

Tricouni Newsletter - Easter Meet 2024



Present:

Katy and Richard Stockwell, Joyce and David Clode, Karen Clode, John Caldwell, David and Fiona Ludlow (and Arkless), Stuart, Kris, Raya and Iris Clode (and Dave), Sean, Francis and Edie Hopson, Vicky, Chris, Scarlett and Milo (and Rosie) Lincoln, Richard, Steph, Angus and Gwen Oaten.

It was a early meet this year and we encountered snow on higher ground. Lots of good walking to be had including the Langdale Pikes with a slippery scrabble up Jack's Rake.

Richard S, Gwen and Francis took on several climbs. The weather Gods were kind with fair and sunny weather on Saturday and Sunday until rain set in on Easter Monday.

Friday 29th March



Kris and Stuart, Raya and Iris, Karen and John, the Oatens, Vicky, Chris, Scarlett and Milo, Sean, Edie and Francis, Dave and Fiona met at the Langdale carpark and went up at various speeds to Stile Ghyll and on to Pavey Ark, with the braver tackling Jack's Rake. The group met at the the top and went on to Harrison Stickle, and then Pike of Stickle with fine views and a long walk back. Vicky, Chris and kids descended from Stickle Tarn as tired kids and a shopping rebellion (I'd say kids, but that was proably Chris) and had some very nice gelato in Keswick. The rest of the party descended on the pub (The Old Dungeon Ghyll) before making our way back to Seatoller.



Saturday 30th March

Karen, John, Richard, Angus, Stuart and Kris, Raya and Iris, Vicky and dog Rosie, David and Fiona took on a circular walk. (6 hours 45 mins)

They started at Honister Pass (People drove up to the pass apart from Vicky who walked up with Rosie the dog and joined the end of the queue over the stile). The walk took on Grey Knots, Brandreth, Great Gable, by the west side, and down via Base Brown. It was fair weather with fine 360 degree views and no wind.

Joyce, David and Katy had a bus saga. Firstly the 9.50 bus to Buttermere did not stop (!). So they come to walk along the river to Rothswaite for a coffee then up to Watendlath where they lay on the grass in the sunshine. They walked back along the road to Ashness Bridge and waited an hour and 15 minutes for a bus that, again, never showed. They rang Seatoller and Chris Lincoln picked them up.



Richard Stockwell filed this climbing report for the newsletter (thanks Richard!)

On Saturday 1, Gwen Oaten and Francis Hopson set out from the House on foot to the nearby hanging valley of Combe Gill, intent on doing some climbing. We were accompanied by Stephanie Oaten who was carrying her art materials, taking this opportunity to do some painting.

The path, which also leads on to the usual route to the top of Glaramara mountain, climbs above and to the side of the Ghyll and quickly becomes fairly steep, (though much steeper ground would be experienced soon enough), and then levels out and passes through a gate in the old 'Intake Wall'. At this point we were more or less level with the main valley floor but our destination, (known as 'Glaciated Slabs'), was high up the valley side on the steep slope on the other side of the stream. We descended, perhaps 50 feet or so, to cross this by 'boulder hopping', and then the hard work started as the slope quickly steepened and then got progressively steeper and looser, until we were struggling up scree. Although it's not a long walk-in, it is quite a 'slog' getting there, especially encumbered with a pile of climbing gear. It is difficult to pick out the detail of the best route here - in fact I don't think there is a 'best' route - though some are much worse than others!

Once we were established at the foot of the rock Steph went off on her own to descend to a small wood she had spotted on the way up, back across the stream.

The plan for the two 'improvers' was to give them a gentle introduction to leading and, perhaps to learn something of the skill of self-placing protection on the rock face.

So I led up Trod Yan, an easy climb of some 60 feet graded at 'Moderate', placing plenty of protection on the way and fixed good belay 'anchors' at the top. I pulled the rope free of the 'pro' then abseiled back down. I had Gwen and Francis climb the route in turn with a 'top rope' for their safety, then lowered them back down. As they had climbed so well, and as they were feeling confident, I had each of them climb the route again, but now they were at the 'sharp end'. They had no rope above them, but clipped into my protection gear



as they went, just as though they were actually leading, before being lowered off again.

And now, seeing as they had done so well, and as they were still feeling confident, I had them each go up the same route a third time with the protection removed, so this time they had to place their own gear, ('Nuts' and 'Friends'). Of course I was belaying them very carefully and watching them like the proverbial hawk, but they did it all very competently and I had no cause for concern. Very well done both of you, Gwen and Francis!

We rounded off this climbing expedition with me taking them up another climb, Trod Tan, which is adjacent to Trod Yan and one grade harder at 'Difficult'. By this time we were feeling we'd done enough to justify our evening meal so we made our way down carefully, (though there were a couple of minor slips on the grass!), re-crossed the stream and found Steph in the little wood, as she had promised, just putting the finishing touches to one of her wonderful watercolours.

And so we made our way back to the House for well-deserved refreshment and baths/showers. And for me, an opportunity to reflect on a very satisfying day out on the hills.

Easter Sunday 31st March

Easter Egg hunt in the garden.

Karen, Stuart, Chris, Vicki, Milo, Scarlett, Sean, Francis, Edie, Davis, Joyce, Raya and Iris took the rollercoaster bus to Keswick and the short walk to the jetty to take the Keswick launch to Hawks End. They climbed Catbells. Vicki, Edie and Milo peeled off to Grange and the rest of the party soldiered on to Maiden Moor and High Stile. From here, Chris and Sean headed up to Dale Head then Honister for a pint.

The remaining party came down through the slate mines towards Rosthwaite and followed the river back to Seatoller. Karen's state tell us the walk was 12 km and she completed 23,300 steps!



Steph, Kris and Angus drove to Gatesgarth. They climbed up to Haystacks and then along the looping ridge via High Stile to Red Pike (it is indeed red!) followed by a very steep and shaley descent to Bleaberry Tarn and then on to Buttermere and along the lake back to the start of the walk.



John and Dave and Arkless the dog took on the same walk but in the opposite direction and the two parties met half way for lunch. Dave and John made their way from Haystacks over to Honister for a pint (they earned it as they were walking into the wind). A sunny, generally lovely day was slightly marred by the discovery of a parking ticket on Kris's car on our return to Gatesgarth.

Fiona went swimming in Basenthwaite. She reckons she stayed in too long (15 minutes) so headed back for a hot bath and coffee.

Richard S and Gwen headed to Bowderstone pinnacle for some more advanced climbing. Here is Richard S's report:

On Sunday there was another small climbing expedition. The party consisted of Richard Oaten, Katie Stockwell, Gwen Oaten and myself and we all set off in Richard Oaten's car for the Bowderstone car park, though only Gwen and myself would be climbing, with

Richard and Katie acting as sherpas/spectators. The car park is situated at the site of a quarry which once produced the best beautiful blue/green slate in the area. I can remember when it was still a working quarry, and sometimes the valley bus would be held up as operations often extended onto the public road!

A short walk brought us to the Bowderstone, an impressively huge chunk of rock 30 feet high, 30 feet across and 90 feet in circumference and estimated to weigh about 2000 tons. It would have fallen from Bowder Crag, some 660 feet above around the end of the last Ice Age.

Bowder Crag was our destination, so off we set to struggle up some ill-defined paths to reach the foot of the crag. It was approximately 30 years since I was last there and many trees have grown up to obscure the view since then so it took a few minutes to get my bearings and locate the correct part of the crag. There are many climbs here of varying difficulty, right up to a rather desperate 'Hell's Wall' graded at E6, (Extremely Hard 6), but our intention was to climb the much more modest and attainable 'Bowder Pinnacle' which is the 'Classic' climb of the crag. The modern guide grades it as 'Diff', but my much older copy gives it 'V.Diff', (Very Difficult).

Afterwards Gwen and I agreed that it was considerably harder than 'Needle Ridge' on Gable, so we will settle for V.Diff.

Bowder Pinnacle is a multi-pitch climb of 120 feet and the newer guide book divides it into 3 pitches, but as this would have made the middle pitch some 60 feet long and I prefer to keep in fairly close contact with partners of less experience, I broke it into 4 pitches, as suggested in the older guide.

Many decades ago an oak tree at the base of the pinnacle fell, taking with it a lot of rock and the start of the first pitch, so it now starts some way up the gully on the right, then traverses in to join the original line. It took some while to locate the correct new start, but after that things went smoothly.



Just as I had remembered it's an interesting climb but the stances between pitches are small, so it would have been very awkward, possibly irresponsible, to have tried to simultaneously manage two inexperienced climbers on the route.

Once at the top there are no obvious placements for modern protection gear, so the 'old-fashioned', (but still effective and safe), technique of tying on directly to a projection of rock was used to bring Gwen up the final pitch. And well done Gwen !

Then there is a short drop to a small ridge which connects the Pinnacle to the hillside at the back. Here both my guide books suggest avoiding the gully for descent and that the best way off is to go up the slope at the back and work your way southwards and down

until the path around the base of the crag is met. And that is exactly what I remember doing in the past.

However, looking at the slope that Sunday, it consisted of steep small slabs of rock liberally festooned with masses of lichen. It was obvious that nobody had been that way in a very long time. Even in the dry conditions this was not an inviting prospect. However, someone, presumably a local club, has provided in-situ anchor and lowering-off ropes, so we made good use of those after making sure they were in good condition. (Ultra-violet light from the sun degrades rope.) I lowered Gwen down the gulley until she was able to safely attach herself to another anchor installed about 2/3 way down, then I followed by abseiling using a large karabiner and an 'Italian Hitch'.

From there it was an easy short lower/abseil to the starting point. However there was one more little problem. Very near the bottom the ropes led through the branches of a yew tree and while Gwen passed through without incident, my abseil was brought to an abrupt halt. I heaved myself up a couple of feet to sit on a branch and discovered that one of the elastic cords that stop my leg loops from sagging had somehow got jammed inside a hole that passed through a small old dead branch.

The puzzling thing was that there was no other visible opening and the hole was closed top and bottom. No amount of wiggling the elastic cord would free it and we still cannot understand how it got in there! The only solution was to break or cut the elastic, so Gwen handed me up the knife that I keep in the lid of my rucksack, and then I was free.



And what of Richard and Katie? Well meanwhile they had had a really hard time, sunbathing, solving a crossword and snoozing !

On the way down from the crag we began by following what seemed to be an easy and obvious path. It zigzagged down at an easy angle, but then about 3/4 way down disappointingly it ended abruptly in a small lichen-covered boulder field. Reluctant to retrace our steps we negotiated the boulders , with some difficulty, and arrived on the bottom path close to the Bowderstone. There were some keen climbers there 'bouldering' above their crash-mats and we watched them for a while, then Richard, Katie and Gwen went up the metal ladder to the top, as they had never been on the top before.

After returning to the car we decided that drinks and ice creams were deserved by all, so we walked along road to the cafe at Grange, later returning to the House in Richard's car.

Easter Monday

Heavy rain set in so the whole party cut their losses and headed off to various destinations, after a very enjoyable meet.







