

Bob Graham Round Attempt

Report by Andrew and Alan Elwood



Preparation

Overview

After spending a week in 2019 running in the Lake District, during which we covered all of leg 1 and most of leg 2 (going clockwise) we decided to have an attempt at the Bob Graham Round (BGR) in the summer of 2021, eventually registering later that year with the BGR 24 hour club to set off at 1900 on Sat 26 Jun 21 as a father and son team (we guess slightly unusual). This left us some 9 months to prepare, both physically, mentally and logistically.

Training

There is no 'one plan fits all' for preparing for the BGR. but you need a plan and you need to stick to it. Attempting the BGR is built on all those early dark mornings doing hill reps in the rain with a head torch on or trudging up Slieve Donard in the rain, wind a sleet in Feb! The advice we did get suggested aiming for 3000m of climb a week and that the more time spent on your feet in the hills the better of course. Alan was able to utilise a mix of local steep road hills (getting 300m to 500m of climb through reps of 30 - 50m hill sprints on foot and bike), Slieve Croob (500m climb over 10 km on terrain), the Mournes (10km / 1000m to 18 km/ 1500m on terrain) and finally moving to several goes at the Mourne Seven Sevens, Mourne Wall and Mourne Skyline routes. Andrew was able to access a 50m forrest path hill for reps of sprints near university in Durham, the Mournes when home on holiday and the Peak District and Lake District. We found it helpful to mix things up and made sure to include regular bike sessions too. We concentrated on speed and strength work on hills for the first 5 months prior to focusing on 6 - 8 hour 3000m climb endurance runs in the hills for the last three months. In all we covered some 4,200 km of distance and 102 km of vertical climb by the time of the attempt. Training generally consisted of 4 weeks of progressively harder effort with a lighter 5th week (details of training can be provided if requested). We tapered down in the last 4 weeks, doing very little in the last couple of week to avoid injury.

Attempt Plan

We set a plan with a 23 hr 15 min target time and a 15 min stop at each road crossing (four in total). The ETA for each summit, based on a 1900 start time, is in the table below.

Location	Clock Time	Leg Time
Moot Hall	19:00	00:00
Skiddaw	20:23	01:23
Great Calva	21:08	00:45
Blencathra	22:17	01:09
Threlkeld - Arrive	22:51	00:34
Threlkeld - Depart	23:06	00:15
Clough Head	00:06	01:00
Great Dodd	00:36	00:30
Watsons Dodd	00:45	00:09
Stybarrow Dodd	00:54	00:09
Raise	01:11	00:17
White Side	01:19	00:08

Helvellyn Lower Man	01:36	00:17
Helvellyn	01:42	00:06
Nethermost Pike	01:52	00:10
Dollywaggon Pike	02:04	00:12
Fairfield	02:45	00:41
Seat Sandal	03:09	00:24
Dunmail Raise - Arrive	03:33	00:24
Dunmail Raise - Depart	03:48	00:15
Steel Fell	04:12	00:24
Calf Crag	04:31	00:19
Sergeant Man	05:05	00:34
High Raise	05:14	00:09
Thunacar Knott	05:29	00:15
Harrison Stickle	05:39	00:10
Pike o Stickle	05:51	00:12
Rossett Pike	06:35	00:44
Bowfell	07:12	00:37
Esk Pike	07:38	00:26
Great End	08:04	00:26
Ill Crag	08:20	00:16
Broad Crag	08:30	00:10
Scafell Pike	08:42	00:12
Scafell	09:16	00:34
Wasdale - Arrive	09:50	00:34
Wasdale - Depart	10:05	00:15
Yewbarrow	10:53	00:48
Red Pike	11:41	00:48
Steeple	12:04	00:23
Pillar	12:37	00:33
KirkFell	13:25	00:48
Great Gable	14:11	00:46
Green Gable	14:26	00:15
Brandreth	14:42	00:16
Grey Knotts	14:50	00:08
Honister - Arrive	15:03	00:13
Honister - Depart	15:18	00:15
Dalehead	15:50	00:32
Hindscarth	16:10	00:20
Robinson	16:35	00:25
Moot Hall	18:15	01:40

Support Plan

We knew that support would be vital and had the fantastic assistance of four of Alan's friends (Andy, Harvey, Keith and Karen), who fancied a 'holiday' in the Lake District, to run the road party. Andrew was able to organise leg runners through the BGR FB page, with two 'strangers' (Alex and John) supporting leg 1 (one of whom had driven 7 hours to be there and the other was wild camping so as to be able to support), and from the university's orienteering and fell running enthusiasts. This support was to prove vital and is a major

component of any success we had. Ultimately the BGR is a team effort and the fell running community we found were only too willing to help. What a fantastic sport with fantastic people. Lastly, we hired a GPS tracker from Primal Tracking, which proved invaluable to the support team and for our wider supporters of family and friends at home (even if it meant some people being unable to sleep due to 'dot' watching all night).

Name	Role
Alan	Attempt Team
Andrew	Attempt Team
Andy and Harvey	Road Team RV1, 2 & 3
Keith and Karen	Road Team RV4 and 5
Alex Fawcett	Leg Runner Leg 1
John Potts	Leg Runner Leg 1
Ben Breeze	Leg Runner Leg 2
Oisin Brennan	Leg Runner Legs 2 & 3
Peter Reed	Leg Runner Leg 3
Billy Reed	Leg Runner Legs 3 & 4
Arthur Raffle	Leg Runner Leg 4
Ben Simmonds	Leg Runner Leg 5
James Rafferty	Leg Runner Leg 5

Fuel Plan

Another key component of the BGR is the fuelling plan. There is a lot of ‘noise’ out there about this but a useful and reliable synopsis, that doesn’t try to turn this into a black art, can be found at this [link](#). We settled for the following fuelling plan, although in the end neither of the two of us was able to eat it all as planned. Still we had it there if we needed it.

Runner	RV1	RV2	RV3	RV4
Alan	Bacon sandwiches x 2 (whole grain) Baked beans (half tin) Banana Milkshake 330 ml Coffee	Sausage sandwiches (whole grain) x 2 Baked beans (half tin) Banana Banana Milkshake 330 ml Coffee	Macaroni cheese Tined rice pudding low fat– 200g (half tin) Banana Banana Milkshake 330 ml Coffee	Spaghetti Bolognese Tined rice pudding low fat– 200g (half tin) Banana Banana Milkshake 330 ml Yoghurt Full fat Coffee
Andrew	Bacon sandwiches x 2 (whole grain) Golden Syrup Porridge Banana Coffee Custard creams	Sausage baps (whole grain) x 2 Baked beans (half tin) Banana Coffee Custard creams	Pasta Carabonara Yoghurt Full fat Banana Coffee Custard creams	Spaghetti Bolognese Tined rice pudding low fat– 200g (half tin) Banana Coffee Custard creams

The only thing we would change to the above is to add in ‘flat coke’, this proved invaluable on leg 4. On each leg:

Fuel on the leg
Tesco Wrap x 1
Flapjacks x 3
Nuts 25 g
Chocolate / jelly baby 50% mix (100 g)
Isotonic powder (4 x 38 gms) - try to drink about 2 lts per leg (weather dependent) - note on the day this proved too much for our stomachs and we had to revert to water only.
Glucose tablets

A few key points we learned both in preparing and on the attempt are (1) You need to eat normal food but don’t eat food on the day you have not tried out in training; (2) have a mix

of options available at the road stops. You never know what you will want until you get there; (3) after about 10 - 12 hours the isotonic mix in our water started to play havoc with our stomachs and we switched back to pure water and (4) it was hard to eat at points but you just need to force yourself, one jelly baby or bit of chocolate bar at a time. The BGR is an eating competition.

Attempt Kit

We had the following kit available to the attempt at each road stop:

Kit	
<p>Central Kit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •2 ring gas stove and gas cylinder •Trangia – for pots and cooking •Matches •Forks & spoons x 2 •Cups x 2 •Salt shaker •Talc 	<p>Food Box</p> <p>One each for Alan and Andrew with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flap jacks Chocolate bars Isotonic powder Jelly babies Nuts
<p>Safety Bag</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Down jackets Spare compass x 2 Spare head torch Medical kit – (blister kits, wound dressing, plasters, bandage) Lace tape Spare BGR Map Towels Suncream (at RV2, 3 and 4) 	<p>RV Bags</p> <p>One each for Alan and Andrew:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socks Running tops Shorts Long bottoms Extra Fell shoes & laces Road Shoes Bufs Warm kit / windproof

Note: We opted not to take chairs. Sitting down means you are tempted to stay longer and it lets the acid build up in your legs. Keep moving at the stops as much as possible.



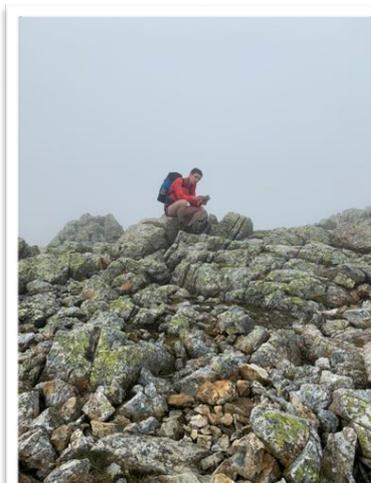
We raised some money for the Children’s Heartbeat Trust.

The Recce



A recce is vital, if nothing else to get a sense of the scale of things, the nature of the terrain and to try to workout the best lines to take. That said if you are unable to recce each leg multiple times, which we were not, then ultimately there is a limit to what you can expect to achieve. Time spent reviewing reports, looking at GPS traces and talking to others is a key component prior to the recce so you can maximise the value of the trip. We decided to recce the route at the end of what had been a very wet May over three days and to camp at the end of each day. We started at 1400 on a Tuesday

and covered most of legs 1 and 2 going clockwise. We had a meal in a pub at Threlkeld at the end of leg 1 (after getting soaked in hail and sleet coming off Halls Fell Ridge) and then progressed over leg 2, camping around midnight close to Grasmere village so we could buy breakfast the next day. The next day we started early from Grasmere to take on leg 3, approaching the top of Steel Fell via a path from the village. The day started with 3 hours of rain but persisted with less than 50 m of visibility all day, making the navigation tricky on this trickiest of sections. We camped that night at the Wasdale Head Inn,



availing of their shop to replenish chocolate bars for the next day, showers, pub grub and a couple of pints of IPA. Day 3 saw the weather improve to the point that we needed suncream as we took on legs 4 and 5, stopping at Honister slate mine for a lunch of baguettes and sausage baps prior to collapsing at Moot Hall that evening. It had been a tough three days, especially given we had been carrying 8 kg bags throughout and the ground had been very sloppy (even at some of the tops), but great craic and well worth it. Now for the real thing.

The Attempt Day

Leg 1



We set off from Keswick at 19:00 on Saturday 26th June and made our way through the park to start the first climb of the day up Skiddaw. The cloud had sat low on Skiddaw all day and the forecasted burning off never happened, luckily the visibility was still good as we entered the cloud. Hitting the top of Skiddaw at 20:21 meant we had stuck to our expected timing for the first peak and were off to a good start. Great Calva was next to tick off. This was all as expected as we found the right line off Skiddaw and saw the only rain of the attempt. Keeping to our timings again we were happy with the start and left Great Calva at 21:03

heading for Blencathra. As expected Mungrisdale common was wet but Andrew's navigation up Blencathra led us via a very good line below the scree and onto the flat near the top. The route off Blencathra was debated on the way there and our two support runner, John and Alex, gave us their opinion that going down via Doddick Fell rather than Hall's Fell Ridge was a much faster and easier option. Taking this advice, we altered the plan and headed down via Doddick Fell. This was much easier running and less of a down scramble than the original plan and saved time. We arrived at the Threlkeld carpark at 22:44 putting us seven minutes up on schedule.

Leg 2

After some bacon butties, beans, some coffee and a resupply of food and water, we departed Threlkeld with our new support running team; Peter, Ben and Oisin. We only spent ten out of our allocated fifteen minutes at the stop allowing us some extra time to play with if necessary. With head torches on we trundled up the road and made the slog up Clough Head in 53 minutes. The whole of this leg provided us with a more difficult navigation challenge than expected as cloud sat over the tops and in the dark the water droplets reflected the beams of our head torches straight back into our eyes, making for under 20m of vis.

The support runners were invaluable here, helping to confirm our navigation and giving us the confidence that we all agreed we were at the tops. Unfortunately, due to the low cloud, the full moon wasn't much use. As we reached the top of Helvellyn Lower Man at 01:28, the cloud cleared a bit, and our navigation was made easier. This barely lasted 90 minutes before it fogged in again and finding the broken down wall off Dollywaggon Pike was made extremely tricky. After a brief search we canned it and



headed down the side on a bearing eventually seeing that we were too far to the right of the wall, but no real time was lost here. Fairfield provided yet another challenge as we tried to confirm we were at the top (there are any number of cairns up there). A GPS aid was used to confirm this and at 02:50 we began the descent towards Seat Sandal. A slight error on the Fairfield descent line lost us some time but, once up Seat Sandal, we motored on down towards Dunmail Raise, arriving there at 03:46. This put us 13 minutes behind schedule all due to the fog slowing our nav but we still had a 32 minute buffer to play with.

Leg 3



Taking 10 minutes to resupply and eat our sausage baps we then headed up the next big climb to the top of Steel Fell. Summiting this at 04:25 meant that the sun was beginning the rise and we were receiving a well needed boost of energy as we started to feel more awake. Nothing on this leg was unexpected, however after consulting Billy we decided to stay high on the spur line on our route from Pike O' Stickle to Rossett Pike rather than dropping height down to Martcrag Moor and then climbing again as we had reced. This route change should have proved faster however a slight tightness behind Alan's right knee (first

noticed on the climb up Skiddaw) had gotten a lot worse and meant that our pace on the flatter terrain was slightly slower than anticipated. Our climbing speed however was excellent, with our timings spot on with what was expected, being two minutes faster than required up the tough climb to Bowfell. At this point however we had lost time and were now 26 minutes behind schedule. Billy and Oisin kept spirits high and motivated us on reassuring that all was not lost yet and so we powered on across the rough boulder fields between Bowfell, Esk Pike, Great End, Ill Crag, Broad Crag and finally hitting Scafell Pike at 09:08 followed by Scaffell at 09:47. Choosing Lord's Rake and the West Wall Traverse as our route between these provided a bit of sketchy excitement but during the attempt it felt a lot better than on the recce, when we had extremely heavy bags. After Scaffell we descended the steep and long way down into Wasdale, the BGR 'graveyard'. As was expected, and is common, both of us were feeling particularly tired by this point but spurred on by the pasta meal waiting for us at the carpark. Arriving in at 10:35 put us 45 minutes down meaning the entire buffer had been used up but after sorting ourselves out and taking the full 15 minutes to eat as much of our pasta as we could stomach, we moved on to tackle Yewbarrow.

Leg 4

The reversed Yewbarrow climb was as tough as expected in the heat of the start to what would be a sunny day. Billy Reed continued this leg with us, and we had a pair of fresh legs too as Arthur Raffle joined to support. Again, our climbing speed was good and as we arrived at the top at 11:41 this meant we were only 2 minutes slower than required. At the top of Red Pike, it was 12:29 putting us 48 minutes behind and things were not looking great. At this point we decided to split into two teams. Arthur went on with Andrew and Billy continued with Alan. Both support runners took more of our kit



meaning we didn't have to carry much at all, and we both pushed on as best we could. Alan's tactic at this point was to keep putting one foot in front of the other, just dig deep, ignore the pain in his right knee (quite sore by now), keep moving forward and try to "catch Andrew". Both of us pulled back time throughout the rest of this leg, especially on the climbs. Our support runners helped us massively by deviating off the route to drop to water sources to refill our bottles, we were both sick of isotonic mix and craving normal water after baking in the sun for the last five hours. Seeing Great Gable in the distance we knew that it would be the final really hard climb of the route and once we got to the top (14:48 and 15:01 for Andrew and Alan respectively) we had both clawed back time. On the final descent into Honister, Arthur left Andrew with his demands in mind and ran ahead to inform the new road crew of the situation as the plan was to grab a quick drink of water and some food and move straight out of Honister. Billy did much the same for Alan and both parties set off from Honister to make the final push for the finish. As a side note the very stony nature of much of legs 3 and 4 took its toll and is something to be aware of for those used to softer terrain.

Leg 5

James Rafferty joined Andrew in support as they left Honister at 15:30 and headed up Dale Head. This was a long climb but no where near as steep as the others and we both found that we did it either on time or quicker. Alan reached Dale Head at 16:22 after leaving Honister at 15:50 with Ben Simmonds as his new support runner and Andrew reached the top at 16:01. For Andrew and Alan respectively the timings at the top of Hindscarth were 16:21 and 16:42 and at Robinson they were 16:44 and 17:07. Both of us now only had the 8km of road running to go to get back in once off Robinson. We meet the road party and quickly changed into road shoes, grabbed some water with both of us surviving on Jelly Babies and Kendal Mint Cake to make it back into Keswick. Andrew finished in 23hrs 28mins and was well within the 24hrs after clawing back lots of time on the road. Unsure as to whether his dad would make it on time he waited and then 15 minutes later saw Alan appear at the



bottom of the street. After running back up the final incline and negotiating the steps we both met at the Moot Hall where we had started nearly 24hrs before. Alan finished in 23hrs and 46mins meaning both of us completed the round within the 24 hours and are now very proud member of the Bob Graham 24 Hour Club.

For more info contact Andrew via amelwood01@gmail.com

The Outcome

Leg Timings

The timings recorded by the GPS tracker (worn by Andrew with a time of 23 hrs and 28 mins) are below. Alan finished in 23 hrs and 46 mins, having separated from Andrew after Red Pike.



83 Alan + Andrew Ewood		
Time Taken 23:27:58	Last Timed Location KESWICK	Battery 51%
Last Tracked 27 Jun 19:15		
Checkpoint	Time	Split
KESWICK	Sat 19:00:57	
Skiddaw	Sat 20:21:36	01:20:39
Gt Calva	Sat 21:03:30	00:41:54
Blencathra	Sat 22:08:19	01:04:49
THRELKELD	Sat 22:54:12	00:45:53
Clough Hd	Sat 23:47:02	00:52:50
Great Dodd	Sun 00:20:57	00:33:55
Watson	Sun 00:32:55	00:11:58
Stybarrow	Sun 00:44:52	00:11:57
Raise	Sun 01:02:25	00:17:33

White Side	Sun 01:12:23	00:09:58
Lower Man	Sun 01:28:20	00:15:57
Helvellyn	Sun 01:36:19	00:07:59
Nethermost	Sun 01:48:17	00:11:58
Dollywaggo	Sun 02:02:15	00:13:58
Fairfield	Sun 02:50:07	00:47:52
Seat Sands	Sun 03:23:02	00:32:55
DUNMAIL	Sun 03:46:58	00:23:56
Steel Fell	Sun 04:25:51	00:38:53
Calf Crag	Sun 04:49:46	00:23:55
Sergeant	Sun 05:23:42	00:33:56
High Raise	Sun 05:33:39	00:09:57
Thunacar	Sun 05:49:36	00:15:57

Harrison	Sun 05:57:34	00:07:58
Pike	Sun 06:13:32	00:15:58
Rosset	Sun 07:03:23	00:49:51
Bow Fell	Sun 07:38:17	00:34:54
Esk Pike	Sun 08:02:14	00:23:57
Great End	Sun 08:25:11	00:22:57
Ill Crag	Sun 08:43:06	00:17:55
Broad Crag	Sun 08:54:05	00:10:59
Scafell Pike	Sun 09:08:03	00:13:58
Scafell	Sun 09:47:55	00:39:52
WASDALE	Sun 10:49:47	01:01:52
Yewbarrow	Sun 11:41:41	00:51:54
Red Pike	Sun 12:29:45	00:48:04

Steeple	Sun 12:47:44	00:17:59
Pillar	Sun 13:13:39	00:25:55
Kirk Fell	Sun 14:00:05	00:46:26
Great Gabl	Sun 14:34:59	00:34:54
Green Gabl	Sun 14:48:58	00:13:59
Brandreth	Sun 15:02:54	00:13:56
Grey Knott	Sun 15:10:54	00:08:00
HONISTER	Sun 15:24:52	00:13:58
Dalehead	Sun 16:00:20	00:35:28
Hindscarth	Sun 16:21:16	00:20:56
Robinson	Sun 16:44:13	00:22:57
KESWICK	Sun 18:28:55	01:44:42

GPS Trace
The route traced by the GPS tracker is below:













