



SOUTH CHESHIRE

Harriers

Newsletter

Summer 2010

Dave Gets His Round In



Sunrise on Great Dodd

On 22 May, 2010, at his second attempt, Dave Hindley completed the gruelling 24-hour Lakeland challenge known as the Bob Graham Round. For the armchair fellrunner, here he talks us through it - from the sore knees to the jarred pears.

To the blissfully unaware, the Bob Graham Round is a circuit of 42 of the highest Lakeland peaks, approximately 72 miles, 27,000 feet of ascent.

So there I was, at the Moot Hall, Keswick, 10 months after my previous attempt had to be abandoned after non-stop bad weather. This time the forecast was better, and the weather had been pretty good in the previous week. Little did I know that this attempt was going to be made on the hottest day of the year so far!

I'd decided on a midnight start, and I was joined by my good friends and mentors John Booth and Dave Sykes, as well as Simon Ellis, an excellent fell runner who I'd just properly met not 10 minutes earlier, and John Rowlands, a friend from South Cheshire Harriers.

With a minimum of heckling from Keswick's nighttime clientele, we were waved off on the stroke of midnight, by Mal Fletcher & Arthur Summers, Charlie Rowlands and Steve Whincup, who made up the rest of my very generous road support team.

Off through the parks and ginnels we sped, making for Skiddaw, entertained most of the way by Simon. We reached the summit in 1h 25min, slightly behind the 23-hour schedule, but at this stage I wasn't bothered.

As we aimed for Hare Crag, the light of a head torch marked the presence of the excellent Mark Smith, who had gone on ahead to help us with navigation.

In the bog on the lower part of Hare Crag I lost a shoe. Luckily I was able to retrieve it; it would have been

embarrassing to have ground to a halt so early in my attempt.

On the way up Great Calva, we were amazed to be hit by a pocket of heat about a quarter of the way up. We reached the summit slightly up on schedule, at 02:08, and headed down the fence line to the River Caldew.

The summit of Blencathra was reached without incident, at 3:18. The fun came on the descent of Halls Fell ridge: it was too dark to use the sneaky traverse below the roughest part of the ridge, so we scrambled down the rocky section, becoming separated from Messrs Booth & Rowlands, but having ascertained they were OK to get themselves down, we continued the descent to Threlkeld, a mere 12 minutes behind schedule.

After a 10-minute refuelling break, Leg 2 began. Dave, Simon & Mark from Leg 1 were joined by Paul Miller, Matt Sheehan, Jamie Lawler, Matt Clews and my mountain marathon partner Allan Cox, who'd just driven up from Wiltshire! Leg 2 passed without major incident, except that my water bottles were left with the road crew, but with a big team on the leg, all kind enough to share their water, we emerged unscathed.

The day was beginning to warm up on this section, with a fantastic sunrise on Great Dodd at about 5:30.

After making good time over the Dodds and Helvellyn range, we arrived at Dunmail Raise at 8:12, about three minutes up on schedule, where Dale Colclough and

Dave Gets His Round In *cont*

Phil Vincent, my Leg 3 pacers were waiting, along with Rachel Vincent and baby Morgan. I grabbed a bacon butty and bid farewell to my loyal pacers from the previous 2 legs, bar Allan Cox, who was continuing from the previous section.

Off up Steel Fell at a steady pace. The day was really warming up now as we trotted easily to Calf Crag. Around Thunacarr Knott I started to feel a bit low on energy, not helped by the fact that I had been struggling to eat thus far.

Dale administered an energy gel and Phil some rice pudding, and by Rossett Crag I had started to perk up. The heat was really beginning to make itself felt by Esk Pike, and I was getting through water like there was no tomorrow.

By about 13:00 we were fighting through the masses to touch the summit on Scafell Pike, and then off down to Mickledore. Dale's favoured route of Lords Rake was still full of snow, so we'd decided to go to Foxes Tarn. Passing by Broad Stand, a climber had ropes set up for another BG attempt, and kindly offered to guide us up the same way, but the consensus was to stick to our original plan, so Dale led us round the climbers' traverse to Foxes Tarn, which was also thick with snow - quite surreal on a day so hot.



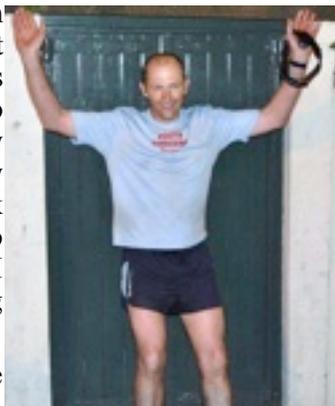
Mickledore

We reached the summit of Scafell comfortably, then began the long descent to Wasdale; the induced speed on this descent always brings a smile to my face.

At 14:14 we landed in Wasdale eight minutes up on schedule. I was delighted to see, as well as my loyal support team, my two sisters Hilary and Patricia, who had travelled from Stockport to see me.

Leg 4 was led by my great friend and other mentor, Alan Williams, and we were joined by Andy Painter, Pete Murphy (three weeks before his own BG attempt) and Pete Mallison, who just had time to come to Yewbarrow with us before having to dash back down to Penrith to catch a train to Crewe. My inability to eat was punishing me by Yewbarrow summit, and I took a quick break, aware that the clock was ticking, to eat some jarred pears - the only thing I managed to get down - before heading towards Red Pike.

The heat was searing now as we made



steady progress throughout this section until the gully at the bottom of Kirkfell, where I had another low point. I had some energy gel, which helped me face the gully, until part way up the exertion/gel combination started having a bad effect, and poor Alan must have been wondering if he could stop me if I fell but thankfully we made it to the top without further ado.

One more tough ascent to go. Great Gable was 'head-down-and-get-on-with-it' stuff, but it was more than worth it for the view at the top. I barely had chance to take it in before Alan was urging me on to Green Gable. At Grey Knotts we decided to descend the fence line as it was a more steady route on increasingly sore knees than the fast grassy descent to Honister. We arrived at Honister after 19h 56min, only ten minutes behind time.

Alan and Pete stayed on for Leg 5, where we were joined by Steve Dawson, Rob Carter and Beth Gregory-Smith, and rejoined by John Rowlands & Allan Cox.

The ascent of Dalehead was, as usual, a long drag, but we did it exactly to the planned time, lost a bit to Hindsgarth, and made it up by Robinson, at 21:24, just before sunset, where I kissed the cairn of peak no 42 victoriously!

Descending Robinson Steve managed to locate a trod we'd discovered the weekend before that made the last section a bit easier. A steep grassy slope to run down, and we were off along the valley at what seemed break-neck speed towards Newlands Church and Chapel End



Robinson, the final summit

car park. After a quick change of footwear, it was then on to the road section with Steve Whincup joining us, and Alan Williams bowing out rather than run on roads.

I probably ran half, and walked half, of this last part of the round, despite Steve's best efforts to get me back in under 23 hours. By then I was just glad at the prospect of getting round in under 24 hours. We trotted up the main street towards the centre of Keswick, and in the last few yards I finally found a last burst of energy, and sprinted up to the Moot Hall and smacked the doors after 23hours and 3 minutes, my long-held dream fulfilled.

What a fantastic day out! Ably assisted by some amazing friends, off and on the fells. Heartfelt thanks to each and every one of you!

Dave Hindley

Confessions of a Saunders Virgin

Saunders Lakeland Mountain Marathon, 3-4 July, 2010

In the run-up to my maiden outing in the Saunders Lakeland Mountain Marathon, I did not lack for words of encouragement. Sadly, the theme that predominated was "you'll be fine; you've got a lot of common sense". Common sense, however, was telling me that an unfit runner with minimal map-reading skills shouldn't be attempting a two-day navigational competition in the Lake District. What I think these kindly voices meant was practical sense and of this I have none, as those that have now witnessed my attempts to put up a tent will attest.

Still, my partner in this enterprise, Steve Dawson, had already spent money on a waterproof coat and a rucksack, so the deal so casually entered into over a post-run pint last autumn had to be seen through, and on the first weekend in July, Steve and I (along with Mike Hatton, Pat Hudson, Andy Painter, John Booth, Dave Hindley, Steve Whincup, Alan Williams and Ian 'Boot' Ankers) headed up to Shap, in the shadow of the beautiful M6 motorway, then along the lanes to the enticingly named Wet Sleddale, where Steve and Mike wrestled Andy's tent into submission while I phoned Andy to complain about their difficulties and occasionally stood on the corner of something to stop it blowing away.

The lessons come thick and fast on a mountain marathon, and you do not need to have left camp before they begin.

Lesson 1: try not to need a pee at night. It involves disturbing your fellow tent dwellers.

Lesson 2: take very careful note of the route between your tent and the portaloos. All tents look the same in the dark, and inattentiveness can result in five or 10 anxious minutes weighing the relative undesirability of entering the wrong tent or spending the night standing up outside. (On the remaining three nocturnal visits, I was much more careful.)

Lesson 3: a Ginsters Cheese and Onion Slice makes a much better pillow than it does a meal. This is especially true once you have used it as a pillow.

Lesson 4: never, ever, ever... oh hell, it's time to start. Where's my pen? Where's my whistle?

Day one of our Odyssey got off to a mixed start. Having patiently transcribed our control points, and cautiously taken a roundabout route to the first control, using paths and streams to be sure of our course, we allowed ourselves to be persuaded by several other pairings that the control was not where it ought to be and nowhere to be found. Fifteen minutes of fruitless faffing later, we resolved to resume our original route downstream and found the control... just about where it should have been.

Lesson 5: trust your own judgement, however unconfident you are - you are in no position to trust anyone else's.



Navigationally, the day proceeded more smoothly from there, even if I did take us round the houses too often, mistrusting the dreaded compass bearing. The main problem was that Steve, having spent most of the preceding week laid up with food poisoning, had barely started eating again and soon found he had minimal energy. He stuck doggedly at it however, and we ground out the miles on a warm day, yours truly becoming of necessity more and more adept at the compass bearing, and our routes between controls became more and more direct.

Lesson 6: if you're well down the field, then by the time you get anywhere lots of other people have been there first. They tend to flatten the grass. This is a useful way to tell whether your compass bearing is accurate. The sting in the tail of day one was an absurd descent into the valley where the overnight camp was based. Almost sheer in places, we occasionally had to turn round and descend backwards. At the bottom, we punched in and got our time sheet with split times. Dead last for our class.

Lesson 7: it doesn't matter; we can stop now.

At the overnight camp, our intrepid party of 10 regrouped and compared war stories. People poured boiling water into foil sachets of dried food, which miraculously reconstituted into wet food. The grizzled veterans didn't even gag. Happily, I still had a spare Ginsters pillow to eat. Pat had secured a spare beer from the (soon emptied) portable shop which I volunteered to drink and, at a distressingly early hour, it was time to reacquaint ourselves with the inside of a tent, and rotate sleeplessly till dawn.

Lesson 8: when they say 'two man tent', it's a bit like those ready meals that 'will serve 4-6 people'. It really all depends on the people.

Day two began with the mirror image of Saturday's final descent: a 35-minute uphill slog to the top of the opposite ridge, this time in the pouring rain. Nobly, I agreed to carry some of the tent on the second day, and that extra burden and the inclement weather threatened briefly to dim my hitherto sunny disposition. But then I don't think my sunny disposition was necessarily winning me a place in Steve's heart, so this was possibly no bad thing.

Confessions of a Saunders Virgin cont

Our route finding on day two was (if I say so myself) pretty much flawless, and our progress markedly faster. Though we were soon bedraggled, and a finish photo (sadly, copyright applies) shows us looking, at best, grimly determined, there was a legitimate sense of triumph as we scoffed our post-race meal of veggie chilli and treacle tart, while the wind threatened to lift the marquee from its moorings. And, after Day 2 we weren't last!

It is, in truth, a demanding but accessible event, with lots of different classes so that you



needn't overreach yourself, and a welcome spirit of openness and camaraderie among organisers and competitors alike. Thank you to Dave and Alan especially for their advice, encouragement and kit. Thanks too to Mal Fletcher & Arthur Summers (absent through injury this year) for further loans of kit, and thanks to Steve for giving it his all when staying at home in bed must have seemed much the more sensible option.

Lesson 9: never again, until next year.

Charlie Rowlands

South Cheshire 20

t-shirts for marshals



I still have quite a few of these very chic (and much-prized) **southcheshire20** t-shirts

for the many marshals, drinks station people, and race HQ staff who kindly gave up hours of their time in April. If you'd like one and haven't received one yet, let me know, I only have medium and large sizes left however.

Charlie Rowlands

Race dates for your diaries:



Halloween Hellraiser

Our remaining race of 2010 is the Halloween Hellraiser, which takes place on 31 October this year.

Next year:

the **Air Products 10K** moves from its traditional Easter Sunday slot to 10 April,

the **South Cheshire 20** will be on 1 May.

We will, as ever, be banking on your support.

Call the Cones Hotline, it's 10K time again...

Air Products 10K, Easter Sunday 2010



Thanks to the hard work of Simon Walker, I was able to remove last year's concerns over the length of the course, with everyone reporting it close to 'spot on' 10K, and transfer my worries to more conical matters. Of which, more later...

This year's winning time of 31 mins by Matt Clowes of Staffs Moorlands AC gave a good indication of what

is now possible on this course. Interestingly it was two minutes faster than Ben Gamble's time in last year's Stone St Michael 10K - a local race well known as a PB course. True it probably means that we'll be awarding a course record prize regularly over the next few years, but hopefully we'll attract bigger fields. Let's just hope Mo Farrah doesn't turn up given his recent GB 10k UK road record of 27 minutes and 44 seconds.

By the way, for anyone looking to run some measured distances for training purposes, the kilometre painted markings are still in place on the pathway around the course.

Organisationally all went very well apart from a small parking hitch, which will be resolved for next year as building work on MMU campus will hopefully be finished by then. I am also pleased to say that the earlier start time also proved a positive, meaning everybody was able to get away earlier and the impact of local traffic on the race was reduced.

Sincere thanks as always to everyone who offered up their time to help with marshalling, car parking, water stations, organisation and so on. You all did a marvellous job and maintained our club's excellent reputation.

A special thanks to Mike Cutler, who saved the day. Following a last-minute daring night-time raid on Crewe Alex training ground at Reaseheath, having scoured three counties, I was able to satisfy Charlie's demands for exactly the correct type and size of cones for the finishing line.

On reflection, given 'Team Rowlands' are the best in the business, I can forgive some of their 'prima donna'-like demands. But I do have to draw the line at the request for a fully stocked Winnebago! I must admit the week before the race it got so bad, I ended up dreaming about cones...

'Indiana Jones levers up the heavy stone cover, the rancid air rushes out. He shines his torches into the black void where the light reveals a seething mass... he gasps

"Cones. Why did it have to be Cones?"

Alasdair Dyde



A prima donna replies: I plead guilty to the cone obsession and accordingly find roadworks fascinating, but anyone who is interested in knowing what Alasdair thinks a cone is should check out the scene in Spinal Tap when the stage designer delivers the model Stonehenge. Less of a finish funnel, more of a tripping hazard. Now, you wait till you see Rob's home-made finish gantry next year...



Pencil the 10th April 2011 into your diaries as this is the provisional date of next year's 10K. Before you say that's not Easter, you are correct. Because of the lateness of Easter in 2011, close proximity to May Bank Holiday, together with other race commitments, we've had to move the race away from Easter for 2011. Hopefully this will only be for this year: plus it means I get my Easter with the family back!

So I look forward to seeing you again next year...

Adventures of the Energetic Eight



Enid Blyton wrote about the adventures of the Famous Five and Secret Seven but these stories have nothing on the adventures of Alasdair's Energetic Eight - or should that be Alasdair's Enduring Eight?

One club night in April Alasdair produced a map and said the planned route would take in the canal in Nantwich, some on and off road, and would be about a six or seven mile run. The run started in the usual way but by the time the group had crossed the footbridge, our numbers had swollen as Mel decided the group he was with initially was running further than he wanted to go, and he preferred to go a little quicker but over a shorter distance. He would come to regret this decision...

Our group made its way out to Brine Leas School and on through Nantwich to Queen's Drive, then along the canal and back down onto Welsh Row. At this point both Gill and I were flagging due to tired legs from racing on the previous Sunday. Alasdair said that we were over half way now and would make our way back down the canal from Acton. We followed without question but when we were soon running across fields towards Burland we started to wonder aloud where the canal was. Not deterred by the questions, Alasdair led the group on, saying we were making our way to Nantwich boating lake!

Our increasingly improvised route took in many picturesque views, stiles and gates. Russell found a number of footpaths and stiles and guided us along. We encountered cows, horses, ploughed fields and a canal we didn't know how to get across. Swimming it was briefly considered, but luckily Alasdair and Neil found a way across. We followed the yellow footpath signs, Russell using his orienteering skills to help, and even some blue signs, which Mel said were for the Alasdair Dyde Mystery Tours.

Mel pointed out as the group left Ravensmoor (yes, Ravensmoor!) that he could see the lights at the Vagrants. We had been out for an hour now and were still miles away. Jackets were being put back on as the air temperature cooled and the light started to fade.

As we crossed a railway line, Neil wondered aloud whether the passing train was going to Nantwich or Whitchurch. Were we even going in the right direction? Alasdair was confident we were.

Finally, we saw Shrewbridge Road and Nantwich boating lake - only another three miles to go! When Rob asked how far we'd gone, Neil answered 8.5 miles, and in only 1 hour 35 minutes. Mind you, it was hard for Neil to see his watch as there was little daylight left now.

Mel thought it would be best to ring Lesley to let her know where we were. However, this proved the source of further delays as he then received a number of phone calls which he stopped to answer. As we made our way past Cronkinson's Farm pub, Katie declared it was the furthest she had run and all the group congratulated her; spirits were high and, indeed, had always remained high in the confidence Alasdair would lead us home.

We finally arrived back after 1 hour and 50 minutes, with 11.5 miles completed. So much for Mel wanting a short quick run, me wanting a short run to stretch my legs, Gill being troubled by her knee and Neil tapering for the London marathon. Rob, Katie, Alasdair and Russell were fine and although our group had run further and for longer than expected, we arrived back heroes - or at least in our own eyes. So where was the welcoming committee for our valiant runners? All in the bar or gone home!

Thanks Alasdair for an enjoyable run, from Neil, Mel, Russell, Rob, Katie, Gill and Sue.



Where are we going next?!

Sue Allcock

Charlie's note: in the shamefully long time it has taken me to put together the summer newsletter, I know the group has been on at least one other 'adventure run', this time a little less unplanned.



Away Days



The disadvantage of a slightly chaotic lifestyle, that defies a regular routine, is not being able to train with people on a consistent basis. An advantage, with a bit of organization and discipline, is the opportunity to run in new locations where what is around every corner is a surprise.

As a case in point, take one Saturday in May.

I had to be in York at lunch time (en route to Middlesbrough) to drop off my husband who was joining a friend on a charity bike ride. So I reckoned that I probably had between three and four hours to spare. While working out my route to Middlesbrough I spotted Sutton Bank National Park Centre in the North York Moors National Park, so that was parking and a café sorted out. Close examination of a 1:25,000 OS map revealed plenty of footpaths so I set off with a highlighter pen and just hoped that I wasn't being too ambitious. An hour later I set off map in hand (cut out of the full size map - good job I had already dropped Fruit off!) into the unknown.

I was treated to an eye watering display (as a hay fever sufferer) of spring flowers (bluebells, violets, wild garlic, primroses, cowslips, wood anemones and celandine), lambs, bird song, some stunning views and some excellent tracks. The opportunity to use stopping to look at the map as an excuse for a rest was an added bonus, while not knowing what I might find around the next corner kept me going on most of the tough bits.

The highlights of the route were glimpsing Rievaulx Abbey through the trees and the fabulous views at the top of the 1 in 4 climb. The low points (but not literally) were the two sections of 1 in 4 climb that I had assumed would be downhill and not up!

The two hours seemed to pass in no time and before I knew it I was back at Sutton Bank with a 12 mile run in the bag and a smile from ear to ear. If anyone would like to see the route or would like help in the irresponsible use of a map and a marker pen – please let me know!

Lorna Fewtrell

Editor adds: And if anyone else has discovered some lovely out of the way run they wish to share, write a short article for the newsletter!



Shattered Dreams!

How fleeting are our triumphs.



None more so than for Chris Walsh at this year's inaugural (and possibly final!) Stoke 2010K, pictured celebrating a vast PB that did not at this stage take account of the fact that all but one of the runners was sent the wrong way and did a course a good kilometre short. Literally seconds after the photo, Chris learned the truth.

Photo included at victim's own request!