

## Ilkley walk Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2021

With the previous day being the Autumn Equinox, where the sun moves into the southern hemisphere, there was a definite autumnal chill in the air or more precisely an autumnal wind, but this did not seem to deter our hardy bunch of Thursday walkers, which has now grown to thirteen, including two newbies, Sarah & Mark from Barnsley and Brighouse respectively. Leaving the now familiar Idle village car park, we headed north along the quaintly cobbled Railway Road, cutting through Idle recreation ground and under the old railway bridge. We quickly reached the river Aire, crossing over the impressive Victorian iron footbridge, built in 1889 at Buck Wood in Thackley.

We then headed east towards the village of Esholt before turning north for the short climb to Tong Park, via the historic Primrose Row. Passing the cenotaph and old mill ponds we descended through Willy Wood, to the stepping stones over Gill Beck, which become impassable during the wetter winter months. Then followed a long steady climb through Hawksworth, a small village which lies to the south of Menston and the north of Baildon, to Hawksworth quarry. After a short but steep descent of Odda Hill we followed the track to Hillings Lane, where the Curlew café was our first stop of the day. Again, teas, coffees and toasted teacakes were the order of the day, kindly provided by Sara, as we took on fuel before we headed out onto wild and windswept moors!!! Sitting in the polytunnel among the fruit and veg Trevor was attacked by a scraggy looking chicken, who was after his sandwiches but this would not be his last dalliance with an animal today but more of that later.

Suitably refreshed we struck out towards Reva Reservoir, where on summer weekends you can find the local scouts practicing their sailing skills. Having reached White Flush and Intake Gate, we headed onto Hawkesworth Moor, to face a windy morning, reaching 'the Great Skirtful of Stones, before passing High Lane Shaw Dam on Burley Moor on the way to the Little Skirtful of Stones. Where the Spa town of Ilkley and our lunch stop was insight both metaphorically and physically. After a steady descent to Green Crag and a steeper descent to Blackstone Beck, where we saw the Ilkley Grammar School pupils snaking along the paths below on a cross country run. We crossed the footbridge over the beck and quickly reached Ilkley Tarn, where Victorians used to ice skate in the winter months, aah... the long off days of frost fairs, buying a bag of roasted horse chestnuts and singing 'on Ilkley moor Baht at' Trevor and Bob were the only ones of the group old enough to remember those halcyon days. Although their reality was probably more diphtheria and rickets!!!

From the tarn there was a short descent into Ilkley town centre, where the La Stazione café, (the station café to non-Italian speakers!!!), was ready and waiting for our intrepid bunch. Teas, coffees and toasted sandwiches were the order of the day. Eleven miles walked, over four hours elapsed and the friendly welcome of the staff was much appreciated.

Once refreshed we had the steady climb out of Ilkley to White Wells to negotiate, we then scrambled up Ilkley crags and followed the Dales Way Link only Pausing at the Bronze Age, Twelve Apostles stone circle, set high on Burley Moor. Heading in the direction of Baildon we descended the intriguingly named Spy Hill to Dick Hudson's. Leaving Eldwick Crags we reached a field of horses and despite skirting around them, more due to the boggy middle of the field, they seemed to take a keen interest in the group or maybe the food in our rucksacks.

We ended up being chased to the style, but at least I now know, which of the group can run the quickest!!! If only we could have filmed it, it would have been an internet sensation - Mack Sennett would have been proud of the performance!!! Having recovered from all the excitement, we reached the relative safety of Shipley Glen.

There then followed the steep climb of Baildon Moor, It was slow going snaking up the hill but once we reached the trig point, it was well worth the effort, as it provides extensive 360 degree panoramic views of the surrounding area.

The cosmopolitan town of Baildon could be seen set out before us in the valley below, with its abundance of shops and cafes. Although all the cafes we tried were either closed or said their coffee machine was not working!!! Maybe we are not the erudite professional group, I think is the image we project and we look more like a rag bag motley crew? But there is an impressive and not to be missed Hallcliffe Community Garden opposite St Johns church and we decamped there for our final stop of the day.

Once refreshed we were on the home run, leaving Baildon, (where all the café closed signs were being turned around again to say open)!!! via Old Langley Lane, heading back towards Thackley Bridge and the short return to Idle village, where we arrived at 4.50 pm. Those still standing walked to the White Bear. The lazy ones – you know who you are, drove there!!!

Next Thursday, we will be on the fifth of our Thursday Autumn walks, this time heading east towards the historic market town of Otley and tackling Heartbreak Hill. If you would like to know whose heart was broken all will be revealed next week!!!