

## Ian Ledgerton's insights into Wainwright's Coast to Coast Walk (WC2C)

### 1. THE WALK HINDSIGHTS

The walk is generally split into sections (Lake District / Dales / "Bridging" / Moors), which is right except for a couple of points,

**A.** The bridging section, Richmond to Ingleby Cross, is not the easy bit, for reasons covered by Alfred Wainwright in his books. He wrote, in 1973, to North Riding County Council for their support of right-to-walk access, but it evidently achieved little benefit. Also it is a long way to go in a single stage, (as I did) with difficult underfoot paths and tracks, and every step at the end of the very long day was painful.

This section is through non-tourist, working farmland. The paths are not maintained, are overgrown, make diversions around "problem farms", and even prevent progress;

- Padlocked gates,
- Nettle fields
- Electrified fences
- Hidden styles
- Vandalised signposts (I found a broken C2C post and sign in a hedge accidentally - when I sat down to study my maps on which way to go)
- C2C direction markers/discs are missing

**B.** The single section of the Cleveland Hills (Ingleby Cross to Clay Bank) is so different to the rest of the Moors sections, that it needs highlighting and anticipating. Each fellow walker I met stated it was, "very *flipping* hard!"

### 2. PREPARATION

I planned for a year (as Black Sail YHA has 12 monthly waiting list).

Being eager to start and keen anticipation, meant that the guide books only provided me with highlights. I wish I had absorbed more advice from AW and taken the time to **read the books thoroughly**.

Find the Facebook group, *Wainwrights Coast2Coast Walk*

Limit the kit to carry (I walked in June necessitating summer gear and, as I never had a drop of rain (miraculously), I carried some gear I may have needed but never used).

### 3. TRAINING

My overview is below.

**POSITIVE:** A year ahead I was walking a lot including a 10+ miler, once a month, increasing in the last three months to four times a month and, in the final month, increased the distances, *for instance 28 miles from New Brighton to Chester*, following up these final long walks on the following day with another 10 mile walk. This worked as I always felt strong.

**NEGATIVE:** nothing prepared me for the first hills (Dent and Caw Fell) with a FULL pack. The packs with which I practiced were heavy, but a final FULL pack of just 9kg became crippling when 2litre of water, a packed lunch, first aid, etc., were added as essentials.

What I'd do if I was planning again.

- Year out 2x 10 mile mountain hike per month
- 3 months out; 1 x 10 mile hike per week
- 1 month out; 1x 30 mile road walk per week + 10 mile of hills the following day

(NB: I had access to a *14-storey* block of flats so, in the final month, I climbed the full 14 floors, 14 times, and even more importantly I feel, descended 14 times to prepare my dodgy knees. It worked - I had few issues coming down hills).

With hindsight I would now also build up to carry a heavier, 12kg, pack in the last month (as I only had 6-8kg) but after a couple of days on the walk I managed the pack much easier anyway. *Roll with the punches.*

#### **4. COMPANY**

The first week was with my son, brother and best friend - no better band was possible.

The following week I had daily company from my son and daughter - lovely!

Throughout the walk I met and befriended many groups/couples/singles and I felt a comfort and solidarity in the familiarity - checking on condition of feet or accomodation or targets for the day.

On the days I walked alone I enjoyed the solitude and did not seek company nor diversion from the simple act of walking in the countryside (neither did I listen to music on the walk. I kept my music to unwind of an evening).

I mention this as through social media there are people looking to partner-up to do the walk. There are many singles thinking that to partner up is safe, however the three points I would offer are;

I never once felt threatened - quite the opposite – however the support from fellow walkers was welcome. You can meet and accompany people along the way. Just be sesnsible.

#### **5. PAIN**

I completed WC2C in 16 days, including 3 rest/short days - Shap to Orton, day off at Ingleby Cross, and finally a shorter stretch from Hawsker to Robin Hood's Bay! This last day was because I could not finish the previous day....

Blister plasters definitely help, take loads and **get them on early.**

An underfoot seg became a problem when I mis-stepped and the skin moved. Ouch!

Footbaths with Epsom Salts helped, in tandem with ibuprofen/ co-codamol, and a slower pace, but it was a painful start to each day for a mile or so.

I found that after a mile (with all injuries/aches/pains/blisters et al), a numbness ensued and I was able to enjoy the walk. Breaks/lunch entailed another limping period - but for a much briefer time/distance.

You have to embrace any pain!

#### **6. ACCOMODATION**

Campers carrying their entire kit - hats off to you! (18kg + ! Wow - no thanks, not for me!)

We (x4 walkers) used YHA for the Lake District section, for which we were unsupported logistically until Kirkby Stephen, at which time my wife joined me with the car. We then hired a cottage for a week in Swaledale) from which time my wife taxied us to daily starts and finishes, and we booked hotel stays for final stages.

**YHA is great!** Camaraderie and fun!

The cottage we hired needed to be more eastern or central to negate long trips later on, but Muker (Yorkshire Dales) for a week is fantastic anyway!

#### **7. KIT**

My 40 year old Karrimore Condor SA65 coped well, but my brother's new Osprey was lighter, off your back air, pockets - all of which makes my future adventures worth exploring a new backpack.

Financial planning/wherewithal can dictate what is needed. People on a budget (and/or younger/fitter) were carrying full packs, whilst people with bigger budgets used third parties to ferry their belongings from one accommodation to the next, affording a daily change of kit.

If you can plan rest days (I had 2; Orton and Ingleby Cross), in towns with a laundrette or cleaning facilities that can reduce the amount of clothing needed.

## 8. MAPS

We started with the Ordnance Survey (OS) app on our phones (£4.99 per month or £30 per annum) as the Lake District OS paper maps did not extend to St Bees.

*We largely ignored paper maps.*

The app has the ability to plan your route and is great as it indicates when you stray and shows how to get back...but there are some issues at times with coverage and the despite downloading the map to my phone the path did "disappear" in remote places.

***In Reeth I bought "A Coast to Coast Route Guide" by Tony & Chris Grogan published by Skyware for £9.99, and used nothing else thereafter. Old School!***

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Coast-Route-Guide/dp/0955998786>

In summary (as I have been expansive) I think my planning and preparation were good, but things still go wrong. Roll with the punches and enjoy!

## 9. SPONSORSHIP & FUNDRAISING

**My chosen charity was Wirral Hospice St John's – in memory of my Dad, John, who was cared for there.**

Wirral Hospice's events and corporate team were delighted to help us and did, immensely, with tech t-shirts, a lightweight 'proud to support' banner, caps, paper sponsorship forms, they taught us how to set up a **JustGiving** page, how to promote the walk ourselves on social media and they then supported when we tagged them in with 'good luck' messages.

If you're walking for charity it's never too early to engage with their fundraising teams.

