

Winter Challenge – Saturday 7 December 2013

Crowden to Ilam (via a scenic route)

This year for the club's Winter Challenge we had a break with tradition and decided on an early morning start rather than the usual format of starting on a Friday evening after work, thus ensuring the majority of the route could be completed in daylight. For some reason (?!?) this change of format proved very popular and tempted 11 people to take part this year, a record turnout for a winter outing and a good time was had by all. Even the weather played its part and apart from some early morning mist it stayed mostly fine and dry throughout the day. If any of those who had taken part in previous winter epics with their guaranteed 10 to 12 hours of darkness and atrocious weather conditions were disappointed they hid it well.

The inspiration for the route came from an old event, no longer held, which started from the YHA at Crowden and finished at the YHA at Ilam Hall, Dovedale. As route planner I also wanted to devise a route which would (hopefully) be unfamiliar to many of the team taking part, visit some scenic parts of the Peak District and stay off the roads as much as possible.

Rather than the usual Four Inns or Pennine Way crossing from Crowden to Edale which the team knew like the backs of their hands, it started with a real monster of a crossing of Bleaklow over 10 miles in length from Crowden to Rowlee Bridge via the Rollick Stones and Alport Moor, a route seldom visited. After climbing onto Kinder Scout and traversing its southern edge to Edale the route headed to Mam Nick to join the Limestone Way for a spell before following a series of spectacular limestone dales to Chelmorton. Our route then followed the western half of the Dove Dale Dipper circuit through Longnor, Warslow and Whetton to the finish at Ilam.

Total distance (measured on the map) is 46 miles with approx. 6,000 feet of climb and descent. Details of the route for anyone who wishes to repeat it is given below.

Robin Carter, Jon Kinder and Bryan Carr ran the entire route with the rest running legs with them. The 46 miles were covered in 12:05 (running time 11:06), an average speed of 4.1 mph. Most of the team thought that once the first two legs over the rough, high and boggy moorland from Crowden to Edale had been completed it would be easy going. But they hadn't reckoned with Monk's Dale, possibly the hardest terrain to run across in the entire Peak District. And if you don't believe it, try it for yourself!

Steve Leach – December 2013

Some photos, our actual times and route description follow below.



The first leg runners ready for the start at Crowden. Left to right is Bryan Carr with his dog Hollie, Jon Kinder, Amanda Carter, Robin Carter and Keith Covell.



The runners passing Alport Castles on the first long leg over Bleaklow.



The runners in Chee Dale, a spectacular limestone gorge.

Actual times and distances run.

Leg	From	To	Leg (miles)	Time Out	Time In	Run Time	Stop Time	Run Pace (mph)	AC	RC	JK	BC	KC	BB	CC	AE	AS	JS	SL
1	Crowden	Rowlee Bridge	10.1	07:30	10:10	02:40	00:12	3.8	X	X	X	X	X						
2	Rowlee Bridge	Mam Nick	5.1	10:22	11:45	01:23	00:10	3.7	X	X	X	X	X					X	X
3	Mam Nick	near Hay Dale	4.1	11:55	12:39	00:44	00:06	5.6	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
4	near Hay Dale	Miller's Dale	4.0	12:45	13:45	01:00	00:08	4.0	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X
5	Miller's Dale	Chelmorton	5.4	13:53	15:14	01:21	00:05	4.0	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X		
6	Chelmorton	Longnor	5.4	15:19	16:11	00:52	00:09	6.2		X	X	X	X				X		
7	Longnor	Warslow	4.9	16:20	17:49	01:29	00:06	3.3		X	X	X					X		
8	Warslow	Wetton	3.1	17:55	18:44	00:49	00:03	3.8		X	X	X					X		
9	Wetton	Ilam	3.9	18:47	19:35	00:48	n/a	4.9	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		
Totals			46.0		12:05	11:06	00:59	4.1											
AC	Amanda Carter		32.6																
RC	Robin Carter		46.0																
JK	Jon Kinder		46.0																
BC	Bryan Carr & Hollie		46.0																
KC	Keith Covell		34.1																
BB	Bob Bond		12.0																
CC	Cliff Cooper		17.4																
AE	Alan Eccleston		11.0																
AS	Andy Swift		22.7																
JS	Julie Smith		5.1																
SL	Steve Leach		9.1																
Minibus drivers: Steve Leach & Alan Eccleston, Support: Julie Smith.																			

Route Description

Leg 1 – Crowden to Rowlee Bridge (10.1 miles)

From Crowden cross the main road and take the discretionary path to the left around the eastern end of Torside reservoir to the B6105. There is no (legal) access onto Bleaklow at this point so follow the Longdendale Trail approx 1km SW to an access point onto Bleaklow via Wildboar Clough (SK 071 984). Either follow the clough all the way to the top – one of the best scrambles in the Peak District – or if wet or icy climb out of the clough and head past the Rollick Stones. From there take a heading for Bleaklow Hill (SK 105 963). On reaching the watershed line (stakes) head east slightly towards the Bleaklow Stones past Alport Head and then descent south onto the feature called The Ridge (SK 111 954). Follow the high ground in a SE direction on faint trods to the trig point on Alport Moor (SK 128 932). From the trig the path improves. Continue on the high ground past Alport Castles to leave the moor at SK 157 894 then descend past Rowlee Farm to the A57. The checkpoint will either be the layby on the main road or down the small road opposite leading to Rowlee Bridge.

Leg 2 – Rowlee Bridge to Mam Nick (5.1 miles)

From Rowlee Bridge follow the track a short distance to join another track (course of the old Roman Road from Glossop to Hope). Do not follow this track but head directly up the hill to Crookstone Knoll and then follow the path along the southern edge of Kinder Scout as far as Ringing Roger then descend to Edale. Follow the road down through the village to the road junction by the main car park, turn right then immediately left to follow the track past Hardenclough farm and Greenlands to the checkpoint at Mam Nick.

Leg 3 – Mam Nick to near Hay Dale (4.1 miles)

From Mam Nick follow footpaths and tracks SE to join the Limestone Way. Follow the Limestone Way crossing the A623 by Mount Pleasant Farm. Continue down the minor road opposite past Limestone Way farm to the checkpoint where the LW leaves the road.

Leg 4 – near Hay Dale to Miller's Dale (4.0 miles)

Follow the path down Hay Dale, Peter Dale and Monk's Dale to the Miller's Dale checkpoint in the car park.

Leg 5 - Miller's Dale to Chelmorton (5.4 miles)

From Miller's Dale follow the river side path west through Chee Dale past Chee Tor into Wye Dale. If the river is in flood and the famous stepping stones are underwater then either a spot of wading will be required or use the higher level Monsal Trail instead. Cross the A6 and head south via Deep Dale leaving the dale at mid-point to follow the Midshires Way to Chelmorton.

Leg 6 – Chelmorton to Longnor (5.4 miles)

From Chelmorton continue south on Midshires Way crossing the main A6 road near Pomeroy . Then on footpaths and small lanes to Longnor.

Leg 7 – Longnor to Warslow (4.9 miles)

From Longnor follow the path south by the River Manifold towards Brund Mill then west on footpaths and small lanes before crossing Revidge, a hill in the Staffordshire moorlands. Then down the track to Warslow.

Leg 8 – Warslow to Whetton (3.1 miles)

Only 3.1 miles but this leg includes a steep climb over Ecton Hill, famous for its mineshafts, followed by another climb past Whetton Hill to Whetton.

Leg 9 – Whetton to Ilam (3.9 miles)

From Whetton head south across the fields then follow the path past Castern Wood nature reserve to Castern Hall. From the Hall descend the track to the River Lodge then follow the footpath by the river as far as a footbridge then across Ilam Park to the finish.