



## Wainwrights

Enjoying a pint of lager in the hot tub at Armathwaite Hall Hotel near Bassenthwaite, celebrating my recent Bob Graham, we checked the tracker and coincidentally Paul Tierney on his record breaking attempt of the Wainwrights was running past the hotel right at that second. I joked "Maybe that should be my next challenge" A few drinks later and we were planning my Wainwrights. This may not seem like the usual way an athlete plans such a huge event. But I am not an athlete, I am just a regular person who loves an adventure. Until recent years I believed that sports were just for a certain type of person. I spent my school years asking my mum to write notes to get me out of PE because I hated the humiliation of being bad at all sports. I joined Skipton AC in 2014, purely in hope to meet new people and avoid a pit of depression after a relationship break up. I soon found Fell Running and fell in love with it. So having now completed the Bob Graham Round I felt I was able to call myself a fell runner.

Within days of the initial idea, I contacted Steve Birkenshaw. Steve created a route in 2015, linking all 214 Wainwright's over 320 miles in an attempt to break Joss Naylor's 29 year Wainwright's record. Having never met Steve before, I asked if he would meet me for a walk and a chat. I wanted to stress that I wasn't like him, and Paul and other top fell runners who usually take on these sorts of challenges. It was way out of my comfort zone. Steve said that he thought I would be able to do the Wainwrights consecutively if I was realistic and aimed for 10-14 days. He kindly put together a schedule for me adding 50% to his own Wainwrights times. (based purely on the fact that I was 50% slower than him on a Bob Graham)

I started hiking the recce's to see if the splits were achievable without running, because I knew that after a couple of days I would slow right down so realistically the whole thing

would be a hike not a run. I was well up on schedule on all recce's so I felt confident that 10 days was achievable . I did not however, factor in lack of sleep, injuries and bad weather - Inexperience!

## First Female

I must admit that when thinking about doing the Wainwrights I wanted to be the first female to attempt the round. I would be doing it for charity so I thought that it might get some media attention therefore raise more money if I were to be the first female. I'm never going to break records, for one - I am not interested enough in that side of running to train hard enough to be at the top, and secondly - I am not genetically made that way. So I thought it would be interesting for other women to see a 'regular' person pushing boundaries. I hoped it would inspire more women to get outdoors and experience the benefits that the hills and the outdoors can have on mental health and well-being.

Due to Covid-19 my planned date of May 1st was cancelled. I knew that Sabrina Verjee was having a go in June/July so I offered to support Sabrina and I put my plans on hold. During the first couple of months of lock down I couldn't get out on the fells to train properly. I found a short steep hill near home but it wasn't the same so I lost motivation and fitness, but it gave me time to reassess why I wanted to do the Wainwrights. Yes I want to inspire other people who are less confident and who think that running or mountains are for 'Athletes' , but really, this was my own personal challenge. I moved up to the Lake District in September 2018 to be close to the mountains. I had just set up my company Due North Events, and realised that I could live anywhere that had access to trail and fell running. The first night in my flat in Cumbria I slept all night through until morning. This was the first time in my adult life that I remember sleeping uninterrupted. I was finally in a place that felt like home and I was content. I have made the Lake District my home and was happiest in the mountains here so I wanted an adventure which took me around the whole Lake District and thanks to Steve Birkinshaw's route I could do that. I decided it would be cool to start from home on foot and head out to the closest Wainwrights which coincidentally are named Great Mell Fell and Little Mell Fell. I would start on one and finish on the other, this made the route unique to me, and I like to be different.

## Day 1 Home (Eamont Bridge) to Dodd Wood

My friend Becky who has been a massive part of my life since we met on the Lakes in a Day Ultra Marathon in 2016, did the first leg with me from home to Troutbeck. Just one Wainwright in that section. It was a great first day. A stunning sunrise over the Ullswater Valley. Tom, who I had formed a 'Bubble' with during lock down and done lots of recces with, did the next section with me. We had decided that we would stay on the road towards Mungrisedale and join the main path up to Souther Fell until we were just under the summit then take a straight line up. When we recce'd it the week before, Steves route took us directly up from the road but through lots of bracken which was taller than me. It zapped my energy. The longer way was actually quicker and less effort. We were knocking a lot of time off each split and Tom was worried that I was going too fast but really, we couldn't have gone any slower. It was a steady jog or a walk. The section from Souther Fell to Skiddaw is fairly runnable. I had planned on only running very steadily on down hills and any flat sections which were good underfoot. The rest I would walk. There are areas across

mungrisdale which are 'flat' but very boggy so we even walked these sections because I wanted to reserve my energy and save my legs. Even at that pace I was well ahead of schedule.



Steve Birkenshaw joined me from Mosedale and was due to swap pacers half way at Whitewater Dash, but I was already 5 hours up on schedule by then so he stayed with me until my next pacer arrived. On the climb to Bakestall I decided to have a sit down seen as

though I hadn't had my planned break at Whitewater Dash, or the brew which my next pacer was going to bring for me. I looked over the Northern Fells which we had done and already felt surprised at the area covered since setting off from home that morning.

We both put on an extra layer as we expected the wind to pick up once we got close to Skiddaw. It did feel cooler but it was still a reasonable temperature. I felt like I had been really lucky with the weather but things would probably change over the course of the week. Kate, my next pacer, met us not far from the end of that leg, with just 3 Wainwrights left for the day. I was over the moon that she brought me a flask of tea. This was the first time that I had ever met Kate. A mutual friend had recommended her to me for support on this section. We instantly connected and were planning our trip to the Himalaya together before we got to the top of Dodd. We were off the top before dark so a relaxed finish through the wood to the van. Five hours ahead of schedule I toyed with the idea of running the road section towards Binsey and sleeping there for the night but decided just to eat and get a good night's sleep. When I first saw the van I panicked. It looked a real mess, with little room to get changed or sit and eat. Luckily it was warm enough to sit outside and eat but I did make a comment about not being able to cope with that for 10 days. It was difficult the first morning waking up at 5am and Gary working out where to cook my breakfast as I tried to get dressed in the van. This is just a transit van with a small bed in the back, not a proper campervan. It did suffice, Gary made it work. I know I left the van in a mess and the next time I saw it it was much tidier.

#### Dodd Wood to Newlands

The schedule that Steve put together for me was based on me starting from Moot Hall, Keswick as he did, but because I started from home, I joined the route part way, towards the end of Steve's route. Inexperience meant that I didn't think to recalculate the schedule, so I was moving quicker with fresh legs where Steve had started to slow down. This meant that for 2 days I was well ahead of schedule, moving the support team around last minute. Day 2 We started at 6am, 3 hours earlier than planned. I did Binsey on my own, I hoped that my pacer who'd arrived a little late, would catch me up with my kit once she arrived, but she never did. So I did 2.5 hours with no water or food. Which doesn't sound long but I know that I need to eat at least every hour otherwise I get to a point where I can not eat. It didn't seem to affect me though. I got to the van near Bassenthwaite and due to being hours ahead I made sure that I had a good feed and plenty to drink before going again.

The next leg to Whinlatter is a section that I had recce'd back in January. Surprisingly I remembered it all like the back of my hand. It helped that it was a clear day and we could see where we were going but it was great for my confidence to be using my own head to get from summit to summit and knowing what terrain to expect helped. The wind was so strong, even though we weren't at any great height for this leg it was still blowing us off our feet a little. As we were getting close to Whinlatter it started to rain and it got pretty heavy. Tom Hollins was my support on this leg and he won't mind me saying that he took me down a bloody stupid line off whinlatter to the road. My legs were covered in blood with cuts from the heather, then we had to pretty much crawl under the trees at the bottom. Katie and Nick who

had been some distance behind us took a different line to join the path and were down at the road at the same time as us. Luckily I know that I can trust Tom and it didn't affect my confidence in him for the next leg. At the van, Nick, Tom and myself all put on full waterproofs, gloves and hats and we were not overdressed. I think it's the worst weather that I have ever experienced on the fells. I suppose normally you wouldn't go up or you would turn around if the weather got that bad, but obviously you can't do that when you are taking on these things. So we got our heads down and pushed on up a difficult climb towards Grisedale Pike. It was so steep with deep greenery underfoot so it was difficult to get traction especially with 40mph winds coming across the fellside. We couldn't speak to each other. We wouldn't have heard anything, we just gave the occasional look to each other that meant 'Let's just get this over with'. Nick made his way back down after Grisedale Pike and Tom and I ran across the top when the wind let us. When we dropped a bit of height and got out of the wind we managed to shout a few words to each other. Both agreeing that it was actually fun being out in this weather. I feel more of a physical connection to the mountains when I'm out in harsh conditions, focusing on the ground, using the shape and textures of the rock when deciding where to place feet. Understand the terrain and respect it. It was difficult to eat in those conditions but I was really strict with myself and made sure that I kept eating enough calories and drinking plenty because I still had another leg to do after this one which would take me into the night.

I had a hot meal in the van at Rannerdale and a bit of a rest until Chris Wright arrived. He had agreed to do Friday afternoon instead of Saturday morning because I was ahead of schedule, which was great because Chris and I recce'd this leg back in February and I had been really looking forward to doing this section with him. It's a great leg, on some of the same ground as the Coledale Horseshoe fell race which is one of my favourite races. The weather had calmed down a little, the wind dropped and there were at least breaks in the cloud giving us intermittent snippets of the views. My favourite was the view whilst climbing Grasmere. The mountains seem so big and you can see across to the other valleys, a reminder of how small and insignificant we are to the rest of the planet. I like that feeling, it makes you realise that the things we worry about are so small. The small thing that I was worrying about right there and then was a niggling pain in both feet around my ankles and shins. I took some painkillers but moving on soft ground and descending was really difficult. It soon got dark and we made a small nav error getting to Barrow and my mood dropped a little. I had been out for 15 hours in mostly bad weather and I was in a bit of pain and slightly concerned about being injured for the next week or so. It wasn't the best few hours but it was good to be with Chris. I was in safe hands and his partner had made us some hot food for our return. It was nice to sit in her clean van to eat, then get in my van with the bed ready and space to change without Gary having to mess about with the stove and pots and pans in our tiny space.



### Newlands to Keswick

I knew that after Keswick I would not make the scheduled splits because that is where Steve was moving very quickly on his round. My good friends Karen and Bethan were my support from Newlands to Keswick. It was nice to have some female company and they both know that area really well so it was just like a usual Saturday outing which was great. It's clear to see why tourists flock to walk up Cat Bells. The summit is in easy reach for half a day's walk with the family, with just enough scrambling on solid rocks to make it exciting, but still accessible for most people, being rewarded with the postcard view of Derwent water and the surrounding fells before even reaching the top.

In Keswick whilst eating my fish n chips I took off my shoes to find that I was badly swollen around my ankles, they were red, and burning. Thanks to Angela - AKA The Running Granny, who came to meet me on Bleaberry Fell, she diagnosed it as Anterior Tibial Tendonitis, which basically means that I was not a wimp for feeling pain- So that's a relief. The weather turned once it got dark, wind and heavy rain contributed to my very slow pace. I hadn't recce'd all of the leg from Keswick to Rosthwaite. I did part of it in February with Steve Birkenshaw but it was in deep snow and really bad conditions so we cut the recce short. I knew it was a tough leg with no decent ground after Bleaberry. But if I had have recce'd it and known how bad it was I think it might have put me off doing the Wainwrights.

A late finish and treatment in the van from Dr Angela meant that I was getting into bed very late. I decided to put the Borrowdale leg back to 9am, so I lost all the time that I had gained on the first 2 days. I had to make a decision in my own mind. Was I going to quit to avoid further injury? Obviously not. Was I going to become obsessed with my schedule and try to claw back time and have less sleep to catch up? Or would I rest and recover well each night and try to deal with the injury. I knew the latter was sensible and although it meant that I was adding days not hours on to my schedule it didn't matter to me, why would I want to be at home anyway when I could be on the fells?



### Rosthwaite to Honister

The weather from Rosthwaite was horrendous. We couldn't stand up on Bessy Boot, so we took shelter and put on extra layers and waterproofs. It was interesting, Painfully slow and the clag and rain made it fairly miserable for my pacers. The two lads went an hour or two without speaking. I tried to take the mickey out of myself a bit to lighten the mood but I think it was more difficult for them than it was for me. I had chosen to do this, it was my holiday, But they had not planned on being out so long going so slow in rubbish conditions. They looked after me though and did a great job with navigation.

### Honister to Ennerdale

A 7am start from Honister to Loweswater with Lorna. The only difficult bit navigationally on this leg was deciding which was the wainwright top on Haystacks. It was hot and sunny which was well received after a couple of days of terrible weather. The terrain was good for me all the way to Hen Combe. Hard trails so I could control the movement of my feet easier and with taking regular pain killers I felt much better than I had on the rough ground the previous day. I felt like I was walking faster and definitely more comfortable. There are some fells which I may never visit again or if I do I certainly won't take the lines that I did for the Wainwrights. Mell Break from Hen Combe - The terrain changed after the steep descent off Hen Combe of which we did about a 3rd on our backsides just to get down a bit quicker. At the bottom, going across to Mell Break its bog, deep in places so it took ages to negotiate the bog and get to some decent ground. We had looked at Steve and Sabrina's GPX to see what line they took up Mell Break. We decided that Sabrin's looked the easier option but ended up doing something in between the two. Through bracken, that from further away looked as though it was dying back, therefore easier to get through but it wasn't easy. The climb seemed to go on and on, never finding the path that we had intended to come across. Thankfully we managed to see the funny side, type 3 fun I think. I laid down in an over dramatic collapse at the summit but didn't hang around long, I just wanted to get to the Kirkstile Inn for a cold drink and some chips.

As we got on the bridleway down to Loweswater I felt frustrated that I wasn't running. It's a flat stone track, easy trail running. I gave it a go, started to jog and it felt fine. I couldn't believe it. My feet worked again. The sense of relief was immense. I thought - if I can keep this up on the trail sections then I could actually get back on schedule. But better than that, I could enjoy it and feel more comfortable.

The chips weren't great so I didn't stop for long in Loweswater.



Joe Faulkner was supporting me to Ennerdale which was a relatively short leg and one which I had recce'd earlier in the year, so I knew that it was fairly straightforward. I was on a high due to the fact that I could run again. Even though I was only running where it was flat, and only if the ground was solid not boggy or rough, I felt like I was making progress again. I was confident. I knew the route, no need for a map and compass. It was so clear in my head from the recce and Joe said that he was really impressed not just at how I was moving but the fact that on the 5th night I was still able to lead my own run and chat and joke. It was all going great until it got dark, I got my map out to check the route then disappeared into a bog. After asking if he could film me trying to get out of the bog, Joe finally passed me my poles but they were no use. I was well and truly stuck. I put my arm in right up to my shoulder to free my foot from the plants which had wrapped around me. It took about 8 minutes to get free from that bog. I got cold and slowed down after that but it all added to the fun. We decided that we would leave at 5am the next day because I wanted to see sunrise.

### Ennerdale to Nether Wasdale

We got very little sleep, by the time I had eaten and packed up the van it was past midnight. When the alarm went off at 4am I was glad to get out of bed, I just wanted to be moving again. We went a different way to what Steve had done out of Ennerdale because when I recce'd this a few weeks ago, we found that forestry work had taken out the path which meant climbing over half a mile of felled conifers.

It was a good climb, short and steep and I was climbing well, using my poles to get into a good rhythm. As we approached the top the sun was just coming up. An orange glow with a silhouette of Haystacks and High pike, the Wainwrights which I had done the day before. That felt special looking back at the outline of my journey so far.

I was moving well for the first few tops but then seemed to hit a wall, sleepy tiredness. I felt like I could sleep standing up. It was getting hot even early morning so we were going through water quickly. Joe noticed that I was tired so we found a perfect rock after Haycock where I could get my feet up and have a power nap whilst Joe went to find water. I was there for 25 minutes. I thought back to my Bob Graham as we were now on Steeple and out towards Pillar. I realised how pathetic I had been on leg 4 of my Bob. There was nothing wrong with me at all then, no injury or anything. I was just moaning about being behind schedule and I let it get to my head which almost made me quit. This time I did have a genuine injury and I had been going for 6 days, yet I was in a good state of mind and happy to be there. I'm glad I had that experience to look back on because it made me focus on positive things and not allow myself to wallow in self pity like I did on the Bob. The day got tougher as the route crossed another valley to Middle Fell and Seatallan from Yewbarrow. Thank goodness I had Joe Faulkner on the Middle Fell section. An expert at picking out the best lines possible amongst some of the roughest terrain in the lakes.

I had a hotel booked in Nether Wasdale. The back of my Transit van had been bedroom, changing room, kitchen and diner so far. Not ideal, but every Motorhome in the country was booked up due to people now having 'Stay-cations' The thought of that bed made me really push on up Seatallan and I almost left Joe behind. I remember thinking, I wish that the rest of the route was a continuous climb because I was climbing with ease.

I thought it was later than it was as the bright red sky on the horizon confused me. We could see a silhouette of the Isle of Man so I thought the sun was setting, but it wasn't, it was still above us but casting brilliant colours across the clouds.



#### Nether Wasdale to Tilberthwaite

The views across Wasdale to Kirk Fell were stunning with cloud inversions between the mountains. It's my favourite view in the Lakes. It's a long pull out of Wasdale to Sca Fell with Whin Rigg, Illgill Head and Slight Side to do on the way. I was worried about getting down Lords Rake so I opted for Foxes tarn route off Sca Fell. Lord's rake is a very steep gully with loose rock that you can not rely on to hold onto because it crumbles away and tumbles down with risk of landing on the person below. I couldn't imagine how I would get my feet at that angle on steep ground because the range of movement around my ankles was so restricted. I realise now that Foxes tarn is no easier, and actually took longer than Lord's Rake would have. Part way down Foxes tarn we stopped to have a 5 minute break for 10 minutes and set off again 15 minutes later (quote from Brian which made me laugh) Ste surprised us on Sca Fell Pike and stayed with us for the rest of the day, continuously chatting at the top of his voice with many inappropriate comments which kept us entertained. It was getting dark on the ascent of Pike of Blisco and the guys informed me that it would be at least another 3 hours in the dark if I were to finish this leg tonight. I was really annoyed, I had wanted to set off at 5am that morning to avoid finishing in the dark and the cold. I knew I was right but when you have 3 people telling you otherwise and you can't really do it without their support, you have to do as you're told. It got to me though and through frustration I accepted Brian's alternative of finishing after Bike of Blisco and getting picked up from the road, then starting early the next day to do Cold Pike and Hard Knott. I think it was the first bad mood that I had.



The next morning from Hardknott Pass, I was thinking about the fact that i'm adding extra on to the day because of the way I finished the night before and it still put me in a bit of a bad mood. Ste was with me and I could tell that when we looked at each other in silence, he knew that I was struggling. Until then I had still been having a good laugh and smiling everyday so I got a bit emotional. However , I do feel grounded when I'm in these hills, comfortable with myself and my surroundings, as I would when in the company of an old friend, so I allowed myself to have a few tears.

In the afternoon the weather was amazing and the views on the Coniston fells were far reaching, beyond the Lake District. This is where I stood for a minute to take it all in. I thought about the amazing runners who had taken this route before me on record breaking attempts, and I realised what luxury I have by being able to stand and stare. Enjoying the moment and not feeling the stress of the ticking clock. Did Steve or Paul get a chance to admire the sunsets? This is when I told Joe that I'm having the best time and I realise that my injury is making me slower day by day, but where else would I prefer to be? I just want to make the most of it. So I decided, rather than stress and push on through that night to do the short leg from Low Tilberthwaite to Langdale, that I would get a good night's sleep and rest the next day with just that short section in the morning, then get another good sleep before the big leg to Rydal. I thought that would give me a better chance of not only finishing but continue to enjoy the experience too.



### Low Tilberthwaite to Langdale

The 'easy day' which was supposed to be a 3.5 hour leg from Low Tilberthwaite to Langdale actually took me 7 hours. That made me even more worried about the following day which was scheduled originally as a 12 hour leg from Langdale to Rydal. For the first time in 9 days I thought about quitting. How could I possibly get to Rydal in one go? If I had to cut that leg short it meant adding a lot of descent and ascent which I really didn't want. I knew that Rydal would be a turning point because it felt like I was heading home after there, so I knew I had to get to Rydal in one go. I had a word with myself, thought about all the time and effort that people had put in to get me this far. So there was no way I could quit. That night I did what I had done every other day and focused on a small section. Even the sleep was a stage to focus on. Then getting up and eating breakfast was the next stage. Getting the first climb out of the way, never think beyond those tiny stages.

### Langdale to Kirkstone

I'd been nervous about the big leg from Langdale to Rydal. It's not an easy section, but it's one of my favourite areas. I have some great memories of the Bob Graham from those fells. It was a stunning sunrise looking over towards Windermere, which turned into another beautiful day and I got to spend it with some of my best friends. The day was split between two groups of pacers due to knowing that it would be a long day. Becky, Joel and Bethan supported me from Langdale as far as Steel Fell then they handed over to Paul Taylor, Sue and Sarah. The morning was great, again just like a usual Saturday outing. I managed to laugh at myself as I struggled across ground which under normal circumstances I would be running over at ease. I have the sort of friends who love to take the piss too so this was ideal for them. I got on my bum to slide down a lot of the descent from Ullscarf to The Bog and before I knew it that descent which I had been dreading was over. It was great to see Sue and Sarah who had travelled from Skipton to do this. It was easy from Steel Fell, tourists paths for most of the route now. It had been another hot day and we

only had to put a jacket on as the sun was going down and we climbed Tarn Crag. Paul and I worked together on the nav as it got dark then as I got bored and tired he did an amazing job on the maze of Loughrigg in the dark. In my head we were doing circles around loughrigg. It felt wrong, but I knew that Paul was more than capable and I had to trust him. Looking back at the tracker now I can see that he was bang on. Well done Paul. Nineteen and a half hours after leaving Langdale I got to Rydal. Poor Sue made a comment about the time taken and that we had done Lakes In A Day quicker than that years ago. Obviously there is no comparison to that on day 10 of the Wainwrights and as I had not focused on leg time, splits or focussed on my schedule at all since day 1 I didn't want to start thinking about that now. I did snap at her and felt bad about it afterwards.



After Rydal things changed. Mentally I was on my way home, and physically, My body was healing and I was able to move more comfortably. I even jogged on the flat and gentle down hills. I loved this leg, working our way up to Fairfield on familiar territory, views across to the Langdales "ive done all of them" I said with pride. I was definitely on a high. There were a few out and backs, down to Low Pike then almost all the way back up before dropping down to Little Hart Crag. It was great to get a surprise visit from Ian who brought me a cold can of pepsi which went down a treat as it was another hot day. Who'd have thought we would be so lucky with the weather. There is a shit section on every leg and the shit bit on this leg for me was going to be climbing off piste to Middle Dodd. Tussocky grass at first then a few rocks to pick my way across on a camber, but it was over quicker than when I had recce'd it weeks before. People I hardly knew were coming out to support me now because I was 3 days over schedule so my planned support were back at work or otherwise busy. By the time I got to Red Screens I'd had 6 different people with me on that leg. Coming off Red Screens I could see a few people and a Collie Dog. I really hoped it was Becky with my dog Billy. It was. He was excited to see me and we had a good cuddle but then he was more interested in the chips that Gary had got for me from the pub. A few friends had come to see me so I

sat for a while eating chips and ice cream but it was a bit too chaotic for me. I had put a lot of work in the last couple of days and felt shattered. I was also starting to feel sad about it being over. I wanted my own bed but I didn't want the adventure to end.



#### Kirkstone to Haweswater

Paul Tierney was my main support from Kirkstone, he brought his friend Mac and I also had Angela and Carie to keep me company. The clag was down and not much in the way of views. Some of the Wainwrights on this leg to Troutbeck were new ones for me so I hoped that the weather would improve. We were lucky and got breaks in the cloud and Mac was right, it's even better than a clear sky when you get views appearing through clouds. We had such a laugh. Paul and Mac are a comedy pair, I'm not sure they realise that? Paul changed the route slightly to suit me, sometimes it's quicker to take the longer route than a rough direct route, but there was no avoiding the descent off Yoke. It was steep and rough underfoot all the way. Paul put his bag down whilst he waited for me to catch up and we watched it tumble away, there goes my food and drink rolling down the hill. Mac thought this was hilarious until just minutes later, he did exactly the same thing. I thought I was getting professional support on this leg not the Chuckle brothers. Anyway, it entertained me and kept my mind off my legs which were stiffening up more and more as we descended. Angela helped me at the bottom with some stretches which seemed to loosen me. I got to Troutbeck much earlier than expected so Paul and Mac stayed with me until Kentmere. From there Joe and Gary had their work cut out in finding another person to support me so that I could continue on the next leg. I had been scheduled to sleep in Kentmere but it was too early, 3:30/4:00pm. The next leg was a big one that finished in Martindale but I had thought about this since planning my schedule, that if I was off schedule I could split that leg in two. Either by sleeping in a tent near Mardale Ill Bell or dropping down to Mardale Head, Haweswater. I did not fancy a tent, So Joe planned the route so that I could sleep at Mardale Head. Brian came to the rescue and did a superb job navigating in the dark and clag. There wasn't much

to see, all I know is that it was boggy. Paul who came out to meet us walked right into a bog knee deep then somehow bounced straight back out as though on springs, which was comical to watch. The final descent was a bit rough, finding our way through reeds which were waist high, but eventually we picked up the path and made it to the road in good time. Gary made a great meal, Fish, potatoes and Broccoli. I had craved broccoli since Honister and I never got bored of it.



Haweswater to Glenridding

The weather played its part again by turning windy, cold and wet - Just to encourage me to get a move on and get closer to the finish. Joe and Jon Tombs started this leg with me. I had no idea where I was even though I know that area. We couldn't see more than a few meters in front of us. It wasn't raining but the wind gusts were really strong. It was difficult to move forward on Kidsty Pike and it drained me of any energy that I had. Once we got to High Street I got my senses back and knew that I was making my way down to High Raise, Wether Hill and Arthur's Pike, My home ground and all good runnable paths. I was sleepy again. Maybe the weather had taken it out of me but I needed a power nap at Martindale. It was full waterproofs and gloves weather again but it was an easy afternoon. Jon went ahead to navigate so I was on my own a lot until Joe joined us again near Angle Tarn Crag. Just one last push up Place Fell then I had a bed for the night, kindly offered by Louise. It was my final night, but I couldn't really accept that I was making my way home the next day. What if I had a setback and went back to the painful, slow pace which I was moving at a few days ago. What if I got another injury in the morning. What if the weather is so bad that it puts me hours behind. I wasn't exactly looking forward to it being over. Normal life would seem so boring after this.



### Glenridding To Dockray

This was the first day that I had set off in rain, but we were still treated to views after sunrise for a short time until the cloud came in again. It was my first ever time on Swirral Edge, it's never really appealed to me before because it's always full of tourists so i've avoided it until now. We took the cheats path which avoids going over the nose of it because I was already

slow enough on descending, especially on big steps. It was a nice surprise to get a visit from Steve Birkenshaw as we were coming off Catsby Cam. It seemed a long time since we were together on the northern fells. Steve started to warn me of the sleepless nights I may have once I'm home. The cold sweats and weird dreams of still running on the fells. Actually, I had already experienced this earlier on, about a week into the Wainwrights. I had dreams that I was running on grass then fall over tussocks or down into bogs. My legs were moving in my sleep and as I fell in my dream that woke me up in a cold sweat. Thinking about that, Steve and Joss and Sabrina experienced this once they were home, but they were only out for around one week so maybe it's a reaction that happens after so many nights of pushing yourself to the limit? And that's why I experienced it half way through my round, about a week in?

We were now into tourist territory. I spent my time watching all kinds of people pass us, I guess all heading for Helvellyn. The choice of clothing was quite shocking considering the weather. I wonder how far some of them got before turning around. I love to see people out there exploring the area but I worry for people's safety sometimes when they're dressed inappropriately with no maps or kit with them.



A quick-ish stop at the van before the final stretch. Drizzle and cold wind from Glenridding to Dockray. I know the Dodds well. It's fairly local to home and it's Bob Graham territory so I suppose I have seen the views many times before. The most memorable thing about this leg is that Joe, who is known for his tea drinking, pulled out a flask of tea to my delight. What a star, he knows I love a brew. However, I didn't notice that there was no steam coming from the cup as I poured it into my mouth, horrified to find I was drinking cold tea! That was the worst thing that happened over 13.5 days on the Wainwrights.

The old coach road to Dockray is probably the least inspiring part of the whole route. It seemed to go on forever, But I had just two more Wainwrights to go. From Dockray, Becky and Tom joined me. Both Becky and Tom have been part of my Wainwrights recce's and

planning all year so it was special to finish with them. I practically ran all the way to Gowbarrow and Little Mell Fell. Joe and Angela joined us up Little Mell Fell and Gary who had been my main road support and played such a huge part in making it all happen over the course of the 13 days, joined us at the top. It was perfect having my main team with me on my last Wainwright. I'm not sure what I expected it to feel like when I reached my last Wainwright, but I don't think I ever imagined that I would feel sad that it was over. I celebrated and I was giddy, but deep down I felt a bit shell shocked and didn't want to go home. At the bottom, my official finish by the track at the bottom of Great Mell Fell, was a perfect ending. No fuss, Just me, my friends and a brew. I had longed for a cup of tea all day since Joe tormented me with the cold brew on the Dodds.



So that's it - 214 Wainwrights, around 330 miles from home. I feel proud not only for what I have achieved but for how I achieved it. I hope that it inspires more people to dare to try something. Its pure determination that got me through it. I am not an athlete, just a stubborn, adventure seeking woman who doesn't let things get in my way.

### **What I haven't said**

I was advised not to talk too much about the pain and suffering which I experienced during this challenge. For fear that I may get trolled for being a masochist. However, I don't think it would be fair and definitely not an honest write up if i were to leave this out. It would also undermine the brutality of the challenge.

I did expect to get an injury whilst doing the wainwrights. It's day after day of steep, up and down hills on rough ground whilst getting more fatigued each day. I just didn't expect to get the injury so early on, therefore suffer for so long. The pain started on night 2. I was lucky to

have Angela - The Running Granny supporting me. Angela is a retired medic and trained sports physio so she was able to advise how many painkillers and anti inflammatories I could take day after day, she also gave me a massage every few days and provided me with cold wrap bandages and compression stockings which I wore everynight in bed. Angela asked me to give her a scale of 1- 10 of how bad the pain was. I hate that question. I never know how to answer it because how do I know whether it is a 7 - 8 or am I just a wimp? Or is it a 9 but I'm hard therefore I think it's a 2?? I've never really known how to answer. So she asked me what's the worst pain that I've ever felt before this. It was probably when I put my hand in a lawn mower and had my fingers shredded. OK, so put a number on that and a number on this pain. Now I get it, it's all relative. So now I can say the lawn mower hand shredding pain was about 6 and the pain I have now in my feet/legs is an 8. This pain seemed worse at night in bed so I never really slept and longed for each morning to come so that I could get going again and my mind would be taken off the pain. Certain days seemed worse. The terrain was a big factor. Bog or soft deep grass, where my ankles were moving at different angles caused more pain, and down hill was worse than uphill.

Why did I continue when it got so tough? I knew it was temporary. Angela told me that if I rested each night for long enough then I could carry on without causing long term damage. That was reassuring. I took paracetamol and ibuprofen intermittently every 3 hours which some days helped and others it didn't seem to have any affect. At times I would use my poles to stop and lean on with my head down having a silent scream to myself. My body did seem to heal itself over the week, or got used to the pain? So after about 8 days of severe pain and only being able to move at a snail's pace, I suddenly picked up again with a few days to go. Less pain, my legs had more movement and I could jog on certain sections. It is the most difficult thing that I have ever been through - Physically, but not mentally. I've experienced challenges in my life which have been far more difficult mentally and emotionally. I have suffered with depression and anxiety, and trauma and had to get myself out of those situations. So when it got really tough on the Wainwrights I thought about these things and remembered that I was doing this by choice. I am surrounded by friends in the most beautiful part of the world and I'm lucky to be able to do this. People had given so much time to help me and I was raising money for charity so there was no way I was going to give in. I had a cry when I needed but I had only a 5 minute spell on day 9 when I wanted to quit. Bad weather, pain and lack of sleep did not outweigh the fun that I had whilst doing the Wainwrights. I'd do it all again ... but I won't because I'm already planning something new.



## Kit

Berghaus Tephra stretch down insulated jacket  
Berghaus Extreme 5000 jacket  
Berghaus Pac light 2.0 gore-tex Jacket  
Berghaus Thermal tech tee with zip  
Berghaus Long sleeved tech tee voyager  
Berghaus lelyur trekking tights  
Berghaus Changtse Pant  
Berghaus Waterproof pancelight over trousers  
Berghaus Teallach insulated jacket  
Berghaus Fast Hike 32 rucksack

La Sportiva Akyra  
Salomon Speedcross 5

Montane Prism Mitts

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