

LAKES, MERES AND WATERS

THE LAKE DISTRICT 26 L. M. W.

Distance: 100 plus miles

Ascent and Descent: approx. 17,000'

Walking and running

Date: 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> June, 1981

ATTEMPT BY:-

LEO POLLARD

ASSISTED ON THE FELLS BY:-

L. Wainwright, J. Norrissey, R. Green, A. Harrison,  
P. Kirkbright, D. Hall, M. Donnelly, W. Charnley  
S. Corbett, F. Whittle, M. McGovern, D. Parker  
T. Brindle, R. Philips, H. Hartley, A. Kenny,  
J. Harding, S. O'Hagan, T. Southworth, P. Micklewski,  
V. and A. Barbier, D. Holt, M. Lomas, B. Fanning  
J. Fanning, G. Pollard, M. Fanning

SUPPORT PARTY:-

Mr. G. and Mrs. P. Partridge, Mr. J. and Mrs J. Foster,  
The Pollard family, Mrs. S. Harrison, Mr. M. and S. Anderton

RUNNING AND WALKING TIME 32.08

REST TIME 3.21

TOTAL TIME 35.29 hours

Pete and I had entered the Two Day Mountain Marathon which in 1979 was to be held in the Rhinogs, Wales. The organisers had warned all competitors that it was going to be tough. Now I am not a person who trains very hard so I thought I had better put in at least one long day before the event. I invited Pete up to Bishops Scale, Langdale. So we could go round the old county tops as a training run (it is more than a training run really it is a classic walk and I recommend it to anyone who has not attempted this very good route) the summits are Helvellyn, Scafell, Coniston Old Man starting and finishing at Langdale. That evening after the walk Pete and I went to the Langdale Hotel, Chapel Stile, during the evening an Achille Ratti club member Peter Grant came over to ask me if I was interested in a twenty four hour run and wrote on the back of a menu the names of the Lakes and Waters to be visited. He said it was Dave Meek's idea and that it had never been attempted. Later that night I said to Pete there's a first for someone how about you and I. We discussed what had happened to other routes and achievements and nearly all had been added to. The Lake District 24 hour record which is different from the Bob Graham 24 hour club had gone from 3 to 72 summits. The Graham route has been traversed clockwise and anticlockwise within 48 hours.

Along study of the Lake District Tourist Map revealed that all the waters were not on the first list, two had not been included, Skeggles Water and Over Water. This changed the whole picture, Dave's idea was to start at Waterhead, Ambleside visit 24 lakes and waters and be back at Waterhead within 24 hours a distance of 72 miles involving 14,000ft of ascent. Skeggles Water and Over Water pushed it beyond 24 hours for the full circuit. I soon realised that to keep the Lakeland 24 hour tradition alive the route had to be a point to point. To give the best advantage Loweswater to Over Water or Over Water to Loweswater. It also has the added advantage and I think an important one for all long distant walks or runs in the lakes that it keeps the percentage of road to fell down.

During the month of August 1980 Pete was on holiday at Embleton with his family so to ease transport and because Pete favoured a circuit we set off from Embleton at mid-night. Dave Stones and a friend along with other Y.H.A. wardens were to give what assistance they could. This attempt ended at Waterhead 7 hours behind schedule. It was then that Pete decided to attempt it without me.

Six months after the first attempt I got the opportunity to do something I had wanted to do for some time which was to get the Achille Ratti Climbing Club involved in some long distance Lakeland attempt. I asked if they would like to be support party and pacers they readily accepted. I was delighted. I was not to know until the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1981 what a wise choice I had made. The weather was atrocious it paid off having mountaineers as pacers and route finders.

At 7.03.am on Saturday the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, 1981 with rain sweeping down the valley, the mist about tree top height the attempt to visit all the major lake, meres and waters in the Lake District National Park in one continuous walk set off. A few yards in front of me stood Len Wainwright behind Robert Green and Tony Harrison. Len was going from Loweswater to Buttermere, Robert and Tony to Wast Water. The conditions underfoot were really bad, Len fell very heavily several times each time I thought he was going to stay down but he bounced back up. At Buttermere Joe and Pete joined in to take me to Ennerdale. I was sure in my mind that I would have seen Terry Hickey and Tom Brodrick at Buttermere but I didn't. This section went quite well considering the conditions we encountered on Red Pike. The conditions going over Red Pike were atrocious and it was then so early in the attempt that I realised that in these conditions I would have to dig deep to be successful as we approached the Ennerdale Black Sail forest road, we passed the Ennerdale race check point lads going to Red Pike, I allowed my thoughts to

contemplate on the atrocious conditions that race was going to be run in that day. At Ennerdale, Dave Hall and Micky Donnelly took us at a perfect pace up to the ridge, small streams now ran instead of paths, the tall heather on each side forcing us to walk in them. On the way down to Greendale Tarn I slipped a few times on wet greasy rocks and felt the first pull in my groin. This section was completed in thick mist Micky and Dave had truly done their homework. At Wast Water it was raining good and healthy, no half-hearted stuff. I wondered what the next team of pacers were thinking. Mick McGovern, Dave Parker, Tony Brindle to go from Wast Water to Coniston Water with Wilf Charnley, Sandra Corbett, Frank Whittle to lead us through the paths around Wast Water on to Devoke Water. On the road after Devoke Water son Gary decided that a pint of shandy would not go a miss and promptly got into Murray Taylor's car. This section for Wast Water to Coniston Water was the section which determined which way round I was to make the attempt, I came to the conclusion that to attempt it from Coniston to Wast Water after 65 to 70 miles would by far cancel out any advantage of running the road from Over Water to Derwentwater. Again this section was completed in mist and rain. It is quite easy when planning this section to underestimate it. At Coniston Water I was welcomed by quite a band of supporters, John Foster supplying the drinks as he did all day, all night and all the next day helped by Freda. The route from Coniston Water to Kentmere Church had been surveyed by Roy Philips and with Harry Hartley's expertise a section I thought would be dull turned out to be quite an experience. Darkness came between Rydal Water and Windermere. It was raining heavily as we walked over the Garburn Pass, as we descended into Kentmere some of the support party came up their bright torch light being very helpful to us on such a night. At Kentmere Church, Freda insisted that I had a few minutes rest, after changing into dry clothes and eating, this paid off because getting to Skeggs Water on a night like we were experiencing was not going to be easy.

I instructed my next set of pacers Alan Kenny, Ted Southworth, Shaun O'Hagan, Jim Harding, Phil Micklewski to be capable of finding Skeggs Water in the worst possible conditions, they did just that. Leaving Skeggs Water behind proved a little difficult and as always when things go wrong the heather seems to get taller and bogs deeper. As we made our way to Haweswater dawn broke and the weather started to improve. At Haweswater I was feeling pretty sorry for myself, I had nursed a groin strain from Coniston Water and the way over to Small Water, Blea Water, High Street and Hayeswater was going to be painful. I did a bit of groaning on the way up High Street and in true Graham style the lads completely ignored me. At Brothers Water Andrew and Val Barbier, along with Mike Lomas, Derek Holt and Mick McGovern were waiting to take over. It was at Brothers Water that I got some sound advice off my pacers, shut up, sit down have a drink and then we will discuss the matter. The matter in hand, was I going on, the discussion never took place. The last 25 to 30 miles from Brothers Water to Over Water was completed in heat wave conditions, Brian, John and Mike Fanning had sorted out the Derwentwater, Bassenthwaite Lake area, the band of walkers was now increasing, up to Bassenthwaite Lake and on to Over Water. The smiles on everyone's face getting broader, the last hill, the last bend the last lake, the first ever 26 Lakes, Meres and Waters walk and the last two trump cards to be played by the Achille Ratti, my youngest son Gary to accompany me to the water's edge and the banner with its Red Rose pinned on it. The banner said Congratulation on the first ever Lakes, Meres and Waters walk and so said Terry Hickey, Brain Fanning and a host of supporters as we toasted our success with Gary's homemade wine.

I have put together and helped to put together some memorable Bob Graham attempts that have gone extremely well. I had very little to do with the organising of this, that being in the hands of George

Partridge, the catering John Foster and Freda my wife, but I can assure everyone that it went like magic. Only two things went wrong, the clock ticked too fast and the weather was too typically British and I would not change either even if I could.

How can I ever thank you enough so many people devoting so much time and energy so that one person can fulfil an ambition, you are truly wonderful people and I feel privileged to know you.

Leo Pollard

P.S. There are those amongst us who can better my time, you owe it to the sport, to the Achille Ratti and most of all to yourself to give it a go.