

Trip Report: The Howgills

Date: 23rd May 2004

Group: Colin Christie (leader) Jim Grant, Mike Arrowsmith, Tony Quinn, Selina Green, Dave Cadman, Sue Lancaster, Claudia MacLaughlin, Chrissie Latter, Neil MacPherson (guest) and Andrew Duncan (Guest)

Route: Summits: 7 in total, ranging from 2044ft (Bush Howe) to 2218 (The Calf)

Total Distance: 12 miles

Total Ascent: 4300 ft

Weather: Sunny, Clear skies and Warm

Time: 7 hours

Great turn out, including two intrepid guests (Neil and Andrew from Hexham) and a beautiful day to tackle the Howgills

The Howgills are the prominent landmark East of Kendall when driving north along the M6 (on way to Lake District?) Although very close to M6 there is actually very little sign of the motorways or any other developments for that matter. The scenery is composed of rounded grassy summits and ridges (see later!!) We arrived at our starting point to note that as expected there were not too many hill walkers to be seen, but we did note several army types.

The leader of our group decided not to scare his fellow hikers by issuing our own team with combat suits, for fear that this may give too much of a clue of the rigours that were to follow (but we were to learn they would have been highly appropriate!! All too quickly, as we embarked on scaling a grassy incline, it became very clear that these army guys trained in this part of the world for good reason!

Having successfully slogged our way up the first of many grassy banks we decided to play a "game" to take our minds off the pain by suggesting words which best described the early stages of the walk. Words such as "grassy," "featureless", "slog", "hard", "steep" came easily to mind with mention of "sadist" (to describe the leader), and even "masochist" were mentioned, For sure, the early climbs were definitely a hard slog, up steep, featureless grassy banks which should only be undertaken by sadists and masochists alike!

Having finally mounted one grassy bank, we quickly found that the going down featureless steep grassy slopes was almost as painful as climbing them! Although it should be said that such was the views were rewarding but the difficulty was getting our head up to enjoy them!

The leader still found it necessary to assure the troops that the worst was over by quoting from the guide book that "this was the biggest of several pathless grassy ascents".

We were to later learn to carefully read the wording as having scaled Randygill Top, en route Fell Head we found that our first ascent may have been the biggest, but it was certainly not the hardest, as we slogged our way up a high Ridge which still hurts as I write, over a month after the event.

This was character building in the extreme and many congratulations to everyone who made this climb. Fortunately, everyone was too knackered to attack/blame the leader for the misinformation and Claudia just gave me "that look".

All the sense of humour failure quickly ended when lunch was called. Jim G, Tony, Neil, Andrew and Colin took the detour to Fell Head with the remaining members heading straight for "The Calf". Those of us who did, found it a relatively easy climb and were rewarded with wonderful views of the Lakes where Sca Fell and the Gable could be clearly seen. It was also reassuring to us mortals that the old warhorse, Jim G even started to feel effects of cramp with Colin coming up with dodgy French anti-cramp pills which seemed to do the trick.

The next few peaks were uneventful as we hit some of the lakes "traffic" at The Calf where we rejoined the others enjoying further well earned rest before winding our way back down to Cautley Sprout, a beautiful waterfall which offered superb views of the falls with a gorgeous alpine path that took us back to base.

All in all to a man (and to a lady) we agreed that this had been truly a wonderful day out, with the total ascent higher than Ben Nevis! ,and at no time did we get lost!

The longer than usual day ate into valuable Dysart time (a lesson learned that this bit should not be compromised!), with Tony wrecking Colins cars' air conditioning and Colin being blamed for some marital friction, for Tony and Jim anyway! None of this detracted from a fantastic day out of pain and pleasure.

.....now what were we saying about S & M??

Colin