

The Joss Naylor Challenge by Brian Jackson

14 July 2012



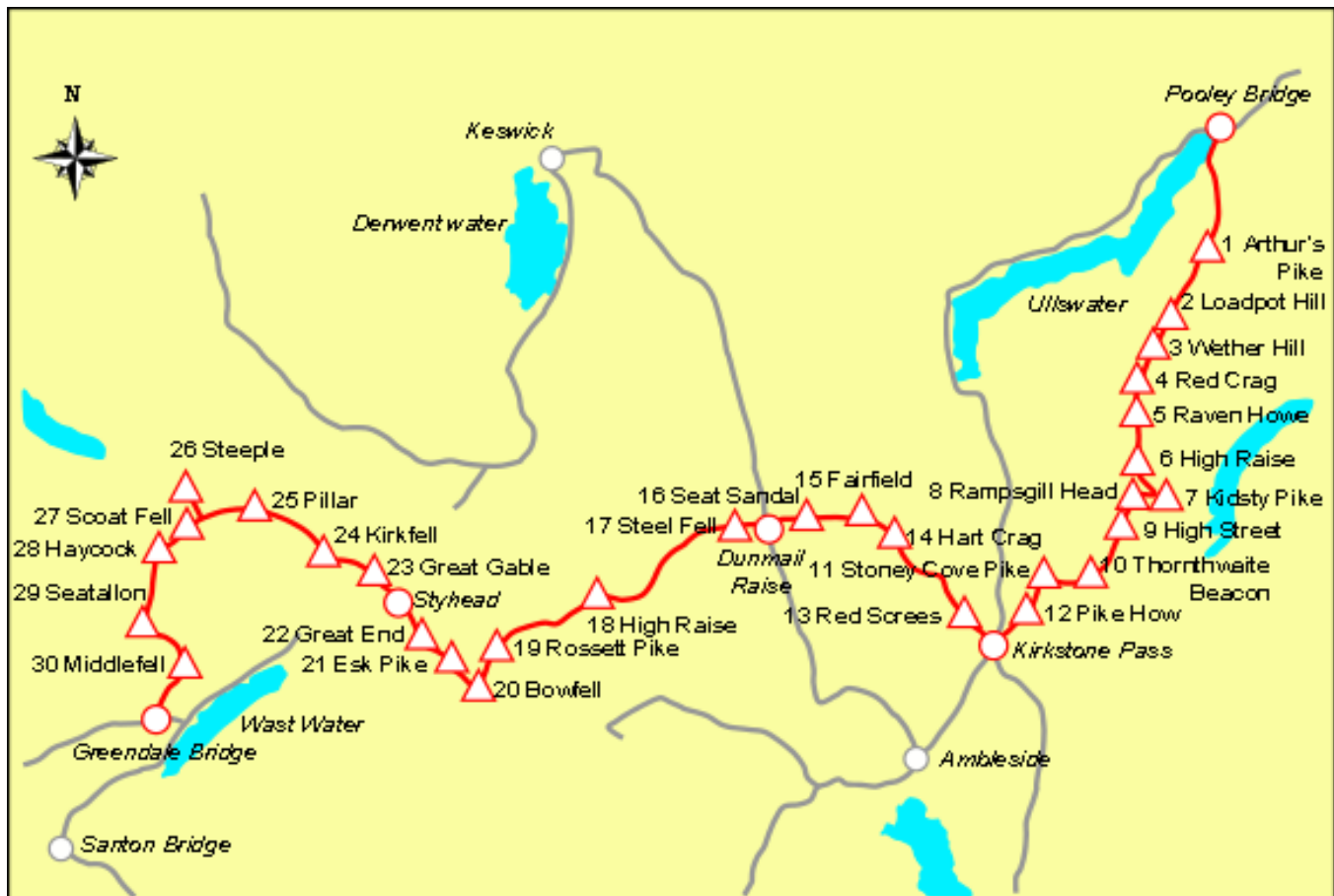
Mark Townsend, Julian Brown, BJ, Kath Turner and Debbie Thompson at the start

The evening of Friday 13 July 2012 had finally arrived. All the training and reccying for my Joss Naylor Challenge attempt would now be put to the test.

Julian Brown, Kath Turner I drove up to Sleagill Head Farm, HQ of Sportident UK and home of Martin Stone and Debbie Thompson. Debbie was there to greet us together with old Clayton-le-Moors clubmates Tony and Vanessa Peacock who are to provide the road support. Julie Gardner and Johnny the Jack Russell arrived later and as we ate cake and drank tea we sorted out kit and food. My trusty heavy duty cag with the weight of an engineering brick was rejected and replaced by a lighter one of Julian's. I will never be allowed to forget this.

11.40pm in Pooley Bridge at the north end of Ullswater and all is deadly quiet. Only a few strange people with lights their heads are about. I meet Mark Townsend for the first time. He is here to help Debbie navigate on the first leg. There is time to take photos on the bridge and then it is midnight. Off we go through the fields, along the lakeside road and up through the caravan site and onto the hills. The few people looking out of their caravans must have been perplexed by the sight of six headtorches jogging purposely onward and upward.

The Joss Naylor Challenge is a long distance route fell runners over 50. It is 48 miles over the high fells between Pooley Bridge and Greendale Bridge and involves 17,000ft of ascent, taking in 30 summits. It is a very tough challenge for the younger ones. Men of 50 to 55 have to complete it in 12 hours and Women of 50 to 55 in 14 hours. By the time you get to my age, 65, both sexes have the generous allowance of 24 hours. I chose a 20 hour schedule, having reccied it at mainly 18 hour pace.



The route of the Joss Naylor Challenge

The High Street ridge comprises very vague rounded summits. This is a tricky section in the dark or mist as most of the summits are very minor things and quite indistinct. Not all have the dignity of a cairn. Navigation, even on a clear night is difficult, so having Mark's night experience of the section and his GPS was very useful even on a clear night like this.

During the week before I had been somewhat concerned about the weather and was suffering from meteorological neurosis by the time it rained all day on Friday in Wilmslow. However, the forecast was good, and so it turned out. Apart from a bit of clag around High Street we had clear views of the lights of distant towns and villages on the first section, and it was relatively warm. A bit of help from GPS confirmed we were doing it right.

I kept a few minutes up on schedule for the whole of leg one except for High Street when I was bang on schedule. It was light and I was 5 mins up as we descended to Kirkstone Pass, the first road crossing - 16 miles completed and 12 summits visited

Tony and Vanessa are there to wait on me hand foot and finger for a break of 13 mins to take on food and cups of tea. They even a camp chair for me to slump into. We thanked and said goodbye to Debbie. She had done her navigation stint and returned to Sleagill to feed the animals. Everyone else continued for the 2nd leg.

Visibility was good and navigation easy. A steep climb up Red Screes over Hart Crag and Fairfield before climbing Seat Sandal and plunging down through the bracken to the dual carriageway road at Dunmail Raise brought me 17 minutes up on schedule. Tony and Vanessa were ready again with the chair, the tea and plenty of food. We arrived at the same time as another Naylor contender called Sandra. She was not going too well, having started at 9pm.

I felt a bit rough at Dunmail and didn't feel like eating. However, Kath offered me some tempting morsels of pie and climbed quite well up Steel Fell. Mark returned home and Julie and Julian made their way round to Wasdale. Kath continued for the 3rd leg and was hoping to go all the way to Wasdale even though a 20 hour schedule would not count for someone of her age. Geoff Pettengell joined us and took over the navigation. I felt better as we climbed Steel Fell. Perhaps it was the time of day and my body was now starting to forget that it had had a night without sleep.



Tied on to Johnny at Dunmail with Julie, Vanessa, Kath and Mark

From Steel Fell there were few strong paths till we got to Bowfell. Geoff had not reccied the route recently whereas I had, and we discussed which would be the best line we made for High Raise and then on to Rossett Pike at the head of Langdale. I enjoyed this involvement in the navigation and perhaps this made me forget that I had felt a bit rough at the road crossing. The climb up Bowfell is crucial and I led this on a good line into the mist. Kath was flagging a bit here. Was I going too fast? Going across the next section to Esk Pike and Great End was in drizzly cloud and the rocks were very greasy. I slipped approaching on Esk Pike and fell on a boulder almost dead-legging my left thigh. No great damage but I could feel the bruise every step from then on.

Kath had a breather below the summit of Great End and we collected her on the way back towards Esk Hause. There are other ways of Great End and I had reccied both the direct route down the nose in perfect sunny weather and also down towards Esk Hause before heading off for the Styhead path. The latter is a few minutes slower but very safe and sound. Down the nose depends on getting the line right. Getting it wrong could cost a lot of time. I don't think Geoff had been down this route because he quite fancied seeing what it was like. However, I had the casting vote.

At Styhead Geoff and Kath dropped down to Wasdale and I was met by a “new” or partly recycled team of pacers who had brought up more food and tea. Julie was to navigate and she arrived with David Tucker and Dave Walker. Julian was not scheduled to help again but turned up because it was nice weather and because he is Julian.

I was 20 minutes up and I felt that if I got to the top of Great Gable without any trouble then I would make it to the end. Visibility for next section was superb with great views everywhere and the summits, with the exception of the central fells like Sca Fell Pike, were no longer obscured. Plenty of people were around. As well as the usual fell walkers there were those who were waiting for the runners in the Wasdale Fell Race to come through and a couple of Bob Graham attempts were also coming in the opposite direction. We bumped into quite a few people we knew. On the climb of Gable I met fellow member of South Ribble Orienteering Club who was spectating the race. She later reported that I had looked to be going well but not as well as the Jack Russell. On the descent Gable we met another SROC member who was well up in the race and then Digby Harris, a fellow Macc Harrier who stopped for a photo.



On the Summit of Pillar with Dave Walker and David Tucker

On Steeple I was 32 minutes up on schedule but my bad patch was soon to come. I lost 7 mins getting to Haycock and then the descent of a horrible heap of scree and boulders on the south side of Haycock set me back further. The bruised thigh was slowing me up so I took a couple of Nurofen, and continued my desperate shuffle to the top of Seatallan. This is a little visited fell to the west of West Water and very boring on its north side, but a beast to encounter at this stage and in my current state. At the summit I was only 5 mins up on schedule but the pills had done the trick and I started to go much better, losing only one minute getting to Middlefell. From here I stormed down through the bracken to arrive at Greendale Bridge to celebrate with a great feeling of achievement,

some 19 hours and 30 minutes after setting out from Pooley Bridge. This was 7 minutes within my schedule and well within the Joss Naylor Challenge limit of 24 hours.



Racing into the finish at Greendale Bridge



At the finish on Greendale Bridge with Geoff Pettengell, Dave Walker, Johnny, Julie Gardner, David Tucker and Kath Turner

The five of us were met by Kath and Geoff and Alison Brind, another long distance specialist. I had confirmed my schedule with the secretary of the Joss Naylor Challenge rather too close to the day so it been impossible to arrange for anyone to meet me at the finish. Usually this is Joss Naylor himself and he comes up Middlefell with a couple of his dogs. However, it was a busy weekend for him, what with the Wasdale race, an Olympic type torch walk to the top of Sca Fell Pike the following day and an evening engagement that day. Debbie is often one of the people who meets and greets contenders at Pooley Bridge and sends them on their way. I managed to go one better than that and persuaded her to navigate the section.

After a few photos we went to our accommodation in one of the flats next to the bridge, drank tea, ate chocolate cake, showered and changed. Then it was a matter of getting to the Strands Hotel in Nether Wasdale before last orders for meals. Seven of us who had been out on the fells plus Alison were joined by Chris Cripps, another Macc Harrier, who often navigates on the final section. A jolly evening of good food, beer and banter followed. The beer was brewed on the premises and was excellent. It had travelled no more than a few yards whilst I had run and walked 48 miles and climbed 30 Lakeland summits that day. Tucker was very happy. We had made it back to the pub before they stopped serving food. This was the real reason for the midnight start and the 19-37 schedule. He was fully vindicated.

It was a wonderful evening and finished off a superb day. One of the best you can have on the Lakeland fells. Magnificent scenery, perfect weather, great company, memories of some enjoyable days reccyng the route and memories rekindled of my Bob Graham Round in 1986, a real sense of achievement and really such a lot of fun.

The day was such fun that it continued through the meal and drinks leaving the Strands. Before we got to the cars I heard the sound of a blues band playing in the Screes Hotel opposite. I still didn't feel tired. The adrenalin continued to flow. The band was excellent, I was tempted to stay. It was 11.20 pm. Common sense got the better of me. We listened to one number and returned to sleep and snore into the night. I had been confident that my support team would do anything to get me to the start, finish and 30 summits of the Joss Naylor traverse but I was not sure that I could persuade them to have my musical tastes inflicted on them at that time of night.

A grand day out on the fells!

Thanks

Thanks to all the helpers on the day. I could not be done without them, and it would not have been so enjoyable either –

Leg 1 - Debbie Thompson and Mark Townsend (navigators) + Julie Gardner, Julian Brown, Kath Turner

Leg 2 - Mark Townsend (navigator) + Julie, Julian and Kath

Leg 3 - Geoff Pettengell (navigator) + Kath

Leg 4 - Julie (navigator) + Dave Tucker, Dave Walker and Julian

Road support – Tony and Vanessa Peacock

Geoff, Julian, Kath, Dave Tucker, Dave Walker and I are members of Macclesfield Harriers. Debbie is a member of Kendal AC. Julie is a member of Dark Peak Fell Runners. Tony and Vanessa are members of Clayton-le-Moors Harriers. Mark is a member of Keswick AC.

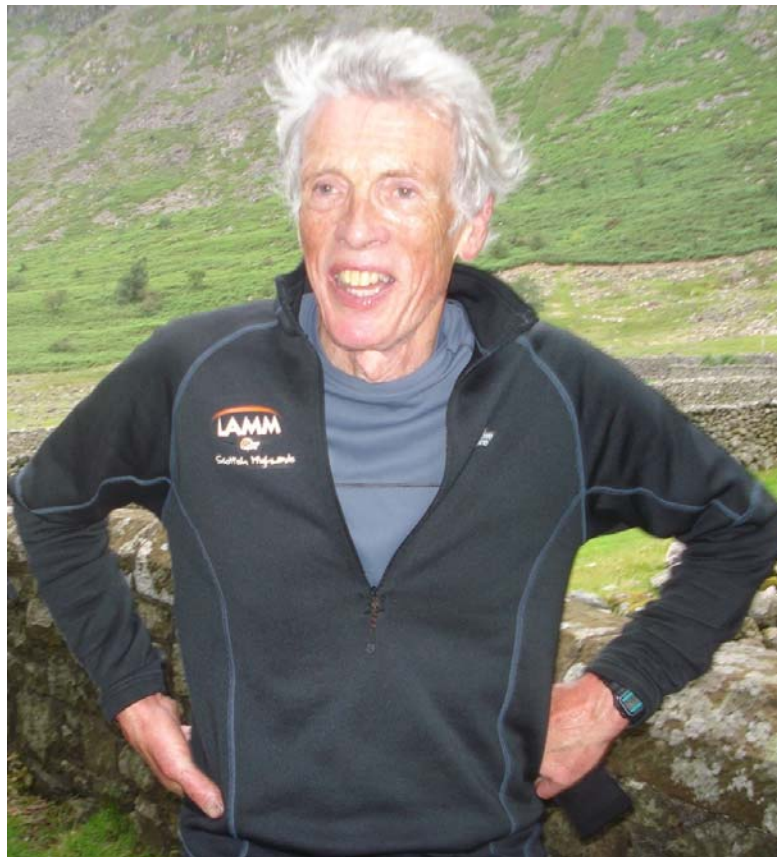
The Joss Naylor Challenge Part 2

The second requirement of the Joss Naylor Challenge is to raise a minimum of £100 sponsorship for a charity. The charity I chose to support is Wilmslow Wells for Africa. This is a small charity which does what it says on the label. Quoting the website <http://www.wilmslowwells.org/> -

Wilmslow Wells for Africa is a direct action charity run by volunteers and working through known and trusted contacts in Britain and Africa. Our aim is to improve life in drought-stricken areas of Africa by providing wells, pumps, dams and water collection equipment

We keep administration costs to a minimum: more than 99% of everything we raise goes directly to water projects. Since our formation in the mid 1980's, we have raised £808,400, funded almost 120 individual projects (many involving multiple wells) and spent only £6,700 on running costs.

Whilst many people undertake personal challenges to raise money for charity and this can be the main motivation I have run only once for a charity. I am always happy to sponsor anyone doing marathons and parachute jumps but feel uncomfortable about asking for a donation for charity. I would be doing it anyway and I don't feel that asking someone to sponsor me for something that I enjoy doing is quite right. So having to get sponsorship has been a very happy byproduct of the challenge of getting from Pooley Bridge to Greendale Bridge in less than 24 hours. Thanks to very generous friends and family I raised £535 with very little effort. I think this is a reflection of how effective and efficient this small charity is rather than my efforts on the fells. Instant access to clean water is something we take for granted whether we are at home or running across the Lakeland fells and topping up our water bottles from a mountain stream. The £535 will go a surprisingly long way to help provide an African village with easy access to clean water. **Many thanks to all the sponsors.**



Joss Naylor Lakeland Challenge 20 Hour Schedule Brian Jackson (M65) 14/07/12

Leg	Start/Finish and Helpers	Summit Distance (m)	Leg Ascent (ft)	20 hour BJ	Schedule time	Actual time	Mins up or down
1	Pooley Bridge - depart				00-00	00-00	
	Debbie Thorpe	1 Arthur's Pike		55	00-55	00-48	+7
	Mark Town	2 Loadpot Hill		26	01-21	01-18	+3
	Julian Brown	3 Wether Hill		14	01-35	01-34	+4
	Kath Turner	4 Red Crag		19	01-54	01-50	+4
	Julie Gardiner	5 Raven Howe		7	02-01	01-56	+5
		6 High Raise		14	02-15	02-11	+4
		7 Kidsty Pike		14	02-29	02-25	+4
		8 Rampsgill Head		7	02-36	02-28	+8
		9 High Street		20	02-56	02-56	0
		10 Thornthwaite Beacon		16	03-12	03-04	+8
		11 Stoney Cove Pike		35	03-47	03-38	+9
		12 Pike How		14	04-01	03-57	+4
	Kirkstone Pass - arrive	16	3900	26	04-27	04-22	+5
	Road support - Tony and Vanessa Peacock	Rest - mins		15		13	
2	Kirkstone Pass - depart				04-42	04-35	+7
	Mark	13 Red Screes		32	05-14	05-04	+10
	Julian	14 Hart Crag		72	06-26	06-04	+22
	Kath	15 Fairfield		19	06-45	06-24	+21
	Julie	16 Seat Sandal		32	07-17	06-58	+19
	Dunmail Raise - arrive	8	3200	26	07-43	07-26	+17
	Road support - Tony and Vanessa	Rest (mins)		15		15	
3	Dunmail Raise - depart				07-58	07-41	+17
	Geoff Pette	17 Steel Fell		34	08-32	08-13	+19
	Kath	18 High Raise		73	09-45	09-27	+18
		19 Rossett Pike		66	10-51	10-31	+20
		20 Bowfell		46	11-37	11-11	+27
		21 Esk Pike		39	12-16	11-46	+30
		22 Great End		33	12-49	12-20	+29
	Sty Head - arrive	11	4900	36	13-25	13-05	+20
		Rest (mins)		15		12	
4	Sty Head - depart				13-40	13-17	+23
	Julie	23 Great Gable		47	14-27	14-00	+33
	Kath	24 Kirkfell		59	15-26	14-54	+28
	Dave Tucker	25 Pillar		80	16-46	16-11	+25
	Dave Walker	26 Scoat Fell		33	17-19	16-47	+28
	Julian	27 Steeple		7	17-26	16-54	+32
		28 Haycock		26	17-52	17-27	+25
		29 Seatallan		44	18-36	18-31	+5
		30 Middlefell		34	19-10	19-06	+4
	Greendale Bridge - arrive	13	5000	27	19-37	19-30	+7
		Total	48				
		Running Time		18-52		18-50	
		Rest Time		0-45		00-40	
		Total Time				19-30	

