

## **Trip Report. Howgills 15/4/2017.**

Group: Lesley, Sarah, Steve, Ali, Dave, Jeff, Ian, Colin, Jim and Mike H (leader)

Distance 10.4 miles, 3200 ft ascent.

After an early departure from Bunbury and a traffic-free M6, the group arrived at Settlebeck Bridge in Sedbergh ready to take on the challenge of the steep grassy slopes of the Howgill fells. As there was a Fell Race across part of the planned route the leader decided to change the plan and do the route anti-clockwise. This meant starting with a very easy stroll along the banks of the River Rawthey. Despite the gentle terrain the first murmurs for a coffee break were heard after just 30 mins. Ignoring the pleas, the group carried on along the riverside path with great views over Baugh Fell and Whernside in the distance.

We arrived at the planned coffee stop at the footbridge over Cautley Beck. This gave the group a good view of what was to come – a steep climb alongside Cautley Holme Beck to reach Cautley Spout and Bowderdale Head. Suitably refreshed we started the uphill walk and very soon the group was strung out with Sarah and Jim way ahead as usual. Finding the path to reach the trig point on The Calf proved demanding as the group were now spread out, finding different bushwhacking routes to climb the slopes of The Calf. Despite the very hard slog up the slopes the group finally arrived together at the path which follows the ridge from The Calf all the way back to Sedbergh. As leader, I was relieved that everyone was still in high spirits, despite missing the trig point and experiencing the Howgill muscle-aching grassy slopes – well done everyone!

Arriving at the ridge we were met with a strong, piercing cold wind, so the fantastic views across to the Lakes Fells and to the Dales were only briefly admired. Even an Andy Goldsworthy sheepfold sculpture was met with only the briefest glance. As we were now on the ridge path the best part of the route was now in front of us and we walked on, ignoring the piercing wind to reach the cairn on The Calders where we found shelter from the wind to have lunch. There was the usual Bums banter over lunch, not least appointing Ian to appear on Goggle-box! We decided this would need a mid-night watershed.

We then continued along the ridge, passed Arant How to reach the trig point on the final peak, Winder. A group photo shoot was done, and we then descended the steep slopes of Winder back to the sleep town of Sedbergh.

As we descended to the town we were passed by an elderly lady who was completing the fell race. She had done over 14 miles and nearly 7000 feet of ascent, bushwhacking the whole way – I felt like a right wimp!

Another trouble-free M6 and we arrived back for rehydration at the Dysart for 5pm – amazing.

Having done this walk several times, even in very deep snow, I would recommend doing it clockwise as per original plan – it is much easier!

