
2024
HELM HILL RUNNERS
HODGSON BROTHERS MOUNTAIN RELAY
33

THE COMMITTEE

Wow! Who would have thought that the newsletter would be resurrected? A huge big thanks to Janie for volunteering to take on the role of editor in chief.

I'm delighted to be asked to be the club chair for another year. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would ever be in such a position with such a great club surrounded by people who care so much about making amazing things happen for all its members. You can be assured you are in the hands of caring yet ambitious people.

As I stated at the clubs AGM, we are signed up to England Athletics club standards. For those who don't know what this is, briefly, it's all about ensuring the club has good governance and responds to members needs in a positive, safe environment free from discrimination in all its forms. This is through such things as having role descriptions for each committee member, this allows members to see who does what, ensures the coaches are trained and are fit to coach via DBS checks and also they have the necessary level of first aid training. The welfare of members is also looked after, not always visibly but is constantly there via the welfare officers.

So what does all this add up to? The happier and safer club members feel, the more they will enjoy their sport and more likely to represent the club at races around the country and internationally. One of the major things the committee does is respond to the needs of its members in various ways, for example, kit swaps. This runs not dislike a library, swap and change kit as needed, gives decent kit a longer life and helps financially regardless. This is also true of the bursaries we offer to members to help with travel to races here or abroad. If anyone needs help ask any coach or committee member openly or in confidence.

I'm sure as you read through this newsletter, you will see some inspirational feats from our members. Don't forget all these people started just like everyone else, no clue or idea of what was to come! Do remember we all achieve every time we put on a pair of running shoes and go out to run,

Enjoy the fells, David Griffin, Chair.



Helm Hill men have had a cracking year! Turqouise vests have raced everything from BOFRAs to ultras, crossing the fells and lighting up the tarmac, at home and abroad. The Helm party bus has travelled far and wide, with people racing for the first time, completing iconic rounds, winning team and individual medals, breaking course records, and being selected for their county and their country. Thank you for all your outstanding and inspiring efforts – and here's to another year of showing why Helm Hill is both one of the friendliest and one of the highest-achieving clubs in the country!



The Helm Hill women have been on so many amazing adventures this year, achieving so many cool things, from skyrunning and ultra events to speedy trail races and tough fell races. Well done to all women who have shown up, tried hard, pushed themselves, tried new things or simply got out in the hills to enjoy themselves… can't wait to see what everyone gets up to in 2025. Don't forget to take advantage of the huge amount of experience and knowledge within the club, ask questions and be inspired for future running fun!

Thanks to Lorna, our outgoing Junior co-ordinator: Reports of my complete retirement have been exaggerated; I am stepping down from the role of Junior Co-ordinator but not from coaching. I will continue to coach a junior group during Wednesday night training.

Also I am happy to be continuing with the organisation of the once-a-month Monday night runs for juniors aged 13 years or older who are able to maintain a consistent pace over rough terrain. It is great to have the involvement of some of Helm's experienced and speedy members to lead these runs, such as Mike Ainsworth, Chloe Lumsdon, Tim Lamont, Adam Perry, Jo Rycroft, whilst I simply ensure crisps and milkshakes are available at the end.

I am indebted to the many junior coaches who have been or continue to be part of the team with me. We are united by our keenness to provide a positive running experience for youngsters. We may not be able to please everyone all of the time, but there is a lot of work which goes on in the background to achieve what we believe, based on our experience and training, is best for Helm's young athletes.

James Parsons is starting now on his journey as Helm's Junior Co-ordinator; he also has a clear focus on supporting junior runners, recognising their efforts and promoting opportunities for them. Please help with this by volunteering your time to assist with a junior group or to take your coaching qualification and do some junior coaching. Talk to one of the junior coaches to find out what is involved – we need You!

Thanks to Sharon, our outgoing Women's captain: Time flies when you're having fun and after 7 years as the women's captain, it's time to hand the baton over. There are so many highlights during this time as captain, but the standout has to be the year of 2019 where the jade & black vest dominated the fells. Kelli was crowned British & English Champion, Hannah U23 British & English Champion, we were British and English team champions for both the open & V40 women and also won the Hodgson Brothers relay – was there anything we didn't win that year!

I'm excited that Janie has taken on the role as captain, especially after the success of the monthly social runs which I hope will inspire so many more women to give racing a go!





YOUR COMMITTEE FOR 2025

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 Tim Lamont

Lead Welfare Officer Anne Aston-Gardner

Welfare Officer VACANCY

Senior training coordinator Michael Ainsworth

Social Secretary Nick Peat

Media coordinator Dave Appleyard

Member Russ Cannon

President Billy Proctor

Vice President Tim Murray

2024 IN RUNNING!

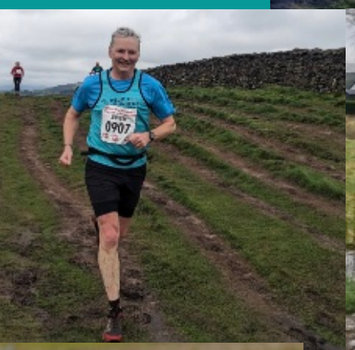
Photo credits:
Stephen Wilson at Grand Day Out Photography
David Wood at Fellside Photography
Jumpy James Photography
And more from the Fell Runners UK group on Facebook!



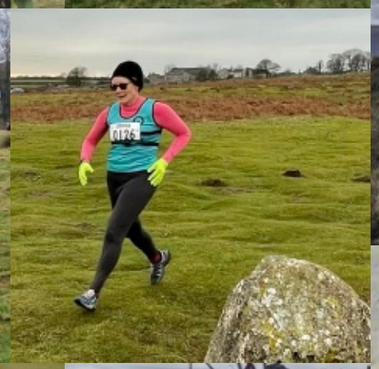


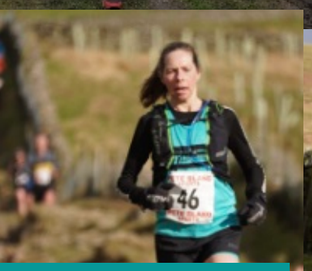


JANUARY











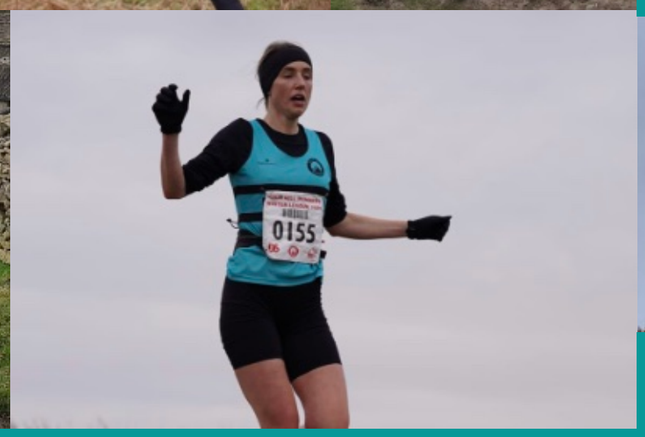




FEBRUARY







MARCH





APRIL











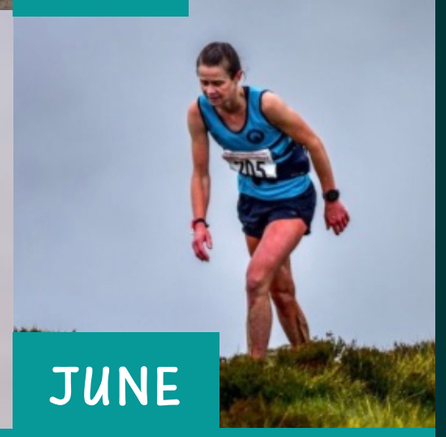








MAY



JUNE

Achievements from some green group heroes!
Vicky Atkinson and Lou Bland in the Montane Ullswater Ultra 34 miles.
Lena Parsons in the Settle Saunter 23 miles.
Caroline D'Arcy in the Coniston 17k.
Jo Haslett in the Storth Stampede.
Alison Tancrel, Angela Burley, Patty Davies in the Ulverston BOFRA race.
Elly Paterson completed 175 miles over 8 days of The Cape Wrath Ultra.

2024 IN RUNNING!



JULY









SEPTEMBER









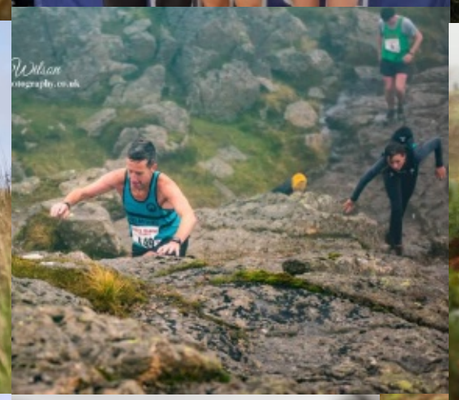


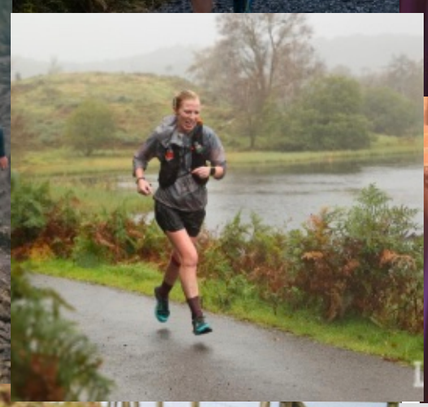














AUGUST













OCTOBER

RELAYS

HODGSON BROTHER'S MOUNTAIN RELAYS



1ST



1ST

It was another superb day out for the blue / green machine at this classic event in Patterdale - one of the most competitive and exciting events of the year.

Those lucky enough to be selected witnessed Captain Tim's exceptional car sharing logistic skills when the organisers told us we could only have 6 car parking spaces due to a flooded field. After some very careful planning unfortunately Tim's master plan went out the window when they told us the night before, the field would be open as normal. Kudos to Tim for the effort, he can now add 'herding fell runners in cars' onto his CV.

There was great support and camaraderie between all teams during the day with shuttling various people about between all the checkpoints. Special mention to those who ran the event for the first time - some top running was on show! In the women's race, Well done Scarlet and Hannah for a new leg 2 record of 1:15:19 breaking the 21 year record by 13 seconds. Kelli and Jo managed to hold off the speedy Ambleside women to take the win by just one minute! Potentially the closest ever race! It was also the fastest ever time for the mighty Helm mixed team! Who also took a fantastic win! 👏 The men recorded their 2nd fastest ever Helm mens time so all in all a good day for everyone 😊

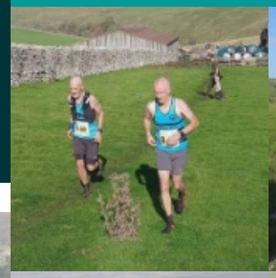


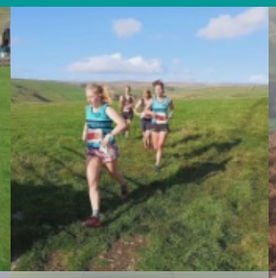


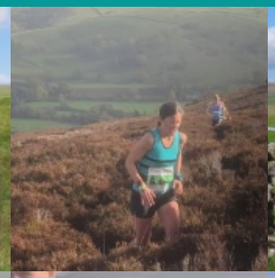


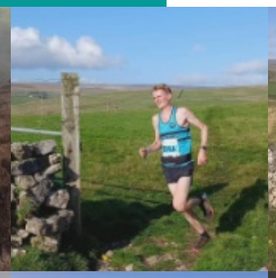
Our men may not have made the podium, but they certainly have some great dance moves - well done Tim and Chris! However, maybe they do need to work on their changeover - 'the dibber Jose!!!"

THE BRITISH FELL & HILL RELAYS







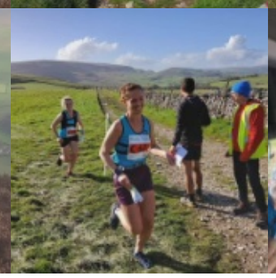














Always an exciting event to watch and a very competitive event to run, this year Wharfedale Harriers hosted the 2024 British Fell & Hill Relays from Ted Mason's farm in Appletreewick in the Yorkshire Dales. The Helm Hill party bus set off early, carrying with it an incredible 9 teams! Ready to race! Unfortunately, on arrival, someone realised that the team tents had been forgotten but it all turned out ok as the sun was shining and we found a great spot for Helm HQ under some trees right next to the start / finish line. A great place to cheer on all of our amazing teams!

Some may say, it was a bit of a different area to usual, lots of farmers fields and walls, and 'where are the real hills?' However the courses still proved to be tough, challenging and in some places very fast. The start however, was a different matter with all runners having to head up a steep uphill climb before they could go anywhere else. This was of course matched on the way back in with a very steep downhill section to finish, providing some great action with some excellent descending skills on display but also people falling over or taking spectacular tumbles only to quickly jump back on their feet to finish the leg.

Throughout the day, there was excellent cheering from all Helm Hill Runners, a few lost dibbers (looking at you Pete and Grace! :), and apparently a Helm Hill Runner even ran down Simons Seat with only one shoe on! And of course there was the odd pair who weren't that well matched ensuring that someone was definitely the nail and the much stronger hammer. There were also some adventures to be had between checkpoint 6 and 7 on the nav leg. Apparently it included clinging to undergrowth while swinging above a fast flowing stream and climbing cliffs... just like Indiana Jones! Safe to say, we are happy that everyone returned in one piece :)

Some top running provided another excellent set of results meaning that it was a happy Helm Hill party bus on the way home - thanks to Tim for sorting all the snacks!

Men's results:

Helm Hill Runners A 8th

Helm Hill Runners B 22nd

Helm Hill Runners V40 2nd

Helm Hill Runners V50 2nd

Helm Hill Runners V60 8th

Women's results:

Helm Hill Runners A 3rd

Helm Hill Runners B 14th

Helm Hill Runners V40 7th

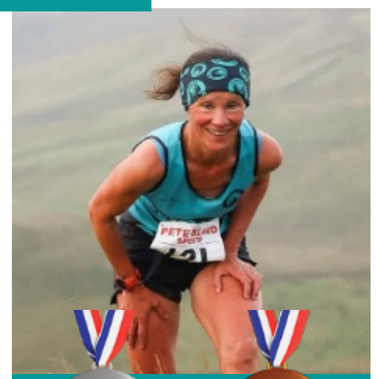
Helm Hill Runners V50 2nd

RESULTS

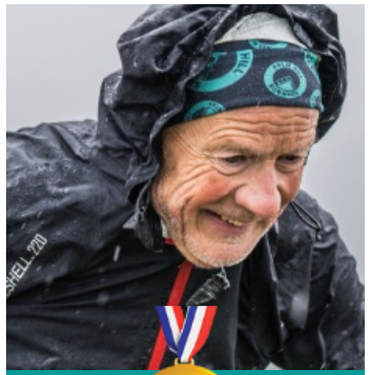
ENGLISH CHAMPS



Tim Lamont
3rd Men's open



Bianca Dyer
2nd Women's V/50
3rd Women's V/45



Brian Thompson
1st Men's V/70

2nd V/40 Men's Team
3rd V/50 Men's Team
3rd V/60 Men's Team

BRITISH CHAMPS

Many congratulations to the Helm medallists!

V/50 Men's Team

V/40 Men's Team

COMING OF AGE. BY BRIAN THOMPSON

A thumbnail sketch and some personal observations on the 2024 V70 English Championships.

The V70 Champs consists of 4 races (2 Short, 2 Medium, no Long required) with 3 to score.

My planning and training began in earnest at the end of September 2023 just after recovering from yet another dose of Covid. I decided that, with my 70th birthday due in January, I would focus all my energy on training for this series... I would not, this time, be distracted by road marathons, Fellsman, 'race the horse', or the beguiling Fred Whitton Challenge.

Here are a few snapshots or moments that my memory has retained...

Flower Scar

Black porridge, well stirred on the first ascent and brought to a fine puree by hundreds of fleeter feet for the last descent.

Lad's Leap

A triple decker boiled egg sandwich proved hard to resist 10 minutes before the off. It made its unwelcome reappearance on the final ascent a little later.

Buttermere Sailbeck

A day of rain with a succession of serious ascents and awkward descents. Anxiously looking back for a yellow vest and only gaining the finish line 18 seconds ahead after two and a half hours running.

Blisco

A run up as fast as you can and a pelt down as quick as your knees allow, to cross the line 8 seconds behind a gent in a yellow vest.

I hope these little notes convey the idea that fell racing is fully competitive in all categories (age or gender) and that there is always a new 'something to be learned' about pre-race snacks.

I would like to add a little thank-you note to the 'young men' in our "V60 Plus" group, especially John Jones, for encouragement and support.

LAKELAND CLASSICS

Congratulations to Helm Hill Runners in the Lakeland Classics Trophy! Philip Rutter, Phil Riley and Sarah Gerrish completed the series, and three people went a step further and won a famous Lakeland Classics mug.

2nd overall: Kelli Jayne

3rd V50: Carrie Gibson

5th overall: Sam Dixon

TRAINING



Hello, I'm Michael, Helm Hill's senior coaching coordinator, and I'm looking for help!! Those of you who know me will already have a few suggestions but…. the help I'm after at the moment is volunteers to lead senior training sessions. I am looking for more people to lead green, blue and red group sessions and for more women to join our senior coaching team across all groups.

I can promise that you will get lots of thanks from our runners for leading sessions and its great to see others succeed in their running goals and know you had a small part to play. The club will cover the cost of the necessary qualifications (including first aid) so if you are interested please come and find me at training or speak to any of the current leaders who can point you in my direction.

See you at training! Michael

HELM HILL TRAINING - A HANDY GUIDE

Our main training night is Wednesday when four groups of seniors set off from Kendal Leisure Centre (or the Helm in summer) for a structured training session. We suggest groups as follows based on a 10k road race time: Green (more than 50mins), Blue (45-50 mins), Red (40-45 mins), Black (less than 40 mins) - note: this is just a guide, you won't necessarily train at this pace! If you aren't sure which group to join then don't worry, you can always try different groups until you find the one that suits you best.

On Monday nights we also have a social run and a track session. More details of these are on the website and they are open to all. We want you to have a good time, make friends and achieve your running goals. Expect a warm and friendly welcome from everyone!

Green Group

Leaders: Jo Haslett, Ali Richards, Russ Cannon

Classic sessions include tours of Kendal Castle and the lanes of Fellside. Join us to…never get left behind, have a warm welcome, run at a steady pace (with harder efforts as you wish), and meet folk with many years of experience as well as new members to the club. Find where the fun really happens! ;)



Blue Group

Leaders: Bill Coupe, Phil Reilly

Classic sessions include 'King of the Castle' and 'No rest at Nobles Rest!'

Join us to…. be part of the 'run to the top for the view' group, join us to learn, laugh and 'dig-in'.



Red group

Leader: Simon Blunden

Classic sessions include Bell reps on the Golf Course and a tour of 'the 7 lesser hills of Kendal'

Join us to….improve any aspect of your running technique. We're a friendly, supportive and inclusive bunch that provides a wide variety of sessions from lung-busting hill reps to longer tours of the local trails.



Black group

Leaders: Tim Lamont, Kieran Hodgson, Peter Stock, Michael Ainsworth

Classic sessions include reps on 'Hospital Hill' and 'two up two down' on the Castle.

Join us to……learn how not to navigate and win races!



CAPTAINS CUPS

Awarded to those who have done something good for the club!

So far given to Janie Oates and Chloe Lumsdon for organising the women's social runs. Also to Bianca Dyer, Jo Hickman Dunne, Liz Whitfield, Esther Lambert, Nic Barber, John Millen, James Baron and Chris Speight for doing the most Champs races in 2024. Jack Waterhouse for a UTMB completion. Finally, Jenny Rice, Clive Allen and James Parsons for stepping into relay teams with 24 hours notice!



WOMEN'S SOCIAL RUNS

Inspired by other fell running clubs, Janie and Chloe decided to organise some runs to bring together the women of the club. So far, there has been a local social run every month either from Staveley, on the Scars, down by the river, on Farleton Knott or even around the Kentmere Horseshoe. Pub stop normally included :)

It's been great for meeting new people, getting to know each other better, getting inspired by others and in general just having a chat. All women welcome. There is a WhatsApp group. Ask Janie or Chloe or any of the other women to add you!



THE LAKELAND 100

BY JAMES PARSONS

Lakeland 100. Decent race. Well actually it's bits of many races stuck together. 105 miles of Lakeland passes without a single top, which means it's runnable, for as long as you can run.

The start of the race is something else. Many of us aren't fans of fanfare, but once in a while it's nice to be cheered.

But it does mean you set off a bit fast and regret it almost immediately. But too late, you are committed now and getting through the kissing gate and over the narrow Miners Bridge quickly is a good call.

The race starts at 6pm and this year was a beautiful summer evening over the Walna Scar Road and down into Seathwaite. The first 20 miles fly by really. Before you know it you're at Wasdale Head and on your way up Black Sail Pass. This is where you realise you're in for some work.

The route has over 20,000ft of climb and Black Sail is the first proper uphill effort. But most of these passes are over pretty quickly (except for maybe Fusedale) and you're on the way down again.



There's a good runnable section into Buttermere and it's where you can properly overcook it. And that's exactly what happened.

Came out of Buttermere and realised I was cream crackered. It was fully dark now and the section to Braithwaite was tough, especially the final climb up Sail Pass. The run down into Braithwaite village was a chore, when it should have been fun.

On the road into Keswick four people came past. Bugger. This is not how my race was meant to play out. Had I really messed things up already?

By Ullswater the morning was setting in, but it was a miserable morning to say the least. The waterproof jacket went on but probably a little too late.

Arrived in Dalemain in a semi hypothermic state. Thank goodness I'd put some spare kit in my drop bag, otherwise it may have been curtains.

Dalemain is 'halfway'. 55 miles into the 100 and the starting point for the 50. I was there at 6am so not even the keenest of 50 runners had turned up yet (they start at 11:30am). The dream of a sub 24 run was still on, but only just.

This is where I met up with Rory. A very tidy ultra runner and former Lakeland winner. But he'd also had a rough night. We never actually agreed to run together, but that's how it played out. I prefer to run on my own in races. But I think at this stage we both needed a bit of bromance.

Talking about former glories (mostly his) and life in general made the miles go by a bit quicker Pooley Bridge came and went. Howtown came and went. Fusedale came, and came, and came.

It's a bastard climb because it's in two stages. No matter how many times I've been up there I always forget that you climb, then plateau, then climb again. Maybe a metaphor for life.

Anyway, this is where I saw the power of poles. I don't like poles (i.e. cheat sticks, not eastern Europeans). I've never used them and don't think I ever will, no matter how long the race, but I watched in awe as Rory powered up Fusedale. Actually I didn't watch at all, I tucked in up his backside and held on for dear life.

The run over Brampton Common was fun. The run along Haweswater miserable. It was properly pissing down and the bracken had dropped and you couldn't see the path, which is quite technical in places.

Those few miles dragged and quite frankly I was delighted to get into Mardale and start the climb up Gatesgarth.

We were going at a decent pace, and had a good run into Kentmere, then an even better run into Troutbeck. I do a bit of running on Garburn pass and the trot down into Troutbeck was a joy, just like a Thursday social with the lads.

Between Mardale and Ambleside I'd made up the places I'd lost overnight, and was now back in the top 10 and sub-24 was firmly on the cards.

After 20 hours of running there was a veritable spring in my shuffle. Long distance running is about peaks and troughs and you'd do well to remember that no feeling, whether good or bad, lasts forever.

I don't always remember that myself and can be prone to a sulk or an over-excited jog. Maybe I'll learn one day.

Seven out of the top 10 finishers were old gits (over 40). That's a lot of partners and kids who have shown love and understanding during training. Always thankful to my support team.

By this time the sun had come out and I was on familiar territory over Loughrigg, and into Langdale.

The Chapel Stile checkpoint was at least a mile beyond Chapel Stile village. Think Rory got bored of my 'Are we there yet' banter. On the way up to Blea Tarn, I looked down and saw the men starting the Blisco Dash fell race.

The only thing left was the annoying climb up Tilberthwaite at 102 miles. A 100 mile race really should be finished before 102 miles.

But the pain was fleeting, and the relief at reaching the col was immense. All that was left was a rather stilted jog back down into Coniston. You have to run past a few pubs which is cruel.

I had two aims for this race. To finish and finish under 24 hours. The latter is a challenging target, and I was delighted to come in at around 22:50. Was good enough for joint 9th with Rory and his sticks. The top three all broke the previous course record with sub-20hr finishes. Incredible.

Both LL100 and 50 are oversubscribed and loved to death. A few of us at Helm are back next year for the 50, which I presume is actually 55.



THE LAKELAND 100

PUT ON YOUR 'CAN DO' HAT. BY MARIA HEARN.

Curling up on a rock and drifting off to sleep had never seemed so appealing. But with cut-off times looming, sleep was not an option. Having never tackled an ultra-marathon before, I wasn't quite sure what to expect. The challenge ahead felt daunting, but I had to focus on one goal: finishing. After 39 hours, two nights, and two sunrises, I crossed the finish line in Coniston.

So, why an ultra-marathon? In 2018, I found myself supporting Alistair during the Montane Lakeland 100. As I sat with our three children, watching the competitors return to Coniston, a thought sparked: I should give it a go. A year later, I ran the Lakeland 50 with Alistair. We finished in under 12 hours—tough, but with Alistair's support, we managed to get through 50 miles without falling out!

Over the next few years, I tackled more challenges, including Lakes in a Day and returning to the Lakeland 50 solo in 2023. As I crossed that finish line, a friend asked if I would consider the 100 next. I mulled it over, deciding if I didn't give it a go I would never know. Alistair offered his tough love that consisted of 'don't be moaning to me you haven't done enough training in July' so I decided to give it a shot.

When the ballot confirmed my entry, my 10-month journey began. Initially, I stressed about fitting training around a full-time job and family responsibilities. Training plans often felt overwhelming and unmanageable, so I decided to do my best. I found an article analysing Western States 100 runners, revealing that the average weekly long run was about 12 miles.

With this in mind, I structured my training around a Pilates class, a HIIT session, coaching a junior group, and a longer weekend run, aiming to avoid injury throughout the process.

A friend who'd completed the Lakeland 100 multiple times advised me to "train like you're doing a 50 but actually do the training!" I entered, "That's Lythe," where I enjoyed a lively run with fellow Helm runners.

I felt more confident with the second half of the Lakeland 100 route, so I concentrated on familiarising myself with the first half most of which I would tackle in the dark.

The route didn't ascend any summits but undulated over 105 miles through the Lake District's valleys, with a total ascent of 6,400 meters. I tried to maximise my training by running from Kendal as often as possible, squeezing in early morning runs around my parenting duties.

On the July 26th, I pitched my tent with pyjamas and a sleeping bag ready to crawl into after the race. After the race briefing, I set off, nervous but encouraged by familiar faces along the way. The sun shone, the views were stunning, and I only had to think about myself. From the start I believed I could finish but had no idea how my body would cope. With only two-thirds of the 750 starters expected to finish—I focused on putting one foot in front of the other while staying hydrated and fuelled.

Nutrition was a major challenge; what seemed appealing before the race often lost its charm 20 hours in. The event was a whirlwind of highs and lows.

As darkness fell, the rain intensified. I navigated the rocky terrain of Black Sail Pass, onward to Keswick, and found relief at the Buttermere checkpoint with a milkshake. As dawn broke, I turned from Latrigg to see a trail of headtorches dotting the hills behind me. I was proud to have made it that far, but the rain persisted, turning the old coach road into a relentless slog.

Approaching Dalemain, I knew I was over halfway, yet fatigue set in along with niggles in my left leg and right foot. Leaving Dalemain, I watched fresh-faced 50-mile runners start their journey, feeling overwhelmed by their encouragement. As tears flowed, Alistair and Harry awaited me at the top of Pooley Bridge.

A quick cuddle from a concerned Harry rejuvenated me. Runners continued to check in, and some salted potatoes and a cup of tea helped restore my emotions. I set off from Howtown with Mark, a runner from Ilkley, feeling much better—little did he know he was about to hear my whole life story over the next 20 hours.

The route was the wettest I'd experienced; my feet were soaked from start to finish. As we headed along Haweswater to Longsleddale, the sun finally peeked through, and the sound of cowbells and friendly faces spurred me on. After the second night fell, I was welcomed into Ambleside by Sophie, Tom, Harry, and Alistair, holding supportive posters that read, "Go Mum, you paid to do this!" and "Pain is temporary posting on Strava is forever!"

Checkpoints were a welcome sight, filled with friendly marshals, food, and drink. Mark struggled with his knee, so we paused for medical attention. My aim was to minimise time spent at the checkpoints to keep the race moving. Once Mark's knee was taped, we continued over Loughrigg.

The second night was the toughest; the temperature dropped, and fatigue began to set in.

I longed to be back in Coniston, tucked up in my sleeping bag before sunrise, but it wasn't meant to be. As the sun rose, it illuminated Crinkle Crags as we made our way down the Langdale Valley.

Once we reached Little Langdale, I told Mark we needed to stride out, dig deep, and finish—or we'd have to come back next year. Heads down, we pushed forward, and soon I could hear my children cheering from the Coppermine's track. The pressure of family life lingered; Alistair needed to get Harry to Kendal by 10 am for Scout camp.

We trotted down together, and I managed a final push into Coniston alongside Sophie. As the finish line came into view, the culmination of 10 months of planning, exploring new routes, and meeting incredible people washed over me.

When people asked if I would do it again, I hesitated. I'm not saying never, but for now, I'm content with having completed this challenge.

I'm not some amazing superwoman; I'm just a mum, wife, and coach who put on her 'Can Do' hat and went for it. And in that moment, crossing the finish line, I felt proud. Proud of the journey, the grit, and the support that had carried me through.







THE ITALIAN JOB

BY ANDREW RUSSELL

After successfully completing the Chamonix vertical kilometre with Teams Addison and Russell in 2022, Hannah was looking for further European adventures. The promise of sunny skies and a finish climbing a ladder to the top station at Pointe Helbronner identified the Courmayeur vertical 2 kilometre as worth a trip. I invited myself along naively believing a vertical 2 kilometre event must be twice as much fun as the Chamonix event. How hard could it be?

Seeing Pointe Helbronner through the apartment window from Courmayuer was a sobering. A long way off and very high up. It was at this point, not for the first time, that I thought that I might be out of my depth.

Our complete ignorance of the Italian language did not help us navigate the registration process, and asking whether or not we needed our micro spikes for the event, just provoked confusion.

We lined up on the start line at 7.00 next morning along with many fit and immaculately attired Italian athletes who obviously knew what they were doing and where they were going.

Accompanied by the usual uplifting rock music we were off, Hannah disappearing into the distance and me employing my usual race strategy of giving everyone one else a good head start.

A gentle 7km uphill jog towards Entreves, was a pleasant start. And then the path went up. I was pottering along at my own pace, not feeling great, but I put that down to Italian zig zags being steeper than French ones.

By the halfway station I was considerably fatigued and wondering how I was going to manage the next 1300m of ascent. Running was certainly out of the question as walking was proving taxing.

Route finding was not difficult as it was just up and there were plenty of other runners in front of me to follow. Interest was maintained on the steepening terrain, dodging the numerous rocks that whizzed past and unfortunately was a result of me letting so many other runners be in front of me. However, it did emphasise the importance of wearing the only mandatory piece of equipment – a helmet.

The route then continued up with some interesting rocky bits to which helpful bits of rope had been attached combined with some quite spectacular drops that I did my best to ignore. I had realised by this time that a few trips up Helvellyn were insufficient acclimatisation training for an event that finished at 3500m.

Italian spectators like to shout the words 'Die, Die' as a form of encouragement as you pass which apparently translates as 'Go on' which was disconcerting. And to add to the fun a storm was rolling in. Arriving at the old Torino rifugio I was met by friendly marshals who may actually in retrospect have been mountain rescue out looking for stragglers.

A few 100m below the top there was no sign of the path and I sadly came to the conclusion that there would be no ladder finish for me and that I was now officially a 'tourist' and must take the tourist elevator up to the cable car station.

The doors of the elevator opened, and I was met by crowds of people looking for the now non-existent views and Hannah asking where the bloody hell I had been. Touchingly, Hannah had been quite concerned for me when the ladder to the finish had been pulled up and I hadn't appeared though this might have been more to do with me having the car keys.

I have three requirements for a successful race, and these are not getting injured, not being last and not getting timed out and clearly I had failed in the last of these requirements. But as we descended in the cable car and cadged a lift back to Courmayeur for the pasta party I couldn't care less as there was no way that I was going to do that again or so I thought.

Success is fleeting but failure lasts a lifetime and over the coming months I kept thinking whether it would have been any different had I been acclimatised. Clearly, I wasn't going to get any fitter as training is something that I leave to other members of the family and so it was that I found myself, against my better judgement, entering the 2024 edition of the Courmayeur V2K. This time however, not being tied down by the inconveniences of employment, I would travel to Italy a week before the event and do some proper acclimatisation.

July found me camped in the Gressoney valley, which helpfully has a plentiful supply of cable cars to get you high without that tiresome uphill walking business. Perfect weather, pottering about at rifugios around the 3500m mark, drinking coffee and eating cake were my idea of a training programme.

At registration again, this time having completed a years' worth of Italian language classes I could confidently ask about the micro spikes. 'Devo prendare i rimponi?' should you need it. Off again and by the halfway station I felt much better than the previous year and much to my satisfaction, manged to jog a bit and actually overtake a few other runners.

This year the route seemed to avoid the horrible loose bit and so there were less projectiles to avoid. Yet the top didn't seem to be getting any closer. Unlike last year, perfect weather meant that you could clearly see where you had to go. Past the old Torino rifugio and there were smiling marshals guiding me on towards the finish.

At the base of the ladder, I took a moment to be pleased with myself and also to breath in some much needed oxygen. I climbed the ladder to applause from other runners, the clicking of cameras and the bemusement of tourists.

Italian job done!



SKYRUNNING

BY VICTORIA THOMPSON

Hi, I'm Victoria and I run in Helm Hill's Red group. In 2024, I was crowned the Women's UK&I Skyrunning Champion. I've documented my journey through the UK Skyrunning series below.

Firstly, a few things to know about me and some of the principles I currently run by.

Running Principles:

- I prefer not to run the same race twice (some exceptions) and not to recce races.
- I prefer to have a map and compass to navigate (rather than relying on GPX files).
- I prefer longer distance races (30km+). I am pretty terrible at short and fast races!

Things:

- In my youth, I was a serious netball player. In 2014, I was selected to trial for the England team but was unsuccessful. I credit my fairly engrained and disciplined training regime to this.
- Nowadays, I do a range of sports: climbing, ski touring, cycling, swimming, running.
- I have some recurring knee pain which flares up occasionally. I cross train excessively in an attempt to keep the pain at bay and maintain fitness!

My focus this year was the UK&I Skyrunning series (with a couple of European skyraces thrown in). Skyrunning appeals to me as the races are a mix of hill running and scrambling (both things I really enjoy).

The 2024 series consisted of 6 races. Runners have to compete a minimum of 3 to qualify for a series position. I completed the Snowdon Skyrace, the Pinnacle Ridge Extreme Skyrace and the Seven Sister's Skyrace. My positions were 1st, 3rd and 1st respectively. That secured my place at the top of the series, earning me the title of Women's UK&I Skyrunning champion!

The first of my races was the Snowdon Skyrace on Saturday 22nd June. Sticking to my principles I didn't reccee this route. However, I was familiar with a bit of it from Day 1 of the Dragon's Back (I got to Day 5 of this race in 2023 before my knee pain flared up). The Snowdon skyrace is 38 km with 3300m elevation, the main scrambly sections are over Crib Goch and Tryfan North Ridge. Unusually for me, I set off with empty soft flasks (except for some tailwind powder) figuring I could make it to the first checkpoint before needing to drink! Normally, I'm very conservative and like to carry water but my pack was a lot lighter without it! My favourite part of the race was running over Crib Goch, I do a fair amount of climbing which makes me feel quite confident on this terrain. I even managed to nab the Strava CR! I was feeling quite hyped after Crib Goch so decided to push hard on the final descent (not the best thing for my knee). I finished in 6hrs30 and was 1st Women! Sadly, I wasn't able to stay for the prize presentations as I had to catch the euro tunnel to France! I was running the Tour du Mont Blanc route over 4 days on the Monday (and then on to the Ecrins for a week of mountaineering).

My second race in the series was the Pinnacle Ridge Extreme race on Sunday 21st July. This race is 28km and 2700m elevation. I wasn't feeling top notch (suffering from an iron deficiency post TMB - another story!!). This race was another great outing! There are quite a few low grade scrambles on this route, including Striding Edge (which I also managed to nab the Strava CR on). One of the other scambly sections is a descent of Eagle Crag which involved quite a lot of scree descending (not my forte). For me, the worst part of this race was when I badly twisted my ankle just as I got to the road near the end. I had to hobble for a bit before breaking into a jog over the finish line. I finished in 4hrs46mins and was 3rd Women. Kelli Roberts (also a Helm runner) smashed the course record and took the win here!

My third and final race in the series was the Seven Sister's on 21st September. This was one of the Irish races and was 32km with 2100m elevation. I've never done a race in Ireland before so I was really looking forward to the completely new experience. Me and my partner decided to bolt on a day of coastal climbing either side of the race which was mega!

When we got to race registration I realised I'd left my garmin charger in Kendal. Sadly, race maps aren't issued for this race so I'd have to rely on the flags if I couldn't find a charger (and so load the route on my watch as a back up). My garmin is ancient so no one at registration had the right model charger. I spent some time thinking and realised there had to be some way for me to charge it from cutting open a standard usb charging cable. After reading a couple of blogs and faffing with getting the naked wire ends to stay in contact with my watch I was successful at charging it (phewee)!

Anyway, on to the actual race! The route is point to point so we got coached out to the start and ran back (over 7 summits) to the finish. While I'd had pretty good weather for the other two races, it was quite claggy for this one which made following the flagged route challenging - I was very glad I'd managed to charge my watch! About half way through I cut my palm, fairly deeply, on a barbed wire fence. I gripped my pole handle harder to try and stem the bleeding (my pole handle now has a red tinge. . .). Despite these minor setbacks I really enjoyed this race, I was running with a bunch of people throughout which was great (somehow I normally end up running alone during races). It was an epic route and I'd love to go back (preferably on a day when there is a view)! I finished this race in 4hrs14mins and was 1st Woman.





As well as these UK&I Skyraces, I also took part in Trofeo Kima on 24th August Trofeo Kima is a legendary Skyrace in Italy. Unfortunately, I didn't have a very good race, suffering from stomach pain, nausea and general tiredness. Over the 10hrs that it took me, I only ate 5 gels (eek)! This race happens every two years so I'll definitely be going back in 2026!

It's been great to be part of the 2024 UK&I Skyrunning series. I'd recommend checking out the 2025 series! The races/dates released so far are:

Scafell Sky Race - 31st May

SkyRun Eyri - 21st June

St Sunday SkyRace - 19th July

SkyRun the Mournes - 11th October

Seven Sister's - 20th Sept

RACING IN SCOTLAND

BY CHLOE LUMSDON

The first recorded hill race in Scotland was said to take place at the inaugural Braemar gathering at some point in the early 11th century. King Malcolm III summoned contestants to race to the summit of Craig Choinnich in return for a purse of gold and a fine sword. Nowadays, many highland games have popular hill races and there's over 140 other races to choose from in the Scottish Hill Running calendar. Many of the races are low key with a friendly atmosphere but the level of competition is becoming fierce as more people travel to race. The race calendar covers the whole of Scotland from the Highlands and Islands to the Scottish borders offering you the opportunity to explore a different part of the country each time.

As many of you know, I like to spend a lot of time up in Scotland and so I've ticked off quite a few Scottish races over the years. In 2022 I was crowned the women's champion of the Scottish Long Classic Series, (similar to the Lakes Classic Championship) where you have to complete at least 4 races to get a final ranking. I also ticked off the Scottish Championship finishing 4th in the women's ranking.

In order to inspire more Helm Hill Runners to cross the border and have a go at hill race rather than a fell race I thought I'd pick out some of my favourites and tell you a little bit about them.

Feel The Burns Hill Race

A fast 13.7miles/800m race across the hills north of Selkirk on the Scottish Borders (not too far from the Lakes!). It summits Peat Law before joining an old drove road that's part of the Southern Upland Way which makes for some very fast running. This race is mid-January and perfect for those wanting to get some speed in their legs over winter. It's a very popular race and always sells out fast so keep your eyes peeled for entries opening!

Stuc a'Chroin

Stuc a' Chroin hill race was first run in 1988 and is a Scottish long classic. It is going to be the British Long Championship Race for 2025 and it's not one to miss. The race starts on a steady path that weaves its way up through the forest and onto a ridge that looks down into Glen Ample. From here you get your first view of the climb up to Beinn Each, a steep line of runners following a fence line to the summit (813m with 500m climb). Once you've reached the summit it's and out and back over an undulating ridge with a final summit push to the top of Stuc (975m). The up and down nature of the ridge makes it seem like it takes forever on the way out but trust me it will feel even longer on the return! The route is usually flagged so no need to navigate and one of the best things about Stuc is that the whole village and wider community helps on the day. There are marshals covering the hill side offering bottles of water, sweets and words of encouragement and the atmosphere they create is great. There's always a ceilidh for those whose legs still have life in them.

Jura Fell Race

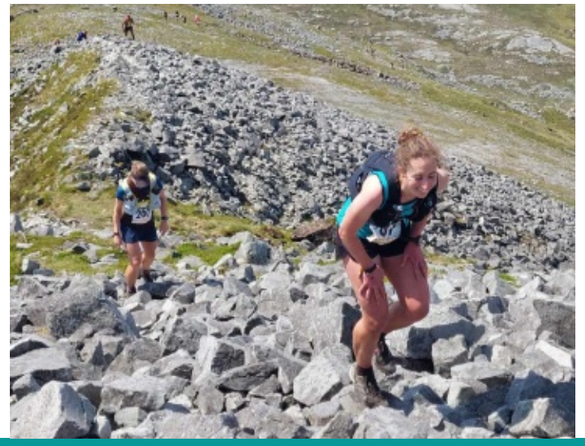
The only Scottish race that's called a fell race and takes place on the last bank holiday weekend in May. It is a whole weekend affair that involves getting the ferry with your bike and cycling to the tiny village of Craighouse. 250 runners + their family and supporters descend on the village and tents are set up on an area of flat ground in between the pub, the Jura Whiskey Distillery and the sea. The race covers 28km, 2370m over 7 summits and finishes with 5km of hellish flat road running back to the village. The Paps of Jura (the biggest hills) are steep and rocky, with scree running descents. It is without a doubt my favourite race of the year as the terrain is wild and rough and I love the whole weekend of adventure. Each year runners try to claim their Jura whiskey glass by completing the race under a certain time (4hrs for men, 4hrs45m for women) Entries are by a ballot and open on 6th January…..will you be a proud whiskey glass owner next year?

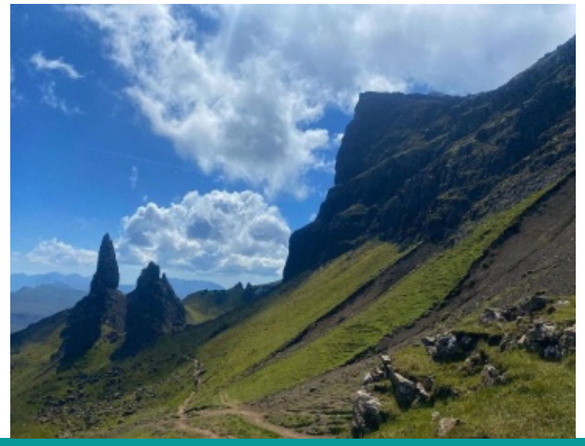
Glamaig Hill Race

The next race on my favourites list is on the Isle of Skye. Dubbed the one of the toughest races in Scottish Hill Running but it's only a short! It has a classic hill race feel, starting at a pub, it's a 7km out and back with a pint to finish and all for £5. The climb is a calf killer with a gradient reaching nearly 50% at times and using all limbs is mandatory. The fastest descent is down the hills large scree slope and there is much debate over what is the quickest line. I seemed to hop from one scree line to the next when I raced it this summer which didn't feel fast at all! This race is also famed for having a great ceilidh afterparty too!

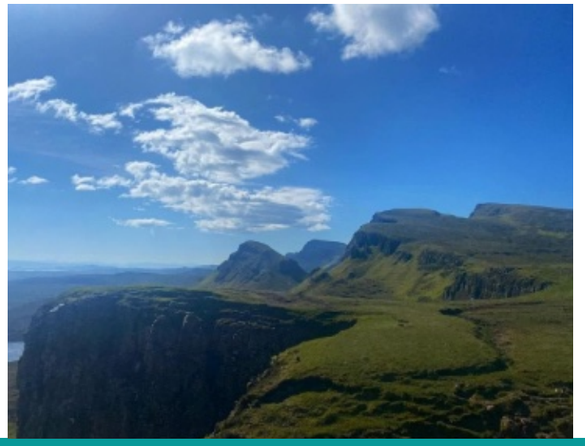
Trotternish Ridge

My last race is the definition of low key with the entries capped at 75 (except for champs years) although most years the cap isn't reached. The race is 27km/2000m along Skye's second most famous ridge with landmarks such as the Old Man of Storr and the Quirang along the route. It is a point-to-point race which is very rare these days. Participants get bussed to the start and there's a mad rush to find somewhere to wee discreetly before the start of the race. With such low entry numbers, even on a clear day having good navigating skills and using a map and compass is vital to successfully get between checkpoints as it's not as simple as following the ridgeline! Don't let this put you off though as it is a spectacular race with stunning scenery and certainly one to add to the lifetime race tick list.









LEARNING TO LOVE THE LONGS

BY TIM LAMONT

In three years of fell running to-date, I'd always been a self-confessed 'fair-weather racer'. Runnable paths, flagged courses, sunny days and single-digit route distances were my jam. I was always conveniently "busy" on Lakeland Classic weekends, and I'd never raced anything lasting more than two hours.

This year, I decided it was time to face the music. I couldn't avoid fell running's most iconic challenges forever, so I took a deep breath and jumped in the deep end, entering Wasdale (the English Championships' longest race) and Peris Horseshoe (the British Long-Distance Championship). Both races are similar on paper – many hours of rough terrain over the UK's highest mountains. And I turned up to both races feeling fairly fit. But – as I was about to discover – there's more to long fell races than "feeling fairly fit".

At Wasdale, I got emphatically chewed up, spat out, stamped on, and stamped on again. Everything hurt, I thought it would never end, and my wife later described me as "staggering past Styhead Tarn like an extra from the Walking Dead". I hobbled over the finish line in my worst position of the season, and promised to never try anything that stupid ever again.

Two months later I broke that promise, at Peris. But this time – against all my expectations – I loved every minute. I smiled from start to finish, felt great all the way round, and finished second, for my first ever British Championship podium.

Why did I have such mixed experiences from my first long races? I think it's got nothing to do with fitness, but because I learned some important lessons about how to survive – and even enjoy – long races. Here's a few reflections on what I learned, in the hope that they might encourage others to have a go at these terrifying – but very rewarding – races.

Lesson 1: There's safety in numbers. Going solo makes these races a really lonely experience. At Wasdale, I decided to run on my own so I could "focus on my own pace". Very soon I was tired, lost and demoralized. At Peris, I stuck in big groups whenever I could and benefitted massively. We shared jokes, navigation lines, turns "on the front" and encouragement up the hills. I never ran alone, and the time flew by.

Lesson 2: If you can't navigate, don't. Of course learning to navigate well is the best option here. But if you haven't done that (like me), the middle of a long race is not the place to try and learn. At Wasdale, I frequently studied a map and compass that might as well have been ancient Egyptian runes. I missed dozens of good racing lines, nearly ran off a cliff, and climbed up a whole extra peak (good for Wainwright-bagging; less good for racing). At Peris, I kept my map in my bumbag, spent my warm-up asking who knew the route, and stuck to their heels like a limpet. Maybe one day I'll learn to navigate – but until then, following is faster than faking it.

Lesson 3: Make a snacks plan, and stick to it. Snacks are crucial, and so is knowing when to eat them. At Wasdale, I had a good snacks plan on the start line (80g carbs per hour, for the nutrition nerds). But I panicked, threw it out the window, and ate everything in my bumbag as soon as my legs started hurting. It didn't help much – now I had a sick stomach to give with my sore legs. At Peris, I actually followed my snacks plan, and it worked a treat. Planned-out snacks, happy belly, happy days.

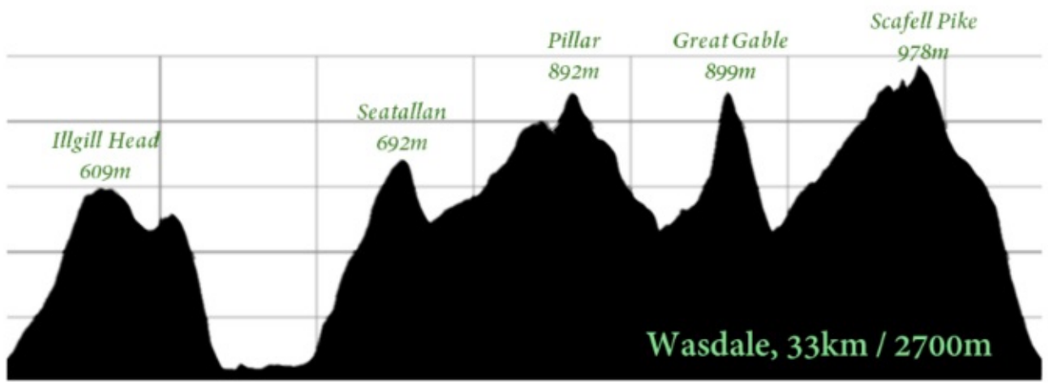
Lesson 4: Make hay while the sun shines. In long races, you'll almost certainly think of some bits as 'nice', and others as 'hard'. At Wasdale, I only thought about the 'hard' bits, and spent all the 'nice' bits jogging along thankful for a break. Unsurprisingly, I never did much overtaking. At Peris, on all the 'nice' bits I put in an effort to close a gap, trying to catch the next group along. Despite falling behind on a 'hard' bit early on, I found I could use a series of 'nice' bits to progressively jump back up to the lead group. Playing to my strengths allowed me to make up for my weaknesses.

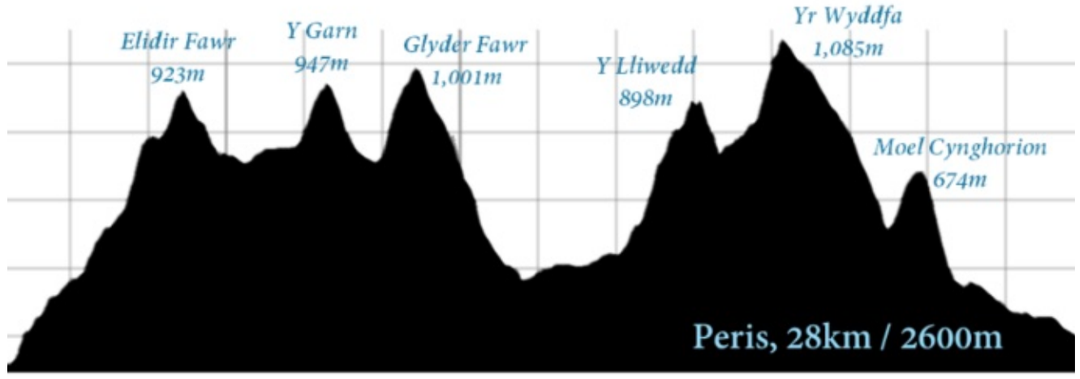
Lesson 5: A twenty mile journey begins with one checkpoint. Reminding yourself that the race is really long and hard is a surefire way to talk yourself out of it. At Wasdale, I stood on the start line dreading the last quarter. All day, I fixated on how horrible Great Gable and Scafell Pike were going to be - they had me beaten before I even got there. At Peris, I only ever thought about the next checkpoint. I figured I would cross the other hills when I got to them, so I didn't have time to dread anything. Before I knew it, that next checkpoint was the finish line.

So, that's what I learned from my first attempts at some iconic long fell races. They're daunting and rewarding in equal measure, and getting through them involves much more than just running. I'd wholeheartedly recommend the adventure, and I'm looking forward to learning many more lessons from future races to come.

Now, where's that 2025 race calendar…?







THE OMM

BY PHIL RUTTER



After two Original Mountain Marathon (OMM) victories in 2022 and 2023 I was nervous ahead of this year's race. Sam Dixon and I have been strong OMM partners. Our mountain skills are well matched, we know each other well and our previous races were on terrain that we were both vaguely familiar with. However, for this year's OMM we were based in Glen Artney in south-eastern corner of the Scottish Highlands. I hadn't been close to the area, and I was running with Finlay Wild…

Legs fresh with excitement, we went off quick at the start (most likely because I gave Finlay almost all the overnight camping kit) and on the way to the first control we ran past Tom Simpson. He heckled at us: "Be careful with him!". I assumed he wasn't talking to me.

Soon after, we caught up to Sam who was running with Matt Atkinson and we enjoyed fast racing around secluded corries and lochans hanging beneath Stuc a'Chroin. The cloud was high and the tops were clear, yet on the approach to Checkpoint 5 we still made an error that cost us 5 minutes. It was the usual combination: low energy (I was eating a thick gel paste that required too much effort to suck through the tube) and complacent navigation. Again, at Checkpoint 7 this time without Sam and Matt, we suffered a similar lapse and found ourselves on a 1 km peat bog slog rather than the runnable grassy terrace we had agreed to take moments earlier. Another 5 minutes gone!

We arrived at the overnight camp to see an excited Martin Stone. He told us we were only 1 minute and 10 seconds off the lead despite spending six hours in the hills having no contact with the current leaders – Dan Ashwood and Felix Wilson (Carnethy). Sasha Cheplin and Jamie Patterson (Carnethy) were a close 3 minutes behind. We were psyched for a hard push and pinpoint navigation on Day 2, so we pitched the tent and forced in calories (instant mash, noodles and nuts).

A clear and cold Day 2 began, and we had Dan and Felix in sight quickly. The OMM has a seeded start, meaning we set off from the overnight camp three minutes apart, and once we caught the leaders, we would have a 1 minute and 50 second lead. This could have been a cause for complacency but then the drama began, and we took wildly different lines to Checkpoint 5. We went high, they went low, yet 40 minutes later we rejoined perfectly at an orange kite. The racing was furious and tactical. Finlay took my bag on some steep uphill and we'd pull away with a gap. Convinced they were finished and without someone to chase we subconsciously slowed and, sure enough, were eventually reeled back in over the tussocks.

Into Checkpoint 7 we all crashed to a halt. We had been at a full effort following Dan to a stream bend and when we arrived, there was no stream bend. Finlay and I backtracked to relocate before eventually spotting the mistake and hurtling down the hillside. But it was too late, Dan and Felix were already long gone. Three technical checkpoints and 40 minutes of racing remained but we were 3 minutes down and had lost the overall lead.

We could see them in the distance, and I split the time on my watch. 2 minutes back… then 90 seconds back… over the crest of the final ridge they took a bad line and appeared just below us looking tired. Without a target ahead, they had also slowed. We fought to stay in front on a rocky gully descent to the final field. In the manic sprint for the finish I was dropped, but we finally crossed the line to win with an overall lead of 1 minute and 44 seconds after 11 hours and 30 minutes of racing. I was completely toast and no number of Kendal river laps would have won me that sprint finish. On the other hand, Finlay had such a relaxing time that he managed to record a podcast episode!

JO HD'S PHD ON RUNNING!

STRIDES, STRIDES, STRIDES!



I've come to realise that, whilst many people have heard about the magical power of 'strides', not everyone really knows what a 'stride' is, or why they are helpful… So, with the start of winter signalling time to knuckle down and get into good habits that will pay dividends in spring races (you heard me) – a quick guide to strides seems like a sensible place to start!

What are strides?

Strides are just accelerations. They involve speeding up from a jog to about 90% of your maximum pace, and then slowing down to a jog or walk.

Why do strides?

Strides help to improve leg turnover (cadence) and get you used to running at high speeds. They are a 'neuromuscular' workout, i.e., coordinating the messages between your brain and your legs to help you run faster. Given this, it is helpful to think about running with good form during a stride – keeping your chest up and open, driving your arms and legs, and keeping the upper body relaxed.

Importantly, strides are not an aerobic session looking to developing endurance. The aim is not to be blowing hard or feel like you've had a really good workout. You don't need to rush them, or strain or struggle to complete them. Think of them like a technical drill to be executed well, rather than reps to be hammered out.

How do you do them?

One stride (acceleration and deceleration) should take about 15-30 seconds over 60-100 metres. You should 'ease' in and out of the stride – you are only running fast for a few seconds. There's no fancy bounding, drills or sprint starts here, so as long as you've got more than one gear, you can definitely do strides!

Grass, road or trail all work fine, but ideally use a flat, even surface so you can focus on form and speed, and not whether you might fall down a hole or into a bog. Start with three-four strides with a good recovery in between (e.g. 60-90 secs). You can increase the number of strides you do, up to about eight (remember, they're not a workout and shouldn't fatigue you). I generally do up to six as part of weekly runs, but only three or four pre-race or session.

You can also run strides uphill, for variation. These are great for helping you to get the quads, hamstrings and glutes firing, and encouraging you to run with good form.

When should you be doing strides?

As part of your warm-up for a session or race (and if you don't warm up then maybe that should be my next article…) to help your body get ready for some faster running. Strides are usually the last part of my warm-up routine before I head over to the start line.

At the end of an easy run, 1-2x per week, to start reaping the long-term benefits. Doing them at the end of the run means you're finishing with good form and speed, and that's what your body will remember!

To bridge to some harder running, for example, if you are new to speed work and don't believe you can run any faster (you can!); or if you've had an injury or taken some time out. They get the legs used to running faster without too much stress and can be incorporated into runs a few weeks before any planned sessions or races.

Take home message...

Strides give you a lot of bang for your buck. They take just a few minutes, make you faster and don't wear you out.

Add them to your weekly runs!

THE TUESDAY RUN CLUB

BY CLIVE ALLEN & PAUL SCULLY

Before we start, two things have to be made clear.

Point 1: it's not a club

Point 2: it doesn't always happen on a Tuesday

Basically, it's all Scully's fault. I'm not sure exactly when the plan was hatched, but at some point a couple of years ago 'a thing' seems to have happened which has now become a firm fixture in our weekly schedule.

You might have spotted this 'Tuesday Run Club' crop up on Strava; it's certainly driven plenty of people to ask what the hell is going on. Well, the concept is simple: we find a run route that ideally neither of us has done before, starting and finishing at a pub that ideally neither of us has been to before. That's it in a nutshell, but the game-changer earlier this year was the discovery of a poster called 'Pubstops Of The Lake District'. Suddenly the gravity of the situation became clear; there's a lot of them! In the same way that Bob Graham probably said, "I'll tick off a few fells for fun" and it became a bit bigger than he anticipated, we've realised that we're really going to have to dig deep to get this lot ticked.

Don't imagine for a second that there's any pleasure in this exercise; it's a serious business, but we're in it for the long haul and determined to get the job done. Someone's got to do it etc. Plus, with horror we've realised that some new bars have opened since the poster was printed, so that means even more time in the pub.

Anyway, to give you a flavour of what's been going on, I'll hand over to Mr Scully for a 'Top 5' overview from our recent athletic endeavours.

Scully's Picks:

Catstye Cam's North West Ridge: Sounds suitably alpine, it looks and feels impressive and is rarely ascended. Pint in the Travellers Rest in Glenridding.

Blea Rigg via White Ghyll: That ghyll ascent just goes on forever but is rewarded by great running and a fine descent. Pint in Lanty Slee's, Langdale.

Helvellyn via Fisherplace Gill: Another rarely travelled route, passing a beautiful waterfall. You might even find Helm people on the summit; we did! Pint in The King's Head Inn, Thirlspot.

All the Dodds: But approached from an unusual direction, Ullswater side. Untracked and boggy here and there. Pint in The Royal Hotel, Dockray.

Caw: The race route, but at a more reasonable pace. Pint in The Blacksmith's Arms, Broughton Mills.

Carron Crag: Never heard of it? One of Wainwright's outlying fells, buried deep in the Grizedale forest. Pint in The Eagle's Head, Satterthwaite.

Yes that's six, not five. But we have an ever-expanding 'Top Five' list.

#RunNowBeerLater





LAKELAND CLASSICS

BY SARAH GERRISH

The Lakeland Classics Trophy is a series of seven classic Lakeland fell races. To count you need to do a minimum of 3 races with two of those being the super long events. Counting races include;

Super Long:
Duddon Valley 29km/1830m Ennerdale
Horseshoe 37km/2290m
Buttermere Horseshoe 35km/2515m
Wasdale 34k/2750m

Long:
Borrowdale 27km/2000m
Three Shires 20km/1220m
Langdale 21km/1450m

The races range from 20km to 37km and 1220m of elevation to 2750m. They take you over some of the highest (and personally some of my favourite) fells in the Lake District; and points are calculated based on your time, not position – helpful when one of the races inevitably counts as a British or English Champs race and entries rocket. The added challenge is the frequency at which the events come in the race calendar, with the main bulk of races having only 3 weeks recovery in between; and in the case of Duddon and Ennerdale, they are on consecutive weekends.

When I first heard about the Lakeland Classics Trophy my initial thought process was along the lines of 'oh I could never do that'. These are self-navigated fell races over tough terrain which for most are extremely intimidating, the cut offs on some are also very tight. Sadly, this manifests as a huge disparity in representation on the start line and the proportion of men taking part far exceeds the number of women. However, this is improving.

In 2023 I tentatively entered Ennerdale Horseshoe as part of my Dragons Back training and was surprised (despite the heatwave) how much I enjoyed it, so this year I decided to sign up to a few more and see how it went. My main driver being that I hoped it would give me the motivation to run and get out more in the fells after a few months of injury, plus another female entry in the mix was no bad thing.

I didn't get off to a great start. At Duddon Valley, the first race in the LCT calendar, I checked out at checkpoint 1 and got my second ever DNF. I did however enjoy an afternoon spectating and cheering in the runners as well as getting an eye in on the last few miles of the race – the section I hadn't managed to recce, and still had the rest of the season to fit in the third counting race.

In the end I did Buttermere Horseshoe, Wasdale & Borrowdale. Interestingly I had my best days out on the Super Long races and found the Long much harder than anticipated. In the run up to Wasdale I was genuinely worried about not hitting the cut off for Great Gable, but figured 'so what?', if I don't make it, I can have a nice run back in to race HQ. I think with a series like this there's so much more than the race itself. There becomes a familiarity as you progress through the season, seeing the same faces of runners also giving the Trophy a try, reoccurring fell tops reached from different directions, grassy race fields filled with club vests and car shares of pre/post-race chatter.

My recommendation… go give it a go!



JOSE CONCHA

Where are you from?

Temuco, Chile. My uncle worked for the chilean navy at the London office which facilitated my parent's decision to move to Europe at the time in 2007. Then I moved to Kendal in 2021 to be near the Lake District and Yorkshire Dale's for their natural beauty, peace and quiet, perfect for running and cycling from the doorstep.

How did you get into running?

Playing football, I'd chase the ball around the whole pitch.

When and why did you join Helm?

Summer 2021. I think being part of a club takes the sport to the highest level, makes it possible to train with the best and compete against the best. Also, a club provides the social aspect which is important to me. I chose Helm specifically because it happened to be the local club. Turns out I'd joined one of the greatest running clubs in the country.

How many pairs of running shoes do you have?

I always have one pair on. Highly recommended.



Typical training week?

I spend about half of my time on the bike and half on foot. Mostly at conversational pace, with a small amount of high intensity workouts or races added in when the legs are fresh enough.

Favourite race?

Langdale Horseshoe - my favourite races are the lakeland classics as they're an all round challenge in a beautiful landscape, they bring in the strongest runners and have the most history. I think Langdale Horseshoe is the most challenging of them all, as it has a strong element of navigation, potential for bad weather, route choice, mixed ground conditions, is short enough that you can physically run close to lactate threshold at times, which makes training for it more complex and difficult to execute technically on the rough terrain sectors.

Any running mishaps this year?

The worst experience I've had was whilst reccing Peris Horseshoe in Wales with Nick Peat. I fell on some rocks descending off Snowdon down the rangers path, got a dead quadricep and a deep cut to my kneecap, I couldn't put much weight on my left leg, it was raining sideways, I started to feel really cold, every downhill step was extremely painful and had to hobble in that state for about two hours to get back to the tent, and a long way to the nearest hospital.

Biggest achievement?

I ran strong at the races I targeted this year, at the short and long British champs, as well as made the Helm Hill team for the Hodgson mountain and FRA fell relays. Also, I'm happy with the amount of time I can spend doing sport, that in itself is probably the most important to me.

Goals for next year?

To add some finer detail to my training and hopefully break into the the top 20 at fell running championships.

SCARLET DALE

Where are you from?

I am originally from Eskdale, spent many years as a child in Hutton Roof, and now live in Coniston.

How did you get into running?

I was pretty rubbish at most sports, but used to beat the boys in primary school races. I gradually got more and more into it over the years. I think Hutton Roof fell race was my first race.. great cakes there. I ended up taking it more seriously and got a scholarship to study in the US for 4 years. I have many a tale to tell from that time! :)

How many pairs of running shoes do you have?

Running shoes have got too expensive so mine have upwards of 1000 miles on each pair which is not advisable. I keep old pairs 'just in case' but I should probably bin them. I'm guessing I have about 10 pairs knocking around.

Typical training week?

I tend to make it up as I go along but I'm trying



to be more structured. I definitely do a couple of long runs, depending on what people would class as long. The goal is at least one session and a long run and as many miles as I can fit around work!

What motivates you to do so many miles?

Running is my break and my favourite part of the day! I also have an addictive personality and running is better than most other vices!

Favourite race?

I need to do more of these, I can't think of any! They're all a bit miserable in the moment! Maybe OCC, Chamonix.

Any embarrassing running moments?

I have had too many of these! I would say the top one would be getting spooked by a bobcat and breaking my ankle on a remote trail in Utah. I had to crawl to find another trail user who had to call fire rescue. When about 30 firemen showed up I was devastated. I now use a Garmin Inreach on runs where I go out of service as it is quite frightening in an emergency when you realise you can't call anyone. Always carry enough kit ;)

Biggest achievement?

Oh it's got to be being undefeated record holders at the Hodgson Relays of course!

I also competed in the Euro trials this year in Keswick and was very excited to get selected for my first GB senior teams. It was a great experience seeing the level needed to compete with the best people in Europe!

Goals for next year?

Race more! Hopefully get a few wins!

Tips for younger runners?

Just enjoy yourself, get out as much as you can with your friends, and don't forget to enjoy the views.

BARNEY PLUMMER

Where are you from?

I'm originally from Newport in South Wales. I lived near Leeds for a few years and then moved to Kendal at the start of 2023.

How did you get into running?

I didn't really do any sports growing up until I started rowing while I was at uni. After I graduated in 2016 I didn't live close enough to a river to carry on rowing, so started running. After a couple of years, I joined my local running club (Horsforth Harriers) in 2018 and since then I've run more and more.

When and why did you join Helm?

I moved to Kendal in January 2023 and turned up to a club run the next day. I had a great time fartlekking over Scout Scar in the rain and never looked back!

How many pairs of running shoes do you have?

Oh dear - too many. I've had to go and count... 15. I don't like throwing a pair out unless they've completely fallen apart!



Typical training week?

I'll aim for 10h of running in a good week. I try to make the Monday track session and the Wednesday club run whenever I can and fit a race or a long hilly run in on the weekend.

Favourite local run?

I like getting into the Howgills whenever I can, there's always a trod I've not taken before.

Favourite race?

Rombald's Stride - a 22 mile race around Ilkley Moor in February. I think most of my fond memories of this race are from the first time I ran it in 2019, on a beautiful sunny day in fresh snow from overnight. It was spectacular, then every year since there's been a rain and a howling headwind as you run over the moor. I also enjoy the incongruous start, which is outside the loading bay of a big Argos in the suburbs of Leeds! But then at 9am sharp, the RO rings the school bell and within a few minutes you're into the woods and on your way to the moors. Plus pie and peas at the end, what's not to like?

Any embarrassing running moments?

At my previous club, I once missed the start of a relay because I was going to the loo. My partner was not impressed!

Biggest achievement?

I won The Lap this year and last year, which is a 47 mile race around Windermere. That, or 4th at Barbon winter league.

Goals for next year?

To get faster!

I've entered the 13 Valleys next September, which is 180km and a lot further than I've ever run before - so surviving that.

Tips for younger runners?

Have fun and enjoy it!

GRACE CULLING

Where are you from?

I come from Grange over sands.

How did you get into running?

I got into running because I always have too much energy and need to get rid of it somehow 😂. Plus it's a good excuse to be out in the fells. I've been running for a while now but only got into racing this year.

When and why did you join Helm?

I joined helm at the start of august this year and I've loved it! I joined because I wanted to start racing, so I wanted get faster!

How many pairs of running shoes do you have?

Pairs of running shoes: too many! I think 4 currently.

Typical training week?

I usually run 4 or 5 times a week. Usually short runs midweek, helm hill training on Wednesday (I love these!) and races or long days in the fells on the weekends.



Favourite local run?

I love whitbarrow scar.

Favourite race?

I think my favourite race so far has been the three shires (despite the crappy weather). I also had loads of fun on the hodgson brothers mountain relay because it felt good to be part of the team.

Any embarrassing running moments?

There's been a few embarrassing moments. I ran past a group of cool popular girls from school and fell quite spectacularly into a wall in front of them. Think it gave them a laugh. I think you've also got a pretty embarrassing picture of me on the grizdale horseshoe race with a very stylish back cap.

20 years old, and you have already done a BG! Tell us how that came about and how did it go?

II always wanted to do a BG. The round really captured my imagination. I always had the idea of doing it before I turned 20 but didn't think I'd be fit enough. I wanted a big goal for my New Year's resolution so I thought I might as well try.

It was without doubt the best day in the fells I've had. But also the hardest. Leg 4 nearly killed me. I was really lucky to have a great team of people helping me, including a few helm hill runners. Im really grateful for all the help.

Goals for next year?

I was wondering whether to do the English champs races next year, but not quite sure I'm fast enough yet!

I have a few long term goals/ potential ideas for if/when I'm fitter including seeing how fast I can do the Cuillin ridge and the classic rock round.

Tips for younger runners?

Enjoy it! Running should be fun. The Lake District is an amazing place to explore so make the most of it.

CATHY CULLINANE

Where are you from?

The picturesque bit of Cumbria, Barrow in Furness.

How did you get into running?

I've always loved mountains firstly as a climber. I moved to Snowdonia from Cumbria and The Carneddau were on my door step. I started running in the hills with friends and because it's easy to just get out in pretty much most weather.

When and why did you join Helm?

Like many, my kids joined and I signed up to be a junior coach. I met some great people who made me feel really welcome.

Typical training week?

Right now I'm 7 months post ACL reconstruction and managing 3 runs a week which feels amazing. I don't really have a training regime. I go running when I can and that's usually 4 or 5 times a week. I love running distance though so try and make sure I get a longer run in.

Any running mishaps you can share?

I've had some massive wipeouts, doubled the distance of a run getting lost but my worst mishap was getting injured during the London Marathon, carrying on and then taking nearly a year to recover!



Tell us about a race that went really well for you.

Last year I was running my last BOFRA race of the season at Muker show, it's a really short up, across and down. I was aiming to win the vet category to clinch the title. I thought I was going to die on the uphill and I missed running around the flag at the top and had to briefly come back and run around it, I'd lost precious seconds and thought it was all over as I'd fallen behind. I really pushed myself on the downhill and caught up a bit. At the end is a river crossing with a rope thrown across to help cross the river. I decided to avoid the rope and I'll never know how I managed to run across the river without falling over. I won by 1 second.

Tell us about a memorable moment in the hills.

I have been so lucky to spend a lot of my free time in the mountains running, skiing and climbing so this is really tough. One in The UK though is running with my favourite people and reaching the last summit, Foel- Fras on the 15 Welsh 3000m peaks in perfect autumn weather, as the sky turned red and being surrounded my wild mountain ponies. It's a pretty good one.

What motivates you to keep running?

I love being outside and I love being in wild places. Running in the hills gives me a real sense of freedom and big climbs give me such a kick. It always makes me feel better. I think this will keep me running for as long as I'm able to. There are also so many amazing and supportive women runners in the club which in itself is really motivating. I think having lots of like-minded friends and family to run with also helps.

Goals for next year?

To get back to where I was before I bust my ACL and racing some of the long Lakeland Classics.

GARY GREGORY

Where are you from?

Originally from Lytham St Anne's in Lancashire. Now living in Kendal.

How did you get into running?

I started running when I was 34 as a way to manage my mental health during a very difficult time I was going through.

When and why did you join Helm?

My early running days were mostly competing in road races, however I spent almost all my training on trails which I loved. I always enjoyed the idea of mountain running but was set on the last fast road races. After giving up running for two years due to constant injuries, I thought that fell running would be a good way to get into that. I joined Helm in January 2024.

How many pairs of running shoes do you have?

Far too many! Maybe 25 ish, mostly road shoes which never get used now.

Typical training week?

This year, I've not been following a training plan, I just get out and run when I feel like it. Over winter I will be focusing on leg strength and endurance on some big long fell runs, with hill reps and tempo run each week. As we move into the new year I'll be using the winter league and some of the local races to get some speed back into the legs.



Favourite local run?

Scout Scar, Loughrigg, Hellvellyn from Glenridding over Striding edge.

Favourite race?

Kong SOB, Coledale Horseshoe, any of the winter league races.

Any embarrassing running moments?

Most races to be fair! Or perhaps when I ran round Loughrigg in torrential rain. I noticed there was a crazy amount of bubbles forming around my shorts. By the time I finished the run I looked like I'd been in a foam party. Turns out the new roll on deodorant didn't mix well with the rain and running. Got some funny looks walking through Ambleside!

Biggest achievement?

Winning Merida, Mexico half marathon and finding myself plastered all over the Mexico tabloids the next day. Even managed to blag a free lunch and coffee by claiming celebrity status... take it while you can!!

Goals for next year?

Avoid injury, get better at climbing, learn how to not fall over more than 5 times per race, place well in English and British champs, and support my daughter Amika with her running.

Tips for younger runners?

Turn up to training, try your best and remember to enjoy it. Running is not just great fun, it's also great for your body and mental health. And remember... hard train, race easy! Sort of 😉

JUNIOR CORNER!

Helm Hill came top in the team standings in the 2024 Junior FRA English Championships after some great performances throughout the season.

We also had some individual medals in the U13 boys, U15 girls, and U17 girls. Well done to everyone who raced this year.

In 2025 we have some really interesting races, some good local ones put on by club members (thanks Justin Tancrel and Nic Barber!), and a couple further afield. 2025 Junior FRA English Champs are:

Sunday 27th April - Duddon Dash

Sunday 18th May - Sedbergh

Sunday 8th June - Edale

Saturday 21st June - Clougha Pike

Sunday 6th July - Clwydian

Saturday 12th July - Tebay

We're always looking at ways to enable more juniors to race, if they want to. Developing their skills and confidence on the fells. All ideas welcome, please speak to new Helm Hill and FRA junior co-ordinator James Parsons.

JOSS WOOD, 12



When and why did you start training with Helm Hill?

I joined Helm Hill in 2019 when I was seven years old. I started running up my local fell with my dad and I really loved it and wanted to follow in my dad's footsteps, so my dad took me to Helm Hill running club which he runs for and that's how I started running for Helm Hill.

What is your greatest running achievement so far?

I think my greatest running achievement was when I came 3rd at Grasmere sports under 9s fell race or when i won Eskdale show fell race like my dad.

Do you do any other sports or physical activities at school, with other clubs or with your family?

Yes, I do cycle cross and road cycling with Kendal cycle club, some Saturdays i go out on a club ride with them. I also do open water swimming in the summer.

How long do you think you will continue to train with Helm Hill?

Hopefully for a long time because it's very fun and gets you fit and strong. I have enjoyed working up through the groups so far.

What is your favourite training activity?

I think my favourite must be short and steep hill reps or just going for a nice long run.

Do you have a running ambition or goal for the future, even if it is when you are much older ?

I would love to win a few prestigious fell races and get really fit in the future. I would like to do the Ben Nevis fell race when I'm older with my dad. But I've never competed in triathlons before so I might like to have a go at that. As well as steal dad's crowns on Strava.

Carrie gave him her old vest when he started at Helm, it was huge on him at the time and had to be pinned, but he is still wearing it to this day, so she also deserves a special mention too.

AMIKA GREGORY, 10



When and why did you start training with Helm Hill?

My dad (Gary) started fell running this year and when I found out I could do the Kendal Winter League I asked if I could join Helm and run too. Joining the training nights is helping me get more stronger and confident on the hills.

What is your greatest running achievement so far?

Winning my first race at Buttermere shepherds meet.

Do you do any other sports or physical activities at school, with other clubs or with your family?

I run around 2km every morning before school starts with my headteacher and I go running with my dad a few times a week. I also enjoying walling in the hills.

How long do you think you will continue to train with Helm Hill?

I will keep running for helm for as long as I have two legs.

What is your favourite training activity?

Hill reps!! I also love descending fast!

Do you have a running ambition or goal for the future, even if it is when you are much older ?

To be my best, and to be the fastest girl in my year at school. I'd also like to run for Cumbria in cross country.

EVAN MULVANY, 14



When and why did you start training with Helm Hill?

I started training with the Helm about 5 years ago when I was 9. I always liked running and wanted to get better at it.

What is your greatest running achievement so far?

Representing Cumbria at cross country and on the fell.

Do you do any other sports or physical activities at school, with other clubs or with your family?

I do basketball club at school and a lot of walking with my family. I also enjoy swimming in the lakes and the sea.

How long do you think you will continue to train with Helm Hill?

As long as I still enjoy it. I would like to continue running as long as I can.

What is your favourite training activity?

I enjoy training on the Helm as the reps are always different. I enjoy running uphill and love running back down again.

Do you have a running ambition or goal for the future, even if it is when you are much older ?

I want to continue to get better on the fells and at cross country.

JUNIOR CORNER!

CHARLOTTE RICHARDSON, 11.5!



When and why did you start training with Helm Hill Runners?

I started training with the club when I was 10 yrs old in September '23. I had previously done some cross country with school and got to the National Champs that year. My brother and I asked my Dad to join a running club, and we wanted to join Helm Hill Runners. We became members in April '23 and were put on the waiting list for junior training. I was so pleased to start training so quickly with the club, it has offered so many new running experiences.

What is your greatest running achievement so far?

This is a hard one, but my favourite was winning my first Winter League on my 11th Birthday. What made it even more special was it was the Helm Hill race and I was in my Helm Hill vest! This result helped me to come 3rd overall in the league, and I completed all 10 counting events. I can't wait for next year's winter league!

Do you do any other sports or physical activities at school, with other clubs, or with your family?

I always loved doing all-sports in primary school, and now in secondary school. I have played netball with my good friends at primary school, and we are hoping to make the school team at Dallam. I also play Cricket for Sedgewick CC and have done this over the last 3 years, and we won the U11s soft ball league last year. Another passion of mine is mountain walking which I do with my family. The funny thing is that I used to hate the up-hill bits! I sometimes wonder how I became a Fell Runner! But doing these mountain walks with my family probably gave me the love to start Fell Running in the first place. I am also part of a dance club and love physical challenges of that too.

How long do you think you will continue to train with Helm Hill?

I really hope that I continue with Helm Hill Runners for as long as I can. It would be great to compete in the senior races when I am older, but for now I am enjoying racing and training with the junior section and making some really great new friends. It is such a great community to be apart of and I couldn't imagine running with another club – especially not Ambleside!!!

What is your favourite training activity?

I quite enjoy relays. In the last training we just did relays all night and I was completely in my element. I quite enjoy sleeping too as that's a very important part of training too!

Do you have a running ambition or goal for the future, even if it is when you are much older?

I would like to try some track racing and see how I like that (although I can't stand running on the road, as it's boring!). The reason for this is that I really idolise Keely Hodgkinson and it would be nice to think that one day I could race in the Olympics. I wonder if they will put Fell Running in it one day? I have also heard about the Bob Graham Round and the 3 Peaks Fell Race and think I might like to do those one day aswell. GO HELM!!!

HARRY ATKINSON, 10



When and why did you start training with Helm Hill?

I started training with Helm when I was 8 years old because my older sister Jessica already went every week

What is your greatest running achievement so far?

I came 2nd at the British Orienteering Championships May 2024 in M10A and I won the Welsh 6 Days Orienteering Champs in Summer 2024 also in M10A.

Do you do any other sports or physical activities at school, with other clubs or with your family?

I do PE at school, swim with Kendal & Carnforth Swimming Clubs, orienteering (in LOC) and I also play football for Wattsfield.

How long do you think you will continue to train with Helm Hill?

I think I'll continue to go to Helm Hill whilst my friends still go.

What is your favourite training activity?

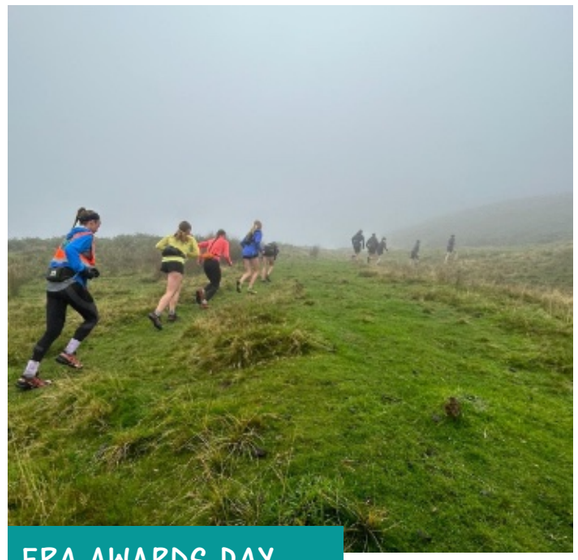
Manhunt game.

Do you have a running ambition or goal for the future, even if it is when you are much older ?

I'd like to do triathlons when I'm a bit older.



FRA JUNIOR CHAMPS TROPHY



FRA AWARDS DAY

QUIZ CORNER

GUESS THE RUNNER!







GREEN OR BLUE?

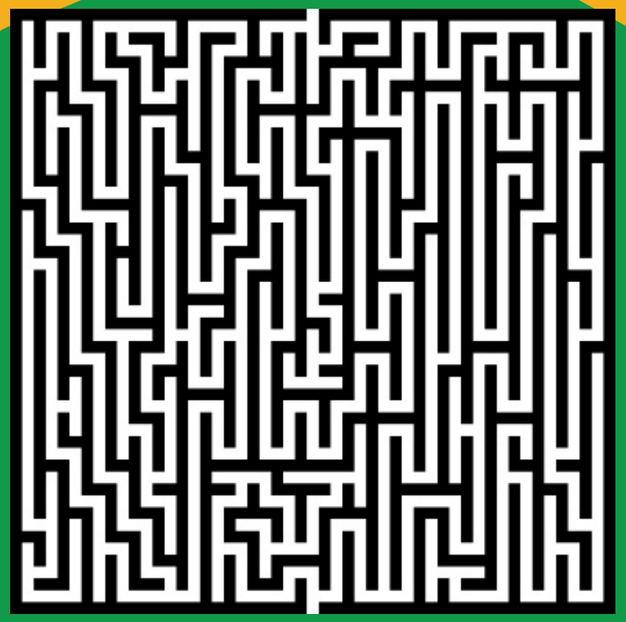








CAN YOU FIND
YOUR WAY
TO THE TOP
OF THE HELM?



TOP TIPS

HOW TO NAVIGATE LIKE ANT

HE MAY HAVE MADE A SMALL ERROR AT 3 SHIRES :)
NORMALLY A NAVIGATIONAL WIZARD, HE SAYS...
ALWAYS GET YOUR MAP OUT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE
AND DON'T FOLLOW CARRIE!





HOW TO FUEL LIKE CHRIS

9 PIZZAS IN 9 DAYS = THE BEST RESULTS EVER! 🍕 🍕

HOW TO CHEER ON LIKE JAVIER

ÁNIMO - COME ON!
VENGA - COME ON!
VAMOS - LET'S GO!

NOW YOU KNOW WHAT HE IS SAYING WHEN HE SHOUTS AT YOU IN A RACE :)

HELM HILL ON TOUR...



The World Masters Mountain Running Championships

Location: Canfranc, French / Spanish border

Distance: 20 miles

The World Masters Mountain Running Championships is held in various countries, mainly around Europe, and is growing in reputation and prestige. If you enter, there isn't a selection process, you will be pitting yourself against fellow runners from Europe, the Americas, Australasia and the far East. In 2024, the event was taking place in Canfranc, situated on the French Spanish border.

Leading up to this event I decided that my training didn't need the experience of racing round Wasdale, (I wasn't going to be in contention for the English championships) so I opted to run across the North Yorkshire moors, the 40 mile Lyke Wake Challenge, much more fun with it's flooded paths and horizontal rain! Character building. I finished in 8 hours 5 mins, 14th overall so not a bad day out. My next planned race was the Howgills race, 3 weeks before Canfranc, and unfortunately was the end of training runs due to huge blistering on my heels and losing skin on my lateral malleolus (look it up) it was agony from the first downhill to the finish! So, not a great start to the race but heyho! That's life. Fortunately, I had opted for only racing the long race, 20.miles and 7000' of climbing!

On race day I was one of only 2 runners for team GB, so there was no chance of winning a team prize, so I had to run as hard as I could for as long as I could and hope that my determination to get a podium position would be rewarded. The route would take us on a figure of 8 across both sides of the valley with some a zing views and worrying drops from the path edges, no room for errors.

From the start there was amazing cheering from the crowd this was soon forgotten as we headed up the first climb, as this is Europe, the route zigzags which makes the climb runnable until your legs scream with pain and force some fast walking on the steeper sections. Once the highest point was reached it was a super fast decent with big drops down more zigzag paths to the halfway point back in Canfranc. The crowds were still there cheering all the runners on. The second climb was pretty much like the first, zigzags. But they now felt steeper and shorter up to the halfway point, which was a boulder field with no path just markers and medics!! Not exactly a confidence building sight but looking down the boulder field I could understand why they were there!

From the midway point my legs started to feel shot. I had passed many competitors on the climb, so I was feeling reasonably confident I would be in the top 5 at least. With about a couple of miles to go, I was greeted by the shouts from Craig Roberts saying he thought I was in second position!! Heck, better than I thought! Further on and what seemed like a thousand zigzags later, I was again told I was in second position.

A few minutes later the finish was in sight and after crossing the finish line it was confirmed I was indeed second V65! 4:25:35. So, second V65 in the world, it still hasn't sunk in and I still cannot believe that I did it!

By David Griffin

Trail des Aiguilles Rouges, Chamonix

Location: Chamonix, France

Distance: 52km

In September I headed out to Chamonix to take part in my first mountain race outside of the UK.

The Trail des Aiguilles Rouge (TAR for short) is a 52km mountain race with 3600m elevation based from Chamonix using the hiking trails of the Aiguilles Rouges massif.

We arrived to pretty horrendous weather. Thunder storms & snowy tops loomed over Chamonix and an ominous clag settled on the tops giving an intimidating presence.

Regular updates came through from the Race Organiser. We kept everything crossed for the sunny day that was predicted but kit recommendations were updated to take into account the snowy conditions and finally a route change & later start were agreed on. The French to English translation described "severely disturbed" weather and a white out above 2000m.

Although initially a little disappointed that the route had changed resulting in 5km less running & 500m less ascent, I was also not totally hating the idea of more sleep & a shorter day out, especially on race day when reaching the second feed station & seeing the tops we should have traversed towering over us.

I rolled up to the start line having had a funny year of running so far, & although not feeling completely like it was unachievable I certainly didn't feel on my top game and I'd instead settled into aiming for the most enjoyable day out, given the situation.

Having been out to Chamonix just a month before, for a summer holiday, it was pretty spectacular to be there in such different conditions and running over snowy trails so soon afterwards.

Being a European mountain race it was waymarked the whole way which removed any navigation 'worry' but with a pack full of winter kit and the experience of the prior two days, the underfoot conditions really emphasized the unpredictability of the weather in the mountains. Its also worth noting the long climbs – the main climb of the day was 12km in distance and 1700m elevation. Despite having reccied it, it didn't make it any easier! You just can't replicate those long climbs in the Lakes.

For anyone considering a European, or overseas race… GO FOR IT! What a great way to explore, immerse in the local running culture and see parts of the place you might not otherwise.







By Sarah Gerrish

HELM HILL WINTER LEAGUE

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW!

The Helm Hill Winter League is a series of short races that run from the first weekend in January through to Easter on most Sundays. Runners of all ages from 8 years upwards can take part so they are a great family event. Racing the same folk each week gives a great sense of camaraderie and friendly rivalry/support depending on whether you enjoy competitiveness or collaboration to get round together.

They are all flagged routes so it's a great introduction to racing for anyone who wants to give it a go.

What you will need to do:

Register online for the series at the Helm Hill website: www.helmhill.co.uk

Collect your number at the first race - you will keep this for the whole series. If you have more than 1 person racing in your family it's a good idea to write your name on the back to avoid confusion.

Make sure you have the required kit: Seniors – full waterproof body cover, hat & gloves, whistle. Juniors – waterproof jacket, hat & gloves.

You will need to register your number at each race so we know the exact number of runners for safety reasons. Junior races start from 11am (last registration 10:45am) and Seniors race 11:45am at the earliest (11:15am last registration). The cost is £5 for seniors and £2 for juniors. Bring cash!

At the end of the race your number will be scanned and results will be available soon after the race.

At the end of the series there is a presentation at the People's Hall in Sedbergh. This also involves a race on Winder and Arant Haw. Juniors are encouraged to run in fancy dress. Juniors need to complete 5 races and seniors 7 to receive a momento from the league.

A couple of requests from the Club:

Please try to car share wherever possible or use alternative transport options if available. Parking can be tight at many of the races.

Please do not bring your dog to the race - this is a landowners request and helps us with ensuring that access to the race areas can continue.

We rely on people volunteering each week to help the races happen. Even if you want to run each week there is still chance to volunteer with registration and the junior races.

Please volunteer to help - the race organisers will ask each week via FB and the WA groups.

The races are varied in terrain and difficulty so here is a short summary:

Scout Scar (5th Jan) - cross country style course (runnable) with steady hills and descents. A mix of slippy limestone and mud with great views.

Giggleswick School (12th Jan) - this uses the school cross-country course and has a bit of everything - twists and turns, short steep banks, a river crossing. Fun to run and to watch!

Whitestones (19th Jan) - notoriously boggy, a good introduction to proper fellrunning with rough terrain and some steeper climbs and descents.

Cunswick Scar (26th Jan) - starts at Boundary bank before going over the footbridge to access the scar. Another 'runnable' limestone escarpment with great views.

Barbon (9th Feb) - a true fell race - hands on knees steep climb up and challenge to stay on your feet on the way down, all in a beautiful and remote location. Car sharing essential for this one!

Sedbergh School (16th Feb) - again this is a school cross-country course, run in laps. Entertainment for all at the notorious water jump!

Birkrigg Common (23rd Feb) - another limestone area near Ulverston with great views out to sea. One of the shorter, 'faster' races.

Elterwater (2nd March) - in beautiful Langdale up on the slopes to Silver How. Another proper fell race with steep rocky/boggy ground.

Cautley (9th March) - similar to Barbon terrain-wise. Juniors go up Yarlside, Seniors up Great Drummacks. Beautiful location with a background view of Cautley Spout - England's highest waterfall. Also next to the Cross Keys Temperance Inn for lunch or a coffee.

Helm (16th March) - our home ground on The Helm - not to be underestimated with all the ups and downs. Fun to run on familiar ground!

Arant Haw (6th April) - another proper fell race in the beautiful Howgills with a classic descent off Winder. Doesn't count towards the series. The presentation for the series takes place after the race.

All dates are TBC - please check the website or Facebook page for updates.

Thanks to Ali Richards for these words.









2025 CALENDAR

2025 ENGLISH CHAMPS

23 MARCH EDALE SKYLINE (AL)
12 APRIL NEWLANDS MEMORIAL (AM)
22 JUNE KETTLEWELL ANNIVERSARY (AS)
12 JULY TEBAY (AM)
2 AUGUST BORROWDALE (AL)
30 AUGUST WHITTLE PIKE (AS)

2025 BRITISH CHAMPS

LONG RACE: 3 MAY STUC A'CHROIN, STIRLINGSHIRE, SCOTLAND, 22KM, 1500M

SHORT RACE: 24 MAY NORTHERN IRELAND. GRANITE PEAKS 9.6KM, 760M

BRITISH FELL AND HILL RELAY CHAMPIONSHIPS: 18 OCTOBER 2025, MEIRIONYDD, WALES

2025 SENIOR CLUB CHAMPS

19 JANUARY – HHWL WHITESTONES
15 FEBRUARY – BLENCATHRA & BLEASE FELL
16 MARCH – HHWL HELM
12 APRIL – NEWLANDS MEMORIAL
7 MAY – HHWL CAUTLEY HORSESHOE
29 JUNE – BAYSTONES & WANSFELL
9 JULY – SEAT SANDAL
31 JULY – HEART OF THE LAKES RYDAL ROUND
13 AUGUST – NOT ROUND LATRIGG
30 AUGUST – WHITTLE PIKE
27 SEPTEMBER – ORTON

YOU MUST RUN 5 RACES TO COUNT

2025 JUNIOR CLUB CHAMPS

5 JANUARY – HHWL SCOUT SCAR
26 JANUARY – HHWL CUNSWICK
16 FEBRUARY – HHWL SEDBERGH
16 MARCH – HHWL HELM
27 APRIL – FRA DUDDON DASH
18 MAY – FRA HOWGILLS
21 JUNE – FRA CLOUGHA PIKE
28 JUNE (TBC) – BOFRA KIRKBY GALA
12 JULY – FRA TEBAY
TBC JUN/JUL – HELM TRAINING RACE NIGHT
31 JULY – BOFRA AMBLESIDE SPORTS
27 SEPTEMBER – ORTON
PERSONAL BEST AT PARKRUN:
RYELANDS PARK JUNIOR PARKRUN OR
FELL FOOT PARKRUN

COMPLETE 6 FOR A SPECIAL PRIZE!

DESIGNED AND EDITED BY
JANIE OATES

THANKS FOR READING :)

SEE YOU IN 2025!

Photo credits:
Stephen Wilson at Grand Day Out Photography
David Wood at Fellside Photography
Jumpy James Photography
And more from the Fell Runners UK group on Facebook!