

Trip Report: The Not So Namby Pamby Walk

Date: 12th March 2011

Group: Colin (Leader), Mike (Deputy/co leader & driver), Lynda (driver), Chrissie, Sue, Lesley, Tony, Lynn and Heather (virgin BUM), plus Roxie, Tilly and Vera (canines)

Route: Arenig Fawr & Moel Llyfnant

Total Distance: 11 miles

Total Ascent: Unknown

Weather: Mainly clear, windy on top

Time: 6 hours 45 mins

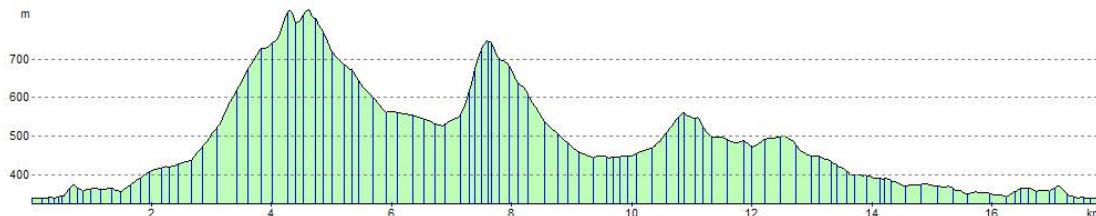
The BUMS had climbed Arenig Fawr in the past, but on a day when you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. This time round, we had much better weather and chose a different (much harder) route to the summit. In fact, after some recent namby pamby walks, this walk put the "M" back in BUMS!

Lynda arrived with Vera, making it a bit tight for my car, so she volunteered to drive her mega vehicle which can accommodate 4 people and 3 mutts with ease. Once again, the girls outnumbered the boys by 2:1 and we set off reasonably sharp at 7.30am.

We were using one of the go4awalk routes, which provides minimal information, although the leader had worked out beforehand that one of the features of this route were the lack of paths. It was graded 7, which I guess was out of 10 so we were aware it might be a reasonable flog. For this reason, he cunningly chose a co-leader (Mike) to blame if things went pear shaped. This worked out only to be partly successful in that we never missed a beat in terms of navigation, but the leader still copped all flak when the going got tough!

Navigating with no paths required us to follow fences and climb over lots of said fences. The problem is that Vera hasn't yet learned that big dogs are capable of jumping over fences and styles. Roxie tried to show how it was done, but Vera took no notice and wanted to be lifted over the fences. This wasn't good as Roxie got very jealous that her master was handling another dog and tried to eat Vera every time we dropped her at other side. It was however very good for keeping Vera clean, as every time we picked her up she cleaned herself on my new jacket! In fact, when we got back to Dysart someone remarked that we looked like we'd been dragged through a hedge backwards, and Vera looked like she had visited Patch's new "How clean is my car" business..for dogs (There's an idea Patch??).

Quite quickly, we embarked on the ascent up Arenig Fawr and it was quite a flog (in fact a mini scramble at some points) and very windy on top. The leader's attempts to show the troops the modest profile on the Go4awalk routing fell on deaf ears (I later noted the Y height axis was about 1mm to 500m!!) and did a quick one on my memory map that seems to show the height gains a bit clearer (below)



Anyway with their rosy cheeks from their exertions, the troops cast some dark looks in my direction as we had our coffee break with some fine views below looking back to Arenig Fach. At this point, Heather our new recruit pulled out her fancy camera, and started talking a strange language which mentioned SLRs, and cameras that were not SLRs, but still had good ISO's and other stuff I couldn't understand. Clearly, she is a candidate for new position of BUMS official photographer (although Les seemed to think she too would be good for this position with her point and fire sureshot?).

As an aside, there is a memorial at top of Arenig Fawr to 8 American crewmen who were killed on 4th Aug 1943 when they crashed on the summit while on a night cross-country training flight. Every year a group of Bala citizens climb the mountain and place a floral wreath at the monument.

We followed the ridge in a SW direction and followed more fences, flogged through more bogs, and lost lots of elevation which was daunting and caused some mutterings, as we could clearly see our next challenge casting a dark shadow in our direction, which was Moel Llyfnant. As we began the ascent the leader decided that it was best to put some distance between himself and revolting troops, and made a break for the summit. It was a proper flog, but happily all our crew, which remember included virgin BUMS, BUMS old enough to be grandparents and BUMS who were grandparents, made it through pain barrier and only a few grumbles could be heard whilst we enjoyed lunch at the summit.

From this point, we were only half way round and another smaller peak was on the itinerary (namely Foel Boeth). As we followed more fences, then struck a SW course over open hillside, it was noted that we had seen not one other hiker en route (which would remain the case until we were almost back at the car). In fact, we had hardly seen any livestock or even

any birds. It was quiet, desolate and secluded in the extreme. At this point, we noted on our map a clear path! Following this path would mean a slight short cut and as time was getting on, and the leader felt the relentless flog up the hills and through the bogs could potentially have taken it's toll on the troops. The co-leader and I decided to miss out the final summit, and strike for home along said path. Sadly, although the "path" had a style leading to it, so we know it was supposed to be a path, in keeping with rest of route it wasn't a path, in fact it was one big marsh! We squelched through to seek sanctuary of another fence as soon as possible as Lesley was starting to show signs of unhappiness and vowed never to use Go4awalk maps ever again. Mike made a pertinent point, which was that whoever comes up with these routes for Go4awalk can never have actually walked them! This in keeping with fact that we had seen no-one and no sane person would attempt a bog trot with no paths! We found our fence exactly where we had expected, struck north, then followed the river, Nant y Gist-faen (which was more of a stream with marshes on either side, but no real path of course) in a NE direction which eventually took us back to a used railway which was the best (only) path we had all day. It was still pretty boggy though, but by this time those with nice boots were smugly saying how dry their feet were, whilst the rest of us whose feet had been soaked from mile one, were past caring about soggy socks! Tony bemoaned the fact that Lynn wouldn't let him wear his plastic boots as they would look too silly (can't blame her tbh, as she probably saw some pics of me in mine last time out!) We arrived back at car and headed back to Dysart for rehydration trying to find the right words to describe the walk. It wasn't the prettiest for sure, apart from one little bit of the river that was quite nice as Chrissie observed, but we made up for that by having 6 brilliant "belles" in our party (and three pretty dogs!)

It could be described as any of the following:

- 1) The desolate walk - we didn't see a soul even although you could see for miles!
- 2) The fence walk - navigation was by following fences!
- 3) The pre-season training walk - it was pretty tough!
- 4) The bog trot - it was also wet underfoot but happily not from heavens!
- 5) The initiation test for Heather walk - which wasn't the intention. Sorry Heather, it's not usually that hard (but look out it can be harder!)

Lynn probably summed it up as an enjoyable and challenging day out which gave her a good sense of achievement! So well done to all and happily, I don't have to lead another one for ages!!

Colin