

## ***Two Breweries – 18 miles, 4,900 feet of ascent***

Photographs courtesy of Steve Fallon

The peacocks may not have been strutting around the lawns of Traquair House as usual but 110 multi-coloured vested individuals still added plenty of colour to the stately setting against a backdrop of a sky getting ever bluer by the minute in the countdown to race time. Eight NFRs were up to the challenge dividing ourselves equally from the Sassenach side of the border (John Duff, Dave Johnson, Paul Appleby and John Dallinson) whilst the Scottish battalion was represented by new member Alistair Paul, Jane and Lewis Grundy and myself.



**.....and they're off**

New organisers and newly constructed fences meant that one or two sneaky routes had been placed off limits and in case anybody was tempted to flout the rules the long arm of the law was on hand to escort us down the first stretch of road with blue light flashing to ensure no shenanigans of a fell running variety.

The initial stretch along the main road soon gave way to farm track which yielded to pasture and then to hillside to be followed by the first of many brushes with the ankle and shin beating heather.

With the sun shining and few clouds in the sky the panoramic views were magnificent when one could be tempted to raise their line of vision further than the next tuft of heather just waiting to send you sprawling (irrespective of whether or not you were in the penalty area).



### **Lewis powers for home**

The route takes you up five main peaks visiting magically named valleys such as Glensax, Manor Water and Stobo before depositing you in the village of Broughton. On the run in to Stobo you cross an innocuous looking little river which is actually the fledgling River Tweed.

The peaks consist of the runnable ascents of Birkscairn and Stob Law but also of the lamentable “hands-on legs, back bent double, can hardly breathe” variety of Hundlescope Heights, Whitelaw Hill, and the deadliest of them all, Trahenna which sucks every last ounce of energy from you.

The route manages to avoid tarmac road pretty much apart from the first and last half miles but makes ample use of farm roads, grouse tracks, forest paths & firebreaks and the occasional sheep trod meaning that finding a safe route is not usually at a premium. However, there are still places to be won and lost by the specific choice with still one or two clever little contours to give those with orienteering skills and/or local knowledge an advantage. When in doubt....follow a Moorfoot vest and hope he or she is not part of an elaborate decoy.

The going underfoot was the driest I had experienced in my four attempts at this beast and whilst sunshine is not to be scoffed at we probably could have done without a stiff breeze full on in our faces for a majority of proceedings.



**John and Paul reach the summit of Trahenna (but no sign of Ringo or George)**

This may explain why the route from Trahenna back to Broughton was littered with hobbling corpses who had been attacked by a severe overdose of cramp. As I found to my own expense beating the ground and yelping in pain does little to aid recovery or attract sympathy given that as I lay on the ground in my post Trahenna torpor one gentleman trotted by and gave me a quick glance muttering something like “Aye that cramp can be a real b-----r” before going merrily on his way.



**Alistair and John in post Trahenna cramp recovery syndrome. The beer is less than a mile away!**

As ever once the gathered throng had run their race and replenished themselves on the never ending supply of soup, rolls, cake and (for the non-drivers) beer it was agreed that it really had been a grand day out and all the pain endured would just mean the beer would taste all the better once we got home.

From an organisational perspective this is probably one of the most logistically challenging races but it seemed to go off without a hitch and any race which offers you a bottle of beer at the end instead of an oxygen mask gets my vote every time.

**John Telfer**