

BUMs Trip Report

Friday 30th June 2023

Walkers: Lesley (leader), Cate, Andrea, Heather, Lynn and Ponya, Christine and David, Janet, Sarah and Steve, Jim Simpson, Derek Burrows

Venue: Marbury and Old St Chad's

Stats: 10.5 miles, 977 ft of ascent, 4 hours walking, half an hour in the café.

Weather- Cloudy and slightly cool for June with light and short showers

We met at the very late time of 9:30 as I wanted to factor in coffee and lunch stops to a route which had very little in the way of comfy seating.

Two potential new members were giving this one a try- Jim and Derek. I was slightly worried that they might find this one a little tame but more of that later. I had agreed to organise today's walk but knee problems prevented receiving something further afield. So here we were only 15 minutes from home, with a worrying amount of wet grass on this slightly pathless route.

We parked at The Swan at Marbury which was apt as this walk is from the now famous 'Adventurous pub walks in Cheshire' book. Since the book was written this pub has been transformed into a fabulous eatery. I highly recommend visiting it.

Walking down the lane we went through the delightful churchyard of St Michael's, built in the 15th century, and out towards Marbury Mere which was full of geese. The meres around here were formed after the last ice age.

We were following the South Cheshire Way (this starts at Gridley Brook near Malpas and finishes at Mow Cop), over a hill and then crossing many fields full of sheep and cows. Poor Ponya- although I think it was Lynn who worried more. Cows and dogs all stayed safe as did people. We had a hard stare from a farmer but that's par for the course when 12 people and a dog are crossing your land in convoy. Leaving no trace, we eventually reached the village of Wirswall and crossed through the Hall and then onto the Bishop Bennett Way:

The Bishop Bennet Way runs from below Beeston Castle, west towards the Welsh border, passing by Tattenhall and Aldford before turning south and east past Farndon towards Malpas and Whitchurch.

A green lane led us down to our coffee spot, and as I said, due to scant places to sit I led the group into a brand new café called The Sheep, in a small industrial park and despite it taking a while to get served the coffee was great and toilets free- what's not to like.

We continued down to cross the fast A49 and passing the Willey Moor Lock Tavern (didn't go in), we joined the Sandstone Trail and up towards Old St Chad's church, now disused. In fact it was built in 1689 and still houses the local churchyard still in use, despite the building of a new church nearby. The group decided not to take lunch in the graveyard for some reason, so we ploughed on crossing fields and farms until reaching the village of Bickley Town (which is definitely not a 'town'), and followed a farm track to a very useful lunch stop just off the official path, Christine stopping briefly to feed a hungry looking and very large cow, so probably just greedy.

Drama of the day came when, after the break, we headed back to take up the path by the very large cow, only to find a huge herd of milkers blocking our way. When I say huge, this was the fact, not just for effect. With stealthy movements Steve and David managed to open two gates and we rushed through before a stampede could occur.

Lynn, now walking faster than a speeding bullet managed to drag Ponya to safety, though the cows didn't seem at all interested having only one thing on their minds--milking.

We glimpsed Bar Mere on our way back down towards the second and somewhat hazardous crossing of the A49 and then a bit of road till we turned off road towards the Llangollen canal where we took the tow path back to Marbury, a very tranquil section. Stiles were tricky in this section but award of the day goes to Cate who had taken secateurs to chop out the brambles and nettles surrounding the stiles. Many thanks Cate for your thoughtfulness enabling everyone to get through without too many stings and bleeds. Team work!

I hope everyone enjoyed seeing some of our local countryside.

Back at the Dysart not only were the chaps back from their great big walk but there was a wedding reception going on at which Jeff and Debbie turned up.

Jim and Derek must have enjoyed the walk as they joined immediately- more funds in the coffers and more fun at the BBQ on the 15th.

Thanks for joining me

Lesley