

Aritri: The Bob Graham? Pah... no way, it's for lunatics... that's what I'd always said.

I had always really loved the camaraderie and relished the feeling of supporting a friend achieve their goals, with might I add 100% success rate! However, it definitely was not a realistic consideration for myself. So in June 2024 I was lulled into supporting two of my friends and brilliant runners Adam and James on their BGs. At that point, I was quite anxious about how on earth I was going to run two legs of the BG, when even one Wainwright was exhausting for me. I'd often joke that I'd infiltrated the running club as I wasn't really a fell runner, preferring light trail to difficult terrain. Somehow, I inadvertently ran three legs! Members of my running club raised their eyebrows and I sheepishly realised I had nominated myself to run the following year.

Organising my schedule, I was fortunate enough to have some wonderful friends willing to support me. The training felt just as enjoyable as the day itself. I was soaking up the miles with friends, loved spending time recceing in the Lakes and stomping up and down Win Hill with Katia.

Eventually, when the day arrived, the nerves fully set in. The kit was ready, I had individually labelled plastic bags of food and a plethora of bacon sandwiches and a good friend, Dan, who would ferry runners to each checkpoint. The rest was up to fate. The Keswick humdrum was ringing in my ears as we congregated beneath The Moot Hall. When asked how I was feeling, a faint smile broke across my face. As it neared 18:45, us five contenders had our photo taken and then we set off on our adventure.

Leg 1 was full of chatter and conservatively paced footfalls. I was treated to the company of the Leicester (shire) Jesters, Adam and Tad, who true to their word wore their jester hats. As a group we took in the first few Wainwrights and descended Blencathra just as dusk set in. Coming into Threlkeld, I ran into the arms of my friend Chris, who is an absolute ultra running beast.

Leg 2 brought out the stars over the Dodds. My friend Holly was kind enough to carry on from her leg 1 support and carry a soggy po-tato cake for far longer than probably intended! Chris, Holly and I chatted through the night taking in hills and were treated to a beautiful blood red moon over Fairfield. As we descended Seat Sandal, I was still feeling fantastic and wondering when it was going to start feeling difficult. In the distance, I could see the headtorches of Felix, Rachel and supporters-what inspirational strong runners, I thought.

Having been told things fall apart on leg 3, I was quite worried about it, but I decided to tell myself that I was in the safe hands of experienced runners Lisa, Janie and John and we were going to find a beautiful line towards Bowfell. After a mandatory sock change, off we went, bacon sandwich in hand, over Steel Fell as the dawn shattered the sky into mesmerising shades of pink and orange. We chatted about our love of speaking Spanish, Janie's novel and munched up a few more mountains. As we reached Rossett Pike, the heat gradually crept up on me and I started to tire, the food wasn't going in as easily and I found myself needing to drink more. Lisa miraculously conjured up ever more electrolyte tablets. I reminded myself of something Jack Scott had said; these ultra experiences don't have to be black and white, when you start to struggle "pull yourself into the grey" because it will eventually pass. But pass it unfortunately did not. Nonetheless, I looked forward

to Lord's Rake and going up Scafell. Descending should have probably been a fun experience were it not my first lesson in downhill scree running (thank you Lisa!) but being a bit underconfident, I really just wanted "to get off this hill!"

Wasdale was hot, busy and having lost a bit of time on leg 3, I just wanted to get going again. Leg 4 ended up feeling a bit of a daze, which was a shame since it was my favourite part of the entire BG; remote, signal-free, often tourist-free with great views over Ennerdale and the western Lakes. Legendary triple round finishers Charlie and Helen were great company and having ascended Yewbarrow, we were treated to Lewis who knew many a good line. Off we trotted over my favourite view in the Lakes, Steeple, and then over to Pillar where we met Kirsty and her very well behaved dog. By the time we had reached Great Gable, I was starting to entertain the idea that perhaps completion may be possible, though Charlie had tried to convince me of this multiple times prior! We took a slightly rogue line coming off Grey Knotts, but nevertheless was treated to the welcoming sight of Honister slate mine, another bacon sandwich, Katia, James and Alex.

Despite the poles, the uphill was beginning to hurt by leg 5 and I was starting to tire of my food. Dory's words of wisdom "just keep swimming" entered my head, I smiled and carried on over the last few climbs. It is such a treat to see different friends at each checkpoint and each section had its own jokes. My descending of Robinson started to take a toll on my joints, when at the bottom Alex asked "Aritri, would you like to get on with this next 10k, or come back next year to do the whole 100k again?" Well... I thought, that's a very good point, let's go then! Reaching the road segment, I had a second wind possibly aid-ed by a cool Cola Zero from Dan's car! We started doing around 5:00 min/km splits. Eventually, the novelty wore off and Keswick started feeling a million miles away. "We'll be there in 500m," said James brightly, to which Katia said "in 800m we'll be turning right." As you can imagine, James was in receipt of a very dirty look! Eventually though, the bridge towards Keswick appeared and then Mountain Warehouse, then the chippy, and then... was that actually the Moot Hall? I had never been so excited to stop running... I legged it to the top of the stairs.

I stared out in disbelief at the people below who were cheering.

Who were they cheering at? My head and body felt heavy, the ringing in my ears returned and a few tears escaped me. I felt so overwhelmed by the kindness everyone had shown me in supporting me round, and saddened that the experience was over. Soon after, my face broke into a huge smile as I saw James T and then Jason complete their rounds. I felt so happy for everyone, and my heart felt so full. What a great strong inspirational running club we are all part of.

Aritri Mandal