

Otley Chevin - Thursday 27th October 2022

Walk nine of the autumn series saw us heading out to Otley Chevin, which is east of Idle but we set off heading west towards Bingley. I'd heard so much about this small market town from local residents, Ralph and Julia and wanted to see for myself, what it had to offer. With both a river and a canal, I thought it might be a water metropolis and allow us to hire a gondola and undertake some punting, but I soon realised by talking to locals, that it is widely accepted that Bingley is not Venice!!! However it does have the famous five rise locks, which was our destination for our midmorning stop.

Seven strong this week, we headed out of idle village in the early morning drizzle - which was nothing to the reunited check point one from the Ulfkil stride - Kevin, Trevor & Roger. If you thought last Thursday's walk was wet, you should have been marshalling check point one at this challenge event back in July!!! Note to self, never agree to man a checkpoint out in the open - a village hall or at least a marquee is required!!! We headed through the Holy Trinity church grounds, taking hidden tracks down to the river Aire at Thackley, following the river bank west through the Denso Marston Nature reserve all the way to Shipley. Crossing Otley Road we were able to take the path through the Aire Sculpture Trail this year. It was closed last autumn due to commercial development but the new Lidl and Costa are both now open and the developers have moved on. There are 15 sculptures, starting with the dog in the dingy on Baildon Bridge and finishing with the Octopus at the bottom of Victoria Road in Saltaire. From here we headed to Hirst Wood, dropping down to the river bank and taking advantage of the two new footbridges, which gave us access to the more remote area of the woods. We decided to take the adventurous route, going under the canal, through the arches. A route better suited to summer, the path as such was just about navigable and we scrambled through to the north bank of the canal. We then picked up the towpath following it through Dowley Gap, to Three Rise and eventually Five Rise Locks, via North Bog for our midmorning stop.

Suitably refreshed and the early drizzle having abated we started the steady climb towards Eldwick Manor House, built in 1696 at Lane Head, before crossing the riding gallops, where we paused to watch the horses going through their early morning paces. We then skirted around Pennythorn Hill on our way to the Whitehouse – no not that Whitehouse, we are walking in West Yorkshire not Washington DC. We then dropped down to Low Spring Farm, crossing Gill Beck before the long and at times steep climb to Hawksworth and the top of Odda Hill. From here we should have been able to see our destination, 'Otley Chevin' in the distance, but as previously this year the views were blocked by low cloud and mist, but there was no hurry to get there as we had our planned lunch stop in Menston to partake in first. From Odda Hill we quickly reached Derry Hill and then there was just the short descent into Menston and our lunch at the Cornerstones Community Café in the Methodist church. Paninis and bacon sandwiches being popular choices today - along with the obligatory teas and coffees, although Chris for some reason had a ginger beer - I assume he read Enid Blyton as a youngster, because he actually said, 'can I have lashings and lashings of ginger beer please'!!!

After this refuelling stop, we followed the track over the railway to Ellar Ghyll, where we took Gill Brow, with its extensive views of Otley, (all the mist and cloud had dispersed by now and it was turning into a warm and at times summery day), to West Chevin Road,

passing the Clarion Lodge Campsite and West Chevin Farm on the climb to Moor Top, taking the path east over Guiseley Moor, before emerging onto Moor Lane for the short descent into Guiseley, stopping at the impressive cenotaph, that not only commemorates soldiers from the first and second world wars but also those who served in the 1899-1902 Boer War and the more recent Falklands War. We decamped on the seats to have our mid-afternoon stop in the late October sunshine. The weather had improved so much there was even talk of the beer garden at the White Bear!!! In case you are wondering, to answer the question I posed at the end of last week's report, there was a crackling fire in the White Bear, which the walkers managed to commandeer.

Before leaving Guiseley we headed To St Oswald's church which was the church where on 29th December 1812, Patrick Bronte married Maria Branwell - there is a plaque beside the altar rail to commemorate this union. Without this marriage we would not have had our local literary heroines Charlotte, Emily and Anne Bronte, who wrote the classics, Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights and the Tenant of Wildfell Hall respectively - 1812 was not just a good year for Russian overtures but also a good year for English literature!!! Leaving the church we headed through Silverdale to Esholt Junction, descending to Spring Wood, where we crossed Guiseley Beck, taking the steep and at times rocky climb into Jerrison Wood, before reaching Esholt Village, with the Famous Woolpack Public House, from the soap opera Emmerdale - which recently celebrated its 50 years anniversary. Maybe due to the half-term holiday, there were a lot of tourists in the village and it was good to see it so busy. Leaving Esholt we picked up the River Aire, for the short walk back to Thackley and steady climb from the river to Idle Village. This week taking the longer but more picturesque route through Field Wood, which is designated as ancient woodland, (that is any wood that has continually been woodland from before the year 1600), to Ainsbury Avenue. There then followed the long climb to Park Road, but we did pass Dennyfield, the home of Thackley AFC - if you haven't heard the Dennyfield roar then you are not a true football supporter!!! We arrived back at the car park just turned 5.00pm - GPS's checked and the general consensus was 24 miles walked - although Mike's legs were telling him 25 miles - maybe that's due to age creeping up on you Mike, rather than your Legs innate ability to judge distance – just a thought!!!

Next week sees the calendar turning from October to November and with the clocks going back one hour this weekend, we will have one hour less daylight to complete our walk in. The walk to the atmospheric Kirkstall Abbey is though shorter, at only 20 miles - lunch is scheduled for Café Dino in Horsforth. We also plan to visit the Japanese Gardens in Hall Park and view the poignant Hornbeam tree, which has been replanted this year and should provide a much improved experience than on last year's walk!!!