

Quite a lot of hills in quite a lot of hours



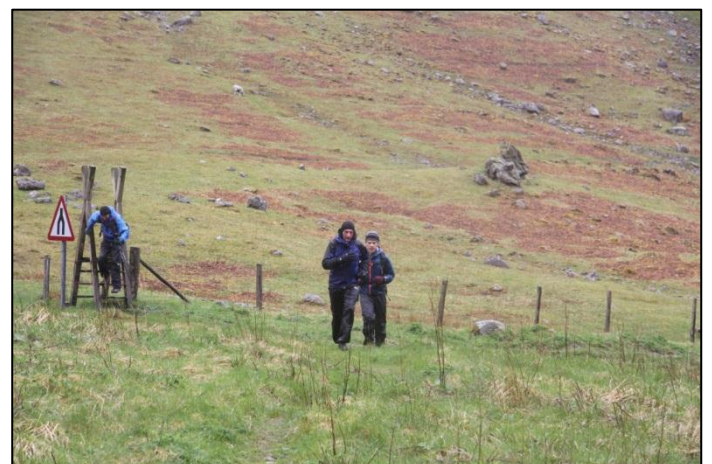
A year ago, in trying to do 62@62, I fell on Great Calva and cracked a rib which eventually forced me to give up. Two more ill-conceived attempts failed and I only managed to get half way through Le Grand Raid des Pyrenees in August. After a year of failures, Michele was keen for me to stop all this nonsense and settle into my dotage.

In an effort to actually complete something, I entered the Yorkshire Ultra and the Hardmoors 55. I managed to complete these, in snowy cold conditions, but in pretty slow times. However the Yorkshire Moors are not the hills of the Lake District and training in the Lakes this spring has been made very difficult by the adverse weather.

May stayed true to form and the umbrellas were up in the car park as John Telfer and I set off up Skiddaw with no sign of any other BG attempts, was there a message here somewhere? Bob Sewell had originally volunteered to do Leg 1 but had been struck down with pleurisy. It was particularly generous of John, therefore, to put himself at the mercy of my navigation, particularly before his BG attempt the following week.

Skiddaw was its usually friendly self, wind, rain and clag, and a mixture of complacency and the desire to get to lower ground as soon as possible, led me to set off at the wrong angle from the fence. In no time John and I were getting a bigger dose of his native plant than we wanted. My fault entirely but we lost twenty five minutes heather bashing on the way to Great Calva, unnecessarily expending a lot of energy. This delay did mean that daylight was on the way as we crossed Mungrisdale, making it easier to find, then a quick drop down Hall's Fell to Threlkeld where I said goodbye and thank you to John for his cheerful and reassuring company. The family were there in force, looking chilled, but cheering me on.

Threlkeld to Dunmail or vice versa can only mean Geoff Davis, who has helped countless attempts over this leg, he's actually guided me five times. He has helped me on every one of my long outings in May, Susan and he have even coined the phrase 'Moralee May Madness'. Tom Reeves was also there, as he often has been, the first occasion being my BG. Five years on, the pace was much slower but we more or less kept to schedule, stopping only to put on more clothes as the weather turned colder, wetter and windier. Geoff, as always, navigated immaculately while Tom had to resort to keeping his hands in his pockets to keep warm, bringing them out occasionally with a magic brownie for me. As usual I wasn't managing to eat very well.





We glimpsed a figure near Grisedale Tarn, our first of the day, that proved to be Susan, constant as ever, popping up to give support. Not long after this, as we slogged up Fairfield, Geoff had to turn Good Samaritan when we met a group of lost souls stumbling down the hill. Tom and I carried on while Geoff put them back on track. And so to Dunmail where the umbrellas were up again and I had my first change of clothes. It takes a while when you have five or six layers on, another excuse for my lack of pace. As I said goodbye to Geoff and Tom the baton passed to another of my ever present helpers, Paul

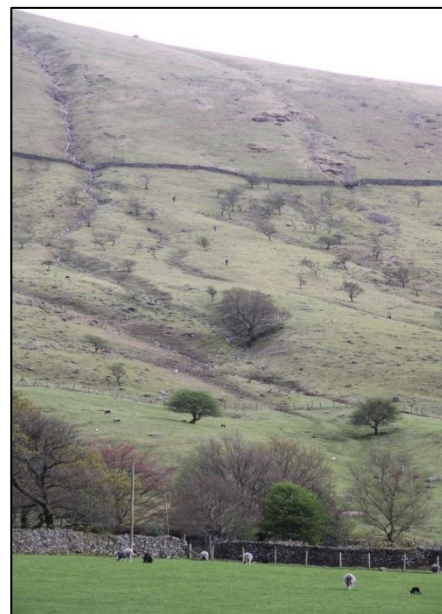
Appleby. Paul has nearly always helped on the long leg from Dunmail to Wasdale, once as my sole helper and often gone on further. The only variety that he has had was to put in a hard shift on Legs 1 & 2 of my Joss Naylor Challenge and also an inadvertent trip down Sharp Edge on my 60@60. Also joining us was Malcolm Slater who Paul had managed to rope in a week earlier. Malcolm was given an ice axe to carry in case we had to tackle the snow in Lord's Rake and Deep Ghyll and settled uncomplainingly into the role of geriatric support. Neither of them was carrying any clothes for me because I had them all on. The last lot were off to be tumble dried ready for the next pit stop.

I was tired over this leg but the support was, as ever, kind and unwavering and I had two targets. The first was to make it up Bowfell because that was where last year's attempt ground to a halt. Secondly, I felt I had to get to Broad Stand where, a year ago, Dave Rickaby and John Bower had waited in vain for my arrival.

We managed Bowfell and the weather improved slightly, leading us to hope that Broad Stand might be dry. We made a small navigational boob coming off Scafell Pike in the clag but got back on course to see Dave and John on Broad Stand. Kevin Bray, who has been a terrific help to me on previous efforts, had been kind enough to enlist them because he and Linda were to be away in the Hebrides. He said "It'll do them more good than spending the afternoon in the Metro Centre" I think that Paul and Malcolm would agree that what followed was somewhat removed from the said afternoon in the Metro Centre!

Far from drying up, the rocks everywhere were running with water and the whole place had a considerably less hospitable look about it than when we went up in the sunshine three years ago. Dave was adamant that Lord's Rake was out because of the snow, the two alternatives were Broad Stand and Foxes Tarn. I felt in the end that these two guys had been good enough to turn up so we had better give it a go. They certainly provided expert assistance but it wasn't exactly a load of laughs, Paul said that when he got down to Wasdale, his arms and shoulders were more tired than his legs. It also took a long time for all three of us to get to the top. Paul had told me to push on down but it didn't seem right to leave anyone behind on the rocks.

After we came down to Wasdale I thanked Paul and Malcolm for their care and attention and then most of the stop was spent on another complete wardrobe change. Its tricky undressing and dressing a corpse but Kathryn set to with a will. I didn't manage to eat much here and loss of concentration led to me failing to check on two things that would come back to bite me later on.



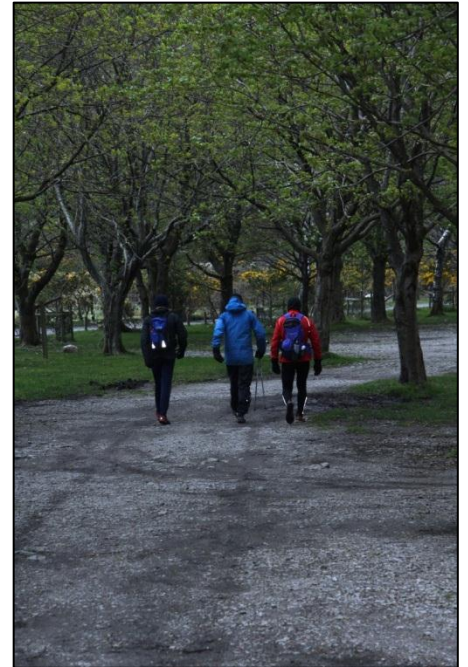
Paul had tentatively agreed to carry on for another leg but I think that he wasn't too upset to see Garry Owens waiting with Peter Reed, an unexpected bonus. I don't think that Garry has been out on many long outings lately and what was to follow was perhaps not the ideal re-introduction to the Lakeland rock scene, not that he couldn't keep up, more a question of whether he could go slowly enough. Peter is another who has always been there to help me with my long expeditions. Although we are virtually the same age, he is getting faster in races while I become ever slower.



I had thought that I was feeling not too bad for Wasdale, but my old adversary Yewbarrow quickly set on me and sucked all the pith from my legs, leaving me feeling completely unmanned. I had to resort to one hundred steps, sit down, one hundred steps, sit down and so on. Peter and Garry were very patient but also insistent that the only way was forward. Eventually we got over the

top to be met by the weather's latest chapter of wind and driving rain. After a slippery scramble down Stirrup Crag, a couple of chocolate toffees helped me get up Red Pike as darkness fell.

It was here that the first of my omissions came to light, or rather didn't come to light. Son Peter had replaced the batteries in the head torch that I had used on Leg 1, but I hadn't checked it at Wasdale and now it wouldn't switch on. Peter Reed produced a spare but I couldn't see much with it in the rain and impenetrable clag. For the rest of the night Garry followed me unstintingly, shining his light to help me see where I was going.



Where we were going was over Scoat Fell towards Steeple but through a boulder field rather than the nice grassy trod that one can find in daylight. The trip out to Steeple and back was interesting, short of light and into the teeth of the weather. Progress after this was very slow as we stumbled over the wet rocks towards Pillar. I broke one of my sticks but, looking back, I think that we were lucky that it was the only thing broken. As Peter and I fell over a lot, he blamed his new shoes. My shoes were fine, I just fell over a lot.



After Pillar my second omission surfaced when I discovered that I hadn't made sure that we had my GPS with us. This could have helped us as we went off piste and journeyed to parts of Cumbria untrodden by Bob Graham. The recording card had already dissolved in the rain as we struggled with the map and a pair of glasses that Peter had bought from the Pound Shop. He complained that I was steaming them up and I complained that he was poking me in the eye every time he put them on for me. Backwards and forwards, up and down we went, we even chased after, like some will-o'-the-wisp, a head torch that Garry swore he had seen in the distance. Was anyone else daft enough to be out that night? I suggested that we go with the words of Richard Askwith (he's the man who got me into this mess in the first place), who spoke of "navigational errors so outrageous that we buried them in solemn vows of secrecy". So be it.

Peter voiced concerns about those waiting for us at Honister, but our phones wouldn't work. Anxiety levels were certainly rising in the family and eventually Allon & Sally Welsh, Steph Scott, Graham Wilkinson and son Peter climbed up to Grey Knotts and Brandreth to look for us. They didn't find us but we did manage to get in touch to allay everyone's fears.

As the relief of daylight arrived and we got nearer to Honister, I thanked Peter and Garry for their kind and sympathetic efforts, efforts great enough to help me up a hundred peaks. I reflected to myself that the time had arrived to stop selfishly putting everyone through these days and nights, from freezing on Skiddaw and Helvellyn, risking life and limb on Scafell, to dying of boredom as I crawled along in the later stages. I thought of those who waited at the eternally cold Honister and reckoned that we could just about get the last leg done in time to get to the pub for lunch.



They were making room for us in the vehicles for the drive back to Keswick when the call came through that Leg 5 was on. Steph Scott, who had already run the Fairfield Horseshoe, Allon and Sally Welsh, Graham Wilkinson and son Peter joined me on the way up Dale Head. Allon has helped me often in the past and he and Sally nursed me off the hill last year after I gave up. Graham was in on my BG and put in a big effort on my 60@60. By now the weather was relatively benign, although visibility wasn't great, and progress was reasonably steady. Steph left us at Newlands Hause, Graham was pleased to hear that we weren't doing Whiteless Pike and Sally enjoyed her first visit to Knott Rigg and Ard Craggs. Allon spotted a peregrine falcon soaring above us on Scar Craggs and then it was Causey Pike and down to Stair where the girls joined us back to Keswick. We met Geoff and Susan on the way in and, as I puffed up to the Moot Hall, my twin granddaughters Harriet and Isabella ran down to meet me.



And so, yet again, an imperfect achievement but, with the help of my family and my friends, a beautiful imperfection. I got to do a leg with my son and walk the road back to Keswick with my three daughters, and Michele didn't have to call out Mountain Rescue. She can relax now, after all that waiting in cold car parks, May Madness is over.



A final but most sincere and heartfelt thank you to everyone who has helped me over the last five years:

Paul and Wendy Appleby, Dave and Val Atkinson, John Bower, Kevin and Linda Bray, Geoff and Susan Davis, Scott Gibson, Paul Hainsworth, Will Horsley, Iain Nixon, Garry Owens, Peter Reed, Grant Reed, Tom Reeves, Dave Rickaby, Jeff Ross, Steph Scott, Bob Sewell, Malcolm Slater, John Telfer, Allon and Sally Welsh and Graham Wilkinson.

The family and most of all Michele, she knows and I know how much help she's given me.



With a macabre sense of humour, the children have bought a picture of Yewbarrow to bring back happy memories.

Peter Moralee