

Trip Report: Not The Cumbria Way

Date: 5th-11th May 2013

Group: Jim G (Leader) & Mike H, Mike W for days 2 & 3, Selina for day 2

Route: The Cumbria Way from Ulverston to Carlisle plus going over the mountains

Total Distance: 76.8 miles

Total Ascent: 14025 ft

Weather: Monday & Tuesday fine and dry, Wednesday & Thursday wet and very windy, Friday fine and dry

Time: 32 hours 47 mins

Sunday 5th May Bunbury to Ulverston

Delia very kindly agreed to drive Mike and I to Ulverston on Sunday afternoon, where we arrived without any traffic incidents despite it being a nice Bank Holiday. Safely installed in our B&B we set out to get a quiet evening meal and a pint. Well we were very surprised to be met by a town that resembled the wild west! One pub was full of drunken girls dressed in golfing attire, playing a pub Golf drinking game, we quickly decamped to somewhere a bit quieter, but not a lot, where we enjoyed a meal and a couple of pints before retiring to the B&B and bed.

Monday 6th May Ulverston to Coniston

The first day on the trail with a bit of route finding to follow the Cumbria Way out of Ulverston. After a few miles we divert off the Cumbria Way making our own route over 5 Outlying Wainwright's: Great Burney (298m) Blawith Knott (248m) Tottlebank Height (236m) Wool Knott (223m) Beacon Fell (255m) before dropping down to Coniston Water and the Cumbria Way that takes us into Coniston. We reward ourselves with a couple of pints of fine Bluebird Bitter at the Black Bull Inn. We find our B&B and after a short rest, meet up with Selina and Mike W for dinner and a couple of beers in the Black Bull Inn

Tuesday 7th May Coniston to Langdale

The day is beautiful, blue sky, sunshine and no wind, all four of us meet up at the Black Bull Inn with the first mountain high above us, this is the Old Man of Coniston (803m). We find the path up Coppermine Valley and follow the normal route, which is uphill all the way, and eventually arrive at the summit to be rewarded by clear views across the entire Lake District.

We follow the ridge north, crossing Brim Fell (796m), Swirl How (802m) and Great Carrs (785m) before dropping down West Side Edge to Three

Shire Stone on Wrynose Pass where lunch is taken. Some debate about dropping down to scale Pike O'blisco but we decide to opt for the path up to Red Tarn. The route now takes us up to Great Knott (696m) then some scrambling up to Crinkle Crags South Top (834m) Crinkle Crags (859m) Shelter Crags (815m) and Shelter Crags North Top (775m) before dropping down to the Three Tarns below Bow Fell. We decide that Bow Fell is a top too far so we drop down the Band to Stool End and along the track to the Old Dungeon Ghyll Hotel where we reward ourselves with a couple of beers after a truly great day in the mountains. The Hotel is a bit like stepping back in time with the walkers bar very basic and the Hotel a bit tired. We have a bar meal and a couple of beers before a well earned rest.

Wednesday 8th May Langdale to Keswick

Mike W & Selina's original plan was to leave us here and head back to their car which is back in Conistown. Mike W decides to join us today, with Selina volunteering to walk back to Conistown via The Cumbria Way to collect the car. We wave goodbye to Selina in the pouring rain, the forecast is dire with heavy rain and gales forecast to so decide to abandon plan A going over the mountains and opt instead to follow The Cumbria Way. The route initially follows Mickledon Beck before turning north up to Stake Pass, this achieved in heavy rain and very blustery wind. Cresting the pass we head down some very tight hairpin bends descending down Langstrath in the rain, clag and wind to Stonethwaite. The route continues on through Borrowdale to Grange and then along the shores of Derwent Water to Keswick.

We check into the George Hotel, when we eventually find it. We are thoroughly soaked so we take off our wet gear and boots before rewarding ourselves with a couple of beers, Selina and the car arriving just in time to partake.

Dinner is taken in the Hotel restaurant, we are recommended by one of the locals to have the homemade pie, we all decide to have a half portion but none of us can manage to finish half of the half! So if you want a big pie this is the place for you! A couple of beers and off to bed.

Thursday 9th May Keswick to Caldbeck

This is the parting of the ways with Mike W & Selina leaving us here, they had a lie-in, before heading back to Bunbury. The forecast is the same as yesterday so we have decided to avoid the high tops again and stick to The Cumbria Way. Shortly after setting off the heavens open and it rains hard for most of the day. Our route takes us up and around Lonscale Fell

until we reach the unmanned Youth Hostel at Skiddaw House. Here there are two alternative routes for the Cumbria Way, the westerly route which avoids crossing the northern fells, or our chosen route eastwards that takes you over the tops. A fair bit of bog trotting to start and a fairly long flog before turning north up a very boggy path alongside Grainsgill Beck that takes us onto the main ridge. We emerge from the Beck path to be greeted by a howling gale, in which it is very difficult to remain upright! We turn northwest getting shelter behind a strange green hut before we cross Harestones (627m) we are still having trouble remaining upright but reach our final summit High Pike (658m). A quick celebration before we continue northwards along The Cumbria Way and our overnight stop at the Oddfellows Arms in Caldbeck where we treat ourselves to a couple of beers and later dinner.

Friday 10th May Caldbeck to Carlisle

The weather has turned for the better and we set off in the sunshine following the final leg of The Cumbria Way. There are no more mountains in front of us but a very pleasant walk following firstly Cald Beck and then the Caldew River Valley all the way to Carlisle. We arrive in Carlisle to find that the end of The Cumbria Way is not clearly marked. It used to finish at the Visitor Center but was fairly recently extended to Carlisle Castle, there is no plaque or sign that we could find so we made some enquiries at the Castle entrance. They convinced us that the official finish was now a big Cherry tree in the Castle grounds, they let us in for free and took our picture under said tree. We were advised that the best beer in Carlisle was to be had in the Kings Head, which we duly found and had a couple of beers to celebrate the end of our adventure. When we came out it was pouring with rain, we were very wet by the time we eventually found our Hotel in Scotland Road. After checking in and drying off we went across to the pub opposite for a meal and a couple of beers.

Saturday 11th May Carlisle to Home

It is raining again when we set off to Carlisle station carrying our suitcases for the first time this week. An uneventful train journey back to Crewe where Amy picks us up and takes back home.

A great week in the mountains, with brilliant sunshine, heavy rain and howling gales, what more could you ask for from a great British Summer!

Jim G

