

# Bullock Smithy Hike, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2022

(46<sup>th</sup> running of the event)



## “Tracker Motivation”

### BS 2021 results

For 2021 the provisional results came out in good time. However, the full set of official results eventually arrived in May eight months later. This was due to some information going missing and taking a while to locate. Good that they eventually did get compiled with the final push given by Steve Holt. You can find every result from past years on the BS web site thanks to Steve Temple – once the new site completed.

### BS Media

The Bullock Smithy event is really moving with the times. A Facebook page specifically for 2022 was set up and was frequently updated as the event approached. Even the old rather outdated BS website is being replaced by a new one. Entry is via SiEntries and of course this year every competitor is fitted with a GPS tracker for continued updates of their position throughout the event.

**Bullock Smithy**  
2nd - 3rd September 2023

New Website! (coming soon)

[2022 Results](#)

 [Download the new route PDF](#)

 [Download the new route GPX File](#)

 [SiEntries Entry Page](#)

<http://bullocksmithy.com/>

### Trackers

These were provided by 'Race Tracker'. Each in their own plastic bag with a Velcro strip.



Trackers were to be fixed outside of your rucksack. Interesting to see how and where people fixed these; with a few presumably tucking them just inside their sack, others fixing to front, side, top, and dangling around. We were told that a lost tracker would cost you a staggering £150. So to be safe I used string from the tally card and cord on my rucksack to secure it rightly – probably a reef knot and a blood knot (in case any scouts are reading).



*Trackers all ready to be handed out (looking like a plague of beetles)*

Registration was due to open at 9:30 but is put back ten minutes whilst all trackers were turned on and tested – good idea. Once open we were greeted with five or six tablet-ready officials who processed registration then tracker and tally card were handed out which seemed to go smoothly.



*No hand out of Tallys in the field this year*

Runfurther has again made this event one of their twelve races for the year. At each one there are spot prizes from their sponsors and I was pleased to receive one of the prizes.



Runfurther: <http://runfurther.com/>

## Starting

I had taken extra care this year not to overdo training, as my problem areas of calves and hamstrings are prone to shout and tell me to stop before something goes twang. Three days prior to the start, a final gentle two mile jog caused me concern with hamstrings again being overtight. So as in previous years I maxed out on compression and KT tape on the legs. I added a touch of suncream too since it is certainly going to be a warm event.



*The author with Paul Rushworth at the start*

I sat on a grass bank behind the starting anvil. An experienced competitor is telling a novice about the event. "Whatever you do don't get in the bus." "Sit down and rest for ten minutes; you'll feel better and will be able to continue. Don't get on the bus". He also said that the worst of the hills are over when you get to Edale!

It is good to see Paul Rushworth again, along with his family, back from part II of their three month tour of most of the world!



*Scouts bash Anvil to start the event*

Steve Holt does MC duties, the scouts bash the anvil and we move off in various directions from the field. For a change I start down Chatsworth Rd (rather than Mill Ln) – yes another minor route difference for me. I guess some of the faster guys, and those not in the know, opted for the A523 even though it was strongly recommended not to, for safety. That way is shorter and quicker providing you can get directly across the busy roads at the crossings (1.65 miles v 1.91 miles).



*Orange – original; Green - recommended*

I take it really easy allowing the legs plenty of time to warm up. Uphill through Lyme Pk and onto open moor I am feeling good and over took a few people. Uphill the hamstrings are generally OK since they are not being stretched. On the Bowstones (CP1) road descent I keep the stride short, avoiding stretching too much. So far the only person I recognised from previous events was Rick Steckles who had set off quick and was leading the field across the initial fields – now long gone.



*Sticks v no sticks!*



*Rick Steckles ascending in Lyme Park*



*Julian Brown ascending Lyme Park*

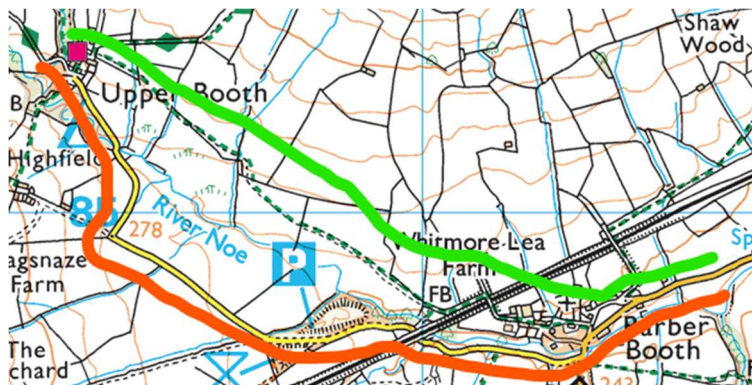
Around Whaley Moor I follow green chap who is quicker on the descent to Furnace Vale so out of sight by the time I nip across the road – *thank you to the traffic for waiting*. After Gowhole, going up Shedyard Clough is Julian Brown, hands under bum bag as is his fashion – normally a long way ahead of me so unusual to come across him. I did on one previous BS when his road running shoes offered no grip on a slippery grass descent. He says there are no problems, just going steady today. Soon after Julian I come across Nick Ham and Paul Rushworth. Julian, Nick and Paul have around 60 BS completions between them (only a few DNFs). I overtake these chaps, and also green man, whilst jogging up Laneside Rd and the track and feel good and soon at CP2.

Down to the refreshments at Peeps manned by various people including scouts, one is proud of his huge bowl of crisps. Took onboard water and choc bar ... as well as dipping into the crisps. The track to Edale Cross (CP3) remains hard going on the large pebbles, although over the years a slightly worn down route is appearing making going easier for running shoes. Covid safe Jelly babies offered in families of four were on offer at the CP; a whole family must be taken we were advised – so I did as instructed.



*Edale cross Covid safe Jelly babies*

Green man nearly caught me on the ascent; and did on the descent. At Upper Booth he takes the road whereas I take the field tracks. His speed is good though so he is still ahead of me when track joins road at Barber Booth. I have taken the road once a long time ago and found the track preferable.



*Track v road*

CP4 at Edale car park. Tracy handed me a pot of rice minus fruit – my preference, and well done for remembering, again! My first sit down, eating the rice quickly. Top up water and off. The Green man had left before me but we were soon together, walking up the fields leading to Hollins Cross. He said that I would go head here given my speed up to Edale Cross where he couldn't catch me on the ascent. Once through the gate to the open moor though I am becoming overheated, in the windless (sheltered) conditions; really sweating and have to slow down. Green man goes ahead. Also a stick man comes by using sticks effectively and overtakes green man too.



*Stick man 1*

A slight breeze is welcome at the top, which soon fades during the warming descent – at least the legs have returned a bit. The jog into Castleton unsurprisingly brings on leg cramps needing a stop and some

walking. At first I thought the hammys were going to tweak and that would be the end. Walking and slower jogging gets me going again, the hammys holding up.

The Peak District is so dry today. The bottom of the path from Hollins Cross has minimal water on it and many other places that would be damp or wet are not. It should be a day for fast times but the warmth of the afternoon, around 3-4pm now, is suppressing speed – well that's definitely true for me.

At CP5 Castleton next to the garage Green man is there, which makes me feel a little better as I'd caught up. Also sitting there is Steve Jones (a fast man) who was VW'ing. He'd taken a fall near Edale and was feeling unwell. The lady marshal serving food agreed it is good conditions for the marshals and helpers and not so (too warm) for competitors. I leave before Green man, with water and a jam sandwich of which I manage to munch through three quarters (a good effort for me). I should have looked in the other two boxes that occupied the marshal's table ... probably just more jam sandwiches. Sticky fingers to sort out.

Grind out the climb up Goosehill, manging the remainder of a warm Fry's chocolate bar and then a gel. Sticky fingers again, using more forehead sweat to clean them. My line is not optimal and it takes a while to get onto a shorter grass path for easier going. Green man overtakes near top and is jogging well to Old Moor. I keep walking only, knowing that a slow time is now inevitable. Maybe I should give up at the next CP? I picture family looking at my tracker on the web page, seeing it slow down but not stop. I'm motivated to get at least to the next CP. I continue walking over the fields on the Limestone Way, then a slow jog on the level ground, climb up the steps over the wall and through the gate, more jogging but legs hurting now. The Oxlow Rake track has fresh pebbles on the surface hindering progress. Another competitor, Grey man (*his top is grey with sweat is seems*), goes past, not too quick though, so I follow his line to one side then the other of the pebbles, picking out easier going. He pulls away once onto the last part of the road approaching Peak Forest CP6.



*Grey man pulling away*

Before reaching the A623 in the distance is Green man wrongly approaching the CP going left to right, as I look, along the A623 – has he gone wrong or just missed the CP building? He is at the CP same time as me. I ask the marshal about positions and she says 12<sup>th</sup>. Green man says he isn't going to finish 12<sup>th</sup> and needed to slow down. I am just amazed. Where is everybody?



*One of the leaders keeping cool nearing Peak Forest*



*Green man;*



*the author;*



*Paul Rushworh*

*Nearing Peak Forest (at different times)*

Water topped up plus electrolyte tablet, a few crisps. Leaving the CP inspired, even though my legs are cramping, I am happy to continue with orange and banana in hand. Orange eaten and sticky fingers again. Green man has left and is way in the distance beginning the uphill section to the hairpin. So along the A623, traffic irritating, up the hill, right at the hairpin, barrier and wall crossing and into the fields with their longish grass. It still feels warm. I'm travelling same speed as Grey man. We continue together all the way to Wheston at which point grey man abruptly stops at the right turn onto the uphill track of the Pennine Bridleway. So I'm on my own along the track, feeling OK now. Opposite direction the occasional entrant from the other major race in the area comes past. Last bit is downhill to CP7 at Millers Dale and the barn. Green man is there so I've caught him again. This year the marshals are at the front. Water topped up, another tablet added and soon off down the hill.

I decide I'm just going to walk the uphill road. I need to preserve some energy as I can feel it seeping away, perhaps in the warmth, or maybe lack of food intake. A helper/spectator near the viaduct kindly (or cruelly) informs me that I am halfway. "Thanks". Cars come at regular intervals and sometimes it is necessary to be safe and step off the road and onto the verge. It's even warmer on the mid-section under the trees with no breeze. Turn off the B6049 and onto the minor road, across the A6, up the last bit of road, with the fields either side full of sheep and cattle and long grass – so the path crossing the fields is not so appealing and not taken. Past the substation, through the gate, up the grassy track to the top at Pillwell Gate. Energy gone I need to sit down for a minute. That is just enough to get some impetus back so down the road my walk breaks into a jog and carries me to Chelmorton CP8 and the gazebos.





*Chelmorton CP*

I sit on a bench, top up, and am confronted with the usual persuasive marshals and the donut offering. I negotiate and manage to get away with only a half one which I eat all of. Sticky fingers again, using more sweat to cleanse them.

Once along the track, and over the road it is the descent and ascent to the quarry. I am interested to see what the quarry expansion situation is like. The pre-race info had said the footpath over the fields might be tricky as it is covered in rocks. Now I'm close to the footpath it is obvious the statement is wrong – there is NO footpath; only a huge quarry hole. No choice but to continue down the road. Near the road corner there is a new path along the side of the new quarry so I take it to avoid road, only to reach an unappealing right turn in the path going back uphill ... the choice is obvious, cut through back onto the road. Two others behind me do the same thing. On one of my earliest BS events I took this outer road rather than the footpath and Steve Temple (results compiler) was sat on top of nearby High Wheeldon hill watching competitors go by and later commented on my poor route choice. There is no real choice this time. More competitors come by me – overtaking me strongly down to Earl Sterndale CP9.

Definitely flagging now as dusk approaches. Still, I am allowed out again on my own ... last year I was paired up for the first time, so maybe I am not looking as whacked out as I feel this year. Two lads jog off ahead. I am armed with jam sandwich, some eaten and more sticky fingers as I walk down the road with an aim to get over to Dowel Dale road before needing to get the torch out. I only just make it in the dusk to the road, feeling the way somewhat down the steep grassy descent. It is walking only now. Three more lads come past. Legs are so stiff, wooden, with minimal spring on the grass towards Booth Farm. Round the farm with its lit up outdoor seating area and over the fields round the lake and skirt Brand End Farm. A token bark only. Brand Top CP is looking busy with cars outside, lights on and customers coming and going, well only me coming at the moment, the other lads all going or gone.



*Winning lady Jayne Lawton topping up at Brand Top; looking fresh!*

I take a ginger biscuit here – possibly the only CP that had them. I should have taken two. Once at the bottom of Dove Head road it is clear from their flickering torches that those ahead are going direct up the fields to Hilltop. I can only manage the steady plod of the road route.



*Available for rent*

Still in a thin short sleeve top the temperature is really mild. Over the A53 and past Flash stores (available to rent) and down the dark road – a sort of jog – to Knotbury. Another stop and lie on the grass bank for a minute to recover a bit. Reluctantly and stiffly get up and continue for a bit more road then turn off left for the track and some rougher going after the tarmac road. Someone is approaching quickly from behind; it's Paul Rushworth. We exchange words about how each of us are feeling. He wants to "get this bit done". "If I get to the next CP then I definitely won't be dropping out". I churn this around in my head ... if he doesn't make it to the CP then he definitely will be dropping out... He has obviously found some energy ... he skips and dances down the rough track – in the dark – like a youngster. Through Three Shires Head and powerfully up to the A54 his torch light quickly dimming in the distance. It seems like he has picked a different exit stile to the one I am heading for though.

I think of the tracker watchers and plod on. Grinding my way up the hill, through the wall gap and eventually stagger up the tall wall stile. A car whizzes by on the A54 then I'm across. Now for the rough descent, past Sparbent, Cumberland Cottage (old CP), tree roots, rocks, then footbridge to arrive in civilisation at CP11, Clough House farm. Flashing lights, cheers, noise, warmth, people, food, drinks. More than I can cope with. I sit on a bench and a marshal comes can clips my tally. Nick Ham is there – unsure where he overtook me. He says, "I thought you were ahead of me; how did I get past?" "It must have been the alternative route I took". My head tries to comprehend how he could have found an alternative route to this CP. I will park that and ask him later (might be weeks later). No real need to top up my drinks bottles as I've hardly drunk anything. I choose some soft ginger cake – and informed its syrup cake; that will do. I leave. Last year I was immediately sick after leaving this CP. It happened again. Curled over on the grass my stomach ended empty, the syrup cake discarded uneaten.



*Nick Ham*



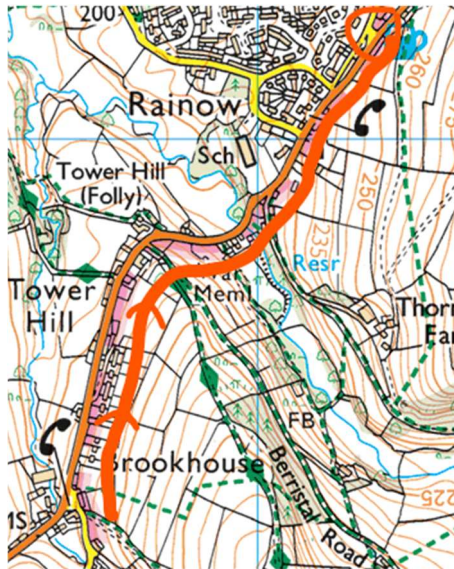
*Before the action starts at Clough House Farm, well marshalled*



*Clough House Farm CP during the action*

Off again, walking, travelling on fumes. Sometimes wobbling along the road. I've nothing inside; just keep plodding. It is twelve plus miles to the finish – should I retire? “No, don't get on the bus”. No temptation to visit Macclesfield Forest today, even though there are lights from others taking that route. This year for me it is road all the way. So plod on and on and on, past Bottom-of-the-Oven, The Stanley Arms and along the minor road towards Walker Barn. A navigation mistake occurs and I turn off to the right much too soon and have to contend with a few late night motorists travelling along the Buxton Rd (A537). The corner and turn off to Walker Barn (old CP) is a satisfying point as pavement is now available. A tiny jog materialises as the road slopes downhill. A lady competitor comes passed. On and on, down Bull-Hill Lane. I like to keep my headtorch off where possible so the surroundings can be taken in. It is so dark here that the headtorch comes on to help.

New ground now for BS competitors as there is a different CP location this year. Turning right on to the B5470 to Rainow. Two more competitors come passed, a lady and a stick man, slowly this time, and to my pleasant surprise they begin to walk. This makes it possible for me to keep them just in sight and a target to aim for. My muddled memory of the advertised new route here is that the CP is just round the corner ... but it does not appear. I follow the two ahead and see they are navigating via GPS and look confident in the route, so nothing for it but to keep going .. and now its uphill .. I did not bargain for this. Some turn offs to the left – not there, then the two ahead stop and ponder at another turn off. I recognise it from google maps and guide them down the side lane. We enter the CP building together.



*Bull-Hill Ln to Rainow CP*

It is a well-equipped hall and ideal for a CP. As always the marshals are helpful. I sit on a bench again and the marshal comes to me to clip the tally. I do get up, empty my water bottle and fill it with lemon thinking that will make a good change and get me drinking something. The lady and stick man leave so I decide I'll try and follow a bit and let them help me with the nav. I also have my own map in hand ready. No thoughts of 'getting on the bus'.

Along Sugar Ln, quietly we've been asked. Another competitor pair are ahead, they slightly overshoot the turn off to the narrow passage to the right which marks the start of the footpath across the fields. I am able to guide all four people into the passage. The other two are soon away but lady and stick man mainly walk which I can keep up with, and an occasional jog on downhills – where they leave me behind. I sip the lemon drink – much too strong unfortunately.



*Helpful navigators for me going between CP12 to CP13  
Possibly Claire Shaw & Paul Bennett*

Ingersley Vale, Church St, Palmerston St .. I'm hanging on. Then turn right – uphill to the canal .. where did that hill come from? Over the canal footbridge and back on to familiar territory with everything ahead well-known from previous events. The two ahead are not so sure though along the towpath and stop at the first bridge because they've reached 52 miles on their GPS and think the CP (marked as 52 miles on the tally) must be around this location. I say to carry on to the next bridge. Still mainly walking. At next bridge they turn too soon and again I am able to tell them to go under the bridge to the CP.



*Bridge 25*

Whitely, the last CP on route. I sit down again – chairs at this CP, so does one other and he asks for tea which the marshals produce instantly. He has half a cup and I request the other half. I drink the hot tea fairly quickly – a refreshing change and I needed to take on fluids. Less than a minute later and I'd lost it all, again crouched on the grass in a corner of the car park.

Down to Middlewood Way and count the bridges. Walking. I can see the distant head lights of those few who had left the CP just before me. Let's try a jog; just one hundred steps I say to myself. Ninety eight, ninety nine, one hundred, oh, let's keep going, so I do. Gradually the head lights ahead are being gained on. Bridge 8, then 9, then 10. I'll walk again. Then another jog ... feeling shaky but still going. Bridge 12 and the others are only just ahead debating whether they have reached the point for their turn off. They decide to continue. It is my preferred turn off point. Up the steps and into Wood Lanes then turn off to Moggie Ln. Energy gone I need to lie down again for a minute or so. Get up and plod on. At the turnoff to Trafalgar three more come jogging past strongly.

Will anybody still be watching my tracker now? – unlikely. Only walking for me now slowly down Towers Rd. It is OK though; I'll get to the end. Some good tarmac sections, some potholed sections which I weave around. Out of the end of Towers at last, over the dual carriageway past the garage and then its downhill, slightly, to the gates. Not before one more competitor overtakes me. Into the car park and inwardly I'm smiling at making it; a cheer from Paul & Tracy who are just leaving is pleasing too. Into the scout hut and that is it; finished.

I take on board a cup of milk, sipping slowly. It remains inside me. Nick Ham finished much earlier and has finished his 'cooked breakfast'. He reminisces about his completion ... how he got stronger as the event went on, and ended with a reasonable time. Opposite to me!

My GPS reads 57.8 miles – which did include the longer road section avoiding Macclesfield Forest, so probably less than 57 on the more direct route.

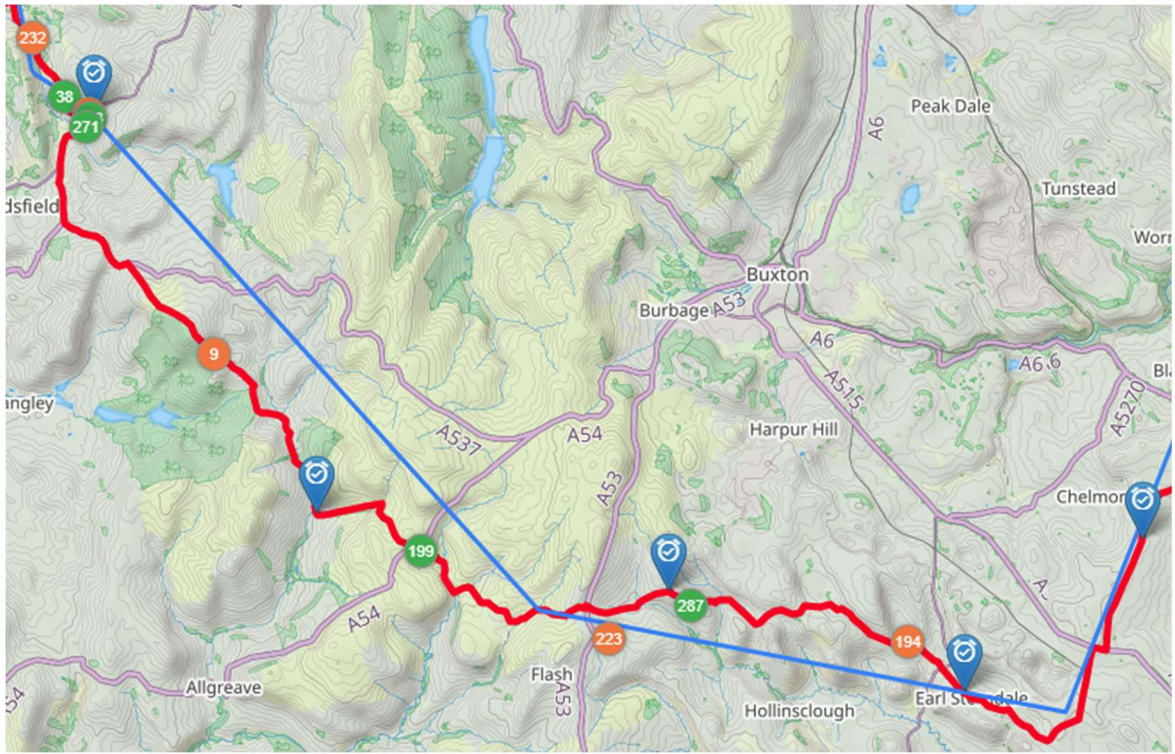
A few days later and a check on who has finished where. Wow!. This is one of the slowest ever. 185 finishers out of 308 starters and winner Richard Kendall in 10:50. Results taken from the new website: [Bullock Smithy 2022](#)

### **Trackers – did they work?**

Reports from my family indicate there were problems with white screens, needing to refresh to get the web page back. People who had obviously finishes were not registered as finished and still had an ETA for finishing. Some people, me included, had no times for many CPs. That said they were still able to get some sense of the event through the various tracker updates.

It was expected there would be points in the hills and lanes where signal was non-existent so that is fair enough. It does look like some trackers missed out on large chunks of signal, with big distances between tracker updates (long straight lines on the tracker maps).

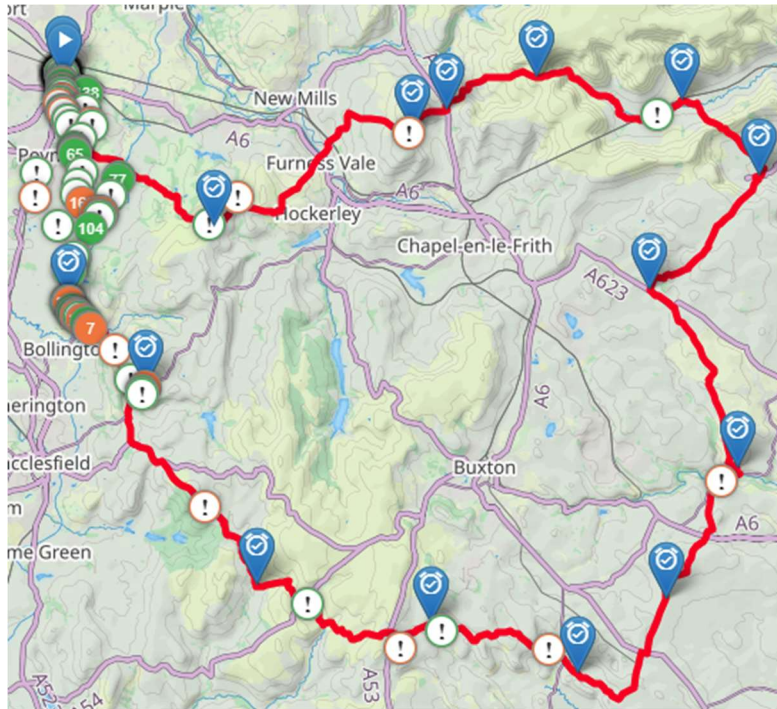
All things considered I liked the idea of the trackers, a good mental motivation factor for competitors. I expect some of the issues will be sorted out in time; although phone coverage may take longer.



*Lack of signal meant tracker update points were long distances apart*

	Time	Time of day
Start	00:00:00	12:00:00
CP1	01:26:51	13:26:51
CP2		
Drinks Point	02:23:40	14:23:40
CP3		
CP4		
CP5		
CP6		
CP7		
CP8		
CP9	08:27:40	20:27:40
CP10		
CP11	11:21:13	23:21:13
CP12	12:34:18	00:34:18
CP13	13:23:00	01:23:00
Finish ETA	14:53:27	02:53:27

*No tracker recordings at some CPs*



*Many exclamation marks*

### **Helpers**

Big thank you to the many marshals and helpers at HQ and round the route



*Some of the many helpers*

After all the training and doing this long event I should now be ready to tackle my first park run.

Nigel Aston (18 finishes, + 2 unofficial completions)

*Photo credits: Various people posting on Bullock Smithy 2022 Facebook; Nick Ham, Internet, Paul Rushworth*