

**Ben McGovern**

## **Lakes, Meres And Waters**

**01/06/2024**

**25:59:58**

<https://www.strava.com/activities/11554155275/overview>



I became aware of the Lakes, Meres and Waters in 2022 when I supported Alex Staniforth on his successful attempt. Despite it not being a typical mountain round, my interest was piqued, and the seed fully planted when supporting Sarah Perry on her completion. The route is special and gives a different perspective on the Lake District, though the road element interspersed throughout was one aspect I was concerned about. This meant introducing road running into my training. I had a time in mind that was up there, and I recced the route inside out so on the day there would be no surprises.

**Leg 1: Loweswater to Wast Water, Saturday, 08:00-12:09**

**Support: Alex Staniforth, Nathan Ball & Sarah Perry**

I'm lucky to have a core support crew who were assembled to see me off. Once underway, the pressure faded within the first few steps and the stunning views of the Crummock and Buttermere valley opened up. The heat made itself known, it felt warmer than the forecast temperatures as we touched Ennerdale. I pushed the pace on this leg, eager to secure a good start, but I always forget the slow drag up and over towards Haycock into Wasdale and I felt the clock bearing down on me. Eventually, as we met the road support, I remembered to quickly touch Wast Water to avoid a major hiccup!



**Leg 2: Water to Monk Coniston, Saturday, 12:16-17:27**  
**Support: Jake Lane, Jamie Rutherford & Tim Wiggins**

Since this is a long leg, I split it up with a brief stop in Seathwaite. There's a chunk of road in the first section so after a quick shoe change, I set off with friends Jake and Jamie who have supported on every round I've done so far.

The conversation flowed on the climb out of Wasdale the pace I pushed on the first section was now under control and set the tone for the day. Devoke Water was ticked off in no time. A surprise appearance from Rob and Diane from the Achille Ratti club lifted the spirits on this section through Eskdale Green.

I changed shoes in Seathwaite, swapping between a more cushioned pair for the road sections and fell for the off-road sections throughout the round. I also swapped support runners at this point with Tim Wiggins - who has a huge amount of experience including a winter completion of this challenge - joining for the next part.

The heat was full on, and the first low point was about to arrive. I used the direct line from near the top of Walna Scar Road to Goats Water and we nailed this compared to some of the recces.



Straight up the side of the Old Man of Coniston isn't appealing at the best of times and after 30 odd miles it was a chore. But we sailed down the other side ticking off Low Water and Levers Water using the direct line there too, before weaving through the mines and Coniston's throngs of tourists enjoying the sunshine to the head of the lake at Monk Coniston.



**Leg 3: Monk Coniston to Waterhead, Ambleside, Saturday, 17:36-20:32 Support: Luke Cook & Robin Leathley**

I was ready for the quiet and beautiful little lanes around Hawkshead but the low point hadn't gone anywhere, and the last thing I wanted to do was carry on eating but needs must. I set off in the direction of Esthwaite Water with Luke and Robin who are an awesome pair of runners. We weaved our way through the initial small paths and then onto the small lanes that take you over Hawkshead Hill into Hawkshead itself. I adored learning this section when training but on the day it was proving hard work.

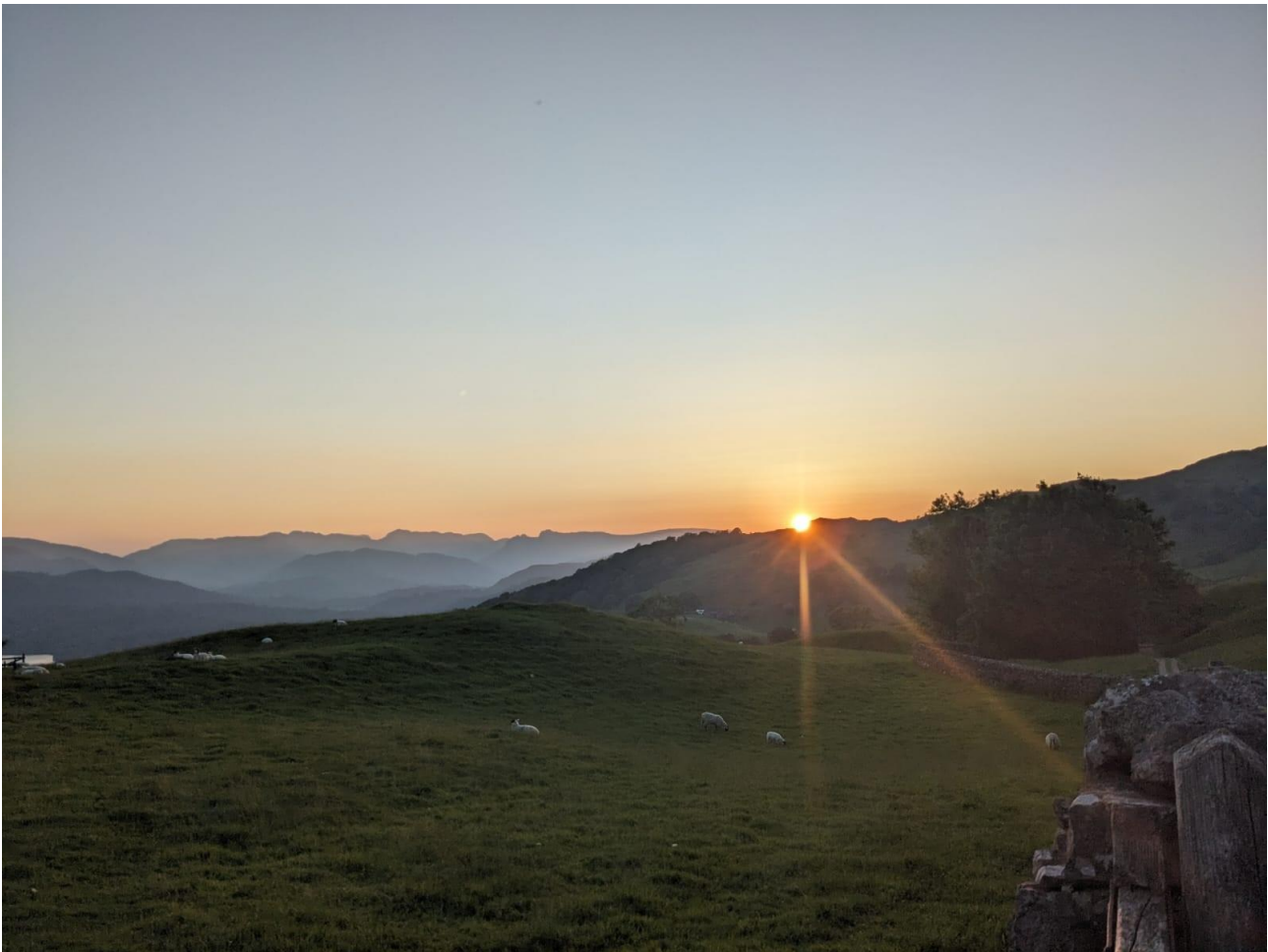
Both Robin and Luke were having a right old time taking in this lovely section that gives you a different perspective of the Lakes, me not so. It was only as we skirted towards Elterwater (Belter Water as Luke calls it!) That my problem solving (read as silence) over the last hour or so finally came up with the answer to why I was feeling so bad -- too many electrolytes. I turned to plain water and the last miles ticking off Grasmere and Rydal Water became far more enjoyable, and I actually started to talk! We sailed into the next support point at the Water Edge Inn for more shoe changing and more importantly cold pizza.





**Leg 4: Waterhead, Ambleside to Hartsop, Saturday/Sunday 20:42-03:29**  
**Support: Chris Welton & Richard Kendall**

Another two super experienced runners picked me up here ready for the graveyard shift. We cut through the beer garden catching some baffled looks and I touched Windermere. We were heading for my local fells now and the plan I had was to capitalise on that and the fact this was a mountainous leg and that's where my strength lies. I'd also managed to get an hour up on the schedule and wanted to build on that or at least maintain it. As we made our way up and over to Troutbeck and then on to Kentmere the most special views presented themselves along with a stunning orange glow as the sun set. Thank God we had those conditions as the long section out to Skegges Water really eroded my mood, it's a slog, especially getting yourself out of the other side of the water through bog and tussocks. I feel Chris and Richard won't be heading back there anytime soon. There's a really good bit of running now towards Kentmere reservoir and this had to be taken at a decent pace, easier said than done and another bout of suffering hit me. I kept reminding myself to look up and realise where I was -- it was still beautiful in the dark. The direct line out of Kentmere reservoir is brutal and didn't disappoint. I started to feel better here as we descended the nice technical section down ticking Small Water off to Haweswater. A small out and back and we were on our way back up to Blea Water and then the killer climb up to High Street. It was unreal, it's as if the orange glow never really went anywhere and it started to get going again as the sun slowly started rising. As you can imagine, this was a true mood lifter and we rolled into Hartsop at around 3:25am bang on schedule. I'll take that after a long night and not really talking much for the first few hours.



**Leg 5: Hartsop to Derwent Water, Keswick, Sunday 03:40-07:37**  
**Support: Kieran Hewkin & Richard Gayton**

This was where the question of whether all the road training I'd done was going to pay off. There is the final big off-road section over Sticks Pass but after that it's all road to the finish. I had a complete reset in Hartsop with a full change along with brushing my teeth, which I always find helps.

From then, I was tired but witnessing the valley around Ullswater being shrouded in the beginnings of a new day gave me a boost.

Richard is from London and this was his first intro to the Lakes so the climb passed quickly as it gave me a welcome distraction to describe the route to him. The climb was rewarded with one hell of a view, and I'd one of those special moments thankfully captured by Kieran. I pushed down the descent as this is what I love, steep and technical -- not sure Kieran and Rich enjoyed chasing me down it, but they had the road to pay me back on! The road to Keswick passed a lot quicker than I was expecting and we hit Derwent Water with a chunk of time knocked off the schedule.





**Leg 6: Derwent Water, Keswick to Over Water, Sunday 07:46-09:59 Support: Luke Cook & Sarah Perry**

This section shouldn't be underestimated as there's still 700ft of elevation to go even though it is just road. It was a joy to set out with Sarah bookending the attempt, and Luke finishing every one of these challenges I've set myself. Thank you so much my friend. The unwavering support and how far you go out of your way is so special and means a lot. The run to Bassenthwaite is along an A-road without pavement so I was thankful it was earlier than I'd predicted we had be on here. I was being dragged along here by my support, all I could do was look at my feet and remind myself to keep turning my legs over and eat Tangfastics. Once Bassenthwaite was touched the satisfaction of one body of water to go really helped. As we got back on to the road I could see a discussion about time and dipping under 26 hours... and then somehow, the pace picked up. Every time I got near my support they seemed to drift ahead again. More support arrived as they all raced to the finish, and my partner Niamh joined me to run in (this is after being up as long as me and covering all road support). I'm not sure where it came from but I turned myself inside out heading for Over Water and we picked up a train of people who had supported through the day as well as Rob and Diane from the Achille Ratti club.

I was on the grass and the water was in sight, a quick glance at my watch showed 25:59, it was time to sprint. Done, I touched the water and simultaneously stopped my watch, 25:59.58, that was close.











