

O V E R T H E H I L L

Newsletter for
S.H.O.T.

January
09

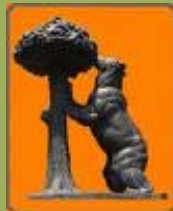
Trips this Year

13th-15th March,
Lofthouse,
Nidderdale



Trip Reports

Madrid Dec
2008



Other News

Weddings and
new Shotlets

SHOT'S YHA
Card

Happy New Year to all SHOT members, hope it was a good Christmas and New Year for you all. Thanks to Julian (and Chris M for the Photos) for his excellent write up on the December trip to Madrid...and thanks to Tim and Mark for another excellent job organising it all.

Thanks

[Nigel Venables](#)

Friday 13th – Sunday 15th March, Lofthouse, Nidderdale

When given the exciting task, just after the Second World War, of delineating the boundaries for National Parks covering the most beautiful countryside of England and Wales, those responsible must have had palpitations of the heart when they realized just how enormous the one would be covering the Yorkshire Dales.



Nidderdale

Not only would it be by far the biggest, but including the Howgills (in the west) and Nidderdale (in the east) would make it super sized in comparisons with the others and perhaps in their eyes unmanageable Both areas are

worthy of National Park status, but perhaps lacking the courage of their convictions they were excluded and demoted to the second tier as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty The Howgills, it could be argued, do not have the same landscape characteristics as the rest of the Yorkshire Dales, but Nidderdale ...

Three reservoirs (Gouthwaite, Scar House and Angram) are located in the upper part of Nidderdale - reason enough perhaps to earn the valley a black mark or three Lofthouse is a small village situated between Gouthwaite and Scar House Reservoirs and the point from which the dale road can escape north-eastwards across the moors towards that well known mecca for beer addicts known as Masham. One mile up the hill above Lofthouse the minor road ends in the cul-de-sac village of Middlesmoor perched high up on a spur between the two main tributaries of the Infant Nidd and affording an excellent vantage point for views down the entire length of Nidderdale. Both these villages have pubs as does nearby

Ramsgill.

Studfold Farm Activity Centre is situated Just off the road between these two villages in an area that is euphemistically called 'Little Switzerland. The bunkhouse contains four bedrooms with 30 bunk beds (1x14, 1x12 and 2x2 beds), a dining area with class room style seating, a kitchen and preparation room, three showers and toilet facilities Access their website www.studfoldfarm.co.uk for further Information.

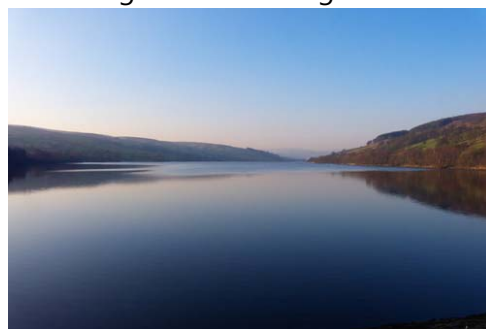
Please bring a sleeping bag.



How Stean Gorge

The best way to approach Nidderdale for most people is via Harrogate. Pateley Bridge is the main centre for Nidderdale and can be reached by the B6165 from Ripley north of Harrogate. Minor roads lead up Nidderdale passing through Wath, Ramsgills and then Lofthouse. Here take the road for Middlesmoor shortly crossing a river bridge. One hundred yards after a left hand bend the road turns sharp right for the ascent to Middlesmoor. Continue straight ahead at this junction for two hundred yards, signposted for How Stean Gorge, go past a car park and then immediately after crossing another bridge turn sharp left for the Studfold Farm Activity Centre (GR 098732).

Many areas play their tourist cards with a Matterhorn or Sugarloaf or Little Switzerland analogy Here in Nidderdale the nearby How Stean Gorge attraction provides a rather tenuous 'Little Switzerland' tag in an attempt to pull the punters away from the multifarious millstone grit formations of Brimham Rocks Just east of Pateley Bridge. Rough, arduous and boggy moorland rising west up to Great Whernside and north to Little Whernside provides classic Pennine water gathering ground for the reservoirs. However, an arc of grouse shooting moors with some excellent bulldozed tracks sweeping around from Scar House to Gouthwaite Reservoirs provides more alienable walking. The Nidderdale Way provides attractive valley bottom walking; Gouthwaite Reservoir pulls in the twitchers; industrial archaeologists will find interest in the former railbeds of the reservoir constructions ; and a visit to Masham will appeal to beer aficionados Please send the usual £ 5 deposit to Gustav to book a place.



Gouthwaite Reservoir

Madrid December 2008

My personal start to this trip was scarcely the most enjoyable, as it consisted of an emergency dental appointment for a temporary filling. I did, however, make it to Liverpool in time for our lunchtime flight to

Madrid. The rest of the northern group arrived soon after and we enjoyed an uneventful flight on EasyJet to Barajas.

Arriving in Madrid we took the mile long walk from the terminal to the station before catching the Metro to the centre of the city. On the way in we had a conversation which would have some influence on subsequent events when Chris H. asked if Spanish restaurants and bars were non-smoking. I looked through my guidebook & found that most small Spanish bars and restaurants, given the choice of being smoking or non-smoking by legislation had gone for the former.

Arrival at the Gran Hotel Versailles was followed by ten minutes of utter confusion, eventually resolved in our favor, over the room bookings. It was already nightfall by the time the northerners arrived so we only had time to go to the hotel bar and the self-service restaurant across the street from the hotel before some of us retired to bed and others to the local bar. Saturday morning dawned and a large group of us set out to find breakfast. We discussed with the southern group, who'd arrived earlier on Friday, what they'd seen of Madrid. "We've already found the red-light district!" was the contribution from an individual who'd better remain anonymous. We settled on a suitably large establishment, the "Cafe Comercial", described as a "Madrid institution" by the guidebooks, for breakfast. The cafe was one of those places that you know hasn't really changed for the last fifty years and lives in a pleasant little time warp as a result.

I decided that I'd try and visit the three great art galleries of Madrid, the Prado, the Reina Sofia and the Thyssen-Bornemisza. I went to the Prado first, went in at half past ten and finally emerged after three, having not seen everything. It is a spectacular gallery with an amazing collection of paintings by Titian, Velazquez, Goya and Bosch among many others. Velazquez alone takes up 4 large rooms. The most famous painting in the gallery is a Velazquez, "Las meninas o La familia de Felipe IV", painted in 1656. You've probably seen it, it features a cute little blonde girl (the Infanta - the king's daughter) and Velazquez himself, working on a huge canvas, the back of which takes up a large chunk of the painting. Velazquez appears to have had no luck in persuading Felipe IV to shave off what must be one of the most ridiculous moustaches in history.



Prado

I had just about enough time after the Prado for a cursory visit to the Reina Sofia, the modern art collection, to take a look at Guernica, Picasso's masterpiece, which was only returned to Spain in 1981 (after his death), as a result of the restoration of democracy. It's carefully displayed, explaining the context for which it was first painted (the Republican government's pavillion at the 1937 Paris Expo) and the process Picasso went through in painting it. There is also film of the event that inspired the painting, the bombing of the Basque town of Guernica by the German Legion Condor in April 1937. Whilst looking at the painting I met Nick and Fiona, who'd already been round the Naval Museum before a paying a more comprehensive visit than mine to the Reina Sofia. By the time I'd finished looking at Guernica it was nearly five o'clock and I was suffering from an overload of art. The Thyssen-Bornemisza will have to wait for my next visit.



Madrid from the Cable Car

Those not intent of overdosing on the art (or who had noticed that the Prado was free on Sunday) had set off to discover what else Madrid had to offer. Chief amongst these seem to be the cable car from the Parque del Oeste to the Casa de Campo (and the bar conveniently positioned at one end), the nearby Templo de Debod (a 4th Century Egyptian temple given to Spain as a thank-you for rescuing treasures from the waters of the Aswan High Dam), the Cathedral and the Royal Palace. Whilst on a general walk round town Mark H had discovered the Christmas Market in the Plaza Mayor, which he described as "full of tat", an opinion with which, after seeing it myself, I totally concur.

Justine had also found time to book a restaurant, the name of which escapes me, on strict condition that we

turned up at eight so that we would be out by ten, when all the locals would start to turn up. We had a pleasant enough meal but unfortunately enough locals had turned up with cigarettes before ten to cause Chris H some problems with his chest. After the meal some of us made a trip round several of Madrid's smoke-filled dives before middle-age caught up with us in good time for the last Metro to the hotel.

On Sunday morning Chris was still suffering, resulting in his and Jean's plans to go to Toledo with me to be abandoned. So it was myself and Nessie who were the only ones to take the option of the most obvious day-trip from Madrid. After having to deal with the understandable Spanish paranoia about security on train journeys we arrived in Spain's ancient capital in just over half an hour. Spectacularly set on a rock outcrop surrounded on three sides by the Rio Tajo, Toledo is a pretty obvious site for a fortified city. After leaving the Moorish-inspired station and crossing the bridge over the Tajo and climbing up the steep path to the top we found ourselves in the main square of the town in the middle of a Christmas market. This was much better than the one in Madrid and contained things one might actually want to buy. Chief amongst these, from Ness's point of view, was a carved wooden pistol, with a rotating gearwheel driven by the trigger, designed to fire elastic bands at unsuspecting members of your family. This was deemed to be an ideal present for Lucas. It was only after its purchase that we wondered what it might look like under the airport's X-ray machine on the way home. We then took a trip round the various museums in Toledo, a process not assisted by the inaccurate information given in my (March 2008 published) Rough Guide on what was where during the refurbishment of EL Greco's house and the Hospital de Santa Cruz. After viewing EL Greco's "Burial of the Count of Orgaz" (which we now understand thanks to the excellent English-speaking guide that someone else had paid for) and a trip round the Sephardic synagogue we had an excellent lunch (after we'd found someone to take our order). After lunch we visited the cathedral, which Vanessa described as being "much better than the one in Madrid" before taking in the view from near the Alcazar and getting a well-deserved cup of coffee in the station bar before returning to Madrid for a rapid turn round the Prado before it shut.



As close as they will ever get to it!

whilst Andy, Bernie, Justine, Matt & Chris M took a trip round the Estadio Santiago Bernabeu - Real Madrid's home ground. Judging from Mr Musson's photographs of the trip they got into the dressing rooms and got to sit in the dugout as well as Chris getting to play the part of the manager getting to answer Matt's awkward questions at the press conference. The trophy room was full, but the dearth of wins in the 1980's appears to have been filled by various trophies Real had invented to give themselves something to win. Matt said the experience had turned him into "an instant Atletico supporter". This was fortunate as we were going to see them play that evening.

After some difficulty obtaining tickets, which was solved by going to the ground and buying them just before we went in, we got to sit in the freezing cold on the top tier of the Estadio Vincente Calderon and watch Atletico beat Racing Santander 4-1 and see some of the most eccentric refereeing decisions some of us have witnessed. Equally eccentric was the Spanish attitude to cold. In Britain the food vendors in the stadium would have been selling hot tea, soup, Bovril and pies. In Madrid they were selling cold ham sandwiches and cans of Coke - some of which had been chilled! Two locals took pity on Yvonne and spread the blanket covering their knees over her shoulder. I relied on my newly-purchased Atletico Madrid woolly hat.



Atletico Madrid Game

By the time we had left the ground it was late to be eating, even by Spanish standards, and I was grateful for my substantial lunch which, together with a ham sandwich, was enough to see me through to breakfast. Chris H., Jean, Ness, Nick & Fiona, the football refuseniks, had eaten in the hotel's restaurant and discovered that the posh establishments in Madrid are all non-smoking.

Monday saw us breakfast in the ironically named Bar Santander across from the hotel before we set off to see the small number of major attractions that are actually open in Madrid on a Monday. In my (and Andy's, Bernie's, Chris M's and Tim's) case this was the Royal Palace, where it was school visit day & we spent our time trying to dodge vast groups of bored kids and their guides, working hard to produce a flicker of interest.

After lunch it was time to get back on the Metro and head off for the airport and an uneventful flight back to Liverpool.

Thanks to Mark & Tim for their efforts in organising the trip. Even they are thinking of somewhere warm next year!

SHOT News

Finally SHOT has purchased a YHA card that can be used by individuals, so if you wish to book YHA accommodation then speak to Donna who will happy to supply you with card.

Weddings and Births




Congratulations to Mark and Anna, who got married on the 4th September in Cyprus.

Also congratulations to Chris Turton and Cath who got married last summer at a castle overlooking Lake Garda.

The Shotlet club gained another two members when Mark, Zoe and Carly were joined by their new born twins, Daniel and Jodie on the 9th September 2008.



Daniel and Jodie



Email: nigel.p.venables@yahoo.co.uk

Or of course you can visit the web site

<http://www.shot.org.uk/>

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