

September Fell Walk Report – Heather, Splendid Views, a Lovely Path and an Adder!

This month's walk started in Eggleston. We were a small group of seven, unusual for our group but many members had opted for a late summer break. However, all present were ready to tackle the challenge of the day!

From the village green we headed north on the Teesdale Way and made our way down to Blackton Beck, crossing the water using the newly installed foot bridge. It was a fine day; everyone was enjoying the gentle walk winding through the trees alongside the stream. Yes, we were being lulled into a false sense of security, not many of our walks start with a descent! However, the gentle stroll was short-lived, and we started to ascend to the locally named 10-ton bridge to cross Eggleston Burn and follow it until the footpath led up to the B6278. We had a short reprieve of road walking before turning onto a grassy track running above the road with open views up the Egglestone Valley and over to Monks Moor. The ascent had begun, and we proceeded with the steep climb up a shooting track to head over Eggleston Common towards The Knotts. The walking was challenging as the heather was camouflaging uneven terrain, which required an 'eyes down' approach rather than scanning the countryside. Nevertheless, good communication amongst the group ensured we did have opportunity to appreciate the excellent views of the Lunedale reservoirs and southwards down Teesdale. We were also able to admire an ascent from a previous walk when we had climbed the Knotts, this time we were skirting them!

We made our way across the Knotts Allotment, avoiding a rocky descent to a lower level and started our search for two walls and a gate! We eventually found the correct gate, passed through it and stopped for lunch.

Once refreshed we recommenced our 'heather ramble/stumble' and headed round a hushing dam, skirting it to our left. It was here that we came across *Vipera berus*, the only venomous snake in the UK. We thought adders were shy, non-aggressive animals. However, the one we encountered was happy to pose for photos! No slithering away, rather rearing up and giving clear warning to keep our distance. After taking our leave of the European Adder, we set off up shooters track, down over Spurlswod Gill then cutting across more burnt/cut heather looking for a fence. Our group leader had assured us of a 'lovely path' that we would join from the fence to start our descent. There had been much discussion as we traversed the Common as to whether we were following a path, a track or a trail, or were we forging a new route! However, our leader did not disappoint. On meeting the 'lovely path', which was wide and grassy, it provided us with a wonderful view of Hurst, Blackton, Selset and Grassholme reservoirs, and Mickleton. We gently meandered down our path, descending to Neamour Hill and continuing over three stiles (there were only four in the whole walk - that is very unusual!) before returning to Eggleston.



