

## Fell Walking in Spring

The Fell Walkers have covered several miles during our three walks in the Springtime. The weather has been kind, waterproofs only required for wind proofing, and suncream needed regular application. We've travelled across various terrain, had glorious views and encountered numerous stiles of various shapes, sizes and construction. 'Flying walking poles and bottoms' have had to be avoided whilst negotiating said stiles (see May Walk for further details)!

In March eleven of us set out on a 10-mile walk starting in Richmond, meandering initially through Round Howe Woods alongside the river. We then had the challenge of Hudswell steps. There was much debate regarding the number of steps climbed - over 200, nearer to 300, the argument proceeded - but all agreed it was a steep climb with several stopping to enjoy the view! We continued through the woods to join a permissive path (MoD), keeping a lookout for soldiers, or tanks, on manoeuvres. We crossed the moorland without incident and reached a limestone quarry where we stopped for lunch. After our short break we moved on to the outskirts of Downholme village, visiting the small church for a moment of reflection and exploration. From here we crossed over Downholme Bridge, walking was preferable to driving, and through the fields to Markse. We were now on the homeward journey so picked up our pace on the Coast-to-Coast path heading back to Richmond and enjoying the route along the north side of the Swale.



In April we had a moorland adventure, starting at the Tan Hill Pub (we didn't visit the establishment until the walk had been successfully completed).



Ten of us set off heading south, briefly on the road, and then turned west, steadily climbing to Thomas Gill waterfalls. We subsequently proceeded along the eastern flank of Robert's Seat, before stopping for our mid-morning break. Our walk leader had promised pastries, which we all thoroughly enjoyed whilst reviewing the 'tractor art' on the fells. The patterns were similar to Maori tattoos; the patterns really did show the contours of the hillside.

Following coffee, and pastries, we started our descent to Ravenseat Farm. We stopped at some delightful spot (not sure where) for lunch before continuing east towards West Stonesdale. Here we were met with a

challenge 'to find the public footpath'. Our way was barred by a locked gate and a sign indicating a public footpath somewhere to the left! Fell walker determination sprang forth and we found a route to start the steady climb to join the Pennine Way. Returning to 'our stiles adventures', we met an interesting one in that it didn't exist. Where it should have been was a gap with wire across it. With a little limbo dancing we safely navigated the obstacle and continued along the crest returning to the pub, and the well-earned refreshment.

The day in May dawned cloudy and chilly but dry and eleven of us gathered at Grassholme Reservoir to tackle 'The Reservoirs Rectangle'- 11.5-mile route linking Lunedale and Baldersdale, giving views of each of



the five reservoirs at some point along the way. The water level in all five reservoirs was very low – and the ground under our feet was correspondingly dry (despite recent rain).

We started by walking along the north shore of Grassholme, across the dam and up through fields to a lane leading to Botany, (not Bay), encountering the first three stiles on the way. The many stiles became a recurring topic of interest and conversation during the walk (sad, these walkers!!). There were 'really good' ones, a ladder stile with no ladder (I exaggerate a little), one where the bar was set very high

– literally – across the gap and one which was decidedly discriminatory against anyone other than Twiggy. We wished we'd taken photos of them all so we could have written an article on 'Stiles on The Reservoirs Rectangle' for u3a!

From Botany we headed south towards Baldersdale as Hury and Blackton Reservoirs came into view. We descended to Hury and had a lunch break by the water – on picnic benches, no less – very up-market for a Fell Walk. A chilly wind encouraged us not to rest here too long but as we followed the grassy shore and then pastures above Blackton the sun came out and we were spurred on by the promise of 'the café in the barn' at Clove Lodge. Here we found an amazing assortment of hot and cold drinks and eatables, from ice cream to porridge and every kind of biscuit bar in between – all provided on a 'help-yourself-and-make-a-donation-if-you'd-like-to' basis. Several of us had some kind of refreshment and then we set off along the Pennine Way northwards for the last three miles, passing Hannah's Meadow then up and over back into Lunedale. On the way we had views of Balderhead and Selset Reservoirs and their impressive dams.



In conclusion, everyone seemed to enjoy our Springtime walks and, as always, each other's company along the way. We're now embarking on our summer expeditions!