

THE WELSH THREE THOUSANDS

(Fourteen Peaks)

John Huxley

Madam Chairman and myself dropped off the grinning hopefuls (Chris Russell and Geoff Brierley and, yes, they really were grinning) at Pen-y-Pass at the traditionally unearthly time of 05.00 and headed down to Nant Peris to catch up on sleep. Soon, we were joined by Ross and his excellent campervan with its superior catering facilities. Dave Cole, Allan McDonald and Neil Metcalfe had elected to spend the night close to Snowdon summit. Several brews later the competitors were all through and we closed the checkpoint, picking up the fourth member of the support group, Helen Avison, on the way to breakfast at Capel.

On to Ogwen and our favourite "private" support place. Ross and I motored down in the Micra to the east end of Ogwen to check Dave Cole through before returning to the west end to rejoin Christine and Helen. In due course the other intrepids arrived, tired and suffering various injuries following what is, after all, a pretty big day by any standards. Neil, on his first attempt, was in better shape than the other three but thought it unwise to go on alone.

Back to the Chapel to marvel at the wonders of Marg's work team and then Christine, Paul and myself went to the Bull for a meal and a drink, ready to collect the victorious Dave. It was all quiet at Two Stones so we wandered up to the actual pass where Madam Chairman ordered her man up the hill to meet Dave on the way down. "Twenty Minutes!" she said firmly. This was ignored of course, and as the darkness increased various reports filtered through from Paul to say that he was on Carnedd Daffydd or some impossibly faraway place and there was no sign of Dave.

Back at the car my mobile flickered into life: it was Dave. "I'm at the car park" he said, sounding somewhat aggrieved "What's going on?"

"Oh dear" I said (or words to that effect) "You're in the wrong place but I know where you are. We'll get to you as soon as we can but first I'll have to let the others know what's going on."

I couldn't raise Christine up at the pass but on my way up there she 'phoned me. "I know where he is" I told her "Recall Paul and I'll be back in about half an hour."

For some reason Dave had thought Pass of the Two Stones was by the Iron Age hillfort of Pen-y-Gaer and had turned right, not left, on reaching Drum. We later calculated that Paul had only missed him by about ten minutes. I found him staggering down the Pen-y-Gaer road and took him back to Two Stones to pick up the others. We had to wait a while for Paul but eventually he came running down the track, no torch and as fit as a butcher's dog, as I believe the saying goes.

We reached the Chapel at 00.30 after another 14 Peaks epic.

Congratulations Dave-15 gritty hours was his time.