

Trip Report: Sandstone Trail**Date:** 31st January 2014**Group:** Mike A (Leader) & Lesley, Lynn, Colin, John F, Heather, Karen, Ann, Steve & Sarah (guests)**Route:** Beacon Hill, Frodsham - Delamere Forest - Primrose Wood - Rock Farm - Shady Oak**Total Distance:** 14.4 miles**Total Ascent:** 1303 ft**Weather:** Unknown**Time:** 6 hours

Another Classic walk, another wet bog trot! At least we didn't have to travel a hundred miles to find this one. It was right on our doorstep. Whilst navigation of the walk was never going to be a problem, it was tricky exercise to get everyone to the start and to have the means to return for the cars. Amanda proved to be the heroine as she selflessly agreed to help with the transport while foregoing the walk. Turns out she was probably the sensible one! We finished up with a 3 car convoy to Frodsham and left 2 cars at the Shady Oak for potential bail outs. The plan had been for the fittest to walk to Bunbury but of course the best plans are the ones which are flexible enough to abandon.

The first task at the start was to welcome and introduce our two guests, Steve and Sarah Hammond who look as if they will be adding to the BUMS membership in due course. The weather forecast was not great and with rain due in a couple of hours we set off at a brisk pace to try and get a few miles in before the deluge. There was a chill wind blowing so a brisk pace was necessary in any case.

Even as we set off through the golf course, there was section of deep mud to cross. This was just a taster of what was to come. The route then led down into the woods and up the sandstone outcrop of Jacobs Ladder back onto the cliff edge where there are usually great views of the Mersey estuary. Unfortunately the mist and low cloud meant this was not a day for great views. As we reached Simmonds Hill at Manley, we felt the first of the dreaded rain and as we turned off the road, it was heavy enough to stop for layering up and a coffee break.

Setting off in in persisting rain we now headed towards Delamere Forest which was not far away. Everywhere was boggier than I can ever remember, in fact I would stick my neck out and state that it was the boggiest Sandstone Trail on record. Still, we had relief from the bog for a while on the wide forest tracks but after crossing the railway line and emerging from the main forest, we were back up to our knees in the

stuff. Still, everyone was having a lovely time but hunger was starting to kick in so we decided to stop for lunch by the stream below Gresty's Waste which was wet and viewless but it was at least sheltered from the wind.

After a quick lunch, we headed towards Primrose Wood which was total bog. Thanks to Sarah's local knowledge, we managed to detour round some of the worst sections and then it was up to Summertrees Café which appeared to be open but luckily this was ignored by the troops. This was the highest point of the walk and it was downhill all the way from here. If there is one thing worse than a boggy track, it is a boggy field where there are no tracks. After Rock Farm this was to be the standard terrain so that the rain falling from the skies was a minor issue compared with trying to navigate across fields of mud.

Despite the tough conditions, spirits were high because we knew that we were closing in on the finish and to a man (and woman) no one wanted to take a step further than the Shady Oak. So the logistic arrangements had worked out perfectly, especially when Colin phoned Amanda to provide additional transport to Bunbury. Steve took John and myself back to Frodsham for our cars and the rest returned to Bunbury and the Yew Tree for rehydration. However certain members who shall remain nameless, (including madam chairlady) went home to shower and change pre Yew Tree. By the time I returned to Bunbury, and heard about this appalling behaviour, I decided to do the same.

Mike A

Jim