

Trek in the Trough

The skies were very dark as I drove over Skerton Bridge in Lancaster to travel to the meet point where a dozen adventurers had gathered prior to travelling to the Trough of Bowland for our walk on Monday 10th May 2010. The plan was for an 8 mile wander led by a triumvirate of Madgie Vintin, Pauline Hall and Vicky Partington.

As the rain got heavier we drove over the Trough of Bowland to arrive at the car park at Langdon Brook. However it was less clement as we changed into walking gear and set off up the first tarmac stage on the Trough road heading northwest past Sykes Farm. Very soon a way marker pointed the way upwards and onwards up the side of Rams Clough. Although a climb of 1000 feet the gradient was not too taxing and we soon passed the ruined remains of Trough House. Continuing our ascent we soon reached the top of the pass between Whins Brow and Whins Fell at an altitude of about 1400 feet to glorious views over the Forest of Bowland. Peering through the gap in the Trough of Bowland the Irish Sea could be seen.



Conditions started to improve reflecting the forecaster's prediction of better things for the afternoon. As we crossed the watershed we started our descent to Brennand's Farm utilising Ouster Rake, a well defined path built up in places with properly constructed bridges over the small streams, evidence that it had once been used as a packhorse track confirmed by the word Rake.



The scenery now was magnificent as the entire aspect of the upper Brennand valley opened up in a panoramic vista. We continued our steep descent with much discussion about a suitable venue for lunch agreeing it was still a little early. Reaching Brennand farm was very interesting as it has a chequered background. The name Brennand is an example of an Irish/Norse name meaning the burning one.

There used to be a chapel here in the Middle Ages, in the past a stone with five stones carved on it stood by the door, but this is now built into the altar of Whalley Abbey Conference House.



Brennand's other claim to fame is that according to the Ordnance Survey it is the Centre of Britain, a claim endorsed by the BBC News Online using coordinates supplied by the Ordnance Survey. A GPS system was used in the search and the exact centre is at grid reference SD 64188.3 56541.43. There is no marker here just a clump of grass surrounded by peat bog. To illustrate further the claim there is a payphone in Dunsop Bridge which is the 100,000th installed by BT and has a plaque "you are calling from the BT payphone which marks the centre of Great Britain."

Continuing our walk we climbed up an area known as Far Pasture, an interesting area as there were several spoil heaps. Lead was mined here in the mid seventeenth century however the water supply and spoil heaps probably date from 1865 when the Whitendale Mining Company mined lead at Whitendale, Sykes and Brennand. Mining ceased in 1873 when the price of lead dropped through the floor.



The weather now improved significantly as we continued past the huge lump of Middle Knoll around which we would completely circle. Once over the top of the small pass we descended steeply down the

path towards Whitendale Farm where we would have our lunch stop at a superb viewpoint of the upper Dunsop valley

After replenishing ourselves with calories and liquids we passed the farm which is in excellent condition- a compliment to the farmer. The original plan here was to avoid a long tarmac stage by using the riverside path. Unfortunately this proved impossible as the path had been closed due to eagle owls nesting nearby and considered a hazard to any walkers.



Regardless the scenery was excellent as we travelled south along the road along the Whitendale river valley. Where the Whitendale has its confluence with the river Brennand it becomes the Dunsop, at this point the road continues due south to reach Dunsop Bridge.

However just before Closes Barn we turned west to take a path to join the Trough Road. As we past the rear of Closes Barn we were greeted by a cacophony of barking from a number of dogs kept in kennels in the grounds. After reaching the Trough road we were soon back at the start point of Langdon Brook where a welcome cup of tea was enjoyed from the roadside caff. This was a most enjoyable walk in an area not often overlooked by walkers; indeed in some guide books this is considered the best walk in the Bowland forest

Alan Sattenstall

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