

Newport Outdoor Group (YHA)



Editors

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Web Site

<http://walk.to/nogs>

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Get The Outdoor Habit!

STAFFORDSHIRE WAY

May 15th to 23rd 2010

by Zena

Editor's Note: Congratulations to the NOGS who completed The Staffordshire Way in May. This article was written by Zena, who accompanied the NOGS on this epic walk.

We started at a place called Mow Cop (Mow Cop Castle is shown in the photo below) walking 92 miles south, to finish at Kinver Edge.

I have to start with introductions. This report was written by non-members. Worse still, at least one yank from rural Idaho and the other a non-resident Brit. Obviously they were hard put to find anyone else. You can blame Angela Bengur who invited me in the first place on the Dales Way last year.

This is my second walk and my husband Ron's first. Hopefully, I have retained my native wit and sarcasm. I have worked hard at doing so. Ron was not so lucky. He was bemused at times by the sometimes caustic and other times rather risqué humor. It turns out that Rural Idahoans are less direct than the English or the Welsh (the result of conflict having more serious consequences in a gun slinging society), but our "innocence" was tolerated I am happy to report. The walk was amazing, primarily for the extraordinary weather we encountered with virtually no rain and blazing sunshine throughout the last half of the walk! Only one Youth Hostel along the way meant little opportunity for self catering so we were forced to have most of our meals in pubs.....a great hardship, I know.

We sniffed out a couple of tea rooms for morning coffee and afternoon tea and enjoyed some traditional delicacies such as victoria sponge, and coffee and walnut cake. The hike was

Vital statistics of the Staffordshire Way

152.2 km/94.6 miles long

2,194 m/7,198 ft of ascent

Max height 323 m/1060 ft

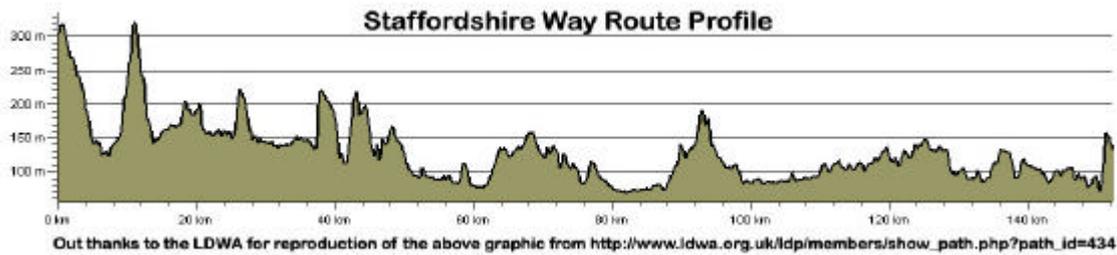
Starts Mow Cop, Cheshire

Ends Kingford Country Park, Worcs.

memorable for the variety of sights and landscapes. Woodland areas and ancient coppice's followed fields, farmyards and other settlements.

Old railways tracks and canals made for easy walking, and colorful barges and high ridges with panoramic views were followed by rolling hills and interspersed with lakes and ponds. Upland areas had larger fields and more modern agriculture. There was a variety of wildlife and domestic animals and one could decipher the economic history from waterways, railways and towns. Tales of Roundheads and Cavaliers followed us through Stafford Castle and the High House in Stafford itself. The people had strange accents but were very friendly and quite pleased we were walking in their county. We were well led both by our navigator Norman and our organizer, Brian. All showed patience for our slow but persistent pace. We were treated to a view of deer in Cannock Chase, the sound of a cuckoo, friendly lambs and some rather curious cows. All in all, we had a





delightful English Countryside experience!

Finally, here are a few unedited words from Ron. " I thought the entire walk across England was fun and a great experience. The countryside is great, scenerific and hard to match. The best part of this trip was getting to meet some British and Welsh personalities that seem to just 'keep on truckin'.

Initially I did not feel like making the entire trek, but then I got motivated by the group because no one else was dropping out....they just kept showing up! If we ever want to make a walk in the States, these folks would be first on the list to be invited because they will get it done no matter what the elements might bring. Great fun and special people.....I would like to try that again some day".



TALK ON THE LIONS RUGBY TOUR 2009

by Ian Kerr

Unfortunately, I missed the first half of Norman's review of his post-retirement trip to follow the Lions tour to South Africa in 2009. Luckily, upon walking into the room I was able to recognise Jamie from his numerous TV appearances, as otherwise he bore such little resemblance to the Jamie of NOGs vintage (1997 to 2003-ish, very ish) that I'd have had no idea who he was. Basically he was taller and wider. A lot taller and a lot wider.

Norman's great photos and videos gave an insight into following the Lions tour as a supporter rather than a player. Most of the support seemed to involve drinking a lot and daubing your face with face paint, but the supporters clearly enjoyed themselves hugely and possibly more than the players.

Sadly, the Lions didn't enjoy overall Test success on the tour, though after a close defeat in the first Test (26-21), they came back strongly and almost won the Second (28-25). A final Third Test victory was well won (9-28). However, Jamie's partnership with the evergreen Irishman Brian O'Driscoll was an enduring highlight, and Jamie was deservedly voted Player of the Tour, a real accolade for his consistently strong performances.

Norman managed to fit in several meetings with Jamie amongst his packed social life (Norman's not Jamie's), as the Lions players did have some opportunity to enjoy the sights of South Africa between fixtures and training schedules.

As Jamie related, there was no escaping the Springbok indoctrination ritual for those in South Africa for the first time. This involved killing a Springbok (the animal, not one of the South African players), probably as a test of virility or some other reason lost in the ancient tribal mists of time.



If it turned out to be female the successful hunters were allowed just to eat the meaty bits, but the price of killing a male one was that one had to eat its testicles, though presumably after cooking them first. Unfortunately, the novice Lions managed to kill a male one!

After the talk had finished, Jamie said he was willing to pose for photos.



Considering the NOG women are not in general of top rugby player dimensions, they proved remarkably adept at promptly forming a tight-knit scrum around him; In fact, it was probably better than Wales' recent efforts. I'm sure all us NOGs are proud of what Jamie has achieved for the Cardiff Blues and Wales, and let's hope he remains a regular fixture in the national side for years to come.

Editor's note: I'm looking forward to seeing Jamie back with the Lions in Australia in 2013!

