

BOB GRAHAM ROUND 2996

21-22 JUNE 1996

This year the club celebrated its 20th birthday. At the AGM various ideas were put forward to mark the occasion; nobody realised it was also to be the 20th BG weekend, the first was in 1977.

Eight contenders (which became 9 once the attempt started) and around 35 others pacers, supporters, drivers, contender's partners appeared at some time during the weekend. The weather throughout was perfect with good visibility and not too hot. The run started at 7pm clockwise and by 6:30pm on the Saturday it was smiles and photos all round at the Moot Hall with Fred Rogerson, the Recorder for the BG club, there saying that getting nine round in a day was an all time record.

Congratulations to all the successful contenders and many thanks to all the people who turned out for this great weekend of fell running. A great way to celebrate "20 years under a brown sky".

Colin Henson

...And Colin himself deserves much credit for this remarkable achievement. Not only does he coordinate the whole thing but he is at each road crossing, cooks up food for the contenders and even has time to run a section himself!

So what did the successful contenders think of their achievement?...

Warts on the B.G. a report, not a complaint.

Following on closely from the storming success of the 15 trigs some three weeks prior to this epic, eight of us started out on a warm, sunny evening from Keswick and some twenty odd hours later, nine of us finished. Life can be puzzling at times. Others no doubt will give details of who, did it and the appropriate times taken (all easily within the 24 hours), I just want to record some of the inner thoughts and agonies that went through my tortured mind during the day.

The time before the start, sitting drinking tea in the camp-site, was the worst time of the whole day. The helpers seemed to be having "such a good time", whereas we (who by now had assumed the role of Gladiators by being considered as "contenders") sat there quietly, the only sound disturbing the peace and solitude being that of churning bowels and dashes to the toilet.

The start and the run up to Skiddaw were pleasant, easy-going and perfectly timed. The company was jocular and we even broke into a run at one point! The views over Galloway and the Isle of Man were stunning and the following sunset was likewise.

However, night follows sunset. Within 50 metres of the stop and subsequent start we

were lost, (mentioning no names, just initials, H.C.) having to rely on a kindly old lady to guide us to the correct point in the fence through which we were to climb something black in front of us.

The night section was strangely unmemorable save for very nearly expiring on a boiled sweet which lodged itself in the lower part of my gullet. Ah, yes, there was Helvellyn where we came across a bunch of semi-torpid druid-like creatures welcoming the extremely cold summer solstice into being. I think they thought we were the head-torched keepers from the National Trust coming to move them on. By the time we had reached the steep side of Fairfield, just another slight incline, by this time, the dawn was breaking. At 3-30 a.m. we reached Dunmail in bright daylight. I have to record the genuine gratitude that I think we all felt towards Colin Henson and the many other helpers who fed, paced and carried for us an incredible effort for any club and one which Dark Peak should be justifiably proud of. I should also say, despite the earlier rumour to the contrary, that the navigation on this stretch was faultless. Roy Small and Dave Holmes achieved an amazing consensus on most occasions. To me and I suspect the rest of the "contenders", if we had been told that the next hill was Snowdon, we would not have batted an eyelid.



Taking on red cross parcels at Wasdale car park (Helen Pedley)

The next section from Dunmail to Wasdale was for me the hardest part. About this time my body told me it was long overdue for a few hours kip which it would have succeeded in obtaining were it not for the fact that we were also surrounded by well meaning souls (notably Mike Hayes) who insisted on keeping within the "schedule". As it happened, I and three others fell a long way behind the schedule at this point and dire warnings/threats ensued about not making it within 24 hours (frankly I was finding it difficult to think that far ahead at this point and didn't really give a bugger). Also, my left knee decided it was going to play up as though it were being knifed every time we ran down hill which kept me firmly towards the back of the group. So after what seemed to be at least half a life time, I struggled down the side of Scafell into Wasdale to the waiting Red Cross parcel. It is amazing how invigorating a cup of tea, rice pudding, fruit cake and apple pie all stuffed down in 3 minutes can be on such occasions.

So putting all thoughts of jellified knee to the back of my mind, we set off up what, in retrospect, was the worst climb of the day, the dreaded Yewbarrow. To say we went fast up this is an understatement. From being about 45 minutes behind schedule at Wasdale, we were bang on after the top and well in front by the time we had reached Red Pike. Yet another tribute to the energising powers of apple pie, rice pudding and fruit cake. The remainder was "steady", Great Gable was shared with about 3,000 other happy walkers (including a fluorescent version of Mike Browell) and from there onwards, Colin Henson led Dave Green and me rapidly towards Honister.

The thought that "bar the shouting", we had virtually completed the Round made the last section the easiest of them all. Rick Ansell and Howard Swindells paced us expertly and on reaching the final road section, after a quick change of shoes, I was almost bounding along! I caught up with Dave Green and Richard Hakes and we ran up the High Street in Keswick line abreast a wonderful feeling. Tom Westgate and Ken Jones had finished before us and Jim Fulton, Dave Allen (the mystery ninth man), John Myers and Karen Green soon followed us in. I have a photograph of me holding a bottle of champagne at this point in time. Where did it come from?

Chris Barber

Richard Hakes (and Tom Westgate) posed the pacers some familiar problems in the early stages, as Richard relates....

"Has anyone seen my bag?"

...By the time the climb up to Blencathra came, Tom and myself were pulling ahead of our pacers, were feeling strong and confident and not a little annoyed that we couldn't get a drink, so much for the close support we had been led to expect. At the top we paused to regroup (get a drink) and consider the view. It may have looked nice but we had to climb all of it! The descent in the gathering gloom was far easier than I had anticipated. One brief incident sticks in my mind, that of Paul Sanderson who zoomed passed on an obviously better path saying, "You should have taken this path". Well thanks I thought.

I had arrived at the checkpoint ahead of my bag and the light within it and I got annoyed when we were hurried up. I wanted my halogen light but didn't have it so had to borrow John Gunnee's lamp. My bag did catch me up and the halogen bulb was much appreciated though it was in a rucsac where a bottle had split and so everything was wet.

Mike Hayes was carrying my bag out of Dunmail and it was fortunate that I didn't need anything in it because I didn't see it again until Sunday morning. Apparently, it made it round on a separate schedule to my own. Again I found myself in the lead with Ken and Tom. It was somewhere later in this section that I hit my low point. I felt tired and doubted my ability to maintain the pace. When you are only a third of the way it seems a long way to the finish.

The BowFell climb again left strong memories. For the next hour the tranquillity was shattered as we fell against up to four helicopters who were following Joss Naylor on his epic tour that day (60 peaks at 60 in 36 hours). I may find myself included in some background film. As I was rock hopping my way to Great End I had this helicopter hovering feet behind me doing nothing for my concentration. Joss even had a few words of advice as our paths crossed, something about taking a five minute nap prior to climbing Yewbarrow. Broad Stand was east with the rope, I wouldn't have done it without it, but the 300ft descent into Wasdale was sheer purgatory.

Joss may have suggested a nap but there was little chance. I had dropped a few minutes on Tom and Ken but we left together. The climbs went well but I fell behind on the descents. Observing Pillar, Kirk Fell and then Great gable poking it's head above them both was quite frightening but Pete Dyke told me not to worry, "They aren't as bad as they seem" and the adrenalin would take over.

Things got better, I began to feel confident about finishing but was becoming paranoid about twisting my ankle. The rest of the section went well and it was welcome to see all the people who had come up to wait for us to pass. It was only on this section that I felt I got enough to eat thanks to the welcome offers I received.

At Honister I picked up Tim Atkin and Mike Pedley as pacers, both very interested in the football match in progress [England v Spain] and we kept in close contact with the game via a radio. The climbs went well but the descents still were causing me concern but I knew I was well within time. It wasn't until Dave and Chris caught me on the final road section (just as penalties were being taken) that I realised just how slow I had become. These two were having none of that and maybe they had done me a favour. I found that I could run again and match their pace quite easily.

I was well pleased with the time of 22 hours and 52 minutes that we achieved. The weather remained good and we all got round in time and without incident... and I didn't twist my ankle.

Richard Hakes

These timings were for Jim Fulton but are the same as most of the others to Scafell Pike and not that much different after that. The actual times above were set running to a nominal 23h 21m schedule. Colin Henson has the original copies of the schedules for many of the successful Dark Peakers over the last 20 years.

One afterthought (pinched from other fell running clubs). How about some sort of "roll of honour" maybe a sketch, cartoon or map below which could be put the names of successful contenders and added to each year? It could then be displayed in The Sportsman (landlord willing). Anyone fancy creating something?

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Actual timings for DPFR BG 1996

Keswick	19:00	Rossett Crag	06:50
Skiddaw	20:23	Bowfell	07:18
Great Calva	21:05	Esk Pike	07:45
Blencathra	22:15	Great End	08:12
Threlkeld - in	22:53	Ill Crag	08:29
		Broad Crag	08:40
Threlkeld - out	23:01	Scafell Pike	08:55
Clough Head	23:52	Scafell	09:35
Great Dodd	00:29	Wasdale - in	10:10
Stybarrow Dodd	00:40		
Raise	01:08	Wasdale - out	10:19
Whiteside	01:19	Yewbarrow	11:14
Hellvelyn Low Man	01:34	Red Pike	12:09
Hellvelyn	01:42	Steeple	12:23
Nethermost Pike	01:53	Pillar	12:58
Dollywaggon Pike	02:09	Kirk Fell	13:51
Fairfield	02:55	Great Gable	14:35
Seat Sandal	03:23	Green Gable	14:46
Dunmail - in	-	Brandreth	14:59
		Grey Knotts	15:08
Dunmail - out	03:56	Honister - in	15:24
Steel Fell	04:24		
Calf Crag	04:43	Honister - out	-
High Raise	05:19	Dale Head	16:09
Sergeant Man	05:27	Hindscarth	16:22
Thunacar Knott	05:40	Robinson	16:46
Harrison Stickle	05:50	Keswick	18:13
Pike O Stickle	06:03	Total Time	23 hours 13 mins