

Tricouni Newsletter - Easter Meet 2023



Present:

Katy and Richard Stockwell, Joyce and David Clode, Karen Clode, John Caldwell, Andy K, Richard, Steph, Angus and Gwen Oaten, David Prist, Jacqui, Jason, Scott, Mairi and Fraser Bagley, Stuart, Kris, Raya and Iris Clode, Charlie and Lynn, Sean and Edie Hopson.

It was a fabulous meet with some classic walks, youngsters trying out climbs with the training, support and encouragement of Richard Stockwell and Scott celebrating his 30th birthday.

The weather Gods were kind - no rain until Monday.

Good Friday 7th April 2023:



Robinson, Hindsgarth and Dale Head - full sun, no wind, cooling breeze.

Richard, Steph, Gwen, Angus, Stuart, Kris, Raya, Iris, Andy, Sean, Edie and Dave (the dog), joined by Karen, John and Dave.

The group met up at the farm in Little Town (Newlands Valley) and walked to Hindscarth with a detour up a bracken bank and exploration of several mine shafts.



At Hindscarth we had lunch and met up with Karen, John and Dave. They had gone the opposite way round and had climbed up Robinson first before heading over to Hindscarth. We descended via Robinson where there were stunning views across to the Isle of Man and Scotland after which headed off to the nearby Swinside Inn for a swift half. Karen, John and Dave were joined by Andy and continued onto Dale Head. They must have been fairly quick because they got to the pub first.

**Saturday 8th April
Full sun, cool breeze**

Sail Crag Hill and Hope Gill Head

Kris, Andy, John and Karen

Hazy sunshine

We headed towards Grasmere via Sail Crag Hill with stunning views in all directions - towards Lodeswater and Scotland. Karen got a text message saying 'welcome to the Isle of Man' There was a nice view of Skiddaw and the party was able to look across to the view of the walk done to Hindscarth the day before. The path split towards Hope Gill



Head and Grisedale peak to down to the pub. The party opted for the Caledale Inn but not before Andy had a paddle in Pudding Bec (Hope Dale Gill) - chilly!

Climbing - Needle Ridge on the Napes escarpment

Richard S and Gwen

(with Sherpa help from Richard O, Steph and Angus)

Richard S writes:

I had seen Gwen in action while mentoring her on Glaciated Slabs, Combe Ghyll, in 2021 and again at Brown Slabs, Shepherds Crag in 2022 where she managed brilliantly, including seconding me up a multi-pitch route, so I knew she had both the climbing ability and the physical and mental balance needed for the climb.

BUT I was aware that the walk-in, with a rucksack of safety protection gear weighing 7.5 Kg, plus a 3.5 Kg climbing rope and water and food, was going to be taxing for me since



reaching the Napes involves a quite long and arduous ascent of approximately 1800 feet over a distance of about 3 miles, much of it steep and over uneven ground up the Styhead Pass and the 'Gable Traverse'.

And so it proved. Fortunately Gwen's family came along and loaded themselves up with the gear, acting as 'Sherpas'. Without 'Team Oaten' I doubt I could have managed the walk-in. Many, many thanks.

After traversing the 'Climbers Path' or 'Gable Traverse' as it also known, Richard, Angus & Gwen elected to 'Thread the Needle' by scrambling up to the saddle between the Needle and Needle Ridge and down the other side. Unfortunately a group of elderly members of the Fell & Rock Club were ahead of them and there was some delay before they were able to join Steph and I, who had wisely continued along the Traverse around the bottom of the Needle. At least it gave me a chance to restore my oxygen levels !



After a brief spot of lunch 'Team Oaten' resumed their own hike and Gwen and I turned our attention to the climb, which starts on the saddle formed by the gap between the Needle and the Ridge.

As most of you will know, Needle Ridge is located in a superb situation on the 'Napes' escarpment of Great Gable, on the side overlooking Wasdale. In between moments of climbing it offers unrivalled views down Wastwater and the Wasdale Screes. The Napes boast a large number of high quality climbs in many grades of difficulty, but although they are not amongst the hardest there, the 'Classic' climbs of Needle Ridge and the Needle itself are considered to be the gems of the crag.

Needle Ridge was first climbed by a formidable early climber called Haskett-Smith in 1884. He soloed it in hob-nailed boots - Tricouni toothed nails were yet to be invented. He gave it the

grade 'VD', (Very Difficult), and that grade is still shown in the guidebooks, although much of the route is easier than that. It is very popular, however, and consequently the rock has become very polished in places, especially the first few feet, on small holds, of the first pitch. In its present condition this would probably earn it a slightly higher grade if it were a newly developed climb, but guide book editors are reluctant to change things, especially concerning 'Classics' such as this.

The Ridge offers about 325 feet of excellent and varied climbing and is usually climbed in 5 pitches. I divided it into 7 pitches since I wanted to be always in 'hailing' distance of Gwen. All went smoothly anyway and Gwen climbed very competently throughout. Very well done Gwen !

At the top of the climb we took off our rock climbing slippers, donned our walking boots and carefully descended an easy-angled gully to reach 'Great Hell Gate', which we used as our descent route to regain the Gable Traverse. Gwen soon discovered why Great Hell Gate is so named and why we needed boots on to go down it ! It really is a HORRID experience, even for someone with the ability of balancing on a moving skateboard! I just hope Gwen found the climb to be adequate compensation.

Now of course there were just the two of us to carry the kit so going down the Gable Traverse so it was obvious that we were going to be VERY late for the evening meal. We reached the stretcher box at the top of the Styhead at 7pm. Surprisingly, at that time there were people there still coming UP the other way. Go figure! We continued down alongside Taylor Force Ghyll because I had previously broadcast my intention to go that way. I would have changed my plan but it occurred to me that someone might just venture up to meet us, which would have been a blessing. In the event Jason did exactly that, but hadn't known our intended route and instead went up the Styhead looking for us. Thanks for making the effort Jason. It's appreciated.

We eventually made it to Seathwaite and the car park field a little before nightfall. We were so late back to Seatoller House that I honestly didn't expect food to be provided but Nigel and his team went beyond the call of duty and Gwen and I were looked after very well. In my case a couple of glasses of wine also helped restore my well-being :=))

So, overall, what should have been an outing of around 7 or 8 hours tops became a 10 hour+ saga.

And what of the future ? Well, not counting Pillar Rock which I doubt I will ever see again, Gable is the highest and furthest in my repertoire of Seatoller-based climbing venues. The others need much less effort to reach so I'm not about to give up just yet.

Richard, Angus and Steph walked on from Needle along the Gable traverse and then climbed Great Gable which was quite a steep scrabble. We descended to Sty Head Tarn via Windy Gap, then back down to Stockley Bridge, Seathwaite - all in fine weather and fine spirits. We had hoped to spot Richard and Gwen returning so we could cadge a lift back in the car, not realising they were quite a few hours behind us.. so we walked back along the road to Seatoller.



Saturday

Keswick and Derwent Water

Joyce, Katy and David took the bus to Keswick and stopped for refreshments. The party then made their way to the lake and walked around the eastern shores of Derwent Water past the Lodera Hotel and then towards Manesty crossing on the edge of the lake towards Grange where they stopped for more refreshment (Katy had a blackcurrent and cream ice cream) before returning to Seatoller via the open top bus.





Saturday

Stuart, Raya, Iris, Edie, Shaun, Charlie and Lynn.

High Spy, Maiden Moor

Raya, Iris, Edie, Stuart, Sean, Charlie and Lynn

The group intended to walk to Cat Bells but found the conditions too windy. Charlie and Lynn stopped half way up then made their way down to Grange and walked back to Seatoller.

The rest of the group walked down to Derwent Water, had a paddle - freezing! and got the Ferry to Keswick. Ice creams were consumed - Raya had a white choc chip and



raspberry and Iris had a 'dubious' peppermint and choc chip - not sure what Edie had but no complaints!

Easter Sunday - April 9th

Cloudy and breezy

After an egg hunt in the garden, parties dispersed for various escapades...

Gillercomb Buttress, Green Gable, Great Gable and Sty Head tarn via Grains Gill Scott, Fraser and Jason

The party scaled Taylor Force Gill and then made their way up Sour Milk Gill to Gillercomb Buttress. They then walked to Green Gable then on the Great Gable which they scabbled off via Little Hell Gate. They threaded the Needle from the Dress Circle and then made their way to Sty Head Tarn via the Climbers Traverse and Grains Gill.



Angle Tarn, Longsrath Valley and Rosthwaite Crag

John, Stuart and Richard O.

A fine walk with two big ascents. The party took the path up to Sprinkling Tarn via Stockley Bridge, then on to Angle Tarn which, though a bit gusty, was a nice place to stop for lunch. They then made their way down to Longstrath Valley then on to Rosthwaite Crag and Tarn of Leaves. It was a 'bit breezy up there' but as John noted, 'beautifully devoid of human beings.' 'A very pleasant 10 miles' added Richard.

Climbing - Brown Slabs, Shepherds Crag, Borrowdale.

Richard S, Iris and Edie with sherpa help from Katie and Kris

Richard writes:

On Sunday Kristina, Katie and I took the bus with Iris and Edie to the Brown Slabs area of Shepherds Crag in Borrowdale. There are several climbs there graded 'Diff', and these are among the easiest that are recognised as proper rock climbs.

I put my 50m rope on the route known as 'Brown Slabs' but found that it wasn't quite long enough to do a 'there and back', even after the top belay was moved to nearer the edge, so I was not able to belay from the ground, which I would have preferred, but had to resort to belaying from above.



Iris and Edie had several attempts on the lower part of the route in which they made some progress. On Edie's final attempt she made very good progress but, understandably, baulked at the 'cruX' high up on the route. After some persuasion she leant back, putting her weight on the rope, and 'walked' down the route in fine semi-abseil style until she reached a lip in the rock, about 20 feet up, where she again baulked.

And there she stayed 'cragfast' for several long minutes. Finally a 'very nice man' from one of the other groups there 'rescued' her by abseiling down and attaching her to his harness. I was on the point of borrowing a rope to do the same manoeuvre but was saved the time and effort.



With the benefit of hindsight it would have been better to only take the rope and fix an 'up and down' belay to a stunted oak tree which grows at about half height. But, again with the benefit of hindsight, a better venue might have been Seathwaite Slabs, where several young Tricouni members were introduced to rock climbing a few years ago, though I have no personal experience there. Another suitable venue, one that I have used, would be 'Glaciated Slabs' on the 'Intake Ridge' in Combe Ghyll, though that first involves a bit of an uphill hike which might deter youngsters.

Anyway, after that bit of drama, though Iris wanted another shot, we packed up and crossed the road to a pleasant grassy bank with a view across Derwentwater and had our lunch. Chocolate was served as a 'dessert' and peace offering and brought back smiles, which were further enhanced by icecreams while waiting for the bus back up the valley to Seatoller.

Easter Sunday cont..

Buttermere and Keswick

Jacqui (our President) and Mairi walked around Buttermere then drove to Keswick via 'the hairy route' to look around.

Andy K took the bus to Keswick and walk back to Seatoller by Derwent Water and the Borrowdale valley. He spotted a Red Breasted Merganser, Barnacle Geese and a European Dipper.

Steph also headed to Keswick and visited the Derwent Pencil Museum to learn the secrets of pencil manufacture.. no plans yet to set up a cottage industry. She walked back along Derwent Water.

Stonethwaite, towards Combe Hill

Lynn, Charlie, Raya, Karen, Joyce and David

We walked along from Seatoller to Stonethwaite along the Langstrath Valley and then up the hill to Bessyboot and over near Rottenstone Gill and back along the road.





Everyone left sharpish on Easter Monday morning after a great meet! See you next time!

