

The skies above Grasmere in the Lake District, the site for this year's British Fell and Hill Relay Championship, were clear, sunny and blue. Of course, that was on the Friday and come Saturday, the actual day of the race, normal Lakeland weather conditions had resumed with low cloud and rain hampering visibility. 245 teams huddled together in a massive marquee erected to keep the worst of the weather off the gathered runners.

Being a relay race, there were four legs offering varying degrees of fell challenge; none falling into the "easy" category with each leg featuring relentless climbs and steep descents. Legs 1 and 4 were 'solo' events with a single runner representing each team. Legs 2 & 3 were 'paired' events with a team of two from each team participating. Each leg followed a different route around the scenic lakeside fells (not that they were visible for most of the day). As you would expect for a national championship, the courses were well marshalled with runners on each leg having to navigate to defined checkpoints and check in using an electronic 'dibber' to make sure everyone was accounted for.

Leg1 set the tone for the day with a 5-mile run incorporating 2,400' of climbing. The route went up the runnable Tongue Gill followed by a steep, much less runnable, scramble up to the summit of Seat Sandal before a similarly steep descent back down. Congleton Harrier's Chris Moss had the pleasure of setting off in the mass start. From the look on Chris's face when he returned after 1.08.52 seconds, this clearly was going to be an event to test each runner to the maximum.



*Chris Moss Leg 1 finish*

*Photo Nick Budd*

Chris handed over to Andy Roberts and Bryan Carr for the second leg. Whilst Leg 1 was predominantly marked, leaving the runners little to do in terms of route selection, Leg 2 left a lot more of the route selection to the discretion of the pair on the 6.7 mile, 2,800' climb up from Grasmere to Great Rigg via Stone Arthur. Andy and Bryan completed their leg in 1.28.19, handing over to Pete Carvell and Dave Clarke for Leg 3.



*Bryan Carr and Andy Roberts*

*Photo Chris Moss*

Unlike Legs 1,2 and 4, the Leg 3 runners only received their map and target checkpoints at the start of the leg, negating any chance to plot routes or undertake recce runs prior to the event. Instead, they had to work out their own route across the fells. Given the low cloud and drizzle, any 'line of sight navigation' was out of the question; instead, once up high, they had to trust to their skills with a compass and bearing. Whilst the lack of a planned route means there is not an exact record of mileage and height, the fact they were out for 1.54.19 before handing over to Nick Budd for Leg 4 suggests an equally arduous length and ascent.



*Pete Carvell / Dave Clarke & tired Bryan in the background. Photo N Budd*

Leg 4 was shorter at 4.5 miles and fully marked, but still featured a 2,000' zig-zag ascent up to Alcock Tarn, then continuing to the top of Heron Pike before a relatively flat traverse to the start of a descent to Stone Arthur and on to a final steep, off path tumble down through flattened bracken to the finish. Despite having jelly legs by this stage, Nick managed a semblance of a sprint at the end to finish in a time of 1.05.23. Overall this meant the team completed the course in 5.36.53 finishing in 140<sup>th</sup> place.

Steve Webb was the sole Harrier in action at the Flintshire 5k race on the Sunday, setting off from the Mold Leisure Centre. The weather was perfect for a run across an undulating, mostly tarmacked course. Steve had targeted a good run, specifically training for it. Despite nearly blowing it by setting off too fast, Steve managed his fastest 5k for 2 years finishing 20<sup>th</sup> in 21:52.64 achieving his first ever top 3 age category finish.

There were a host of other runners also out on Sunday, but not in race action. Helen Jefferey, who is tackling the Snowdonia Marathon next week, decided that the 'perfect warm up' was to tackle the 35 miles of the Gritstone Trail with three work colleagues. They just managed to complete the route before sundown in under 9 hours. Also, after a hiatus of a few weeks, the Sunday social run has resumed with Phil Dawson leading a group of runners from the Harriers and Boalloy around Alderley Edge, with only a few unintended detours.

On a different note, runners from a variety of clubs went to an informative injury prevention workshop hosted by Andy Ayres on Thursday to learn a bit of the science vs myths associated with running.

The club welcomes new members. You can find full details on our Congleton Harriers website: [Congleton-harriers.co.uk](http://Congleton-harriers.co.uk). You can also connect with the club on Facebook where details of club activities are posted regularly.