





2025

HELM HILL RUNNERS













Welcome to the 2025 newsletter!

Firstly… thank you to everyone who has written something for the newsletter! There are some great stories in here so I hope you enjoy reading and take plenty of inspiration from your fellow Helm Runners!

For this newsletter, I was particularly pleased when people came forward unprompted to tell their story or contribute things that I wouldn't have thought of… It's great to hear all about the BOFRA series from Jane and to get some words from Thao about the Monday night social run which I know is important for lots of people. Thinking about doing your Bob Graham? That is in here too… thanks to Phil for a brill write up. What's the perfect stepping stone to the BG? The Lakeland Classics! In here thanks to a write up from Lucy. There are also some super words from our very enthusiastic juniors! Apparently they all love hills! What is the one thing that really shines through with every page? So much energy and enthusiasm for running, for adventure, for team mates and for Helm Hill!

As for me, my highlights this year include awesome turn outs from the women at many of the big Champs races, great to see Grace and Ellie bag medals in the under 23s! So many women have been racing hard, pushing themselves, taking on new challenges but also getting involved with the club. There have been some great social runs for the women with another after work loop of the Kentmere Horseshoe. It's been great to see Esther and Ellie step up to be on the committee and also Claire become a coach in Red group. Finally, the British Relays trip to Wales, so much work went into planning this trip… and it was an amazing weekend for Helm!

Enjoy reading and see you in the hills!

Janie, Women's Captain and Newsletter Editor.







Your committee for 2026

Chair David Griffin

Vice Chair Kieran Hodgson

Secretary Thao Nunns

Treasurer Sam Burnstone

Membership Secretary James Leigh Baron

Junior Coordinator James Parsons

Women's Club Captain Janie Oates

Men's Club Captain Phil Rutter

Lead Welfare Officer Anne Aston-Gardner

Senior training coordinator Michael Ainsworth

Social Secretary Ellie Simmonds

Media coordinator Dave Appleyard

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If we just stop and think back over the past year we will remember some amazing feats of athleticism from a wide swathe of Helm Hill Runners! These run from mind blowing ultra runs to the first time racer, all are major achievements for the people involved, well done one and all.

Lots of these achievements slip under the radar due to the modesty of runners. This isn't a bad thing but, remember all achievements are worth celebrating! So, if you have won a race or age category let me know and I will happily give you a shout out on Wed training nights (I would love to mention all achievements but we would never get to go training!)

Behind all of your achievements lies a story of hard graft, pain and suffering both to yourself and your partner, so it's worth giving them a hug and a thank you every now and again, if you are single, give yourself a pat on the back, you've earned it!

As we head into January, the real training starts for the year ahead. This is the toughest time to get out and train so, don't forget, if you are a reluctant fair weather runner, training in a group is much easier than alone.

January is also the start of the Helm Hill Winter League, so include these races as part of your training regime. The races are a great introduction to racing as they are short and friendly races. Entry is via the Helm web page. If you are unable to run, why not give the race organisers a hand by helping out at the races, every volunteer makes the job much easier, too many volunteers are better than too few! You can also run too, let the Race Organiser know you want to run and they will assign a task enabling you to race, usually marshalling juniors or car parking duties.

During 2026, we will be carrying more communication via Spond. This is a free app to help manage communication within the club. It has many benefits and meets lots of security requirements.

As you read through this great newsletter, take inspiration from the contributors and let's get out there and compete! Success breeds success.

The future is bright, the future is Jade!

David Griffin, Chair

2025 English Champs

The English Fell Running Championships is made up of 6 races that take place throughout the year… 2 short races, 2 medium races and 2 long races. If you want to complete the series then you need to do 4 races and at least one from each distance. Whatever you decide to do, each race brings its own challenges and there is always great camaraderie and friendly competition.

The 2025 season kicked off with the Edale Skyline in the Peak District. Helm Hill headed down together in a mini bus to tackle this long race - 34km with 1300m of ascent. Known for being fast and runnable, this edition of the race also brought very misty conditions which meant a few people getting lost and drawing some very interesting Strava art!

Next up… Newlands was a Lake District classic that brought hot conditions over 18km of beautiful Lake District fells. Next over to the Dales for the short, sharp Kettlewell, before returning to Cumbria for Tebay - another medium at 13km with 900m. Organised by Nick B and the Helm crew, it was a great day for the club with all the junior races too! Incredibly hot conditions were eased by the paddling pool at the end… In August, Borrowdale was a tough Lakeland Classic covering some of the roughest terrain in the Lakes - a great and successful day for some and less so for others, succumbing to the pain of the final, brutal last climb up to Dale Head. Finally, the last short, Whittle Pike, completing the Champs and bringing home the medal haul that you see below! See you for the same again in 2026!

Helm English champs medals 2025:

Grace Culling U23 🥇

Ellie Simmonds U23 🥉

Sharon Taylor V40 🥇 & V45 🥇

Bianca Dyer V50 🥉

FSEN team 🥉

FV40 team 🥉

Tim Lamont 🥉

Rob Jebb V45 🥉 & V50 🥈

Kenny Richmond V55 🥈

Brian Thompson V70 🥈

MV40 team 🥈

MV50 team 🥈























Our under 23 medallists

BY GRACE CULLING - 1ST

My first year of English championship races didn't disappoint. The series kicked off with Edale Skyline: a brutal 35km featuring some fast running, massive bonks on Win Hill, and no shortage of navigational issues for many (lead in the wrong direction by a Dark Peaker!!).

I've wanted to do Newlands Memorial race for a while, and it certainly lived up to expectation. A fast start through the valley was followed by a steep climb up Robinson. I've been told the race only starts at Dale Head, but my legs didn't get the message. By the time Catbells came into view, I was just about holding on. José flew past looking like he'd hardly left zone two, providing a spectacle for the usual crowd of tourists on Catbells.

Kettlewell was short and sharp. The added interest of chasing a marshal holding a large rat teddy made for a fun and rather fast start up the first hill. The cake selection was also particularly good.

Tebay was a scorcher. My excitement at the prospect of a good race quickly disappeared into heat-induced lethargy with swimming and sunbathing seeming a more appropriate use of the day. Cumbrians, after all, aren't built for hot weather. Despite the heat, there were some standout performances by Helm runners built of sterner stuff than me (hats off to Ellie Simmonds for second under 23).

Something about Borrowdale seemed ominous. Perhaps I've heard too many stories about what Kilian Journet describes as a "runnable hill" but is far from it. My recce hadn't exactly gone to plan. Torrential rain, gale force winds and zero visibility resulted in some interesting lines being taken off Corridor Route. However, when race day came, the sun was shining, and I was optimistic. The race started steadily. One foot in front of the other until Esk Hause, picking up the pace up Scafell Pike, in my element on the scree, and smiling all the way up Great Gable. The slog up Dale Head finished off anything my quads had left to give, and the finish line couldn't come soon enough. Finishing as 3rd woman and 1st under 23, the race I had been most anxious about was my most successful race of the series.

The series came to an end with Whittle Pike. The course was a fast one. I struggled behind Sharon Taylor for the first quarter before getting dropped. I don't think short races will ever be my thing.

At the start of the year, these races filled me with nerves. Surely the English champs races are overly competitive and scary? I couldn't have been more wrong. My first experience of the champs series has been one of friendly competition, a supportive atmosphere, and a great community. I'm happy to finish the year as first under 23, and even more happy to have thoroughly enjoyed every race. I look forward to next year's champs races and can't wait to see you all there!



BY ELLIE SIMMONDS - 3RD

English fell running championships 2025

I first heard about the English Championships when a group of the Helm women were heading out to reccy the Newlands Memorial route. I hadn't heard of the series before, but with so many others taking part, I thought I would give it a go and being an under-23 meant I could skip the long races — thank goodness!

Newlands was my first event. I'd recced the route, felt confident… and then caught a terrible cold. Naturally, I decided to race anyway. Let's just say that by the bottom of Robinson, my body disagreed, and I made the wise (if slightly defeated) decision to turn back. Not the heroic start I'd imagined, but probably better than collapsing on the fells.

Next up was Kettlewell — a short race and thankfully no cold in sight. The rock chimney scramble was interesting, but once on the moor, the running felt good. The Helm support was brilliant, and Grace and I both bagged podium finishes in the U23's — happy days!

Then came Tebay - fifteen kilometres in the blazing sun! I spent most of the race questioning my life choices and dunking myself in every available stream. I didn't hit my target time, but I did finish, which frankly felt like a victory.

The final race was Whittle Pike. The last race, big turnout, great atmosphere. The course was fast (not exactly my forte), but I gave it everything — even after being swallowed by a rather enthusiastic bog. The downhill sprint to the finish was the highlight.

I ended the series as 3rd U23, which felt like a great way to finish my final year in the age category. Looking back, I'm so glad I took the plunge — coughs, bogs, and all.





British Relays

One of the highlights of the year, in 2025 the British Relays took place near Dolgellau in Wales, organised by Meirionnydd Running Club. This event is made up of 4 legs. A single runner tackles the first short leg, then a pair of runners heads out on the longer leg, then a pair grab a map to complete the navigation leg and finally the last runner does the final short leg. So 6 runners on each team. This time Helm took 9 teams to Wales! An amazing 54 Helm Runners taking part in total!

There was the usual last minute panic with drop outs and hunt for replacement runners to step in - a huge thanks to those who did step in ensuring that all of our teams were complete on the day! The courses this year were as tough as ever with plenty of very steep ascents and descents testing everyone to their max. A huge well done to everyone, including those who stepped outside their comfort zone, took on something new, pushed themselves to run with someone faster then them, and in general just gave it their all. Helm were definitely making the most noise cheering on in the finish zone. 45 Helm Hillers then stayed in a shared house in Dolgellau, where our team of expert chiefs cooked up a great meal for us, kiwis and captains cups were given out for top performances and a few mishaps, and then it was into town for beer racing with some other clubs and back for the Helm disco till 2am. Great dance moves from a lot of the boys! On the Sunday we had a brilliant social run! All in all, an excellent weekend for Helm!

Results:

Helm Mens A - 9th	Helm Womens A - 5th
Helm Mens B - 14th	Helm Womens B - 22nd
Helm Mens v40 - 5th	Helm Womans v40 - 7th
Helm Mens v50 - 1st	Helm Womens v50 - 3rd
Helm Mens v60 - 8th	





Our v50 teams

V50 MEN - 1ST (BY KIERAN)

Old Guys Rule- V50 British Champions 2025

Most importantly the team!!

John Millen, Kieran Hodgson, Will Acland, Alastair Dunn, Javier Simon and Craig Burrow

For those of you that don't know me I have been an avid fell runner for many years and love racing. As the years have rolled by I have had to change tack and I now consider it a win to make the start line. Imagine trying to get 6 !! This year was no exception and after the early loss of Kenny Richmond who would we get to take up the place and more importantly be willing to run with me. Up stepped Will Acland. True to Helms values he put in some hard work over the coming weeks.

So to the day itself. Our main competition was always going to be Calder Valley. We have countless 2nd places to them. And true to form they were leading going into the second leg. Will's hard work paid off and by the end of the second leg we handed over in joint first. Was history to repeat itself? By the end of the third the answer was likely yes. Calder had a minute and a half going into leg 4. Could Craig catch their runner? A really tall order.

I cannot describe the feeling when we saw Craig come down the final descent having overtaken. The emotion all came out with a unified sprint to the finish with him and other team members. For those of you that don't know him Craig is an unsung hero. He is hard work personified. Always turning up and willing to help others. I am so pleased that he had his moment. Well deserved.



V50 WOMEN - 3RD (BY CATHY + TEAM)

The UKA Hill and Fell Relays are a 4 leg relay with teams of 6. This year it was organised by Meirionnydd Running Club. Heading towards the Helm Hill flag in the event field, it was a quick hello to Marie working the Pete Bland van before she headed off to run Leg 1. A short sharp leg which headed into the mountain clag. Next time we saw her was in a stream of other runners legging it away from the start line.

Next up, on Leg 2 was our Team Captain Jo and me. Passing through kit check together to get into the start field we watched as the first leg 1 runners came in. I started the obligatory faff about how many layers to put on but was cut short as suddenly we heard that Marie was approaching the finish. Running in like a rocket, she tagged us and we were off. Helm Support was out in force even on the summits. Leg 2, around 8 miles was an absolute treat as the clouds cleared with views over to Snowdonia once on the Ridge line. I really didn't want it to finish but as the descent began the noise from the event field kicked in. A final mud splash before tagging Rach, and Ali who were setting off on Leg 3, the Navigation leg.

As usual there had been much discussion among Helm runners as to where this might be, which hill, which side of the valley. No theory too implausible, even 'Pete's sheep theory'. By the time they set off they knew where they were heading and they looked really strong as they left the event field. Looking slightly hypothermic despite her many layers was our Leg 4 runner, Bianca. Before we knew it, it was mass start for leg 4, another short lung busting effort. Clearly very excited to finally get going she almost immediately realised the ascent was practically vertical, at least she could hear the cheers from the event field below. Meanwhile, Rach and Ali were whooping down their last hill and were back with huge smiles on their faces.

Right then, all eyes upward to wait for Bianca. It was quite easy to spot people and before long there were 2 Helm vests descending. The cheering and noise escalated as Bianca and Bill neck and neck headed to the finish funnel. Other clubs looked over to see where all the noise was coming from, there was a lot of noise! Helm Hill of course.

I hadn't been following the results but there was a murmur we had a podium position. We headed over to prizegiving to find out we'd come third. The event had been so incredibly well run and they handed over a bag of local goodies. Big smiles had been on our faces all day but now they were even bigger.

As Jo said afterwards, 'it's about so much more than running', and that's for sure. Being in this team was just a small part of being part of the strong Helm Hill women runner's community. Huge thanks to Meirionnydd and Tim and Janie!



British Relays

BY ALEX SPEIGHT



My name is Alex, I'm 17, I got into running doing school x-countries, parkruns and Kendal Athletics track sessions at Queen Katherine. I started training with Helm when I was 13 years old and began doing more on the fells.

- I compete in the Winter League and the Bofra championships most years, both of which I really enjoy because you run against the same people and get to know them over the course of the series. My favourite races are usually the steep ones, especially Cautley, Elterwater and Wasdale.
- In the few weeks prior I probably should have rested a bit more than I did! Instead I was doing the Schools fell running champs and Wasdale BOFRA. I did take it easy in the week before it and missed training.
- It was fantastic! I really liked the route on my leg, leg 1, and the atmosphere was great. Everyone was really supportive of each other too as teams were coming and going from the funnel.
- I would say, keep working hard at training, go to as many sessions as possible, and learn from the fantastic coaches at helm, all of who are very experienced and willing to help juniors improve. Also, do routes and races that you enjoy, because its much easier to work hard and keep going if you're enjoying it, and what's the point in running if you don't enjoy it!



New Men's Captain

BY PHIL RUTTER



I'm Phil Rutter, I'm originally from Chorley and I moved to Kendal 6 years ago specifically to live near the Lakes and join Helm Hill! Since moving here I've taken up all kinds of outdoor adventure activities (climbing, skiing, camping, biking) and they all get me to some incredible places but running in the hills is still like nothing else. Racing is too much fun to ever stop!

Favourite race: I love the long stuff so every year I aim to race as many of the Lakeland classics as I can. They're all contenders, but the Isle of Jura Fell Race in Scotland has to be my favourite. Getting to the island itself is an expedition, usually done by bike, and camping in the distillery field is like a mini-festival. The race terrain is iconic: rough Scottish bog, endless jumbled scree slopes and hills that rise straight out of the sea. Even the road section at the end is a glorious stretch of running passing white sand beaches and finishing back at the distillery to bagpipes and whiskey.

Top tip for nav: Look at maps! Being able to quickly glance at a map and decide 'yep!' or 'uh oh…' within a couple of seconds is a vital skill. If you can get your brain used to seeing and picturing terrain from a map more mental energy can be spent on running, fuelling and following your race lines. I always have a map pinned to the wall next to where I brush my teeth, it's a split view of South America and South East Asia at the moment which admittedly isn't the best for nav practice…

Top tip for racing: I don't think I've ever had a good race when I've gone off at high speed so after the initial kick to get off the start line I'd suggest keeping it easy until the second half - especially in longer races. It gives you the satisfaction of pulling through the field, keeps the motivation high and generally always results in a fun race.

Biggest mistake: When I first started training hard for racing I spent too much time on long slow runs trying to cover big distances. I ended up overtrained and injured and I've had to take quite a bit of time off in recent years to recover. It's fun to train hard but it shouldn't be at the expense of the training basics. My weakness is a lack of a springy-ness (agility and power) and I've spent the last 4 months hopping up and down in the kitchen trying to get bouncy again!

Biggest success: Three consecutive wins at the OMM has to be the highlight! I grew up orienteering and over the years I've developed my fell running skillset over the longer distances. Racing at the OMM puts the years of experience to the test: mountain craft, fitness, teamwork and decision making. It's also just loads of fun to be battling through rough terrain that's new to everyone!

Ideas for the club: Helm is such a huge club now and I'm really keen to celebrate our members racing across all different types of events (no-one cares the KMF 10k isn't a fell race!). I'd also like to get more training sessions out in the hills on tougher fell terrain, particularly during the summer. We've got an ace line up of proper fell racing Wednesday night-ers for the Helm Club Champs too so I'd love to get more people down to those.

The BOFRA series

BY JANE FINDLAY

Sharp and appealingly short - the BOFRA races are technically challenging, exciting events, held throughout the Lakes, North Yorkshire and Scotland. From May to November, the British Open Fell Runners Association (BOFRA) organise this brilliant 16 race championship series, with runners needing to complete 8 races to qualify for points in the final league table (and earn the coveted BOFRA t-shirt).

With some events held at Country Shows, your racing efforts are further rewarded with an array of delights - from prize winning Herdwicks, caber tossing, homemade jam and some pretty handsome prize money up for grabs! With races for u9's up to vet categories, along with a wonderfully friendly community, the BOFRA championship is definitely one for all the family.

After having a baby in 2024, I was nervous approaching the start line of the first BOFRA race this season - but I'm so glad I did. After a steady start, my confidence and fitness improved and I started seeing my race position rise - from a 10th in my first race to 2nd and 3rds in the later meet ups. I was delighted to place as 3rd woman overall in the final championship results.

My key moments:

Most surprising: Fun and games at the river crossing at the Muker show.

Most rewarding: £100 prize money at the Alva Games!

Most challenging: Absolutely roasting in the 30°C heat at Alva.

Favourite moment: Reaching the top of the 2300ft climb at the Wasdale Shepherds Meet - epic views and an exciting race downhill for the 3rd place women's champs position!

Helm runners who also completed the championship, with great results after brilliant racing were: Alex Speight (3rd u17boy), Alistair Dunn (1st V50), Chris Speight (2nd v60), Ray Gill (3rd v60) and Tommy Findlay. Well done also to the other Helmies who also represented through the season (apologies, there are too many to name!)

The family atmosphere and friendly community is what I love most about BOFRA. I enjoyed the post-race chats and racing with my husband Tommy, and dad Ray each week, whilst my mum and our son Alfie cheered us on.

It was wonderful watching the juniors enjoying the races and community too; having arrived early to the Bradley race, we caught the tail end of a friendly inter-club cricket match between juniors, tossing the bat and ball aside as they were called up to the start line.

The races can be tough, but it's a great introduction to fell racing. Plus, the top 5 juniors in each age category get a super shiny trophy at each race!

It would be great to see more Helm folk at these races - especially if you are after a fix following the Kendal Winter League (as Cathy Cullinane put it, BOFRA is a "warm alternative!"). Though parents beware...you may need a bigger trophy cabinet!













Lakeland Classics

BY LUCY SPAIN

On a wet evening in November 2024, over a drink in the factory tap, I told Janie my plans for 2025. To complete the Lakeland classics trophy. Her response was incredulous, 'What, the Lakeland classics, really??!!'

Whilst an understandable response to someone 8month post-partum who had been running for less than a month in 2024 to that point, it left me with only one option....

The Lakeland classics are known for being long and including plenty of ascent and descent whilst crossing some pretty rough terrain. The series came about to try and encourage more participation as numbers of racers taking on these long, gnarly and remote races dwindled.

They are also some of my all time favourite routes in the Lakes. This year's write up in the fell runner reported a reduction in the number of women completing the series this year, so hopefully here's some inspiration to change that next year!

In my head, when I imagined doing the classics, I imagined amazing days in the hills, it was sunny and I was floating over the fells having the time of my life (disclaimer: actual real previous experience for many of these races).

With the exception of one Langdale, I hadn't completed a Lakeland classic race since 2017 when I last completed the series so these memories were obviously fresh and could be trusted to apply in just the same way in 2025.

In a practical sense, whilst I'd not done much running at that point, I had spent a fair portion of 2024 on long days out in the hills carrying a rucksack full of baby and snacks. Was it really a giant leap to a Lakeland classic?

Yes, it turns out it was... whilst feeling good when I shared my plans, circumstances conspired to mean by the following May I'd truly run out of time in the 'running better than you deserve post-partum' stakes.

The brakes had slammed on and no matter how hard I tried, I just couldn't access my full energy reserves (it's almost like my body was reserving energy to stay up all night and make milk rather than channelling it into running).

The good news, I could still run, just very slowly and not really uphill. My average pace was around 4min/mile off my previous race times, which was a bit daunting given the number of miles in some of these races, but I was finishing races with loads left in the tank. That could only be a good thing if I was going to add 80% of the distance on top of my longest race of the year.

Duddon

I did some maths and decided my only hope was to do Duddon (as the shortest superlong) even if it was sooner than I would like. Race day arrived and the optimism that the weather forecast for heavy rain and strong wind was wrong strengthened as me and Bianca headed into the valley. Highlights of this one include glancing to my 2014 vintage Pete bland 'extra print run' map heading for hardknott and realising it was rubbing off the paper...survival by folding the remaining map to the centre and minimal use from then on. The weather arrived with a headwind from little stand and, despite me being very right it was one thing too many for my core strength to withstand for 18miles, I did get back, albeit after the rest of the Helm team had left!

Buttermere

This race holds a special place for Pennine fell runners (my previous club) as a memorial to Daz, our team mate who died in the Hodgson relays in 2012. 'Dig in' is the line he is remembered with and as I approached whiteless pike having already taken a battering of wind and rain, that is exactly what I had to do not to just run straight back down the valley (thanks to the organisers for not letting you change to the short course mid race). I knew I'd covered next to none of the race and really questioned my ability to get round in the conditions. As it happens, navigation is just as key to this race in those conditions. Shortly after bidding my old teammate Geoff (marshalling Whiteless pike) goodbye and committing to the rest of the race, I got into a great battle of nav vs speed. Every 30-45mins for the rest of the race I would come across 'Ian and Helen' who were running far more strongly but also very much further than I was. We had a great bit of banter throughout, (one of the things I love about the longer races) and I would like to say slow and steady wins the race, but they overtook one last time up Mellbreak and that was it. This was the longest day out in the hills I'd had for years and there were moments I was at risk of missing a cut off, not least on the final summit, but it is definitely a lesson that you can go further than you think.

Three Shires

Why break with tradition, the risk of flooding due to the weather was so high it looked likely to be cancelled on the Friday, but with a delay in some of the rain arriving until after we were all on the parking field, it was good to go! I always assumed I'd be ready to start the series by Sept and I was right! Finally, I ran well, for at least an hour and a half! This was the first running of a new route for this race after issues with some permissions. The new version is no less and if anything possibly more difficult than the original, with a good solid runnable start and ever increasing climbs as the route goes on (or it certainly feels that way)! The final descent is now an epic long and rough affair off Wetherlam all the way to the valley floor. Save something in the legs for this one!

So, absolutely no sunshine, the races at their most brutal and very little 'floating over the fells' went on, but I do still love these races, for the challenge, the fell running camaraderie and the truly wild days out.

I have never been happier to reach the finish line and complete the series! Thanks to Bianca for having one eye on how many women we had entered at each race and Sharon and Carrie for making sure the team was always complete (and my slow time could be compensated by some much faster ones). Helm ladies took the team prize this year, come and join us all for some classic days out next time! Those races are due a year of fair weather....







Getting to the Bob Graham

BY PHIL RILEY

I moved to Kendal from Wigan 5 years ago to be closer to the mountains and lakes. I had heard about it but I didn't really know! The Bob Graham, the ultimate English Round! I had moved away from long distance Triathlons into Trail and Ultra running. I had done a couple of leg recces and supported a fellow club members attempt on leg 2 back in 2020 just before the move North. I still didn't really know anything, apart from it was hilly!

Training and racing more on the fells, my love and knowledge of this beautiful landscape grew. It didn't take long for the seed to be sown and I thought I would love the challenge of an attempt one day...

Still, it was just a pipe dream, an ambition one day but I was way off!

I got fit enough to race some of the English and British Champs races in 2022 and my first attempts at Three Shires and Langdale. I was loving this sport, the people and feeling inspired. I really wanted to do the long Classics, they were more me and a longer slower race! In 2024 I did Ennerdale, Buttermere, Borrowdale & Three Shires, enough Classics to qualify for my age Cat in 10th place overall. They were big days out in the mountains! A bit scary but I loved them and learning the routes and the land was all part of the enjoyment.



I wasn't ready in 2024 but I had already made my mind up to have a go at the BG in 2025. I was still miles off but if I could stay injury free and get fitter and stronger and another year of conditioning the legs in the big mountains I might have a chance.

This year, my 50th year, sounded like a good time to make some proper plans. I needed a big goal early season to motivate me through Spring. I decided to have a go at the Old County Tops race in May. A 35 mile Classic of Helvellyn, Scafell Pike and the Old Man. As you run in pairs it sounded fun, would motivate me to train and it was long enough as a great base for the BG! It was a hot, tough day out and Carrie and I came 2nd in the Mixed V100 pair and we both won an OCT race mug! I did Ennerdale again in June on a bad weather day and came 1st MV50! Chuffed! Something was working! I decided that would be my last race before the attempt, I was feeling a lot fitter and stronger and just wanted to concentrate on getting more consistent miles and climbing in my legs over the next month.

The big day was planned for Saturday 26th July 7pm start on a 23hr schedule. I had an inflamed achilles tendon four weeks before so hadn't run much going into it. I still knew this was my chance, the miles and hills were in the bank and I had a strong team around me who knew these fells. I was still terrified of it but it was time to go for it.

Leg 1

With my Mum and Dad up from Bolton cheering me off, we set off from the Moot Hall with Andrew Cox (Coxy) on NAV, Rick White & José. We made perfect time hitting the top of Skiddaw. I managed to lose my ear pods in the bogs getting across to Great Calva! There was some drizzle and clag around and Coxy nailed the line off Blencathra down Halls Fell in the dark. José did the leg carrying a big camping pack and when we hit Threlkeld, he turned around to go back up to Scales tarn to camp the night! We were bang on 23hr schedule, good start!

Leg 2

Changeover done around 11pm and Adam Perry on NAV, Craig Burrows & Dave Langford were off up Clough Head with me in the dark. It's a long slog and when we got on the tops it was claggy and mizzerly for most of the leg! Adam could navigate with his eyes shut so we ticked off the tops without any issues. I didn't have a clue where I was for half of it! I took my pack off for the out and back up Fairfield forgetting my tracker was taped to it! Adam went back for it as we carried on the climb. Into Dunmail, the legs were good but I had felt a bit nauseous and uncomfortable running into the clag and head torch beam for 4hrs. I would be very glad to see dawn!

Leg 3

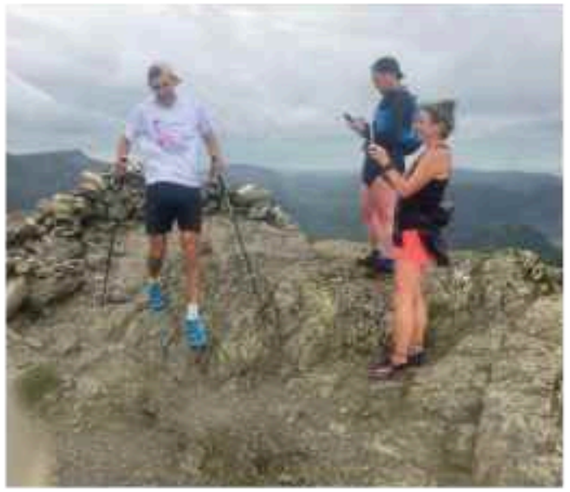
I got a hot drink in and tried to eat something before we set off up the steep of Steel Fell just before 4am. Matt Harris on NAV, Carrie & Javier lifted my spirits on the climb and we were still hitting the splits. Dawn finally broke around 5am and I started to feel a little better and got more food in. It was about this time my tracker battery decided to pack in which we weren't to realise until Honister! Annoying as I had some family and friends dot watching and they thought I had jacked it in!

I started to fall a few minutes behind schedule around Bowfell and then a little more over the rocky summits of the Scafell Massif and the scramble around the West Wall Traverse onto Scafell. Rough ground and by this time my feet were in a bit of pain and despite changing my shoes and socks every Leg, it hadn't seemed to have helped. No surprise to me, with my size 12 Hobbit feet! The fast scree descent down into Wasdale was a relief for the feet and quads and it was great to see the support team and have a sit down for 10mins!

Leg 4

The weather had slowly been getting better and was pretty perfect now. Despite again changing







my shoes and socks my feet were sore and blisters felt like they were starting. I put some blister plasters on and dropped some painkillers. I was over 30mins down on the 23hr schedule leaving Wasdale but the legs were still working well and I could stop the time haemorrhaging on top of Leg 4 couldn't I!? I had always had the goal and determination to 'make sure I get out of Wasdale!!' This is the crux of the Round and many don't! I was determined to carry on and get up Yewbarrow! My mate Carl was there to give me a surprise boost and Alex Staniforth had also appeared to help with the pull up there.

With Carrie now on NAV, Matt also carrying on and Howard Dracup we set off up the intimidating 30% climb of Yewbarrow. The crew and Alex kept me entertained and distracted for most of it. Alex turned around at the top, his little turn done. I was suffering a lot now though and straight onto the next climb of Red Pike! It's another long drag of 20%. It's a long way out of Wasdale! This is where I was at my lowest and suffering the most. I had many thoughts of quitting, feeling sick and felt like I was too slow to carry on. The only thing that kept me moving forward was the thought of 'I don't want to come back and have to do this again! I can't let everyone down! And it's a long way from here or Wasdale back to Keswick anyway!'

I kept moving and eating regularly, anything I felt I could stomach. We got to the top of Steeple and still only 35mins down. I hadn't actually lost any more time despite how bad I felt! As we then turned back towards Pillar, we were now on the tops and I could run more and it felt like we were slowly heading 'home'. I started to feel a bit better now and recover and the next climbs of Kirk Fell and Great Gable, I felt were the last big efforts before the easier Leg 5. I could do this!

The descent into Honister was a dream and I was running well. Friends and family waiting for me to come in drove me on, it was joyful to see them as I approached the car park, spine tingling and massive motivation. What a relief to make it this far. Still only 35mins down on 23hrs! One more leg to go!

Leg 5

Right, just get your ass up Dale Head and it was practically over! Those big b*stard hills were behind me and I was still motivated! I had recced Leg 5 a few weeks before and knew I could make some time back on the schedule. If I kept moving well and didn't fall over I would definitely get under 24hrs!! Coxy was back again on NAV, Joe Parkins, Javier again & Kerry Cornforth had drove back from helping at Wasdale and decided to set off ahead up Dale Head to join the party. Its a long drag but not steep and the lads dragged me up it as we caught Kerry near the summit. We ran around most of Hindscarth and up to Robinson so I was still moving well! My feet were killing me now and I had to stop below Robinson to sort my feet out and take some pills again. The last summit Robinson, number 42! We had a quick celebratory photo on top. Coxy navved us down well and we hit the road and the pit stop to change to road shoes. Again, a relief to finally get down off the fells, see family again and try and enjoy the road run in! 4.5miles of tarmac, bliss...Not! I was running ok but walking the little lumps and my feet were hurting! Not long to suffer now! I tried to enjoy it, as euphoria slowly crept over me as I knew I had done this now! A sub 23hr time had gone but still wanted to get in under 23.5hrs. I hit the road into Keswick with a smile on my face and across the square to cheers and claps off everybody around. Up the steps to touch and kiss the Moot Hall doors! I bloody did it!! Overcome with joy and relief! It was a great feeling and to have lovely friends and family there with me at the finish to celebrate with was very special.

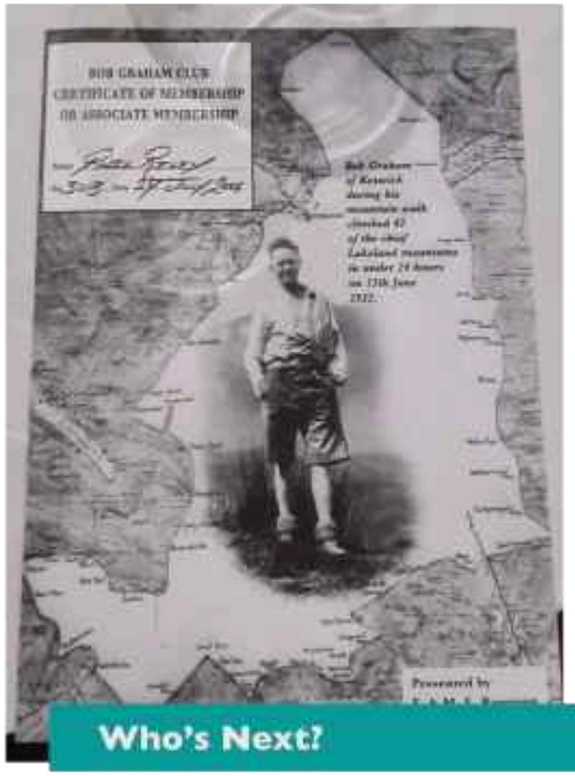
The hardest thing I have ever done and not something I wish to do again! I now have the Certificate to prove it and an official member of the Bob Graham club. Very special and proud to join some amazing athletes and inspiring fell people. Big thanks to my team for getting me round, sacrificing their time, listening to me moaning, their spirit, motivating me, carrying my kit and generally being splendid! I couldn't have done it without them for sure. I will always be grateful for helping me achieve a dream.

Did I enjoy it? Looking back, Yes. During, not so much! More so, the journey from being a novice in the mountains and a pretty naive fell runner, through the process, getting to the finish line and achieving something very important to me. What's next? Not sure, but definitely not the Bob Graham Round!









Who's Next?

1st year with Helm

BY CLAIRE KENNEDY

Just 12 months ago, I jogged down to my first Helm Hill training session, full of trepidation and excitement. After a prolonged break from running starting a family, I was ready to get back to training properly and, after a lot of internal debating about whether I was fit enough, I joined in.

I soon became a Red Group regular where I have been made to feel incredibly welcome and have benefited from the excellent sessions led by Simon Blunden and others. My running has come on so much over the past year - not just from the training itself, but also from the advice and encouragement I've had from everyone in the group.

My first race in my Helm vest was Dunnerdale; a great race but probably one of my worst ever performances (we all have those 'meh' days right?!) But the cheers and support I received were a wonderful boost and made me remember how good it is to be part of club.

I joined in the Yorkshire three peaks relay team in April. Heather Tait and I took on leg 1 up Pen-Y-Ghent and across to Ribbleshead to handover the baton. After a fast start (too fast for me!), we soon found our stride, powered up the climb and enjoyed a flowing descent followed by 8 miles of trail/road where the ex-road runner in me came into her element. The event was a fantastic way to get to know some fellow Helm Hillers better — and it's inspired me to take on the full race next year.

By spring, training for Ennerdale Horseshoe was in full swing; upping my mountain miles, lots of weekday fell runs with Amy Boustead and a couple of unplanned tempo runs to get back for school pick up! Training went well but nothing prepared me for how brutal the race was. Cramp started to kick in going up Pillar and I'll be forever grateful to Matt Harris for catching me up and sticking with me for the last few miles until he flew off on the final descent. The tears of relief as I crossed the finish line were real, especially when I found out I'd finished 3rd female — one of my proudest running achievements to date.





Next up was Sauders Mountain Marathon in July. It was held on possibly the wettest summers day imaginable and there were many times where I questioned my life choices! But the atmosphere was brilliant — fun, supportive, and full of camaraderie. Running around the Lakes with your mate for a weekend isn't something to complain about. Huge thanks to Charlotte Seward for putting up with me! Top tip: don't keep chatting while leaving a checkpoint — you might find your map is 90 degrees off, adding an extra hour to your day and returning so late that fellow Helm Hillers ask race HQ to check the trackers to make sure you're still alive. Lesson learned!

Tebay, an English Champs race this year, brought a brilliant turnout of Helm ladies. It was such a privilege to run alongside such an inspiring bunch of women. The runnable descent played to my strengths and I benefitted from following the excellent race lines of Bianca Dyer to the finish. Being held on one of the hottest days of the year, the paddling pool at the end was a highlight!

Training, racing and just being out on informal runs with Helm Hillers gave me the confidence to enter the Lake District Mountain Trial in September. I was nervous about not knowing the route and not being able to recce — would I get lost? Apart from a mile of waist-high bracken bashing (I guess it's called a Trial for a reason!) it was a brilliant event: well-planned courses, great route choices, and a real sense of adventure. Alongside Chloe Lumsden and Janie Oates, we won the ladies' team prize — a real privilege to share with two incredible, inspiring women.



I was privileged to run the navigation leg with Janie in the Ladies A team at the British Fell Relays this year, which were held in Snowdonia. 9 Helm teams made the journey down and race day excitement was high. As Chloe Lumsden on leg 1 tackled the incredibly steep hills to the south of event HQ, we got intel from an observant David Appleyard that there were some flags leading to the less steep fells to the north. Not much time to consider routes but it helped to settle some nerves knowing which hills we had to conquer. Grace Culling and Heather Tait tagged us at changeover and we set off, collecting maps after a few hundred meters and navigated our way through the tussocks and bogs of pathless mountains. Amy Boustead ran a speedy leg 4 to bring the team home in 5th. A fun night out in Dolgellau, some 2am antics (by others I hasten to add!) and a social Sunday run topped off a fun weekend. Huge thanks to Janie, Tim Lamont and Sam Burnstone for the excellent organisation.

So that's my round-up of the first 12 months of being with Helm Hill. Thank you to everyone who has made me feel so welcome, inspired me and given up their time to make Helm Hill the wonderful club it is. And what's next? Well, I've just signed up to do my Leadership in Running Fitness course so you may see me leading a session sometime soon!



From Collapse to Comeback

BY LEWIS BOWNESS

From Collapse to Comeback: My Journey from the Lakes Traverse to the Lakeland 50

Back in July 2022 I did my first ever ultra. I was 19 at the time and honestly had no clue what I was getting into. It was hard, it was amazing and I came away completely hooked. Fast forward to 2025 and I wanted to step things up a bit and see what I could do over something longer, so I entered the Lakes Traverse.

The race runs from St Bees on the west coast all the way across the Lakes to Shap, about 100 kilometres in total. I spent the six months before it properly training for it. Reccing parts of the route, sorting my fuelling, and just trying to be as ready as I could be. It was one of my main races that year and I really wanted to do well.

Race day came around and I actually started off really well. Settled in early, found a rhythm, all going to plan. Then about two hours in, just before checkpoint one, things went downhill fast. My stomach started cramping badly, then my chest. I'd never had this in training, but in the race the gels just wrecked me. From that point on I was battling it for six to eight hours. Couldn't get food down, felt bloated and gassy, and just had this constant pain in my chest.

The weather made it even more frustrating because it was perfect. Warm, sunny, bit of a breeze. Proper spring running weather. But I was just falling apart. I got through Honister and all the way to Ullswater Cricket Club in bits, feeling awful. I was in third at that point but barely hanging on. The sun had been roasting all day, I wasn't eating properly, and I was basically just shuffling my way forward.

At Haweswater, I remember seeing Jack and Hannah Waterhouse. They were legends for coming out, but I still apologise to them now because my head was gone. I was miserable, half out of it, and they were just trying to help shove anything down me but I was having none of it.





From there it was the longest walk of my life to Shap. Getting passed by people, taking wrong turns, starting to feel cold as it got dark. Then, to top it all off, Damian Hall came cruising past. He'd started an hour later than me doing the Northern Traverse which is three times longer. I managed to hold onto fifth place in the end but I was completely done.

It wasn't the result I wanted but I learned so much from it. About what you can and can't control, about mental resilience, and about just how far you can push yourself when things go wrong.

Four months later I stood on the start line of the Lakeland 50. I'd made a lot of changes which is a bit risky in this kind of sport, but I knew I needed to do things differently. I changed my fuelling, changed what I was eating, and just focused on doing what worked for me rather than copying what others did.

My goal was simple. Run the time I wanted. Position didn't matter. If I hit my target, I'd be happy.

The day was spot on for running. Early on I was in the lead group, moving well, feeling good. Around three hours in I hit a bad patch, but I'd been there before and knew it would pass. That's the thing with ultras, it's not just about how well you run the good bits, it's about how you handle the bad ones.

By halfway I was feeling solid again. I was floating between first, second and third, just running my own race. At Langdale, three of us hit the checkpoint at the same time and we were all wrecked. One guy pushed on hard and I thought that was that, he'd gone. I focused on my own pace and told myself I just needed to hit my time.

Coming into the last checkpoint at Tilberthwaite I saw the guy who'd gone ahead just disappearing into the hills. I thought maybe there's still a chance. As I started descending into the copper mines at Coniston I caught sight of him again, closer this time.

All the fell running I'd done over the years kicked in and I just went for it. Fast, focused, nothing to lose. Within a few minutes I caught him, passed him, and suddenly I was in first. Passing someone a mile from the finish of a 50 mile race feels brutal, but when you're that close you just have to go. I didn't look back, just kept pushing because I know from experience it's not over until you cross the line.

Running down into Coniston was a blur. People cheering, my family and friends shouting my name. It only really hit me what I'd done when I turned the last corner before the finish. I'd won the Lakeland 50.

It took a few days to properly sink in. I had loads of messages coming through and it was amazing, but it took a bit of time to realise what had actually happened.

One thing that really stuck with me though was when I worked out the difference between my first Lakeland 50 and my second. I went back through all my runs between the two races, and when I divided the total improvement by how many training runs I'd done, it worked out that each run was worth about 0.2 seconds. That's it.

That really shows what consistency means. It's not about one big breakthrough, it's about turning up every time and chipping away.

The Lakes Traverse was a disaster in the moment but it taught me everything I needed to win the Lakeland 50. The lessons from the bad race were just as valuable as the win.

If anyone reading this takes one thing away, it's that progress takes time. You'll have races where it all clicks and others where it completely falls apart, but both are part of the journey. Keep showing up, keep believing in what you're doing, and remember why you started. Two races. Two totally different outcomes. Both unforgettable.



World Champs

BY JO HICKMAN DUNNE

World Mountain Running Championships, Canfranc, Spanish Pyrenees, 25-28 September 2025

I was lucky enough to be selected to represent Ireland in the classic race at the World Mountain Running Champs in Canfranc, Spain. I represented Ireland for the first time last year at Snowdon International, but this was a big step up, and my first time toeing a world championship startline!

A rocky start to 2025...

My 2025 racing schedule was sparse, to say the least, due to an unfortunate hamstring pull in late 2024. Hamstring pain turned into sciatica, and it's been a literal pain in my butt ever since (more on that later). By the time the Irish Trials rolled around in June, I'd managed to patch together some (very) limited running and lot of bike sessions (If I have to ride another Brigsteer hill rep before I die it'll be too soon).

I arrived in Cork on Friday night ready for the Uphill only trial, having not raced since September and no idea what was in my legs. Unsurprisingly, my performance wasn't spectacular, but I pulled my socks up for Sunday's classic race trial, and a respectable 3rd place earned me a spot on the team! What followed was a fairly intense few months of more biking (yes, more Brigsteer), and trying to do what running I could (not a lot). I did get the chance to do a few uphill races in Italy to help my preparations, including Tri Rifugi, which was an amazing experience!

Race week and hamstring-gate 2.0

Race week definitely didn't get off to the best start. Three days before I was due to travel I was led astray by a certain Ambleside AC-er on an easy run, caught a toe and pulled my very fragile hamstring. We're still friends, but I've declined subsequent run invitations…





I set off for Spain with a now very unhappy hamstring and unsure if I would even be able to race. We arrived on Wednesday but I wasn't racing until Sunday, so there was time for some panic rehab and spectating. We went out on course for the uphill only race on Thursday, which was great fun, and all races started at Canfranc-Estacion, which is an amazing venue! We were staying down the valley in the town of Jaca, and I fully committed to testing the coffee and pastries in all of Jaca's main cafes (all in the name of rehab). I hobbled around the classic course on Friday – two loops and extremely fast and runnable, with a lot of switchbacks on the descent. Those that know me will be surprised to hear that I actually wished it was a more technical route…

Race day

Sunday rolled around and after much deliberation, I decided to start the race (and pray for the best). After all, this had been my goal race for the year. The weather had been glorious all week – cold and sunny – which meant the course was dry (and we had been treated to great views of the Pyrenees). It was a little warmer on Sunday and cloudy in the morning, primo racing conditions!

The atmosphere was incredible – this was the last day of the champs so most competitors had finished and come out to cheer us on. Starting the first climb was almost too loud and I was glad to get up into the trees and settle into a rhythm. The climb was a narrow track and it was difficult to pass people, but I reminded myself to relax, if I was moving at this speed on the second lap I would be doing well!

After the first descent there was a flat 1km section with aid stations and a lot of cheering. This was amazing, although my legs felt truly terrible. A cheer from Jim Walmsley and Judith Wyder (!) at the start of the second climb spurred me on though. I was chasing a New Zealand runner, and their cheer-squad was exceptional, so I enjoyed that too! I could see my team mate up ahead, and chased her into the finish, rounding out our team results of 57th (Dee), 62nd (Sarah), 67th (Louise) and 68th (Me). This is a result I am very very proud of, and far exceeded my expectations at the start of the week.

I am now being very nice to my hamstring, and won't be running again until it is truly fixed. However, this has fuelled my fire, and I am excited to see what I can do with two working legs and a solid block of training. I feel incredibly lucky to have spent the week with a lovely group of people – big kudos to the team managers who worked around the clock to make sure everyone had the support they needed for their race. I can't wait to wear the green singlet again!



Helm kids rule uphill ok?

BY JAMES PARSONS

When Lorna handed over the Junior Coordinator reins 12 months ago, she also passed on the FRA Junior Uphill Championship trophy. The race was last run up (and not down) Great Whernside in 2017. I put the trophy in the garage alongside a load of other stuff but didn't forget it…

Roll on nine months and we found ourselves at People's Hall, Sedbergh (where else?) putting on the first FRA Junior Uphill Champs race for eight years. It was a cracking day (phew!) and the race began from the fell wall at Lockbank Farm.

Copying the John Bagge playbook almost beat for beat. All age groups apart from the U9s ran to the top of Winder. This was a proper fell race, but nothing beyond the skills of our juniors.

Oliver Bailey (U19 B, Staffordshire Moorlands) and Connie Jenneson (U19 G, Buxton AC) reached the summit first in 13:14 and 15:34, followed closely by another 98 runners. They moved so fast the sweeper was dropped halfway up. I think he might still be up there.

Jokes aside, the real challenge with an uphill-only event is getting every junior swiftly and safely back down. Fortunately, plenty of parents and volunteers made their way to the summit to escort groups down, and all 100 juniors were soon back at the People's Hall for medals, soup and cake before the presentations.

This was my first time as RO and I have renewed respect for anyone who puts their behind on the line – especially where kids are involved. Couldn't have done it without the army of volunteers, many of them Helm, and especially Mike Ainsworth for making sure I didn't do or say anything stupid.

38 out of 100 runners were Helm juniors, a seriously impressive number. With the six fastest runners across all age groups, Helm Hill retained the team prize. Hoping another club will put the race on next year so we can win it again.





L4 group coach

BY RICHARD KAY

Taking over the group from Kate at the start of this year meant stepping into some big boots, as the Level 4 group was already running smoothly.

Since January, there has been incredible effort during sessions, strong consistency, and a mature attitude toward both training and racing.

The group has taken ownership of warm-up activities and developed key skills such as shared drafting, controlled breathing, conserving energy, and listening attentively—especially when we've had advice from our 'downhill experts'. And of course, we've had some fun with our 'strides'!

Over the year, we've seen some outstanding results: top finishers in their age groups for the Winter League, school records broken, a double County Champion (including long jump—perhaps helped by all that downhill striding!), a call-up to the GB orienteering team, a call-up to senior teams at the British Championships, and plenty of moments where our athletes have been 'clipping the heels' of some of our best senior runners.

In the coming months, we're looking to grow the group a little further to encourage more sub-group work, as well as to mix things up by gate-crashing the occasional senior session.

We currently have athletes aged 14 to 18 in the Level 4 group, all of whom show great maturity and respect for one another. They are a pleasure to coach, and I look forward to seeing even more success from them over the next year.

Finally, while consistency from the runners is key to improvement, a big thank you must go to those who consistently support the sessions: Rachel, who supports the group every week, along with James, Lucie, and others who help out when they can.

Their support makes these sessions possible.



Helm Juniors

MILA SILLITO

I started Helm when I was 8½ and I really loved it, so I go every week. In 2023 I only raced when it was race night on the Helm then in 2024 I did around 3 races but this year (2025) I have done 25 races so far!

Most of them were FRAs, winter leagues and club champs but a few were BOFRAs or just random races like Buttermere Shepherds Meet, it was a proper good fell race. I also have run for Cumbria in cross country.

Races

I did all the winter leagues and my favourite winter leagues were Barbondale, Cautley and Elterwater because I like steep up hill. I also liked Elterwater because there was a tiny tunnel that went under the road and me and all my running friends kept going through it.

One of the reasons I liked the winter leagues was because there were these cool t-shirts! I did all the FRAs and my favourite FRAs were Howgills and Edale because I like steep up hill and when I did Edale I went on the Helm bus which was fun even though we had to wake up at half 5, we also got these cool jumpers and t-shirts. I did all the Club Champs other than Ambleside Sports and my favourite Club Champs were Howgills, Kirby Gala and the park run.

Why I like running

I love running because I get to be outside and get muddy and wet. I also like challenging myself and at Helm I get to see all my running friends. I also enjoy running because I like being on the fells and I love running up hill and love steep, technical descending. I really like running because it is very fun!



ELENA PROCTER

Amazing Athletics at Sedbergh

Last summer, I attended the Athletics Camp held at Sedbergh School, led by the Olympic athlete Dean Macey. I was so excited when I found out I had a place and also really grateful, as Helm Hill Runners provided a grant to help towards the cost.

On the first morning, I was a little nervous, but I knew there were a few more Helm Hill runners attending, including my friend Isla Dalton. Once we were there, we saw several juniors from other clubs who we normally race against, so it was fantastic to all spend time together having fun.

Over the four days, we learnt so much, including different warm-up techniques which I now use when I am racing. We also tried various athletics activities, including javelin, hurdles, long jump and high jump – which were all great fun. One of my favourite activities had to be the relays, which parents came to watch on the last day.

As well as the athletics, we went swimming, had free time to relax with friends and also enjoyed a presentation by Dean about his time at the Olympics.

At mealtimes, all the athletes enjoyed a meal together – the food was delicious! On the last evening, we were treated to bouncy castles and a BBQ.

I really enjoyed the whole experience, spent time with friends and made new ones – and most importantly, learnt so much. I hope I can go again in the future as it was definitely a highlight of the summer, and I recommend other junior runners to come along too!





BARNABY PLANT

People have always encouraged me to try fell running, so I started by going to a Winter League race in February, and seeing how things went. I watched at Barbondale and immediately realised while walking the course that I was going to enjoy hills if I began racing.

So, I ran in the Sedbergh race and James Parsons saw me run and invited me to join his coaching group. I began training with them a couple of weeks later, and as soon as we hit the hills I was running really fast and really enjoying it.

I carried on racing in the Winter League and came 6th in the Cautley race, which I was really happy with. It was my favourite Winter League race, but I'm sure Barbondale will be a contender next year.

I realised that this hill obsession was going to be one of my favourite things in the sport. A lot of my friends don't understand why I like running uphill so much, because they much prefer running downhill or on the flat. I think that's because it doesn't hurt their legs as much!

I have a favourite hill on the Helm – it's the one by the gate on to the road, down the far side near the trig point. It's very steep, and sadly in training we don't often get to run up it because most people don't want to!

I took my mum to run up it, and she's laughing at me right now because it definitely wasn't her favourite hill - in fact she doesn't even have one! Weird, I know.

Now, after nearly a year of running, the crazy obsession has grown and I'm really happy that I've managed to do well in my races.

Thank you for reading, and see you on a hill some time soon – race you to the top!

And I only wrote this because James promised me…EXTRA HILL REPS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I know, crazy right?





JUNIOR CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP RACES 2026

Sunday 11th January – Giggleswick, Giggleswick School, Mill Hill Lane, Giggleswick.

Sunday 25th January – Elterwater, Elterwater Common.

Sunday 15th February – Sedbergh School, Busk Lane, Sedbergh

Sunday 1st March – Cunswick, Boundary Bank Buisiness Park, Kendal.

Sunday 29th March – Arant Haw, Sedbergh People's Hall, Howgill Lane, Sedbergh.

Saturday 9th May – Howgills, Lupton Fields, Back Lane, Sedbergh.

Saturday 13th June – Ulverston - Beckside Farm, Old Hall Road, Ulverston.

Saturday 27th June – Kirkby Gala - The Sports Field, Beckside, Kirkby-in-Furness.

Sunday 12th July – Whinlatter, Revelin Moss, Whinlatter Pass, Keswick.

Sunday 2nd August – Farleton Knott - On the A6070, 1 mile from the M6 Junction 36.

Saturday 26th September – Orton Fell Race, Orton C of E Primary School, Orton.

Sunday 15th November – Arnside Knott Fell Race, Hollins Farm, Far Arnside.

TBC – Helm Hill Runners Club Night Race, The Helm, Kendal – on a training night.

PLUS Your best time at parkrun, run between 1st January to October 31st 2026.

U10, U12 – Brockhole on Windermere junior parkrun

U14, U16, U18, U20 – Fell Foot parkrun

Junior Championship Rules and points

All competitors run in the age group they are in on the 31 December 2024 and stay in that group for all of the club champ races.

Categories: boys and girls in each group: U10, U12, U14, U16, U18, U20

Points will be awarded to the juniors for their best 6 of 13 races/parkrun. 20 points are given to the first person to finish in their category in relation to the other Helm Hill runners, 17 to second, 15 to third then 14, 13 and so on.

WINTER LEAGUE RACES

Sunday 11th January – Giggleswick, Giggleswick School, Mill Hill Lane, Giggleswick.

Sunday 25th January – Elterwater, Elterwater Common.

Sunday 15th February – Sedbergh School, Busk Lane, Sedbergh

Sunday 1st March – Cunswick, Boundary Bank Buisiness Park, Kendal.

Sunday 29th March – Arant Haw, Sedbergh People's Hall, Howgill Lane, Sedbergh.

FRA RACES

Saturday 9th May – Howgills, Lupton Fields, Back Lane, Sedbergh.

Sunday 12th July – Whinlatter, Revelin Moss, Whinlatter Pass, Keswick.

BOFRA RACES

Saturday 13th June – Ulverston - Beckside Farm, Old Hall Road, Ulverston.

Saturday 27th June – Kirkby Gala - The Sports Field, Beckside, Kirkby-in-Furness.

Sunday 2nd August – Farleton Knott - On the A6070, 1 mile from the M6 Junction 36.

ALSO:

Saturday 26th September – Orton Fell Race, Orton C of E Primary School, Orton.

Sunday 15th November – Arnside Knott Fell Race, Hollins Farm, Far Arnside.

TBC – Helm Hill Runners Club Night Race, The Helm, Kendal – on a training night.

PLUS Your best time at parkrun, run between 1st January to October 31st 2026.

U10, U12 – Brockhole on Windermere junior parkrun - home | Brockhole on Windermere junior parkrun | Brockhole on Windermere junior parkrun

U14, U16, U18, U20 – Fell Foot parkrun - home | Fell Foot parkrun, Newby Bridge | Fell Foot parkrun, Newby Bridge

The Lap

BY PETER STOCK

Having learnt my lesson from last year Corrin and I arrived early, at 4:30am to a very soggy start field. The rain was heavy and uninviting, so Corrin and I hunkered down in the car to finish preparing for the start. Thankfully, the clouds eventually broke and patches of clear sky began to appear.

On the start line I saw Barney and we edged towards the front. The atmosphere this year seemed more apprehensive than last, probably due to the poor weather forecast and torrential rain encountered 5 minutes earlier.

We were soon away and the first few kilometres in the dark went by easily, chatting with Barney and trying to stay upright on the slippery single-track sections. The rain had subsided and there were signs of a nice morning ahead.

Reaching High Dam, I was treated to a beautiful view of the tarn, covered in mist with the sun just poking through the trees. Mornings are my favourite time to run, and this one was turning out to be a beautiful one! Barney caught up descending into Finsthwaite, and it seemed we'd continue to yo-yo with each other all day.

At Gummers How I saw some family supporters and took a full slide on the descent as my feet completely lost grip on the wet grass. Safe to say conditions underfoot were not going to be ideal.

The next 20km to Troutbeck is relatively flat with lots of good running, so here I really got into a good flow and enjoyed the beautiful course.

At Troutbeck I picked up my 2nd lot of nutrition from my drop bag which let Barney gain a lead on me up Baystones. Here I experienced my first low point and struggled to push on the uphill, which allowed Barney to increase his lead. On the descent of Wansfell I I was descending very slowly, and told myself I would start pushing again once I reached the more runnable track to Ambleside.

On the track down I managed to get the legs moving quickly and was pleased to come through the other side of my low. I managed to run most of the ascent of Loughrigg, albeit quite slowly, but on the descent I finally felt like I could push again and the running felt smooth.

After Loughrigg the route follows good paths which allowed me to get the legs moving quickly again. I grabbed a flask of coke at Skelwith Bridge and quickly found my rhythm.

The next 15km felt good, trying to push where I could to close the gap ahead, however Barney was also running really strong so this gap didn't actually change much at all!

I managed to climb Latterbarrow feeling strong, however cramped up on the descent and wondered if this would be an issue for the final hour of running. Thankfully I was able to push through the cramps and running became smooth again.

The final checkpoint I grabbed some more coke and knew that if I could continue running smoothly the sub 7 goal would be achieved.

Finally the finish straight came into view and I could hear the shouts of my family cheering me through. A quick check of the watch showed I'd hit my sub 7 goal, running 6:50:17.

A day that started in a downpour ended with a hard-earned personal goal—almost everything went to plan despite the low patch and tough conditions. A brilliant race, a beautiful course, and a reminder of why we love these long days on the trails.



Monday social run

BY THAO NUNNS

A huge thank you to Yvonne and Ruth, who have been the friendly, dedicated faces of Helm Hill for so many years.

Their commitment to leading the Monday social run—welcoming new members, guiding people into the right training groups, and inspiring many to step into new roles within the club—has shaped our community in countless ways. They've shown up every single Monday, rain, hail, snow, or storm, always with enthusiasm and encouragement.

A special thank you to Yvonne, who first got me into running when I could barely make it past 2K. With her support, and the incredible encouragement from the social group, I went on to complete the Lap Ultra in September—something I never imagined possible.

Yvonne and Ruth, you are both a huge credit to our club. Thank you for everything you do.

How to get involved?

Every Monday night 6.30 outside Kendal Leisure Centre, apart from last Monday of the month, we have a night away run 😊







Winning a Golden Ticket

BY CHLOE LUMSDON

Some people in Helm will know that I seem to have unusually good luck when it comes to winning random prizes — and most of them have absolutely nothing to do with my ability to run uphill! Over the years I've somehow managed to win a 16ft sea kayak through a magazine competition, a £1000 coffee machine via Instagram, and plenty of other bizarre things that I won't bore you with now. But winning a Golden Ticket to the Salomon World Series Finale in Italy has to be one of my proudest running achievements to date — and it all began with an entry into the Ben Nevis Skyline.

The race kicked off at 8am (far too early for a proper breakfast), starting with fast, runnable trails up to the CIC Hut before joining the main tourist path to the summit. As I reached the top of Ben Nevis, I found myself sitting in 8th female. The lack of a decent breakfast was catching up with me and I felt weak after the relentless early pace.

Thankfully, the second half of the race shifted from smooth to rocky and rough — and that's where I knew I had a chance to move up the field if I just kept my head down and stayed determined. By now, the rain had set in and the descent off the summit and along the CMD arête was the slippiest I've ever experienced. I felt slow and cautious, but gradually I began to reel in a few of the women ahead.

Next came a pathless, boggy valley traverse towards the top of the bike trails. Surprisingly, this is where I started to feel strong again, overtaking another two runners. A man kindly shouted that the woman ahead of me was in 3rd place. Suddenly, the race had a new focus. I knew third meant £100, and that incentive was enough to push me to chase the next lady down the infamous "Blue Doon" mountain bike descent, supposedly the longest blue-graded MTB trail in the UK (5 miles), and it felt every bit as long as it was described.





Somewhere, about halfway down, I finally moved into 3rd position. From that moment on, I ran as hard as I possibly could, willing myself forward all the way to the finish line. I then had to wait 7 hours for the prize giving but it was worth it to find out I had won a trip to Italy!

Ledro Skyrace – GTWS Final

This year's final took place in Valle di Ledro, near Lake Garda in Italy. Fortunately, it fell on the one October weekend that didn't clash with the Hodgsons, FRA Relay or the OMM, meaning I was able to attend. As it turned out, the Golden Ticket covered flights, airport transfers, five nights' accommodation, all meals, entry into two races and even a party to round everything off! From start to finish we were treated like professional athletes and represented the UK in the open category. The organisation was next level, with a detailed daily itinerary and everything taken care of. All six athletes who podiumed at Ben Nevis took up the opportunity to go, along with a couple of other women from the UK. While we were there to race some of the fastest athletes in the world, it was the people I met, and the time spent with everyone that I enjoyed the most.

The location was absolutely stunning, with steep-sided mountains rising above a crystal-clear lake.



Our daily routine quickly settled into a perfect rhythm: breakfast – run/race – lunch – swim – dinner. The race format involved back-to-back events: a 7km / 530m prologue time trial on Friday, followed by the 20km / 1800m Ledro Skyrace on Saturday. Before going, I'd told everyone I'd probably skip the time trial to save my legs and avoid coming last. But once I arrived and got swept up in the atmosphere, I realised I wanted the full experience – so I did both.

It turns out I wasn't last in either race, which felt like a win in itself, especially considering almost everyone there was a professional runner or closely linked with a brand for support. The standard was incredibly high with top runners coming from all over the world. Both races were steep and technical, and my legs were completely ruined for the second one, but in the end, that didn't really matter. The pros were there chasing glory and prize money; I was there to soak up the experience and try not to finish last – mission accomplished!

I'd absolutely encourage anyone to go for a Golden Ticket next year. It was an unforgettable five days in Italy and an experience I'll take with me for a long time.



Hobbling on

BY KIT SAUNDERS

When Jo Cater and Jo Wilcox expressed an interest in entering the Haworth Hobble as part of their Lap training, I was keen! I had lived only 7 miles from Haworth for my first job, and again when returning many years later to Bradford for my PhD. During that second stint I was also a member of Queensbury Running Club, familiar with the Yorkshireman Marathon and Half, and of course, the Hobble itself.

At that time, I felt that those races were 'for other people' and that I would never be fit enough/fast enough/good enough to ever complete them. This time, I knew I had done this distance before, so surely I could do it again? And of course, what do you do when you do something similar? You look at how you trained the first time…

I saw, when I looked back, that I had trained hard, much harder than my injured body allows me now, and I saw runs and trips, even adventures, that I think that I will remember for the rest of my life. But more than anything, I felt the emotions of that time, emotions that I was far too numb and shellshocked to even comprehend in that moment.

When I started training for my first ultra, I had recently lost my mother, very suddenly. Only 5 months after that, I had seen my partner fall to his death from a descent route, when we were climbing in Langdale, an event which I remain haunted by, almost 7 years later. I was trying to be strong, to stay strong, to keep going, but my father's terminal cancer diagnosis only months later was another killer blow.

Looking back at my training, and at the bike trips I did (mainly to inject some element of fun into long journeys to visit a dying man), I don't know how I did it. I do not know how I worked full time and trained so hard in such extraordinary circumstances. But perhaps that is the point? What do you do when someone sets off a bomb in the middle of your life? You control what you can control. Miles can be counted, goals can be set, and physical pain can be felt, even when emotions can't.

At that time, running an ultra was the biggest physical challenge of my life, I had no idea if I could do it. It was a huge thing and took on an immense amount of meaning. I downloaded a plan off the internet, created the most thorough training spreadsheet known to humanity, started my pre-training and off I went.

At this time, I wanted to be anywhere but the south of England and I spent most of my time fitting my work into 4 days, so that I could go off to a Lake District Youth Hostel to run. I never ceased to marvel at the wonder of modern technology as I coded against a database that lived on an iMac in my office in Oxford, from a train going past Shap!

As I went through my training plan, lost in the minutiae and the detail, something began to happen, the plan itself became the journey and ultimately gave me far more than the actual event. I changed. I forced myself, through loss, to overcome my crippling anxiety and to do the things that I now felt driven to do, because I still had a life, when the people that I loved did not.

I recced the route, skiving off early, taking two trains and a bus to Keswick, staying in the hostel, then running 26 and bit miles to Buttermere Hostel, before running the last 10 back to Keswick the next day. I had never run that distance before, and certainly not with my toothbrush and toiletries!

Obsessed with making the cut-offs, I went back a few weeks later and ran the first 21 miles again. Planned to the nth degree, I popped out on the road near Crummock Water, waited a little while, stuck my arm out and jumped aboard the Honister Rambler, back to Keswick for another bus to Penrith and the train(s) south. I have never forgotten that day, nor the fact that I could plan such brilliant stuff while everything else in life was chaos.

I ran that race, and I finished. I had achieved something that I did not think was possible. I didn't really realise it at the time, but I had become strong, capable, and no longer needed a crutch (person) to do the things I wanted to do. Through that process, doing things on my own became the default, in part, I think, because it's much less easy to be hurt if you operate in isolation.

The trauma and distress surrounding losing 3 people in only 21 months, catches up with you eventually though, and in 2022 I became seriously ill with clinical depression. Thought, speech, and movement all slowed down significantly, and running became so difficult, that just trying, made me feel even worse. By October, I was doing nothing other than watching all 12 series of Death in Paradise, one after the other…

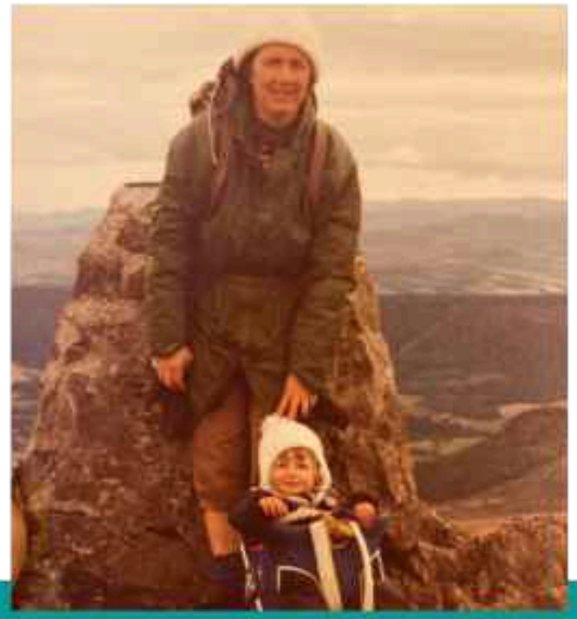
It took a long time, but by 2023 I was slowly getting better and in early 2024, after a hard winter of training, I completed the Dirty 130 gravel ride in Kielder, avenging my DNF at the start of my illness, in 2022.

Come September, when Jo and Jo mentioned the Hobble, I didn't feel especially run fit, but I wanted to do the race because it had once been local to me. It wasn't going to be the biggest physical challenge of my life, because I knew that I had already done that, and it was amazing how different the prospect felt this time.

Training was often done with others, sometimes alone, we went together to do recces and made friends with the RO. I even got to inflict my love of planning, and of public transport, on other people. It was a big deal, and I trained as hard as I could, despite a couple of really bothersome niggles/injuries, but this time I had friends, and it was about completing the race together (which of course we did). Even my strong, strong mum came along, with her 1950s Girl Guide badge pinned to my pack.

As I continue to train, usually frustrated by my speed, or my knackered body, or perimenopause, or a number of other annoyances, I often have to stop myself. I am still here, I am still alive, when at times I had really wished that I was not. I've come to realise that as hum drum as it now is, my life is precious.

What choice really is there, other than to just keep on hobbling on?







The Lap + The 13 Valleys

BY BARNEY PLUMMER

On a damp morning in September, I stood next to Pete in a muddy field at the start line of The Lap. This was a rematch from the previous year, where our head-to-head had been rudely interrupted by Pete's IT band. Getting into the field to park had been the first struggle of the day, but we'd both made it to the start line on time. We set off to the sound of bagpipes at 6am, passing cars that were still queueing to get into the car park, moving quickly through the dark. As we took the first descent on a muddy woodland trail, my headtorch flickered off, and I immediately slipped on a rock and hit the ground. I picked myself up and pulled a few thorns out of my hand - thankfully it was nothing more than that, but it was a reminder that the race could be over before it really started.

I tried to cling onto Pete's heels for the first climb up to High Dam, eventually catching up to him on the descent into Finsthwaite to the first checkpoint. It was the same story again for the next climb through the woods and descent into Newby Bridge, but this time he stopped to let me past - was he playing mind games?! (Pete claims he was just being nice. I'm still not sure). I briefly led past a group of spectators at Newby Bridge before he dropped me again climbing up to Simpson Ground. So far, all the same as last year. I started to gain once again running towards Gummer's How. Last year I'd dropped Pete on the descent from Gummer's - would it be the same story?

There was some wonderfully partisan support from Pete's mum on Gummer's: "Well done but don't catch him!". No chance of that for the time being; he disappeared off up Gummer's and was quickly out of sight on the descent. I didn't want to push the pace on twisty sloppy trails through the woods, told myself that I was expecting Pete to be quicker in the first half, and decided not to try and keep up and run my own race instead. The fast trails to Windermere kept Pete out of view. I'd occasionally catch sight of him on a climb but he'd be gone by the time I reached the top. I was working hard and had to keep telling myself to keep at it, that I thought I'd be stronger in the second half, I just needed to stay close up until Wansfell.

I started to gain again on the long drag up Dubbs Road where Sam B and Emma were out supporting - this was the first time I'd been quicker on a climb that day, so I felt like the race was swinging my way. On the descent into Troutbeck we had a quick chat where we both lied about how great we were feeling, and I got to the Troutbeck checkpoint slightly ahead. (Pete's mum: "Oh no, where's Pete?!") He arrived very shortly after me and headed off for his dropbag.

I seized the opportunity to get a gap and pushed on up to Wansfell, working hard. Pete was a few minutes behind as I climbed the stile onto the fell, so I kept pushing as hail started to bounce off my face. The descent from Wansfell is never nice but particularly not in trail shoes. I took a few hard falls trying to keep to the quicker grassy lines so tiptoed down the main path, just trying to stay upright. Through Ambleside, up Loughrigg, and another tentative descent on the flagstones towards Skelwith Bridge. In previous years there had been a race coming up this path as I was running down, so at least this time I wasn't dodging poles. After Loughrigg, the worst of the race was done, but I'd pushed hard over the climbs and still had 12 miles of running to go.



I kept pushing on to the news from Matt Harris that I was a few minutes ahead, and dug in for the short sharp climb up Latterbarrow - the last proper climb of the race. The forest tracks had turned to streams, and it was a bit of a shock to find myself waist deep in water at one point. It's always a relief to make it to the last checkpoint, and more of a relief to not be able to see Pete behind. One last drag uphill, a horrible off-camber rocky section, a steep descent, then a couple of miles of flat running, and I was done. I was delighted with my run - I'd thought I could go sub-7 but ended up running 6:41, helped all the way with a fantastic run by Pete to finish in 6:50. This was a massive confidence boost - I just needed to recover well in the 2 weeks before the 13 Valleys…

A 6pm race start was new to me, and left a lot of time for faffing. So I had a lie in, ate, faffed with kit, faffed with maps, did a bit of last minute shopping, faffed, ate more, faffed more, and eventually it was time to leave for Keswick. Registration was smooth, leaving me with plenty more time for pre-race faff - re-packing kit, smothering myself in vaseline, tying and retying my shoes, and of course endless toilet trips. After getting papped by Joel Jameson leaving the loo, I thought it was time to head over to the start. And finally we were off!

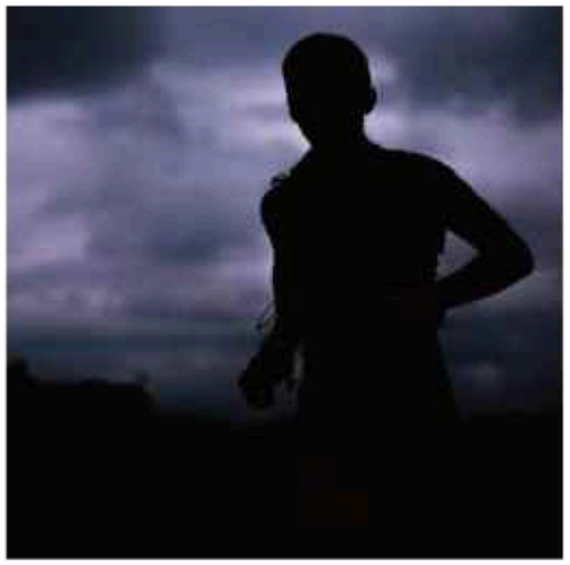
There were fantastic crowds at the start, but then once we left the park I was already on my own. I did wonder if I'd got over-excited by the energy at the start and gone out like a stabbed rat, but checked my watch and didn't think I was being too silly so kept on at it. I'd been expecting and hoping for some company running into the night, but thought I'd take it at my own pace and not worry about anybody coming back to me.

The run to Honister felt smooth and easy - the terrace path under Catbells is lovely running - and there were a few photographers out in the dusk. I put my headtorch on as I ran into the Honister checkpoint, grabbed a few bits and set off up Tramlines.

The path down into Warnscale bottom isn't nice at the best of times, let alone in the dark, but I was happy to take it steady at this point and enjoyed the descent as best I could. I started getting into my own head through Buttermere - it was a long way to run into the night by myself, and the distance I had to go felt overwhelming. But climbing up to Scarth Gap, I could see the train of headtorches dancing down into Buttermere, making the night feel less isolating, and the mountain safety team at the top of the pass was a welcome sight.

Running past Black Sail Youth Hostel, I passed a few supporters/confused hostellers, and sang Hakuna Matata to myself as I climbed Black Sail Pass. I rolled my ankle a couple of times on the descent into Wasdale, so I got some caffeine in and started paying more attention and was fine for the rest of the race. More snacks in Wasdale - a Nutella doughnut (sorry, hazelnut beignet) and a babybel - then up to Burnmoor Tarn to get my feet wet. I had a great time on the descent into Boot, but was starting to get ahead of the checkpoint opening times, causing the volunteers some difficulties!

The run through Dunnerdale Forest was as wet as ever, but the race-week diversion onto the forest track was a welcome diversion from the worst of the bog. I tiptoed across the boardwalk in the valley, doing my best not to fall in the mire, and then up Walna Scar Road. This was a big milestone in my head - the feel of the race was quite different before and after Coniston, with some indistinct paths and back-to-back climbing



in the first 35 miles, and bigger paths and bigger climbs with long flatter sections in the valleys after that.

It's nicely runnable after Coniston, into Grizedale Forest where an owl swooped overhead, then through Hawkshead and up Claife Heights. I was moving well on the flat path alongside Windermere - possibly too well, as I arrived at Wray Castle to be told that I'd beaten the food there! The volunteer was very apologetic and even offered me her own snacks, but thankfully it wasn't too far into Langdale so I carried on, passing their food van as I left.

I saw a herd of deer and a badger in a field on the way to Skelwith, which made me feel like a Disney princess - and then my headtorch gave up, and I plodded along in battery-saving mode (the headtorch, not me) to Elterwater where I could change the battery under a streetlight. I kept on trucking past the half-way point in Langdale, and the climb up to Esk Hause felt good as a bit of variety after the long runnable stretch. Soon enough the sun was starting to rise as I came into Rosthwaite.

It felt like another big milestone to be able to take my headtorch off at last, and I was expecting a boost from the daylight, but instead I was just struggling into the wind over Greenup Edge. The descent into Grasmere managed to be simultaneously rocky and muddy, and my knee started to hurt for the first time - not a good sign with more big climbs to come.

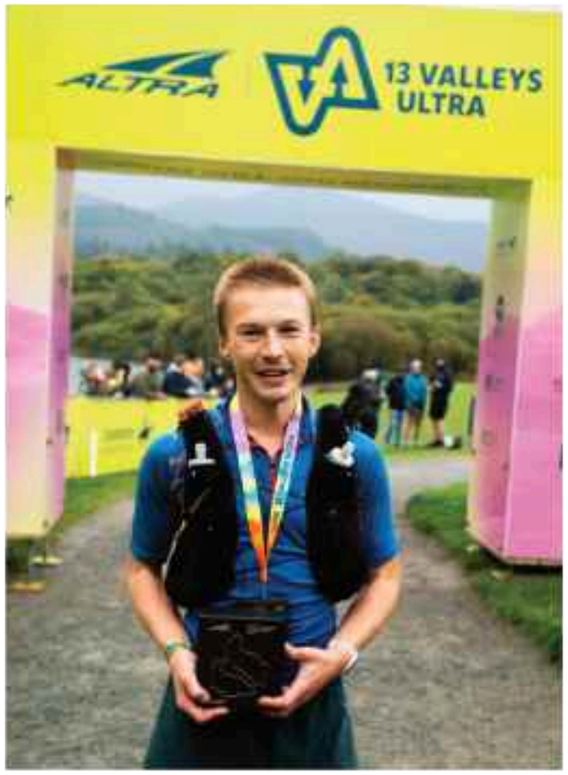
Our drop-bags were available at Grasmere, so I tried to reset there. I changed my socks and topped up my food supplies before setting off along the shores of Grasmere and Rydal Water. I plodded along through Ambleside, dodging the parkrunners, then climbed along to Troutbeck.

I started to pass some 5V runners on the drag up to Thornthwaite Beacon as my legs slowly deteriorated. I tried to run along to High Street, but my knee was in a state, and I struggled down the wet descent into Hayeswater. Thankfully I could still run on the flat section into Glenridding, but couldn't climb well, and had a sit down and a slice of pizza in the youth hostel.

Getting moving again up Sticks Pass, I was struggling to walk uphill and was a bit concerned that I might not make it to the top, but had a nice chat to a 5 Valleys runner about our daft spaniels (amongst other things) which distracted me well and kept me moving. Once again the descent was a struggle. A bit of bum sliding, a lot of hobbling, no running. Hitting 100 miles at the bottom of Sticks Pass felt like it might be an achievement but I still had 15 miles to go.

Under normal circumstances, the trail to Threlkeld would be lovely and runnable, but at this point, it was a battle just to keep moving forwards. I ran where I could, walked where I couldn't, and steadily made progress.

Crossing the railway trail at Threlkeld, there was a sign for 3 miles to Keswick - in the opposite direction, and we still had 10 miles to go. In Threlkeld, Liv told me that 2nd place had closed up so I knew I had to push hard into the finish. It's another great trail into Keswick but I wasn't doing anything close to running at that point. My knee was seizing up, my feet were in agony and I could feel the blisters popping as I shuffled along. Finally around Latrigg and into Keswick - and you can see the finish when you're sent off for one last dogleg into the park. And finally, after what felt like an unnecessary extra mile, I was finished.



Helm Hill goes down under

BY BIANCA DYER

I've never been one to make plans or set goals for the upcoming running season - things just sort of happen. Doing a BG because Rowan and Ali were training for it and what else would you do with all those Lockdown miles in your legs? Doing my first Saunders because Janie's partner had dropped out and I had less than 2 weeks notice….

But let's start at the beginning. We're at the stage in our life, where slowly but surely the "little Dyers" are flying the nest. Becky migrated down south to London and of course every so often, a parent should visit to check on their offspring. "But a whole weekend without running or a race?" I hear you gasp in horror! Of course not. Hannah and I quickly located the nearest parkrun. Who says Londoners are a miserable, unfriendly bunch?! All you need to do is rock up at the start line in matching, bright yellow "Never mind the weather" Winter League T-Shirts and you have everyone's attention.

The second year took us to Highbury Fields in Islington - very posh - not the dump of a flat but the neighbourhood. It was Christmas time and you couldn't move for fairy lights. It felt like walking onto the set of some London based Romcom. You know the one. Anyway, running round in circles with 600 people was kind of fun I think.

Becky's third year took me into proper tourist parkrun territory! Berlin! Needless to say that most runners were expats or visiting Brits. The Germans seem to be struggling with the concept of parkrun - it's probably not serious enough. After all, it's free! My warm up commute took me through Kreuzberg. What an experience that was. I wondered wether people are still drinking or already cracking open a can of lager?! My question was answered on the way back when a woman chased me down the road firing a water pistol at me.

Year 4 took us back to London and after the rammed, small park with too many laps to count experience, we opted for Hampstead Heath, near Becky's new home in Camden. Two laps, but plenty of trees and greenery and definitely Cumbrian flat - not a PB course.

"But what about Down Under?" I hear you wondering! The time had come for the next "Little Dyer" to fly the nest - all the way to Australia to prove his love of rugby and mullets. So, plans were made to visit the boy - it's a tough job, but somebody had to do it. Unpaid leave was granted, tickets were booked, parkruns were googled. Surely Australia has embraced it with more enthusiasm than Germany.

YES BUT WAIT! With a shriek of excitement I charged into the living room one evening "Jacob, guess what, guess what! It's the Canberra Running Festival when we're there! We could do a marathon! We've always wanted to do a marathon!!" Had we?! My desire to do a marathon went as far as popping my name in the London Marathon hat at the annual Helm



Do. At this point, some of you need to be informed that my lifelong fell running husband is a little less enthusiastic about racing and regularly gets (some might say) bullied into doing stuff. Anyone remembered Seven Sevens? He won't be rushing back to do that one. So he humoured me and did a little road running. Only because work took him to Liverpool for a month and there was a distinct lack of fells.

Meanwhile my training began in "earnest". I googled a few training plans, dismissed them and cobbled my own together which consisted of our beloved speed sessions on tarmac, probably far too may fell races and the odd longer road run. Luckily, we are blessed with lovely country lanes. Diligently, we did our halfway half marathon in Haweswater. Probably waaaaay too hilly for your standard race prep - we even did our pre race 20 miler. Now, I'm not sure if the authors of these training plans envisaged us doing Edale Skyline - 20 miles granted, but also a heck of a lot of climbing. At that point I knew that Jacob would not return to do that one either and I wondered whether sticking to a proper plan and not also trying to keep the fell running ticking over was such a good idea.

Anyway, at the start of the Easter holidays we hopped on the plane and 25 hours later were spat out in Sydney. Post long-haul cold, a tad tired, I was secretly relieved that we still hadn't entered the race! But, as Jacob pointed out, I had trained for it, bought some fancy, bouncy trainers (and had wreaked havoc in PB's) and we'd even changed the Airbnb booking so we were practically staying at the start line. The event was entered 2 days before and we made our way to Canberra. Whilst carb-loading on crisps, the only vegetarian food available at the club, we watched Reuben's first match playing for the Wests Lions against the Uni Owls (cute names, right).

On Sunday, 13th April, the 5 o'clock alarm went off and we joined our fellow runners, who like lycra clad zombies, emerged from the darkness from all directions to make their way to the start. Well, what a way to do sightseeing. Canberra is really not as boring as Google led us to believe. Cheered on by flocks of screeching cockatoos, we made our way down leafy roads, past government buildings and "the bush", along Lake Burley Griffin over a huge bridge to the other side, at which point we realised that instead of going along the scenic lakeside path we were looking down a very, very long stretch of dual carriageway - not ideal in the searing morning heat!

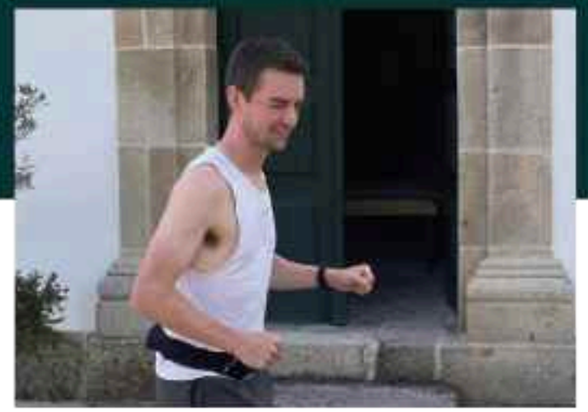
So in the end, my haphazard training paid off and I finished with a big grin on my face, having enjoyed most of the experience. Jacob I hear you ask? He won't be doing another marathon EVER! Hated every minute of it! (not quite true - he of course set off like a bat out of hell as if heading for a 3:15 stalking the pacer - great fun! Until that is his legs seized up on said never-ending dual carriageway!).

And what happened to the Aussie parkrun? Well, after a few days of doing very little and eating multiple Sombrero's Burritos, we found ourselves in Batemans Bay. And guess what, there was a parkrun. Jacob chauffeured Hannah and me there for an ungodly 8 o'clock start and I can honestly say, it did't hurt that much. Will my name go into the London marathon hat? Absolutely; will Jacob's? Absolutely not ;-)





Helm Profile
Guy Hartley



Where are you from?

I grew up near Kirkby Stephen, in a village at the foot of Nine Standards for anyone who knows that fell race.

How did you get into running?

A friend of mine started doing triathlons after uni and told me I should give it a go. Running was the easiest thing to get back into after having kids as triathlon, swimming and cycling involve so much time and faffing about with kit, bikes, swimming pools etc.

Why and when did you join Helm?

I joined in summer 2024 as I was starting running again and wanted to join a club for the social side of it as well as training. I hadn't done any fell running before but liked the idea of getting onto the fells, and I live in Kendal so Helm was the obvious choice.

How many of pairs of running shoes do you have?

Too many according to my wife! Eight in total I think. I've had a couple of pairs re-soled by the cobbler on the market square in Kendal and I'd recommend that – I put trail soles on some road shoes I'd worn out and they're great for going on the Scars.

What's your typical training week?

I've managed to build up my training volume over this year and have a good routine now. Monday is a rest day, Tuesday is a short easy run and core session, Wednesday is a Helm session, Thursday is a short recovery ride on the turbo and strength session, Friday is easy hills with drills and strides, Saturday is an easy flat run, and Sunday is a long hilly run for about two hours.

Favourite local run?

To save time I do almost all my running from Kendal so for a hilly run usually go to both Scars to do c12km and 300-400m of climbing. I live near the castle so tag on some castle reps to add time and climbing if needed.

Favourite race?

I haven't done enough yet to pick a favourite properly, but Shipman Knotts is a local Helm race and the only race I've done twice. It's got a bit of everything: steady runnable start, decent climb, interesting descent and fast finish. This year I tagged onto Kieran Hodgson for his route knowledge on the descent – as everyone went too far right, he cut back in left and we made up half a dozen places. It was awesome!

Any embarrassing running moments?

Going up the wrong hill at the UKA fell relays last year… on a course that was flagged and that I had recce'd. Still not sure how I managed that. I cannot think of anything more terrifying than a relay nav leg.

Biggest achievement?

Before my daughter was born I wanted to do a sub-10hr Ironman then bid farewell to triathlon. The friend who had got me into triathlon had done 9h47m and I managed to do 9h45m. There's nothing like friendly competition to get the most out of yourself.

Goal for next year?

I'm aiming for at least four of the English fell champs races to give the full championship a proper go. Hopefully I'll go well then be in the mix for the Hodgsons and UKA relays at the end of the year.

Tips for younger runners?

I didn't do any dedicated running growing up but did loads of sport throughout school and uni. I'm sure that training and competing in general have helped set me up for running now, so I'd suggest doing anything active and fun.

Through Helm I've learned loads by asking advice from other members. I've found training in a group motivating for hard sessions and it's raised my ambitions in running. Seeing other club members achieve great things makes you think you could do the same if you put in the time and effort. So, stay in Helm!

Helm Profile
Fi Morphet





Where are you from?

I'm originally from Blackburn and now live in Farleton.

How did you get into running?

I've always enjoyed all sports with hockey and mountain biking being my main ones. When Pippa was born, I turned to running as I could get out and run with her in a buggy – fresh air and exercise for me, nap time for her – winner!

When and why did you join Helm?

I signed up for my first marathon, a bucket list item. I started training for it and wanted to meet and run with like-minded people, so joined Helm for my first session back in April 2024. Fell running was completely new to me, and I absolutely loved it!

How many pairs of running shoes do you have?

A pair for all occasions…..!

What does a typical training week look like?

I try to fit in a long run, a speed or hill session and then a couple of easy runs.

Favourite local run?

Farleton Knott. There's so much to go at up there and I never get bored of it!

Favourite race?

I love the Staveley Half Marathon for the fast-paced flowing trails and Newlands Memorial for the epic views – I'm keen to do this race again next year minus the monster stitch!!

Any embarrassing running moments?

Suffering an absolute thrashing by Cat Mason at the British Fell Relays in Wales this October. I was only capable of panting the occasional swear word and "I'm going to be sick". It was a walk in the park for Cat, I've never experience DOMS like it….!!

Biggest achievement?

Completing my first ultra, Lakeland Trails 55k, in July 2025. It was a serious challenge in 30-degree heat, but I loved every moment of it (I think) and finished 3rd female.

Goal for next year?

I've got the Lakeland 50 in July – I'd like to train hard enough to be able to enjoy it on the day! I'd also like to get better at running downhill!

Tips for younger runners?

Just get out there and enjoy it! Get muddy and have fun!

Helm Profile
Tom Willox



Where are you from?

I'm originally from Lancaster, and after 18 years in Manchester and London I moved back to the area after the pandemic, keen to start a family and live closer to the hills. We've now settled in Halton, slightly north of Lancaster.

How did you get into running?

I've always been active and solo action sports have often pulled me in. I spent my teenage years skating, then skiing and biking in my 20s, and gradually got into running. Having never ran before a friend convinced me to join her in running the London Marathon in 2010 so we trained together for 6 months and I got the running bug.

I first ran a trail race in 2018 at Box Hill, Surrey. It was the Salomon Sunset Series and I vividly remember the excitement of choosing lines and throwing myself down trails, it felt like skiing and biking again. Once we moved north in 2021 I started running in the Lakes, Dales and Howgills as I discovered and fell in love with fell running.

When and why did you join Helm?

The sport was new to me, I knew no one in it and I wanted to run with others who enjoyed the hills like I did. I ran my first fell race in 2022, some other runners recommended Helm to me, I started running with the social group then gradually joined the midweek training sessions as I got more into it.

How many pairs of running shoes do you have?

About 5 although I only really use 2 pairs - my NNormal Bruts for fells and my Hoka Rocket x3s for road.

What does a typical training week look like?

Run commute in and out from home to the office x4 days which is 12km / 150m each day, a couple of strength sessions when my children are asleep, then one big run at the weekend around family life, typically of a couple to a few hours, involving hills.

Favourite local run?

Helvellyn via Birkhouse Moor, Striding Edge and straight down back to Glenridding.

Favourite race?

I love the Ingleborough Mountain Race. It was my first fell race and the feeling as you drop off the top for the first time is pretty cool.

Any embarrassing running moments?

Absolutely loads, I try not to take myself too seriously, probably full on stacking it during the Yorkshire 3 Peaks relay was a quite spectacular example.

I turned around shouting to my relay partner that we were right behind the next team and completely wiped out in front of a crowd lining a stone wall who all gave a collective 'oooooooo' as I hit the track shoulder / chest first. We still finished, with smiles on our faces too.

Biggest achievement?

Getting to Wasdale on my BG attempt. The aim was of course the whole thing but getting 70km / 6,000m done was a mark of progress personally and it's the biggest thing I've done so far.

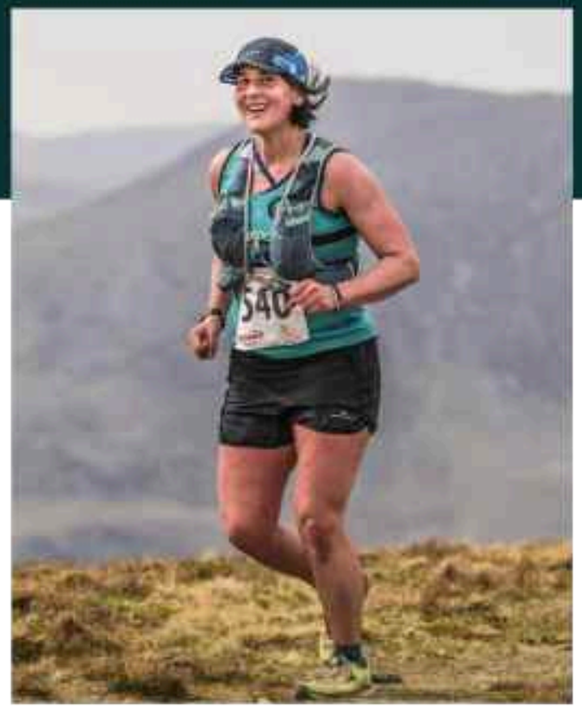
Goal for next year?

Complete my Bob Graham round, improve and enjoy my running.

Tips for younger runners?

Don't be afraid of it not working out, try anyway. Have fun in what you do and lean in to your strengths.

Helm Profile
Hazel Clarke



Where are you from?

East London originally, lived in London for 28 years, Hertfordshire for 8 years and moved to Cumbria nearly 9 years ago.

How did you get into running?

I started to run for fitness and weight loss in my late teens. I had always been active with horse riding and working at stables but then went to uni and stopped and didn't like the way I felt so began to run. Found out I loved it and I've been running ever since.

When and why did you join Helm?

I joined a different club when I first moved up but it wasn't quite the right fit for me, I transitioned to Helm and I am much happier. I love the friendly groups, the inclusive organisation and the clubs values.

How many pairs of running shoes do you have?

Quite a lot... The eternal search for the perfect shoe is ongoing.

What does a typical training week look like?

That's changed a lot over the last 10-15 years. I've found my body can't recover from the harder sessions like it used to.

As I've got older I tend to do more in the gym and less running. Maybe 3 runs a week, some kind of 'session', a shorter trail/fell run and a longer trail/fell run alongside 3 CrossFit sessions is fairly standard these days.



Favourite local run?

Farleton. I love that hill.

Favourite race?

Maybe Hutton Roof Crags or Kentmere Horseshoe.

Any embarrassing running moments?

I once got out sprinted by The Cheeky Girls at the finish line of the London Marathon.

Biggest achievement?

Honestly, I try to appreciate be thankful for every run and race. I work with people who have complex pain, injury and disability and I am just so unbelievably grateful for every run I get to do.

Goal for next year?

I'd love to try and get to do the English Champs races next year.

Tips for younger runners?

The body loves variety. Embrace other ways to move (strength, other cardio, Pilates etc). There will be periods of time when you won't be able to run due to injury or 'life' and you'll need to rely on different forms of physical activity. Your future self will be very grateful.

Helm Profile
Simon Blunden



Where are you from?

I grew up in south east Cornwall.

How did you get into running? Aside from a couple of cross country runs in primary school, I was a late adopter of running, only taking it up in my late 20s. I remember having a picnic on Helm Crag soon after we'd moved to the Lakes and seeing a scantily-clad person appear out of nowhere, streak past and disappear off the side of the fell. It was my first close encounter with the fell-running kind and I thought they were crazy. Little did I know that a few years later I'd be falling in love (literally head over heels at times) with this marvellous sport.

When and why did you join Helm? I think it was around 2018. After several years of considering it, I finally ran out of excuses and took the plunge. It was a year when I was running at least 5k every day to raise funds for Muscular Dystrophy UK and it was great to meet some new people for company on these runs. I thought I was reasonably fit at the time, but found myself hanging out of the back of Blue Group, never having done hill reps. I have found Helm to be such a friendly and welcoming club, full of great tips and advice.

How many pairs of running shoes do you have? Probably 7 or 8 (almost all Saucony Peregrines - I'm not sponsored), in various stages of decay

What does a typical training week look like? I generally hover around 30 - 50 miles per week with a target of 10,000 feet of climbing. This menu will usually be made up of a long steady weekend run, a couple of middle distance efforts and a more focused session with Helm. When I run out of time, or the weather is terrible, I supplement the elevation with stair climbing in the house much to my family's amusement…

Favourite local run? The Kendal Round! I used to call it the "skyline run" until (Andy) Coxy told me it had a proper name. The core of the route is that it takes in the three trig points around Kendal on Benson Knott, The Helm & Scout Scar. I think the shortest version is just under a half marathon, but it can be extended out to a marathon if you take in Potter Tarn & Gurnal Dubs and finish with Cunswick Scar. I'm trying to do 52 in '25 and I'm currently at #46...

Favourite race? I'm pretty new to the racing scene, only getting into it with any consistency this year. My New Years' resolution was to do as many of the Winter League races as possible - I managed all but one in the end. I also did the Yorkshire Three Peaks race this year, it has to be one of my favourite routes so far. It feels like a good distance, terrain mixture and elevation for me as I normally take a few miles to get warmed up!

Any embarrassing running moments? I once had to hide behind a big boulder in Borrowdale to remove my underwear in order to ease some epic and painful chaffing during an extremely wet Scafell Marathon. Luckily no-one came to along unexpectedly to witness the horrific scene…

Biggest achievement? Completing my first Bob Graham - it was so much further and more relentless than anything I'd done to that point, so I had no idea whether it was even possible.

Goal for next year? I'd like to do more racing (maybe even in better weather than the Winter League!), I'd also like to improve my navigation skills which are terrible at best…

Tips for younger runners? It's a cliche, but concentrate on enjoying yourself and don't worry about positions or timing too much. As a grown up, I spend a lot of time trying to recapture that youthful state of running for the pure joy of it. I get occasional flashes - the last time probably a cracking long weaving descent off the Wicklow mountains around Glendalough in Ireland - it was early in the morning and no one was around, so I whooped and windmilled my arms around like a runaway toddler!

2026 Dates

English Senior Fell Running Championship 2026, organised by the FRA, sponsored by Pete Bland Sports and Inov8:

Sat 21st February: Doctor's Gate: AL

Sat 7th March: Black Combe: AM

Sat 18th April: Blackstone Edge: AS

Sun 28th June: Blencathra: AM

Sat 25th July: Aldermans Ascent: AS

Sat 12th September: Old Crown Round: AL

All dates are provisional and will be confirmed in the 2026 FRA Handbook.

British Fell and Hill Championships 2026, organised by UK Athletics and sponsored by Pete Bland Sports.

Old Crown Round is also the British Long Championship Race for 2026.

The British Short Championship race will be Pen y Fan in Wales on 11th July.

The InterCounties 2026 will be at Sedbergh on 3rd May.

The UKA Relays will be hosted by Todmorden Harriers on 17th October 2026.



Race Preview: Black Combe — English Champs Round 2, Saturday 7th March 2026. By Robbie Driscoll.

The English Champs heads west in early March for Black Combe, a classic 8-mile romp around the fells in the most south-westerly corner of Cumbria. From the start near the tiny hamlet of Whicham, you head up through grassy fields and onto the fell, where you immediately tackle the steep but relatively short ascent of Seaness (CP1). Best not to waste your energy here, as up next is the main climb up the path to Black Combe's north summit (CP2), which is mostly runnable if you pace it right. On a clear day, you'll be rewarded with magnificent views over the Irish Sea to your left. On a cloudier day, you'll be rewarded with the fun of trying to find the right line off the summit. The running from here is fast and furious, as you trade the main path for a grassy trod which takes you all the way around the ridge towards White Combe (CP3). Take care not to veer too far left and end up in Bootle, or too far right and descend too early into the valley.

From White Combe, there's a short, steep descent down to a fodder rack (CP4), where you turn sharply right to trash through the undergrowth on a traversing descent to a stream junction in the valley bottom (CP5). This is the roughest part of the route, especially if the bracken's decided to make an early appearance.

The whole race up to this point is exhilarating, good old-fashioned fell racing fun, but now you face the real kicker in the long, looooonnngg drag up to Black Combe's south summit (CP6), only a few hundred metres from where you were earlier at CP2. After such a sustained stretch of fast running, everything goes in slow motion, and there are bags of places to be gained if you can speed walk just a little less pathetically than those around you. There's no obvious trod, so a compass bearing's not a bad idea, though you can't go too wrong if you just go up!

From the final checkpoint, it's a mad dash directly back to the start, initially through the heather and then along the same main path you climbed at the start. There's a special prize for the fastest descent from the south summit to the finish, with the men's record held until recently by Helm's own Nick Barber. The current records are 7:55 (M) / 9:41 (F) if anyone fancies a go.

After the race, there's always a pie and the usual comparison of racing lines and grumbling about that south summit climb. All in all, a great day out and it would be lovely to get a big Helm turnout in 2026 for a day at the seaside.







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