

Double Bob Graham 30th June 1979

Midnight at the Moot Hall, all ready to go, pumped up and a good forecast for the two days ahead, going through my mind is the memory of being like this three years ago having no idea of what the Bob Graham Round was all about. Then I was with Andy Lewesley, just the two of us with no support and the knowledge that less than 40 successful runs had been done so far; now it was me and Brian Harney with the organisation of the incomparable Martin Stone behind us. We were setting out for an intended two days of ground breaking running on the Lakeland fells.

I had got the idea of a double Bob Graham (BG) at the pub that most of the runners who had just been doing the 1978 Mountain Trial were debriefing over a jar. Boyd Millen was explaining to his pals of his plans for a BG double round attempt. It was after I had heard that he had taken over 52 hours to do it that I approached Brian with the proposition.

Martin had the idea that to reduce the amount of support that we would need, if we combined in with the standard Dark Peak club single round attempt maybe that would also give us extra pep.

The club in those days traditionally set off on a Saturday morning in a clockwise direction, after all the non-contenders had had an almighty piss up in the Horse and Farrier pub in Threlkeld, everybody being camped at the

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side of the river at Setmabanning, a farm very near the village.

Martin had the idea that if we started at midnight on Friday, going the other way round, we would coincide with the club runners at Wasdale.

At that point we would reverse our direction, joining with the club attempt all the way round to the end of their round at Keswick, where we would then continue round in the same direction towards Newlands and Robinson, and go as far as Wasdale; at which point we would reverse again going back to Keswick. That would mean we had completed one round in each direction. The overall challenge was to do it all in under 48 hours and so do a classic double.

Well in the event we got to Wasdale and no sign of the club so we resolved to extend and make our reverse point the top of Yewbarrow instead of Wasdale. Half way up the climb, down came the club and so we were on catch up. We were still going very well and caught up the back marker who was Alan Bond and since big hearted Arthur (me) had said that when we were running with the club's round we would help them, so we stayed with Alan to encourage him to get back on schedule rather than us run through to catch up the main group as we could have done. Since we were supposed to be sharing pacers until we got back to Keswick, no pacers had been arranged just for me and Brian. When we got Alan to Dunmail, there were no pacers and the club had long gone, Alan packed in which was just as well really. We were very lucky that

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Chris Dodd was hanging around at Dunmail and was prepared to take us on. In those days Chris was very zany and we were shouting and singing and kept repeating the silly jokes that Chris kept cracking. Chris was in fact doing the same section in reverse that he had brought us on the previous night. Well after a couple of hours I got very drowsy and Brian and Chris had a right job in keeping me vertical all the way to Threlkeld. As soon as we arrived, I dived into a car and was comatose for about an hour; I think that they wrote us off then. I woke refreshed and raring to go with Frank Thomas carrying the bag for us. Well I don't want to count the number of times I have wandered off to the left coming off Blencathra. Panic, soon overcome and a concerted three-way effort got us back on track. We rolled into Keswick not far off schedule and Joss was there to take us to the top of Yewbarrow where Martin Hudson was to bring us back to Keswick and a glorious achievement. Coming off of Robinson, Brian started dropping behind; the knee problem that had caused him to drop out of the 100 at Dartmoor flared up again and he really did want that PW record. Joss just carried on saying that Brian would find his own way to Honister. Unfortunately, it didn't work out as easy as that because when he should have turned right and descended to Honister, Brian carried on down the ridge. Fortuitously Brian came onto a walker coming in the opposite direction who put him right. Down at Honister they were panicking at Brian's no show

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and it was over an hour after me and Joss had gone through before Brian appeared.

Joss got me handed over to Martin ok after showing me a new route up to the top of Yewbarrow.

On the way back to Keswick my bad right knee really seized up and when I asked Martin to find me a stick for support, amazingly, he found one. The saving however of my disablement was really when I put on some over trousers and in warming the joint up, I got going again to be able to enter Keswick 46hrs and 34min after I had first left it.

37 years later, I was privileged to be around when the phenomenal Nicky Spinks broke my record by 64min and began her unbelievable treble double, that of also doing double rounds of the other two classics. The Paddy Buckley in Wales and the Ramsay in Scotland, albeit the BG was the only one done in under 48hrs.

These days cameramen with video and drones with cameras enable a so much better record of the event compared with just stills at the road crossings back in '79.

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