

A Ridge Too Far

Boundary Ridge Walk, 28th July 2023

Distance: 10.27 according to OS maps, 12.7 miles according to Strava!!!!

Ascent: 2,500ft advertised, 2,400ft According to Strava

People wot walked: Richard (Leader) and Della Calder, Dave and Christine Bond, Dave Barker, Janet Murray, Cate Gregory and Lesley Arrowsmith.

The one and only Jasper the dog.

Summer seems like a good time to venture further afield so a trip to Snowdonia was proposed and the aforementioned folks chose to join me in Eryri.

As we know Eryri is suffering from the huge number of visitors arriving at weekends and bank holidays so I decided we should visit an area reserved for connoisseurs rather than the hoy poloy. Visiting during the week ensured we had the hills pretty much to ourselves.

As usual the team assembled at the Pavilion in good time to depart before the 08:00 start time. Travelling via the A5 was not too bad but we did spend a long time behind a very large truck until he turned off for Bala. Nevertheless we arrived at the crest of the Crimea Pass, opened in 1854 during the aforesaid war appropriately built by Russian POWs, hence the name.

Everyone was dressed and ready to walk by 10:00 and off we went up the road for a few hundred yards to join a footpath. We followed a well-made, but not well drained track taking us around Moel Dynogydd and leading to some spoil heaps created when the London and Northwestern Railway dug the tunnel through the mountains to connect Blaenau Ffestiniog with Llandudno Junction. Why would they dig a tunnel 4km long in 1854 at huge expense; well, it was to transport slate, a valuable commodity at the time. Remarkably it is still in use today. On the map it looked like there was a cut off path avoiding the spoil heaps and making a more direct line to the valley floor but there was no sign of this on the ground so we stayed on the track adding some extra distance to the planned route.

Fortunately, the spoil heaps provided a welcome shelter from the wind and a coffee break was called. Once refreshed we set off down the track leading to the valley of the Afon Lledre. All was well until we arrived at the stepping stones across the Afon Lledre which were underwater! Undeterred the leader attempted to see just how far they were underwater and after discovering it was too far and that the stepping stones were made from Teflon as well an alternative route was called for. Bushwacking and bogs are not easy bedfellows but after a short time we met a road which allowed us to bypass the river and work our way back to the intended route.

So far we had been travelling downhill but this was about to change as we left the last farm in the valley to head northwest to the Boundary Ridge. The track was good, the views were opening out as we climbed higher and everyone seemed to be enjoying the walk. A convenient old mineral working provided a nice sheltered spot for lunch. Bait taken we

carried on climbing steadily towards the ridge. Not too steep just a gentle incline. The country became wilder and more remote as we progressed. Not long after crossing the Afon Edno Cate managed to slip crossing a dyke banged her hip and did a pretty impressive face plant in the inevitable bog. Fortunately, nothing broke and after a couple of minutes to regain her composure she was ready to continue. We were now well off the beaten track and I was surprised when we met a Dutch group of four coming towards us who enquired which way to go. We put them right and continued to the Ridge.

The Ridge runs from the summit of Moel Siabod in a generally southerly direction to Alt Fawr above Blaenau Ffestiniog and is a good 4km long providing great views of the Snowdon Massif, Porthmadoc, the back of Cnicht and the Moelwyns. Guided by the fence which marks the boundary we plodded south. There were many bogs requiring long detours in many cases and the further we went the stronger the southerly wind became. The bogs and strengthening wind coupled with the endless ups and downs began to take their toll on our energy and progress was slow. Many false summits eventually brought us to the beginning of the descent but by this time the weather had become a bit damp, not raining hard just a wet mist which added to the misery. We were all ready for the end but still had a couple of miles to go. Dave and Christine Bond seemed to be the only ones with any spring in their legs and the rest of us just tagged along. Dave knew the way as he had been here last year so we followed him.

Everyone stuck at it and we were all glad to see the cars at the end and have a well earned sit down all the way back to Bunbury. Finishing the walk at 17:30 it was a unanimous decision to boycott the usual rehydration at the Dysart and we all went straight home.

The leader takes full responsibility for the variable length miles in Eryri and apologises for any distress caused by missing the Dysart. It was an epic day though and I'm sure will provide lots of nostalgic analysis in years to come.

Thank you all for your company, a great day out in a wonderfully remote and beautiful area.

Richard Calder