

Trip report - Mam Tor and Edale Valley. Sunday 12th Feb.

Distance - 11.5 miles

Ascent - 2700 ft

Squad: Mike H (leader), Christine, David (aka Bondy), David, Sue, Iain, Lesley, Chrissie, Jim, Sarah, Steve, Jan, Della, Richard, plus two canine companions - Pippa and Jasper.

This first Sunday outing for a while proved to be popular with 14 members joining the squad. Arriving at a very busy Mam Tor car park we found that Sunday is also popular with other walkers. Fortunately we all managed to squeeze into the available spaces, so no parking tickets on this visit.

As we set off along Castleton ridge we met the whole world and their dogs but as usual the crowds gradually thinned out the further we went from the car park. The route took us over the hill called Hollins Cross - a hill but with no cross on it as it disappeared in 1905. The cross marked the old route from Edale to Castleton. Coffins used to be carried on this route from Edale to the church in Hope, hence its nickname 'coffin road'.

The route continued along the ridge to Lose Hill Pike, where hearing cries of 'where's the coffee' we had our first stop. From here we could admire the views over the Edale Valley and the edge of the Kinder plateau, as well as the towering Hope cement works. We then had a steep grassy descent to reach the bridge over the river Noe to join the path which follows the old Roman road. By now there were few walkers on this part of the route but it is popular with off-road cyclists and it good to see the improvement in this path since scrambler motor bikes were banned.

We continued along the path to reach the pillar at Hope Cross which was the planned lunch stop. The 8ft high pillar here was erected in 1937 to replace an older column and acts a way mark. It is likely that there was an ancient wayside cross at this location similar to that on Hollins Cross. Looking back along the ridge we had just walked it shows why it is regarded as one of the best ridge walks in the country (at least according to 'Visit Peak District' tourist board). It was also surprising to see the number of paragliders hovering over nearby Rushup Edge.

After crossing the stream at Jaggars Clough, we went off the planned route to follow a more interesting path behind the Youth Hostel. This added about a half mile to the route but avoided a short section of tarmac road walking. Following the path across fields we arrived at Edale, and chance for a toilet stop. By now we only had about a mile and a half to get back to the car park, but it involved a steady upward slog of 800 ft to reach the car park - the sting in the tail! Making slow progress up the hill I was given a lesson from Richard on how to use my walking poles during an ascent - it made a difference. As we neared the top a few of the group made it clear that they didn't enjoy this last section but that they weren't going to stop. Well done to the whole group as this climb after doing over 11 miles proved to be quite a challenge. (It would have been even harder if we had to carry a coffin!) And I got a ticking off for exceeding the prescribed distance - perhaps I shouldn't have done the detour.

This route is a personal favourite - I walk parts of it a couple of times a year as part of a training route with Jim or on my own. But on this day walking it with the company of the group made it particularly enjoyable.

Mike H