



# Bullock Smithy Hike, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018 (43<sup>rd</sup> running of the event)



*"It's hot (again)"*



*A glorious day in the Peak District – unless you're running [photo Rushworths]*

25 August, a week to go. About this time, it's worth taking a peek at the weather forecast for race day. The forecast was cloudy, maybe some afternoon rain. So good conditions for a long day out. As race day approached it 'improved' and the weather people delighted in saying how it was warming up and on Saturday we were going to get another taste of the hot summer again. Sure enough, driving across in the morning the temperature was at 16C, warm in the car and getting warmer.

After registration around 9:15 (takes them a little while to get the new tech ready) my doze in the car was a bit uncomfortable with the hot sun coming through the windows. Maybe I should already have been drinking more. Time to get ready. A good covering of factor 50 was applied, no need for gloves, just minimal kit packed as required by the kit list. 2 full water bottles though. I felt good, did a little jog to get the whole body going. Then standing in the park waiting for the start the heat of the sun was easy to feel. I stood in the shade. A bit of stretching and then a warm hello to the competitors I know best – Paul Rushworth plus Tracy and new baby, Steve Jackson plus wife and daughter, Julian Brown. Many other regular faces are also noted.

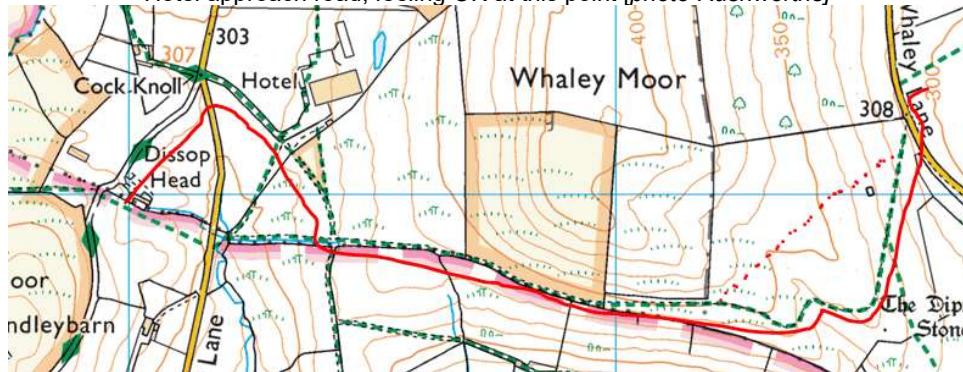
We're off without much ado, I hold back this year, no trailblazing, just steady pace to avoid overheating. We cross the empty dual carriage way not yet commissioned – won't be so easy next year when only the pedestrian crossing on green will be suitable. Up Towers Road, cross the first fields, the end of Davenport Golf course end and the Anson Road to the open moorland. Just a few fields away from the Anson Road is a 'Smithy'. This fits in well with the bullocks we are later to encounter.



I exchange positions a few times with two blond girls and a blue top chap who are running together. [Sally K, Linda M and Geoff O] It does look like the girls are sisters with a similar build. I think they were just club mates. I fear they are going to pull away from me but on a short steep bit of the track they switch from jog to walk and I go past. Then they come past again. Then I overtake them on a cattle grid, Then they come past again. Then I overtake on another cattle grid – all in about half a mile. A good bit of fun early on. But the real business has started now. We're in Lyme Park, we're ascending and it's warm. At CP1, for first time ever on Bullock Smithys, I replenish my water supply, so I've still got nearly 2 bottles.



Hotel approach road, feeling OK at this point [photo Rushworths]



Dotted route shows potential for a short cut

Steve Jackson is ahead, and I use him as a carrot as we go around Whaley Moor, with no short cut takers in sight. On reaching the tarmac road of Furness Vale I catch Steve and we manage to keep the traffic stopped on the A6 to cross safely – helped by a chap on a recumbent bike using only arms to power him along. We hesitate at one of the minor route decision points and go for the far path.

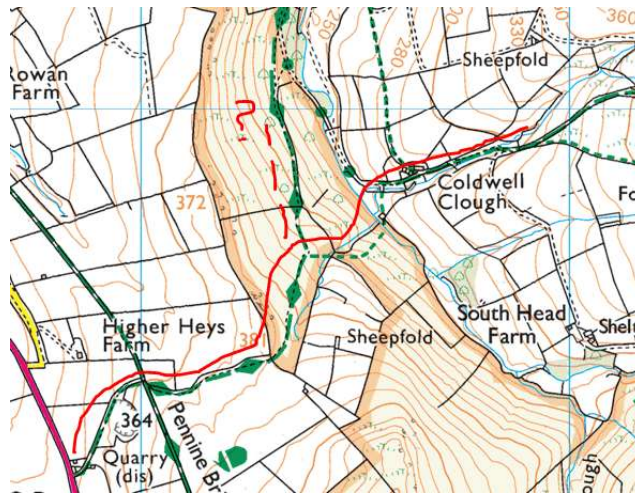


The two possible routes up to Shedyard Clough

It's an uphill slog to CP2 but I'm generally pleased that my body is going OK. Drinking plenty and nibbling. I overtake a couple of people on the drop down the bank to CP2 and try to relax on the downhill to the refreshment tables. Crips, Fredo choc bar (not melted) and fill water bottles.

We leave Peeps and have our first encounter with people on the Edale Charities events which later seems to be going in all directions centred around Edale. The walkers are moving along the Pennine Bridleway which we cross. I thought one of the Bullock Smithy entrants turned right instead of straight on and mistakenly joined them! We are heading over the top to Coldwell Clough. Three runners ahead take the straight descending path and miss the normal route sharp right down to the stream. Sometimes this bit is flagged, when its not you can bet people will miss the turn. Even some Stockport Harriers have missed this in a previous year.





*Dashed line shows the opportunity to go wrong – or take a much longer route*

The slog up to Edale Cross in the heat saps my energy. No jogettes on the semi-flat bits, just walk. The legs are beginning to cramp. Once past CP3 [at least the marshals get a glorious day out up at this high point] the words of Steve Jackson are heeded – last year in the heat he struggled from here with cramps and had to go much slower. As I reach the bottom of Jacob's Ladder people are sunbathing and relaxing by the stream. I cannot resist and descend into the stream and get a capful of water on my head. Instantly it is good. Afterwards the salty sweat keeps dripping in my eyes so not so good. The legs though are becoming uncoordinated.

A woman in light blue with frizzy hair comes smoothly past me. Steve Jackson is behind. I concentrate on the firm sandy path when boomff I'm down on the ground and both legs immediately cramp up. A minor trip up. Steve reaches me and jogs past asking if I need salt or water, to which I reply "I'm OK" a few times as I lay on my back in the grass, legs straight holding on to my toes to stretch out the muscles. The knee is cut, and the cut filled with dust. I get up, adrenalin is pumping, and surprisingly I can get back to a jog again. Eventually I've caught Steve. He slows at Upper Booth so I move ahead. The grassy fields are cooler than the path which is welcome. The campsite by the River Noe is popular; ideal weather for them today/tonight.

Off down the road. Steve J comes past. The road is busier than normal with one of the fields used for the Edale Charities car park. Now here is a route choice I've wondered about. Really the only motivation for taking it is to avoid the potentially dangerous busy narrow road. Well I think Ms Frizzy took this as when I arrive at the car park she is coming down the road from the station.



*Road route to Edale and shortest cross country route*



Up the steps and a chap with red top nearly takes a tumble going up – his legs also a bit jelly like. My leg has some blood running from the cut knee, so I ask the CP people if there is any first aid available. Not really. I take on water, also a tongue full of salt and eat the rice pudding and fruit [normally I avoid the fruit but today its so hot the fruit is welcome]. A marshal gets me a jug of water and some kitchen roll which I use this on my knee to clean out the dirt. I am concerned about infection, so I sprinkle some salt from the salt pot onto the kitchen roll and a bit of water and rub this into the cut for primitive disinfectant.



*CP4 Edale – rice pudding/fruit [photo Nick Ham, 2017]*

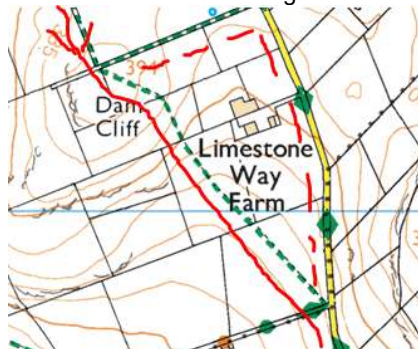
Off out the car park, over a timing mat for the Charities people with the lady timer saying I was getting two races for the price of one. Its so warm on the Hollins Cross ascent. I really would like to just stop. I have no speed and no push or aggression. The top is reached amongst the chaos of the EC event with people everywhere. They are not aware of people 'running' so the narrow path down becomes extra hard waiting for people to give way. The stream part of the path is completely dry – very unusual. Can I make my legs work smoothly on the Hollowford Road? This is one of my 'favourite' cramping spots, but my legs have cramped enough already and its no worse on the road. Some EV event people walking 5 abreast across the road give me a few route choice issues. All these people have numbers which were something like 2500 or was it 25,000. Either way that's a lot of people.

Should I carry on? I have a conversation. Look this is my only running event this year, I have trained, I've reserved the weekend. It will continue to be hard, other people will find it hard too. You do not want a DNF in your records. But not even at CP5 yet? What is your decision body/mind? Let's keep going. We can stop at a later CP if necessary. So, that's it, I'll keep going a bit longer.

Castleton CP at far end of car park is reached. "Oh, that's a bad cut on your knee". The blood has dried though, so I do not need any more attention for it. Water bottles topped up, a jam sandwich taken. As I walk through the car park there is Jayne from Stockport Harriers. She has retired. In a brief conversation she says that she was losing too much salt and has a blood transfusion on Thursday. Also, Ms Frizzy has stopped and maybe she is going to retire too?

This perks me up and gives me something to chew on to accompany the jam sandwich. I eat all but the crusts and donate these to the Cave Dale wildlife. If people are retiring because the conditions are too tough, and I am still going then maybe I'm not doing too badly. Not a chance of running anything in Cave Dale. Chap with red top comes past and joins up with chap in orange top. A partnership that lasts them to the finish. Somewhere ahead is Steve J and I'm not sure where Paul R is, maybe he'll be taking the Cow Low top path. Once out of Cave Dale and onto the flat grass I can jog again. A walk up to the top of Oxlow Rake and then a jog down. I'm moving again and feeling more positive. Red and orange top are about two fields ahead when I reach the bottom of the track. At Peak Forest CP red/orange tops and Steve J are briefly resting indoors. Water, crisps and a banana and I'm out again.

Oh, sugar, I forgot to take an orange segment. Well. I'll keep the banana for a bit and jog along. That's strange; where has everyone gone? There is no one ahead along the pavement. I thought the 3 chaps had left the CP before me. Is there another way to avoid this section? I've looked on maps before and thought any alternative route would be longer or involve climbing – maybe I'm wrong. So, as I jog along on the pavement and then roadside of the A623 I look to the right. Can I see the other three anywhere going across fields or tracks parallel to me? No. I leave Hernstone Lane at the sharp bend and enjoy the short grass that the farmer has just cut and still doing so. Banana is chomped on. Its possible that the fastest competitors will have encountered long grass here. Most of the banana is chomped. I wonder about taking the detour route we were presented with in a previous year because new grass had been planted. This is longer but does avoid four fields of grass. I choose the grass as its not too high.



*Possible detour to avoid long grass*

I chug along the road and am pleasantly surprised that I can keep going and going. I do wonder whether I might see the other three at Wheston as a possible joining point for a possible alternative route. No sign of anyone or any cows. I continue chugging all the way to Miller's Dale CP. I ask if they've had many through and am told I'm in eighth place. A tingle of excitement as that means a



fair few have dropped out that were in front of me. Mrs Jackson asks if Steve is with me, so that confirms the other three are behind somewhere. Still chugging along the valley main road under the viaduct Steve Temple<sup>1</sup> and friends walking the other way give me a cheer. Once the bottom of the road climb up Blackwell Dale is reached I adopt bottom gear and walk. Only one small section of the whole climb do I get into a jog [bonus point for anyone who spotted a good condition yellow claw hammer at the roadside]. I even take the track rather than cross the fields to get to Pillwell Lane. The running legs have gone. I can only manage a shuffle. Not surprisingly someone catches me here. What is surprising is the speed of the catch and the pass as Stephanie Watts goes past. I don't know this person and wonder why the speed. [later I found out she had been walking /jogging with someone slowly and then decided to split at which point she got a shift on]. I see her reach Chelmorton CP and leave before I get there.



GP8 Chelmorton later in the evening (after I'd gone by) [photo Bullock Smithy Facebook]



CP8 Chelmorton tent, the donut and biscuit box. [photo Nick Ham 2017]

So, decision time at the CP, do I attempt a donut? I go for half a donut and a biscuit. The biscuit is surprisingly easy to eat, and I manage all of the jam part of the donut, the rest being donated to the wildlife. I can see Stephanie way in the distance. I jog all the way along Highstool Lane and on the Dowlow quarry path catch site of her disappearing over the top. Will she be able to cope with the cows? I reach the cow fields and no sign of her. Plenty of cows though. Field after field the *bullocks* [to go with the 'Smithy' from earlier] are inquisitive and play sleeping soldiers creeping up on me with back turned. Five fields in total of this. I'm glad for the road. A shuffle. A well wisher informs me I'm in tenth with a lady just ahead [where did 9<sup>th</sup> go?]. A few claps into Earl Sterndale and comments on the knee cut. Another jam sandwich and as I jog along nibbling a mother and children ask me what I'm eating. Haven't they seen a jam sandwich before? I leave the crusts for the grass verge inhabitants.



CP9 Earl Sterndale – typical refreshment offerings. [photo Nick Ham 2017]

<sup>1</sup> Steve Temple has some very fast completions and nowadays compiles all the Bullock Smith Results – see web site.

I can still see Stephanie as I approach Dowel Dale, but this is probably my last sighting as its already getting dim [my pace is so slow the light is already fading, normally I can make it to Knotbury without torch]. Some new fencing on the approach to Booth Farm means I do not cut the corner over the grass. Then near the farm red and white tape. Is this for our event? I take the recognised route anyway and the tape continues. In fact, the tape is really good and takes me past the lake and to Brand End farm and then on detour2 [detour1 was in place last few years, now we have an alternative, longer one at the request of the various farm owners]. There is a zig and a zag and then up the slope, follow a straight piece of string plus red/white tape to get to the track. There is a gate to open with a rope attached to it. As I open the gate and duck under the rope my legs cramp up. I'm temporarily stuck, half under the rope above my head, neither this side or that of the gate opening and I cannot bend down to reach my toes and stretch as I'm holding the gate open. Then the back of my shorts catches on the gate too. Oh boy! Eventually I extract myself from the situation and manage to walk/shuffle to the CP at Brand Top.

The heater is on. I sit down. My water bottle is filled, and I have a tongue full of salt. I'm asked whether I'd like anything to eat. "What have you got?". "Biscuits". "What sort?" A family is helpfully manning this CP and their son brings me packets of biscuits. "We also have some ginger nuts". "I'll have a ginger but". "Take a whole packet [of 3]". "Just one will do". "Take the packet for later". "No, just one please". I leave with a single ginger nut, then go back in as I need to get my headtorch out and switch it on. It becomes cool outside in comparison with the CP heat. I struggle down the rough track. In previous years I've managed to be quicker and its still light. I realise how slow I am going – and how slow others must also be going.

Amazing to think that at this point the fastest person has already finished.



*Rory Harris after finishing in under 9h [photo: Rushworths]*

Plod up past Flash stores, a sort of jog down to Knotbury. A farmer in car carefully slows down and stops and asks me, "any more of you that I need to watch out for?" I say that there may be some coming along the road. Thoughtful of him. This feels so slow carefully picking my way over Three Shire Heads track. Two people catch me up. A man and woman. "Are you doing the Bullock Smithy", they ask. They inform me they are on a training run. I recognise them – they were standing outside ES CP. "Do I need anything?". All I need at this point is guidance to the exact route to the A54 ladders. They are also a bit unsure. Together we get a perfect route and I am pleased not to waste any effort in bogs or wall climbing or nettles as on previous occasions.

Cumberland cottage track is hard for me in the dark, little running, concentration, stomach not brilliant. I have been drinking and drinking but have probably lost too much fluid and salt through sweat. Maybe there will be some coke on offer again at this CP. The track is worse than normal with recent stones added to help preserve it. A noisy flashing welcome at the cottage CP. Inside is super-hot. I do have some coke, no food though. I am asked a few times whether I am OK. Perhaps I look bad. Coke drunk and out into the cool of the night. 20 m down the track and yuk, I'm sick a few times. So much for the coke. After a minute I'm off again, stumbling to the bridge and then the road.



*CP11 Cumberland cottage – flat coke. [photo Nick Ham 2017]*

Once through the trees by the road side with torch on I switch it off. Its peaceful and enough light and I trust in the road surface to continue without light. I manage a jog. I look at the Macclesfield Forest possibility and chose road. I only manage a walk on all the uphill taking care when a car comes from in front or behind to be on the obvious side of the road. Walker barn CP. People are outside. I'd like to sit down for a minute; there are no seats outside though and I would like to avoid another hot room. So, after being punched I turn around [all within 10 sec, my fastest CP of the day] and head back along the road and off down the A537 to pick up Bull-Hill Lane, Lidgetts Lane and then Kerridge.

The end is getting closer. I wish it were getting closer quicker. Still no one appears to have come past me. Yet I am hardly moving. Where is everyone? The canal. I sit on the bench for 30 seconds and stretch out my legs. What have I got left? Not much. I'll finish though. Off again, I break into a walk. Some people come past – its red and orange top. They are jogging – how do they do it? I walk and jog a bit. At Whiteley Green CP Julian Brown, his partner and others all catch me. I sit down at the CP. A little water in the bottle. I get going before the others. Then on Middlewood Way a train of people pass me. I'm sort of jogging and Julian walks for a bit at same speed as my jog and I realise that my jogging is only as fast as a walk. So, I walk the rest of Middlewood. A few others come past. It is dispiriting. However, the finish is getting closer and I am going to finish. One person out of my normal circle of regulars that has not come past is Paul R. Maybe he'll be by soon?

After many Bullock Smithys Wood Lanes is my preferred exit. This year I would have liked to continue along Middlewood but am unsure of the departure bridge right now. So at bridge 12 I leave for Wood Lanes, Wardsend and on to Towers Road. Nearly there. Still time though for two chaps to come past – one in a green/yellow top. I attempt a jog – no, jogging is not working. I try again later and with the help of the gentle downhill at the end of Towers Road I manage it. And then keep it going nearly to the finish. I find I'm going too quickly though, unnecessary, no one else following; the body is doing strange things – likely to lead to a sick episode. So, the last little bit is walked. That's it. Finished. Tally off. No clapping though. No one is clapped in fact. Maybe this only happens for the earlier finishers – or maybe only when Paul R is at the finish.



*Kevin Hoult finishing in second place [photo Rushworths], Stephanie Watts first lady [photo Bullock Smithy Facebook]*

I sit with Julian B, green/yellow top and chill out. The scout Deputy County Commissioner, Claire Jarvis, offers to provide some first aid on my cut knee. She cleans it a bit and bandages – apparently, I am a somewhat bigger patient than the normal baby-care she encounters in her day job. I'm grateful. Kevin Hoult is also at the finish tables. He does not want to go and sleep in the common room just yet even though he finished nearly 4h ago. His partner had let him take part on the condition that she had the car so he used train to get to/from the venue and was now waiting for the morning train to get home. We discuss the heat and its affect. Some coped well with it. The official finish lady explains that Paul R abandoned, saying that he couldn't get going. I can understand that, the heat saps the energy and demotivates. I receive a few comments about past Bullock Smithy reports, I think they were favourable.

Kevin finished in 10:02. Maybe if the detour2 at Brand Top had not been there he'd have broken the magic 10h barrier? I could knock 2 minutes off my time – it would still be my slowest ever.

The provisional results are out. It shows that around 150 people finished, and a huge 70 people retired; some of those quite notable with previous top 10 finishes. The weather certainly played its part.

Thanks to all the organisers for keeping the event going.

Nigel Aston (15 finishes)