

## Dark Peak 15 Trigs - 26/27 November 2010

There was a time when one Epic per year was deemed sufficient to satisfy the cravings of that band of Harriers who delight in these kinds of masochistic pleasures. It was of course Jon Kinder who came up with the idea of a Winter Epic to fill in those dull days between the Autumn Epic (the Centurion Challenge) and Christmas. Harriers Epics now follow the seasons.

The Dark Peak 15 Trigs was chosen as a worthy challenge. This is a circular route visiting 15 OS triangulation pillars in the northern part of the Peak District. For those Harriers who's idea of nirvana is running on the roads or well defined trails then you wouldn't enjoy this route. The 15 Trigs is hardcore Dark Peak porn, only attractive to those with a particular fetish for this kind of stuff. Think bleak moorland, grit-stone and peat bogs. Think grouse and arctic hares. Then think undertaking it in late November with freezing temperatures and snow forecast. Then decide to start at 6:30pm in the evening meaning a large proportion of the route would have to be undertaken in darkness.

Despite the obvious attractions (!?! ) of such an outing, only six of us met at the appointed hour in Edale on the Friday evening. From R-R were Allan Pollock, Malcolm Marchant, Jon Kinder, Pete Adams and Steve Leach. We were joined by Bryan Lomas from Congleton who had been with us on our Trans-Scotland Challenge. Julie Smith had bravely agreed to support us and was due to meet us later that evening on a lonely dead-end road by a reservoir. At least looking at the map I had thought it would be a lonely spot at night.



It was very cold in Edale as we started, but we warmed up on the first climb to the Kinder plateau and we quickly found the first trig point at Blackden. Following a steady jog off Kinder, the trigs at Win Hill (trig 2) and Stanage High Neb (trig 3) followed. At this point the sky was crystal clear with the constellation of Orion blazing in all his glory overhead. From High Neb we took a good track down to Redmires reservoir where we had agreed to meet Julie.

Far from being a lonely deserted spot, the rendezvous point I had chosen for Julie to meet us turned out to be a popular meeting point of a different kind. Whilst we were marching across the hills, Julie was being flashed at by a succession of cars which had driven up to this remote spot with one thing on their minds. As we arrived the remaining cars turned round and left, obviously deciding it wasn't going to be their night. Julie gave us food, hot tea and soup which went down a treat in the very cold conditions. At this point Malcolm and Pete decided to retire with Pete joining



Julie as part of our support crew.

The four of us carried on with a plan to meet the support crew at the very top of the road up the west side of the Derwent dams. After Rod Moor (trig 4) it started snowing and continued heavily as we approached Emlin (trig 5). Communications had been a problem but we finally got a call which confirmed that the planned meeting point at the top end of the dams was not possible because of the snowfall, so we quickly agreed a backup meeting point on a minor road which was still passable so we could pick up extra food and clothing.

After the rendezvous with Julie and Pete we carried on to our 6<sup>th</sup> trig, Back Tor on Derwent Edge. Approaching Margery Hill (trig 7) we were exposed head-on to the full blast of the icy wind. The



concept of 'wind chill', very popular recently with TV weather presenters, was brought to reality. This was not a place to linger as our body heat was stripped away by the wind. My water bottles, even those inside my rucksack, froze solid. The time was 5 am.

The area is notorious for its 'man-eating' bogs and we picked our way carefully. Fortunately the intense cold had frozen the fearsome bogs and the greatest risk was slipping on the glass-like surface hidden below the snow.

On arriving at the Outer Edge (trig 8) we could at last turn our backs to the wind and suddenly we felt much warmer as we descended down to Howden reservoir. The time was just before dawn when the mind and body is most tired and we tramped along mostly in silence with just the odd curse when someone slipped and fell on the ice.

As we climbed onto Alport Moor (trig 9) dawn broke and our spirits were suddenly invigorated by the sight of the returning sun. Just before Shelf Moor (trig 10) we came across the remains of the Superfortress which crashed on these desolate moors over 60 years ago. This is one of the best preserved aircraft wreck sites in the Peak District and well worth a visit.

The next trig was Cock Hill (trig 11) and from there we descended into Glossop determined to find some food. We found a café serving breakfast which was a real boost.

Leaving the café fully recharged it was a steady climb up to Harry Hut (trig 12). From there a good path took us over Mill Hill onto Kinder Scout.





Earlier the plan had been for Julie and Pete to walk out from Edale and meet us somewhere on the Kinder Edge path. Because we were now behind schedule the planned meeting didn't occur and they returned to Edale to await our arrival.

We carried on to Sandy Heys (trig 13) and then onto Kinder Low (trig 14). From there we knew it wasn't far to our last trig on Brown Knoll (trig 15) which we reached just as the sun was setting.

All that then remained was the final few miles back to Edale down a very icy Jacobs Ladder, arriving back in Edale 22 hours 57 minutes after we started.

The route we took, recorded on GPS, was 57 miles with nearly 10,000 feet of climb and descent. Yes it was a slow pace, more a long walk than a run, but it was a grand night and day out in true winter conditions. We may well go back in late spring or summer and do it again as a long run in daylight. Many thanks to Julie and Pete for the support they provided on what was a very cold night.

Bring on the Spring Epic!

Steve Leach

