

Trip Report: Pistyll Rhaeadr

Date: 25th November 2011

Group: Mike (Leader) & Lesley, Hugh, John, Heather, Jim G, Lynn, Lynda, Colin + mutt

Route: LLangynog - Pistyll Rhaeadr - Y Clogydd - LLangynog

Total Distance: 7.5 miles

Total Ascent: 2336 ft

Weather: Cool with blustery showers

Time: 5 hours

Another good turnout for the November 'midweekender'. It was especially good to see Lynda on her first outing since being exiled to Waverton. The weather forecast had changed during the previous 24 hours from gales and rain to glorious sunshine. As usual, the truth was somewhere in between.

It was less than 1hr 30m travelling time so we arrived before 9.00 at the LLangynog car park (free of charge and complete with Public toilets) expecting to have to wait for Hugh. As usual he had already arrived, having set off from Luton in the middle of the night.

We set off on a narrow lane below the disused slate quarries of Craig Rhiwarth and shortly turned off onto a track leading diagonally up the hillside through a small wood towards the open moors. First navigational issue was to find a small path heading over a stream - we found it to be some way beyond the point shown on the map but never mind - everyone managed to ford the stream without getting a drenching. At this point our thought turned to Philip who was planning to join us but had to cry off injured. This would have been the perfect opportunity for him to have a swim!

At this point we started to climb up to the col between Y Clogydd and Glan-hafon and the first flog of the day found John and Heather gasping for breath as we completed the 1000ft ascent. I hope they appreciate that we took the easier zigzag path rather the direct route. From this point we could see our destination valley which has the waterfall at it's head. As we descended towards the valley, a coffee break spot was found out of the chill wind which had become increasingly evident as we climbed. The descent continued on a good track and we then turned off onto a little used path (judging by the dense foliage) which took us directly to the falls and gave us an elevated view. The area must have had a decent rainfall in recent weeks because the falls were really spectacular. The 240ft waterfall is apparently the highest in England and Wales and it is

one of the 'Seven Wonders of Wales' according to a 19th century rhyme as follows:

"Pistyll Rhaeadr and Wrexham Steeple, Snowdon's Mountain without its people, Overton Yew Trees, St Winifride's Well, Llangollen Bridge and Gresford bells". Not the greatest competition admittedly but thought I would mention it just in case the next quiz we attend is set by a Welshman.

When we were all photographed out, we climbed up to a point at the head of the falls, where we intended to cross the feeder river, Afon Disgynfa, in order to continue our route south back to LLangynog. Although I had made this crossing many years earlier, on this occasion the river was too high and fast to risk 9 BUMS and a dog.

We decided to continue up stream to find a suitable crossing point, and about half a mile further on we spotted what appeared to be a gate, but turned out to be a handy bridge. This was not marked on our maps and must be a recent addition. Presumably the local emergency services are tired of recovering walkers from the bottom of the falls.

Although we were now on the correct river bank, the route back over the moors was far from straightforward. According to the maps, there is a myriad of paths and tracks, but in reality there is nothing but sheep trods and heathery tussocks. As we were climbing once more (in the teeth of a hail squall) there was cause for further sense of humour failures amongst some members of the party. There was also talk of the onset of starvation amongst the ranks, however the possibility of finding a nice sheltered lunch spot was zero. Consequently, as we were between showers, we just stopped in the middle of the moor for a quick break before setting out again in search of the mystery path. There was a moment of drama as Hugh disappeared up to his waist whilst attempting to find a short cut through dodgy looking terrain.

We eventually managed to find Y Clogydd at 584m, the highest point of the day, and according to the map, we followed a fence (always a good standby) to look for a path intersection which would lead us back on the planned route to Pencraig. Needless to say, the path never materialised, and on account of a) there was a howling gale, b) nobody wanted to turn back to look for the path and c) we could see down in the valley the route we had ascended, we decided to cop out and bushwack in a direct line to the path we could see. This was not without its dangers as small people and dogs find it tricky to clamber over fences topped by barbed wire!

We descended unscathed to the point of the first river crossing, and sort of retraced our route back to the car park. Although we only covered 7.5 miles, the difficult terrain and weather conditions plus the spectacular

waterfall resulted in an excellent day out and rehydration at the Dysart was more than justified.

Mike A