

Trip Report: The Peak District**Date:** 13th November 2011**Group:** Jim G (Leader) & Mike A, Lesley, Sue, Chrissie, Philip, Lynn, Tony, Ian + Molly, Colin + Roxy**Route:** Alport Dale and the Woodlands Valley**Total Distance:** 14.29 miles**Total Ascent:** 1604 ft**Weather:** Claggy, Foggy, Misty and Cloudy**Time:** 6 hours 53 mins

The weather forecast was promising but it turned out to be a re-run of Fog & Bog but with a bit less of the Bog. A very good turn out considering the 7.30 am start and it being a Sunday morning. Three cars made their way through sunny Cheshire before disappearing into the fog just the other side of Glossop; as we headed up the Snake pass. The Leader was concerned about the limited parking at Alport Bridge so took the decision to park in a lay-by opposite Blackden View Farm this added about 2km to the advertised walk distance, to the dismay of some! Jim and Mike are both sporting new GPS devices and these would be called upon later!

The route starts from Alport Bridge and follows a track to Alport Hamlet, which is the venue for the annual "Love Fest" which is held on the first Sunday in July, luckily it is November!

At Alport Farm we cross the River Alport by a footbridge and then head off up into the clag heading for Alport Castles (484m) in the thick clag we can not even see the spectacular Alport Tower or anything else for that matter; Jim and Mike drop behind as they are playing with their new toys. The route then bog trots its way northwest along the edge of a broad ridge, past Birchin Hat (also not visible) heading for the lonely OS trig point of Westend Moor (502m). After a while the trig point looms up out of the mist and we decide to take a standing coffee break as the ground is far too wet to sit down. In thick clag we set off from the trig point following a path of sorts that then crosses a small river, the Leader is not convinced that we are heading in the right direction and after consulting his and Mike's GPS we tell the squad that we need to retrace our steps back to the trig point, this is greeted by the expected levels of muttering and whinging. It proves to be an inspired decision as we regroup and find the correct but very vague path that eventually leads us to the head of Glethering Clough. This fine but very narrow trod contours around the side of Alport Dale and we can hear, but seldom see, the River Alport far below us. We arrive at Grains in the Water, where despite clear warnings from the Leader about the slippery rocks at the stream

crossing, Philip decides to dive into stream with a half pike and three full spins. We encounter a bunch of Horaces at this point who appear out of the clag apparently seeking the Pennine Way; they head off in completely the wrong direction vanishing in the clag never to be seen again. We head west up Hern Clough and where it meets the Pennine Way we stop and take lunch, a little gap in the clag promises a glimpse of the sun, but it lasts all of 30 seconds before the clag closes over.

We follow the Pennine Way for a while passing the high point of the day, Alport Low (578m), before we turn left down Doctor's Gate and emerge onto the Snake Pass road. A bit of a flog down this busy road before and impromptu slide down a short bank picks up the path alongside Lady Clough. This very pretty section goes through the woods alongside Lady Clough before we cut back up to the road and the lay-by at Birchin Clough from where we cross over to the other side of the valley following an old Roman road. We pass through and then along some woods and there is a small revolt as some Bums are seeking a short cut back to the cars. The Leader has to assert his authority to quell this rebellion and despite several promising possibilities no short cut is found and we continue back to Alport Bridge and flog back up the road, dodging the speeding cars, to return to our start point.

An uneventful drive back to Bunbury and the Dysart for a sherbet or two, finishes off a fine day in the hills.

Jim G