



Out on the Trail A walk from Southport to Aintree

My brother, Ken is intending to walk the TPT from coast to coast in sections with his mate, Jon, so I and another brother, Graham decided to join them for the first stage of their adventure, from Southport to Aintree.

Graham and I left Holmfirth, West Yorkshire at 6am on Sunday and drove to Aintree where we left the car and caught the train to Southport.

On arriving in Southport, we made for Starbucks (other coffee shops are available) on Marine Parade where we awaited Ken and Jon's arrival who were travelling from Widnes, before making our way to the TPT Seamark on the sea front, and the start of the Trail.

We set off on a 5-mile march along Sefton coastal path to Woodvale. We chose to use the cycle route that runs along the Coastal Road, to allow a faster pace, and it was lovely to see so many people using the path as we passed Royal Birkdale Golf Club and a couple of interesting features on the roundabouts out of Southport - firstly the horse and cart statues on Weld roundabout representing the Town's traditional shrimping industry, and the second on the Pontins roundabout, a metal sculpture of the iconic Lockheed Electra aircraft, marking the first commercial transatlantic flight that took off from Southport beach in 1937.



We joined the Cheshire Lines Path off Plex Moss Lane which was altogether quieter, traffic free and very straight, running alongside an equally straight Cheshire Lines Brook.

On approaching 10 miles of our walk and feeling in need of some refuelling, we decided to take a detour into Lydiate to sample the hospitality of the oldest pub in Lancashire, the Scotch Piper only to discover they had stopped serving lunch at 2pm! But the beer, a pint of Salopian Gold, was very good.

But we had come prepared for such eventualities and out came the ham, cheese and mustard sandwiches with crisps from the bar to fuel us for the rest of the walk to Aintree.

After a brief but welcome rest in the beer garden, we were on our way again to rejoin the Cheshire Lines path, leaving it to follow Old Racecourse Road which was the site of the Grand National before the race was transferred to Aintree.

We then followed the TPT signs through Jubilee Woods, part of community woodland on former landfill sites, to cross the River Alt at Mill Dam Bridge before making our way to Aintree, and the car parked in the railway station.

Longer and harder than we expected with the detour and faster pace we'd set ourselves, Graham and I were glad to get back in the car for the drive home to Holmfirth and leave Ken and Jon in Aintree for the Premier Inn promise of a guaranteed good night's sleep before embarking on the next stage of their adventure the following day, to Widnes. I was grateful to Graham for driving and for the hot bath when I got home.

It was a good walk with good weather and many points of interest along the way but when I do it again with my wife, Sarah, we will do it in shorter stretches, at a more leisurely pace and make sure we check out in advance, the serving times of the local pubs!



Horse and Cart sculptures



Lockheed Electra sculpture



The Scotch Piper



River Alt



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