

Trip Report

Minera Lead Mines, 24th February 2023

Distance: 8.5 miles advertised, 8.75 according to Strava

Ascent: 1,400ft advertised, 1,391ft According to Strava

Human Participants: Richard (Leader) and Della Calder, Steve and Sarah Hammond, Lesley Arrowsmith, Andrea Percival, Fred and Anne Morris, Dave Barker, Colin Christie, Dave and Chris Bond, Debbie Sargent and Jeff Ewing, Heather Foster, Cate Gregory, Dave French, Neil and Ann Bodfish.

Canine Participants: Spot (ran 16.98miles) and Jasper (ran 32.85miles)

What can I say another great turnout for a Friday walk. Whether it was the nearness to home or the modest total ascent which attracted people I don't know but it is lovely to get a nice big group out in the hills. Mind you; nice big groups do have their drawbacks particularly when there are slippery styles to be negotiated, but we managed which is more than can be said for our canine friends who needed the odd lift now and then. More of that later.

Setting out from the Lead Mines carpark we followed the route of the old tramway towards Minera Quarry long since abandoned and now slowly reverting to nature in its new guise as a country park. The pleasant flat walking soon had to be left for a needless descent to the River Clywedog just to say we'd been there and to generate some ascent in order to qualify as a hill walk! The climb up a narrow track brought us to a road but we soon left this to follow the route of the old standard gauge railway which used to transport limestone from the quarry to Brymbo and beyond. Passing a gang of tree loppers who were lopping chunks out of their morning biscuits we soon came to the entrance to the old quarry.

A smart new metal bridge took us over the river again but there was very little water to be seen as it had gone underground at this point. Once across we passed alongside a large range of old lime kilns in remarkably good condition considering they were probably last used at least half a century ago. Some steps then lead us up to the top of the kilns where we soon came to the locked entrance of one of the entrances to Ogof Dydd Byraf a large natural cave system extending under Esclusham Mountain.



Ogof Dydd Byraf

After a brief explanation of the cave we decided not to go down and I didn't have a key anyway so no point in asking for volunteers.

Gradually climbing above the quarry a suitable place for coffee soon materialized and we sat and admired man's handywork in removing a large part of Minera and distributing it in various parts of the country over the years. Coffee downed and so were we, back down to the floor of the quarry only to begin ascending the opposite side and heading off towards Llandegla. We soon encountered slippery styles and none of them had dog gates so there was quite a bit of assistance needed for Spot who kept looking at Debbie and saying you've got to be joking! whereas Jasper just launched himself and hoped for the best. As a responsible leader caring for my flock and respecting the rights of way I lead the group through some fields with styles at every fence. This involved walking away from our desired direction at one point to remain on the path. Nearly all followed, but there is always one isn't there? Well three and Spot actually and without mentioning any names there was a man from Utkinton and two people from Ruyton XI Towns. This blatant disregard for public rights of way is what gets us walkers a bad name!!!

Soon we were on the gravel road leading to Llandegla Mountain Bike Centre which we passed then picked up a fire road into the forest which led us to our lunch stop on the shore of a beautiful dried up lake. How was I to know they were mending the dam? Nonetheless we had a nice break during which it attempted to rain with little success, fortunately for us.

Bait boxes empty we rambled on into the forest which began as normal but soon became a narrow alley between young pine trees so closely spaced it would be impossible to penetrate them. Some thinning needed there methinks! Exiting this dark alley the leader made an uncharacteristic mistake turning the wrong way along the path. Arriving at a bird hide he tried to make it look like part of the plan but the group were not convinced. Retracing our steps a short way we resumed the correct course and soon arrived at a collection of Black Grouse wooden sculptures and our exit from the forest to the moor.

From the inevitable style a faint track led off in the direction we wanted and was remarkably dry underfoot. Arriving at a boggy depression we picked up an even fainter track avoiding the bog and worked our way with minimal bushwacking to a shallow valley with a stream which we crossed easily and began ascending on nice grassy slopes to meet the Worlds End road.

On the way we passed the entrance to Ogof Lyn Parc a shaft 100m deep leading into mine workings and natural cave below Esclusham Mountain. A short dissemination of this information was given to the attendant throng along with the snippet that the leader had descended this shaft in the distant past when he was a troglodyte. The throng managed to hide their amazement well! This shaft links up with Ogof Dydd Byraf nearly a mile away which we saw earlier.



Person about to descend 100m down Ogof Lyn Parc

Carrying on gradually up the moor we arrived at our high point for the day, Esclusham Mountain. Not sure it strictly qualifies at only 1,499ft but it provided a rather misty 270° view over Cheshire and Shropshire. The way was down now and we wandered through old mine workings and bracken to emerge in a green field close to our start point. A bit of road some steps down and the cars appeared after a nicely varied ramble in an area very few people knew of.

Thank you all for your company, hope you enjoyed it and please come again.

Richard Calder