

## Classic No 2 – Stiperstones

Walk Date: Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Distance: 11.8 miles (Satmap)

Ascent: 1920ft (Satmap)

Weather: Good Sunshine with a cold wind high up.

Walkers: Dave (leader), Christine, Mike Willis, Carol, Heather, Andrea, Dave (+Jasper) Iain (+Pippa)

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Waking up to a bright full moon, and with the faint suggestion of bright skies on the horizon the weather looked promising for a 'figure of 8' walk in the Shropshire Hills.

After a short delay (Carol made a quick dash home to retrieve forgotten boots), we left the Pavilion Car Park shortly after 8.15, meeting up at Pole Coppice Nature Reserve on the Minsterley to Habberley Road.

Having done 99% of the walk previously, the leader was confident of leading a winter walk on good paths and tracks, without bog and navigational issues. (foolish man!).

Leaving the Car Park, up the lane, and right along a track (the 1% not previously walked), proved to be a little moist under foot. Fortunately, everyone's boots were up to the task, and no one had to complete the walk with wet socks.

Now in Eastridge Woods on the first climb of the day, rising to open sheep pasture for the first views of the morning towards mid Wales.



We continued down the lane, around Lordshill Farm and through sheep pasture before entering open countryside.

The gradient eased with coffee taken in bright sunshine.

The main ridge path soon reached, with clear and distant 360 degree views, we continued towards the unique rock formations (some 500 million years old – thanks Iain) standing in a sea of moorland heather. Taking a breather out of the wind, in the shelter of the rock formation known as the Devil's Chair, Christine climbed to take an aerial photo of us all.





Proceeding towards the High Point, both Mike and Christine decided to scramble up the rocks to the summit and reach the Trig Point at 536m. I hadn't realised that Mike was so competitive and determined to reach the top first. Nearing the top, with Mike just ahead but with Christine gaining rapidly, in a bid to keep his lead, he decided to hurl his drinks flask at his challenger's head in a most unsporting manner.

Of course, Mike claimed this was accidental and his flask had slipped from his rucksack pocket. (Draw your own conclusion!)

We then descended south, and at the base of the hill turned west where lunch was taken in a sunny and sheltered spot amongst the gorse and bracken.

Continuing west before swinging North, we continued around the base of the ridge where a solitary Red Kite was spotted. After a mile we turned right to reclaim the main ridge to complete the first loop.

Returning on our outward path for a short distance, the leader missed the required turn (mistake No 1). After about 200 yards realising something didn't seem right, maps were consulted and the decision made, rather than retrace our steps, to continue a short distance to join another footpath which ran parallel to the intended route (mistake No 2). If we had been in the middle of a drought this would have been OK but let's just say the alternative path was not clear and somewhat \*CALDER-esq.\*

Back on track and descending to a farm a further obstacle was encountered. A small herd of cattle (the ones with long sharp horns) were blocking the route through the farmyard. Fortunately, a detour down a steep bank to another track, bypassed said obstacles, and the walk continued without further incident to complete the second loop and back to the car park.

Despite a crash on the A5/A49 junction, everyone made it back to the Dysart by 5pm.

\* New terminology for underwater.

A great winter walk. Thanks to all those taking part.

David