

Trip Report: The Black Sail Weekend

Date: 7th & 8th June 2014

Group: Jim G (Leader), Mike H, Bob, Gerry, Hugh, Colin, Tony, Lynn, Ali, Dave, Lynda, Brian

Route: The Walk: Day 1: Ennerdale Valley to Black Sail. Day 2: Black Sail-Looking Stead (627m)-Pillar (892m)-Scoat Fell (843m)-Steeple (819m)-Haycock (798m)-Bowness Knott car park

Day 1 Distance: 6 miles Day 2 Distance: 9.25 miles Ascent: 3354 ft
Time: 5hrs 30 mins

Total Distance: see above

Total Ascent: see above

Weather: One day of lashing rain, one day warm, sunny, windy & cloudy

This weekend was from an original idea by Selina and booked many moons ago before she buggered off to Kuala Lumpur and left Jim G to sort it out! This trip turned into the organisers nightmare, the original plan involved booking the entire Black Sail Youth Hostel for an overnight stay for a maximum of 16 people. With a full trip and reserves, what could possibly go wrong? Well for various reasons, some of them even valid, Mari, Ian, Mike & Lesley dropped out and the three subs were also not available. What more could possibly go wrong? Well the great British summer weather of course! With dire weather forecasts for Saturday, these included: tennis ball size hailstones, heavy thunderstorms with lightning, heavy rain and winds gusting to 50 mph!

The Leader made the call to abandon the original Saturday route (done in reverse on Sunday), and postpone departure on Saturday from Bunbury to 10.30am. The new route was a walk up the Ennerdale Valley, from Bowness Knott car park (where we met Ali & Dave) to Black Sail Youth Hostel, this being accomplished in lashing rain, no hailstones, no thunderstorms, no lightning, no gale force winds! so much for the forecasts! A walk of 6 miles up a very good track, with only one bit of route finding due to a Forestry Commission diversion round some tree felling, to meet Hugh at the youth hostel following his walk over from Buttermere.

The Youth Hostel common room and gents toilet were open on our arrival, the staff don't make an appearance until 5pm. This Youth Hostel has undergone a £250k refurbishment but what we really needed, that it didn't have, was a drying room, we were all soaked to the skin. Having said that, this youth hostel is set in the most amazing location and it has been renovated to a high standard, it sleeps 16, has a nice big common room & kitchen, his & hers toilets and one shower, but most importantly of all they sell beer & Wine! We settled in, slowly drying out until the bar

opened at 5pm and the usual drinking frenzy ensued, only interrupted by our pre-ordered dinner at 7pm, the drinking frenzy continued until the bar closed at 10pm and finally off to bed when the hip flasks had run dry. I shared the gay suite with: Gerry (insomniac), Hugh (insomniac), Mike H (insomniac) Bob & Colin, needless to say none of us got a good night's sleep. Hugh decided to depart for Buttermere at 5am, only to find that the common room (where his boots were) didn't open until 7am! Breakfast was a rolling affair, with cereals/toast/tea/coffee available at 7am, porridge at 7.45 am and the full English at 8 am. That done, it was a miracle that the squad was ready to hit the dusty trail at 9am, several looking decidedly worse for wear, Hugh having long ago departed for Buttermere.

What a difference in the weather, the morning started off with clag only on the highest tops with sunny interludes and got progressively better as the day wore on. Our route was a Wainwright peak bagging fest, ascending Balck Sail Pass (this cleared a few heads) before turning right to cross Looking Steads (some needed a bit of verbal encouragement to leave the path to bag this one), Pillar (where a coffee break was taken and a small diversion to view the magnificent Pillar Rock), down to Wind Gap (it was windy), up to Scoat Fell, then an out and back to bag Steeple (no amount of verbal abuse could convince some to partake) lunch was taken with our backs to the Ennerdale wall, then on to our final peak of the day, Haycock. As soon as we turned north onto our descent path to Ennerdale Water, the sun really made an appearance and a lot of delayering took place, This path proved to be a tiring flog down a loose stoney trench through the biggest heather area I have seen anywhere in the Lake District, before we hit the wide track that took us back, eventually, to our cars at Bowness Knott.

A great trip, only marred by Saturday's weather, we waved goodbye to Ali and Dave who were off on holiday to Scotland, dropped Gerry off in Portinscale (Shirley who must be obeyed) and after a good journey back down the M6, apart from the bloody unmanned roadworks near Lancaster, we arrived back in The Yew Tree for the usual rehydration therapy.

Jim