

7– 9 Mile Walking Group – Trip Report – by David Ramsay

On Safari in Weardale

A group of thirteen gathered on Wearbank near Wolsingham Station, intent on investigating rumours of Elephant sightings on Pikestone Fells. Weather had been very inclement preceding the trip but due to a miracle of organisation the day of the walk was fine with some blue skies.

We headed along the Weardale Way, steadily ascending via Ashes and Towdy Potts Farms until the fabled herd of Elephants came into view on the distant skyline. The lower fields proved to be quite muddy but once we gained the track on the crest of the ridge conditions underfoot were good. Unfortunately, by the time we reached our objective the elephants had disappeared, but we were able to take some refreshment in the shelter of the wall surrounding a group of beech trees.

After a brief stop we carried on, descending to White Kirkley and began to head back following the line of Bollihope Burn. This section of the walk provided interest in the form of Industrial Remains. For more than a century, after they were built in 1847, fires burned day and night, turning limestone from the quarry over the hill into quicklime for cement to build cities and to sweeten acid soil.

A little further on we passed Harehope Gill Lead Mine, which was worked between 1796 and 1890 by the Beaumont Company. Here we took a detour to view what is often an impressive exposure of Frosterley Marble in the burn, however the water levels and peat stained water prevented us from seeing much.

A lunch stop was taken on the slopes overlooking Harehope Quarry, this is a redundant Limestone Quarry which many years ago became an Environmental Study Centre. These days the scars of quarrying have been softened and absorbed by nature and it provides a centre for a variety of studies and activities.

We completed the walk following the River Wear past sprawling chalet parks to glorious open fields for the final mile.



With thanks to David for leading such an excellent walk

Our next walk on January 17 will be led by Margaret. The 7 mile walk from Richmond will take in Easby church, Skeeby and the Aske Hall estate. Please let nicky.grace729@gmail.com if you would like to come along

In February our walk on February 21 will be led by Chris also in the Richmond area