

THE BOB GRAHAM ROUND 1999

The club's success in the BG over the last three years must have led some people to think we were invincible; but this year these thoughts were almost cancelled out.

On Friday afternoon on June 18th I was driving to the Lakes in heat wave conditions. I was thinking that with seven good contenders an excellent weekend was in store. The attempt started at 7pm on Friday evening; the weather forecast was for cloud with some drizzle. The first leg to Threlkeld went smoothly enough; the second leg across the Dodds was harder because of low cloud. Everyone was grateful for Chris Barber's navigating skills.

After the Langdales the weather worsened, with rain and the wind getting stronger. In Wasdale the support team were gazing anxiously towards the Scafells; the schedule was going amiss- nearly 2 hours adrift. The runners finally arrived, wet and bedraggled, and four of them retired.

Three contenders carried on - Andy Dickinson, Kevin Saville and Chris Ledger, who had injured his knee. The weather in Wasdale was terrible and conditions on the Tops could only be imagined. We were the only vehicles in Honister car park, which was under two inches of water.

Andy Dickenson was the first of our three heroes to arrive; he had just over 3 hours left to beat the 24 hour deadline. We thought he would make it as he set off up Dale Head into the teeth of the gale. As time ticked on we thought no-one else had a chance with less than 2 1/2 hours remaining Kevin Saville came in: he said he was carrying on come what may. He grabbed his rice pudding and a spoon and with a determined look set off again. He stormed over the last three peaks in great style and ran the last 4 1/2 road miles in 34 minutes to reach the Moot Hall in 23 hours and 56mins. Andy Dickenson had already finished in 23 1/2 hours. Chris Ledger retired on Red Pike and was taken down to the Wasdale Inn and rescued later.

Our two successful runners turned what could have been a dismal day into an evening celebration at the "Salutation." Thanks to all our supporters and to members of Penistone Footpath Runners who were a great help on the day.

Colin Henson

And one of the successful contenders writes...

We set off as planned at 7.00pm from the Moot Hall in dry but overcast conditions and were strictly adhering to the schedule, walking as soon as we came to any gradient. The view was admired as we headed up Skiddaw and it turned out to be one of the few occasions we actually had one to admire during the next 24 hours. We all kept together and arrived at Threlkeld to the welcome sight of tea and food. For some reason I thought I'd have time to contemplate changing clothes but it all seemed a bit hectic and all I wanted was to drink tea in large quantities. At least though I'd been capable of reasonably clear thought then the rest of the road stops I did as I was told and cleared off after only 5 minutes, which was just as well as it turned out.

So we headed off into the night 5 minutes ahead of schedule. This section was done entirely in the mist and cloud and of course in the dark not helped by the untimely breakdown of my head torch. Having not run through the night before it was all a bit surreal running in the mist with head torches and I have to admit probably not my favourite pastime although subsequently I've been told that having the head torch at your side helps, I'll reserve judgement on that one I think.

It was during the night that my right knee started to give me "jip" and by Dunmail I was struggling badly on the descents, this wasn't helped by the news that we had lost over an hour over that section. I must have been struggling both mentally as well as physically as I ate a hotdog without a second thought and I'm normally a veggie! After no time at all we were off again this time with an appointed supporter so Paul Sanderson was to look after my every need, he did a tremendous job and ensured I was eating and drinking at every available opportunity as well as attending to the knee pain with a steady supply of nurofen.

Once on Bowfell the weather started to deteriorate a little as did the visibility. We had made up some time by then but this was then lost over the slippery rocks as we made our way to Scafell Pike. It was at the rope climbing section that we were finally split up and this may have proved to be a decisive point in the attempt, as the first few over this included Kevin and myself who went on and managed to complete the round. Dave Lockwood then took three of us off Scafell down to Wasdale Head.

I have to admit that my knee was giving me a fair bit of pain by now and the wait at the top of the rope climb had allowed it to stiffen up considerably. This allied to the fact that we were now almost two hours down was contributing to serious thoughts of packing it all in. However I had not reckoned with Rick Ansell being there at the bottom waiting to take over, he wouldn't hear of any thoughts of giving up and I meekly complied. So after a quick mug of tea Rick set off with the three of us Kevin, Duncan and myself on the section that would decide whether we would make it. I think it was Rick's comment to the effect of "I haven't driven 300 miles to see you sit it out here" or words to that effect that swayed any argument if you could call it that. By now once on top of Yewbarrow the wind was blowing and the rain wasn't far off.

By Redpike I wasn't feeling too bad and Rick decided we should push on so by Steeple it was just Rick and I. Kev and Duncan (who had just had the misfortune to re-dislocate his shoulder!) pushed on with their supporter, soon to be joined by Gavin.

Rick's navigation then came to the fore as we battled our way through the rest of the section. I was now being hampered with diarrhoea as well too many nurofen tablets possibly. So we arrived at Honister at 4pm with 3 hours left, Jacqui my wife thought that I looked awful coming down the hill but was surprised to hear everyone contradicting her maybe she had forgotten that I had been out for 21 hours by now!

Andy Howard now joined Rick and would continue through the road section which was just as well Rick being averse to running on the roads. After not being even allowed to sit down at Honister we were off the stomach held out until Hindsgarth but frequent stops were required after that until we reached the road.

A small group were there to help at the carpark as I was shed of clothes and my footwear was changed is this what its like being Royalty, I bet they don,t have to run quite so far to get help. The final 5 miles and 74 minutes to do it in I could picture the finish and I didn't need reminding to do that as I'd been doing that for the last 2 hours.

Andy saw me safely to the Moot Hall and I touched down at 6.26pm with a whole 34 minutes to spare and it was still raining but hell didn't it feel good. It was then a nervous wait as the news was that Kevin was on the road and very close to completing but it was going to be close. In the end he timed it far better than me and came in with less than 5 minutes to spare a superb effort after all that effort to then have to push the road section as well. You will have heard it all before but those 24 hrs are now etched in my memory never to be forgotten, the agony the ectasy but most of all the companionship on the fells.

I did make the pub but not for long but I'll be back but supporting I think next time.

Andy Dickenson