

Digby Harris Bob Graham Attempt 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> July 2007

Start Time: 6.30pm

Direction: Clockwise

Leg 1 (Julian Brown (Navigator), Dave Kilpatrick, Andy Sinclair, Steve Swallow, Greg Turner, Kath Turner, Jonathan Whitehead)

We convened in George Fisher's café at 4.30pm to fill up on tea and cakes. By 6.00pm we were at the Moot Hall making last minute preparations. We departed Keswick on a dry but slightly murky evening to ascend Skiddaw. The summit of Skiddaw was in the clag but upon descending c. 100m we emerged into a glorious evening with perfect views over Great Calva and Blencathra. The beautiful sunset began on the scramble up Mungrisedale Common to the summit of Blencathra. We could just make out ahead of us the couple from Hertfordshire Mountaineering Club who had set off at 6.00pm on a BG relay attempt. The sunset lit up the slopes in dark green to contrast magnificently with the slate grey sky above. We reached the summit of Blencathra in more clag where Dave, Jonathan, Steve and I began the descent of Halls Fell Ridge in the twilight. Exiting the clag we could see the dark grey clouds accumulating over the Dodds, warning us of conditions to come. Dave lead the charge to the first road stop and the support team with my order for tea and rice pudding. My smiling young son, Saam, greeted me with a big hug. Mahtab, Sally and Dawn, our catering support, had chairs, a table and a feast laid out; it's shame that my appetite had already started to dwindle by then but it was great to see them and what they had laid on.

Unfortunately Jonathan twisted his ankle on the way down and limped in shortly after me advising that he was not going to continue onto the Dodds, and neither was Steve, as we had hoped.

Leg 2 (Craig Harwood (Navigator), Sarah Campbell, Ewan Douglas, Janet Hatton, Ross Litherland, Andy Sutton)

We set off up Clough Head at a good pace. Head torches were switched on about half way up and we entered the cloud as the angle began to ease. Immediately Craig had his map and compass out as we began to make our way from top to top in the pitch black. The cloud continued to thicken, reducing visibility to less than 10m. The rain and wind set in and I put on my waterproof leggings and fleece. Navigation became increasingly difficult. Was this the right path? How many more marker cairns before we reach the next top? Sometimes we were too far to the left, sometimes to far to the right, we had to retrace out steps, we missed a summit and we had to spread out and walk back to find it. Conditions were grim; we could only travel slowly and were haemorrhaging time. We missed the trig point on Helvellyn and had to carry out another search. Once we found it we made our way on to Nethermost Pike, Dollywagon Pike and the steep descent to Grisedale Tarn. On reaching the bottom we thought we had arrived on the wrong side of the tarn, too far to the left. We continued on to a large path and carried on not knowing that we were heading in the opposite direction to Fairfield. Ross worked it out and we turned around. We then missed the path up Fairfield and continued on in the direction of St Sunday Crag. We knew this was wrong and agreed to head straight up to find the path. We found a path and the angle began to ease as we approached the summit plateau. Ewan and Andy remained at the lip to mark our way back down. I touched the cairn just north of the shelter and we headed back down. The glow of torches appeared to our right and we made our way over to Ewan and Andy to begin our descent. The path disappeared. From the direction of the slope, Craig worked out that we needed to traverse west to find *the* path and after stumbling around on the steep slope we found it and headed off towards Seat Sandal. On the descent of Seat Sandal, we missed the path and Dave Kilpatrick, who had come up to meet us. We stumbled back down through bracken covered boulder fields to find our relieved supporters waiting with cups of tea, c. 1.5h behind schedule - not bad considering how difficult the conditions were but I was having fun and with good company!

Leg 3 (Phil Cheek (Navigator), Julian Brown Pete Coppack, Catherine Crowther, Mike Nelson, Ross Litherland (from Rossett Pike)).

The weather started to improve as we ascended Steel Fell and it began to get light. The top of Steel Fell was clear but we could see cloud on the High Raise plateau. Thick, grey cloud still hung over the Dodds. By the time we reached Sergeant Man the cloud had thinned and largely lifted. We continued on to Rossett Pike where we met Ross, who had driven round to Langdale. Cloud hung over Bowfell and we stayed in it to Scafell. Mike, Ross and I ascended Scafell via Lord's Rake and the slimy Western Traverse whilst the others went down to Wasdale Head. We could see the summit of Scafell on exiting the Western Traverse - things were looking up. On the descent of Scafell the cloud continued to lift in the West and we were rewarded with great views towards Mosedale, Yewbarrow and the other Leg 4 hills. The scree run brought us into Wasdale Head quickly to be met by a new team of supporters, hot food, tea and a fantastic foot-wash, courtesy of Annette, together with socks and thermals change.

Leg 4 (Chris Cripps (Navigator), Becky, Richard Clark, Jack Leach, Mike Nelson, Andy Skelhorn, Dave Tucker)

We seemed to storm up Yewbarrow and then on to Red Pike. The Leg 4 tops were clear apart from Great Gable and we were going well. Our journey continued on but still the cloud hung over Gable. On top of Kirk Fell I saw Andy putting his clothes back on after just having gone swimming in a tarn! Then miraculously, whilst descending Kirk Fell, the cloud lifted on Gable and we could see people on the summit. Chris lead us off Gable and down to Windy Gap via a superb route covered in grass to save our feet. Once again it was fantastic to see all of the people that had come to support me as we descended into Honister. As I sat down to more hot food and tea I was informed that I had just about recovered the deficit lost on leg 2 and that I could even be on schedule or ahead of it by Keswick. I relaxed instantly. I wasn't bothered about the schedule; all I wanted to do was get to Keswick in under the 24.

Leg 5 (Annette Morris (Navigator), Becky, Julian Brown, Richard Clark, Chris Cripps, Julie Fletcher, Andy Sinclair, Andy Sutton, Greg Turner, Kath Turner)

The pressure was off. Barring disaster I knew I was going to get to Keswick in time so I decided to ease back and take things steady. The cloud and rain had returned by the time we reached the summit of Robinson but nothing could spoil the satisfaction that I felt at reaching number 42. Dave and Ian met us at Snab farm for the shoe change in preparation for the road leg to Keswick. My legs had begun to protest despite the new comfy shoes so I was content to walk most of the way to Keswick safe in the knowledge that I had plenty of time to spare. Chris stopped the traffic at the roundabout in Keswick. The team then held back to let me lead the charge to the Moot Hall and a fantastic welcoming reception.

#### Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank everyone involved for helping me have such a rewarding and successful day out in the hills. In particular I would like to thank the navigators, Julian Brown, Phil Cheek, Chris Cripps, Annette Morris and especially Craig Harwood and Ross Litherland who had to deal with such difficult conditions. The road support was superb, many thanks to Ian Hughes, who came up to help despite being in constant pain with his injured arm, and to Dave Kilpatrick. Finally, I would like to thank Mahtab Karbasi, Sally Harris and Dawn Nelson for the excellent catering provided at the road crossings and again to Mahtab and Saam for tolerating so many weekends of me being away in the Lakes to get fit and learn the route.