

## ACCOUNT OF COMPLETING JOSS NAYLOR CHALLENGE

13th May 2023

Jon Punshon



*Kevin Bray, Bob Sewell & Jon Punshon*

Having been a casual runner for over 40 years and latterly more interested in fell running than pounding the roads, I developed an interest in attempting the JNC. It was not until my good friend, and fellow NFR member, Kevin Bray suggested that we attempt the challenge on his 65th birthday that the plans started to take shape. Kevin likes doing extreme acts on his birthday! In 2022 he “forced” me around the Fishers Tea Round. I have to say that birthdays for me normally mean a few beers and a curry! We were joined in the enterprise by Bob Sewell to form a trio for the attempt. From the outset I regarded myself as the “weak link” as both Kevin and Bob had already competed both “The Bob” and “The Joss” before. My fell running had never exceeded a 25 mile journey and I regarded 40 plus miles as possibly a step too far for me! I was worried and moreover I still had a degree of plantar fasciitis!

We chose *Survivors Of Bereavement By Suicide* (SOBS) as our charity to fundraise for because of the recent loss of Shaun Scott, a close friend of Bob and Kevin and well known in local fell running circles. At the time of writing we have raised well over £5000, and this figure is still rising. We are amazed at how supportive our sponsors have been.

The combined age of the three of us was 198 years and since each was over 65 we were allowed 24 hours for the challenge. We set a target of approximately 20 hours.

## Stage 1 Pooley Bridge to Kirkstone

*Pacers: Rich Carter, Jane Briggs and Mathew Briggs*

We set off at midnight and experienced largely clear weather. Running by headtorch is interesting and demands good torch, particularly on the steep rocky sections. I nearly bought a new torch especially for the JNC but not entirely convinced by the high lumen, expensive items on offer. I used *Petzl Actik Core* which was fine. The ability to increase the intensity on the more challenging sections of the route was really useful, followed by stepping down the intensity for the gentler grassy sections. When we started descending towards Kirkstone we entered heavy mist of the temperature inversion. At times visibility was down to a few metres and we almost stepped onto the pass road before we saw it!

Linda and Denise had hot tea waiting which was quickly consumed and we set off before the chill took its toll. Our poor support team had been standing around in the chilling damp air for over two hours!



*Jane and Matt Briggs pacing on Leg 1*



## Stage 2 Kirkstone to Dunmail

*Pacers: Sarah Acey, Lindsey Quinn, John Butters and his dog Jasper*

Arriving at the top of Red Screes we were greeted by the most amazingly clear views of a sunrise gently changing from pale yellow to deep orange and valleys filled by white seas of cloud. Everyone agreed we were privileged to savour that moment. Steady progress was made in the growing warmth to Fairfield. The whole attempt nearly came to an early finish when Bob Sewell tripped on the very steep descent from Seat Sandal. He somersaulted and rolled about 10 metres before coming to rest having bashed off a couple of protruding rocks. Amazingly, despite the impression that he must be seriously injured, he quickly dusted himself down and got on with the job; confirming that he is truly made of strong stuff.



*Sunrise and massive temperature inversion viewed from Red Screes (5am)*

### Stage 3 Dunmail to Sty Head

*Pacers: Sarah Acey, Claire Calverley, John Telfer, Rich Kirby, Paul Appleby and Vaughan Hemy.*

At Dunmail we were warmly greeted by Julie, a Josh Naylor Challenge representative; a lovely touch! The next stage went pretty smoothly in very warm conditions as the morning cloud was burnt off by the strong sunshine. Despite liberal application of suncream most of us ended up with degrees of sunburn. The steep ascent up Billy's rake to arrive on Bowfell was hard work in strong heat. At Sty Head we were met by a large party which included Shaun Scott's wife Claire and his daughter Lois. It was lovely to find them so positive and supportive and Lois prepared to join us for the final leg.



*Sty Head: Claire Scott, Linda Bray, Lois Scott, Denise Waugh & Vaughan Hemy*



## Stage 4 Sty Head to Greendale

*Pacers: Lois Scott, Claire Calverly, John Telfer, Rich Kirby and Vaughan Hemy.*

We were just 12 minutes behind our 20hr 19m schedule at the start of the final leg. A steep scree descent from Gable, not the cleverest route, took its toll and we pushed on, only to discover to our amazement, that two pals of Kevin - Chris Dixon and Grant Reed had hiked up to Pillar with food and drink for us all.....what a generous treat! Thanks Guys; all that way to give 10 minutes support to fatigued runners. At this time the final peaks were becoming a bit of a chore as I was deeply tired and, not having recce'd leg 4 (a major error) I wasn't psychologically programmed for the final ascents; the ascent of Seatallan, the penultimate peak, in particular, demanded a gritty determination. Nevertheless we plodded on and arrived at Greendale Bridge at 9:36 (21hrs 36m since we left Pooley Bridge) to be greeted by an enthusiastic crowd including Joss's Naylor's neighbours Ian and Sue who had turned out to greet us. Joss knew of our attempt but it was too late for him to turn out from his home in Gosforth (no, not our Gosforth!). Seeing Claire and Lois engage in a tearful embrace as they reflected on the day, I too was brought to tears. The meaning of the day and the amazing selfless support of everybody proved to be an emotional overdose I will never forget.



*Greendale Bridge: Rich Kirby, Vaughan Hey, Claire Calverley, Lois Scott, Bob Sewell, Jon Punshon, Kevin Bray @ John Telfer*

Thanks again to the amazing pacers and to the superb support crew:

*Linda Bray, Denise Waugh, Margaret Sewell, Mike Briggs, Claire Scott, Gary Mason, Wendy Stephenson, Chris Dixon, Grant Reed and Skye.*

Finally, love and best wishes to Joss - thanks for creating the challenge.

*Jon Punshon 15/5/2023.*

