

"The Lost Boys" Guide to the Lake District...  
(Langdale to Buttermere in four 'easy' stages)

By Jonathan Craddock and Andrew Hall

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## Introduction

The air was filled with the electrostatic tension which accompanies all great expeditions! Having arrived at the metropolis of Kendal, (thanks to the amazing motor vehicle of the Stott's,) we proceeded to arm ourselves with a brace of Ordnance Survey maps and after gorging at McDonalds, we approached the Mountain Rescue Post, our hearts filled with anticipation.

We were not due for any disappointment and when we heard the brain-tingling roar of pure motorbike energy we realised that this must be Trevor Cotton, the ultimate in D. of E. assessors.

His bi-wheeled velocipede ground to an unstoppable halt and as we wondered if his cylinders were cooled with liquid nitrogen, he led us to the nerve centre of the Mountain Rescue World. After a brief and informative chat he checked our ruc-sac's for size and weight, and after slight alterations to the route we left for Baysbrown and our first night under canvas!

Day ONE - Baysbrown to Throstle Garth

After our pleasant night's camp, we ate breakfast and having carefully scrutinised the map we took our bearings and headed off towards our first goal, a barren crag by the name of 'Silver Howe'.

It was a steep and rough pathway through craggy ground, but the effort was worthwhile. We were all delighted by the sense of achievement upon reaching the summit and we were rewarded with superb views of Langdale and its surrounding mountains.

There was some tough walking from here to Sergeant Man, but members of the group encouraged one another and the entire group pulled through.

The next stage towards Angle Tarn was easier going, although rather boggy and marshy.

Angle Tarn was the first Tarn on our route. (See Photo)



And what a tarn it was! The realisation that our first objective was reached was overpowering. It was all we could do to prevent ourselves from donning our swimming trunks and taking a dip! But we were not yet satisfied. We wanted to see more of these aquatic pools!

It was mainly downhill to the tarn, across open fell. Unfortunately the weather was deteriorating rapidly. A light drizzle quickly became a torrential downpour. Luckily we had managed to finish our dinners before the rain lashed down.

The climb ahead was indeed daunting, but we were equal to the task. Spirits were kept high by many jokes, witty observations and sarcastic comments, but none of us were sorry to turn our backs on the climb when it was over.

By the time we reached the south-eastern side of Esk Hause and began our descent to camp, new hope was in our hearts and our souls were uplifted. The weather changed dramatically and for the better. Some members of the group were seen to don sunglasses!

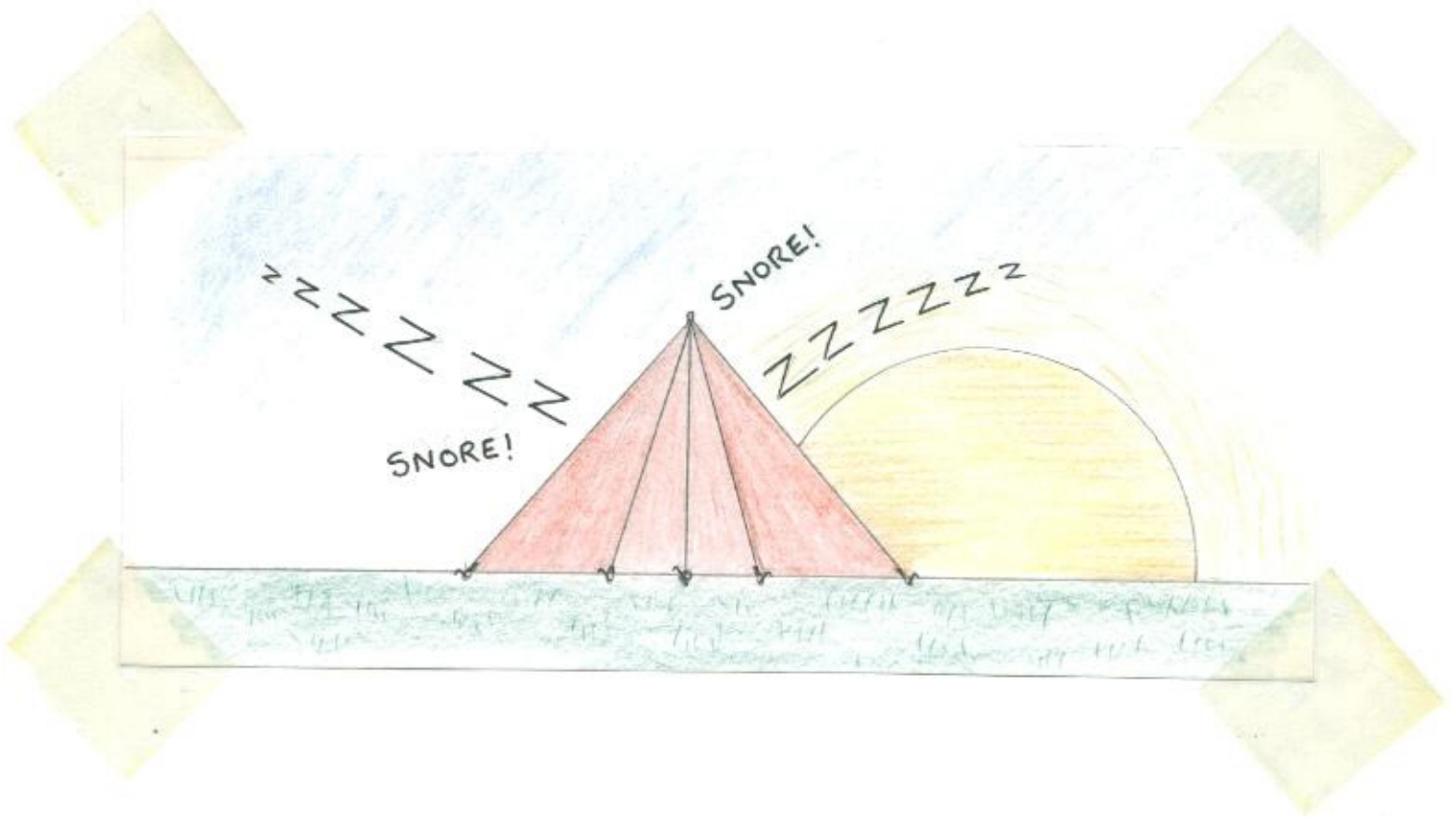
Our steady descent down the upper course of the River Esk was surprisingly pleasant. The sun beat down strongly and appropriate precautions were taken, including sun-tan cream!

We found an appropriate site for the camp and sent out a scout to see if it could be bettered. I soon realised that it couldn't and so we erected our tents and cooked our teas. The campsite was picturesque with crystal clear blue water in the many pools. These pools and cascades provided a superb backdrop to our second night's camp.



We thought we had seen all of the spectacular sights around the camp when our attention was drawn to two magnificent birds of prey perched high upon Herron Crag. A pair of Peregrine Falcons glided majestically through the light at sunset, turning solemnly in the soft breeze.

After familiarising ourselves with the next morning's route and Dr Stott's home brew, we went to sleep, the sound of the cool waters of the river, just audible through the silence of the night.



Day TWO - Throstle Garth to Wasdale Head

Our camp below Herron Crags was the best wild camp-site we were destined to stay at. We awoke to the pleasant sound of running water as the myriad crystal clear droplets journeyed downward through the River Esk, on their lengthy passage to the sea. They criss-crossed the smooth polished rocks on their seemingly infinite travels towards the tumbling torment of the wide rolling oceans.

We had a pleasant mornings walk ahead of us. Ninety-three million miles above us, the sun blazed, a towering inferno of fire. Hydrogen and Helium fused in abundance on its fiery surface, spitting tongues of fire into the black vacuum of space. The sun shining out in the heavens, had been burning for four-thousand, seven-hundred million years and would go on burning for as long again. How short our journey seemed by comparison!

Casting aside such thoughts we concentrated on the task in hand and made steady progress along winding and gently undulating pathways down through Eskdale.

Sadly, some members of the group were feeling the effects of Hayfever and were finding the going difficult. After a short rest they found that wearing sunglasses helped a great deal to relieve the problem and with words of encouragement all round we continued on our way. Once again, the benefits of working as a team were clearly shown.

We had got through a sizeable proportion of the day's walk by the time we stopped for lunch and we were able to have a pleasant rest in the sun before finishing the days walk.

The views over Wastwater and Wasdale Head were impressive. Our position on Illgill Head commanded breathtaking views of the mountains around High and Middle Fell, whilst in the other direction the strong buttresses of Scafell were clearly visible.

Our spirits were high as we descended down to our next campsite at Wasdale Head. Our arrival at the Trust campsite was dignified and with the sun still blazing at approximately fifteen million degrees centigrade, we sat down on the warm dry grass and surveyed the skyline.

Towering above us due east was Scafell, a mass of mountain standing guard over our campsite like an ancient soldier!

We cooked our teas and with the shadowy mountains keeping watch over us, we settled down to sleep, our minds filled with images of the day's walk.

Day THREE - Wasdale Head to Crummock Water

We awoke with a feeling of calm apprehension on this, the third and longest day of our expedition. There was a difficult mornings walk ahead of us and the afternoon was just as hard.

We wasted no time therefore in getting started. At first the walking was fairly easy but as the gradient increased, the pathways began to deteriorate and walking became more difficult. By the time we reached the col at the top of the Black Sail Pass we were all feeling tired.

Visibility was poor because of the low cloud and leaving my ruc-sac with the group, I made my way carefully to the edge of crag to our left. From there it was possible to see right down into Ennerdale. The forest stretched out westwards towards Ennerdale Water. The cloud was brushing the tops of the mountains as I returned to the group. Luckily the rain kept off and we began our descent to the Black Sail Youth Hostel.

That descent was trickier than any of us had bargained for. The pathway fell to pieces underfoot and the gradient seemed to be almost incomprehensible!





We lunched at the foot of the slope and kept a careful eye open for falling climbers!

A fine drizzle was falling as we made our way down through Ennerdale forest. The trees did offer us some protection from the wind, but once we were clear of these trees the heavens opened and the drizzle turned into heavy rain.

For some time the group trudged on in silence. The rain was persistent and heavy. By the time the rain stopped the day's walk was almost over and we had a walk of some three or four kilometers into the campsite. The ground was boggy and the path was unclear. There was a feeling in the group that our proposed campsite had been engulfed by the swollen waters of the lake and that we would be spending the rest of our lives aimlessly wandering the hills in search of a campsite.

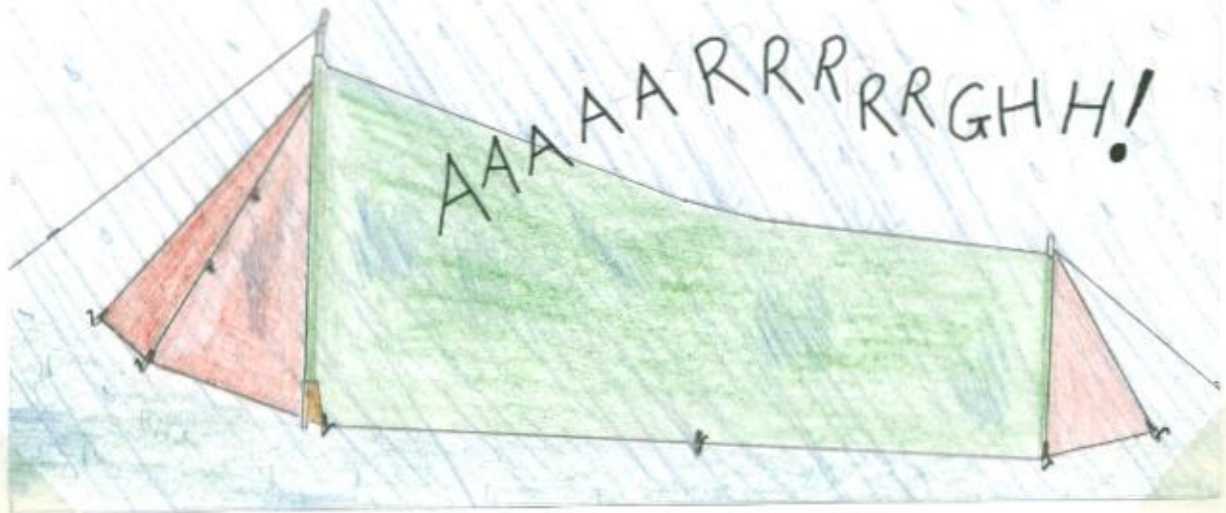
At last we found the site. A small grassy headland jutted out into Crummock water. The ground underfoot was flat and well drained.

We began to put up our tents just as the rain began again. We lost no time in finishing putting up the tents and eagerly climbed into the shelter they provided.

I remember carefully taking off my boots and socks on that evening. I left my socks which were slightly damp, draped over my boots at the entrance to the tent and lay down on top of my sleeping bag and sleep mat in the tent inner. Andrew was rummaging in his ruc-sac for his stove and tea. After lying for a moment listening to the rain hammering on the walls of the tent

and trying to forget the days walk we decided to make a hot drink. I lit the stove and poured the chocolate powder and sugar into the two mugs.

Needless to say, it was at about this time that we realised neither of us had any water. I shall not repeat what Andrew said! The thought of going into the rain once again was, to say the least, depressing.



Shortly after returning to the tent with some water, a stern voice broke through the silence of dusk. It was a gruff voice and sounded low and angry.

"You lads can't camp here you know! What do you think you're doing?!"

"Hello Dr Stott," came another voice.

That days walk had been the least enjoyable so far. The weather after Black Sail had been dismal. At least tomorrow's walk would seem easy by comparison and with this happy thought we finished our teas and slept soundly through the night.

Day FOUR - Crummock Water to 'The End'

The fourth day was the shortest of our expedition. At Mr Cotton's suggestion the original route was slightly amended, so that we would now pass to the north side of Crummock Water and down its Eastern side, finishing at the rescue post to the south-east of Buttermere.

We awoke to overcast skies and intermittent light drizzle. Our spirits remained undaunted however and we set about dismantling the campsite and making sure that we had left no rubbish.

We began the day by walking back along the path on which we had walked the previous day. We made good progress throughout the day. The walking was level and easy.

We stayed within view of Crummock water all morning and had our dinners on a rocky outcrop which protruded into the water.

It occurred to us during dinner that Loch Ness might not be unique in its claims to have a monster. We were surprised and terrified when we saw an explosion of bubbles on the surface of the water quite near to us.

An ominous black shadow moved silently and smoothly through the murky depths. We wondered what sort of unearthly creature this could be. A dinosaur perhaps or an ancient amphibious dragon. The tension was indescribable as this 'thing of the lake' broke viciously through the surface, closely followed by another equally astounding creature.



"Very good Mrs Crisp. You've obviously got your flippers on the right feet!" said the gentleman in scuba gear.

"Thank you," his pupil replied.

Although we were disappointed, we were also relieved that we had not become the lunch of some aquatic monstrosity!

Our walk in to the finishing post was mainly along roads and as we arrived at the finishing car park, amidst cheers and celebrations, we looked back on the expedition.

It had gone well despite the occasional rain. I think we were all glad to have finished in one piece, but the question is, will any of us return to the lakes? Only time will tell.

As Dr and Mrs Stott's car tore into the car park and skidded to a halt after executing a series of spectacular handbrake turns which threw a spray of gravel half way across a nearby field, we contemplated.

'The Lost Boys' were at last, found!









