

Tales from DalesRail

My memories of 'Climb a Peak Slowly' Keith Thomson

DalesRail may not be operating in 2020 but that doesn't stop us sharing our many interesting experiences about our journeys. We hope you will share your interesting stories, favourite walks, fascinating anecdotes and pictures about DalesRail. Please send them to richard.watts.crl@gmail.com or Simon Clarke at simon.clarke.crl@gmail.com.

Over many years as a founder member and leader on Rail Ramblers, and on DalesRail, I have had many memorable experiences. One of my 'specialities' over time was 'climb a peak slowly' walks, designed for anyone who wanted to climb a peak but would find an A or B grade walk far too demanding. I would like to share a couple of these, both climbing Pen-y-Ghent (at 2277 feet) via Brackenbottom and up the 'sharp' end which is a bit of a scramble in places, descending via Hull Pot to Horton-in Ribblesdale, a distance of about six miles with 1600 feet of ascent.



Pen-y-Ghent (John Barnes)

On the first walk, as my party assembled on the platform at Horton, I noticed a blind lady with a guide dog. My first thoughts were "how on earth am I going to get you up there and back down safely, this is going to be very interesting". She was accompanied by her family and as it turned out I knew her husband, we grew up close by in my home town. George assured me that they were experienced walkers and were quite capable of climbing the peak. The early stages of the walk were somewhat tricky, whatever directions/hazard warnings I was giving the lady, George was giving different directions. After a brief discussion I decided to give directions to the party and George would interpret. That worked much better. We made it to the top and back down safely and an enjoyable day out was had by all. Of particular interest was how the dog (a beautiful golden Labrador) behaved. On the few occasions it was

safe to let him off the lead he ran around like an excited child in a playground, but on the lead he was totally focused on his work.

The second walk, we were joined on the platform at Horton by a couple of Oriental ladies, a mother and her adult daughter (I can't recall whether they were from China or Japan). Their command of the English language was minimal and my backmarker that day, Alan Smith and I had even less of a command of their language. However, we managed to communicate with them describing points of interest in the landscape, views and history. I think they just about understood what we were saying. We made it to the top safely for lunch but shortly after, a heavy mist came down making the descent a bit tricky. Once back at Horton, the ladies said they were staying in Leeds, so we escorted them back to the station ensuring they boarded the right train. The ladies, having found out about DalesRail by picking up a brochure at Settle station, decided to give our walk a try and thoroughly enjoyed their day out. I do believe Richard that some days later you received a letter of thanks from the tour company the ladies were travelling with commenting how well they had been treated that day.

I think these two walks give an example of why we as leaders do what we do. It is the challenge, the responsibility, the satisfaction when things go well (it doesn't always do), the meeting people and the friendships. I have enjoyed every minute of it and if there are any budding leaders out there**why not come and join us.**



The climb to Pen-y-Ghent via Brackenbottom (John Barnes)