

"The harshness of the landscape lent the peaks a radiant contrasting beauty. I took a long, deep breath and stared at the mountains, feeling the familiar rush of excitement coursing through me. Despite misgivings, I was still captivated, enchanted by their dominance, by all the potential they held so silently. There was about them a sense of menace, thinly veiled by beauty; an intoxicating blend of threat and arousal. I was an intruder standing within their shadows, overwhelmed by the aura of their power, glad to be living there again - scared, excited and spell-bound"

Joe Simpson, Storms of Silence

Mountains became a home away from home in my teenage years. This formed around the escapism and solace that my Dad sought from his too-busy job on our joint weekend trips to the Highlands and Lake District. The joys were obvious; a revelation of a hidden view, the childlike joy of running down grassy slopes towards a distant bealach, the spiralling of eagles from a summit cairn. Something made sense in the simplicity, in the wind and rain, in the not-so-silent silence that worked its way deep.

This interest began with walking, then for a time morphed to mountaineering and climbing, before fell running firmly became my central activity to enjoy the hills. My apprenticeship in mountain activities was privileged to include mentors who passed their knowledge of skills and importantly risk assessment and management on to me for over a decade.

My Dad was the first. He showed me how to pack a bag, use a map and compass, and wild camp. My Uncle Arthur taught me how to lead climb, how to move safely and efficiently over technical terrain and improved my skill base in winter conditions. Another was Chris Davison, a friend of my Dad and who joined us on many of our forays North of the Border. This memorably included my first Munros, Sgùrr na Ciche and Garbh Cioch Mhòr on the Knoydart peninsula when I was 12. Chris was incredibly fit, a runner of marathons and a decent triathlete. It was from Chris that I first heard of the Bob Graham Round. A teenage John was astounded that anyone could do something like that and, in the knowledge that it had rebuffed Chris's efforts three times, accepted that it was beyond him. However, the seed had been planted.

From that early fascination with the outdoors I developed myself into someone competent in outdoor group management, achieving my Mountain Leader qualification aged 21 and I even worked a season as an outdoor instructor in New Zealand in 2019. Other highlights included walking the Alta Via 1 through the Dolomites with my wife Amy and friend Catherine, guiding my friends Danny and Hayley up a multi-pitch climb on the Isle of Arran and many wild camping trips with my brother Stu, brother-in-law Louis and Danny in the Highlands; the Lochaber Traverse and Crianlarich Munros providing particularly good memories. I had previously attempted the Bob Graham in 2024, finishing my day in Honister after battling sciatic nerve pain that had come on during the descent off Seat Sandal some 13hrs before, which had severely hampered my ability to move well. It was time to try again.

A lot has happened in the two intervening years between my first and second attempts. Amy and I were lucky enough to welcome a daughter, Florence Joy, into our lives in late 2024. Adjusting to being a Dad was difficult but I don't think anything in life has made quite as much

sense to me. It has given me purpose, perspective and joy alongside making me much more disciplined in my training so as to not disrupt family time.

I also joined Northumberland Fell Runners (NFR) in 2025 and have really enjoyed racing and meeting a now familiar sea of faces across the North East, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Lakes. Through NFR I also started training with the TrailNorth group, led by John Butters (JB). The group sessions have challenged me to become a better runner and also meet some amazing new people. JB and I over the last few months were able to get out on school nights and weekends and push each other as we trained for our respective goals. This and an enjoyable season racing on the fells, including Lakeland classics Ennerdale and Borrowdale, had given me a quiet confidence approaching the Bob and as the day drew near I just wanted to get started and execute well after a long summer of training.



Ready to go. Moot Hall with Arthur, myself, Joe & Glynn (L to R)

The Attempt

11th-12th September 2026

LEG 1 - Pacers: Arthur Hill, Joe Stringer & Glynn Jones

Glynn counts me down from ten, my heel pressed against the Moot Hall. Then it begins **(20:30)**. Cheers from those gathered (including Chris Davison, Natalie & Caspian, a pleasant surprise!) chase us down the ginnel of the Golden Lion as we make our way towards the darkness of Fitz Park. "We" being Arthur Hill, Glynn Jones (both of whom I met supporting Cas' Double Bob last summer) and Joe Stringer, fellow NFR. True to form Arthur and Glynn begin chattering absolute garbage which diverted all attention as we smoothly skirted around Latrigg. The two had been egging each other on from afar all week, the excitement bubbling over to produce outfits that Billy Bland would certainly deem questionable. Arthur was resplendent in a neon pink shorts-tee combo whilst Glynn had accessorised with a rainbow Tutu that he "couldn't wait to test in the bogs". Joe, who has a decent collection of very short purple and green split shorts, had not got the memo and was dressed rather sensibly.

Arthur probably knows Leg 1 better than anyone living and led us on some wonderful lines that avoided the worst of the zig-zags on Jenkin Hill as we made steady progress upwards. The evening was still, warm and clear. The dark fells were outlined in the dull twilight, as stars shone above and the lights of Keswick and Portinscale pulsed below. It was quiet. Glynn had dropped off as the climb steepened but soon caught us up as the gradient levelled off before rounding Little Man. The chat resumed and we continued up and over the summit of Skiddaw **(21:45)**. Taking care to not bomb the grassy downhill to Hare Crag too hard, we soon found ourselves in the heathery bogs below that had been replenished by the recent rains after a very dry summer. The climb to Great Calva passed quickly, I chatted to Joe and followed Arthur upwards as Glynn fell back again on the steep ascent. We summited Great Calva **(22:23)**, hopped the fence and headed down towards the Caldew. Arthur told us he had managed to cross it dry several times this year but those days were long gone. We marched over Mungrisedale Common with wet feet. Joe and Arthur talked about their shared love of music as we trotted up the back of Blencathra, hitting the traverse path dead on, the summit **(23:22)** following shortly after.

The descent of Halls Fell was one of the highlights of my round. Arthur leading and Joe behind, we dropped off to the right, down the screes and traversed onto the ridge itself below the rocky slabs. An absolute belter of a line, marred by the fact that someone had eaten the Squares bars that Arthur had stashed earlier and had been talking about for the past couple of hours. We made light work of the rest of the ridge, revelling in the freedom of movement and the stillness of the night. Finding ourselves suddenly on the road as a three, we were greeted, after passing through Threlkeld, by the lights of the support crew car **(23:45)**. Lloyd and Danny had set up shop and I quickly changed my top, socks and shoes. I was well up on schedule and made a conscious effort to take Leg 2 very conservatively. I ate some watermelon and a surprise babybel that Joe had brought along for the Leg 1 ride before setting off once more towards Clough Head with Lydia and Tim **(23:53)**. Glynn was just behind, descending Halls Fell. The BGR Tutu relay (an unplanned, but central part of the day) would be missing a leg.

LEG 2 - Pacers: Lydia & Tim Barker-Chapman

Lydia and I had gone to University together and, for the intervening years (post-2014), hadn't kept in touch. Cue my surprise when running Borrowdale in August, we bumped into each other early on in the race and agreed to reconnect at the finish. Post race, Lydia told me that she and her husband Tim had completed the Bob earlier in the Summer and offered their services on my round. This couldn't have been more timely, as conflicting race calendars had taken my intended Leg 2 pacers from me. Mr Stringer had jumped onto Leg 1 and placed fourth at Cronkley the following day, whilst Mr Larkin came fifth at the Old Crown Round - a race that, funnily enough, Tim and Lydia were set to marshal after a minimal amount of sleep. Fell running is a small world.

Starting up the road, I knew I was in good hands as Lydia began to lay out the plan. Tim was up front navigating and she would hold poles when needed and shove food at me every thirty minutes. We chatted our way up the climb and turned the lip to a fairly forceful headwind. Jackets quickly donned, we reached the trig point of Clough Head (**00:41**) and immediately followed onto the lovely grassy descent towards Calthow Pike. The gentle climb to Great Dodd (**01:08**) passed comfortably with some shelter from the pressing wind. It was here on the descent that we quickly turned our headtorches off with such predictable terrain underfoot and gazed up at the stars. It was magical, one of those moments that makes you appreciate the strange yet wonderful places that doing things like the Bob take you.

The summits come at you fast on Leg 2 and Watson's (**01:16**) and Stybarrow (**01:25**) Dodds were quickly dispatched. The wind continued to gust as we cut down towards Raise. An odd sight then appeared out of the dark. At first we thought it was the eyes of a cluster of sheep standing in formation on the wide col of Sticks Pass, but as we neared it was a large squat geodesic tent (covered in reflective dots). A small trail of flags then led up the hill, marking some unknown event. We continued and the rocky summit of Raise (**01:42**) was gained before Whiteside (**01:50**) followed. Pressing up Helvellyn Little Man we were met by headtorches coming towards us and more tents sat in the dark. The event was Apex Everest and was running non-stop over the weekend, with competitors coming up and down Helvellyn from Glenridding. None of us had heard of it. We said our hellos as we passed, one gentleman even told us he was a "hard motherf-!"

Little Man (**02:04**) and Helvellyn (**02:10**), the cairn helpfully adorned with a laminated piece of A4 with the mountain's name on it, rolled under our feet as we hit the traverse paths towards Nethermost (**02:18**) and Dollywagon Pike (**02:31**). It was here that the clag rolled in on the high ground, where it stayed for the rest of my round. I can remember the fierce gusts as we reached the top of Dollywagon that buffeted us as Tim located the fence post that was our cue to exit down the steep slopes towards Grisedale Tarn. Fairfield was dealt with speedily as we sunk into a great climbing rhythm and plunged into the thick cloud on top. Tim, again, nailed the nav and walked us onto the summit (**03:08**) with visibility less than 10m. We enjoyed the scree filled descent back to the Hause before the last kick up Seat Sandal (**03:32**). As we trotted down the fell with lights from the support car at Dunmail slowly filtering upwards, guiding us home, we continued to chat away between us. I remember doing a quick check in with myself. I'd felt very comfortable on the leg and hadn't pushed at any point. I was feeling great now but knew that the

weather was due to kick in on Leg 3 so was determined to meet it with resolve. What I didn't know was how much worse than forecasted it would be.

We were met off the fell by Danny and Lloyd (**03:52**) who had everything laid out and ready to go. I ate some watermelon and sushi, made sure Jack had my overtrousers close to hand and switched to my best waterproof running jacket.

I thanked Tim and Lydia for their help. They had delivered a masterclass in every aspect, spot on Nav, kept me fed and watered and encouraged me throughout. They had built on what Joe, Arthur and Glynn had delivered on Leg 1 and really set me up to succeed. Now it was over to Jack and Cas to get me to Wasdale.



With Lydia on top of an unknown mountain

LEG 3 - Pacers: Caspian James & Jack Simpson

Leg 3 was the toughest on the day. There comes a point where you can't really get any wetter, a point that I reached approaching Rossett Pike. Decision making in the outdoors gets better as you accrue experience. At no point during the leg did I feel we were "out there", past the realm of reasonable control. Everything was safe, just not necessarily enjoyable at all times. It strangely felt like a bit of a rite of passage, as if the fells were asking, "Can you deal with this?". All that it did was stoke defiance. I remember moments of laughing into the lashing rain, loving it.

Setting off from Dunmail **(04:03)** I felt reasonably fresh and the first two hills, Steel Fell **(04:29)** and Calf Crag **(04:50)** went by quickly. Of greater importance; the Tutu had returned, this time sported by Caspian, who pushed me out to the front to dictate the pace as I was still up on schedule.

We were topping out of the ramps leading up to Sergeant Man when rain began to lightly fall. After reaching the summit **(05:25)** we turned to begin the run over flat grassy ground onto High Raise. It was on this split that the weather dialled up a notch. Heavy rain now layered onto the constant, occasionally brutal, wind that had been the fixture from Clough Head. The rain wasn't to let up until after I set out from Wasdale on Leg 4, some five hours away.

After tagging the trig on High Raise **(05:33)** we cowered in the substantial summit shelter and stuck our overtrousers on. Turning for Thunacar Knott we were now headed directly into the wind, stinging rain peppered us and, in the light of our headtorches, significantly reduced visibility. It was very much head down, keep moving. We overshot the summit of Thunacar, as the gloom cleared in the beginnings of a grey dawn and revealed the distinct skyline of Pavey Ark and Harrison Stickle ahead. We quickly corrected, backtracked, and found the cairn **(05:54)** before once again pressing into the rain, scrambling up Harrison Stickle **(06:02)** wind whipping at us doggedly. I dropped off the rocky face to the stepping stones below as Cas waited for Jack who had begun to struggle on the wet rock. Pike O Stickle was scrambled up **(06:17)** and we began the long traverse to Rossett Pike, firstly over the sodden Martcrag Moor and then down the grassy slopes to Stake Gill. In my fell shoes, I welcomed the runnable terrain and enjoyed darting down the terraces watching as the wind whipped the clouds and squalls of rain across the black crags across from us. The gusts abated in the shadow of the ridge allowing Cas and I to actually have a quick chat! It was here that two black-clad teams of three appeared on the slopes above. Like us, both had started the evening before; one at 8PM, the other at 7PM. The first we passed with small words of encouragement on the traverse before the final punch to Rossett Pike, the second just off the summit itself **(07:01)**. They seemed in good spirits despite the inclement weather. I had no idea what time we were on so couldn't guess how they were progressing. I later learned that the 7PM starter managed to get round in just under 27 hours, an incredible effort to keep going in the conditions especially when the 24 hour target had slipped past.

Cas led us on to the correct ramp through Bowfell's craggy eastern flank as we put our heads down and got to work on the climb. The reassuringly distinctive summit was gained **(07:34)** and we set off over the rocks towards Esk Pike, false summits coming and going in the rain. After passing over the true top **(07:54)** it became clear how set-in the rain was. All paths were now streams, and the funnelled terraces leading to Esk Hause bubbled with water.

From here it was upwards to the plateau and plentiful wet rock hopping. Great End fell under our feet (08:18) followed by the Craggs, Ill (08:34) and Broad (08:44), in quick succession. As we swept up Scafell Pike (08:58), shockingly vacant for once, Jack began to fall behind again. Cas waited as I dropped to Mickledore and down the scree gully to the terrace leading onto Lord's Rake. Water cascaded off Broad Stand and rivulets sprayed from the high crags above. Turning the corner I was met with the sight of Lord's Rake turned-waterfall. My initial thought was, "Well, this is probably where the day ends!" Broad Stand was impassible and Fox's Gully would be in an even worse state of deluge. However, after closer inspection, the main volume of water was coming from another gully to the left and not down the Rake itself. Care would need to be taken in the initial 5 metres or so but after that it would be just the usual scrambling on wet loose rock. Cas and Jack popped over the crest behind and I shouted back what the plan was and set off though white water and tumbling rock. West wall traverse was definitely off the cards, and we completed Lord's Rake in its entirety. This jettisoned us onto the flank of Scafell and back into the wind once more. The final march to the top (09:37) marked the end of Leg 3's summits and the start of the long downhill to Wasdale. Jack was left behind in the clag as Cas and I set off down through the initial rocky steps, and then over the grass to find the top of the scree gully. It, like everything else on the fell, was in full flow and for the first 50m of the descent, water rushed around our feet. This abruptly stopped as the torrent disappeared underground and we continued down the streak of red, exiting the right hand side of the gully onto the steep grass marking the final descent to Lingmell Ghyll. Again, the sheer ridiculousness of running down a scree chute turned-river produced a moment of enjoyment that mixed with a sense of relief and achievement that Wasdale was so close.

However, reality soon set in with the sobering sight of white water appearing in the better visibility of the valley, roaring down the beck on the flanks of Lingmell and swelling the usually fordable stream separating us from the footpath. The easy route down to the car park lay 10m away but it may as well have been 1000. Cas and I had a quick chat, he was going to wait until Jack was in sight and I was going to traverse downwards, on this side of the river to the footbridge below. This involved hopping over a couple of fences and thrashing through some neck high bracken until I gained the track that led to the National Trust Carpark. Time had been lost due to things beyond my control but I knew I had now broken the back of it. This resolve only deepened when greeted by JB ("Absolutely flying"), Pip and Hannah (10:15). I changed out of everything bar my shorts and boxers, and gave the team a quick debrief, something along the lines of "That was insane, but I'm enjoying it. Let's keep going". I told them that they needed to wait for Jack and that Cas should have things in hand, as indeed he did. Jack had developed a niggle coming off Scafell Pike and did very well to struggle through in terrible conditions, especially as he had run 80 odd miles at a Backyard Ultra the weekend before. Cas as always was excellent. I had helped him over the same hills in similar conditions on his Double Bob in 2025 and there are few people that I would rather have alongside me in weather and terrain like that. Most importantly the Tutu changed hands (JB becoming its latest victim) but, stuck with Jack, somewhere on the flanks of Scafell, the spare kitbag that contained a map and compass did not...



Lord's Rake (top) and Lingmell Ghyll (bottom) in spate.

LEG 4 - Pacer: John Butters

I'd made such good time on the first three legs that my brother Stuart hadn't managed to get to Keswick by the time my road support (Hannah and Pip) had needed to set off and get around to Wasdale. So for Leg 4 it would just be JB and myself. The conditions down in the valley were much milder than on the tops and I found myself taking off both my waterproof and overtrousers in the first hundred meters of the climb up Yewbarrow. It was a good feeling to be leaving Wasdale behind (**10:30**) and with JB padding out in front, I got my head down and followed suit. My legs were good but I just felt a bit off, this feeling stuck with me over Red Pike and only dissipated heading towards Steeple. Looking at my splits in hindsight I didn't slow down but it was probably the lowest it got for me physically. I quietly kept moving forward and we gained the hallowed summit of Yewbarrow (**11:12**), firmly back up again in the clag and wind. Importantly however, there was no rain accompanying the gusts. The weather was turning. The hours in the dark telling myself to "stay in it" felt like a distant memory but I also knew that Leg 4 was not to be underestimated.

We settled into a good rhythm and picked up the traverse path that took us below Stirrup Crag, to the col under Red Pike. The ascent passed quickly and we drifted right to tag the cairn (**11:56**), continuing on in search of the wall that marks the Ennerdale watershed. Visibility had now dropped to below 10m and we gained the wall too far right, forcing us to backtrack towards Steeple. We located the cairn marking the turn off and were then greeted by the faint dark ridge hanging in the mist, as the ground dropped off into grey on either side. The trail leading to and from Steeple's distinct promontory is brilliant and the two of us made good time as we enjoyed some faster paced running over the technical terrain. It was this change up that seemed to shake off the funk that I had been in and I started to feel better. We hit the top (**12:25**) before heading immediately back on ourselves and then, using the aforementioned wall as a handrail, located the path around Black Crag. The sharp climb up Pillar passed without incident although I remembered getting frustrated at the many false summits in the swirling cloud before we found the actual cairn (**12:56**). We ran well on the next sweeping descent, moving freely down the gentle gradient. Suddenly, Kirkfell reared up out of the clouds in front of us as we neared Black Sail Pass, the strong winds gifting us a fleeting and welcome perspective. You could see the speed of the gusts whirling eddies of water vapour across the dark bastions of its crags and, for a few seconds, the light took on a warmer colour as the sun threatened to breach the clouds. We ran towards this vision, grinning like schoolboys, relishing the sight after two hours of seeing very little. Funnily enough it was the only complete view of a mountain I had on my round! All too quickly the clag came back in and we skirted left, grateful again for the wind shadow, and pushed up the enjoyable climb of Red Gully.

Reaching the summit of Kirkfell (**13:48**) we made a mistake. The visibility had significantly reduced once again and we managed to get turned around in the simple act of tagging the top and set off heading towards Wasdale, not Great Gable. We had probably descended 100m when the alarm bells started to go off in my head. There had been no tarn, the shape of the ridge felt wrong and then by providence, as if to confirm my doubts, the clouds parted dramatically revealing a swollen river and a cluster of buildings far below. Wasdale Head. My initial thought was one of annoyance but I quickly turned back to the task at hand. Instantly turning 180° we slogged back up Kirkfell, traversed right, and found the tarn that appeared out of the clag only when we were about 10m from it! The clag lifted again to give us a quick

sighting of Great Gable's lower slopes as we neared the col. I fixed my eyes on where I knew the path led upwards and forged ahead into the mist. The climb was an absolute slog for a couple of hundred meters before it spat us out onto the moonscape of the final dome. I clambered over the summit rocks, again in really bad visibility, and tagged the top (**14:50**). We had to reorient ourselves again (I wanted that compass so badly!) and headed towards disembodied voices coming from the line of cairns we had set off along. On the rocky steps below, we had a quick chat with a group of women who had come up from Ennerdale, and continued down to Windy Gap. Green Gable (**15:11**), Brandreth (**15:26**) and Grey Knotts (**15:35**) quickly followed over the finally visible and eminently runnable terrain of these lower fells. My trail shoes were not up to the very wet and grassy descent from Grey Knotts and I wished I had my Ronhills back on as I gingerly padded downwards. Honister in sight, I thanked JB for getting me through the leg and also for all of the shared hours training together throughout the year. I was pretty focused the whole time and only really relaxed when we were coming off of Great Gable so I wasn't good company. We'd known each other less than a year, but spending time with someone racing and training really does form a bond, especially between people with similar goals and mentalities. Knowing he was with me through some of the more mentally challenging parts of my round really helped me push through and made me keep trying. Hitting the track and striding into Honister (**15:49**) feeling good was one of the highlights of the entire day. Seeing Lloyd, Danny, Amy and Obi really picked me up to new heights. Rounding the corner to where the team had set up the aid station, under the lean-to of the visitors centre, I spotted Stu. I immediately gave my brother a hug. It was so special to have him there on the day and after not seeing him in Wasdale it was another welcome boost to my spirits. I then reconnected with Pip and Hannah, used the facilities, ate some food and donned my NFR vest for the run home to Keswick. I think for the first time that day I allowed myself to welcome a single thought, prompted by the very words my brother had just given to me, "It was getting done!".



Kirkfell disappearing back into the clag

LEG 5 - Pacers: Stu Packer, Matty Selman & Jonny Pigott

I took three steps into Leg 5 and realised I'd forgotten something very important. After having sat down for 5 minutes, I had been mercifully relieved of the chafing that had begun midway through Leg 4. I retreated and applied some bodyglide to the "affected area", telling a shocked Hannah not to turn around. Then it was off again, (16:01) up the short ramp of road leading to the last real climb of the round: Dale Head. Borrowdale Fell Race had been the last time I'd been here, grimacing in the August sun, before that it had been on a recce with Jonny in April.

Jonny (the new owner of a fourth-hand Tutu) joined me today alongside Matty and Stu. It was a special feeling to be accompanied by some of my closest people on the "glory leg", and with so much time in the bag we chatted our way up Dale Head (16:34). I tapped the huge cairn and then set off along the ridge, enjoying the trail as Matty and Stu ripped along ahead. It was great to see Matty having fun again after being sidelined for so long recovering from surgery. We ran well and were soon pressing up the gentle incline leading to Hindscarth (16:52). Cries of "41!" went up as I turned from the penultimate summit and located the faint and then very obvious trod across the cirque linking to Robinson. Jonny and I had absolutely blasted this section earlier in the year as it's so runnable. The pace on the day was more leisurely but I was still moving freely as we dipped out of the clag. Far to our right we could see the distant flanks of Skiddaw lit by the sun, raising our already high spirits as we plodded up the final climb to Robinson (17:17). Reaching that final summit was a rush of feelings; happiness and pride that all the peaks of the round were behind me, mixed with a knowledge that I wasn't yet finished. The run into Keswick was what my mind immediately switched to. We celebrated, took a photo and set off down the ridge. Jonny located the bypass trods around the rocky steps and we padded our way carefully down the steep slopes to hit the track leading to Newlands. From there it was a series of landmarks I ticked off in my head. The church, road shoes on, Little Town, Swinside Inn, Nicholl End, Portinscale. Here, Chris Larkin (who had just secured overall 3rd place in the English Champs!) was waiting on the other side of the footbridge to see me in. Then the final mile or so over the common and up the high street.

22 and a bit hours later and I was back where I had started, legs still moving. We dodged the usual crowds and, looking up, I searched for Amy and Florence. Flo looked like she was kicking off so I initially went past not wanting to drag an already perturbed toddler from her Mum. Coming closer however, I could see and hear her crying "Daddy". I stopped and took her from Amy, carrying her the final 50m or so to the Moot Hall and up the steps. It was a moment I will remember for as long as I live. Upon reaching the top I sat down with her on my knee and said "We did it!".

I hadn't expected the reception I got at the finish. There were "my" people and then others waiting outside The Round or just coming and going through the centre of Keswick. It was genuinely touching to be applauded by strangers. Some of them would have had an appreciation of what I'd just accomplished whilst others didn't (including two lads who walked directly in front of me as I ran to the steps). I think that is the Bob Graham in a microcosm; held in reverence by some and an obscurity to the many. Most people have no idea what it is, others may view it as just another endurance challenge, but it's the history (both wider and personal), the fell running culture and the support aspect that makes it so special. Getting to thank everyone for their support at the end was incredible. I had expected to be very emotional upon

finishing but I think the nature the challenge took on during the small hours of the morning had forced me into a very present state that was so focused on getting it done, moment by moment, that when it was all over, I was almost in a state of disbelief. I couldn't summon the overarching narrative of what it actually meant to make it to that moment. In fact, it probably took a week for it to settle in.

When you have children it introduces a new level of perspective into your life. It heightens the highs and diminishes the lows. Florence won't remember those final steps or the words I said to her but I hope I can instill in her what it means to risk failure in search of what you are capable of. To work and to go after things that a past-you may have written off. Maybe she will read this one day. I hope she will recognise the value of surrounding yourself with great people who can elevate you beyond what you alone are capable of.



Top: Robinson, the final peak! Jonny, Stu, myself & Matty (L to R) Bottom: Back at the Moot Hall

Post Script - Thoughts from the day

One of my favourite quotes from the world of sport comes from the tennis player Rafael Nadal. Asked in a post match press conference; what did Nadal think was possible for his opponent if he was able to focus on each point like he could. Faced with this hypothetical question, the Spaniard's blunt answer of, "If? If? If? Doesn't exist." has always stuck with me. The simple truth of it is that only you can do it for yourself. It would have been so easy to fall back on "If the wind hadn't been so high or the rain so heavy... If Lords Rake and Lingmell Ghyll weren't in spate... If we hadn't gone the wrong way off Kirk Fell...". Excuses abound when things feel hard. I am certain I would have been surrounded by well meaning sympathy and applause for having given it a try. I'm not saying that there isn't a time to give in or that anyone who does pull out of an endurance effort has not exercised a strong will. Just on this day, for me, internally I knew that to withdraw because of the weather would cheapen the effort I owed myself, the effort that I deserved to execute. Strangely this occurred in a single moment that I can remember with some clarity. To bow to the conditions did not reflect what I felt in myself: I was strong, my legs felt good, physically I was operating comfortably.

It was midway through Leg 3, we had just crossed Martcrag Moor, and I was already soaked to the skin. I was on the long grassy descent to Stake Gill, wind pounding, a palette of grays filtering through the dull dawn as the terraces to Rossett Pike loomed ahead. I was actually having fun. Even though it should have sucked, I was enjoying myself. I was ahead of Jack and Cas at that point and can clearly remember playing the "If, doesn't exist" quote through my head. I pictured myself carrying my daughter up to the finish. This moment crystallised a decision of such clarity and defiance that I can't say I have experienced before. I wasn't going to stop. I owed myself that moment with Florence on the steps of Moot Hall, I owed Amy for the time that I had spent away from our family racing and training. Nothing short of time running out would be excusable. This may sound extreme but what it did allow me to do was take the day moment by moment, I was present and thankful to be where I was and for who I was with at the time. Hopefully the people supporting me can testify that I was focused on my task and positive throughout. It was truly one of the best days of my life spent doing something hard, surrounded by people I love.

There is such an incredible community that surrounds the Bob and Fell Running in general. The nature of the support that surrounds you on the day is something really special. There is a purity of ethics, a confidence in competence in completing something solo and unsupported. Indeed I have successfully undertaken other challenges in that style but, looking back, I perhaps remember them less or they are not as easy to recall as days spent with others. I firmly believe that adventures are better shared, both "in the doing" and in the collective memory. This can occur spontaneously or, in the case of a Bob Graham, it is a day marked before its undertaking by the conscious acceptance of "I will remember today for as long as I live and it may be told by others when I am gone". The telling and retelling of overlapping stories, an embellishment of truths until the mountains are bigger and the margins are smaller forms a collective narrative that is far more interesting than a single person's viewpoint.

Finally, due to struggling with his mental health this year, my Dad had to make the difficult decision not to be there in person supporting the attempt. Both he and Mum followed my progress from afar on the day. I can safely say that without my parents' support I wouldn't have completed a Bob Graham Round. My deep love of the outdoors is merely an extension of that of my Dad's. A man who taught me how to be resilient and how to fight well. My Mum is the strongest person I know, the calm in the storm. I hope I can claim to have inherited an ounce of her grit and grace. When I pulled the plug at Honister on my Bob attempt in 2024, they were the two people closest to me when I said the words. Dad was pushing me to keep going whilst Mum had seen that I had already made my decision a while ago. I remember telling them that I had nothing to prove. Looking at that moment now I think it just highlights the values that they fostered in me. Effort over outcome. Now that I have had the outcome I still think the best part of the day is the effort, the shared miles, the digging deep, resisting the elements. There's no other place where you can feel more alive.

"In this country, where the silence is music, an old man's spirit can dance unfettered. The glory is in the doing, not in the having done. And wanting to hear music and to dance to it, is what keeps luring back to the hills..."

Glyn Jones from The Mountains Are Calling by Jonny Muir



Location	Time	Split
Moot Hall	20:30	-
Skiddaw	21:45	1:45
Great Calva	22:23	0:38
Blencathra	23:22	0:59
Threlkeld - Arrive	23:45	0:23
Threlkeld - Depart	23:53	0:08
Clough Head	0:41	0:48
Great Dodd	1:08	0:27
Watson Dodd	1:16	0:08
Stybarrow Dodd	1:25	0:09
Raise	1:42	0:17
White Side	1:50	0:08
Helvellyn Lower Man	2:04	0:14
Helvellyn	2:10	0:06
Nethermost Pike	2:18	0:08
Dollywaggon Pike	2:31	0:13
Fairfield	3:08	0:37
Seat Sandal	3:32	0:24
Dunmail Raise - Arrive	3:52	0:20
Dunmail Raise - Depart	4:03	0:09

Location	Time	Split
Steel Fell	4:29	0:26
Calf Crag	4:50	0:21
Sergeant Man	5:25	0:35
High Raise	5:33	0:08
Thunacar Knott	5:54	0:21
Harrison Stickle	6:02	0:08
Pike o Stickle	6:17	0:15
Rossett Pike	7:01	0:44
Bowfell	7:34	0:33
Esk Pike	7:54	0:20
Great End	8:18	0:24
Ill Crag	8:34	0:16
Broad Crag	8:44	0:10
Scafell Pike	8:58	0:14
Scafell	9:37	0:39
Wasdale - Arrive	10:15	0:38
Wasdale - Depart	10:30	0:15
Yewbarrow	11:12	0:42
Red Pike	11:56	0:44
Steeple	12:25	0:29
Pillar	12:56	0:31
KirkFell	13:48	0:52
Great Gable	14:50	1:02
Green Gable	15:11	0:21
Brandreth	15:26	0:15
Grey Knotts	15:35	0:09
Honister - Arrive	15:49	0:14
Honister - Depart	16:01	0:12
Dalehead	16:34	0:33
Hindscarth	16:52	0:18
Robinson	17:17	0:25
Keswick Moot Hall	18:53	1:35