

Bob Graham Round - 14 June 2003

by Dave Makin

THE seed was planted at the Achille Ratti Dinner Dance in 2002. Feeling good at Christmas I gave it the thumbs up (well one at least!) and from then on I knew all I had to do, other than six months of hard training, was turn up and run on the day as everything else was masterminded by Leo Pollard and Arthur Daniels. As usual they lined up the Ratti's lean mean BG machine to give me a great chance of completing a successful BG. At 42 years old I would be the same age as Bob Graham when he completed his successful attempt. 14 June was the day after he did it and we both ran under a full moon. The omens were good.

It was a relief to finally set off. I'd struggled to get some sleep but before I knew it Janet was shaking me and we were off to Keswick. It was a convivial atmosphere with lots of supporters and friends at the Moot Hall to see me off. Then I was running. At last, this was it. With Colin Jones, Bill Mitton, and Robert Green it was a steady run up and over Skiddaw and Great Calva in the dark. The overcast sky hid the full moon. I felt tired. "Don't worry, you'll wake up when the sun comes up," the team assured me. It was starting to come light as we climbed Blencathra and raced down Halls Fell Ridge. Janet and Sean were manning the mobile support van at Threlkeld. I was a few minutes down on schedule but, as promised, I was starting to feel good and was relieved to have got through the night.

The sun was on the back of our necks as I climbed Clough Head



Ready for the off!

with Micky Donnelly, and Jeff and Peter Billington. The Dodds passed easily as Jeff and Peter entertained me with an endless stream of jokes. "Less laughing, and more running," Micky scolded, "you're not supposed to enjoy it!" We powered over the rest of the leg, probably a little too quickly as we'd pulled half an hour ahead of schedule by Dunmail. Janet and Sean were there to ply me with a variety of goodies to keep up the strength.

Leg three beckoned. Alan and Brian Kenny, Steve Schofield and John Broome escorted me as we made the long pull up Steel Fell. Alan set the perfect pace and it was steady away as we hit summit after summit bang on schedule. The number of people who came out on the hills to offer encouragement was amazing. Austin and Lucia, Martin and Nicola, John Crummett, Chris the barman from the New DG; there seemed to be hordes ascending from the valleys just to see me. It was a



Dave, Steve Schofield, Brian Kenny, John Broome and Alan Kenny on Bowfell

humbling experience. Hilary and Peter McGonagle, "We're just out for a picnic," were even wearing specially commissioned T Shirts identifying them as 'Dave Makin's BG Fell Crew 14-6-2003.' Then we met Dave 'Butty' Melling, a seventeen and a half stone prop forward I've known for twenty five years. He'd never walked up a mountain before but, there he was, stood on top of Bowfell clutching a big bunch of bananas. "You're a minute late," he growled, "where've you been?" I pointed to the backdrop of peaks that filled the skyline behind us, "Over all those mate." I don't know whether he actually believed me - or just how quickly his bananas disappeared. Just further on were Michael Pooler and Tony McHale. They'd told me the day before that they'd bring up a succulent meat and potato pie for me, "It kept me going on my BG," Michael had fondly remembered. Unfortunately by

the time I met them they'd eaten most of it themselves and I had to make do with a few crumbs. By now it was all becoming a bit of a blur. It was hot and sunny with a big blue sky but, despite the heat, I was feeling great. Jane Smith met us with her dogs and we bumped into lots more Todmorden Harriers out to wish me well. Phil Hodgson and Tony Shaw had rigged Broad Stand making it easy to romp up the cliffs and onto Scafell before Jim Smith led us off the top and into Wasdale at a cracking pace. The food and liquid provisions concocted by Janet slipped down well. I was right on schedule.

I was guided up Yewbarrow by Arthur Daniels, Mark Laithwaite, Neil Hodgkinson, Neil Sale and Colin Jones (this time with his dog). We passed Alan Brighton round the back of Yewbarrow before the endless drag up Red Pike. I ran on my own out and back to Steeple. As I returned Arthur thrust an old BG favourite, the crisp butty, into my hand. "Get this down yer neck lad," he ordered. Not one to argue with 'Top gun' I gulped it down. The soaring temperature necessitated lots of fluid and a hat that got dipped in every puddle of water we saw. I even had to have a couple of minutes sat in the shade on the gruelling pull up Great Gable. But I was still on time. The amazing support continued; I don't know how Leo and Arthur managed it but I got a flypast by the Red Arrows as we descended Green Gable. As we ran over to Brandreth Arthur dropped back with cramp. "Leave the old bugger," someone said, "he knows where he's going." He certainly



Still smiling!

did. We were amazed to see him hurtling down to Honister in front of us as we descended off Grey Knotts. We got a great welcome at Honister. Janet and Sean of course, plus my mum and dad, and lots more Rattis and Tod Harriers.

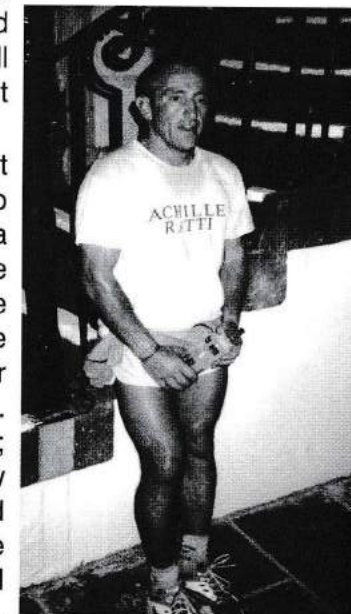
The last leg. This is where psychological strength has to kick in. Sean, Leo, Sheila Anderton, Helen Hodgkinson, Mandy Goth, Dave Hugill, and Paul Cooney accompanied me over Dale Head and Hindscarth with Leo setting a good pace. Phil met up with us on the 42nd and final peak of Robinson. It was dusk as we made the last big descent into Newlands and more people joined us for the run in.



Mark Laithwaite, Dave, Neil Hodgkinson and 'Macca' on Great Gable

what felt like a civic reception. It seemed like everybody was there. A clenched fist "Yes! I've done it." 22 hours 25 minutes. A marvellous feeling. It was handshakes and hugs all round before I was thrown in the back of the van and delivered to the New Dungeon Ghyll Hotel. Becky and Ian had kindly provided Janet and myself with a room. They'd even put us on the ground floor – I don't think I could have managed any stairs. But, despite the late hour, after a welcome shower, I did manage a few beers. And, somehow still awake on pure adrenalin, I was the last man standing in the bar!

I was amazed at the incredible support I got all the way round from family, club and friends. It really does make a difference to have so many people cheering you on. I'm bound to have missed a few names of those who were out there on the day but your encouragement was much appreciated. And, many thanks to the support squad; what a great team effort. Having a top crew guiding you, feeding you, and encouraging you helps takes the pressure off. As I said at the beginning I just turned up and ran. But what a run. What a day. One of the best.



Job well done!

Although the slight gradients felt like a 43rd peak we raced along the road. A breathless Mandy was heard to declare, "This is faster than my race pace!" Feeling incredibly elated I sprinted down the path into the centre of Keswick and ran down the middle of the road to the Moot Hall to