

# Crook Circuit

No not a thieves day out or even a shepherds round of golf?? but an intermediate walk of 6.5 miles led by Mike Shearing in the undulating country just west of Kendal. Eleven adventurers had gathered in the usual meeting spot with the prospects of very mixed weather, it was fairly certain that there would be some precipitation that day with an anticipated heavier burst predicted for the evening.

A straightforward journey brought us to the start point just past Crook (which gets its name from the Icelandic Krokr) to the new car park at the St Catherine's church.

Setting off to a very grey sky we could see the tower of the old St Catherine's church across the green pastures. Soon reaching the old church this proved most interesting as it was built about 1620 but the main body had to be demolished due to serious structural defects, leaving the tower only to remain as a local historical landmark. It was restored in 1993 with the help of several benefactors, particularly the family of Judy Logan who tragically lost her life at the age of 26.



Leaving this poignant place required the negotiation of one of the most difficult stiles we have ever encountered involving a mid flight turn and huge drop to safely gain terra firma once more. Proceeding south west through delightful countryside there was a cry from behind as an intrepid bunch of mountain bikers swept past, (obviously a shout is more effective than a bell!!!).



We soon reached Birk Moss where a sharp change in direction was required to swing north east. As we had covered about a mile and a half, an intake of liquid refreshment was required. Just as we settled under a tree for our sustenance the heavens opened causing a hasty rustling of backpacks to remove waterproof gear. Typically once the gear had been put on the rain stopped - a constant feature of the walk.



Reaching High House there was a real surprise in store as a herd of Gloucester Old Spot pigs could be seen in a sty. They are English bred and are specially noted for their high quality meat, and used to be known as orchard pigs as they traditionally pastured in orchards feeding off the drop apples. They are especially regarded as they are very calm and well natured being well liked by small holders and farmers. Regrettably in the UK

they are classed as category 5 Minority by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust as there are less than 1000 registered females in the country.

Continuing through the very pleasant undulating countryside we reached a minor road soon passing Brow Head and Milldam which had a superb garden. The

weather continued to vary with very black clouds menacing over the Lake District, John correctly predicting thunder later.

The route headed down past a superb private fishery- Atkinson's Tarn owned by the WADAA, Westmorland and District Angling Association.

This was a superb place, especially picturesque and is used as a coarse fishery containing carp, tench, roach, bream, crucians and even eels. It has been extensively developed recently and the hope is that in 2010 the first 20 lb carp will be caught. Unfortunately one of our team had a shocking experience as the outer wall was protected by an electric fence, somewhat strange as this was in front of a stone wall and difficult to fathom the reason for its location. There was much discussion about this feature with the conclusion that it was to prevent deer getting into the area as they have extraordinary vaulting abilities.



Turning north we passed a very attractive residence Spigot House (Spigot being a valve for the control of liquids). Crossing the very busy main Bowness Kendal road brought us to a pretty lane which climbed steadily as we headed north to join the Dales Way. Dropping down to a rivulet we crossed in style across a convenient bridge.



We turned east across the green pastures which were remarkably dry underfoot reflecting the very dry period of 2010. The weather was starting to improve after a distant clap of thunder over the Lakes and views of Kentmere could be seen as we passed Crag House.

The way ahead was clear as we continued along the Dales Way, almost a walker's motorway as the path was much wider and obviously subject to much greater use. As we were 2/3 along our walk a lunch halt was taken; it is always odd how someone else's lunchbox contents look more appetising than ones own!

During the lunch halt a herd of 5 deer were spotted, as they are very timid someone kindly produced some binoculars so that they could be enjoyed without being disturbed. The way ahead twisted between rocky outcrops of granite, the many undulations reflecting the harder rock underneath. Soon after joining a minor road we spied our way ahead along a diverted path alongside a house, the right of way change being approved by Staveley Council. After a steady climb glimpses of Scout Scar could be seen to the east with the Howgills even further away.

Just in front of Yew Tree farm the route headed slightly uphill before a sharp descent to Crook End

After all the splendid residences we had already seen this one capped the lot even containing a viewing gallery (similar to the famous spinning gallery at Yew Tree farm near Coniston). It had a designer garden and a super array of weeping willows.

Across the fields could be seen the distant tower of St Catherine's so a short stroll across superb meadows full of colourful flowers brought us back to our start point after a most



pleasant walk. It had been commented how much undulation was involved and we were astounded to learn that the walk entailed over 1000 feet of ascent in an area not noted for its altitude

Alan Sattenstall  
8<sup>th</sup> June 2010