It was Friday the 11th. I was sat in the Garden of Achille Ratti's hut in Wasdale, drinking my 15th cup of tea of the day. The sun was bouncing off the crags of the Screes.

I was so tempted just to drive around to Loweswater and start there and then. But the plan was to start the next day at 8am, and the forecast was predicting the perfect storm wind, rain, and lots of it.

Saturday morning came around and Dad drove myself, Dom Raby, Tom Makin and Matt Dunn around to Loweswater. It was quite a journey; the rain was bouncing off the road. I looked around at the three in the back. The look on everyone's faces said it all, and we all just started laughing.

Here we go again!

Loweswater to Wasdale

We touched Loweswater and away we went. I set the pace and, before long, we had forgotten about the rain.

Crummock Water and Buttermere passed with a hop, skip and a jump. Then came the big climb up Red Pike. We didn't realise just how much we had been sheltered from the wind until we went over the summit. The strong westerlies pinned us to the floor.

We needed to get down, and quickly.

The clag was down too, making finding a good line off the mountain far from easy. At that point, we were just glad to get down on anything that got us out of the wind.

The fields before Ennerdale were completely flooded. The River Liza was in full spate, with the water almost up to the top handrail of the footbridge.

We reached Ennerdale Water around 27 minutes down on schedule.

We headed up through the forest and towards the summit of Tewit How. The line contours below the summit before heading up to the col between Haycock and Steeple. Unfortunately, we lost height on a bad line, making the climb back up to the col harder than it needed to be.

After the col, we dropped down Nether Beck towards Wastwater.

At Wastwater, we said goodbye to Dom and Matt. Tom then took me over Birker Fell via Burnmoor Tarn. By this point, the weather was starting to dry up.

Devoke Water to Coniston

Waiting for me at Birker Fell were Felix Watts, Andy Poole and my long time fell running partner, David Jackson.

I hadn't seen Dave since our friend and mentor, Dave Makin, had passed away suddenly while out walking on Kentmere with a friend. It was a lot to take in, but I pushed the emotions deep down.

We could have a cry another time.

For now, we had a job to do .

We headed for Devoke Water. Once we touched the water, we headed back towards the road via Woodend Farm, then east over Ulpha Fell. It's pretty rough ground, but there are good trods to be found.

The quicker option is to drop down the road through the old quarries to Dunnerdale Hall, then head up the valley road to Turner Hall Farm. But the road isn't for me and there was enough of that coming on the next leg.

We passed High Stonythwaite House and High Wallowbarrow Farm before dropping down to Seathwaite.

At this point, I had been working out times in my head and somehow managed to convince myself that I was three hours down.
In reality, I was only an hour and a half down.

That mistake put me in a bad place mentally. My wife and kids were waiting for me at Coniston, and I didn't want to disappoint them.

After some wise words from Dave and some cold pizza, we flew up the Walna Scar track.

Unfortunately, we dropped Andy Poole He had been struggling. He had been in the Alps for a few months and he just wasn't feeling his best. He carried on down the Walna Scar track towards Coniston while we picked up the pace.

We headed to Goat's Water, then took a direct line to the summit of the Old Man. From there we dropped down Low Water before another little traverse to Levers Water.

For me, this is the best part of the LMW.

We legged it down towards Coniston, and suddenly there were family, friends and the best bag of chips in the Lakes waiting for me.

It was a real high point and a reminder that I was actually enjoying this and, judging by the smiles around me, it looked like everyone else was too.

Happy days.

Coniston to Windermere

This is the road leg where I think a lot of fell runners can be put off doing the LMW.

But when you're 40 odd miles in, putting on some comfy road shoes and switching off from navigating is actually a welcome change. And having some new friends to talk to makes the miles pass quickly.

It certainly wasn't boring.

We saw a pair of deer, a badger and, most importantly, bats.

Bloody bats.

They kept divebombing us, right in our faces. Maybe they were head touches who knows!

Tom Appleton was leading the way while Gareth kept us entertained with riddles and got increasingly intoxicated by Rob Chaddock's Christmas cake.

Before long, we were at Windermere.

Windermere to Hartsop

I think when completing a challenge like the LMW or BG, a lot of success comes down to your support crew.

In total, I had 25 road crew and runners, which can be a logistical nightmare. The reason I like to have at least three people on each leg is because there is always the chance of something unforeseen happening.

Luckily, there weren't many problems.

Unfortunately, on this leg I had lost two runners due to illness and was down to just one runner, Matthew Smith.

I got the message while I was running Leg 3. I didn't panic. Matt and I had done this leg a few times, both in the day and at night.

By the time I reached Windermere, Andy Ford, who was unwell, had reached out and found me a replacement Charlie Parkinson.

I knew of Charlie. He'd had a lot of success a few years earlier, setting an under 20 record and becoming the first teenager to break the 19-hour barrier for the Bob Graham Round. We'd had a few battles at local races, but other than that, we hardly knew each other.

Yet here he was, standing in the Waterhead car park at 10:15pm on a Saturday night, ready to run 20 miles.

The fell running community really is the best in the world.

The night was clear and warm perfect conditions.

We made our way over to Skeggles Water. Charlie was getting impatient. We'd been running for ten miles and still hadn't touched any water.

Hopefully, he'd be impressed by the last ten miles. There was plenty of water and plenty of good climbs to come.

We ticked off Skeggles, then headed over to Sadgill and up and over Gatescarth Pass towards Haweswater.

Haweswater is about as far east as the round goes, and once you reach that point, you get a real feeling that you're on the home stretch.

Even though there were still 30 miles to go, you could almost taste success.

I was quite excited about getting to Haweswater. It felt a bit like getting new runners onto a leg and I certainly had a new team of road support.

My Uncle John Pollard, cousin Joe Pollard and his ten year old son, John, were waiting for me.

At 70 miles, I was two hours late, but the car park was lit up like a runway, with red lights leading me through the gates.

We were short of nothing.

Coffee. Butties. Rice pudding.

The lads did me proud.

We spent 18 minutes at this stop and rightly so. The lads reminded me that we had to get going.

So off we went, up to Small Water and Blea Water, then up and over towards Hayes.

We finished the leg at Hartsop at 5:30am.

Brothers Water to Legburthwaite

The great thing about the dawn of a new day is that, after a bacon butty and a brew, you kind of forget you haven't slept.

You feel ready for another run.

The weather was doing exactly what the forecast had promised: clear, warm and still.

Time for short shorts and some new friends.

Kat Klunder, Josie Greenhalgh LMW number 10 and Tony Marlow LMW number 7.

I knew there was going to be a lot of chat on this leg.

I can't think why!

We ticked off Brothers Water, then Ullswater, before reaching the last climb of the round: Sticks Pass.

I was gutted.

I'd been enjoying all the climbing.

It was the descending I wasn't enjoying quite so much. By this point, the descents were brutal.

To top it off, as we came down the other side towards Legburthwaite, the path was like a slip and slide. The day before, there had been an event where people were going up and down Helvellyn as part of an Everesting challenge, and flags were still littering the fells.

But I was too busy enjoying the morning to start moaning.

Maybe just a little.

Legburthwaite to Over Water

I was very thin on the ground for help on this leg. I just didn't have anyone.

Dad was itching to save the day, but he was still under health investigation. Mum quickly came up with a possible candidate and reached out to Megan James, an Achille Ratti member and LMW number 31.

She agreed to help, although she did have some concerns about my pace. She had been at the Old Crown Round race a long counter for the English Championships the day before.

She didn't need to worry about my pace.

As we entered the final hour, word had got around about the quiet last leg.

Josie, Tony and Kat fancied carrying on to the finish, bagging themselves another 26 miles. Felix Watts fancied a look at the final stretch too.

So two became six.

It was now the busiest leg of the round.

I'm glad it was, because I had seriously underestimated the final 16 miles.

It was also the only leg of the round I hadn't recce'd. I had done part of it before, helping Josie Greenhalgh on her LMW a couple of years ago, but only as far as Derwent Water.

The section from Keswick to Bassenthwaite Lake is one I would encourage anyone considering the challenge to have a look at.

Some people jump on the A591 all the way, but depending on the time of day, that can be dangerous.

We went along the River Derwent and through the farmland, which is a cracking route but it definitely needs looking at beforehand.

We reached Bassenthwaite, and waiting at the water's edge was all the family, enjoying the sunshine.

Five miles to go.

As we left Bassenthwaite behind us, we were treated to the opening of the last gate by Uncle Gary Pollard, cousin Yves and his son Leo Pollard.

As we continued, six became eight.

Matthew Smith and Gareth Foulkes joined us to witness the final suffering.

From there, we ran towards the finish it felt like it was a low key fell race.

I touched Over Water in **29 hours and 17 minutes**.

And that was it.

Loweswater to Over Water.

29 hours and 17 minutes.

A hell of a journey, made possible by an incredible group of family, friends, runners and supporters.

The LMW is a massive undertaking, but the thing that will stay with me most isn't the time. It's the people.

My Final Word

I would like to dedicate my round to my Mum.

Alongside my Dad, and on behalf of the Achille Ratti Climbing Club, Mum is one of the record keepers of the round. Since my Grandad passed away, she has continued to turn out, meeting, encouraging and supporting people taking on the challenge.

She has given so much of her time to the LMW and to the people who come to take it on.

I felt I owed it to her to give this round everything I had and to finish it knowing I had done my absolute best.

So, Mum, this one's for you.