

## Grisedale Horseshoe 2<sup>nd</sup> September

Several Keswick runners were among the 128 souls who braved the elements thrown at us all whilst trying to complete the Grisedale Horseshoe fell race from Glenridding village hall. After a thorough check of everyone's compulsory safety kit the competitors, with some hesitation, lined up outside for the start just as the rain became really heavy.

The weather in the valley was wet and blustery as the runners set off, but by the time they were approaching Swirral Edge, the wind and rain were doing their best to blast everything off the fellside. By this time most had their cags on, plus hat and gloves as the driven rain felt needle like as it hit flesh.

The extreme conditions didn't deter the four leaders from pulling away to establish a comfortable lead by Grisedale Tarn. Of the four Mark Horrocks was the first to drop off the pace, leaving the Borrowdale trio of Jon Bland, Andrew Schofield and Mike Fanning to sort out the final placings. The usual crossing of Grisedale Beck had to be abandoned, the raging torrent forcing a safe detour to bridges further down the valley. Meanwhile, others were making navigational errors or forced into poor route choices as the weather worsened, though the Keswick contingent were all still going well. Colin was battling in the top 20, Rick and Dave were very close in the top 40, Lyn was challenging for 3<sup>rd</sup> lady, John B, John T, Geoff, Craig were within (big) puddle splashing distance from each other and yours truly was a little way further back. However, the conditions for the descent from St. Sunday, saw lots of places gained and lost before the painfully slow mud bath across the valley.

I was stunned to see one or two runners still in vest and shorts – what conditions would they need to wear their foul weather protection?

Anyway glad to finish a memorable event and tuck into tea, sandwiches and cake. An incredibly big thank you to all the marshals who patiently saw us all safely through.

Chris Knox

1	JONNY BLAND	BORROWDALE		1.55.12
17	COLIN VALENTINE	KESWICK	1st V45	2.12.10
31	RICK COOPER	KESWICK	V40	2.18.20
33	DAVID OWENS	KESWICK	V50	2.18.42
34	JANE REEDY	AMBLESIDE	1st L	2.19.17
61	JOHN BEETHAM	KESWICK		2.33.26
68	LYN THOMPSON	KESWICK	4th L	2.38.29
77	CRAIG DRING	KESWICK	V40	2.43.35
78	CHRIS KNOX	KESWICK	V50	2.44.43
90	JOHN TELFER	KESWICK	V45	2.49.46
91	GEOFF SOMERS	KESWICK	V55	2.50.19

### **Memory Lane or get your own back!**

I looked up in awe as the lithe figure attached to other end of the rope I was clutching, deftly swung round the last of a series of chock stones and disappeared from view. A cheery "Climb" command came soon after and a slightly hesitant "climbing" emerged from my mouth. How did I get here? I'm not a climber, I didn't ask to do this, did I? I did? Sadly "yes" was the only response available from the memory bank.

This all started out 20 years ago when I had the honour of pacing the first two Keswick ladies to complete the Bob Graham on the same day. However one was running clockwise and the other anti-clockwise. No problem, I'd park at Threlkeld, run Gill over the Dodds to Dunmail, pop down to Patterdale for a few hours work then back to Dunmail to run Winky over the Dodds to Threlkeld at night. Gills bit was easy, early in her round and bang on schedule, it was great to help someone who'd been on my own round the previous year. Winky was towards the end of her round going into the night and slightly tight on the schedule. However, despite a few hiccups with the other pacers, we had a really good run, gaining a few minutes, and she promised to return the favour one day. Winkys round finished some two hours ahead of Gill, to be our first lady 'BG er', she went on to be our 'Lady Fellrunner of the Year' and collected the Bob English trophy for long distance achievement. She retired from racing to concentrate on her other passion of climbing and guiding with her partner, with some of that guiding being based on the Isle of Skye.

So here we are, I'd wanted to do the 'In Pin' since I'd first discovered it some twenty years ago, Wendy checked how much I was worth on life insurance and promptly booked me in as a birthday surprise.

Day 1 – Gloomy and damp, Winky takes three of us to scramble up above the An Stac scree, breaks in the cloud allows brief glimpses into a vast nothingness around and a distinct sense of exposure. We'd all managed to stay on the rock and we emerged at the top quite happy with our efforts, dropped into col and took on some refreshments. Well, as we're here we may as well go up, says Winky, to save putting it into tomorrow's route. I realise we are sat at the foot of the East ridge of the Inaccessible Pinnacle (In Pin), and this is it, now or never. One decides not to climb and goes around the base to watch us on the Western abseil. A brief but thorough run down of the process, we rope up and Winky leads off. I follow, up this little groove, OK, then after a little stalling, out onto the edge I check my grip and look for holds, not quite so OK. I glance to my left and there is nothing except fresh air, I look right and there is even more fresh air, so up I go. The edge levels out, I have to stand – the sense of exposure is extreme – but I manage to walk across to the summit and gratefully sit. Now, says Winky, lots of runners do this as their first abseil so don't worry, I'm clipped on and remembering instructions as I go over the edge. Misjudge the last three feet or so and crumple in an undignified heap much to others amusement! She then says, but I can't think of any with only one hand – could be a first!

Day 2 – Clear, sunny and hot. We take bivvy gear up to Coire Bannachdich via an impressive scramble over Sgurr nan Gobar, the forecast is good and we plan to do the Cuillin over the next two days.

Day 3 – Clear, sunny and hot. Logistics sorted we go in from Elgol via ‘rib’ boat to Loch Coruisk, the whole ridge looks stunning and we make good progress. However we see a front coming in from the West as we approach Sgurr Dearg and our bivvy just beyond. We abandon the bivvy as rain is being driven in and looks set.

Day 4 - Misty but clearing to be sunny and hot. We climb further North to work back to Bannachdich to retrieve the bivvy gear but doing some gentle (gentle on Skye!) scrambling to catch another top or three on the way.

Day 5 - Misty and some swirling cloud that soon burned off to be hot and sunny. Started from Sligachan to Sgurr nan Gillean, such an atmospheric setting and so vast, Am Basteir.....and that’s it the Cuillin ridge Munroes all done, Blaven (Bla Bheinn) can wait for another time. What a week.

‘‘Are you climbing yet?’’ brings me back to the task in hand. ‘‘Yes, just trying to get on the first ledge.’’ This is Winkys last day on Skye, her day off and always does Clach Glas, her favourite, and asked If I’d like to do it too.

Now we’d just done that and Half Crown and yet I was still climbing. I fought up to the first chock stone rested, then tried to move out and round it. Failed. Right, Winky did all of this as one sort of continuous flowing move, try again, it works. I keep moving up the gully, out, round and over the next stone and the next, I’m blowing hard, round again and I’m up! Well done says Winky, you’ve just done a proper climb, the summit of Blaven is only 200 metres higher so you may as well do it to complete the classic Clach Glas/Blaven traverse. I left the sack and ran up the first upland path I’d seen this week, picked it up on the return and continued chasing Winky the 3000’ back down to the road in a scorching 23°C. Quite a rare high for Skye and no midges, oh well a few, but not bad.