

Ultimate Trails 100k

Saturday 14th September 2013

I heard about this race at the Highland Fling this year from Gaynor who is the course director. She said it is a superb route and I'd love it! At that stage I hadn't planned what I was going to do after the whw race so was interested.

I did a recce run of the second 50k when I was in the Lakes marshalling at the Lakeland 100. I knew Katrina would enjoy the 50k so she signed up as well. I also encouraged my work colleague and friend Jonny to enter the 100 and his partner Frances joined Katrina for the 50k.

The four of us left Paisley at 3pm on Friday night for the drive to Brockhole. We arrived just before 6pm, registered and set up our tent at the visitors centre.



We met up with Andy Cole who was also doing the 100k and went to the race briefing at 8pm. Thankfully it wasn't too long as we were all keen to head into Ambleside for some fish and chips. We had a quick chat with Dave Troman who had volunteered to help marshal the route. He was going to be stationed around Askham Moor near Howtown.

We were in bed for just after 10pm but I don't think any of us slept too well. Jonny and I had to be up for 4.30am to eat some breakfast before the 6am start. Katrina and Frances had to be ready for 9am for the buses to take them to Patterdale for their 12noon start.

At 3am I stirred from my dozing so hear rain on the tent! Thankfully it didn't last long and the day was perfect as forecasted. I was happy for 4.30am to come so I could get up and get ready for the race. I felt good and ready to run.

Jonny and I left the girls dozing in the tent and made our way to the start. It was still quite dark but by the time we'd dibbed in and were ready to go it was light enough that we put our head torches away. We met up with Andy and wished each other a great race.

Brockhole to Kentmere (6.79miles)



Even though it says finish it was the start!! (photo thanks to James Kirby)

I was setting off with a rough sub 15hr plan. I say rough as it was hard to know what a good time for me would be. I've done the race before and because it's a new race no-one has so there are no results to compare things with. On my recce we stopped a lot to video and enjoy the views but I felt 15hrs was a good target to have in mind.

The organiser's sent us round the Brockhole grounds before setting off down the road. Jonny and I started together but we had agreed that we would run our own race. The small loop took us past the camp site and suddenly I saw Katrina standing there cheering us on in her pj's! I gave her a high 5 and wondered whether I would see her later on or at the end.

The 50k race would start 6hrs after us so if I got to Patterdale in my planned 6hrs 20mins I would be 30mins behind her after I'd had my pit stop. I thought if Katrina has a good race it would be unlikely I'd catch her.

It was good to get going and I felt really good. We settled into a nice pace and followed the runners ahead up the hill to the start of the large loop. It was single file for part of it so we ran/walked at the pace of those ahead.

Once we reached the top and turned right onto the main path there was plenty of room. Jonny and I ran together chatting to each other and the runners around us. A guy from Turkey thanked me for the Lakeland 100 videos which Jonny found very amusing!

We ran through Troutbeck and up the hill, past the spot where I stopped to watch the Lakeland 100 race in July. We chatted to James for the next 45mins or so into Kentmere. James has worked all over the world in bars and now is a Food and Technology Teacher.

One of the things I love about ultra races is the opportunity to meet all sorts of folk and have time to chat as you run. We came into Kentmere together. I had roughly thought 1hr 10mins for the 6.26miles so was slightly concerned when I saw 1hr 27mins but it was 0.5mile longer due to

the small lap in the grounds.

I felt it had been really easy and my HR of only 126 showed I'd started comfortably. I was happy with that but was in and out of the checkpoint just taking a banana and was ready to push on a bit harder.

Once the official splits were published I was able to work out my positions for each leg. In the 100k race there were actually 2 groups. The race and the challenge. The only difference is that the challenge had more generous cut-off times but effectively they were all one race so I've put them all together.

So my official time for leg 1 was 1:27:37 and I was in 87th place out of 176 starters.

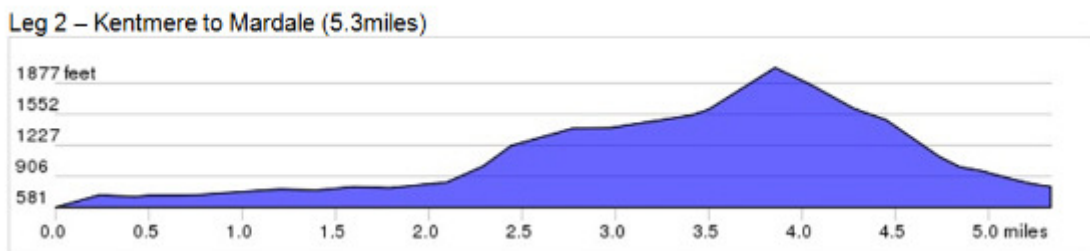
Brockhole to Kentmere					
from	to	distance	time	total	pace
brockhole	junction	2.15	28:38	28:38	13:19
junction	kentmere	4.64	58:58	27:36	12:43
	Leg Total	6.79	1:27:36		12:54
	Rest	0.01	0:21	1:27:57	

Kentmere to Mardale Head (5.69miles)

James came out with me but almost immediately said he was stopping for a minute or so to sort out his gear. Jonny was still in the checkpoint so I was now on my own. It was good to be able to settle into my own pace and because I'd started easy over the next few miles I passed quite a few people.

I had a quick chat with each one and everyone agreed we'd picked a great day to be in the Lakes! Initially I thought we were using the same path (though the opposite direction) as the Lakeland 100 between these checkpoints but Andy had pointed out the previous evening that it was a different route so I was looking forward to comparing it.

I carried with me laminated profiles for each leg and they were so helpful. The profile for this leg was ..



So I knew I had a couple of miles of running before I started climbing up the hill. I was feeling really good so made the most of it. Once on the hill I walked as hard as I could picking out people ahead and catching up with them.

At the very top was a cheery marshal who was encouraging all the runners as they passed. All the marshals and volunteers were superb all the way round the course. They really made all the runners feel special.

Once over the top the view down to Kentmere Reservoir was stunning and once again I was reminded how much I love running these trail races. I definitely preferred this route to the

Gatescarth Pass.

It was a fairly technical descent and I made my way down as quickly as I could. One or two went past me and I went past a couple more runners. I knew Jonny was going to be loving this part but thought I was probably too far ahead by now to be caught on this bit!

I went past Katie who was finding the rocky descent tougher than me. We would end up running a lot together over the next 8hrs.

As I came into the checkpoint at Mardale Head I saw Mark Barnes (Hoka sales rep) on his way out and I wondered whether I would catch him.

I checked in, took a flapjack, refilled my water and was off again within a minute. All was going well and I was really happy with my progress so far.

My official time for leg 2 was 1.18.19 (20th fastest for the leg). My overall time was 2.45.56 and I'd moved up to 49th place.

Please note that the official time is taken as you arrive at the checkpoint so any time spent at the checkpoint is added to the next leg's time.

Kentmere to Mardale Head					
from	to	distance	time	total	pace
kentmere	hill	2.87	34:06	2:02:03	11:53
hill	top	1.23	21:05	2:23:08	17:08
top	mardale head	1.58	23:23	2:46:31	14:48
	Leg Total	5.69	1:18:34		13:48
	Total	12.49	2:46:31		13:20
	Rest	0.01	0:57	2:47:28	

Mardale Head to Bampton (7.07miles)



Leaving Mardale Head. Photo thanks to Dudley Desborough

My plan had been to be at Mardale Head in 2hrs 15mins so I was 30mins behind my plan. On the whw this would a big negative and would affect me but it didn't worry me at as I knew I'd made up the figures and they weren't based on anything.

I decided to run the way I was feeling and what would be would be. I set off with a couple of different runners and we made our way round the headland and along Haweswater. The last time I ran this in the Lakeland 100 race last year I'd been going for over 70miles and my feet were really hurting.

It felt so good to be running strongly and enjoying the views and company. I caught up with Mark quite quickly and we ran together for a bit, chatting about running in general and how great HOLA's are in particular!!

Mark had said that he hadn't been able to do as much training as he hoped. I did wonder whether he'd gone off a bit quick but didn't say that at the time!!

I caught up with another runner Steve who was doing his first ultra and had come across my blog. He thanked me for the help it had been which was nice of him. He asked me what time I had in mind. I explained I had a rough plan for sub 15hrs and hoped to be at Patterdale in around 6hrs 20mins.

Steve had a similar overall aim but thought 7hrs to Patterdale. I agreed that maybe that was more realistic but having run the second half I knew the course was a lot harder and thought I'd need more than an extra hour. Anyway I was realxed about it all and didn't worry at all about it.

We ran pretty well the whole path along the lake and through the fields and lanes until we reached the road into Bampton. So far the signs had been excellent but when we reached a gate there wasn't a sign. We caught another couple of runners including Katie (who had gone past us) wondering where to go.

We quickly decided the road was the way and soon enough another sign appeared to confirm we were going the right way. We ran into Bampton following the signs to the checkpoint. Just before the hall we saw a runner coming the other way so we knew the way out was back along the road.

Again another quick in and out. 1min 26secs this time. Enough time to take a bacon butty, banana and refill my water. The 7.07miles had taken me 10mins quicker than my rough plan so that encouraged me that I wasn't going to have to add 15mins to every leg!

My official time for leg 3 was 1.17.37 (28th fastest) and overall 4.03.33 (43rd place).

Mardale Head to Bampton					
from	to	distance	time	total	pace
mardale head	path	2.58	31:28	3:18:56	12:12
path	gate	2.53	28:18	3:47:14	11:11
gate	bampton	1.96	17:04	4:04:18	8:42
	Leg Total	7.07	1:16:50		10:52
	Total	19.57	4:04:18		12:29
	Rest	0.02	1:26	4:05:44	

Bampton to Howtown (7.22miles)

I left on my own but Katie soon caught up again and so did Tom Sutton. Tom had run the Lakeland 100 in 25hrs 39mins this year! I asked him he felt running this race after a superb L100. He said his legs were still quite trashed and the hills were tough! He was running pretty well.

Tom pushed on a bit so Katie and I ran together. Again there was a few miles of flatter running on the road so we made the most of it and went past Tom who was walking the slight rise in the road.

Once we left the road and ran on the grassy track Katie pushed on ahead and I followed. I went past a runner with a whw buff so we chatted for a bit.

It was getting quite warm now so I was making sure I was drinking regularly and taking a succeed tablet every 90mins or so. I knew we were coming into Howtown soon but I wasn't quite sure where we would join the L100 route.

Suddenly I saw Dave Troman with his bright yellow marshals top. He was taking photos as well as directing so made sure I smiled as I ran past.



Photo thanks to Dave Troman

Dave said he was having a great time enjoying the lovely morning and wished me a great race. Thanks Dave.

I soon recognised where I was and realised I had about 2.5 miles to go to the checkpoint. I was running so easily so pushed on loving the feeling of running well after over 5hrs of running. As I ran I wondered how Katrina and Frances were feeling. They would be at Patterdale with under an hour to go before their race started.

I think Katie was still ahead at this point and another passed another Kate somewhere along this bit. I came into Howtown feeling strong and again happy to see that I'd done that leg 24mins faster than my rough plan so I was now almost back on track! Plan was to be at Howtown at 5hrs 18mins and it was 5hrs 17mins!!

So maybe my plan wasn't too bad after all but it was just the actual legs that were a bit out. Another quick pit stop and away for the next leg to Patterdale and the half way point.

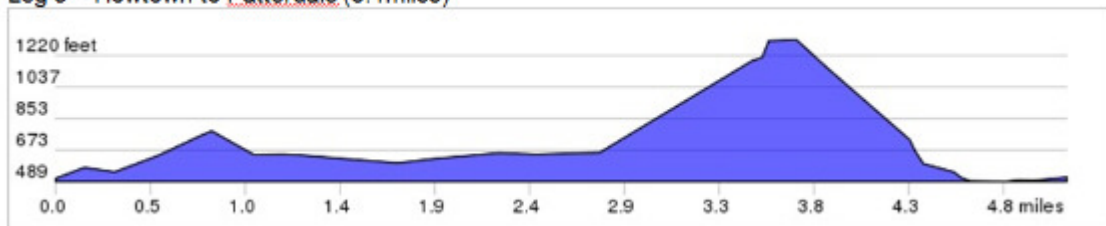
My official time for leg 4 was 1.13.21 (10th fastest). Overall time was 5.16.54 (30th place).

Bampton to Howtown					
from	to	distance	time	total	pace
bampton	junction	2.54	27:45	4:33:29	10:56
junction	wall	2.19	21:46	4:55:15	9:56
wall	howtown	2.49	22:22	5:17:37	8:59
	Leg Total	7.22	1:11:53		9:57
	Total	26.81	5:17:37		11:51
	Rest	0.02	1:00	5:18:37	

Howtown to Patterdale (5.31miles)

I'd not run this leg at all but I knew from the profile that after a small hill there was a couple of miles of flatter ground

Leg 5 – Howtown to Patterdale (5.1miles)



What I didn't realise was that the 2miles was on the road. I must admit it wasn't my favourite part but I did run the majority of it. I leap frogged Kate a couple of times and Katie was behind.

I could see the path winding its way up the hill in front and got ready for a good solid climb. I was taking some video clips along the way but a couple of times I noticed I it was already on as I took it out of my rucksack pocket and I suspected that it had been switched on by mistake. That is what happened as it ran out of battery by Thirlmere and I have lots of footage of the inside of my bag!!

I settled into a steady rhythm up the hill counting my breaths or steps. I was catching the runner ahead and not been caught by the girls so I must have climbed up okay. It was good to reach

the top and start heading down to Patterdale.

It was a great view looking down to Patterdale. It was now 12.10pm so the 50k race would have started 10mins ago. I hoped Katrina and Frances were feeling positive and settling into their run. I also wondered where Jonny and Andy were.

Maybe I was doing too much wondering and not enough running as both Kate and Katie went past me and ran faster down the hill than I did! When I was near the bottom I noted when they went over a cattle grid and timed I was 1min behind them.

I ran into the checkpoint in 6hrs 30mins 19secs 10mins behind my rough plan. Gaynor was at the checkpoint and very kindly sorted me out. She found my top drop, made me some soup and filled my second water bottle with coke!

I had a towel to dry off and changed my top. Kate went straight through but Katie was having some food as well. I was still feeling really good and from now on I knew what was coming which always helps. After 7mins or so I was off again.

My official time for leg 5 was 1.12.30 (26th). My time to half way was 6.29.30 (30th place)

Howtown to Patterdale		distance	time	total	pace
from	to				
howtown	road	2.04	25:02	5:43:39	12:16
road	tree	1.69	25:42	6:09:21	15:12
tree	patterdale	1.58	20:58	6:30:19	13:16
	Leg Total	5.31	1:11:42		13:30
	Total	32.14	6:30:19		12:09
	Rest	0.03	7:28	6:37:47	

Patterdale to Thirlmere (6.74miles)

I left on my own as Kate had only stopped for a minute and Katie had left just before me. I walked up the hill out of the checkpoint and did a quick MOT of how I was feeling. I was encouraged that everything felt pretty good and I was still full of running and ready to do my best over the second half of the course.

Yes I was feeling the effects of having run 32miles but knew I could keep this going. I was keen to stay in the moment and just concentrate on each leg. I had mini-splits from now on so I concentrated on the first one which was 2.65miles away half way up the hill.

I ran most of the path and then climbed as hard as I could. I wondered when I might start to catch the 50k runners. They started 37mins before I got there so I reckoned it would be after Thirlmere. I also wondered whether I would catch Katrina and Frances!

There were lots of walkers out on this section and they were all really friendly and happy to move out of the way to let me pass. I was on my own for most of this leg and quite happy to have time to concentrate on my run and enjoy the beautiful surroundings.

It was good to reach the top and run round Grisedale Tarn. I went past a couple of runners on this section. A lady walker asked me whether I was running 100k as if she'd been told but couldn't believe it. She then asked if it was for charity and I said no, just for fun. I smiled as I heard her ask the next runner behind me!

I knew the descent to Dunmail Raise was steep and quite technical so I made sure I concentrated and watched my step. Half way down I caught the 50k back marker and sweeper. She was going down very slowly and cautiously and I thought she's going to be out for a long day at this rate.

As I reached the bottom I saw Katie and another runner. They weren't sure which was to go so we ran together. I think we dropped down a little too far but soon saw the familiar flags. The three of us ran into the checkpoint together.

My plan was 1hr 35mins for this leg but it had taken 1hr 50mins so once again I was wondering whether that sub 15hrs was realistic. I had decided a few hours ago that I didn't really know so once again it didn't really bother me!

I had a couple of cups of coke and filled up on water and coke for the next leg and set off after 1min.

My official time for leg 6 was 1.55.30 (27th fastest) and my overall time was 8.25.00 (27th position).

Patterdale to Thirlmere					
from	to	distance	time	total	pace
patterdale	bridge	2.65	36:09	31:30	13:38
bridge	tarn	1.61	34:18	1:05:48	21:18
tarn	thirlmere	2.48	39:41	1:45:29	16:00
	Leg Total	6.74	1:50:08		16:20
	Total	38.91	8:27:55		13:03
	Rest		1:00	8:28:55	

Thirlmere to Watendlath (4.85miles)

Katie left with me and we ended up running the whole leg together. I knew there was a mile of road before the climb up so decided to see whether I could run it all. I was really pleased to see I could and once we left the road and started the climb I took the lead.

We made good time up the hill, out of the woods and up the grassy slope to Watendlath Fell. I knew from the recce that it was going to be wet and boggy over this section but it's the same for everyone.

Half way over we met Jeff who was the marshal in charge of this section. He was putting out more flags and glow sticks for when it got dark as they were concerned about the runners going over this in the dark.

My Hoka's were superb for this race but I must admit I struggled in them over this section. This will be the last race in this present pair as they have done over 800 miles. There isn't much grip left and I was slipping and sliding a bit on the wet grass. Katie thought it was very funny!

Thankfully it wasn't too long and soon we were heading down to Watendlath. We passed a spectator who said how good I was looking. I thanked her and said I appreciated that even if she was lying! She insisted that I did look strong so that was another encouragement.

I had been sipping my coke regularly which was going down well. The first couple of times I lost

some as the coke was fizzy so when I opened the top it spurted out. I have a bottle with a straw so I had to open it with my mouth over the top and the coke literally shot into my mouth! It made me smile every time.

Katie and I ran into the checkpoint together. I stopped a little longer here to eat a bit more. There was a sticky toffee pudding on offer. I was tempted but knew I wouldn't be able to eat it especially without custard!!

My official time for leg 7 was 1.23.45 (16th fastest) and my overall time was 9.48.45 (24th place).

Thirlmere to Watendlath					
from	to	distance	time	total	pace
thirlmere	path junction	1.64	23:32	8:52:27	14:21
path junction	gate	1.63	33:07	9:25:34	20:19
gate	watendlath	1.58	23:54	9:49:28	15:08
	Leg Total	4.85	1:20:33		16:36
	Total	43.76	9:49:28		13:28
	Rest	0.01	3:13	9:52:41	

Watendlath to Stickle Barn (10.30miles)

Katie and I set off again together with another runner. I led the way up the hill eating my banana as we climbed. But once we were over the top and heading down to Rosthwaite Katie pushed eased ahead and the gap grew a bit.

Once we got down to the path along the river I couldn't see Katie and for the first time in the race felt I was struggling a bit. I didn't run as much of the next few miles as I should of and I definitely had to regroup a bit and sort myself out.

I knew there was a big climb to come up Stake Pass and I needed to be careful that I didn't push too hard and have nothing for the climb. So I walked a bit, ran a bit and within 20mins or so I was feeling better and by the time I crossed the river and set off up the path to the climb I was moving a lot better again.

I can always tell when I'm struggling a bit as I get caught by other runners. Thankfully this time only one runner caught me. He introduced himself as Dudley and we ran/walked together for the next 30mins or Dudley's longest run to date had been 30miles so he was already well past that and still going well.

Half way up the hill he pushed ahead. By now I was passing 50k runners quite regularly. I had a quick chat with each and we were able to encourage one another to keep going and enjoy the rest of the race.

There were some marshals at the bottom of the switch backs on Stake Pass. One of them recognised me as I checked her kit at the L50 this year.

Once we got on to the switch backs I was feeling really good and soon caught up with Dudley and went past. There were other 50k runners as well to aim for as well.

There were more marshals at the top including James Kirby taking photos including this one of me ...



At the top of Stake Pass (photo thanks to James Kirby)

I knew there was almost 5 miles to the checkpoint at Stickle Barn but most of it was downhill or flat so I was keen to run down as hard as I could. My quads were feeling really good and I was thankful for all those runs down Ben Lomond as they were now paying off big time.

I passed loads of 50k runners as I made my way down. As I crossed the bridge half way down there were a group of walkers who were cheering their friend who was just in front of me. As I passed them I said what about a cheer for me! So they all cheered and once they saw my name on my number they cheered even more and called out Go John! It made me smile for the next few minutes!

The weather was perfect for running and the views running down to the Langdale valley were superb. I loved it and it reminded me again of why I love to run these events. I was feeling very positive and knew I'd broken the back of the race but still had about 14 miles to go so couldn't relax just yet.

I passed a couple more runners then saw a lady ahead with a 100 number. I was quite surprised to see her in front of me when I realised it was Frances. She had been put in the wrong race initially and so had a 100k number even though she was running the 50k.

Frances was going well and enjoying it. She said that she had run with Katrina for the first 10 mins and saw her in the distance for a good while before she lost sight. We ran together for a few minutes and then I pushed on. I glanced at my Suunto and realised it had run out of battery.

I suspected it would and did think about carrying my portable battery pack like I did for the whw but had decided to carry my Garmin 205 instead from Patterdale. So I got it out and switched it on but it took ages to try and find a signal. I walked for a bit to see if that would help.

As I walked Frances caught up with me and we ran together into Stickle Barn. It was great to have some company again and we chatted about the race and how it was going. Frances hadn't been able to train as much as she'd liked and entered late but she was moving really well.

We heard the checkpoint at Stickle Barn before we saw it with the live band playing outside. I was keen to stop a little longer here to eat some food for the final 11 miles. The tomato soup was lovely and so tasty and I ate a few tuna sandwiches with it.

Andy Mouncey came over and introduced himself. We have emailed each other a few times so it was good to meet him. I sorted out my gear and was away after 5mins or so.

My official time for the leg was 2.45.44 (19th fastest) and overall 12.34.29 (21st place).

Watendlath to Stickle Barn					
from	to	distance	time	total	pace
watendlath	bridge	3.22	45:40	10:38:21	14:11
bridge	cairn	2.16	35:09	11:13:30	16:16
cairn	stickle barn	4.92	1:15:17	12:28:47	15:18
	Leg Total	10.30	2:36:06		15:09
	Total	54.07	12:28:47		13:51
	Rest	0.01	5:34	12:34:21	

Stickle Barn to Ambleside (7.02miles)

Frances and I left together and we ran into Elterwater together. I didn't feel I had to stay with Frances but I couldn't shake her off as she was running well!! Her phone went at one point and I thought she was going to stop to answer it thinking it might be a B&B booking.

We ran all the runnable bits to Elterwater passing a few more 50k runners on the way. They probably thought Frances was a 100k runner with her number! Once we crossed the road and headed up the hill Frances said she wouldn't be able to keep up so encouraged me to keep going. I really enjoyed the hour or so we ran together and I think it helped both of us.

I did wonder whether I would catch Katrina. In one way I hoped I didn't as it would mean she'd had a great race but on the other hand my idea scenario was to catch her with a mile to go and run in together!

I had been thinking about my finishing time a bit over the last couple of hours and had decided that sub 15.30 was my new target. I thought that was a reasonable goal that would keep me honest over the last few miles.

As I approached the Youth Hostel I was expecting to go into the grounds and past the front as Gaynor had said they were keen for us to run through their grounds but the signs took us below the hostel on the path we did on the recce. I passed another couple of 50k runners and headed down the road, through the gate and past Loughrigg Tarn.

I was expecting to stay on the road a bit longer until we re-joined the L100 route as we'd done on the recce but the signs took us over a field and on the path to Ambleside a different way. I wasn't quite sure where I was until I realised we were on the main path as I saw the small hill after the stepping stones.

By now it was getting seriously dark but I reckoned I could make it to the Ambleside Checkpoint without my head torch. I didn't fancy stopping to get it out!

It was really dark through the trees but I had just enough light to make it down safely. Well I

didn't fall anyway. I ran through the park going past another 50k runner and into the checkpoint. A quick refill of water and coke and I was off again. I got my head torch out and put it on my head but didn't switch it on until I was out of Ambleside.

My official time for leg 9 was 1.42.11 (14th fastest) and my overall time was 14.16.40 (20th place).

Stickle Barn to Ambleside					
from	to	distance	time	total	pace
stickle barn	elterwater	2.94	47:26	13:21:47	16:08
elterwater	gate	1.47	19:35	13:41:22	13:19
gate	ambleside	2.61	35:07	14:16:29	13:27
Leg Total		7.02	1:42:08		14:33
Total		61.10	14:16:29		14:01
Rest		0.08	2:32	14:19:01	

Ambleside to Brockhole (4.52miles)

I left the checkpoint at 14.19 on my watch so I had just over an hour to run the final 4.5miles. I was still feeling good and loving the fact that I was going to be able to finish strong again. In 2011 and 2012 I had some tough, tough finishes. I'm proud of the fact that I finished them but the last 7-10hrs weren't much fun and to be honest I was starting to wonder whether I wanted to put myself through that again.

This year though has been so different and has restored my confidence and love of running these long races. I had strong finishes at both the Fling and especially the whw and now at this race.

I ran through Ambleside which is always a strange sensation as folk are wandering along in the early evening off for something to eat and drink.

When I reached the white house and turned left I decided I needed to switch on my head torch. I'd delaying it as I knew it wasn't much good. I had decided I didn't want to carry my Petzl all the way for the sake of an hour or so at the end. So I ordered a smaller Petzl 3 weeks ago but it hadn't arrived so I bought the cheapest (£3.50) and smallest one I could find.

You get what you pay for and all it gave me was a small circle of light just in front of me. If I looked up it was useless! Not one of my better decisions but it was just about good enough.

I knew the route really well through Skelghyll Woods and so when I didn't see any signs I wasn't too bothered as I knew the way. I did wonder though what had happened to them. As I climbed up I saw a group of 7-8 head torches below me. The path they were on joined mine and they followed me as they weren't sure of the way.

I realised that Katie was in the group. I said I thought you were miles ahead. She said her legs were gupped and she was finding it hard. Steve Knight was with her and commented that I was looking very spritely. I'm keen to finish strong was my reply!

I never really race against others in these ultras especially early on and Katie and I had run together for a good way but with just a mile or so to go I was keen to finish ahead of them! So I pushed on as hard as I could. I benefitted from there better head torches as they lit the way ahead.

Then the light behind me got less and less and I realised I was pulling away. Every now and then I was lit up and I could imagine they were looking up to see me. I didn't fancy a sprint finish so decided to try and get some distance between us before the final run on the road.

I ran as strongly as I could and walked hard on the ups before the final turn right and down to the road. I couldn't see very well with my cheapy head torch but I couldn't see a light behind me either so I must have been going okay.

I'd thought a bit about this final mile and in my mind I was going to enjoy the final run down the hill. In reality I felt I was being hunted down and it reminded me of Jonny catching me on our Ben Lomond challenge a few weeks ago!

The road appeared and I ran down to the finish as fast as my legs would take me. I had quite a bit felt which makes the whole finishing experience so much better. It was very dark around the car park but I found my way in, ran round the finishing loop and through the arch to finish in 15hrs 18mins 35secs for 18th place. I think I was 4th in the M50 category.

Ambleside to Brockhole					
from	to	distance	time	total	pace
ambleside	junction	2.77	40:24	14:59:25	14:35
junction	brockhole	1.75	19:10	15:18:35	10:57
	Leg Total	4.52	59:34		13:11
	Total	65.70	15:18:35		13:59

After the race

As it was 9.20pm or so when I finished there weren't many people around at the finish and I didn't want to get cold so headed up to the Visitors Centre to give in my dibber and then go for a shower and get some food. I was very surprised to see Frances already there!

It seems that she got lost in the Skelghyll Woods with the group she was with and came down on to the road. As the evening went on it was clear that something had happened to the signs (stolen?) and a number of runners had the same problem. It was a real shame as the event had gone so well.

I went back to the tent and headed for a shower. I saw Katrina coming out and was so pleased she had loved the race finishing 34th in 8.19.44. Sadly she too had been with a group of 6 who had got lost in the woods and came down early. She was disappointed especially when someone accused her of cheating but it's a no win situation for runners and organisers alike. What can they do if someone takes the signs and glow sticks.

We went back up to the hall and waited for Jonny and Andy to finish. We weren't sure what time to expect them but they arrived within a few minutes of each other. Jonny finished 35th in 17.08.21 and Andy 37th in 17.10.58. They both had loved the course and the whole event.

We all wandered off to bed just after midnight. I didn't sleep very well so ended up getting up at 4am to watch some of the runners coming in during the early hours. Some of them had

obviously had a tough time but did so well to make it to the end.

I will post some thoughts on the race and lessons I've learnt from it later but for now I'd like to say a big thank you to Graham, Gaynor and all the team who worked so hard to put on this event. It is always difficult with an event this size to get everything right the first time but I'm sure it will grow from strength to strength.