

## A Ridge Not Too Far

Congleton Edge Walk, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Distance: 7.29 according to Strava.

Ascent: 941ft according to Strava.

The walkers were: Richard (Leader) and Della Calder, Dave and Christine Bond, Dave Barker, Janet Murray, Neil and Ann Bodfish, Jim Grant, Mark Hallet, Tony and Lynn Quinn, Ray Bunting, Chris and Chrissie Latter, Fred and Anne Morris and Lesley Arrowsmith.

And the dogs: Jasper Barker (perfect name for a dog!), Flora Bunting and Ponya Quinnski.

As the days are getting shorter and the rain is getting heavier and more frequent, I decided to look for a walk not too far from home and one which would not be a mudfest. These days after nearly twenty years of BUMS walks here there and everywhere it is not easy to find any new ground and after a lot of trawling my memory banks, I remembered a delightful section of the Gritstone Trail worthy of a visit. An evening perusing the OS map showed there is a wealth of paths which meet the trail and a route was conjured which included the whole of Congleton Edge and a good length of the Biddulph Valley Way.

The walk began on the road leading north east from Mow Cop at a lay-by adjacent to Cheshire's Close which the leader incorrectly advertised as Cheshire View. He wasn't entirely wrong as the view can only be described as extensive taking in the whole of Cheshire and stretching way up north to the Lancashire hills beyond Manchester.

Once everyone had booted, suited, gloved, hatted and muffled up against the biting wind we headed back towards Mow Cop for a few hundred yards before picking up a path descending northwards and skirting round Cheshire's Close. Some bog avoidance was necessary here but the fields leading down to Corda Well Tank were not too soggy. A short walk down the drive brought us to Mow Lane and a short walk down this allowed us to pick up Puddle Bank Lane.

At the end of the lane, we passed through an old farm and began the climb up through fields toward Nick I' th' Hill. The first field was stock free but the path soon led us into horse territory! Jasper wasn't taking any chances and took Dave into one of the empty paddocks, not for long though as the only way forward was through a narrow occupied paddock. The equine occupant had spied us coming and didn't appear to be at all keen on meeting a group of eighteen walkers. Dobbin decided to canter up to the top of the rapidly narrowing paddock and stood by our exit route rather frightened and not knowing where to go next. She was not the only one frightened. By this time the majority of the group thought they would soon be mowed down by a bolting horse. The leader knew something had to be done for further progress to be made by the group and so everyone was asked to stand still while the leader ventured toward the horse slowly to make friends with her. Wary at first, she soon realized he wasn't such a bad sort and after a sniff of my hand allowed me to

stroke her neck (always a winner that move!) Gently taking hold of the bridle I attempted to walk her past the group. She didn't want to move until I said the magic words "walk on" which did the trick and she calmly followed me past the group to safety and freedom.

We soon reached Nick I' th' Hill and took the opportunity to sit on a wall in the sun and have our morning coffee and calm our nerves.

On to the edge, a short steep climb took us up to a very pleasant path. Anyone having a leaning towards vertigo kept well to the right for some distance as the path ran very close to the edge of a vertical cliff for some distance until it eventually resumed normal slopes on each side. A rather strange ramp cum ladder affair caused some difficulty and a hands-on approach was adopted to help people descend the four-foot drop before we resumed our descent to the end of the wooded edge.

Turning left over a stile we climbed up a peasant meadow to a tree then descended an exceptionally steep slope to a gate into a field with two alpacas in it. One was brown and disinterested in humans but the other white one instantly fell in love with Christine who reciprocated the infatuation but drew the line at French kissing! This dalliance continued until everyone except Christine had crossed the next stile at which point fond farewells were bid and the relationship ended. I don't know who was the sadder?

A few more styles brought us to a busy main road which was crossed with no fatalities. A track then led through some houses and by the golf course to another road. Across the road steps took us down to a small river and probably the boggiest part of the walk so far. Luckily most of the mud could be avoided by detours or silly walks with legs akimbo and we were soon on the old railway track leading towards Biddulph.

After a few minutes a bench in the sun was spotted which was accompanied by three rotten tree trunks and lunch was taken here. Some people sat in more comfort than others! The lunch spot also featured a convenient latrine which was convenient for those who needed the conveniences.

Bait consumed and nature calls attended to we proceeded along the uncannily dry track until a road passing under the old railway took us back uphill towards the edge again. Rather than retracing the edge again we turned below it and traversed through pleasant woodland past a remote farmstead and up a nice dry track to Nick I' th' Hill. From here we followed the other end of the edge back to the top of Mow Lane enjoying splendid views again and finally reached our cars after a short road walk.

All was done by 2:00pm and the team headed back to Bunbury to replenish lost fluids.

Lovely day, great to be joined by so many of you.

Richard