

Trip Report: The Christmas Family Walk

Date: 27th December 2007

Group: Richard (leader) Selina and Mike, Lesley and Mike, Jim G, Ian + child, Jenny and Bob, John, Tina, Alexa and Matt, Colin. Tony, Lynn and Rosie, Caryle and Louise, Shirley, Gerry, Rachel and Lucy, Hugh, Chris, Pauline and Olivia, Darren, Mark and Mike, Chris, Sandra + 2 children and 2 parents, Jill + 2 children, pack of dogs

Route: Teggs Nose, White Nancy, Macclesfield

Total Distance: Unknown

Total Ascent: Unknwon

Weather: Unknown

Teggs Nose car park was chosen as the start of the Xmas walk for no other reason than it has brown tourist signs pointing the way to it from the centre of Macclesfield, it would be easy to find. And so it proved. In spite of the dismal drizzle and rain that was forecast and which subsequently materialised 45 (6 dogs included) hardy souls lined up for the obligatory group photo prior to taking to the paths and byways. Always puzzles me the group photo. You set up your little tripod, get everyone in the frame, press the time delay button then run like mad to join the group only to see Hugh there next to the camera taking your picture with his camera!

Madam Chairman had earmarked a route round Macclesfield Forest which was going to be at least 10 miles. As there was a large contingent of smaller BUMS whose legs are much shorter it was felt that this would equate to nearer 15 for them and that might be just a tad too far. A rethink was necessary. During a secret meeting while driving to Macclesfield it was agreed between myself and Madam chairman, (I wuz delegated as I know the area well) to take a different route altogether which would be about 6 miles and would be at a lower level for most of the return leg into the wind. This seemed more sensible.

The route change caused consternation in some quarters when we set off in the opposite direction to what was expected. I announced that I was leading the walk and this was met by a silent demonstration of complete apathy. I could see it was going to be difficult to get the group going but by the cunning ploy of kidnapping young Jack I knew his parents at least would follow me! Anyway we had to go that way because I did not want any one to see one particular member of our party who was determined to do the walk in only a grey and white Fairisle polo neck jumper. The fact that the lady in question was a **dog** only made the situation worse.

Our route took us just a few yards up the road to join the Gritstone Trail which led off north across fields towards the Buxton road at Calrofold.

It soon became apparent that getting 39 people and 6 dogs (one in a jumper!) through and/or over stiles was going to be time consuming but it did have an upside in that it continually mixed people together.

Once over the road we made a steep descent to a stream followed by an equally steep ascent which brought us to some rather pleasant rambling though more fields until we reached Brookhouse where we crossed a B road and headed for the foot of Kerridge Hill.

A short climb brought us onto the ridge where the wind was pretty strong, coming mainly from behind so not too uncomfortable. It was at this point that we could take in the view towards such famous landmarks as Jodrell Bank, Beeston Castle, Manchester Airport, Winter Hill and the distant peaks of Snowdonia but there wasn't much point as we could barely see the quarry just over the wall!

News soon began to filter up from the ranks that some people were about to expire from lack of food so it became pretty important for my safety to find a picnic spot pronto. I've seen this sort of thing before and it can turn nasty very quickly.

"Not to worry we will be at a perfect spot in five minutes". Well, sure enough it was only five minutes, but it was not perfect. Ok it was out of the wind and under the trees but there were no picnic tables! Everyone grudgingly sat on coats, mats, sacs or anything else to keep BUMS dry. Flasks and sandwich boxes came out all round and everyone began to tuck in.

Colin's dog was feeling a bit peckish as well. His dog looks like a retriever but actually it's a "thiever" as Jennie found out to her cost when she rested one of her sandwiches on her knee. She didn't have to worry about balancing the sandwich; it wasn't there long enough to wobble as Colin's dog saw an invitation to gobble, never one to look a gift horse in the mouth Colin's dog. They say they are just like their master.

Before lunch finished there was the ceremonial distribution of Christmas cake among the needy, until it ran out that is, it saved carrying it back and was well received by all who partook. Made a change to feed Darren he normally feeds me!

As we broke camp after lunch Ian Langford came back from a fruitless search for the toilets (I think he improvised, he's an actor don't you know) announcing that he had seen White Nancy, the secret was out, soon everyone would know. Not many people realised that we had stopped for lunch about 100m from the well known edifice. Quite funny really as White Nancy is visible for miles around Macclesfield and Bollington but

we were sitting virtually on top of it. We all gathered round the strange white protuberance on the very end of Kerridge Ridge wondering what it was and how it got there. And we are still wondering.

Bob managed to find his name scratched on the side but wouldn't say when he had done it. Keep watching Dr Who I am sure we will find out eventually (Bob would make a pretty good Dr Who).

The drop off the end of the ridge is very steep and the path is composed of rocky steps leading down to a small lane which contours round the base of the hill. The descent was slippery and the group fragmented as we dropped down and as the faster ones reached the lane they plodded on at a fair lick but were guided off the lane before it descended further to continue along the contour path. All that is except for Chris's dad Dave, who was last down the hill and missed the contour path. He continued descending down the lane.

Sorry Dave, we should have waited but full marks for getting back on the scent and rejoining the group at Rainow. Of course every black cloud has a silver lining and in this case Dave was fortunate not to see me take most of the group off course resulting in a bout of undignified fence crossing which resulted in a nasty strain to Lyn's inner.....well we won't go there! After waiting for Dave at Rainow people were starting to get a bit wet and tired so we retraced our morning route back to Teggs Nose rather than add an extra loop. Some of the dogs were dog tired and so were their handlers, it seemed like the right thing to do as the weather had taken a turn for the worse.

Well I think we got everyone back in one piece eventually including the little madam in the polo neck jumper. It wasn't long before the lure of the famous Dysart chip butties emptied Teggs Nose car park and we were on our way back to Bunbury.

Any complaints must be made in joined up writing to Madam Chairman in not more than one word. I hasten to add that she delegated this walk to me and I am wholly innocent as I was only doing what I was told.

Richard