Great Gift Peaks Round

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12th September 2020

On 11th November at 11am in 1918 the Armistice was agreed which ended the First World War.

In the early years following the war, three very special gifts were made to the National Trust to look after on behalf of the nation.

The first mountain to be gifted to us was Scafell Pike, England's highest mountain, by Lord Leconfield. Then Castle Crag was given as a memorial to 'the men of Borrowdale'.

Shortly afterwards, 12 Lake District summits were given to the Trust by the Fell and Rock Climbing Club in memory of the fallen. This included famous climbing crags and a large gift of land surrounding the iconic peak of Great Gable. It was described at the time as the "world's greatest war memorial."

In 2019 Hamid Reza Kashefi created a natural round to take in all 14 peaks as 'the great gift peaks round'. Over the following year a handful of people completed the round, and on 12th September 2020 the record stood at 8 hours 24 minutes (Steve Rhodes).



Source: https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/a-great-gift-in-the-lake-district and FRCC

Like many this summer with no races going on I occupied myself with many long runs and personal challenges (such as the three big Lakeland races – Ennerdale, Wasdale & Buttermere on consecutive weekends) and then the Tea Shop round. It felt like I was going really well & looking for the next challenge – and the Great Gifts Peak Round just fitted the bill.

With only a few completions there doesn't seem to be a set round, however looking at the peaks there is really only one decision to make: Clockwise or anti-clockwise?

Clockwise: The key issue is the long, long plod up onto Glaramara which I didn't like the look of.

Anti-clockwise: Just thinking about the descent off of Kirk Fell makes my legs go all wobbly, memories of the Wasdale show race & the resultant DOMS still haunt me.

I only made my mind up during the car journey over to Wasdale – ACW, I'll worry about Kirk Fell later.

The rules of the round are summed up on the Facebook page:

1. All rounds should start at St Olaf's Church gate, the new location original memorial plaque from Great Gable.
2. A gpx file or timing sheet (time at each summit) and evidence of having visited each peak (time & GPS stamped images) should be provided to ratify your round.

3. Time limit for the round to count is 11hrs (just because ceasefire was declared at 11 o'clock, on the 11th day of the 11th month)
4. You should respect the land you travel on, be responsible for your safety and collect any litter you see on route.
5. Anyone attempting the round should consider donating to raise money for Fix the Fells (you are welcome to raise money for another cause as these are only suggestions)
6. All 14 summits (highest points on each fell as shown on OS maps) should be visited in any order. They are Grey Knotts, Base Brown, Great Gable, Green Gable, Kirk Fell, Scafell Pike, Lingmell, Broad Crag, Great End, Glaramara, Castle Crag, Seathwaite Fell (Great Slack), Allan Crags, Brandreth.

Prior to the run I walked through the grounds of the church, noticing a number of local surnames on the gravestones – especially Naylors, and then I read the plaque on the North East wall. This helped bring the meaning of the round to me before I began – it didn't feel like just a fun run, but a remembrance of the people who gave their lives for our freedom, and the appreciation shown by the local landowners of the sacrifices made.

With this now in mind I set off up Lingmell, quickly separating from the small crowds already starting on their way up onto Scafell Pike from the Head. Much of the route is familiar, some parts more so in reverse such as Scafell Pike to Broad Stand. Cutting off of Great End on the Joss Naylor Challenge route I'm making a rough guess in the thick mist as to what is a good line, hoping I won't end on top of some big cliff. Although the inclusion of Castle Crag greatly extends the round it is all good running & enjoyable ground. Back on the anti-clockwise BG route up to Grey Knotts was very familiar from last year's club BG relay, but I wasn't sure which summit was the accepted one for this round – what the hell I'll do both. Brandreth to Base Brown is definitely new ground for me – it looked very dodgy Brandreth but went very easily but the energy was starting to go coming back onto Green Gable.

Nearly there, just Great Gable & Kirk Fell and then it's all downhill – which was the problem. It was very steeply downhill – very, very steeply downhill. At least I wasn't racing it so I could rest the thighs every now & then, not that it made that much difference. What a relief to get down to the flat by the pub – if only I had some money for a pint I may have been tempted, although it is only a short jog back to St. Olaf's once down.

Knowing how long it took me to do the Tea Shop Round I thought the record might be possible, but it was still pleasing to get 7:39 and my first FKT! More to the point it is a great round for anyone looking for something mixing the familiar and with a few different lines, all combining to a great day out.

My FKT didn't last long, on 27th September Matthew Atkinson & Harry Bolton did the round in 5 hours 20 minutes – a much more worthy record. At least I held it longer than John Kelly held the Pennine Way record and I think I've still got the fastest solo time!