

PYW heads west to Shropshire for Easter 2017



Attendees: Stephen A, Sarah A, Ian C, Kate, Debbie, Ian L, Julie, Ian J, Claire, Mike, Sara, Phil, Dean, Janet, Jane P, Martina, Claire B, Shaf, Mary, Sheela, Susan, Nigel, Linda and Matt (24 in all).

Another Easter weekend upon us, 24 PYW members descended on Shrewsbury, staying in local hostelryes and with the new 'campervan section/fraction' staying on a nearby campsite, somewhat agricultural style, and sharing with a Christian caravan rally for added culture!



All convened at 10.30am on Good Friday at the circular National Trust car park in Much Wenlock. The secretary instigated a double parking regime so as not to monopolise the entire car park. We are not the most sustainable group when it comes to transport with several cars travelling from the same hotel.

Twenty-three participants were counted out (after some debate), setting off along a track it was only a matter of minutes before the front half of the group were seen returning in the opposite direction! Debbie declared a 'collaborative' walk leading approach – travel a few hundred yards and a number of 'deviations' that require back tracking before engaging in 'debate/collaboration' to agree direction. The map was in one hand and the route guide in the other, opposite hand and opposite direction – or so it seemed!

A promise of picnic benches for lunch did not materialise. But the lunch stop with a view and some rocks for Dean to climb made up for it. And the day saw a number of keen photographers vying for the ultimate PYW shot in anticipation of the 2017 photo competition.

On the latter stretch of the walk the leader gave a (collaborative) option of the long less steep or steeper faster route. A 50:50 split. The steeper without the leader but no deviations occurred and all made it safely back to the circular car park.

'Innuendoes' a plenty, commencing with a 'can you stuff it in my pouch' by Claire W & Zara declaring she 'can't feel vibration any more' the day was full of amusement as ever!

10.5miles were walked along Wenlock Edge, a 'collaborative' distance agreed after some debate.



In the evening the group reconvened at Ask for starters and mains, on a 'cash only' basis in accordance with Claire W's spreadsheet. No sooner had mains been cleared – Someone exclaimed the felt 'randy for a brandy' and hurried away..... Meanwhile, Secretary Abbott and Captain Cable declared mutiny and the remaining group jumped ship to Wetherspoons for desserts, sundaes and optional custard with Ale to wash it down.

Easter Saturday was our Stiperstones walk (minus Dean and Janet – claiming a poorly knee), walking out along the ridge from Snailbeach village hall car park to The Rock and returning via the café at The Bog visitor centre and Stiperstones pub.

The campervan brigade set off early via Shrewsbury town centre to collect Kate en route who had cycled into Shrewsbury to complete the parkrun (5km, 25th woman/214) just to prove we are 'younger walkers'.



A craggy first half, at the top, some tackled the stones, Sheela braving the 'full monty' stone crossing. Whilst the boys played on the rocks in the bracing wind – claiming H & S prevented them from doing the 'full monty'. Debbie quoted that younger members show us (exactly who 'us' included wasn't clear) up and declared that she is retiring soon. The days hot topic followed - Debbie's pending retirement post Brexit - apt for a 'younger walking group'!



Lunch stop up top, where the leader declared 'there's no more up – when you're up your up' followed by a descent into the valley where the sluggish pace (average 2.4km/h) picked up at the promise of a cake stop with a race to be first in the queue for tea and cake in the 'old school' at The Bog. Disappointingly 'average' tea and cake was taken by all, whilst Zara surveyed the group opinion of a potential purchase for a piece of new kitchen 'wall art'. Opinion fiercely against her first choice attracting the general opinion 'granny flower' in favour of a cute woolly sheep, like the new born lamb the group had seen earlier in the day. The walk continued on with a pub stop in Stiperstones village before heading back to the cars.

The days walk leading style was declared 'dictatorial'.

All glammed up, for the group evening meal at Bistro Jacques where we were seated upstairs, tonight it was the turn of Claire & Mike to escape early after mains... for homemade dessert, whilst the remainder of the group stayed for dessert by kind permission of Secretary Abbott, where desserts including custard were approved. Prize for the fanciest shoes went to Susan.



Easter Sunday was Dean's walk (he arrived late after stopping in Church Stretton for breakfast). The turn of Shaf, Claire B and Matt to play truant.

Peter Kay style 'car share' meant a more sustainable approach to today's travel. A fresh morning, the heat of the sun came through, interspersed with light showers. Conversation a plenty, topics including pet names... mention no names!..... as the group ascended from the car park, a picturesque walk up through the valley on narrow paths, to the top of Long Mynd. Sheep and lambs a plenty to Mrs A's delight, opening up onto a moorland walk of gentle paths.



Early lunch stop (and open air toilet exhibition to entertain) whilst Zara provided a hand warming exercise class, much to the amusement of passers-by. Moving on across the moor the group were treated to a gliding display above, before the cloud came in, waterproofs were donned but the rain for the most part stayed away. Fresh blustery wind and sunny spells as we marched across the hills and some fantastic views, constantly changing at every turn.



Descending down into a farm hamlet we were greeted by a brace of dogs. Moving on we descended through rolling fields to a pub stop at a rather posh pub close to a level crossing.

Then came a choice of routes the high road, up and over, or the low road. Again the group divided with eleven taking the hardcore route up and over the top of Ragleth Hill in the bracing wind and, just as we reached the top, lashing rain!



The group reconvened in Church Stretton sending the car drivers a bit further than the eleven miles already walked up a final short steep hill to car collect.

Back in Shrewsbury, a wet evening as the group met for the final supper in the Cromwell Inn where we had a private room to ourselves. Martina (PYW's answer to Angela Merkel) made an emotional German farewell speech as her year in the UK came to an end, making the mistake of inviting us all to Germany -PYW may yet go Auf Wiedersehen style. Sheela declared Ian C's jokes as 'dad like' before Ian C made the weekend presentation, thanking the dinner organiser, walk leaders and awarding the prize for best walk leader to Debbie, who was most excited by her gift of a she-wee, which was demonstrated and inspected by many! With a lack of desserts much of the group retired once again to Wetherspoons for some delicious desserts and to be entertained by some 'ladies of Shrewsbury', much to Stephen's delight!



Easter Monday As some of the group headed home early, the hardcore 'remainers' headed out for a very wet 5 miler around and over The Wrekin. Setting off through the trees the group were treated to some excellent Bluebell displays, tramping around the Wrekin before making a steep ascent up through the trees as the rain came in, first glimpses across the surrounding countryside, but as the group neared the top (with some finding it an arduous ascent) the cloud came across to obscure the views.



Reaching the top, we were greeted by minions of 'Sunday walkers' who as usual had picked the easier route! A brief photo opportunity and a more rapid descent to say farewell after a great weekend walking.

In total over the weekend - 6,618 feet climbed, 36 miles walked, 4 lovely days, great views and great company. The weather was even pretty good too.

