Lakes in a Day 2018

By Ian Grimshaw

13th October…….. the same day as Storm Callum…..

Caldbeck to Cartmel : 50 miles, 4000m of ascent

By the time the day of the race arrived, I was beginning to wonder why I had entered. I'd done the race 2 years previously, but this year I felt woefully under prepared. I'd only managed 4 long runs of 30km or more as training, with a long weekend in Glencoe marking the courses for the Skyline series. On top of that, Storm Callum was due to arrive in full force about 2 hours after the start of the race. So it was with some apprehension that I stood in Caldbeck at 7.50 am waiting for the start of what was going to be a long day. Race organiser James Thurlow gleefully told us that the river Caldew wasn't too bad, so the temporary bridge wasn't being put in and that it wasn't too windy to exclude Halls Fell ridge. Some nervous chatter broke the silence as we waited in the increasingly heavy drizzle. At last the time came and we were off; I was immediately too hot in a base layer and full waterproofs, but thought that up higher I'd be pleased I'd gone for the heavier goretex jacket and trousers.



The run up the road sorted us all into our rough positions in the long snake that would elongate during the day, and as we trudged up High Pike it was obvious the ta few had gone off too fast. I passed a few, occasionally jogging on the flatter sections and on the descent to the river Caldew charged passed about 20 runners. (a lot of trail runners don't like rough ground).

At the river, a rope had been put in place as the level had risen to thigh high, and this was followed by a long wet slog over Mungrisedale Common and up Blencathra. I was pleased to finally reach the top and thought I'd overtake a few runners on the technical descent, but it was so crowded and wet, discretion was the order of the day. As the drop off relented I got passed a few and arrived at the Threkeld feed station. I'd already decided not to waste much time at the feed stations; I still had a litre and a half of water, so I grabbed a couple of sandwiches and walked straight though….. at least another 20 places and I munched as I headed towards Clough Head.

I hate Clough Head…. it always seems to go forever. But I seemed to be going well and I found a steady pace up and onto the top. This is where the full force hit me. I'd been sheltered as the wind had increased and it was now a steady 40 mph, with 60mph gusts. The visibility came and went, but I was pleased I just about knew the route across to Helvellyn . I went passed a few runners checking maps and compasses and continued as fast as possible. It was hard going, difficult to run at times in the gusts which were getting



stronger, But I was soon over Helvellyn and heading down to Grisedale Tarn and the dreaded climb up Fairfield. The storm here was at its worse, and I found out later that a lot of runners dropped out here and headed for the road.



i was soon back on familiar territory and the descent to Ambleside. Even in the mist I found the quickest trods and overtook a few more runners as they headed for the "bad step" and began to look forward to dry shoes and socks at Ambleside.

Another quick feed station turnaround : water fill up , 5 slices of pizza and I was soon jogging across the park towards Clappersgate. I was only 30 minutes behind the time I'd done in the better weather 2 years before, and was thinking that I might make that up over the final 22 miles.

At Clappersgate I arrived at the first flooded road. The Police were dealing with 2 flooded cars and a massive traffic snarl up. I waded through; my dry shoes had lasted 10 minutes . I realised that my optimism was a bit too soon and the final 20 miles would be slow going.

The tracks through the woods and alongside Windermere were all either flooded or muddy and I waded and slipped all the way to Finsthwaite, the final feed station. With just 7 miles left, I knew I would finish now, so began to take it a bit easier, thinking of the fell Relays, a week away. But when my watch died I had a 3 mile rush to try to finish before midnight. The cut-ff was 8am the next morning, but I fancied finishing at least on the same day. The final road section had to be run quite fast, but I finally reached the school and finish;

15 hours 51 minutes since the start and 76th.



Panic over and a welcome meal and shower.

There was a 37% drop out rate this year, mainly due to the weather, but it's a route that is certainly within any runners capability as the cutoffs are generous and the feed stations have everything you need. All you need is a lot of determination , a slight capacity for pain and the ability to run very slowly.

Next year the weather has got to be better.