

Jon Punshon 11/12/1956 to 2/7/2026 – A Tribute.



Jon – in his element.

As most of you will know, tragically Jon died on the 2nd July in a climbing accident in the French Alps.

I really got to know Jon after Keith Wood called me in April 2021 to pick my brains about the Cuillin Ridge traverse in Skye. We ended up setting a date to have a go and Keith said he had a mate, Jon, who wanted to come along.

I had met Jon before at the 'church', (Byker climbing wall) and I had seen him at local fell races enough to say 'hello' but I hadn't spent any time with him.

We arrived in Skye and met Jon and his partner Denise and we had a brilliant couple of days on the ridge where Jon showed Keith & I that he was a 'proper' mountaineer and we were a couple of hackers! A squall came in as we reached the infamous TD gap. The rock was cold and greasy – Jon climbed it masterfully then dragged Keith and I up and honestly, his skill was SO impressive.



Jon, TD Gap in the clag & wet!



Jon, loving it on the Cuillin Ridge!

Surprisingly, he had never been to Skye before, yet his eye for the correct line and the way he moved over the difficult terrain was something to behold – he

was utterly in his element and he loved it – Keith and I were just thankful he was looking after us!

Fortunately the weather improved and we continued the journey on dry rock with great views – one of the highlights was ‘bivvying’ out on top of the ridge on a beautiful evening!



Jon & Keith, Cuillin Ridge bivvy June 2021

That trip started a friendship with Jon that evolved – he became mates with the Morpeth Harriers crowd and was deputised and sworn into the Northumbria Police CHAOS club – that’s the outdoor section mainly made up of pensioners and he became a fixture on our annual skiing trip. He was an extremely stylish, competent and tidy skier in all conditions. Not surprising as he had led and completed many ski tours in the Alps including leading a party across the famous Haute Route from Chamonix to Zermatt which involved hut to hut days and ski mountaineering techniques.



Cervinia March 2026 – Paul McLeod, Jon, Doug Bray, Sooty, Ian Park, Kevin Bray, Dave Hall & Tony McLeod.

Jon had run for many years, beginning when he was teaching at the RGS. He became firm friends with a colleague and north east running legend Gerry Keating of Blaydon Harriers. John had his climbing (he was working his way up to become an MIC, a high level qualification enabling him to teach summer and winter climbing in the UK), his full time job and a young family to balance and so his running training was at lunchtimes around the Town Moor with sessions set by Gerry, a 'hard' man & high mileage guru!

Johns running improved and he went on to regularly run inside 35mins for 10k and sub 60 for 10 miles – though he was never a prolific racer (climbing got in the way) and over time he moved across to fell running and he eventually joined NFR .

He told a great story about the 'Old Crown Round' fell race in the north lakes where he discussed the route with Geoff Davis and John Tollitt prior to the start.

The gun went and Jon, Geoff and John parted company after a mile or so – he told me that ‘it wasn’t the best route choice he’d ever made’ (slight understatement there) as he trailed in about an hour after the guys after negotiating chest high bracken concealing steep scree somewhere around Carrock Fell. He tested the theory that ‘no-one is ever last’ to the limit!

He grudgingly conceded that he should have listened to the wise old fell running masters – he had the greatest respect for Geoff and John!

For years he made his annual trip to Edinburgh to compete in the 7 Hills Race organised by Carnethy running club. You find your own route and the race covers varied terrain including running through the shopping mall next to Waverley Station and along Princes Street – on a Saturday afternoon! He absolutely loved the race and over the years he spent hour’s reccyng various options to shave time. He and Denise loved Edinburgh and Whitby trips in their ‘Hotel California’ camper van. John loved the run out from Whitby to Robin Hood’s Bay and back – and the Whitby pubs!

Jon joined a bunch of us from Morpeth Harriers & the Chaos club when we took on the George Fisher Tea Round back in May 2022. That day encapsulated what these challenges are all about – a good day out on the fells with your mates, enjoying the challenge, the crack and a well deserved pint at the end of the (long) day – we were definitely in the B team that day!



Rich Kirby, Bob Sewell, Paul Appleby, Dave Garrick, Jon, Callum Garrick,
Gwenda Cavill, Kevin Bray, Mike Steven, Peter Reed, John Telfer, Allon Welsh,
Tea Round, May 2022.



The o/60'sB team = still smiling (just) after a long day - Jon, Mike, Kevin & Les Cavill!

Jon had talked about having a go at the Joss Naylor Challenge for a number of years and when Bob Sewell and I decided to try and do it in May 2023 to raise money in memory of Shaun Scott, Denise said to Jon – ‘no excuse now’!

The die was cast!

Jon had recovered from surgery after a serious health scare and a crowd of us had some memorable days out with Jon training for the JNC – he built up his fitness and on one run he asked me ‘what’s been your best running experience – other than the fells’?

That was easy. The New York Marathon. The event, atmosphere, support, the city.....little did I know!

The JNC day would be unforgettable for anyone involved!

A cold wet start, with Rich Carter, Jane & Matt Briggs then Denise, Linda, John Butters, Linzi & Sarah absolutely freezing in thick fog at Kirkstone Car Park! A stunning sunrise and inversion, Bob falling on Seat Sandal & making an amazing recovery. Being joined by Paul Appleby, Claire Calverley, Rich Kirby and Vaughan Hemy for a fantastic journey across the lakes, meeting Claire, Lois, Margaret, Denise, Linda, Gary Mason plus other supporters at Styhead, Grant, Chris with sausage rolls and cheese pasties at Pillar and coming into Greendale as the sun set. Jon loved the whole experience and on the rough stuff he showed his prowess as a descender!



Greendale Bridge – Rich Kirby, Claire Scott, Vaughan Hemy, Denise, Claire Calverley, Linda Bray, Lois Scott, Bob Sewell, Jon, Kevin Bray, Margaret Sewell & John Telfer.

Come November that year Jon didn't get to the JNC tankard presentation night – he was in New York to run the NYC Marathon in company with his son's Tom and Alex. Activities with the guys were extremely important to him and to say they had a whale of a time was an understatement – so much so that trips to Chicago and Berlin for their city marathons followed! Jon was extremely proud of Tom & Alex – their successful careers and sporting prowess and he loved spending time with them and his 18 month old granddaughter Sofia.

Jon kept competing on the trails and the fells. He enjoyed small, friendly events, nice people, nice routes that were 'doable' for the older fell runner!

A crowd of us took part at Arnside Knott and the Allithwaite 8 and Jon loved the North York Moors series of races where he was competing over last winter & spring.



Arnside Knott – Jane Briggs, Sue Smith, Jim Alder, Jamie Johnson, Matt Briggs, Jon, Gwenda Cavill



Allithwaite 8 – Peter Reed, Jon, Kevin Bray

Jon led a full, active and exciting life. He was involved in the local area BMC group, he was a member of the Labour Party and very interested in economics, politics, current affairs and modern history. He taught Economics and finished his career as Deputy Head of the Joseph Swan School in Gateshead. He played the guitar and in his younger years had fancied himself as a Richie Blackmore! He built a successful business as a climbing and mountaineering instructor (there's not many of those in Cramlington) and he was Technical Advisor and

trainer for Rockworks (who build climbing walls) and he travelled all over the UK servicing climbing walls, training staff and route setting. He didn't regard it as work – he absolutely loved doing it. Recently he was instructing the Coastguard at their National Training Centre in Portsmouth in cliff rescue techniques. He was hoping to get a ride in one of their helicopters but sadly I never got to find out if that actually happened. It really is incredible how many people's lives were touched by Jon because of his training and instructing.

He was a member of the Fell & Rock Climbing Club and Paul McLeod, Mike Jeffrey and I were lucky to spend time with him at the FRCC hut in Langdale last summer where Jon took us out on some classic climbs.



Jon lead climbing in Langdale

He was also a member of the prestigious Alpine Club and attended their last two summer meets in the Alps. He went to the Bernina area of Switzerland in 2025 and finally at Courmayer in Italy from where he didn't return.

He sent me a picture on the morning of Thursday 2nd July from the Vallee Blanche asking me 'guess where I am'? It was a stunning view of the sunrise on



Mont Blanc with Jon's climbing partner, Ian, ahead of him on the glacier.

I replied but sadly I never heard back from him.

Sincere condolences to Denise, Tom & Alex – we all feel for your loss.

Kevin Bray