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Cover:

Pennine Way, Edale from Back Tor

K.R.Davidson

The Pennine Way in Three Days and Five Years

by MIKE CUDAHY

At 3.00 a.m. on the 19th June 1980 I left Edale bound for Kirk Yetholm some 270 miles away. Just before 9.00 a.m. on Sunday 3rd June, 1984, I finally made my destination, thus setting simultaneously records for both the fastest and slowest traverses of the Pennine Way. Between these two dates lay, as they say, a fair amount of blood, sweat and tears (both of joy and despair), about 20,000 miles of running and walking and a small fortune in training shoes.

I never really envisaged writing up my Pennine Way endeavours for the Journal. The whole thing has been an intensely personal experience and anyway it doesn't have a lot to do with 'pure mountaineering'. However, I have been persuaded an account would be of general interest and since Ted Dance and Dennis Weir established the tradition of a 'record' for the Pennine Way in 1969 and accompanied it with an article (RCJ 19) I am following precedent. Before I begin I would crave indulgence on two points, the second following from the first. The account is personal and does not seek to avoid subjectivity therefore it is of considerable length. A set of places, times, mileages does not represent my relationship with the Pennine Way and as time now passes the objective facts assume even less significance.

Brief History of the Pennine Way Record

In 1969 when a friend told me that Ted Dance and Dennis Weir had completed the Pennine Way in under five days I was staggered. Though I knew Ted and Dennis from fell-running, I wasn't a member of the Rucksack Club and knew nothing of its tradition of long continuous walks. (Ted still describes the achievement as 'only like doing five club walks one after another'). The previous best time seems to have been some six and a half days by Arthur Puckrin. Dennis was obviously confident of bettering this as when Ted arrived home to enjoy a long weekend he was told that Dennis had arranged to start the Pennine Way next morning. 'But', protested Ted, 'I've only got three days holiday'. 'That's alright' replied Cath, 'Dennis says that's enough!'

The idea of fast Pennine Way traverses began to catch on and in 1972 Alan Heaton (now a member) and Mick Meath of Clayton-le-Moors Harriers did just over four days. Alan could undoubtedly

have gone faster and had he been solo and fully supported the three day issue might have been settled there and then. However, the big guns were assembling and in 1974 Joss Naylor stepped down from Mount Olympus (well, the Wasdale Fells anyway) and made an attempt that seems to have depended on gaining sufficient momentum to carry him through the three day 'barrier' as it had now become. Joss covered 108 miles in a remarkable and, to my mind, ill-advised, 18 hours. Thereafter he proceeded to become painfully stiff and shortly before Kinder, with his goal almost within his grasp, he was forced to stop and rest. He slashed the record but was still some 3½ hours adrift of the three day target.*

In 1975 the modest and unassuming Pete Dawes of Kendal A.C. made an attempt that excites my admiration more than most. He seems to have taken a rather dim view of the prominence given to Joss's effort and made a heart-warming bid to get back to the light-hearted amateurism of the Dance/Wier approach. Ace ultra-distance man Boyd Millen tells of turning up in Kirk Yetholm and wondering where all the support was gathered. Pete's wife informed him that she would cover the road crossings and he was the only runner for the first 90 miles. After accompanying Pete for the 30 mile Cheviot stretch Boyd stood down for a rest but was so stricken with remorse as the diminutive and lonely figure disappeared into the Byrness forests that he accompanied him thereafter. Pete's plan was simple: go steady for twenty or so miles, pick up and go strongly for the next 40/50 then hang on for the last 20/30, have a few hours sleep then repeat the process twice. Despite eating problems and associated stomach disorders (always a problem), Pete succeeded in smashing Joss's record (his declared priority) and coming close to three days (3 days 1 hour 48 minutes). As he neared Edale all kinds of help arrived including one old friend out for a sedate Sunday stroll with his wife. Casting off his togs he 'persuaded' her to catch the bus home and joined in the last exuberant push for home.

With three days now an enticing target, Brian Harney of Rotherham and Dark Peak Fell Runners mounted a large scale operation. Like most of the other attempts Brian elected to go from north to south but unlike them, he intended only to take sleep when forced to. He set himself a very tough schedule for the first day and a half, hoping to hang on later, Brian raced through the first 113 miles in 24 hours taking no sleep. He continued to press on and passed the half-way point in under 30 hours. At 163 miles and starting his second night I believe he made a crucial error. His

* At the time one pundit proclaimed that this record would not be bettered in Joss's lifetime!

support team had a bed ready for him at Hawes, but feeling good he decided to keep going at least to Horton 15 miles away. After reaching high ground he became very weak and his support got him into a sleeping bag where he slept for 45 minutes. After this Brian was still very slow to Horton and took another hour's sleep there. He had only a further 30 minutes sleep in the remaining 92 miles but as he'd started at 9.00 a.m. he had to suffer Black Hill and Bleaklow in the dark, difficult conditions in which to recoup time. He came mighty close to the three days however, just 42 minutes short taking over an hour off Pete Dawe's record. He professed himself well pleased and not particularly disappointed to have missed the 'barrier'. His statistics were very impressive, not to say daunting: 113 miles on day 1; 81 miles day 2 and 74 plus 2 to finish off. He had two and a half hours sleep, which was included in his total stopping time (for eating, changing etc.) of around six hours.

Brian set his record in 1979 which is where I come in. I had just completed my longest run, breaking John Richardson's time for the 120 mile Tan Hill to Cat and Fiddle with 32 hours 20 mins. When the news came through of the Pennine Way I was, as we of the mixed clichés say 'gripped on the horns of a dilemma'. On the one horn I knew I couldn't possibly break the record, on the other horn I knew I could not forbear to try. The moment of truth came as I was pounding a muddy towpath in Birmingham. I turned to my running mate and informed him I was prepared to devote just one running season to having a crack at the record (isn't self-knowledge a wonderful thing!?)

The Attempts

The seven unsuccessful attempts which I made between 1979 and 1983 have begun to form into a kaleidoscopic jumble in which images of burning feet, creaking muscles, lashing rain, and boiling sun are embedded in a general background of bright optimism turning to black despair. Certain incidents stand out in memory and while there were many light-hearted moments, most of the detail resembles clips from a horror movie with me as the central character.

On my first attempt after a nine months dedicated training and a long period of settled weather, I cringed in Edale at 3.30 a.m. listening to the roar of the wind and trying to hide inside my cagoule. It should have been light over Kinder but it wasn't, and I had no torch. I could just see the luminous dot on my compass so was able to stumble in the right direction. When I reached Ted on support at the Snake road I was appalled to see the car rocking in the wind. After about 50 miles I had used nearly all my supply of

dry clothes and had maintained schedule at the expense of burning off three days energy in one. Fortunately I developed an incapacitating injury and thus cut short my ordeal.

On another very wet occasion having set out in the evening (in order to 'break in' gently, cover one night section when fresh and have full daylight for a last push). I tripped over a small notice board in the middle of Black Hill! This did a naughtiness to a groin muscle and 90 miles later I had to lift the leg into the car manually in order to be driven home. In any case it had rained to the extent of provoking hollow laughter about entertaining thoughts of breaking the record.

Rain and cold were not always problems. I can remember climbing up Malham Cove in the afternoon of a day of extraordinary heat and humidity. I could both feel and hear the blood pounding through my head and it was one of the few occasions when I did consider I might be doing myself harm - but that never mattered. I refused to stop just because I could see the writing on the wall but carried on until the wall collapsed on me! On that occasion I was irredeemably behind schedule by Hawes (107 miles) but John (Richardson) and Ted encouraged me to go on as Hawes had become a bit of a sticking spot for me. I laboured on, oily with sweat, feet burning like coals. At last as I began to ascend from the Tees Valley (150 miles) the evening air suddenly cleared and I was transformed from a limp dishcloth into a runner again. I began to run effortlessly uphill and as I entered Dufton (162 miles) I no longer believed I could achieve the record, I *knew* I could.

The following year I felt I was fitter than ever before. Furthermore I had begun to come to terms with the nerves and tension which can detract from one's final preparation and even induce premature injury and fatigue. I set off from Edale in near perfect conditions feeling very strong, calm and optimistic. I continued running beautifully, just snipping minutes off the schedule as I deemed fit. But before 100 miles my feet were beginning to burn on the hot dry ground. At Hardraw (109 miles) I tried major foot surgery but the writing was again being written on that wall. My time began to slip away as I limped downhill. I should have quit at Dufton but after sleeping for an hour and a half I dragged myself out and walked as if on glass up towards Cross Fell. John accompanied me and though he knew very well I was doomed he said nothing. I tried to jog on reaching level ground but how can you do that when someone has filled your shoes with burning cinders? Ted met us at the ski road and saved me the miles of stony track to Garrigill. For the first time I actually shed tears and I

declared quite genuinely, that I would not attempt the Pennine Way again. It may be thought that one would get used to failure but I certainly didn't. At each moment of decision to abandon an attempt it felt as if something I had cherished had died. Now at 170 miles with physical reserves quite untapped something as prosaic as sore feet had ended my dream again.

I consoled myself with getting under 12 hours for the Colne-Rowsley and noted dismally that after 70 miles of hot, dry conditions both feet were in perfect condition! Such was my desire to achieve a sub three day record that it generally only took a couple of days to swallow the disappointment and plan afresh. Friends began to smile when I talked of 'just one last, absolutely final attempt'. This time however, it was more serious, it took a full week to break my solemn pledge and rise phoenix-like from the embers of my burning feet and another week to inform my long-suffering wife.

In the meantime however, John Richardson, no doubt inspired by my abject failures mooted an attempt on his own behalf. At first I volunteered to support but eventually we decided on a joint effort. For a change John decided we should go north to south and thus we found ourselves strolling round Coldstream on a perfect evening after a day which had been an invitation to any runner. The only black cloud was me, it was too good to be true. Everyone smiled at me indulgently but in the morning a grey sky greeted us and a gentle drizzle dampened the ground. By Cheviot summit we were in a minor blizzard, the bogs were approaching the plimsoll line and our support was suffering from exposure. We waded on, hoping for better weather, but by the time it came we were on our way home. I had one more attempt that year. I was very hill-fit but the Pennine Way was now as hard as the road. My feet held out but I'd done no road work and after 100 miles my legs were like planks and I couldn't run downhill. With all my experience I'd prepared like a novice and this time disappointment was accompanied by anger. After two days rest I began to train again with an aggression I hadn't felt before.

Preparation for the Record (1983-84)

Apart from when I was easing down for competition or recovering from it I ran between 70-120 miles a week making sure I did something long at weekends. I managed to avoid all injury and stayed disgustingly healthy throughout winter, thus when the time came to step up the length of individual runs I was in good form. As spring sneaked in early under winter's skirts I did a couple of

40/50 mile efforts then a grand Welsh Three's circuit in winter conditions. Then I caught a cold! Caution ruled and I cut down on the long stuff and opted for four days of 30 miles a day followed by two days rest. This felt good so I moved on to four days of 50 miles split by a day's rest. These were local runs and took in some fine scenery in lovely spring conditions in the Dark and White Peak. After my 50's I had three days rest and then drove onto the Pennine Way where I did another four days split by a day. This time I did 60 mile days. The first day was very hard but by the fourth I felt I could manage this regime indefinitely.

I deemed I was still short of a really long run, i.e. in excess of 100 miles. One needs something to 'go at' over this sort of distance, so with some misgivings I decided on an attempt at my own Tan Hill to Cat and Fiddle record. My relationship with the Tan/Cat is about as complex as that with the Pennine Way, and as painful, as it includes winter epics. I knew that I was capable of getting well below my record of 32 hours 20 minutes - given sufficient rest but I couldn't afford to 'peak' twice so I just had a week's rest and wondered what I was letting myself in for.

After 30 miles I knew. I was in a Catch 22 situation. If I carried on I risked becoming so burnt out I'd need a complete re-build for the Pennine Way attempt plus the danger of stress injuries. If I quit I'd still need a rest and a long run with available summer weekends becoming limited by work commitments. I decided to rely on my extensive background, slow the pace and keep going. It was a very interesting exercise in will power and concentration as motivation was slight. Nearly every step seemed to take a separate act of will but after 50 miles things got little worse and at the end I had only two very sore hamstring tendons and a new record (29 hours 10 minutes) which I tried to look pleased about (I wasn't but I'll be back!) The great joy was the wonderful support I got from John Beatty and Rob Ferguson by their enthusiasm and encouragement. They really lifted me and at the end I was running more for them than me.

All the same I wondered if I'd 'blown it' as in the following week I felt tireder than I'd ever felt before and what was worse, psychologically depressed. Somewhat given to manic cheerfulness I found this hard to bear. The psyche recovered after a week but I decided to put back the record attempt by a week. This now allowed me 3½ weeks recovery and was a good move as on the original weekend it rained, blew, and on the Cheviot they had a repeat blizzard - I felt really smug.

The Record

Thursday 31st May, 10.55 a.m., Edale. Some cloud, some sunshine, some breeze - perfect. I feel as if I'm one big physical and emotional time-bomb. A minor irritation and I explode with anger, a sweet melody coming over the radio as I wait for the time signal and I feel near to tears. Not exactly a big send-off, just two support crew, my friend and colleague from Birmingham, Inken, who two months later became only the 12th lady to achieve the 'Bob Graham 24 hour Fell Record', and my son Mark who is to be main running support on Day 2.

Touch the Nag's Head and off. Cross the boundary of open country, wave farewell to Inken, embrace the moors. The thought of 270 miles lying ahead is no longer so overwhelming, I just pray that this time I'll be there at the end, the weariness I just don't care about, I just don't want to get injured and have to quit. The first 14 miles over Kinder and Bleaklow I'm running alone. This will enable me to tune in mentally, focus my concentration and find my rhythm and pace. Repetition has its rewards. I can judge my 'Pennine Way Pace' as I call it, down to the odd minute over miles of varied going even without a watch.

Driving over to Torside, Inken has picked up Ted and with the two of them and Mark, I am accompanied for the rest of the day. Being a fairly non-stop talker (except when Ted's around) I enjoy the chat as it helps reduce the tension and speeds the miles by. It may be thought that nerves disappear as soon as the running begins. Not so. It is necessary to cover at least 100 miles before getting an idea of whether the body parts are going to renege on their preparation or the feet decide to opt out of the endeavour. After my rather unorthodox run down to the event I also feel a little anxious about my standard of general fitness, I seem to be going quite well without feeling exceptional, I nip a few minutes off my schedule over the Bronte Moors and prepare for my first big stop at Cowling which is the start of my first night section.

Cowling, 58 miles gone in just over 11 hours. To my surprise and pleasure a welcoming committee has joined my scheduled support. The Richardsons and the Crutch family have turned out to wish me well and it gives me a big boost - I even manage the odd merry quip. Partly because I'm a little short of support and partly because I enjoy the first night, I'm going through the few dark hours alone but with John on car support.

Setting off along the lane with good wishes ringing in my ears I feel comfortable and relaxed. No need to run to keep on schedule

-but if I feel like it I can jog quietly downhill. A good sign, I want to jog, so off I go. A beautiful early summer night with country sounds and smells. John is due to meet me at Gargrave 12 miles on but I'm up on time and he's not there. So I visit the local loo (well placed) and scratch a message on the pavement. He'll be at Malham two hours later. I have trust in all my support but with John it's an absolute unquestioning faith, after all, we've shared eight Karrimors, two winter Tan/Cats and numerous other epics together. Thus run my thoughts as I move gently onwards and there is John's torch across the Malham meadows. Thus dawns Day two, the very crux and pivot of the whole thing.

Day one is easy if the weather is good. One is fresh and strong and in my case the 11.00 a.m. start means it is only 17 hours long. Day two for me begins at Malham at 4.00 a.m. and will end at Dufton 21 hours and 85 miles later. The freshness and bounce have gone by now but there's no real feeling yet of approaching the end, indeed, at Malham there's still 193 miles to go. However, I can't afford to lose any time, if I'm even 15 minutes behind schedule at Middleton (142) I'll have to stumble across the Falcon Clints in the dark which will compound the time loss, may force me into unscheduled sleep and the whole attempt will begin to collapse around me. I'm also short of running support and will need to run nearly half of Day two by myself.

The next sections are all very tough, having a mountain each; Fountains Fell, Pen-y-ghent, Cam Fell, Great Shunner. My son Mark is my running support and John is looking after me on the road crossings. A minor incident after Fountains indicates my nervous tension. Coming over the fell I felt tired but pushed hard and 'took' five minutes off my schedule. At the car no drink was ready and John asked me what I wanted. I very rudely shouted (without stopping) that having just screwed myself to gain a few minutes I wasn't wasting it waiting for a drink. I headed towards Pen-y-ghent feeling embarrassed.

By Horton (92) I knew I was going quite well and had 30 minutes in hand. The weather was cool and misty but very acceptable. I was doing alternate sections with Mark and was pleased to be able to tell when the 100 mark was passed. I was relieved he didn't say 'Good Show! only another 170 to go!' The first 24 hours were concluded at Hardraw, 108 miles gone and 45 minutes in hand. I had no illusions however, those minutes would tick away later as I had been rather mean with my scheduled stops. As we progressed the ground became wetter and by Tan Hill the light drizzle had changed to heavy showers. I tried to hide in the car until they passed but John decided they weren't going to and kicked me out.

The rain got heavier and I began to feel really worried about prospects but soon we were through the half-way stage (only half-way? don't think about it!) taking only an hour longer than Brian Harney had. Just before Middleton Geoff Bell and Don Talbot drove up. I must really be in a black mood as I can hardly manage a joke with them, I think the weather and the thought of the night ahead is getting to me. I set off feeling low and disappointed in myself.

At Middleton (142) there's a change of personnel. John and Mark, after 17 hours continuous support take a break and Geoff provides car support while Will McClewin of Dark Peak F.R. runs with me to Dufton. Dufton - the focus of my attention since Edale. It is here that all my support will gather and where at last I can have a sleep. I've been reminding myself all day 'get to Dufton and join all those friends who mean so much, get there on schedule and you can have a sleep, get away from Dufton by 4.00 a.m. and you can achieve the record!'

Never met Will before but one glance at the threadbare tights and determined jut of the jaw and I know I'm in the hands of a real professional. (Now there's the man who should be doing this kind of thing!)

The miles up the Tees are predictably tough and monotonous. Only the thought of the Falcon Clints keeping me running on the easier ground. A last effort and we're on them, half light only with this mist, but good enough. Slippery though, 'Hello! What's Will doing stood in the river?' Very slippery! As the light fades we climb the rocks by Cauldron Snout to the reservoir road. Geoff couldn't get the car here but he's galloped along on foot with food, first aid and hot drinks - a real trooper!

The section over to High Cup Nick is moonless, awkward and boggy. Will demonstrates an uncanny ability to find the deepest of these bogs. Near High Cup itself disaster looms with amazing swiftness. A thick mist zooms in and I pay no attention, navigating from memory without a compass. Eventually I decide to check that the edge of the Nick is where it should be and suddenly everything looks wrong. Thank God the compass is pointing the 'right way'. Are we going to come down the wrong valley though? Ten minutes later we're safely back on the main path, my panic ceases but I curse my carelessness.

At last Dufton (162) one minute up on schedule! But what's this? Instead of feeling wonderfully euphoric and happy I feel terribly tired and very, very low. I've concentrated so much on driving here and now I am here I can no longer ignore the fact that there's still

108 miles to go. I stuff some food down then stumble to the tent and lie down. A kindly hand puts a pillow under me and pats me gently on the head, even through my black despair I am deeply touched - there's hope yet.

My short sleep was not restful. It was punctuated by stabs from overworked joints and constant, vivid images of haste and hurry. Woven into the semi-nightmare was the unmistakable reality of rain pounding on the tent. After enduring an hour and a half of such sleep, Geoff stuck his head in and produced tea. It was still raining hard. I wanted him to say the weather was hopeless and I shouldn't venture over Cross Fell. Another good attempt, but hard luck eh? I had reached my nadir. I'm usually careful to guard against early morning 'lows' but now I was so low I didn't even recognise my condition. For a while total subjection had me in its grip. No one tried to persuade me to go on but there's Geoff, cheerful as only he can be early morning and as kindly too. And here's Will emerging, nearly as weary as me after such short sleep. Over there are the others, sleeping after their tremendous efforts on my behalf. I totter off down the road, the attempt is still on - just, but the credit does not lie with me.

Down the road a little and part of my befuddled brain notes the absence of rain. I look up and see a small patch of blue among the swirling clouds, good enough for 4.00 a.m., I think. On the lower pastures now, managing a conversation with Will, not bad. Slowly the realisation dawns that my legs are in great shape and the feet are fine! Next moment we round a bend and there, glistening with raindrops, is a dense bank of deeply coloured bluebells. They're incredibly beautiful and they finally end the period of avid emotion and negative thoughts.

Knock Fell is a hell of a tough climb, steep and long. But I judge my condition from Will and I am relieved he's finding it tough too. Through the mist now to Geoff at the ski road. Devour the breakfast I was too low to attempt at Dufton. Again a spot of carelessness in the mist causes some anxiety. Just beware of deterioration in the information processing department, as the body slows so does the mind. At last off Cross Fell and onto the long dreaded stony track to Garrigill. The feet are up to it though and we dip below the mist into a sun-swathed morning with immense moorland views all around us. Behind us, Cross Fell wears its old snowfields like a giant necklace beneath its summit plateau. I relax in the morning sun and enjoy a little 'doze' on the move - switch off the mind and put the body into 'automatic'.

Although I am only partly aware of it, at Garrigill I have crossed



Will McLewin and Mike Cudahy leaving Alston Geoffrey Bell

not only the physical watershed of Cross Fell but also the mental watershed which has hitherto separated dream from reality. From this moment self-doubt and negative thoughts vanish, I can get down to the business of whittling away the miles with no worries that a silly injury will rob me. At Garrigill there are 91 miles to cover in 26 hours (or less I hope!), not a doddle but I have no physical problems, I'm no longer fresh enough to 'burn myself out' and so can mentally relax and give all I've got. (It was fortunate at this point that I didn't know what the Cheviots had in store for me).

My memories of the rest of the day are mainly pleasurable - and therefore less interesting! I remember running down the road shortly after Garrigill feeling great and being delighted when the rest of the support happened to drive by. They seemed to be looking at me anxiously and I wanted to put on some real pace to show how good I was feeling. There were now two cars and five supporters to share the running and the road stops. At Slaggyford (189) John at last joined me in a running capacity, and as I remarked, it was like slipping into a comfortable pair of old shoes. At each road crossing I received a boost and always put on a little

pace and a big smile (where possible) as I came in. It wasn't all easy however. The Roman Wall with its switchback was exhausting in the heat of the day and beyond this in the Wooler Forest I found that running up even the slightest gradient nearly put me on my knees.

It was just after here that a minor crisis arose. For some time my feet had been getting sore and as I ran into Ladyhill (217) they were really burning. I'd been working out a treatment however, and at the stop I removed all old dressings, applied Vaseline, changed socks and insoles and then crossed my fingers. I limped cautiously out of the shop to a chorus of silent wincing from my support but after half-a-mile the feet felt good and I had no need to touch them again.

With the cool of evening I received fresh strength and the 230 odd miles were resting easy in my legs. There was a sublime period in the waning light when with Geoff and Don we ran through clouds of cotton grass which seemed to be floating bright and white above the dark moorland. Then through the dark pine-scented forest to Byrness, the last real stop before the final barrier of the Cheviots. I reached Byrness just before midnight and thus had 11 hours to cover the last 30 miles.

I felt I had time in hand at Byrness and wanted to take time to eat and have a little rest. I couldn't understand why people kept peering at me and why John kept pestering me to be off. I'd only just sat down hadn't I! No, I hadn't. What was happening was that although my mind was working clearly it was operating in slow motion. John finally got me going and we set out on the last leg with, for me, a feeling of muted excitement. The plan was that John, Inken and Mark who were all very strong would run with me to Kirk Yetholm while Don and Geoff would first meet us at the Roman Camps (seven miles on) then drive to the finish.

The problem with night sections is that as you get into the second or third the effects of fatigue follow an essential curve. Night one may be little slower than day one (if desired) but Night three is usually very different. Now I found the moving shadows from my torch were, in effect, shifting the ground from under my feet. I stumbled happily on however, rather dangerously euphoric. That is until a keen east wind began to cut into me. John and Inken had gone ahead to locate Don and Geoff and I remarked several times to Mark how cold it was. He said he was O.K! Fortunately, experience came to my aid and I stopped and put some gear on - not a moment too soon.

At the car I wanted to stop for a short nap but there was one

small car (full of gear) and six of us. It was too cold to ask everyone to hang about so cramming on more gear we set out again - into the final crisis. The morning will not get light, the ground is uneven and I start stumbling. I'm stumbling because-I can't see clearly, because I'm tired and because I keep falling asleep on my feet. If it would get light I would wake up but no amount of determination will work the trick. Shall I curl up on these lovely tussocks? so inviting! Aware of the problem John asks me do I want to sleep at the refuge hut near Lamb Hill. Hell! What a calculation for me to grapple with at this juncture. Time lost stumbling versus time lost sleeping minus time gained from possible refreshing sleep divided by the possibility of sleeping anyhow. I'm vaguely aware of the importance of coming to the right decision and quickly. I elect to sleep and ask John to give me five minutes. Outside the refuge the wind is howling but inside is strangely warm and peaceful. I stretch out on the wooden bench, put my head on a friendly lap and after about a minute to switch off the systems sink into a wonderfully calm and refreshing sleep.

'Come on Mike. You've had seven minutes.' I jump up aware that this is it. I can afford no further weakness. Sticking my nose a few inches from John's rapidly retreating backside I give it all I've got. It nearly isn't enough. The bogs get deeper and the wind stronger. Soon no strength to go round the bogs, straight through cursing, will they never end? Worse to come I know. Cheviot Summit is a heart-breaking morass of heaving mire which has to be covered twice, up to the trig-point and back. At the summit I'm surprised to see I still have over two hours left in which to get under

33

*The 'Run In', down to Kirk Yetholm
Mark, Mike, John, Don*

Geoffrey Bell



three days by a full two hours. As soon as we reach firmer ground I start to fling clothes off and get running. At last after 265 miles of careful hoarding I can cut loose and really run freely. It's so exhilarating I feel unreal. So exhilarating I lead us wrong! We hit the road a bit early but the anxiety and annoyance lend wings to my heels and we run up the steep hill - last climb before Yetholm. Don and Geoff are out to meet us in the pouring rain, Geoff backing rapidly away from us as he tries to capture the moment on film. We swoop down to Yetholm like a set of wild border raiders, I scream 'Where's the pub?' spot it and finally skid to a halt clutching the wall. John raps out the time while I'm still trying to focus on my watch 'Two days, twenty one hours, fifty four minutes, thirty seconds' I jog quietly back up the road to meet Inken who got left behind in the rush. The tears have gone by the time I get back but the mouth is in great shape - I don't stop talking (mostly nonsense) for several hours, until sleep claims me on the drive back home.

Epilogue

At last I'm returning home without that bitter feeling of failure and disillusionment. There's no gold medal for me but something worth far more, stuck on the front door is a brown envelope with a message from my four young children 'Welcome home Dad and well done' something gets in my eye again and I have to retreat to the bedroom to remove it.

The euphoria lasts long enough to get me up early next morning for a short scene for Granada T.V. and even into work where everyone seems to have heard the news. Well, enjoy being a celebrity it won't last long!

If you've read this and not been made aware of the importance to me of my support team, then I need to re-write it. I've been helped by many people over my various attempts and I simply have no way of thanking them adequately - but thank you all. I owe a debt of loyalty which you can claim anytime.

Some Facts

*(Support can be hard work, here are support mileages):**

Ted Dance	18	Will McClewin	48
Inken Blunk	61	Geoff Bell	16
Mark Cudahy	79	Don Talbot	12
John Richardson	58	Me (Solo)	62

DAY 1.	108 Miles
DAY 2.	81 Miles
DAY 3.	81 Miles (22 hours)

Half-way point (135 miles)	30½ hours 4.4 m.p.h
Edale - Dufton (162 miles)	38½ hours 4.2 m.p.h
Dufton - Kirk Yetholm (108 miles)	29 hours 3.7 m.p.h.

SLEEP At Dufton 1½ hours. On the Cheviots 7 mins.
Apart from this there was no specific resting time but a further seven hours were spent in eating, changing, doctoring feet etc. (must improve on this!)

*Running is only half the story. Just as hard is coping with incoming runners at road points at any and every hour of the day and night - my support did both.