

Trip Report: The Carneddau Horseshoe

Date: 11th April 2005

Group: Jim Grant (Leader), Colin Christie, Chris Green, Lesley Arrowsmith, and Mike Arrowsmith

Route: Llyn Ogwen, Pen yr Ole Wen (978m), Carnedd Dafydd (1040m), Carnedd Llewelyn (1064m), Pen yr Helgi Du (833m)

Total Distance: 11 miles

Total Ascent: 3700 ft

Weather: Driving rain, windy and cloudy

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

The weather forecast was for cloudy, warm, dry conditions, the truth was far from that and the walk turned into a true winter outing with driving rain, strong winds and a lot of snow on the high tops! The outing was scheduled to start at 7am, need to pre-advise Colin of the start time as he was still scurrying around in his kitchen at 7.15am!

The walk started in driving rain, from the A5 just East of Llyn Ogwen, heading North by Glan Dena, a hut belonging to the Midland Association of Mountaineers. The route proceeds alongside Afon Lloer and zigzags its way up the fairly steep hillside towards Ffynnon Lloer.

Before we reached the foot of the East Ridge of Pen yr Ole Wen the Leader had to intervene to prevent a Scottish route variation way to the right of our intended route! We turn off East just before Ffynnon Lloer and arrived at the foot of the East Ridge thoroughly wet and engulfed in the low clouds. We are having difficulty finding the start of the route but before the Leader can assess the situation, Mike sets off up a loose and chossy gully heading up into the mist! This proves not to be the correct route but a gully to the right, full of scree, choss and grass, now known as the "Mike Arrowsmith Gully variation". Luckily the Leader re-establishes control and a traverse left at the top of the gully gets us back onto the correct route. Once on the East Ridge the route picks its way, without any further diversions, to the rocky summit cairn of Pen yr Ole Wen.

The weather has not improved and the route has a very wintery feel to it as we head north around the head of Cwm Lloer through snow and rubble to arrive at Carnedd Dafydd without incident.

Now comes the tricky bit, finding the summit of Carnedd Llewelyn in the very poor visibility with few reference points to help along the way. So with compass in hand the Leader sets about his task with some confidence. So bearing due east and despite a few hesitant moments and re-checking bearings and terrain along the way he guides the squad to the

summit of Carnedd Llewelyn. An outstanding piece of Mountain craft, though I say it myself (no chance of anyone else saying it!).

The next part of the route takes us down south west ridge towards the final summit of Pen yr Helgi Du. Dropping down we plough through some deep snow banks and eventually below the clouds and can see the sunshine and Conway valley far below us, we experience our first fleeting glimpse of the sun, it lasts about 2 minutes. Come across our first Horace's of the day coming up the path from the Ffynnon Llugwy reservoir. The descent down to Bwlch Eryl Farchog involves some interesting scrambling down some smooth wet slabs.

The final pull of the day is scrambling up the fine airy ridge to the summit of Pen yr Helgi Du that is a fitting end to the Carneddau Horseshoe. On the summit the sun finally makes an appearance as we start the descent down the grassy ridge, we have magnificent views of the snow clad summits of Tryfan and Glyder Fach. The descent continues down to the A5 with a bit of road slogging to get back to the car. We arrive back at the Dysart at 4.30pm for the essential re-hydration therapy.

MATTERS ARISING

Mike changes his clothing more often than is healthy for a Male.

Mike and Lesley need to invest in new waterproofs and waterproof underwear.

All Members are politely reminded to bring sufficient funds for the re-hydration therapy.

Jim G