

Dales Skyline

36 miles 10600ft Ascent

Completed by Andy Hirst and Kirsty Hall 1st August 2013

After successfully completing the Cumbrian Traverse last year with Kirsty and Brother Richard, with excellent support from their dad, and all having said we enjoyed the day.

The feeling of transition, and the ever changing landscape and sometimes weather, the experience of traversing a linear route brings, we decided we would like to try a similar challenge this year; a couple of choices were banded about.

And after browsing the Gofar website over the winter months, (always a dangerous idea) the Dales Skyline was decided upon. I t stated it was a Dale's companion to the Cumbrian Traverse, which seemed the ideal choice; the route was originally devised by Duncan Elliot of Bowland Fellrunners, and first completed by Duncan and club mate Andy Cook in April 2010.

The route starts from the church in the village of Barbon near Kirby Lonsdale and finishes 36 miles and 10600ft of ascent later at the Market cross in Settle, in between this are 10 summits which form the Southern Dales skyline if viewed from the Bowland Fells.

Basically the route is the Three Peaks with three extra peaks. Calf Top, Crag Hill and Green Hill to the North West, and Fountains Fell, Malham Moor, Rye Loaf Hill and Warrendale Knotts to the South East.

A few people had shown interest in completing the challenge, but on the day it was down to Kirsty and I, with support from her Dad, (and Kirsty's dog for the first leg to Kingsdale.)

An early and cloudy start and so travelling down the A65 past Settle towards Kirby Lonsdale, the further we went, the enormity of the challenge became more and more apparent. We finally arrived in Barbon Village, located the church, (the start out of Barbon to Castle Knott being the only bit I hadn't recced) We changed into our running shoes , a final kit check and off we set at 07:00am down the lane by the church which is part of the course of the Barbon Hill climb for cars and bikes, then a stop for a quick check of the map (told you I hadn't recced it) then off again through Barbon Park towards Esk Holme locating and climbing up to a gate which gave access to the open fell (sorted)

A steady but humid climb out to Castle Knott, and then a drop to a boggy Saddle, before the climb up to Calf Top above Barbondale, our first summit of the day. Unfortunately, the mist and haze not allowing the usual superb views across to the Lakeland Hills. We doubled back from the trig following the Boundary wall and dropping off sharply finding a good scree bed which aided our progress into Barbondale, fording the river and crossing the valley road at Short Gill Bridge, we located a gate and started the long climb out to Crag Fell, following the north side of Short Gill Beck admiring the waterfalls on the way. The climb levels off after a while, crossing Sedge and boggy ground before the final steep climb, and

a few false summits which seem to typify hills in the dales; we finally reached the claggy top of Crag Fell. From here it was a loop round the head of Ease Gill omitting Great Coum and Gragareth but taking in the insignificant flat top of Green Hill taking us a minute to locate the few stones which justify a Cairn and presumably the highest point. Although it does boasts being 1 metre higher than Gragareth on OS maps.

We dropped quickly down through more sedge and bog to pick up the Occupation Road which contours the hill above Deepdale and Dentdale and meets the summit of the Kingsdale and Deepdale road, and our first support point.

After tucking in to all kinds of delights kindly provided by Kirsty's Dad and taking on fresh supplies, we set off to what would be our highest point of the day and the first of the Three Peaks Whernside. Yet more boggy ground across White Shaw Moss before the climb proper began, soon reaching the summit trig and the start of the Three Peaks Motorway. At this point, the sun started to break through and lit up Ribbleshead. The viaduct looking particular impressive.

Up to this point we had passed only three walkers. Things soon changed with unbelievably a group of Trail riders with their Motorbikes on the summit ridge, revving their engines and disturbing what had till then been a peaceful journey. These idiots having no respect for the environment, wildlife or anyone else for that matter With a bit of luck they fell off on the way down! Rant over.

We soon descended Whernside taking the less used trod, cutting out the steep descent off the ridge and missing out part of the appalling and rough path restoration. It was this which probably caused Kirsty the first of three traumatic experiences of the day, going over on her ankle. But in true Fellrunner fashion after a series of expletives and hopping she managed to get over the pain and carry on, and we arrived safely and with relief at the Hill Inn where our support was waiting, again handing out all sorts of tempting sustenance. A nice Tuna sandwich being my personal choice, but more about that later.

The day was starting to improve, the sky's clearing and the heat building, so a quick change to shorts and vest and swapping my Mudclaws for trail shoes, we set off towards Ingleborough which looked majestic in the sunlight. We took our time in the increasing heat and aware of the distance yet to travel, but soon gained the summit plateau and trig taking time to look back and reflect on the ground we had covered, but not trying too hard to think or look at the distance yet to travel.

A steady descent into Horton, and Kirsty suffered her second trauma of the day being stung on the leg. A few more choice words filled the air as we came into Horton, (I was learning an all different language today).

On the way down from Ingleborough I recall Kirsty mentioning she was looking forward to a Tuna Sandwich. As we reached our support point at Horton, Kirsty was rummaging around in the back of the truck asking her Dad if he had seen the Tuna Sandwiches. It then twigged what had happened! I sheepishly looked the other way. Being a man I eventually owned up, waiting for more colourful

language. As her Dad was present, I think I got away with it (just!). Unlike last year at Honister on the Cumbrian Traverse when Husband Chris did exactly the same, then having to go and purchase one out of the cafe!!

We departed Horton with Kirsty still in pain from the sting. (At least it took her mind off the Tuna Sandwich) and headed via Brackenbottom and the crowds, towards the summit of Penyghent. Boosting our moral as we past walkers who were probably doing their first and only summit of the day.

Leaving behind the crowded summit of our last Three Peaks, and looking across towards our last major objective of the day -Fountains Fell with just a little confidence that we would finish the route, we headed north east and descended through steep craggy outcrops following Crooke Gill. Fighting our way through high sedge grass and bog which obscured the trods, towards Blishmire House, this saved having to retrace our steps along the Pennine Way to Dale Head and the road section.

On the way down we had seen our support vehicle waiting on the road. By the time we arrived, it had gone! The day was really warm now and humid and we had both nearly finished our supply of water, hoping to fill up here.

We set off to Fountains Fell on the Pennine Way. I offered Kirsty some chocolate raisins. She turned round to grab some and fell straight into a small but very deep bog hole! Number three trauma. Kirsty now looking a little bedraggled as we headed off the Pennine Way route taking the steep but direct line to the summit Cairn and thankfully finding a passable supply of water for our bottles and somewhere for Kirsty to clean off the mud. Refreshed, we set off with renewed vigour to the summit. Reaching the Summit cairn and boosted by the knowledge our last main obstacle was behind us, we made good progress heading on good run able trods, soon reaching and passing the South Summit of Fountains Fell. Past here our route meant losing the path, crossing a gap in the wall and taking a direct line across rough pathless boggy moor and having to negotiating numerous Peat Hags. This section would be tricky in mist but luckily for us conditions were clear. Eventually we picked up some Quad bike tracks and trods which thankfully took us to the lonely rarely visited Malham Moor trig.

We set off from the trig, gingerly climbing an electric fence and headed quickly down, on a good track with Malham Tarn below us, looking inviting with the sunlight reflecting off the surface, We soon saw our arranged support at the road Junction at Henside, where Andy Holden was waiting to navigate us through the last section to Settle and record the events for posterity.

The day seemed to be getting warmer and more humid and the welcoming breeze we had for most of the day seemed to have vanished. But the end was in sight with only the two tops of Rye Loaf Hill and Warrendale Knotts to surmount, and the thought of a refreshing pint spurring us on.

We set off down the road towards Capon Hall. Andy taking pictures and asking us to run so he could get some action shots (a big ask at this stage of the day after nearly 30miles!), for our own vanity, we tried to oblige.

We skirted Black Hill and crossed the Settle Loop Bridleway, followed, then crossed a broken wall and headed up the shallow valley to the west of Grizedales eventually crossing near the top of Stockdale lane. We followed the wall between Kirkby Fell and Rye Loaf Hill, the wall sweeps round to the top of Rye Loaf but we opted to take the more direct line dropping down to a boggy hollow then a short climb to the Trig point, which awarded us fantastic views all round. Andy said it's his favourite place and knows the ground round here intimately, explaining the Craven fault line between the Limestone's green pastures and Gritstones rough Moorland which is very distinct here.

Geology lesson over- Andy showed us a good way off, dropping directly down towards Stockdale farm, part of which is not a right of way, but as he knows the farmer it was ok.

We past through the farm yard and on to Stockdale Lane where our support was unexpectedly parked in a small quarry at the side of the road. A quick stop and we pressed on; knowing a sub 12hrs was on the cards.

Below Attermire we had to negotiating a rather large Bull with its herd of cows. I could hear Kirsty behind, reprimanding Andy who was trying to entice the Bull towards her to show how friendly it was. I suggested we keep running and keep close to the wall.

We left the livestock safely behind and soon started the last climb of the day surrounded by stunning Limestone scars, onto the lovely summit off Warrendale Knotts. We spent a few moments here for congratulatory photos and taking in the views. The darkness of Victoria cave contrasting sharply against the sunlight scars. We looked back across to the Three Peaks reflecting on how far we had journeyed across this fantastic landscape.

We reluctantly left the summit finding a gap in the scar and a path leading down to a ladder stile where Andy went ahead. I'm sure he was hoping to get a good leg cramping shot! All that was left was the knee jarring descent into Settle and touch the Market Cross, and a well deserved pint or two.

Sometimes, when you undertake these challenges, you get to a point when you just want it to end, and to arrive at the finish so the suffering stops. The fulfilment and enjoyment only comes afterwards in retrospect. We both said that at no point during the day we wished for the end, but enjoyed the all experience as it happened.

Another great route and right on our door step. Cannot wait for the next challenge!

Finally a big thanks to Kirsty's Dad, without whose welcome support, encouragement and generosity through the day, (not forgetting the Tuna Sandwich) helped make it the enjoyable and memorable experience that it was.

Andy

| | Location | Height feet | Distance | Time | Splits |
|---------------|-------------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Depart | Barbon Church | 300 | | 07:00 | |
| 1 | Calf Top trig | 1998 | 3.5 | 08:01 | 01:01 |
| 2 | Crag Hill trig | 2238 | 2.8 | 09:08 | 01:07 |
| 3 | Green Hill cairn | 2060 | 1.4 | 09:20 | 00:12 |
| 4 | Whernside trig | 2415 | 2.4 | 10:30 | 01:10 |
| 5 | Hill Inn | 948 | 2.6 | 11:05 | 00:35 |
| 6 | Ingleborough trig | 2372 | 2.5 | 12:10 | 01:05 |
| 7 | Horton in Ribblesdale | 750 | 4.5 | 13:15 | 01:05 |
| 8 | Penyghent trig | 2277 | 2.5 | 14:30 | 01:15 |
| 9 | Fountains Fell cairn | 2192 | 3.3 | 15:35 | 01:05 |
| 10 | Malham Moor trig | 1930 | 2.4 | 16:05 | 00:30 |
| 11 | Rye Loaf Hill trig | 1795 | 4.5 | 17:30 | 01:25 |
| 12 | Warrendale Knotts trig | 1444 | 2.4 | 18:25 | 00:55 |
| 13 | Settle Market Cross | 506 | 1.1 | 18:35 | 00:10 |
| | Total Time | | | | 11:35 |
| | Total Distance | | 36 | | |