

A perfect Lakeland day

My adoration of the Lakes first began some 68 years ago at the age of 11, walking up Bowfell with my Father and eldest sister. It was Easter, the weather was glorious and there was snow on the top of Bowfell.

My parents hired a cottage at Far Sawrey , which became the family's Easter Holiday home for some 20 years thereafter.

My memories are endless covering both walking and rock climbing adventures with family ( walking) and boyhood friends( climbing)

Living in Southport, access was fairly easy and sometimes I would pop up with my Father on a day trip and just hike up a fell and return home after the usual pint in one of the Lakes' welcoming pubs. The Queens Head in Hawks Head was a favourite.

I used to camp in a farmer's field adjacent to the Old Dungeon Ghyll in Langdale in my climbing days, it being so accessible to Raven, White Ghyll and Gimmer crags. Spent many jolly evenings in the ODG sharing the day's climbing adventures with other climbers over a good pint or two. The camaraderie was so special. One of the great things that i am privileged to have enjoyed with all 'People of the Mountains'

One of my most vivid memories was during a visit with my family, in my fifties, we stayed in a holiday cottage near the beautiful village of Grasmere. Two of my nephews and myself decided to walk/hike to Scafell via crinkle crags and Bowfell. It was the beginning of August, so the days were reasonably long. We set off at 6.30 am from the Three Shires Stone on Wrynose Pass. It was a perfect Lakeland day, with deep blue cloudless skies, pollution free fresh air and a slight breeze as the sun came up; just spectacular. The water in the streams sparkling like sapphires as the sun touched the surface. ( many of you Lakeland lovers will be familiar with this rare day; absolute heaven).

We set off at a brisk pace towards our first objective, Crinkle crags, knowing that there was a fairly long day ahead. We made good time and were soon over/past the crags, with a pleasant scramble up the bad step, and up to the summit of Bowfell, then down into Eskdale Valley, with the glorious clear view to the summit of Scafell and Slight Side, our major goal. The valley of Eskdale at this point is considered to be one of the wildest scenic places in the UK., certainly in England; awe-inspiring, beautiful, just stunning, surrounded by some of the highest peaks in the Lakes.

We reached Mickeldore Chasm, via Cam Spout at around 10.30 am and after a good rest and refreshment, we decided, as the weather was so

perfect, to split up. I had always wanted to attack the summit of Scafell via Broadstand, the infamous scramble, with a reputation for many accidents, particularly the first section. I did not have a rope and my nephews knew the route up by Lord's Rake quite well. So with great respect and trepidation, I squeezed into the crack at the beginning of the climb, squirmed up a few feet, traversed across left and found the excellent holds that gained me the top of the first section/pitch, without too much difficulty; great relief and elation. The rest of the route was quite straightforward with a few interesting scrambles. The whole climb only took around 45 minutes to the summit of Scafell, far quicker than Lord's Rake. Great satisfaction for me; at last (to quote Ed Hillary) 'I had ticked the bastard off'.

After a longish wait, the boys arrived thrilled with their efforts and good route finding.

The views from the summit were spectacular, with the clear summits of Scafell Pike, Esk Pike, Great End and The majestic Great Gable, towering above the lake of Wastwater. To the East one could see much of the Lake District's fells right through to Skiddaw and beyond, not a cloud in the sky.

After an easy drop down Slight Side, we struck out for Bowfell and Crinkle Crag back the way we had come. I admit that I did make the odd mistake trying to take a shortcut to Bowfell, which one of my nephews pointed out to me, prior to me dragging them along the incorrect way. Anyway, we arrived back at the Three Shires stone at around 4.30 p.m., tired, but excited and very fulfilled with the day's adventure. It was obviously time to reward ourselves with a visit to the nearest pub, me for a pint and the guys with soft drinks and snacks. What a perfect day out!

Let us continue to enjoy the pleasures of such a beautiful part of the UK. It is such a privilege to do so, we must protect it for the generations to come.

Minimise erosion by keeping to the paths and confine 4X4 tracks to suitable areas that do not impact on the destruction as on such places as Tilberthwaite.

Stay Safe, fit and well.

John Allen