

My Bob Graham – Jonathan Malley 19:20

An account of puntering around the Bob Graham being terribly under-prepared and organised.

In June of this year I moved to the Lake District to live and work for a few months. I had just come back from Sweden and was low on motivation to do much as well as coping with a Peroneal tendon strain. A month of moping and waiting to heal past before I had another week trip to Sweden in late July to compete. As expected I did thoroughly pants, unfit and out of practice. However, this really inspired to start running again!

In April before I had gotten injured, I had gone up to Scotland for a long weekend and enjoyed pottering round a few Munros and thoroughly intended on another trip up there again over the Bank Holiday Weekend. In to August, I was just out on the hills most evening after work going to local orienteering races. I ventured to the Steel Fell race, I surprised myself a little running a comfortable pb and placing quite well. On leaving I bumped in to Rachel Findlay-Robinson, Rachel mentioned she was planning her own BG in a few weeks, so I offered to help.

On the 21st Rachel confirmed her plans and that she intended to run on Friday (27th), this seriously impacted my Scottish plans but I couldn't turn her down. I was then left trying to find something stupid I could do locally at short notice on my birthday (29th). Given the seed was sown, it was natural I contemplated my own attempt. It was exciting at first rattling out a few cautious emails and texts working out whether I could get enough support at short notice. Given that many of my friends were also helping Rachel I was unsure about this. Slowly but surely they all started confirming and before I knew it I was committed. An awful feeling of dread ensued, I hadn't done the training, hadn't done the reccyng, hadn't done anything really!

I decided that a 22hr schedule should be feasible comfortable and given the unknown distance enough time to collapse in later legs should I need it. Organisation stepped up a level on Monday, a slow day at work led to much procrastination which flowed in to the evening. I really should have been preparing for a job interview the next day but couldn't leave it alone. Tuesday and Wednesday were full of mental exhaustion from the interview and Thursday excitement as I was offered the job. Lots of distractions keeping my mind off what I had half-agreed to undertake at the weekend. Friday involved being glued to weather forecasts for my own and Rachel's attempts, luckily the weather just kept on improving!

7pm Friday - the start of my specific BG training. Rach was planning on a 23:30 but started well up and down Skiddaw in the lovely evening sun. Only reaching for our headtorches on the summit of Calva. Across to Blencathra and yes, it was wet! Went up to my waist numerous times and kept cramping which is unusual for me. Not a good omen. We met Adam Perry and he took us all down his parachute line. 11pm Friday – the end of my specific BG training. Not the best feeling but it had to be enough. At lunch the following day I drove down to Dunmail and met one of my supporters for a trot up to Grisedale Tarn to make a stash, my quads were battered after the parachute route. Although a quick dip sorted me a bit, I was still quite tender going in to the evening and the follow 'day'. The trip home involved a stop at Moot Hall waiting for Rach to finish. This was brilliant, although I now

HAD to finish. The nerves arrived and grew throughout the 28th, from my window I could see the clag was down but steadily rising. By sunset I could see all of Lonscale Fell, all that remained was the final pack.

Leg 1: 3:22 – Lucy Spain (Helm Hill) and Tom Partington

We arrived at Keswick pressed for time, perfectly in keeping with my attempt but got everything sorted for the 11pm chime. We were off! 1 stride, 2 stride, 3...this isn't a race, calm down! I took it very steadily up Skiddaw, in fact Rach was quicker up there on the Friday! Tom left us here after giving me two handfuls of goodies. Made it out to Calva and back avoiding



Figure 1, the off with Tom and Lucy

the man-eating bogs of Friday. Blencathra was also fairly straightforward we got a really good line despite the light clag and again took the Parachute line. I was a bit overenthusiastic and ran away from Lucy. Common sense struck so I stopped to wait in case anything were to happen. We still made it in to Threlkeld about 10mins up on schedule with my legs in very good shape.

Leg 2 – 4:14 Jack Wright (Ambleside)



Figure 2, dawn break on Fairfield

A quick sock/shoes change and I was back on the go. I wasn't really looking forward to the Clough Head climb, I remembered it as being long and unpleasant from Helvellyn and the Dodds race. Slowly but surely we made progress and hit the summit ridge just as we hit the thick fog. It was awful! Missed the Calfhow Pike traverse and from then we just really struggled with

navigation. It was all very stressful, missing tops, missing paths and losing time. However, we were still moving at a good pace and ticking off the peaks. We got a glimpse of dawn in a brief respite at the top of Helvellyn, however soon enough we were back in the terrible clag. The descent off Dollywaggon brought pre-dawn light and all of a sudden we were below the fog and presented with a vivid pink sky. Looking up and all the fog was clearing in front of our eyes, it was a very special moment. Eventually Jack caught me back up near the Cofa Pike col after faffing trying to find my stash. I had my first bad patch here but it was soon forgotten about descending off Fairfield. Before we knew it the graveyard stint was over and we were trotting down to Dunmail, 7mins down. We had survived the night, all that was left was to beat the sunset!

Leg 3 – 5:10 Scott Gibson (NFR) & John Malley on Broad Stand



Figure 3, "the real start". Steel Fell from Dunmail with Scott

Leg 3, the leg I was worried about. I had no idea how I would cope after Bowfell, which was when I believed the lack of training would catch up with me. Luckily I had Scott on hand to guide me through it. I wouldn't have wanted any other people than him up here as he knows the lines and pacing from his own BG last year. Likewise, I couldn't have really considered my maiden trip up Broad Stand without my Uncle up there. We kept it steady plodding away and reached the Langdales still happy and moving well. Took the race trod down and up Rossett and after rattling through my birthday calls hit my mental barrier...but not my physical one. If anything we started picking it up here and shaving the odd minute off here and there. The rocks were a welcome relief, something to take my attention off what was still to come. Great End, Ill Crag, Broad Crag, Scafell Pike...it was time. Trotting down to Mickledoor and spied my uncle, big grin and all! A good morale boost. Followed Scott through fatmans agony...it looked a bit close ;-) then roped up and tentatively inched my way up. My uncle described it as a flappy hand scrapping desperately for something. A quick

refuel on Pepperami and milkshake ensued then we continued on upwards. The descent again something I was wary of passed remarkably well with my quads still intact.

Leg 4 – 3:54 Todd Oates (Ambleside AC)

My biggest fear, the Yewbarrow face! Last year I had completely blew up going up here on Scotts BG. I checked out the times before and didn't want to be near to that. Todd however hadn't gotten the memo and led me quite strongly, gleefully giving me his yearly update. We continued at the same pace up Red Pike and Steeple and by Pillar I was 30mins ahead of schedule! Despite feeling pretty good still and fine in the legs I was worrying about when 'the bonk' would arrive. Kept shovelling food down my neck and counting down the



Figure 4, stuffing Jellybabies in up Kirk Fell

hills. We raced the Pillar schedule up Kirk Fell and arrived to a flurry of social media as Todd tried to pre-warn Honister of the drastically altering schedule. Both Gables came and went then Brandreth, I stood on something here and it played havoc with my foot blister wise. This was the only time I slowed from what I wanted to doing, popped a few pills and was able to pick it back up down towards Honister. Sure enough nothing....couldn't see the chair! Dropped out of view and as we reappeared over the skyline it was suddenly a hive of activity as a sleepy Duncan struggled to get ready.

Leg 5 – Duncan Birtwistle (Telford AC), Lucy Spain (Helm Hill) & Wil Spain (Dark Peak)

Change of shoes and had to get going again, I struggled to eat from this point but hoped I'd taken on enough prior to get me to the end. The worst hill of my round in reality was Dale Head, I just couldn't get going again. That was until my head started trying to work out what time I was going towards. Did I need to push to get a time or could I trundle in? My brain said push! I calculated I was on 19:42ish pace, Scotts time was all I needed to get out my rut. A big big push between Dale Head and Hindscarth and I was at 19:37. My brain then went fuzzy and added an hour and as sudden as my push began, it faded. I kept working at it and made it to the top of Robinson, No.42! Had a brief pause to take in the perfect

view...



Figure 5, the view SE off Robinson with Lucy

Ran away from the top and had managed to work out 19:30 was still on. Pushed hard feeling amazing off the last hill and on the soft grassy track. I'd done it! I couldn't fail to finish it now. Work was still to be done however, I dispensed of as much wait as I could at the top as I was over-heating and ran. Changed to road shoes quickly and then set about trying to drop my pacers. The smooth tarmac felt ok for the first 2/3miles till Swinside then everything did actually go fuzzy. The next I remember was Wil trying to get my NFR vest on at Portinscale. Duncan mentioned 19:20 which again spurred me and I began to pick it up, hit the main street and saw Moot Hall then ran with everything. 19:19 ticked by but kept running till the door hit me. 19:20 was the time, much quicker than the 21:40 I'd scheduled and the 20:00 I'd quietly mentioned to Duncan and tried to forget.



Figure 6; John Malley, Todd Oates, Duncan Birtwistle, Myself, Lucy Spain, Wil Spain and Rachel Findlay Robinson at Moot Hall afterwards. Missing Jack Wright and Scott Gibson

Can't quite believe how I managed this, it still hasn't sunk in. The majority is down to those who agreed to help me and look after me during the day (and the evening after!). I really couldn't have done it without you lot and it wouldn't have been half as enjoyable without being able to share some special moments up there. Unfortunately given how under-prepared I was I now need to have another go and give it my best! Maybe a few years first but be prepared, I may come calling again!



Cheers
Jonny

Location/Top	Actual time					
	Hr	Min				
Leg 1			Supporters	Lucy Spain		
Moot Hall	23	0				
Skiddaw	0	17				
Great Calva	0	56				
Blencathra	1	54				
Threlkeld	2	22				
Leg Time	03:22:00					
Leg 2			Supporters	Jack Wright		
Depart	2	28				
Clough Head	3	19				
Great Dodd	3	40				
Watson's Dodd	3	50				
Stybarrow Dodd	4	1				
Raise	4	21				
White Side	4	29				
Helvellyn Lower Man	4	43				
Helvellyn	4	49				
Nethermost Pike	4	57				
Dollywaggon Pike	5	10				
Fairfield	5	47				
Seat Sandal	6	20				
Dunmail Raise	6	42				
Leg Time	04:14:00					
Leg 3			Supporters	Scott Gibson		
Depart	6	48				
Steel Fell	7	10				
Calf Crag	7	31				
Sergeant Man	8	1				
High Raise	8	11				
Thunacar Knott	8	23				
Harrison Stickle	8	31				
Pike o Stickle	8	43				
Rossett Pike	9	22				
Bowfell	9	52				
Esk Pike	10	10				
Great End	10	31				
Ill Crag	10	46				
Broad Crag	10	54				
Scafell Pike	11	4				
Scafell	11	32				
Wasdale	12	0				
Leg Time	05:12:00					
Leg 4			Supporters	Todd Oates		
Depart	12	6				
Yewbarrow	12	44				
Red Pike	13	23				
Steeple	13	39				
Pillar	14	4				
Kirkfell	14	44				
Great Gable	15	15				
Green Gable	15	26				
Brandreth	15	37				
Grey Knotts	15	46				
Honister	16	0				
Leg Time	03:54:00					
Leg 5			Supporters	Duncan Birtwistle Lucy Spain		
Depart	16	6				
Dalehead	16	36				
Hindscarth	16	47				
Robinson	17	7				
Keswick Moot Hall	18	20				
Leg Time	02:14:00					
Total Running Time:		18:56:00				
Rest Time:		24				
Total Time:		19:20:00				