

## **The Fell Walkers' June Expedition**

Ten hearty walkers gathered in the Dales Bike Centre ready for the first challenge of the day, the climb to Fremington Edge. We had been informed that we were starting with a steep climb and luckily, although a bright start to the day, the sun was not yet in its full glory. We headed towards Reeth and started the ascent, initially by road then changing to track. After a short stop to remove a layer of clothing, the temperature already rising, we were informed there was a choice! We could continue with the well-trodden path or take a shortcut which would enable the Edge to be reached more quickly. On the downside, yes there always is one, it would result in a direct climb upwards, an even steeper ascent. We accepted the challenge and turned onto the upward path. The climb was relatively short, thank goodness, and the view from the top was glorious; we looked down on Reeth bathed in sunshine. After having a moment to catch our breath we proceeded along Fremington Edge, heading east, with a promise of coffee on our descent to New Close Bank. Coffee was spent with the sheep, whilst avoiding their droppings!

After refreshment we continued in an easterly direction passing Marrick towards Shaw Bank. As we approached the road which would take us to Marske our walk did a U-turn, looping us back towards Marrick but taking the route tracking the river Swale. Before commencing the next ascent, we decided to adjourn for lunch as we noticed the ready-made seating at the side of the track, all rocks having smooth tops! We ate lunch in sunshine plus a slight breeze which was very welcome. We were now ready to start our next series of ascents. Whilst passing across farmland we came across a distressed lamb, it had got itself tangled in the wire fencing. Animal rescue was put into operation, initially causing further distress, but with reassurance, and firm handling, the release was secured. The lamb went bleating its thanks loudly whilst giving its rescuers a wary look.

Continuing along our route we viewed Hutton's Monument across the valley. The monument commemorates Sir Matthew Hutton of Macclesfield, who died in December 1814, aged 35 and requested to be buried here at his favourite viewpoint of the family's Marske estate. From admiring the monument from afar we headed for Steps Wood. Here we met a field of nettles, the short wearers in the group were somewhat alarmed but nettle squashers i.e. trouser wearers, were deployed to create a safe passage for bare legs. Such was the concentration on nettle traversing that we failed to notice that we were no longer on the footpath and no access to Steps Wood. On realising our mistake some of the group retraced their steps, dancing through the nettles, whilst others scaled the wall ensuring no damage was done. We regrouped and descended through the wood using the Nuns' Steps to Marrick Priory. The steps were built to connect the Benedictine Nunnery to the Priory and were used by the nuns between 1160 and 1539 but are now part of the Coast to Coast. They have sunken over the years but are still clearly visible and provide safe passage. After emerging from the woods, we passed the Priory and were nearing the end of our walk. We followed the wall down from the Priory to Stony Bank and rejoined the Swale for a gentle walk to Grinton Bridge. Subsequently we returned to the Bike Centre for coffee and cake, our treat for the successful completion of the 11-mile walk.

