

Hardmoors 55mile Race Report

Saturday 20th March 2010

Race Tale by John Kynaston

Pre-Race

After I ran the Hardmoors 110 mile race in September 2009 I thought I'd love to come back and run the first half of the route in the daylight as it looked such a great path over the North Yorkshire Moors. So when Jon Steele put on this race it didn't take me long to sign up. The fact that it was being run on my 51st birthday only added to the fun!

I left Paisley at 11am on Friday when Sharon picked me up. We drove down to Tim's house in Ayr and then the three of us shared a car to Guisborough. We had a good journey down to Guisborough arriving before 5pm.

After sorting out our rooms we head into Guisborough to check out where we needed to go at 5am to catch the bus to the start. We also decided to go for a little walk down the disused railway track which would be the last mile or so of the race.

On the way we saw a lady running towards us who turned out to be Wendy who ran in the race. As we wandered back towards the Cricket ground firstly Brian Mcl ran to say he had arrived and was making his way down the track and then we were caught by Stuart M who was doing a recce run of the last 5-6 miles of the route.



I'd met Stuart after the Fling last year. A very talented runner from New Zealand who got lost after the first 10 minutes in the Fling and lost 25mins on the field. He would be the favourite for this race.

After calling in to Sainsbury's to buy some food for breakfast, (I went for a couple of pastries and some pancakes and honey) we headed back to The Premier Inn for a meal. Andy C arrived as we were finishing and joined us.

Tim and I headed to bed about 9.30pm, watched some of the Sport Relief evening and then tried to sleep. I always find it hard to sleep before a race especially when I need to be up at 4am. I actually slept better than I thought and didn't wake until 3.30am.

Quick shower, sort out my gear, update my blog and then we were off. From our bedroom window we could see Roseberry Topping but not this morning. A low cloud was covering the whole area and was a sign of things to come.

We arrived at Guisborough just as the bus arrived. We all piled on with Sharon, Stuart and myself occupying the front row on the upper level. We spent the whole way chatting about various races, training plans and hopes for the day.

The bus driver dropped us off at Helmsley Square just after 6am and we then walked up to the Football ground where we registered. Jon, race organiser had everything running well and we quickly got our numbers and goody bag. I caught up with various friends including Dave and Lee, Flip, Richie, Julien to name a few.

We had plenty of time to get ready, decide what to wear and sort out our drop bags and eat our breakfast. I decided to start in shorts, two tops, buff but no gloves or waterproof top. I was

hopeful the weather would improve. I had my jacket with me and had left other gear in the drop bags.

Soon enough 8am arrived and we were ready to go. I took a few photos and wandered over to the start.



Me, Sharon and Richie



whw men! Andy, Tim, me, Richie and Brian

Section 1 – Helmsley to Sutton Bank (9.03miles)

Sharon and I had agreed to start together and try and run as much as possible but with the understanding that if whoever was going better could push on.

Sharon was slightly ahead but I caught her after about 10mins and we ran together. Brian Mcl went past looking strong. After about 30mins I realised that I'd not thought about my chest and it was fine so that was good news.

The first 9miles to Sutton Bank was fairly straight forward and we kept a good solid pace going. We could see a few runners ahead. It continued to rain but it wasn't too cold and I felt fine. A few times I pulled ahead on the up hills but Sharon soon reeled me in on the down hills. We actually compliment each other well and I'm sure it helps us both.

We caught up with Wendy, who we'd seen the night before. Wendy had won the whw ladies race in the early 1990's so it was good to chat about that. The first checkpoint at Sutton Bank was past the white horse and involved running out and back and we wondered whether when we'd see Stuart M and the leaders.

Sharon guessed in 4mins 30mins from where we were. I reckoned that if Stuart was running at 8min miles and we were going at 9mins 30secs then it would be 2mins 30secs. Sure enough we saw him after 2mins 38secs so I won that one.

Sharon said if I won she'd buy me a tap water and if she won I'd buy her a pint so she was on to a winner there.

We ran into the first checkpoint in 1hrs 26mins which was 9mins ahead of my schedule. I took one of the cliff bars which was very tasty and went down well. I'd been eating every 30mins of so and feeling fine.

Leg Time: 9.03miles in 1hr 26mins 32secs

Section 2 – Sutton Bank to Osmotherly (14.05miles)

I'd been looking forward to this next section as the route goes along the end of a steep cliff and the views should be really good but sadly the mist was so low that we couldn't see anything. In fact I reckon I saw more in the dark last September!

The route after 5miles or so climbs up on to the moors and it is really exposed and on a day like this one is very cold. I was still running in my running top and no gloves and I was getting colder by the minute. I was wet and the wind was chilling my body. I felt I was having to work really hard to keep warm. Looking back it would have been more sensible to stop and put my jacket on but with a rucksack and bum bag plus watches to take off I decided to keep going until we reached Osmotherly.

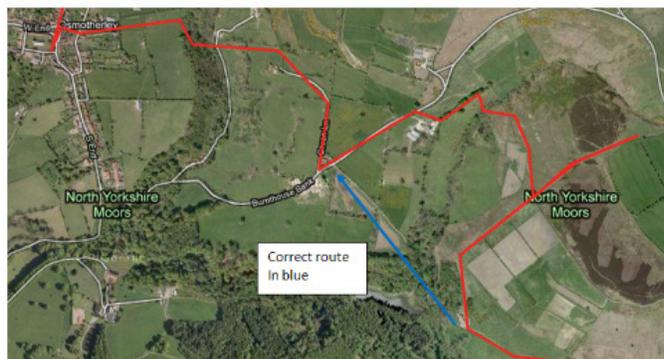
I was pushing the pace a bit and we were catching a few folk including a guy called Al from Bakewell who I ran with for a while. He left home at 2am to drive to Guisborough to get the bus! The things we do to take part in these races.

I opened a bit of a gap on Sharon but once we started descending to Osmotherly I soon heard the pitter patter of Sharon's feet and she led the way down. I calculated that we were still ahead of my 10hr 30min schedule and despite the awful weather was still feeling quite positive and optimistic, especially as I soon warmed up as we descended.

Then in one moment of stupidity I lost all the time we'd worked so hard to gain. I had a map with me but assumed I'd be able to remember the way from running last September. I hadn't got lost (well until Scarborough) in the dark so I was far too cocky in my ability to just remember the way.

Anyway we were on a track going past a house and there was a path up to the right. A guy in front was deliberating whether to go down or right and without checking the map or seeing there were no acorn signs to follow I was convinced we go right.

The picture below shows the time and effort we wasted getting back on track. If I'd looked at the map it was obvious we needed to stay on the path.



I felt terrible not just for me but more for Sharon who had worked hard to get into first place in the ladies race and we, sorry I'd, messed it up. Sharon, bless her, never once complained or criticised me but accepted it was a genuine mistake and she was big enough to handle it.

So by the time we arrived at Osmotherly we had lost at least 12-15mins and were now way behind all the runners we'd gone past and more.

We stopped for 6mins or so to warm up, put some more clothes on, grab some food and get going again.

Actual: 14.05miles in 2hr 29mins 17secs
Overall: 23.91miles in 3hrs 55mins 49secs

Section 3 – Osmotherly to Wainstones (10.83miles)

For the next hour or so I had a real battle with myself over the lost time. I felt really annoyed with making such a silly mistake and realised that I'd ruined any chance of a good time, of catching Brian and worse of all messing up Sharon's race.

But ultra running is about dealing with tough issues and I realised that I couldn't do anything about the time I'd lost but had to focus on the next leg and doing the best I could.

I was feeling warmer with my jacket on and Sharon had a dry pair of gloves and top and was going well so we pushed on. The route out of Osmotherly stayed with the Cleveland Way whereas the 110mile race went up the road past Cod Beck Reservoir.

This didn't help with my state of mind as I'd not run this bit and was worried about making yet another mistake but thankfully we were okay. We got back into our rhythm of me leading the up hills and Sharon taking over on the descents.

The next checkpoint was the Wainstones and in my mind I thought I knew how far it was to various points but once again it was very different to reality. I recognised most of the route once I got there but couldn't remember which what was to come half the time.

After running through Clain Wood we took another extended bit but it wasn't until I downloaded my garmin on getting home that I discovered this so it didn't bother me at the time! It does now though.



There is a long climb up past Round Hill and onto Chalton Moor. I led the way and we were going okay. Once we got on the top though it was exposed and very cold once again. I still had no gloves on and just my buff but felt all right.

Sharon and I were running together but not chatting much. We were both just getting on with the what we had to do and were in our own little worlds. As we descended down to the road Sharon once again was away and I lost sight of her.

Once I made my way down and over the road and stile I saw her ahead not sure which way to go so we run on together. We went past another runner who thought he might have missed the Wainstones checkpoint but I knew it was still a way to go but I thought it was close than it was!

We climbed the next hill and ran along the well defined path towards wainstones. At some point we went past Dave W who was in his tent in the middle of the moor. He'd heard that we'd lost time but said we were looking good and encouraged us on our way. The marshals were amazing, especially those out in the wilds in this weather.

By now my hands were getting really, really cold so I got out my hat and gloves and put them on, just in time. It took me ages to get my hands into the gloves. I pulled with my teeth and eventually they were on and it made a difference.

Sharon was running really well and was away on the next decent and I didn't see her again until Kildale but that's another story.

So I was now on my own and by now I was readjusting all my goals and times. I realised that sub 11hrs was out the window and that finishing as best I could was the order of the day. I was happy with that and so didn't worry too much about splits, pace or the like. The only thing that mattered on my garmin was distance.

I was eating well but not really drinking that much. I didn't need to. At one point I thought I must have missed the wainstones but they eventually came into view and I gave in my number 29 to the marshal and his son who were manning this exposed check point. All I can say is that Jon has some amazing friends who are prepared to spend a Saturday on the top of the hill in the pouring rain. Thanks guys.

Actual: 10.83miles in 2hrs 35mins 34secs

Overall: 33.91miles in 6hrs 38mins 02secs

Section 4 – Wainstones to Bloworth Crossing (4.30miles)

On my way down to Clay Bank I slipped and fell. As I hit the ground I thought, 'Please not my ribs!' Thankfully it wasn't too bad but I did have a bloodied knee for the rest of the race.

Steve W caught me on this section but didn't quite get past and the guy I'd gone past earlier went past me as well. Downhill running is definitely the weakest area of my running and I always lose time to those around me on these sections.

I climbed up onto the Carr Ridge and knew there was a runnable section coming up towards Bloworth Crossing, the next checkpoint. The mist was really thick here and I couldn't see too far ahead. The path is good and there is no chance of losing the way so I plodded on and tried to run as much as I could.

I felt I was still going fairly well and wasn't struggling to run when I could. I used a few of my mind techniques, counting breathes, repeating my mantras (slow and steady – make it last) etc and sure enough Bloworth Crossing came into view.

Another amazing marshal in his tent supporting the race. I asked how far ahead Sharon was and I think he said 8 mins so I was pleased to hear she was going so well. I also thought that I don't want to get much further behind with our 2010 challenge to consider!

Actual: 4.30miles in 1hrs 01mins 43secs
Overall: 38.21miles in 7hrs 39mins 45secs

Section 5 – Bloworth Crossing to Kildale (5.95miles)

I spotted the runner who had overtaken me earlier just ahead so that gave me a focus. I decided to try and catch him before Kildale which was almost 6miles away.

I was again getting cold. I was still in shorts and my legs were fine. Head was warm with my Kilbarchan beanie on, hand okay with gloves but I could feel my body getting colder. I knew that I had a thick running top in my drop bag at Kildale and just the thought of that made all the difference.

So I pushed on and quickly caught the guy ahead and ran on into Kildale down the road. As I entered the village I wondered whether Stuart had finished by now. I knew he's been aiming for 8hrs but reckoned that even he would be at least an hour slower in this weather so there was a good chance he was near the end.

I entered the village hall and was greeted by Lee M and Mike M, both friends from the whw. It was great to see them and they sorted me out with a cup of tea and replenished my water. I was expecting to see Sharon as I reasoned if she was 8mins or so ahead I she'd still there.

When she wasn't I thought she must be going even better than I thought and so asked Lee when did Sharon leave. I couldn't believe it when she said she's not been in yet. I was really concerned as that meant she'd got lost and could be anywhere.

A minute or so later she arrived in tears and said she was stopping. I've never seen her so down and low. Thankfully Lee took her into another room and they were able to get all her wet clothes off, put her in a sleeping bag and warm her up but it took over an hour before she stopped shivering.

Sharon is a stubborn and gutsy runner and doesn't quit easily but this was the only decision to make in the circumstances. It would have been irresponsible to carry on. She learnt a lot from this experience and will be back to fight another day.

I also heard that Brian had stopped as he too was hypothermic as his hand swere so cold he couldn't get any food out of his bag.

Leg Time: 5.95miles in 1hr 09mins 32secs
Overall: 44.16miles in 8hrs 49mins 17secs

Section 6 – Kildale to Roseberry Topping (4.38miles)

After 10mins or so I set off with about 12miles to go to the finish. In those 10mins at least another 4 runners came in so I was keen to keep ahead of as many of them as I could.

I felt so much warmer with my fleecy top and suddenly the mist went and the sun came out. I was now a lovely late evening Spring day and I decided to make the most of it. Throughout the run I'd been doing a few video clips and as I spoke about Sharon stopping I was choking up and decided to make sure I finished for both of us.

On the next hill I got out my mobile phone. I'd been receiving messages over the last few hours but didn't want to get it out in the rain. Now it was dry I decided to read through them as I walked up the hill. It was great to read the birthday greeting and best wishes from friends and family and definitely raised my spirits.

In the full race last September I'd missed the path through the woods to the Cook's monument and was determined to find the right way this time. It was pretty straight forward and I wondered why I'd missed it but it was pitch dark at the time.

As I made my way towards the monument I saw a runner behind. I knew an older guy had been at the check point and thought it was him.

By the time we got to the bottom of the hill after the monument he had caught me but there was an up hill to come and I got away again. I could see Roseberry Topping in the distance and decided to run as much as I could before the climb.



I ran for 50 breathes, then another 50 and another 50 and yet another 50 until I had opened a gap. But as soon as started the descent before the climb he caught me again. I really must work on my downhill running technique!

I decided to use the climb up Roseberry Topping to refuel. I suddenly felt so hungry. Normally 10 hours into a race I'm relying on gels if anything at all but I this time I ate and ate. Sweets, energy bars, muesli bars. Infact anything I had with me.

I reached the top a few seconds behind the older guy and gave in my number to the marshals on the top. They gave me a couple of gels which I ate as well.

Leg Time: 4.38miles in 1hr 10mins 17secs
Overall: 48.54miles in 10hrs 09mins 43secs

Section 7 – Roseberry Topping to Disused Railway (5.54miles)

Once again I was left for dead on the descent. Another runner had gone past both of us and they were away into the distance heading back to where we just come from. There is an out and back to the top.

But it didn't take me long to catch them once we got on to the flatter ground. When I started chatting to the older guy I realise who he was. Last year in the Fling I'd been overtaken a couple of miles before Auchtertyre by 'an older guy carrying a guide book.' It had motivated me to get going and I eventually caught him a mile or so before the finish. I went to discover that he won the M60 class.

I now discover his name is Adrian and he's a really nice guy. I recounted the Fling story and apologised for calling him an old guy with a guide book!

We then ran together for the next hour or so. Adrian knows the route really well and had done a recce run through the Guisborough Woods on Wednesday. In the full race I'd got lost in the woods and now as darkness fell I was more than happy to have my own guide to show me the way.

So Adrian guided and he told me how he got into running and various races he's done. We put on our head torches and ran through the woods. We were both going well as the end was in sight.

We came to the end of the woods, found the road and ran down to the disused railway line where Dave W was waiting for us. Dave had already been there for 5 hours and would stay there until after midnight when the last runners came through. An 8hr shift after already doing various other jobs. Lee joined him later after finishing her duties at Kildale. Thanks to both of you!

Leg Time: 5.54miles in 1hr 24mins 26secs
Overall: 54.08miles in 11hrs 34mins 09secs

Section 8 – Disused Railway to Guisborough Cricket Club (1.30miles)

So we pushed on and I was thinking I'd be quite happy to run in together but Adrian said if I wanted to push on that was fine and I didn't need asking twice! So off I pushed and 12mins later arrived at the finish as the Cricket Club.

I'd finished the race in 11hrs 46mins 10secs but to the honest the time was irrelevant. I was happy to have finished in such tough conditions.





With Adrian

Actual: 1.30miles in 12mins 01secs

Overall: 55.38miles in 11hrs 46mins 10secs

Post Race

We finished just in time for the prize giving. Stuart won with Richie third. Wendy won the Ladies race and Adrian the M60.

Andy C arrived about 15mins later having had an excellent run. I had time for a massage then it was back to the hotel for a shower, bath and birthday cake.

I really enjoyed the whole weekend and even though the weather made the race a lot tougher than expected I'm glad I ran and would do it again. I really want to see the views on a good day.

Thanks to Tim and Sharon for your company over the weekend and everyone else we met down there.

Finally a massive thank you to Jon Steele and all the marshals and helpers. They were amazing in very difficult and trying conditions.