

Ethels – all 95!

Rob Gittins, Saturday 22nd - Saturday 30th August 2025

On Saturday 22nd August I set off to attempt a continuous round of the 95 Peak District peaks known as 'The Ethels'. I'd been up 41 of them over the last few years, before they'd been given that classification, some of them regularly and multiple times. The other 54 were new to me. Parts of the round would be familiar and parts, particularly in the southern areas of the White Peak, a journey of discovery.

There are two maps covering the heavenly summits of the Peak District – OL1, The Dark Peak and OL24, The White Peak. I bought new copies of them both in the autumn of 2024, spread them out on the dining room table and affixed stickers to the tops – what better way to spend a few evenings. I tried to devise a route, initially with minimal 'out and backs' and as little road as possible. Initial route plots were around 350 miles. It seemed feasible and I was surprised nobody had had a crack at it. I folded the maps and put them back on the shelf.

In August 2025 I had planned to run the Transpyreneas race, 850km from the Med to the Atlantic. After jarring my back in the UTS100K in May and limping off the hill to retire at the half-way point I decided to withdraw from the Pyrenees race. I was unable to run for a few weeks and felt empty. A few Wednesday night runs with Macclesfield Harriers and mountain biking forays restored my confidence. A couple of V60 successes in short local fell races reinforced this and, after Bob Graham support for Toby Wallis and Paddy support for Andy Sutton I felt that maybe my running days were not actually over.

Numerous Facebook posts reporting the start of the epic Transpyreneas left me with a sense of regret. I still had the time booked off, the Ethels would be my penance.

With the Ethel app open on one screen and Outdoor Active on the other I replotted the route and being less fastidious about 'out and backs' and road sections got the route down to 500km/300m with 15,000m/50,000ft of elevation. I chose to start at The Cat and Fiddle, still iconic despite no longer being a pub, and only 10 minutes from home. The route looked good on the map with two forays into the White Peak before heading north and then looping back down to home ground. There are a number of inaccessible tops – I opted for the dropped pins on the Ethel app.

At times I diverted slightly off the obvious route to pass through towns and villages with facilities to lessen the need for road support. I wasn't planning a solo effort, but being self sufficient during the day would make life easier for Ange, my wife, who'd just need to find me in the evening so I could sleep in the van.

The route's not perfect and there are no doubt obvious improvements to be made, runners from local clubs will know better lines between their peaks and wonder why I chose to go

the way I did or why I did them in that particular order. The more the round is completed the more efficient the route will become.

I had no schedule as such, initially optimistically hoping for 80km a day and a 6-day finish. In reality (older, stiffer, not quite as fit) I averaged 65km.

With a couple of exceptions, I ran during daylight hours. The route, particularly in the White Peak, is largely farmland – sheep and cows in fields, footpaths passing through farms – and it didn't seem appropriate to disturb stock and wake dogs at 3am. It also allowed me to get a good night's sleep.

Day 1 Saturday 21st August

79.2km 2,554m

Start 00:01

Dropped off at The Cat by my sister Claire at 23:50 with son Tom, who ran the first couple of peaks with me. Too much chatting and laughing and we ended up on the front of Shuts so opted for road to Croker Hill. Dawn broke on the descent of The Cloud, then familiar territory to Ramshaw Rocks. Into the White Peak with both Wettons summited just to be sure. Arrived ruined in Ilam about 16:00 and refueled at Ilam Hall. Rang for extraction and limped to the pick-up point to be met by Rhonda, Ange's sister.

1	Whetstone
2	Shutlingsloe
3	Croker Hill
4	The Cloud
5	Gun
6	Hen Cloud
7	The Roaches
8	Ramshaw Rocks
9	Merryton Low
10	Revidge
11	Ecton Hill
12	Wetton Hill
13	Musden Low



Day 2 Sunday 22nd August

64.43km 2,367m

A decent night's sleep in the van then dropped off back in Ilam. Felt a lot better than the evening before. Unable to summit Wolfscote Hill as all access has been withdrawn. Met at the bottom by Jon Faulkner, who lives locally and guided me over Carder Low and Pilsbury Hill.

Back into familiar territory, Parkhouse and Chrome visible in the distance and then an interminable climb out of Hollinsclough to reach the oasis of Flash Bar Stores to refuel on coffee, coke and Cornish pasty.

The next 4 I knew well, a beautiful late afternoon run before Chelmorton and Sough Top and a tired trot down to Miller's Dale where I rehydrated in The Anglers' Rest on Chatsworth Gold while I waited for Ange to arrive.

14	Thorpe Cloud
15	Tissington Hill
16	Wolfscote Hill
17	Carder Low
18	Pilsbury Hill
19	High Wheeldon
20	Parkhouse Hill
21	Chrome Hill
22	High Edge
24	Oliver Hill
25	Cheeks Hill
26	Axe Edge Moor
27	Grin Low
28	Chelmorton Low
29	Sough Top (Taddington)



Day 3 Monday 23rd August

60km 1,712m

A beautiful start to the day along the Wye Valley to Monsall Dale, picking up two Ethels along the way. The approach to Fin Cop was very overgrown and an attempt to exit directly off the end was met with cliffs or impenetrable shrubbery.

Temperatures began to rise but spirits were lifted by the arrival of Mandy Calvert and Martin Rands, and not long after by Andy Sutton. Plenty of diverting chat along the dusty limestone trails.

As my pacers retraced their steps to their cars I wandered up Bolehill after a chance meeting with Nathanael Booker and family and then sat outside an unfortunately closed pub to await Ange

30	Wardlow Hay Cop
31	Longstone Moor
32	Fin Cop
33	Bole Hill (Burton Moor)
34	Harthill Moor
35	Aleck Low
36	Minninglow
37	Harborough Rocks
38	Bolehill (Cromford Moor)



Day 4 Tuesday 24th August

71.46km 2,230m

Steep forested and overgrown paths to Blakelow Hill and then fields to Winster and the very welcoming Community Shop before stone flagged field paths to the beautiful Stanton Moor (Gritstone, heather, trig and stone circles).

Jon Falkner popped up by the Chatsworth Garden Centre and led me up to Harland Edge.

Darren Hunt and Clare Holdcroft (Buxton MRT) were waiting with coke and encouragement in Rowsley and Matt Johnson surprised me on Sir William Hill.

Down into Hathersage to meet Tom Whittington for pizza and a pint (the 50-minute wait was music to my ears as I wasn't quite ready for a night-time assault on Stanage). We dined alfresco, which was fortunate for the other diners – 4 days in, I was beginning to stink.

Tom's van tonight, Ange was grateful for a night off.

39	Blakelow Hill (Bonsall Moor)
40	Stanton Moor
41	Lees Moor
42	Harland Edge (Beeley Moor)
43	Sir William Hill (Eyam Moor)
44	Durham Edge (Abney Moor)
45	Burton Bole (Shatton Moor)
46	Higger Tor
47	White Path Moss
48	Stanedge Pole
49	High Neb (Stanage Edge)





Day 5 Wednesday 25th August

61.26km 2,149m

Early out and back to Win Hill, Crook Hill via the Ladybower visitor facilities and up on to Derwent Edge and across to the equally stunning and deserted Howden Edge.

A surprise meeting on the Woodhead Road with Rob Jeffries and Mark Gibson. Time passed with stories of their 'Kidnapped' adventure and route was shortened thanks to Mark's local knowledge. Darren Hunt provided tea at Holmfirth Moss and we carried on towards West Nab, the northernmost Ethel. Mark and Rob headed back to Holmfirth Moss and I continued along the A635 (probably the most dangerous section of the route) to a rendezvous with Ange in a surprisingly busy layby on Saddleworth Moor

50	Win Hill
51	Crook Hill
52	Back Tor (Derwent Edge)
53	Lost Lad
54	High Stones
55	Margery Hill
56	Dead Edge End
57	Snailsden Pike End
58	Britland Edge Hill
59	White Low
60	Black Hill
61	West Nab





Day 6 Thursday 26th August

62.58km 1,852m

Early start along the road then down to 'the bothy' hoping to find tracks I'd spotted on satellite imagery – they were there and the location of the river crossing was confirmed by several deer making their way to Ashway Moss. Stayed high on runnable tracks from Alphin Pike and picked up tracks to Featherbed and Black Chew Head.

Once again back on familiar ground, too relaxed and my route to Alport Moor is not one to repeat.

Matt Johnson met me in the rain (the first significant shower of the week) on the Pennine Way for the soft ascent to Featherbed Top and the long, flagged path to Mill Hill and beyond. Catharine Crossley somehow found us despite a change of route and Geoff Pet was waiting at the road crossing where Gillian Lindsey had set up a popup coffee stop.

Fish and chips after Lantern Pike, then along the roads and tracks to Buxworth with Catharine and the Three Amigos: Dennis, Barrie and Bernard. It was suggested I head off towards Sponds but I'd had enough for one day and retired to the comfort of Tom's van.

62	Ashway Moss
63	Alphin Pike
64	Featherbed Moss
65	Black Chew Head
66	Bleaklow
67	Higher Shelf Stones
68	Alport Moor
69	Featherbed Top
70	Mill Hill
71	Cown Edge
72	Lantern Pike



Day 7 Friday 27th August

66.37km 2,736m

Up Black Hill, Sponds and Eccles with Tom before breakfast at the excellent Bridge Bakehouse in Whaley Bridge. Solo to Chinley Churn and the descent to the Lamb Inn (just opened for the day, sun shining in the beer garden – why not).

Jon Falkner magically appeared on the col between Famine and South Head and upped both my mood and my pace. We headed up Mount Famine and then towards Grindslow Knoll picking off the tops along the way. Jon headed back towards his car and I diverted down to the Penny Pot Café in Edale and drank ice cold juice. Catharine somehow found me on the rear terrace and handed me a delicious ham, cheese and mayo bap, I praised her sandwich making skills but, she honestly admitted she'd bought it.

Refueled, we took the direct approach up to Lord's Seat where we met Geoff and Simone Breedon for the ridge to Lose Hill, then down into Castleton to Gillian's popup coffee stop.

Marc Bradford and Toby Wallis were waiting to accompany me up to Bradwell Moor. I was very grateful. Dusk was approaching, rain was imminent and the prospect of continuing alone would have been daunting. Great nav from the pair of them through numerous fields, carefully avoiding sleeping bulls, to sometimes indistinct summits. We reached Sparrowpit at 10:30pm. Ravioli and a Hazy Jane.

73	Black Hill (Whaley Moor)
74	Sponds Hill
75	Eccles Pike
76	Chinley Churn
77	Mount Famine
78	South Head
79	Brown Knoll
80	Kinder Low/Kinder Scout
81	Grindslow Knoll
82	Lord's Seat (Rushup Edge)
83	Mam Tor
84	Lose Hill
85	Bradwell Moor
86	Slitherstone Hill
87	Eldon Hill
88	Gautries Hill





Day 8 Saturday 28th August

32.7km 1,200m

Up early, I had a deadline – 1pm. I was already a day later than I thought I'd be. Ange was off to Chatsworth Country Fair with Buxton MRT at 2pm and Hugo (stepson) needed a lift to Alsager for lifeguard training.

Off down the road towards Chapel. A couple of attempts to rejoin the field paths I'd originally planned were thwarted by brambles so I stuck with the tarmac to Castle Naze. Up on to Combs, where I was joined by Mandy and Martin, and then Dennis, Barrie and Bernard for Corbar Hill. The party grew at the foot of Corbar with Nathanael, Andy Beevers, Tom Whittington, son Tom and his friend Declan Tate and then Carol Upton and Sydney

Burbage Edge done, we descended on the Windgather race route then carried on down the old Goyt Road to cross the almost empty reservoir. The Tan Hill – Cat and Fiddle route came that way in the 1950's before the valley was dammed. Good luck to anyone following that route on Strava.

Foxlow Edge and then Andy Haigh with an Ethel millstone tribute and up towards Pym Chair. A path side coffee from Gillian and more support from Laura Telford and John, Rachel Mundy, Jon Hopper and Spence. More millstones and a medal to treasure.

Two to go! A walk and a jog over Cat's Tor and up the flagstones to Shining Tor. A fitting peak to finish on and worth the effort to clamber on to the top (thanks Dennis).

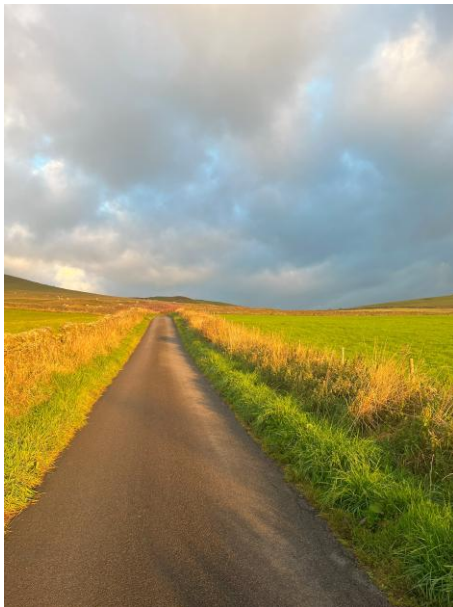
A gentle run to the Cat, with a welcome from more Harriers, my daughters and parents, to complete the round in 7 days, 13 hours and 11 minutes.

498km, 16,800m

Not quite as quick as I originally thought, but I wasn't exactly sure what it would entail. Quite happy with that.

I'll leave it to somebody else (younger, fitter, faster) to finish within a week.

89	Black Edge (Combs Moss)
90	Combs Head
91	Corbar Hill
92	Burbage Edge
93	Foxlow Edge
94	Cats Tor
95	Shining Tor



It was a glorious journey full of spectacular and contrasting scenery: the farmland plateaux, dales and picturebook villages of the White Peak; the isolated moors and gritstone edges of the Dark. If you are able to, I'd recommend ticking off a few Ethels. If you're crazy then have a go at the round.

A big thank you to all those who came out on to the hill to support me, to Tom Whittington for his logistical skills and allowing my filthy body into his pristine van, for all the encouraging comments on Facebook etc., to all those who generously donated to Buxton Mountain Rescue and most of all to Ange who fully supported me and enabled me to attempt the challenge despite me only giving her a few days' notice. Ange had spent the previous week in the van supporting Hugo on his Pennine Way epic, the last thing she needed was a week sleeping in isolated laybys (isolated but surprisingly busy!?)



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