

Trip Report: Offa's Dyke

Date: Fri 28th Nov

Group: Bob, Mike H, Mike A, Lesley, Sue, Lynn, Hugh Jim G, Sarah, Steve (leader)

Route: Offa's Dyke path including Penycloddiau & Moel Arthur

Total Distance: 12 miles

Total height gained: 2200ft

Weather: Dry but misty all day and breezy at times

The drama on this walk began before we had even left Bunbury! With nine of us travelling to Cilcain a last minute decision was made to use two cars rather than three as planned. Jim was able to leave his in the pavilion car park and jumped in with Mike. As Mike's car disappeared round the corner those of us left waiting to get in my car, stood and admired the open tailgate of Jim's car. A desperate effort to contact him by phone was fruitless and so we just had to shut the tailgate and trust that Bunbury would be free of car thieves for the day (which, I am pleased to report, turned out to be a safe bet!).

An hour or so later we re-grouped at the start point near Cilcain together with Hugh who was there waiting after a very early departure from home. It was about 9.30 by the time we got going and the level of chat was high, helped by the wide track and the fact that the visibility was very limited by thick mist!

The route initially took us towards Moel Arthur, although we couldn't see it, and then followed a track over the shoulder of Moel Plas-yw. A bit of meandering across a field led to a few anxious comments but we soon found the necessary footpath and descended steeply to a farm where it was a relief to find the barking dogs all restrained by chains. After a stream crossing, a short climb and some challenging stiles we found a spot for coffee. But still no views.

After walking for a couple of hours without seeing Offa or his Dyke there were some concerned voices in the party and the leader found himself having to offer reassurance that the route would, eventually, live up to its billing. Sure enough after a few boggy bits we soon reached our most northerly point and the first sign indicating that we were joining Offa's Dyke footpath. The path ascended over Penycloddiau where the wind picked up but unfortunately it didn't clear the cloud & mist. At this point we passed the only other walkers we saw all day and then soon dropped down into woodland and found a sheltered lunch spot.

Lunch was followed by a steady climb up Moel Arthur. Offa's Dyke path skirts the summit but we made the short diversion to see the iron age earthworks and the cairn at the top. Just one more steep climb followed and then another undulating 1k along Offa's path before we left it to follow the track that links Llangynhafal and Cilcain. Unfortunately we were still denied any decent views but were back at the cars within half an hour and could at least celebrate the fact that we hadn't been rained on!

Thanks to Jim for taking a few photos along the way.