

Newport Outdoor Group (YHA)



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Web Site
<http://walk.to/nogs>

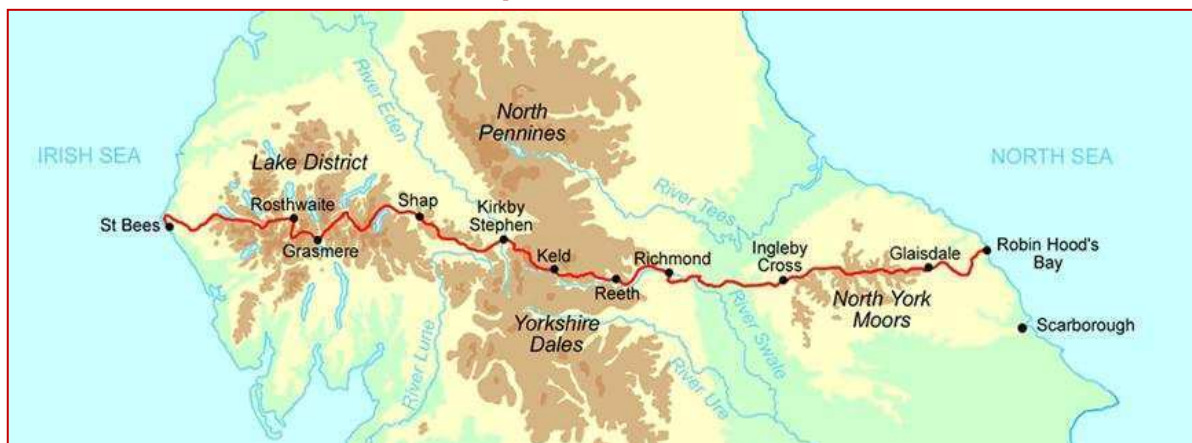
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Get The Outdoor Habit!

COAST TO COAST LONG DISTANCE FOOTPATH (PART 1)

May 2012

By Jackie Roberts



The above map appears courtesy of Contours Walking Holiday at <http://www.contours.co.uk>

Day 1. St Bees to Cleator - 8.5 miles

The start of our journey from St Bees went according to plan.

Seventeen of us met, having travelled from different parts of the country, indeed world, and after the introductions for those who did not know each other, we all walked down to the sea to wet our feet and select pebbles to carry on our journey.

Walking from Fleswick Bay around St Bees lighthouse and then inland to Sandwith, Cleator and finally the Grove Court hotel, we reached our destination for the first night. Only 8 and a half miles on our first day together, nothing too strenuous.

The hotel used to be an old school, and our meal together that first night did feel a bit like a conference meeting, probably because some of us were still getting to know each other.

We knew Zena and Ron and Mary, friends of Angela's, from previous trips, but we now met John, Mary's husband, and Patricia and Freddie, friends of Brian. We also met Gareth, a friend of Stella who by chance happened to work as a podiatrist (feet). He would prove to be a very useful person as the trip went on!



Day 2. Cleator to Ennerdale YH - 10 miles

The next day we set off in good spirits, the only hitch being Brian, who realised that he had left his camera in his room about half an hour earlier!

We walked up over Dent Fell and eventually around the southern side of Ennerdale Water, clambering over the outcrop of Robin Hood's Chair and got to the hostel just before 5pm.

We were the only group staying here and they did take good care of us, offering every hospitality and good basic hostel food.



Day 3. Ennerdale YH to Black Sail YH – 8 miles

The distance between these two is very short, only about 5 miles, so we decided to take the route up and over Red Pike behind the hostel, over High Stile, cutting down through Scarth Gap to our beds that night.

It was quite cold and misty on top and the first opportunity we had to appreciate our outdoor gear. Black Sail is a must visit place, I think, even if only for one night, simply because it may not always remain as it is now. It is an old shepherd's bothy and facilities are basic, but...location, location, location.

The same wardens service both hostels, though I think everyone would agree that the food provided for us tonight was first class hostel fare, including 3 different curries plus trimmings.

Day 4. Black Sail YH to Grasmere YH – 15 miles

Next morning we climbed from the hostel up Loft Beck, over Grey Knotts and down to the Honister pass where we were to meet up with Ken, an American friend of Brian's, also Phil, Zena's brother. Ken had gone on a slate mine tour, wanting to utilise every minute of his time in this country, so he joined up with us a little later in the day.

From Honister we walked down into Seatoller, stopping for morning coffee at Borrowdale YH.

We then started to climb up over Greenup Edge, a major mountain pass between Borrowdale and Grasmere. The sky at this point was dull but the light was reasonable and walking was very pleasant.

All of a sudden the weather changed and started to rain heavily. This turned to sleet at which point we donned our wet weather gear and regrouped. Then came the blizzard, (cheers George), followed by an hour or so of quite challenging walking to get down to the lowest point. Norman's leadership skills were second to none and we all got down safely.

As the shower eased off it became very cold, breaking into sunshine as we climbed up to the head of Far Easdale. The drop down through the valley into Grasmere in late afternoon sunshine was something to be remembered. The hostel, Burtharlp Howe one of two in the village, the other being Thorney Howe which is now closed, and is an iconic showcase for the YHA. It was very comfortable, there was plenty of hot water and first class food was available in the restaurant. What more did we need?

Day 5. Grasmere YH to Patterdale YHA – 7.5 miles

The next day we all met Phil's wife Paula who joined us for the last three days walking. Having recently undergone surgery for a replacement hip she was a little bit cautious when climbing, but very good company and a good sport.

We walked up Tongue Gill along the east side of Grizedale Tarn, over St Sunday Crag then down the beck into Patterdale. A very old hostel, it is now quite dated when compared to the facilities in today's modern buildings, but nonetheless quite comfortable. The food was certainly good, if a little sparse. Not enough ice cream to go around!

Day 6. Patterdale YH to Bampton – 11.5 miles + 1.5

The route from Patterdale took us up over the west side of Angletarn Pike and over Kidsty Pike, later dropping down to Haweswater reservoir. We were split up that night for our accommodation, some of us in Bampton Grange, some in Bampton itself at the Mardale Inn pub and some above the old Post Office. It was very luxurious for all of us, with lovely food.

Day 7. Bampton to Orton – 1.5 + 12 miles

A relatively easy days walking, past Shap Abbey, coffee in the village, over the M6, over Crosby Ravensworth Fell and into Orton where the delights of the George Hotel awaited us. Our adventures here included Patricia and Freddie getting locked into their rooms, Brian being locked out of his, and wonky floors, our bed had one of its legs raised on a wooden stand. Oh and the previous owner had taken minimal effort when changing utility systems which was a headache to the new lady owner. But the food was very good, my bed was very comfortable, they had a spare bath on the landing and also a chocolate factory next door. What more could I ask for?

Day 8. Orton to Kirkby Stephen – 12.5 miles

This was the last day for most of the party and unfortunately it was quite cold. We did a small detour via a stone circle and then spent time walking across Tarn Moor. It was quite bleak and after a bit of road walking we went across Ravenstondale Moor and later up onto Smardale Fell before descending into Kirkby Stephen.

We met a couple that looked to be serious trekkers with massive boots on. They had decided not to go over Ninestandards Rigg, the mud was virtually up to the thighs in parts and apparently the guides in the area had advised against it. Oops...that's where the route was to lead us the following day. After a cup of latte in a walker's café and a quick shower, we all made our way to the Bulls Head for a celebratory meal. We said our goodbyes to thirteen of our group, although we still had the following morning's breakfast with them. It was most enjoyable and I think we were all a little



bit sad that the time together as a large group had come to an end. The week had certainly passed very quickly and it was hard to believe that we had walked halfway across the country.

Day 9. Kirkby Stephen YH to Keld – 14.5 miles

The Sunday morning dawned bright and sunny as five of us set off on the second stage of our journey. The previous evening there had been much speculation about how we were going to cope going across the mud bogs on the top of Nine Standards Rigg, particularly in view of the heavy rain recently. We had to make a choice on whether to take the green route, the blue route, or the red route, although little known to me the decision had already been made for the red route.



As we made our way up and over the top of the fell the weather was absolutely glorious. Being quietly grateful for small mercies, the loan of your over trousers, Gareth, was very much appreciated. In the middle of the afternoon we eventually dropped down into Whitsundale Beck and Ravenseat Farm to enjoy the hospitality of cream teas and chitchat with the children who lived there. As well as the scones, the countryside seemed like a small slice of heaven climbing out of the dale past Cottersby Scar up towards our destination of Keld for that night. I am sure that Brian and I will not forget that 'flippin chicken' in a hurry!



Day 10. Keld to Reeth – 10 miles

The luxury bunkhouse at Keld was probably one of the most perfectly appropriate places that we had to stay on the entire trip, though the boys sleeping quarters were cramped. It was alongside a small gorge and gushing falls of the river Swale but the noise did not keep us awake that night!

Keld is where the C2C crosses the Pennine Way and is derived from the Viking word 'Kelda' meaning 'spring'. We enjoyed the evening meal of chicken curry or chilli that was provided by Ian and Michelle, absolutely perfect with a bottle of beer. There used to be a YH here in Keld that has recently been taken over and refurbished as a rather expensive Lodge, much frequented by Ramblers.

The next day we followed our way down Swaledale, taking the lower more scenic route and a short detour across the river to Muker to enjoy a cup of morning coffee. It was very much a settlement area for Viking raiders and Norsemen. We walked down the valley through Gunnerside and had lunch on the village green while the locals were doing gardening work on it. The most gorgeous scenery, with oystercatchers, rabbits, birds of prey and all the while the Swaledale sheep were munching away contentedly at the grass.

Day 11. Reeth to Richmond – 14 miles

Tonight at Reeth we were staying at The Old Temperance bed and breakfast facing on to the village green.

It was good to arrive just before 5pm and take the opportunity for a quick bath and lie down before eating at the Buck Inn. Sorry John, it was not my intention to take all the hot water.

And perhaps also being picked up on his table manners the next morning by Elizabeth will not make him want to go back there anytime soon! Julian and Norman enjoyed the selection of real ale at the Black Bull later that evening after our meal.

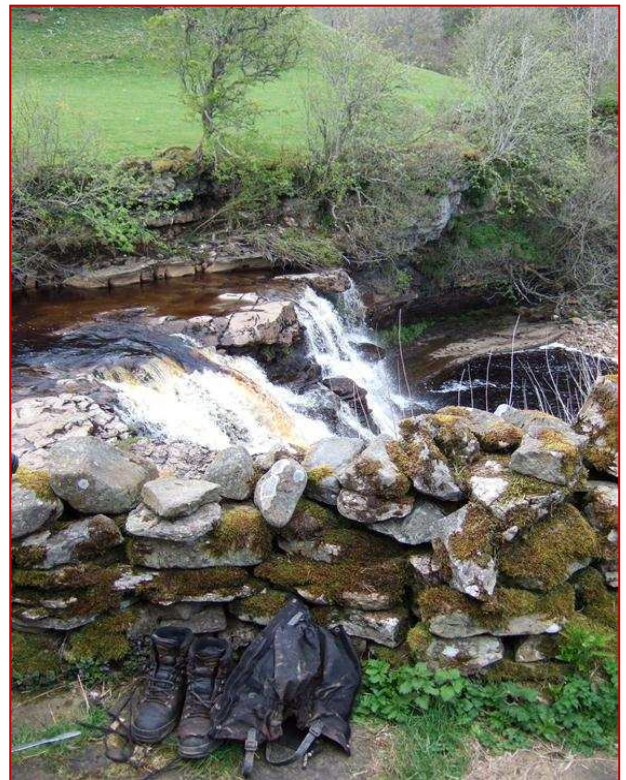
Walking out of Reeth early next morning we could see the YH Grinton Lodge on the other side of the valley. Extremely popular, very traditional but recently refurbished, unfortunately we were unable to book for ourselves on this trip. We walked steadily into Richmond, the heart of Yorkshire, on a sunny day, the weather still glorious, and stopped for coffee at Elaine's farmhouse, widely renowned by walkers and rightly so.

Elaine was thinking about investing in a machine to make cappuccino coffee for American visitors, personally John and I think her milky coffee/latte was second to none.

At Applegarth Scar we stopped under the shade for a lunch break and meandered the last 4 miles or so down into the hustle and bustle of the biggest market town on the C2C.

Day 12. Richmond to Danby Wiske – 13 miles

Richmond is full of history and an ideal base for a holiday visit to Yorkshire. The Pottersgate guesthouse where we stayed at the very beginning of our trip and also this evening was sooo comfortable with the bonus of a good value Wetherspoons nearby.



Norman took the opportunity to check the safety of his car parked on a farm about 2 miles away as soon as we arrived, first of all enjoying a cup of Yorkshire tea of course. The next morning, Yorkshire fully cooked breakfasts were beginning to take their toll on Brian by this stage and he was by now asking for a packed breakfast sandwich as an alternative to a full plate. True to form Barbara duly obliged.

Setting off the next morning we had a slight detour trying to find the correct footpath but before long were steadily on our way. It was great fun meeting up with fellow walkers en route and today was no exception. The Vale of Mowbray is extremely flat and tedious to walk and it was an extremely hot day. We stopped for a while alongside the river just outside Catterick for a well-earned rest. We passed through several villages that day and coming into the small village of Danby Wiske that evening was a great relief.

Day 13. Danby Wiske to Osmotherley YH – 13.5 miles

The Swan Inn had very comfortable rooms. It also served very good food. The landlord there was a true custodian and the improvements he was making ie new doors and frames etc were hopefully going to last for at least 400 years. I liked him. He was a man of vision.

Many people do the stretch to Osmotherley in one go, which is quite tough. We chose to break our journey here, as we were not in a hurry to finish the walk and had a couple of long distances to do on the last two days. The first part of today's walk was very much like the previous day, long and flat without much interest. We did find a nice pub to have our lunch break, the Blue Bell Inn at Ingleby Cross, where we sat out in the shelter of trees next to a very interesting metal sculpture.

Walking into Osmotherley, we first of all found the village shop and bought supplies to cook our own evening meals, then true to form located the teashop for the usual.

Day 14. Osmotherley YH to Clay Bank Top - 12 miles + 2

Norman and I had stayed here last summer when it was about to be sold; in fact we had been there when the surveyors arrived.

The management had since been taken over by the campsite next door and what a difference in a relatively short space of time.

It is an outstanding building and hopefully in time with more tlc can prove to be a huge asset to the YHA. Today the route took us along the Cleveland Way and we were building up to the last two longest distances on the walk, partly due to the availability of accommodation. So we had to set our pace.

The scenery, though stunning so far surpassed itself as we climbed over five ridges in succession with the famous landmark of Rosebury Topping getting nearer and nearer and then receding in the other direction as we walked around it from a distance, we were looking down on Middlesborough.

Although the sun was hot, the wind chill kept us cool but when we gathered on a bench before covering the last stretch to Clay Bank Top we were very glad the days walking was almost over. Or so we thought. Finding the most direct route to our accommodation had not been simple these last few days and today was no exception.

Day 15. Clay Bank Top to Glaisdale – 2 + 18.5

A jug of cold water and 5 glasses has never ever been so welcome! After been shown our lodgings for the night and ordering a three-course meal with wine for 7pm, we all enjoyed a cup of tea and relished our home comforts at Malt Kiln House, Bilsdale.

The next morning Brian and I elected to be sensible but the other three insisted on retracing their steps to Clay Bank Top to ensure that they did 100% of the footpath. So we waved to Wendy from the top of the hill and joined the others on the Cleveland Way near Round Hill, the highest point, about 30 minutes later. Today's walk was along an old railway track, with stunning scenery across the North York Moors, and extremely windy when we stopped.



We went over the top of Urra Moor and around High Blakey Moor for a mid-morning break at the Lion Inn, the fourth highest inn in Britain. After a couple of miles we passed Fat Betty, a spot for offloading or exchanging snacks, and continued into Great Fryup Dale before descending into Glaisdale for our final overnight before the last leg of the journey.

SEE THE NEXT ISSUE OF NOGS NEWS FOR THE CONCLUSION OF THIS EPIC TREK!