

## Three long mountain adventures

Below is a detailed description of three long (24 hour) routes undertaken in early summer 2009. Routes were chosen in familiar parts of Snowdonia and the Lake District.

### Round of an extended Lakes 3000s: April 2009

I've completed the standard Lakes 3000s a few times in the past and the idea this time was to extend the route by taking in some extra peaks along the way. A natural line could easily be found: just add in peaks where you would normally take the road.

This was to be the first of my spring/summer mountain trips with fairly little long-distance preparations in the preceding months. So the route undertaken was to be a more or less *let's see what happens* kind of round: but it does help knowing the Lake District well. Just previous to attempting this, most outdoor activities included spending a few weeks running around (flat) Texas, and running/walking around the coast and hills of Devon, namely Dartmoor and Exmoor: but only a few hours each weekend.

I was previously in the Lake District September 2008 and so it was a visit I was looking forward to. There is always a sense of excitement taking the train north to Windermere and observing the change in scenery. Vaguely, it starts going all *fell-like* once one leaves Lancaster, first seeing the distant hills from the west coast and then observing the bright green landscape with tree-topped outcrops poking out of the rolling hills and fells. There seems to be a distinct contrast to other hills in the UK, especially Snowdonia (eg the Welsh 3000s: rough and rocky) and Scotland (eg. Sutherland: rough and wild). Although compact, the Lakes does provide a mountainous atmosphere once one glances the Langdale Pikes with their rocky tops and the distant cloud topped Scafell's.

On the day of my particular attempt, the weather outlook was meant to be good. However on arriving at Grasmere in the early afternoon, it was humid with thick grey clouds and drizzling. Just as I was about to set off there appeared a sudden flash overhead, a loud bang and then a downpour. A stone bus shelter kept me out of worst of the rain and away from the trees, although I was perhaps a candidate spark plug (fortunately my hair was not standing on end). The storm soon subsided and at 2pm I set off from Grasmere Common. I followed a standard route along the road and up to Easdale Tarn passing many walkers coming the other way. There were impressive water falls and it was now evident that I would not need to carry much water on the way. Beyond Easdale Tarn, the valley becomes more isolated: the day tripping hoards at the tarn are soon left behind. Rumbling grey clouds loomed ahead and it was a place for second thoughts as regards to continuing on. However by the time **Seargent Man** was reached and then **High Raise** the clouds had begun to lift. I'd by now warmed up to a *sort-of* running pace. Given the proposed distance to be undertaken it was important to concentrate on going slow in the early stages, at least until night fall, were I'd be going slow anyway. By the time of daylight I'd probably be slowing down due to getting tired. So the idea now seemed to be going *slow* all the way!

The fun thing about the trip was the anticipation of what lay next around the corner: the landscape and peaks change character all the time, especially as one leaves the Langdales for the Scafell's, and then towards the Newland's ridges in the dark. It was certainly an interesting test to see how far one could go without much training or preparations. Although I should comment that I was not completely unprepared for what lay ahead due to general familiarity with the various central Lakeland peaks. However each visit adds something new and unexpected. To make things a little easier the line of route actually chosen was to get the awkward peaks in first and then leave the more rounded summits towards the end, with opportunity to miss/add peaks along the way. In addition I chose suitable peaks for the night section noting that darkness is generally from 9pm to

4am in April.

Continuing with the route: going beyond High Raise, there is a long grassy and boggy crossing to Angle Tarn where the ground then eases as the Scafell Pike motorway is joined (going via Esk Hause). I took the brief rocky excursion to **Great End** and also diversions to **Ill Crag** and **Broad Crag** which are technically 3000ers in their own right. **Scafell Pike's** large summit cairn was reached at 6pm, but not overcrowded at this time of day. It was then an out-and-back to Scafell via the Climbers Traverse and Foxes Tarn. The former traverse is a cunning route which needs a bit of prior knowledge. There is a little bit of exposure and the route is slippery in places on greasy rocks and grass. With a steady head no technical problems are presented. Relative to ascending via Broad Stand I can vouch that the route is no more than 8 minutes longer. I then gained the next (unofficial) 3000er **Symonds Knott** and then the main summit of **Scafell** around 35 mins after Scafell Pike. I retraced steps back towards Scafell Pike's summit and took the descent route to Lingmell's col and then onto Sty Head pass via the Corridor route. The descent is quite long with scope to go at a fast pace. After the quick descent to Sty Head I then climbed the 450m up to Gable in about 35 mins (which was too fast!). **Great Gable** summit was reached around 8pm with good daylight and a view of the setting sun. About 7500ft was now covered and I started to regret the previous hour's exploits of going too quick as I begun to feel light-headed going towards Green Gable. This soon went away and **Green Gable's** summit was soon gained. It was prudent to slow down again and eat something. Overall in terms of food I recall taking: *2 veg pasties, 2 egg sandwiches, 1 large syrup cake, 4 eccles cakes, at least 8 bars of chocolate, 1 packet of jelly babies, 1 packet of shortbread biscuits, some energy gels, 1 salt+vinegar crisps, some mixed dried fruit.* I did not get through all of this. At conveniently timed stops I made sure I got through some of the sandwiches/pasties. On the hill the shortbreads and jelly babies I found easiest to get through.

The first timed stop was Honister Hause, and this was reached around 9pm after summiting **Brandreth** and **Grey Knotts**. I took a 20 mminute rest here and prepared for the long night section ahead - it was now getting noticeably dark (and no moon) but the weather was stable. The scetion ahead I knew fairly well in the dark, at least that of the Dale Head to Robinson stretch. The peaks of **Dale Head**, **Hindscarth** and **Robinson** were gained easily but I was starting to slow more noticeably on the return to Dale Head. I was now especially having to concentrate on the eating, navigating and the footing in the dark (all at the same time). The skies were clear with a substantial view of the stars in the night sky. This also meant that the night was going to be cold, especially in April. Dale Head (for the second time) was reached around 11:30am. The next part of the route involved the High Spy ridge but this bit was new to me (at least in the dark). First I had to descend correctly off Dale Head. This was a steep 1000ft descent, interspersed with rocks and outcrops with a cliff to the left (north). However there is a path - but this becomes invisible in the dark. Here I set the compass and luckily got down without incident (but slowly). Ahead I could hear the crashing of water and if I dipped the head torch I could see the large tarn to the right: I find that water features easily show up in the dark if the eyes are allowed to adjust. It seemed that I was about 100m too far north (down stream) of the crossing point when I inspected the map. This was confirmed as a juniper bush/birch tree came into view: a good indicator that I was about to venture into a deep ravine. Fortunately I found a good crossing point (with obvious water source) and moreover found myself on the path to **High Spy**. This peak was quickly gained. I was now more relaxed as I recalled a big wide path down to Cat Bells. This was perhaps a flaw in the plans, as the wide path did not materialize and I ended up going over relatively featureless grassy/rocky terrain to **Maiden Moor**. The map also showed some crags off Maiden Moor and this made it crucial to get on the path to ensure an easy line. Slower than expected progress was made here but the path was finally gained and then finally **Cat Bells** around 1:30am, now after about 12000ft climbing.

In my mind it was going to get easier from now on. However my attention turned to other things on the descent to the road: blisters! Having not really ran around with wet feet for a good 6 months my feet had become ill conditioned and now blisters had formed on the toes. The road made these worse, especially in fell shoes. Luckily I changed the socks and the blisters subsided from my mind for the time being. The road was followed to Swinside and then to Portinscale but I was not running as fast as I had hoped. On the approach to Keswick I passed someone walking the other way who looked surprised and asked where I was going at this late hour. I more or less replied that I was out late. On this occasion, Keswick town center was avoided (together with the nightclub revellers) and I headed direct to the path for Skiddaw summit (via Latrigg car park). Eating/drinking was going better than expected but it was not so easy getting up to the required speed on the ascent. Mist was shrouding the tops and the wind was picking up as the height was gained. It was notably much colder in this later part of the night. **Skiddaw Little Man** and then **Skiddaw** was reached around 4am by which time it was starting to become light. I was hoping to make it back to Grasmere by 10am (via Helvellyn and Fairfield) but this was not going to be likely at the rate I was going. However I was certainly on for the 3000s in under 24 hours so it was a case of how much could be done. The descent off Skiddaw went well and I soon warmed up. I then descended to the old train line and followed this good (long) path all the way to Newsham. This should have been easy but it took a long time as I was clearly flaking, not eating so much by now, and again starting to feel the blisters on the toes. A tough ascent to **Clough Head** followed with the sun shining. The summit was reached at around **7:30am**. I was now plodding to the successive peaks **Great Dodd**, **Stybarrow Dodd**, **Raise**, **Whiteside**, making sure I got at least one jelly baby down per peak ascended. However the toes complained on the stoney descents meaning it was difficult to run when I wanted to. At last **Helvellyn Low Man** and then **Helvellyn**, the last 3000er was reached by 10am. Approx 19000ft and 50 miles covered by this point. The job was done and there was still time in hand for more peaks. However I decided not make things any more difficult than they needed to be and the feet (literally) did the talking here. I chose to descend to Grasmere but unfortunately this was a little adventure in itself. The mist level was about 700m and by letting my mind drift on the path to the Dolywaggon Pike I descended (as it turned out) too soon. I then became fairly disorientated in what should be a familiar location. Once out of the mist I could see the sides of peaks but their tops were mist covered. Was I looking at Fairfield or was I looking at Seat Sandal or even Steel Fell (or something else entirely)? I couldn't see any tarns, roads or forests. Faith was now put purely in the compass and it took a good 20 mins or so along featureless ground before Grisedale tarn appeared. A very slow descent along the path towards Grasmere ensued together with some stops to bathe feet in the streams. Grasmere Village was reached at 12 noon (so approx 22 hours later) with a sprint finish: this facilitated by running for the 599 bus that had just pulled in. **Overall travel circa 55 miles, 19500ft.**

An hour or so later, I was generally recovered and then proceeded to eats lots and lots for the remaining day and the days after. The legs generally felt ok throughout and thereafter (but obviously tired). Now it was a question of what to do next on the hills in the coming months.

## **Extended Welsh 3000s traverse, May 2009**

Just following on from the extended Lakes 3000s round in April, I was soon back in the Lakeland fells for further running but just odd day trips. Back at work in Devon I undertook further running along Exmoor's coast (around Lynton) and in Dartmoor (around the Haytor Rock outcrop). This all involved moderate/small scale running: a few hours at a time. Given the next spell of good weather and the opportunity to escape back to the north my attention was this time drawn to Snowdonia, in particular an extension of the Welsh 3000s. There is a fairly established fell running circuit that

visits 47 peaks in northern Snowdonia (the Paddy Buckley Round: PBR) but this misses out four outliers of the 3000s (and more to the point the PBR is quite hard to do!). However the PBR does incorporate peaks of good mountaineering interest, and so I chose more or less the PBR section(s) from Snowdon to Bedgellert to extend the Welsh 3000s.

The weekend towards the end of May was bright and sunny with essentially cloudless skies. Food-wise and equipment-wise I took the same as for the Lakes 3000s round, but also took a bivvy bag and sleeping bag for a planned stop on route. Sun hat and sun cream also proved useful. The sleeping equipment was required due to there being not enough *easy stuff* for a continuous traverse given the length of darkness: it was unlikely I would pass the Nantlle ridge before nightfall given the public transport restriction of not getting to Llanfairfechan until at least 9am. In the end I started at 11am with the hope of getting the standard 3000s out of the way before nightfall (around 10am).

As is canonical on earlier Welsh 3000s attempts I started on Llanfairfechan's sea front. Departing at 11am prompt I set off through the town, up through the golf course and then onto open country. The going is fairly easy up a good track and the first peak of **Drum** was soon ticked off. The peak of **Foel Fras** was reached at 12:45. The aim now was to get to Snowdon before dark by taking in the standard Welsh 3000s (plus a few extra tops on route). It was going to be a hot day and so the pace had to be judged carefully. I also had to make sure I was carrying enough water and eating + drinking appropriately. The aim was not to do a fast Welsh 3000s but I had roughly 10 hours to reach Snowdon from Foel Fras. Setting off at a reasonable pace the peaks of **Garnedd Uchaf**, **Foel Grach**, **Carnedd Llyelyn**, **Yr Elen**, **Carnedd Dafydd**, **Pen y Ole Wen** were summited without difficulty. I opted for the steep nose descent direct to Ogwen from Pen y Ole Wen, arriving around 3:30pm.

A brief 5 minute break was taken to eat something and then I ascended Tryfan via the more-or-less walkers route up a gully. This was a tough and steep climb but it was direct and so 50 mins later I was touching the tops of Adam and Eve on **Tryfan**. A quick scrambly descent to the col then left with me the dilemma of whether to do Bristly Ridge or not. However time was ticking and I so decided to climb Glyder Fach direct. If I was ahead in the schedule later on I could do Crib Goch's north ridge. The peaks of **Glyder Fach**, **Castell y Gwynt**, **Glyder Fawr** were soon gained although it's still unclear to me if it's faster to over Castell y Gwynt than around it. However this was one of the peaks to be included and it provided a short entertaining scramble.

A fast descent off Glyder Fawr followed and then another steep climb to **Y Garn**. At this point I was mentally checking the cumulative amount of ascent, amount of travel and how much I was eating+drinking to prevent any chance of flaking. Fortunately the going was ok but there was no room for complacency as the time was getting to 7pm, giving three hours of good light to get to Snowdon. I knew in theory that I could reach Snowdon in about 1 hour 45 from Nant Peris. From Y Garn, I became acquainted for the first time with the peaks of **Foel-goch** and **Mynydd Perfedd** before plodding up to **Elidir Fawr**, arriving circa 7:45pm (more or less on schedule). The skies were all clear and the sun now beginning to get lower in the sky. I made the long descent to Nant Peris in about 30 mins but did not stop in the village. I wanted to get the road section out of the way before stopping for a scheduled rest. This was taken by the stream of Blaen Nant at 8:30pm before embarking on the long climb to Crib Goch. Unfortunately not much of a rest could be taken, and without surprise the ascent up to Llyn Glas and towards Crib Goch lead to the so called *bad patch* for the next hour. Here I had to force down some short bread and jelly babies on the ascent but further rest stops had to be avoided if I didn't want to be caught on the ridge in the dark. Complacency on the schedule from the outset had caught up here - and I thought to myself that if I had another half hour to hand all would have been fine.

Beyond Llyn Glas the north ridge and the pinnacles of Crib Goch were all tinted pink and I was now in two minds: do I stop and bivvy here (which of course I could do quite comfortably) or risk

the ridge (with the prospect of a more unpleasant bivvy on pointy rocks). I continued upwards with forced effort and slight uncertainty of what was to come. Bwlch Coch, the pass between Crib Goch and Crib-y-Dysgyl was reached at 9:30. The sun had now gone below the horizon which gave to my mind around 30 mins to pass the awkward bits of the ridge. First I did the out-and-back to **Crib Goch**, negotiating the pinnacles carefully and this took under 15 minutes. However in this 15 mins I somehow managed to recover and any doubts of having to bivvy on the ridge were suddenly lifted. In retrospect I was never far away from an easy escape off the ridge, but I guess my mind didn't think of that at the time: on the ascent to Crib Goch via Llyn Glas you see a jumble of imposing crags overhead and ponder the possibilities of getting stuck on the ridge.

At the col I managed to eat more shortbread and jelly babies and this got me going at a good pace towards Snowdon. Crib-y-Dysgyl was then tackled head on, climbing the first tower without difficulty: something I'd spent the previous hour worrying about having to climb in the dark (and it's well recorded that paths to the left lead to dead-ends). After this the going is generally easier with some smaller obstacles, but nothing problematic, even in the dark. So it was to be, and although the light had faded I could see well enough to scramble to **Garnedd Ugain** without the head torch. This peak (and the ridge leading up to it) I had to myself. On the ascent to Crib Goch beforehand I did see some people on the north ridge, but I encountered no one. However on the approach to Garnedd Ugain I could now hear loud cheering sounds coming from Snowdon together with flickering head torches from its summit cairn. In fact the numbers of people up there looked huge, it being around 10pm. I now began the main approach to Snowdon, and as I was walking up the path there were a lot of cheery faces (in the region of 50 people): it looked like they had just completed a group challenge event (possibly the *Three Peaks*). As I neared the summit, some even offered me a "congratulations" and a "well done," probably thinking I was doing the same thing. I offered a congratulations too. There was some appropriateness to their offers as I was about to complete the Welsh 3000s again (for the 4th time). However I still had another 10 peaks to go before the job was done! **Snowdon** was reached at 10:20pm (9 hours 35 min after Foel Fras). Given the encounter with the hoards I incidentally had the summit to myself.

After a 10 minute break I was considering a prospective bivvy site. I continued over another 3000er (top) **Bwlch Main** and then down towards Allt Maenderyn. This descent I thought might have been tricky in places but I was somehow descending faster than expected and with the head torch still switched off. The sky still kept a good tint of blue even after 10:30pm, but on this occasion there was a moon in the sky which helped with the visibility. At 11pm a bivvy site was found on good grass below the 704m spot height.

I was intending to be up at first light but I arose at 4:30am and departed at 4:45am towards the next peak of Yr Aran. On departure I reckon I had about 6000ft, 15 miles to go having already covered about 28 miles and 14000ft but it was going to be a push with 6 hours 15 mins left on the clock: again I wished I had given myself another 30 mins in hand instead of oversleeping. Moreover my estimated measurements had been out and the 6000ft of ascent to be done ahead was in fact 7000ft (but I only realised that afterwards). I had not set a precise schedule but I calculated that I would need to reach Rhyd Ddu by 6am, and then reach Mynydd Tal-y-mignedd around 8am to make it back to Bedgellert for 11am.

From the bivvy site, it was a sharp drop to the col Bwlch Cwn Llan, and then a steep pull up rocks and grass onto **Yr Aran** (a first ascent), reached at around 5:30am. A fast descent cross country and through mine workings brought me (via a good track) to Rhyd Ddu just after 6am. The sun was out again in a cloudless sky and it was going to be another warm day. A sustained but direct climb brought me to **Y Garn** and so onto the Nantlle ridge. At this point I was calculating how much ascent was left to do and how many feet per hour I needed to climb to make it by to the finish 11am: so long as the number was less than 1000ft per hour I was pleased (but of course I'd

not yet realised that this rate was an underestimate). Good progress was made along the scramble sections and I topped the peaks of **Mynydd Drws-y-coed**, **Trum y Ddysgl** and **Mynydd Tal-y-mignedd**. An out-and back was made to **Craig Cwm Silyn** and this involved a good bit of climbing (circa 1500ft) and moreover I was starting to run low on water with no streams in sight. The peak of Mynydd Drws-y-coed was reached for the second time around 8:15am, but the descent towards Y Gyrn was grassy and fast and I had therefore made up some time. The peak of **Y Gyrn** is quite wild in character despite its size. By tugging at various bits of vegetation and clambering over rocks I reached its summit just before 9am. In essence I reckoned that I had now gained on the schedule. However all the water was used up and 10 mins or so were used up to search for a stream. A small trickling stream was found but it was a reliable source. It was now a case of cracking on, which I did after eating as many shortbreads as possible to counter any chance of flaking. A good 1000ft of ascent was made to the rocky top of **Moel Lefn** and then along the ridge to **Moel yr Ogof**. I had not lost or gained any time but I guessed it was only 500ft of ascent to Moel Hebog. However the climb was much longer and the 12 mins I that I allowed for had turned into over 20 mins. I reached the summit by 10:30am. Now, I've only done the descent of Moel Hebog once before when it was covered in snow and so I did not know the true route off. However it was easier than expected to find, but steep and stoney in its upper reaches.

Now being mid-morning, walkers were coming up the path and some asked where I had been. I replied with the short answer of having just gone over the ridge from Nantlle which the walker still deemed to be a long way. Once off the stoney section, I moved onto the short grass and began to descend flat out (with popping ears) until I reached some bluffs in the lower sections (and walls and fences to negotiate). Fortunately these obstacles were soon by-passed and the main track to Bedgellert revealed itself. I arrived at the village 11:00am dead: just in time for the scheduled (but infrequent) Sunday bus back towards Bangor, and then the train to Liverpool. **Overall travel circa 43 miles, 21000ft, 30 peaks.**

**Further thoughts on Snowdonia routes:** Initial ideas included doing a route starting at Penygroes and going in the opposite direction over the Nantlle ridge first and then the Welsh 3000s. A bivvy could be avoided altogether (or done at the very end) if the Carneddau are done in the night. However this direction gives less scrambling opportunity. Admittedly I reckon the tougher sections (eg Nantlle) could be done at night if I took a brighter head-torch (and/or was supported). As a supported non-stop traverse a time of 16 hours might be a good target for the enthusiasts!

For future routes, I'm also contemplating a circuit (round) that includes again the whole Welsh 3000s but starts/ends Capel Curig or Llanberis. A particularly adventurous traverse would be Barmouth to Llanfairfechan (or the reverse) by way of the Rhinog ridge, Moelwyns and the Welsh 3000s. The Rhinog section is exceptionally rough and a 24 hour (non-stop) schedule would be a challenging proposition (distance/ascent circa 24000ft, 55 miles). This could also make a good 2 day route with a bivvy on the Moelwyns.

In south Snowdonia there is also the (24000ft) Meirionnydd 47 peak circuit. This is comparable in scale to the PBR and goes over rough terrain in large part (and little in the way of paths). A simpler version of this route would be to ascend the main peaks over 2500ft (Cadair Idris, Arenig Fawr, Aran Ffawddwy, Glasgwm) - and of course the Rhinog ridge should also be included!

## **A traverse in the north and west of the Lakeland fells: June 2009**

The midsummer weekend provides the best opportunity for long mountain adventures, and after doing the Welsh 3000s a few weeks previous I was already making general plans for a long route over my favourite parts of the Lakes: the Langdale Pikes, the Scafell's, the Borrowdale Fells and the Buttermere Fells. I chose a selection of peaks that I definitely wanted to visit, but I decided

more or less on the day how to link them together, especially in the later stages when I would be obviously tired. The start point was to be Grasmere and I would either return to Grasmere or finish at Seatoller: the latter village I know very well. On this occasion I did not take any bivvy/sleeping equipment and opted for a continuous non-stop traverse.

I arrived in Grasmere mid-morning via the touristic 599 open top bus and set off from the Common at 10:30am prompt. The morning weather was slightly overcast with light showers forecast over the day. It was not going to be hot, and the streams were bubbling and frothing from the previous week's rainfall: so fortunately not much water had to be carried. The initial stretch out of Grasmere towards the Langdale Pikes goes over seemingly wild and undulating terrain, passing little outcrops, crags, tarns and bogs. There is good path to follow but one never knows what's coming up next. The first top of **Blea Rigg** was bagged around 11:30, and then I headed directly towards Pavey Ark in a heavy rain shower. The summit of **Pavey Ark** was reached via a steep scrambly path, but not Jacks Rake this time (my usual choice of route). The rocky tops of **Harrison Stickle**, **Loft Carg** and **Pike o Stickle** were scaled in quick succession and by 1pm I was now heading on the long stretch towards the Scafells. The hoards are left behind on the stretch over Martcrag Moor but being a midsummer Saturday there is little sense of actual remoteness in the Lakes. The main path was picked up at Angle Tarn with the usual diversions to the summits of **Great End**, **Ill Crag** and **Broad Crag**: all reached in quick succession. The summit of Broad Crag was in mist and I passed a group discussing whether it was the top of Scafell Pike. Soon after I picked up the main climb to the Pike, which was easily picked out by following the hoards. At the top, there was no such *up and away* as there was queue for the summit cairn. The queue for the summit cairn being prolonged by a group of four who decided to take photographs of each other in all possible combinations. While it looked like they were about to leave they then asked me to take another photo of them all on the cairn! This I did, but I made sure I was standing on the cairn too. **Scafell Pike** reached around 3pm, but the small wait did provide a useful rest.

The rain had subsided by the mid afternoon, and I proceeded out of the mist towards Mickledore. Then via the climbers traverse to Foxes Tarn and steeply up to **Symonds Knott** and then **Scafell**. I then made a good descent off the screes to Wasdale, passing what looked like some Bob Graham Round (BGR) runners in the other direction (the only runners I spotted throughout). Wasdale was reached at 4:30pm.

I had a 15 minute break and then began the long climb up **Yewbarrow** which took a good 50 minutes. There was sunshine on the western parts of Wasdale, but Red Pike and Pillar were covered by ominous thick clouds. The peak of **Red Pike** was gained, by now in thick mist. It was now a case of navigating correctly to get the best line to **Steeple**. My luck was in and the peak was soon bagged followed soon after by **Little Scoat Fell**. It was now early evening but I had lots of time and daylight to get over what I deemed to be the last of the tough section: **Pillar**, **Looking Stead**, **Kirk Fell** and **Great Gable**. After these peaks had been bagged, the remaining terrain was going to be much easier, albeit some of it in the dark (and still a good 10000ft it). The climbing and descending at this stage seemed well paced and I was not having any problems eating/drinking. All the high tops were still in mist and it still seemed to threaten a downpour. However the weather remained static. Great Gable was reached around 9:00pm. Although I knew this top very well the first 100m of descent in mist still provides an opportunity to get disorientated. By Windy Gap I could now relax, but wise enough not to get complacent. An easy ascent to **Green Gable** followed and then I followed a good path to Base Brown: but still needed the compass to make sure I was not heading to Brandreth. On descending Green Gable I passed a large group heading to the summit and they were probably wild camping over the night. The peak of **Base Brown** was just out of the mist and this was soon bagged. The daylight was now beginning to fade (and more noticeably due to the cloud) but it was still going to be good for the next hour or so. I contoured around the

head of Gillercomb via a known sheep track and then ascended **Brandreth** and **Grey Knotts**. A quick grassy descent to Honister followed, arriving around 10:30pm.

A 20 min rest followed, and then I prepared for the night section. The mist persisted over the tops with base near the 600m mark, but this was going to pose minor problems on this section. **Dale Head** and **Hindscarth** were gained easily. My luck was in by immediately finding the short-cut path to Robinson from Hindscarth: in the mist and the dark it can easily be lost. I reached the peak of **Robinson** just after midnight. However, a route dilemma presented itself. I was hoping (vaguely) to reach Robinson with some daylight in hand so as to negotiate the Buttermere Moss bogs. These were likely to be very spongy due to the amount of water around, and past experience taught me that getting caught up in bogs in the dark is not such a good idea. There was also a risk that the mist had fallen below the 500m contour making the section even harder. I therefore decided to descend off the south-eastern part of Robinson, following a fence. This was a route that I had not done before, it was steep in places and close to a ravine: I could hear the waterfalls crashing close to my right.

Even though it was misty and in the middle of the night (and no moon) there was still a hint of navy blue in the sky due to nautical twilight. I could also see lights from a farm which looked deceptively close but they were still a good 1000ft below. The final part of the descent went through a small wood close to a stream. This was adventurous but entertaining while trying to seek out the little path and negotiating twigs, branches and tree roots.

Buttermere was reached around 2am, and then Newlands Hause around 2:30am (which I would have reached an hour earlier if a good line via Buttermere Moss was chosen). The road to Newland's Hause was obviously traffic free but now covered with sheep who decided to sleep on the warm tarmac. I had a brief rest at Newland's Hause and at the same time began to contemplate my precise route given the time. I had about 8 hours to get over the Grasmoor group of fells with the additional aim of going via Whiteside, northern Crummock Water to Mellbreak and then to Seatoller along the Buttermere fells. This I had done before in about 7 hours - but fresh. The diversion to Buttermere added on an extra 700ft and approx 2 miles. To follow the planned route I was now having to push on during the ascent of **Knott Rigg** and **Ard Crag**. These peaks were gained but I was now starting to slow down and having to concentrate more on the eating and moving. At this stage I had now climbed about 16000ft and it was a slow ascent to **Sail** and **Eel Crag**. I was continuously calculating my chances of finishing in good time and upon reaching **Grasmoor** around 4:30am I decided to choose an easier line that avoided Mellbreak. If I was to recover time (and speed) later on I could decide upon doing High Raise back to Grasmere. The descent of Grasmoor via **Whiteless Pike** went very well and I was soon arriving in Buttermere. Here I got through the last of half a ham sandwich with a bit shortbread and jelly babies. I then recall the next 2000ft climb to Red Pike being exceedingly tough, and I stopped at various points to get down more shortbreads. The energy kicked in (off and on) and the summit of **Red Pike** was reached around 6:30am. In any long-distance round I find the 3am-7am part of the morning generally the hardest. However the mind does eventually adjust to not going to sleep. A stroll to High Stile followed and then a deceptively long (but pleasant) ridge to **High Crag**. The mist had by now lifted and the sun had finally come out. A scree descent followed to Scarth Gap and there were now just two peaks to go (each with moderate climbing).

The climb to **Haystacks** went better than expected, in part due to its scrambly path to the summit. The peak had wild campers scattered throughout, although it probably did not seem wild to those camping there (with various barking dogs and playing of guitars). The last scheduled peak of **Fleetwith Pike** was now in sight but it was to be gained by another tough climb through heather and slate (when taken direct from Dubs Bottom). The summit was reached just before 9am. I now knew of a bus from Seatoller just before 10am, so the aim was to be down in time for that (as is

typical to end with a sprint for the bus!). Going down from Fleetwith's summit I gained momentum from a jog along the ridge to a flat out run down through the quarry and down the Honister. I reached Seatoller village at 9:25 (so 22 hours 55 after leaving Grasmere). I chose not to do High Raise and instead headed to Keswick for a fry up. **Overall travel circa 50 miles, 23000ft, 36 peaks.**

**Afterthoughts:** This turned out to be the last of the long-distance runs/walks that I undertook in the summer (at least those geared towards 24 hour traverses). There was a small temptation for trying the full BGR route later in the summer - however that will have to wait! Future extensions to the Lakeland 3000s that I'm considering would perhaps go via Coniston Old Man and then to the Scafell's via Harter Fell and Eskdale Falls.