

BOB GRAHAM ROUND

Hugh Mathieson and Mike Hayes : 19-20 JUNE 1993

The full report runs to 28 pages and is an excellent record of the attempt as well as a detailed analysis of the schedule in attempt to derive the elusive ideal schedule. This report be modified in future to produce a DPFR Bob Graham Round guide. may

On this attempt Mike wore a Polar 4000 Heart rate Monitor throughout which enabled the accurate split times to be obtained at every key point... until the memory ran out on the final climb!

The 6 page detailed split and commentary has been included here and includes Mike's estimates of where he thinks slippages on an ideal round occurred.

Sectional Data for the Bob Graham Round

MOOT HALL, KESWICK	8.00.00 a.m.	
[7175 metres, +475', -300', along undulating country lanes]		<i>Two contenders (Hugh Mathieson and Mike Hayes) set out from Keswick and stayed together for the whole Round helped by a 7-strong back-up team. The specific logistical support given by this team was vital to success and is described later.</i>
Chapel Bridge, Newlands	8.42.27	
[2475 metres, +550' up a farm track] then [425 metres, +425' zigzagging on scree and grass].		<i>We left the track too early and lost 1 minute by going over Blea Crag ridge.</i>
Blea Crag, S. Col	9.11.45	
[200 metres, + 200' clambering over rock-steps], then [1375 metres, +800' along a comfortable uphill path].		<i>There was a shroud of mist on Robinson other wise ideal conditions (not too hot, cold, or windy).</i>
ROBINSON	9.34.01	
[1175 metres, -525' on a path down easy ground]		<i>We left Keswick at the same time as another 2 contenders (supported by a Cornish team). We took a slightly different route from them up Robinson but arrived at the summit at the same time. Throughout the Round each party kept to its own independent pace and route but we kept on criss-crossing each other. This was a useful benchmark on progress.</i>
Littledale Col	9.40.39	
[1075 metres, +475' along easy sheep-tracks]		
HINDSCARTH	9.51.48	
[875 metres, -225' along an easy path]		
Hindscarth Edge (W. Col)	9.56.10	
[950 metres, +325' along a safe simple ridge]		<i>Our team serviced us here like a motor-racing pit-stop... a quick snack and we were away.</i>
DALE HEAD	10.05.48	
[2000 metres, -1325' down a good slightly muddy path]		
HONISTER (arrive)	10.17.20	
HONISTER (depart)	10.25.08	
[1425 metres, +1100' up an eroded but safe path]		<i>The weather was still ideal (overcast but not too windy, hot, or cold). We could see that the higher mountains such as Great Gable and Pillar had their summits in cloud.</i>
GREY KNOTTS	10.49.03	
[825 metres, +100' over slightly wettish ground]		
BRANDRETH	10.56.24	
[500 metres, -200' over mild rockfields]		
Gilliercombe Col	11.00.29	
[900 metres, +450' up a firm easy track]		
GREEN GABLE	11.11.09	
[300 metres, -150' down a zigzag stony path]		
Windy Gap	11.13.15	
[625 metres, +500' up loose awkward stonefields]		
GREAT GABLE	11.23.52	
[975 metres, -900' ; a rough rock scramble + loose zigzags]		<i>Foggy, so took care navigating from summit</i>
Beck Head (E.End)	11.37.27	
[125 metres over easy flat ground]		
Beck Head (W.End)	11.38.19	
[450 metres, +475' up stable scree and outcrops]		
Rib Top	11.46.00*	
[800 metres, -100', +200' over grass and a few easy rocks]		<i>In the fog on Rib Top, I took a bearing for Kirk Fell Tarns, passed just below them without realising. then panicked when they did not turn</i>

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[800 metres, -100', +200' over grass and a few easy rocks]		<i>In the fog on Rib Top, I took a bearing for Kirk Fell Tarns, passed just below them without realising, then panicked when they did not turn up. Martin Spence, pacing just behind, soon sorted it out. We lost 3 minutes</i>
KIRK FELL	11.57.04	
[700 metres, -375' down a gentle grassy slope]		<i>This tricky section was navigated O.K.</i>
Hudson Gully (Top)		
[575 metres, -450' down a nasty rough gully and scree]		<i>So that we would not dislodge stones on each other we spaced ourselves out and lost 1 minute on anyone going down solo.</i>

Black Sail Pass [800 metres, +200' along an easy path]	12.07.27 p.m.
Looking Stead Col [375 metres, +325' up rocky zigzags], then [1400 metres, +600' along an easy path]	12.16.25
PILLAR [575 metres, -450' ; stony track to awkward rockfield]	12.39.00
Wind Gap [450 metres, +250' ; stony track to awkward rockfield]	12.46.13
Black Crag [725 metres, -100', +125' , easy path + a few big rocks]	12.51.48
Scoat Fell [425 metres, -125' , exposed but safe path]	12.58.32
Steeple Col [75 metres, +75' on a twisting but easy path]	01.02.15
STEEPLE [75 metres, -75' back on a dog-leg]	01.03.26
Steeple Col [300 metres, +125' on easy ground]	01.04.18
Scoat Wall [675 metres, -250' over pathless grass and a few rocks]	01.07.50
Red Pike Col [625 metres, +200' over easy grass]	01.13.21
RED PIKE [1775 metres, -1175' , fast grass then slower outcrops]	01.20.41
Dore Head [875 metres, -50', +400' , using a tiny path which twinkles through boulderfields then climbs up bilberry slopes]	01.34.30
Stirrup-Yewbarrow Col [450 metres, +175' along an easy airy ridge-path]	01.50.02
YEWBARROW [500 metres, -300' on easy grass] [950 metres, -1525' down steep scree and brackenfields] [250 metres along a near-flat road]	01.53.57
WASDALE (arrive)	02.16.24
WASDALE (depart)	02.37.31
[375 metres, +100' along the riverside track] [3075 metres, +2850' up the open fell then through rocks]	
SCAFELL [350 metres, -75' over mild rocks]	03.45.55
Deep Ghyll Top [300 metres, -575' down a dangerous gully, across the narrow but safe West Wall Traverse and down unstable scree on Lord's Rake].	03.51.00*
Lord's Rake Bottom [200 metres, +125' on a rocky, narrow, but safe path]	04.01.15
Mickledore (S.W. end) [725 metres, +550' ; moderate boulder-scrambling]	04.05.40
SCAFELL PIKE (arrive)	04.20.17

Hugh, in the lead, powered up the inclines sending my heart rate close to 150 ; so our time on this section might be a bit fast.

We had sent Martin to lay out a picnic at the wrong spot whilst we did the Steeple dogleg. So we lost 2 minutes whilst he caught us up.

11/40

Contouring round the false summit.

The grass is faster than the main path.

We lost 2 minutes at Dore Head when some of the party started contouring too high.

We lost 3 minutes when I cut down too soon and we had to traverse some rock fields to reach the top scree-run.

Another superb pitstop service meant that we were ready to leave after 15 minutes. But a heavy squall delayed us by 6 minutes. When it did not stop, we set off anyway.

What with the good line we found up Scafell and my heart rate mostly in the 140s, the time for this section might be just a bit fast.

Broad Stand was ruled out beforehand. (We had no rope and it was too wet anyway).

Slow work in slippery conditions. Even when dry, it is not worth rushing this section. We lost 2 minutes over a single person as we spaced ourselves out for safety reasons.

There was fog above 2500' all afternoon.

Scaffell Pike (depart) 04.23.00*
[400 metres, -300' down eroded stony zigzags]
Broad Crag S.W. Col 04.29.43
[275 metres, +150' ; a nasty scramble over big boulders]

BROAD CRAG 04.35.44
[250 metres, -200', more scrambling over jagged rocks]

Broad Crag E.Col 04.44.00*
[375 metres, +200' ; rock-scrambling, but not so bad]
ILL CRAG 04.49.41
[900 metres, -200' ; half joggable, half a scramble]
Calf Cove Col 05.02.09
[375 metres, +150' along a reasonable stony path]

Great End (N.W. cairn) 05.07.46
[150 metres over a flat easy stony plateau]
GREAT END 05.10.20
[375 metres, -275' through an awkward boulderfield]
[575 metres, -250' using easy paths and grass]
Esk Hause 05.18.35
[800 metres, +425' on a path winding through outcrops]
ESK PIKE (arrive) 05.31.06
Esk Pike (depart) 05.32.44
[625 metres, -325' on a path winding through outcrops]
Ore Gap 05.38.24
[1050 metres, +375' ; stony path ending in a scramble]
BOWFELL (arrive) 05.52.32
Bowfell (depart) 05.53.35*
[375 metres, -175' ; a scramble then a stony plateau]

Billy Bland's Rake (top) 06.09.00*
[1175 metres, -800' ; nasty slant down through rockfields]
Rossett Gill (top) 06.23.07
[275 metres, +125' on an easy path]
ROSSETT PIKE 06.27.27
[1500 metres, -700' on a stony but runnable dinky path]
Stake Beck 06.45.34
[1850 metres, +850' slogging over boggy moorland]

Pike of Stickle (N. foot) 07.12.58
[50 metres, +75' ; mild rock-climbing]
PIKE OF STICKLE 07.16.07
[50 metres, -75' ; mild rock-descending]
Pike of Stickle (N. foot) 07.17.52
[550 metres, -200' down a muddy path]
Dungeon Ghyll (arrive) 07.21.12
Dungeon Ghyll (depart) 07.22.56
[400 metres, +350' ; a steep safe climb over clean rock]
HARRISON STICKLE 07.30.48
[200 metres, -175' ; an easy rock and path descent]
Harrison Stickle (N.foot) 07.32.28
[625 metres, +125' along an easy undulating path]

We lost 2 minutes because I was too lazy to take a bearing from the summit.

All the times hereabouts are reasonable for traversing wet rocks but not for dry rocks.

We lost 2 minutes when I again failed to use a compass to find the best way off.

In fog, I navigated this O.K.

Ditto

We lost 2 minutes blindly following some others to the N.W. cairn (slightly off-route).

Leaving Bowfell, not bothering with a compass, I led the party on a 180 degree U-turn and started to descend towards Eskdale. Howard Swindells pulled out his compass, read the Riot Act and put us right. I lost us 12 minutes here, the worst mistake of the Round.

You can't avoid the awkward bits.

Hugh was driving us hard here and others might find that this section-time is tight. I got the bonk just before Stickle foot but got revived with chocolate raisins + a drink.

A quick drink + a bite to eat as we walked up hill.

From here to Dunmail we were jogging everything flat, downhill, or even uphill inclines if they were slight.

THUNACAR KNOTT (S. cairn) 07.38.27
 [850 metres, -125' ; path over easy soft muddy ground]
Top of Bright Beck Col 07.42.45
 [1000 metres, +275' ; along an easy path]
HIGH RAISE 07.53.27
 [950 metres, -150' ; +50' ; along a boggy path]
SERGEANT MAN 08.00.57
 [1800 metres, -825' ; easy jog down grassy soft ground]
Easedale-top Col 08.17.03
 [700 metres, +200' on an easy path over soft ground]

CALF CRAG 08.24.51
 [1900 metres, -250' ; +100' ; boggy and undulating path]

Fence corner, Steel Fell W. base 08.38.24
 [575 metres, +200' along an easy path]
STEEL FELL 08.44.55
 [550 metres, -200' on an easy grassy path]
Gully top
 [650 metres, -875' down a steep slippery grass slope]
DUNMAIL (arrive) 08.56.00
DUNMAIL (depart) 09.17.28
 [2000 metres, +1675' ; easy path up steep bit then grass]
SEAT SANDAL 09.56.48
 [675 metres, -475' ; easy grass then steep loose earth]
Grisedale Hause 10.03.49
 [1175 metres, +925' ; earth + small scree zigzags]
FAIRFIELD 10.29.14
 [1250 metres, -1100' (via Cofa Col) ; a dinky path neatly zips down the steep rough terrain]

Grisedale Tarn Outlet 10.47.27
 [1350 metres, +925' ; a zigzagging loose-earth path]
Just S. of Dollywagon (arrive) 11.13.10
Just S. of Dollywagon (depart) 11.16.38
 [200 metres, +125' ; easy grass]
DOLLYWAGON PIKE 11.20.48
 [550 metres, -150' ; little rockfields then a path]
 [1050 metres, +250' ; easy path and easy short grass]
NETHERMOST PIKE 11.41.43
 [400 metres, -75' on easy grass and paths]
 [625 metres, +275' up the good-surface tourist track]
HELVELLYN 11.53.42
 [775 metres, -125' ; +25' ; on a very easy track]
HELVELLYN LOWER MAN 12.01.57 a.m.
 [775 metres, -400' ; following a good path]
Whiteside S. Col 12.09.33
 [500 metres, +200' ; an easy path]
WHITESIDE (arrive) 12.16.36
Whiteside (depart) 12.19.25
 [275 metres, -125' ; earth path through scattered rocks]
Whiteside, N.E. Col 12.23.18
 [725 metres, +200' ; earth path ending in a few rocks]
RAISE 12.31.24
 [950 metres, -450' ; indistinct path through boggy ground]

We covered this section a bit fast (by about a minute) as we were gaining rapidly on another Bob Graham party in front.

We caught and passed 2 Bob Graham parties so we were going about 2 minutes faster than was necessary over this section.

Hugh set a hard but fair pace for this section.

We lost 1 minute following the wall too close.

We lost 1 minute double-checking the route off Fairfield in the dusk, (a wise precaution). At this point we started using torches a bit.

By now it was pitch black.

We lost 3 minutes because I got the bonk. Bonk removed by a drink of Isostar + banana. Put on 2 thick Hellis +Buffalo windshirt for the cold night section to Clough Head

4 minutes lost taking a roundabout route.

There was no moon or stars and it was foggy until we got off Clough Head, so our pacer, Pete Gorvett, navigated carefully all the way.

Another quick drink of Isostar + banana

Sticks Pass 12.41.21
 [550 metres, +300'; a simple easy path]
Stybarrow Dod (S.W. Cairn) 12.50.00*
 [425 metres over an easy featureless grass plateau]
STYBARROW DOD (N.E. Cairn) 12.55.26
 [1200 metres, -200', +25' using indistinct, easy paths]
WATSON DOD 01.09.01
 [500 metres, +50', along an easy slightly muddy path]
Great Dod (Foot of S. Shoulder) 01.18.00*
 [325 metres, +150'; an easy path]
Great Dod(Shelter) 01.23.31
 [150 metres, +25'; featureless short grass, no path]
GREAT DOD 01.25.31
 [1500 metres, -675'; easy grass + an elusive path]

2 minutes lost by over-cautious walking

2 minutes lost by straying a bit too much E.

The route from shelter to cairn is not obvious

We took this section very cautiously (on purpose) because this is a common disaster point for many contenders. Pete Gorvett (Ace Orienteer) got the line dead right by taking us at a careful walk in the thick fog. We lost 7 minutes over a time on a clear night.

Calfhow fence 01.43.56
 [1500 metres, -50', +325'; some mud, but an easy path]
CLOUGH HEAD 02.03.13
 [625 metres, -300'; mostly an easy path + a few rocks]
White Pike Col
 [925 metres, -925'; awkward to balance on slippery ground]
Coach Road Bend
 [1300 metres, -550'; paths through reeds, bog, and mud]
Newsham Farm
 [750 metres, -200' down a farm road to Mill Bridge]
 [875 metres, +100' along roads]
THREKELD, N.E. (arrive) 02.52.22
THREKELD, N.E. (depart) 03.03.00*
 [650 metres, +250' on a good footpath]
 [1350 metres, +1200'; zigzags up a good earth path]
 [800 metres, +825' rock scrambling on a razor-type ridge]
Beneath Hallsfell Top (arrive) 04.01.00*
Beneath Hallsfell Top (depart) 04.03.00*
 [50 metres, +50' clamber up a steep path]
BLENCATHRA 04.04.05
 [3900 metres, -1625'; pathless grass + mild tussocks]

We lost 12 minutes on what could be achieved from Clough Head to Threkeld, most of it in the vicinity of White Pike where I had led the party then lost confidence in what to do next. But we still descended much faster than all other parties just behind us. Another lightning-efficient refuelling-pitstop.

There was just enough light to dispense with torches halfway up Blencathra. We lost 2 minutes having fun rock-climbing. A quick drink + adding a layer of clothes.

Mike Pedley took us on a superb route and not many will match our section time here.

A quick stop for fruit juice and flapjack

Feeling wobbly and took Isostar to revive.

Another subtle route by Mike Pedley

Towards the top, Hugh was stronger than me and pulled away by a couple of minutes. Here, the Heart Rate Monitor ran out of memory.

Hugh had got to the summit 2 minutes before me and stopped to get stones out of his shoes.

Caldew Junction (arrive) 04.34.33
Caldew Junction (depart) 04.37.38
 [750 metres, +50'; a reedy path along Wiley Gill]
Fence Foot 04.46.00*
 [1050 metres, +1050' on a good slightly muddy path]
GREAT CALVA (arrive) 05.09.36
Great Calva (depart) 05.11.15
 [1450 metres, -700'; a bit of heather then a muddy path]
Dead Beck Track-Bridge 05.24.35
 [800 metres, -50', +75'; small path through marshes]
 [1850 metres, +1100'; pathless longish grass to fence]
 [825 metres, +350'; a good path over firm earth + slates]
SKIDDAW 06.19.00*
 [600 metres, a good flat slightly slatey tourist path]
Skiddaw's S. Shoulder
 [525 metres, -350'; a safe descent on a good earth path]

Jenkin Hill-top Bend

[1100 metres, -975' ; steep, earthy, obstacle-free path]

A girl who started half an hour before us zooms past elegantly to ensure she beats 24 hours.

Dip at Jenkin Hill Bottom

[825 metres, +25', -125' ; undulating path, good surface]

Latrigg Car Park

[2375 metres, -700', +25' ; well-graded easy track + road]

[825 metres, +25', -25' ; parkland and Keswick streets]

MOOT HALL, KESWICK

07.22.00*

A steady hard jog all the way on this section. I thought our pacers were a bit cruel here.

The Role of the Back-Up Team in our Bob Graham Attempt

Nearly all successful Bob Graham Rounds depend upon good teamwork. We had 7 pacers who shared between them the task of guiding us over the 5 sections. We also had a minibus, driven by Roger Lyons which had the 24 hour job of servicing us at every road crossing point and picking up or dropping off pacers. This involved travelling 135 miles over roads that were often narrow and hilly. At the crossing points, preparing food for the contestants poses special problems. They will want something instantly available, often cooked, but you won't know when they are going to arrive. Also a variety of food has to be available because endurance activity has strange effects on people's digestion (often saliva dries up, or people get an aversion to certain sweet foods, or sometimes have a craving that leads to overeating and sickness). For this reason Roger always had a wide variety of foods on instant offer.

On the hills, there is also an art in being a good pacer dependent on the terrain, the weather, and the physical and mental condition of the contestant(s). This is how it worked in our case.

Keswick to Honister, paced by Howard Swindells.

More teams fail because they start too quickly than too slowly. Howard ensured that we had an extended gentle warm-up, also that we conserved nervous energy.

Honister to Wasdale paced by Ray Rogers and Martin Spence

Ray and Martin regarded us as rather frisky sheepdogs. They let Hugh and I set the pace but were on the alert to intervene as soon as we did anything silly whilst letting us have our way if things went well.

Wasdale to Dunmail paced by Hugh Cotton and Howard Swindells

This was the longest leg (6 hours 20 mins.) over the highest mountains with the severest terrain. So Hugh and Howard carried extra food and clothing for emergencies, letting us set the pace and do the navigation for the first half of this section but taking control when our mental and physical energy started to flag a bit.

Dunmail to Threkeld paced by Pete Gorvett

Pete let us set the pace (Hugh uphill, me downhill) but took complete control of the navigation. This made sense as we were getting tired, it was dark and foggy...and Pete is the best navigator anyway.

Threkeld to Keswick paced by Roger Lyons and Mike Pedley

Mike did all the navigation just in front of us. Roger stuck like a leech, providing instant support to whichever contender he thought was suffering most. This was a most effective pacing strategy here.

Conclusion

These notes have been written up whilst everything is fresh in our mind. We hope that they will provide an interesting foundation for research into long distance endurance events and also provide assistance to anyone thinking of tackling the Bob Graham Round. Having had our moments as Prima Donnas, we look forward to supporting our pacers at some future date.

Mike Hayes

Hugh Mathieson

15