

DEREK TREKS BRITAIN – An update from Sue Adams

Hello everyone, and a big welcome to all you new "Derek Trekkies" - am I allowed to use that word? 🤔 After a good night's rest, Derek set off early on Sunday morning, (March 12th), heading to the Hartlepool Headland. He paused here to join a service at a 12th century church built on the site of a 6th century abbey. He explored this area and headed for Newcastle, going through Byker, which brought back memories of life back in the 80/90's with the "kids" watching Byker Grove.



He was carrying his full rucksack - (which I can't even lift!) heading for his accommodation for 3 nights at Travelodge, Newcastle Central, which is almost under the Tyne Bridge. We are forever grateful to Travelodge for helping whenever possible. It means that he can leave his main rucksack in his room, and walk with just a day bag, returning by bus in the evening from the point he reached, and then returning the following morning to that same point to start off again.

On Monday (13th) he walked from South Shields to Jarrow, paying his respects to Ellen Atkinson, the lady who organised the Jarrow march. (Did you know that? I didn't.) From there he carried on and crossed under the Tyne from the south bank to the north via a pedestrian tunnel. Alongside this tunnel is another for cyclists, very impressive. He caught a bus to Sunderland and walked to the mouth of the Tyne at South Shields. I hope I have got this in the right order - he is always excited to tell me what he has

seen/done, and I can't always keep up with him. He experienced quite a lot of rain, but not enough to dampen his spirits, needless to say.

The following day (14th) he set off from Tynemouth, through Cullercoats where he visited the "Watch House", built in 1879 as a look out point for the Cullercoats Volunteer Life Brigade, also used as a meeting place. It is currently a Community Hub, and Derek was given a very warm welcome, along with hot drinks and a bowl of soup. David from there kindly showed him other local places of interest, before he set off again, heading for Blyth. On this day Derek experienced everything weatherwise - bright sun/wind/rain/sleet/horizontal hail (very painful apparently)/snow.

The road to Blyth seemed a bit bleak in places, sparsely populated, and no sign of anywhere for refreshment, until he entered Seaton Sluice. Here he found The Astley Arms, a friendly pub, with its own very poignant story. The pub had been a favourite with submariners stationed at Blyth, and Christmas 1939 a group of them were in the pub and bought tickets for the Christmas raffle. The prize was a large bottle of whisky. The submariners, from HMS Seahorse were due to go to sea, and jokingly told the land lady to keep the bottle of whisky safe for when they returned. The bottle is still there, the Seahorse did not return, it's exact fate is not certain, but German records examined after the war tell of an attack by the German First Minesweeper Flotilla on an unidentified submarine on 7 Jan 1940. So very sad.

From Cullercoats he pressed on to Whitley Bay, where he visited the LBS (Life Boat Station), and finished at Blyth, where there is another LBS.