

## **Trip Report: The South Pennines**

**Date:** 13th February 2010

**Group:** Tony (leader), Lynn, Colin, Caryle, Jim G, Jean, Mike, Lesley, Ann, Sue, Graham, Rob, Richard and Della, Tilly, Roxie and Polo

**Route:** Circular route from Abbeystead via Ward's Stone

**Total Distance:** 16 miles

**Total Ascent:** 1837 ft

**Weather:** Unknown

With cold but clear weather forecast we set off for the Lancashire hills slightly later than usual due to the close proximity of the area to Bunbury, and we also welcomed 2 newcomers, Graham and Della (and Polo), and welcomed again Ann and Rob.

The Forest of Bowland may no longer be a forest but it is an area of outstanding natural beauty and just 10 miles north east of Preston it is an area usually bypassed by many walkers on their race up the M6 to the Dales and Lakes. In fact this area was also a first for the BUMS.

We started in the village of Abbeystead and after the customary car-park photo shoot we were off up towards our destination Ward's Stone. With thanks to the Countryside and Right of Ways Act 2000 we used our *right to roam* to explore the area as we saw fit. Some of the male BUMS got a bit over enthusiastic and decided to bag an extra peak (Grit Fell), and a bout of mild panic hit the rest of the group when the breakaways seemed to take a bit longer than expected to re-join the group. However, we carried on with our roaming but then got a bit lost, as the local landowner, HM The Queen, had a trick or two up her royal sleeve and made sure that the paths on the ground did not match the tracks on the OS map.

A hack across open moorland was required to get us back on track, but at least the conditions were fine enough that we could see our destination Ward's Stone (561m).

At the top we used the shelter of the gritstone slabs to take our lunch and were rewarded with fine views in all directions to the Lakeland peaks, Ingleborough, Pendle Hill and even Heysham Nuclear Power station.

The cold made sure it was quick lunch stop and we set off along the tops eastwards through frozen bogs, which in summer is probably a complete soggy nightmare to traverse.

The next highlight was the Queen's Chair which was a carved stone chair fit for a royal posterior, and Lesley kindly did her bit for the blog photo shoot.

With the height and the cold winds across these fells the snow takes a while to melt and we had one or two interesting moments making our way across the pockets of icy ground.

The next peak was Wolfhole Crag at 527m and after a double-back ascent we then we started our descent towards Miller's House, which was not a house but yet another outcrop of gritstone.

The route now, although descending, was difficult terrain with miles of wet and muddy grassy mounds which meant our party started to stretch out a little too much for safety, and poor old Polo was starting to find the walk a bit of struggle.

We re-grouped at a stile at White Moor and tried to cheer up Colin after hearing about yet another last-minute Scottish rugby disaster.

Richard, Della and Polo had to call it a day when we reached the road, (Mike picked them up later). We carried on in failing daylight along the Wyre valley back towards Abbeystead, but Rob couldn't wait, and set off ahead of us without a map or a compass. We worried about him all the way home.

Well done to everyone on this longer than expected trek, some internet scallywag had advertised it as a 12 miles walk, when in fact it was more like 16-17 miles !

Tony