

The Irregulars



NEWSLETTER No. 61



A fine day on the Lakeland Fells

FROM THE EDITOR

What can I write about 2020 that hasn't been written before? I've always strived to keep politics, race and religion out of the pages of the Newsletter so that wipes out a lot of this year's topics.

One thing I must mention is that my most favourite walk reporter, Jess Fry, sadly came to the end of her life not long after the start of lockdown. I am sure I won't be the only one who has fond memories of her transformation from quiet canine, plodding along obediently by Grahame's side, to a barking high jumper whenever she found a puddle or stream to perform her unique leaping act – it made the audience smile every time.

Some of you are aware that in August Jeff was admitted to hospital with acute pain in his leg that left the medical profession baffled. The ensuing weeks were tough but, as he has done on several previous occasions, he stared adversity in the face and last week we walked 17 miles so he is on the way to recovery.

I know some of you have also had health problems and I hope you make a speedy recovery so you can re-join group walks. Sadly, Jeff and I will not be doing so. After over 40 years in the LDWA, we no longer feel any affinity for it and have therefore ceased our membership. Sadly, recent changes to the Irregular's constitution to comply with NEC rules make us feel that it is untenable for us to remain in the Irregulars. So this is my last newsletter and I want to thank those of you who have contributed, sometimes under duress, over the past decade. Jeff and I have enjoyed the fifteen years we have been in the group and wish everyone good luck and good walking in the future. And more importantly, keep safe. Pat



Our 'grandpup' Lottie taking a break on one of our walks

WALK REPORTS

Down the Mouth of the Dragon - Sat 26th September 2020

Participants: 17 Leader: John Whitworth

You could feel the first autumnal chill as you stepped out of the car that Saturday morning and as you looked around other walkers had donned their winter coats and boots. Having said that it was a clear, sunny morning with only a chill in the shadows. We were a little late setting off as some members had lost their way to Longnor and John was required to give the Covid briefing as well as the usual outline of the walk. We left the centre of the village along Leek Road to follow the Manifold Trail.

The LDWA COVID guidelines now permitted up to 30 walkers on a walk. Therefore seventeen walkers passed by the well-dressing which appropriately depicted a medic wearing a mask, a reminder that we would need to wear a face covering later to enter the pub for lunch. We made our way to pass the camp site then turning right to Shining Ford. Back onto the road climbing up to a path on the right which took the group to Marnshaw Head. The footpath had been blocked here but, being Irregulars, we found a way over. We then followed the paths to Hole Carr and down to the footbridge. We climbed up to the trig point prior to Hollinsclough Moor then to Coatestown. We continued down the road, to climb over the boulders at the bottom into Hollinsclough where we had our morning break. Another large group of walkers passed by, thought to be Young Farmers, which a couple of our group mistakenly started to follow until they were called back. Suitably refreshed we passed the chapel and onto the footpath which led along Hollinsclough Rake to Tenterhill. The recent wet and blustery weather had made the footpaths muddy along the Rake as well as contributing to several trees being uprooted. These were factors that attributed to Kirsty taking an au naturale mud facial. An event that was much to the amusement of her partner!! The wet wipes had an unexpected use! Clean and with dignity intact she carried on as women do. A couple of socially distanced bridge photos taken, we continued to Brand End Farm (or those who have taken part in the Bullock Smithy, the "Barky Dog" farm, which lived up to its name).

We continued onwards to Booth Farm around Tor Rock before climbing Chrome Hill, which all the group completed and were rewarded with outstanding views of the Derbyshire countryside. At the foot of Parkhouse Hill we divided into two groups, those who wished to climb the hill and those who wished to walk round. We reassembled at the road below Hitter Hill and, as time was getting on, a decision was made not to ascend High Wheeldon hill but to take a shorter route to Crowdicote via Glutton Bridge and Underhill. Face-coverings in place, most of the group entered the Packhorse pub for lunch whilst a few walkers, who were socially distancing, chose to stay outdoors. Contact details given for Covid we sat at separate tables in separate rooms so we couldn't have interacted anyway. The staff did their best but it did take the full hour for everyone to receive the food they'd ordered; we did feel those outside as it was chillier now. Once gathered outside some normality was regained, as Sid was awarded his badge for achieving his 300th walk. Well done Sid.

In good spirits we followed the valley to Pilsbury Castle Hills, onto Pilsbury turning right down the road to the Ford. We climbed uphill, a path I have known to be muddier, to the road junction where we turned left then right to High Sheen Hill farm. We made our way to rejoin the Manifold Trail, again not as wet and muddy as I had expected, along the valley towards Longnor. On nearing the centre of the village we were greeted by the tempting smell of fish and chips from the local chip shop; if the queue hadn't been as long I'm sure they would have sold a few more portions. An enjoyable walk, a good route which had followed some unfamiliar but scenic paths coupled with good company. Thanks to him indoors for leading! (Sharon Whitworth)

Yorkshire Water Walk [22] Gargrave - Wed 30th September

Participants: 6 Leader: Brian Campbell

Difficult times bring out the best in us!! Or does it? With the Covid pandemic nearly having its epicenter in the North, prudence is the right way forward. With that in mind, I walked with only the permitted 6 people. However, to allow more people to complete the walk, I took a group on the "marshal's" walk thus giving more members a chance to do it.

The walk started at Gargrave and it was the first time I had done over 20 miles for months of lockdown - and did I feel it the day after! Just one of those days that started OK despite the forecast but rained the entire afternoon, which drenched us to the skin and made me realize just what I had been missing! The group consisted of more women than men - they do have the stamina - and a good pace was set as it was only a small party with no chance of a rest over stiles etc. The route took us over parts of the Pennine Way along some gentle grassy fields to Thornton in Craven where we stopped at St Mary's church.

What a must stop - everything was there from Latin inscriptions on the church walls to a "Holy Well" that had existed since 1764 - well (pardon the pun) worth a visit. The church was open and the most positive welcoming vicar offered us shelter and a warm loo inside. We would have stayed there for much longer but a funeral was about to take place and we would obviously have taken them over the permitted numbers.

The pub stop was at Lothersdale about half way around (Hare & Hounds). What a lovely pub. Covid compliant which provided a very safe environment where we could sit together, eat and drink. The afternoon weather had got much worse but was well worth carrying on to actually see and pass alongside a real reservoir (Elslack). An anti-climax afterwards as we only had footpaths, roads and the long haul back to Gargrave in the rain. Whether it was the excitement of seeing a real reservoir or just the good company remains a mystery, but all of the participants booked on the following month's

YWW walk, despite having wet underclothes but wearing a big smile at the finish. Thanks to all for their excellent company on the day. (Brian Campbell)

Privateers Walk -Thurs 8th October

Participants: 11 Leader: Mike Warner.

Starting at 10.00 am for an Irregulars' walk; no that's not possible, are you sure? Yes, I was told that's the start time. Great, another few hours in bed. It was a fine day, not too cold and not too hot with a hint of rain forecast for later in the day. So, turning up at 9.45 to the Old Wetherby railway station and there they all were waiting for the off. We set off across the golf course. Like the last time I was here it was very soggy under foot. We made our way across to the village of Linton, much favoured by footballers and their WAGS. Houses at eye-watering prices, with beautifully laid out gardens. We turned right at the end of the lane to the only ascent of the day - a gradual climb up a flight of steps. Walking on to reach the village of Sicklinghall where we stopped for our mid-morning break.

After a good 20 minutes and coffee drunk, sandwiches eaten it was the 2-minute call and we were off again along bridle paths and tracks to arrive at Spofforth. We crossed the old railway bridge next to what was NER line from Harrogate. In 1911 the station had a catchment area of 1534 people. The line sold 1389 tickets in that year. Its only claim to fame is it was the first Yorkshire railway station to be closed by Dr Beeching on the 6th January 1964. We stopped at the Castle Hotel in Spofforth for our lunch stop and where we were seated at a social distance by a waitress who was a little disappointed that we were not all ordering food. After a very pleasant 60 minutes we walked across to have a look at the Castle, which was the main seat of the Percy family, one of the most influential families in the north of England. It was built by William de Percy in the 11th century. A real Privateer! After Spofforth we picked up the old railway line that took us back to Wetherby, passing under many old bridges to the old Railway station and our cars. Thanks to Mike for leading a very enjoyable walk. (Mike Colley)

Astray from Harrogate - Wed 14th October

Participants: 7 Leader: Reg Tayler

I think this walk should have been named "A Tour of the most desirable places to live in the Harrogate District" We started on a beautiful Autumn morning on the Stray close to Reg's penthouse suite, with seven people, for once the ladies outnumbering the gents. The forecast wasn't good, with rain expected by lunchtime, but we enjoyed the trees doing their display against a blue sky as we walked towards Crimble and a bit of the Harrogate Ringway. Does anyone remember Crimplene? It was a drip dry, non-iron fabric modified from Terylene that ICI took over and named after Crimble Beck. Continuing through Ridding Park estate we crossed to the outskirts of Follifoot, picking up Crimble Beck again, over a very muddy field to Spofforth where we had our 10.0'clock break looking at Spofforth Castle. On to Kirkby Overblow (a favourite of Leeds footballers to live), too early for a pub stop so onto North Rigton and The Square and Compass pub where we were made very welcome and tucked away from the diners who were rather better dressed than we were. The beer and tea were good and generous bowls of triple-cooked chunky chips were excellent (they ought to have been at £5 a bowl, HOW MUCH?!). There had been a quick shower whilst we were indoors, but it held off as we crossed many sodden fields to Brackenthwaite and picked up the Ringway again to the outskirts of Harrogate (the posh end). Reg took us through lots of paths and alleyways that I had never walked before, and I have lived all my life in this area. On passing the playing fields of Ashfield College (Public School of course) we made our way to Fulwith Mill Lane (Millionaires' Row) where we got an absolute deluge, and Vera discovered that in her hurry after sleeping in, she had left her waterproof behind. She was loaned a pertex, which couldn't really cope but kept the worst off. We sheltered for a while under the trees looking forlorn, but the residents obviously weren't going to take pity on us and open their remote-controlled gates to allow access to their multi garages to shelter. We gave up and headed back to the Stray to finish our 20.6 mile walk. (Tricia Hesford)

Ancient Woodland Walks [4] - Wed 21st October

Participants: 10 Leader: Reg Tayler

Autumn, the season of mists and mellow fruitfulness has arrived. Well, we certainly got the mists but did the conversation provide the mellow fruitfulness? Fruity in places maybe. Reg's walk started from the top of Sutton Bank. The first challenge was finding the right car park in the mist. Reg rounded up some of the lost but sadly Vera was defeated by the mist and a loss of GPS signal at a vital moment. Eventually, ten walkers plus Tizzy set off through the murk.

The walk followed the escarpment from above the White Horse to the North York Moor centre. On a clear day the views from here are well known - the best view in England as claimed by James Herriot. Pick your day with care if you are doing a catch up walk. We then dipped down into Garbutt wood and spent the next hour following paths down and up and down and up and down through undisputedly ancient woods. Lake Gormire, another favourite spot was somewhere down there but we couldn't see it in the mists. Down on the plain below the escarpment things were clearer and we had a tour of several little villages - Thirlby, Sutton under the Whitecliff, Balk, Thirkleby and Kilburn. This should have maximised the chance of finding a pub open at lunchtime but not today. The "available for lease" sign on the pub in Sutton was a forlorn sight. We got lucky at lunch time finding three picnic benches on the green at Thirkleby.

Between villages we tested our abilities in various consistencies of mud. The cameras were on hand to catch the unfortunate but miraculously no one took a tumble or lost a shoe. Nigel and Ian avoided the best of the mud by opting out at Kilburn and taking the direct climb up the steps to the White Horse. The remaining 8 (is a 20% loss ok in these times?) splodged on to Oldstead. The final long climb from Oldstead up the old drove road past the chapel at Scotch Corner finished most of us off though Pam and Tizzy could probably have romped round again. Back at the top it was still shrouded in mists. A return visit on a sunny day is definitely recommended. Thanks to Reg for another lovely walk in the woods even if mired in gore. **(Helen Johnson)**

Six Sails and Two Blast Furnaces - Wed 21st October

Participants: 14 Leader: Sid Upton

We gathered at the appointed place in Duffield, all 13 of us. Someone pointed out that this was an unlucky number and that we were in for a hard day. However, salvation was at hand in the form of walker number 14, Luigi, arriving late and blaming an errant satnav system. A muttering was heard that the fault with the satnav was situated firmly in the driving seat of his car. Luigi eventually admitted that this may possibly have been the case and so we all set off in cheerful spirits albeit a little later than planned.

The weather forecast was dreadful with torrential rain of biblical proportion expected for the whole day. For once luck was on our side and the weather took pity on us, and we suffered no more than an intermittent drizzle for most of the day. Sid set a cracking pace as we headed off through the beautiful rolling countryside of South Derbyshire. We all knew it was beautiful because we had seen photographs of the area when the sun had been shining! The cloud and drizzle managed to obscure most of the views. The route took us through varied terrain with a good mix of beautiful woodland, attractive villages and open fields. We visited two 19th Century brick-built blast furnaces gently crumbling into ruin, now situated oddly in a green field, and then onwards to the lunch stop. This was The Black Boy at Heage (the name remains but in these enlightened politically correct times the signage has been removed), which welcomed us and gave us brief shelter from the elements.

On again through the rain during the afternoon, passing a magnificent six sailed windmill, more woods, farmland, a golf course and on to visit one of our number not able to join us on the day. To say John-Paul was a little surprised to see 14 wet, muddy walkers on his patio is an understatement but he took it all in his stride. We chatted for a short while and then it was on again heading for the finish and the cars with the promise of dry clothes. Everyone agreed it had been a really good day and our thanks go to Sid for leading. **(Mike Arnold)**

Willy's Wooley Walk - Thurs 22nd October

Participants: 11 Leader: John Williams

The walk commenced from the car park behind West Bretton Village Hall. It was pavement plodding at first, through the village and past the Wooley Edge Services. After crossing the M1 bridge we walked on a track above a railway tunnel and through woodland before starting a long climb over a succession of fields. All went well until the last field before Woolley Edge Lane. The footpath had been obliterated by crops by an inconsiderate farmer. John and Sid eventually found the way out tucked away into a difficult to see corner. The next stage was down to Woolley village before passing the churchyard and starting the climb through fields where, again, the line of the path wasn't clear due to crops. After reaching the road there was another stretch of road walking to near a memorial which is at the scene of a serious road accident in 1993. At this point it was a long downhill to Haigh Village. Unfortunately since I was last on that path heavy plant had churned it up badly. We had a lunch stop in a little garden at Haigh. This was later than I would have liked but due to ground conditions there was nowhere suitable earlier in the walk. After crossing the M1 access roads we headed down Huddersfield Road towards the Country Park. Unfortunately, the gates were padlocked ostensibly because of Covid, which seemed strange because the gate was open at the adjoining Sculpture Park. I found another unofficial way in so we were able to walk some of the last part of the intended route. The weather was kinder than it had been forecast which was a big plus. **(John Williams)**

Yorkshire Water Walk [23] Poppleton - Wed 28th October

Participants: 6 Leader: Brian Campbell

This was going to be the last of this year's Yorkshire Water Walks, with a background of flat fields, leafy woodlands and gently flowing rivers of the Nidd and Ouse. No work for me as Jeff and Pat had provided the route and pub stop, leaving me to just follow the line on GPS. The marshal's walk went well with me being out of the picture as a contact of a contact had been tested positive for Covid, and although a very low risk, I did not want to pass the risk on to others. (all turned out OK with my contact not infected). Pat, Mick, Richard and Mel did the marshal's walk and I followed it up with their detailed route the following week. It was nice weather when we walked and talked about tiers - always a never ending discussion as no one has any idea what it all means and what we should do, can do or not do. And when it would change next!

On the way we saw many strange things such as rhea, guanaco, several species of pigs and donkeys. All very interesting! The route took us over railway crossings, vague footpaths alongside the river Nidd and Ouse and of course a real YW reservoir at Moor Monkton. The strange thing about this reservoir is that it has a concrete divide in the middle - a

mystery - until Dave M's Google showed it had been put there to enable anglers to use both side of the reservoir for fishing competitions. The group was much the same as the previous YWW walk with the addition of Reg. The walk was quite flat, as you would expect in East Yorkshire (Ed: North Yorkshire!), so although an hour went by quickly in the pub (excellent at Covid prevention) we finished mid-afternoon, despite me requesting that we all bring a torch as the clocks had gone back the previous weekend. So another YWW walk under our belt and into the 5th year for next year's walks. It was looking good to finish the series at the latest in 2021 but may now creeping into a 2022 finish. I enjoyed the walk and pleasant company - a nice change from lockdown restrictions soon to come. We are all looking forward to next year (or the year after) when walking becomes the new norm again. (Brian Campbell)

RECENT AWARDS

**Top: Dave, Tricia;
Below: Luigi, Sid, Alan.**



A COVID LOCKDOWN POEM Author unknown

I won't arise now, and go to Innisfree
 I'll sanitise the doorknob and make a cup of tea.
 I won't go down to the sea again; I won't go out at all,
 I'll wander lonely as a cloud from the kitchen to the hall.
 There's a green-eyed yellow monster to the north of Kathmandu
 But I shan't be seeing him just yet and nor, I think will you.
 While the dawn comes up like thunder on the road to Mandalay
 I'll make my bit of supper and eat it off a tray
 I shall not speed my bonnie boat across the sea to Skye,
 Or take the rolling road from Birmingham to Rye
 About the woodland, just right now, I am not free to go
 To 'keep out' posters or the cherry hung with snow.
 And now, I wouldn't be travelling much, within the realms of gold
 Or get me to Milford Haven; all that's been put on hold
 Give me your hands, I shan't request, albeit we are friends
 Nor come within a mile of you, until this virus ends.



Left: Vera, Sara, Helen, Reg and Dave demonstrating social distancing. This reservoir is five miles from my home and was I sick of seeing it during lockdown local walks!

Below: Jayne and Lesley make good use of a bus shelter; Tricia and Nigel - I could make some facetious comment like 'spot the ass?' but as it's my last issue I'll be kind.



Left: Pam and Tizzy make arun for it as the creature guarding the wood pile looks fierce;

Below: John W limbo dancing under the fallen tree. Ian was too quick for the photographer and passes by in a blur.



PENRITH WEEKEND - 2nd to 4th OCTOBER 2020

Hall's Fell That Ends Well - Friday 2nd Participants: 10 Leader: John Whitworth

After a pleasant drive up we arrived at Scales with time to spare. Most of us parked up near the pub and walked down to meet John and Sharon at Scales Farm where we were to start. I heard "We are not going up there are we?" - the smile on the face of our leader said it all! Blencathra (2,848ft), one of the most northerly hills of the Lake District, towered before us. It has 6 separate fell tops of which Hall's Fell is the highest, so yes, you know which one we were to take! We set off and were soon on a steep rocky descent down to Scaley Beck which of course meant a steep rocky climb up. With a couple of helping hands from John W and Mike Y we turned right onto the path up Hall's Fell. It was quite a steep ascent so with a couple of stops to re-group, assistance from John A. where there was a gully, and some scrambling on all fours, we were on Hall's Fell ridge where the fun started. It was quite windy and exposed so most of us were leaning over gripping the rocks tightly whilst selecting firm footholds. Once able to stand upright we were able to take in the spectacular views. We were soon at Hallsfell Top where there is a concrete ring trig. We sat for a while to take in the stunning scenery before taking the path down which took us onto Scales fell and back down to the farm. A great 5 miles and a fantastic start to the weekend. Thanks John. (Jayne Astbury)

High Cup Nicked - Saturday 3rd

Participants: 15 Leader: Mike Colley

We set off from Dufton village car park in the pouring rain at the usual time to pass the YHA and then turned left into Wood Lane - a grassy track which eventually leads to the village of Brampton. Just before Brampton we exited onto a metalled road for a few yards and turned left onto Frith Lane (track) to follow the path along the edge of Flakebridge Wood with Frith Beck on our right. Eventually emerging from the woods to follow the route across the fields to the village of Murton where we stopped for morning coffee break. There was a shelter with a seat for those who arrived first and a seat outside in the rain. Otherwise it was standing room only.

After morning break two of our number decided to abandon the walk. We then trudged on for a few yards from the village to then make what seemed an endless ascent round the edge of Murton Pike, face on into the wind and rain. On reaching the summit we traversed due north across the moorland to reach our intended destination, High Cup Nick. Despite the weather we did have a reasonable view of the valley although not beyond that (not as good as the sunny day when I was there 17 years ago). Finally, with the wind behind us, we set off along the Pennine Way towards Dufton. Half a mile or so after leaving High Cup there was a strange episode involving a molehill, a walking pole, and a nose. An incident I would rather not mention in writing, if anyone is interested, ask John A. or Sid Upton. We finally got to the road which lead us down into Dufton, where it was boots off and a dash across the village green in the rain, and with muzzles on we entered The Stag Inn for a welcome pint. Thanks Mike for a good day out, pity about the weather - you must have be praying to the wrong god. (Sid Upton)

Well I Askham - Sunday 4th

Participants: 11 Leaders: John and Sharon Whitworth, route originally devised by Jeff Coulson

Having had a very wet walk the previous day, that had 100mm of rain, we moved to another planet for the Sunday walk, one that was warm and sunny. At the start of the walk, the River Eamont was quite fast flowing and a little high, but by the end of the walk it was in full spate.

The walk started at Clifton Cross car park on the A6, just south of Penrith. From there, we walked alongside the River Lowther and Yanwath Wood, past Lowther campsite on a good, metalled lane and on through the Lowther Estate. On turning right to Askham Bridge, there was a view of the splendid façade of Lowther Castle and we passed some magnificent Short Horn cattle with calves further on, as well as Askham Hall. From the bridge, we went onward through Askham, a picturesque village, and up Askham Fell.

Lunch was taken on the other side of the fell, in warm sunshine and with a fantastic view of Ullswater above Pooley Bridge. After lunch, we continued to Sockbridge. On the way to there, we walked through a series of freshly ploughed fields that had soft, very muddy surfaces: oh for those lovely metalled surfaces! From Sockbridge, the next village was Yanwath. The path to which crossed a rickety bridge over a beck in full spate, just before it met the River Eamont. It was decided to cross this one at a time, with John W, who has unbounded enthusiasm for testing the structural integrity of bridges, going first. Leaving Yanwath, we were able to walk on good tracks to Eamont Bridge and back to our cars at Clifton Cross. Thanks for a great, thoroughly enjoyable walk John, Sharon and Jeff. John - you can have as many chilli symbols as you want for the walk enjoyability. (Patrick Loveday)



PENRITH OCTOBER 2020





A couple of bridge photos to close my last newsletter....



Accept that some days you're the pigeon and some days you're the statue