

Bolton Castle Walk 4th August 2016 Report

Of Dungeons and Dragons.....



The serried ranks of Cumuli Nimbus and visible rain blowing across the dale did not bode well for a day in Wensleydale, as our parade of pensioners marched noisily west leaving behind the imposing edifice of Bolton Castle, which at one time was the place of incarceration of a

possible monarch of the realm.

Having said that it would appear that rather than being locked up in a dungeon Mary's stay was closer to an illicit affair in relative luxury, by medieval standards, in wonderful scenery with her live in lover.

I also wonder who was the real winner between the battling siblings, Elizabeth with all the stress and restrictions the "crown and glory" or Mary having a riotous time. A short life but a merry one versus a long trouble filled existence.

But enough waffling, our group by now had had their spirits lifted by the appearance of the sun and the exit of any rain as we strolled through Carperby, carefully avoiding the pub & coffee (shame) on our way to the Ure crossing at Aysgarth.

As we approached Aysgarth we passed the disused station which is part of a scheme to reinstate the line through to Hawes.

Does anyone else think that a tiny proportion of the TS2 budget would bring far more benefit to this part of the north than shortening the London to Birmingham journey time by 20 minutes?

Sorry, slipped into curmudgeon mode there!

After crossing the river which was roaring under the bridge, prompting thoughts that the future stepping stone crossing could prove quite "exciting", we continued into St Andrews church, the grave yard of which is allegedly the largest of any parish church in England at over 4 acres.

It has to be one of the hilliest.

A look inside St Andrews revealed a wonderful example of medieval craftsmanship in the form of a remarkable carved wood Alter Screen, which had been saved or liberated from Jerveaux Abbey at the time of the reformation.

Len also pointed out that amongst the records of infant mortality and the seemingly inevitable Commonwealth War Grave, most of the locals appeared to have been very long lived.

I wonder if this could this be proof of the efficacy of the renowned dairy product of the dale and the Wallace was right all the time "Cracking Cheese....."

After leaving the consecrated ground we wandered over the rolling meadows to Alan's eponymous village where we ate lunch (I think) on the village green in what was now a glorious summer day.

After inspecting the mini High Force that is Burton Falls we set off on a footpath through the woods toward Pen Hill.

It was a pity that the lady Fell Runners warning about slipper paths came just too late to prevent Len from taking a tumble and plastering his leg and shorts with something Green, Slimy and of Bovine origin.

"I don't think anyone laughed Len", well not that you could hear anyway as we all felt you should probably walk on your own for a while.

It brought a whole new dimension to the phrase Smelly Helly. Phew!

We soon arrived at the ruins of the ancient Knights Templars Preceptory, which I understand played some sort of role in raising funds for Western Europe's first attempt to sort out that troublesome Middle Eastern problem - the Crusades.

We don't learn do we! I wonder if there was a Blair involved then too. (Sorry slipped into politics).

Keith tested out one of the coffins which worryingly seemed to suit him.



A bit of research indicates that the religious building was at the heart of a substantial community with now invisible field systems etc. I wonder if they had a pub Keith.

Descending through Swinthwaite we

arrived at the river and a warning that the Stepping Stones were impassable.

Not only impassable but pretty much invisible. The Ure was in spate and flowing at a scary rate about two feet above the stone level. Even Ray our inveterate river crosser was not tempted, so after lunch (again) and an alfresco bath for Len we set off upstream to Aysgarth passing the Mill, which was built as a Cotton Mill in 1784 and working until 1958 in the form cotton, flax, wool and eventually corn mill through its life.

After taking in the spectacular sights of the Ure cascading over the Lower Falls in a roaring torrent, within feet of kids and families enjoying a not too safe spell on the limestone platforms which shape the river, we followed a popular path toward the distant fortification where we started this morning.

Now if someone mentions fallen ash trees and chainsaws, my mind swings to logs, open fires and warmth, but to Andris Bergs a resident of Bainbridge and chainsaw artist a dragon came to mind and in the field opposite the castle we saw a magnificent fictional animal laid devouring a knight. Looks like St George may have lost this one.

We were definitely winners though, with another great walk through lovely scenery in terrific weather.

Cheers

Bob