

CHALLENGE 24

21 Peaks in 21 Hours June 2014



On 20th June 2014, a group of novice fell walkers traversed 21 peaks in just 20 hours and 10 minutes. They walked from Broughton Mills to the base of Cat Bells covering over 30 miles and 12,000 feet of ascent. On 21st June the same team then hosted a Jamboree at Lowca Rugby Club in Whitehaven where they provided a raffle, auction, food and drink and live music.

*Sponsorship is still coming in at www.justgiving.com/sunbeams24 but as I write we have raised over £7500 to go towards building **Tom's Room** in the Sunbeams Music Centre.*

At 18 Tom Froggatt was captain of St Bees School cricket team and young player of the year for Egremont RUFC second team. Four years later he has symptoms similar to Alzheimer's disease and needs 24-hours-a-day care after being struck down by an as yet undiagnosed brain condition. His condition has stabilised but Tom is still losing his cognitive ability.

We provide Tom with Community Music Therapy at a Day Centre he attends in Cleator Moor. Here Tom is encouraged to vocalise and perform as part of a group called **The Silver Liners**. Despite his condition, he is able to play the drum and he even sings whole phrases at times. This is because music is a global process, using different areas of the brain rather than one specific area which means when one area is damaged, a person is still able to respond to music.

So that's why we did it! And here's how it went...

Report by Sally

It's 3am and I'm sitting in my car in the dark at the end of a tiny country lane near Broughton sipping a protein shake and eating a banana. I feel sick at the prospect of 21 fells and half of me feels like going home but then I think *"This is just one day. One day of struggle. That's all"* I think about why we were doing it and the daily struggles our beneficiaries face due to their disabilities, and vow to go as far as I can!

The rest of the group arrive in the support minibus and a quiet band of lads get off and don their head torches. I can barely see who is there in the dark before we are off down a path and our walk has begun!

We reached the official start point at 3.50am and set off for **Peak One: Great Stickle (305m, 1000ft)**

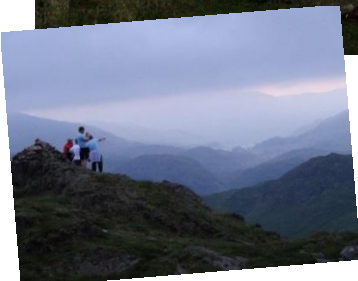
Peak One: Great Stickle – 4am



Peak Two: Stickle Pike – 4.30am



After wading through bracken in the dark, we were all pretty pleased to get the first one out of the way and quickly set off for nearby **Peak Two: Stickle Pike (375m, 1230 ft)** We could see our path laid out before us as the light got better and we really saw the challenge ahead.



After stretching our legs on these two peaks, we made our way down to the road and the support minibus to collect our bags and get ready for the first big chunk of the walk, from Caw to Wrynose Pass which we estimated would take us around 7 hours.

Peak Three: Caw – 5.30am



Setting off with full rucksacks, we had to walk around 20 minutes through fields to reach the base of **Peak Three: Caw (529m, 1,735 ft)**. We were coming at it from quite low, so it was a push to the top and it was in the bag. Sadly we then had to lose a lot of height and make our way through low lying fields and bogs before being faced with White Maiden. Wet feet all round!

White Pike – 6.45am



Looking at the map now, perhaps our approach to White Maiden would have been better from further along towards the mines, but we took the rather more challenging route straight up **White Pike (not listed in the official list of Cumbrian Traverse Peaks)** and this really was tough, with some scrambling. At the top I made the rather foolish decision of getting my full map of the route out, and was met with groans of despair. But we pushed on....

With visibility still poor, the usually clear Walna Scar road was hard to spot, and a few wrong steps and we were heading down when we shouldn't have been losing height. A quick check on the GPS and we brought ourselves back on track and were quickly at **Peak Four: White Maiden (610m, 2001 ft)** with its distinctive jagged outcrops of rocks.

Onwards from White Maiden, and soon the real paths appeared and even the poor visibility couldn't slow us down.

Peak Four: White Maiden – 7am



Peak Five: Brown Pike – 7.20am



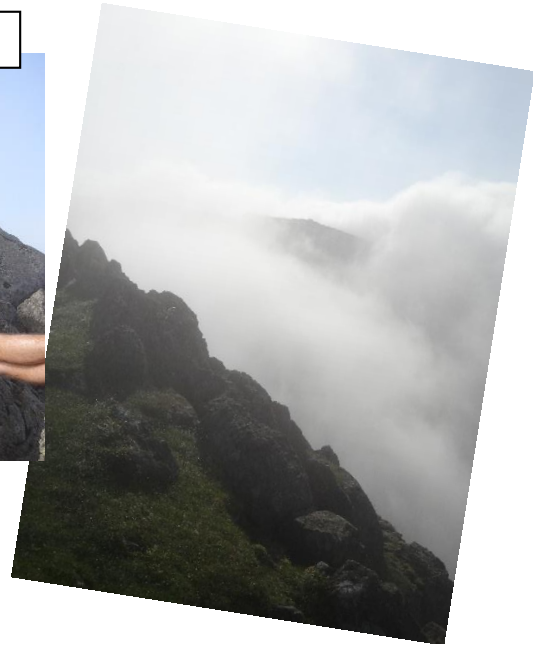
We reached **Peak Five: Brown Pike (682m, 2238 ft)** and for a moment we thought the mist would lift, but it stayed with us as we made our way along to Dow Crag.



Peak Six: Dow Crag (778m 2552 ft) involved a little more scrambling, and gave us the opportunity to look across to Coniston Old Man, which seemed to be impossibly floating high up in the clouds.



Peak Six: Dow Crag – 7.50am



The mists lifted for a short while, and we all slapped on the sun cream and got prepared for the heat, but no sooner had we done so we lost the sun for our ascent of **Peak Seven: The Old Man of Coniston (803m, 2634 ft)** with not a soul in sight – an unusual occurrence for the Old Man, but it might have had something to do with the early hour!

Peak Seven: Old Man of Coniston – 8.30am



We didn't stop long with no view to admire, so we fuelled up with sweets and snacks and ploughed on...





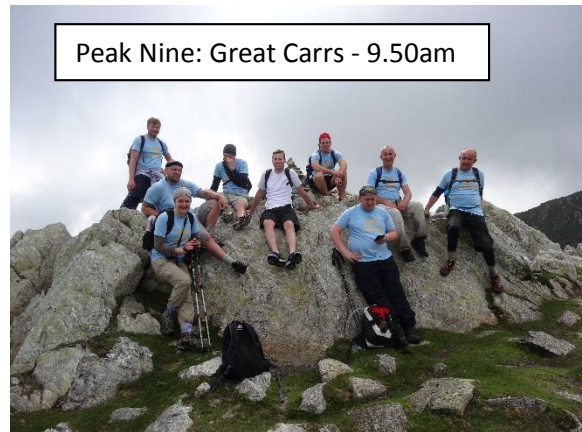
Peak Eight: Swirl How – 9.30am



Peak Eight: Swirl How (802m, 2631 ft) was when we really started to enjoy the views as the sun started to really shine, and our first pit stop was in reaching distance.

Just one more peak and we would be down at Wrynose Pass eating bacon butties!

We reached **Peak Nine: Great Carrs (788m, 2585 ft)** at 9.50am and slowly made our way down onto the Wrynose Pass for a much needed pit stop at around 10.45am.



Peak Nine: Great Carrs - 9.50am

We were really well looked after by the support team and it was nice to see so many friends and family there to support us. Knees were bandaged, socks and shoes changed and rucksacks repacked. Friends and family were there to buoy us up and it was pretty difficult to leave!!



But leave we must. The hardest stretch of the walk lay before us with the words *Great Gable* being whispered about with some trepidation.

It was a long, hot slog up from Wrynose Pass to **Peak Ten: Cold Pike (701m, 2300 ft)** but we had a new member of the team who kept us entertained – Willow the Dog!



Peak Ten: Cold Pike – 12.15am

Peak Eleven: Crinkle Crag – 1.10pm



A childhood dream of mine was realised when we reached **Peak Eleven: Crinkle Crag (859m, 2818ft)**. I have looked at it all my life, with its distinctive outline against the Lake District skyline, but I had never been.

It afforded us some fantastic views, and I don't know if it was this, or the effects of the bacon butties, but I was high as a kite as we set off for our next peak – the infamously misty Bowfell.

Despite a few ominous clouds, the weather held and we were presented with some stunning views from the top of **Peak Twelve: Bowfell (902m, 2959 ft)**. We also received a £20 donation from a lovely lady we met at the summit!

Peak Twelve: Bowfell – 2.30pm



Peak Thirteen: Esk Pike – 3.30pm



Then it was just a short way to bag our next peak, **Peak Thirteen: Esk Pike (885m 2904 ft)**

Now was the point where those minor injuries that were just niggling at Wrynose were starting to really bite and so it was disheartening to have to climb **Great End** only to come back down the same way as we had already discovered that there wasn't a safe route down the other side for our group. At this point, to go back on ourselves seemed terrible, but at 4.30pm we took it - one of our highest peaks...

Peak Fourteen: Great End (910m, 2986 ft)

The worst part about Great End was that from the top we could look over to our nemesis – Great Gable. At 899m it was actually slight lower than Great End, but far worst because we had to drop down to 488m to the Sty Head Pass before we could start our ascent! We trudged with hearts sinking as we made our way down and it was at this point that sadly we had to let two of our team head down to Seathwaite due to injury, and the 7 remaining team gathered themselves to make the ascent next to a Mountain Rescue stretcher box no less!

Peak Fourteen: Great End – 4.30pm





Peak Fifteen: Great Gable – 6.15pm



We all took it at our own speed, and there was not chit chat as we summoned the mental and physical strength to get up. And we were rewarded with incredible views from the top of the best - **Peak Fifteen: Great Gable (899m, 2949 ft)**. We radioed in to our support team down at Honister Slate mine and their cheers of support really helped to lift our spirits.

We knew we had lost time at this point, and we needed to get down to Honister quickly. We were now sure we finishing the last three peaks in the dark. Between us and those final three was our last vital Pit Stop but to get there we first had a cruel and rocky decent of Gable, which was hell on my knees, following by a quick ascent of **Peak Sixteen: Green Gable (801m, 2628 ft)**

Peak Sixteen: Green Gable – 7.30pm



We didn't hang around, despite the evening sunlight making everything look particularly beautiful, and forged ahead to **Peak Seventeen: Brandreth (715m, 2346ft)**

Peak Seventeen: Brandreth – 8.00pm



Thankfully Brandreth and our final peak before the Honister Pit Stop were not too challenging after Gable, and we bagged **Peak Eighteen: Grey Knotts (697m, 2287ft)** at 8.20pm



Peak Eighteen: Grey Knotts – 8.20pm

We then had to pick our way down along the fence to Honister Slate Mine, which turned out to be the end for me. The pain in my knee which had started on the way down Gable got worse and worse on the rocky uneven descent, and it was only with the assistance of my walking poles, and some moral support from Liesl and Becca from the support team for the last few hundred metres, that I was able to limp to the minibus.

It was the end of my journey, but the 7 remaining team members were all ready and (almost) raring to go. They also had a boost of support from handful of friends and family who joined them to compete the last three peaks. It was with a little sadness that I watched them disappear off up towards High Spy without me, but I knew there was just no way I could have continued.

The support team and myself scoped out the finish line, then took refuge in the Pub at Portinscale to await news of the final three peaks being defeated.

The team set off again at around 9.30pm, and despite the enthusiasm of the fresh walkers, it was a long haul up from Honister to **Peak Nineteen: High Spy (653m, 2,142 ft)** and the light was fading fast (I've managed to lighten this image up a bit so you can actually see the team!)



Peak Nineteen: High Spy – 10.40pm

After High Spy, they were quickly over to **Peak Twenty: Maiden Moor (576m, 1,890 ft)** in just 20 minutes, hitting it at 11pm. Then it was with relief that they reached their final Peak, **Peak Twenty One: Cat Bells (451m, 1480ft)**. In the dark however this was quite the challenge as the descent to the base of the fell and the awaiting cars was steep and is tricky even in good light. Liesl and Annie made their way a little way up the path to meet them coming down, and saw the team safely down and by **1am** all 7 of the remaining team plus extras were collapsed in the car park and having a well-deserved drink before piling back into the minibus to head home.

The whole day was incredible, and pushed everyone to their limit. There was a suggestion from Annie that next time we try a sponsored sleep, and her brother Mike had the rather serene sounding idea of a sponsored fish!

Equally impressive as the 21 Peak achievement was the Jamboree that the group hosted the following day. They and their family and friends had put hours of work in in the run up to the event securing auction items, raffle items, booking the bands and the venue, hiring equipment, and making sure we sold hundreds of raffle tickets and got as many people along to the day as possible.

It was easy to spot the walkers during the Jamboree, you just had to look for the walking wounded!



Thank you guys for all your hard work. It was an incredible two days and everyone is in awe of your achievement. And importantly, you have raised a significant amount for **Tom's Room** and we expect to see more donations coming in now you've completed the challenge!

www.justgiving.com/sunbeams24

www.sunbeamsmusic.org

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