

BG ROUND 25th and 26th June 2004

I'm told it's traditional after these 'do's' to write a few words, as usual I can't think of a huge amount to say other than 'thanks very much to everyone', but here's a few words anyway. Sorry it's a bit boring.

Having got into walking longish distances about 5 years ago, and more into running over the last 2 to 3 years, I suppose it was inevitable I was going to have to try the Bob Graham, especially running for a club like Macclesfield. I was reasonably confident that the distance alone would not be a major obstacle, but was more concerned about the amount of climb and descent, especially on rough ground. So a bit more walking and running in the Lakes was called for, I managed 3 or 4 weekends up there, including a reccy of legs 3 and 4 over one weekend (followed by quite a long trudge back from Honister to Dunmail to fetch the car) and a go at the Old County Tops (thanks Mandy). This got me more used to the terrain and also more familiar with the route.

I didn't really ease off too much before the day, I'm not sure whether this is a good or bad thing, but could have probably done without getting soaked through on the Wednesday over Lantern Pike, and stopping up till the small hours on the Thursday (after watching us getting beat at football) making butties etc. By Fri afternoon I felt rather lethargic, 6:30 pm is a funny time to start anything I suppose.

Still, the appointed hour came and we set off up Skiddaw, the required pace feels painfully slow, but I've no doubt it was spot on, as we were within 3 mins of schedule at the top. Navigation on this leg, indeed every leg, was perfect and this both saves you time and gives you confidence / lifts your spirits a bit.

By the time we were halfway over Mungrisdale Common there were only 2 of us, and I descended Halls Fell Ridge alone, stopping halfway down for a few seconds to check Darren was OK behind, and also the way to the support at Threlkeld. Time for a quick cup of tea, and to meet the pacers for the night leg.

We had excellent conditions overnight, clear skies all the way to the coast, and a good moon meant torches were not needed until the descent of Dollywaggon, and no hesitation with navigation. I managed to nick my hand coming off Fairfield but didn't really notice until later. A fine route selection off Seat Sandal had us down at Dunmail in no time and more tea and rice pudding. You can't eat too much on these jaunts I reckon....

Having awakened Craig and co from their slumbers, he set us a cracking pace up Steel Fell, which was surprisingly wet underfoot compared to what had gone before, we had a few problems picking up the path (not that it was much of a path) until it got fully light on High Raise. The section over the high fells passed very well, again excellent route choices saved time and effort. The wind was getting stronger and as the forecast did not bode well for later it was good to be making steady progress. Very few other people seemed to be out, another BG contender passed us on Thunacar Knott, he was climbing Broad Stand as we went round Lord's Rake, and we passed him on Yewbarrow. The descent off Scafell added a bit of interest with some scree and some sliding down on the shorts (was a bit concerned here about tearing them but they seem to be 'fine')..... More Tea, More Rice Pudding – and more clothes as well as the weather was definitely on the turn.

Onwards and upwards up Yewbarrow (doesn't the pace pick up every time you change pacemakers ?) and then a fairly relentless trudge up Red Pike. But from the top, there is definitely a feeling of 'not too far to go now....' And although the wind was picking up and the rain coming in, Pillar, Kirk Fell and Gable passed off OK. Green Gable was a breeze, literally, with the wind on your back it was easier to go up than it would have been back down again ! And on over to Honister and erm... more tea etc. etc. but Phil wouldn't let me rest too long. By now it was rather wet to say the least but Chris Cripps and Martin 'volunteered' for the last leg, fine men both, so off we went slithering up Dale Head, (which must be the biggest cairn on the round by some distance), then round the last couple of fells, and down to the road. Here Chris left us – to buy a new bike apparently, but at the speed you run Chris you don't need a bike – and Trev joined in for the run down the road. All that was left was to avoid getting run down, then it was back into Keswick, a little busier than 22 hours ago, and back to the steps to complete a grand day out on the hills - definitely the right way to spend your birthday.

I think I managed the other 'challenges'; namely 'nearly' eating my not insubstantial quantity of food, and also 'more or less' staying awake in the pub till chucking out time.

My heartfelt thanks to all the navigators who never put a foot wrong all the way round, all the support on the fells, and especially the road support, I wouldn't have got round without you, also Jo and everyone else who's been out running and walking with me over the last few years - I didn't even know about the Bob Graham a few years ago.

A few memorable moments, possibly not entirely word perfect (OK some are a bit fictional).....

Kath, whilst transferring about 6 tons of food into her car – 'you've got no chance of eating all that lot';

Me – no response, just made a mental note 'we'll see about that'

Trev, coming off Calva 'Stay out of the boggy bits, don't get your feet too wet';

Me 'But we're about to ford a knee-high river'

Chris Rhodes, somewhere on the Dodds 'Have something to eat';

Me, to Martin /Mandy 'what have you got',

'Sandwiches, scones, a bar and some jelly babies;

Me 'Yes, that should be enough'.

Craig on the way up Steel Fell,

'you've got me out of bed indecently early so we may as well put our foot down';

Me- nothing, too out of breath to even protest.

Craig / all of us, on the way to Calf Crag in the dark 'There's a path here somewhere'

30 seconds later 'Ah here it is'

2 minutes later 'oh we've lost it again, but there's a path here somewhere....

(repeated until it gets light).

Kath and Woody at Wasdale, within 2 seconds of sitting down 'what do you want to eat and drink'

Me got any rice pudding, mandarins, maybe a scone and a sandwich or two –

3 seconds later – 'there you are, anything else ?

10 seconds after that, Phil Cheek 'Come on, get up, Time to be off, you'll never get round sitting there'.

I would be interested to see the resting times on Phil's BG – if indeed he had any resting time.....

Me to Chris Rhodes, - whilst being fed crisps on Kirk Fell in gale force winds and pouring rain (not the easiest thing to do you'll agree) - 'you should have been a nurse or something'

Chris 'Actually I've always fancied being a sheepdog.'

There's no answer to that, mind you some would say he must have been a bit barking to do 2 legs with me.....

Everyone, in turn, to Dave Tucker at Honister 'Are you carrying on to the finish' Dave 'No I'm bloody not'

There's no answer to that either, but I don't blame you mate.

Phil, about 150 yards from the finish, 'Right, the best route from here is on the right of the road, keep well in, then you cross over the crossing, then your best bet is round the back of the Market stalls, keep high and to the left, then cut back when you can see the hall.

Me' I think I'll just knock the tourists over.'

Phil 'OK then, good plan'.

Bryan, at the Moot Hall 'Take my phone with you, that way, if you fall asleep we can ring you up to get you down the pub'.

So I take said phone, it's a bit fancy though and I don't know how to answer the bloody thing. Have shower then lie down for planned 40 winks.

10 mins later it rings, but because I can't answer it, it rings again, every 5 mins, for the next hour and a half, at which point Dave Tucker appears and drags me down the pub.

So the 40 winks became about 3 winks and that's my excuse for dozing off a bit before last orders.

Finally a bit of sad news.

As you know it was my birthday on Sat. and whilst everyone who knows me has long since given up buying me owt, I do sometimes treat myself.

So I nipped into one of the not inconsiderable number of outdoor shops in Keswick and treated myself to..... some NEW SHORTS !!!!!

I'm afraid my favourite 2 pairs are to be put into 'semi-retirement' in the top drawer and will only make it out on special occasions from now on. A few tears were shed as I folded them up (that could have been the smell of them making my eyes water though.) Of course, if the new ones aren't as comfortable, you'll be treated to the old ones all over again next week.