Abdon Village Hall and the Church, where some members of the group offered thanks for their safe return. It only remained to make the return trip to the Dysart for the usual rehydration.

Jeff