

Trip Report: The Howgills

Date: 14th April 2012

Group: Mike H (leader),Mike A, Lesley, Lynda, Susan, Rob, Graham, Colin (and Roxy)

Route: The Howgills

Total Distance: 11 miles

Total Ascent: 2929 ft

Weather: Unknown

As this was my first walk as leader I had the double challenge of not getting lost as well as overcoming past experiences in the Howgills. (Not to mention missing the semi-final between Everton and Liverpool). A circular route was chosen with the hard fell climb at the start and a more gentle valley walk along the River Rawthey to complete the route.

The group left the car park in Sedbergh in sunshine and a chilly breeze, and immediately set off up-hill. Having negotiated the path through a local farm with friendly signs like 'Dogs will be shot' (fortunately Roxy can't read), we made our way onto the fells. We by-passed Winder, the first peak, (Shh...don't tell Jim) to conserve our energies for the larger hills to come. As one female member of the party added, "We'll ignore the little knobs."

As we made our way onwards Colin was startled to find paths in the Howgills! - the previous outing here must have been off-piste. A strong N.E. wind created a significant wind chill and as there are few rocky outcrops on the Howgills to provide shelter the group maintained a steady pace with no coffee stops until we reached our first peak of Arant How. We continued at a steady pace over the Calder (with photos taken for Richard) to reach the Calf - the highest point in the Howgills. The views across to the Lake District and the Dales were spoiled by haze despite bright sunshine but we had a very good view of the M6. So far most of the walk had been up-hill, and from here on the going was downwards along easy paths. Because of the brisk pace set by the group I was beginning to think I had chosen too easy a route and wished I had included going up Winder at the start.

We made our way along the tranquil valley of Bowderdale and then across Swere Gill to reach a path to take us to Cautley Spout - now renamed as The Sprout. We found shelter from the wind near a small beck to have lunch with the views of the Sprout above us and the Rawthey valley below. With the warmth of the sun, good company and marvellous views, I thought I was in paradise. My feelings of joy were suddenly ruined when Rob announced "Everton have scored".

The return journey was along the banks of the River Rawthey where we met our first stile of the day. Until now we had met only gates and climbing a stile came as such a shock to Roxy that she fell as she leapt over. Normally her agility amazes all, and she looked up as if embarrassed by her downfall. As we made our way along the river through green fields full of lambs and even a trio of Alpacas, Lynda treated us to her imitation of frolicking lambs! The river is a special place for me (Mike H) as I caught my first sea trout here. It was made even more special when Rob let us know that Liverpool had won 2-1!!

We arrived back in Sedbergh after covering nearly 11 miles and hopefully with changed opinions of the Howgills. We now had to face another 100 miles of motorway to get back to the Dysart. Particular thanks must go to the Lesley and Lynda to survive the journey in the back of a Land Rover Defender - not the most comfortable car.

Mike H