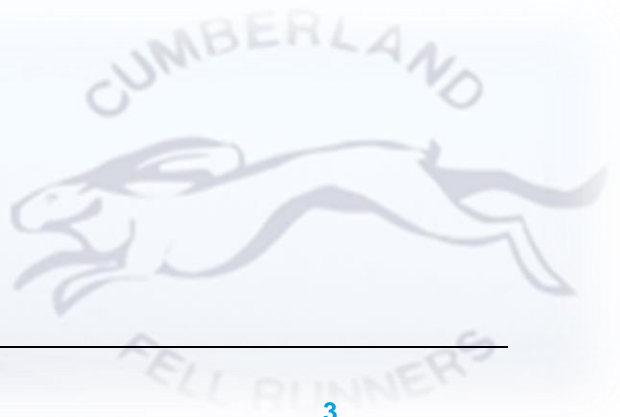

Cumberland Fell Runners

Newsletter
July 2023



Howard and Kieren, BYU, April 2023.



Contents

The Committee	3
Club matters	4
New members	4
Next members meeting (and social things!)	4
Members' meeting 27 th June 2023	4
Members meeting 4 th April 2023	5
Mental running	8
My solo BGR	12
Juniors	18
Marathon du Mont-Blanc 23 km	25
Relays	30

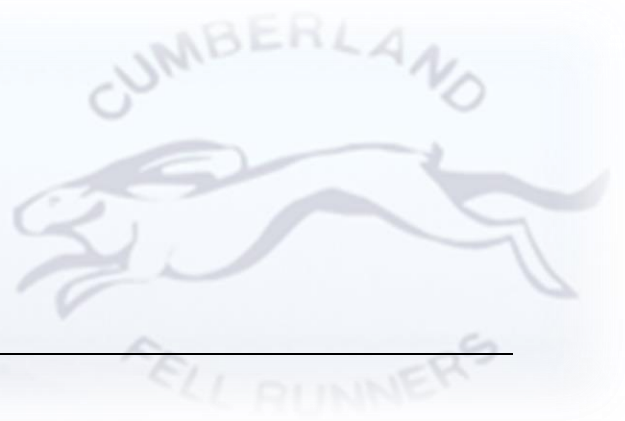
Editor's note

Welcome to the Summer 2023 newsletter and many thanks to all that have contributed!

If you've articles ready for the next issue, or have comments and corrections, don't hesitate to email me at jackgilbert89@gmail.com.

Enjoy!

Jack



The Committee

Your wonderful club is brought to you by:



Chairman

Paul
Jennings



Statistician

Darren
Parker



Secretary

Charlotte
Barker



**Equipment
Officer**

Jane
Mottram



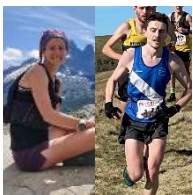
**Membership
Secretary**

Adam
Cresswell



**Race
Organiser
Coordinator**

Andrew
Bradley



Team Captains

Sam
Holding,
Sophie
Likeman



**Race selection
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Cummings,
Andrew
Bradley,
Steven
Breeze,
Darren
Parker



**Lead Junior
Coach**

Tony
Jewell



**Website
Administrators**

Darren
Parker,
Adam
Cresswell



**Lead Senior
Coach**

Barry
Johnston



**Newsletter
Editor**

Jack Gilbert



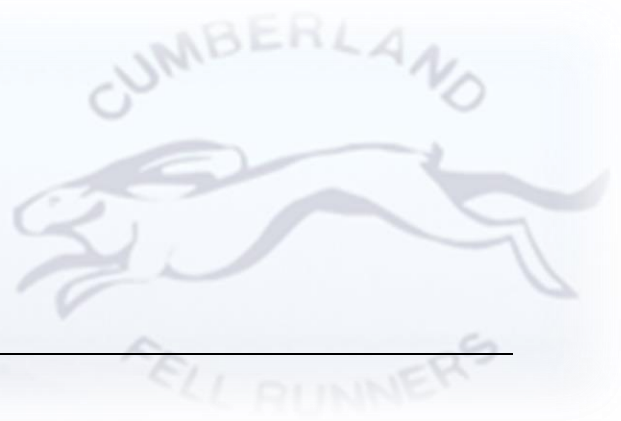
Treasurer

Ann
Cummings



**Welfare
Officers**

Sian
Spencer,
Isabel
Mancebo



Club matters

New members

A big welcome to our new members! We look forward to meeting you on the fell if we've not already!

James Bremner	Alexander Reed	Daniel Pons
Louise Johnson	Evie Youngman	Mark Bullock
Alastair Bowes	Samuel Youngman	
Alexis Boddy	Iona Amcakinbell	

New club members now are given a 'CFR Club welcome pack'! This includes information as well as freebies: buff, water bottle, car sticker, race card etc. If you are a new member and haven't got yours yet contact Adam at a1cresswell@googlemail.com.

Next members meeting (and social things!)

The date of the next members' meeting will be communicated by SiEntries and posted on Facebook as well.

For your calendar:

- Navigation coaching session – Loweswater – 18th July 2023
- Summer social – keep your eyes on our communication channels!
- Presentation night – Workington Golf Club – 25th November 2023 7pm-11pm

Members' meeting 27th June 2023

Presentation night

Charlotte has provisionally booked the Presentation night at Workington golf club for 25th November from 7pm to 11pm. All present agreed it was really good to get something in early.

Summer social

Charlotte is planning a summer social on similar lines to the very successful summer social last year. Watch this space!

Coaching

Barry has been co-ordinating a lot of coaching related activities for the senior club members. There has been a mixed turnout so far, but all events have been very successful for those who have turned out.

A bit of a discussion around these activities were held. These are open to all club members.

- Navigation – Ann took a small group around Sale Fell. Another session is planned for 18th July around Loweswater Lake.
- Wednesday sessions at the Hay – Tony takes a group of juniors on Wednesday and welcomes any seniors who want to come along to the Hay where can offer his wealth of coaching experience.
- Cycling – Les has been posting about local cycling time trials, and there is talk about a session at the M-Sport track. Watch this space for details.
- Open water swimming – Jennie is looking at putting on some sessions for open water swimming.
- Thursday hills/speed work – These sessions are currently self-led during the summer racing season. Ideas are on the website, turn up & you may or may not have company. The intention is to start these back up over winter when there aren't so many races to go at.



- CFR weekly Consistency Challenge – Sam is co-ordinating a challenge to ensure that our training is consistent, not too little & not too much – set your own plan and then stick to it! Contact Sam for more details & join in the group to support each other.

Race Organisation

Colin Dulson is looking at stepping down from organising the Ennerdale Horseshoe after next year's race, Richard Eastman is also looking at stepping down from organising the Wasdale after next year's race. I intend to step down from organising the Buttermere Horseshoe a year later (so 2025 will be my last year).

Colin and Richard have offered for CFR to take on these races. At the moment we haven't had anyone offer to take them on. Without a race organiser these races will not go ahead, and there is a real risk that no-one takes them on.

A long discussion was held around the reasons people may not want to take them on, and the difficulty that CFR would face if we took yet more races on (we currently organise 11 races). A lot of the issue was around finding sufficient marshals without relying on the same people every weekend.

No resolution was found and ideas from any club member is very welcome, either mention your ideas to me, or any committee member.

Tuesday night run co-ordinator

Adam has asked for support to cover for him over the months of August to October, he will continue to plan the runs but cannot guarantee to be around on the Tuesday evenings. It was suggested that he publicises the runs early and we will put our names forward to cover for him.

We also discussed the support Andrew has been giving through taking a second group as well, and it was suggested a similar approach was taken for the second group.

If you can offer to co-ordinate the group on a Tuesday evening, please let us know in advance and we can share the task between us all.

Members meeting 4th April 2023

Colin Dulson, Bob Davis, Tony Jewel, Adam Cresswell, Nick Moore, Andrew Bradley, Barry Johnson, Sam Holding, Ann Cummings, Paul Jennings

Ennerdale Horseshoe fell race/CFRA

Colin & Bob from the CFRA (and CFR/ex-CFR) joined the meeting to discuss the CFRA especially since Colin is looking to step down from organising the Ennerdale Horseshoe after the 2024 race. Paul also mentioned that he'll be stepping down from organising the Buttermere Horseshoe after the 2025 race.

The discussion centred around 3 themes that need to be addressed;

- Ensure that whoever takes on these races is well supported through a group of marshals/helpers – from within CFR and reaching out to the wider fell running community.
- Identifying and supporting someone to take on these races – whether this is within CFR or we let the races pass to other clubs will be dependant on if anyone shows an interest in running these events
- The future of the CFRA and how this will be organised, including the finances and equipment stock.

In the short-term, Andrew & Paul agreed to look at how to corral a group of people who would be available for general help and marshalling for these races, as this can be one of the main headaches and worries around organising these big races.

Note, that the current organiser for the Wasdale, Richard Eastman, has a lot of help from Richard Byers who we believe will take over the race as long as he has sufficient support (as above). Richard Eastman also organises the Scafell Pike race for CFRA and he intends to continue doing so.

Juniors at senior training

It is our desire in the club to integrate the juniors with the seniors more, especially since there are some juniors (U18) who can easily run faster than most of the club. However, inviting them to the senior club runs (Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday) does raise an issue around safeguarding and the legal responsibilities of the adults co-ordinating these club runs. It was agreed that we definitely want to enable under 18s to join in with the senior



training if we can, so Paul took an action to speak with our welfare officers to see what we need to do to achieve this.

Also on the same lines, Tony offered to extend his Wednesday sessions at the Hay where he currently trains some of the juniors (6 – 7pm) and will include the seniors once the junior runners have started their session so from 6:30 – 7:30pm. Adam offered to put the information on the website.

New to racing series

To encourage club members who have not completed a CFR championship, and are not sure if it is for them, Paul proposed a new series based loosely around the Parkrun idea of completing a set number of races where your position does not matter. So starting this year until two weeks before the presentation night, anyone who has not completed a CFR championship before and isn't in line to do so this year, can select any six races out of the FRA and BOFRA race calendars to be eligible for an award at the presentation night. It was proposed that we put forward a list of local, accessible races which people may be tempted with. Paul agreed to flesh this out with some more detail and then publicise this.

New to Racing series (update 20th April)

As mentioned in the minutes of the last members' meeting we are introducing a 'New to racing series'. The idea is to encourage any member who hasn't completed a main club championship before (and doesn't complete this year's championship series as you'll win a prize anyway) to try out a number of fell races over the year, the position or time doesn't matter it is all about learning about the joy of the race without worrying about the outcome.

The series is the challenge of completing at least six FRA or BOFRA registered races between 1st January and 1st November (about 2 weeks before the presentation evening). When you have completed your six let Darren Parker know so we can arrange an award at the Presentation evening.

Any race you have already completed this year will also count, suggested short races include (but are not limited to);

In the past:

King of the Castle
SOB
Blake Fell
Two Riggs
Jarrett's Jaunt

Coming up:

Lord's seat
Latrigg
Two tops dash
Latterbarrow loop
Langstrath

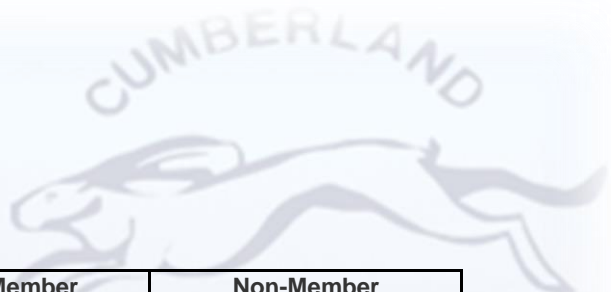
Or choose any race (short, medium or long) from the list in the FRA website <https://www.fellrunner.org.uk/races> or BOFRA Race Calendar – BOFRA

Get out there, encourages your running partners to also give it a good and Happy Racing!

Membership benefits

With a lot going on in the club, some of which is members only and some does include non-members, there has been some confusion on what is open to who. Paul therefore put forward a table for discussion which was agreed after some discussion and minor modifications.

Tony asked about subsidising the parental travel costs for juniors at national races (especially Loughborough was mentioned). It was agreed that some support was appropriate and that we would determine how to apply this (forms/approvals/amounts etc.). Paul will pick this up with Ann.



	Full Member	Social Member	Non-Member
Tuesday club run	X	X	X but expect to join if attending regularly
Sunday Social	X	X	X but expect to join if attending regularly
Thursday hill reps	X	X	X but expect to join if attending regularly
All other CFR training	X	X	
Club champs	X		
Relays	X		
London Marathon Place	X	Only if no full members take place	
Subsidised 1 st Aid	X	If regular marshal/ race support	May include parents of junior members
Other subsidised fees offered by club	X	On a case by case basis	May include parents of junior members
Presentation night	X	X	As guest only
Members only FB page	X	X	May include parents of junior members
Training Hub page	X	X	
Other FB/WhatsApp groups	X	X	On a case by case basis

AOB

Sunday social – Jenny is stepping down as overall co-ordinator, and is in the process of handing this over to Tara. We need people to put forward ideas for runs which they would like to take the role of the 'on the day' co-ordinator.

Pip Conlon unfortunately can't continue with her Social Media co-ordinator role so there is a vacancy.

Darren Parker has undertaken a major update of the Ultra pages on the CFR website, some of this is from personal Strava accounts of people Darren follows. Please check if you are happy with the information shared on this external website, if not please let Darren know asap and we will remove it from the website.

Meeting location/time/day – a brief discussion was held as to whether changing the day, time and location of the meeting helped attendance. It was felt that generally it is better to hold the meetings straight after a club run. We may have to review our location in the Shepherds' Inn over the summer / tourist season as we do 'block' their restaurant places.

Presentation night – Andrew highlighted that it would be good to start organising this very early to ensure that we get the most appropriate place for our evening.



Mental running

Howard Seal

Two months ago, over the last weekend of April I took part in my first Backyard Ultra. Three months of focused training and as much preparation as possible culminated with me standing alongside 57 others in a field ready to run/walk/crawl for as long as we could or wanted. With no idea how long I'd be out, start slow, stay slow and try not to get too slow was the plan... Anyway I'm getting ahead of myself.

Back in 2021 I'd looked at the Backyard Ultra (BYU) format as something I may like to try. The Cowshed BYU in Northumberland looked like a good one, being close by, lumpy for a BYU, mostly off road and organised by a great low key events company called Greener Miles Running. It wasn't until early January this year when I finally bit the bullet and entered the race. Having had a low patch towards the end of 2022 I needed a focus, with no thoughts yet of a training plan or logistics, all training would need to be geared towards this one goal.

What is a BYU?

It is a mental challenge, more of an endurance event than a race, where competitors aim to complete as many 4.167 mile laps, known as yards, as they can. There's a one hour time limit for each lap. On the hour, every hour a new lap begins until only one person is left. If you aren't in the start "corral" for the beginning of a lap you are out: simple, but as the tagline goes: "It's easy until it's not." Why such an odd sounding distance per lap? It's how far you need to run each hour to cover 100 miles in 24 hours. To have a winner, the last person has to complete one more lap than the next (called the assist) or everyone counts as DNF. The format was devised by Lazarus Lake, the sadistic mind behind The Barkley Marathon; the race that eats the world's best runners for breakfast. In the event where the former world record was set, two Belgian runners both completed 101 laps, but neither started lap 102 so technically the world record holders did not finish the race. The record was extended to 102 yards (425 miles) in June...

What possessed you to do it?

As many of you will be aware I have long term mental health challenges, namely BPD (Borderline personality disorder) and associated social anxiety, OCD and depression amongst other things. It's a constant balancing act between not being complacent and analysing everything to the nth degree. Reflection and mindfulness are great tools with running and being outside a powerful medicine,

to a point. Let me explain: Running and being in nature boosts mood and health in general, but my BPD means I need to be alone for long periods, whilst my OCD can lead to me pushing way beyond my limits. When in balance this can be a powerful characteristic as it allows me to run ultras though I am acutely aware longer ones could have serious mental ramifications. An event where you have to choose when to rest would not be a good idea for me as I wouldn't stop until I physically collapsed. With that in mind, I thought a BYU would be a great fit: you have to stay mentally strong to keep going but cannot go too far beyond your personal limits as the one hour time limit per lap prevents you from crawling on.

Preparations and training

How do you even train for such a thing? Mainly by running slowly, running often and practising what you'll do between laps. It means getting ready for being on your feet for a long time whilst tired, training to recover faster, learning to eat and drink the right amount to maintain and fuel your mind and body, and to learn how to do that on the move. It means mentally preparing for the inevitable ups and downs, learning to run sleep deprived and how to power nap. It means to prepare for the potential monotony of a multi lap event by having tricks to alleviate it. Mental preparation is at least, if not more important than the physical bit and harder to do.

I did a few "crazy" things as part of my prep: running the date in kilometres throughout January, running the date in miles throughout February, running 10k every 4 hours for 48 hours and multiple "yard" practices to simulate the race (I got up to 7 yards).

People often say it is easier for me to train for this kind of thing as I have a lot of spare time. On the face of it I'd agree it should be, though, it isn't. It can take most of the day just to get out of the house making it, at times, very hard to train. Mental health can be a right git with a penchant for irony.

Race day...

OK so where were we? Ah yes, standing in a field with 57 others preparing for a race of undetermined length. All the preparations done, advice listened to and plan ready. As the race would take me into the unknown my expectations were more like rough targets. I felt I had enough knowledge, kit and food to adapt as required. The course record was at the back of my mind as I was fairly confident I could get up to 36 laps, realistically the assist was my target.

As we gathered nervously waiting for the off, positioned near the back, since speed isn't important, I tried to keep my mind on the coming lap and not think too far ahead, I failed as thoughts of the night running, dawn chorus, weather, if my tent was set up optimally, what I was going to eat etc. etc. bounced around my head as the countdown began:

10, 9, 8... 3, 2, 1 Bell! We were off.



It was almost comical the speed most of us set off at, chatting and jogging as if we were on a jolly. After 150m, at the first rise we slowed from a jog to a walk! The first lap was very social as we made our way around the "Yard" mostly in a large group with some flying off ahead and a few walking at the back. Most people hadn't done a BYU before but those who had were near the back conserving energy. It was good to get a feel for the route on that first lap, deliberately going extra slow.

Over the next five laps I gradually picked up the pace to get a feel for what felt most efficient. Lap five was a planned fast one with nasal breathing only (NBO) as a bigger feed with protein was scheduled. I forgot about nasal breathing until about 1 km in: oops! The bacon and avocado toasted sandwich with potatoes and a cuppa went down well, I even managed to change my socks, ready for a slow lap.

Laps 6 - 10 ticked off nicely, mostly keeping to a nice easy pace and chatting with a few people. As is typical for me I usually forgot to introduce myself or ask their names! Sorry guys! The only concern at this stage was how often I needed to use the toilet, this persisted for the first 12 laps needing to, um, relieve myself after 10 of them. Luckily by lap 15 all was right again: note to self don't go out the night before and have a rich meal; stick to the plain food as planned! It was nice though and good company.



Lap 18 was my first proper target as I wanted to be serenaded by the dawn chorus. Unfortunately by then it was raining, footfall and rustle of the waterproof dampened the bird song which was a tad disappointing. A curious Roe deer watching from its wooded vantage perplexed as to why these strange humans were running in circles helped lift me, as did the rising sun. Another worry on lap 20 as I got the uncontrollable sweats making for a slow lap, three packets of crisps before the next lap to improve my sodium levels: the 100 miles mark approached.

Second target: finish lap 24 and be on the start line for lap 25. At this point there were 4 of us left, Chris

stopped at the end of lap 24 and Billy stopped after lap 25. He'd beaten last year's total and covered the distance of the Lakeland Hundred, his main race in July.

Then there were two. Only Keiren and I started lap 26. He looked so fresh, so my new target was to keep going as long as I could and be the best assist possible, hopefully getting to that 34 lap course record. He continued to knock out smooth laps but was slowing, his knee was beginning to give him trouble.

By now it was: Get to the start line, finish the lap, quick turnaround, get to the start line, and repeat until fail.

Lap 31, the one after covering 200km was a close call, my sodium levels were low again so I struggled to run much as I sweated profusely even at a very low effort. The dandelions were pulsating and flashing at me, the ground wobbling but somehow I managed to get back with a little less than 90 seconds to spare: drink, have a gel, refill my soft flask with electrolyte and get back on the line with 30 seconds left before the next lap. Kieren joined me and ...3, 2, 1.

Go.

As usual Kieren was ahead pretty quickly but he stopped by the first gate to sort his leg. As we swapped places I thought it might be a bit of kidology, but every time I looked behind there was no sign of him. Part of me was thinking "I've got this", part of me "Come on Kieren" and part of me "relax, just relax and finish the lap".

With 1.5km to go I heard car beeps coming from the road on my right and cheers from a house ahead then "We are the Champions" started blaring out accompanied by "You can do it Howard". Finally as the muddy descent to the short road section approached meaning 1km to go I started to believe: I had 13 mins to finish the lap.



Crossing that line having completed 32 laps, running 131 miles was a surreal thing. Congratulating and

commiserating Kieren in equal measure I started to relax then, like a bus, the exhaustion hit me. Suddenly I could barely walk, my words slurred, my mind started to drift and sleep was calling. Shelagh, who had just missed me finishing, packed everything away as I was of no use to anyone by then.

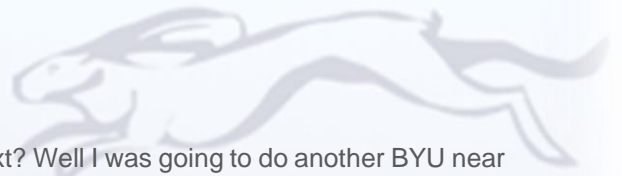


Recovery... sort of

A few days later as the dust was settling I was invited to run as part of the 10 person England team at the four nations championship in Wales at the start of June, just six weeks away. I knew that wasn't enough time to recover but also didn't want to turn down such an opportunity.

Wales was a humbling experience: it didn't go to plan. My strategies from the Cowshed didn't work in the unrelenting heat which was exacerbated by the lack of shade, with few opportunities to cool down between laps and warm water to refill bottles with.

There was a lot more going on than that though. The course was very dry and single track terrain for the majority of it meaning you were forced to go at a pace dictated by those ahead and keep your eyes focused a couple of metres in front due to the uneven rocky ground. In a normal race I would happily sit behind then surge past if an opportunity arose. But it was so dry, clouds of dust formed from the footfall ahead, which was then being inhaled. To push past would mean the use of precious energy needed later, so it was dust or surge, neither a good option.



Looking at the views and taking in the beautiful surroundings, something I love to do was mostly not possible. In reality if you disregard the heat I would still have struggled. The Cowshed was still affecting me, I'd not eaten, drunk or slept well in the fortnight before due to performance anxiety which then spiralled into a feedback loop further increasing anxiety.

Maybe the choice to keep it secret until just before the start was the wrong thing to do if others knew their support would have alleviated some of the issues? We will never know. I'm still very proud to have run for England and hope to again.

What next? Well I was going to do another BYU near Pitlochry in July to get back on that proverbial horse and try out alternate tactics and strategies. Knee issues and fatigue put paid to that idea, maybe for the best, but I will be back!

Keep running, keep having fun and keep being a brilliant group of people who make CFR a club that I am proud to be a member of.



My solo BGR

Pete Faulkner

A brief glance down at my watch reveals I'm doing 7 min 25 per mile pace as I try to open up my legs as best I can, running down Newlands valley using whatever little is left in me. Without pause, but with a degree of apprehension at the possibility of cramping, and uncertainty as to quite how my ailing body will react, I throw myself at, and over the rapidly approaching gate – just one of the seventeen I must negotiate on my run in from the base of Robinson. A short time later, at 04:50am on 18th June 2023 I touch the door of Moot Hall, some 23 hours and 50 minutes after leaving the very same spot.

I had finally done it: I had completed a sub-24 hour solo, unsupported Bob Graham Round comprising 42 of Lakeland's highest summits over a distance of 65.5 miles, with 26,636 ft of ascent and descent.

But those aren't the real numbers....

236.5 miles, 99,964 ft of ascent, 89 hours 39 minutes - that's how long I've actually spent attempting solo, unsupported Bob Graham Rounds.

I could talk facts and figures all day long (and would happily do so - if you don't know already, I'm not someone who's good at moderation!) but the numbers don't tell a fraction of the story of my journey to be at one with the mountains.

They don't come close to explaining the distress of being immobilised by nausea and dizziness while precariously balancing on the exposed West Wall Traverse on Scafell, the loneliness of enduring engulfing hill fog in the dead of night for hour after hour, the dark places in the depths of the mind where all sorts of demons lurk, ready to emerge when one is at their most vulnerable, or the struggle to overcome the all-consuming fatigue that must be battled in order to take just one – more - step.

The numbers also fail to convey the elation, the gratitude, the freedom, the feelings of total peace, calm and acceptance that are the other side of the very same coin and can only be truly appreciated when one is prepared to experience the lowest of lows in order to reach the highest highs. Without one, you cannot have the other.

Facts and figures don't show the worry and impeded movement on technical terrain resulting from hours spent with lost vision in one eye from the bitter, driving winds over The Dodds at night, or the joy and hope that a new dawn brings as the sun finally rises over Fairfield and that lost vision returns, or the restorative feeling of sugar gradually finding its way

into the body from the first bite of food that actually stays down after ten hours unable to retain anything.

They don't tell of the hundreds of hours spent learning every aspect of the route, experimenting with different lines, in all weathers, consciously creating positive associations with individual pieces of terrain, specific views and landmarks (all hail Mini Jesus on Kirk Fell!); all of which will be drawn on at a later date and play an integral part in achieving such a demanding feat.

They don't take into account the hours and miles spent supporting other people's Rounds: waiting with baited breath at Dunmail Raise in the dead of night to see head torches slowly wind their way down from Seat Sandle, the weight of responsibility of leading an unknown runner into the night as you play your part in their BG journey - learning how they function, what they respond to, how often they need to eat, what pulls them back from the brink of meltdown when the going gets tough (or how many Mini Cheddars it's acceptable to force-feed a stranger before things get awkward!). Neither do the numbers show the friendships that develop, the deep sense of understanding, admiration and unity that come from experiencing such challenges with others.

The cold, hard numbers don't show any of that, but it's these aspects - the human aspects, not the numbers that have been on my mind recently: both during and since my latest Round. It appears, you see, that success is not a solo endeavour!

In all, I've made four attempts at the Round: all solo, unsupported. I could probably write a book about them, such are the numbers of lessons learnt and experiences, well – experienced, but that's for another time otherwise this piece will become an endurance event in itself! I probably ought to give a brief run down of those attempts though....

June 20-21st 2021 was my first attempt. The epitome of solo, unsupported and the moment a 'maybe one day' became a 'there's no time like the present'.



Inspired and full of confidence having jumped in to run three legs of support on a friend's BG the week before, I saw a weather window, booked the afternoon and the following day off work, packed my kit (all 8kg of it!) and left Moot Hall at 8pm that evening. Nobody knew I was out there, and that's how I wanted it - me and the mountains on the most epic of adventures. It scared me stiff, but it excited me more.

A real adventure from start to finish.

The first 12 hours all excitement and happiness, followed by 10 hours of absolute hell: vomiting, nausea, dizziness, not even able to keep water down. I was unable to move for periods when dizziness made it unsafe on technical terrain. I dug deep, really deep to pull back lost time over Leg 4 and 5, until lying down and briefly losing consciousness as I ascended Robinson.

I awoke to the most surreal calm feeling, knowing the ordeal was almost over and that I would make it safely to Keswick, so there was no rush. When my watch died as I reached the final summit my brain pulled the plug (if it ain't on Strava...) and I contentedly and casually walked back to Keswick, stopping for a conversation with a sheep along the way.



On reflection this was definitely self-sabotage as I couldn't bear the thought of just missing the 24 hour deadline, (or just making it, but with no proof) so wanted to take any doubt out of the equation. The brain does funny things when you're fatigued past the realms of rational thought. I'd wanted to find where my limit was, where I would lose my ability to push on no matter what, and for the first time I found it.

My brain's self-preservation mode had overridden my motivation and scuppered any possibility of doing anything other than what was required for survival. It was a long, slow walk. Although I was tempted not to, I made myself climb the steps to Moot Hall, finally completing the Round in 24 hours 17 minutes.



July 23-24th 2021

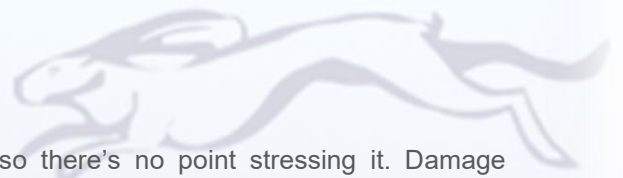
After less than a month to stew over my near miss, I made a last minute decision to go, expecting a break in the heat wave we were experiencing. There was no such break! I definitely wasn't recovered from the previous attempt. Heat exhaustion ensued and I bailed out after Steeple, using Wind Gap for an absolutely horrific descent down to Wasdale where I was saved by friends with Coke and Ice cream!

June 3rd 2022

Despite a difficult year with foot injuries I wanted another stab at the BG, leaving me time to recover before going out to Chamonix in August for CCC.

Another evening start, but even as I set off to a glorious sunset, I was battling the demons of past attempts and full of anxiety going into the night, knowing the ordeal that lay ahead.

Nasty conditions on Leg 2 with strong wind and thick fog led to the aforementioned loss of eyesight in one eye for several hours – disconcerting to say the



least, but apparently not uncommon with Ultra runners.

There was an empty feeling of 'going through the motions' as I touched summit after summit – this didn't have the feeling of adventure and was more a case of just wanting to get it done.

I missed the magic and excitement, but physically I felt good on Leg 3, until the descent from Scafell to Wasdale produced severe lower leg pain.

Into Leg 4 the pain continued and it became obvious it wasn't just a 'niggle'. I was haemorrhaging time so, not wanting to exacerbate any potential injury I called it a day at Steeple – AGAIN!

Unfortunately there's no easy way to quit in the hills: I had a 10 mile walk out to Honister along Moses' (aka "Quitter's") Trod where again. Friends supporting another BG were my salvation (more Coke and Ice cream!).

[Subsequently, the lower leg injury (three sprains and two cases of tendonitis) put me out for the rest of the summer – goodbye dreams of racing in the Alps after 5 years of preparation!]

After the 3rd attempt I thought I was done: I couldn't see how I could bring myself to face the same ordeal all over again – all for the sake of 17 minutes.

The itch

Gradually though, the itch became too great not to scratch and I prepared for a fourth and final attempt, but this time mixing it up with a totally different (5 am) start time to change the feel of the entire Round and bring back the adventure. I'd consciously and meticulously trained for the tough night section on Leg 4, making peace with, and even learning to enjoy, the long technical climbs and even completing a deliberately unpleasant run in a very depleted and tired state to replicate how I would feel at that point in the Round. I had never been so well prepared.

After a long period of exceptionally dry weather, legs 1, 2 and the first part of 3 were much more runnable than normal, and even at a conscious 'Southern pace' (as a friend would say). With carefully maintained comfortable effort levels, I had built a time buffer that I maintained. It was a fresh new day and I was super excited for the adventure, thoroughly enjoying the experience and feeling very relaxed about the whole thing.

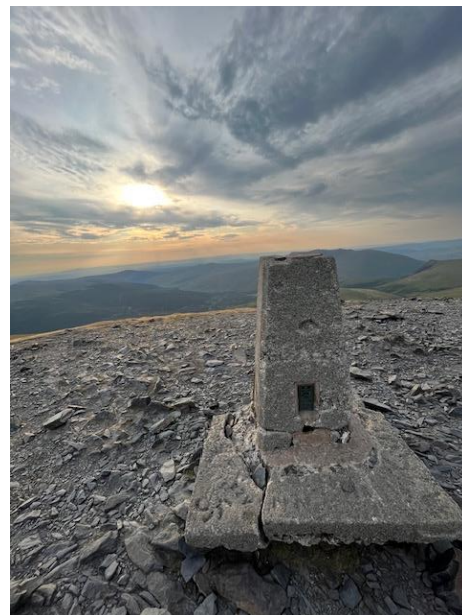
Into the evening I was waiting for things to start getting rough, as they inevitably would. The climb up Yewbarrow was relentless as always and initially I thought this was the start of a downward spiral, but looking back now I see that I didn't drop too much time against schedule, despite making the decision not raise effort levels too high. Yewbarrow is always

a killer, so there's no point stressing it. Damage limitation is the order of the day.

I didn't even feel flustered when my watch suddenly and unexpectedly died on Steeple – I couldn't explain its uncharacteristically short battery life, but there was no point worrying. I stopped to dig out various cables, using my spare head torch battery as a power bank, and got going again, unphased.

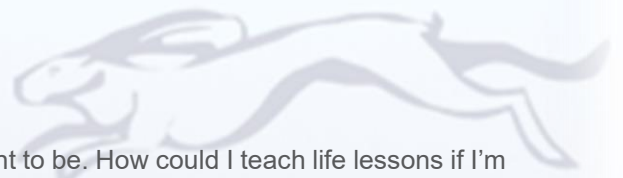
Between Pillar and Kirk Fell was where things went downhill, big time. I was aware that my cognitive function was really lacking – something I don't usually experience no matter how tired. I was struggling to pick lines through the rocky terrain, getting clumsy on my feet, and just couldn't get my head right. I also couldn't get food down. My mouth was inexplicably dry to the point that I could only swallow liquid. I tried to eat satsumas but they were spoilt – a day in the heat had turned them fizzy! That instigated the throwing up.

From then on over Kirk Fell and Great Gable I lost more and more time, felt continually worse and could not get any calories in. I was in a daze and spiralling downhill, now almost 20 min outside schedule (and 15 min outside 24 hour pace). This is what I'd prepared myself for during that depleted training run, but this time I couldn't get calories in to revive myself – nothing was working.



I thought about other people's struggles on this same section during their own rounds – tantrums, tears, stomach issues; I've seen it all, and I've also witnessed the most gutsy, inspiring come back against all the odds that started on the very rocks I was now collapsed amongst.

Those people, now friends who I take great inspiration from had pulled through, and I was



determined to do the same, but I was experiencing complete physical and mental fatigue in a way I haven't before – there was no specific pain or issue, I just had absolutely nothing and my head was all over the place.

I knew this was the moment that it was all about: everything else until now was just to get me to this point. This is where I either find a way to open my eyes, lift my face off the ground, get up and start moving, or I give up.

This is where I find out how much I want it and what sort of person I am: where I discover if, when I've reached the bottom of the well, I have what it takes to keep digging.

There was nobody there to mother me, or bark orders, or help me to my feet, and I'd pretty much run out of willpower to do this for myself.

17 minutes – who actually cares?!



But then I thought about a conversation I'd had with an amazing little boy just days before. He'd faced a really tough time during an important cycle race where the odds had been stacked against him, and then mechanical issues struck – at six years old it must have seemed like the end of the World.

Being the super-competitive child that he is, one would have expected an emotional over-reaction where feet were stomped, things were thrown, etc., and that would have been understandable. Instead though, he knuckled down, he struggled to push the only gear he had, fought back the tears and the urge to quit, and never gave up, ultimately regaining most of the time he'd lost and even managing some sort of grimace/smile as he passed the photographer!

We'd talked afterwards about how he'd made really good decisions, how it's important not to give up when things seem to be falling apart around you, how you don't just quite because life isn't going to plan.

I thought about how my parents have always led by example and shown us that you don't just quit in the face of adversity, and that's the sort of role model

that I want to be. How could I teach life lessons if I'm not prepared to follow them myself?

In that moment I found my 'why'. I was no longer alone in the mountains, I had everyone I'd ever shared these hills with beside me, showing faith in me, encouraging me along, I had the innocent eyes of a six year old looking up at me for guidance. This was no longer about me wanting to beat an arbitrary time, it was about me being the person and the example that I wanted to be, for other people. Perhaps that's what had been missing before – my 'why'. And that's what was different this time around – I realised I wasn't doing it alone.

Tentatively back on my feet

With newfound motivation I got the final kick up the backside that I needed – head torches! I'd been aware of another BG party behind me all day: I'd declined food at Dunmail Raise from their crew, I'd seen climbers setting up on Broad Stand, but now I saw lights descending Kirk Fell and making their way up Great Gable towards me, like the Grim Reaper heading through the night to sweep me up.

If those lights caught me it was game over – I couldn't run with anyone else or I'd lose the 'unsupported' status of my Round, and I didn't have time to slow down and let them pass, so I needed to get a wriggle on.

I somehow managed to pick the pace up and found a sense of urgency and determination that kept my feet moving beneath me and got my head back in the game, and I started to claw back time.

Descending to Honister I didn't have time to waste, but needed a quick water refill from the ever-reliable spring. Except this time it wasn't – it was dry as a bone. That's it then – no water for the remaining 3 hours. I couldn't even look up at the support crew waiting for the pursuing group as I ran through the carpark and past their table laid out with a banquet of everything you could imagine – Coke, proper food; all the things that I was craving to revive my body and get me through the last leg. I could ask them for none of it, but I needed something.

Just out of sight of the Slate Mine at the start of the climb up Dale Head is a solitary rock. I'd sat there on a training run for a picnic, and I sat there again now. I forced some peanuts into my mouth. I couldn't even chew them, but I hoped the salt or the grease, or something would find its way into my body and give me some energy for the last slog.

I hiked the ups, I trotted the flats and I ran the downs and by Robinson, the last of the 42 summits I was just five minutes outside schedule. The final, steep descent didn't come easily, but I was spurred on by the lights chasing me down just a summit or so behind, and I'd been looking forward to Newlands



Valley – full of heart-warming memories from a lovely family walk there a few weeks earlier. I pictured Herdies scattering in every direction as that same little boy joyfully sprinted down the trod, and I imagined he was there with me now.

The rest, as they say, is history. I ran the last six miles of flat farmland (I use the trail run-in to Keswick rather than the road - it's a fell running challenge after all and that tarmac stuff sucks!) faster than I've run in a long time, the soles of my feet on fire but my legs able to move relatively well now they were no longer faced with the inclines they'd battled for almost an entire day.

Having worked out what I was up to when I said I wasn't free to help support another friend's running project that weekend and having followed my progress on my tracker (I always carry a Spot Tracker when in the hills alone) a couple of friends (both of whom I'd been fortunate enough to help on their BG's, and who have been a great encouragement during my BG journey) arrived just in time to see me into Keswick and climb those infamous steps to the door of Moot Hall. That meant the World to me and really cemented to me that this may have been a solo Round, but its success was most definitely not a solo endeavour.



I have always spent much of my time in life, and in the hills alone, and I love that – the hills are my happy place, my therapy, my escape. But throughout the course of my BG journey over the last few years I have learnt that the best things in life are even better when shared with others.

Every mile I share with other people – on club runs, helping strangers with Rounds, long days battling awful weather with friends, guiding people through my ML work, enjoying much loved family hikes is a mile that I treasure beyond belief and every person that I share those miles with plays a part in making this journey what it is. I may have spent those 23 hours and 50 minutes by myself, but this time I was not alone.

Thank you all.

Pete Faulkner

June 2023



17-18 June '23

LEG 1	TOD	lg Time	Elpsd	Actual
Moot Hall	05:00	0	0	
Skiddaw	06:25	85	01:25	1:21
Great Calva	07:10	45	02:10	2:03
Blencathra	08:20	70	03:20	3:02
Threlkeld - arr	08:54	34	03:54	3:41
Threlkeld - dep	09:09	15	04:09	
			04:09	
LEG 2	TOD	lg Time	Elpsd	
Clough Head	10:08	59	05:08	4:30
Great Dodd (N)	10:38	30	05:38	4:57
Watson Dodd	10:47	9	05:47	5:05
Stybarrow Dodd	10:56	9	05:56	5:14
Raise	11:14	18	06:14	5:30
Whiteside	11:22	8	06:22	5:39
Lower Man	11:40	18	06:40	5:54
Helvellyn	11:46	6	06:46	6:01
Nethermost Pike	11:56	10	06:56	6:09
Dollywaggon Pike	12:08	12	07:08	6:22
Fairfield	12:50	42	07:50	7:09
Seat Sandal	13:15	25	08:15	7:34
Dunmail - arr	13:40	25	08:40	8:03
Dunmail - dep	13:55	15	08:55	8:16
			04:46	
LEG 3	TOD	lg Time	Elpsd	
Steel Fell	14:20	25	09:20	8:37
Calf Crag	14:40	20	09:40	9:01
Sergeant Man	15:15	35	10:15	9:40
High Raise	15:24	9	10:34	9:49
Thunacar Knott	15:39	15	10:39	10:01
Harrison Stickle	15:49	10	10:49	10:09

Pike O Stickle	16:01	12	11:01	10:26
Rossett Pike (W)	16:46	45	11:46	11:19
Bowfell	17:25	39	12:25	11:45
Esk Pike	17:53	28	12:53	12:09
Great End (E)	18:21	28	13:21	12:42
Ill Crag	18:38	17	13:38	12:56
Broad Crag	18:49	11	13:49	13:06
Scafell Pike	19:02	13	14:02	13:21
Scafell	19:37	35	14:37	14:02
Wasdale - arr	20:12	35	15:12	15:05
Wasdale - dep	20:32	20	15:32	
			06:37	
LEG 4	TOD	lg Time	Elpsd	
Yewbarrow	21:22	50	16:22	16:05
Red Pike	22:12	50	17:12	16:59
Steeple	22:36	24	17:36	17:13
Pillar	23:10	34	18:10	17:59
Kirk Fell (S)	00:00	50	19:00	19:09
Great Gable	00:47	47	19:47	20:04
Green Gable	01:02	15	20:02	20:18
Brandreth	01:20	18	20:20	20:32
Grey Knotts	01:28	8	20:28	20:42
Honister - arr	01:41	13	20:41	20:55
Honister - dep	01:55	14	20:55	21:11
			05:23	
LEG 5	TOD	lg Time	Elpsd	
Dale Head	02:28	33	21:28	21:37
Hindscarth	02:49	21	21:49	21:56
Robinson	03:15	26	22:15	22:20
Moot Hall	04:55	100	23:55	23:50
			03:00	23:55

Juniors

Richard Jewell

The long Cross country season started winding down towards the end of February with only the National Schools Final and the UK Inter-counties left to run for some of the CFR runners.

11th March – UK Inter-counties XC - Loughborough

Mylo Jewell was selected to run for Cumbria Athletics U15 team for the UK Inter-counties. Unfortunately, Mylo suffered a broken wrist leading up to the finals which severely hampered training and affected the good run of form he had leading up to the event. Mylo's cast was removed the day before the event, travelling down to Loughborough as soon as he got out of hospital. Mylo as always gave it everything but the sticky mud on the Leicestershire course and lack of training made it a hard day out. A strong run considering, finishing 8th Cumbrian.



Mylo Jewell

18th March – National Schools XC Finals – Nottingham

Mylo was selected for the Cumbrian Schools Year 9 and 10 team. Due to the broken wrist and uncertainty over healing time Mylo pulled out of the race early to allow time for a reserve to train for the race.

23rd March – National Primary and Y7 Schools XC Finals – Loughborough

It was Evie Youngman's turn to fly the flag for Cumbria Schools Y7 team. Despite muddy conditions and shoes getting lost all over the course, the team and Evie had a fantastic day out

with Evie finishing in 87th place, and the team winning the bronze medal.



Evie Youngman

Celebration of Achievements – April 2023

When the XC season finally comes to an end it gives the runners a few weeks to rest and re-energise until the fell running season starts. The opportunity was taken during this quiet period to celebrate the achievements of the CFR runners for 2022/23. The Whitehaven Academy was the venue for the event. A coached session was held on the school field before everyone headed inside (removing muddy running shoes first) for cake, biscuits and drinks while certificates and trophies were presented by Coach Tony Jewell and CFR Chairman Paul Jennings.



19th April - Grisedale Grind – CFR SC Race 1

New for the 2023, Summer and Winter championships have been introduced. The main focus of the Summer Championship is fell races, the Winter championship, XC.

The first fell race of the season for many of the CFR runners, also the first race in the CFR Summer Championship was the Keswick AC organised Grisedale Grind. 17 CFR runners across all age groups made their way to Whinlatter for the race. The blue and white squad ran brilliantly running some fantastic races on some tough routes.



U9G – Charlotte Mathieson – 1st

U9G – Mieke Van Shelven – 3rd

U9B – Freddie King – 2nd

U11G – Alice Maddams – 1st

U11G – Megan Connor – 3rd

U11B – Jack Thwaite – 1st

U11B – Oscar Frankham – 5th

U11B – Oscar King – 6th

U11B – Ewan Taylor – 7th

U11B - Wesley Van Shelven – 8th

U13B – Charlie Tulley – 2nd

U13B – Callum Taylor – 3rd

U13B – Joseph Giddings – 4th

U15G – Evie Youngman – 1st

U15B – Ethan Hughes Rudd – 2nd

U17B (seniors race) – Mylo Jewell 1st (16th Overall)

23rd April - Duddon Dash – FRA Championship Race 1 (CFR SC Race 2)

This was the first time many of the young CFR runners had taken part in an FRA championship event. The courses are generally longer than local events but this did not phase our runners. The courses didn't disappoint, they were slippery and technical from the start with two beck crossings in the first 50m of the race. CFR did really well in all races. Many hungry for more FRA championship experience.



Mylo

U9G – Charlotte Mathieson – 2nd

U9G – Anna Giddings -

U11G – Megan Connor – 11th

U11B – Thomas Tacon – 10th

U11B – Samuel Youngman – 23rd

U13G – Alice Hardy – 11th

U13B – Charlie Tulley – 20th

U13B – Joseph Giddings – 30th

U15G – Evie Youngman – 19th

U17B – Mylo Jewell – 17th

2nd May – Lowca 10km

Mylo Jewell ran his 2nd road 10k at Lowca. He was looking to improve on his time he ran at the North Lakes 10km race in January. He did this by running a PB of 36.43, finishing in 5th place.

3rd May – Lords Seat (CFR SC Race 3)

Consistency is key to fantastic results, regular coaching sessions are paying dividends. No fewer than 6 first places through the age groups at the Lords Seat event organised by KAC. Charlotte Mathison, Alice Maddams, Charlie Tulley, Alice Hardy, Ethan Hughes-Rudd and Evie Youngman all winning their races.

U9B – Freddie King – 2nd

U9B – Jonny Frankham – 4th

U9G – Charlotte Mathieson – 1st

U9G – Anna Giddings – 2nd

U9G – Mieke Van-Shelven -4th

U11B – Thomas Tacon – 2nd

U11B – Jack Thwaite – 3rd

U11B – Oscar King – 5th

U11B – Arthur Prosser George – 6th

U11B – Wesley Van-Shelven – 8th

U11B – Samuel Youngman – 9th

U11G – Alice Maddams – 1st

U11G – Megan Connor – 3rd

U13B – Charlie Tulley – 1st

U13B – Callum Taylor – 4th

U13B – Joseph Giddings – 5th

U13G – Alice Hardy – 1st

U15B – Ethan Hughes Rudd – 1st

U15B – Luke Davison – 2nd

U15G – Evie Youngman – 1st



6th May – Todd Crag – FRA Championship Race 2 (CFR SC Race 4)

Race 2 of the CFR championship was the Todd Crag event at Ambleside on Coronation Day. Another great turnout and effort from CFR. The best result came in the U9G race. Charlotte Mathieson ran brilliantly to win.



Thomas Tacon Photo 10 CT and RPG

U9G – Charlotte Mathieson – 1st

U9G – Anna Giddings – 12th

U11B – Thomas Tacon – 8th

U11B – Jack Thwaite – 11th

U11B – Ewan Taylor – 29th

U11B – Samuel Youngman – 34th

U13G – Alice Hardy – 16th

U13B – Charlie Tulley – 26th

U13B – Callum Taylor – 31st

U13B – Joseph Giddings – 36th

U15G – Evie Youngman – 27th

U17B – Mylo Jewell – 18th

20th May – Sale and Ling 2 Tops Dash (CFR SC Race 5)

Two races on the same day, with a huge 24 runners competing around Cumbria. 19 of them taking on the junior races at Sale and Ling. CFR had five victories at the event with Charlotte Mathieson, Freddie King, Alice Maddams, Charlie Tulley and Luke Davison all taking 1st place in their races.



Start Line

U9G – Charlotte Mathieson – 1st

U9G – Anna Giddings – 3rd

U9G – Iona McKinnell – 4th

U9B – Freddie King – 1st

U9B – Jonny Frankham – 4th

U9B – Mieke Van Shelven – 5th

U11G – Alice Maddams – 1st

U11G – Megan Connor – 2nd

U11B – Jack Twaite – 2nd

U11B – Arthur Prosser-George – 3rd

U11B – Oscar King – 4th

U11B – Ewan Taylor – 5th

U11B – Wesley Van Shelven – 6th

U13B – Charlie Tulley – 1st

U13B – Reuban Prosser-George – 2nd

U13B – Callum Taylor – 4th

U13B – Joseph Giddings – 5th

U15B – Luke Davison – 1st

U15B – Ethan Hughes Rudd – 2nd

20th May – Storth Stampede – FRA Championship Race 3

The other race of the day was near Milnthorpe, the 3rd race of the FRA championship. Five runners made the journey on a blisteringly hot day. The course was not a typical fell race with large sections on the road, fields and trail. Great running from all that travelled, gaining valuable points for the championship table. The fast U17 course suited Mylo Jewell who had great run to finish in 10th position.



Alice Hardy

U11B – Thomas Tacon – 11th

U11B – Samuel Youngman – 34th

U13G – Alice Hardy – 11th

U15G – Evie Yougman – 27th

U17B – Mylo Jewell – 10th

24th May – Latterbarrow Loop – (CFR SC Race 6)

The weather was good once again for the mid-week race. There was a slight 'hitch' during the U11/U13 race but it did not seem to affect results or standings in the Summer Championship table. CFR ended up with six 1st places on the night from U9 through to U17. Luke Davison and Ethan Hughes Rudd moved up to the U15 age category this year meaning they got the experience of running with the seniors. Both had fantastic runs and enjoyed the experience. Ethan was just beaten by his dad at the finish, make the most of it Mike! Mylo Jewell improved on last years' position by finishing 4th overall, 1st U17B.



U11/13 start

U9B – Freddie King – 1st

U9B – Finn Hawley – 2nd

U9B – Jonny Frankham – 3rd

U11G – Megan Connor – 1st

U11B – Oscar Frankham – 2nd

U11B – Jack Thwaite – 3rd

U11B – Oscar King – 4th

U11B – Max Hawley – 5th

U11B – Arthur Prosser-George – 6th

U13G – Alice Hardy – 1st

U13B – Charlie Tulley – 1st

U13B – Reuban Prosser-George – 2nd

U13B – Callum Taylor – 3rd

U13B – Joseph Giddings – 4th

Senior Race

U15B – Luke Davison – 1st (25th overall)

U15B – Ethan Hughes Rudd – 2nd (33rd overall)

U17B – Mylo Jewell – 1st (4th overall)

27th May - Hutton Roof Crag

The Frankham brothers enjoyed their day out at Hutton Roof Crag junior races. Jonny (U9) and Oscar (U11) ran well to finish 2nd and 4th in their races.



Oscar and Jonny

28th May - Edinburgh Marathon Festival

Charlotte Mathieson travelled to Edinburgh to take part in the EMF 6-8 yr old 1.5km race. She continued a fantastic run of form, finishing 2nd girl out of 156, only 4 seconds behind the winner.



Charlotte Mathieson

24th June – Hope Boulder (Telford) - FRA Championship Race 4

A few more were entered but due to injury and other issues, only three hardcore CFR members made the journey South to Shropshire. More fantastic running from everyone, fantastic championship points picked up by Alice Hardy in the U13G race finishing 10th.



Alice, Joseph and Thomas

U11B – Thomas Tacon – 6th

U13G - Alice Hardy – 10th

U13B – Joseph Giddings – 23rd

Junior Coaching Details

CFR have been well represented well over the Winter during the XC season and in the Spring fell races. 24 runners are regularly running and

competing in the FRA English Championship and the CFR Summer Championship, more attending the coached sessions. We are now looking forward to the summer shows and more fantastic fell running.

Sessions continue to be held on Saturday mornings at 10am, alternating between Sale Fell and Kirkland Leaps. The sessions are planned around age, ability and the development of each runner. Typical activities include warm up before moving onto agility, balance and co-ordination drills and some short hill reps. There are plenty of opportunities to get a drink and have a breather.

For coaching information contact Tony Jewell on jewelltony@yahoo.co.uk

For other any other issues please contact Stephen Davison on cfr-jnrs@gmail.com

Upcoming Races:

9th July – Clwydian – FRA Championship Race 5

16th July – Big Stone – FRA Championship Race 6

27th July – Ambleside Sports

2nd Aug – Netherhall 10km Junior Races – CFR SC Race 7

30th Aug – Ennerdale Show – CFR SC Race 8

Details will be posted on the CFR Junior FB page.



Marathon du Mont-Blanc 23 km

Charlotte Barker

I don't even know where to start when somebody asks me about Chamonix. Chamonix is Chamonix is the best way to put it and if you can you go then you must go see the beautiful scenery, eat all of the amazing food and try the blueberry beer! Although I bet that the blueberry beer (recently discovered by me!) is not the first thing that appears when you google Chamonix. A quick google will lead you to skiing and some of the world's biggest trail running events such as the UTMB and Marathon du Mont-Blanc. This valley and surrounding areas have, in my opinion, some of the best running trails and climbs in the world.

So... one day last October I entered the ballot to run within the Marathon du Mont-Blanc events. I don't really know why I entered beyond its Chamonix and I dream of running out there. I managed to obtain a place in the 23km race and then told Nick that Chamonix in June would be a great idea. Nick agreed to our holiday and then race support within seconds. Those that don't know me very well, I get big daft ideas which usually involve long runs during my day dreaming of running adventures (I have a busy stressful job!).

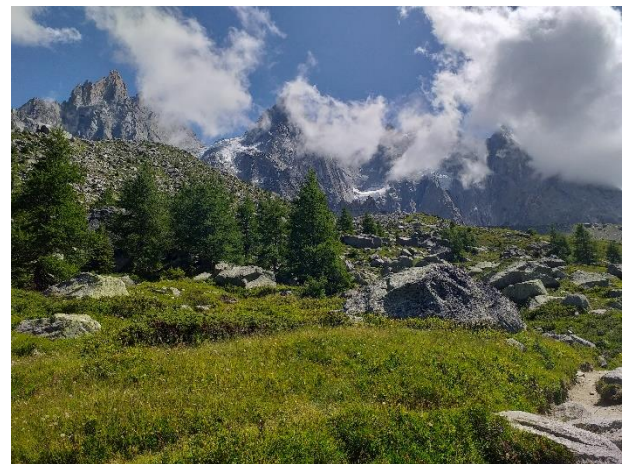
Training

The training for the event was far from what I/Kat (Kat Townsend has the job of coaching me for all of my daft ideas) had planned, I decided to fall off a step at work in February and badly sprain my "good" ankle and then fall over early May whilst out in the fells. However we had some miles in the bank and plenty of ideas about fuelling to support my blood sugars.

The race is 23km (in reality this is more like 26km) with 1680 meters of ascent. I decided to compare it in my head to Buttermere Sailbeck or lots of Ling Fells, however comparison is never a good thing. Chamonix for example has very steep valleys, is located approximately 1000m above sea-level (higher than Scafell Pike) and has glaciers... Buttermere Sailbeck definitely does not have any glaciers on/near the race route just in case you wondered.

It is very interesting and you can very quickly spend several hours considering the impact of high altitude upon the body and the impact when

running. I always feel a lot fitter when I return to Cumbria from Chamonix is one way of explaining it. I had not raced abroad (Scotland does not count, I've checked) and this was one of the considerations as to how I was going to acclimatise whilst tapering for the race. I decided a couple of higher level and then mid-level runs would quickly solve that "concern". I am not sure whether this actually worked but mindset is a powerful part of running, racing and challenges.



Kit

The kit list for the race includes insurance for French and Swiss mountain rescue along with a foil blanket and the normal race kit that we would expect. The list also stated 500ml of water had to be carried, I will return to this item as this was needed a lot more than I believed. I went to have my kit checked on the Thursday evening (the race is on Saturday) at my allocated time. I waved a few items at the French lady who did not understand anything that I was saying in my very broken French with a hint of Cumbrian/Yorkshire. For those that don't know, I had recently taught myself some more French words including "eau" so my school German didn't make a happy appearance when trying to beg for water on route.

Back to the kit check, it is possible that she looked at me and thought from my approach that I knew what I was doing or the likely thought was she had was that I definitely needed the compulsory rescue insurance and that I would be somebody else's problem. I was passed my race number (5122) and decided to go find some carbs for the race



preparation that was being undertaken (eat slightly more and drink more water).

The race number included my name and a Union Jack flag so clearly the 23km was to be my international debut. Poor Nick was informed this many times as I clearly viewed myself as the next Emeile Forsberg or Killian Jornett.

I spent the next 30 something hours trying to drink lots of water and rest my legs. The glasses in the room we had were small glasses that I was treating these as pint glasses which they weren't.

The race

Saturday morning appeared and the weather that we had escaped in the UK of sunshine and very warm temperatures with very limited breeze had decided to make an appearance in the French Alps. I was very disappointed about this as I prefer rain and a slight chill. It was estimated by the start line commentator that it was going to reach over 24 degrees and we were warned to get water where we could for dampening our hats and filling water bottles. I had packed 2 flasks so had 1 litre waiting in my pack which I believed would be enjoyed at Planpraz where the finish arch was located.

We were released in waves every 10 minutes and I found myself allocated to SAS 4 (the final wave) which set off at 8.30am. A few days beforehand I had located a friend who is a local and has ran the Marathon Du Mont-Blanc races and the UTMB races, his advice was "be fast and be rude for the first 15 minutes otherwise you will find yourself stuck behind people on the narrow sections!".

At 8.17am we walked forward to the starting arch and I was nervously stood on the 3rd row smiling at anybody, the mountain huts located at Flegere and Planpraz and the route ahead of me. There was lots of chattering in French which I did not understand, the next words announced over the dance music was:

"cinq, quatre, trois, deux, un... lets go".

My legs and smile happily ran with the go fast and rude mentality towards the river path towards Le Lavancher. The path was trail which reminded me of Ennnerdale valley on the way to Memorial Bridge from Middle Bridge but a lot wider. I heard lots of cow bells being ran and "allez allez Charlotte". The name on my race number was clearly visible to the local supporters cheering on the court. I glanced down at my watch and spotted that I was running

faster than planned and was in the numbers surrounding 7.30 minutes per mile. I didn't let off this speed until the climbs started.

The first leg is 554m of ascent with 11.8km of distance. I happily trotted up the hills at this stage and ran the flats and occasional downhill. There were lots of poles being used and I thought fondly of the set in my pack but decided to stick to my plan of finding them after Montroc when the steep uphill started. However the "steep uphill" was also in this first leg. I arrived at Montroc with 30 minutes ahead of the cut off. This put me slightly at ease as the cut offs has caused a lot of stress in the weeks leading up to the race with lots of Strava searching of my previous runs and races. At Montroc I grabbed a piece of cut up orange, filled my flasks that I had drank (0.7L by this stage) and stuck my head under the water spray to cool me down. It was definitely getting warmer than 24 degrees!

I have since been informed that the first 18 minutes and then the first 10km was attacked using my interval level training effort. Caught up in the moment? A bit daft? Or following the advice of a friend from Chamonix/Ambleside AC?

I headed towards the next section which included the very steep climbs to reach La Flegere which was the next cut off/major checkpoint. I had to reach this and be through the check point by 1pm. The poles very quickly appeared and I was starting to feel tired, warm and a bit sick. I had been eating every 30 minutes due to my type 1 diabetes but that was starting to slacken off. I quickly discovered that this section to Le Bechar (1691m) was steep narrow forest trails with lots of tree routes and rocks. This route went up, a bit more up and then down quite quickly to then require more climb. I pushed on the uphill and found myself moving well but drinking a lot more than I normally do.

On one of the climbs I glanced to my left to see Mont-Blanc and the surrounding peaks standing in all of their beautiful early summer snow and rock conditions, then I turn to my right to see three sunbathing ibex! I waved to alert Phillipee behind me (his race number suggested he was from Belgium) about the ibex, he was very eager to see the ibex. I had only seen these alpine animals on postcards and fridge magnets in town not actually on the trails so I was very pleased.

I then had to contend with the downhill to Bas du Bois du Plagnolet which required a lot height being lost on very rocky technical ground. There were

some interesting very narrow rocky sections which required poles use to steady myself and avoid a fall.

I became quite aware of my ankles and clumsiness at this stage. I had already been shoved forwards on my ankle on a narrow path to Montroc by a much older French man that clearly did not enjoy being overtaken by younger female runners (I spotted him push a few people along with me).

I reached Bas du Bois and spotted a handy sign (there's lots of these in the Alps that are very helpful to navigate and estimate timings) that La Flegere was 55 minutes away. I was happy as this would provide me with 1 hour of time to play with within the cut offs.

I continued to drink and very quickly ran out of water whilst checking my blood sugars which had decided to respond to my lack of insulin supply with spiking upwards (this has to be quickly sorted so that the sugar supply in my blood could become converted to energy).



I had slowed a lot by this stage due to the heat and lack of shade alongside the steep climbs. I drank 1 litre of water in 3.8km which had 350m of climb. Thankfully I found a friendly British marshal who offered me some of her warm water which I eagerly

accepted. However I soon spotted a helpful sign that informed me "La flegere 1 hour 55 minutes". This hit me quite hard as this meant that I had 10 minutes to play with to hit the cut off.

I reminded myself that these are walking signs and gave myself a mental push as a positive powerful mental approach is a major part of tough routes, races and long distance challenges.

The next 2-3 miles were tough. Mentally the strength was there and the legs were moving through pure stubbornness and determination. My fellow runners were moving at a speed that I can only describe as zombie speed and I too was lost in this speed. My water started to run out again which meant after my filling of the flasks that I had drank 3.5 litres of water in 12 miles.

If anybody ever tells you that La Flegere is close, it isn't and there are some big climbs before you hit the ski path climbs to reach the cablecar station. I sat down 2/3 of the way up the final hill for 2 minutes to try and fan myself along with checking my blood sugars etc.

A French female runner smiled at me and asked "ca va" in a concerned voice. We had been battling for several miles and had a good level of mutual respect for each other by this stage. I looked to those who were behind me in the race and noticed that the last climb wasn't without drama as a very eager male runner was trying to push his partner at a faster speed. She started to cry and continued with the zombie speed up the hill.

I looked around at the people surrounding me and those behind me, there was a lot of tiredness, determination but a lot of compassion for the other runners. I continued on my determined stubborn approach to the checkpoint that was in sight. I also smiled at the lady with the eager partner to show my support.

1.03pm was displayed on the suunto watch... "hello, I am really sorry to have to tell you this but I am having to time you out as the time was 1pm for this checkpoint" "it is okay, I understand and thank you for making that difficult decision for me".

3 minutes... 180 seconds...

I found 3 slices of orange and filled my empty flask with coke whilst trying to calculate the bizarre emotional response that I found myself feeling. I felt happy, I felt proud and I felt okay about it all. I

passed an orange to “ca va” lady and placed my hand on her shoulder with the response of a smile and “bravo”. She cried with both relief and disappointment. I stood there trying to remember some more French beyond “Je joue au foot” which is “I played football” but went with the view of she didn’t need to know about the made up game of football.

I found a seat and videoed the party atmosphere of La Flegere then decided after 2 minutes that I was going to go find Nick and finish the route. I am not known for my patience! Nick had seen my timer and knew that sad news was coming from me so had set off from Planpraz to La Flegere to find me. His stories of the runners ahead of me provided a similar picture to the zombies that I saw around me. There were several runners being treated on route for heat related issues by the race medical teams. The heat, terrain, route and altitude was not to be under estimated.



After 1 mile, I found Nick coming towards me and I announced that I was okay but I really wanted to reach the finish. I went to the extent of saying I wanted a glass of water and a solero ice-cream from the mountain hut. Please note that continuing on the route but not in the race is allowed if race control were aware which they were thanks to a handy contact service that had been set up. After 4 miles and 1 hour 50 minutes, I reached Planpraz and the snow that surrounded the area. I laid in the snow and then allowed Nick to place snow between my CFR t-shirt and running pack due to how warm I was.

I hadn’t finished the race but I had given a good attempt and had a reason for next year’s holiday (subject to the ballot result).

The take aways from this are:

1. Never under-estimate a route
2. Never under-estimate yourself
3. Compassion costs nothing to you but means a lot to others when everything is getting tough
4. Enjoyment is important as what is the point if you aren’t happy?
5. **YOU CAN DO ANYTHING**, including that big climb at any pace including zombie pace
6. Ibex like the sun on their stomachs



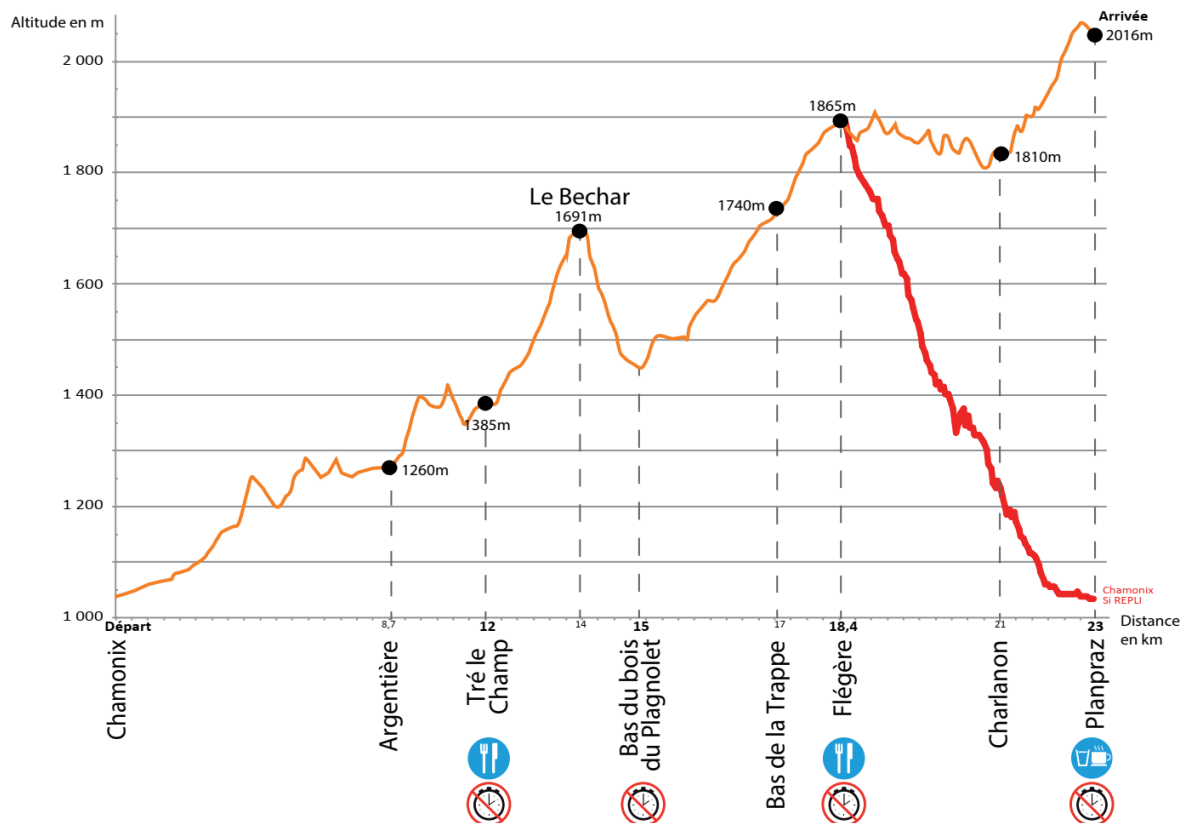
Lucy Bartholomew of team Salomon responded to my message to her saying thank you for her social media posts that reflected my views as her father was timed out of Western States by 2 minutes on the same day of my race. She sent me the following “the finish line is just a line in the sand”. This is exactly my response! Sometimes we hit the line and sometimes we stumble towards it.

On we go to the next big daft idea... The Lap September 2023.



23KM DU MONT-BLANC

Tracé rouge repli en fonction des conditions météo



Barrière Horaire
Time restriction

Ravitaillement Complet
Full Refreshment

Ravitaillement Léger
Light Refreshment

Relays

Sam Holding, Sophie Likeman

It's time to start getting excited about everyone's favourite two days of the year... The Hodgson Brothers and FRA British relays.

This year, the Hodgson's will take place on Sunday 1st October. The FRA's will be three weeks later on Saturday 21st October.



Jennie and Pip finish Leg 1 at HBR 2022. Photo: Darren Parker.

If you haven't taken part in one before, there is a reason that many (of all abilities) consider these two days to be the best in the fell running calendar. Please get in touch if there is anything you would like to know about the events.

Entries will soon open for both events and this is our plea for expressions of interest. If you would like to be part of a CFR team at either or both events, please let one of us know via email – sam741@hotmail.com (Sam – men's team captain) & sophienoon@googlemail.com (Sophie – women's team captain).

In the past it has been very common for people to feel like their running ability isn't adequate for being a part of a relay team – please know that this is entirely incorrect and is not true for any club member. Every CFR member represents a valuable

asset to our teams. So valuable that in many cases, we wouldn't be able to put a team together without you there.

For the Hodgson's we're likely to have a Vet's team and, in a break from tradition, we're keen to try mixed teams in the open category. Depending on numbers it may end up being two mixed teams or one mixed and one men's.



Sam and Mario hand over to Dan and Pete at HBR 2022. Photo: Ruth Stanley

For the FRA's we'll be trying to get as many teams in as we can. It will depend on how many teams we're allowed to enter but the aim will be to give anyone who wants to run the chance to do so. It is also worth noting that the FRA's are taking place in Keswick this year... As if you needed more encouragement...

We look forward to receiving your eager responses to be a part of these great days out.

Sam & Sophie.

