

## **Shak's Tracks**

### **If you go up in the woods today .....**

So far, our tracks have meandered gently along the fields of the Cheshire plain with nothing to hinder our progress. This month, we will tackle a few hills. We'll start where Welsh Row meets the A34 (1). The stout of constitution may choose to get here on foot by a road route (via Nursery Lane) or a field route (via the old Chelford school, Heawood Hall etc.). If the Christmas pud and turkey prevailed, you may park your car carefully at the start or join the route at the NT car park by the Wizard. Suck in that tum, we're off.

In 1243, Sir Walkelyn de Arderne was granted the right to hold a market in Nether Alderley. The business failed but the stump of the old market cross gives us a starting post as we cross the A34 and go up Artists Lane. At the first fingerpost on the left, we'll cut through the hedge and run along the obvious path up the first little rise and follow the track along until we meet Whitebarn Road. Here, we turn right up the hill (I did warn you !) and as we near the top, you'll see a fingerpost on the left (2) which points to a track that runs between two wire fences. Follow the track to the stile at the end, hop over and aim diagonally right toward Windmill Wood. As we turn left on the path into the edge of the wood (3), we head up the hill (again !). Close to this point were the sand hills, a by-product of 19th century copper mining, and Hagg cottages which relatively recently, were the subject of an archaeological dig. Never mind that, get up that hill and cross the Macclesfield Road and head for Castle Rock (4). We're now on the Edge and (sort of) at the summit of our trip. Follow the path along the top of the cliff and bear right to the remains of the Armada Beacon (5). The old stone signal station blew down in 1931 but some blocks still remain on the top of a small bronze age burial mound.

From here, we run down the slope to the north east, up the rise and soon we're at Stormy Point (6) with its many remnants of a long history of metal mining. On another day, we could explore the caves but for now we can pause a little to marvel at the view of the Pennine foothills and chew the grit blowing on the wind. With your face to the view, turn right and take the broad track all the way to the wooden gate onto a farm track. At this point, on our left, we'll

see the Golden Stone (7). This is a merestone, a mediaeval boundary marker. Give it a pat, about face and follow the track down to the NT car park near the Wizard. Just this once, I'll excuse you if you need a stop at the Wizard tea rooms. Tomson usually has a slurp from the bucket at this point. Alf would recommend a cuppa instead.

Once fortified, we'll turn left into the car park and right onto the Macclesfield Road. We'll make our way carefully to the left and to the junction with Bradford Lane for a rapid descent. The views from Bradford Lane to the west are beautiful. Enjoy them as we splash down through the mud to the lovely rounded cobbles on the lane. In two hundred yards, your ankles will be shot. Press on. Near the foot of the lane, you have a choice to take a field path on the right to Artists Lane or you can press on back to the A34 then it's home on foot or by a contribution to global warming.

Are the woods of the Edge haunted? What of the white horses, the tall, grey-bearded man or poor Nell Beck by Bryn Low? Stranger by far are the stories of the two strange, nocturnal apparitions with a single bright eye in the centre of their heads. Why do they speed by in the deep shadow of the trees, heading down the hill in the general direction of Chelford? The answer is out there to find.

