

# Walgrave Wild Walkers – 10 October 2010-10-11

## *“The Roaches”*

The Roaches is a hill a few miles north of Leek in Staffordshire, in the district known as the Staffordshire Moorlands. The rocky south west edge is a favourite haunt of rock climbers. The terrain is a mix of very pleasant woodland and open moorland with fascinating sandstone outcrops, behind which shelter can be found in windy weather (see later!)

Eight members of the group gathered at our usual mustering point (outside the pub) at 8.00 on Sunday morning. About 100 miles and two hours and a brief comfort stop later we arrived at the car park near Gradbach, close to the former silk mill, now a youth hostel.

The walk (led by Ted) took us past the youth hostel, and a very noisy Scouting association “challenge” event into the woodland which surrounds the fascinating “Lud’s Church”. This is a chasm in which, allegedly, religious followers of John Wycliffe met several hundred years ago to avoid persecution for heresy.



After a brief visit here we followed a clear path onto the main edge of the escarpment. This is where we met the increasing breeze. Hats and gloves were donned, though the unbroken sunshine meant that they soon came off. Spectacular views and autumn colours surrounded us for the next hour as we followed the edge to the summit of the Roaches (505m, or 1683 ft approx.). Much more wind here, and standing up would have been a challenge!



Lunch was taken by a small pond just south of the summit called “Doxey Pool” – a truly idyllic spot. Rock outcrops provided welcome shelter from the very strong wind. It would have been easy to stay there all day, but several more miles of walking had yet to be done.

The descent from the Roaches is quite a steep scrambling affair, involving occasional bottom-shuffling down sloping rock, but everyone coped easily.

Sadly I managed to avoid a section where slithering through a hole between large boulders is required (I know it's there somewhere!), though Meg expressed relief.

A gentle section back to the car park followed passing mainly through farmland, by now the wind had dropped and we were thoroughly warm by the finish. A quick cup of tea was taken at a nearby pub before returning to Walgrave at around 6.15pm, and a drink and chat in the Royal Oak.



Facts and figures:

Length : 14.9 km (10 miles)

Ascent : 420 m (1400ft?)

Time taken : 5 hours (including breaks for lunch and photos etc.)

Present : Ted Dean, Viv Dean, Emma Rogers, Meg Timlin, Ruby Cole, Barbara Evans, Linda Twohey, Chris Morley-Smith.