

7-9 MILE WALKING GROUP - WALK REPORT FOR WED 15 FEB 23

A group of 20 assembled in Middleton on a cold, but bright morning before setting off towards the Holwick road to pick up the Pennine Way, heading for Harter Fell. Led by Jim and Judith Coleman, the first quarter of an hour meant climbing up what was, for some, rather euphemistically described by Jim as a “steepish” climb up Intake Hill, but we all made it.

Reaching Crossthwaite Common the path takes a slight south-westerly direction towards the fell and for the next 45 minutes we ascended steadily towards the highest point of the walk at 1430 feet – or 435.86 metres for those who wished we’d never left the EU! We didn’t climb Harter Fell itself, but skirted its flank before stopping for a well earned coffee break. The plan had been to sit and admire the elevated views over Grassholme and Selsset reservoirs as our reward for reaching the top, but by this time the weather had deteriorated enough to force us to shelter in the lee of a nearby wall – just like a flock of Teesdale sheep! From there downhill on well established paths, although that didn’t prevent Jim from going through the wrong gate at one point and ending up in what looked like a penning area!

As we dropped down into Lunedale, we felt the benefit of it being more sheltered from the wind. Despite the overcast conditions the scenery was still lovely, but we didn’t see much in the way of wildlife. Several of us were, however, taken with the ‘tuck shop’ at Wythes Farm – a covered shelf stocked with soft drinks and chocolate bars, and an honesty box for payment. Being seasoned walkers we all had our own supplies so didn’t buy anything, but it was good to see such a fine example of entrepreneurialism.

On reaching the entrance gate to the *south* side of Grassholme reservoir we saw a confusing sign which said the path on the *northern* bank was closed – confusing enough for some to question if Jim had taken another wrong turning! As we ambled along we noticed what looked like lane markings on the surface of the water, learning later they were probably foam lines.



Photo – James Dykes

The weather improved enough for us to stop for lunch at the Grassholme observatory, before returning to Middleton via some fields and the Tees railway path. We got back bang on 2.30pm as planned, having covered just under 9 miles in 4½ hours (including stops), after which some of us repaired to a local café for tea and scones ... well, we would have, except the cheese scones were sold out!

Jim Coleman

Thanks to Jim and Judith for leading the walk. Our next walk on Wednesday 15 March led by Lynda will be a 7 mile walk around Hamsterley forest. On this occasion

there will be a limit of 18 walkers so please contact nickygrace729@gmail.com as soon as possible to reserve your space.

In April the walk is on Wednesday 19th led by Alan from Balderhead reservoir.