

IT'S MY ROUND!

A report on the first completion of the Freeman Round

On Tuesday 25th June, to mark my fiftieth year, I completed a new round of the Lakeland fells, devised by myself - the 'Freeman Round': 50 miles, 28 peaks and nearly 15,000' of ascent. Starting and finishing in Ambleside (Golden Rule pub), the route is as follows (summits in caps):

Ambleside (Golden Rule), LOUGHRIGG, SILVER HOW, BLEA RIGG, SERGEANT MAN, HIGH RAISE, ROSSETT PIKE, Sty Head, GREAT GABLE, GREEN GABLE, BRANDRETH, GREY KNOTTS, Honister, HIGH SPY, CAT BELLS, Hawse End, Keswick, LATRIGG, Newsham (Threlkeld), CLOUGH HEAD, GREAT DODD, WATSON'S DODD, STYBARROW DODD, RAISE, WHITESIDE, HELVELLYN LOWER MAN, HELVELLYN, NETHERMOST PIKE, DOLLYWAGGON PIKE, Grisedale Tarn, FAIRFIELD, HART CRAG, DOVE CRAG, HIGH PIKE, LOW PIKE, Ambleside(Golden Rule).

For me this is a natural and meaningful route, incorporating as it does sections of a number of classic races (Loughrigg-Silver How, Borrowdale, Anniversary Waltz, Helvellyn, Fairfield) and also most of one section of the BGR. It is quite a 'runnable' round, the only really rough bit being Gable. The middle section between Hawse End and Newsham is mostly 'trail' rather than fell (although I actually found this the hardest section on the day – mostly because of the hardness of the paths after the softness of the fell).

When I devised the round I wanted it to be do-able in daylight hours, and finishing in a reasonable time to go to the pub for a couple of pints and then have a meal at The Old Smithy chippy! I decided it should start and finish at The Golden Rule because it is my favourite pub and is well placed as a start and finish point.

I had been planning to do the round on Sunday 23rd June, but decided to postpone it because of the bad weather forecast of heavy rain, low cloud and strong winds. I would have had running support all the way if I'd gone ahead and done it on that day, but it wouldn't have been as enjoyable, and I may have struggled to get round in a reasonable time. The weather forecast was good for Tuesday 25th and so I decided to do it in this good 'weather window', even though that meant running solo for the first two thirds – but with invaluable roadside support at Honister, Hawse End and Newsham from Ben Evans and Christeen Taylor. Jim Tyson ran with me for the third section from Newsham to Ambleside, and it was good to have his company. The weather conditions were perfect, with some warm sunshine tempered by high white cloud, a gentle breeze on the tops and excellent visibility.

Setting off from Ambleside at 6.15am I was working to a schedule of 13 hrs, 20 mins, but on the day I felt good for most of the way and from Gable onwards I steadily

gained slightly on my estimated times between each summit and finished the round at 6.51pm in 12 hrs, 41 minutes.

When I first designed the round I was only vaguely aware of the Joss Naylor Challenge, but then later discovered that it has similar statistics, and my round could be considered an alternative to the JNC – though with the advantage of it being a round rather than a point-to-point challenge, as well as it being informal. Also you don't have to be over fifty to do it. It could also be of interest to those who feel the Bob Graham Round is too much, and who want to run a round that is do-able all in daylight hours.

Getting under 12 hours for the Freeman Round should certainly be possible, especially with running support all the way. My timekeeping method (for noting times at summits and other points) was not the most efficient and probably slowed me down by up to a minute at each point, adding maybe half an hour to my total time.

The photograph (by Christeen) shows Jim, Ben and myself at the end of the round, outside the Rule, before getting changed and going inside for pints of Dizzy Blonde.

If anyone fancies having a go at the Freeman Round I can provide more detailed route information etc.

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