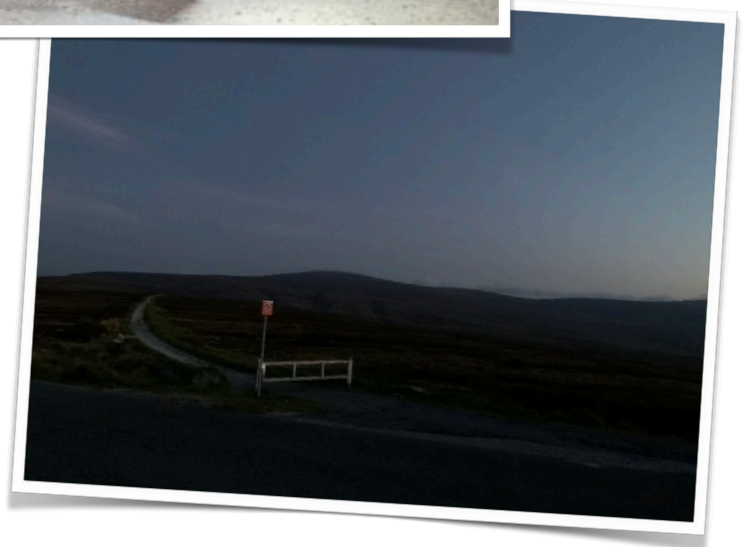
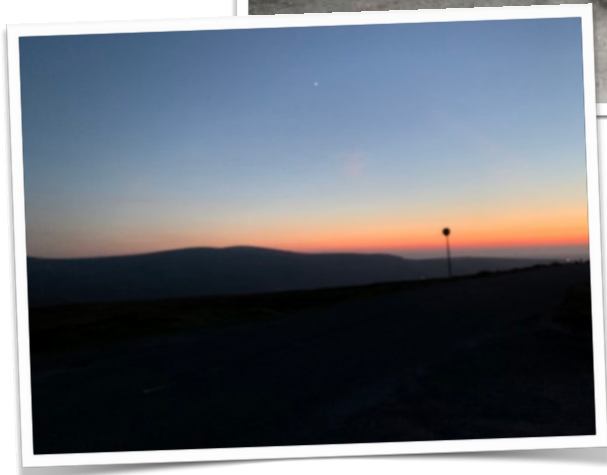


Wicklow Round Attempt

Report by Alan Elwood



Background

Overview

Having been thwarted in an attempt the year before with my son Andrew (combination of covid-19 and early morning mist) the Wicklow Round had been playing on my mind for the rest of the year. Andrew, and I originally intended to have another go in mid Apr 23, when he was back from uni, but the terribly wet start to the year put paid to that, with the ground just so soft it was going to add hours to my time that I knew I did not have. On top of that I managed to tear the gastroc muscle in my left calf in early May so that put paid to going then. So, when the weather finally picked up and we had a spell of dry sunny conditions the ground was in perfect shape for an attempt at the end of May by myself only, as Andrew was deep in uni exams. After consulting the physio, who said it was worth a go but no guarantees when you're 52, the date was set for a midnight start 26 Jun 23.

Training

There is no 'one plan fits all' for preparing for the Wicklow Round. I'd completed the Denis Rankin and Bob Graham Rounds and was in the Mourne Mountains most weekends, with a combination of short 2 / 3 hour sessions mixed in with regular longer days out doing the wall or seven sevens. The one area that it is tricky to train for in terms of the Wicklow Round is the nature of some of the terrain. I mean no one in their right mind would choose to run over some of the stuff you end up crossing, even if you could find the same patch of 'joy' in the Mourne Mountains that went on for long enough. In the end I'd covered some 1,800 km and 72,000 m ascent in the year before the second attempt.

Attempt Plan

I set a plan with a 23 hr 45 min target time. The ETA for each summit, based on a midnight start time, is in the table below.

Summit	ETA	Summit	ETA	Summit	ETA
Leg 1		Lugnaquilla 032918	08:03	Leg 8	
Start 131197	00:00	Corrigasleggaun 048911	08:25	Djouce 179103	19:52
Kippure 115155	00:40	Carrawaystick 066902	08:45	War Hill 169113	20:10
Leg 2		DrumGoff 106909	09:50	Tonduff North 159137	20:50
Carrigvore 122101	01:47	Leg 4		Leg 9	
Gravale 105094	02:07	Mullacor 093939	10:54	Prince Williams Seat 177183	22:50
Duff Hill 094082	02:31	Derrybawn 119955	11:20	Knocknagun 163187	23:03
East Top 082067	02:55	Leg 5		Leg 9	
Mullaghleevaun 068070	03:11	Camederry 082981	13:07	Finish 131197	23:45
Moanbane 033061	03:54	Leg 6			
Silsean 023056	04:11	Tonelagee 085015	14:20		
Leg 3		Leg 7			
Oakwod 046995	05:58	Scarr 133018	15:54		
Table Mountain 020973	06:51	Knocknacloghoge 143054	17:28		
Camenabologue 023960	07:08	Lugalla 150074	18:21		

Support Plan

As ever support is vital. The unique difference with the Wicklow Round is that although you can have a road party to provide some nutrition at road crossings you are not permitted leg runner or pacers. In this attempt I was supported by the best team imaginable. Stephen Bickerstaff, Stephen Morgan and Geoffrey Collins were the backbone for the majority of the RVs, with the additional luxury of using Stephen Bickerstaff's camper van. Angus Tynor took on the first RV and Ballinagee Bridge and local lads Michael Dowling and Paul Mahon both turned up to assist at Drumgoff. The outline timings for the RVs were:

- Ballinagee Bridge: 05:00
- Drumgoff: 09:50
- Glendalough: 12:00
- Road Crossing point between Wicklow Gap and Hollywood: 13:30
- Road Crossing point between Sally Gap and Laragh: 19:00
- Road Crossing point between Sally Gap and Ballinastoe / Roundwood: 22:00

Fuel Plan

Another key component is the fuelling plan. I set the plan out below but have to admit I failed to eat enough on the legs while on the move, particularly when the sun came out.

Fuel Plan					
Runner	RV1	RV2	RV3	RV4	RV5
Alan	Collect: 0.5 Lt water 0.5 Lt iso mix Flap jacks x 2 Chocolate bar x 2 (100 G) Chocolate / jelly baby 50% mix (50 g) Nuts 25 g Wrap x 0.5	Eat: Baked beans (half tin) Bread and cheese Banana Banana Milkshake 330 ml Coffee Collect: 0.5 Lt water 0.5 Lt iso mix Flap jacks x 3 Chocolate bar x 2 (100 G) Wrap x 1 Chocolate / jelly baby 50% mix (100 g) Nuts 25 g Head torches	Eat: Macaroni cheese Bread and cheese Banana Yoghurt Full fat Coffee Collect: 0.5 Lt water Flat coke Flap jacks x 1 Chocolate bar x 2 (100 G) Chocolate / jelly baby 50% mix (50 g)	Eat: Tined rice pudding low fat–200g (half tin) Banana Banana Milkshake 330 ml Coffee Collect: 0.5 Lt iso mix Flap jacks x 1 Chocolate bar x 2 (100 G)	Eat: Tined rice pudding low fat–200g (half tin) Banana Yoghurt Full fat Coffee Collect: 0.5 Lt water Flap jacks x 1 Chocolate bar x 2 (100 G)

Fuel Plan						
Runner	RV6	RV7	RV8	RV9	RV10	
Alan	Eat: Baked beans (half tin) Banana Milkshake 330 ml Tined rice pudding low fat Coffee Collect: 0.5 Lt water 0.5 Lt iso mix Flap jacks x 2 Chocolate bar x 2 (100 G) Chocolate / jelly baby 50% mix (50 g) Nuts 25 g Wrap x 0.5	Eat: Wrap x 1 Banana Bread and cheese Banana Milkshake 330 ml Tined rice pudding low fat Coffee Collect: 0.5 Lt water 0.5 Lt iso mix Flat coke Flap jacks x 2 Chocolate bar x 2 (100 G) Wrap x 0.5	Eat: Porridge Wrap x 0.5 Coffee Collect: 0.5 Lt water Chocolate bar x 1 (100 G)	Eat: Yoghurt Full fat Coffee Collect: 0.5 Lt iso mix Flat coke Flap jacks x 1 Chocolate bar x 1(100 G) Chocolate / jelly baby 50% mix (50 g)		Collect: 0.5 Lt water Chocolate / jelly baby 50% mix (50 g)

The Attempt Day

Leg 1 and 2

I set out at midnight on a clear and warm evening with the lights of Dublin below. The track up to Kippure was comfortable but due to the earlier torn calf muscle I was taking it easy. I could see the transmitter tower and red flashing light encouraging me on. However, as I climbed I entered a deep mist and lost sight of the tower and lights, with my own head torch reflected back in my face. So thick was the mist that I bumped into the trig point at the top. Undeterred I followed the access road off for 200 m before dropping down over the moor to the bend in the military road and out of the mist. I then turned right for Carrigvore. I was concerned that I would now be faced with mist as I climbed again through the night. As I ascended Carrigvore I glanced back to see one solitary cloud sitting over Kippure and breathed a sigh of relief. The next few peaks (Gravale, Duff Hill, East Top, Mullaghcleevaun, Moanbane and Silsean) were straight forward enough. I was



just very careful on the navigation so although I missed my target time to each I was able to be at the Ballinagee Bridge on schedule, having benefited from sun light from the summit of Silsean.

Leg 3

Angus, Denise Mathers (Dale Mathers and Rick McKee had set off two hours after me) and a load of midges were waiting for me at the bridge. I changed my long bottoms to shorts, lathered on suncream, ditched the torch and grabbed a hat, all while shovelling down baked beans and bread. In no time I was off crossing the road and river to then join the forest track and head straight through the forest for the spur to Oakwood. I passed through Oakwood and headed on a deer path prior to swinging right and aiming to pass the Three Lakes to my right. After a while I could see the ditch leading to the top of Table Mountain and was soon at its summit in good order. It was then a simple matter of following the line to Lugnaquilla, going over Camenabologue, then off that through the forest after Corrigasleggaun and Carrawaystick to reach Drumgoff, 5 minutes ahead, and a welcomed feed of rice pudding and macaroni cheese.

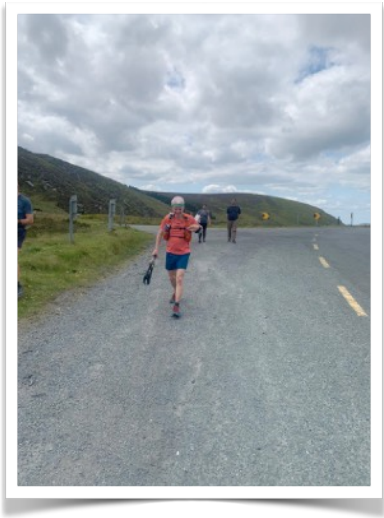
Leg 4

I left the comfort to Drumgoff, nearly without my glasses, after 10 mins and climbed using the paths through the forest to break out onto the moor and summit Mullacor, a tad more slowly than planned. The calf had been tweaking on the way from Oakwood and I didn't want to risk it on the climbs so decided to nurse it along. From here it was a pleasant jog to get to Derrybawn and then drop down into the very busy Glendalough. The lads had

managed (somehow) to get the van into the very busy car park so I sat down for more rice pudding, coffee and flat coke.

Leg 5

Soon enough I was up and away on the relentless climb to reach (after what seemed like an age) the summit of Camederry. From here I trudged on to the reservoir and followed its perimeter fence along before curling off and descending straight down over the moor to access the road crossing point between Wicklow Gap and Hollywood and the waiting camper van. Aside from losing a soft flask (gutted) all went well. More fuel was loaded on and I was up and at it again.



Leg 6

The sun was now high in the sky and the cloud that had shielded me to now was starting to thin so it was getting hotter as I commenced up Tonelagee. Passing a few tourists on the way I summited and then jogged off down over the NE Top to pick up the track that leads down to the road crossing point between Sally Gap and Laragh and more fuel and words of encouragement.

Leg 7

As I climbed the path towards Scarr in clear visibility (the scene of the previous year's disaster in zero visibility) the wind dropped to nothing and I started to bake in the direct sun. The next few hours proved to be not very pleasant. I struggled in the deep heather and ferns that make up most of the route from Scarr, to Knocknacloghoge and then Lugalla. They trapped a layer of heated tepid air so that despite drinking at all times I nonetheless slipped into mild heat stroke, collapsing at the summit of Knocknacloghoge and attracting the attention of some concerned walkers. I managed to keep moving but was not in a good way upon reaching the road crossing point between Sally Gap and Ballinastoe / Roundwood and the care of the support team. I was now some 30 mins behind schedule.

Leg 8 & 9

I left the road and headed for Djouce, eating and drinking as I went. By the top of Djouce the sun was that bit lower and the wind picked up so I started to feel myself again. I knew that the only hope I had was to push as hard as I could and ignore the pain and suffering so that's what I did. I crossed War Hill and Tonduff North at pace and dropped down through awful ground, falling and rolling and shouting and cursing, to reach the forests and paths networks that took me eventually to break out of the forest line at Prince Williams Seat and back on target time. It was then a matter of crossing over Knocknagun, nipping up to the actual summit from the large stones, before setting off on the track to the lower forest path and then onto the Military Road and back to the finish, at times making 7 and 8 mins per km.

The Outcome

Timings

The timing recorded by the GPS tracker was 23:47:27 and the entire route taken can be viewed on [Primal Tracking](#).

