

The Blue Lagoon - Thursday 21st October 2021

After two days of incessant rain we awoke to a more promising morning, and with it not becoming light until about 7.30 am we caught the tail end of last night's full moon, which in October is the Hunters Moon. With a clear sky, it was a much colder day than earlier in the week and six hopeful walkers set forth heading towards the intriguingly named Blue Lagoon. Maybe in hindsight, this walk would have been better scheduled for midsummer, with temperatures touching 30 degrees Celsius and clear blue skies, instead of the late October temperature of 12 degrees? We are though the West Yorkshire LDWA and walking from Bradford not in the Caribbean!!! Note to Julia –now that would be an exchange trip I would be interested in, is there a St Lucia LDWA? As we departed Idle village, the main talk particularly from the male members of the group was whether Brooke Shields would be at the Blue Lagoon today!!! I'll make no further comment or reference to this 1980 film.

It was good to have our backmarker Trevor back in the team after his recent illness, every time we cross the 18 yard line on a football pitch, he always shouts 'everybody out' I assume a throwback to his Bartle Rovers days, when he commanded the back four? Heading east into the morning sunrise, we followed the Leeds/Liverpool canal down to Owl Bridge at Rodley, before cutting up through fields and crossing Rodley Lane to Brookfield Park. Passing the allotments and cenotaphs for both Calverley and Farsley, we followed the Calverley Millennium Way via Hazelbrae to Wadlands Hall Farm, before taking Priesthorpe Lane and cutting up over Woodhall Hills, which provides panoramic views of Leeds and also a tucked away picturesque hamlet, with history dating back to Roman times. We were though now in sight of our destination, crossing Woodhall Road we quickly negotiated the golf course and dropped down to the eagerly anticipated Blue Lagoon. Suddenly the clouds dispersed, the sun shone down and the temperature rose to 30 degrees. Calypso music was playing as the palm trees swayed in the light breeze and there was a sudden joie de vivre amongst the group, so we headed down to the vibrant beachside bar and ordered Pina colada's – sorry, I just nodded off for a second there, I must have been dreaming. On reaching the lagoon, the bullrushes although prominent were starting to die back for the winter and it was a stretch calling the water blue but we had arrived at Thornbury's Blue Lagoon, also known as Woodhall Lakes. It is though, an ideal place for walking and summer picnics. Having walked around the lake and taken a few photographs, we headed off towards Thornbury roundabout and our first stop of the day at the impressive new Starbucks, built on the old Junction Inn site! No Pina coladas, just coffees and teas kindly provided by Chris.

Suitably refreshed we set off through the Gallagher Leisure Park, (for those old enough to remember - built on the old Phoenix Park rugby grounds), with the impressive Odeon cinema as the anchor tenant. The exit from the park for walkers is via one of the narrowest styles imaginable, rucksacks off – all breathe in, but everyone made it!!! Down to the railway at Ducketts Crossing, passing the impressive Halloween dressed house on Wild Grove, through the electronic gates at Wild Grove farm on the way down and steep climb back up to Gibraltar Road - no sign of any Barbary Macaques this morning though!!! Continuing our climb over Owlcoats Hill, we crossed the Stanningley Bypass on the way to West Royd Park, where the old Aston Martin Factory used to be, there is an impressive commemorative stone celebrating the manufacture of the Aston Martin DB4, where a housing estate has replaced

the old factory. There was then a short descent into Farsley and our lunch stop at the trendy Mill Kitchen. Scrambled egg and beans on toast were the popular lunch choices today, although Mike had both, that's beans on toast, with an egg on top!!! Teas and coffees drunk, food consumed and we were on our way heading down through Bagley to the canal at Rodley Barge Bridge. Following the towpath to Horsforth Vale, we crossed the river and started the long steady climb all the way to Rawdon, passing Brodie & Flynn's, (no time for a coffee stop for this hardy group, today!), on route to Knotts Lane and the long ascent to Red Beck, which we followed to Billings Hill. After taking in the panoramic views, we headed over the fields towards Leeds/Bradford Airport and having reached the boundary fence, where we could see numerous planes on the ground, we dropped down over Rawdon Common for our final stop of the day at the Yeadon Stoops, where Judi, on her first Thursday outing, kindly bought teas and coffees for the group.

Suitably refreshed, we were onto the final leg of our walk, taking in Yeadon Tarn and Yeadon Banks on the way down to Engine Fields in Rufford Park. Following the disused railway track between Yeadon and Guiseley, which is now a cycleway, we cut through Belmont Wood and over the railway bridge into Spring Wood, following the tricky path beside Guiseley Beck for a short distance, we then took flatter, wider paths through Jerrison Wood into Esholt village and the famous Woolpack public house, from Emmerdale. Departing Esholt, now heading west into the setting sun, we picked up the River Aire, following the river bank back to Thackley and our final climb of the day to Idle village, where the main body of the group arrived at 4.30 pm, refreshed and feeling better for having another 23 miles in our legs!!! The remaining walkers were unfortunately registered as DNF, (did not finish), having decamped to the White Bear, within sight of the finish line but were unfortunately timed out!!! No names needed, but photographic evidence clearly shows the walkers involved.

Next week sees us on our ninth and final walk of this year's autumn series, heading to Tong Garden Centre. With only 57 shopping days left until Christmas, it will be a chance to start ticking presents off your Christmas list – yes all the Christmas displays are in full swing, after all it is October!!! This is a walk not to be missed unless you are 'the Grinch that stole Christmas'.