

Swale Trail Cycle Report by Dave Thompson

"Billed as an easy-going mountain bike trail along the length of Swaledale, between Reeth and Keld. The Swale Trail is aimed at aspiring young mountain bikers and families who want to ride together. A valley bottom route 20km (12 miles) in length, of which 75% is on traffic free tracks/roads."



On Thursday July 26th three Smellys, John, Terry & Ged, myself and a Coffin Dodger mate Ed, met in Reeth to take on the challenge.

A fine day albeit perhaps a wee bit too hot for the short steep sections just before Keld. The first downhill section, on the road, took us past The Dales Bike Centre to Grinton and the

old coffin road past St Andrews church.

A new gravel topped trail took us past a couple of plaques explaining a Tumulus and a defensive earth work from the 6th/7th century.

Following close to the Swale we passed through meadow land until a short sharp ascent adjacent to Stubbin Farm where we rejoined the road. Just past Scabba Wath Bridge we joined another new section of trail which we found obstructed by a parked car at Low House Farm, squeezing past we headed for Gunnerside Bridge where we crossed The Swale to take the unclassified road past Gunnerside Lodge this eventually ended in a gravel track where I discovered I had a puncture in my front tyre, a new tube made a quick repair but not as slick as Hamilton's 2.9 second pit stop.

A gravelly descent, exciting for those with fat tyres and the confidence to let it roll but scary for those on road tyres.

Less than 2 km from Keld we were forced to get off and push our bikes up a short steep section before arriving at Kisdon Force where some of us sought shade from the oppressive heat to take a lunch break.

Crossing the footbridge we once again had to push our bikes for a short steep section before finally arriving in Keld.



The return journey was back along the main valley road to Muker where refreshment was sought at the Farmers Arms, although two members went next door to the cafe to create their own Temperance group !!!

It was then a straight forward route down the valley road until we rejoined The Swale Trail at Gunnerside Bridge and retraced our route to The Dales Bike Centre for coffee and cake, although Ged was straining at the leash to get back to Reeth for a Guinness.

27/28 miles and over 4,000 feet of ascent - not bad for a trail billed as 'easy-going' ???

A really enjoyable day out in good company - Thanks guys.

Dave T.