

## Shak's Tracks

### Paving the Way

To my mind, this toughish 8.5 mile trip above the Goyt valley is one of the best routes around. I know I'm not alone in thinking this as many other feet have taken their toll on the peat, so much so that a long stretch of the path is paved with big slabs of sandstone. A friend who lives near the Cat and Fiddle refused permission for the helicopter to transfer the stones over her house. A wise decision. On one occasion, the cargo net split, spilling about a ton of paving stones onto the hill below. Not to worry though, the worst we're likely to see falling from the sky is the usual torrential rain. We'll have to take the car through Rainow on the Kettlethulme road, turning right at Ginchlough onto the minor road past Jenkin Chapel and Pym Chair to arrive at the car park just to the south west of the dam on Errwood reservoir. The nearest access by bus onto the route would be from the Cat and Fiddle, a stop on the 58 route from Macc to Buxton.

We're off to a surprisingly gentle start, running left out of the car park to take the path down to the edge of Fernilee reservoir. We'll jog through the pleasant, flat, woodland path alongside Stockport's water supply for about a mile and a quarter to the point where we'll head steeply uphill for a short distance then north along the path by Normanwood. At this point, there are loads of (confusing) choices of route but if we stay on the main farm track, we'll eventually pop out to turn left onto the steep little road to Overton Hall Farm. Keeping this on your right, bound up the hill (back to normal now !) and before you, you'll see the ridge of Taxal Edge. When the farm road meets the paved road, ignore the comfort of the bench seat opposite and go right for about 20 metres to pitch straight up the hill keeping the wood on your left. Once at the top, 40% of the pain is past. From here, we'll go over the ladder stile into the wood following the path which turns sharp left along the wood boundary to emerge at Windgather Rocks. Ignore the climbers although it looks a lot of fun and press on. We'll stay behind the wall with the road on our right and run smugly on along the ridge in the direction of Pym Chair. This is glorious country and the views are fantastic. Pym the Highwayman thought so as he was able to spot his potential victims easily from here as the jagers with their pack animals came up the old salt road.

When we arrive at Pym Chair, we'll turn left down the road for a short way and on our right is the path along the ridge to Cats Tor. This is what hill running is all about, the reward of the views as we bounce south along the ridge to the point where the paving stones take us all the way along to Shining Tor. The gradual ascent gives 360 degree views of Cheshire, Derbyshire and be-

yond whilst below to our right is the strange, hidden valley of Thursbitch, the otherness of which is described brilliantly in the eponymous novel by Alan Garner.

Have a breather at the summit of Shining Tor, cross the wall and stand on the trig point. Look to the west and you may see Chelford. Jodrell Bank is more easily spotted. The tough stuff is over now. Well, nearly. We'll run south east down the track from the summit of Shining Tor, up the little rise (Huh ! said Mrs Shak on reading this), go through the wall and turn immediately left onto the rutted track which runs down the east of the ridge above Shooter's Clough. This is the home straight and we can crank it up where the track becomes a grassy path that heads down toward Errwood reservoir. Or we could do a little detour and visit the ruins of Errwood Hall, once the home of the wealthy merchant, Samuel Grimshawe and his family, many of whom remain buried in the grounds of the ruined hall.

Whatever your choice, head for the reservoir and jog it out north along the road to the car park. Your choice of places of refreshment on the return to Chelford are many. The Clan Shak favour either the Rising Sun in Rainow or if you take the route out of the valley to the south, the Stanley Arms at Bottom-of-the-Oven. You'll definitely have earned a pint and a pie.

P.S. The last time we did this, I tripped running in the wood behind Taxal Edge and had to limp to Pym Chair and rescue. The pain of the tweaked muscle was much less than that caused by the smirks that hikers reserve for injured fell runners.

