

The North - South Crossing of Bowland 2007



The idea of a crossing of Bowland from north to south had been in my head for a while. The obvious line was from Wray to Chipping but what should it include. It should stick as much as possible to a straight line but also keep to viable paths and tracks, and be runnable as much as possible. I had been out and reccied the Roeburn valley only to end up on a courtesy path through the woods flanking the river and ending up bewildered amidst the fields. The best route I had found was through the fields high above the river parallel to the road and heading for Higher Salter farm. I had tried a route up through Haylots Farm and onto Gallows Hill. This looked feasible from the map but there is no official access from Haylots to the access land so I had had to ask the farmer. Then the path from Gallows Hill to Wards Stone was just a bog complete with a floating sheep that I nearly stood on. Besides Ward's Stone was not on the north south line.

So on Wednesday 29th August I set off from Wray Church. I had to abandon my car here and hope for a lift back. There is public transport from Lancaster but I gave up trying when the bus took a detour to Brookhouse in Caton and left me Billy no mating by the A683.

It was a cool dry day as I ran up the lane and turned off into the fields to head for first Ouththwaite and then Higher Salter farm.

The grass was marinating in early autumn dew but the view down the Roeburn was stunning and it was silent. Untouched by retail parks!

At Harterbeck Farm I ran through the farmyard of inquisitive cows and over the footbridge above the waterfalls of Goodber Beck. Here the path disappeared and I took the only faint trod across the field. Within 300 metres I was climbing barbed wire and realising that I was heading for Middle Salter. Never mind I would still hit the track so it wasn't worth turning back. There is access land to the east but I had tried it and found it to be tussock and sedge and not worth the hassle.

At Middle Salter I dropped onto the motorway of the Salter Fell track and the end of navigating lowland fields until the end at Chipping.

The views east to the skyline of the Dales were stunning and even gave me the idea of a route –Crag Hill above Barbon to Settle along the tops. One for another day.

The Salter Fell track gradually climbed to Alderstone Bank where I stopped for a feed and drink. The problem today would be water. I was carrying two bottles but I would turn off to Wolfhole before the reservoir of bottles I have buried at the County Gate. First stop would be the bottles at Hareden. I would just have to manage.

I cut the corner here down to the Roeburn and then climbed to the Shooting Cabin on the new track. The track is an eyesore but a very useful one if you want to get up to the skyline fast.



As the track bore off to cross the watershed to Tarnbrook I decided to cut across to Wolfhole Crag. On the map it looks rough but after a few bits of serious heather rainforest it was possible to link up the grassy bits and emerge at the col on Wolfhole. That is emerge into a soup of flies! They were swarming but not particularly interested in me –I can't imagine why – but just everywhere. As I ate my bag of rice pudding I hid from them in the rocks of Wolfhole. From here Brennand Great Hill via the direct route looked inviting and it was dry. So I set off heading for the elephant sized boulder. Running was easy and I was soon descending the gully of Sapling Clough and climbing to the wall. The flies fortunately being hefted to Wolfhole. These next sections is just a long run, at first on the left, then crossing the wall at Millers House, and then back over the fence just before Brennand Tarn. Today the tarn looked a shimmering mirror of its dour winter self. It is tempting to consider drinking here but the Canada geese droppings soon dissuade you. Salmonella Soup!

A long pull up Whin's Brow and I could begin to see the end - just Totridge to climb. But I had run out of water so I needed my bottles at Hareden.

I followed the fence for a while before cutting across the top of the track coming up from Trough Barn.

Along the fence there has always been a good trod but today after a few hundred meters it just vanished. I managed to pick up one on the south side in the heather but eventually this did the same thing and I was back on the north side and down the overgrown side of the wall to emerge opposite the Mountain Rescue cottages after trashing through the bracken like Ray Mears in search of food! Here I managed to locate a tap round by the back door and fill up under the gaze of the CCTV. This saved me having to dig out my Hareden bottles and be tempted by the out of date cans of rice pudding that lie rusting there.

As I ran into Hareden I had thought of carrying on past the bridleway turn up to Mellor Knoll and cutting through the field, but there was a gaggle of farmers boggling each other by the gate so reluctantly I had to bin the delights of a trespassing ascent.

The climb through the grassy field is pleasant but I missed the new gate to the courtesy path and ended up stumbling through patches of boggy sedge until I finally hit the climb to Totridge. Once at the top I checked my watch and realised I could go under 5 hours so I sprinted off just stopping to phone home for a lift at 2 30 pm.

The peat was dry and dusty - a rare luxury for Totridge, and I was soon running past my first walkers of the day. At Burnslack Corner I turned off to cut down the most direct route to Chipping. This is a lovely traverse round to Burnslack Fell and then a plummeting descent. And the chance to enjoy a last trespass across to the ford on Burnslack Brook. From here Ian and I had reccied the route through the fields to Chipping to avoid the frustration of getting lost when you are trying to sprint into the finish, and all the blood is diverted from your brain.

I headed down through the woods and across the fields to emerge by the Chair Works with two minutes to get to the church and my lift.

I dug in sprinting up the hill and touching the church door at 2.30 pm. 4 hours 52 minutes of running since leaving the sleepy suburbs of Wray.



A lovely run with an ecclesiastical interest! It would be quicker with better navigation to Higher Salter but a lot slower given the revival of the bogs of Bowland that I was lucky to meet in subdued mood. What better way to spend a day out? Just the problem of collecting the car but that another story!

20 miles and 4000 feet of ascent
Time 4 hours 52 minutes



THE NORTH SOUTH BOWLAND CROSSING



- Start at Wray Parish Church door
- Up past school and down to cross River Roeburn at Kitten Bridge
- Lane then field paths to Wray Wood Moor Tarn then Harterbeck Farm and High Salter Farm
- Salter Fell track to Alderstone Bank
- Track to Shooting Cabin and across moor to Wolfhole Crag
- Wolfhole Crag across via Long Crag to Brennand Great Hill
- Whins Brow
- Descent to Mountain Rescue Centre via fence line on Staple Oak Fell
- Hareden farm
- Totridge
- Burnslack Fell fence corner
- Descend Burnslack Fell and cross Burnslack Brook at ford (short trespass)
- Field path from High Barn to Chipping Chair Works Dam
- Chipping Church door