

## BGR Report – Mark Burley

1<sup>st</sup> Aug 2020, 1:30am start, Clockwise

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**Road Support – Emma Mason, Emma Beveridge, Angela Drakeford**

**Moral Support – Allen Bunyan, David Vincent, Barrie Thomason, Bernard McCarron, Emma Vincent Tom Whittington, Carl Hanaghan**

**Leg 1 – Target 3:14, Actual 3:20**

**Support – Col Allott**

The weather forecast, which had been mixed at the beginning of the week, gradually solidified into something promising. The hottest day of the year the day before the attempt could have meant thunderstorms so I was a little worried, but MWIS just promised fog in the morning and possible remnants of showers, light winds, followed by a 70% chance of cloud-free summits later in the day.

I'd booked an AirBnB to attempt to get some sleep from 6pm until midnight – unsurprisingly it wasn't to be, but I felt I knew the route pretty well after going over and over it in my imagination for six hours.

After some (very) early morning stretches and suncream application (always weird in the dark), Emma picked me up at quarter to one. We arrived in Keswick in plenty of time to watch the inebriated teenagers emerge from the pubs and bars and return to their cars. I've never seen someone punch a hanging basket before.

Met Col at Moot Hall, arranged kit, and then a tense couple of minutes wait until 01:30 spent discussing the first route choice – which alleyway to take through to the car park? But we were away on time, and wished well by a local youth; “wheeeeeeeeey I know what you guys are doin’; twenty-four hours mate; good luck boys”.

No problems for the first mile or so, other than psychological from Col's horror stories of everything that went wrong on his (successful; amazingly so, based on the stories!) attempt. We ascended into the clag around Jenkin Hill and from thereon it only got thicker – despite the path being pretty well defined we were still leaving it every so often as it was difficult to discern the edges. It also became increasingly windy, although it was quite a warm wind so this wasn't a massive problem; I never felt too cold in a long-sleeve. Despite the conditions we reached Skiddaw bang-on the totally arbitrary 20-hour schedule. From there down to Hare Crag and up to Great Calva was straightforward although much boggier than on my recce a few weeks before. Near the top it was difficult to stay on the path again, but lower down the visibility improved, and we remained on schedule. The fenceline down from Calva was much better running than the more direct line I'd taken on the recce, and we had no issues until halfway up Mungrisdale when we were in the clag again and didn't see the small tarn until we were knee-deep in it, and had to backtrack slightly. This and losing the trod a few times meant we were a few minutes down at Blencathra, despite Col's prescience anticipating the tarn on the ridge *before* we fell into it this time.

Doddick on the way down is further than Hall's, but it's nicely runnable the whole way and nowhere near as dangerous – also much easier on the quads. Sent Col off to increase the water allowance for Leg 2 and was feeling good at the changeover; 5-ish minutes behind schedule.

## **Leg 2 – Target 3:36, Actual 3:33**

### **Support – Nathanael Booker, Billy Parkinson**

Col had thought the changeover would be the carpark rather than the lane (understandably – despite the car park not being on the racing line...) and so since there was no rest time scheduled, Emma drove up the lane to catch us up with an extra softflask. Definitely a good call! It was much warmer than I'd expected. Changed from my damp long-sleeve into a t-shirt at this point which was a little strange in itself before 5am. Especially along the road, it was fine to see now without torches and so timing had worked perfectly from that point of view – very happy with choice of 01:30 start time.

Back into the clag up to Clough Head, but near-perfect navigation (a few issues on the Dodds but corrected within seconds) meant that we were adhering magnificently to the (again – perfectly arbitrary) schedule. My biggest worries had been accidentally missing one of the Dodds or going up Calflow by mistake, but we reached Dollywaggon without incident and I was still feeling good.

On the recce I'd come down the steep grassy slope to Grisedale Tarn, but today I decided the grass was too slippery for trail shoes and so stuck to the rocky path – probably slower but safer, and again, easier on the quads. Followed the steep trod up to Fairfield via the col between it and Cofa Pike.

Nathanael and I dropped Billy two thirds of the way up the climb. In the thick clag of Fairfield, we decided Nathanael would drop back down a bit and he and Billy could then contour around to the scree descent down to the Seat Sandal Col – then catch me up again before Seat Sandal summit. In the excitement of worrying about this I took a bad line of Fairfield myself and ended up to the South of the path, with a slippery boulderfield between me and the scree. Since I wasn't sure what would happen if I carried on, I had no choice but to do a bit of clambering – luckily this wasn't too far and I was soon back on track. I had a brief worry that I would now be *behind* Nathanael and Billy rather than ahead of them, but Nathanael caught me just after the col. I didn't see Billy again – he'd wanted to do the entire leg rather than skipping the top of Fairfield, and so Nathanael had abandoned him in favour of the attempt (the right call, obviously). I didn't know this at the time – but Billy got down to Dunmail c.40 minutes later than us, having not wanted to end up in Ambleside (understandable) and so descended Fairfield via Cofa Pike (less understandable) and then contoured round the scree to get to the Seat Sandal col. Definitely a less well-travelled route.

Enjoyed the fast descent down to Dunmail and glad to have gained back a few minutes on the leg. Still feeling good at this point.

## **Leg 3 – Target 5:38, Actual 5:43**

### **Support – Nic Barber, Matt Johnson**

Nice to see a big crowd at Dunmail, and had a few extra people to run sections of Leg 3 with – David joined me for the ascent of Steel Fell, and Allen and Nathanael used the logistical support we had in place as a good opportunity to recce the whole leg.

Clag was gradually clearing and Steel Fell climb felt okay. Started to get some lovely views from the top. Made up some time vs. the schedule across the rough terrain to High Raise – I've never recce'd the Sergeant-Man-first route but I've always been happy with the straight line – and feeling optimistic at High Raise despite the clag closing in again. Nic took us on a lovely grassy trod to Sergeant Man which didn't quite end up in the right place – I think if we'd have cut off a bit sooner,

it would still have been a better route than the main path, which is rockier and more undulating. It felt like we lost more time than it looks like we did, and we were soon back on track and a few minutes up on the schedule.

Despite falling over a few times across Martcrag Moor, I remained positive. Some great views down into Langdale from Black Crag, and the first time I've seen Rossett *not* in the clag and so successfully avoided going to the subsidiary cairn before the main summit. On the climb to Bowell, now after around eleven hours, I had a bit of a bad patch and found it tough. But Nic found a great line (starting with the first shelf rather than the second) and we emerged much nearer the summit than I ever have before. I didn't know this at the time, but we were now ten minutes up, which is the most we would ever deviate from the (arbitrary, genuinely!) schedule.

The next few summits passed without incident although it was still claggy from Great End onward. Lost time at Ill Crag and Broad Crag, unsurprisingly as the very rocky sections have always been my weak point. As usual, despite seeing very few people thus far, Scafell Pike was very busy. Although I'd wanted to try Lord's Rake and the West Wall traverse, Nic told me it wasn't very nice at the moment and I wouldn't like it very much. I thought he was probably right and so elected to go via Foxes Tarn but try and find a trod which led us to a higher way into the gully. Retrospectively that was a bad call – should just have taken the hit – so lost a bit of time cutting across higher up and then having to lose the height anyway. Consequently we were a few minutes down at Scafell.

The rocky section at the top of the descent wasn't as bad as I remembered, and the scree lower down was a delight as it has been the previous two times I've done it. Stopped to empty my shoes after sending the support on ahead, but due to moisture it proved impossible to fully extricate all the small stones. Based on this I stopped again at Wasdale (chair, fresh socks and fresh shoes all nicely laid out; perfect) for a couple of minutes. This did mean that I'd gone from being the most up vs. the schedule to the most down (eight minutes on leaving Wasdale) within two and half hours; all on the same leg. Still feeling good at this point though, as I was now pretty confident of making it back within the 24-hour window, even if I had to walk most of the rest of the route.

#### **Leg 4 – Target 4:53, Actual 4:48**

##### **Support – Rob Gittins, Stefan Bramwell**

Disappointed not to have Tom with me on this leg, but an injury on the Wednesday evening fell group training run (which it seems was a sensible idea for me to miss out on!) meant a last-minute substitution to Rob – who ironically, was also a last minute leg four substitute for Tom's own BG when someone else dropped out!

I was still feeling good on the Yewbarrow climb and was spurred on by leaving Nathanael behind (he has loads of perfectly valid excuses, but this is my report so I don't have to mention them) as I'm so used to seeing him disappearing off into the distance in races. This kept me going up Yewbarrow and Red Pike and gained time on both those legs, only losing a bit of time on Steeple after stopping for a poo (it had, after all, been 16 hours by now).

Pillar and Kirkfell were both fine although I was definitely starting to find it tough – not so much in the legs (although my knees didn't feel like they would take too much more punishment) but my stomach wasn't overly happy with the constant diet of Clif bars which had always worked so well in the past. Red Gully up to Kirkfell definitely seemed a better route to going around to the right like I did on my recce, and I gained some more time on this leg. Even on Great Gable – my least favourite

mountain since getting hypothermia here on the Lake District Mountain Trail a few years ago and being genuinely scared for my survival – I gained a couple of minutes despite it feeling glacially slow going. Probably my worst time psychologically during the whole round, but Stefan and Rob got me through it; largely by keeping their own pace up and knowing I'd have to keep going if I wanted to stay with them!

The weather atop Great Gable was amazing and there were some glorious views down onto Seathwaite Fell, which is probably my favourite place in the Lakes. I was now seven minutes up and feeling confident, but the rocky descent off Great Gable reminded me of another reason I don't like it, and I lost half of that time here. The rest was lost with another bathroom break on the way to Brandreth, so with Honister in sight I was pretty much exactly on schedule, arriving just one minute behind target.

### **Leg 5 – Target 2:36, Actual 2:29**

#### **Support – Rob Gittins, Matt Lynas**

I thought the ascent of Dale Head felt pretty speedy but it was a couple of minutes behind what I was hoping for. This made me feel pretty despondent – but Matt was excellent at some motivational chat, and having David along too (“maybe I'll just do a bit of the leg and see how I feel”) really helped lift my spirits. Across to Hindscarth started putting in some real effort as I knew the last big climb was out of the way, and got a minute back. Similarly to Robinson – revived by the sugar hit from some emergency Shot Bloks I got back another two minutes and was suddenly back on schedule. The sight of Barry and Bernard at the summit (who I'd totally forgotten were going to be there) telling me I was perfectly on time buoyed me up again and suddenly, beginning the descent which is the same as the descent on the anti-clockwise tea round (on which as far as I know I still hold the anti-clockwise course record and that I know really well) I felt amazing again. I flew down the top half of that hill, stopped for another quick poo (didn't want to, but it was necessary!) and then flew down the second half, with my support struggling to keep up at times. From the top of High Snab Bank (I prefer the ridge run to dropping down early as it's a much gentler descent) I could see Emma waiting with my change of shoes and socks. As soon as I got down, she confirmed that a sub-20 was still possible (in fact I was five minutes early to the changeover) and I set off at a great pace on the start of the road section feeling really positive.

As soon as we reached the first uphill on the road though, my body reminded me were reaching 100k (which is a good 15k further than I'd ever run before, not even considering the 8,300m+ of ascent which is a good 3,000m more than I'd ever done before as well) and began to rebel. I could feel my pace slowing. Matt was keeping up the motivation which I thought was working pretty well – only found out afterwards that Emma and Rob were worrying about the pace and deciding which strategies would work best to keep me going. Whatever they did worked anyway, and got me from Little Town to just before Portinscale. At this point we were back to the Tea Round route and suddenly I could visualise exactly how far was left – and that sub-20 was definitely on. I knew I had to keep a reasonable pace but equally I knew I didn't have to wreck myself. And that gave me the confidence to speed up – after not really being bothered about the 20-hour thing the whole way around, it being a time pretty-much randomly picked as a nice round number that nobody thought was out of the question; suddenly a time starting with 19- became incredibly important and it mattered just how far under 20 I could get. When we got to Keswick and I saw Emma B and Stefan waiting and clapping, I found an extra gear somehow and sped up again, and as soon as I saw Moot

Hall in the distance I started to sprint, just because I could, and it felt right. Finishing was far more emotional for me than I expected. The support from everyone mentioned in this report was outstanding and I couldn't have done it without them – thanks guys.

The pepperoni, garlic and chilli pizza from the place right next to Moot Hall was possibly the best I've ever tasted.

**Overall – Target 20:00, Actual 19:53**