

THE TORRIER

NEWS, INSPIRATION, RACING, OBSESSION, MEMORIES, ADVENTURE AND MORE!

AUTUMN 2017





Running and racing on the fells, trails and roads. We cater for all, come and join us for a run, and bring a friend!

Every month we visit a different pub on Wednesday evenings and try to organise four different groups: slow, moderate, medium and fast. We also try not to lose anyone. All runners are welcome. The runs are off-road in daylight hours and on-road (or choice of off-road with headtorch) in the winter months. Take a look at **www.todharriers.co.uk**



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A few words from the Chair...

What's what

There are still fixtures in the club champs to qualify in the GP and maybe win a prestigious prize at this years presentation. There are also a host of relays and team events rapidly approaching so here are some dates to take note of:

Red rose XC and club XC championships (RRXC) everybody's favourite sufferfest: <http://redrosecrosscountry.co.uk/fixtures/>

Sat 4th November - The Shepherds Skyline Fell Race is our most popular event – and the junior races are as popular as ever! So please come and help out RO organiser Andi Mcfie will soon be asking for helpers, so come on!

RRXC Sat 11th November, Chorley

RRXC Sat 18th November, Bolton, Leverhulme Park

Sunday 26th November 2017 Lee Mill fell relay. Team managers:
Men's Dave Garner, Ladies: Lucy Hobbs

RRXC Sat 2nd December, Rossendale

If you're looking to train smarter and get some speed in your legs Graeme Wrench's sessions are on a Tuesday at 6:30. In the park during the summer months but currently at Ferney Lee School when the dark nights dictate (Keep an eye the forum and the Facebook page for updates)

Sat 16th Dec. Todmorden Harriers prize presentation. If you would like any illusions of results, performances, activities, photos etc. please send to youngbulltodharrier@gmail.com

This is your club and you have a say in how things are ran. This is an

open invitation for any members too attend committee meetings. If you have any matters that you would like to discuss, please either come along to your committee meetings. Meetings are held at the Golden Lion in Tod 7:00 - 8:00 on the first Monday of each month.

10 Years a Toddie

A few weeks back I celebrated 10 years since my first pack run. It was one week after my first fell run and I'd just taken part in my 2nd race, Blackshaw Head. I treated the race as a fun run as I hadn't yet developed a competitive streak. I loved that my 4 quid went straight to the Blackshaw Head community. My sister in law lived up there and she told me that they were saving for the kids' play area so it was quite a contrast to GNR which I'd ran the previous year was hundreds of pounds, this time any race revenues would go direct to a local cause. I think the money I raised doing GNR probably got sucked up paying for goodie bags, medals, post event physio and event organisers wages.

On that first pack run we went to the Fox and Goose for a drink and I was given a copy of the Torrier. I recall laughing in bed as I read Colin Duffield's write up of running the Mary Townley loop and soon I had this bug....obsession. If i wasn't running I was reading on forums, blogs starting to check out gear, dreaming of owning an OMM Kamleika jacket.

Early on I decided I wanted to do a marathon, an ultra, a mountain marathon, Wasdale. Yeah, Wasdale. I was quickly in at the deep end, "The new fast lad" thrown in and massively wet behind the ears. I was getting lots of support and encouragement from club members and my naive enthusiasm gained the nickname that I became very proud off. The learning curve was a steep one, I know some of you will recall passing me as I crawled the last quarter mile of the Trog whilst I experienced bonking like to the deepest and darkest corners that bonking can go. I found an incredible passion for the outdoors and intimacy with the new environment of Calderdale. (I'd moved here from an urban upbringing and had always found goretex and maps a bit

inaccessible) So I became remember of this amazing club of great people, meeting many ordinary people who are incredible and I'm very grateful to share my time with them having an absolutely great time.

Earlier this year I finally got round to Wasdale, my first few entries had came to nothing. I tripped on a tree root and needed six stitches in my knee the week before my first entry and my the week before my next entry I passed out with heat exhaustion at Heptonstall. Both of these incidents were probably for the best as I still had a bit of Young Bull in my system. I'm sure Wasdale would've just spat me out as it's an absolute beast, an epic and amazing course. Well worth the wait and not for the faint hearted.

Running the 2017 British Fell Running Championships as part of the V40 team has been fantastic and probably peaks the past 10 years. Partly because of it being a shared experience and success. Going to amazing places, doing amazing things with fantastic people has been absolutely awesome.

I've never scored a goal or caught a wicket, genuinely last to be picked and to get out of PE would get his Mam to write notes saying he had athletes foot. I was the underdeveloped anaemic kid. Outside of school though I did enjoy days out with a ramshackle peleton of grifters, choppers, BMX's and the pdd road bike that people nabbed from older brothers etc. I would ride my Mam's steel framed road bike and I enjoyed participating in other minority sports, skating and martial arts. However until I joined Tod Harriers though I never realised that I liked sports.

This year with a core of determined and hardy team of men and women we had a second bash at the V40 British and the English Fell Running Championship. We travelled to the races hosted across England and to Ireland, Scotland and Wales and worked with determination and persevered as a team. The men after coming 4th last year

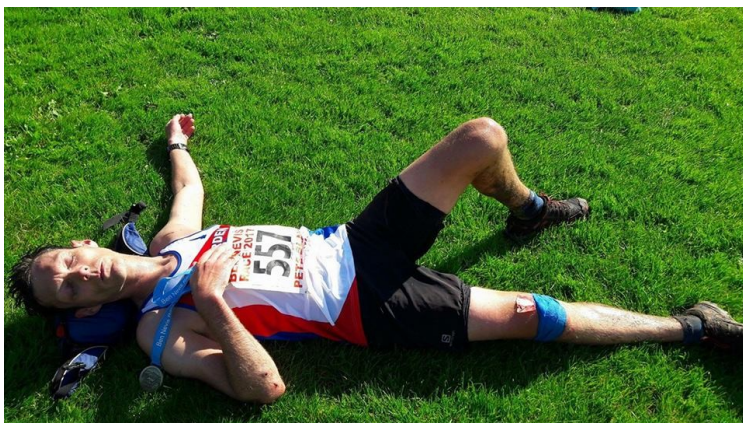
held on too a glimmer of hope. Throughout the year we have battled like David vs Goliath and it has been an honour to be part of this, representing our great club. Results are out and I'm very proud to say that this years championship results have earned us in the British champs a Silver in the WV40's and I'm delighted to say and be part of MV40's Bronze winning team. Additionally the WV40's have also taken a silver in the English and at the FRA relays in Llanberis were 3rd WV40 team.

But its not all about the V40 teams because in the open categories we have seen some incredible performances in all age categories.

Next year Todmorden Harriers will be celebrating 40 years. I've seen and been part of some great performances over the past ten and I'm looking forward to being part of plenty more escapades. I'd like to thank all club members for being part of something really special to me. If you have any suggestions on what we could do to mark this occasion then drop me a message youngbulltodharrier@gmail.com

There's also quite a few significant birthdays next year and there's V50 team categories as well by the way.

Nick B AKA notquitesoyoungbullV40callmeoldman



A word from the Editor...

Wow, another great season. Iron Mans (Iron Men?), Bob Grahams, new faces, medals, PBs and prizes all over the shop... What an impressive lot you all are.

Like Nick, I was not at all into sport at school, and also got my mum to write notes for me...she's now a more regular off-road runner than I am! (Although she was a bit perplexed at me not getting a medal for my first race, Stoodley Pike..."Mum, it's four quid") Actually *wanting* to get out of breath and not stop when my legs hurt is a pretty recent thing! Tod Harriers have been the backbone of my running progression and continue to be, even though I can't often make pack runs. "Go on Tod!" never fails to make me grin in races, training and racing with Toddies is always a pleasure, and I'm attributing my reasonable time in my first and only half marathon to David Leslie, for encouraging me to ignore my Garmin!

I'm slowly learning that everyone has to start somewhere, and everyone's human, even though they might not seem it. Along with a few other Toddies, I recently went to an evening of talks on Long Distance Running hosted by Simon Franklin, and was astonished to learn that Carol Morgan, 2017 winner of the Spine and the Dragon's Back, was a heavy drinker and smoker in her mid-twenties. It's amazing to see what "normal" people can accomplish, and having been in the club a bit longer now, I'm really enjoying seeing people add to their achievements, especially ones that they previously thought were completely mad and unattainable.

We've got loads of good stuff in these pages - a massive thank you to everyone who's sent something in. Stu's shown that Harriers not only excel on the fells, but also in the horror genre, Dan's back with some Toilet Seat corks, and we have epic accounts of Simon G's Ironman, Dazz's Dragon's Back and Jono's Frog Graham. If you're left wanting more, there's a superb collection of race reports on the website, and

tons of pictures on Facebook... and of course I'll be on the hunt for more material for the next Torrier in the New Year, so get creative! As you'll see this issue, we like a variety, and it's great to hear what everyone's been up to. Serious race reports, drawings, stories, graphs, recipes, keep 'em coming! Don't worry that it's too long or too short, we'll come up with a plan!

Thanks Tod Harriers; it's an honour to call you teammates and friends. The picture below was taken when Hannah Godden and I were sweeping the Castle Canter race, quickly realising it'd be more efficient (and fun) to larksfoot the tape into fancy skirts.

This September I had the joy of completing my furthest distance yet, 64 miles, on the Hardmoors 60, so this issue's cheesy quote comes from the director of the Hardmoors race series, Jon Steele.

"You are a damn sight tougher than you can ever comprehend."

Kim Ashworth
kkashworth@gmail.com



Club Championship Tables

The following tables are as of the end of September 2017 and include all qualifiers or the top ten.

Its not been a bumper turnout for qualifiers this year but there are still races left - dont forget that there are awards given in all age categories for fell and road.

Full tables and links to all the results are on our website
www.todharriers.co.uk

Grand Prix

27 of 33 races completed

Pstn	Name	Cat	RACES completed	number of FELL	number of ROAD	number of TRAIL	Qualified	GP SCORE	Best qualifying combination
1	Mel Blackhurst	F50	15	9	4	2	Q	823.4	3F-3R-2T
2	Andrew Worster	M	15	7	5	3	Q	793.5	4F-2R-2T
3	Paul Brannigan	M50	13	6	4	3	Q	774.0	3F-2R-3T
4	Matt Flanagan	M40	12	5	2	5	Q	762.9	3F-2R-3T
5	Richard Butterwick	M45	13	3	7	3	Q	752.4	2F-4R-2T
6	Chris Goddard	M	9	4	4	1	Q	727.6	3F-4R-1T
7	David Leslie	M65	10	2	5	3	Q	718.9	2F-4R-2T
8	Darren Tweed	M	9	5	2	2	Q	710.1	4F-2R-2T
9	Duncan Cannon	M	9	2	3	4	Q	685.6	2F-3R-3T
10	Stu Wolstenholme	M45	14	9	2	3	Q	674.5	3F-2R-3T
11	Peter Ehrhardt	M70	14	6	6	2	Q	635.4	5F-2R-1T
12	Helen Hodgkinson	F45	10	7	2	1	Q	619.0	5F-2R-1T
13	Dan Taylor	M	11	5	2	4	Q	615.9	2F-2R-4T
14	Mark Williams	M40	11	2	4	5	Q	591.6	2F-3R-3T
15	Dave O'Neill	M55	9	3	2	4	Q	493.5	3F-2R-3T

Fell Championship

13 of 15 races completed

			Completed	Qualified?	Qualification points	Total points
1	Andrew Worcester	M	7	Q	585.1	675.3
2	Jon Wright	M45	6	Q	561.5	561.5
3	Rebecca Patrick	F40	8	Q	473.7	616.4
4	Dave Collins	M60	7	Q	464.1	528.3
5	Stuart Wolstenholme	M45	9	Q	454.4	661.5
6	Paul Brannigan	M50	6	Q	453.8	453.8
7	Mel Blackhurst	F50	9	Q	446.4	655.0
8	Claire Duffield	F40	7	Q	437.8	505.2
9	Helen Hodgkinson	F45	7	Q	370.6	428.2
10	Peter Ehrhardt	M70	6	Q	324.5	324.5

Road Championship

9 of 12 races completed

1	Richard Butterwick	M45	7	Q	520.2	600.1
2	Sarah Glyde	F40	6	Q	456.4	456.4
3	Peter Ehrhardt	M70	6	Q	336.6	336.6
4	Andrew Worster	M	5	X	474.3	474.3
5	Chris Goddard	M	4	X	365.0	365.0
6	David Leslie	M65	5	X	348.6	348.6
7	Heather Rostron	F35	5	X	336.4	336.4
8	Paul Brannigan	M50	4	X	329.2	329.2
9	Michael Harper	M45	4	X	319.1	319.1
10	Mel Blackhurst	F50	4	X	317.9	317.9

Trail Championship

5 of 6 races completed

			Completed	Qualified?	Qualification points	Total points
1	Duncan Cannon	M	4	Q	270.7	349.7
2	Stuart Wolstenholme	M45	3	Q	233.9	233.9
3	Dan Taylor	M	4	Q	231.1	305.5
4	Kate Mansell	F45	3	Q	217.0	217.0
5	Mark Williams	M40	5	Q	216.1	350.0
6	David Leslie	M85	3	Q	213.0	213.0
7	Myra Wells	F55	3	Q	159.5	159.5
8	Dave O'Neill	M55	4	Q	154.4	203.1
9	Tom Barker	M	2	X	157.9	157.9
10	Joe Courtney	M	2	X	156.0	156.0

Ultra Championship

5 of 8 races completed

1	Dave Garner	M45		3	Q	235.7
2	Jonathan Wright	M40		2	X	149.9
3	Bev Holmes	F45		2	X	127.9
4	Louise Greenwood	F45		2	X	125.7
5	Martin Davies	M40		1	X	94.4
6	Ben Holmes	M		1	X	86.9
7	Ben Beckwith	M		1	X	86.9
8	Robert Tyson	M		1	X	72.8
9	Peter Bowles	M45		1	X	69.5
10	Dwane Dixon	M40		1	X	67.6

Ironman Lanzarote III (Or... “2 Out Of 3 Ain’t Bad”)

Well, after last year’s DNF, I just had to come back to erase the memory (hopefully!) ...

In the 2016 race, I got sun stroke and sickness and was unable to finish the run. Because...

- I wore a sleeveless tri suit exposing my neck and shoulders.

- I used well out of date sun cream (I found this out when looking at the packaging later).

- I only arrived 36 hours before the race. This was not enough acclimatisation time. All the rushing about doing last minute preparation and a lack of sleep was just too stressful.

I reasoned that all of the above problems could be solved for this year...

However, my training this time was interrupted more by illness and injury. Notably, 4 weeks before the event when I hurt both calf muscles whilst continuing to run through pain in the Ribby Hall Triathlon. My right calf in particular swelled up quite badly the following day... I couldn’t believe my stupidity! I should have stopped and thought of the bigger picture. Well, I guess we all make those kinds of mistakes. However, after a week or so, both swimming and cycling could be done carefully – but there was to be absolutely no running until the day itself. I had no idea what to expect for the marathon.

Time ticked by...I arrived in Lanzarote 7 days before the race. My workplace had kindly allowed me to swap some days and I had “promised” everyone it would definitely be my last time. I was a stone lighter than at Xmas and my right calf injury could no longer be felt when walking about. I began to feel tentatively hopeful. There is a buzz around Puerta Del Carmen at Ironman time and as a competitor you can easily begin to feel “superhuman”. Ha!

My goal this year was simply to get a Finishers Medal. Of course, on

the day I would be trying my absolute best. If I can't run, I'll just have to walk around the marathon, I told myself. Hopefully it wouldn't come to that.

In the days that followed, I tried to keep a lid on my emotions. Unfortunately, 3 days before the race I walked into the edge of the bath in the night - and hit my left shin EXACTLY where there is a stress fracture weakness from 10 years ago. It hurt and I almost cried - not so much because of the pain but because of the unbelievable bad luck with the timing of this accident. As I dreaded, the next morning (despite copious amounts of ice), there was clear bruising, swelling and pain. I even wondered if I had refractured the leg. I daren't visit a Spanish doctor in case they tried to put my leg in plaster. Luckily, I had registered earlier that day so I could just lie around the apartment listlessly, resting my iced up leg. And for the next day too...

Even walking to the pool area hurt. I will walk the marathon to get my medal (if need be), I told myself. I just couldn't go home with nothing, like last year.

Anyway, all too quickly, the day before the race came...Time to hobble down to transition to rack the bike etc. I found the situation almost comical. Both legs were now injured but they didn't feel too bad when walking slowly. I went to rack the bike early - so I wouldn't have to stand around too long in queues and I could get back to my apartment quickly to rest and cook my last supper etc. I also didn't feel like speculating with other triathletes about what tomorrow might bring. Soon, it was time to set the alarm.

Race Day

There is always something so intense and committing about waking up on Ironman morning...5 am.

I had no problems with pre-race preparation and then suddenly it was



the final countdown. The gun went off and we entered the sea. I had enjoyed the last two year's swims but this time was different. I think I'd positioned myself too near the front because within the first 200m, I got punched in the nose, had my goggles knocked off, got kicked a few times, swum over and drank too much sea water. Just stay calm, I told myself... Luckily, I'm okay about swimming in open water. The sea was certainly a lot warmer than Pennington Flash (near Wigan), where I train, and the waves were calm. The rest of the first lap passed and the sec-

ond was easier. I had used more energy than I intended to because of the aggression - but was glad to have survived the swim. 1:17:07. Pleased with that. T1 was fine.

Onto the bike... I jogged very tentatively through transition. My calves slightly cramped but I told myself it was due to the long sea swim. The crowds were cheering and I felt good. Soon I was out on the bike with a good start to the race... Once you leave Puerta Del Carmen, it suddenly becomes lonely. Every man/woman for himself. It's a long, hilly, hot and especially, windy bike course – but the village supporters in Lanzarote and the awesomeness of the event and the scenery keep you going.

The course winds itself around most of the island and has a bit of everything. Long, slow climbs and descents, short and steep ones. Fast, flat sections. Excellent road surfaces/rough, bumpy ones. The wind is



sometimes very helpful but usually not. The Lanzarote cross winds were bad at some points this time, noticeably descending from Mirador Del Rio towards Arrieta, but not horrendous. Barring a mechanical I knew I would finish. I came back into Puerta Del Carmen feeling good – but understanding that the race for me now really was to begin... Bike time 8:09:30. My slowest ever in Lanzarote - which was a little disappointing. It had felt better to me. However, the bike route is so epic that for a cyclist of my ability I can feel proud simply for finishing it. T2 was fine.

In 2016, I started the run and felt dreadfully ill from the start. This year I didn't! I was just tired. I could have jumped for joy! My right calf cramped up in the first km and the left at about the 4k mark... but it just slowed me down, didn't actually stop me. I kept up my slow jog strategy for 20k or so, eating and drinking only the minimum I felt I needed...

Then I became more confident, pushing the pace, but soon felt sick at about 22k...Whoa! Remember, you must finish!! So, I walked for a couple of kilometres and began to feel better. The rest of the marathon passed and soon it was the final turn around! My pacing had been slow but consistent. One last effort to the finish line!

Run 5:41:42. My slowest marathon ever but I didn't care.

I ran through the crowds and collected my medal - where I felt strangely unemotional. As you can see, I even forgot to look up with happiness when I crossed the line!! I had spent so long controlling myself I was not yet ready to let go...that





came a week or so later. It had been (by over an hour) my slowest Ironman time ever – but I am older now and I am delighted to have achieved it again. This may well be the last one. Who knows? Certainly not me at the moment! This time in Lanzarote, I got what I came for.

15 hours 25 mins 58 seconds. 1191 out of 1606 starters. 1339 finishers.

Simon Galloway

Recipe: Scott Jurek's Green Power Pre-Workout Drink

This issue's recipe comes from Scott Jurek's book *Eat and Run: My unlikely journey to ultramarathon greatness*. Scott Jurek is widely regarded as one of the best ultrarunners of all time, having won Western States 100 miler a record seven consecutive times, set a course record for Badwater 135 in 120°F (49°C) heat, broken the Appalachian Trail FKT and he's even done a BG.

The book covers Scott Jurek's journey to greatness, learning some sneaky tactics (turn your headtorch off at night so your rivals behind

you can't track you...giving Andy ideas)

This drink seems pretty odd, but I find it provides a good amount of energy and hydration before a race or tough workout. Give it a go!

Kim Ashworth

"Hippie Dan first taught me the importance of greens like spirulina and wheatgrass. Spirulina is a green algae said to have been carried into battle by Aztec warriors. Used for centuries as a weight-loss aid and immune-boosters, it has lately been studied and shown promising results as a performance enhancer for long-distance runners. Because spirulina is marketed as a dietary supplement rather than a food, the FDA does not regulate its production; buy it only from a health food store and a brand you trust."

"Packed with protein (spirulina is a complete protein) and rich in vitamins and minerals, this smoothie is an excellent source of nutrition. For a little extra carbohydrate boost, replace 1 cup water with 1 cup apple or grape juice."

2 bananas
1 cup frozen or fresh mango or pineapple chunks
4 cups water
2 teaspoons spirulina powder
1 teaspoon miso

Place all the ingredients in a blender and blend for 1 to 2 minutes, until the mixture is completely smooth. Drink 20 to 30 ounces (2 1/2 to 3 3/4 cups) 15 to 45 minutes before a run.



Miso is a great base for soup - as seen in Japanese restaurants. It also provides a great salty spread for toast, paired with roasted tomatoes.

Conquering the Mighty Wasdale

Well I'm going to keep this brief.... unlike the race itself!

Paul suggested we have a weekend away in the Lakes without the kids. I thought great, sounds relaxing.... he suggested we might want to do a race while we're up there. Not so relaxing ...

How about Wasdale he said. Now Wasdale is a lakes classic race, twenty-one miles long with around 9,000 feet of ascent. Among long fell races, Wasdale is often considered to be the toughest of the British races. Now I knew it was a beast but, as I'd probably had a glass of red or three, I agreed. Why not!

Nearer the time it dawned on me that it was also an English Champs race... great more pressure. Having not raced much all year Paul clearly thought it would be a good idea that I threw myself into something tough and challenging. Why waste any more time with fun, local, short stuff. I however started to think this might not have been such a good idea. But I'd committed, so put my fears to one side and (wo)manned up.

So, on to the day itself. No injuries, lots and lots (and lots) of food, gorgeous weather with good visibility (without this I really would have been in trouble). Okay so I hadn't done much training for this (or should I say no training for this. I did manage to run up to the Pike 3 ways ...does that count?), but nevertheless, I felt optimistic.

We set off. Everyone said 'don't set off fast', so I took them at their word as I set off slowly up the first climb up Whin Rigg. This was followed by a lovely descent to the bottom of the valley to be greeted by Jim and Mandy. Feeling fine at this point ... but of course the race hadn't really started. Hence feeling fine.

During the first epic climb up to Seatallan it started to dawn on me

the cut-off times were going to be very challenging. Saw Steve Smith-ies at the checkpoint, he encouragingly shouted 'you'd better get a shift on'. So, I did until the ridiculously boggy drag up to Pillar. This was a low point! You'd think being in the Pennines we'd be used to bog, but for some reason this got to me. My head started to go down at this point. However, knowing Jackie Scarf and Kate were just ahead cheered me up, as I knew they were probably feeling equally cheesed off!

I asked the helpful supportive marshals at the Pillar checkpoint if it was likely I would make the next cut off at the top of Great Gable, they replied 'not unless you get a shift off' and 'what's your down hill like'. Okay so it was time to motor. So, I did get a shift on, passed the Leonards who shouted words of encouragement 'get on with it' 'you can do it' and 'get your head up!'. Finally I made it to the start of the fierce climb up to Great Gable (knew I had approximately 20 mins to get up it ... it was going to be tight). Started to really panic at this point. Couldn't believe I'd come this far to be cut off by a minute or two. Luckily Kath B popped up out of nowhere at this point. Gave me a swig of Lucozade and a kick up the a**se. She said I could do it... no sweat. She was probably over estimating my climbing ability but still I thought 'right let's have it'. At this point I could see Robin T, so just aimed to keep on his tail. He also looked extremely cheesed off! I did look behind briefly and felt sorry (but also jealous) for the line of runners behind who probably weren't gong to make the cut off. On a positive note they would be put out of their misery shortly!

Anyway to cut a long story about cut-offs short, I made it by the skin of my teeth. After that there were no more cut-off, so Jackie, Kate and Robin and I relaxed and enjoyed the views. Happy days!

However, this is a tale of extreme highs and lows. After we finally got to the top off Scafell, coming off the summit I fell gashing my knee. I had two choices 1. cry and limp down or 2. pick myself up and crack on. Luckily I decided the latter was the best option. After enduring a

ridiculous amount of climb and tough terrain I was not going to be defeated by a little scratch! So, I had a strong run down and back to the finish. I was powered down by an overwhelming desire to get this epic endurance test done and dusted.

And the really good news was I was faster than Paul from Great Gable summit to Scafell summit.

Anyway the moral of the story is harness your inner badass ... get angry and get fired up to the extent that you will make that bloody cut off, goddamit.

Thanks for entering me Paul, thanks for the words of encouragement and support Toddies and thanks for the pictures Jim!

Not for the faint hearted, but definitely one to put on your bucket list. Will I be back next year.... the jury is out.

Lucy Hobbs



A Marathon and an Ultra in the Lakes

In 2016 I managed three ultras so this year I wanted to do at least one, and chose the Lakeland Trails ultra from Ambleside as being likely well organised and not too tough.

The Coniston Marathon was first on 4 June – start and end in Coniston and with a mix of climbs, descents and rough ground but with some sort of path or trail most of the way round. I was early at the start after stopping in Coniston village the night before and started chatting to two other runners. One of them was about the same speed as me and we did the first 12 miles or so together. This helped me keep to a steady pace, walking up anything remotely hard uphill, stopping at Tarn Hows for some pictures and generally chatting to anybody who seemed even vaguely interested to listen.

From the half way point I was on my own, chasing down some faster runners, wondering if I was still on track – yes nobody else in sight at that point. After the last water stop we were on the gentle slopes above the south end of Lake Coniston and coasting down to the lake-side for a final run in to the finish through trees on a path with a base of twisted tree roots making for very uneven running. Here I got behind another vet who pulled me along at a good pace to the finish, the cheers, the chance to look at the results board (I was 1st V60) and a good long rest before driving home.

With that run behind me I was suddenly less worried about the Lakeland Ultra, run nearly a month later on 1 July from Ambleside. I was wrong to be so confident. I had done no recce; the route was mostly off road but with far more climb than the marathon and I had not done enough long runs in preparation. However I was lucky both with the weather – cool but sunny in the morning, cloudy and a bit of cooling rain in the afternoon – and lucky with the excellent Lakeland Trails organisation.

I stayed in Ambleside both before and after the race and was bright and early at registration. There was a strong international flavour to the field and generally a much higher running standard than in the marathon. The first hour running seemed to be continuously uphill. But after Glenridding the uphill just got steeper.

Then on the descent through Grisedale the route was far too stony and difficult to allow any speed and by the time I got to Grasmere I would happily have stopped and gone home. But no there was a long loop, luckily at lower altitude since the mist came down and we could have got rather lost on the higher ground, with marshalling pretty much restricted to the feed stations.

On the last section I was on run/walk along with a band of brothers in just the same shape as myself. It was only then that I realised the advertised 50K race was in fact more like 58k long. We all live but clearly some of us don't actually learn from past mistakes.

The last mile saw us all running steadily again – it was the most runnable downhill section of the route – and the last bit coming into the finish park at Ambleside was a continuous roar of applause. Once a foot or so over the finish I stopped dead and only recovered about an hour later for a gentle warm down run back to the car park.

Anyway – it is proven again – The Lakes are a great place to run. But Lakes runners have to be tough.

David Leslie



My Frog Graham Round – 21.6.17

The Frog Graham Round (www.froggrahamround.co.uk) is a fell-running and swimming challenge that was created by Peter Hayes via inspirations from the classic Bob Graham Round but with an added twist: Along with covering just over 40 miles and ascending and descending 15,750 feet over the Lakeland Fells, the competitor must swim across Bassenthwaite Lake, Crummock Water, Buttermere and Derwent Water before finishing where it all started at Keswick's Moot Hall.

I had been thinking about this challenge soon after reading Peter Hayes' *Swim-hiking in the Lake District and North East England* several years ago.

I decided to go for an attempt on the longest day just because I like to mark the occasion every year with something outdoors (it seems to me such a natural thing to celebrate). A pre-dawn start also seemed like the right thing to do – I thought there'd be enough light in the sky to see me through the first bit without a head torch.



However, on arrival in Keswick I realised that the track leading up to Latrigg would still be a bit gloomy amongst the trees, especially as there was a fair bit of mist and cloud hanging around. So to spare myself from the tree root trip hazards, I took the torch, just for the first 20 minutes (then had to carry it for the next 17 hours or so!).

Moot Hall and bleary-eyed (did I mention that I'd only managed 20 minutes sleep?!)

At 2.45 a.m. the last thing you expect to see at Moot Hall is a group of runners/walkers hanging around! I walked past them and was

doing my final kit checks when one of them came over to me – “Excuse me, are you here for the walk to the stone circle?” she enquired. “Er, no. Sorry,” I replied. “Oh,” she said. Pause. “So what are you doing here?” Hmmm... I thought, good question! Anyway, on the dot of 3 o’clock, I set off.

I had been able to recce many sections of the run and had done all of the swims in preparation, so was feeling fairly happy with the route. (Bassenthwaite and Derwent combined made for a good first experience of proper swim-hiking. Linking Crummock and Buttermere together is also a popular choice and has now become a challenge in itself, the Tadpole, for the young and less experienced). For some bits though and especially in terms of finding a good line, I would just have to see what I could do on the day.

However, it had been many years since my last walk up Skiddaw and in the gloom I wasn’t sure of the path – I couldn’t recall the path split and unfortunately gambled incorrectly that the left hand fork was the



Just before dawn on Skiddaw on the longest day.

one to take (stopping to check the map wasn’t for me this early into the challenge!) I started climbing Little Man before realising my mistake and had to traverse across the open moor to get back on track.

There were a few other instances of spotting a better line to take – after I’d done the section in question, but then just getting out

there and giving it a go, solo and unsupported, was part of the attraction for me in taking on this challenge.

Feeling relieved at having ticked off FG ‘checkpoint’ 1, I was soon trotting down through the woods and starting to contemplate the first swim. I was dismayed to see the wind had got up and big waves were racing down the length of Bassenthwaite. I’m not keen on rough wa-



The swim to Beck Wythop



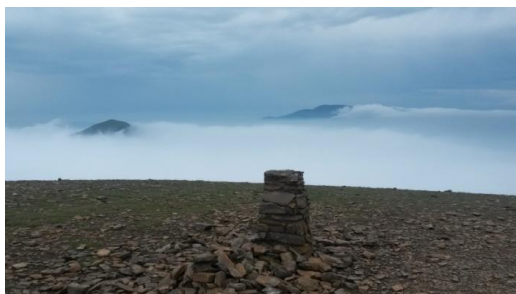
Looking down from Barf (no.3) at the first swim.

ter as it takes so much more energy to make any progress. In this sort of challenge though, you just have to deal with whatever you come across and get on with it! I ended up doing a fair amount of breaststroke (unusual for me) as I was still getting used to the idea of being in the water that early in the morning and coping with the waves! A heavy rain shower passed over during the swim but I couldn't be any wetter!

The ascent of Barf (no.3) was over sooner than expected. Lord's Seat (no.4) and Ullister Hill (no.5) quickly

followed and my prep work on the tracks in Whinlatter meant that I was soon down through the forest.

Taking on board the "Ditch the hitchers" message, I made use of the tap outside the Whinlatter Visitors' Centre to rinse everything through. Even with this lengthy delay I was ahead of my schedule although getting tired and on the next climb it started to tell.



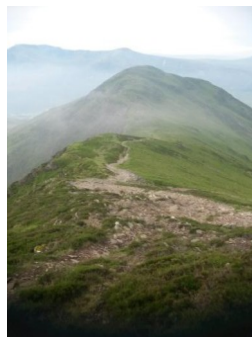
Grisedale Pike, Hopegill Head and Sand Hill (no.s 6, 7 and 8) were all a bit of a misty blur and the climbing was starting to slow. I'd also forgotten the best line and the number of slight rises between Grisedale Pike and Hopegill Head.

Reaching Crag Hill (no.9) my spirits lifted as I gained my first glimpse of blue sky – looking back over Grisedale Pike and Skiddaw already ticked off!

I deliberately chose the slightly longer but more gentle line up to Crag Hill, just to give me a chance to eat a bit more than I had been managing. I also started having a few doubts here about whether I'd get round, given the state of my legs. That long, solo swim across Derwent at the end of the day was weighing on my mind!

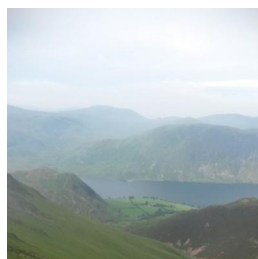


Still to come ... Whiteless Pike (no.11) and later ... Red Pike (no.15) and High Stile no. (16)



A fun descent from Wandope (no.10)!

(Right) The other side of Crummock, thinking about the slog up to Mellbreak (no.14) – I wasn't looking forwards to that!



Looking back on some of leg 2

Descending towards Crummock I was thinking perhaps of leaving the FG route after swimming it and just treating it as a fun day out, possibly swimming Buttermere, then getting the bus back. On reaching Low Ling Crag (no.13) I realised I still wasn't that far off my plan, so pushed on. However I didn't get the best of lines through

the bracken on this steep climb (the FG equivalent to the BG's Yew-barrow) and this was where my time 'cushion' started to vanish.



The never ending path to Red Pike was where I definitely started to suffer in the heat! That climb just went on for ages and my energy was going.

After the boulder fields of High Stile ... the bracken. In fact, there was a fairly decent path still through it all. The earlier climb to Mell-break was worse. As a sufferer of post-Lyme Disease syndrome, I'm very aware of creepy crawlies lurking in the undergrowth – in fact, I kept on stopping to check my legs for hitchers as I climbed through the bracken. The horse-flies were another significant distraction throughout the afternoon! I was also trying to convince myself that the climb up to Robinson on the other side couldn't be that bad ...



The swim across Buttermere was lovely – calm water and I was swimming well. I could probably do with acclimatising to non-wetsuit swims as changing here took longer than the actual swim! All the swims were a pleasant break from being on my feet and I felt slightly more energised after each one. So the climb to Robinson was back on the agenda.



The pain that was the climb up Hassnesshow Beck! Tortuous! Of course, it looks fairly gentle in the photo. On the earlier parts of the climb the fence line just next to the path offered some handholds so I could haul myself up!

Looking across from Robinson

After what felt like half a day, I finally made it to Robinson, and had a good run down to the col. I thought that the run off Dale Head (no. 19) and along the ridge to Catbells (no. 21) would be fairly straightforward. The reality was a whole lot harder! Trudging up to High Spy (no. 20) was hard work and slow ... very slow.



It was such a relief to see Catbells – the final climb. I was still

wondering how choppy it might be on Derwent. If it was as bad as

Bassenthwaite had been I was seriously questioning whether it would be a good idea to do the final swim – and then thinking to have come that far, and not be able to finish it off! The closer I got to the water, the more I looked for signs of how rough it might be. On the hill the wind seemed to be dropping and the temperature still rising – so much so that I had to use some of my dwindling water to cool my head down!



Some footpath closures meant a slightly longer descent to Otterfield Bay. I sat on a rock there considering my options for a few minutes and eating what food I had left – I'd never swum feeling that tired before ... but having come this far, perhaps I could make it, no matter how slowly. It was well after the last ferry by this time, but there were still a few other boats to watch out for. A water-skiing boat was whizzing to and fro in front of St. Herbert's Island (no.23) but I managed to

get their attention, so I at least knew that they were aware of me. (I also had two bright orange tow-floats and a bright orange swim hat.)

Relieved to complete the final stage of the Derwent swim, I hauled myself out and stuffed everything away without too much care, knowing that I wouldn't need it again and being keen to get going and finish this off. Amazingly my total changing and swim time for this swim was exactly as I'd predicted! I started thinking about all the fantastic scenery and places I'd been on this journey, energised by the thought that I'd made it over all those tough sections.

I picked my way through people milling about in the streets of Keswick, sort of running, and straight to the steps of Moot Hall. The final time check and then I sat down. No fanfare, applause or crowds – just the quiet satisfaction of having completed one of my toughest challenges to date.

And finally – minus the blood, sweat and pondweed, the time sheet. I based my timings on those of a previous Frog Graham completer, allowing a little extra. Unlike the BG, there's little information to go by, with only 10 previous completions to date. I was quite pleased with my pace over the first two legs but slowed later on as the heat of the day and lack of training were really beginning to take their toll on me. Conditions on the day are everything – waves and water temperature, wind and bracken height to name but a few variables. Knowing what I know now, I'm

Frog Graham - 25.0.12 *Timetable* *Actual*

Leg 1 - 9 miles

Point	Predicted	Actual
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Leg 2 - 3.5 miles

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Leg 3 - 1.5 miles

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Final time - 19 hrs 45 mins

sure I could go at least an hour quicker, possibly more. But that's not the point!

The Frog Graham Round, 21.6.17. Departure Moot Hall 3 a.m. Return 8.41 p.m.

17 hours and 41 minutes. Solo and unsupported. Full wetsuit used for all swims.

FGR Roll of Honour no.11

Jonathan Wright

The Curse of the Purple Shading

"You'll win your category, it's a given, barring a broken leg" said Bill Johnson in the car on the way up to the Lake District to the R.O.C Mountain Marathon. Not a problem, Clare and I were the only female super vets' pair, what could possibly go wrong?

We registered, got our dibbers and were fitted with a tracker; Big Brother was going to be watching our every move. We walked up to the start. Received the map and controls and duly marked up the circles with the points. But something seemed really odd; it looked like the overnight camp was back at the start, especially as on the control sheet it said overnight camp at position of 2 circles. The only 2 circles we could see was at the event centre. It also seemed strange that the 'Out of Bounds' areas, which are usually marked by red hatching, were shaded in purple. Baffled by this we came to the conclusion it was a Shane Ohly (Race Organiser) thing!

We decided on the controls we were going to visit and set off. The tops were shrouded in thick grey clag, navigation was going to be challenging. We had no problems finding the controls and congratulated each other, it was going well.

We had chosen the Short Score which gave us 6 hours to complete on day 1. So by 2pm we had an hour left and needed to up the pace to get back in time as to not incur penalties, we felt pleased with our effort, what could possibly go wrong?!

At last we descended out of the clag and could see the finish in the distance. But we had not seen anyone for ages, "Maybe we're the first back" I said, Clare looked worried. As we got nearer, the Event Centre looked deserted and there was no control at the last gate. It started to dawn on us that this was not the Overnight Camp, more like a ghost town in the Wild West, I'm sure Tumbleweed crossed our path!

In the finish tent we were greeted by the only official, who knew our names, how did he know who we were? The tracker, he had been watching us, the whole world could have been watching us, bloody Live Tracking! How were we ever going to live this down? We made our pitiful excuses.....it was the purple shadings fault (the 'Overnight Camp' was in black text within a dark purple island on the map). We had options, they offered to take us to the Overnight Camp and we could finish as non-competitors on day 2. This is when we made the decision to go home, the fact that our money, phones and clean clothes were in Jackie & Phil Scarf's car wasn't going to halt our escape. 'Hitch-hike' Clare announced; I hadn't done that since my teens.

There we were stood on the A595 on a quiet Saturday afternoon, muddy, smelly and damp with our thumbs poised. We got a variety of lifts, the first being a lady who only took us about a mile. Whether that had something to do with our smell we'll never know! Other people stopped, a German couple going to Coniston and a couple of girls wanting directions to Black Combe, ironic as we were trying to get away from there. Then the smallest car with 3 people inside and holiday luggage stopped; a French family who insisted they could take

us as far as the M6 at Kendal. The motorway was a challenge, we stood on the slip road, I know it's illegal but it was the only way. A black BMW 4X4 stopped. At this point the mud was dry but dropping off. He said he could take us as far as Preston. He was a Psycho-Therapist who had been at a seminar about the role of money in the modern day life; apparently he had issues in the past, a gambler I think. At Preston we were stood again on a slip road but it lead to the M61, 56 and 6, no one stopped.

How did we ever manage before mobile phones? If we had a phone we could ring Nick to pick us up, if we had change we could use a phone box, if there were any phone boxes! We found ourselves on an Industrial Estate outside a huge factory with a manned gatehouse; the security guide was kind enough to let us use the phone. Nick came and got us and I was home before 8pm, what a day, what an adventure, with an end result of one or two toilet seat points and a lesson learnt to always read all the information!!

Elise Milnes

A Thank You to Pack Runs

I've just got back from a run. Which I enjoyed. This is A Big Deal. A year ago, as I anxiously mm-hmm'ed to Antony's suggestion that we go try a local fell running club's pack run, I'm not sure I'd ever enjoyed 'going for a run' (sample size: ~5). I'd always favoured sports where you could sit down and do nothing half the time - I spent most of my



teenage years rowing, and then transitioned to mountain biking at university. Since then I'd dabbled in most flavours of cycling, but remained stubbornly reluctant to get off my ass.

And then we moved to Yorkshire. And soon realised that a) biking is brutal here and we might want to try something else, b) the trails would not hold up well in winter and c) fell runners have a habit of yomping past you as you slog over the hills, suggesting they are fitter than you. I guess deep down I knew it would probably be good for me. Unlike the other option of a pie-and-no-exercise-because-it's-grim-out-there lifestyle.

And so off we went, with zero idea of what to expect, though I nervously read the 'pack run' page of the website several times over. I went out with the 'slow' group, and weirdly, wasn't actually hanging off the back wheezing like an old Labrador. I felt ok, and everyone was super friendly, and I actually had enough breath to join in conversations. Huzzah! My overriding thought was 'maybe this isn't so bad after all'. Actually, if I'm honest, I was probably just very pleased with myself for going on a 'real' fell run - go me! Short-shorts and vests ahoy!

After a few weeks in the nurturing environment of the slow group, I bit the bullet, and upgraded myself to 'medium'. >gasp< This was a step up (and back, towards old-Labrador status), but again, everyone seemed very accommodating, even if I didn't know everyone's names, and I was quite happy to shlomp along huffing and puffing towards the back of the pack, listening to Toddies FM as everyone else chattered away about races and injuries. And so it went, through winter as the group sizes shrank and we formed a little core of hardy mediums, and into spring and the return of the roadies.

And now it seems a year has passed since my first tentative shamble round the moors. I still wouldn't say running is 'my sport' but the Wednesday trot is firmly part of our routine, and even as work trips and body fails have interrupted things (I needed to be able to join in on the injury chat, right?), I'm so glad I made it to that first run. It really opened the gate to fell running for me. And now, even if it isn't full on bear hugs and chest-bumps when we meet up with you all,

there is an amiable undercurrent of companionship, and I've picked up a few really good friends through the club. So thank you all, joining the pack runs has been a wonderful way to explore the area, find out just how boggy the middle of a moor can be (thanks Dave), and do a long-format pub crawl.

And maybe, just maybe, this coming year will see me try racing for the first time. It would probably be good for me.

Edit: Since time of writing, Celia did her first ever fell race, Withins Skyline, which was also her third run since breaking her shoulder. She finished covered in bog, chuffed to bits. –Ed.



The MAD BADGERS' Mediterranean to La Manche (M2M): Nice to Caen along the river systems of France

Simon Anderton, Richard Leonard, Phil Hodgson

Nice – 3pm on the first Friday in May. We'd flown in from Leeds/Bradford, assembled our bikes and panniers, disposed of the cardboard bike boxes and were ready to start another cycling adventure. Other than the ferry from Caen, two weeks hence, we'd booked nothing. We were carrying lightweight camping gear and a map of France. Where we ended up each day would be down to the weather, our fitness and whatever route tickled our fancy when we planned the following day each evening. Having touched the blue waters of the Med just outside Nice a 40 kilometre afternoon ride took us northwest to

the municipal campsite in Grasse, the “perfume capital” of the world. Quite apt really; wherever we ended up over the ensuing two weeks we always came up smelling of roses.



HIGHLIGHTS

It's bit colder than we anticipated!

The Verdon Canyon was one of the “must do’s” of the trip. Canyons, by definition, scythe their way through high ground. After a long, long climb on day two, battered by torrential downpours, we found ourselves 900m above sea level at Comps. The municipal campsite, although a little run down, had a saving grace: a heated toilet block. We spent a pleasant evening with the block to ourselves drinking strong Belgian beer to fortify ourselves against the prospective long cold night in damp tents.

The Corniche Sublime...

The road along the south lip of the Verdon Canyon is known as the “Corniche Sublime”. We’d told Simon that we vaguely remembered that the 50 kilometres of road to Lac St Croix was mainly downhill. Our memories were wildly optimistic. The balcony route undulates along the meandering rim of the “grand canyon of Europe”, ascending over 1000m before it finally plunges down to Lac St Croix. We cer-

tainly deserved our pizza lunch, sat in the sun, in a small village overlooking the aquamarine Lac.

Not Ventoux...

Our planned assault on Ventoux foundered when we discovered that there was still snow up there! We'd also anticipated riding over the Massif Central in a northwesterly direction but, with Simon's knee playing up, our mercurial plan morphed into a route which would follow some of the mighty rivers of France. This would increase the distance to be ridden but reduce the climbing; an enticing compromise. So, day four found us freewheeling in a southwesterly direction from Riez to join the River Durance as it swings westwards and skirts the Parc Naturel Regional du Luberon. The pleasant country roads should have provided easy riding but our lack of planning hadn't prepared us for the Mistral. We were head-on into this fierce wind cycling "through and off" for hours, each one of us taking repeated turns at the front. (Apparently the maddening effects of the Mistral can still be used in a French criminal court to justify the murder of one's spouse!). Arriving at the campsite in Cavaillon the reception staff greeted us with "You are cycling in the Mistral? Are you crazy?" ... "and you're camping in tents?!" Taking pity on us they let us put our tents up in the lee of an unoccupied cabin where we would be sheltered from the howling gale. "...and you can use the table and chairs on cabin balcony." Luxury J.

Sur le pont...

A visit to Decathlon was needed before we departed Cavaillon. I needed a warmer fleece and Simon's trouser flies had been broken since the day we landed! Arriving in the magnificent walled town of Avignon just after lunch we went to the tourist information centre. Humming the famous song we asked "Where is the Roman Bridge?" They looked at us quizzically. "Roman?" ... "You know, like in the song" ... "Oh, you mean Pont d'Avignon. It's 12th century, not Roman"

Suitably chastised we visited the bridge. There was only half of it left. Quite appropriate really as we only know half the words to the song!

On, on...

We turned north and followed pleasant flat cycleways and quiet roads, now with the unpredictable mistral blowing us north, along the banks of the mighty Rhone, up through Valence, and over into the upper Loire valley. We continued up the Loire through Roanne and Nevers, and then along the Cher valley before rejoining the Loire at Blois.



Where's the road gone?

As we turned down a quiet lane we spotted the large “Route Barre” sign. Confident that this would likely consist of minor roadworks, easily passable on a bicycle, we carried on for several kilometres down the lane. Turning a corner we found our onward route blocked by a large mesh fence...beyond which the road ended abruptly in a yawning precipice. Over the edge we could see major earth moving works were in progress. Fortunately the workmen were on their lunch break. We prised open part of the fence and, removing panniers, managed to wheel our bikes down a steep crumbling arête of rubble. Having leant our bikes against the dormant bulldozers we climbed

back up for our panniers. Descending back to the bikes we heard the bulldozer engines roaring to life. Just in time we rescued our bikes, and tracked by the bemused stares of the workmen, we traversed the 100m of mud to the other side of the chasm and the severed road ahead.

St Jacques looks after us...

We'd ridden most of the day in torrential rain and bore a closer resemblance to drowned rodents than mad badgers. We arrived in the village of St Symphorien late in the afternoon. "Who's up for a hotel then?" someone asked. Consensus quickly affirmed we asked a local where we might find one. "There ees no 'otels eer", he replied, "but you might be able to stay at the pilgrim's gite. Just ask at the town hall". We walked, dripping, into the foyer and Simon, in his best French, explained that whilst not technically pilgrims walking the Way of St Jacques to Santiago de Compostela, we had cycled a bloody long way and had a very long way to go. A quick phone call confirmed that for 10 euros each we would be welcome to stay at the gite. We had the place to ourselves and spent a very warm and pleasant evening much appreciative of St Jacques hospitality.



Happy camping...

From the Loire we headed northwest up into Normandy. A long day in the saddle found us in the town of La Ferte Bernand. At the tourist

office we asked where the camping municipal could be found. "It is closed down", the nice tourist info lady told us. "The nearest campsite is 30km to the east". "We're not going that way, we're heading north-west", we told her. "In that direction it's 40km to the nearest campsite" she shrugged. We weighed up our options. "We'll have to find a hotel", we decided. The tourist info lady weighed us up. "I live in town and I have a large lawn ... you could camp on it if you'd like?" Gobsmacked we quickly agreed. She gave us directions and told us that her teenage sons would let us in the house to use the shower. Result! ...and it got better. Having pitched our tents on the lawn we strolled into town and found that it was Affligem (strong Belgian beer) happy hour at a local bar. Perfect J.

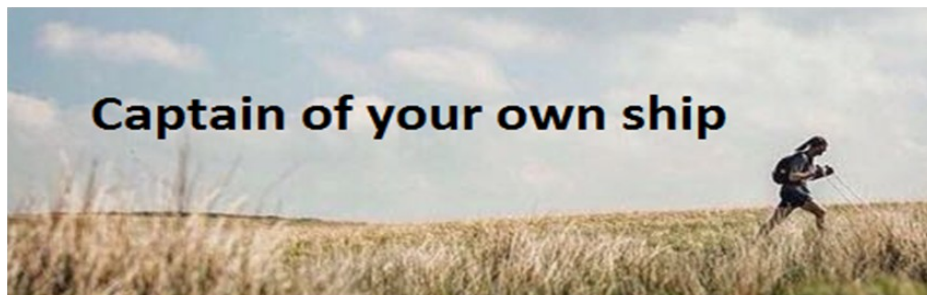
Normandy hospitality...

Our penultimate day saw us cycling through Normandy in repeated torrential showers. Arriving in Vermoutiers we were soaked and decided for the second time on the trip to swallow our pride and find a hotel. We spotted the Hotel Soleil D'Or in the town square and went inside to enquire, depositing a trail of water on the tiled floor. The lady looked us up and down. "Room for two", she asked. "Yes please" we replied. Well you'd better get out of those wet clothes straight away then. I'll wash and dry them for you", she smiled. Yet again St Jacques was looking after us.

* * * * *

So, after 14 days averaging 100km/day we reached Caen ferry port and the end of our French cycling odyssey. We walked down the beach and touched the grey waters of La Manche (the English Channel). A great trip and a fine adventure. Next up? ... it surely has to be the Way of St Jacques!

Phil Hodgson



How the Dragon was Slain

For those of you who are familiar with the Dragon's Back race, you'll understand why all of Daz's race account won't quite fit in these pages, so we've included some excerpts. The rest of Dazz's account can be found online at adventureandcake.wordpress.com/dragon –Ed.

It's Friday morning and I wake up feeling nauseous after yet another restless night's sleep. I'm awoken by someone in the tent getting his gear ready. I check my watch. It reads 4.54am. 4.54am! Oh gawd, I think, I'm so tired and I feel so sick!

It's the final morning of the Dragon's Back Race and I'm starting to fall apart! The last four days have taken their toll on me now. Also, the weather hasn't helped, with hot sunny weather every afternoon since Monday and today is meant to be even hotter!

I crawl out of my sleeping bag, put on some clothes, grab my cup and bowl and head out of the tent. I eventually find myself staring into a bowl of beans, veggy sausage and egg, clutching a cup of coffee. I stare, and stare at the contents in the bowl. I need to eat it but I don't want to. I just feel sick. There is nobody at the side of me telling me to eat, either! I look up and glance around the marquee at other 'runners' who look just how I feel! I'm not on my own here, I think. I finish my coffee and start to eat. I have to eat! Today will be tough and I need fuel. Approximately 39 miles with over 7000ft of ascent.....in the heat.....after 4 previous days.....and I'm falling apart! I laugh to myself "Daz!" I say, "This is what you signed up for! This is

what you've been expecting for the last 5 years! Did you really expect to coast around it? This, by far, is not a fun run!"

But what brought me here? Why, I ask, did I want to do a race billed as one of the toughest races in the world? I'm no superhuman! I'm not a race winner.....by far! But the challenge, pushing yourself and being as far away from your comfort zone as possible! That's what can drive anyone's desire to complete anything in life.....and the Dragon's Back Race was the challenge I wanted to complete!

Ultra Distance Running.....I've always loved to do it. Even before I was running, I walked long distances. Days in the 80's & 90's were spent bagging as many summits as possible or long days on the Pennine moors! I loved it! I remember doing the Welsh 3000's way back in the early 90's . That was a long, long day! Setting off at 4 in the morning to climb Crib Coch, feeling that I could never climb Pen-y-ole-wen and finally finishing at the chippy in Bethesda to find out my home team, Oldham, had beaten Liverpool to stay in the Premier League (yes, it was that long ago!). Such a great day.

Back in 2012, the Dragon's Back Race was resurrected after it was last run in 1992. I had never heard of it until then. The route looked really tough. 5 days of mountainous territory and enough climbing to scale Everest....twice! 1 day would be enough for me, never mind 5 continuous days!

* * *

DAY 1 – Carneddau, Glyderau and the Snowdon Massif – 52k/3800m

I woke up at 4.30am. The start was at 7am so I had to be up early (good practice for the following 4 mornings). I stuck the Premier Inn kettle on, showered, dressed, taped my feet, packed, repacked and repacked my rucksack again, just in time for the kettle to come to the boil! Anyone who's stayed in a Premier Inn must know about the age it takes for the kettles to boil! I was surprised that I wasn't nervous.

To be honest, the last week or so I had just wanted to start and get on with it. This event had had such a big build up with training etc. I was just looking forward to finishing! Before I knew it, I was at Conwy Castle, the iconic start of the race. I had seen this scene many times before on the 2012 DVD and here I was! I don't like to use



Moments to go! The boys from Tent 22

the word 'amazing' preferring to keep that word for biblical events, but to be honest, the atmosphere within the castle grounds was amazing.....just! Everyone was there, including the local male voice choir! At the start of the 2012 DVD, the male voice choir set up the beginning of the race and now, hearing it in real life, the hairs on the back of my neck (and back.....but sadly not on my head) were standing



up! It was quite emotional standing there waiting to start. 5 minutes to go and Shane the RO gave a final briefing, mainly telling everyone to really enjoy the journey. I gave Joolz one last kiss and hug and moved to the other side of the starting gantry, ready for the off.

Suddenly, there were 10 seconds to the start! The seconds counted down on the big display....10...9...8...7...6...5! Suddenly I'm thinking 'Did I pack my compass?'...4... 'Hmm. Foot still feels tender'... 3... 'Should have eaten more breakfast'...2... 'I need the toilet!'...1... OFF!

And that was it. I was off. I was running the iconic Dragons Back Race.....for real! The start of the race is like a procession, similar to bike races. In our case, all the runners jogged along the castle walls

whilst spectators clapped and cheered. The time actually started once we left the castle and dibbed at the side of the road. Steve Birkinshaw, winner of 2012, actually went to the toilet once the race had started so when he caught up with the leading runners, he was actually 5 mins in front!

Soon, we found ourselves climbing steadily up Conwy Hill towards the first checkpoint. I walked most of this as there was no point rushing at this stage. Drones flew above us, filming the line of runners up the first hill. We'll see many of them this week, I thought. In fact, I never saw another one all week! I dibbed at the top of Conwy Hill, looked back at the castle one last time, then turned onwards towards the Carneddau Range and the whole of Wales!

The weather was kind and the day had started calm and clear. Visibility higher up wouldn't be a problem. I had reccied this section only 2 weeks earlier and then the weather was horrendous. The route here is simple and the climbing is kind. You could easily get carried away with running too much and too hard along the Carneddau. And I was! I had pulled away from a few friends so slowed it down, especially around Pen yr Ole Wen. The descent from Pen yr Ole Wen was slow for me and I was glad to arrive at the midway support point at Llyn Ogwen.

For the race leaders, the midway point is just a quick stop to replenish food, have a quick drink and off! All streamlined to a few minutes. For me and many more, it took more than a few minutes before I even unpacked my bag. The midway bags are all lined up on the floor in numerical order. A member of the crew would have your bag ready for you when you arrived. I found a place to sit down and enjoyed the food I had packed. During the running, I had mainly survived on sweets, flapjacks etc. but at the midway point, I had packed a cold food pouch containing potatoes and beans and a tin of rice pudding for each day. I ate the lot! Once done, all rubbish had to be placed back in your kitbag and I was off again.....straight up Tryfan!

I know I said in the last paragraph that the potatoes, beans and rice pudding was great, but within half an hour, I was regretting my choice of food. Tryfan was straight up and my food nearly went the same way! It's a tough climb to the top after the midway point. Maybe I should have done as the race leaders did and not hang around. However, the sickness passed and the top was reached. Luckily, the race does not make you leap the two standing stones at the top, Adam and Eve! Good job as the wind was quite strong at this point! I then headed down towards the col before Bristly Ridge, leaping, scrambling and wandering slightly too far to the right, down Tryfan.



Descending off Tryfan (the guy behind me was NOT in the race!)

I met Joolz, Clare and Elise halfway down Tryfan as they were supporting the event for the day. I stopped and chatted for a bit. They were going to meet me once more at Pen y Pass and would say their goodbyes then. So off I went again, eventually climbing over the Glyders. On the climb along side Bristly Ridge, the weather closed in. The wind had gradually picked up and now the cloud had dropped so the traverse of the Glyderau was spent in cloud, battling against gales! It was quite grim up there, but you soon drop off the top, heading towards Pen y Pass. John Minta and Mick Cooper caught up

with me on the descent. These were my tent buddies for the week, along with 5 others and we ran much of the rest of the day together.

We arrived at Pen y pass and met the girls. Also, it was a chance to pop in the café to buy something if you wished. The race rules on sup-

port are simple. No one can give a runner support but if it's available to all runners, then it's ok. So, Joolz couldn't give me food, but I could buy it from the café. Simple and fair. I opted for a bottle of coke, said my farewells to the girls, as they were going home from here, and headed up Crib Goch!



Faffing at Pen y Pass

The weather now was nasty, but not wet. This section would test the mudrunners, I thought. On the ridge, Mick had managed to get in front of a small group but John and I couldn't get past them. We never saw Mick again until back at camp! On the ridge, the cloud shrouded us and the drops on either side of the ridge looked even more dramatic and scarier! The wind also made it slow going but John and I eventually got to the other side. Snowdon was quickly done. No hanging around up here. Two weeks ago, Snowdon was very, very busy as it was a glorious day. Today? Other than the marshal at the check point, I never saw another soul!

We were soon descending, picking up the odd sole runner, who looked a bit lost. Eventually we were a posse of 6 as we ran into camp. It was on the final descent that I noticed my left leg IT band felt tight. Knowing that I hadn't had an issue with my IT bands for years, I thought it would be fine by the following morning. I dibbed at the camp and the 1st days running was over. Just 4 more days like that to go!

Dazz Graham

To read the full story of Daz's awesome adventure down the backbone of Wales, go to adventureandcake.wordpress.com/dragon

TOILET SEAT

GRASS UP ON THEIR STUPIDITY ETC. AND EMAIL PAPPA
DANNY TODMAN TOILETSEAT@TODHARRIERS.CO.UK



SOME GREAT EFFORTS SO FAR IN THE MOST ENTERTAINING OF THE CLUB CHAMPIONSHIPS. HERE WE HAVE THE TIP OF THE ICE-BERG IN JUST SOME OF THE ACTS OF STUPIDITY THAT YOUR TEAMMATES WOULD LIKE TO CELEBRATE AND HONOUR IN THE TOD H. TOILET SEAT POINTS!!!

Lee McCluskey – Got lost on recce of Calderdale Way and didn't even manage to finish the recce, lucky Roger knew the way come race day - 5 Points

Nick Barber – Got confused over the whereabouts of pack runs, gets them wrong then right, then wrong then right again. – 5 Points

Dan – Dan's modified Nike Fell shoes fell apart at Heptonstall, after he showed them off to everyone before the race – 5 Points

Robin Tuddenham – Robin flew to Northern Ireland for the Donard Challenge British Champs Race only to find out he hasn't entered. He managed to blag Paul Hobb's place to avoid total embarrassment- but still gets 5 points

Dan T – Left his shoes at home when going direct from work to help with Andy's BG, detour home on the way – 5 points

Robin Tuddenham – Enters Tebay via Sport Ident, but again no entry. Can someone please enter Robin in future. - 5 more points

Chris Goddard – Crack cartographer Chris was getting his kit ready to be checked before the last leg of the Calderdale Way Relay. What did he forget? Only his map and whistle! He was seriously thinking about quickly drawing one, but luckily David Leslie stepped in with spares. – well done Chris 5 points

Nick B – Finished leg 4 of Peters Bob Graham and got stuck into a buffet in the back of a car. Unfortunately it wasn't Peters support Team – Buffetastic and 5 Points

Graeme Brown – Fancied a brew after Wasdale, so put the Kettle on the hob. A funny smell starts to hit the room and he realises its an Electric Kettle – Well done Graeme 6 points (5 + bonus for extra stupidity)

Dan Taylor – Knackered after the Holme Moss Fell Race (first AL since his accident). Dan asks Stu W if he beat 2 ladies they were battling with early on in the race. Unfortunately Stu had been dropped off 5 minutes earlier. – 5 more points

Graeme Brown - Graham was looking forward to seeing British Sea Power at the Trades Club. Whilst at Jack the Barbers he found out it was the previous night- Well done Graeme 5 more points

Richard Butterwick – Richard was enjoying himself so much at Norland Moor that he followed the leading runners the wrong way, adding a km on to the race and being overtaken by Matt and Duncan. - 5 Points

Points Table September 1st 2017
1st Dan Taylor - 15 Points
2nd Graeme Brown - 11 Points
3rd = Nick Barber - 10 Points
Robin Tuddenham - 10 Points
5th = Lee McCluskey - 5 Points
Chris Goddard - 5 Points
Richard Butterwick - 5 Points

A Spooky Tale from Stu...



My first pair of fell shoes, Inov8 Mudclaws. Given to me on my 40th birthday by a fell running friend (and Toddie) I'd been a "roadie" for a few years and was initially a bit apprehensive but my first steps off road in my pristine new Mudclaws I immediately felt at home, reassured that I was safe with great grip and flexibility, I loved these shoes right from the start and together we had numerous adventures on training runs, we joined the Harriers together, ran pack runs and many races.

After a couple of years the grips wore almost smooth so I bought a new pair, chucked the old things in the bin and that was that.

Only it wasn't, the next day I walked past the bin and there they were, on the floor. Strange I thought, and threw them in the bin again.

The day after I opened my front door ...and there were the old Inov8's again "the wife must've retrieved them I thought" I threw them back in the bin, told Joolz that I'd thrown them out and said not to get them out back again, "wasn't me" she said. Mmm?

In the middle of that night I awoke to the sound of banging at the

door. I rushed downstairs opened the door ..there's the Mudclaws again. Mudclaw prints all over the door, As if the shoes themselves were trying to kick the door in?

Angry now I put them in a bag, tied the top tight and the next day took them to Baitings reservoir and threw them in. I watched the bag disappear into the depths of the cold peaty water and I returned home.

Asleep that night I was tormented by dreams of being chased across the fells by ghostly Inov8s. Same again the next night ...and the next ...and so on for weeks until I couldn't take it anymore.

Desperate for the torment to end I went to the local church and spoke to the priest for advice...

The priest told me that my shoes were broken hearted and that he could offer prayers for them. If this works then the shoes would be happy, the happy shoes would then get into heaven and my torment would end.

You see, it turns out ...shoes have soles.

Stu Wolstenholme



Thanks again to everyone who has contributed to this edition of the Torrier. We'll be going to print again in Spring, which means that you should start writing for the next one now! Send **word docs** (not PDFs) and pictures to kkashworth@gmail.com...and you could win a prize!*

Ed.

*prizes subject to availability and/or editor's discretion. 'Prize' meant in the loosest sense of the term, i.e. not as good as a toastie maker. Or two. Prizes may take a while to materialise.



Saturday 16th December

Todmorden Cricket club 7:00 till 1:00

TODMORDEN HARRIERS

CELEBRATE 2017

Presentation of trophies and certificates for all championships

7:45 VEGAN FEAST

**WILDER THAN THE WEST, DRESS TO IMPRESS
A BARN DANCE WITH ATTITUDE!**

LAST CHANCE SALOON BAND

**Disco till 1:00 AM with 1 of TH's resident DJ's and his fruit
salad light show.... Branny!**

£15 per person , please make payment to Todmorden Harriers send or
give to Mel Blackhurst

Mel Blackhurst Cragg Holme, Cragg Vale, Hebden Bridge West Yorks
HX7 5SQ

Name.....

No. of tickets.....

Any dietary requirements, please email kkashworth@gmail.com