

Trip Report: The White Peak**Date:** 26th November 2010**Group:** Jim G (Leader & Driver), Lesley and Mike A**Route:** Grindon-Hoo Brook-Swainsley-Wettonmill-Ladyside Wood-Grindon-The Manifold Track -Waterfall-Grindon**Total Distance:** 11.9 miles**Total Ascent:** Unknown**Weather:** Dry, sunny and frigging freezing**Time:** 5 hours

A small but quality turn out this month; for the midweek walk. Departure from Bunbury at a leisurely 8am after a very hard overnight frost. The tortuous drive to Grindon, via Crewe, Hanley and Leek is achieved in 1 hour 25 minutes for a distance of 50 miles!

We park next to the church in Grindon (The Cathedral of the Staffordshire Moors) due to lack of toilet facilities Lesley has to make a pit stop behind a dry stone wall before we set off; and after Lesley had checked her Blackberry! This walk is a combination of two routes, one to the north of Grindon and one to the south, a figure of eight walk observed Lesley.

We set off on the northern route first on a clearish path, the Leader mistakes a "stone banning cyclists" and is looking for a "stone barn" is this a symptom of retirement or Alzheimer's? Eventually reads the guide correctly and we are off and heading for Hoo Brook. In the shade it is freezing but in the sun very warm, this leads to a number of de-layering and up-layering stops to achieve the optimum number of layers; this is 3 for men and 4 for women. We also note that the countryside is dotted with old metal baths, full of ice!

We arrive at the Swainsley ("the clearing of the pig") Road and turn right down towards the Manifold Valley; at the bottom this seems to be a favourite spot for joy riders/boy racers judging by the large Police warning sign! We cross the River Manifold at Ecton Bridge and meander along this track alongside the river, it is bitterly cold in the valley but we manage to find a sunny spot for the obligatory coffee stop.

We turn right at Dale Farm and cross Wetton Bridge to join the Manifold Track; with rising excitement culminating in the appearance of Thor's Cave cliff. We turn right; off the track and take a narrow path up and through Ladyside Wood and back into Grindon.

After an initial faff the Leader locates the correct exit from the village for the second leg of our route now heading south. Walking through a farmyard full of cows we locate the path heading down a dry valley past a

mere, where we stop for lunch, Jim sitting on another old metal bath! We then continue down the valley where we join the Manifold track heading south; crossing the dry River Hamps eight times before reaching Gail Egan's tearoom at Lee House, which is closed! We are now to turn right off the Manifold track looking for a swallet, not that we know what one is! (Wikipedia search back home reveals a swallet is a sinkhole). We fail to find this and instead follow a narrow tributary of the Hamps and frosty valley before heading uphill and into the village of Waterfall. We turn right into and then through the churchyard of St. James and Bartholomew past the village of Back o' th' Brook and head north up the sunken track of Slade Lane. We have a chat with a friendly farmer and then past Grub Low tumulus and Oldfield Farm past a scrap heap full of old metal baths and then a gentle stroll back to Grindon. An uneventful drive back to the Dysart for rehydration therapy at 4.10pm

Jim G