

Newport Outdoor Group (YHA)



Editors

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Web Site

<http://walk.to/nogs>

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The
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THE LAKE DISTRICT

August Bank Holiday 2010

by Jon Gray

As a new face in the Newport Outdoor Group, I was looking forward to getting to know my fellow NOGs, and participating in the walking events. The NOGs weekend in the Lake District proved to be a memorable experience!

We made our way up to the Lakes in two cars, with Norman, Jackie and Brian arriving at YHA Wastwater, within the grounds of Wasdale Hall, early on the Friday evening and Dawn, Sue, Ken and myself arriving later that evening. A few of the NOGs had an interesting journey when we reached the Lake District. Approaching the area from the South, the first introduction that we had to the wonders of this region was a brief visit to the tourist town of Bowness, located on the banks of Lake Windermere.

This was the first opportunity that we had during our trip to appreciate the beautiful scenery that the region had to offer, plus there was the abundance of gift shops in Bowness for the UK and Overseas tourists. There was certainly no shortage of Kendal Mint Cake, that's for sure!

The lakeside route brought us nearer the hills of the lakeland valleys, and Ken took us along the single track road over Wrynose Pass, and Hardknott Pass (or should that be Hardknock Pass: to be negotiated only by the brave and fearless!), the impressive scenery continued to amaze us, and the journey continued on until reaching the Wasdale Valley and our Hostel accommodation at

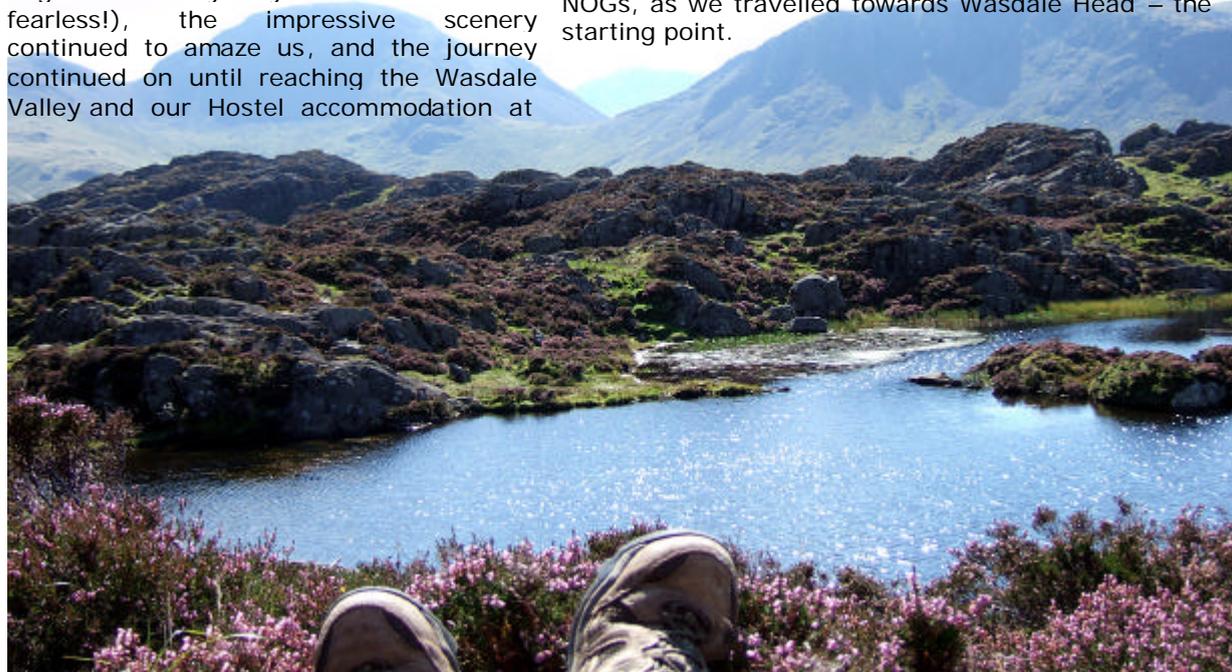
WastWater (which has the privilege of being the deepest lake located in England). The Hostel was conveniently situated in an ideal place, and the NOGs had a sample of what lay beyond, simply by looking at the stunning landscape, that included the range of mountain peaks at the far side of WastWater.

The comfortable, yet perhaps overcrowded, hostel provided us with a base for our walking adventures. The “pre-walk journey” took us from the coastal village of Ravenglass, on an old steam heritage railway journey with the nickname of ‘La'al Ratty’ (the name's origins could not be properly identified, but a plausible explanation could be the nickname of the little old station master of the Ravenglass railway line – Mr. Ratcliffe, known as La'al Ratty). The train rode across the Eskdale valley and terminated at Dalegarth, where the walk began.

The variety of scenery that ranged from hills to woodland (let's not mention the weather, however!). The highlights of the walk were the crossing *Doctor Bridge* over the River Esk, and the other notable attraction was the dramatic Stanley Ghyll force a 60 foot high waterfall, reputed to be the most beautiful waterfall in the Lake District.

Liquid and food refreshments were well needed for us intrepid NOGs, and the Bridge Inn Pub and Restaurant, at nearby Santon Bridge, provided this for us. Interestingly, the Bridge Inn was also allegedly the venue for the World's Biggest Liar competition, held in memory of a Mr. Will Ritson, who was known in the area for telling fibs!

Anyway, on to Day Two of our walking weekend, and the ultimate challenge of climbing England's highest mountain – Scafell Pike. Luckily for us, the weather was smiling at us, and this lifted the spirits of the NOGs, as we travelled towards Wasdale Head – the starting point.



As we ascended towards the famous Pike from the basin of the Wasdale Valley, we joined crowds of people who were also "up for the challenge" and strode up the hillside, before joining a long, steep path. This was hard going, but as we went higher, the views of the valley below were a rewarding sight! This thoroughfare of walkers is known as the Tourist Route to Scafell Pike. I could describe this as the "motorway for mountain walkers". It's fair to say that the final section of the walk, before reaching the high ridge at the top, was a challenge in itself, and we were accompanied by rocks and boulders that we had to tackle underfoot on this uphill path. Mickledore ridge awaited us at the top - the name meaning "great door" or "pass", and this is not surprising, as it is the mountaintop gateway to the highest summit of England! This is where the big brother of Scafell Pike is separated from its smaller brother, Sca Fell. The views could not be underestimated (but more on this when the famous summit is reached). The NOGs made it this far, so we all rested here, and Norman - the NOGs Professor of Knowledge - relayed Wainwright's personal comments on Mickledore (which were quite "poetic"). The last "leg" of the walk was the rocky path up from the ridge to the Pike. This was a steady climb, during which time there was the huge anticipation of getting to the summit then there was the sight of lots of people ... and with the blasts of strong wind upon us, we joined the throng, and the summit was in clear view. We had arrived - and were greeted by the presence of Scafell Pike. The travel hardy NOGs enjoyed the truly fantastic views over the rest of the Lake District, and these views alone were well worth the challenging effort. On the subject of views, by the way, word has it that on a very clear day, from the summit, the eye can see as far as Scotland and out to the Isle Of Man, plus Blackpool Tower is also visible, apparently! It's also interesting to note that the summit had a huge stone circle "cairn", for people to gather in, a memorial plaque, and an unusual stone built trig point.

The route walking back to Wasdale Head, was also challenging, although not quite the same as the walk up. The NOGs had to tackle the rocky sides of Piers Gill, but the down hill trek to the Wasdale Valley was a quite leisurely affair, with the satisfaction of having walked up to, and having stood on the "Roof of England". The day finished off with a pub refreshment, courtesy of the Wasdale Head Inn (this pub is also a World's Biggest Liar competitor!), and a return visit to the Bridge Inn. For Norman, Jackie and Brian, however, the journey was yet to continue, together with another few days of tackling more of the Lake District's peaks and pleasures, and experiencing the delights of Inter-Hostelling. For Dawn, Sue, myself and Ken, there were a few more stops along the Lakes before we travelled in the direction of Wales. For the start of the return journey, Dawn recommended a few places for us to visit (for which I, and I'm sure Sue and Ken, are most grateful). This consisted of Coniston town and Coniston Water (very pretty Lakeland area), plus a visit to Tarn Hows, one of the Lakeland hill tops that sits alongside a mountain lake, and has extensive views of the lakes and hills and the wooded Lakeland areas. Ken summed up Tarn Hows, by rightly saying that the view was one that you would see on a "Chocolate Box".

I can sum up this NOGs weekend as a memorable and enjoyable experience of a very special part of Britain. The Lake District is a lovely walking region, with scenery that is unforgettable. Let us hope that there are many more exciting NOGs trips, like this, to come.

For those who needed a little extension

by Jackie Roberts

Our extension started on the Monday morning with Ken very kindly giving Brian, Norman and myself a lift up to the end of Wastwater, saving us some legwork of about 5 miles. Carrying slightly more than usual to sustain us over the next 5 days we walked up over Sty Head down into Borrowdale via Seatoller, then up the long hill to Honister. The hostel is in close proximity to the slate mine, the only drawback being disturbed by the cockerel at 5am. Next day we set off for Black Sail via Dubb quarry, Haystacks, Innominate Tarn and Scarth Gap. Black Sail hostel is not accessible by road, only the wardens land rover is allowed to carry food up each day, and is one of the places that we have wanted to visit for a long time. And it was perfect! For the three nights we were there the food was first class, Brian was completely taken by Susans culinary skills. Mind you, his wood gathering skills were second to none! The next day we climbed up to Green Gable via Gillercombe and across Windy gap to Great Gable. We climbed down via Beckhead Pass. Thursday saw us climb up Pillar via the Black Sail Pass. We came down via White Peak, through the forestry and the River Liza. On Friday we carried all of our kit down to Ennerdale Hostel and did a 5 mile circuit of the lake, gathering and eating as many blackberries as we could. The story of the conservation work being undertaken in the Ennerdale Valley is worth a mention, basically they are trying to restore things to how they used to be before they were despoiled by man, if that makes any sense. Saturday saw us walk back across to Wasdale via Deep Gill and Haycock.

Of course we had the celebratory drink of Ritson Ale in the Inn at the head of the valley, from which we had started our trek at the beginning of the week. Sunday saw us drive home via Coniston and a trip around the lake on the steam powered gondola courtesy of Brian. Over a quick lunch at the lakeside we reflected over the pleasures of the previous week and how fortunate we had been with perfect weather.

If you would like to see more of our photos, Norman has put them on the Webshots website.

