

SSGMC – October meet 2016 – Rydal Hall, The Lake District

Route: Rydal Hall, Grasmere, Stickle Tarn, Harrison Stickle, High Raise, Easedale Tarn, Grasmere
Distance: 15.4 miles
Conditions: Overcast with light rain, 9-13 degrees C, light winds. Clearing in the afternoon.
Highlight: Ascent of Pavey Ark via Jakes Rake route.

We stopped for some lunch on the shores of Stickle Tarn, from where Pavey Ark dominates the sky line and gives the impression of being a rocky ridge. With the mist and clouds hanging low the summit was only visible in fleeting glimpses as the wind carved open just a few small clearings. Pavey Ark is the largest cliff in the Langdales, looking eastwards its main face is just over a quarter of a mile across and it looms over Stickle Tarn some 625ft below.

From Stickle Tarn there was a choice of routes and after a short debate we decided to take one of the most popular which was to follow a diagonal slit up the south-eastern face known as Jack's Rake. Jack's Rake is the most famous ascent of the Pavey Ark precipice. It is classified as a Grade 1 scramble (grade 3 being the highest), but it is within the capability of many walkers, though it does require a head for heights and is considerably harder in bad weather. The rake starts beneath the East Buttress at the precipice's eastern end, near a large cairn immediately north of Stickle Tarn, and then climbs west across the face of the crag. The rake follows a natural groove in the precipice face and is clearly indicated by several Ash trees.



The whole rake is some 250 yards long and rises at an average angle of 30 degrees with a maximum angle of 50 degrees. By the time we reached the top we had ascended the 400 feet cliff and the "exposure" was noticeable at times. The route finished up a slight gully that lead to a small plateau a short way down from the actual summit of Pavey Ark (690m). Wainwright wrote that for fellwalkers Jack's Rake is "difficult and awkward", although there is "curiously little sense of exposure, for a comforting parapet of rock accompanies all the steeper parts of the ascent".

After a brief rest and small celebration we set off for the next peak of Harrison Stickle which was clearly visible to the south west and reached by a path contouring round the steep slope above Stickle Tarn. From the summit of Harrison Stickle (736m) we were rewarded with good views back over Pavey Ark as the weather cheered up for a short while and the sun briefly broke through. By now though it was 3.30pm and we still had a way to go. Heading north from Pavey Ark we took in Thunacar Knott (723m) then High Raise (762m) and Sergeant Man (703m) before picking our way down to Easedale Tarn and then eventually into Grasmere itself just before dark. To get back to our base at Rydal it was just a matter of retracing our steps of the morning along the 2.4mile stretch of the 'Coffin Route'. That was until the idea of catching the local bus was voiced. It was a short wait and a short expensive ride, but well worth it. A good walk, with good company and a day to remember.



To the left is Harrison Stickle and the right Pavey Ark. Jack's Rake can be traced from lower right to upper left.