

Andy's Big 30 @ 30

By Andy Blackett

Anyone who runs with me should know that I had 3 objectives for this year, number 1 of which was to run 30 Wainwrights on my 30th Birthday, which fell on January 21st 2012. I planned to attempt this, whatever the conditions as a way of sharing my birthday with some of my closest fell running friends and as a small nod to great fell runners who complete 50 at 50, 60 at 60 and so on.

I spent Friday night sleeping in a camping barn laying awake listening to the wind howling around the building, things didn't sound good. The weather forecast warned of whiteout conditions and severe buffeting on higher ground. When we got to our starting point, Park Foot Caravan park, Ullswater, 469 233 the peaks were visible and although the wind was strong, it didn't feel as strong as forecast so I set off hoping that the forecast was wrong and things would turn out fine.

Myself, my wife – Fiona Blackett, Jim Mann, Duncan Archer and Pippa Archer (who had to turn back during leg 1 with an old injury) all set off on the climb of Arthurs Pike reaching it bang on schedule. As we got higher the wind got stronger and started causing problems at High Raise (not the High Raise BGER's will know), we stumbled to the summit and Jim insisted on us posing for a photograph so that he could tweet. I have to admit that I am converted to the idea of tweeting during fell running challenges, as it brings long distance fell running about as close as anyone could imagine it to being a spectator sport. That said, as things got tougher, the frequency of tweeting was drastically reduced.

The climb of High Street was only interrupted by a snowball fight with team Blackett triumphing over team Mann/Archer who beat a hasty retreat to the relative safety of the windswept summit. After that things went well enough, we only had to crawl to a couple of summits, until the descent to Kirkstone Pass when a vicious hail storm made for a rather painful end to leg 1 which came with a very welcome rest and bowl of soup in the Kirkstone Pass Inn.

Leg 1 complete 10 minutes up on schedule.

Leg 2 started on schedule, after a slightly longer than anticipated pub stop, with the climb of Red Screes which was in the shelter of the westerly wind and passed without incident. Jim was the only runner with me for Leg 2 after everyone else pulled out for a variety of reasons. After Red Screes the wind didn't let up for the rest of the run. The trot down to Middle Dodd felt like a real fight trying not to get blown back to the pub several hundred metres below. At the summit of Little Hart Crag we passed a couple of walkers who were stopped in their tracks by the wind on the short scramble to the summit. High Pike brought some rest as it has a rather convenient 6 foot high wall which protects the path from the wind. Fairfield was almost laughably difficult to reach the summit with a mixture of crawling and walking over the summit

plateau to eventually reach it. The descent to Great Rigg was good running, with a wide grassy path and an even wind that wasn't gusting.

At this point I figured the wind wasn't going to get much worse, I was feeling strong, we were on schedule and with only 2 significant climbs left thoughts turned to the possibility of success for the first time. With little else to worry about on the descent I got a little emotional inside my ski goggles which I had been wearing since Red Screes thinking about how most of my 30 peaks were now behind me. I now knew that if the wind wasn't any worse over Helvellyn I would finish my 30.

Jim took a tumble on the traverse from Great Rigg to Grisedale Tarn, but landed on his feet after a second or two when he looked like he might end up at the bottom of the valley 300m below. We took 5 minutes for some food and a sit down at the bottom of Seat Sandal, then climbed it strongly to reach the top on schedule. On the descent of Seat Sandal we noticed the bright orange shelter which turned out to be Dom and Sarah with hot Ribena waiting for us – a real boost before the steep climb to Dollywaggon.

The top of Dollywaggon is at the summit of a steep spur with a drop on 3 sides, today it would have to be approached with caution, me and Jim took it in turns to play dodge the gusts, tag the summit and retreat to the safety of the path. Nethermost came and went, Helvellyn was a little tricky due to the ice around the trig point which warranted some caution on the approach to ensure that a gust didn't take us both down to Red Tarn.

After this it was just a case of getting home, I have never enjoyed a stretch of running as much as the section from White Side to the end, at times the wind was behind us and we could let off the breaks and sprint down the grassy descents at, what my watch tells me was 5 minute mile pace, but felt a lot faster! The final climb of Great Dodd was wonderful, the wind had swung around to the SW so was directly behind us and we managed to keep at a steady run all the way up the 80m climb to the summit.

The plan was always to try and finish before head torches were necessary, and we managed it by the skin of our teeth, perhaps pushing a little too hard as we raced my dad to the car park and nearly ran straight into a gate! Dad had come along the coach road to meet us, which was really appreciated, it really meant a lot that he had braved the wind to stand around and see us home.

Huge thanks to Fiona, Duncan, Pippa and especially Jim for supporting me the whole way around – it would have been a very different day without you Jim.

Special mention to Clive who made the trip to the Lake District and was unable to run due to a chest infection – next time Clive!

Huge thanks to everyone who helped me celebrate my success in the camping barn afterwards, especially mum for providing everyone with such fantastic food.

I finished my run, not with a big outpouring of emotion, but with a massive feeling of contentment with a job well done. I hope others follow my route and try to better my time for running these, or any other set of 30 Wainwrights, and to this end I post my timings here and I will post details of the route on gofar.org.uk. My route took 9:51, road to road, (2 minutes up on my schedule), I am sure this is easily beatable in better conditions, and I would love to hear from anyone else who attempts it.

Full schedule shown on the next page...

Andy's Big 30 @ 30 - schedule

	Location	Time for leg	Time of day
	Start		07:21 AM
1	Arthur's Pike	35:48	07:57 AM
2	Bonscale Pike	10:21	08:08 AM
3	Loadpot Hill	16:50	08:24 AM
4	Weather Hill	10:00	08:34 AM
5	High Raise	26:39	09:01 AM
6	Kidsty Pike	07:29	09:09 AM
7	Rampsgill Head	06:23	09:15 AM
8	The Knott	05:01	09:20 AM
9	High Street	17:53	09:38 AM
10	Mardale Ill Bell	09:30	09:47 AM
11	Thornthwaite Crag	16:50	10:04 AM
12	Caudale Moor	21:50	10:26 AM
	Kirkstone Pass	24:27	10:50 AM
	Rest	26:30	11:17 AM
13	Red Screes	20:20	11:37 AM
14	Middle Dodd	06:39	11:44 AM
15	High Hartsop Dod	22:38	12:07 PM
16	Little Heart Crag	13:33	12:20 PM
17	High Pike	27:13	12:47 PM
18	Dove Crag	18:02	01:05 PM
19	Hart Crag	10:28	01:16 PM
20	Fairfield	20:43	01:37 PM
21	Great Rigg	11:30	01:48 PM
	Rest	05:00	01:53 PM
22	Seat Sandal	29:38	02:23 PM
	Rest	04:00	02:27 PM
23	Dollywaggon Pike	26:21	02:53 PM
24	Nethermost Pike	16:34	03:10 PM
25	Helvellyn	11:46	03:21 PM
26	White Side	22:50	03:44 PM
27	Raise	07:38	03:52 PM
28	Stybarrow Dodd	17:42	04:10 PM
29	Watson's Dodd	09:07	04:19 PM
30	Great Dodd	11:06	04:30 PM
	High Row – West of Dockray	43:09	05:13 PM
	Total Time	09:51:28	