

Chasing the Lakes: My LMW Journey

I'd toyed with the idea for years, but this time I made a promise—if I did one thing this year, it would be the LMW. So, I started to plan. Recces began in earnest, and with each trip out on the route, the challenge felt more exciting—though I knew I'd only attempt it in good weather.

To keep things simple (and flexible), I decided on minimal support. That way, if I had to cancel or postpone, I wouldn't be letting too many people down. Luckily, my two trusted running mates didn't hesitate when I asked them to cover 40+ miles of pacing. Add in my two kids and William, and the team was set.

I managed to reccé nearly all the waters—bar Devoke, Derwentwater (I figured I wouldn't miss that one), and Bassenthwaite (where I did, in fact, miss the path!). I also drove any long road sections I hadn't covered on foot. I sketched out a rough 30-hour schedule but didn't want to be tied to splits or pressured checkpoints like a Bob Graham.

Then came the week of the attempt. The forecast: a classic mix, with a thunderstorm warning thrown in. We left the final call until Friday. The plan? Set off and reassess at Hawkshead. If the weather turned, we'd stop. It meant Adam might have a wasted trip to the Lakes—but he was game, regardless.

Quiet Trails and Quality Checks: A Memorable Leg on the LMW

Pacer: The incredible Sam Downey

This leg was a treat—calm, scenic, and just a touch muggy. After an early start, I felt decent, though Red Pike gave me a bit of a wake-up call. It was the first climb of the day, so I put it down to warming up. The forecast had kept most people away; even West Water's usually busy shores were quiet.

Sam got a kick out of my system—handing him a laminated name tag after each water touch to make sure none were missed. I'd read about someone having to backtrack after skipping one. No thanks.

We reached Eskdale Green about 40 minutes ahead of schedule, greeted by my ever-reliable mum and dad. They served up a legendary lunch: pork pie, baked beans, and doughnuts. We ate in the rain—the only rain we saw until Keswick.

Miles, Mistakes, and Missed Drinks: The Mid-Leg Reality Check

We left Eskdale Green at a steady pace, bellies full and spirits high, heading towards Devoke Water. Despite the extended lunch stop, we arrived 20 minutes ahead of schedule. But the good pace took a hit as we left the road and plunged into a wildly overgrown path—more bramblebashing than trail running—before finally rejoining tarmac.

That's when the fatigue crept in. The flat stretch to Turner Farm felt tougher than it should have. I even stopped to walk, thinking, Only 30 miles in and I'm already

flagging? The climb up Walna Scar Road was a slog, and the top didn't bring the relief I'd hoped for—just sore knees and a growing sense of weariness.

We stuck to the main footpaths to tick off Goat's, Low, and Levers, but the descent from the Old Man was unforgiving. I'd promised myself a cold drink in Coniston, but somehow we passed straight



through. As we moved past the buzzing beer gardens, I couldn't help but think: Maybe they've got the right idea for a Saturday afternoon.

The Turning Point: A Battle of Mind and Miles

Pacer: The fantastic Adam Oakden – supported by Oscar, William and Milly

From Hawkshead Hill to Hawkshead, I made the call—it was over. This wasn't the usual low that fades with a snack or a second wind. I was deep in the bin. My knees were screaming, energy gone, and the thought of continuing felt impossible.

Still, I stuck to the plan: touch Esthwaite, then sit down at Hawkshead. I told my lad I was pulling out, and watched him quietly drift off to speak with Adam. A field full of cows—and one bull— briefly distracted me as we reached Esthwaite.

But on the way back, I started to doubt my decision to stop. What if painkillers help? What if food gives me a boost? Maybe I didn't need to DNF. Maybe I could still run the final leg with my kids, something they'd been looking forward to. Only 40 miles in—I can't pull out now! How bad can it be?

After what might've been the best fish and chips I've ever had—and a fresh change of socks and shoes—we set off again. I'd asked my wife to meet us at Troutbeck, fully expecting to call it there and head home. At least I'd have given it a go, and Adam would get a decent run out of it.

But something shifted. I felt better. The miles passed quickly. We reached Troutbeck for a quick stop, then began the slow climb over Garburn Pass to meet Emma at Kentmere.

Could the Comeback be on: A Run to Remember

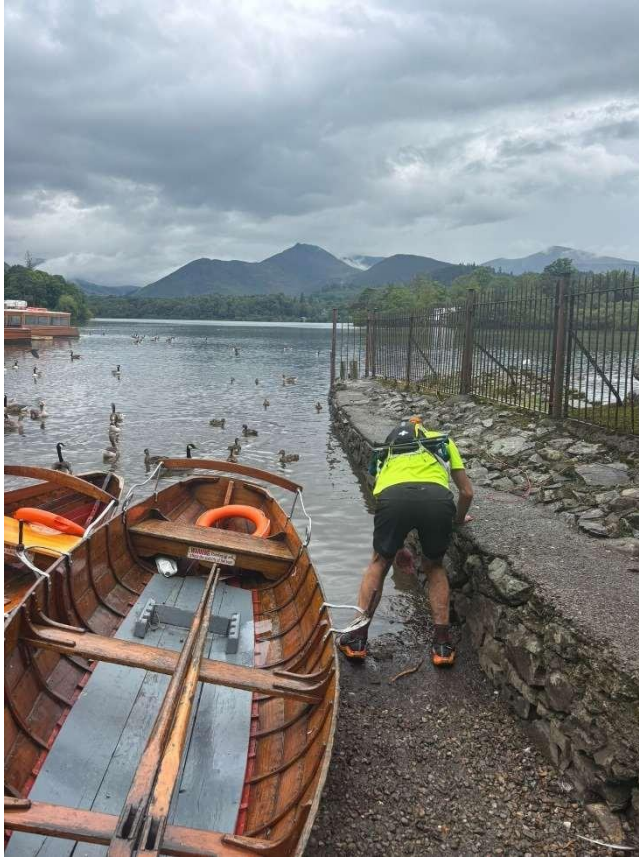
I reccied the section from Kentmere several times as I knew this would be in the dark and I remember thinking how the hell was I going to get up over the crags to High Street. I'd really enjoyed this section on my recces but this was now turning into a real slog.

Adding Kentmere Reservoir to the plan had seemed like a good idea—until the climb back to Nan Bield reminded me otherwise. At least we were moving slowly enough to enjoy the daylight. Haweswater was low, and despite Rob's reassurance that I only needed to reach the usual waterline, I went further down. Just to be sure.



Then came the climb past Blea Water—absolutely stunning. We paused often, not just to catch our breath, but to soak it all in. The descent from Hayeswater to the road dragged on, filled with a half-sensible chat about which Hodgson legs we'd done or reccied. I'm not sure we made much sense.

Finally, we reached Brothers Water. I found myself clambering through bushes to touch the water—something I definitely hadn't done on my reccie. But the thought of a sit-down at Hartsop was pulling me forward. One step at a time, the journey continued.



From Bacon Rolls to Overwater: A Journey Through the Grind

After one of the most glorious sit-downs imaginable—bacon rolls, hot coffee, and a moment to breathe—we set off over Sticks Pass. I'd told myself before starting: just get to Hartsop, then it's one climb and a flat-ish run to the finish. How wrong I was.

The thought of the three-mile stretch to Glenridding nearly broke me. But then came William and Oscar—aka Kilian (Jornet and (John) Kelly—bringing fresh legs, chatter, and encouragement. Their energy lifted mine, and the climb to Sticks Pass, though endless, became bearable. The descent was better than I remembered, and soon we were back at the van, dropping the lads off.

Truthfully, I'd had enough. But with less than 20 miles to go, what choice did I have? Just keep moving, and eventually the end would come.

The next section? It deserves its own book. But here's the highlight reel for future reminiscing:

- The swamp.
- The deceptive “2 miles to Keswick” sign.
- The crushing realisation that 4 hours still remained.
- The rain.
- Milly playing a blinder stepping in as pacer for a memorable 8.5 mile stint.
- The busy road.
- Missing the path to the church.
- The horses.
- The safety escort.
- Picking up Oscar for the final 4 miles.
- The endless hill.
- Finally seeing Overwater.
- Spotting Rob and Diane and finding the strength to hobble/run the last bit.
- Touching Overwater.
- And finally... sitting down.

37 hours and 54 minutes. It was all I had—and everything I had.

Mum and Dad

Emma, Milly & Oscar

Sam

Adam, Natalie, William & Elizabeth

Rob & Diane

Joss Naylor (RIP)

Ben Timbers



With sincere and massive thanks to: