



BCR

NEWSIE



FEBRUARY



2022



IN THIS EDITION...

Membership Update by Matt Rooke	2
Running the Lakeland 100 by Simon Austin	3
Meet the Captain An interview with Matthew Allen	4
Tim's Ten Years of Fell Running by Tim Ripper	6
366 Days of Running by Matt Rooke	9
Running for Ice Cream: Black Combe Galore by Jess Hartley	10
BCR Gatecrash a Hash by Beth Ripper	12
Taking it 'Easy' on the SILVA Great Lakeland 3Day by Emma Seery	14
A Year at BCR: Notes from a Newbie by Robbie Driscoll	15
RAS: The Will to Endure Epic Days by Josh Hartley	16
Turf Eventing: Another Way to Get a Running Fix by Chris Roberts	19
Unfinished Business: The Cumbria Way by Eleanor Claringbold	20
When BCR Met John by Gavin Lloyd	22

EDITOR'S NOTE

It's been a pleasure to compile everyone's reflections, stories and ramblings about all things related to running and BCR. I hope you enjoy reading, and all suggestions or ideas for future editions are welcome. Bring on 2022!

Robbie



MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

by Matt Rooke

In 2021, we have passed the 100-member milestone. This is a great achievement for a year that started in lockdown and demonstrates how important our lockdown challenges and the return of social running has been.

The graph below shows how our membership has varied over the past 6 years. Growing trend!

If you know of anyone who would like to join, then direct them to our membership form: <https://forms.gle/SEPPZCZtzPApPeMj9>

At £5 a year, we are very cheap. Remember — to race for BCR, you should be either EA affiliated through the club or a member of the FRA. This is essential for national champs and relays.

As a fell-only club, members of non-fell clubs can join us to race on the fells, and I'm quite happy to fill in the forms to let our members run XC, road, trail and track (or throw stuff and jump over things) for another club. Or even race walk.

Club kit in stock:

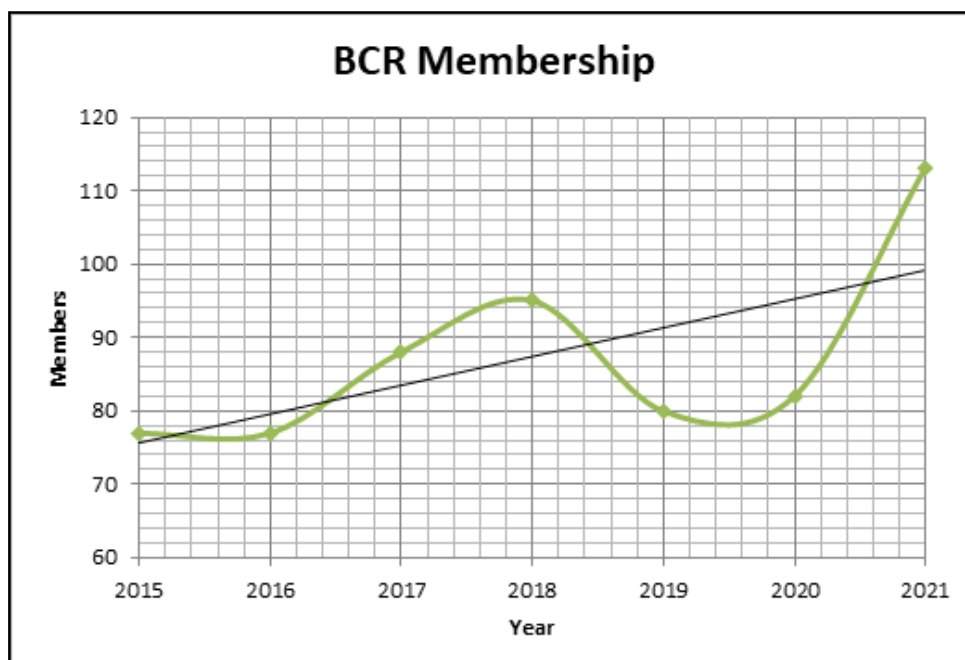
- Vests: £15 (adult); £9 (kids)
 - * Men S, M, L, XL
 - * Women 8, 10, 12, 14
 - * Kids 5-6, 7-8, 9-10
- A few Giraffes (not the original multifunctional neckwear) left at £7
- Race t-shirts: £16.50
 - * Men S, M
 - * Women 10

Membership Fees Reminder

Please don't forget to pay your membership fees if you haven't already. It's £5 for club membership, plus £16 if you want EA affiliation. £3 for Juniors.

Payment can be made via bank transfer:

Account name: 'Black Combe Runners'
Sort code: 09-01-56
Account number: 41744188



RUNNING THE LAKELAND 100

by Simon Austin

On the weekend of the 23rd to the 25th July, I competed in the Lakeland 100 with Paul and Alastair. The race is a 105-mile ultra marathon, starting in Coniston and going through the Lake District, taking in Buttermere, Keswick, Pooley Bridge and Ambleside, before ending up back in Coniston.

The time limit for this is 40 hours, and the race is non-stop (so no time for sleep)! Training for the event went as well as it could have done with the pandemic going on, so I was feeling confident. The race started at 6pm on Friday evening, to the cheers of the Coniston residents lining the streets, which was amazing. Friday night was challenging: even at 1am going over Black Sail Pass, it was

almost 20 degrees, which proved too much for a number of competitors. Myself and Paul tagged along with each other from this point, and this proved to be the case for the rest of the race. The cooler weather on Saturday morning was a relief, and upon reaching the halfway checkpoint at Dalemmain 60 miles in (just outside Pooley Bridge), I was still feeling strong and moving well. This is also where the 50-mile event starts from. Going into Saturday night, fatigue was starting to kick in and my feet were getting more and more painful, so I was slowing down to a walk. Reaching Ambleside at midnight, I knew I had 10 hours to finish the final 15 miles, so it was a case of fuel up and keep moving. Paul stuck with me from this point back and was a massive help in getting me round. Not far from Coniston, I was starting to hallucinate (I saw a field full of camels... don't ask!), and I just wanted to finish. I got back into Coniston at 6:30am on Sunday morning, crossing the line after 36 hours and 35 minutes. A marshal asked for my name when I crossed the line, and as I was competing in the 100-mile event, this was passed to the announcer, who announced me in as a 100 finisher. It's an incredible feeling to hear your name called out and so many people cheering you in for finishing. After the event, I ended up being on crutches for 3 days, as I could not walk at all, and it took me 3 weeks before I was able to run again.

Fun fact: at one point, myself, Paul and Alastair said we would never do this again. However, unsurprisingly, all three of us enjoyed the pain so much that we are doing the 100 again this year!



MEET THE CAPTAIN

AN INTERVIEW WITH MATTHEW ALLEN

Eleanor and I invited club captain Matthew Allen over on his birthday to interview him for a 'Meet the Captain' feature. We were joined last-minute by Josh Hartley, Rob Browne and Dan Hartley, who helped us ply Matthew with plenty of wine before plying him with questions. Here's a (heavily redacted) version of how it went:

Have you always been called Matalan?

Matthew: I haven't always been called Matalan. Matalan is, I would say, BCR-specific... or my northern calling.

Robbie: How do you feel about Matalan?

Matthew: Being named after a clothing and homeware retailer is not ideal...

[General cries of outrage and disbelief from around the room.]

...but it has caught on with everyone. I am not precious about it whatsoever.

What was your first social run?

Matthew: I remember driving all the way round to Millom for a social run and thinking this was bloody miles away. I joined a very welcoming bunch of people to go for a run across the estuary, led by Karl. I had not come prepared to be waist-deep in seawater.

Robbie: When would this have been?

Matthew: So, I'm a southerner masquerading in the north. I did the Saunders Lakeland Mountain Marathon in August 2013, which happened to be on Black Combe, and then started work at the GSK facility in Ulverston where I met Pete Tayler who quickly got me involved. I remember meeting Tim and Beth, and James who was trying to sell me financial advice.

It was a really good run, and I obviously got hooked from there.

Do you remember your first race?

Matthew: I do remember my first race — it was Black Combe. I was in a pair of New Balance trail shoes. By the end of it, I put a hole in them and ripped most of the sole off and thought, "No, you can't run a fell race in this kind of thing." So, I swiftly bought myself a pair of inov8 Mudclaws.

What are your personal goals for this year (running-related)?

Matthew: There are probably a few. I'm not getting any younger, so... speed work.



Dan: Stop lying — you want to continue to kick Robbie's arse.

Matthew: To beat the young whippersnappers, I need to be quicker. I am loving the club rivalry at the minute, with the likes of Ethan, Gavin and Robbie, so that spurs me on. For me, it's more about tactics and nous.

I think as you get older, you tend to focus more on the longer runs, so maybe I might try and do a few more classics this year. And then, I've obviously done a Bob Graham Round, so I would really like to do umm... the one in Wales, which I should know the name of.

Robbie: The Paddy Buckley.

Matthew: The Paddy Buckley, thank you. You can edit that bit out.



What advice would you give to anyone taking on a long-distance challenge like a Bob Graham Round?

Matthew: Is it the 5 Ps or the 6 Ps? Prior preparation prevents piss poor performance. I think with something like the Bob Graham Round, the key is having the right people around you and setting a sensible schedule. Mentally, I pictured it like this: it's about 66 miles, so all you need to be doing is 3 miles an hour which is not a lot more than walking pace. I really enjoyed trying to pick people to pair with me on each leg.

Josh: What was the food that kept you going?

Matthew: Well, I'm very lucky — I have a strong stomach. I just ate normal stuff. I had made myself little lunchboxes, some wraps with various things. It is important to keep yourself fuelled, eating the right quantities at the right times. I overindulged at a few of the checkpoints. I could not resist the spread that Hazel laid on for me!



What are your plans and hopes for the club this year?

Matthew: I think maintaining the membership levels would be great. I appreciate people have other priorities, but I want to get everyone more confident about running on the fells. I'm not one to talk, but you've just got to put yourself out there and learn from your mistakes. You know, today I went out and ended up on Sour Howes in the complete mist, took a wrong line off the top, but it's knowing when you've gone wrong and being able to say, "Oh, crikey, I'm off course" and knowing how to correct yourself.

Dan: So, moving from being a follower on Tuesday nights to being more confident to do it on your own?

Matthew: Yeah, that's the kind of thing. So then you're confident to go and do a race or tackle something on your own.

What is your proudest moment as captain?

Matthew: I think it has to be the Fell Relays. Getting six teams out was great. On that note, I think we've got strong enough runners to get a team on the podium at either of the relay events. So, here's the plan: 2021 was about growth, 2022 is all about building confidence on the fells, and then what I think will be my final year as captain — we definitely need to go to the races in 2023!

If you had two hours to run anywhere, where would you run for two hours?

Matthew: errrr....

Dan: The Dolomites is the answer to your question.

Matthew: I was thinking more local, but I do love the Dolomites. I've been to Cortina d'Ampezzo too many times to remember. I love the mountain trails, the food and a good aperol spritz! One of my favourite races was the sister race to the North Face Lavaredo Trail — I signed up to the 50 or 60k shorter race. It was a cracking event with a great atmosphere.

What is your favourite thing about Black Combe Runners?

Matthew: The club is very welcoming and hopefully caters to many, whether you're just looking for a social catch up or looking to be more competitive.

Last but not least, what's your favourite whisky?

Matthew: That is tough. I might have to go home and look at the cabinet... A single malt from Scotland is a good place to start.



TIM'S TEN YEARS OF FELL RUNNING

by Tim Ripper

Whilst out on a run, it dawned on me that this year I have been fell running for 10 years! That got me thinking back over the highlights — I thought I'd share one standout run from each year.

2011 — A friend invited me to join a BCR social run...

"I don't really enjoy running that much. Why would I want to try running up hills?"

"Don't knock it 'til you've tried it."

"Ok, fair point..."

We ran up the Walna Scar road from the Newfield, with deeper and deeper snow as we went up. Onto White Pike, a beautiful bum slide in the snow down what I now know is really horrible scree, and falling through the mud on the final descent to the pub. Where do I sign up to do this every week?!!

2012 — Ian Hodgson Mountain Relay, Leg 4

I'd never run a race before and turned up feeling very out of place with my lycra cycling shorts. A quick trip to Pete Bland's van set me right with some nice short shorts (still got 'em), and I was ready to race. Richard Evans and I were running Leg 4, the grand finale. We took a gel to share (what was that about?!) and set off. I was a bit ahead on the climbs. He left me for dead on the descents. Unfortunately, it's



a very long descent from the top of St Sunday! But what a race... I was hooked. The cake wasn't half bad either!

2013 — Long Duddon

My first proper long race. It was a baking hot day, and I don't think I'd ever run this far before, but I set off at a decent pace anyway. By the Three Shires stone, I was hurting. Half way up Wet Side Edge I was crawling, and the leg cramps turned up shortly after. It's a long walk back from there. Will smiled as I wobbled across the finish line after 4 hours. "Aaah, the wooden legs. I know that feeling."

2014 — Bob Graham Round

Maybe the best day out in the fells with friends it's possible to have? I set off at midnight, with John Millen chasing me an hour later. I remember feeling steady and generally good until Leg 3 — John almost catching me on Leg 3 (which gave me a burst of energy!) — and almost falling asleep on Red Pike. The run in from Little Town was amazing, and I lasted all the way to Thirlmere on the drive home without being sick! I'm still amazed at how these days bring the club together for a fell running party.

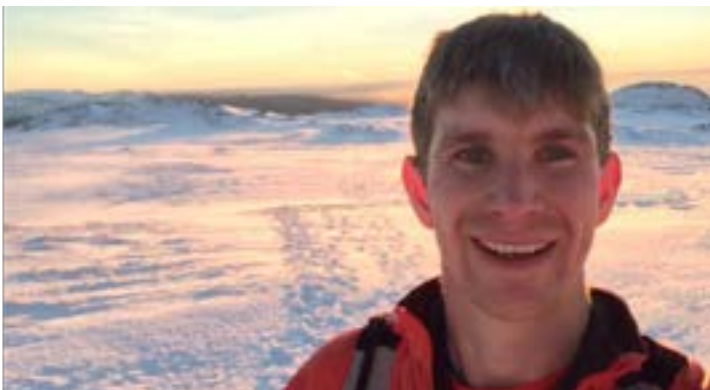


2015 – Glencoe Skyline

Something a bit different. I love the long classic fell races, but also enjoy a more adventurous mountaineering approach. Hearing that a race was being put together that ran the entire Glencoe skyline, including some great ridge scrambling, I signed up as soon as entries opened. My first taste of the world of skyrunning – a bit too commercial at the start, but the race itself was epic. Racing up Curved Ridge and along Aonach Eagach was pretty special. The final 5-mile gentle uphill to the finish was epic in a different way – as were the midges!

2016 – Big 3 at 30. Specifically, failed winter BG attempt

I'm not entirely sure where this idea came from, but it seemed silly enough to be worth having a go! With the Paddy Buckley (Wales) and Charlie Ramsey (Scotland) rounds complete, I decided to wait and go for a winter Bob Graham. End of November, the snow turned up. Anna joined me on Leg 2, then I was alone again. I remember a stunning sunrise across Langdale, swimming up Foxes Tarn gully (with snow up to my armpits and icicles falling around me), and a snow ridge of pure perfection out to Steeple in the sunset. By the time I got to Honister, I was totally and utterly spent (ask Beth and Matt!). I came back 3 weeks later and completed the round in much easier conditions, but it's the snowy one that sticks in the memory.



2017 – Beth's Bob Graham... or possibly Pikes of the Lakes

Can I have 2 memories for this year? Beth's Bob Graham was another great day out in the fells with friends. Preparing for big rounds seemed second nature by now, and it was great to see everyone come together to support on the day. The sunrise on Dollywagon was another lifelong memory. Beth was super strong throughout and flew into the



finish, making it all look rather easy. She then set me the challenge of running all the fells above 700m with the word 'Pike' in the name – a mere 90 miles all around the Lakes. We devised the route ourselves, did all our own support (i.e. Beth drove around the Lakes to feed me!), and I

ran it solo, finishing at the Blacksmiths Arms on a nice sunny Sunday afternoon. Probably my most memorable big round to date for its simplicity.

2018 – TransGranCanaria125

Another slightly different one, time to perfection – we flew back to the UK only a few days before Beth reached the stage in pregnancy where they prevent you from flying! I ran this race the year before, but this year the race was a better route, we had a great group of BCRs all staying in the same place, and I was feeling much better prepared – taking nearly an hour and a half off my previous time, on a longer 125 km course. The final dry riverbed was still torturous, but the high mountains were stunning, and not much beats the final mile of this race! And any race where you throw up on the finish line and the medic's solution is to give you a can of beer must have its priorities straight.



2019 — Lakes 2500 (now the Steve Parr Round)

I was encouraged to give this one a go by keeper of the long distance records Martin Stone, who was resurrecting it from the mid 80's. I put a route together and with some more super BCR support, set off. The first half went really well, the second less so. I almost stopped in Wasdale, but the party bus had been waiting for nearly 8 hours and there was no way they weren't getting a run out! It was this round where I perfected the use of a rock for a pillow, along with the 2-minute power nap on the fells. A sprint finish came out of nowhere and ended with us all sat drinking coffee in the sunshine outside the Moot Hall.



2021 — BCR Summer Challenge

It's been a slightly trickier year, running-wise — having moved house and with Sammy joining the family. My stand-out favourite running moment was probably watching Charlotte set off at a proper run across the tops of Hard Knott after some fairly serious scrambling on the way up. But my best personal running was at Sue's brilliant Mini Mountain Marathon. I set off early on a cracking summer's day and whilst my route broadly followed the Long Duddon, it veered off to all sorts of interesting little places. I remember running through the Coniston area feeling like I was in the Alps! We topped it off with food in the Newfield, beers around the fire and camping out in the field. Perfection. And a great way to say 'Thank You' to Black Combe Runners for a truly brilliant 10 years of fell running.



2020 — Lakeland Classics Round (aka the Ripper Round)

Another one from Beth (I really should stop listening to my wife!). She liked the idea of linking fell race routes together, and this quickly evolved into linking all the Lakeland Classic routes. After a few months of lockdown training, I was ready to have a go at something big. Fell runners are great, and people came out from all over the community to help out, feed me, abuse me for having shiny shoes, and prod me awake when I tried to sleep. You know you've done alright when Joss says "Well done, lad" at the end. The route trace afterwards is one I'll always feel proud of!



366 DAYS OF RUNNING

by Matt Rooke

In November 2020, Becca set a challenge for us to run till Christmas. I kept going.

Here are some stats:

- **Started:**
14/11/2020 (5 km “Not a Power Parkrun”, Grizedale Forest)
- **Ended:**
14/11/2021 (17.9 km Tim Watkins Trophy, Hutton Roof, Dalton Crags & Farleton Knott)
- **The Rule:**
At least 10 minutes of continuous running
- **Longest Run:**
BCR Summer Challenge, 26/06/2021 (28.83 km)
- **Shortest Run:**
Lots of up and down Hoad Hill (1 km)
- **Number of Races:**
39 (including Map Runs & Virtual Time Trials)
- **Total Distance Run:**
1612 km
- **Total Elevation Gain:**
> 40,000 m
- **Average Weekly Distance:**
31 km
- **Biggest Week:**
56 km
- **Easiest Week:**
13 km

My informal target was 30 km per week. Hitting 50 km between Christmas and New Year was an achievement. I doubt I’ve done that without racing an ultra since I was at university.

There were some long efforts, including the Summer Challenge and a run to Lowick Common with Matalan, but also some pathetic 10-minute jogs. The most ridiculous was probably running round Urswick playground for 10 minutes while watching the kids. The most irritating was on days I cycled to Barrow and back but still had to do a 10-minute run. I was playing Turf quite a bit last winter so one run took place between 02:00 and 03:00 to bag the Dark Ninja medal, and another to the church yard at 00:00 to claim the Ghost Minute medal.

Why did I stop? I hurt my knee orienteering at Hutton Roof. It was rocky, and I probably jarred it trying to cross some limestone. Exactly one year since I started, it had swollen up in the evening, so my attempt to run every day in 2021 was over. I managed the year though!

I think it has been worthwhile. I’ve not had any injuries from actually running, and my plantar fascia problems have eased to the point I’ve done quite a bit of road running. I’ve transitioned to a forefoot running style and am mainly using wide, zero drop shoes. My toes seem more flexible, and my legs ache less after running. Once my knee recovers, I will try to keep up doing something every day, but sometimes it will be on a bike.



RUNNING FOR ICE CREAM: BLACK COMBE GALORE

by Jess Hartley

I flipping love being out on the fells but am very much a dabbler when it comes to racing and really have to be in the mood for it. But when your club is organising two races up Black Combe in a weekend — what a challenge! Why not? :D

The Black Combe Dash (28/08/21) was a special one-off race for the English Champs series (due to another race not being able to go ahead), and a brand-new race route. Will R and the BCR team got to work preparing everything for the day. And what a cracking day it was — including an appearance of the sun! I'd done a warm up to watch the men's race come in which was all very exciting, seeing BCR's Josh H coming 33rd,



closely followed by Harry S in 35th, to name just a couple of the 23 BCRs (male and female) taking part in the race.

I'd spied the ice cream van in the finishing field (my absolute fav food), so I thought: excellent — that'll be my prize for keeping going! Before we knew it, we were off, the classic thoughts going through my head in the first mile of “why the heck am I doing it?”, “this hurts, I'm far too unfit”... and then there was the climb to the summit. Which just kept on going, and going, and going! I love a good climb and was in a pack of around 5 (including BCR's Ann E), all switching places, pushing each other on to see who'd be able to keep up, trying to pick the best lines through the heather and tussocks. All the time in the back of my mind, I was thinking, “Ouch, these stomach cramps are a bit unusual for me”.

I've never been so happy to see my parents marshalling at the top of Black Combe, knowing that was all the climbing over with, and after a very brief out-of-breath “hello”, it was next to decide which line to take off the top. Options included a shorter but tougher underfoot line (Josh H's



10

choice), or get to that tourist path ASAP and have an easier descent. Descending isn't my strong point, and in the panic of the moment I think I did a bit of both (ha ha)! I love running down Black Combe: you can get into such a nice rhythm, and peeling off to the third checkpoint (White Stones) was lovely and grassy. You can't beat the feeling of relief when you see that finishing field. I finished 147th in a time of 01:00:26, behind Ann in 143rd (01:00:06) and Steve W hot on my tail in 149th (01:00:41). I wasn't so happy to see the ice cream van had gone!! Noooo! Although this race is likely to be a one-off (??), I'd definitely be up for this route again.



Two days later, bank holiday Monday came around, and off we go to Bootle Show for our very own Pete T's 'Dark Side of the Combe' fell race. One I've done before, and every time I do it, I'm always shocked how long the climb is up Black Combe from that direction! If you've not done it before, it's a cracking day out — it's not a massive show, but it's packed with traditional Lakeland stalls and entertainment. In this race, the men and women set off together (including 12 BCRs). It was a fun (but painful) race up with some great tussles between me, Julian, Pat and Jon B. I still had those pesky stomach cramps but just tried to ignore them. It's a great (albeit a bit demoralising) route, as it's an out and back, which means you see all the faster runners running towards you whilst you're still climbing, but it's great to cheer on fellow racers as they fly down.

On my way to the summit, I'd made a bit of a gap, and with my downhill running not being the quickest, I ran as fast as I possibly could down the hill to see if I could hold anyone off. In the end, Pat M just had me in 01:29:23 (32nd), I finished in 01:29:32 (33rd), with Julian D close behind in



01:30:02 (34th). Meanwhile, BCR's Josh H came in 1st (01:05:03), and Harry S was close behind in 3rd (01:05:44) after taking a great line on the descent. And the bonus...? This time, the ice cream van was there when we finished — hurrah! I took the prize for the fastest lady of the combined Black Combe races — not too tricky when you're the only lady doing both (from what I can remember anyway). Oh, and in case you wondered, those stomach cramps, unbeknown to me at the time, were due to my unborn child!!



BCR GATECRASH A HASH



by Beth Ripper

Sue bounded ahead of me, gazelle-like, leaping over bogs and tussocks.

“I feel like Josh Hartley!” she yelled.

In which case, I must be Harry Stainton, I thought, grunting along shortly behind (no disrespect Harry...). We were both out front, leading the pack and weaving our way towards the summit of Muncaster Fell. It wasn't actually a race, but we certainly weren't going to let that get in the way of our newfound sporting prowess: we were busy earning our stripes as “FRBs”^{**} in our first ever Lune Valley Hash House Harriers (LVH3) event.

The LVH3 committee (known as the Mismanagement) had ‘disorganised’ a club trip over in the Eskdale Valley, and Chris Roberts (a hashing veteran) had kindly invited us along. I've since discovered that Chris was formerly The Grand Master of the LVH3 club, meaning that he was ‘someone of great standing and natural authority who makes the final indecision’. Quite something for the CV!



Anyway, what is hashing and how does it work? Well, I'm not entirely sure as I've only done the one and can't really be counted as an expert, but the general gist is that initially you have no idea where you're going to run. You just set off as a group and look out for clues as to where the trail might go — these might be blobs of flour on the floor or chalk markings on gate posts. Occasionally, you'll see a circle marked on the floor, which means the trail could follow any path at that junction. You then run about erratically until you find the right way. The incorrect trails will either have no flour blobs or be marked with a ‘T’ so you know to stop and turn around. The idea is that the faster runners do much of the buzzing about to locate the trail, whilst the rest of the group catch up, or maybe just loiter at a junction having a chat whilst the trail is being discovered. When you do find a flour blob (for some reason these were often on some cow pat or sheep poo), you shout “On on!” with great gusto... something I quite enjoyed. Sue was a bit crap at this bit. Though her running was fabulous.



I assumed the run would only take us on the trails around the Eskdale valley bottom, but I really enjoyed the route which followed some trail, climbed the length of Muncaster Fell, weaved through woodland on the Muncaster estate and tracked down to the beach at Ravenglass. Things came a bit unstuck here as the Mismanagement had unfortunately failed to factor in the high tide... a select group of dedicated hashers teetered along the shoreline attempting to scout out a possible way through, but a decision was quickly reached that turning around and heading to the pub was a better plan than wading through the sea.

Hashing clubs typically describe themselves as a drinking club with a running problem, so most of their outings culminate in a drink or meal at a local watering hole. For this outing, we stopped at the Ratty Arms in Ravenglass. We whipped off our shoes, peeled off our mud caked socks and sat down to grab some grub.

Once you've been on a few hash outings, the club will take the opportunity to grill you on your life story and assign a 'handle' — a nickname that's then used for you on every run. I'd heard them yell to each other "Baldrick!", "Hard Astern!" "Morticia!". I couldn't help but ask Chris what his handle was... he sighed and claimed he had no choice about the name. I'm still not sure how he acquired the handle "Large Package", though I suppose some stones are best left unturned...

Many thanks to Chris for the invite and to LVH3 for the fun outing — I really enjoyed it!

*FRB stands for Front Running... errr... People (this is a family publication after all...)



?? ? QUIZ CORNER ?? ?

Can you identify the BCRs from the race photos below with their faces obscured? Answers are at the bottom of the next page.



TAKING IT 'EASY' ON THE SILVA GREAT LAKELAND 3DAY

by Emma Seery

Before I moved to the Lakes, me and my friend Olivia signed up for the 2020 ROC Mountain Marathon. Just a couple of intrigued trail softies who like playing with compasses and thought of Bristol as a hilly place to run.

Two years later, thanks to COVID craziness, we finally ended up on the SILVA Lakeland 3Day event in August 2021. We didn't have a clue what it would be like, or really care to be honest. We were just excited it was actually going to happen.

But it turned out to be pretty epic, and I think some BCR-ers might like it.



First, there's the luxury. No carrying tents or other camp kit, just your hill kit for the day. You get hot water on tap, yummy food for sale, and a free beer at the end of the first day... all of which was a total surprise to us! Suddenly, it made far more sense why the marshall at the start

mocked me for packing a loo roll in my overnight bag.

Second, the courses involved some pretty hardcore fell running. Linear courses, with no marshalls and no easy options — just a lot of hills and a long way to travel. We did the second easiest of four courses — the Short Wainwright — where each day was a chunky 28 to 32 k, with 1300 to 2000 m of elevation. People we met on the easier 'gentle' Cafe course seemed generally pretty knackered, and confused by the lack of 'f***ing cafes'.



Third, the vibe was really lovely. Friendly mountain people of all ages, quizzes and giveaways in the evening. And did I mention the free beer at the end of day 1...??

Safe to say, me and Olivia didn't win any prizes. But we had some long days of type 2 fun, and did a hell of a tour of the Lakes.

We ticked off Silver Howe, Helm Crag, Pavey Ark (via Jack's Rake — pretty inefficient, but it seemed rude not to!), Harrison Stickle, Pike of Stickle, Thunacar Knott, High Raise, Ullscarf, Grange Fell, Glaramara, Allen Crag, Lingmell, Haystacks, Castle Crag, Bowfell, Blea Rigg, and Swinescar Pike.

We also stopped for picnics, which seemed to confuse and amuse the other Short Wainwright runners who we leapfrogged on the route (and who ultimately, largely, beat us to the finish).

And I learned what 'maceration' is, and how inadequate the best of tapes are on your feet over 3 long days. Mmmmm.

It ain't cheap, but it's a good one.



A YEAR AT BCR: NOTES FROM A NEWBIE

by Robbie Driscoll

Oh God, I can't run down there that fast.

Don't think, just run. Come on, you're losing her.

As I desperately try to find safe places to put my feet amongst the jagged, wet rocks and puddles of churned-up mud, I imagine an absurd apparition of Josh Hartley speaking to me, as if he's some kind of ghostly Jedi Master or the voice of God echoing from the heavens in Monty Python's *The Holy Grail*:

"Lean forward and don't look at your feet."

Don't look at my feet?! How am I supposed to negotiate my way down this hillside in one piece if I don't look at my feet? Right now, it feels like looking at my feet is my number one strategy for avoiding a trip to A&E. But Hollie's already approaching the bottom of the hill, and I'm determined to keep up, so, leaning forward and trying as hard as I can *not* to look at my feet, I launch myself after her through the rain.

The initial feeling of exhilaration quickly gives way to a sense of 'Ohmygod...I'mgoingtodie... WhatamIdoingwithmylife?', but within moments the ground is levelling off and Hollie is within touching distance again.

On the next descent, I start to feel like I'm getting the hang of this whole downhill running thing. Hollie's still setting a ferocious pace, but I'm just about managing to keep up, and (dare I say it) I'm actually enjoying myself. Maybe I've got the hang of this. Maybe I've cracked it. Maybe—

SQUELCH!

Suddenly, I'm lying in a deep puddle of



mud, which I'm sure Holly had just run across as if it were tarmac. She must have levitated. Two Helm Hill runners slow down to check I'm alright.

"All good thanks! Never had a softer landing!" I reply with unnecessary enthusiasm, springing to my feet and wiping mud from my face. Better crack on — doesn't seem like Hollie's in the mood for hanging around...

This was Leg 2 of the Hodgson Brothers Mountain Relay, and, apart from having to stop to tie my shoelaces twice, I hope I didn't let Hollie down too much. (Afterwards, Josh told me to push the bows under my laces — a new nugget of Jedi wisdom to tuck away for the next race day.)

Six months earlier, I'd never have imagined that the highlight of my October would be a day mostly spent standing around in soggy fields and playing one long game of car Jenga, all for the privilege of legging it up and down High Street in weather conditions that can best be described as "challenging". But I loved it, and on the drive home I was already itching for the next one.

Given that I'd only come along to my first social run a few months before, I want to say a massive thank you to everyone at BCR for being so welcoming and encouraging new members to get involved. I've got many highlights from my first year at BCR, from eating pizzas outside the Wolfpack after spending a glorious summer evening on Hard Knott, to watching Gavin (or should that be Ragnar Gavinsonn?) come charging out of the mist, sword in hand, at the Caw fancy dress race, just as we were sending out a search party to look for him. I hope the next year will be just as good, with more superb evenings out in the fells, a healthy amount of mud and rain, and probably fewer lost Vikings.



RAS: THE WILL TO ENDURE EPIC DAYS

by Josh Hartley

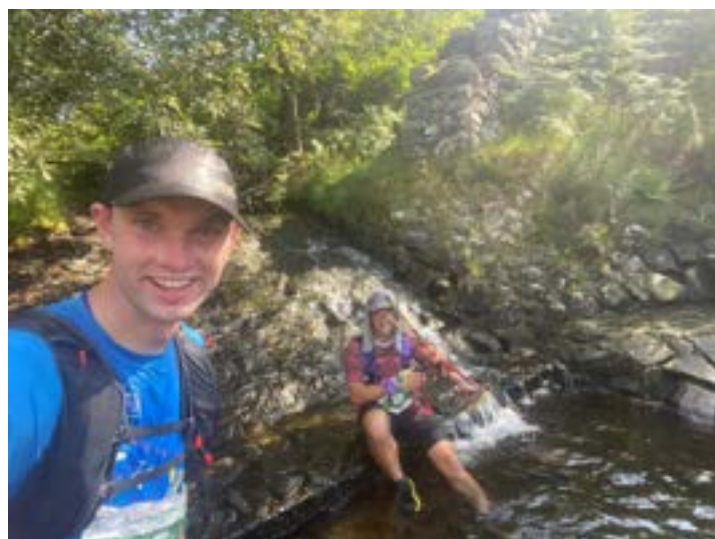
It might have been a chat with Tim about exploring more of Snowdonia that prompted the entry, or the timing of an ex-Black Comber race organiser (Mike Jones), who hit me with some good and timely marketing, but I can't be sure... Either way, I'm ever so glad I jumped into the unknown and entered the inaugural RAS (Race Across Snowdonia) in July 2021 — it's a race I will never forget.

For the statistic lovers out there: Day 1 – 40 miles (11,000ft) and Day 2 – 36 Miles (10,500 ft), with the added flavour that this was the hottest weekend of 2021...



Preparation-wise, I hadn't given it much thought, but I figured recent big races like Ennerdale, Caw and Wasdale (Ok maybe not Caw but it was brilliant) meant I had some legs, along with the knowledge that I could get round a Bob Graham in 2020 (off a similar lack of preparation). A good mountain bike friend many years ago said to me at the end of a race, "You'll never die not knowing." He was fitter than me and trained harder, but I was simply prepared to suffer more and so placed higher.

The brilliant thing about the race was that it was a point-to-point adventure, starting at Aber and finishing 76 miles later in



Aberdoverly. Leaving cars at the finish meant an apprehensive 3am bus ride to the start. The start base was a somewhat new and peculiar experience for me: there was a real European trail race type buzz, folks doing video blogs, music etc. I sat there taking it in with a bacon bun, spilt a coffee down myself and contemplated what I was doing. With a brief cheer, we were off. I just went steady away, but as we headed steeply up onto the Carneddau, I soon got bored of that and cracked on to the front group. Now this is where things got even more peculiar — folks pulled out poles... this was no fell race! The running along the tops was superb, epic even, racing into the unknown with the sun out, and I had a massive grin on my face. However, it was warming up...

As we dropped steeply down off Pen yr Ole Wen to Lyn Ogwen, the heat became very noticeable. I crouched beside a fresh, crisp stream, dunked my hat and cooled off. It was the Glyders next, Tryfynn our way up, and I think (can't be sure) someone recorded the hottest global temperature at exactly the moment I was climbing it — properly SCORCHIO. The leader, Simon (who went on to

win the Dragons Back 2021 I might add), was now comfortably ahead, slogging away in the distance. I had a small gap over the 3rd–5th group, but rather worryingly for 12 miles in, I resembled an elderly sloth suffering in the heat. It was all I could do to put one foot in front of the other.

As I dropped off to Pen-y-Pass, 3rd–5th places joined me for a trip to the Gents for a water top up (it was most confusing for the Snowdon tourists). I was suffering: I soon dropped to 4th, and for the first time just thought ‘f*ck it’ and dunked myself in a stream. I made it a further mile before reaching a river full of swimmers and kayaks. Much to their surprise, I dropped my bag and dived right in, like a hot pan under the sink — it was bliss. The cooling had sorted me out: I reached the halfway food drop in 3rd — the fruit pots and flat coke went down a treat. It was unknown to me at this point, but much of the field would drop out or be timed out at this point.



I slogged up onto the Moelwynion, the heat reflecting off the tarmac road, but I had a cunning plan: at every stream, I would submerge myself. I coined it RDR (Run Dunk Run). You might think this slows you down, but frankly I didn’t have much choice, as I was badly overheating, and, well, it was working. I could see ‘2nd place Sam’ as I came to know him, and I was slowly reeling him in.

I joined Sam on some vague ground just short of the checkpoint — I say joined, as when we ran onward together, chatting away, we agreed it was in our interest to work together to hold onto 2nd and 3rd. On reaching a small ‘Llyn’ (tarn), I dropped my pack and jumped in. Sam just stood there baffled. I advised him it would be a good idea. He joined, and it’s safe to say, I converted him to the merits of RDR. After this, we ran through some amazing disused mines and dropped through dense hot bracken to Ffestiniog. Fortunately, we had a good

swim in the Afon Dwyrrd, and in a buoyant mood, headed to the final checkpoint before the finish at Trawsfynydd. Sam got into a rhythm up the road and I clung on, with a few small chunders and some top-up slices of pizza. News reached us that Simon (1st) was well ahead, and 4th was well behind.

Now, the final section to the overnight camp was some of the toughest few hours I’ve ever experienced. Sam and I dragged each other up through deep bracken. At one point, I literally dragged Sam to his feet. The ground was boggy and vague, but it was worth it for the final sweeping single-track descent down to the camp. We crossed the line together, totally spent, in 10 hours 47 mins (leader 9 hours 4 mins).

We set about laying there or a long time, then had a good craic with the volunteers and Mike who did a great job of sorting us all out. 4th arrived (11 hours 47 mins). After putting up tents and cooking (very slowly), we lay down again and reflected on a surreal day. 5th arrived. Dribs and drabs arrived in cars, vans, taxis... Hmm... It started to dawn on us just how tough that day was. People who I had looked at and thought “you look fast” or who had talked a good game at the start were looking broken getting out of cars.

It was 7:30pm ish and only five of us had finished. Our overnight packs were 10-litre mega bags, and they were all lined up. The pile slowly reduced over the coming hours, a cheer now and then as folks appeared. 8pm... 9pm... 10pm. I remember it being weirdly poignant seeing the pile uncollected, accounting for runners still out there. But they came. Well, 20 of them came, some in the dark, including the first lady in 15 hours 57 mins. Serious suffering — true grit. Some would start day 2 on only a few hours sleep.





Day 2 — Well, it was hot again. Sam and I agreed to set off together. The plan was simple: lock out the podium (Simon was out of reach) through a steady pace with plenty of RDR. First up was the rugged Rhinogs. Despite a slight nav error, we held a good pace over gnarly terrain and matched each other through to the midway Lake Garwn support point. After a change of shoes, pizza and lush fruit tubs, we headed into the final 15 miles. and Cadair Idris.

No words for the suffering up there. We focused on our next RDR and the chance of a swim in Llyn y Gadair before the final assault for the summit up a scree travelator. The swim was good, the scree less so. The views on the top were something else, so good in fact I've been inspired to book a holiday there this year with the family. After some undulating running, we were treated to one more big 'punchy' climb after one heck of a slog up a sun-baked fire road. There was much cursing... we were on the edge and going to some dark places in the mind. Thank goodness for the ford crossing dip before the big pull up the fence line, followed

by a sublime downhill through to the aptly named 'Happy Valley'.

Sam and I were still together: we weren't racing, just out for a run together. The job was done — we had out-suffered all but Simon. We had put more time into 4th place, but suddenly with only one small climb and approx. 3 miles to go, it was all to play for when it came to 2nd place. Sam started the poker face conversations: "Right, ok, so we've dragged each other round for 50 miles. What do we do?". I suggested, "How about, when we are in sight of the finish flags, we shake hands and a have sprint finish?" Sam agreed, and then eased off, clearly saving his legs. I called him out, but true to the bond we had made, we laughed our way down into Aberdovey where we arrived at the beach. The flags came into view; they were a heck of a long way down the dry sandy beach. We turned, shook hands and went for it. It was the most sporting way to do it — no mercy. It was superb. A local 'youth' joined us briefly, but he was soon dropped, much to the amusement of his mates. Sam faded, and with that, 2nd was secured (11 hours 19 mins). (Simon finished in 9 hours 8 mins). Only 7 others finished both days — it speaks for itself.

Sam plans to attempt a Bob Graham this year. I'll be out there with him, and I'm sure he would welcome a few more. Simon continues to dominate Ultra races. However, I would note that Harry and I finished a few places ahead of him and his partner on leg 3 of the FRA relays. As we chatted in the queue for the chilli, I remarked, "I make that 1-1 mate."



TURF EVENTING: ANOTHER WAY TO GET A RUNNING FIX

by Chris Roberts

Many will have heard of the GPS-based game 'Turf', but if you haven't, here's a brief description: Turfers use an app on their phone to locate and take ownership of Turf zones, for which they score points in an international league. Anyone can compete, and this can be either on foot or bike, both of which have advantages depending on the local terrain. Scores are reset every month, and regional, national and world champions are declared. There are local competitions between clubs, and players can earn virtual "medals" for achieving various goals. Zones exist all over the world, but new ones tend to appear wherever there are active turfurs, making it easier to run up a high score. Once a zone is taken (by staying within its boundary for a short time), it is "blocked" for a while, after which any other turfurer can take it. You gain points every hour a zone is held, as well as the take-over points, so being active late at night can be an effective strategy to retain zones for longer.

Anyway, that's the usual kind of Turf that's available to incentivise you to get out 24/7. It helped me a great deal during the earlier lockdowns, when there was little else happening in the way of competition. I even managed to win the North West Region one month.

I have become less of a regular turfurer since fell and orienteering races are now more or less back to normal, but I have recently found out about Turf events, which are a different kettle of fish. Events are for a limited time only and take place within a confined area. A whole new set of zones appear within this area at the start of the event, and anyone signed up to the event can then race around taking as many as possible whilst trying to second guess the other competitors' plans. The picture is a screenshot taken during the event in Preston a few weeks ago.



Each figure represents another turfurer and their position, while the small red circles show the location of zones. You can zoom in on the phone screen to see exactly where each zone is, and it shows your own position as well.

So as well as running, or cycling, as hard as you can for 90 minutes or whatever has been set up for that event, you also have to try to beat others to each zone. During events, the block time is 3 minutes and takeover time is 30 seconds, which often means changing your mind about which zone to go for next if someone else blocks the one you were heading for.

I have competed at two events so far and have planned another in Lancaster on 10th February, which may have already happened before you read this. I'm fairly sure there will be others coming, so long as volunteer organisers step forward. Even without waiting for a Turf event, it's worth having a go at normal turfing to get a feel for it. It's not for everyone, but you might just like it!

Visit <https://turfgame.com/> for more information, or ask me: Chris Roberts.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: THE CUMBRIA WAY

by Eleanor Claringbold

In summer 2021, Robbie and I had just made it back from hiking the Coast 2 Coast and were looking for a new adventure — this time, one with a bit more running involved. After not very much deliberation, we settled on the idea of running the Cumbria Way over three days. What could possibly go wrong? A lot. It turns out.

We decided to take the train to Carlisle and run home to Ulverston, with B&B stops in Keswick and Elterwater en route. On Day 1, we set off bright and early, ready to smash out a 31-mile day. The first section of the run is surprisingly flat, but aware of how far we had to go, we kept the pace right down. We ran through small towns, along a canal and through fields with relative ease, stopping for an early lunch in Caldbeck around 13 miles in, just as the Lake District fells began to come into view.



Full of jacket potato, cheese and beans, we approached the first proper climb of the route. High Pike, with a respectable height of 658 m, was a real slog. I was feeling depleted as we reached the top, but once the sun came out, I began to appreciate the views as we traversed the base of Skiddaw. We almost flew down into Keswick and arrived at the guest house tired but happy.

In spite of a good night's sleep, I woke up the following day absolutely exhausted. Most worrying though, was my ankle, which felt in a bad way. I seemed able to run on it, so after wolfing down a delicious breakfast and stocking up on supplies, we were on our way. Today was 'only' a 21-mile day. It should have been easy compared to the previous day. I would soon learn that this would not be the case.

Only five miles in, I was already struggling. In spite of the enormous amount of food I'd eaten, I was still in deficit, and even the views across Derwentwater wouldn't pick me up. I began to perk up as we ran through Rosthwaite, but by the





time we reached the Langstrath valley, my ankle started to really complain, so we slowed the pace right down. We didn't run any of the ascent to Stake Pass, with the idea that we would then breeze down the descent. However, it was here that my ankle really decided to make its presence known. The more I pounded downhill, the worse it got.

By the time we made it to the bottom of the valley, I was barely able to run at all. In the end, I opted for a tactic of leaning on my poles on the harder ground and trying a run/shuffle on the softer, grassy terrain. It soon became clear that a power walk reliant on poles was now not only less painful, but actually quicker than my attempts to run. I was relieved when we arrived in Elterwater and threw ourselves into the pub to gorge ourselves on as much as possible. That night, it was decided that I would have to hike the final day, as running was clearly out of the question.

However, the following morning, I woke up and — to my horror — found I wasn't able to put any weight on my ankle at all, let alone hike. So, rather heartbroken, I reluctantly called it a day. However, I was determined to come back once my ankle was healed to finish what we started...

Although my ankle thankfully improved very quickly, summer had turned into autumn by the time we got round to making good on this promise. On a Saturday in early October, we set off from Elterwater, this time with a bit more energy, given that we hadn't run over fifty miles the two days previously.

We sailed past picturesque Tarn Hows before descending into Coniston. The path along the shores of Coniston brought back slight PTSD from a particularly hot marathon day, but before long, we found ourselves in the Blawith fells, gliding through the bogs of Beacon Tarn. From here, it really did feel like home territory: we'd come out this way before on our lockdown runs.

The final eight miles felt suspiciously easy. The only obstacle on the way into Ulverston was a huge herd of cows — up to that point, we had kept up a decent pace. It was a mixture of feelings as we rocked up at the finish point (technically the starting point) in the square in Ulverston. Pride and joy were definitely very prominent. Despite this, I'd be lying if I said I wasn't the tiniest bit disappointed that we hadn't done it all in one go as initially planned. It was however, the easiest 23 miles I'd ever run, which was nice.

Although we didn't stick to our original plan, I am so glad we did go back and finish it, as it was a wonderful adventure and still an achievement I am incredibly proud of. Next time, we'll have to run the whole thing in one go!



WHEN BCR MET JOHN

by Gavin Lloyd

“Bloody hell these midges are awful!” I said to super Nick Sebley and Simon “Ultra” Austin, as a swarm of the little beggers enveloped us and our table while we awaited promised pizzas at the Woolpack Pub, Eskdale. We had been on a great social run, and Tim had organised for us to go and have pizza outside in the beer garden. Nick had luckily brought some trusty *Skin So Soft* for the occasion, and the bottle was passed around, as we kept half an eye on the England vs Croatia game being watched by many back inside and one overly excitable Scottish fan. He was perched outside with, it seemed, his own private outdoor TV. When they scored, it was clear why they had put him outside. Whilst one by one, box after box of pizza came out, Charmian, brandishing a huge smile as ever, shared with all of us how an American ultra-runner called John Kelly was planning to attempt an assault on the Wainwrights record: a 326-mile gruelling challenge with 36,000m of ascent and the record held by Sabrina Verjee at 5 days 23 hours and 49 minutes! John Kelly though is up to the challenge.

Kelly is one of the very few finishers of the infamous Barkley Marathons, winner of many ultras, poster boy for Italian outdoor brand La Sportiva and maple syrup connoisseur (he drank it literally from a soft flask during the attempt). However, he came to my attention when he broke the Pennine Way record in 2020 — a 268-mile route known as the spine of England, which runs from the Border Hotel in Kirk Yetholm to the Nag’s Head in Edale. After suffering with crippling stomach issues en route and fighting through a world of pain, John Kelly broke legendary ultra-runner Mike Hartely’s 32-year-old record! This record though was short lived and was broken a week later by GB ultra-runner and Inov8 brand ambassador Damian Hall by a few hours in 2 days 13 hours 35 minutes and 15 seconds.

If you haven’t seen it yet, watch the superb documentary film *Totally FKT* from Summit Fever Media about both attempts. Back to Eskdale and pizza though. Charmian was putting the feelers out to see if anyone was interested in giving John a hand with road support or pacing a leg or two. At first, I thought no. My navigation is shocking. What if it falls on a school night etc. Thanks for offering though. Then, a couple of days later Charmian sent out emails, with links to the plan and the unbelievably meticulous spreadsheet for the attempt. It caught my eye that John was planning to have 2-3 pacers on each leg of the route, one to run slightly ahead and navigate, and 1-2 pacers to stick with him carrying food and kit. I took the plunge and put my name down to be a mule and carry his maple syrup soft flasks and La Sportiva/Ultimate Direction kit. You want it, you’ve got it John! Your wish is my command sir! The leg was number 7, linking most of the Conistone fells together, starting with Dow Crag from a layby near Birks Bridge, then Brim Fell, Grey



Friars, Great Carrs, Swirl How and Wetherlam, before descending down to Tilberthwaite. It really is a cracking route!



A few weeks before the attempt, John Kelly himself sent me an email, letting me know that his nav runner on my leg was now unavailable and asking if I would navigate now instead. “Shit!” I thought. But then I considered... what a thing to be part of, what a great personal challenge for me, and think of how proud I would feel if I actually read a map and ended up where I wanted to be! “YES!” I replied, and this catalysed a 4-week project to make sure I knew where I was going! So, a few recess later and after studying the route, I was feeling as prepared as I could be, and noticing the high number of fellow BCRs looking to be involved throughout the week was a proud feeling.

The day came, and dot watching was the game! I was constantly refreshing the page and keeping up to date with the Whatsapp group; we were scheduled to meet at 6pm, so a beautiful evening on the fells beckoned. However, John was dropping continually off pace as the day went on, although he was still ahead of the record. 1 hour, 2 hours, right out to over 5 hours behind schedule. Yet, you can't blame him. The British summer had dropped over these few days, making the going tough in the

scorching conditions. With sections over Wasdale and into the Duddon Valley behind him, he was on his way with Super Nick, El Capitano Matalan and Inov8 ambassador Chris Gaskin. Next stop: me! Meanwhile, after dot watching all day and eating a pizza, we set off (kit manager and driver aka the parents coming along for the ride). We parked up at 8:30pm, with John 3 and a half hours behind schedule. An hour passed. Nothing. 2 hours. Still nothing. The realisation of having no internet data and no signal began to set in, meaning that there was no way of knowing where they were, apart from looking into the darkness to spot a head torch. We watched the moon rise and fall, yet still nothing. Suddenly, lights and a van loom into view and it streaks straight past us. Milk van? A late night drive home from the pub? No idea. Unbeknown to us, the van was road support for John, with Montane ambassador and coach Jen Scotney frantically trying to find a pub still doing food at this time (now 10pm) to get John a promised burger and chips, and then finding the correct layby. Finally, close to midnight, a glimmer of a head torch illuminated the night sky. “That’s them!” I gasped with relief, after starting to think he had dropped out. A few minutes later, they roll into transition. I greet super Nick and Captain Matalan and say hello to John and Chris. We exchange bags and the all-important tracking device, along with a huge bag of salted nuts, baby food and maple syrup. John asks and looks around for Jen’s van and the holy burger and chips, but it was nowhere to be seen, and you could clearly tell the thought of this was keeping John Kelly going. “Cheers Nick. See you later Matt.” “Right!” John all of a sudden sets off. I’m told to get in front of him and lead us through this tricky first section of path-finding in the woods and crossing the stream over a brand new bridge (my ‘It’s A BEAUTIFUL BRIDGE! IT’S A BEAUTIFUL BRIDGE!’ joke to try and break the ice didn’t seem to go down well, sadly). The climbing began here as we wound up to the crossing at the Walna path, leading to Seathwaite Tarn. Here, the silence was making me feel more nervous and so talking to myself about the noted landmarks of the route coming up definitely helped.

Then, as we crossed over the path, talking to Chris Gaskin bore more fruit, and I told them both about our running club, the routes we do in this area, what the scenery is usually like (in daylight) and local history like the Duddon Viking long ship dig and Coniston mines.



John speaks! Maybe it was my history lesson and tour-guiding that took his mind off burgers and chips for a moment, or maybe he just gave into the idea that this bloke isn't going to shut up is he! After this, topics ranged from ultra running news, fell running, family, children and what John does for a living. He explained how he works for a company doing data analysis, which makes sense considering the detailed aforementioned spreadsheet. Chris Gaskin turned out to be an interesting bloke too. A former royal marine turned ultra runner, he picked up sponsorship with Inov8 and at the time was the record holder for completing the Wainwrights solo and unsupported, carrying everything he needed for the attempt.

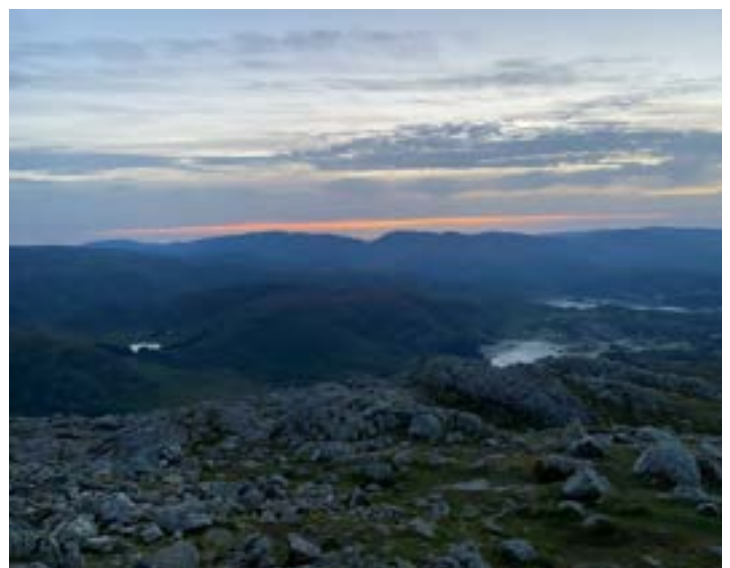
He also told us of his plans to compete in the Marathon de Sables. We reached the summit of Dow Crag at 2:05am, with a short break to wolf down some baby food. The calm night sky, with zero wind, made it feel like we were the only people still awake in the world. We pressed on to Coniston Old Man. John became more lively as conversation switched to the Bob Graham Round, and how he came to be involved with La Sportiva.

Anyway, we touched the top of the Old Man and made the turn to look towards Brim fell and the amazing path leading to the second half of the leg. After being alone in our own little bubble, we noticed a figure carrying a large backpack rising up from the valley below. As they got closer, I asked, "Hello, have you brought water?", which I was told on Whatsapp would be happening at this stage. The man's reply though was met with a sudden injection of pace from John, which took me and Chris totally by surprise. "No, I'm just filming for the documentary highlights." This was John's catalyst to aim for the next summit: a slight stumble didn't seem to disrupt his newly found rhythm and I made small talk with the camera man as he checked the footage he had captured. Unfortunately, he was of shAmbleside, but we talked about how he had filmed with John in the past and had been part of other filming projects. As we turned for Grey Friar, Steve the cameraman went onto Great Carrs to scout out a good position. The tension seemed to dissipate now and, singing to myself, I made sure to hit the correct path to lead us to the cairn. Here, our trio was met with the fourth musketeer — an Irish man called Josh (queue your English

man, Irish man and a Yorkshire man jokes) — who it turns out was here to provide water after he stopped off on a mini break up to Scotland to get involved.

His spare head torch also helped me to find the path back down, and then Steve the cameraman's light paved the way for a direct line to Great Carrs. I pointed out that the plane crash site we had discussed earlier during my history lesson was just over there and as there was no time to stop to look, we ploughed on to Swirl How. At this point, I found myself shoulder to shoulder with my new friend Irish Josh, who it turns out works for the FA. So, we chatted about football and how he had seen the updates on social media and thought he'd take the opportunity to help out.

A few moments later, we reached the summit of Swirl How, just as the sun rose up in front of us, and John, with Chris by his side, touched the cairn. Now, Prison Band beckoned! The pace to begin with was sedate as John's feet, due to the searing heat of the past few days, were scorching hot with pain. Bearing that in mind, the next couple of minutes were astounding. John picked up the pace. At my heels, dancing down the rocky sections of the Band, he had stopped swearing for a while too; maybe he thought, "The quicker I go, the quicker I'm down." Either way, it was incredible to see someone fighting through pain to reach their goal. Even with this moment of euphoria, there was still a feeling of tension. The film crew, the pain, the pressure probably, as the goal is a personal one, but also much more than that. "Ergh....erm," Chris Gaskin made all of us pause. "Was that you John?" John smiled "No," as we inhaled his silent, but deadly fart. We all laughed, which certainly diffused the tension, and the gradual climb to Wetherlam was a welcome one.



The sun now up and head torches not needed, we all tapped the pile of stones marking the top and

began to take in the early morning views. Not John though. He made the turn almost immediately, onto the very runnable descent. Next stop... STEEL EDGE! "Find the tarn, find the tarn, find the tarn," I thought, knowing it was the last place my nav could go wrong, but thankfully we made the turn, passed the tarn, and the gradient started to drop away under our feet. I said to John, Chris and Josh, "Ok this is pretty steep down here." John followed close behind and with a few slip and slides later, we made it through the scree to find the path, which is like running over the spine of a turtle. Smooth, grassy and a place to let go and pick up speed. I stopped just as the route starts to fall away to the stream below, and John was first to say how much he enjoyed that bit. "That was epic," announced Chris, and we turned sharply to the right, following the GPX file. However, where was the line? For a brief moment, I thought, "Oh no, not now." Then, John, with a classic BCR-esque point, said, "It's there." We took it, crossed the stream without any issues and started to wind our way down to Tilberthwaite, mine and Chris's personal finish line. John's finish line though, was still a long way to go. We tackled the steps down to road support: Jen Scotney and co, who had spread out kit and food and unfolded a chair for John to collapse in, were waiting for us. We grabbed a quick team photo and said our thank yous.

I thanked John for allowing us to be part of his attempt and, after changing socks and shoes, John announced he wanted a quick snooze in the back of the van. We dutifully slipped away to our respective cars, and John's new pacers greeted us. One ready to go was Charlie Day, also of Ambleside. We sat on the bridge, chatting about what he's done, where we had been and what they were about to guide him through, as the heat from the sun, now just after 5am, was already making things feel warmer. I continued to my own car, and Chris Gaskin was just pulling away in his, with a fairly long drive back to Yorkshire ahead of him. I waved him off and decided to get changed, have a quick sandwich and see John off on his next leg. I joined Charlie again, and around 30 minutes later, John emerged from the van and threw on a new top and his sun visor. Charlie and two others divided up what they needed to carry and the all important tracker was safely stashed away. They moved off, with encouragement from this select team of people clapping and cheering. "Looking good John," I said, actually thinking "He looks as stiff

as a board... How is he carrying on?" Incredible stuff. I think that is my overwhelming feeling from this experience. We all have goals. Big or small. Maybe it's a life goal, like a career pathway or starting a family. Maybe it is a personal goal or a sporting one. Training to get better, whatever better means to you, or simply just getting out the door to get away from what's on the other side of that door for a few hours a week. We all have them. We might not always reach them, yet as John Kelly proved and a certain Billy Bland once said, "One leg passed the other — that's all that running is, and if you get out there and train, you might be surprised by what your body can do."

Finally, before setting off back home, John Kelly was staying with Charmian and Steve, so they brought him along to our social run from the Newfield Inn, and he stuck around until we were finished to have a chat over a pint and many peas in a pod (from Charmian's garden). A great bloke and a great experience! Thank you.



