

More on the Pennine Bridleway

Peaches and porridge (PB Leg 3)

I'd never classed myself as a runner. I used to run round the block (about a third of a mile) as a kid with my mates and liked to copy 2 Scots on TV at the time, Ian Stewart and Ian McCafferty, especially their fast finish. That the finish in question for this 10 year old was about 30 metres was irrelevant. Also the fact that the local kids I ran with were all 7 or 8 probably explains why I used to win a lot! Entered a cross country at school a year later and finished halfway and I hadn't run competitively since. Roll on over 30 years and I'd started running on my own, just 2.5 miles at a time then 6 months ago was introduced to the club. Couldn't believe how easier and more sociable it was to run with others as well as being able to enjoy the surrounding environment. It certainly beats the A646. I did flirt with Calder valley runners at the beginning too but it was quite obvious Tod harriers drank more!

So after 3 months I did a couple of races and then the call came. Dave Wilson asked me if I'd like to run in one of the teams in the Pennine Bridleway relay. I was really flattered because I'd not been running seriously very long and hadn't thought for a moment I could be considered alongside some of the really fit and experienced members to represent the club. I said yes immediately but was also concerned that Dave may believe I was better than I really am. The last thing I wanted to do was let the side down. Anyhow I had two weeks to prepare and ran as often as I could leading up to the day. And I knew nothing about how a runner or indeed any athlete should prepare for an event concerning their training or diet. That is apart from not having 6 pints and a curry the night before! Fortunately that weekend there was a piece in the Saturday Guardian about how some foods can give your body an energy boost. Mentioned were tinned peaches (in own juice), pasta, porridge and black coffee. I settled on the peaches and porridge although I had no idea how long before running you should consume these propellants. I settled for the morning of the race. Also I knew nothing or indeed what was expected of the teams. I just hoped I was in a good one.

Dave rang and said I'd be running in the Allstars team on leg 3 with Jim Duffy. I felt really chuffed because I thought that sounds like a good team. Mandy and Claire were running the same leg for the ladies team and we recced it together the week before the relay, which was fantastic because we would have got lost. (Jim didn't know the way either).

So the big day arrives and I turn up full of peaches and porridge, met Jim and waited for our leg 2 pair at the changeover. At the start of the leg the Ladies team had about a 3 minute advantage going into Callis wood. I thought we'd catch them up at some stage so Jim and I found a comfortable pace and wondered how long it would be before we saw Mandy and Claire. We knew they were only 2 places ahead. After about a mile and on crossing the river the immediate pair ahead went the wrong way. Jim suggested we'd have to split on them but after about another 2 miles they reappeared in the distance behind us so it wasn't really cheating and certainly wasn't a short cut! We covered another mile or so and still no sign of Mandy and Claire. And then for a while there was no sign of anyone, just me and Jim running along chatting away (we got on great) but with no idea of how we were doing and me just beginning to wonder had we come the right way.

Thankfully we then reached the path that leads down to the Top Brink Inn so I knew we were okay. Still no sign of the girls though. Maybe they'd read the piece in that Saturday Guardian too. We finally spotted them on the climb up to the Shepherds Rest and after about two thirds of the leg managed to overtake. As we passed they asked us to leave the gates open and although not sure if this was race etiquette (I'd always followed the country code) I thought if the chair of the club is asking me it must be alright although I hoped no-one saw us. It didn't matter because we didn't see anyone else at all until we approached the very last gate which was just being opened by the pair ahead who had slowed to a walk. We ran straight through and left it open saying to them our clubmates were just behind and that I didn't normally leave gates open and always followed the country code. Although we were now running away I could feel them staring at me as if unsure what to make of this statement so I shouted back 'in fact I'm really law abiding.' I think this made it worse! One of them glanced at my club vest as if it might explain my behaviour and developed a rather knowing look maybe thinking that all the inbreeding in the valley in times gone by, some traces obviously still remained. I felt like shouting back 'I'm not even from round here' but by that time we were too far away, over the last hill and on the wide, swinging, fast, downhill stretch to the finish where we handed over to our clubmates.

And then suddenly after running over 9 miles including a few hills we were just standing there not really doing very much. Felt a bit weird really. I felt quite tired but also radiant and probably a bit excitable. Fantastic in fact. It was then I realised I was a convert and was already looking forward to next time. I hope I get picked again.

> Jeff Anderson

Even more on the PB...

Ladies team report

One night during a pack run Jane Smith mentioned that we needed a captain for the ladies PBW relay. I didn't put myself forward at that point but I mentioned it to Rachel Skinner to see if she would help me organise it. Things went a bit quiet, nothing more said until I had had a drink in the Masons after another pack run and Mandy asked if I would do it so I thought what the hell give it a go. Picking the 10 ladies was easy enough the pairing up on what leg was the hardest partOh dear poor Shaun he was calling names of the ladies team out in his sleep, I didn't think at the time that I wittering on that much. Even Bert our dog walked out of the room at the mention of the Pennine bridleway relay.

One afternoon Mark Goldie called around and he made me feel better as he was also stressed out (in his words) about his team like me and Rachel and he couldn't decide who to put onto which leg. At this point Shaun put on the kettle and went for a extra long run it was bad enough for him hearing me going on and on but not Mark as well. Mark and I both decided after a few cups of coffee and talking about each others team that it would all come together in the end. Shaun was relieved to hear that, we had a good night's sleep that night

Next day my thoughts were what if somebody gets injured? What if I get start times wrong? (And I did originally) Then I get a call from Kath Brierly, great Kath could run a leg that's leg 2 sortedoh no now that changes it all I would have to run with Rachel Skinner on leg 1, oh I was unsure that this being captain was good for the Blood Pressure. So I Phoned up Rachel and she called up 1 evening with Jeff and a bottle of wine...or 2to finalise the team, all that came out of that evening was Jeffers was totally ass holed and fell into a unconscious state on our settee.

After speaking to Rachel Mandy and Jane I decided I needed to chill out about it and I did and it did all came together in the end despite the team changing a few times. ... it was a great day the ladies team ran really well and the main thing was we all enjoyed ourselves
Would I do it again?.....Shaun hopes not.

Sharon Godsman

Todmorden off to great start in English championship

With the first English championship counter falling on the same day as the Noonstone preparation was not ideal, just getting a team out was in jeopardy, however Tod showed great commitment to the cause and sent down a strong contingent. The race itself was from Carding Mill Valley, Church Stretton, Shropshire. Its classed as a 4 mile race with 1800ft of climb. Well I can believe the 1800ft of climb but if the course is 4 mile then its possibly the hardest 4 mile I've ever ran! Its now Monday night and my legs feel like lead weights!

The race starts with a short road section which leads to the first steep ascent of Cow Ridge. As usual with championship races there is plenty of pushing and shoving with people jostling it out for position, this race was no different- i recall Shaun Godsman pushing Mark Goldie out of the way and running off into the distance like a man possessed battling it out with the likes of Ian Homes and Simon Bailey!!! After the initial climb fast running on tracks, grass and heather take you around the first half of the course over the Devil's Mouth and onto Burway Hill. As you descend to the valley floor you see the views of Stanyeld, Bodbury Ring Roman hill fort and Haddon Hill, unfortunately your next objective is to climb these! At this point running past my car which was parked at the 1/2 way point was a bit disheartening as a lie down on the back seats was most tempting!

After the grueling climbs there's a long, fast descent down Mott's Road to finish through streams into the top car park. Congratulations to Chris Smales - first Toddy back. I heard there was an interesting sprint finish between Jon Wright and Andy Wrench, Unfortunately they was way ahead of me to witness it. The race was won by Tim Davies of the promoting Mercia Harriers in a time of 42.33, with Pudsey and Bramley taking the team prize. Todmorden Harriers results were as follows: (22) Chris Smales, 48.04, (29) Jon Wright, 48.49, (30) Andrew Wrench, 48.50, (36) Alex Whittam, 49.36, (37) Shaun Godsman, 49.53, (62) Andrew Horsefall, 51.35, (69) Mark Goldie, 51.51, (123) Dave Collins, 55.57.

I hear we finished 4th in the team prize, not bad considering the competition, well done to everyone. -
Alex Whittam