

## **Joss Naylor Challenge, Rob Gittins M55, 27.04.19**

The challenge was inaugurated by Joss Naylor in 1990 as a fund-raising challenge for the over 50's.

Joss's challenge involves climbing 30 peaks, crossing 48 miles of mountain terrain and ascending nearly 17,000 feet. Pacers are mandatory for safety reasons. The route starts in Pooley Bridge, Ullswater and finishes at Greendale Bridge, Nether Wasdale.

Each age limit has a specific time limit varying between 12 and 24 hours with different times for men and women.

At 55 years of age I had the 'luxury' of 15 hours but I based my attempt on the Women's 50, 13hrs 40 schedule which would give me the cushion of an extra hour if necessary (and it turned out that I needed it)

We had a comfortable and very warm night at Patterdale YHA. Outside the rain was beating down ominously – Storm Hannah as predicted? Still a lot could change in a few hours.

Up at 5am for a brew, cheese sandwich and last minute kit check, and then off down the shore of Ullswater to Pooley Bridge. The weather was strangely calm, overcast but no wind or rain – had MWIS got it wrong?

Guy and Paul were waiting on the bridge and we set off bang on 6am, safely navigating the campsite and straight up Arthur's Pike. Too much chatting and a lack of concentration resulted in an unorthodox route up Loadpot Hill and an early loss of 8 minutes, but great nav through the clag and some fast downhills meant we arrived at Kirkstone on schedule.

Still no weather on Leg 1 and even a couple of brief views when the clouds opened up – we were being spoilt.

Fed and fuelled by tea we (Graham, Steve and Mark continuing on) set off up Red Screes, an acceptable 3 minutes down on schedule. My legs felt tired on the ascents but I was running well on the flats and downhills. Cloud free tops to Fairfield and views that merited getting the camera out.

Still no actual weather, tempting fate we commented on Hannah's existence.

14 minutes down when we left Dunmail with Paul Swindles (in shorts), his dog Joss, Tom and Steve carrying on for some additional fun. Quick enough up Steel Fell but we lost a chunk of time on what seemed like a good route to High Raise. It could have been the weather, the rain had started and the temperature had dropped noticeably, Hannah was finally putting in an appearance. Paul seemed happy in his shorts but now, incongruously, put on a pair of winter mittens – top half winter mountaineer, bottom half beach party. (I have a similar pair in a drawer at home – not much use there!)

Steve left us and dropped down into Langdale for a lift back to Kirkstone from the ODG. Unfortunately his lift was waiting at the NDG

Good time up Rosset and Bowfell despite the slippery conditions underfoot then across to Esk Pike in increasingly Arctic conditions. Paul and Tom became concerned when I started slurring my words,

worrying that I was hypothermic. So, down jacket and over-trousers on, cold hands up sleeves and some actual running across to Great End to raise the temperature.

The clag cleared briefly on Great End revealing the cairn marking the way off the end. We made it to Sty Head an hour down on the original schedule and apologised for being late. Gillian and Graham had walked up from Wasdale with tea and coffee and we were joined by Carl and Chris, Debs and John from Wasdale Mountain Rescue and an extra dog – a perfect team for the final leg (Tom and Paul, both carried on). All I had to do now was keep to schedule. I knew now that Joss would be on the bridge in Greendale so I had an added incentive to get there in time.

A lull in the weather up Gable and Kirk Fell and some great lines down allowed us to recoup a few minutes. The exfoliating hail returned with a vengeance between Pillar and Scoat Fell and the winds made the out and back to Steeple interesting. Off Haycock in the clag and across the almost tranquil Pots of Ashness.

On schedule! Just Seatallan, what could go wrong? To add to the 'sting in the tail' we encountered the most intense and sustained wind I have ever experienced. Hannah was playing with us, the dogs went to ground, I was blown over and Debs literally took off. Carl acted as a human windshield and we battled to the top.

The same wind that had hindered our ascent now propelled us across the summit and down towards Greendale Tarn. Just Middle Fell now, which we summited with 30 minutes to spare. Then a relaxed run down to the bridge, where Joss was waiting.

Beers and food in The Screes to finish – a perfect end to a great day out.



I wouldn't have made it round without the help of all those involved both on the road and on the fells

Road Support: Gillian and Jonathan Lindsey, Angela Drakeford

Leg 1: Guy Illingworth, Mark Burley

Leg 2: Mark Burley, Steve Swallow and Graham Brown

Leg 3: Steve Swallow, Tom Whittington and Paul Swindles

Leg 4: Chris and Deb Cripps, John, Carl Hanaghan, Tom Whittington and Paul Swindles

**Rob Gittins**