

# The DMC Big Walk - DERWENT WATERSHED

## 24<sup>TH</sup> November 2013

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This year Mike had organized the DMC “extreme” walk as the short version of the classic Derwent Watershed, which takes the logical circuit clockwise around the reservoirs starting from Ashopton viaduct over the Ladybower reservoir. At nearly 40km and including the most featureless sections of the Bleaklow moors, it would still be a tough walk for a late November day and unlike similar walks in recent years there are no road crossings, so we wouldn't have the benefit of bacon butties en route.

Mike, Tony, Dave A and Sally comprised the sensible group on a Tranter 25 pace and set off at 07:30 while Gill and I set off half-an-hour later. The “brisk” team on a Tranter 20 pace included Andy, John, Colin, Dean and Dave B and didn't set out until 08:50 aiming to complete the walk in 8 hours.

The forecast was for a quiet settled day with sunny intervals. In the event it was generally cloudy as we made the straight forward climb past Crookhill Farm towards Alport Castles but we had good views over towards the Kinder plateau. Our delightful quiet walk was almost shattered when a large group of trail bikers emerged from the plantation. At this point they were some distance ahead of us and soon disappeared past Lockerbrook Farm. As we gained more height it began to drizzle and the cloud base dropped which ensured that we would have something of a traditional bog-trotters day. We were enveloped in the mist by the time we reached Bleaklow Stones and stopped for a bite to eat. At this point the brisk team joined us having gained an hour over our pace and they soon surged ahead over the groughs navigating towards Swains Head. We dropped out of the mist and shortly after this we all met up together which made a group shot possible. The fast guys moved on and the rest of us maintained our steady pace.

We were now on classic Bleaklow terrain, often trackless and generally very wet and muddy, as we continued around the watershed to Howden Edge, Outer Edge and then Margery Hill. Mike ensured that we went to the trig point, rather than following the path on the ground. Beyond here the true watershed route diverts from the path to cross Middle Moor to reach Round Hill. It is wholly trackless and requires walking on a bearing. We drifted into the deep groughs at the head of Stainery Clough and had to make a correction to reach the top. Soon after this the route reaches the main path that drops down to Abbey Clough and our route diverts along the ridge line towards Low Tor and Back Tor. Much of this is on flagstones so route finding becomes straight forward – just as well as it was now dark and we had dropped off our planned pace. The rest of the walk along the eastern edges past Dovestone Tor, Salt Cellar and Wheel Stones was a matter of plodding along by the light of our head torches and we were all quite weary by the time we reached the cars at Ashopton.

We made a quick change out of muddy boots and then a short drive to the Yorkshire Bridge to enjoy a celebratory pint. The brisk team had finished at 18:00, a very creditable walk time, while the rest of us were 45 minutes later, so all credit to them for waiting for us to arrive. We were perhaps fortunate to have favourable conditions and everyone enjoyed the walk. Once again, many thanks to Mike for his detailed organization. Having done the Marsden-Edale, the Edale Skyline and now the Derwent Watershed, what will be the big walk next year?

Next year's walk will be the Kinder Round (ED)

