

Trip Report: The Dark Peak

Date: Friday 25th August 2021

Group: Jim G (Leader) Selina, Lesley, Steve, Sarah, Ray (+ Flora the mutt)

Route: The Chew Valley from Crowden

Total Distance: 11.75 miles

Total Ascent: 2177 ft.

Weather: Chilly grey start, warm afternoon sunshine

To quote the Cicerone Guide book "The walking is not arduous, with much along clear paths, making this option an easy, enjoyable day's walking"

What could possibly go wrong, well, this route will rank as a contender for bushwhack of the year!

A leisurely 8.0am departure from Bunbury with an uneventful drive to the start at Crowden, once a Youth Hostel on the Pennine Way, now an outdoor pursuits centre.

Usual early difficulty leaving the car park in the right direction but we are soon on track through the bracken making our way upwards, passing Highstone Rocks on a narrow clearish path. We cross Lad's Leap, an attractive series of small waterfalls on Hollins Clough then walking along the gritstone edges passing over Millstone Rocks. Dropping off the end on a vague path we cross a stile onto open moorland, then the first bushwhacking event occurs, the path simply disappears into the vast heather covered moorland. The Leader is wading through the heather but is unhappy that we are not going in the right direction. So, we about turn and head back to the top of the edge where we find another vague path (probably a sheep trod or beaters path) leading vaguely in the right direction but it appears to be straying north into Robinson's Moss. This path also vanishes so the Leader spots Robinson's Springs (on the correct path) far below us, so we have no alternative but to bushwhack straight down the hillside. Arriving at the springs (just a water filled hole) we decide that a recovery coffee break is required.

The feint path, with the occasional marker post, leads us across Tintwistle Knarr seeking out a sunken path buried in the heather. A bit more bushwhacking finds us in the sunken path, the origins of which are a mystery. This path leads down to Arnfield Brook, turning sharp right another false start, we find another sunken path which leads down into the Brook, at the bottom of which we cross to the far side. The path has now vanished under 6 ft high bracken, so there is nothing for it but to bushwhack up the bracken covered hillside eventually breaking through onto the heather covered hillside, making a beeline for a group of Shooting Cabins, clearly marked on the map!

Lunch is taken here with the hope that the bushwhacking is over. Sarah has a lurid stain on the back of her shorts, lots of discussion on whether it is bilberry or beetroot, nobody gets close enough to find out!

After a short excursion on a wide track we turn right onto the pathless Arnfield Moor, now let the real bushwhacking begin! The squad are now starting to suffer a major sense of humour failure crossing the pathless Arnfield Flats, which is a leg sapping combination of heather, bracken and bog.

We eventually find a stile (marked with a small cairn) where we do, at last, find a clear path, the Bushwhacking is over, we follow the path across Ormes Moss and the Wilderness.

We join the path along the top of the beautiful Chew Valley following this up to Chew Reservoir Dam. We pass the reservoir on the right until it ends at Chew Clough where we follow the intermittent path. This weaves it's way alongside the Clough crossing it and re-crossing it as we make our way through Laddow Moss. We arrive at a stile over a wire fence and the path then descends quite steeply until we intersect the Pennine Way at Laddow Rocks.

At last we have a very clear path, the Pennine Way, as we descend down the beautiful heather covered Crowden Valley towards the cars at Crowden. There is a minor incident when Flora went missing for a while but she is soon found and we continue our descent.

The drive back to the Dysart was uneventful, where we enjoyed a sharp half or two, in the warm evening sunshine, joined by the usual suspects

Jim G (Lead Bushwhacker)