

PYW goes to the Land North of The Humber – Easter 2014



Yes, for the late Easter this year (18th-21st April) PYW went to Northumberland for the first time. A record number of the Group converged on Alnwick over the course of Thursday via the pleasures of the A1 or the East Coast Main Line ready for the off the next day. All told we were 35 at maximum strength.

Good Friday – A short drive for everyone to Warkworth where we were to board our coach to the start of our linear walk. Everyone arrived early but unfortunately the coach had gone to the wrong car park which gave time for Sarah A to collect bus fares. Travellers were then pleased to be given back £10 each by Jane B as they got on the coach (don't ask!).

The journey to Craster seemed longer than anticipated which made a number think they were in for a very long walk back. Nevertheless we de-bussed (alighted) in glorious sunshine for the first of many photo opportunities. Our first stretch was coastal path (Northumberland Coast Path and St. Oswald's Way) south to Boulmer (pronounced Boomer) where we relaxed for an early lunch on the grass out back of the Fishing Boat Inn overlooking the beach. The 33 walkers were joined by Mat and Iggs who had cycled to join us. I think we disturbed someone's 75th (or 57th?) birthday lunch in the pub.



Reluctantly we moved on but were boosted by our first beach section from Seaton down to Alnmouth and a very fine sandy beach it was too as evidenced by the paddling that some indulged in. As the sun was now beating down most treated themselves to an ice cream in Alnmouth (yes it was ice cream weather!).

Again we were obliged to push on via a big detour round the River Aln as the tide was in. We soon found a beach option again for the return to Warkworth with it's fine castle. 13 miles successfully completed for the cost of a couple of red faced Ian's.

Our evening meal was in the Olympic Dining Room at the White Swan Hotel in Alnwick. The room was nicer than the food overall.

Saturday – We all drove to Bamburgh (all early again) where the official Group photo was forgotten about as the coach was also early. Our drop off point today was at Embleton for a short walk down to the coast then south to view the remains of Dunstanburgh Castle where the walk leader unwisely let some of the Group off for a close up viewing, 10 minutes turned to 20! Some mutinous talk of changing plan before a compromise was reached and we all set off along the beach to Low Newton and a first toilet stop. Some dog took things too literally and proceeded to leave a trail of it's business along the path.

Back onto the coastal path for a walk among the dunes to Benthall and another toilet stop (what is it with you ladies?). Fortunately the walk leader was then able to find a deserted beach with readymade seating for 30 and a fine sea view for lunch stop. Birthday girl Julie then enjoyed a champagne toast (well 5 of the

Group did) and the chocolates were passed round. Another nice sandy beach was up next for the short stretch to Seahouses with some wading through a stream that crossed the beach.



A final stop in Seahouses for tea and cake or ice cream (did I mention it was ice cream weather?). The place was heaving with day trippers and the queue was too long for a quick go on the crazy golf. A huge stretch of beach followed heading straight towards Bamburgh Castle which then disappeared from view behind dunes but reappeared round a corner as we neared the end. A tricky climb up some shifting dunes before a photo opportunity with castle backdrop.

A fine 12 mile walk in glorious sunshine again completed at a cost of two even more red faced Ian's. Dinner was at the best establishment of the weekend – The Plough. A fine dining room with great food, all topped off with birthday cake and candles which Julie managed to blow out at the first attempt.

And to complete the birthday celebrations a select group of Rockers continued on to Alnwick's finest night club establishment, where Julie, and the red faced Ian's amongst others partied into the small hours!

Easter Sunday – The Day of Three Walks



A change of walk leaders and no coach for Sunday. Instead a lot of car sharing and an interesting drive along rough pot holed roads and crossing a ford for some to the start point at Langlee Ford in the Northumberland National Park (wot no coast?).

At last the Group photo was organised (only 24 hardy walkers though) before setting off in sunnyish weather for an incessant climb in the direction of The Cheviot.

After much strenuous uphill walking over Scald Hill a small rock cairn close to the top of The Cheviot provided some shelter for a mid morning break (or lunch as some treated it). Jackets were definitely on now as the wind picked up and the sun disappeared (not ice cream weather - More Pasty!)



The uphill gave way to a slabbed path for the final stretch to the summit and all arrived at the 815 metre summit

very pleased with their efforts. After the obligatory photos and trig point mounting it was off to Scotland. Fortunately the slabbed path continued to the fence corner where Scotland was found and the Scottish Claires' rejoiced. This was

Hangingsstone Hill (743 metres) and the highest point in Roxburghshire (another county top done).

After some backtracking to Cairn Hill a group discussion resulted in a choice of routes back – the Harthorpe Burn or the ridge, two groups then set off.

The valley group took the tortuous route down alongside an ever widening Harthorpe Burn that had to be crossed numerous times. If we crossed it once we crossed it 20 times. The crossing points became deeper and trickier with some losing their footing resulting in wet feet or indeed choosing to wade across to avoid falling in off the slippery stepping stones. Eventually the valley widened out and the ridge group were spotted beginning their descent resulting in the valley group speeding up to arrive back at the cars ahead of them. A challenging 10 miles done.

The mountaineering group then headed off to top another summit, Comb Fell, first rapidly descending an unmarked and vague path through heather and gorse, following the line of a stone wall. The pace continued as the path became ever less defined it was easiest to keep your feet off the ground for fear of sinking in the wet peat! Members of the group each finding their own path in attempt to avoid being swallowed by the mud! Though some didn't always do so well landing flat on their face, though they were 'relieved' afterwards (no official toilet stops on this walk!).

Over Comb Fell and the 360 degree views of the fells opened up, descending again for a brief chocolate stop before the final ascent to the summit of Hedgehope Hill for an official photo at the trig point.



The group then dispersed as they rapidly descended the more grassy hillside to meet up with the valley group at the picturesque car park only 10 minutes behind.



A breakaway group of six walkers enjoyed a less strenuous walk of 7 miles along the Breamish valley, in the southern Cheviots. The walk climbed to the top of Brough Law, an impressive Iron Age hill fort giving great views up and down the valley, and across the Cheviot Hills. The return walk along the valley included several stops to watch newly born lambs taking their first steps. The shorter distance also allowed time for a tea and hot chocolate stop at the 'Muddy Boots' tearoom.

The final evening meal together was at The Oaks. A noisy affair with lots of reflecting on a fine three days walking and card playing (how rock and roll).

Easter Monday – A do your own thing day. Amongst the activities were a short 4 miler around the outskirts of Alnwick, along the river and up behind Alnwick Castle, trips to Holy Island and the Farne Islands (Puffin Watch), visiting friends and relatives and some shopping before the joys of the A1 again.

Holy Island a popular option with at least three sub groups venturing across the causeway to explore the island, spotting the seal colonies, taking in the views, the castle and checking out the recycling opportunities!



Same time next year?

Special thanks to Stephen and Sarah A (walks 1 and 2), John and Claire M-R (walk 3), Shane (extension to walk 3), Jane P (alternative walk 3), Jane B (evening dining), Claire W (birthday cake and card) and everyone else for being prompt, paying up and being great company.

Attending – Brian, Carla, Caroline, Claire M-R, Claire S, Claire W, Clare D, Darren, Dean, Debbie, Ian C, Ian J, Ian L, Iggs, Jane B, Jane P, Janet, John, Julie, Karen W-M, Kate, Kirsty, Linda, Mat, Mike, Nigel, Paul N, Phil C, Richard, Sara, Sarah A, Sarah D, Shane, Stephen and Susan.

PYW – Fun and adventure in so many ways!

