

Andy Crook Bob Graham Round 11 June 2011

My only previous BG experience was chasing Richard Davis round leg 4 on his sub 20 hour round and navigating leg 3 for Pete Murphy in June 2010, and once I'd recovered from the stress of the responsibility it crossed my mind that I might be capable of doing it myself. I reiterate it '*crossed my mind*' but stupidly I must have said it out loud at some point and Wynn found out, the process was taken out of my hands and before I knew it I had a date, a time and a lot to think about! 10 June 2011, midnight start, was now on the calendar, no worries I thought its ages off and in any case Declan had set his date too, July 2nd 2011 – I had a training buddy and besides the 'Bowland Machine' was with me so I couldn't fail could I?

Declan and I discussed training plans and agreed to recce the legs together, any other training would be down to personal preference. Winter passed, fitness levels maintained and no injuries that could mean only one thing, no excuses! I made lots of trips to the lakes, did various races and events like the Howarth hobble, 4 passes and the Fellsman (3 and ½ hours off last years time – (training clearly working, get in!) and now it was taper time, for me the worst bit, you go from full weekends out on long recce's (thanks Beverley for the time off, I owe you 2 months ironing I think) to well, basically not very much. A few weeks before the off, Beverley and I visited Wynn to discuss logistics, food for the road crossings etc. and she mentioned a guy called Andrew Tibbetts who was looking to help out on couple of legs in prep for his own attempt in August. A couple of weeks later I recced leg 3 with Kev Smith from Darwen Dashers and Andrew, from the off it was obvious Andrew was very strong and more than capable of a successful completion, so, once again in stepped Wynn and it was '*decided*' that we would have a double attempt on June 10th, myself and Andrew (as it turned out on the night, four Andrews were all setting off at 12, a good omen I thought!) So with a little last minute shuffling of the pack we were ready to go.

I finished work early and was home a little after 1 PM so I could get some sleep in, I managed all of an hour before Beverley (clearly excited) came thundering into the bedroom with all the stealth and grace of a Rhino and asked me if I was asleep???? Are you excited she asked? Well excited wasn't quite how I was feeling to be honest, I just wanted to get on with it now. We'd been invited to meet up at Wynn and Steve's house, getting there a little after 7 PM just in time for homemade lasagne, Salad and cakes. Andrew was getting his stuff together and was chatting away about his preparations and his diet of 'digestible carbs', proteins and lots of other stuff I was mentally noting to Google, I was dreading Beverley mentioning the chips and gravy I'd demolished just before leaving as I felt sure these were not 'digestible carbs' nor a nutritious start to a BG! The house was full of people, all talking about past BG's and plans for the next 24 hours, I slipped off to try and get some more sleep in but probably only managed about 45 minutes, not this time due to Beverley, (though she was still rather animated) rather the adrenalin was now kicking in and I was ready, but I felt sure the 45 minutes would undoubtedly help.

We set off to Moot hall in a convoy of vehicles, Beverley drove and I sat there saying very little just contemplating what the next 24 hours would have in store for me. Tonight was definitely a bumper BG night, we'd already seen the head torches of a group ascending Clough Head on the way in, and more people seem to gather as we were waiting for the off at Moot Hall. One group set off at 11:55 leaving Andrew, Kev Smith (also on his attempt) and myself lined up with Steve Cliff our navigator, Baggins in support with pacers Pete Murphy and Andrew Raynes. Yiannis said one minute to go, we were all synching watches and we were into the final count down, go! We were away across the car park and out through Fitz park, it felt quite fast but Steve explained this was to get some of the adrenalin out of the system and I knew I had plenty of that! We were soon into a good walking climb, with Skiddaw reached 3 minutes ahead of schedule. The group got a little disjointed on the way over to Great Calva but we regrouped on the climb up to Mungrisdale common. The clag made things a little more difficult for Steve at this stage but as we approached the summit of Blencathra a voice came out of the mist it was Yiannis right on cue, with the contenders all present we were off descending steeply down the parachute route. We arrived in Threlkeld safe and sound and tucked into porridge served up by the lovely Ian Roberts (no he didn't offer me a leg massage). Unfortunately my rucksack hadn't arrived in time so I collected my spare kit and popped it into a bag. We were off a few minutes to the good, our crew for this leg being Clive Davis navigating with support from Will Houghton, Ian Cookson and Johnny Wade all club mates from the Bowland Massive. Baggins was going to navigate Andrew over this leg but had injured his knees coming down the parachute route trying to keep up with Steve cliff! So he joined our group and we slogged our way over leg 2, Kevin had his own support from now and had gone on ahead. What a stunning morning, visibility was excellent with just a few clouds covering some of the higher summits we would be visiting later but I was surprised at how sleepy I felt despite the physical effort I was making (thinking about it now I've never run at this time of the day and my body just wanted to sleep, I'm a sleeper and my brain was having none of it!) thankfully the feeling passed as my supporters sensing my downturn made me take water and food, put extra clothing on and take extra clothing off, they were fantastic! The bit I hate on this leg was approaching; out and back to Fairfield, I'd really struggled up here on a recce, perhaps on an off day but no problems today so this made me feel really good, we summited Seat Sandal and were greeted by Andy Farmer and Lottie the dog who highlighted the trod down to Dunmail Raise. I sent Will on ahead to let the support crew know that I would like Soup, a bacon buttie and a cup of tea on arrival, apparently this was met with confusion, "soup?, we haven't got soup, it's breakfast time, there's soup planned for Wasdale, there's no soup here", but as luck would have it, a random tin of soup was found and promptly warmed up, I knew nothing of this when I got there, I simply tucked into my soup and ate my bacon and egg buttie whilst my shoes and socks were removed and replaced with new ones. As a BG contender you do nothing for yourself except put one foot in front of the other and this was just another example of the terrific support that helped me on the day. I was still a little ahead of my schedule as we set off, Chris Reade, Mike Johnson and Andrew Knowles joined me on this one, and David Wilson was going to join us somewhere en route. I don't know why but the climb up Steel Fell doesn't trouble me at all but Mike and Chris practised their finely tuned distraction technique, getting me to detail the contents of my food bag to them which I think does not conform to the usual for a

BG, but it's all the stuff I know will get me round!. We were having a real laugh I can't remember much about what was discussed but time just flew. David was waiting on the summit of High Raise and told us he'd seen two groups ahead, the first with Yiannis who was navigating for Andrew and the other I assumed was Kevin both of whom had left Dunmail ahead of me.

Every climb I was eating and drinking whether I wanted to or not, I just did as I was told, anyway what's the point of having the support of such experienced individuals then ignoring the advice? Andrew Knowles dropped off at Bowfell to meet his parents and daughter, this epitomises the efforts that people make to support in anyway they can. On our way from Esk Hause to Great End I noticed a person in a blue shirt sunbathing by a cairn, it was Paul Neald who was joining us for the run into Wasdale. As we were descending from Great End I could hear Mike talking to someone as he recorded my time, within seconds Mark Palmer and Scoffer came passed going like a train. Scoffer had told Mike they were on a 16 hour schedule, phenomenal, I couldn't begin to comprehend that sort of schedule! John and Jo Taylor were on the climb up to Scafell Pike and came with us over to Mickledore, David left us at Scafell Pike and we carried on up Lords Rake and the West Wall Traverse, after Scafell it was down the screes to Wasdale.

A big reception party was waiting at the car park with Stew and Soup and loads of cake for lunch. Again a change of clothing and a look at my watch still ahead, could this be it unless I get injured, surely I must finish now in less than 24 hours! There was a little niggle in my right knee so Volterol was applied and Ibuprophen taken and we were off again. Leigh Warburton my navigator, with Stewart Forsyth, Duncan Elliot and Ian France in support. The big climb up Yewbarrow was one I hadn't been looking forward to mostly because of where it comes in the round. Today however it was okay, I think this was down to Duncan's ramblings and constant bickering between him and Stewart like that of an old married couple that kept me moving upwards! Red Pike, Steeple and Pillar came and went, Leigh constantly checking my preferences for lines, then as we started the drop off Kirk Fell it began to rain. I mentioned to Leigh the line Richard Davis used on his BG that would keep us off the big rock slabs near the summit of Gable. Before I knew it we were on the grass then the summit was in view. Green Gable, Brandreth and Grey Knots, the rain stopped and we were down into Honister. Only 3 peaks to go now and to be honest with over 5 hours to go from Gable I knew I could walk in, I was sure of it.

The Bowland crew were there on masse - lots of clapping and huge grins met me and the magnificent road support had everything laid on to perfection: homemade bread, soup (more cake) and a change of clothes. I don the most important piece of kit all day - my Bowland vest which I wear with pride and I even have my 'matching' bright orange' shoes, Beverley's always telling me, if nothing else, one should be coordinated! Coming down the hill into Honister my quads were really sore, Chris Reade had warned me that my downhill legs would go before my uphill legs, oh boy was he right, in steps Wynn and her Volterol Gel, heaven, she could earn real money doing that! It was time for the last leg, I was climbing out of Honister with Ian Charters my navigator, Martin Walsh, Mike Gibbison, Will Houghton, and Ian Cookson. Ian Roberts had gone ahead and was waiting at the summit of Dale Head.

My quads were still sore so I walked most of the way to Robinson for the final photo shoot. Kev Smith caught us up and continued his run through to the descent. Lots of alternatives were used, but I stayed with Ian Charters, we had recced this section carefully and I was supremely confident in Ian's ability to lead me off. I was not disappointed. We hit the track then the road, passed Newlands Church, and was into road shoes walking up the hill to Little Town as the light faded dramatically. My sister Karen and Beverley had joined me at this point, wanting to run the road section and bring me in only they seemed to forget I was there, running on ahead chatting away! The rest is a bit of a blur, everyone seemed to be having a great time, Ian was running right by my side as it got darker and Will dropped back to share his light with me. Ian France joined us at Portinscales and as we turned a corner, we saw Kev's group, passing them, my legs felt good so we continued to run over the bridge and across the field and on to the road. All I could hear around me were voices saying look there it is, Moot Hall, people were standing in the road to stop the traffic. The voices seem louder now and more animated, I just wanted to keep going, pushing harder I keep looking ahead checking I'm getting closer. Over the past few months I've been out running with Beverley on many occasions and I always encourage her to 'leave something in the bag' for a sprint finish, and much to my astonishment she was now badgering me for one, are you kidding I thought, but then she ran off ahead of me, I could see Duncan was filming this and then the testosterone, well it just has a mind of its own doesn't it, so I upped a gear and well, discretion prevents me from mentioning who won the race.

A big group cheering and clapping met us all and after banging on the doors of the Hall I began shaking hands and celebrating my achievement. Pam was on hand with Champagne but I could only manage a small sip, that's a first!

I tried to find the words which would sum up my day but I struggle all I could do is say thank you to everyone in the vicinity. I keep thinking what makes so many people want to help you in this way, what drives you on and how is it possible for an ordinary bloke to achieve something that others outside a small community can't even comprehend? It can't be because they just want to see you suffer, can it?

I tried to thank everyone on the day (but there was quite a lot going on). I hope didn't miss anyone! Just listing everyone somehow seems to diminish all they have done for me but I must do it for the record. My enormous thanks go to;

Steve Cliff, Clive Davis, Chris Reade, Mike Johnson, Leigh Warburton, Ian Charters, Bill Williamson, Pete Murphy, Andrew Raynes, Will Houghton, Ian Cookson, John Wade, Andrew Knowles, David Wilson, Paul Neald, John and Jo Taylor, Duncan Elliot, Stewart Forsyth, Ian France, Martin Walsh, Ian Roberts. For those at the road crossings Wynn Cliff, Pam and Andy Farmer, my sister Karen and most of all to my partner Beverley who made it possible for me to get the time to do the training and gave me the support and encouragement I needed. Finally to those who couldn't be there but helped me along the way a massive thank you particularly to Declan O'Duffy my training partner and to Andy Walmsley for the fantastic work he puts in to keep us running through the winter months.

I promised Wynn when she asked me what type of contender I would be that I would smile all the way through, I hope I managed to keep the smile. I tried to enjoy every minute of it even the difficult parts. I am immensely proud of my achievement but know without the help of so many people it would not have happened.

Thanks Again

Andrew Crook