

## Salts Mill – Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023

After recent walks from Haworth and Saltaire, it was good to be back in Idle, the group assembled at 8.00am, for the first of two consecutive walks from the village car park, we were thirteen strong, including international jet setters, Phil, recently back from Italy plus Ralph & Julia also just back from a walking holiday in Austria. We had a table booked in Salts Mill diner, at 1.00pm for lunch, so left promptly at 8.00am. We headed out along Ellar Carr Road, picking up tracks towards Dobson Wood, following the contours of the Leeds/Liverpool canal, through Field Wood to Buck Wood in Thackley. I was hoping to achieve the full set of four woods but Rolling Stones guitarist, Ronnie was otherwise engaged!!! From here we followed the north bank of the river Aire all the way to Shipley. Despite the recent wet weather, we had picked a good day for walking, the clouds soon cleared and we were in for a dry and sunny day. It was much more conducive to walking, than this time last year, when on the 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2022, the UK temperature broke records, reaching 40.3C in Lincolnshire. Today it was a good 20 degrees lower, I do not want to start any conspiracy theories but - global cooling perhaps!!! Where's Greta, when she's needed?

Continuing to follow the river west, we soon reached Roberts Park in Saltaire. Before heading out to Milnerfield, and the grounds of Titus Salt's son's house and Gilstead Moor, which provides excellent views of the Market town of Bingley, at Crow Nest. We then dropped down into Prince of Wales Park in Eldwick for our mid-morning stop, at the picnic tables. This also allowed members of the group, who had missed the Flying Scotsman walk, to experience the thrill of a lifetime, by riding on the Prince of Wales Express - check the photographs!!! After our 'elevenses' we headed to the picturesque hamlet of Mickleton, hidden on the south side of Rombalds Moor, it originated as a Viking settlement, in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century. From here we dropped down to the canal, where we followed the towpath back to Saltaire. This time, heading up Victoria Road to the impressive Salts Mill for lunch arriving at 12.50pm.

Titus Salt served time as the Mayor of Bradford and was a Liberal MP in the late 1840's, before losing his seat in 1850. I'm not sure what he would make of the current state of British politics, there were three by-elections being held today, following the fallout from the Sue Grey report, which saw Boris Johnson among others resign their seats!!! During the 1850's Titus Salt, concentrated on his business ventures, introducing Alpaca wool, to the trade and quickly became the largest employer in Bradford and by the 1860's he was in the process of building the mill and village for his workforce. Saltaire being three miles from the centre of Bradford, the idea was to escape the smoke and pollution, caused by the burgeoning number of factories due to the industrial revolution.

Fast forward 160 years, and our cosmopolitan group of retirees, entered the mill not to start a 12 hour shift, manning the looms but to have lunch at Salts diner, with its impressive open plan kitchens, after which, we browsed the upmarket, merchandise on offer as we walked through the mill floors and the **Pièce de résistance**, a visit to the Hockney gallery. Where we were able to view, 'a year in Normandy' an art installation, which connects over 200 interlinking works and at 90.75 metres long it is David Hockney's biggest ever picture - a vibrant, joyful frieze recording the changing seasons in and around his French garden. There was a limited edition, souvenir book of the artwork, on sale for £4000!!!

My latest business idea, is to set up an investment fund, to buy some original Hockney paintings, to help tide us over this current economic crisis. I'm selling shares at £1000 each!!! His painting, Portrait of an artist, (pool with two figures), sold for \$90million in 2018. The highest amount for a living artist. Being a Bradford lad I'm sure I can negotiate a generous discount – so do not miss this once in a lifetime opportunity!!!

I was disappointed that my business ventures from the autumn series last year had no takers. If you had invested, you would be able to reach the top of Otley Chevin in a cable car by now and spend an afternoon at the water theme park, on the site of Bolton Woods quarry - you would also be living in your own £10million pound house and be riding around in a chauffeur driven Bentley. I do though now accept that my business venture to offer trips in a submersible, to see the wreck of the Titanic was not my best idea - but this was the scheme Trevor invested heavily in, he still believes we can turn it around, I've already convinced him to double his investment twice, since the implosion late last month and think I'll be able to go for a third, doubling over the coming weekend!!! People do ask me, where I get my entrepreneurship from, I think I inherited it from my great uncle - Charles Ponzi. He always had a lot of schemes on the go!!!

On departing the mill, at 2.15pm we only had the final, three miles of the walk left to complete. We headed down the canal to Windhill, passing the Saltaire Brewery, despite the brewery walk only taking place last month, I was surprised, that the drinkers from that day had no or at best a hazy recollection of the drinking session after the walk!!! From the brewery, we picked up the disused railway line, through Thackley woods, arriving back in Idle shortly before 3.30pm - GPS's checked and 16 miles agreed. With the White Bear not opening until 4.00pm, the drinkers headed down to the Brewery Tap, for what I assumed would be another night of lost memories!!! I headed for home - with a clear head.

Only six days to wait until my next midweek walk, a first for the Thursday group, we will be walking on a Wednesday. Starting again from Idle village, we plan to walk to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, National Trust property, East Riddlesden Hall. It is an open day, so entry to the house and gardens is free - lunch will be in East Riddlesden Hall café.