

## The Hardmoors 60

- *Or "A Day at the Seaside With Our Very Own Secretary, John Telfer, for NFR Chairlady, Steph Scott".*

And so it came to pass that these two 'esteemed' Committee members ended up at Guisborough Sea Cadets HQ at 7.15am last Saturday (29 Sept 2012).

Avoiding the bright lights and bogs at the Kielder Blast, they sneaked off to Yorkshire for some bracing coastal air and a 60 mile ultra race along the Cleveland Way. As it happened, there was one on foot and the other travelling by car - and how very kind it was of John to offer to support me in my latest crazy adventure! I was not the only crazy one this time, Jeff Ross and Dave Coxon were also signed up for this treat!

My preparation had reached its usually heady heights and JT's mum had been dispatched to find the right map the day before the race! John's parents live close to the start and had kindly offered to put me up (or put up with me!) on Fri and Sat nights. This was incredibly generous of them and of John, himself, to offer to be my support crew for the race. I had no idea of my race day logistics apart from running from Guisborough to Filey and then hoping to get a lift back somehow, until John phoned to offer his help. This in itself was a lovely gesture, but it also meant that our Secretary had to stay out of the pub on a Sat night which is above and beyond the call of duty!

So, we queued at the kit check/registration and wondered why exactly it meant standing outside in the cool morning air, but at least it wasn't raining. Armed with an array of maps, courtesy of Mrs Telfer Snr, numerous hats, gloves, head torch, batteries, etc we asked the kit man which things were required. I had more than enough stuff and he seemed unconcerned about which map or if I took any at all! Even I had spotted two navigational points;

1. Keep the sea to your left when on the Cleveland Way in order not to return from where you came
2. There was no requirement to carry a compass to go with the map

Back to the car we went and made a 'team' decision that I would carry the relevant page of the route description from the event website and JT would swap it over at each checkpoint so that I always had the required one. (None of the OS maps actually covered all parts of the route). John was also in charge of all my food, drink and kit so I didn't need to use the 'drop bag' system, but it did look as though it worked quite well. Certainly there were lots of carrier bags at the check points anyway! There was an orienteering-type punch at the checkpoints which the marshals used to mark your progress on a card that each competitor carried.

The start of the event was delayed due to a lack of men's toilet facilities! Eventually the race organisers babbled some instructions which meant very little at the time, mainly about how to get to various check points. Throughout the race these were poorly marked and tricky to find in the villages adjacent to the Cleveland Way. A little bit of tape would have gone a long way!!

Finally we were off.....



..... just the 35 mins late!! A small, but significant delay, meaning that even a 12 hour finisher would be well into darkness and also that it was starting to feel like a long time since breakfast!

Knowing nothing, I was quite surprised when John had informed me that the first part of the route would be familiar in places as it went up the road past the rugby club and into Guisbro' woods to High Nab. Excellent! Although we took a different route to the Guisbro' Moors Race even I recognised it. As the lead runners zoomed back towards us, I realised we were close to the checkpoint and retrieved the little card from my rucksack. I had decided to zip it away in a pocket as I couldn't bear the thing flapping about for 60 miles and there was also every chance that I would lose it! The first 2 squidgy and mainly uphill miles done, we headed back through the woods, on an 'unknown' section to a road, a sneaky 'click' at an extra check point and onto Skelton. I pushed on as the ground was good underfoot and I didn't want to get on my own as we entered the village. (A good move as the route was not obvious and some other runners had to be called back as they had missed the turning through a housing estate). At this point, I heard a 'Well done on your BG, Steph'. Had they heard about me in this remote part of North Yorkshire?? No, of course not! It was our very own Dave Coxon who ran with me to Saltburn Spa Hotel, the first food stop at 9 miles.



My trusty support man was there at the ready with coffee and snacks. I decided it was now warm enough to get rid of the waterproof coat. The checkpoint was inside the hotel, but even that wasn't obvious and JT had to tell a few runners to go inside and get there cards clicked! I had been to Saltburn a few weeks earlier on the Tynedale Harriers club relay where I had run the next section to Staithes with Peter Hearn and Pete Murphy. This made me confident of at least the next 10 miles where the terrain was a bit more rugged but it was still all on paths. The coastline is lovely and the route passes through some pretty places, Staithes being one of these, and climbs up to the highest cliffs on the East coast. This section sees the start of the real undulations. They are short but frequent, steep 'downs' to the bays or villages and climbs back out and onto the cliff-top path. There is apparently 3500m of climb in this race, but it never feels like a hard uphill slog. There are many (too many?!) obstacles along the way though such as stairs, (both up and down, 100s of them literally), stiles,



gates, walls and narrow gaps. They break your rhythm but are also increasingly hard work on tired legs. I knew it was another 3 or 4 miles to Runswick Bay where I had also been on the relay. It helped me as I knew where the car park/checkpoint was. Here I found JT who kindly took a photo of me as I grimaced and tried to protect my legs as I ran down the very steep road to the bay.



I rewarded myself with a packet of salt and vinegar crisps and a walk across the beach. (Oh, I know how to have a good time!!). It was too nice to run and I was only here to finish so there was no need to trash my legs any further by running on sand! It also gave me chance to watch where people went and locate a set of slippery rock steps with water running down them as the exit from the bay. There were a few people to run with once we hit the coastal path again, but once it gets runnable I tend to move quicker than most and I ended up chatting to different people along this section to Sandsend.

On days like these you get loads of great comments from people and I found an 'expert' who had heard of the Bob Graham Round but remarked that you mustn't need to be a super athlete to do it! I pointed out that you couldn't just nip over to the Lake District and run round it and although I am clearly not a 'super athlete' I did have a great support team. I don't think 'anyone can do it'. He said I must have had good weather! I also ran into Sandsend with a guy who decided that I was 'clearly not a fell runner then'. This he concluded when he saw me teetering on a steep staircase rather than jumping down which is what real fell runners do, apparently! He had done a BGR but got lost on Skiddaw, going clockwise!?! People have great stories. Anyway, I left him coming down the stairs, ironically, into Sandsend car park! This must be around 30 miles when I come to think about it, but I was getting into it by now and as many runners seemed to be resting in the sun, I cracked on. So after a quick 'click', some coke and snacks, I left the checkpoint on my own, feeling quite happy that I had stolen a few places. JT reports that I was 'in the zone'!



As I ran out of the car park, it wasn't obvious where the official route went, but I could see some ruins in the distance and I had the sea on my left, so I decided I must be Whitby-bound! I ended up running a mile or so along the road and as



John drove by I indicated that I didn't know where I was going. Being the kind soul that he is, he stopped and parked under a wooden sign saying 'Cleveland Way' and pointed the way down to the coastal path. Being the expert navigator that I am, I had retrieved the instructions from my bag and realised that my route was 'THE ROUTE' and that I was looking for a sign pointing left! Excellent! I followed the path and kept checking the instructions as I arrived in Whitby. The only requirement was to pass under the whalebone arch and then head 'via any route' up the 199 steps to the abbey. There were so many steps during the day that these just blended in! I was running on my own all of the time from Sandsend through Whitby and into Scarborough. A couple of guys passed me at a fair pace at some point after Whitby, but it turned out that I overtook them later when they took an unnecessary stroll on a beach! I was running well, but the field was well spaced out so I didn't catch anyone up. It was lovely running in the coastal breeze and passing all of the bays along the way. Incredibly I bumped into Mandy and Louise from Elvet Striders looking out over Robin Hood's Bay. They kindly gave me some water, but I resisted their offer of a hard-boiled egg and some curried bread! It was a great boost to see them and very helpful of them to point out that I should be running!! I took their advice and trotted off in the direction of Ravenscar which seemed to take a long time to arrive and was at the top of a long climb! As the path came into the village, a small arrow indicated a right turn, but I had no idea where the checkpoint was. Luckily a couple of ladies pointed me up the hill and round the corner to the village hall and the location of my very own bag man. A hilarious lady made me a black coffee and twice offered me milk for it! She then asked me if I'd got lost! Here I fed up on some sausage rolls and jam tarts - all the stuff I never eat in 'real life', but it tasted yummy. I managed a few bourbon biscuits too. Well, why not? John waved me off once more into oblivion. Alone.....





So I ran down the road, once again feeling like the only person in the race. I knew I was heading towards the sea again and could see Scarborough in the distance, so convinced myself I was going in the right direction. I had to get the instructions out after about a mile and double-check whether I should turn left through a gateway with a bright arrow seemingly pointing to Heaven. I could see a path and assumed that this was the Cleveland Way (it was!). I felt like getting to Scarborough would be a major psychological milestone as I only had to get to the finish after that. Someone had told me that it was 8 miles to Scarborough, 3 miles round the bay then 9 miles to the finish. I was happy with that, although some of you reading it might think "that's another 20 miles to go!" I don't really count the miles in these long races, sometimes I think about the time and try to

guess-timate how long it will take to reach the next check point, but invariably I forget what I had decided anyway! Generally, I just run and if I don't feel like running I walk for a bit! The section to Scarborough was fairly runnable so I trotted merrily along the Cleveland Way, in the direction of a settlement that I hoped would turn out to be Scarborough.

As I entered the town, I asked a dog walker if he had seen any other mad fools running this way, to which he replied "No, you're the first!" (fair enough!). He kindly directed me the quick way through the sand dunes and on to the promenade. At this point, I realised John had not magically materialised from anywhere, nor had any signage relating to the race! I continued running with the sea on my left until I came to a road junction. The instructions required me to follow the path to the end and take a right turn up a gravel track. Only then did it dawn on me how poor the information was. Night was starting to fall, there was no-one else from the race insight anywhere around, my phone had no signal and I had no idea which part of Scarborough I was supposed to be looking for a car park in!! I decided to follow the sea front path, but was concerned that I would miss the check point without knowing! I also hoped that my phone would find itself, but it didn't. There were lots of people around, none of whom had seen any runners or who were in the race! I kept running, but had no idea where to. I decided to take a path up to the right and see if I could see anything from higher up, hopefully the car park! I did spot some runners who must have caught me up whilst I worried where to go. I ran down to catch up with them and they seemed to think we had to go right round the bay to the Spa. This we duly did, but there was no obvious gravel track and certainly no race markings! It was properly dark by now so we decided to wait for some more runners to arrive. They didn't have any wise words so as a group we headed up to the street above where we could see some lights. My 'expert' had re-joined the group and luckily his phone had a signal and he rang race HQ for instructions. We ran further along as a group and turned left down another road to the car park in the darkness!

The race marshal checked our numbers and told me that John had left my bags and gone to see if he could see me coming from down the gravel path. (The path was easy to see in the light, but without any markings was invisible to us in the dark). He soon came running back and we decided that I would just stay with the group as it was now totally dark and the idea of running along a cliff-top

path and into Filey on my own was not the best. I had lost a lot of time in Scarborough, but I had found my two friends from the previous section and resolved to stay with them. I asked JT to find the route at the Filey end of the Cleveland Way as I didn't fancy another unnecessary tour of a seaside town! So the plan was made and at times like that, your support 'crew' are invaluable. I have been so very lucky to have had first class 'crew' at my events; people who I whole-heartedly trust. On this occasion, I knew that John would be at the end of the Cleveland Way, so all that I had to do was to keep going along the narrow path until I found him. It may appear to be obvious that you have arrived in Filey (or whichever town) and essentially it is, but what isn't obvious is where to go when you reach the promenade!

My new friends, Gordon and his nephew Ryan, were good company and we stayed with the others from Scarborough most of the way to the finish. It turned out that Gordon had done the Lakes 100 and he was chatting about a 'big chap, strong runner' from NFR who he had finished just in front of. Now who was that?! And did I know him? Even after 12 hours of 'running' I can play 'Name That Runner' and win! Yes, it was Paul Hainsworth. Was he with Tom, I asked? Yes, indeed he was. Gordon turned out to be from Chester-le-Street (I think) so he knew Tom Reeves, too. Gordon also had a GPS watch which told him that we had run 60 miles long since and still weren't in Filey. We had been told that there was another 1.5 to 2 miles through Filey to the finish at the school. Gordon was not a happy bunny!!

I was pleased of their company as there were some very dark and tree-covered parts of the route which I wouldn't have wanted to visit on my own, particularly as we got closer to Filey. Eventually, we could see a road through the trees and as we joined the prom, out popped JT who directed us along the sea front to the end of the path. There was a plain-clothes official (no bright coat/race top etc) who clicked our number and told us it was about 10 mins to the school up the path on the right, left then right in front of the golf club. Again, there were no obvious markings (we saw piece of tape which could have been for the race!) and unexpectedly it took much more than 10 mins! We were joined by a guy who had gone the wrong way on this section and we all continued on a tarmac path which eventually came to a road. The instructions said to turn right at the junction. There was a main road just at the end of our road and we had no idea which right to take. In the end, we decided to turn right straightaway and head

up the hill. We couldn't see the school initially, but soon a 'children crossing' warning sign came into view which confirmed we were on the right road. John was walking down the path to meet me and we wandered into the school hall together just over 14 hours after leaving Guisborough. I was 5<sup>th</sup> lady apparently, but I had no idea of this during the race and I wasn't that interested as my



main aim was to arrive in Filey in one piece. I had just about managed that, although the back of my right knee was starting to get tired of all of the stairs!

According to Gordon's GPS, the route was more like 64 miles than 60 which begs the question "Why run to High Nab and back?" There seems no need to do this as we could have just continued through the woods without that detour. When you enter a 60 mile race, you don't really want it to be 4+ miles long. In the dark, on rough ground that is essentially another hour for most people. That doesn't make tired people happy!

Personally, I thoroughly enjoyed the day. The coastal path is beautiful and mostly

runnable. The views are fantastic. I spent a lot of the day on my own, in another world to my usual one. It's amazing how these long races transport you to somewhere else, giving a freedom that normally I would never experience. How lovely to be running along with the sea breeze in my hair, watching the colours



change in the water as day became night, with the moon to keep me company and my own thoughts to occupy my mind.

Once again, my success is due to having such generous and reliable support, on this occasion, from Team Telfer. Many thanks JT.

*Steph Scott*