

## Long Tour of Bradwell 9 August 2014

*(All photos courtesy of Nick Ham)*



*A choice of two gates at the top of the field just after the race start*

The 9am start gave the day time to recover from the early morning shower and heat up from the still mild 14C. It wasn't long before the 90 runners in this year's tour were feeling the effects of the warming sun and by the finish we were up to 23C at Bradwell. The race had 16 dibber checkpoints of which 6 were manned with drinks and a few sweets etc. As the day progressed these water check points became increasingly welcome.

So this year we set off from the 'field' in the centre of Bradwell and charged for gate 1 or gate 2, with a few seconds gained or lost depending on your choice. Soon it was single file past the cement works before opening out onto the wider tracks to reach the top of Cave Dale. I caught up with Kate Whitfield at this point and we ended up doing the rest of the route together. The previous day's rain had dried up making a potentially slippery descent of the limestone rocks in Cave Dale more straightforward. The first of the water points, plenty taken on board here.

Kate and I swapped our injury concerns, her achilles tendons and my overly tight hamstrings. As we jogged along Hollowford road out of Castleton Kate decided to add to her collection by falling flat on the ground where she left some skin from the palms of both hands. The ascent up to Hollins Cross gave a chance for Adrian Howlett to come past and we were to swap positions a number of times until near the last section.

Down and then up to Edale and the second drinks point, again welcomed. I have two OMM drinks bottles with pop up tops, one is a bit loose and does not work well, the other is tighter and works OK. I'd brought the wrong one on this trip so my full water bottle quickly became just 3/4 full – a fact quickly pointed out to me by John Minta who we were to share the next 15 miles with.

The crowds were out on this fine Saturday and we had a long string in a walking party to pass as we ascended Ringing Roger's lower slopes. A much improved route to Druids Stone for me this year, as advised by Kate, and then a good sloped descent below the rocks before descending off Rowland Cote moor to the valley. Thankfully I had applied sun cream and cap offered useful protection, but that did not stop it being warm in the valleys. Up we went to Back Tor and near the top Catherine Litherland came past going strongly uphill. Catherine, John, Kate and I were to stay more or less together until we came off Stanage Edge edge.

My hamstrings and Kate's achilles had now been tested and were holding up OK, but at the 'FB' near Hope Kate decided to go up a notch and added an ankle twist to her collection and emphasised it with a "that's me done for the day now". But a few seconds later she was jogging and moving freely and off we went to drinks stop number 3. The tactic here was to get one or two cups of water down, and just partially fill up the leaky bottle to avoid getting water dribbling over my bumbag and shorts.



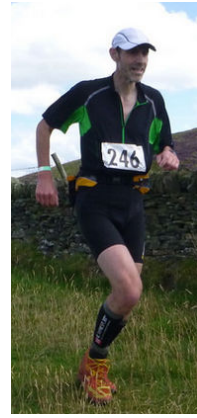
John Minta



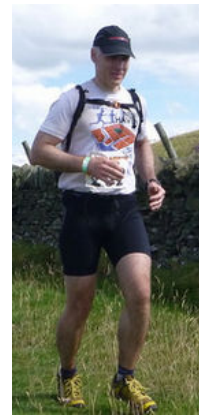
Catherine Litherland



Kate Whitfield



Nigel Aston



Adrian Howlett

Breezy on top, so much so that I removed my cap before the wind took it. Some jogging and a bit of stumbling over the rocks, but a better route off the Edge's edge for me this year down to another welcome drinks cp. A few cupfuls, water bottled filled too (3/4) and then off. Catherine dropped behind a bit here – topping up on fuel, and Ben Edwards joined us. We took the Eastern of the three routes down to Toad's Mouth, about half way down my water bottle bounced out the holder in the bumbag and I caught it. Funny! I put it back in. A little later it bounced out again – it turned out the elastic had broken. So I carried the bottle – until it was nearly empty then it got tucked down my shirt.

Toad to the Grindleford railway crossing needs a bit of care. This year the route was well taped and given many competitors had gone before and trampled grass and bracken the way was easier to follow than expected. Out of the woods and into the open, with the heat back on. I was wilting. Ben and John forged ahead, I plodded on managing a jog trying to keep up with Kate. Along the river, level going, outskirts of Hathersage we reached the final water cp, lovely.

From the Hathersage cp I could justify walking a bit as the road goes uphill. In fact quite a bit of walking up the pavement and then walking up the narrow lane. Eventually it was time to try a jog, but before that Adrian Howlett came past for the final time. The route along the valley is OK and the newly repaired Stoke Ford foot bridge looked resplendent and solid. Walk and jog up the lane from Abney, round the curve and into the field. Time to put on the parachute. A dry descent, so OK.

A WW1 event outside the pub in Bradwell has a good crowd in attendance. The finish comes and Kate and I dib together. Great. We find some shade on the pavilion steps, and enjoy this most welcoming of all the drinks cps! The prize giving takes place and then it's time to head off. Just as I was leaving Andy Robinson (Runfurther chief organiser) comes in and resumes a lying down position on the grass – pretty shattered. Later Emma David and Dick Stroop (Runfurther stalwarts) also finished.

I was a little disappointed that my time was 16 mins slower than last year, but more pleased when I found out this year's winner was 17 mins slower than last year.

So 9 done in the Runfurther Series – 3 to go.

Many thanks to Richard the organiser and all his crew for a well marshalled race.

Nigel Aston

And some of the Runfurther crew ...



Andy Robinson



Emma David



Dick Stroop