

Blue Oyster – Thursday 8th September 2022

It appears only five walkers do not fear the reaper!!! It also appears the seasons don't fear the reaper either? Nor do the wind, the sun or the rain, we had all three today. If that introduction jogs a few memories, then Blue Oyster Cult are playing Leeds arena next month!!! However the title of the walk has no reference to the BOC but this would become clear to the group, when we departed Otley but we had 24 miles to walk before then.

I would like to say, as soon as we heard the Holy Trinity church clock strike eight we were off like the release of a coiled spring, but the walk leader was taken by surprise, when it was mentioned, it's four minutes past, are we getting off? Heading out of Idle along Railway Road towards Thackley. A rapid descent of Buck Wood brought us to the banks of the river Aire which we crossed via the impressive iron footbridge, heading east this week, we had fields and farmland boarded by deep green hedges to our left and the river keeping us company on our right as we quickly reached Esholt. Our first ascent of the day took us up the historic Primrose Row to Tong Park. We headed for the stepping stones across Gill Beck, which can often be under water during the winter months but were easily negotiated today. Then followed a long steady climb to Hawksworth quarry and the summit of Odda Hill. The view from the top usually gives us a prospective of the days walk, we can usually see in the far distance the aerial mast, on Norwood Edge. This would be the turning point of our walk, high above the Washburn Valley. We can normally also see the summit of Otley Chevin, which we would be scrambling over mid-afternoon but today it was all shrouded in mist and low cloud. After dropping down Derry Hill into Menston we picked up the Ebor Way at Bleach Mill, following it all the way to the Cow & Calf rocks in Ilkley for our first stop at the Cow & Calf café, arriving at 10.55am, where the drinks were kindly provided by Chris. After our first group photo, with the famous rocks as our backdrop, we were soon heading down to the River Wharfe at Ben Rhydding. Crossing our second Ironbridge of the day, but this time having to share it with motor vehicles. Plans have been approved for a second bridge over the river here. The sooner it is built the better!!! We continued on to Denton and started our long and at times meandering climb over Askwith Moor where undulating moorland of Green and brown, interspersed with purple heather stretched for miles on either side. This afforded us peace and tranquillity as sheep stood like statues before scattering in all directions as we approached. The hedgerows contained wild flowers of pink, white and yellow, lining our way as the spectacular views of the 'Golf Balls' at the American airbase of Menwith Hill came into view.

With the promise of lunch in the air, we quickly reached the village of Timble, where we planned to decamp on the seats outside the village hall for our refreshments but these were out of action due to engineering works, new gas pipes I believe. The scene was typically British, one man working in a digger and three others stood around watching!!! This is where the skills and experience of the walk leader come into play, with complete calmness, I just moved the lunch stop to the Timble Inn herb garden!!! After lunch we picked up the Six Dales trail through the Washburn Valley to Norwood, dropping down to Lindley Wood Reservoir we followed its banks through the woods, where we found spotting any water a challenge!!! Hopefully we will get some persistent and heavy rain in the near future to replenish the dwindling water stocks, but hopefully not on a Thursday!!! Departing the reservoir we made good progress reaching Otley, and checking the clock in the market square

it said - 4.10pm. This time opting for Takeaway coffees from Costa, kindly purchased by Kevin, we took advantage of the late afternoon sunshine and sat on the seats outside All Saints Church, Where fellow walker from last week, Gill on her way home from work on her bike, stopped for a chat. I'll claim this as a celebrity meeting, (with only one degree of separation!!!), Cousin of long distance swimmer, (and fellow Thursday walker), Madeleine, who had swum the 10.5 miles of Lake Windermere yesterday in 7 hours. Leaving Otley, we headed up Station Road as a precursor to the steep climb to the top of the Chevin. Watching the group struggle to the top sparked an idea inside me for my next business venture. I propose a cable car ride from the top of Station Road to Surprise View car Park!!! I'm looking for investors if you are interested? Investment shares start at £1000 each - this time next year we'll be millionaires!!!

After reaching the top of this arduous ascent, we exited the Chevin by Yorke Gate and it was plain sailing into Yeadon, via West Carlton. We were now on the final leg, dropping down through Engine Fields, we reached Gill Lane and Esholt woods. Passing the impressive Home Farm Business Park on the Avenue, we quickly reached Idle swing bridge over the Leeds/Liverpool canal and our last ascent, (I've heard that before), to Mitchel Lane and Idle recreation ground and our cars parked in Idle village car Park, arriving at 6.40pm. - GPS's checked and 30 miles agreed.

Next week sees us on our third walk of the series, this time to Cabbage Hill. Where we will face two challenges, Post Hill, (even Ralph went pale at its mere mention!!!), and the Archway steps. A walk not for the faint hearted but if you survived this week, you are well prepared for these two challenges. Ropes & crampons although recommended are not essential - It will be, as all my walks tend to be, an emotional rollercoaster!!!