

160-mile walk brings man through Wayne

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A lone man, dressed as a Confederate soldier, crested the top of the hill.

Philip Brown hardly noticed a car speeding past him. He is re-creating the walk home by a paroled Southern soldier after the Civil War -- a walk thousands made after the end of the conflict.

Brown is re-creating Washington Duke's walk from Durham to New Bern, but in reverse. The 160-mile trek is being completed in period garb, and worse, period shoes.

The walk home represents all soldiers' transition to civilian life.

"The themes are very meaningful," Brown said.

Along his way, many veterans have come out to talk with him about their own war experiences.

On Friday, Brown, who is from Charlotte, traveled from Cliffs of the Neuse to Goldsborough Bridge Battlefield. The 13.3-mile walk was shorter than his 20 mile daily average, but it had been a long week.

Tuesday was the worst day of his journey.

"It was a long day in the heat after a long day in the rain," he said.

As he crested the hill, his welcome party shouldered their muskets.

Local historians and re-enactors Randy Sauls, Kerry Thompson and Lynn Bull waited for him in their blue Union uniforms.

"Mr. Duke, where are you going?" Sauls asked. "May I see your papers?"

After hassling him for a while, they led him to a barn where he would sleep for the night.

"You do it up right here," Brown said.

Along his trip, Brown has been sleeping in church yards or camping outside.

During the day his crew, Mia Berg, Andrew Long and Julia Rogers take turns walking with him.

Ms. Rogers is documenting the journey for social media. She walks next to him in a brown work dress, representing a displaced woman after war. But she brings along her modern neon sneakers and wide sunglasses.

"It's not so bad when you're not in period shoes," she said.

The support staff sleeps in an RV.

In each community, Brown is welcomed and fed. He has had a mix of period food and eastern North Carolina barbecue.

But on Friday, he got some bangers and mash from the Flying Shamrock.

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Philip Brown completes his 13.3-mile trek from Cliffs of the Neuse to the Goldsborough Bridge Battlefield. Brown is walking from New Bern to Durham, re-creating the path of Washington Duke after the Civil War.

Bull offered him a blanket to sleep with.

"It's a U.S. blanket. Will that bother you?" Bull asked.

Brown has always been interested in the lives of Civil War soldiers. He just graduated from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro with a master's degree.

When he finishes his journey at Duke Homestead on May 23, he will make his way to Pennsylvania for his new job at Gettysburg.

"I'm very excited to get to work," he said.

He has missed only some modern conveniences, like shoes and cars.

"This wouldn't be worth it in a car," he said.

Friday's air show practice entertained him along his journey.

"That kept me going," he said.

His journey's progress can be followed at www.asoldierswalkhome.com or by using the hashtag #walkhomeNC.

The homecoming will be celebrated May 23 at the Washington Duke Homestead in Durham. The public is welcome to attend.

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