

Run 173: Little Salkeld

Hares - Doc and The Thong

After the successful Duddondale tour in June, CH3 hit the road again for another foreign sortie, deep in stockbroker belt Eden Valley (stock as in cattle, horses, ponies and other expensive livestock). This time it was only for the day, the pressures of being on the road, non stop barbecues and honeymooning couples having taken their toll on the predominantly ageing band.

It was billed by the hares not only as having their first walkers route but also one that took in some old ruins and national treasures. I was fortunate enough to chauffeur 3 of them (national treasures, that is, for the avoidance of doubt) to Little Salkeld. We were expecting a thin turnout what with the distance and all and the siren call of the Cumbrian Run but there was a healthy contingent setting off from the Green, numbers swollen by Anita Santiago's complement of little Indians and the last minute arrival of Happy Sac and Mr Sheen, domestic duties done.

An inadvertent hint from Thong after a cunning query from Godiva set us off anticlockwise towards the first of the landmarks, the impressive stone circle of Long Meg. Fluorescent Ron Hill gear rather spoiled the mystical atmosphere for a few happy snapping grockles before we on on'ed towards a fiendish check by a church, where tiny blobs of flour has been balanced on top of very thin fenceposts.

After the split, we were on intermittent markings as the previous night's rain had laid waste to Doc's hard work the afternoon before, but the odd blob of flour remained to give us hope. We eventually turned off road into pheasant heaven. There were hundreds of them running around - this was probably a sanctuary as there was the sound of heavy gunfire not too far away. It was a measure of the average speed of the pack that the birds managed to keep ahead of us for some time - on foot. One particularly incompetent beast suddenly remembered those wing-type things and thought that might be a more effective means of escape. Mirror, signal, manoeuvre. Up it went. Straight into an overhanging branch. It dusted itself off, looked around to say, 'I meant to do that' then ran straight into a fencepost. Why waste ammunition on them? Sooner or later they'll top themselves and land in your lap of their own accord.

Kirkoswald Castle and Frenchman's Hill (smelling strangely of elderberries) soon passed in our Cooks Tour of East Cumbria, and we trundled along the road to the river and a regroup with the walkers pack, somewhat earlier than the hares had anticipated. Miss Demeanour opted for a change of pace and yomped along with the runners for the remainder of the route which included a delightful detour into Lacy's caves after some of the most treacherous duckboards known to man.

A redistribution of national treasures saw us arrive at the Shepherds in a strange combination of vehicles. An underwhelming Sunday lunch was salvaged by a stunningly good banana cake, whipped up by Plum, in short notice in honour of Miss Demeanour's birthday.

Not exactly the Royal Geographical Society but a fine foray into uncharted territory. We should get out more.

Half Dome

