

## THE LYKE WAKE WALK

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The redeeming feature of exile in Yorkshire is the variety of mountaineering pursuits it can offer. Few counties give choice of potholing, gritstone-climbing, ski-ing, climbs on limestone and fell walking.

Perhaps the oldest and best known Fell walk is the Three Peaks Walk. A twenty-odd mile excursion, roughly triangular, it embraces the summits of Whernside, Ingleborough and Pen-y-Ghent, all of which comfortably clear the 2,000 ft. contour. A good stint by any standard; it tends to become enjoyable after you have done it a dozen or so times.

In the more recent past, however, there has been established a classic traverse of the North Yorkshire Moors at their highest and widest point. This takes an almost direct line from Osmotherley, near Thirsk, to Ravenscar on the coast, a few miles north of Scarborough. Forty miles is covered on this wholly pleasant walk, more if you get off course on the trackless sections of moorland the route plunges across.

It is generally accepted that the walk must be accomplished within twenty-four hours and the purist will travel part of the time at night and bivouac en route. Most prefer the West to East crossing, but the reverse course from Ravenscar to Osmotherley is considered harder.

For no other reason than a convenient train service between Leeds and Ravenscar we chose the hard way. Three in number, we caught an evening train one Saturday in September and reached Ravenscar about eight-thirty. The pitch darkness was only slightly relieved by the oil-lamps on the station and the promised full moon was obscured by cloud. Since the official starting place is the bar in the Raven Hall Hotel we limbered up with a pint of Youngers apiece before setting off at exactly 9.03 p.m. The night air was cool and the sound of the sea gradually dropped behind as we plodded through the coastal civilisation on a compass course which was to bring us to Bloody Beck and Fylingdales Moor. It also brought me into a farm-wife's clothes line which turn brought me to my knees and shortly after I fell over a recumbent cow. At least I *think* it was a cow.

By Bloody Beck we gained the moor and began to move confidently towards our first "summit", Lilla Howe (959 feet).

I would mention here that this area has been much used by the military and it was necessary to obtain access permits from the P.T.A. Range Commandant. We had also to supply him with signed indemnities certifying our willingness to be blown up by any unexploded shells or bombs we happened upon in the then uncleared areas.

This we thought rather a joke until the moon at last broke through and we saw for the first time the small mortar-bomb craters in amongst the heather.

After Lilla Howe we took the rest of that accursed heather at a trot and only felt safe when we were passing through the foundations of the newly-started Fylingdales Early Warning Station.

At about 1.30 a.m. we reached the railway line on Goathland Moor having covered about ten miles. A platelayers' hut gave us our lodging for what was left of the night; rather a rude lodging at that. The walls were sleepers and the only furniture a shelf-seat, but it did have a stove and we wrought havoc with the coal wastage figures for the N.E. Region. Shortly afterwards Dr. Beeching closed that line down.

We ate a scanty breakfast just before 6 a.m. and drank our last flask of coffee. Fifteen minutes later, still cold and stiff, we were away. But what a grand morning! Keen moorland air, the grass still wet underfoot and the sun beginning to break through over our shoulders.

By the time we had accomplished the short pull up to Simon Howe we were quite warm and moving rhythmically. The light had an early morning intenseness about it, the sun was well and truly out and a lark rose up almost from the summit. No thought was given to the thirty miles facing us; we savoured the present moment and swept on down to Wheeldale Beck getting a shouted "Hallo" and "Good Luck" from the occupants of two Arctic Guineas pitched by the side of the beck on a lovely site. Then we were across and ascending steeply to Wheeldale Moor. There followed five miles of swishing, trackless heather to the summit (1,043 ft.) and on to the deserted and ruined inn at Hamer Ho where a road crosses the moor at 1,065 ft. It was 9.20 a.m. and so we shrugged off our packs and settled down to a second breakfast.

Despite the air of decay given by the broken building, there was fine green turf to stretch out upon and a clear spring to drink from. We ate sausages with fried onions, some fresh fruit, a pound of slab chocolate between us, and bread with marmalade but no butter. That, we decided, would take care of our gross bellies until we reached our only feed-point some 12 miles ahead where, we hoped, a devoted wife would be waiting for us.

At exactly 10 a.m. we filled our water-bottles. We were now faced with over ten miles of walking across the highest parts of the Cleveland Hills. Although not of great height (the peak is only 1,419 ft.) this stretch of moorland is superb, isolated and unspoiled. We would lose very little altitude until we actually dropped down to our feed-point. At one stage we would contour round the head of Rosedale and then move along the edge of Farndale to pick up, of all

improbable things, a disused railway track bearing testimony that ironstone was once mined hereabouts and sent to Durham and Middlesbrough.

The sun was now beating upon us and as we traversed this heather clad moorland our eyes could sight upon a long straight line of white painted boundary stones which ran a distance of five miles and enabled us to dispense with the compass. On then to the old railway, trackless now, but giving ease of travel after the rough heather crossing we had just accomplished. Tiredness was edging upon us and shortly we stopped at a point where we could look down into Farndale. While enjoying this pleasant view, gazing at the scattered farms and winding valley road we drank a bottle of Lucozade I had carried for that very moment. With it we ate cheese-balls—for the uninitiated Wensleydale cheese into which raisins are pressed and then rolled into balls about the size of a walnut—and when ten minutes had passed we were on our way again.

Someone remarked that an hour should see us at our feed-point and we fell to wondering if beer would be on the menu. We were now more or less at the edge of the Cleveland Hills and as we began to drop down to the road there was an occasional glimpse of the haze of Middlesbrough away to the north. The heather was gone now and in its place tuft-grass that soon gave way to fern. Then the car was in sight and a diminutive figure could be seen waving; we reached it at exactly 3.10 p.m. with 30 miles of the walk accounted for. An hour had been allowed here and we soon had our boots off to relax while opening the dreamed of cans of beer.

Obviously our helper expected a state of dehydration for we were then offered, and drank in turn, beef-broth, lime-juice, coffee and orange-crush. How fortunate it is, I secretly thought, that she has not also heard of Mummery's Blood! Some cold beef rolled in lettuce eaten with a chunk of French Bread came next and after that a fruit salad. More coffee and then there was the effort, mental and physical, of getting ready to move off.

Effort that it was, shortly after 4 p.m. we were on our feet and ready to go, first waving goodbye to the departing car as it set off to encircle the hills and meet us at Osmotherley.

This last section of the walk, just about ten miles in a direct line, had something of a sting in its tail. We had in fact reached the edge of the Cleveland Hills and at first would walk along an escarpment that contained five distinct summits, and even though the highest was only 1,427 ft. and the lowest a mere 1,025 ft., each had had to be separately topped.

By 5.30 p.m. we had reached the third and highest of these and found the place not without interest since there was a gritstone

outcrop just below the summit and various ropes were engaged upon it. By contrast the next hill, which was reached after a long descent and an equally long climb back, was flat topped and contained a runway for launching gliders which was in full use. It had taken us just over an hour to reach this point from the previous height and we rested here to watch the soaring and ate between us a tin of raspberries. When we moved off we were faced with a long trackless descent to a beck which was to lead us nearly into Swainby, and before we got there darkness had overtaken us. After this there was very little left of the walk except a stiffish pull away from Swainby to the termination point, a triangulation point on a 900 foot hill over-looking Osmotherley.

We reached it at 8.40 p.m. with a full moon shining and just twenty-three minutes to spare. Truth to tell, it had taken us exactly half an hour to find that wretched triangulation point in the dark.

A two-mile descent into the village of Osmotherley and a triumphant signing of the Lyke Wake Book in the Queen Catherine Hotel brought proceedings to an end. The Landlord, familiar with the ways of Lyke Wakers, offered his congratulations and quickly pulled the beer that two of us demanded. The third, to our surprise and the amusement of the locals, asked for *milk*. This was poured into a pint pot and served with due ceremony. Unabashed, our companion then took off his boots and stood at the bar drinking it with much relish.

For those interested in such things, and for no other reason, this was our time table:—

Raven Hall Hotel, Ravenscar	..	..	9.03 p.m.	23.9.61
Helwath Beck.				
Bloody Beck.				
Lilla Howe	..	..	12.30 a.m.	
Ella Beck Bridge.				
Fen Bogs House (bivouac)	..	..	Arr. 1.30 a.m.	
			Dep. 6.15 a.m.	
Simon Howe	..	..	6.45 a.m.	
Wheeldale Lodge.				
Black Moor Rigg.				
Hamer Ho (2nd Breakfast)	..	..	Arr. 9.20 a.m.	
			Dep. 10.00 a.m.	
Shunner Howe				
Loose Howe	..	..	11.05 a.m.	
Fat Betty.				
Ralph Cross.				
Flat Howe.				
Old Railway.				
Bloworth Crossing	..	..	1.40 p.m.	

Botton Head.

Hasty Bank, point 842. (feed-point)	Arr.	3.10 p.m.
	Dep.	4.10 p.m.

Hasty Bank summit.

Cold Moor summit.

Cringle Moor summit	..	..	..	5.30 p.m.
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Carlton Bank summit	..	..	..	6.30 p.m.
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Live Moor.

Triangulation pillar, Osmotherley	..	..	8.40 p.m.	24.9.61
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