

Wind Turbine Walk – Early May Bank Holiday 2011

Being in a club member minority by living in the Rossendale Valley, we know we've got something special as far as localised walking goes – travelling all around our glorious country can be an eye-opener as far as showing us what this country really does have to offer, but walking locally can give just as much enjoyment. Much as I love the Lakes, the Dales and especially Scotland, walking locally is just as good especially so when the weather is as good as it has been lately.

Rossendale has many areas for great walking; our own long distance walk – The Rossendale Way – being one of many walks that we can all enjoy, allowing us to choose how far we want to walk. Our local mountain rescues (RPMRT) even arrange an annual walk letting us do a half way in a day or, for the more ambitious, the whole route in a day. Whilst this sort of walk is attainable for us all, a recent 10 miler that Victor and I did is one that is repeatable at any time, but even better in this recent bout of good weather we've seen.

Starting and finishing at a local Helmsore pub – the White Horse, recently having changed hands and is now very much a pub that serves food as opposed to anything else, an ideal watering hole. Walking past the allotment that our better halves were working, we walked down past a local beauty spot called Snig Hole (where eels were once found, hence the name), then following a well trodden path through a local wood with the River Ogden as company. The route takes us under the old Accrington to Stubbins branch line viaduct that still stands proud to this day above, what is known locally as "Little Blackpool, once a local Victorian bathing spot; sadly no longer in use but very much allowing that visual appreciation of what was once one of those many branch lines this country once had.

By the time we leave the wood, we are close to Irwell Vale where the East Lancs Railway continues to run through on a regular basis. Irwell Vale is a lovely little village (railway halt) based around the confluence of the River Ogden and the River Irwell, and was once the home of several mills. Sadly, the mills have gone but their remains can be seen if you look closely enough. In recent years, the village green has been taken over by the "Americans" as part of the ever popular ELR War Weekend over the Whitsun weekend. Not too long ago, there was a re-enactment of Dad's Army show in the church when the German airmen took hostages – it was every bit as good as the original.

Using the foot tunnel near the level crossing, we started our ascent out of the valley and upto Edenfield, before making our way even further up into the hills, following part of the Rossendale Way that would eventually bring us to Waugh's Well – a monument originally built on the site of a spring in 1866 to honour Rochdale-born Edwin Waugh. It makes for a fine contemplative viewpoint and resting place. On the day we walked, the views were amazing, allowing us to get a glimpse of Wales in the distance. From here, we took a diversion from the main path, and went looking for what is reputedly the highest point in Rossendale – Hail Storm Hill (477m), a Marilyn – although another local spot called Top of Leach (471m) does lay claim to that right as well. We eventually found it – after passing through a quarry complex that had been adapted for mountain bikes – a very small cairn in the middle of a bog, somewhere not dissimilar to the true location of Kinder Scout, just a lot drier.

Rejoining the Rossendale Way at a convenient marker of two stone gate posts, we started our descent back into the valley but this time passing through the Scout Moor Wind Farm – 26 wind turbines spread over 1,347 acres of moorland. At 60m high, they are amazing up close and especially so when they are working (as they rotate), as they were as we walked through them on a breezy but bright and sunny day. Our route down from here continues on the Rossendale Way, crossing the Edenfield to Rochdale road, before taking us close to the Bleakholt Animal Sanctuary. From here we continue down the valley until we pass through the village of Chatterton where, in 1826, rioting Luddites were read the Riot Act by the 60th Rifle Corps. Ignoring the

reading of the act, the mob attempted to destroy looms at Aitken and Lord's factory whereupon the soldiers eventually opened fire, killing 4 men and wounding many others. A blue plaque commemorates this historical event.

Upon leaving Chatterton, we follow the River Irwell for a short way, before joining what looks like a little used path that takes us back under the old Accrington to Stubbins branch line, following a riverside path at various heights above the river, before arriving at Lumb at Edenfield (not to be confused with Lumb at Waterfoot) – a delightful village of period properties that eventually brings us back to Irwell Vale and our eventual route back to the White Horse in Helmshore.

The selection of real ales was worth waiting for, this time we were spoilt for choice – Abbot, Pedigree, Hobgoblin, and Blond Witch. Venturing back out into the sunshine and just sitting there supping our beer, was worth the walk. We know we'll do the same walk again in the near future, as we will with many of the walks in Rossendale.

If anyone is interested in doing this route, by all means get in touch and we'll see what we can arrange.

Also, some dates for your calendars:

Rural Rossendale Foodie Walking Festival 2011, running from 30th Sept to 3rd Oct – I am leading a walk on Sat 1st Oct, called the Sliven Clod Sausage Stomp, starting from Rawtenstall Market at 10:00am.

The distance is 7 – 8 miles, with a stop at Riley's Butchers in Crawshawbooth part way round for a sandwich and a cup of tea, cost £5.00pp.

Further details to follow.