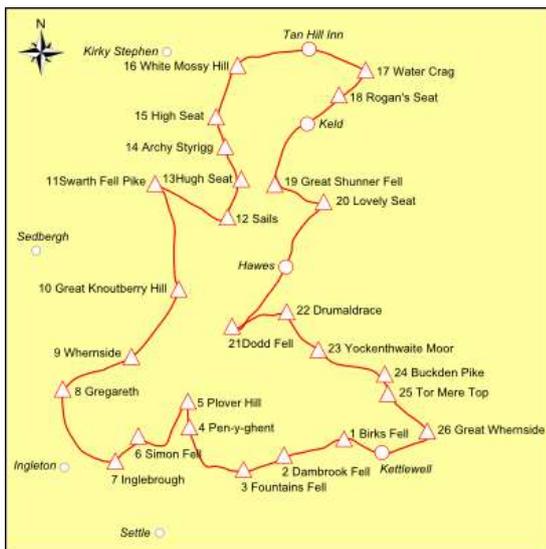


The Yorkshire 2000's

After not getting lucky in this year's draw for a place in the Ultra Trail Mont Blanc and Grand Raid Pyrenees filling up in record time, meant that my usual late summer 'hundred' event of last few years, was looking unlikely to happen. No bother, time to organise my own. A good scan through Tony Wimbush's excellent gofar.org.uk website quickly threw up some possibilities. The Yorkshire 2000's were first completed in 1982 and then in 1984, but no apparent recorded completions since. After a gap of 29 years it only seemed right that someone should blow the cobwebs off this route. There are 26 peaks in Yorkshire over 2000ft (according to the criteria) and linking them up gave a 119 mile route with 20 000ft ascent.



I left Hawes at 1501hrs on Friday 27 September, in unseasonably warm sunshine. Heading clockwise, my route took me south up on the trail of my usual Tuesday night run, to Wether Fell. I came off due west and followed part of the Cam High road, the near straight roman road from Lancaster to the fort at Bainbridge, for a couple of miles until I struck off across the start of many hours of wet ground up to Dodd Fell. I then retraced my steps across to Fleet Moss for a quick brew at a road checkpoint. The next leg crosses wild country to Middle Tongue, and I was joined by Jess Palmer (who has completed 27 Fellsman's and therefore spent a lot of his life on the Moss!). We picked a good route across, reaching the trig well under an hour and then took off avoiding the worse of the hags, down to Cray. Another brew, then off with Andy & Richard at 1820hrs for the twilight hours. We summited Buckden Pike, along the ridge to Tor Mere Top before picking up headlamps at Park Rash. Great Whernside followed just after darkness fell and we kept bang on the bearing down to Hag Dyke scout hut which was a handy feature.

Onward to Kettlewell, where the lads got a pint or two in, meanwhile Mark Dalton was on the night shift and would be my company for the next nine hours. Some soup and bread followed and we were soon heading up the ridge between Wharfedale and Littondale. Handrailing the wall, we eventually arrived on Birks Fell. Down into Litton, the Queen's Arms doing it best to persuade us inside, but we continued up the Dawson's Close track for a short distance and then straight up onto Darnbrook Fell. Back on rough ground here, no trod and chest high (on me anyway!) rush. From the elevated trig point, courtesy of peat erosion, we continued to cross the Pennine Way, and to the summit on Fountains

Fell. The night was clear and the moon was starting to appear. Cracking running weather! Down onto the Pennine Way and up Pen Y Ghent via Dale Head, out and back to Plover Hill, with a short wander around just to be sure we'd actually visited the high point, and then down to Horton for more tea and cakes. Soon off up Sulber Nick, turning off to collect Simon Fell and then west to Inglebrough, where a cold wind persuaded us to continue our journey without delay. Mark's company was great, constant chatting really did pass away those early morning hours.

Cutting through Ingleton Quarry, we were soon at the end of Kingsdale where we met road support for another top up. Adam Perry took over pacing and we were soon trailing up to the long ridge along to Gragareth. Daylight had arrived and the clear night gave way to a stunning temperature inversion along the A65 valley. We cut off the ridgeline, dropping down to the head of Kingsdale, before picking up the trod due east, that goes direct to the trig on Wherside. We saw our first walkers coming off the summit as we headed towards the aqueduct and then across to the path that follows the ventilation shafts from Blea Moor Tunnel on the Settle-Carlisle railway. We headed north via Dent Head forest and Swineley Cwm and back onto the Fellsman route for the last time to pick up Great Knoutberry Haw. A long descent followed all the way to Garsdale Head where cereal, tea and toast awaited. Adam went off to sleep and Jess Palmer was back on his feet for the next leg.



Early morning on Wherside

A long trudge up rough ground at the head of Grisedale (almost made famous by Barry Cockcroft's 'The Dale that Died' TV documentary) to Swarth Fell Pike, which put us on the Cumbria / North Yorkshire boundary. Down to Aysgill Moor Cottages and over the railway, up to Hell Gill bridge and an even slower trek up to Sails. The pace never really picked up much, despite the contours suggesting otherwise, as we made progress along Mallerstang Edge picking up three 2000ft tops before dropping down to the road at Tailbridge Hill. After more tea and sandwiches, it was off towards Nine Standards Rigg, but a detour off kept us safely in Yorkshire, and over White Mossy Hill. My route choice now went along the Coast to Coast walk route down to Ravenseat, and then on a path towards Tan Hill Inn.

By now my feet were suffering, all the twisting and stretching on rough wet ground and it felt like the skin had split on the soles of my feet (which it had, but would only be confirmed hours later at the end). The few stony tracks left, where I thought I would make good

progress, were very difficult. Very arduous terrain was crossed from Tan Hill to the outlying Water Crag, then a slight improvement in ground led us to Rogan's Seat, before a torturous descent on a shooter's track to Keld. My pacers kept stopping to put more gear on, so I knew things had slowed right down. Darkness was on us once again. My original schedule said I should be finishing now, but with 16 miles to go, it was time to get the head in gear and just let my feet follow on.

Jess and Will took over pacing (*that word suggests a decent turn of speed, but we were down to less than 2.5mph by now!*) after Dave and Michael doing their stint from Tailbridge Hill. A couple of miles down the road to Thwaite didn't go badly, but the rough track up Great Shunner Fell on the Pennine Way was hard going. Things were slightly easier on the stone flags once we got on the fell proper, but now all I wanted to do was to lie down and sleep. It was windy on the ridge and the slow pace meant a few more layers, gloves and balaclava to keep warm. Fighting the sleep monster successfully so far, we reached the summit of Shunner and went off east along the fence down to the Buttertubs Road. Then one last hill; Lovely Seat. This dragged on as they all do and we were eventually back down on the road, with only 5 miles in the way of the finish. My feet felt like battered raw ends and I was struggling to put much weight on them. Eventually, my arms over the shoulders of my two mates, I was rather pathetically half walked / half carried back into the car park at Hawes. 36 hours and 25 minutes had elapsed and in less than 5 minutes I was asleep in a chair in a deserted car park. Thankfully they didn't just drive off, but manhandled me into a car and took me home.

A BIG thank you to all my pacers, to Andrea C for the road support and to Andrea B for accommodating pacers coming and going at home. I carried a tracker, supplied by [Open Tracking](#) that worked well for the duration and was of great assistance to helpers. It also let others 'join in' even though they couldn't be there. Well recommended for helping this inherently selfish long distance stuff become more of a spectator sport, (if you want it to be). The stats worked out at 119 miles and 19800ft ascent according to the Garmin watch. For the gadgeteers, the watches were 2 x Garmin 310XT.

Even though on home turf, I'd underestimated the effect of the wet ground on my feet. Much of the route is not on any sort of path or trod, and that rough ground eventually tore the skin on my sodden feet. But, just like the three other successful completers before me, I just had to get on with it.

Matt Neale