

Teesdale u3a 3-4 mile (Shorter) walking group. Walk around Grassholme 25th March 2024.

“It mightn’t be as bad, the weather forecast is not always right”, and it must be said that the Met Office did say that by 14:00 the chance of rain was down to 20% and for 15:00 the cloud icon had changed from black to white, so it seemed churlish not to turn up.

So it was that ten of us set out for a 3½-mile circumnavigation of Grassholme Reservoir. This was a first for many of us as the dam and North Shore has only recently reopened to walkers after construction work had finished but recent rain had not only hidden the old bridge which had remained submerged since 1915 but had brought the waters to the point of overflowing.

For the first 500m the weather forecast seemed to have got it right but ‘up the dale’ is not the same as Barney and by the time we were walking along the South Shore the drizzle started, giving way to steady rain which lasted with little break for the rest of the walk. Oddly, the sheep seemed unbothered.

On a clear sunny day there are stunning views down the Lune Valley and the sight of Kirkcarrion in the distance. For the ten of us the view was largely of our own feet as we picked our way through the mud, across streams and slippery stones. Then we encountered the mud and not just any mud but the ankle-deep oozing mud that can pull poorly-laced boots from ones feet.

However, there was a brief respite at the Visitors’ Center (sic) for terra firma and the loos. With the car park deserted the shop didn’t seem to be doing any trade and they must have been disappointed that not one of the ten of us entertained them either. Perhaps it wasn’t the day for ice creams.

After crossing the dam we inspected the new stonework on by-wash before we left the metalled track. The footpath back was however a little kinder, less mud, fewer streams and even providing a rather damp seat to take in the view. Now though we also now seemed to be walking into the rain, so it was hoods up, heads down again. Thankfully, it wasn’t long before the cars appeared and we could ease our wet and muddied bodies into some shelter.

We hope to have dried out before our next walk.

Ian Royston

