

## A DAY TRIP AROUND THE LAKES - JOSS NAYLOR STYLE

by Alex Smith

Saturday 25th June saw another successful record attempt by legendary fell-runner Joss Naylor. The target this time was Alan Heaton's year-old "Lakes, Meres and Waters" record - a circuit of all 27 lakes and similar in the Lake District - standing at 26½ hours for the 106 mile round.

At 5 am Joss set off from the shores of Loweswater, alone, into the cold grey mist of a midsummer dawn. The next two lakes, Crummock Water and Buttermere were collected within 40 minutes, after which came the first climb of the day - over Scarth Gap and into Ennerdale. He was met at the lakeside by fellow Cumberland Fell Runner, John Wild, who accompanied him on the only navigational error of the day - a brief excursion into Blengdale in thick mist. This lost them only an estimated 5 minutes, however, and they arrived at Wastwater a comfortable 32 minutes ahead of schedule.

John continued with Joss as far as Devoke Water, where he retired and went off to win the Blake Fell Race! No accounts of the delights of Blake Fell were to deter Joss, however, who continued on his way with a fresh pacer, Richard Eastman, and an even fresher one - his dog Juno - to Goats Water. This is the most difficult section for routefinding but by this time the early morning mist had lifted to give a fine sunny morning and no difficulties were encountered.

The temperature rose as the sun climbed into the sky and the early afternoon section between Esthwaite Water and Windermere was run in suffocating heat. Joss is used to the heat, however (you have to be if you live in Wasdale!), his most formidable record, the 72 peaks, being set during another heat wave in 1976.

There then followed a long section, remote from the road, taking in Skeggleswater, Kentmere Reservoir (thrown in just in case - Joss doesn't do things by halves), Smallwater, Bleawater, Haweswater and Hayeswater before finally returning to the road at Brotherswater. It was during this section that Joss was at his maximum ahead of schedule (1 hour 27 minutes at Kentmere).

It was at Brotherswater that I met Joss, 80 miles down the road, almost exactly an hour ahead of schedule and as bright as a button. After a brief stop we set off down the road towards Ullswater, Joss shirtless in the warm evening, enquiring about the results of the Blake Fell Race and making light of his day's exertions.

At Ullswater one of the support crew produced a copy of the Times which featured a photograph and an article about "the flying shepherd". "They must be pretty short of news", was Joss's curt verdict. If I'd taken the trouble to read the article at that time I would have seen that 'Joss rates this run as only medium hard' which might have made a good conversational gambit later in the day.

From Ullswater we ran the last fell section - through Glenridding, over Sticks Pass and down to Thirlmere where we were greeted by the worst midgets of the summer. I sheltered in a support car but Joss braved the outside world which may explain why it was such a short break.

From there the route lay along the road and over fields to Derwentwater. Despite it being virtually the longest day, the sky clouded over at sunset and darkness set in quickly. John Peel (of whom more later) and a group of apprentices from British Nuclear Fuels Ltd had sorted out the shortest route to the lake which involved a scramble across fields, along darkened footpaths and through a small forest in the gathering gloom before finally arriving at the lake shore in near darkness. Here Joss

stopped for the famous Naylor shake - to get his legs "loosed off" and a brief towel down. My legs feeling shaky enough already, I just stopped for some of Mary's fruit cake which I can certainly recommend to any other aspiring Lakes, Meres and Waters runners.

Just on the outside of Keswick Joss turned to me and said, "Well, that's the hundred up today". The last tricky section was the approach to Bassenthwaite Lake where a local farmer let us stumble blindly through his field to the lake shore, willingly joining into the spirit of the occasion by providing a large torch and a good deal of cheerful banter. There was now just one lake left - Overwater, which is approached by a long, winding, undulating but steadily rising road. Joss told me later that there are 1,700 feet of climbing from Bassenthwaite to Overwater but on that evening he described it more colourfully. He was now a good deal less chatty than he had been for the first 100 miles but he muttered that he had been thinking about this hill ever since setting out at 5 in the morning. It had proved too much for Alan Heaton who had been reduced to walking at this stage but Joss had an air of grim determination about him and his crisply efficient style never faltered. There was by now a large number of runners joining in, followed by several cars all moving slowly up the hill in the darkness, headed by Joss running in silence.

At the point of closest approach to the lake a large crowd had gathered. A line of torches organised by the omnipresent John Peel stretched across the fields down to the lake. Willing hands provided a torch for Joss who hopped over the fence with remarkable ease; leaving me caught up in the barbed wire. Having freed myself and stumbled across the field in the darkness I caught up with him just in time to get tangled up in the next fence. This time I didn't catch him until he arrived at the lakeside - the time 0014:25 - just 17 hours 14 minutes and 25 seconds after setting out from Loweswater. After 106 miles and 18,000 feet Joss was within 7 minutes of his scheduled time - that's planning!

Having arrived, Joss sat on an upturned boat and proceeded to give a short speech, thanking the large number of people who helped in the effort; this was absolutely typical of the appreciative attitude he had shown throughout the run.

Afterwards it just remained to return to the cars on the road, treating the fences with a healthy respect this time, for Joss to repeat his thanks and for me to eat some more of Mary's fruit cake.

No account of an event of this nature would be complete without acknowledging the help of a large number of supporters. John Peel has already been mentioned. Tommy Orr drove a support car and met Joss at every road crossing throughout the run - and if you think its a long way to run, you should try driving it! Dave Elliot was instrumental in the planning and organising of the run and many others, too numerous to mention, provided invaluable support on the day.

Stage No	Stage Name	ETA	Actual Time	Stage No	Stage Name	ETA	Actual Time
1	Loweswater	0500	0500	15	Windermere	1520	1355
2	Crummock	0515	0512	16	Skeggeswater	1710	1603
3	Buttermere	0542	0537	17	Kentmere	1810	1653
4	Ennerdale	0700	0631	18	Smalwater	1848	1729
5	Wastwater	0830	0758	19	Bleawater	1858	1738
6	Devoke Water	0940	0911	20	Haweswater	1920	1756
7	Goatswater	1130	1045	21	Hayeswater	2010	1906
8	Low Water	1150	1111	22	Brotherswater	2030	1929
9	Leverswater	1220	1120	23	Ullswater	2055	2003
10	Coniston	1230	1143	24	Thirlmere	2215	2135
11	Esthwaite	1320	1221	25	Derwentwater	2300	2230
12	Elterwater	1420	1310	26	Bassenthwaite	2335	2316
13	Grasmere	1440	1325	27	Overwater	0020	0014.25
14	Rydal Water	1455	1336				