

**WADSWORTH TROG – 20 miles, 4,000 feet of ascent**  
**February 9, 2013**

As I begin to make steady progress up into the foothills of the mountain that is my sixth decade one thing is becoming ever clearer: namely this race never gets any easier whatever the conditions. Having experienced sheet ice, beautiful sunshine, thick mist and deep snow the conditions are never predictable and I suppose this all adds to the enjoyment which found me making my seventh pilgrimage down to this part of the Pennines to once again do battle with the beast that is the Wadsworth Trog.



Pre-Race : JT demonstrates which part of his anatomy hurts most following the last pint in The Fox & Goose  
© Geoff Matthews

To counter balance this unpredictability I sought solace in a predictable routine of sampling the local waters and meeting up with several folk whose acquaintance I owe entirely to this annual sojourn down to Hebden Bridge, a town so defined by its lack of definition that surprise and delight abound around every corner and one I never tire of.

Word must be getting round as a record entry of nearly 190 bears testament to, although starters numbered around 160. Our own master of the beagles John Duff was a late withdrawal due to muscular troubles. At £6 a pop (or no charge if you formed part of the 2012 stretcher party) you get an almost unlimited intake of hot beverages and various biscuits, cakes and soup...oh and 20 excellently marshaled miles of Pennine bog.



Pre-Race : .....and which bit hurts following the last pint in The Stubbing Wharf  
© Geoff Matthews



Pre Race – The good news is the first 400 yards is all downhill !  
© Geoff Matthews

The day dawned cold and dull but clear. The pre race chatter was a buzz of optimism and laughter as the expectant throng gathered for a 10am start, slightly delayed by a presentation by the current race organizer Hannah



Dobson to Bernard and Kay Pierce (<http://www.cvfr.co.uk/2013/02/bernard-kay-get-life/>) who brought the Trog to life over 20 years ago. Also on hand were my friends Geoff Matthews and Tom Rattray, who form part of a local photography group called Lensworks and who appeared at various points of the course. [<http://www.lensworks.co.uk/trog2013/>]

Keeping pace with the front runners for the first ten yards (downhill) I was still reasonably close to the front to observe a new route choice which involved straddling a two foot wall. No problem there then, save for the fact it was a six foot drop on the other side and had a strand of barbed wire about a foot from the wall resulting in a “few fallers at the first”, luckily myself not being one of them.

Having run out of Old Town village and made our way onto the first moor of the day it became clear that mother nature had deposited a couple of inches of snow overnight on the high ground. Not enough to make running difficult but cunning enough to conceal bits of frozen bog which had a veneer of ice upon it, claiming a few more fallers.



Doing my best to keep out of the mud – success for now was soon to be followed by lamentable failure.  
© Geoff Matthews

The race then settled down into its routine of descent and ascent, tussock hopping, bog trotting and heather bashing. Every now and again a reservoir service road or hardcore path up to a series of grouse butts provided some light relief. The decent from Top Withins (a.k.a. supposed inspiration for Wuthering Heights) brought me to the point of last year's high drama and fellow runner's twisted ankle. Maybe I am just getting old or the spirit of sprained ankles blew in the faint breeze but I felt my descending was slightly more timorous than in previous years.

From that point on the field got ever more spread out such that it was not unusual to find yourself in almost splendid isolation even if you had shipped a slightly less than splendid 80 or so places since trying to give the leaders a run for their money and failing so impressively. Some brief sunlight and some truly magnificent scenery lifted my spirits as did the somewhat bizarre sight after 13 miles of 3 runners coming towards me at a ninety degree angle suggesting they had adopted a more circuitous route : we've all done it.

The last five miles were the usual mudbath, especially as around 90 pairs of legs had been through the gloop before I made it to this point on the course. The piece de resistance comes when the mud runs out and the last half mile to the finish involves a climb through a field so steep that even the sheep carry full climbing gear and mortal fellrunners are in need of oxygen tanks. It is as though life is being lived in slow motion as no matter how hard you try your (or at least my feeble) limbs can manage nothing than a measly shuffle.



400 yards to go - Grimace meets smile meets exhaustion meets the thought of the first pint!  
© Geoff Mathews

The final ignominy comes with a lap of the cricket field in full view of those more fleet of foot enjoying the afternoon sun with a cup of tea (or something stronger) on the balcony of the pavilion as the mud splattered runner in the purple and green vest wheezed over the line in a time of around 4 hours 20 minutes a mere one and a half hours behind Calder Valley course specialist Karl Bell who clearly had got less for his money having completed the course in under 3 hours.

I never tire of using superlatives in respect of this race be it the organization, the cheerfulness of the marshals standing around for hours in freezing temperatures and the hearty slices of cake and Yorkshire bonhomie present throughout the day.

So tough are they in these parts that the prize giving was held outside as the last runners were lapping the boundary against the last vestiges of weak afternoon sunshine.

Whether it is the allure of a good early year tester in tough conditions or just the call of some of the finest real ale pubs within a one mile radius I shall no doubt be back in 2014 to provide some easy canon fodder for those looking to elevate their fellrunning rankings. I am sure neither to disappoint nor be disappointed !

Results : <http://www.cvfr.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Trog20132.pdf>

**John Telfer**  
**February 19, 2013**