

**Joss Naylor Lakeland Challenge – Matthew Lynas – 08/05/22**  
**30 peaks, 48 miles, 17,000ft ascent : Target time M50: 12 hours, M55 15 hours**

My first real appreciation of the Challenge was in July 2020 when during a drive over Kirkstone Pass, fellow Macclesfield Harrier, Mark Burley, pointed out the climb to Red Screens at the start of the second leg. I had only just started fellrunning in The Lakes and this looked quite daunting. I knew there and then that 'the Joss' would be a 2022 challenge for me, by which time I'd be older (but not necessarily wiser). But even though I turned 55 in January, I planned a sub-12-hour completion schedule because I thought it was manageable.

During 2021 I made several recces, covering the first, second and fourth legs in some detail but paying rather less attention to leg 3, believing that I knew enough of the route from my Bob Graham round. I hadn't allowed for the fact that routes look very different in the opposite direction!

I picked a date in early May to fit in with planned fell races and the availability of supporters. Quite by chance on my final Leg1 / Leg 2 recce I discovered that the date I had chosen coincided with the Fred Whitton cycle challenge – Britain's largest cycle Sportive. The presence of two and a half thousand cyclists on the roads would make life rather too challenging for my road support. We solved the problem by moving the start time from 7am to 8am – late enough to avoid the cyclists but early enough to complete comfortably in daylight. I went for a 'lite' support model, carrying my own water, food and kit, and relied on rehydration and refuelling support at Kirkstone, Dunmail and Styhead. I enlisted two pacers: Mark Burley for Legs 1 and 2 and Allen Bunyan (another Macclesfield Harrier) for Legs 3 and 4.



I normally taper my running training for about a week before this sort of event, spending less time on my feet and more time reading the weather forecasts. However I ran the Rainow 5 fell race on the previous Wednesday, confirming my legs were still in working order and winning a couple of cans of beer and a pair of Running Bear socks as first M50 home. The weather forecast looked better and better as the week progressed albeit with a significant southerly (head)wind.

On the day of the attempt, Mark, my wife and I arrived in good time at a warm and sunny Pooley Bridge. The weather was as forecast with very good visibility throughout: a little warm on the early stages, though cooled by a gentle but noticeable cross / head wind. Mark and I set off at the planned pace, with Mark treating the leg as a recovery run from the previous day's Inter Counties Fell championship. In spite of the headwind, we arrived at Kirkstone bang on schedule and three minutes later, with refilled water bottles and a further supply of Clif Bars and Shot Bloks, set off up Red Screes. It was still long and steep but considerably less daunting-looking than two years previously. We were heartened also to learn at Kirkstone, that Allen was already waiting at Dunmail and raring to go. The run from Red Screes to Hart Crag had not gone well on my final, solo recce but Mark's superb navigation saw us efficiently and safely across the moors. With a sense of relief I reached the more familiar territory of Fairfield and Seat Sandal. On the descent to Dunmail, Mark dropped back a little, and promised to catch us up by omitting a couple of summits before we reached Styhead.

I arrived at Dunmail just three minutes down on the schedule and after three minutes of refilling water bottles and collecting further supplies (including some flat Coke), Allen and I set off up Steel Fell. I navigated less well than I would have liked on Leg 3 and the lack of recceing in the correct direction took its toll. I needed to navigate confidently at 'race pace' and although the knowledge I gained from completing a Bob Graham round in 2021 ensured I didn't get lost, my routes were not efficient enough to stay with an 11hour 50 minute schedule. Specifically, I lost time on the routes to High Raise and Rossett Pike, resulting in our arriving at Styhead 20 minutes late. However my spirits were lifted, first by meeting up again with Mark just prior to summitting Great End, and then by meeting – not quite accidentally on their part – the two clubmates, Jake and Joe, who had given Allen a ride to Dunmail and who were recceing the Bob Graham round. At Styhead, Andy Robinson (a friend from orienteering days in London) met us, having hiked up from Wasdale Head. Once again we refilled water bottles, and collected a final supply of Shot Bloks. Mark and Andy made their way back to Wasdale Head and Allen and I set off up Great Gable. I must have been beginning to tire as I asked Allen to take the two headlamps that Andy had given me!

On the final leg, we managed a good pace on the uphill, ran the downs and did our best on the rough flats. Allen had been primed by my wife on how best to motivate me, and a mixture of a bit of nagging, some high spirited banter and conversing with sheep, kept my mind off the climbs ahead of us. Aided by swigs of Coke and blessed with some grassy running after Steeple, I lost only nine minutes against my schedule on Leg 4. I arrived at Greendale Bridge 32 minutes down, having completed in 12 hours and 22 minutes.

The welcoming party included Ian and Pauline Charters. Ian had requested a copy of my schedule and had been monitoring my progress throughout the day in order to meet me at the finish. He and Pauline provided some much-appreciated campervan hospitality to my wife and Mark while waiting for me to finish.

My heartfelt thanks to Mark, Allen, Andy, Joe, Jake, Ian and Pauline and my wife, Wendy: I had a truly wonderful and enjoyable day on the fells – away from the crowds but with just the right amount of expert company for support. In keeping with the tradition of the Challenge, a donation has been sent to Buxton Mountain Rescue.

The only sadness of the day was that Joss himself was not well enough to meet me at Greendale Bridge. Ian had told him of my attempt at the Challenge and he had sent his congratulations, and we, in turn, send him our best wishes for his continuing recovery.

