

**Trip Report: Derbyshire Dales**

**Date:** 28th October 2016

**Group:** Mike H (leader) Ann, Lesley, Lynda, Debbie and dogs, Sarah, Mike A, Jim, Jeff, Steve

**Route:** Lathkill and Bradford Dales

**Total Distance:** 12.3 miles

**Total Ascent:** 2300 ft

With a weather forecast for mist, fog and drizzle the group left Bunbury just as the drizzle started so we all thought Jim had made the wrong decision to walk in shorts and my reputation for organising wet walks was being reinforced. As we drove over the tops approaching Buxton we were in thick fog and steady drizzle. Fortunately, the weather started to brighten up just as we geared up for the walk - phew!

Leaving the village of Monyash we headed south to the Limestone Way to take us to Bradford Dale. After regular navigation checks at the start of the walk the path ahead looked very clear and straightforward so no need to keep a watchful eye on the route - so I thought. After walking along Lathkill Dale for a short distance it became clear that we were on the wrong route. It later transpired that the Limestone Way has been diverted avoiding One Ash Farm and onto the Lathkill Dale path. Rather than backtracking the short distance (less than 100yds!) to rejoin the Limestone Way we continued along Lathkill Dale so doing to route clockwise. This turned out to be fortuitous as we walked through the dense woodland in cloudy conditions and got back on the open grassland of the Limestone Way in the afternoon sun. No-one believed me that this was an intentional change.

Lathkill Dale is fairly narrow with intermittent pools of water. It is in the care of English Nature and has an impressive display of wild flowers in Spring. We passed by the remains of columns of an old aquaduct which carried water to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Mandale lead mine. Evidence of old mine workings were evident all along the dale. The dry river bed at Lathkill House shows how the mine workings are still causing excessive loss of water from the river - a major concern for local conservation groups. Further along the dale we passed a series of ponds formed by weirs. The ponds are being used as a trout fishery hence the signs to keep dogs out of the water. Anyone fishing as we passed would have been angered by the number of dog owners ignoring the signs. After crossing Conksbury Bridge we re-joined the Limestone Way to reach Alport and the junction with Bradford River. Lunch was enjoyed on the banks of the Bradford

River, the ladies sitting on a bench in their "hobbit" cave, while us gents enjoyed the comfort of the wall of a very ancient packhorse bridge. Moving on we crossed the Middleton - Yowlgrave road before emerging into open fields. Our walking pace quickened as we passed by a large bull which was keeping a watchful eye on Lynda. As we moved onto the next field Debbie and I were agreeing that cows with calves, especially Friesians, are far more dangerous and, as if on cue, a large cow lowered its head and charged at one of Debbie's dogs. Debbie reacted by pulling her dog away which meant that she was now between an angry cow and the dog. We all breathed a sigh of relief as the cow wandered off to get to its calves, and we quickly climbed a stile into the safety of next field. We thought the excitement was all over only to have to have two over-excited horses charging close to us as we walked through the next field. We then reached the safety of the road taking us back to Monyash. Driving back from Monyash we again met dense fog as we went over the higher roads. The foggy conditions on the road showed how lucky we were choosing a low level walk rather than one on the high level Derbyshire ridges.

An enjoyable walk which was done in almost completely dry conditions - almost dry enough to erase memories of Clun!

Mike H