

Trip Report: Snowdon**Date:** 12th January 2013**Group:** Jim G (Leader), Tony, Ian, Mike W, Selina, Ann, Neil & Eilidh**Route:** The Watkin Path**Total Distance:** 8 miles**Total Ascent:** 3510 ft**Weather:** Very cold, very windy and very claggy**Time:** 5 hours 50 mins

A last minute change of squad with Mike H withdrawing (chest infection) withdrawn not under starters orders (but the free beer fine applies) but with the addition of Eilidh (Ann & Neil's daughter). An early 7am start from the pavilion; arriving at the National Park car park at Pont Bethania 2 hours later, no other cars are present but the toilets are much appreciated.

The path starts off fairly gently up through broadleaved woodlands and then on through Yr Wyddfa National Nature Reserve, special for its arctic-alpine and montane plants. The path arrives above a fine display of waterfalls on Afon Cwm Llan where a digger marks the spot where there is a small hydro-electric dam being built. The whole Cwm is littered with abandoned and derelict buildings and spoil heaps from long lost slate mining activities.

We pass Gladstone Rock where a plaque commemorates the visit in 1892 of the then Prime Minister to address the people of Eryri on the topic of justice for Wales! The path climbs steeply now before we disappear into the clag! We stop for a coffee break just below Bwlch y Ciliau in what we thought was a sheltered spot, after sitting down the wind began to howl and didn't stop for most of the rest of the walk!

Reaching the Bwlch the path turns left along the ridge; with the ground now frosted and frozen; to Bwlch y Saethau before the next section that rises abruptly up and across the southern flank of Snowdon; it consist mostly of frozen rubble and the route finding is a bit tricky in the clag. After a spot of scrambling and scabbling about we eventually reach the prominent finger of rock on Bwlch Main to be greeted by a howling gale, we regroup here and turn right; heading for the summit of Snowdon on a very icy and slippery path. We reach the new summit cafe and shelter behind it out of the howling wind and decide it is too windy and dangerous to battle the wind to the summit cairn. We meet another bunch of Horace's and our senses are assailed by the smell of freshly cooking bacon, but we are unable to locate its source so after a brief rest we turn back down the ridge to make our descent.

The path is even trickier in descent with several Bum's in use to aid the way forward and we slip, slide our way back to Bwlch Main, passing this heading down the narrowing ridge. The wind is now gusting to 40/50 mph and it is quite a job keeping upright and you can see the clouds pouring across the ridge and where it is forced through the gaps in the ridge it is strong enough to blow us side ways! The ridge narrows and great care is needed because of the wind and there are some scrambly bits across Allt Maenderyn. We eventually drop out of the clag and the wind starts to ease as we drop lower and we find a sheltered spot where we have our lunch break. We continue down the ridge and dropping down a rocky staircase of slate we arrive at Bwlch Cwm y Llan. The path up to Yr Aran is straight ahead but there is little enthusiasm for gratuitous peak bagging or going back up into the clag and strong wind.

We turn left down a slate gully before crossing boggy, grassy slopes (Tony got excited here) before joining an old tramway along which horse-drawn trams took slate to the top of a steep incline where they were lowered to Pont Bethania. We continue long this until a clear path down left leads us back to the digger where we turn right and retrace our steps back to the car park.

An uneventful drive back to the Dysart for a warm in front of the fire and a couple of sharp halves to complete a memorable day of winter mountaineering

Jim G