

Trip Report

Wetherlam 16th July

Distance 9 miles. Total ascent 3400 ft.

Squad

Mike H (leader), Jim, Lynn, Tony, Ann, Neil, Lesley, Mike A, Mike W, Selina, Colin.

After an early start from Bunbury and a quiet M6 the group set off from the expensive car park in the centre of Coniston in brilliant sunshine and no sign of clag over the fells. The group was in good spirits as we reached the start of the path to take us up Yewdale Fell. That was until Tony pointed out the much cheaper parking at the nearby primary school.

Finding the path at the start of a walk is usually a bit of a challenge but this time finding the start was a real problem. The area was covered by a dense jungle of bracken making it impossible to locate the path – a sign of what was to come. The guidebooks describe the route as ‘passing through beautiful bluebell woods, with small cairns which help to identify the variably apparent path’. The bracken made the ‘variably apparent’ path totally invisible with no cairns to be seen. As we plodded on the high spirits of the group started to fade. Rather than backtrack and extend the distance by following the tarmac road, we persevered and eventually reached more clearly defined paths – relief was felt by all not least the leader. Shouts for a coffee stop!

The route took us past the old Penny Rigg quarry workings near Tilberthwaite. Walking over wet rock, Lynn took a tumble and grabbed hold of a thistle to steady herself. Fortunately, Jim had a minor surgery kit in his rucksack to remove the numerous thistle spines from Lynn’s hand.

Crossing the footbridge over Tilberthwaite Gill, we then climbed the clear path to reach Birks Fell with great views down to Little Langdale. Ahead of us was Wetherlam Edge – our main route to reach the summit of Wetherlam. Climbing the Edge was a bit of a scramble with plenty of hand and foot holds.

The summit of Wetherlam gave us stunning views of the ranges of Skiddaw, Scafell, Helvellyn and High Street in the distance as well as the nearby Langdale Pikes. We then descended from the summit onto the clear path to Swirl Hause. As we came down the grassy slope Lynn had her second mishap of the day, tripping as she tried to disappear like Alice down a rabbit hole.

Reaching the large cairn marking the path down from the ridge, Mike W continued along main path to ascend Swirl, just to test reactions. This was met with loud groans of that being a peak too far. The group continued down the planned route to Coppermines Mines Valley passing along the banks of Levers Water. The ground next to the tarn can get very boggy in wet weather. At this point Neil tested the waterproof qualities of his walking gear by slipping and coating his backside in soggy peat. Luckily he was travelling back in Jim’s car.

The old mining buildings in Coppermines Valley have recently been renovated using money from the Lottery. One old cottage that was previously used as a climbing hut is now a posh holiday cottage that was being used as a wedding venue. Seeing a group sitting in a hot tub in the middle of the fells seemed rather incongruous. Tourism has reached the high fells.

The group continued the descent along the old mining road to get back to Coniston. After a stop/start journey back on the M6, we arrived back at the Yewtree now under new management to be rehydrated by rather flat beer!

Another enjoyable and memorable day in the mountains.