

Doubler Stones – Thursday 1st September 2022

The winds of change are upon us, as summer slips into autumn but with the passing of the seasons comes fresh challenges with the first of the 2022 autumn series of Thursday walks. To make the most of the better weather, and longer daylight hours, September usually brings, compared to October and November, I've frontloaded the longer walks, this year. We are also welcoming our friends from South Pennine on at least one walk each month and Both Pendle Pete and Sue joined us on our first walk of the season.

Back in the familiar surroundings of Idle Village, we welcomed our Guest Rob from Romford, A Fulham season ticket holder I believe!!! With 26 miles in front of us we departed promptly at 8.00am heading down Railway Road towards Thackley and the river Aire, which we would follow, through the Denso Marston Nature Reserve all the way to Roberts Park in Saltaire. We had the good fortune to spot a number of Kingfishers flitting in and out of the trees, thanks to Mikes' excellent eyesight!!!

Leaving the park, we headed through Milner Field, Titus salt juniors' estate, very little now remains of the original house, but both North & South Lodges are still occupied. On reaching Gilstead, we passed the house, where world renowned and controversial astronomer and physicist Sir Fred Hoyle, was born in 1915, educated at Bingley Grammar School and Cambridge University, he went on to coin the phrase 'The Big Bang Theory' in 1949, although he was arguing against this being the correct theory for the creation of the universe!!! We proceeded over Gilstead Moor, which offered us the first signs of autumn, with its extensive display of purple heather, which would be a constant companion on today's walk. The moor also offers extensive views of the market town of Bingley and we quickly reached our first stop of the day at Prince of Wales Park in Eldwick. Making use of the picnic tables or Panic tables as Chris would call them!!! Suitably refreshed the reinforced and now eleven walkers, were soon heading off through Mickletonwaite and East Morton reaching Sunnydale Reservoir, which due to the hot summer we are still experiencing, was very low and where a new set of steps has made access to the woodland trail easier to navigate.

Crossing Ilkley Road, we followed the paths through High Bradup and Bucking Hill, over Rombalds Moor, where the continued deforestation has decimated the once impressive woodland, sometimes on walks you have views and vistas that gladden the heart, and at other times it leaves you in despair. We did though have another 'chance' celebrity meeting, this time with ex Leeds United and Scotland footballer John Hendrie, who was out walking his dog. After spending time with him, reminiscing about his career, playing at Leeds, Bradford City, Middlesbrough and managing Barnsley we left Rombalds Moor, negotiating Long Ridge and on reaching the trig point, the Doubler Stones and our lunch stop could be seen in the distance on Addingham High Moor. We decamped on the rocks for our refreshments, where we could see Silsden nestling in the valley below and to Petes delight, Pendle Hill in the distance, which we estimated to be about 15 miles away. After lunch we headed towards West Morton, passing one of Simon Armitage's Stanza Stones, (Dew), on route to Riddlesden, Simon Armitage, appointed Poet Laureate in 2019 was commissioned at the Ilkley Literature festival in 2010, to produce a set of poems, carved into stone that were to be dispersed over a 47 mile trail, Between Marsden, (Armitage's home town) and Ilkley. They follow a water theme, (snow, rain, mist, dew, puddle, beck). There is reputed to be a seventh

secret stone, in the Pennine watershed area, waiting for intrepid explorers to stumble on by chance!!!

We continued the walk passing the Television relay station and heading down Banks lane, turning east through Larksfield Farm and Heighs Farm, before commencing a steep and at times unintentionally rapid descent to reach the Leeds/Liverpool canal at East Riddlesden Hall. Picking up the towpath back to Bingley Five Rise Locks, for our afternoon cuppa at the Five Rise Café, where we sat outside to enjoy the late afternoon sunshine. During the recce last Sunday, on this section I became part of an Ultra walk which covers the 127 miles from Liverpool to Leeds. For whatever reason, spectators and competitors alike thought I was part of the walk!!! Once back on the move, we soon reached Shipley and Windhill, leaving the towpath we crossed the canal and took the woodland path, (a disused railway line), through Thackley before climbing to Town Gate, (arriving at 5.45pm - GPS's checked and 26 miles agreed). The group decamped to the White Bear for liquid refreshments before the short descent of the High Street brought us back to Idle village.

Next Thursday sees us on the second of our autumn series, this time heading out to the Washburn Valley on a 30 mile romp, where we will get the chance to see the water level, in Lindley Wood reservoir and face the challenge of climbing all the steps up Otley Chevin!!! There will also be an explanation of the intriguing title of the walk – Blue Oyster.