

Paddy Buckley Report_26th July 2025 by Andy Sutton



3 Dextrol tablets , it's all I've got left, 3 Dextrol tablets scrounged from a guy heading up for Snowdon sunrise. I'm 20 hours in, 3 more at least to go. It's not enough. My legs haven't let me down all day, except for that brief period on leg 3, where I deprived them of the high carb fuel they had come to expect; and the wheels nearly came off. I'm sat at the hastily arranged rendezvous point, legs dangling over a small culvert on the mountain railway. It's pitch black and I'm surrounded by cloud and my torch is fixated up the line. Was the message passed on? I'm desperate for the flash of a torch, a sign maybe that reinforcements have arrived. I'll wait 10 minutes but then I'll have to go. Please come, please.....

Background.

After a successful BG in 2023, with some time in hand, I thought I may have a chance at the Paddy. I fell into the trap of wanting to use, and not lose my BG fitness, and earmarked an attempt in the autumn. I had trained on legs 1 and 5 in a loop out of Llanberis for the Dragons Back in 2020 and supported both Mark and Allen's attempts, so had some prior knowledge and it wasn't a crazy proposition. Fortunately sense prevailed and I realised I was not giving the route the respect it deserved.

After a year to enjoy the 60th Fellsman and completing the Lakelands classic trophy series, I started a training block end of January 2025 following a different plan to previous, focusing more on speed and power rather than just pounding out the miles. I really enjoyed it running around 50 miles a week, but the SWAP 16 week plan finished and possibility of organising an

attempt date with a team wasn't in sight. 16 weeks became 20 then 25 and I went from feeling super fit to over trained and fatigued. I needed to get off the plan. At last the stars seemed to align for an attempt at the end of June, but last minute plans fell through and a last long over night reccy was disappointing, as I was off-pace and was really feeling a lack of mountain days having done most of my training locally.

Fortunately I had a last chance a month later, a few days prior to a family holiday to the Alps. On paper it looked promising. I had a good team available to assist and enough time to cram in some long mountain days and some heat training in case of another heat wave. Work nearly screwed it all up, but late changes saw me at last heading into Llanberis on a grey and damp Friday evening. The cloud level was just above the top of my head, so I went to sleep with fingers crossed that things would improve in the morning.



Leg 1 Llanberis Support Jon.

It was a relaxed start, with plenty of time available to make the short walk from the car park to the pretty non descript traffic island, in front of the bus stop, which marks the start from here. We set off at 6am on the dot, on my favourite leg, and made good time up through the quarries. No security to avoid this time, that had caught me at 3 am a few weeks earlier, as the House of Dragons films crews had moved on.

As we reached Elidir Fach I was pleased but surprised to be up on the schedule, even though it was set at a good pace(for me). Fortunately the visibility had improved a lot overnight, it was still cloudy but blowing through, and this really helped over the rough rocky ground that makes up Elidir Fawr summit, until you reach the more defined grassy trods leading around the ridge.

Good conversation made the leg pass quickly. Jon hadn't run it before, so by giving him the guided tour helped me stay focused on the nav. The steep climb up the scree chute onto the Glyders went well, and vis was good enough to get through them without any slips. The scree slope down off the Glyders to the base of Tryfan is a contender for the worst descent ever, but again the reccy's paid off and the zig zag line I'd chosen went well today, as did the climb up to Adam and Eve on top of Tryfan summit. I learnt a lesson on the descent though, running an out dated version of the gpx on my watch, so that I almost missed the super steep runner descent gully. The current record from top to bottom is a staggering 7mins 21 seconds, but I was happy today that I made better time than previous, and my knees still felt good at the bottom after the punishing descent.

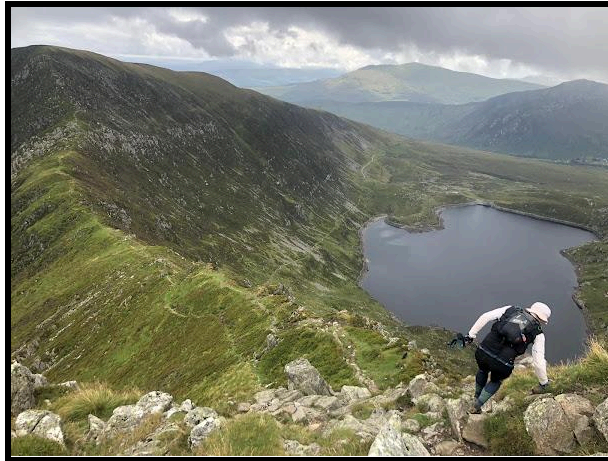


Leg 2 Ogwen Support Allen Logistics Graham & Trish

I was really pleased to finish the leg 30 minutes up on schedule, the quick descent adding to the time gained initially. This little buffer really helped mentally for the rest of the round. Nearly caught Allen out though who had only just recently arrived.

An efficient pit stop by Graham and Trish, and Allen and I were off up the road. This was the only section I hadn't reccied recently, but Allen knew the way and guided us on a good route up through the ferns and bogs onto the flank of the ridge, which we followed to the top.

We negotiated the rocky plateau of the Crnedd well enough, surrounded in cloud making things tricky, until we lost some height dropping down the rock step to Pen Yr Helgi Du and onwards. Always nice this section to get out of the clag and enjoy the views of the water of Llyn Cowlyd, and Ffynnon Llugwy. As we approached the end of the leg, my stomach was starting to feel a bit full, having religiously stuck to my fuelling plan, but legs were feeling great so finished the long run down off Pen Lithrog Y Wrach pleased but nervous about what was to come.

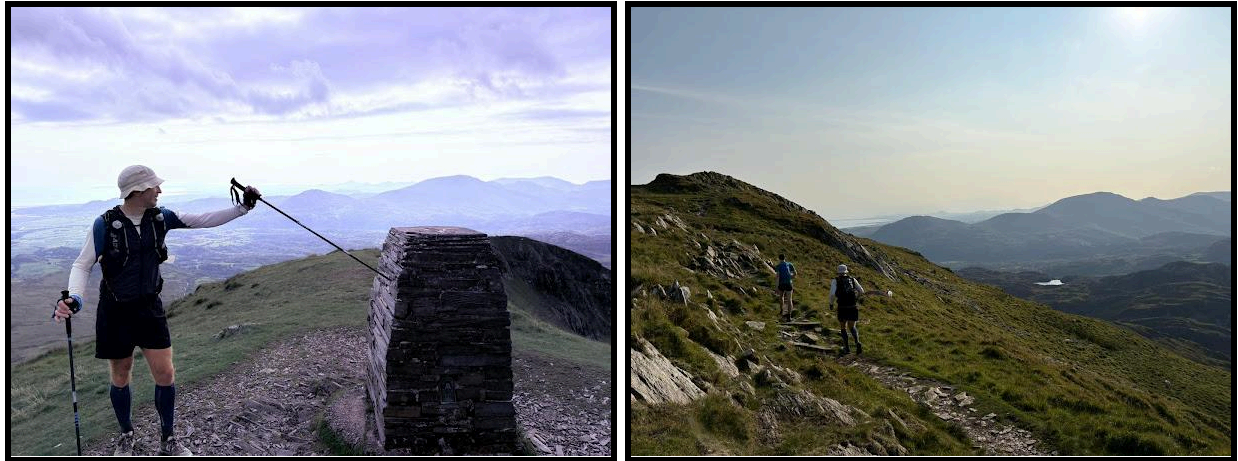


Leg 3 Capel Support Joe and Mark Logistics Jade and the girls. Graham and Trish.

I gave the Girls the customary whoop whoop on arrival to the checkpoint just outside Joe Browns. Always such a boost to see them and always seems harsh to get out of there as soon as possible, but a quick soup stop, high fives all round and we were off up the road. The ascent up Moel Siabod passed quickly, catching up on Joe and Mark's latest incredible running adventures, and I was pleased to be on pace. We made good time on the grassy descent down to Clogwyn Bwlch y Maen, and as we made the sharp left turn, crossing the style to follow the fence line, I entered the unknown for the first time, having covered all this first bit a few weeks previous. Unlike the long reccy though my stomach was now 'not good' exasperated by the quicker running. Mark and Joe did really well, encouraging me forward, re-assuring me that it would pass, but I was slowly grinding to a halt as I ran out of energy having stopped regular fuelling to let things settle. Frustrating as there are some great running trods on this leg, and bogs a side, you can usually make good time. After a couple of 'non' comfort breaks, things weren't improving, I didn't know what to do. It was Joe who suggested getting back on the caffeine, usually a cause of stomach troubles, but he reckoned if you were used to it sometimes it did the opposite and settled things down. It's worth a shot, back of the net!

By the time I got to Alt-Fawr I started to feel better as the caffeine worked its magic. Leaving Mark and Joe to re fill the water bottles I stretched my legs on the fast descent down to the quarry and appreciated properly the amazing views ahead of me. The weather was absolutely perfect, as the cloud had cleared throughout and we were blessed with full mountain vista.

The silver lining to the slower start to the leg was, now 'carbed up' my legs felt great. The circuit from the quarry visiting Moelwy Bach and Moelwyn Mawr is another favourite section, an incredible mixture of mountain beauty and welsh heritage, and we continued to make good time. Before I knew it we were descending on the rough trod back to the west of the quarry, and for me the start of the crux of the route. Cnicht, 689m of steep, steep slog. On schedule you get just under an hour to descend from Moelwyn Mawr and up to Cnicht, and if you don't have the legs you loose a lot of time. I went back on the Beta fuel. I had not chanced it to this point, as thought the high carb dose may have caused my stomach problems. 40g of carb straight down the gullet. It was like rocket fuel and up and over we went.



Leg 4 Nantmor Support Rob and Matt, Logistics Jade and the girls, Graham and Trish. Whoop, whoop, it was all smiles on seeing everyone again. Eager to crack on Jade reminded me to take some more time which I did, but i really wanted to get the next crux section done and in the light. The terrain up to Bryn Banog is tough ,a boggy braken infested start followed by a really steep climb to the ridge. Matt broke trail and then Rob led the way, while Matt kept conversation flowing, plus keeping an eye on the watch to remind me to take a beta fuel every 30 mins. Banog done, Moel Hebog was next and as we neared the grand rock monument marking the summit, it was a huge mental boost to have these tough climbs under the belt.

As we lost the light, the weather closed in again, but it wasn't too bad in the drizzle. We deviated from Finleys direct line off Y Gyrn which is sketchy, and found our own sketchy line further along the ridge which we sort of fell down in a controlled manner. Fortunately the lines improve from this point, on what is the most popular section on the Nantlle ridge, until you commit to the rocky ridge proper. It was slow through here in the dark and wet, but then we made up good time on the descent off Y Garn, with Rob picking out a great line down to the forest.

It was as we ran the easy fire-trails through the forest my thoughts turned to the last leg. Graham had stepped in at short notice, but had warned me he wasn't mountain fit. I was fully prepared to run the last leg solo, but I was worried now my watch would not have enough juice to last the leg if I started to use the maps heavily, and I could really do with some company on the non distinct slog of a grassy, tussocky line up to the first ridge. I needed a lead out as they say in cycling. I summed up the courage and asked a big favour of Rob and Matt at midnight, in the dark and drizzle. Would they keep going and see me up to Craig Wen?



Leg 5 Rhyd Ddu Support Rob, Matt, Graham. Logistics Trish.

Of course they said yes, though it was hard for them to say no, which i felt bad about. Matt had 2 hours left on his torch, so an hour up and would then head back. No need to spend long at the changeover, and with a quick re stock, the three of us were off; although crucial I only took enough fuel for a couple of hours.

I led the way following a pretty poor line through the long grass to the high wall, which had to be scaled. Fortunately we all made it over and the terrain improved, Matt taking the lead up to the ridge.

We started to get a bit strung out, so once we got to the ridge it was just me and Matt, and his hour was almost up. Hastily the plan was made that Matt would relay the message, to miss out Carnedd Ugain , a detour , and head straight down the Ranger path from Snowdon summit. My plan, on what is a tricky descent in the dark and clag from Carnedd Ugain, was to use their torch light as a marker, meet them en route and re supply. As easy as that.

With the plan set, I got my head down on the steep climb up Yr Arran, making distance and height on the others, vaguely aware of Matt shouting up he was turning around. Knowing the direct line off Yr Arran would be death in the wet, I used the longer but better path to the East, made good time on the descent and had made good progress up the South West ridge of Snowdon, before I looked back and there was a torch light, committed to the direct descent. Nothing I could do now, just trust their ability and experience, but what did occur to me was there was a lot of time and distance between me and them now, and I was almost out of fuel. Snowdon summit went smoothly and came quicker than I expected, up and over the summit cairn and shortly after I'm at Carnedd Ugain, and heading down the loose scree towards the railway.

And that dear reader is where we began, torch and eyes fixated up the line.

10 minutes is already up and I'm about to go but just then.... torch light, but is it a Sunriser? Flashes again, like someone has put their hand over it as a signal. I do the same. The light then disappears....more time passes..... I should see it by now.... nothing..... nothing....then I hear Rob's voice calling my name from lower down in the darkness. The relief was indescribable, I just felt so elated. I ran down and gave Rob the biggest hug. You want some fuel?

I had Rob's company for the Rangers path, and then I pushed on solo for the last few tops. The last bit of the round is a heart breaker, with steep ups and long downs that go on just a bit too long, confidence was now high but I didn't really think it was in the bag until the very last top of Moel Ellio with over an hour spare. It was a real delight, on reaching civilisation to see none other than Rob there holding the gate open, and who better to run it in with, across the last few fields and through the alleyways to the bus stop. 23:14:59 hrs, happy with that.



Heartfelt thanks to the support team, Jon, Allen, Joe and Mark, Rob, Matt and Graham, who really did go above and beyond on this occasion. It was a real privilege and honour to run with such experienced athletes.

Thanks to Graham and Trish for such a brilliant, and smoothly run logistics operation and finally thanks to Jade, Chloe, Anna and Ella, for supporting me fully through another big adventure.