Western Fells (30 Apr 2019)

The Western Fells route has always appealed to me – circular, very little there and back, the longest mountain leg of any book (road to road) at 64km, and including many of my local hills. I'd love to be able to say I had a great time but I didn't. I'd pre-emptively put Compeed on my usual rubbing points on my feet and then taped over them, and I was also using new insoles. I was surprised that my toes starting to immediately feel sore and after three hours I stopped to put on more Compeed and tape. There was no improvement and it eventually dawned on me that it was pressure caused by having increased my foot volume, not rubbing. I removed my insoles and the pressure reduced but the damage was done and subsequent steep descents were agony. Despite this I made reasonable progress, a little longer than expected because I hadn't taken into account the rougher underfoot conditions. I had a break after Middle Fell (almost 10 hours in) but a new problem was rearing its head – feeling sick. Half a butty helped to settle my stomach a little but the problem became increasingly worse. Ascending Lank Rigg I managed about 4 pieces of popcorn (I was going for variety on this trip!) but that was it. I never ate or drank anything substantial for the final eleven hours – not great for energy or hydration. I couldn't even tolerate sips of water. Things came to a head on the flanks of Banna Fell when I lay down and retched – nothing emerged, no liquid, no carrots, my stomach was completely empty. If I could have gotten a phone signal I would have called my wife for rescue; if I walked back down to the road I'd probably still not get a signal. So I continued but a few minutes later I retched several times, but this fortunately made me feel a little better. Ascending Gavel Fell (now in the dark) I lay down and almost fell asleep, not good as light rain had started. I felt good ascending Blake Fell, my local fell, but the nausea and retching kept returning every 40 minutes or so. I'd texted my wife to say I was struggling and she offered to pick me up – it was so tempting, just a short hop from Loweswater to my car at the Kirkstile Inn, but I didn't want to be beaten by the nausea, especially as my legs felt good and I could keep up a brisk walking pace upwards and jog down shallower descents. The rain became heavier ascending Fellbarrow and I was forced to I put on my waterproof – I wasn't in a fit state to cope with getting wet and cold, although the prospect of getting hot and sweaty didn't appeal either. I finally allowed the thought that I was going to complete the round, and after an agonising descent of Low Fell I reached my car, 21 hours and 31 minutes after setting off. It's the longest single outing I've ever done and I stand in awe of those people who get up the next day and do it all over again.

(93km, 5685m of ascent. Time taken – 21:31; stationary 0:55; 4:09 in the dark.)



Sunrise from Great Borne



Ennerdale Water