

# TODMORDEN HARRIERS

NEWS, MOTIVATION, INSPIRATION, RACING, OBSESSION, MEMORIES, BANTER AND MORE!



**SUMMER TORRIER 2015**

## **Summer 2015**

It seems quite some time since our last issue and what a year it is has been so far. I would like to extend a warm welcome all new members and encourage you all to get involved in all things that are Todmorden Harriers. There is loads going on and to keep up to date make sure you are a member of the forum and if you use Facebook we have Tod Harriers FB group. I hope to see you racing in the Club championship, marshalling at races, submitting contributions to the Torrier, training at Tod high on Tuesday at 6:30, joining the Gaddings swimmers, Captaining teams, racing in relays, attending committee meetings etc.....your thoughts and opinions are valued and all club decisions are based on a majority vote basis. Whatever you are doing many thanks as it all helps make Todmorden Harriers a great club.

The club championships and Grand Prix are still wide open with at time of writing Dave Collins holding the top of the fell champs and Richard Butterwick at the top of the road. With 9 races remaining anything could happen ....you could still qualify and line up to be commemorated at the end of year prize giving - you could even win! For more info regarding the separate championships and the Grand Prix check out <http://www.todharriers.co.uk/torrier/2015jan/15.pdf>

## **Dates for your Diaries**

### **Ian Hodgson Mountain Relay**

Sunday 4th October. Mandy has volunteered to be the ladies' captain but we still have vacancies for the men's captain and the teams! 4 pairs of 2 in each leg are needed

### **Red Rose XC league**

Will the boys be getting out in force for the first fixture and the following?

Sat 10th October, Leigh Sports Village

Sat 7th November, Hyndburn

Sat 21st November, Bolton (Leverhulme Park)

Sat 5th December, Rossendale

West Yorkshire Winter League?

## **British Fell Relay Championships**

Sat 17th Oct 2015 - leg 1 - 1 runner , legs 2 - 2 runners, leg 3 (nav leg) - 2 runners, leg 4 - 1 runner = 6

Men's and Ladies teams to be entered (TBC) Captains needed!

Venue - Barley, Pendle hill.

If you would like to volunteer for any of the Captains posts then please have a word at a pack run or post on the forum or on the FB page.

## **Ultra champs**

Over the course of the year there have been some incredible performances in the Ultra running scene with Toddies completing the Fellsman, Buddy competing in the Transvulcania Ultramarathon, Steve Pullen the Lakeland trails 110K race, Robin Tuddenham running the West Highland Way, Craig Stansfield and Elise Milnes in the LL100, Steve Radcliffe and Jill Davison in the LL50. These runs were the result of lots of hard training, and some great performances at build up events at increasing distances. I'm sure there are plenty more (sorry if I missed you). Also, big respect to Jon Wright and Andrew Horsfall, who did their own ultra, running the UK 3 peaks and cycling to each in between!!

It has been suggested that the club runs an Ultra Championship, which has been discussed with the Club's Committee. Like the XC Championship, it will operate separately to the existing Grand Prix, reflecting the growing interest in Ultras in the club, recognising some of the amazing achievements of Toddies at big distances, and putting the Ultra warriors up against each other. The committee welcomes a small group of those interested in developing the proposal for 2016. If you would like to participate, please email me at [youngbulltodharrier@gmail.com](mailto:youngbulltodharrier@gmail.com) to express an interest by September 30. And watch the forum for further updates!

**Thanks for all contributions please keep them coming in and send to [youngbulltodharrier@gmail.com](mailto:youngbulltodharrier@gmail.com)**

## Thank you – from Mandy

It's March 1989, a Monday night, and there's a dozen of us sat in the Ukrainian Club for the Todmorden Harriers AGM. Mick Wainwright the retiring Chairman announces "We need a new Chairman and a new Treasurer". We're all looking at each other...then everyone's looking at me and Hazel. "I'll be treasurer" she announces "Guess that means I'm Chairman then!" Little did I know that that decision really would change my life.

I'd joined Todmorden Harriers about 18 months earlier after the Todmorden Grueller Race.



Running never came easy to me, I was the kid off the back at school puffing and panting and it was only when I went to Danny's gym to lose weight that he helped me learn how to breathe and therefore run. At the time the Harriers was mainly a road running club with about 40 members. On joining the Harriers I got lots of encouragement to race, mainly in local road races.

It was around the late 80's and early 90's that we had started pack runs. Following the suggestion of Mark Grice we copied Clayton Harriers who ran from a different pub every month in the summer. At some of those initial



packruns we only got 4 or 5 runners. We also started a newsletter to help communication and the Grand Prix to get members out racing.

We were also encouraged to get out on the fells and, with help from Ian Morris and Dave Wilson, we even ventured up to the Lake District for Three Shires and Langdale and to compete in mountain marathons (which I discovered is my forte).

As a fairly close knit team we all encouraged each other just to get out there. Todmorden Harriers have over the years been a very social bunch and include a lot of climbers and cyclists as well as runners. We've had many weeks and weekends away together at races such as Coniston and Ben Nevis.

Over the years as Chairman I've done many jobs (as have many others) and, I suppose, Tod H was very much my baby. I would like to think that I've helped grow Tod H into the active, inclusive and welcoming club that it has become by orchestrating the massive efforts and contributions of many, many other members...and by occasionally smoothing the waters behind the scenes. I have consciously tried to step back over the past few years and pass things on as now, 26 years later, Phil and I want to spend more time travelling.

The decision to finally stand down was taken out of my hands in January when I had another attack of ventricular tachycardia and was hospitalised for three days. Thankfully Simon stepped into the breach (and the consultant zapped my heart and cured it!)

I hope that everyone finds Todmorden Harriers a friendly club where everyone matters irrespective of speed or ability. I like to think we encourage everyone just to get out there and enjoy it at whatever level you are at. It doesn't matter if you just want to potter about or to seriously race.

The support I have had from the Harriers with my various health issues has been phenomenal. Whatever I have put into the club has been repaid with interest. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all past and present Toddies for their support and contributions to the club and to wish our "new" committee every success. I'll still be around a lot of the time and can hopefully carry on contributing to the smooth running of our great club.

*Mandy*

## Your New Chairman

Hello everyone. Simon Anderton here. I've been asked to introduce myself and give the newer members of the club a bit of background info about me.

I joined the Harriers in 1990, having trained for and finished Pennine and London marathons. I came into fell running as an extension to mountaineering trips and I loved the challenge of being fit and self reliant in the hills. I met many amazing people once I joined; many seemed to share the same interests and values as me.



My favourite races were those where I had close battles with people who I really admire as great athletes. For example, one early race I did was the Ribble Valley 10 mile and Parky and me beasted each other to a 56/57 minute pb.

My all time best memory in racing was when I was finishing very strongly down Sulber Nick during the Three Peaks and Wrenchy was shouting at me telling me that I was flying., I finished in 3:19 and Andy Peace gave me my medal.

I had knee surgery after this and, inspired by my brother ,got into triathlon. I represented Great Britain at the World Champs in Madeira in 2004, and on three more occasions, and completed two Ironman events.

My running has been limited by health issues in recent years, but hopefully now I've retired I'll be on the old comeback trail.

There are many great clubs around Britain and beyond, but I find it hard to believe that there is a club which offers more support and encouragement than this one. So many people are prepared to help, support and organise things for the benefit of us all. Long may it continue.

## Grand Prix - what's left to do?

As the final three months of the season begins we are just two thirds through our race calendar - there are still 10 fixtures left to get your quota of 8 GP finishes done. After 22 races we only have 8 qualifiers in the GP, 1 on the fells, 2 on the road and 6 for the Trail championship. Don't forget the separate Club Champion qualification - only 3 road and 3 fell races but you must have 1 in each category of short, medium and long.

So get yourselves out to the following, or it could be a very short 'Presentation Do' this year!

6<sup>th</sup> Sept: **Guiseborough 3 Tops** - Medium Fell. Last chance to run an English Championship counter, though probably by the time you read this it would have passed you by. As has the Championship for most people this year.

13<sup>th</sup> Sept: **Garstang Half Marathon** - Long Road. Starting in Preston, a rural undulating course through Garstang, Catterall, Claughton and Barnacre. Entries should be available on the day.

19<sup>th</sup> Sept: **Three Shires** - Long Fell. You didn't want to do the Good Shepherd again did you? So it's off to Little Langdale this year for a 12.4 mile race that packs in 4000 ft of climbing over Wetherlam, Swirl How and Pike O'Blisco. For those new runners looking to experience a Lakes 'classic' this is very do-able.

22<sup>nd</sup> Sept: **Mandy Goth 5k** - Trail. The name alone should guarantee a great turnout - the record stands at 40 Toddies at one race. An easy little course: up a road and track, twice round a reservoir (looking across at those in front or behind you) and back down the same way.

11<sup>th</sup> Oct: **Withins Skyline** - Medium Fell. A runnable climb, past Wuthering Heights (take care not to alarm the Japanese tourists), down the slippery flag stones and back via Bronte Bridge. The race usually sees a big Toddie turnout and some muddy finishers who have gone bog snorkelling.

18<sup>th</sup> Oct: **Jimmy Cricket 5k** - Trail. Not to be confused with Mandy Goth (though to some there is a passing resemblance); this goes up a road, twice round a reservoir but then not down. Jimmy will be there to start the race and will present the prizes - so don't forget your autograph book.

24<sup>th</sup> Oct: **Great Whernside** - Short Fell. Starts in Kettlewell, a 4 mile straight up and down of 1200ft over mixed terrain: fields, heather, rock and bogs. First time in our GP I think and looks a cracking race - just don't head for Whernside!

1<sup>st</sup> Nov: **Derwentwater 10m** - Medium Road. Billed as a "spectacular" run; clockwise round Derwentwater from Keswick, undulating rather than hilly and one of the most scenic road races in the country with autumn colours at their peak. But you will all have your heads down looking for points not views.

14<sup>th</sup> Nov: **Tour of Pendle** - Long Fell. Attractive to those with a fetish for Pendle Trig point - visited many times from different directions, even more if you get lost. Recommend rehydration afterwards is at the Hebden Bridge Beer Festival in the Town Hall.

29<sup>th</sup> Nov: **Wesham 10k** - Short Road. Just a week before our 'Presentation Do' so guaranteed to bring out runners who are one race short of GP or Road qualification - and, as in previous years, cause problems for those compiling the results and engraving the trophies. So, to those intending to leave it to the last possible opportunity, don't! Please qualify at one of the above.



# Race 22

Pstn	Name	Cat	total completed races	total points	total fell races	avg per fell race	total road races	avg per road race	total trail races	avg per trail race	Qualified?	Best combination	GP SCORE
1	Kath Brierley	F50	8	785.5	5	93.9	2	107.6	1	101.0	Q	5F-2R-1T	785.5
2	Richard Blakeley	M70	8	758.5	2	93.5	4	96.6	2	92.6	Q	2F-4R-2T	758.5
3	David Leslie	M60	17	1522.9	7	87.6	7	90.7	3	91.6	Q	3F-3R-2T	745.8
4	Richard Butterwick	M40	13	1135.1	4	78.7	7	92.2	2	87.5	Q	2F-5R-1T	737.0
5	Michael Harper	M45	9	811.3	2	87.7	5	91.8	2	88.4	Q	2F-5R-1T	725.5
6	Peter Ehrhardt	M65	13	1045.2	5	79.0	5	83.2	3	78.1	Q	2F-5R-1T	663.8
7	Paul Cruthers	M50	10	769.8	3	73.5	4	78.6	3	78.4	Q	2F-3R-3T	636.9
8	Dave O'Neill	M55	9	584.1	3	63.9	3	67.7	3	63.0	Q	2F-3R-3T	523.5
9	Mel Blackhurst	F45	7	693.9	4	96.1	3	103.2	0	0	N		693.9
10	Matt Flannagan	M40	9	816.5	4	89.7	1	97.0	4	90.2	N		642.3
11	Guy Whitmore	M45	7	585.7	2	78.5	3	88.0	2	82.4	N		585.7
12	Stu Worstenholme	M40	7	566.0	5	80.1	1	83.8	1	81.6	N		566.0
13	Ben Crowther	M40	6	545.7	5	90.5	1	93.1	0	0	N		545.7
14	Kevin Coughlan	M50	7	545.5	2	71.2	3	81.6	2	79.2	N		545.5
15	Nina Fedorski	F50	7	540.1	2	76.4	3	79.0	2	75.2	N		540.1
16	Chris Goddard	M	6	525.8	5	87.1	0	0	1	90.3	N		525.8
17	Dave Collins	M55	5	497.8	5	99.6	0	0	0	0	N		497.8
18	Myra Wells	F55	7	520.6	0	0	5	75.9	2	70.6	N		453.1
19	Josh Murphy	M	7	510.7	0	0	5	71.3	2	77.0	N		448.2
20	Helen Wilson	F50	5	410.9	2	79.2	1	89.2	2	81.7	N		410.9
21	Moyra Parfitt	F70	4	407.5	1	105.6	3	100.6	0	0	N		407.5
22	Fiona Armer	F45	5	405.7	4	78.6	1	91.4	0	0	N		405.7
23	Nick Barber	M40	4	381.6	3	93.3	1	101.6	0	0	N		381.6
24	Darren Graham	M45	4	372.3	1	91.9	2	97.0	1	86.4	N		372.3
25	Rachel Whitaker	F40	6	366.8	1	52.4	1	71.1	4	60.8	N		366.8
26	Joe Courtney	M	5	365.2	0	0	5	73.0	0	0	N		365.2
27	Dave Garner	M45	4	360.7	4	90.2	0	0	0	0	N		360.7
28	Paul Hobbs	M	4	345.8	4	86.5	0	0	0	0	N		345.8
29	Darren Tweed	M	4	334.0	1	77.0	2	84.9	1	87.2	N		334.0
30	Louise Abdy	F50	4	331.3	1	80.8	1	82.6	2	84.0	N		331.3
31	Julie Graham	F45	4	319.8	0	0	2	81.9	2	78.0	N		319.8
32	Catherine Elvin	F	4	314.1	2	72.7	2	84.4	0	0	N		314.1
33	Dave Wilson	M55	4	299.4	2	77.7	1	77.2	1	66.9	N		299.4
34	Nic Corrigan	F40	4	296.2	0	0	4	74.1	0	0	N		296.2
35	Paul Brannigan	M50	3	294.1	2	103.2	1	87.8	0	0	N		294.1
36	Jane Leonard	F55	3	287.2	3	95.7	0	0	0	0	N		287.2
37	Steve Corrigan	M45	4	276.1	0	0	3	69.7	1	67.1	N		276.1
38	Jane Mitchell	F35	3	261.8	0	0	2	88.6	1	84.7	N		261.8
39	Simon Galloway	M50	3	250.2	2	81.7	0	0	1	86.8	N		250.2
40	Dan Taylor	M	4	238.2	2	55.0	1	65.7	1	62.6	N		238.2
41	Matt Annison	M	3	213.4	3	71.1	0	0	0	0	N		213.4
42	Ben Beckwith	M	3	203.9	3	68.0	0	0	0	0	N		203.9

# CHAMPIONSHIPS - The 'TOP 10'

full tables and all the results are on our website

## Fell Table - after 9 races

			completed	total points	qualified?	qualifying points
1	David Leslie	M60	7	459.8	Q	396.5
2	Chris Goddard	M	5	433.1	X	433.1
3	Ben Crowther	M40	5	433.5	X	433.5
4	Dave Collins	M55	5	396.4	X	396.4
5	Stuart Worstenholme	M40	5	375.9	X	375.9
6	Paul Hobbs	M	4	345.8	X	345.8
7	Kath Brierley	F50	5	342.1	X	342.1
8	Matt Flannagan	M40	4	338.9	X	338.9
9	Dave Garner	M45	4	330.9	X	330.9
10	Mel Blackhurst	F45	4	294.6	X	294.6

## Road Table - after 9 races

1	Richard Butterwick	M40	7	607.9	Q	527.4
2	David Leslie	M60	7	504.8	Q	439.9
3	Michael Harper	M45	5	426.2	X	426.2
4	Joe Courtney	M	5	365.2	X	365.2
5	Josh Murphy	M	5	356.7	X	356.7
6	Peter Ehrhardt	M65	5	314.3	X	314.3
7	Richard Blakeley	M70	4	279.9	X	279.9
8	Paul Cruthers	M50	4	279.5	X	279.5
9	Myra Wells	F55	5	273.4	X	273.4
10	Nic Corrigan	F40	4	252.7	X	252.7

## Trail Table - after 4 races

1	Matt Flannagan	V40	4	342.9	Q	258.7
2	David Leslie	M60	3	219.1	Q	219.1
3	Paul Cruthers	M50	3	209.2	Q	209.2
4	Peter Ehrhardt	M65	3	176.3	Q	176.3
5	Dave O'Neill	M55	3	160.6	Q	160.6
6	Rachel Whitaker	F40	4	209.0	Q	159.8
7	Richard Butterwick	M40	2	164.5	n/e	164.5
8	Michael Harper	M45	2	164.3	X	164.3
9	Josh Murphy	M	2	154.0	X	154.0
10	Guy Whitmore	M45	2	150.8	X	150.8

## Coniston Old Man Triathlon

Or

### A fell runner's introduction to the world of triathlon

On 14<sup>th</sup> June 2015 I completed my first triathlon: Coniston Water 2000m; Wrynose, Hardknott, Birker Fell 75km; Wetherlam and the Old Man 20km. A good day out. (My first fell race was the Edale Skyline – some might say I like a challenge. I see it as getting value for money.)

Velominati rule #42: *A bike race shall never be preceded with a swim and/or followed by a run.* So I'm definitely not one of those velo types then. I enjoy all three activities – I had just never tried doing all three in one go. In fact, after several days of increasing anxiety about the 3 transitions (yes, *three* – swim to run to bike to run, as the bikes were racked up in a field 700m from the water's edge) the thought that I was just "going out for the day" to do all the things I like doing, helped to restore calm and a sense of perspective. The rest could race; I was just going for a good day out in the Lakes.

Distractions from just having *a good day out* – the bikes racked up with wheels alone worth more than my complete bike. At the transition, you can see how many bikes have already gone/finished by the time you get there. Just onto the bike section, free-wheeling down into Coniston village and just getting into it. Mr. Aero goes whizzing past already tucked into his aero position ... and then follows the arrow that marks the turning for the run route up onto the fells – *ha! Good luck with that on your aero bike!* Being a thoughtful fell runner I let him know he's made a mistake.

I estimated 6-7 hours. Total effort similar to a Haworth Hobble or Wuthering Hike? That told me how hard to go off – *steady*.

Calm – *go at your own pace* – essential for the swim. Just find your rhythm and it will flow. The water was "warm" – well, anything is "warm" after training in Gaddings. Deviate slightly around the shallows on the "out" leg – remember that for the second lap. Rhythm, breathe, "sight" the marker buoys, breathe, steady, sight, breathe, rhythm – *oh no, I'm nearing the last turn – I've got to get out and go for a bike ride now!*

Stepping out of your comfort zone every now and again is good for you. Challenge yourself. But getting back into familiar terrain can be enjoyable too. Glad to rack the bike and get the trail shoes on. A steady climb, determined to run as much of it as I could. Concentrate on keeping to the path after Wetherlam, rock-hopping – *come on Twinkle-toes*. Catching others is a great boost after 4.5 hours – gradually pulling away from those triathlete types is even better!

6.5 hours, challenge completed. Not bad for an old man!

Jonothan W.

Please note Jonothan W. is too modest to say .....he came 3rd V40....well done ;)



## **Iceland 2 by Simon G.**

I returned to Iceland again this month for my second time running the Laugavegur Ultramarathon. I described the race in detail last year but in a nutshell it's a long trail/fell race with a bit of everything under foot – snow, rocky trails, rivers to cross, sulphurous mud and black volcanic sand. Oh, and the last few kms are through a natural Icelandic forest. I entered with Reg last year but this time, despite my best efforts to explain how awesome this race is, I couldn't persuade anybody to go with me...

So at 6am on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July I found myself on the Easyjet flight to Reykjavik. When I entered my intention was to try to break 7 hours (7:14 last year) but my preparation hadn't been ideal this time. I had focussed until the 23<sup>rd</sup> May on Ironman Lanzarote – and then followed 2 months interrupted by a recurring calf injury and a chest infection that I still wasn't over by the race day. However, the choice was either to not go and lose the race entry fee and flight costs (over £300) – or just turn up and hope for the best. I knew I would feel worse if I didn't even try but arriving at Reykjavik 8am their time I wasn't sure I'd made the right decision. Still, I was committed now...

That day I registered for my race pack and basically tried to stay awake as long as I could before an early night beckoned, to catch up on lost sleep. However, during the night, I managed to get up and walk into the corner of my bed – by the morning my middle left toe was bruised and swollen. Was it broken? It didn't matter. It hurt! Somebody, somewhere clearly didn't want me to do this race!!! On that day (Friday), I went back to the Blue Lagoon – a truly amazing place that lives up to all the hype...



Well worth a visit if you ever go to Iceland. 3 pints of strong Icelandic beer by lunchtime and life seemed rosier. Strangely my toe didn't seem to hurt as much either. The rest of that day I sorted and packed my gear and had another early night.

The alarm went at 3:30 am for the 4:30 Race Bus to the start line. No nerves this year as I was not expecting much from the day really. I wasn't at all confident of even finishing with my injury problems...

At least the weather was glorious – hot sunshine and little wind - completely different to last year!! 9:05 was my start group time and we set off up the trail. The first 10km is virtually all uphill to the highest point and check point 1 at Hrafninnusker and soon we reached the snow line. Iceland had experienced a cold spring so there was far more snow on the route than usual and it was melting so was mostly rather slushy.



Mercifully only ankle deep and the coldness numbed my toe nicely – I reckon I was one of only a few competitors who was glad of it! I took this section very steadily and was nearly 15 minutes slower than last year to the first check point. I took plenty of photos too and was starting to really enjoy it.



The next part is my favourite and with no injury issues so far I ran steadily up and down various small inclines until the magical drop into the valleys towards checkpoint 2 at Altnavatn Lake. This part is a true fell runners delight for the best part of 20 minutes and I let myself go, overtaking maybe 30 runners. I knew most of them would come past me on the flatter parts but that didn't matter now! I reached Altnavatn and felt really good. Exactly 3 hours racing and it was all going better than I could possibly have imagined.

Checkpoint 2 to 3 at Emstrur has the least hills in but although my legs were tiring I only started adopting a walk/run strategy towards the end of this section. I couldn't believe I reached this third checkpoint only about

5 minutes slower than last year – and felt in better shape. 38km done in just under 5 hours.



So to the final part...17km of up and down with a few more, icy cold river crossings (which were really helping keep my troublesome calf under control). Here, my lack of specific long distance training kicked in and combined with the hot afternoon sun began to attack my reserves of energy. This last section seemed to take forever. My legs felt very battered and bruised, although fortunately I never suffered from cramps. My dream of beating last year's time faded though...I finished in 7:26. Just 12 minutes slower than 2014 and I was pleased to have got to the end.

The journey home was eventful. Our Race Bus had a tyre blowout after crossing one of the rivers and as these tyres are bigger than those on UK tractors this meant at least a 3 hour wait for a replacement bus to be sent from Reykjavik. However, the Slovakian guy I had met up with flagged down the second bus about 10 minutes later... they had 4 spare seats and I got the last one. PHEW!!! He had a flight to Munich to catch at 1am and mine was early the next morning so I didn't feel too guilty. We got back to Reykjavik at about 10 pm and I packed up.

By Sunday lunchtime I was back at Manchester airport. I've lost last year's medal somewhere at home but this one is already safely hanging on the wall!

A fine and unique race that I would thoroughly recommend.



## 70 in 70

So – my birthday's in March, and I started with the Flower Scar, and the Roddlesworth Roller next day. Then 5 miles of concrete & 5 miles of tarmac on the front at Blackpool; I staggered round Heptonstall, and followed it with the first Andy O'Sullivan 5k trail race of the season. After which came the Elterwater fell race during a very wet Langdale weekend, though it did not rain during the race itself. That was March.

April started with the Caldervale 10, probably my favourite road race. Then on the Sunday the Guiseley Gallop, Monday the Hollingworth Lake 5k in misty conditions, Tuesday Bunny Run 2 and Wednesday another Andy O 5 k trail. The number of races completed was starting to stack up. Wardle was very windy and as a result I found it really really hard; first of my 2015 Radcliffe races followed the next day, 10k trail. Then another Andy O 5k trail and at the weekend the Overgate Hospice 10k. Andy O Diane Modahl 5k I felt to be a success, as I ran the whole route, which I had not been able to do 5 weeks earlier; then at my first ever BOFRA race, over Ilkley Moor, I was first v 65. After which it was off to the Wray scarecrow 10k where I enjoyed getting past a couple of runners just near the finish line. Orchan Rocks topped the month off nicely.

Another Andy O 5k trail race the next night and the Cake race at the weekend, another windy day. On to the Blacksticks Blue 10k and the Wholan Nook 5k, a trail race and my first race in the Burnley & Pendle Grand Prix. Leg 5 of the CWR, run for the Search & Rescue team came next then Blackstone Edge, the Burnley Lions 10k and Hutton Roof on a very hot day. I like Hutton Roof. Ilkley Trail came next and Edenfield on the 31<sup>st</sup>. That was May.

1<sup>st</sup> v65 at the Littleborough 5k was a nice start to June. Some grubby virus meant that the next race wasn't till the 13<sup>th</sup>; this was Weets, a nice route I thought. Got 3 races at midsummer madness, where I passed the halfway mark, completing in total 36 races. 1<sup>st</sup> v65 at Eddie's Revenge, a curious race at Newhey. Another one with nice cakes. Whaley Waltz was again a curious set up, a very hot day with a nice route and a water splash at the end.

July started hot at Cragg Vale; the mud bath at the end of the wood was almost dry by comparison with what one expects. Then the Eccup 10 was my 40<sup>th</sup> race. Next was the Radcliffe 3 day event; fell race Thursday, cross country Friday and trail race Saturday. I found the cross country the hardest. A new event is the Pendle family running festival and they had a splendid route for their 5 mile trail race where I was in grave danger of being beaten by daughter Jenny, but I managed to tuck her safely away at the BOFRA race at Ambleside sports, a fast and furious 2 miler with 800ft of climbing.

That's the lot so far. 45 done and I've got till the end of February to complete the 70. Should manage it.

Curious – as I read through this I seem to be short of a couple of races. It'll probably come to me what they were.

Peter Ehrhardt

01.08.2015

## **2015 VLM - Fishing with dynamite**

*"If you're not on the edge then you're taking up too much room"* - Macho man Randy Savage RIP.

If I have told you the story already then you might want to skip this and read the next article. If I haven't told you the story then you also might like to skip this and read the next article. Or if you're curious to wonder "how did Nick Barber run a 4:28 marathon at the 2015 London Marathon?" then read on.

During the now distant, cold darkness of winter, embracing the bitter winds and horizontal downpours, like many I continued to pursue the rich rewards of runners endorphin rich exhaustion. The satisfaction of having embraced the conditions and ticking of the weekly high milage. Which seems to be a requirement when preparing for a marathon is beautifully consuming and a real indulgence. Mix that with an enthusiasm for CR hunting on strava and you have a rich elixir for the most hedonistic. Yes sometimes you feel tired but once out the door the wind blows that away and soon enough you find your required pace and the endorphins start to flow.

I love training and after a few weeks the rewards begin to show. You feel the benefits, you have days where you burst out the door and your pace is great. Other days it takes a few miles to warm up but you finish strong, The long runs are less formidable, combined with strava, new runs in different areas creates excitement. I eagerly anticipate the long sunday run, planning my next strava bashing robbery which will take place in new daylight territories.

Now lets press fast forward in this story approximately 18 weeks and about 900 miles further. Now there remains only 26.2 left to complete. It's the night before the marathon and via text messages I'm receiving a pep talk.

"Have a good un"

"I'll try"

"you can do better than that"

"I'll try"

"Stand up be proud of who you are and what you stand for - Be prepared to suffer! Suffer for us, suffer for you friends and for your club and think it could be last race you ever run. Give it everything for all of us, we are there with you. Smash it!"

"I hope you don't go saying that to everyone"

"Nah mate, I just say good luck to them"

It had done the trick. In my opinion much of a marathon is the psychological build up. The demands it takes on the mind to concentrate for your expected

period of time. I think you go into an outer body state, you have to otherwise you would probably stop pretty early on. It's this outer body state that I enjoy.....where you know that the body has performed as your brain has trained it too. You set off and let the body do it and over ride the whinging that the body makes, you over ride the pain receptors.

So winter has ran its course and on this cool spring morning I find myself standing at the start line of the worlds biggest marathon. The only marathon that matters, the only marathon that everybody has heard of - **London**. I have every intention of performing a personal best. But something is telling me that a PB will not be enough. I want to perform at my peak, I'm at my peak I want to perform a PB that will stand on a permanent basis. I don't want to knock off a little from my previous effort and then come back next year and knock a little more off. I want to lay my cards out, slap them on the table and say, "Royal flush, there it is, my PB, Booyah!"

I feel relaxed, prepared.

People around me are performing warm ups, strides, drills and leg swings. My brother who is also running a good for age time asks when am I going to get warmed up. I have no intention of wasting a single drop of energy I explain. As we enter the starting pen I dispose of my bin bag body cover and make sure the shoulders of my Tod vest aren't twisted. We are all sizing each other up and figuring the order of where we should stand (how close to the start tape) I ask a few folk what time their going for and soon find myself on the start line with the start tape against my waist. It must be the adrenalin but on this cool April morning I'm already beginning to sweat.

And then we are off, I'm running fast but not hard. I have a minimum pace in mind and this is faster than it should be but I know I have a tendency to start fast - I figure its the adrenalin and assume that I'll settle into things and the pace will ease.....but it doesn't! Ok whatever I gain here will give me some time for the latter miles and allow me to run at an easier pace. I grab a drink here and there, wet my whistle, take a swig and throw it to the side of the road. I'd been hydrating all week avoiding caffeine and alcohol and my wee was clear. As I tick off the miles I try to engage with the crowds and at around mile 7 I pass Paula Radcliffe for next few miles the crowds are roaring. I wish I'd written Paula on my number instead of Nick I thought to myself, I stick with her group briefly but it feels easy so stride on.

At 10 mile I run a PB and at half way another PB and I'm feeling good, I'm continuing to engage with people. I'm enjoying the atmosphere and support. I see my niece and brother in law in the crowds and this warms and energises



me for a few miles. Again a PB at 15 miles and at 20. I've been consuming gels every 45 mins and taking the occasional swig of water but not with any defined consumption rate - just taking a swig here and there ( I don't want to take a second gulp as I think I need the air more.) I've ignored all the voices of doubt but somewhere after mile 21 a couple of runners pass me and for the first time I allow myself to walk three steps. Immediately my legs turn to jelly and I hear a big "oooohh!" I'm not sure if this was from the spectators or if it was in my head? In response to my inability to walk I decide to resume running.

My pace has dropped....drastically! I come round and I'm lying down in a first aid tent. \*!^@\* I think and probably say out aloud. This is not a first time, I run at the edge and I'd dropped off. Heat exhaustion and dehydration - the usual thing. How could I do this I'm thinking. I'm not thinking about PB's now I'm thinking how could I do this to my wife, my family, my Mam and Dad, my brother who will be at the finish, my niece and brother in law. The Toddies other friends who have given support and encouragement. But mostly I'm thinking about Katch - my wife. I know that she will be tracking me and I know that she'll be getting upset and anxious.

"I need to get to the finish".

"You don't need to get to finish".

I'm getting anxious, the first aid team explain that they can get me to the finish at 5 o'clock when the roads re-open.

I'm getting anxious my train is 4:05 ( I don't tell them this). There is no way that I can spend the next 3 and a half hours in this tent with this guy who really means well but can't actually do anything else to help.

"It'll all be alright in the end" He tries to reassure me

The first aider must see in my eyes, I'm sure he's thinking exactly the same thing (No way can I spend the next three and a half hours in here attending to this guys anxieties). "It'll all be ok in the end " he says again. "Bollocks" I think. I'm sat freezing in my vest and shorts wrapped in a tangle of space blankets. I get the Doctor to approve my discharge. He doesn't approve of my plan to go the finish. But I know that at the finish I can fix everything - get my bag, get some food, let family know I'm ok and get my train and still catch the antiques roadshow. So off I go initially legs like jelly, I grab a lucozade enroute and don't throw it to the side. There I am swerving through the masses, clutching a space blanket, lucozade and Doctors notes (just in case). Mile 21-23 takes 1 hour 55 mins (probably because a bit of a stop). My legs have loosened back a little but I'm not interested in pushing it now, I'm running at about 7-8 minute miles. During these last miles the crowds are going nuts, screaming for the bloody nipples charity runners - they are really

suffering. Cramping up and stretching against the railings. Its like a gladiators arena, the more pain, blood, sweat and suffering they see the more the crowds seem to roar. I'm pleased/relieved to getting to the finish. I pass the finish in 4:28 but keep running. I grab a goodie bag ( I want the calories) and keep moving. I want to get to my bag and phone asap. It's at the last collection point, I'm relieved to see waiting for me is my brother.

Quickly I make some calls and I'm relieved to hear Katch on the end of the phone and a tearful reassurance is shared followed by a disapproving bollocking from my parents? Next we head for the train station. I make my train and during my journey back I have a few sniffles and pick up my messages. I make it home in time for the Antiques Roadshow and it's a bloody repeat. I manage to eat a little and then sulk off to bed.

The marathon captures the nation, the non running public who wouldn't appreciate the efforts involved in getting around many of the other races I've completed. My friends, family, colleagues, students were excited to see the weekends event. Work had tweeted a message of support in the days before and when I get home I see a post on Facebook of me in front of Paula Radcliffe being escorted off the course. The following days were .....very rich. I got lots of hugs and kindness from lots of very caring people. Writing about it now still puts a lump in my throat. So many kind messages, The next day I wear my marathon t-shirt for work - it's a dress down day and I feel it hangs on my scrawny beaten body.

So did I leave it all out there? ..... Yes I bloody did and I want it back !!

The following stats are not official from the race - I haven't looked to see my position but I believe I beat Chris Evans.  
Times are taken from my Garmin/Strava

30k **Best estimated 30k effort** (1:47:10)

Half-Marathon **Best estimated Half-Marathon effort** (1:14:44)

20k **Best estimated 20k effort** (1:10:48)

10 miles **Best estimated 10 miles effort** (56:37)

15k **Best estimated 15k effort** (52:44)

10k **Best estimated 10k effort** (34:53)

## **Jura**

### **The mountains are calling and I must go – John Muir.**

The first time I heard about the famous Isle of Jura Fellrace, was on one cold winter evening in one of the many pubs of the Calder Valley. Settling down to a weekly post-run pub meal, snippets of conversation could be overheard as groups of seasoned veterans huddled together nursing their choice of poison. I was intrigued to find out what was so special about this Isle of Jura Fellrace. Benjamin Beckwith caught the scent and, like a well trained sniffer hound, gathered the intelligence needed to embark upon our journey. Cheques in the post, forms signed and bikes borrowed, we were off on our adventure.

The Southern Hebridean Isle of Jura, or the 'Island of the deer' is found off the West Coast of Scotland, a few miles North-East of Islay. Considered as being one of Scotland's last wildernesses, the two hundred people who permanently occupy the island are outnumbered by the three thousand five hundred deer. The folklore and history of the island is rich and deep, much alike Todmorden; from standing stones, cursed inhabitants, witches and the Corryvreckan whirlpool, Jura is seen as no ordinary destination. Some people visit the island for peace and tranquillity, gathering their thoughts and cutting themselves off to the outside world. Indeed the world famous author George Orwell wrote his famous dystopian novel '1984', in a remote farmhouse called Barnhill. Other people however, visit Jura for one purpose, to test themselves on the Islands challenging terrain.

The Jura Fellrace is a fifteen mile slog up and down the Pips and Paps of Jura. Ascending and descending 7,500 feet, this race is not for the faint hearted. My old man, like a wise prophet, passed on his wisdom before the previous year's trip. The race is just a race he said; it is the place however that gets under your skin. The race nonetheless, had my full attention. The sheer scale of the undertaking created a certain amount of anxiety. The staggering height of the first Pap as it ascends towards the heavens is certainly humbling when you're looking up from the valley bottom.

"Check them Paps out!" – Benjamin Beckwith 2014.

I remember seeing the winding snakelike procession of runners climbing up the first Pap and disbelieving the sight. Following Phil across the great plain and approaching the first proper climb is a memory I will always remember. This was proper fellrunning, the Calder Valley can only go so far in conditioning the legs for this onslaught.

I look back upon my time on the island through a halcyon haze. Unlike other events, Jura drew me like no other. A carefully mixed tapestry of racing, community and the sheer wildness of the Island had me hooked. The weather had been perfect, the atmosphere electric and Todmorden Harriers were out in full force. When it came to signing up for this year's race, however, I was a little tentative. The cause for this anxiety; injury. Mike Murray became a favourite in my contact list and travelling down the slow and weary road to recovery was frustrating and expensive. Slowly but surely I started to see results. I stuck to the regimen of the exercises like a Benedictine Monk. My broken and tight Achilles started to loosen off. Thank God.

Benjamin Beckwith being Benjamin Beckwith came up with a plan to supersede last year by adopting a theme for the trip. This theme was based upon steezy eighties hairstyles, gung-ho bravado and multi-coloured clothing. Most excellent – dude! So adopting the old Tod Harriers vest, mutton chops and brightly coloured clothes we set off. The trip is memorable, not just for the race but because of the journey to get there. Jura is in the middle of nowhere and is incredibly hard to get to. However, this is what separates it from other races lending itself to more of an adventure. Bike touring, camping and time spent in good company were the order of the day and I loved it. A hop skip and a jump from mainland to the Islands off the West Coast of Scotland. Our roster looked like this; Ardrossan-Brodick, Lochranza-Clonaig, Kennacraig-Port Askaig and finally Port Askaig to Jura our final destination. Cycling over the Isle of Kintyre is exciting as well as exhilarating with full panniers on! The first year saw us being joined by Sue and her daughter Annie whereas this year Ben and I were battling against the elements alone. Racing against the clock and seeing the next ferry coming into port creates a certain sense of immediacy and this year saw us time it to perfection. I was glad of this, due to the driving wind and the cold rain, brrrrr. Parking the car at Ardrossan and Ferry crossing sounds expensive, but I am pleasantly surprised at how cheap this mini

adventure is. Jura only has one pub, a distillery, a hotel, a cafe and a small community shop. It takes a while to adjust to the slow paced lifestyle of the inhabitants.



The start of the race brought together a hotch potch of individuals of all shapes and sizes. Ribbons of colour scattered the hillside moving steadily up the first climb, weaving in and out of the knee high bogs and ankle breaking tussocks. Route choice was just pure luck as I was trying my hardest to instil the inner deer, bounding, stumbling and falling to gain my position. The thrill of the first few miles settled to an easy maintainable rhythm. Last year I had been foolhardy and underprepared, this year led me to stick to a strict regime of a mouthful of food and a gulp of water every twenty minutes or so. I felt amazing, what a difference! Whereas last year I saw it as an ordeal to battle through, this year I gave myself time to enjoy the moment. The experience of the Haworth Hobble also led me to carry some salt to stave off cramp. I have also started to listen, begrudgingly to advice from the veterans of the club including my old man ;) The children's story of the tortoise and the hare springs to mind. The route, this time wasn't alien and I could

relax into my rhythm as I knew what was coming. The debilitating cramp that attacked my calves and quads from the previous year threatened but didn't impede my slow progress. The final descent from the last pip down to the bridge is by far the longest section of the race for me, however I did notice interesting route choices from the old guard in which I definitely will try next year.

Rosie greeted me with water and enthusiasm as I began my tortuous shuffle back along the mile long stretch to the distillery. I was aiming for a sub five hour time and I needed to get a wiggle on if I were to achieve this personal goal. The kindness from a fellow runner provided me with flapjack and the necessary energy to maintain a constant pace. I crossed the line with the time of 4hrs 58mins and 3 secs.

The Isle of Jura Fellrace will hopefully become an annual pilgrimage; it certainly has a draw unlike any other fellrace. The whisky is pretty good too ☺



## Ten Trigs

It was an icy cold December morning as I left the house, the road was slippery as I made my way down to Calder College to meet John Taylor for the start of the Ten Trigs. Arrived to find out Ben wasn't coming, (John had just seen him randomly stood on a street corner pastie munching, whereupon he told him he was going to Liverpool to help someone move house ???). So off we went slowly making our way through the icy streets, the steep hill up Meadowbottom was especially bad so we were glad to reach the end of the tarmac. We continued striding up the steep hill until we reached Windy Harbour. We looked across to Stoodley and could see the sun was not far from rising. Then after a short bit of road we stepped out onto the fell proper, there was quite a bit of snow as we jogged to the first trig at Bridestones. As we passed the old Sportsmans pub and went onto Redmires, we stopped and watched the sun rise it was an awesome sight, but as we set off again the going went from good to tough. The heather has grown a lot this year and with a covering of approx 4 – 6 inches of snow, we were soon slowed to a quick walk. Got to within around 75 metres of hitting the stile (which isn't bad) and just stomped on for what seemed like ages till we reached trig 2 at Hoofstones Heights. The view was immense, with Pendle Hill and the Yorkshire 3 peaks glistening in the morning sun, all covered in snow. The going down to below the windmills was good and we set a reasonable pace. I found the trod halfway down to the stream, which helped. A quick ½ mile down the Long Causeway, then a dash/trespass through a field and we were at Trig 3 Robin Cross Hill. The sun was still shining as we started the fast descent into Cliviger. The climb to Theiveley Pike is long and hard at the best of times. The icy conditions slowed us slightly on the way to Trig 4. We passed a fox dancing through the snow on the way up and some sort of smallish Hawk circling above a nearby forest. The ridge along to Sharneyford was hard frozen and we made good time. We left the path and the trod was remarkably visible in the snowy conditions, it took us almost to the stile towards bacup road. We continued over the road and on towards Trig 5 Trough Edge End. We cut off the main track a little early which made it rough going for 5 minutes, but we soon found the right path and the trig. The conditions were still good along to Hades Hill and the sun was still shining, but we noticed cloud down in the valleys, (not a good sign). As we descended past



Watergrove Reservoir towards Trig 6, we were in the mist and managed to take a different line to usual going over, instead of skirting around the little hill before the trig. John checked his GPS and we were heading straight toward the trig so on we went, shortly afterwards the pylon came into view out of the mist with the sun shining through from behind. We missed a path on the way to Littleborough which didn't add much but did include some nice steep cobbles. The road to Lydgate was ok and we trotted on towards the fell. The Roman Road was steep as always then we went along the drain and then direct to Trig 7 Blackstone Edge. By now the weather was turning and the bright morning had turned into a grey afternoon. We drifted a little on the way to the drain above Green Withins Reservoir and had a little longer to run till the turn towards Dog Hill and Trig 8. The path was good and we broke off a few hundred meters before the top for some more tussock bashing. Amazingly we saw someone at the trig in the mist, but we didn't stop to chat for long. As we started to descend toward the A58 road crossing at Baitings the heavens opened and we were in a full on blizzard. The road was closed over the reservoir and we had to duck under some metal fencing to get over the newly concreted bridge. After feeling good all day (as John had struggled through a long bad patch) my legs gave up the ghost on the last bit of the climb to Manshead End and we trundled along the top to Trig 9. My legs began to move again and we managed to run most of the way to Cragg Road, then all of the way past the White Holme Reservoir. The path from here to Holder Stones has been getting better lately, (the fences have only been in place about 3 years so it's taken time for them to form) and are now a lot better than 2 years ago when there wasn't one. We trudged on but had nothing left in our legs. I had a minutes rest sat on the floor and John made me drink, which brought me back round. I was sure we were nearly at the Trig a couple of times, but we weren't. Then out of the mist I could see it, Trig 10 the Little Holder Stones, jubilation and happiness was quickly replaced by the fun of finding the next path. The weather was now dire, very cold, wet and snowy. We were struggling to run and feet were starting to really feel the cold. We found the path after 5 minutes and amazingly through the blizzard, I hit the stone bridge at the back of Warland Reservoir spot on. I set off jogging then turned round to see John stumbling along quite slowly. He asked if I had any food and I got out some emergency flapjack. This brought him round and we trotted down the stones to Gaddings Dam. I

decided to take a short cut to save a few hundred yards, this involved a steep slope and John proceeded to do a spectacular roll/fall before playing dead. I didn't want to go back to save him so shouted up and a hand rising above the ground showed there were signs of life. A couple of moans and groans and he was back on his feet. The comment he made on facebook went something like 'Dan was so concerned he almost moved away from the fence post he was leaning on'. We kept going now and the jog down past Honey Hole and through town went quickly. We finished in 7hrs 45, could have done faster but we faded after Cragg Road as the temperature dropped and we tired. As you will now know I was knocked off my bike 3 days later, but am slowly recovering and hope to be able to do the Ten Trigs again towards the end of the year.

Trig	Total time	Stage Time
Bridestones	30 mins	30 mins
Hoofstones	1 hr 7 mins	37 mins
Robin Cross Hill	1 hr 39 mins	32 mins
Theiveley Pike	2 hrs 9 mins	30 mins
Trough Edge End	2 hrs 55 mins	46 mins
Watergrove	3 hrs 40 mins	45 mins
Blackstone Edge	4 hrs 45 mins	1hr 5 mins
Dog Hill	5 hrs 19 mins	34 mins
Great Manshead End	6hrs	41 mins
Little Holder Stones	6 hrs 50 mins	50 mins
Calder College	7 hrs 45 mins	55 mins

## **Ironman Lanzarote 2015 by Simon G.**

Well, 9 years after doing Nice I decided I wanted to do another Ironman - before I get too old! There was only one choice really - the most iconic course in Europe and probably the World (Hawaii being the possible exception - but you have to be good enough to qualify for that!). So whilst in a good mood last summer, I found myself pressing the “submit” button on the entry form for Lanzarote...now for the training.

I basically followed the same plan I used for Nice but with extra concentration on long bike rides - this apparently being the key to Lanza. My bike and swim training went just fine, but as for Ironman France, running injuries interfered with that discipline. Calf muscles this time, shin problems last! This wasn't unexpected as I haven't been able to run as much as I'd like to for the last ten years or so. Road running particularly causes problems, so most of my training consisted of long, stamina type, fell runs with my longest pre-race road run being 5km. Good preparation for the marathon part. Ha Ha!

Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May I flew out to Puerto Del Carmen. Over the next few days this popular holiday resort became overrun with “Iron Fever”. Every morning people were out testing their wetsuit swimming in the sea, and all day other Iron hopefuls were running or biking along the promenade. The atmosphere was buzzing and I loved it. At my apartment complex, there was an amusing mixture of about one third athletes from all over the World and two thirds “normal” holiday makers swigging beer and sunbathing. I was right next to the pool area, so was once or twice disturbed by late night revellers. I didn't complain. Usually, I would be one.

I had arranged to meet up with Ozzie (also staying at La Penita), for a couple of short bike rides. Tuesday's ride we cut short because it was pretty windy. Too late to get any fitter now and neither of us wanted to do too much in the days before.

Little did we know...Wednesday was horrendous! Being woken during the night by a howling gale wasn't a good sign. It calmed down a bit so we attempted a short bike ride in the afternoon. As soon as you got out of the resort it became a struggle to remain upright on the bike. These

were different winds to the usual type in the UK. Very unpredictable, fierce gusts that seemed to come from any direction, without warning. A guy on a triathlon bike came past us fast - we were impressed until he came off 30 yards in front. Luckily, he was unhurt but that was enough for us. Probably the scariest short ride I've ever done. Back to the hotel we went. It had been a sobering experience. The fact that Lanza vets told us this was the worst they'd ever known it didn't really help much. Thankfully, the forecast for race day, although not great, was slightly less windy. Fingers crossed, Ozzie and I resolved to be on the start line and see what happens.

On Thursday morning we met up with some other Tri Talk guys for a sea swim. There were loads of other triathletes out practising and I did about 30 minutes training. The water was cool and clear but rather choppy. Not lovely and calm like Nice was. The good thing about the Lanzarote swim course is that you don't go out too far - most of the 2.4 miles is parallel to the beach - so if it got too bad you would hopefully still be able to swim ashore. Later, I registered at Club La Santa on the other side of Lanzarote. There was lots of lovely merchandise to buy there too. Somehow I managed to come back nearly 300 Euros lighter (Don't tell Nadine!!!). Well, I only intend to do this race once...

Ozzie's family came out Thursday evening and we all walked down to transition together on the Friday afternoon. By now, Puerta del Carmen was packed and it felt good to be finally dropping off our bikes and transition bags. I cooked my own tuna and pasta meal that evening as I didn't want to risk any chance of food poisoning from a restaurant meal. Unlikely, but you never know. An early night resulted in virtually no sleep for me. I knew that would happen so I wasn't concerned about it and just lay there trying not to think about the race too much.

Soon my 3 alarms went off and it was time to get moving. At about half 5 we all walked the short kilometre to the transition zone, passing a few people crawling out of night clubs. It was just the same as in Nice. But unlike Nice, absolutely everyone seemed to know about this race going on so they didn't look surprised to see triathletes carrying wetsuits etc.

The next part was a blur and suddenly we were all in the starting pen. Although we were similar standard swimmers, Ozzie wanted to start near the back for a calmer swim. I moved further forward and to the right so as to swim wider around the buoys for the first few turns. It was windy, but not like on the Wednesday and so for that I was very, very grateful. I wanted to have a chance of finishing.

BANG!! We were off. The first lap was relatively calm and I hardly got bashed at all. An unexpectedly fast split time of 37:02 and I moved closer to the buoys, thinking I might get near my Nice swim of 1:11. Surprisingly, the second lap was a lot rougher. Both the sea itself as the sun rose and the wind picked up, but also I got battered by other swimmers. Nothing too bad but a fair few kicks and my goggles got half knocked off. I can only imagine that a lot of people became more aggressive as the finish approached. Personally, I always move away from any trouble - not being a big and strong guy I reckon that's the best policy! I didn't want my race to be over already. Sadly for 20 people it was - 5 of them hospitalised apparently. Hopefully, not for anything too serious.

Having survived the swim...(I'm the good looking one - haha!)



**1:18:53 for the swim.** I was happy with that.

A quick toilet stop for me and a quick transition too. I had resolved to do this. Over the years (and nearly 50 triathlons now), I've found it better to rush through transitions and take a "breather" when out on the bike/run - at least you're still moving then. So, along the Playas de la Americas we went. Hundreds of spectators cheering which, as always when crowds do this, gave me a buzz. But soon, we left the town behind and began climbing towards Yaiza. Two things became obvious early on. Firstly, I must have had a relatively good swim and

transition as absolutely loads of faster cyclists came past me in the first 30 km. Also, it was windy! Not as bad as on the Wednesday (which had been bordering on “impossible” for me) but the gusts were continuous and strong. Over the course, the wind was predominantly Northerly which was helpful at least for most of the last 50 km or so. Near Yaiza, I saw the leaders coming the other way before I went to tackle the El Golfo loop myself. The scenery was impressive but soon moved up a notch from that to awesome as we cycled up into the “Fire Mountains”. I loved this part and for the first time began to overtake more than just the occasional other cyclist. Climbing has always been a strength of mine (but unfortunately, descending is correspondingly poor!). We had now done almost a third of the route. So far, the wind wasn’t getting any worse so I began to think I should definitely finish. I just needed to pace myself carefully.

Onwards, we travelled, through pretty inland villages before swooping down towards La Santa and the coast. A few more hills, then down again to Famara before the main climbs began. I had again lost places on the descents but as we climbed up to Teguisse in the middle of Lanzarote, I overtook people again. Around here, I saw the first casualties of the race sat or slumped at the side of the road - for medical, not mechanical, reasons. The heat, wind and hills were taking their toll. However, for me, the next 40 km were to be my best. I absolutely loved the climb up to Mirador del Haria and even enjoyed the hairpin descents, going faster than I usually would as “race fever” came over me!

The Mirador del Rio was even more spectacular - with fantastic views across the turquoise blue sea towards the island of La Graciosa. Then a straight and long descent for 5 km or so on perfectly smooth roads down to the coast again at Arrieta. Exhilarating! This was fun. We were slowly climbing again towards Tahiche and then the infamous sting in the tail up to Nazaret. I was getting near the finish of this epic ride now and just needed to be careful. There were some rough road surfaces (I believe one of them is known in Lanza as the “donkey track”) and scary descents as we neared Puerta del Carmen. I began to feel quite saddle sore but otherwise okay. It was annoying to be overtaken by about ten people in the final descents to the town but

the crosswinds were particularly ferocious here and I daren't lose control. I later learned that Dave M (a fellow Tri Talker) came off around here and broke his collar bone in two places. He then spent 40 minutes getting patched up in T2 before hobbling around the marathon in a sling. Amazing! As I entered the promenade roads and the crowd roar again, I felt quite emotional. The bike ride had gone well and I had stopped just once for 2 minutes. I would surely now finish this race!

**8:06:29 for the bike course.** On this day, and for me, delighted with that.

I ran through T2 and was soon off and running the marathon. However, just like in Nice, the efforts of the day caught up with me at this point and I felt grim. The wind didn't matter anymore but it was still hot. My legs were fine but I felt sick and had neck and back pain across the shoulder area. I decided to adopt a walk/run strategy - which seems to work better for me than the very slow but continuous plod that some people do. The course was 3 loops this year. The first, longer one, going right past the airport and Playa Honda to a 10.5 km point and back again. It was nice to have this relatively unsupported section along the side of the airport to take a breather - without the constant encouragement from spectators to keep moving. I tried to keep running for the whole of this first 10 km but the split time suggests otherwise! There's no hiding place. I was just hoping to feel better later on.

Anyway, I kept up this run/walk strategy for the next 2 laps and was still moving faster than most of the other competitors still going. Time ticked by...the sun retreated until it was suddenly the final turn. I tried to finish strongly, aiming to beat 5 hours for the marathon...hmmm...





don't think your average club runner would be impressed! A final sprint and there it was. The finish! A few photos, a medal and some refreshments beckoned. I felt okay really. Better than in Nice.

**5:03:16 for the marathon.** My slowest time ever but it was all I could do.

The next morning at the airport I reflected on my race...could I have pushed the marathon harder? Easy for me to think that now - in hind sight. To be honest, I'm delighted with how it went. I believe that more competitors than ever didn't finish the bike or swim course and I have my medal. It was a really tough race and an awesome experience. Anyone who half fancies this race - do it! Thanks also to Simon and Emma, who spoke so glowingly about this race and helped convince me I had to enter.



**14:46:52 in total.**

**1197<sup>th</sup> out of 1462 finishers. 1786 starters.**

## **Yo, Soy un Transvulcan bebé - by Richard Butterwick**

*It was just before 8am on the steep upward slope of Calle de Volcanes in the small town of Los Canarios, a young girl was ushered forward by her mother. She stood there shyly half holding out a clenched hand unsure of what to do. Her face lit up with excitement, as 'Todmorden' reached down to gently tap her hand with a grinning "Gracias". Her mother squealed with delight then joined in with the shouts of "Animo" and "Vamos" as the girl ran back to her arms.*

*After the water station, the crowd funnelled in towards the top of the climb, Tour de France mountain style, with just enough space for one runner to squeeze through the deafening yells. The pavement plaques commemorating every male & female winner of the Transvulcania Ultramarathon hidden under hundreds of feet.*

*Surging forward up a quieter path, still climbing, a beautiful woman picked out his name from his race number with her dark sultry eyes. Her lips glistened in the early morning sun, as she quietly urged him on "An-i-mo Ri-shad An-i-mo" barely louder than a whisper but firmly penetrating through the noise of the crowd below.*

*He breathlessly hesitated as their eyes briefly locked, but then pressed on, remembering this was the race report for the Transvulcania Media Maratón not the opening lines of a new romantic novel, 50 shades of volcanic black!*

After following the spectacular Transvulcania race on the Canary Island of La Palma since it started in 2009, I finally dared to enter the fun run version. At 24.1km (or 26.8 pre-remeasurement) it was longer than I had ever raced before, but 2014 had been a good year... up to 10 miles (16k).

A winter of viruses did little to help preparations in upping mileage but 2015 would be the year of half marathons, with 5 completed in the lead up, including 3 in 3 weeks in April. In March I'd also notched up only my 2nd ever long fell race at Heptonstall, a confidence boosting well-paced effort over 24 km, but with less than 1000m of height gain, the Mediamaraton had more than double the up.

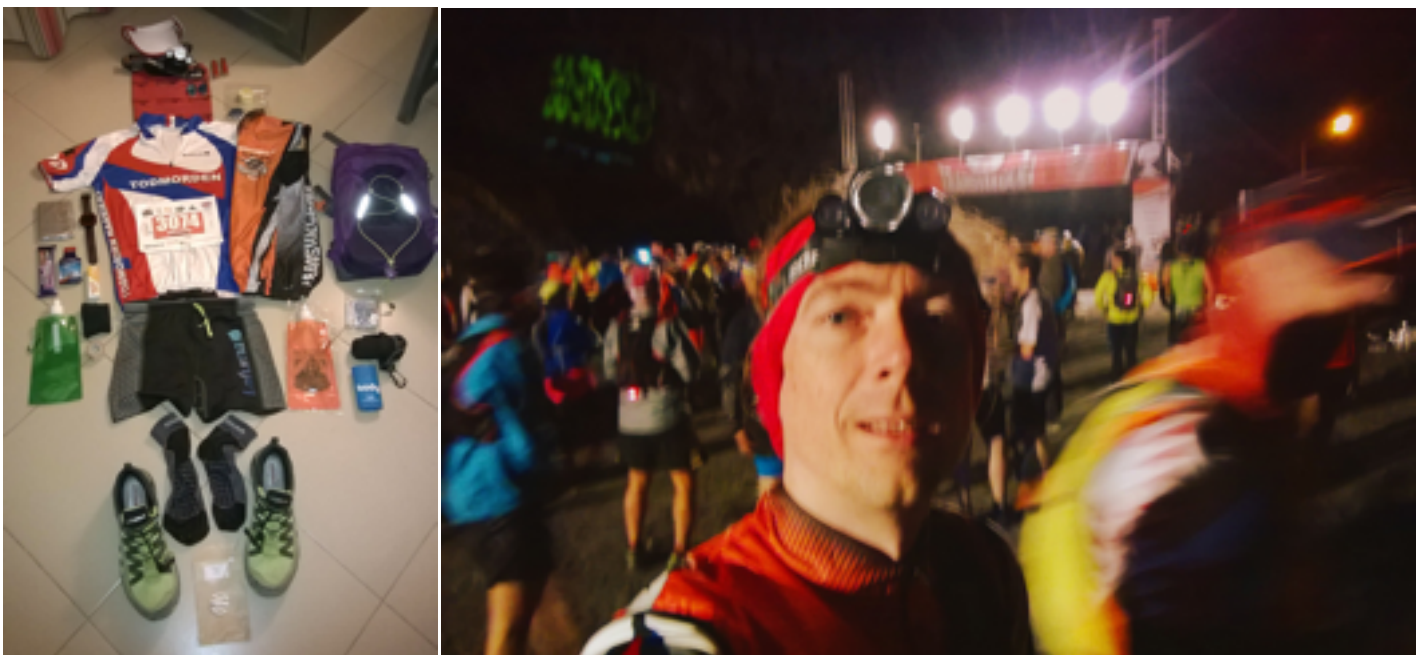
Arriving on the Thursday evening before the race was a shock from the cold British spring, only a week since I'd last touched snow and now straight into 80' near tropical sun. To make things worse the chest infection that I had for a couple of weeks morphed into a cold just days before. Apparently flying with a cold is a bad idea as it makes landing very painful and affects hearing & balance, I googled queasily later.

Friday was a busy day, hiring the last spare car on the island, crossing the mountains (more ear problems) to Los Llanos to collect my race number and pick up some

souvenirs at the runner's fair. Down to the southern tip of the island for a 5k acclimatisation run, then check out the hairpin roads to find the finish, so that Myra knew where to pick me up after the race, hopefully.

I laid out every item of race kit ready, checked, double checked, and went to sleep. Maybe not, too excited. Browsed Transvulcania tweets for a bit, and finally got to sleep just after midnight. The alarm went off at 3am. The hotel had kindly laid on a 'runners breakfast' between 2-3am but I wisely decided an extra hours sleep to be preferable.

At just after 4am we were on the road south, which was in the midst of major roadworks and regularly involved driving off the now non-existent road. By 5am we were parked on a windy volcanic cliff just 700 metres from the start. Having heard tales of freezing winds I was pleased to find it was actually relatively mild, to me, nice for now but meant it would only be hotter later.



At 6am the Ultra marathon was underway and the river of ~1500 lights made its way around the Faro de Fuencaliente lighthouse and up along the path like a reverse pyroclastic flow. The speed of the frontrunners was incredible, only 73km to go for them.

I then made my way down to the starting pen for the Mediamaratón, loud rock music & a manic PA guy battled the crashing waves a few feet below. A giant green countdown clock was projected on the rock face. I resisted joining the extremely athletic looking crowd toeing the line with 30 minutes still to go and attempted a

warmup jog between the back of the crowd and the 3 portaloos at the other end of the pen. So glad I had skipped breakfast and had no need for them!

The others warming up looked like serious athletes, all matching kit, poles & everything Salomon. At least I looked the part with my matching Lafuma shoes, shorts and bag teamed up with a cheeky glimpse of a Tod vest peeking out from under my Transvulcania gilet – this was no fell race in a farmer's field, this was a proper continental fashion race!

With 10 minutes to go, everyone was bouncing to Rage Against the Machine and Metallica. I reflected that 20 years ago I was actually probably doing the same thing to the same songs in the early hours of a Saturday morning in May, but with a day in bed with a hangover rather than 24 dusty kilometres & a hot sun to look forward to. As Thunderstruck literally shook the foundations of the island, this was it DIEZ-NUEVE-OCHO 413 starters SIETE-SEIS 24.1 dry and dusty kilometres CINCO-QUATRO over 100 volcanoes to run past or over TRES-DOS-UNO... VAMOS... this was Transvulcania bebe!!!

I resisted the urge to sprint the first hill but still rocketed off as though it was a 5k near the back. After a crowd pleasing loop around the lighthouse it was onto a narrow volcanic sandy path and up. 1800 metres up in the first 18km to be precise.

There wasn't too much queueing to scramble up the rocks with only a quarter the runners of the main race and within a km I was settled. It was hard going but I was getting the hang of picking out the bumps in the volcanic sand. I grew up playing on Formby beach and dunes, so instinctively knew the secret was always to place your foot on sand sloping away to gain a bit of extra purchase. The sun hadn't yet risen but there was enough dawn light to see, I left my torch on as the light spot on the ground made overtaking easier by alerting those ahead.

After the noise at the start, it was quiet, eerily quiet, very little talking just breathing. Thirty minutes in and I was still gaining places. I used a steeper slope to walk, drink and swop headtorch and the freebie gilet for a cap. The sun was still hidden behind a volcano but it was already warming noticeably.

After a decent section of dusty track, the approach to the town of Los Canarios and the first water station was up a steep winding path. For the first time it felt like I was working flat out as I struggled for meaningful traction in the deep loose sand. Onto the road by the visitor centre and around a corner the sun came into view, as did a steep climb. I ran it. I didn't mean to but there were lots of people encouraging us on and I felt guilty to walk. Most others obviously didn't, as they walked. Then I went round the next corner and saw the real crowd! The whole town was up and had been cheering for nearly 2 hours. I kept running and smiling.

[6.1k Split 98<sup>th</sup> – 1:01:55]

Arrived at the first of two water stations in good shape, for some inexplicable reason I ignored my planned hydration strategy. (i.e. drink lots). I had two 0.5l bottles for the race but one had leaked so I ditched it before the start. I'd started well hydrated and had drunk a third of it but forgot to top it up. I drank just 1 cup at the water station, and 1 poured over head. I only had 11km ish to the next water station so should be fine. I often have run longer with no food/ water in a morning. But not usually under a sub tropical sun, up big mountains, on tough sandy terrain, in a big race, oops!

The next 3-4km was still difficult running, much harder than the first section, and harder than I had expected here. Despite the addition of pine trees to the landscape the soft deep sand continued but I was still progressing up the field, probably now into the low 80's position wise and on for a sub 4 hour time. Sometime around 10k I started feeling different and had stopped picking off places.

On a particularly steep climb I had eaten a cake bar and had to wash it down with water but was now down to about two mouthfuls left. The uphill was relentless with only brief flats or even downs, the only other relief when the deep sand occasionally alternated with more rocky sections. The relatively new volcanic rock (less than 400 years, with the last eruption in 1971) being very sharp and grippy demanded 100% concentration every step, a fall would not be pretty.

After a big climb past the impressive San Martin volcano we reached a hellish hot open section of black sand that seemed to drain every drop of liquid in my body straight out of my feet. Surely it wasn't far to the next drinks station? It was. I'd switched from race mode to survival mode, the two mouthfuls of water reserved for if things got serious. It was five or so of the longest hottest hardest kilometres ever, down to over 20 minutes for 1km on the steeper sections, struggling for grip, sand slipping backwards, sun getting higher and hotter. One of the hardest mental battles I've had to stay positive and focused on just keeping going.

Finally, after a few false hopes, what I thought was the final climb before the water station came into sight and I decided I had to drink half my water as I was overheating and losing my head. Still saving a mouthful in case of real emergency. A slight down allowed a rare bit of easier running and as I rounded a corner a big white tent thingy full of drinks appeared before the climb like a magic oasis. Orange, water, energy drink, water over head, repeat. Oh! go on, then just another cup. 2 litres later and I think I was rehydrated enough to know I wasn't hallucinating!

[16.5k Split 131<sup>st</sup> – 3:09:29]



Despite the refreshment and the knowledge this was the last climb, it didn't make it any less steep or easier and more places were lost before I reached the top as I was struck with cramps at the back of my knees. As long as I didn't lift them it was bearable, not easy on a big hill. For the first time I could also detect the effects of the altitude, subtle but definitely less oxygen, about 20% less.



Finally, it was all downhill now, almost, there were still 3 climbs within the down. At least the paths were getting rockier in places, although I did delight in a long sandy/ loose rock descent taken at full effort. More and more places gained and also catching back markers of the Ultra who still had over 50km to go.

Increasing amounts of trees and I knew the finish couldn't be too far. The question was how far, as there seemed to be conflicting race information as to whether it was 24.1 or 26.8km that I didn't resolve until afterwards. The excellently marked GR131 trail signs didn't help either as it appeared there was some kind of re-measuring exercise going on and the two sets of marker posts gave different distances as well.

It didn't matter, I was running again, I was racing again, and I was really enjoying it so the more the better. At that point I'd have kept running the whole island if I could have. Music started filtering through the trees, then shouts and cheers so I knew I was getting close. Hit my fastest km of the race. Managed one last overtake on the final

twists and turns and then there were people, lots of people and a huge orange banner appeared. Completely forgot about my planned triathlon style hi-5 weave finish as I saw the clock and sprinted straight across the line in 4:14:21 and 124<sup>th</sup> place (16<sup>th</sup> male vet).

My first overseas race was an amazing experience, I expected hard and it was so much harder. Good lessons learnt. 90% of me would do it again tomorrow, but 10% remembers the hell in the middle and thinks never again. It's probably that 10% that will see me back on La Isla Bonita with its wonderful people and scenery sometime soon though!

Yo, Soy un Transvulcan bebé (Translation: I am a Transvulcan, baby!)





**“One more spoonful of rice pudding and I’ll be home”**

## **West Highland Way 2015**

It has perhaps been too perfect a build up. Solid performances in earlier races, and no injuries. After a recce weekend on the route in May when I ran 57 miles over two days I felt ready.

I wasn’t to know that later that night I would spend it throwing up having picked up some sort of viral thing that knocked me out for a week, followed by a heavy fall and a trip to A & E in final 100m of a Park Run!

But I didn’t let it get to me too much. Running a race like this is all about slow and steady training over several months, not the last 3-4 weeks. So as I was weighed in (yeah think boxing match, Iron Tudds Tyson) and collected my timing device late Friday night I thought my A list target of sub 20 hours was definitely possible.

The nerves were palpable as we all stood by the pedestrian tunnel in Milngavie on the outskirts of Glasgow at midnight to listen to the race briefing. The Barber brothers looked more focused than me, all prepared for the military operation aka as crewing en route. As we lined up on the start it was hard not to admire the elite on the front row, especially the record holder, Paul Giblin. He looked sinewy as ever and his star turn late entry was fresh from his Ultra running exploits for the UK team. His presence was a godsend as will become clear later.

Then we were off, running briefly through the town at 1am headtorches blazing, the crowd giving us the love. My mantra kicked in for the first few miles “slow down, slow down”. In my first 100 miler I had gone off far too fast, and was determined not to get giddy this time, a definite risk as this was a runnable section.

I remembered that the sun should start to rise from 3.28am, and a few minutes before something quite magical happened. The moorland burst into song as the dawn chorus played out all around us. From the calm of just the sound of feet on trails to the cacophony of sound. It was an ornithological equivalent of a Motorhead gig, but more tuneful!

From that point, we started to gradually descend to Balmaha, a twisty wonderful route down in the strengthening light. Nick was there in midge headgear ready to dispense various goodies, and despite running steady I was up on target and feeling fine.

Eventually Loch Lomond came into view, the largest stretch of inland water in Great Britain. Elise in her wise prep talk has warned me about the rough terrain and the endlessness of it. Initially the first few miles weren't too bad, but eventually the rocky, uneven surface does wear you down and that water looks like it will never end! I was pleased to finally reach Beinglas Farm, marking 40 miles in and not far from halfway. Rice pudding definitely featured at this checkpoint.

The next stretch is perhaps the most scenic and as you pass Tyndrum towards the Bridge of Orchy the beauty of the surroundings boosts you. This is proper highlands, epic mountains, and pure magnificence. I tore down the road into the Bridge of Orchy checkpoint still up on schedule and still feeling human which was pleasing given I was 60 miles in.

Boost your love and hope reserves during that stage. If this race was a drama, the next episode would be the one when it all gets messy. Rannoch Moor, oh Rannoch Moor! Again the sage Elise had warned me. I had recced this, but it's something else to run across it late afternoon after you have been running since 1am.

Robert MacFarlane in "The Wild Places" describes how people have been lost on the moor in winter and lost their minds, tortured by the unending similarity of the surroundings and no sense of direction. It was ten miles marred by little sense of progress and that elusive checkpoint at Glencoe felt like it would never come.

Nick told me afterwards I was grey at I staggered in, and knew I didn't look good as the marshal asked if I was ok. I stuttered that I was a disgrace to ultra running, to Todmorden Harriers, to my mother who never should have given birth to me, I meant it! But Nick calmly pointed out I was still on schedule and so I rested for a bit, recovered and headed off to the Devil's Staircase. There wasn't much movement in terms of places by this stage but I did pass another runner and somehow realised I may now have been through my low point.

Robbie Britton say you will have low points, embrace them, live with them, it will get better. And it did. I saw the last main checkpoint Kinlockleven a few miles before I got to it. At this point Richard, Nick's brother, was going to run the last 14 miles with me. This could only happen if I was more than 4 hours behind the

leader. Thankfully Paul Giblin was tearing up the trail on the way to beating his course record by six minutes, and two and a half hours ahead of 2<sup>nd</sup> place. Without him I would have had to run on my own. The clock was speaking to me, rest had to be brief, I left the checkpoint just a minute ahead of schedule for a sub 20 hour finish.

We headed for the big climb I had been warned about, but it felt so good to be with another runner it didn't seem to matter. Richard was a star, tolerating my torrent of expletives as the hills continued, not big but relentless and I was tired by now. Suddenly the last hill was reached and the wide track emerged which would take you downhill to Fort William. I knew I had 3 miles to go at that point and the sub 20 hours looked on.

I was giddy now, somehow speeding up to just over 6 minute miles and with people shouting you are nearly there! Then we were in town, and I saw a runner ahead, he finished 20 seconds ahead of me but had left the last checkpoint 22 minutes before. This last few miles was satisfying and testament to Richard's support. Nick appeared on the road as the finish line was in sight, I punched the air and was done in 19 hours 40 minutes at 8.40pm, still in the light. I was weighed and was 3.5kg lighter than when I started!

That cup of hot sweet tea felt like the most wonderful thing ever. I was now officially part of the West Highland Way Race family, still less than 1000 that have completed the race. We camped that night, and after a cool windy but dry day I thought of those still out there as the rain pounded down overnight.

We headed to the presentation the next morning just after 11am and watched the last finishers coming in, who deserve total respect, two nights out there gulp. The presentation was a moving experience and my goblet is a proud possession. This really is a special event, on a route that a lot of people have walked so it still causes lots of conversations not only with runners.

Finally, it's important to say that three of us completed it, not just me. Nick and Richard were amazing and I am in their debt, crewing something like this is hard work, I think we were all part of a weekend we will never forget.

Robin Tuddenham

## WHICH RACES DO HARRIERS PREFER? THE MAGIC FORMULA

Mostly for a bit of fun I looked at which races attract the biggest Toddie attendance from this year's Grand Prix. Partly this was a reaction to grumblers with comments like "that race was too expensive" or else "too far away" or "too long and difficult for me." Partly it is from a belief that maybe we could pick the Grand Prix races to better reflect those that will attract more runners. Partly it is to make better use of the excellent work done by Dave O'Neill in presenting our race statistics on the web site.

The table below may still have a few mistakes. We could try and repeat the exercise at the end of the year when the full Grand Prix list is available. However just at first glance it does look as if we can conclude that;

- Attendance falls off a bit during the year
- Fell races have bigger attendance than road, with trail even less
- Races closer to Todmorden have higher attendance
- Hard to see a clear relationship with distance. Maybe there is some preference for shorter races but hard to be sure.

Have a look at the table and see what you can conclude.

<b>Race</b>	<b>Distance to Todmorden</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Length (km)</b>	<b>Toddies Racing</b>
Soreen Stanbury Stoop	13	Fell	11	22
Meltham	29	Road	10	26
Liversedge Half	30	Road	21	11
Standish Hall	36	Trail	10	12
Midgeley Moor	9	Fell	10	30
Sweatshop 10m	50	Road	16	10
Heptonstall	5	Fell	25	25
Ron Hill Accrington 10K	16	Road	10	15
Guisseley Gallop	25	Trail	10	16
Blackpool Half	50	Road	21	7
Stretton Six Summits	117	Fell	10	6

Blackstone Edge	11	Fell	6	20
Ilkley	27	Trail	11	15
Duddon	125	Fell	29	9
Otley 10m	27	Road	16	6
Freckleton Half	40	Road	21	3
Whaley Waltz	37	Fell	9	13
Eccup 10m	46	Road	16	4
Lingmell Dash	116	Fell	7	2
Lee Mill	14	Fell	10	14

With the above data I have also done a regression analysis and come up with a formula which predicts the number of Toddies likely to race on any given month, type of race etc. This “formula” seems to predict the past correct to between 1 and 6 people (and the two biggest exceptions Lingmell Dash and Duddon are both English Champs). So maybe we could add this variable in together with a few extra variables such as price and number of runners taking part for which I already have partial data.

The magic formula is ;

Number of Tod Runners =  $21.2 - 0.42 \times \text{distance in miles to travel} - 0.004 \times \text{month of the year} - 1.25 \times \text{type of race} + 1.60 \times \text{race distance in km}$

Here race type is 1,2 or 3 depending on fell road or trail and month is just 1 to 7 from January to July. So the formula suggests that a trail race will likely only have 2 or 3 fewer Toddies running than a fell race after other variables are already accounted for. Also that a Lakes race will have as many as 30 fewer runners than a local race of similar attractiveness as seen by type, distance and so on.

Clearly this is only a preliminary finding and anybody who believes every number in this predictive tool needs to have their head examined, however there does seem to be enough here in Dave O’Neil’s statistics to warrant more study – and perhaps a few jokes as well.

## PRIZES – WHAT PRIZES?

There are plenty of people in Fell Running who compete to win prizes and will stretch themselves to the limit to do so. Perhaps it's a good thing I am not made like that, because my experience of prizes so far has been rather mixed.

I am a Vet 60 so on the rare occasions when I have been eligible for a prize, it is rarely obvious at the end of the race. I end up pouring water down my throat, chatting to club members and generally trying to recover fast enough to get back on the road home. Sometimes I stay for the prizegiving but so far never actually in expectation of being perhaps one of the winners – so more often, like most people, I get on the way home before the winners are announced.

Here are examples of the prizes I have actually “won”. My first ever “prize” was at the Hebden Bridge race in 2012 when it rained so hard the number of runners was down to just 51 (of whom 3 were men's V60). That time I discovered I had been first in my class only 2 weeks later when a pal asked me at pack run if I had got my prize yet!

My next “prize” was first V60 at the Blackpool half marathon this year. I was 184<sup>th</sup> of 945 starters and never dreamt that would give me a ‘first V60’ place. Publishing of results was late because of a Lancashire mix up on timings and again it was 2 weeks or more before my prize was confirmed. This time I became the proud holder (very proud actually) of a free entry to the same event again in 2016!

Next was the one I am actually proudest of. First V60 in the inaugural Hoofstones. This time Jules told me I had won my class (first of the two men's V60 runners I think) and a week later Dan complained (gently) that I had not come to the prize giving. I could only apologise but actually this was a tough fell race and for me a real achievement to place where I did.

There were also a few 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>s in class but the first time I got something of real value (Pete Bland voucher) was at Duddon Valley. I did not complete – getting bad cramps with more steep climbs than I am used to – but even so was given a spot prize.

So my best prize ever was for a race where I really did not perform well. There seems to be a certain random element to actually winning prizes!

Perhaps all in all it is a good thing I am not in Fell Racing for the prizes – and certainly not for actually winning a race. However those who know me will appreciate that I do get a lot out of the sport even when there is little expectation of ever actually winning. Really it is more than enough to know that I have been getting slowly but steadily a little faster over the years.

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## **Great Chill Swim**

### **31/1/15, Windermere**

It is possibly the most stupid thing I've done. Swimming 120 metres in the depths of the winter is quite mad. Even mad people think it's mad.

I wasn't too sure what I was going to learn from this. It's going to be cold, and hopefully over before I ask myself why I'm doing this. However in those few minutes, I learnt so much.

The swimming area was between two pontoons on the side of Windermere. There were 8 lanes. On the start pontoon, the distance to the other side is probably a swimming pool length. A few strokes and you're across. My 120 metres was four lengths.

'Clothes off' and we're standing there, inappropriately dressed for the Arctic breeze. Trunks, goggles and a silicon cap, that's it. Chest out, stomach in, nervous smile, posing for the crowds. Surprisingly warm as I climbed down the steps. No gasps or panting for air, I'm going to nail this.

Shoulders under the water, and horn goes off. A few strokes, head down, looking good. I even managed to kick. A little bit of turbulence gave me a bit of water in the mouth which didn't help, but sorted, no worries. I'm suitably trained, well for warmer waters that is.

The blurb says that I should be conditioned for cold water. Well I figured that given I'm a hardened northerner, a couple of cold showers should do. In hindsight, that's possibly where I went wrong.

My arms quickly become like lead weights, hard to lift out of the water, and even harder to pull the stroke. Almost from the start, coordination and strength was a problem.

Then my style really starts to go. My head is more above the water than in. Even so I'm taking in more water than I should. I think I'm sinking, not drowning, just unable to keep a good profile. My legs are way below the surface, almost being dragged along. Barely half way across and I'm not impressed with myself.

Desperately trying to perform well, head goes down again, and I'm powering on. So much so, I find myself caught up in the line between the lanes. That was a shock, and wasn't welcomed. My arms are flapping with the line trying to untangle myself. I'm confused on which lane I should be in. Was I that disorientated, I think I probably was. Still a bit of head rolling and I'm clutching the steps at the other end. Phew, that wasn't easy. 1 out of 4 done.

No time for hanging about, turn around and swim back. It looks longer this time. It's almost all head up crawl. I bit like that youth that has no real idea on how to swim. Arms splashing forwards like the blades of a windmill, head rolling from side to side. No style whatsoever. I'm actually embarrassed, I'm



floundering, and I'm getting slower. I think my swimming profile is normally good. Not today it wasn't.

Rhys, get to the steps, concentrate on the steps. I'm half way across. I've now decided that I'm pulling out. I felt the clock was ticking on how long I could stay afloat. The closest I've been to drowning for a long time. Rhys get to the steps, and pull out.

Breast stroke became a life saver. My arms were getting weak, but my legs kicked me to those steps. Yes, I'm safe.

Thank goodness I was there. Climb out and warm up, easy.

But you don't. I'm still there in the water, holding on to the steps. And all it took was the assistant saying, 'go on, you can do it'. That, or it was a voice in my head.

I turn around, deep breath and push off. It wasn't too many strokes before the

fear came back to my eyes. Any strength in my arms really wasn't there. Good strong legs propelled me, but didn't stop my head continually going under. I was annoyed at not pulling out now. This is serious.

I felt so vulnerable, so far from any help. I was alone, and I knew it. For the first time in ages I am scared. I thought my inner strength was going to be enough, that I could blag it. Not today.

Then, I felt the strangest of senses, there seemed to be a current pushing me along. I was being drawn to the other side, how weird. With my now minimal effort, the far side was getting closer. I'm slow, naff style, but who cares. I'm not drowning.

Again holding the steps on the other side, for a moment or two longer than I should. Let go Rhys, you have to let go.

Turning around brings no comfort at all. The impending doom is ahead. It's all grey, slightly choppy water. I push off. I'm sticking with breast stroke. Very slow but no drama. It was clear that failing to properly train in cold waters wasn't good preparation.

No negative thoughts, I'm going to do it. That tide is with me again, how can that work?, pulling me towards my goal. The crowds have ramped up their cheering, it's getting really loud, so much encouragement. The other swimmers are out and drying themselves off. I'm going to do this. I'm clearly last but hey looks like I'm going to be a hero. That 4<sup>th</sup> length became a breeze. Grabbed that ladder, and climbed out, ready to give my bow.

The crowds were still cheering, I look around and there are two others still swimming. One in a terrible state. I'm not last, I chuckle to myself.

A brew, a soak in the hot tub, a laugh with the other nutters, and the world is such a lovely place. Even so it must have taken a further 20 minutes in the warmth for me to stop shaking.

The water temperature on the day was 5.1oC, which technically is 0.1oC too warm to be registered with the International Ice Swimming Association. It should have been even colder, how lucky was I.

...and you already know the answer to your 1<sup>st</sup> question, but maybe I'll do the 60m next time, but make sure that I do some cold water training. As to your 2<sup>nd</sup> question, let's just say nothing fell off, although it was some time before I could confirm this ;-)

Rhys

# TOILET SEAT



GRASS UP ON THEIR STUPIDITY ETC. AND EMAIL PAPPY DANNY TODMAN . .....TOLIETSEAT@TODHARRIERS.CO.UK

*SOME GREAT EFFORTS SO FAR IN THE MOST ENTERTAINING OF THERE CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS. MAYBE YOU'VE BEEN SO MUCH IN THE ZONE BUT WE NEED TWO SHEETS THIS ISSUE. LETS HEAR MORE. HEAR WE HAVE THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG IN JUST SOME OF THE ACTS OF STUPIDITY THAT YOUR TEAM MATES WOULD LIKE TO CELEBRATE AND HONOUR IN THE TOD H. TOILET SEAT POINTS!! !*

**Nick Barber** - London Marathon - Set off far too fast (new pb at ½ marathon along the way) ended up being held up live on TV as Paula Radcliffe passed by. 5 points for running far too fast and a bonus point for collapsing live on TV.

**Chris Goddard, Rob Gray and Paul Hobbs** - Coiners - Followed around half of the field, in the wrong direction cutting out some distance and getting DQ'd. 5 points each and an extra bonus point for Chris as he is a cartographer and lives locally.

**Richard Leonard** - Audax - Set off with a Snowy Weather forecast and surprisingly (for a mad badger) had to give up. 5 Points for even starting out.

**Ben Crowther** - Cycling to work - Too close to the pavement, crash bang wallop, leaving Ben with gravel rash and an injured finger. 5 points for being a twerp.

**Kath Brierley** - Lost Passport on way to Iceland - Kath managed to misplace her passport on the way to the airport while removing a scarf. After many phone calls to John she got in touch and he found/delivered the passport just in time for them to board - 5 Points for misplacing the passport, it could have been more.

**Chris Goddard** - Lost Key at Duddon - Just before the race Chris placed his key on the top of one of the tyres only to hear it drop down. The key didnt land on the floor, but disappeared in a panel gap. After lots of messing and trying to get the key, Chris had to get a local mechanic to jack the van up, remove the wheel and locate the key - Well done Chris 5 more points

**Robin Tuddenham** - Parkrun mishap - Robin was comfortably winning the Burnley Parkrun and decided to try and cut the last corner. This resulted in a fall and a bad cut to the knee. - 5 points to Robin

**Paul Hobbs** - Blackstone Edge number - Paul collected his number then went to sort himself out, come race time the number was nowhere to be found. - Well done Paul looks like you found yourself 5 more points.

**Ben Crowther** - Reservoir Bogs number - Ben heard Paul had picked up easy points at Blackstone Edge so copied his efforts, he then proceeded to visit checkpoints in the wrong order - cheap points Mr Crowther but 5 none the less.

**Peter Kerridge** - Foot injury Wearing Crocs - Peter wont be running for a few weeks after injuring his foot wearing crocs. - 5 points Peter and welcome to the Toilet Seat

**Dan Taylor** - Managed to lose both my Car Key and Mobile Phone while flagging for the Bridestone race, got them back the next day via the power of Facebook - Still 5 points

**Phil Scarf** - Bought airport car park ticket then proceeded to lose it - excess charge and 5 points Phil.

**Jackie Scarf** - rushed off the plane into the airport leaving her phone behind - Jackie got the phone back but also got 5 points.

<b>1st</b> Chris Goddard	<b>11 points</b>	8th Richard Leonard	<b>5 pts</b>
<b>2nd</b> Paul Hobbs	<b>10 pts</b>	9th Dan Taylor	<b>5 pts</b>
<b>3rd</b> Ben Crowther	<b>10 pts</b>	10th Peter Kerridge	<b>5 pts</b>
4th Nick Barber	<b>6 pts</b>	11th Jackie Scarf	<b>5 pts</b>
5th Robin Tuddenham	<b>5 pts</b>	12th Sue Roberts	<b>5 pts</b>
6th Kath Brierley	<b>5 pts</b>	13th Steve Pullen	<b>5 pts</b>
7th Rob Gray	<b>5 pts</b>	14th Phil Scarf	<b>5 pts</b>



WHY HAVE FORMER TOILET SEAT CHAMPIONS SUE ROBERTS AND STEVE PULLEN MADE IT TO THE TABLE? IS THERE A STINKING, SCORCHING MISDEMEANOUR TO BE REVEALED? IS THIS AN EFFORT TO COVER THE TRUTH? WILL THE ACT OF FOOLISHNESS BE EXPOSED OR IS THIS AN ACT ERROR FROM THE TOILET SEAT EDITOR UNCLE DANNY TODMAN?.....WHO KNOWS, I SUSPECT THE LATTER. WILL THIS MEAN MORE FOR POINTS FOR NEW DAD UNCLE DANNY? WE SHALL HAVE TO SEE. MAKE SURE THAT EVERYBODY GETS EXPOSURE THEY DESERVE AND KEEP THE CHAMPIONSHIPS THRIVING. SO GET GRASSING FOLKS...  
TOLIETSEAT@TODHARRIERS.CO.UK



## **The Mad Badgers ride PBP 2015 - Paris-Brest-Paris...or Pasta Bloody Pasta?**

Paris-Brest-Paris – a 1200km cycle ride from Paris to Brest, and back again, to be completed in under 90 hours. Now organised by Audax Club Parisien this is the oldest and most prestigious audax randonneuring event in the world. First started in 1891 the event was held every 10 years until the 1930s as a professionals + amateurs event, and then, after World War II, every four years as a purely amateur event. The 2015 event was the 18<sup>th</sup> edition in its current format. Just to qualify and enter the Mad Badgers, Richard and myself, had to ride a 1000km event in 2014 and 200km, 300km, 400km, and 600km events in spring 2015.

Sunday August 16<sup>th</sup>, the start date, was soon upon us. We stood outside the French National Velodrome in St Quentin-en-Yveline in the southern suburbs of Paris in the company of over 6000 other cyclists. I've never seen as much colourful lycra in one place before. A blur of brand logos competed for space on tops and shorts with the national flag colours of 54 different nationalities. The variety of bikes nearly matched the ethnic diversity. Tandems, tridems, three-wheelers, three-wheeled tandems, Bromptons, recumbents, fold-ups, bullet bikes, steel, aluminium, titanium, carbon... Cheered on by thousands of spectators we were set off in waves over the space of 5 hours from 4pm, giant peletons of 300 riders at a time; an intermingling, five abreast snake of riders behind a lead car for 10km before stretching apart into more discreet groups of adrenaline fuelled randonneurs.



We'd loaded the route onto our GPSs for navigation purposes. We needn't have bothered. Every junction had arrows pointing us in the right direction... and we just followed the cyclists in front...the long, long line of cyclists, some in groups, others solo. As it got dark it was like being part of an infinite string of red fairy lights. Looking back we were dazzled by the array of super bright LEDs chasing us down. Our planned "steady away" start was blown away as usual by over zealousness, fast roads and some exhilarating peleton riding. We were sucked along at 28kph with 200km passing in just over 8 hours

despite brief stops for food. On through the first night feeling great until the pre-dawn. A strong coffee kept us going and we pedalled on as the sun rose.

Jane had booked in a campsite just near the 365km mark. We joined her an hour earlier than our conservative schedule and bagged a couple of hours kip. Away again into our second night of riding and the pace slowed and minds wandered. In the small hours both of us, while still riding, fell asleep briefly and experienced “waking up” in the saddle, fortunately not while on a bend. Whether asleep for a few seconds or microseconds we’ll never know but this is definitely the most dangerous aspect of long distance audaxes. Another hour and a half’s fitful sleep curled up on the floor of a school hall, 88km before the half way point, did little to shake us out of our mental lethargy. On, On...at 5am on pitch black forest roads we persevered. While more coffee, Pro Plus tablets and chocolate coated coffee beans gave us a short lived buzz, it was the second sunrise which finally induced wakefulness, if not increased pace.

The biggest hill of the ride was a long gradual up and over with a snaking descent to the River L’Elorn estuary and the pedestrianised Albert Louppe Bridge over to Brest. Through mid-morning traffic we weaved our way to the half way checkpoint, cheered in by big crowds. We were hungry but were faced again by a lack of choice of food. Pasta, pasta or pasta seemed to be the main menu of every checkpoint. We felt lucky to get rice at one stop. Unlike UK events you had to pay for all the food and drink. Not at extortionate prices but over three and a half days riding the cost soon mounts up. While counterbalanced by the relatively cheap entry fee, with any profits from food going back into the communities hosting the checkpoint, I still prefer free food events...and will no doubt be unable to face another morsel of pasta for the foreseeable future!

The support from the French public throughout the ride was amazing. Outside every one of the 18 checkpoints the crowds were there to shout encouragement. People stood at junctions and old boys by the side of the road in the countryside. Women leaned out of first floor windows and families with children gathered outside their gardens as we rode past. Every one of them cheering and whooping, “Allez allez, Bon courage”. The kids all put out their hands for high fives as we rode past. Some had set up little stalls by the side of the road with water, juice, coffee, cake and biscuits...for free. Amazing.

Although the big hill we'd ridden down now had to be re-climbed it felt easier, no doubt due to the psychological effect of reaching halfway and now riding for home. The day wore on and with it the sleepiness returned. "You fancy half an hour's kip?" I asked. "You bet" Richard replied. We spotted a grassy roundabout with a tree to shade us and were soon snoring. Waking to our half hour alarm we found ourselves in the company of about 10 French folk, cheering on the never ending line of riders. They asked us where we were from, how we were feeling, and why did we do it? We replied in our best pigeon French. Then, looking quizzically at me, they asked, "And how old are YOU?"

Our third night in the saddle brought culinary redemption when we spotted a pizzeria. They appeared to take the arrival of a locust swarm of cyclists ordering les grande pizzas in their stride. A few hours down the road disaster struck. Just after midnight my rear cassette gear cable snapped and the chain dropped onto the small sprocket. Pedalling now became exceptionally strenuous, particularly up any sort of incline. Standing in the pedals I managed to ride the 5km or so to the next checkpoint only to find that there was no mechanic. Despite fuddled brains we managed to get the chain fixed onto one of the larger sprockets by lashing the broken cable to my back rack. I managed to "single speed" the 26km to the next checkpoint where, to my relief, a mechanic replaced the offending cable in 20 minutes. We rejoined Jane on the campsite at 865km for a very welcome shower, three-hours sleep and bean stew for breakfast.

Another day wheeled past. The distances between checkpoints visited on the way out had somehow grown. "Are we there yet?" became an unuttered mantra. The focus on pain from ass bones was occasionally dispelled when we roused ourselves to jump on the back of peletons, and be pulled along by the train. A couple of close calls on roundabouts highlighted the need for complete focus on the riders' wheels in front and to the sides. Any aberrant deviation in line could result in a major pile up. Such concentration and the sudden high accelerations needed to hold the line kept us awake better than the cocktail of caffeine we'd been taking. However, at 4am, having reached the penultimate checkpoint with 65 km to go, and with eight hours to do it in, we grabbed an hour and a half's sleep on a gymnasium floor. Despite the deep sleep of the well knackered I still woke up 10 seconds before my watch alarm



went off. Weird how the mind is not going to let you miss the looming deadline of the big event of your year.

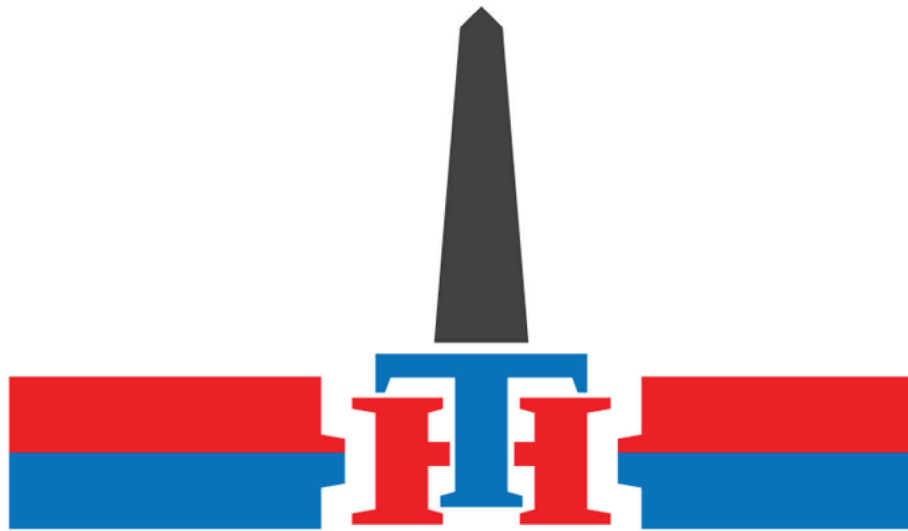
Six hours to ride 64 km. Piss easy...or so it should have been. We'd aimed to finish by 9am when there'd be a decent crowd to cheers us in. However, with 30km to go, just as it started to rain heavily for the first time on the ride, Richard's quad finally gave up in protest at the ludicrous distance we'd ridden. Unable to put any power through it he laboured up the often steep hills pedalling with one leg! The last 20km seemed to be stuck in a time warp with the 5km markers taking an age to materialise. At last, we saw the velodrome, and 88 hours and 15 minutes after our grand depart we rolled over the finish line to the cheers of hundreds of bedraggled onlookers. PBP was in the bag... our third mega-ride in three years. "Never again" we agreed as we shook hands and patted each other on the back. Knackered but euphoric, we were welcomed into the velodrome for the post event meal...you guessed it... bloody pasta!

**Phil Hodgson & Richard Leonard**

**– The Mad Badgers**







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# **TODMORDEN HARRIERS**