

**Trip Report: Snowdonia**

**Date:** 15th March 2008

**Group:** Richard, Selina, Lesley, Mike, Tony, Frank, Jill

**Route:** Rhinog Fawr

**Total Distance:** Unknown

**Total Ascent:** Unknown

**Weather:** Unknown

Rhinogia, as the Welsh people call them are the hills twixt Trawsfynydd and Dolgellau, bordered to the west by Cardigan Bay and to the east by the road from Trawsfynydd to Dolgellau. Far from the madding crowds of Snowdonia yet close enough to Bunbury for a day trip they were the venue for our March wanderings.

Seven doughty souls, Selina, Lesley, Jill, Frank, Mike, Tony and Richard made the foray west and were rewarded with medioca weather, persistent cloud cover and some rain. Were we downhearted? No.

The Rhinogs certainly lived up to their epithet and proved to be rocky, rough, tough and rewarding. There is nowhere else quite like the Rhinogs, full stop. They are unique in their rocky persistence and individuality. As well as rocks I had promised wild goats which is fine, I knew the rocks would be there but the goats are a law unto themselves and there was no guarantee that they would be around when I needed them.

Undaunted we set off from our starting point strangely denuded of trees from the last time I had been here in 1999. The unfamiliar landscape soon enticed us onto a signed path which proved to be a test route for gortex boots and very soon overcame the pathetic water repelling qualities of my own footwear setting the standard for the rest of the day.

A pleasant plod through what used to be a forest lead us up towards the col between Rhinog Fach (Tony thought this was a "scouse" name) and Rhinog Fawr and once at the high point we turned north to climb the latter hill. It wasn't long before we lost the path as it moved from grass to boulder field, a minute four rock cairn indicating the way onwards and upwards. The cast scrambled over this ankle breaker which was a precursor of what was to follow for the rest of the day.

Soon we emerged onto a wonderful level pavement of almost perfect rock which stretched away towards the summit of Rhinog Fawr which we soon crossed to pick up the path which wound its way tortuously towards the summit.

Much to Tony's disgust we saw our first goats on the ascent. He was convinced that they were just a figment of my imagination but right on cue there they were. It was a little worrying to begin with as they stood

like statues and it was suggested I had just planted them but luckily they moved while we watched them and I was off the hook.

This was good because for the rest of the day everybody believed me when I said I knew where we were, where we were going and how long it would take! (I didn't know any of these things)

Nearing the summit the wind got up and it started to rain but we pressed on and were rewarded with fleeting glimpses of the Lleyn Peninsular as the mist rolled over the summit. Descending over the other side the mist began to clear and Tony regaled us with stories of his time at Port Merion when he was Prisoner Number 8 and how he had failed to avoid the big bubble gum which chased him across the sands of Traeth Bach which we could now see in the distance.

Our descent was anything but smooth. The rain made the rocks and anything else for that matter incredibly slippery and care was needed to avoid contact with mother earth by anything other than boots.

The first victim of this gravitational pull was Gill who assumed a horizontal position rather too easily after one particular greasy slab. This unplanned realignment of her frame with the terrain did not bother her in the slightest and she broke out into hysterical fits of laughter cleverly realising that this was the best medicine. First BUM on a Rhinog. Gill's close relationship with the Rhinogs continued throughout the rest of the day and for anyone who is interested we have a complete record of her subsequent encounters with the turf and rocks of the Rhinogs saved as way points on the GPS.

Once down from Rhinog Fawr I made a navigational error which I tried to disguise as local knowledge.

This ploy failed dismally when we arrived at the top of an impossible descent and had to do much toing and froing to find a way down to the café for lunch. Fortunately when we arrived all the seats were free and we had the pick of the best.....wet rocks!!! Still it had stopped raining and we all had a pleasant break.

It was at this point Gill discovered why her landings had been so soft. Delving into her sac she brought out a freezer bag which contained what can only be described as a pureed sandwich. Obviously this had cushioned her fall. She didn't know how to eat it and it was suggested that if she cut the corner off the bag it would probably behave much like cake icing if she squeezed the bag. She didn't go hungry.

After lunch we embarked on the next phase of our discover Rhinog trip moving north into the "chaotic mile" a weird wonderland of rock and heather on the thinnest of trods which frequently disappeared with monotonous regularity. It was at this point I gave up all pretence of

knowing where we were and in a break in the mist announced where we were going.

Time was marching on, the Dysart was calling and the troops were beginning to weary. A strategic withdrawal was called for so we forged a path in the direction of home. Never let it be said that BUMs have not exercised their "right to roam" today we did and how! After much binding in the marsh and much stumbling on the rocks and tree stumps we finally joined a forest track which fortunately had a fully equipped facility for the fairer sex to powder their noses, something which had been sadly lacking on the exposed slopes above.

Soon we were back at the cars and a rapid change was made into drier clothes for the trip home. I think it is fair to say that there were 14 very weary ankles along with 14 tired feet. Distance? Who knows? Immaterial in the Rhinogs, impossible to measure.

Rewarded walkers? Seven.

Richard