

# Three Peaks



## 3 Peaks - 5 Grand

On Saturday 24th May a seven strong group of dedicated fund/fun raisers set out from Humberside to tackle the Three Peaks Challenge. The first bit sounds straightforward, if somewhat strenuous - "Climb Scafell Pike, Ben Nevis and Snowdon, the highest mountains in England, Scotland and Wales". It's the second bit that's the challenge - "in the space of 24 hours".

So who were our challengers? Well, the assault team were Clive, Neil, Dean, Mikey and Philippa, backed up Simon and Lisa who did the driving and, where and when necessary, boosted flagging spirits. All of them are Lincs Branch plant people.

Their day jobs are with Brian Plant and NCC Plant Services, two companies which operate from the same centre to provide a wide range of plant, transport and mechanical services throughout their region. Both companies have been established for many years and serve loyal and appreciative customers, the perfect situation when it came to drumming up sponsorship for their combined attack on the three peaks challenge in aid of our Benevolent Fund.

Six weeks before hand Philippa sent out over eighty requests for sponsorship, which no doubt raised a smile. She wrote - 'none of us, other than Clive in his youth, are mountain junkies or fitness fanatics but we are knuckling down to the first challenge of becoming fit enough to stand a realistic chance of completion. We have enthusiasm on our side.' (!!)

Now Philippa, Brian Plant's office manager takes up the story of 24 not according to plan hours, for the benefit of their generous sponsors..

On Saturday 24th May our enthusiastic group of walkers: Clive as pathfinder, Dean Chalder (machine operator), myself (Philippa) representing the "office girls" , my teenage son Michael and Neil Carter from NCC Plant Services, with our support Simon and Lisa, set off bright and early to Scotland to stay overnight in Fort William prior to our challenge attempt. After a lovely Sunday morning spent sightseeing around the area we drove to the base of Ben Nevis to prepare for our start. Our intention was to start at 4.00pm Sunday and finish 4.00pm Monday.



All's well on the slopes of Ben Nevis

(l. to r.) Neil Carter, Dean Chalder, Philippa Thornley and Michael Thornley

We began our ascent in glorious sunshine which was totally unexpected and had brought out every tourist in Scotland. The lower reaches of the mountain were very busy and finding a walking rhythm was difficult at first. Gradually the higher we went the fewer there were and we reached the top in 3 hours 10mins which, in view of the heat, was on target. While descending we were held on the mountain for 45 minutes while an injured walker below us was airlifted by a mountain rescue helicopter. We soon began to feel the cold and the reality of injuring yourself on the mountain became a niggle (certainly in my mind anyway). We were all safely down by just after 9.00pm and en-route to Scafell after a welcome cuppa.



Caption: The top of Ben Nevis. One up – two to go!

(l. to r.) Neil Carter, Clive Thornley, Michael Thornley, Philippa Thornley and Dean Chalder.

Unfortunately the journey to Scafell was longer than expected, it took 6 hours. Clive was poorly and we had to make several comfort breaks for bucket emptying! It was 4.15am Monday morning when minus Red Leader and with a crash course in compass reading the remaining fit team members embarked on

Scafell. We were making excellent time until we came upon a tarn I was convinced was not en-route and sure enough we were off course. We had walked 20mins on the wrong path which, with the lot time, was a big morale downer. Picking up the correct route we continued, with the path developing into a climbing and scrambling challenge. Those of us less like the TV Gladiators became slower the more testing the terrain became. The weather, considering we were in the Lakes was not wet but there were gale force winds and moving was arduous and hazardous.

The final ascent is a scree wall (which my son said was a proper challenge bless him!). As we scrambled up I realised that in these conditions I was slowing the boys down too much. We needed to get up and off there before an accident occurred, so I waited on a ridge just below the summit line while, Dean, Neil and Mikey basically stooped and crawled their way 500m across the top to the Cairn for the team photo. Standing up was not an option as the wind was simply too strong and gusting. It was the longest half hour ever, while I sat getting colder, clinging to my boulder, and trying not to think what child protection would think of my sending my son up there! At last they reappeared, possibly a little greyer for their hairy experience, and our decent began, now with a fierce head wind. At times simply taking a step was painfully slow progress. We eventually got back to the mini bus at 11.05am after a 7 hour epic that according to plan should have been completed in 5.5 hours.

Now there was much debate. We desperately wanted to complete the challenge but leaving Scafell for Snowdon at 11.30am on a Bank Holiday Monday meant a 5 hour drive. Climbing Snowdon was scheduled as 4 hours, but in the wet and very windy conditions forecast was likely to be longer. That meant arriving back in Grimsby in the early hours of Tuesday and so returning to work without proper food or sleep. We had to accept the reality. We had to accept that it was unsafe to continue.

We do intend doing Snowdon, the drive and the climb in a day, very soon, to write the task as complete, if not in the time scale intended, for our own achievement. We were all bitterly disappointed that we felt we had left with an empty chapter in our challenge and of course we carried with us the weight and incentive of the pledges which you as generous sponsors had been so kind to offer.

It is therefore with sincere humbleness (and very stiff muscles) we ask whether you would consider honouring your original pledges or would wish to lower them in accordance with our achievements. None of the original cheques/cash has yet been banked.

I very much look forward to hearing your comments and receiving your valued donation so I can inform the 'Lighthouse Club' of our totals as soon as possible.

Footnote:

Well of course, the team did climb Snowdon, and in the set time. All those pledges were honoured with the result that the team, (with the exception of Phillipa's son Micky), was able to present Lincs. President, John Clugston with a cheque that was very close to five thousand pounds.

