

**Trip Report: The Lake District**

**Date:** 18th-23rd May 2015

**Group:** Jim G & Mike H

**Route:** Not The Bob Graham Round

**Total Distance:** 83.5 miles

**Total Ascent:** 32884 ft

**Weather:** The lot

**Time:** 51 hours 3 mins, Average walking speed of 1.64 mph with 644 feet of ascent per hour!!

The Bob Graham Round route is designed to test the best of fell runners who attempt to complete the round of 42 peaks, 66 miles and 27,000ft of ascent within 24 hours.

Mike H & Jim G took on this walking version of the route as a Bums annual challenge, and we were joined by other Bums for part of the route.

Walking the route over 6 days involved extending both distance and total ascent, so that we finished each day in a village with a pub for essential rehydration and with a comfy bed in a B & B. We were advised from the outset not to underestimate the magnitude of the challenge, and to be prepared to modify the route if the weather turns bad.

**Day 1: Keswick to Threlkeld, 8 hrs 20mins**

**Summits:** Skiddaw, Great Calva and Blencathra

**Ascent and distance** 5390ft, 14.3 miles

We were joined by Jeff on this day. As we left Keswick the view up to Skiddaw did not look promising with thick dark clag covering most of the mountain. As we got higher we were met with heavy rain driven directly at us by a strong northerly wind. So a quick photo on the summit and then across a rain soaked peat bog to reach Great Calva. Our route from Great Calva to Blencathra involved fording the River Caldew, but as the river was in full spate we had to take a 1.5 mile detour to cross the river at a footbridge. Even so it was heavy going to reach the summit of Blencathra. With legs aching after summiting 3 peaks we then had the steep scrambling descent down Hall's Fell Ridge to get to our B&B in Threlkeld. Jeff didn't enjoy the scramble! We then had the best meal of the week in the Horse and Farrier.

**Day 2: Threlkeld to Grasmere, 8 hrs 56 mins**

**Summits:** Clough Head, Great Dodd, Watson's Dodd, Stybarrow Dodd, Raise, White Side, Helvellyn Lower Man, Helvellyn, Nethermost Pike, Dollywaggon Pike, Seat Sandal, Fairfield.

Ascent and distance: 6397ft, 15.2 miles

With a big mountain day ahead, we made an early start to get to Clough Head. As we made our way towards the Old Coach Road Jeff decided he was going to follow the lower level alternative route. So with bus pass in his wallet (that's another story) he set off along the valley to Grasmere. The ascent up Clough Head was a hard slog up a steep grassy slope. Jim reached the first summit with relative ease but this summit creased me for the whole day ahead. We had planned to meet up with Sarah and Steve at Sticks Pass but with my slow ascent and walking in driving hail we were already behind schedule. Clough Head marks the start of the Helvellyn range, and we tried to make up time as we followed the path along the ridge to tackle 'The Dodds'. Seeing Sarah and Steve walking to meet us raised our spirits as they were both fresh and eager. So they led us along the ridge in rain, hail and snow passed Helvellyn to reach the end of the ridge at Dollywaggon pike, and then the steep descent to Grisedale tarn. My spirits had now hit a low point and the prospect of climbing the next two steep peaks seemed beyond my endurance. But with a bit of persuasion from the others (good team work) we all managed to reach the summit of Seat Sandal and Fairfield. Steve chose a better route down to Grasmere than our planned route and we even found the energy to bag an extra peak Great Rigg.

### **Day 3: Grasmere to Langdale, 7 hrs 13mins**

Summits: Steel Fell, Calf Crag, Sergeant Man, High Raise, Thunacar Knott, Harrison Stickle, Pike of Stickle.

Ascent and distance: 4071ft, 11.1 miles

A dry day forecast!! We say goodbye to Sarah and Steve who make their way back to Glenridding, and Jeff rejoins us as we make our way to Langdale. As usual each day's walk begins with a steep climb; in this case, a steady climb to the summit of Steel Fell. From the summit cairn we head for Calf Crag, over Codale Head onto Sergeant Man. Here we say farewell to Jeff as he follows the path down to Easedale Tarn and back to Grasmere. Jim and I continue to summit of High Raise and from there head south to the familiar Langdale Pikes. The day's going is much easier thanks to dry weather and generally good paths. From the summit of Pike of Stickle we get a good view of the next day's route to Bow Fell and the high Scafell range - another big mountain day to come. After climbing the pikes we head down the steep path alongside Dungeon Ghyll to get to Stickle Barn and a well earned pint of Keswick Gold.

#### **Day 4: Langdale to Wasdale, 9 hours 1 min**

Summits: Rossett Pike, Bow Fell, Esk Pike, Great End, Ill Crag, Broad Crag, Scafell Pike, Scafell

Ascent and distance: 5797ft , 12.8 miles

The day starts well with good visibility and dry weather. We climb the steep path up Rossett Gill towards Esk Hause. After climbing to the summit of Rossett Pike we follow the path around Angle Tarn before ascending to Ore Gap. From here we head uphill to summit Bow Fell, and then retrace our steps back to Ore Gap and on to Esk Pike. We continue along the main path towards Scafell Pike, ticking off the summits of Great End, Ill Crag, and Broad Crag before reaching the huge cairn and trig point that marks the summit of Scafell Pike. From the summit we head SE to reach the narrow connecting ridge of Mickledore, which connects the two Scafells. From here we agree to take the safest route to Scafell via Foxes Tarn as the route over Broad Stand was far too wet to attempt (even for Jim). From the summit of Scafell we take a steep screed path with our knees aching down to Wasdale.

On the way up to Foxes Tarn we learned, from two other walkers, that a guy looking about 80 years old climbed the rock face near Broad Stand - madness! We met on his way down and he said he avoided the big slab on Broad Stand. But his route would have been even more dangerous.

#### **Day 5 Wasdale to Stonethwaite, 10 hours 39mins**

Summits: Yewbarrow, Red Pike, Steeple, Pillar, Kirk Fell, Great Gable\*, Green Gable, Brandreth, Grey Knotts.

(\* summit of Great Gable was not reached -see below)

Ascent and distance: 6647ft, 16.7 miles

This was always going to be a challenging day, but with wet weather and low cloud forecast for the whole day, it was going to be particularly difficult. We start the steep ascent of Yewbarrow in heavy rain. The going over the faint paths is slow. From the top of Yewbarrow we continue to climb the ridge path to reach the summit of Red Pike, and then continued upwards to Scoat Fell to reach the connecting ridge to Steeple. Instead of the amazing views of Ennerdale from Steeple all we see is thick, thick clag! And it is still raining. Our slow progress continues and we have to make regular navigation checks to ensure we don't stray from the planned route. We continue along the path down to Wind Gap, and then upwards to reach the trig point of Pillar. A long descent from Pillar ends at the top of Black Sail Pass. From here we climb steeply up a steep rocky gully through Kirk Fell Craggs to gain the north ridge and on to reach the shelter cairn that marks the summit.

We pass Kirk Fell Tarn before beginning the ascent of Great Gable. We pause briefly to take on food and to plan ahead. At the rate we were going we were unlikely to reach our destination in Borrowdale until very late, so to avoid arriving at our next B&B with everything shut and no dinner, we take a short cut and traverse the north face of Great Gable on Moses Trod to reach Windy Gap and then up to reach the summit of Green Gable. This was a hard decision to make as it meant we did not summit all the peaks of the Bob Graham Round. Our route is now called 'Nearly the Bob Graham Round'. From Green Gable we descend along clear paths, over Brandreth & Grey Knotts before emerging out of the clag on the descent to reach Honister Pass and from there down to Stonethwaite.

At various times on this day, despite my intense concentration I kept wondering off the path, and always to the right. If Jim wasn't behind to correct me I would still be walking in circles around Kirk Fell!

#### **Day 6 Stonethwaite to Keswick, 6 hours, 54mins**

Summits: Dale Head, Hindscarth, Robinson

Ascent and distance; 4583ft, 13.4miles.

At last, a very unusual Lake District event - a sunny day! With good weather and the end in sight we climb the steep path up Dale Head with relative ease. As it is a bank holiday the fells around Borrowdale are very busy but it gets quiet as we gain height. We skirt around Dalehead Tarn and then climb the steep path over Dalehead Craggs to reach the summit. From there we head NW along Hindscarth Edge to reach the summit of Hindscarth. From the summit we follow clear paths in bright sunshine to reach our final summit of Robinson. From here we got a panorama of all the Lake District peaks we had covered over the previous five days - amazing views encapsulating memories of each peak. After a quick celebratory handshake we head off to reach Keswick and a well-earned pint (or two).

#### **Final thoughts**

A common question asked on getting home is 'did you enjoy it?' The overriding feeling is one of achievement - it was physically and mentally a very demanding trip. The amount of ascent covered each day tested our endurance, and there were several occasions when we could have bailed out. Thank you to Jeff for his companionship on days 1 and 3, and to Sarah and Steve for their support on a very challenging day 2. And a special thanks to Jim for keeping us moving when the going was tough, and

for his accurate navigation skills, particularly in the thick mists on day 5, without which I would still be walking round in circles.  
Next year's challenge? It has to be somewhere in the sunshine!!

Mike H