

# Hardmoors 110mile Race Report

Friday 25<sup>th</sup> – Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2009

Race Tale by John Kynaston

## Pre-Race

Neal & Caroline arrived at our home just after 11am. We packed the car with all my gear, enjoyed a lovely pasta meal (thanks Katrina) and then set off for Helmsley at 12.15pm.

Neal drove the first couple of hours then after a pit stop Caroline drove the rest of the way. I tried to doze a bit in the back for the second half and partially succeeded.



We arrived at Helmsley – Race HQ just after 5pm with 2 hours to go before the start of my next challenge for this year. My gear was checked, race number given, got changed and soon enough it was the briefing and the start.

I chatted with Mark Leggart who I'd met at the Devil's race last month. He looked rough and explained that he's picked up a cold and wasn't sure whether he'd be able to complete the race. The same thing happened last year and he pulled out before the start. This time he'd decided to run and see how far he could get. He didn't look or sound very positive and I really felt for him. Helen Johnston, his partner, was doing a great job in keeping him focused.

I also spoke with Martin who won the race last year and a few others but everyone seemed lost in their own little world getting ready. Compared to the Milngavie Car Park at the start of the whw race this felt very low key and relaxed.

We walked to the centre of Helmsley, had another pep talk from Jon Steele, then walked the few minutes to the official start of the race. Neal & Caroline wished me all the best and wandered up the hill to video the start.

Another pep talk from Jon and a guy from the Cleveland Way Trust and we were finally ready to start at 7.07pm. Not even started and already 7mins down on my plan!!!!

## Section 1 – Helmsley to Sutton Bank (7.71miles)



The start is up a slight hill and I decided to run nice and easy. Two guys (eventual winner Neil and Martin) went off pretty quick, followed by Dave then Mark and me with another couple of guys just behind.

I was concerned about the route navigation for this race but it proved fairly straight forward. It was well marked and route description Jon had given us was excellent. I didn't use my OS map at all but relied on the marker posts and the cards I'd printed out (and laminated) with the route description.

I soon settled into a good pace running with Mark and a guy called Andy. Mark seemed to be going okay and it was good to be running with someone who knew the way. Mark had reced the route and knew this part.

As we ran through Cold Kirby Helen was there waiting for Mark. I'm sure she was pleased to see him running freely. It's a long way to come from Aberdeen (they left at 5am!) to run 5miles!

It was dark from about 7.30pm so the head torch had been on from just after the start. The realisation of the fact that I'd be running for the next 11hrs in the dark focused the mind but like all these challenges I just concentrated on the next bit, which was getting to Sutton Bank. I arrived with Mark and Andy in 1hr 23mins.

I was surprised when Neal told me I was 3<sup>rd</sup>. I thought I'd be 4<sup>th</sup> but didn't argue the point and set off on the next leg to Osmotherly.

*Leg Time: 7.71miles in 1hr 23mins 22secs*

### **Section 2 – Sutton Bank to Osmotherly (13.17miles)**

Just after setting off I went past Andy and his support runner as they stopped for a wee. I wasn't on my own for long when I was joined by another runner. It wasn't Mark as expected but Dave and the slightly mystery was solved. Dave was in front of us but had taken a wrong turn somewhere and ended up behind us coming into Sutton Bank.

Dave had run the race last year, had done a recce run over 4 days last month and still got lost! But I decided it was probably a good idea to stay with him on the route to Osmotherly. We ran in silence for ages, then Dave pointed out how great the view is in the day and we then chatted the rest of the way.

The path was well defined and we ran most of the way until Osmotherly. The check point this year was a mile or more out of the Town along the road and soon enough we arrived.

Neal & Caroline was there waiting for me. Caroline was going to run with me for the next 23 miles and so was kitted up and ready to go.

*Actual: 13.17miles in 2hr 26mins 57secs*

*Overall: 20.88miles in 3hrs 51mins 56secs*

### **Section 3 – Osmotherly to Wainstones (8.05miles)**

Caroline & I started ahead of Dave running along the road until we rejoined the Cleveland Way path though Clain Wood. Soon enough Dave caught up with us and then Mark. The four of us ran together up on to a slab paved path (presumably build by the Romans). It was undulating and Mark pushed ahead on one hill and then we caught up with him on the downhill.



We had arranged to met Neal at Lord's café but I was unsure what distance that was. I thought it was about 8miles but it turned but it was nearer 5miles.

We were running at about 11min a mile pace and I was a little concerned that Caroline was falling off the back of the group. I was keen to stay with Mark and Dave and so called back a few times to see if Caroline was okay.

There was a very sharp descent to Lord's Café. Mark was leading, I was a bit further back with Dave just behind me when I heard a thump and Dave had fallen quite heavily. I stopped and went back to check he was okay. He said he'd banged his knee and slowly got up and said he'd be fine. He limped his way down where Neal was waiting for us.

Caroline decided that the pace was just a bit too quick and as I was running with Mark and Dave it would be better for her to stop. I know she was disappointed not to be able to run the section in the dark but I really appreciated her unselfishness.

I caught up with Mark and we ran together. Dave had dropped off and we weren't sure how he was feeling after his fall. No doubt he was having to regroup and see how it felt.

I was feeling good at this point. I was eating regularly and the pace seemed fine. I was coping in the dark and trying to get as far as I could before things started to hurt!

We went up and over the Wainstones where the official check point was. There was a guy in a tent taking our numbers. It did strange having checkpoints in the middle of nowhere as it meant they were not resting points in the same way as the whw.

*Leg Time: 8.05miles in 2hr 06mins 22secs*  
*Overall: 28.93miles in 6hrs 00mins 55secs*

#### **Section 4 – Wainstones to Bloworth Crossing (4.32miles)**

Mark & I continued to run together but we were soon caught by 3 runners Steve and his support runner and Matt. They were going well and I didn't even think about trying to stay with them.

I was comfortable with my pace and Mark too seemed happy to let them go. I saw Neal and Caroline at Claybank Cark Park. They had had an interesting time trying to find Lord's Café and Claybank but I was so grateful they did.

I took some more of my sustained energy drink and things to eat and set off again looking forward to seeing Murdo who was going to be manning Bloworth Crossing – another checkpoint in the middle of the moor.

Mark & I ran together chatting most of the way and helping each other. It felt really good running with someone and even when we weren't chatting just having someone with you helps.

It was just over 3 miles from Claybank to the crossing and we could see Murdo's light from about 20mins away. As we arrived he was lying in his bivvy tent with his Saltire Flying from a nearby post. It was good to see him but we didn't stop long. Murdo ran the race last year and had been a great help in going over the route with me.

*Actual: 4.23miles in 59mins 28secs*  
*Overall: 33.25miles in 7hrs 00mins 19secs*

#### **Section 5 – Bloworth Crossing to Roseberry Topping (??miles)**

Mark and I pushed on towards Kildale where I'd arranged to meet Neal & Caroline. I felt Mark's pace was just a bit quicker than I wanted to go and after a couple of miles or so he pushed on. I walked a hill that he ran, took some food on board and then set off running at my pace.

This was the first time in the race that I was on my own (after 36miles). This surprised me as with such a small field of 20 I assumed I'd be on my own for the majority of the race.

I was quite happily running slow and steady when Mark comes back into view and I caught up with him! So we ran together again. About a mile or so from Kildale we heard a runner behind us and it was Dave. He explained that he'd had a tough bit and had even considered squeezing into Murdo's bivvy bag for a sleep! But he was feeling better now and he was running strongly.

Dave & Mark pushed on hard down the hill and I took a bit longer. I looked at my watch and realised I'd been running for 8hrs hours without a real stop. So I decided I was going to take 10mins at Kildale, change my top and eat a bit more.

Mark didn't stop for too long and was soon away again. Dave's support team were not meeting him again until Saltburn so Neal & Caroline took over his support needs as well giving him some water.

Dave asked would I mind if we ran together. I'd assumed he would go with Mark and so was very happy to be able to run together. I changed my garmin here and didn't realise that the auto lap was on Neal's watch I borrowed so I'll need to sort out the distances to the checkpoints.

*To Kildale: 5.96miles in 1hr 05mins 49secs*

*Overall: 35.25miles in 8hrs 06mins 08secs*

*10min 12sec stop*

I would say that the next 45mins was a tough bit for me. I was so grateful to be running with Dave as I could settle in behind him and let him do the work! He seemed happy too with company so it worked for both of us.

We slightly lost the path on the way to Cook's Monument where Julien was waiting for us in his tent, arriving from a slightly different direction. I think we may have a run a bit further than we'd needed but we found it.

From this point on I was feeling a lot better again and we spent the next few hours chatting away and running at a steady pace.

There is an out and back section to Roseberry Topping and on the way up we saw Steve and Matt coming down and then Mark so we knew we were in 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> places.

At the top of Roseberry Topping Jez Bragg was waiting for us in his tent. We had a quick chat. I congratulated him on his excellent run last weekend at Keswick and then we were off again heading to Saltburn.

### **Section 6 – Roseberry Topping to Saltburn (??miles)**

I had been told that the route through Guisborough Woods was the trickiest part of the whole race and was again thankful to be with Dave who had at least been through before. I was slightly less thankful when he said last year he got completely lost and ended up in a farm!

Jon Steele had laid out some tape at key points and it was great to see those and know we were on the right trail. But we lost the tape at some point and I think we were on a parallel path just a bit lower but eventually came out at the right point so no time lost!

Neal and Caroline were waiting for us at the Fox and Hounds. They looked very cold and tired and once more I appreciated how much they were sacrificing to support me.

*From Kildale to Fox and Hounds: 10.08miles in 2hrs 50mins 42secs*

*Overall: 50.14miles in 11hrs 04mins 55secs*

*Rest: 2mins 56secs*



We now had just under 5miles to go to Saltburn and the coast. It was now 6am and though still dark the first glimpses of light were appearing. I was so looking forward to being able to switch off the head torch and be able to look around and see where I was running.

Dave & I continued to run together and chatting about all sorts of things. I found out about his first job as a fisherman, his decision to stop smoking at 35 and start running, his present job and all sorts of things!

We also talked about our tactics for the rest of the race. I could tell that Dave was running stronger than me and I was grateful he was pulling me along but I wanted him to know that whenever he felt I was holding him back that he was to push on.

Dave ran the race last year and stayed with a young lad right to the end finishing in around 34hrs. He wanted to break 30hrs this time and I could tell he had a great run in him. He was keen to run together but we agreed that we'd stay together for as long as possible but I insisted that he had his race to run and I would get as much pleasure out of him getting a pb as my own. I also thought (though didn't say) in the unlikely event of me being the stronger I wouldn't wait for him!!

So we ran through Skelton and arrived at Saltburn just after 7.15am with the sun coming up and suddenly the world looked a better place. I was asked after the race what was my high and low point. More about the second later but this was definitely my high point.

I'd arrived at the coast after 55miles in 12hrs 10mins (just 5mins outside of my sub 26hrs schedule). I was feeling good, the sun was shining and I thought the hardest part of the course was behind me. All I had to do was run the 55miles down the coast line to Filey. How hard could that be!!!

*Overall: 54.97miles in 12hrs 11mins 02secs*

*Rest: 8mins 24secs*

### **Section 6 – Saltburn to Runswick Bay (11.94miles)**

So I set off from Saltburn feeling pretty positive and the feeling got better as we climbed up onto the costal path. After 11hrs of darkness it was great to be to look out over the vast sea and look ahead down the coast.

The path was grassy and easy on the feet. We ran and chatted and the miles started to pass. One of the things I found hard about this race was never having run the route I didn't have any mini markers to break up the sections.

On the whw route I have lots of small sections of 3-4miles and I concentrate on getting to the next one and the overall distance takes care of itself. So this leg was 12 miles and I felt I needed something to help me break it down.

For my photo/video of this race I decided to take a photo of myself every 30mins and put them all together to give a feel of the race. So I had my watch on 30min repeats. The routine became, watch beeped, took photo and then I was allowed to look at my garmin and see how far I'd come since Saltburn.



I received 2 phone calls along this bit. The first from Ian Beattie asking how things were going. I was on a high point at the time and was full of how great it was and how much I was enjoying it. The next time I spoke to Ian was a different story! The other was from Mike Mason who was marshalling at Whitby. Mike told me how comfortable his bed was, how much he enjoyed his full English breakfast and asking what my eta for Whitby was.

The route was a lot more up and down than I'd imagined. At one point we ran along the beach which was hard work through the soft sand.

Sure enough the miles were ticked off and Runswick Bay was getting closer. With about 2miles to go I was sensing that Dave was pulling ahead, then slowing down to let me catch up. He was also quicker to start running after an incline. I told him again to push on but he said we'd get to Runswick Bay and then see how we felt.

I'd run out of water and knew that I really needed to eat something but without any water I wouldn't be able to swallow. Fortunately I asked a couple who were walking if they had any water and they very kindly gave me some. So I was able to eat and drink and got going again. The other thing I was struggling with was the heat. It was hot and I felt I was really burning up. I'd forgotten to take my buff from Saltburn and the sweat was pouring off me. My legs were feeling wobbly and I knew I need to regroup and focus on getting to Runswick where I could have a short stop and rest.

Dave continued to run at my pace and we arrived at Runswick Bay in just over 2hrs 50mins.

*Actual: 11.94miles in 2hr 51mins 04secs*

*Overall: 66.95miles in 15hrs 10mins 27secs*

*Stop: 11mins 13secs*

### **Section 7 – Runswick Bay to Whitby (9.05miles)**

Dave had told me he was changing his socks at Runswick Bay and having a Bovril. I changed into a vest and took some extra fluid for the 9miles to Whitby. I was ready before Dave so set off knowing that he would soon catch me up.

I was on my own for the first time for ages and quite enjoyed being able to find my own rhythm and run slow and steady. I started to use all my motivational quotes to keep me going. On the way down in the car Caroline was talking about a session by Frank Dick, the athletics coach, that she'd been at this week.

One of Frank's quotes was, 'make pain your friend and you'll never be lonely' so that became my mantra. Later on Neal amended it to 'John's posse of friends' because I had a lot of pain!!

Sure enough after about 40mins Dave caught me up and went straight past. He was going so well and I was really pleased for him. I knew he had a great time in prospect and he deserved it. Dave caught up with 3 guys in front, Mark, Steve and Matt and finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in 24hrs 23mins. An incredible run.

He covered the first half in 12hrs 10mins and the second half in 12hrs 13mins. By anyone's book that is amazing running. I feel privileged to have paced him for the first 67miles!!! In some ways I think it may have helped him running within himself staying with me whereas if he was on his own then he may have pushed too soon too early. Well that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

Once Dave had gone past me I had another 5miles or so to Whitby and Mike! As I approached Sandsend Neal was coming up the path to see how I was. It was good to be running as he saw me and I was feeling better by this point. They had decided I might appreciate the extra support and they were right.



I walked and ran through Sandsend and then realised it was only 3miles to Whitby. I went past the golf course and then could see the Abbey in the distance. It was a bit of a battle getting through the crowds at Whitby but soon enough I was climbing the 199 steps. I just put my head down and assumed people would move out of my way. As I passed one young couple they said "you'd think they'd put an escalator up here!"

Caroline was waiting for me by the Abbey and then Mike appeared to take me round to the check point. I drank some milk had a chat with Mike and then was on my way again.

*Actual: 9.05miles in 2hr 10mins 10secs*  
*Overall: 76.02miles in 17hrs 31mins 55secs*  
*Stop: 10mins 5secs*

### **Section 8 – Whitby to Ravenscar (10.27miles)**



Neal took me round to the path and waved me on my way with a 'get running John' message in my ears. I did but I could sense that any quality running was behind me and I tried to refocus my efforts on running whenever I could but walking hard the rest.

The scenery was still stunning but now instead of inspiring me it was making me realise how far I still had to go. I convinced myself that I have 3 legs to go - 11miles, 11miles and 12miles. I can do it even if I have to walk the majority. It's when you realise that if you can keep going at 20mins a mile (3 miles an hour) that it will still take you 11hrs that the reality dawns that there is a long way to go!

So my mantra became one step at a time and eventually you will get there. I was finding it hard going but this is what I'd trained for, this is what I wanted to do and there was no alternative but to get it done. So stop feeling sorry for myself and move!

The relentless ups and down were hard. 20 steps down then 25 steps back up. Run a bit, walk a bit then another 40 steps down followed by 50 steps up. There always seemed to be more up than down though the ups were slightly easier on the legs.

After almost 2hrs Robin Hood's Bat arrived. Neal & Caroline had arranged to see me there but I couldn't see them. I rang and found out they were a bit lower down. I must have sounded pathetic on the phone as they were getting concerned for me.

Neal suggested I change running shoes which I did and said he could run/walk with me from here as one of the guys in front had a support runner.

*Whitby to Robin Hood's Bay: 6.76miles in 1hr 59mins 43secs*

*Overall: 82.78miles in 19hrs 41mins 43secs*

*Stop: 8mins 10secs*

So after a short break (which felt nowhere near long enough!) I was off again. It was great having Neal with me and he was superb, chatting and trying to coax some runs out of me. He succeeded a number of times and after an hour or so we reached Ravenscar.

I'd been asked a few times by walkers was I in a race and one couple just before the checkpoint seemed genuinely amazed by how far I'd run! To be honest so was !!!

*Robin Hood's Bay to Ravenscar: 3.51miles in 1hr 05mins 21secs*

*Overall: 86.31miles in 20hrs 54mins 14secs*

*Stop: 8mins 57secs*

### **Section 9 – Ravenscar to Scarborough (10.76miles)**

There is no way round this but to say that this was a long 11 miles and really hard. Neal did his best to raise my spirits and we chatted and encouraged each other. Each drop and climb were manfully tackled. We started a competition where we had to guess how many steps there were up. Neal was uncannily accurate in his guesses.

To be honest I don't remember too much about these 4hrs but they just went on and on. My posse of friends were right there with me!

Talking of friends reminds how much I appreciated getting texts from everyone throughout the day. It's great knowing that people are wanting to hear how it's going and encouraging me. I know there were problems getting reception but Caroline did a great job keeping folks up to date on twitter.

We finally arrived at Scarborough about 8pm in the dark. We hadn't taken our head torches and just about got away with it. If we'd been much later it might have been a different story.

The Scarborough check point was at the far end of the prom so we had a long walk to reach it. Caroline met us half way. We stopped for the loo and then continued on. The check point wasn't manned when we got there as the marshal had had to leave early and the replacement had yet to arrive. Caroline rang Jon who told us to keep going!

*Actual: 10.76miles in 3hr 42mins 36secs*  
*Overall: 97.13miles in 24hrs 50mins 08secs*  
*Stop: 12mins 23secs*

### **Section 10 – Scarborough to Filey (11.31miles)**

We both some more clothes on and set off for the final 12miles to Filey. We both knew it would take some time but we knew we'd get there eventually. There was no question in our minds. A sub 30hrs was still on but for me finishing was all that mattered and finish I would.

We walked along to the end of Scarborough were we expected to see the path but couldn't see it. I didn't take part much in the discussion but weakly followed as Neal led the way. Anyway to cut it short we wandered round for 45mins or so and couldn't find the way. Neal rang Jon and tried to get directions. I sat down on the grass and tried to rest. When I got up I was feeling awful, cold and everything seem to be breaking down. It felt so unfair not being able to find the way so close to the end.

We rang Jon again. He suggested something else. We set off and still couldn't find it. By this point I was really struggling. Suddenly the thought occurred to me I can stop here. It seemed perfectly valid to me to stop because we are lost and no-one would blame me. I didn't have to finish and would be happy to have got this far.

Neal will say I officially spat the dummy at this point! Neal was great. He was so supportive. If I wanted to go on he would be with me every step but he knew it was my decision. I spoke to Jon and told him I was thinking of stopping. He said he's come over from Filey and show us the way. Great but that would be another 20mins and I was getting colder and more fed up by the minute.

I said to Neal that's it. I'm stopping and we can get a lift back with Jon when he arrives. I even stopped my watch as I really believed I was stopping. Neal never really accepted my decision and said later that there is no way he'd have let me stop but quite rightly he let me work it out.

We went over to a bench over looking Scarborough and waited for Jon and Caroline to come. Just then my phone rang and it was Ian Beattie. Neal had my phone as he'd been talking to Jon. He handed it to me so I had to answer. I explained to Ian that we'd been lost for over an hour, I was cold, my body was struggling and I was stopping. Did Ian show any compassion and sympathy? Not an ounce!

In no uncertain terms he told me I had to finish, that I would regret it for a long time and I could do it. He reminded me of lots of our friends who have finished the whw and UTMB races in far worse states than me. I knew this was coming from someone who had to drop out of the whw race last year and struggled big time with that and how he felt afterwards. My excuses sounded pathetic but I rationalised that my situation was worse. I hadn't planned to stop but we were lost and my body had decided it was stopping.

As the phone call finished I thanked him and said I'd think about it but to be honest I still felt 90% sure I was stopping. Neal though saw the 10% and said let's walk and see how you feel. As I did so I didn't feel as bad as I'd expected and realised my excuses were fading. Then I said to Neal, 'What would you do in my situation?' To which he replied, 'I'm a stubborn bu\*\*er and I would carry on' and then he added, 'Caroline is the same!' By this point I knew Caroline was with Jon and prepared to walk in with me as well. I discovered later there is no way Caroline would have let me stop.

So I said to Neal, 'Okay let's do it.' Just then the phone rang again. It was Ian, 'I'm going to ring every 5mins until you tell me you're carrying on!' He then reminded me of his 24hr race in Perth last year when I helped support him. When Ian reached 100miles he was content and I tried to encourage him to push on and catch Rosie Bell. He told me that I was right then and he is right now. Talk about emotional blackmail!! When he eventually stopped talking I told him I was going on.

As I write this I'm in tears and have been a couple of times when I've talked to Katrina and then my Mum. The thing that gets me is the strength of friendship shown to me. Ian having been through a similar struggle was determined that I didn't have to go through what he went through. He would do whatever it took to get me going.

Neal & Caroline were prepared to walk through the night with me to make sure I finished. They had been driven me here, been up right the night and now were prepared to walk another 4hrs.

I can't thank them enough. Also I was receiving texts from Katrina and our girls saying how proud they are of me and that I can do it. Plus friends telling me to dig deep.

Looking back now it seems easy to say I decided to carry on but at the time it felt the right decision was to stop but I'm so thankful I did carry on.

Jon and Caroline arrived and Jon took us to the right stop. We weren't that far off which made it even more frustrating.

In some ways the decision to carry on was the easier bit. Now we had to walk the 10miles to Filey. It was 10.45pm by now and we were going into our second night. I'd hardly eaten anything and was surviving on determination but with such good friends alongside me and others encouraging from a distance we got on with it.

It was a long way but step by step you get there. Maybe the rest did me some good as I was walking far better than I had a couple of hours earlier.

The walk out to Filey Brigg seemed to go on and on for ever. I was amazed that no-one had caught us and that I was still in 7<sup>th</sup> place but time and position just didn't matter. We were focused on getting to the end.

I was starting to fall asleep as I walked. I've never had that before and it was weird. I'd close my eyes and as I stumbled I'd come round and try and focus on the path. At one point I actually fell, then stood up and wandered over to the other side.

We didn't talk much for an hour or more but following Neal & Caroline was all I needed and eventually we did get there. One guy did overtake us. He was still running and looked better than I felt!

We reached the tent at Filey Brigg and then headed down for the last 1mile and a half to the Everon Centre. We managed to get lost a couple of times trying to find it but we did and we finished at 2.19am .... A mere 31hrs 12mins since leaving Helmsley on Friday night!

*Scarborough to lost point: 2.24miles in 1hr 32mins 28secs  
Waiting for Jon & Caroline and getting to route: 1hr 15mins  
Car Park to Filey and end: 9.07miles in 3hrs 39mins 46secs*

*Overall distance 108.44miles in 31hrs 12mins*

Mark & Helen, Dave, Jon and others were all waiting for us and it was so good to see them and congratulate them on their races. When I was talking to Mark it hit me that if I'd stopped at Scarborough I would have had to explain to him why I stopped and it would have sounded pathetic!

So I finished and as I write this on Monday I'm feeling good. My plan is to have two weeks off running and let my body recover before building up to my last ultra in 2009 in France.

I'll reflect a bit more on the race at a later date but I wanted to say a massive thank you to Neal & Caroline for being with me throughout the weekend and to everyone else who encouraged me in various ways.



*Jon Steele presenting me with the Hardmoors buff*



*Caroline and Neal – thanks for all your support*