

Kirsty Hewitson

I was fortunate to have excellent weather for my Lakes, Meres and Waters (LMW) attempt starting June 4<sup>th</sup> 2021 at 10:00 from Loweswater. No rain, light wind and temperatures just below 20oC.

A small departure party waved us off from Loweswater and we made good time past Crummock and on to Buttermere to one of the major climbs on the entire route – up Red Pike. This passed quickly whilst chatting to supporters and we took a bearing off the top to ensure we picked up the right line for the descent to Ennerdale. The run along the valley bottom was arduous and uninspiring but we soon reached the climb to Black Sail Pass and then it's a glorious descent into Wasdale. We surprised the support crew by arriving nearly an hour early, which was far quicker than we ever managed in training runs.

Leg two begins with the climb past Burnmoor tarn followed by another gradual descent and then ascent to Devoke Water. We were sticking to schedule although it was becoming rather hot. Running toward the Seathwaite changeover on the road was energy sapping with the heat.

Leg three is one of my favourites because it involves some "proper fell" and navigating. It was the leg that I had recce'd the most since I was never completely happy with my lines from Goats – Low – Levers Water. However, Steve had also done a substantial amount of route checking and we hit all the lines spot on before the descent into Consiton.

By contrast, leg four was one of the legs that I was least looking forward to – it's basically approx. 15 miles of trail and road running. However, my support kept the conversation going, night arrived and the temperatures dropped. You also have to keep alert with the navigating to ensure that you don't miss the various small turns.

Leg five is THE big leg and, I think, defines whether you'll finish the LMWs and in what time. It has the most climb (2,000m) and equal most distance (20 miles). You're also starting to feel tired by the time you get there. It was where I started struggling with my stomach, which I'm prone to on ultras. It became a case of having a single potato or a single sweet. Coca-Cola also helped! It was a truly magical leg though with dawn breaking to a clear, warm day. I love running through the night – it almost distracts you from what you're doing and makes the challenge feel special.

Leg six starts with a trudge along to Ullswater and then there's the significant climb up Sticks Pass. By this time, it was starting to get very hot and the food wasn't going down well, but you know that the end is getting relatively "close". The final bit of descent into Stanah is super steep and most unpleasant after nearly 85 miles when you have sore feet!

Leg seven is another mixture of road and trail running. Some of it on horribly busy roads. However, you just have to get on with it and dodge the crowds as best you can in Keswick. The last road section to Over Water seemed to take forever and felt like it was all uphill. It was great to finish in a time of 30:10:22.

I personally feel that the best aspect of the LMWs is the support crew. You absolutely couldn't get round without them and the memories that I have will include them all. It almost feels like a reunion rather than an attempt and it generates even more stories for you to share. This community feel is why I love ultra running so much. The miles are a challenge, but it's the people that make it.

My deepest thanks and best hugs go to all the support crew (in leg order): Charmian Heaton (unerring magnificent road support throughout), Fiona Taverner Ballester (who put up with me before, during and after), Helen Elmore, Paul Jennings, Mike Harrison, Tim Rippon, Tim Ripper, Nick Sebley, Nicky Spinks, Steve Wathall, Clare Griffin, Paul Hunt, Rik Griffin, Fiona Pascall, Matt Milson, John Worth, Julie Ferris and Josie Greenhalgh.