

East Riddlesden Hall – Wednesday 26th July 2023

As I awoke and looked out of my bedroom window, the weather was more promising than last weekend, when it had rained heavily on both days and made for a very wet recce on Sunday. July is turning out to be one of the wettest on record, due to the jet stream, being to the south, meaning low pressure was sitting over the UK, whilst mainland Europe was experiencing a heatwave, highlighted by the fires on the Greek island of Rhodes, with all holiday flights from the UK being cancelled until next Monday and tourists being flown home to escape the dangerous environment - if only we could have sent them some of last weekend's rain!!!

We assembled in Idle village carpark, for the 8.00am start, and ten strong, including newbie Steve, we headed up the High Street and Westfield Lane for an early climb towards Idle Hill. Trevor said he was pleased that the walk was on a Wednesday this week, instead of the usual Thursday because he was going to the cinema tomorrow, to see the new Barbie film, which was only released into cinemas last weekend. I said, 'I thought it would not be his type of film' but he said he had already seen it three times - tomorrow would be his fourth time!!!

We were soon dropping back down from Idle Hill into Shipley, passing through the new Windhill Wild Park, which was opened on July 13th and is a safe play area aimed specifically at and designed by girls, who live locally. From here we quickly reached the Leeds/Liverpool canal, at the Gallows Bridge boat yard. Heading west towards Hirst Wood, we watched a pair of Mink, frolicking on the opposite bank of the canal, before slipping away into the undergrowth. From Hirst Wood we followed the River Aire to Cottingley Bridge and the St Ives Estate. We took our mid-morning stop at the Ivy Kitchen, where we sat outside taking advantage of the morning sunshine. Teas and coffees drunk, we headed out through the Hollin Plantation, passing the Druid on our way to Thwaites Brow, before dropping down through Park Wood, reaching Keighley train station, where the heritage Keighley and Worth Valley Railway, (KWVR), offices are based.

I had received a phone call on Monday from the KWVR, saying they had Trevor in their offices with a photograph from last Thursday, of him driving the 'Prince of Wales Express' with nine passengers on board, and could he use that as evidence, to secure a job driving their trains!!! I thought they were phoning me for a reference but they just wanted to ask me if I knew which care home, he had escaped from so they could return him!!!

From here it was only a twenty minute walk through Worth Village, to East Riddlesden Hall, where we arrived at 12.10pm, and on checking GPS's, agreed 12 miles had already been walked. The hall was built in 1642, by Halifax clothier, James Murgatroyd, who was a royalist and supporter of King Charles the first in the English Civil war. The grade one listed building, has a medieval tithe barn and a walled garden in the grounds. It was used as a film location, in the 1992, adaptation of Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights and more recently, the BBC drama, Gunpowder in 2017.

The original Bothy is now the gift shop and more importantly, the tea rooms, where lunch was taken by the group, again decamping to the outside seating area. There was a stall selling bottles of Gin, and they were providing free samples, to prospective customers. Ian was first in the queue, and I'm sure took most of the groups samples for himself – he was certainly in high spirits both metaphorically and physically on the way back!!! We spent a full hour

looking around the house and grounds as well as having lunch and planned to reassemble, at 1.15pm, for the return walk to Idle, but the fire alarms went off, just turned 1.00pm and we were asked to evacuate. This is where Christine had a spot of luck, she had just been handed an ice cream and with the alarms sounding, the payment systems went down and was told she did not need to pay and could head to the assembly point, with her freebie!!! We were still being blessed by the weather – although it was starting to cloud over and the wind was getting up. From here we headed down to Bingley, Five Rise Locks following the canal tow path, before climbing, to The Heights at Eldwick, and followed Eldwick beck, all the way down to Shipley Glen. Then there was just the small matter of hiking over Baildon Moor, but the stiff climb, is well worth the effort, with its panoramic views from the trig point, and we could see the town of Baildon nestling in the valley below, which was the intended destination of our afternoon stop. And after 19 miles of walking, we took advantage of the seats in the market square. Departing about 3.50pm, the group could sense rain coming and we were trying to out run it as we dropped down to Buck Woods in Thackley, and made quick time reaching the White Bear in Idle, just after 4.30 pm. GPS's checked and 21 miles agreed. The rain was still holding off so we were able to sit in the beer garden, Walk Leader, Kevin joined the drinkers for his first alcoholic drink of 2023 - a cherry cider. After one drink we scuttled down the high street, back to our cars, beating the rain by a good ten minutes!!!

Next month, sees the Thursday walkers, heading out of West Yorkshire, for the first time, in their short three year history. We are heading to North Yorkshire!!! The plan is to walk from Conistone to Kettlewell, for the Scarecrow festival. Lunch will be in the village hall café, which is well worth the visit.

As we will be crossing a county line and may be mistaken for a gang, please make sure you pack your own rucksack and if anyone asks you to carry any small packets of powder for them – just say no!!!