

Hi everyone:

So, after a couple of months “rest” over Christmas, I travelled up to Berwick on Tweed on 12th Feb to continue my 4,000 mile walk. This trip took me 394 miles from Berwick to Skegness: I’ve now walked 3,388 miles in total – only 612 miles to go! The map link below shows the actual route I have covered so far - as before you can zoom into this to see more detail, although I have had to reduce the resolution slightly in order to cope with the amount of data displayed.

Before starting this trip, I was slightly worried about the weather and the shortness of the days in February, but actually it didn’t seem to rain more than it did in the autumn, nor was it significantly colder. And I had planned for no single day’s walk to exceed 20 miles, so that I did not risk walking in darkness. And on the positive side, the East Coast is a lot flatter than the South or West Coasts: I exceeded 2,000 feet climbed on only two days this trip.

In the negative column I have to mention the mud! (again!). Many parts of the Coast Path in the North-East pass along cliffs which are eroding at a rate of more than 4 meters per year: as a result the Path keeps having to be re-routed further inland, and therefore no-one appears to bother with path maintenance. Result: mud, more than a foot deep in places, usually with no feasible way around! Sometimes they haven’t got around to the re-routing yet, and the path simply disappears over the cliff, as can be seen in one of the photos attached.

I did quite a bit of beach walking on this trip: most of the beaches were sandy, so long as I could get away from the areas close to the base of the cliffs, which were often strewn with boulders released from the “glacial till” as the cliffs collapsed. You don’t see so much, walking along the beach, but it’s a lot easier than the uneven and muddy paths, provided the sand is firm. And at the weekends some of the beaches, particularly around Whitley Bay and Scarborough, were quite busy with families enjoying themselves at the weekends.

Perhaps some of them were staying in their “holiday homes” (a.k.a. mobile homes or static caravans), which have been in the news recently. I passed literally hundreds of these, mostly empty at this time of year, and couldn’t help wondering whether some of this housing stock could be made available to those who have no place to live, whose plight is so much worse in the cold winter months. I realise that the planners would probably say “NO!”, but perhaps where there’s a will there’s a way. And I’ve noticed that many of the coastal businesses are suffering severe staff shortages, both in the hospitality sector in the summer, and in construction / refurbishment in the winter when so many establishments are closed after the summer season...

My walk took me across two major rivers using very different 20th century engineering projects: the Humber suspension bridge, once the longest in the world, and even today the longest such bridge open to both pedestrians and cyclists, and the Tyne foot tunnel, which almost caused my Garmin GPS watch to broadcast an emergency alert, since it couldn’t work out where I was! Both were amazing, though the bridge had better views!

As always, the people I met provided some of the highlights of the trip:

- Gordon, my B&B host in Belford, who drove me to the nearest pub serving food when both the pubs in the village were not, and then returned to pick me up when I had finished my dinner!
- Mandy, who hosted me in Burniston, and ran me a bath so I could finish watching the England rugby match and still be in time for my dinner reservation in the local pub! (And also allowed me to use her washing machine & dryer!)

- Andrew, who invited me to Sunday lunch in Scarborough, on the basis of a 30 minute conversation after mass, and his lovely wife Anne, who didn't bat an eyelid when informed there was an unexpected guest (and the lunch was super!)

And lots more! Thank you everyone! I've tried to review all of the places where I stayed, on Tripadvisor, Booking.com, or Airbnb.com, and I've noticed that my opinions are inevitably influenced by the hosts themselves: friendly and helpful hosts can make even average accommodation seem wonderful and great accommodation seem perfection, while the reverse is sadly also true! I've been fortunate to have encountered mainly the former hosts on my Walk!

Now I'm back in Claygate awaiting the imminent birth of my second grandchild, following which I will be straight back on the Path. The next trip will take me from Skegness to somewhere around Felixstowe/Ipswich/Harwich: I will post my itinerary on my 4000 Mile FaceBook page once I've finalised it.

Best wishes,

Brendan

PS: A few "highlights" photos are attached– those of you who have visited the FaceBook page will have seen most of these already, plus many more.

Composite map of route walked so far:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1m5pHQ9Ek8cTAEAr3aL-gIVswJPVf00A&usp=sharing>

Link to the 4,000 Mile FaceBook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/BrendanHemming117>





GODS LENT CHILD

'Til land you for a while a child of mine, He said
For you to love the while he lives and mourn for when he's dead.
It may be six or seven years, or forty-two or three,
But will you then call him back, take care of him for me?
You'll bring his share to grace, you'll find should he stay he brief,
You'll have his share, my dear, my dear, for your grief.
I cannot promise he will be your own, when earth returns,
But there are secret signs, dear, there I want this child to learn.
I've found the way, would you be my search for teachers true,
And from the things that trouble the world, I have chosen you.
You will see the sign, my dear, and you'll think the labour vain,
For who has seen a child, who'll take him back again?

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LEO
font



