

Fellwalking - Report and photo by Annie Clouston

Nine of us had a brilliant, and not particularly strenuous, ten miler from Grinton over Harterfell and back along Apedale to Grinton. It was a clear and sometimes cloudy, sometimes sunny, day when the heather was gorgeously purple and Swaledale stunningly green. Our views were exceptional, highlighting the predations of humankind on the landscape and the fauna. The ancient architecture of the lead mines was all about us, in old shafts, pits, flues and spoil heaps. In places recovery seemed slow, and dozy sheep were about picking at pathetic bits of grass where just a few metres away the ground was rich with lush grass. The architecture of the shoot was all about us, though happily the gunners were not near, and the delightful bobbing of little white legs and accompanying "go back, go back" was testament to today's safety for the grouse. Who could shoot them for sport? (Well, it seems anyone with £250 per brace to spare!)

Let's not be total hypocrites - we did make use of a shooters' bothy for our mid-morning snap. But at lunchtime, it was possible to imagine ourselves, while all sitting in a row on a long low ridge overlooking Apedale, being taken out like grouse napping on a dry-stone wall, by a marksman on the other side of the valley. My imagination (darkly) runs away with me sometimes. Incidentally, we pondered the derivation of Apedale, and lo and behold, we came upon a plethora of beehives - and copious pesky bees - in the valley (and no chimpanzees). Quad erat demonstrandum!

We wrapped up a great day at the Bikers' Cafe by the river where our company caused meltdown in the ordering of refreshments such that we may in future be banned.

Thank you to John for leading such a great walk.

