

## Bullock Smithy Hike, 7th September 2024

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



***“Humid and mizzle – but thankfully not too hot”***

A 56 mile circuit (or is it now 57?) in the glorious Peak District

### Trackers

Trackers from FellTrack are in action same as last year with the whiz/screech at each CP once the orange strap was placed next to the orange box. At registration there was a choice of lengths of watch strap – normal if you were attaching round your wrist, or long if you wanted it to put it ... well that's your guess, round your leg perhaps!?!)



*Orange wrist straps are handed out – normal or long?*

Web site: <https://www.felltrack.com/cgi-bin/felltrack.cgi#top>

FellTrack - Bullock Smithy 2024. Guest user: guest

#### Reports

Entrant progress

Query entrant

Leader board

Retirements

#### FellTrack tracking page

I chat with Steve Jackson who has been competing in the BS for 20 years. This year he is going round with his son Ben and likely to be a bit slower. Just getting Ben round will be an achievement. Good to see Paul Rushworth (+Tracy and Maizie) – 24 completions. How long before Maizie attempts it?



*The author and Paul Rushworth at the start. Sunglasses and hat may have been overkill*

Waiting for the event to start I catch up with Nick Ham whose done BS most years since 1996. It's surprising that with so much knowledge of the route that he's carrying a full set of maps and route description; he explains that it's full of notes on route choices and timings which he likes to keep track of. I know that he has many 'optimal' route choices. Jerzy is not taking part this year due to injury; he's done every one since the start, except for one year. He imparts some advice on the aging process having an effect on expectations at the start: initially about beating your best time, then just matching your best time, and finally in the later years just getting round!

Rob Massey does the briefing, and Jerzy bangs the anvil to get the event underway. People leave from exit 1, exit 2 and even the frowned upon exit 3 to the main road.



*Rob Massey does the race briefing. Jerzy (in flashy shorts) ready to bang the anvil (bottom right)*

Apart from a few weeks off from Covid in June and another few weeks with a tight calf in July my training has been better, more complete, than the previous few years so I'm hopeful for an improved completion time. Another partial bonus is there is no hot sun. As a precaution I've added sun cream to my top half and stuck on cap and sunglasses. An hour before starting I ate a flapjack with a wet finger of salt - the combination is not a good taste but maybe energy and salt loss will be helped.

Once off we soon find that humidity is high and remains so for the afternoon. I've ditched the compression shorts too and compression calf protectors and no KT tape, and added some stretch bandages around the ankles. Let's see how that goes.



Exit 1 takes me on to Chatsworth Rd and the legs have plenty of time to get warmed up. Fast and slow starters. Exit 2 starters come along Mill Ln and we join up over the A555 bridge and off road into the fields. Turn right onto the track through the woods and eventually we join the Exit 3 runners just before Anson Rd. So what's the difference between all the routes from the various exits?



*Routes for Exits 1, 2 and 3*

- Exit 1 1.93 miles (4 gates, up/down on bridge)
- Exit 2 1.98 miles (4 gates, up/down on bridge)
- Exit 3 1.57 miles (1 stile, 2 gates, 2 road crossings – danger!)

At a speed of around 5 mph, exit 1 v exit 3 will cost you about 5 minutes. But as my Dad would say better 5 minutes later in this world that 5 minutes earlier in the next!

Up Anson road we go, over the canal and into the countryside with a few supporters giving early encouragement to everyone. In Lime Park two people have cut off right, the old route from a few years ago, to short cut over the wall and diagonal up the field. We know the wall route is now fenced off; we see them run first along the wall to the right then along the wall to the left. I go past Steve and Ben Jackson who are now walking.



*This old route out of Lime Park over the wall is now fenced off and not accessible*

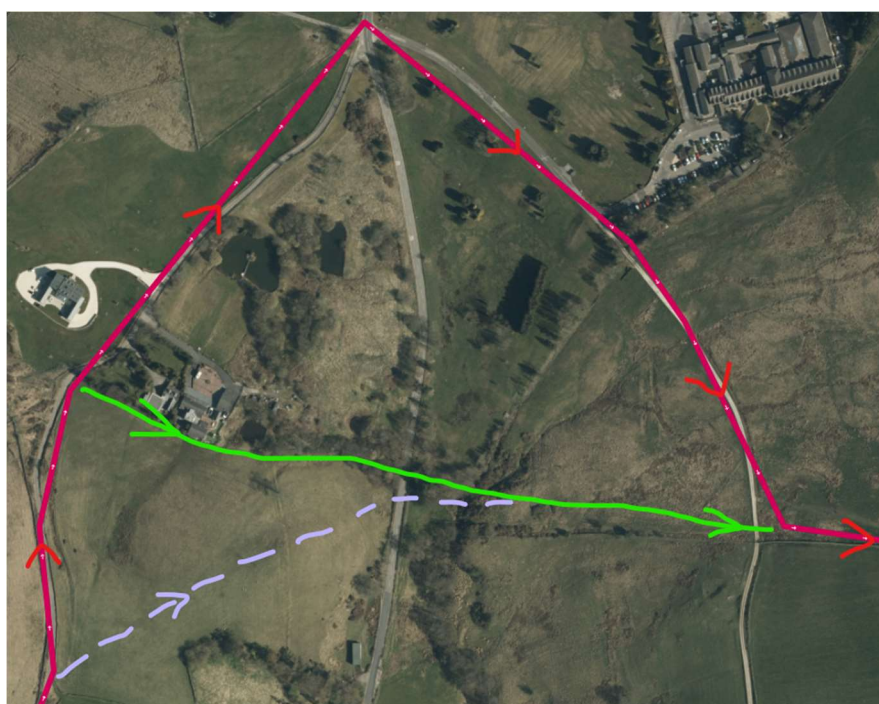
Lime Park car park is packed, we skirt round its edge and begin the first long ascent of the day following the Gritstone trail, Knightslow Wood and up to Bow Stones (CP1). Orange wrist strap at the ready for auto checkin ... but the machine is not working. What a disappointment at the first CP for the organisers, could

be like that at the rest of the CPs. It also means those at home watching on the web tracker will not get the initial update. Anyway, marshals always do the manual recording and the tally card is punched. Drinks bottle topped up, then down the road. I push the tally card into my shorts back pocket. Previously I have used a lanyard around my neck with the card attached; the pocket – with zip – is secure enough and works well. I would not like the card flapping around on the back of the rucksack as some people have.



*Bowstones CP - marshal trying to fix the orange whizzer machine; back up manual recording is ok though*

Trotting down the road we see one person going the ditch route, but with an optimised attack point. He's scaled the wall/fence/gate at the corner and gone diagonally over the field. If that is a legitimate crossing point then it's a very good line and probably makes the up/down ditch route favourite over the longer flatter Dissop Head road.



*Dissop Head: Cutting the corner (purple), down & up official (green), round on the road (red)*





*Dissop Head: Through the gates to cut off the corner? Maybe if legitimate*

The rest of us go round, past the High Peak Special school up on the left and join the top of the ditch route path for the final ascent up the field. A chance for a nibble now whilst walking. Various wall and wooden stiles, a small footbridge, a road and more stiles take us to Brownough farm large gate. We make sure its closed and two of us (chap in blue) descend into Furness Vale together. One chap who is about 20 secs ahead with red rucksack (Neill Martin) activates the pedestrian crossing, which is perfect for the two of us to jog straight over the A6 without stopping.

Feeling pleased at having saved a few seconds we are then confronted with the railway crossing gates closing ahead. So all three of us have to climb up and down the bridge steps ... rather than wait a few minutes for the train to pass.

Must note for future: Trains arriving at 13:06; 13:31; 14:08 [subject to change for 2025 😊]



*Furness Vale station – alternative to the road's level crossing*

Down the road, up the nick to the right and onto the next ascent, Shedyard Clough. A surprise at Shedyard farm as many bottles of water are available plus some jbs. In surprise I slurp out of an open bottle and the chap with me takes a whole bottle as he recalls Rob Massey's warning about no refreshments at CP2. Up Laneside Road, some more eating and here I decide to take off cap and sunglasses as its overcast and not sunny; yes, it was overkill to have warn them. They do not make another appearance. Able to jog a little up the dried up steam/path, walk the last bit, then sudden steep drop down to Chinley CP2. The orange whizzer machine is working here. Chap in blue with me is a first timer and happy to follow my lines. We leave the CP and our speed increases down the gentle then steep slope (I like the grass on the right for the final bit) to reach the roadside refreshments with various supporters scattered around.



*Steep descent down to Chinley CP*



*CP2: Leader Rory and later red rucksack (Neill Martin)*



*Chinley cold and hot refreshments, crisps, choc bars + attentive helpers*



Water top up, eat some crisps for salt, and take a choc bar. Over the road, up the track and prepare for the ascent to Edale Cross. First we drop down to Coldwell Clough over the stream – not too bad when dry, but getting worse year on year. After the stream it's just up. No jogging now, head down, plod. I make a small gain on a few people ahead, bikers come and go, some walkers. The mizzle which is now around has likely put off there being more hill trekkers. At Edale Cross CP3 the orange whizzer works; the marshals have just a small canopy for shelter – reflecting the mild conditions. The jb tray is out again and I take a full family.



*Edale Cross CP with small shelter; the lady marshal serves out families of jbs*

A pause to tighten shoelaces before the descent. I am feeling a bit stiff now and there is no bounce down the steepening hill side path. On the left there are frequent distant shouts and various people on Jacob's ladder stop and peer into the distance, trying to work out whether someone is in trouble. I see a few people scrambling up a steep grassy gorge – maybe they are going to the 'rescue'? I vaguely contemplate whether I could be any help – unlikely, with my small supply of blister plasters – and how 'bonus' time would then be calculated.

Someone comes past me before I reach the bottom and goes ahead over the stone bridge. A small group with a lady also overtake. I am not dispirited though. Keep going and don't fall over is the main thing. Turn at Upper Booth and through fields with a few small gates, over the railway line and keep left through Barber Booth – don't fall over. A chap ahead goes right to meet the road direct then left and I end up ahead. Uneventful jog along the road except to wish we could avoid it as cars are close. Into Edale car park CP3, whizzer works. Paul is just leaving. Hello to Tracy. Sit down and take in some rice and fruit – risking the fruit this year. Water top up. When I leave it's spotting with rain and the CP marshals move inside. No patching up of knees or hands from falls needed which is a relief; the falls have been brought on by leg cramps over the last few years.



*A marshal directs competitors inside to register at Edale car park CP*



*The author enjoying fruit and rice at Edale CP - and a sit down*

Feeling slower and a bit warm with the humidity in the valley, it's along the road a bit, then turn right and avoid the mud on the track to go through the small gate and begin the ascent to Hollins Cross. A few chaps ahead. I close in on some. Pleased it's dry as the main track is badly rutted. Past the discarded microwave. Miss out the gate to the moor and skirt round to the left as the wall has collapsed. Now, for a change, to avoid the narrow gully track – heat/people/cows (sometimes) I'm going to try going up on the grass which is a little to the right of the track. This works. I can pick my own line and am uninterrupted apart from a gorse bush. I overtake Paul and look down on him from my grassy path route – which later Paul generously refers to as the 'Aston Line'.

The descent from Hollins Cross is not trivial but gets better each year with flag stones and now a gradual even slope. The path repairers have done an excellent job, all the way down to the road. A lively pop-up camp site is on our right. A few more people pass me on the road – that's OK, I'm happy to plod along and avoid cramps from overdoing it. A packed Castleton Car Park is navigated and CP4 gained over the road at the garage forecourt – I like it being there, it seems a bit special. Tracy asks me how's it going, and I reply with a few grunts; "Surviving".





*A rare shot of the author actually jogging and not walking, arriving at Castleton garage CP*



*Castleton garage CP*

The table of goodies included gels, so I had one, to complement my own. That is unusual. I declined the jam sandwiches though. Water – well blackcurrant this time - is topped up. I leave the CP marshals my rubbish which they readily dispose of. Claire Shaw makes a quick stop and looks strong going ahead. Paul comes in just behind me.

There seems to be no Peak running event based in Castleton this year which previously has meant runners on this other event coming in the opposite direction to our travel. However, the road out of Castleton towards Winnats Pass is full of cars, really busy. We do not go that way, it's a left through the rough car park, up Goosehill road and left again up the steep grassy slope of Goosehill itself. I go steep until a path is reached, follow it for a bit, then steep again to the next path then follow that. Finally steep again to the final path takes me to the wall stile. Last year this was nearly the end of me with cramps getting over the wall. OK this year though. Once over I can only manage a walk, and am impressed to see Claire jogging some of it in the distance.

Maybe I am a bit dehydrated; although fluid top ups have been regular, toilet stops have been none! The humidity has been high and is now starting to drop a bit which should help. I nibble a ginger biscuit.



Once down and up onto Limestone Way those ahead have disappeared completely – because now the low cloud has obscured everything. I am OK with this lack of visibility, once I check my nav that I'm going in the right direction. The mizzle, dampness, keeps things cooler. A little jogging now as the legs manage to turn over again all the way to the right turn to Oxlow Rake and then walk the uphill. Once on the way down it's jogging again; not an easy track to jog down, sometimes off to the right provides a smoother path. I catch up with James Leask as we cross the fields together. Crossing the field my shoes have turned from blue to white – because of the fertilizer/lime. (*editor's note: I think it was this field*) I could do without my shoes growing, they are fine as they are. Down the roads to Peak Forest CP6 where a marshal has kindly pressed the pedestrian crossing button as we approach so we can cross straight over the busy, fast A623. I take on crisps and half banana, no orange – maybe the acidity will upset my stomach so this year I avoid it.



The author arriving at Peak Forest CP – getting tally card out of back pocket; James Leask arriving at same time

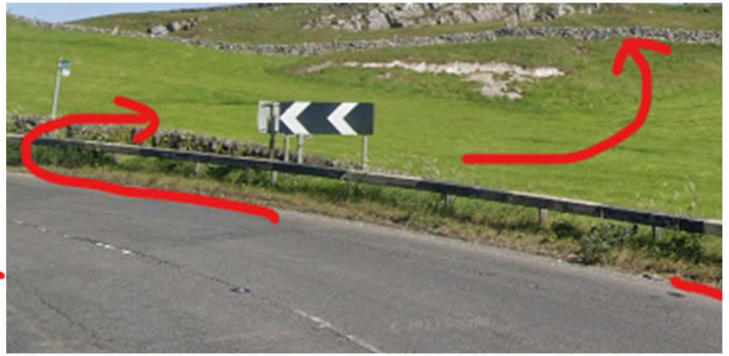


*Well organised and neat layout of refreshments at Peak Forest CP*

Plod/jog along the pavement as far as possible and then onto the edge of the A623; not pleasant as it's really busy with cars and lorries. I keep to the right of the edge solid white line so I can keep moving as vehicles pass. This is not enough for one Land Rover driver who stops, waves arms around inside the cab, then toots horn madly and drives off. The organisers do wonder if there is a suitable alternative route that could be prescribed, such as the turn onto paths at Peak Forest past Damside Farm and then the i-Spy of



Dales ... Dam Dale, Hay Dale, Dale Head, Peter Dale Monk's Dale and finally Millers Dale. Much harder on the legs but safer.



*Alongside and then finally turn of A623*

I'm glad to take the footpath off on the corner of Hernstone Lane. I close in on red rucksack and companion Hugh Lovatt ahead. Fields of lush grass, slightly uphill, not easy to run through so I don't try. The low cloud remains and not possible to see the other side of a field; the two ahead misjudge the direction of a wall crossing in the mizzle at the other side of one of the Dam Cliff fields and have to double back. By the time the road is reached I've closed in on the two ahead. Then they are off, much quicker than me on the hard ground of the road. I plod along, quite content. The cloud is low enough to mean that it's not possible to see where the end of the road is. Eventually the bend to the right appears and down to Wheston.

My footwear is working OK. Brooks Cascadia. I've kept with this brand for many years and used Brooks Ghost for road. In the month before the BS I avoided using the Ghosts as there is a 4 mm difference in the drop (8 mm v 12 mm) and this might possibly be an aggravation contributing to my stiff/strained calf issues. I do have a problem with the front side of my shoes splitting, letting in grit and wet. So rather than throw out a pair less than a year old I've used duct tape inside to cover up the slit. It's worked well and given them a good few months of extra life and ideal for training, especially when dryish. A newer pair without slit was used for this event though.



*Brooks Cascadia internal slit repair (shoes not used on event though)*

I make my way out of Wheston on the rough track with some jogging and begin to catch the two ahead which spurs me on. By the time Millers Dale CP7 is reached we are all together. The inside of the CP barn has changed round from previous years, almost like livestock could be in it – instead of the marshals. Quick stop here for water only.



*Millers Dale CP - a working barn - and two working marshals*

Down the rough narrow steep track, and right onto the road which runs along the river Wye. Under the disused railway's viaduct and ready to face the road ascent. Soon plodding. Wishing that there were no cars as need to make frequent jumps into the edging to keep safe as visibility around the many bends is poor for motorists. Of course there is the safer recommend route of Priestcliffe and maybe I should give that another go next time; it is a bit longer. Once the high point is reached, after taking on a gel, there is a km of jogging down and then small up to Chelmorton CP 8. Before reaching the CP red rucksack comes past at a good pace. What will the food offering be? When I arrive the only offering is half donuts. Well let's give half a try. Fill up the water, take the donut and set off. Sticky mouth and fingers, but eaten, which is more than I usually manage.



*Chelmorton CP – donuts (halves and wholes) and hot refreshments available*





*Two ladies (Amy Billing and Rebecca Brimage) at Chelmorton CP; Amy went on to finish, Rebecca retired*

Red rucksack gradually fades into the distance even though I am doing a slow jog. My ankle stretch bandage has worked well and am happy with clothing/socks etc, but the tightening of the shoelaces at Edale Cross has caused some red sores across tops of feet. The Chelmorton track gives way to road taking me past the lonely Blinder House, over the A515 and then the quarry/farm track. Down then up. No turn off on the fp to the right now because of the quarry. The sun has gone but there is enough light to not need torch yet. The road skirts the quarry and then descends to Earl Sterndale CP9. Tracy is there and Paul arrives just after me, gaining 7 minutes on since the last CP.

We are in a new location this year which is over the road from the previous one. We are escorted through the graveyard and into the parish church itself. Quite spectacular for a CP to be in a church. No service in progress of course. Eat some crisps, no water needed but I cannot face any of the combination of bread, butter, jam even though all possibilities are there in separate containers.



*The author and Paul topping up at ES Church CP - but no jam sandwiches for me*



*Nick Ham at ES church CP trying to take it all in - camera at the ready*

On the road outside Paul jogs along to join me. He has thrown away the (holy?) water from the church as it tasted strange. Luckily I did not top up there. I only just manage to keep up with him as we cross the fields through gate, gate, gate, gate, field and then drop down the steep, grassy, slippery bank to Dowel Dale road. Paul slithers, slides and yelps but remains upright. It's dark, but still enough light to know there is a road. Paul goes ahead and is soon well away. Before reaching the fp turn off to the right it's time for headtorch. The event being on 7<sup>th</sup> September is the latest date in the year in can be (first Saturday of September) and as such the daylight is the shortest with sunset some 14 minutes earlier than it would be when the event is on 1<sup>st</sup> September. The mizzle and/or low cloud plus dark means visibility is minimal. I look in the grass for tracks. These help mostly although I need to do a shimmy to locate one of the wall/fence crossings.

At Booth farm fields, always a bit tricky in the dark, a lady from the house/farm shouts directions to me; "Left past the tractor". Over the wall and I keep to the path on the left near the fence. Somewhere along here there is a turn off to the right; must be this one. Of I go. Oh no, I'm in the undergrowth and a fence. Back, carry on, I reach the correct turn off, across the narrow bridge and then left to Brand End. A wiggle to get through the gate – which is wide open – climb the grassy bank, reach the tarmac, through the large gate, then straightforward over the cattle grids to reach Brand Top CP10.



*Brand Top CP refreshments; Nick about to leave in wet weather gear – more than mizzle outside at this point for him*

Top up with water and small pieces of fudge – nice as easy to chew and swallow. Not to linger here so can avoid the contrast between warm inside and cool outside. Not so bad though this year. Through the garden, under the tree and down, down the track, a bit wet because of the spring, until I reach the small road. Normally I go for no thinking, easy plod up the road which is a bit longer. This year I go for the direct recommended route up the fields. At first the trampled grass makes for easy route following; then not so



obvious with tracks all over the place. A few shimmies needed here and there and eventually popping out over a gate with the Hilltop road directly ahead – nice.

Off to Knotbury. A bit of jogging – stiffened legs just allowing it. Second turn off on the right, slowing down badly now even on the short road ascent to the last Knotbury cottage. Spurred on a little by the route choice ‘excitement’ ahead I carefully pick my way over the boulders to Three Shires Head. I jump down from one boulder and suddenly it’s pitch black. What happened? Who has switched off the lights? Then I realise my Silva head torch has turned off. I press the on/off button, it comes back on – phew. I ponder what would have happened if I had not been able to switch back on; maybe wait and follow very closely the next person through – not good.

Over the bridge it’s left here on the now recommended route for a clockwise traverse of Cut-thorn Hill. This is longer than the old route past Sparbent and Cumberland Cottage but avoids the steep climb and rough root-strewn track. If jogging was possible, as it will be for some, the clockwise route would be quicker, but for me there is no jogging. Various fields, road crossings and marshland – which is dry – to reach the road near Crag Hall. A supporter cycles up from Clough House to meet her entrant and then cycles back down to the CP with him. A little up and then down to Clough House CP11. From a mile away you can hear Clough House marshals with loud bell jangling and whoops to encourage the competitors; and maybe discourage anyone else from approaching!



*Clough House CP with hot/cold food - plenty to choose from. I take some cake and crisps*

A feast awaits. This year I take some food – a few crisps and some cake. I leave. I’m not sick here as I have been on two occasions in the last few years. Mainly walking for me now. It is only just possible for me to know where the road is with head torch off which I prefer as then can take in the surroundings. A distraction though as, I’m guessing, the competitor’s supporter who was on a bike is now in a car and follows him along the road with car headlights shining the way. I’m Ok with the headlights part as they go into the distance, but the rear brake lights of the car going on/off are dazzling as I try to make out where I am going on the road in front of me. In the distance the car and entrant turn off for Mac Forest and I see them go continue together for the whole of the road section. That’s also my route this year; I’d rather trudge up past the forest, a shorter route but up and down, than trudge along the road. Slow and steady. Another incident of torch suddenly switching off and again thankfully the on/off button works its wonders. The forest track gives away to the sandy road and the view of Manchester; not much in the way of Manchester lights though because of the cloud this evening. Down, down I go along Charity Ln, past Walker Barn along the A537.

I am jogging slowly, various people come past. All the way down Bull-Hill Lane until the slightest bit of uphill is reached once past Brookhouse causing a shift to a walk. Hugh Lovatt comes past and arrives at the CP just ahead of me. Orange whizz working, some water and a few sweets.



*Rainow CP, mainly fluids on offer. Steve Jackson contemplating (his son Ben has retired)*

Outside I need to go round the houses down the lanes onto Sugar Lane and locate the path on the right that goes past someone's back window. Through the fields, with a body wiggle through a couple of tight stone/slate chicanes over a few foot bridges and finally pop out onto Ingersley Vale road and the edge of Bollington.

Along a quiet Church St, left to Palmerston St. Entrant Paul Bayley overtakes me. He goes past Clarence Rd at the cross roads and I shout to him to come back. He insists his GPS says straight on and continues. I leave him to find an alternative route to the canal. In front of the Mill building, now flats, is the canal footbridge. I take the steps rather than the longer ramp – which is tempting. With canal on the right I manage a walk and a bit of a jog. The few moored boats have fast asleep owners – not that I would be disturbing them. Under bridge 26 – and Paul B appears from the left – so he had to climb up and use Adlington Rd. He's off ahead of me and reaches Whiteley Green CP13 first. No water for me needed but I do take a few jbs.

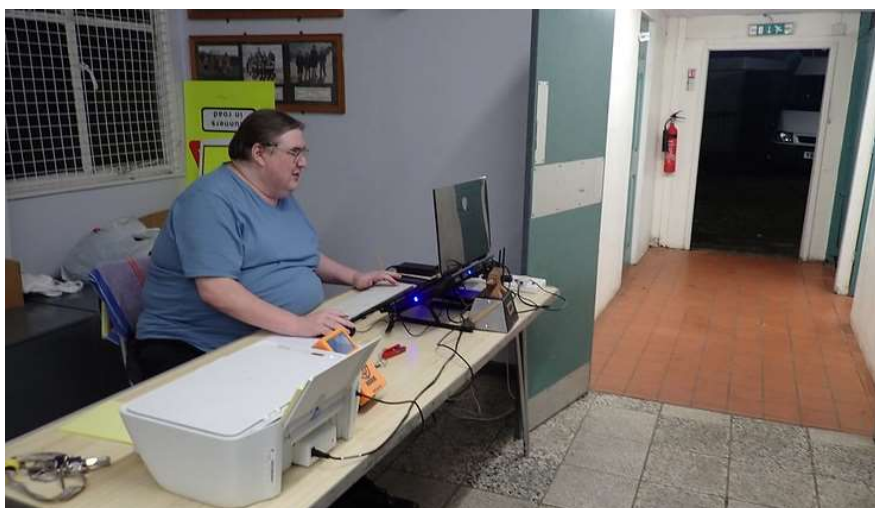


*Marshal and campervan + table at Whiteley Green CP*

I leave the CP and see entrant Hugh L going backwards and forwards trying to find the path down to Middlewood Way. He does and disappears quickly. My stomach is feeling rough and the jbs have triggered the need to stop. I sit down in the grass and am sick – not that there is much in the stomach. No one comes past thankfully. Debating whether to just stay sat down or carry on ... I carry on. Get up, slow walk, then a quicker walk, a few sips of water, walk, a few more sips of water, bridge 9, bridge 10, bridge 11, a little jog, bridge 12. Debating whether to go Coppice or Woods Ln I need to get off Middlewood Way for a change underfoot. So turn left up the steps and down Wood Ln. Turn off onto cobbles, past the permanently parked trailer, me wobbling over the cobbles. Stomach OK though. I risk a gel – but coordination is terrible and the gel runs down the outside of the packet and I end up with no gel in my mouth and lots of gel over my hands -what a mess! I sip some more water and try to clean my hands in damp grass. Moggie Ln, Waterloo, Trafalgar, jitty and finally across to Towers Rd.



Walk and a bit of jogging, using pavement and road edges around the unmade parts of the road, and use the middle of the road where tarmac smooths the way – gradually they are covering more of the unmade bits in tarmac which is good for us . At least six speed humps to negotiate over the 1.15 miles of Towers Rd. The road end can't come soon enough at my slow speed. I look forward and not back. The last little bit now. Past the garden centre and railway – gates are closed – easy crossing of the dual carriage way as no traffic around this time of night/early morning so safe to do so. Tesco garage on the right and across the traffic lights to reach the left side of the road. Oh no! I hear people some way behind me; a glance round and there are multiple head torches. I don't really mind what my finish position is, but to be overtaken in the last 500 m would be demoralising. My walk pace quickens, the voices get nearer. I don't want this pressure. I don't want to be overtaken. I jog. Still they get closer – how close? From somewhere my jogging pace is able to increase for the last 100 m and I make it into the Scout hut before them.



*Andrew recording all finishers and printing certificates - as he has done for as long as I can remember*

Andrew claims my orange wrist strap and goes to work on the yellow certificate card. I sit close by and recover. The three behind me were Naomi Coverley, Ruth Gowers and Tom Hiddleston, looking very happy to have finished strongly having gained 21 min since Clough Housen (Tom gained 13 mins). Tom remarks that I did well to increase my pace to avoid being overtaken.

Should I risk food? I get a mug of milk and go and join Julian Brown and Paul R who finished well over an hour before me. Jerzy, not competing, is cheffing/waitressing with cooked meal orders ('full English') to those who want it. Not for me though. Satisfaction on finishing .. for sure, yes. A bit quicker than last few years; would have liked the time to be less but that's life.

There are no prizes for completing or winning in this event. I like that. However, Runfurther do a spot prize across all entrants – and I am pleased to pick up one of the thirteen prizes this year. Thank you Runfurther.  
<https://runfurther.com/>



*Runfurther information, leader boards and spot prizes*

My GPS recorded over 57 miles. Now the official recommended route has increased by going the longer way around Cut-thorn Hill, along with the extra dog leg to Rainow Institute, I think that the organisers can now rightly claim this is a 57 m event (currently billed as 56 m).

Brilliant job by all the organizers and marshals – thanks for all your efforts.

186 finishers out of 247 starters, about 30 more than last year. Rory Harris and Brooke Webster were the fastest man and lady.

Nigel Aston (20 finishes, + 2 unofficial completions in 2021)

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