

## **Bums Trip report**

**Sunday January 19<sup>th</sup> 2025**

**The Bridestones, Rushton Spencer**

**7.5 miles                      1100ft of ascent                      4 hours**

**Weather: Grey skies but no rain. Bitterly cold day and murky**

**Walkers: Lesley (leader), Mike (assistant leader), Christine and David, Della and Richard, Selina and Mike with Leo the dog, Jim**

This walk is taken loosely from a walk in Bob Harris' book "Walks in the ancient Peak District".

It was chosen for January as it was only an hour's drive away and, given the weather we had recently endured, I thought it best to remain close to home. In fact, the structure of the walk and the ancient megalithic site was a big draw.

The original squad had whittled itself down to 9 from 12, with doctor's notes and slight injuries named as reasons. Fair enough!

So, four were meeting at the start and the remaining 5 squeezed into one car to save the planet. It also helped us stay warm. The temperature as we set off was just under freezing but it got colder as we climbed and was easily -4 deg on the tops with a chill breeze and frosty vegetation too.

Starting from the old disused station car park at Rushton Spencer, we began our climb up towards Woodhouse Green, west of the village.

Bob describes the route as not always obvious but that the stiles are all there.....well there were bits of wood nailed together randomly but whichever council area we were in (Stafford or Cheshire East), they certainly were not mending stiles! But the route was surprisingly clear (or maybe the leader was up to the job).

By now we were supposed to be able to see The Cloud but it was cloud covered, though we knew it must still be there, in the cloud.

The ranks were rebelling now so we had to find as suitable coffee stop as possible which proved to be a low wall on a quiet road (see lunch stop for repeat). Unfortunately, it was at this point that Mike discovered the coffee flask had sprung a leak in his rucksack---well, not a leak exactly but user error! Ooops. I volunteered to clean up later being the coffee maker. Stale coffee not a pleasant smell. Anyway, the tepid coffee was delicious even though half of it was missing.

Making the slightly busier road we soon encountered The Bridestones. There were two huge forecourt stones (10ft tall) guarding a long chamber formed from enormous gritstone slabs (one riven with a heart shaped indent). According to Bob ritual fires were lit here as evidenced by charcoal found at the site. Bob states that judging by other similar structures it could date back to 2700 BC. Much posing on the stones was done, mainly by Richard C and photographs taken to record the scene.

Here we diverged slightly from Bob's route to avoid the road and we made a bee line towards The Cloud (which marks the very easterly edge of The Pennines), but then turned due west through the Clouds beautiful flanks, till we reached the bottom of the main path

up to the summit, at 344 m. More photography ensued, aimed at January's calendar page. It was bone chillingly cold at the top so we descended till we met a very quiet lane with a mossy wall, for lunch. Leo enjoyed a very noisy dog chew with us.

The path which is the Gritstone Way now converges into the Dane Valley Way, then the Staffordshire Way- in the end it didn't matter which Way as way finding proved to be a doddle and we climbed up for the last lap onto the disused railway track which led us straight back to the cars.

I was very pleased that we were able to complete the day without getting lost or off track, once!

Thanks to Bob Harris for the idea. Shame he had to endure MUFC losing so badly instead of walking.

Lesley