



## On The Start Line – A Month of Racing

### *TRIGGER RACE SPECIAL*

2015 saw Meltham AC runners line up at the Marsden to Edale Trigger race for the third year in a row. Taking in Black Hill, Crowden, Bleaklow, Snake Pass, Mill Hill and Kinder Plateau on the way, the linear race is so much more than the sum of its parts, with the ever changing January weather adding its own challenges on top of the ups, downs and underfoot conditions. Steve Perren started it all in 2013, running a fantastic 4:56, inspiring Andy Lang, Christian Lloyd and Jeff Miller to follow in his footsteps in 2014 with a mixture of fortunes and almost two hours separating Steve's 5:20 and Jeff's 7:15 as the clag came down and caused havoc. Despite the forecast of wind and snow; Steve, Christian and Jeff lined up again this year, with Giles Bailey, Sam Bolton, David Sadler and friends of the club Alan Hiron and Andrew Thompson joining them. Andy Lang joined Nick Thompson, Susi Sadler and Paul Elliott on the support.



### GILES' STORY

It's still dark; it's cold and the car is being buffeted by the wind blowing down the Colne Valley. The options are a) sign on then retire and go home back to bed or b) run up to Black Hill decide it's too windy and cold then back to Marsden to retire and go home. After a proper kit check I sign on and start to warm up in the clubhouse though I'm still not convinced this is a good idea. Just before we become too warm and decide to stop in the club house all day we go outside where it is now actually light and marginally warmer. After a quick pose for photographs we're off.

We leave Marsden Cricket Club then cross Butterley Reservoir dam wall and up the Wessenden valley track. I consciously take it steady all the way to the Sky Road; must be thinking of going to Edale after all. The flagstones after the A635 have a light covering of snow and slush but aren't too slippery; cross Dean Clough then slowly crest the brow of the slope onto Black Hill. The wind has picked up and I wonder how wild it will



be on the more exposed Bleaklow and Kinder Scout; so I must be going to Edale. After the checkpoint at Soldiers Summit I drop out of the snow and it's an easy line into Crowden Little Brook, then quickly down the track into Crowden where I see all the travelling Meltham support.

A quick drink and a jelly baby it's off to Bleaklow via Lawrence Edge. I walk up Lawrence Edge following a fairly well defined path before onto the open moor. At this point Nicky Spinks (the race organiser) comes past me which is either good news – I can follow her on some sneaky lines or bad news - I'm going too fast early on and am going to blow up. I keep up with her and there is a small clough with a good trog which leads into Wild Boar Clough. Ian Sutcliffe (Stadium Runners) passes me at this point – 'What's he doing behind me? I must be going too quick.' It now feels like we are all on the same route; up Wild

Boar Clough, Pennine Way then across more rough ground to Shelf Stones trig point and the next check point. Playing follow my leader again I leave Shelf Stones for the Pennine Way and Snake Pass. Andy, Nick and Susi are all waiting at Snake Pass offering words of encouragement.

Another check point; a drink and jelly baby; off onto the most boring piece of running ever – the flagstones to Mill Hill accompanied with a head wind.

Two miles of tedium; the only things of note are I pass Nicky Spinks, Ian Sutcliffe cruises past me and there is a slight kink in the path where the wind changes from into my face to onto my right shoulder. From Mill Hill I walk up onto the edge of Kinder Scout and the penultimate check point where there is only a jelly baby on offer. The path along the edge is defined but rough going and with tired legs that are on the



point of cramping up I trundle onto Kinder Downfall. The wind is blowing the water from the downfall back up the hill so all the rocks and vegetation in the vicinity are covered with a layer of ice. Unfortunately at this point I'm not that interested in scenery I just want to finish and I reckon I've another 5 miles to go. To keep things going I try to catch a group in front of me but it's just not happening. However, I slowly reach the final check point at Kinder Low; 4 miles to go maybe less. At this point it's either down into the valley or stay on the tops. The tops is shorter and there's somebody in front – tops it is. The problem is I'm slowing down, the people in front are slowly disappearing out of sight, my legs are packing up, my stomach feels queasy – I want to sit down with a cup of tea. Finally the path starts to head down and I can see Edale, all I have to do is negotiate is a short steep hill into the fields below. Somebody else is trying to slide down the snowy slope on his backside – not just me that's suffering then. I limp down the hill and then

manage a staggering run through the village to the finish – time to stop.

Thanks to Susi Sadler for encouragement and lift from Edale to the Travellers Rest. Thanks to Andy Lang and Nick Thompson for their vocal support. I'll crew for you all next year.

## **CHRISTIAN'S STORY**

I felt marginally less ill-prepared than last year's Trigger. I'd done plenty of enjoyable recces with Steve and Alan, if not the full distance, invested in a pair of metal-spiked fell shoes to avoid falling over quite so often, and managed to avoid any injuries, colds or hangovers prior to the race.

Once we got underway with some great Meltham support, I paced myself up to Wessenden Head opting for the road rather than cross-country. There was plenty of opportunity to fall into a bog later on. The climb up to Black Hill was increasingly icy

and cold but a warm smugness over my specialist footwear helped. The descent was enjoyable, a chance to run a bit, chat to a runner from Glossop and fall into a bog or two.

Jelly beans and the Meltham cheerleaders awaited at Crowden before the dread of climbing Laurence edge. Bleaklow was snowy and I picked an instinctive line straight to the stile, while my line to Higher Shelf was a mess. Then, distracted by watching a mountain hare I headed off in the wrong direction before someone called me back.

I did dwell on the idea of getting into a warm car at Snake Pass before heading into the increasing wind. The flags up to Mill Hill were hard work and I started to feel the downside of metal-spikes. Hands too cold to get my spare buff on. Struggling to get my hood untangled. Feeling hungry and decidedly cold. It was autopilot around Kinder, tagging along with any runners I could find. Kinder downfall was going in the wrong direction turning water into icicles and forming a mini snow storm. By the time I got to the last check point I was struggling to unzip my jacket to show my number.

I figured everyone else was probably finished by now, certainly Steve, Alan and Giles. So I was surprised to catch up with Sam and Steve and then half a mile later Alan. We were all in a similar state and decided to finish as we started, together. In the end I don't know if I was more surprised by my quicker time or the amount of snacks Sam had consumed during the race. Either way it was a great race, especially once it was over!

## **SAM'S STORY**

Tripped over coming out of the car park at the start and spilled the contents of my rucksack all over Wessenden track. Great start. Nice descent from Black Hill check point down to Crowden, with a double leg, waist high bog detour. I was worried about this section, as I'd only recced it once, so it was nice to tick that part off and really nice to see Andy, Nick and Susi cheering us along.

Slogged up Lawence Edge. Nailed the navigation over from Bleaklow Head to Higher Shelf via Wildbour Clough. This was the other section I was worried about, as there's the most potential to get really lost, really quickly. Coming over the top, everyone took a different route. I decided not to follow anyone and take my own bearing. I'd remembered about Andy saying that he'd followed someone else's foot prints and ended up on



the wrong route. I wiped out again coming off Bleaklow Head and had a real struggle to get out of another bog.

In my head, I thought once I'd got to the Snake Pass Road, it was mostly done...wrong. The old mill bottom flag stones over Featherbed Moss to Mill Hill were really tough. There's lots of gaps in the flags where you could go down and break an ankle, so you had to be really careful. Most of the track was flooded as well and the water was ice cold. Looking back, that's where I really started to feel the wind and start to slow down.

By the time we got to Mill Hill, Steve Perren had caught up with me and although we didn't run together until Kinder down fall, I'd like to think that we pushed each other on, swapping positions regularly. Kinder downfall, with its upside down waterfall and icicles, was a highlight. Although there wasn't much up and down, after a long run, I really struggled



along this section and was glad to get to Kinder Low. Christian was next to join the "party" at Jacob's Ladder. We ran together chatting for the last section and even caught up with Christian's friend Alan, who we'd done some recces with. The last section was really

nice and relaxed and a great way to finish off the run. Once again, it was lovely to run in and see some smiling Meltham AC faces at the end.

Would I do it again, definitely.

Food and drink for the run included 2 cans of coconut water, 1 banana, 1 apple, 3 homemade energy bars, peanuts, dried apricots and a naughty jaffa cake. No gels or energy drinks. Running on plants...and a jaffa cake. "

## **SAM'S "WHATEVER HE COULD FIND IN THE KITCHEN/MADE UP ON THE CUFF" TRIGGER ORGANIC, DAIRY FREE, GLUTEN FREE ENERGY BAR RECIPE.**

- 250g oats (blended with a hand blender)
- 50g gram flour
- 50g chopped raisins
- 50g chopped dried apricots
- 25g chia seeds
- 25g raw cocoa powder
- 3 table spoons of Marsden honey
- 2 table spoons of daily balance oil (could just use olive oil or coconut oil)
- 2 table spoons of water

Mix it all together, lightly oil a glass oven proof dish, squash it all in and bang it in the oven on about 180 degrees for about 20 minutes or so.

## **ANDY'S STORY**

The Trigger race is perhaps the hardest run I did in 2014, it has rough terrain, big hills and is nearly marathon distance. Just what you need to get over Christmas. Except this year after sustaining an injury I decided not to run this year's Trigger race. I was happy with my decision not to run but still wanted to be part of the day and when Nick and Jeff asked if I could give them lifts I didn't need to think twice.

The start at Marsden cricket club was a stark contrast to last year, watching everyone do their kit check and drinking coffee,

whereas last year I was racking my brains for an excuse to get out of it. The weather too was starkly different last year was so cold and icy at the club that the start couldn't come quick enough, this year much warmer, but with a strong cold wind from the west a ruminant of gales from the day before. I had run up Black hill the day before, as these runners were about to and the wind nearly took me off my feet a couple of times, plus it was very wet underfoot and the streams had risen so stepping stones couldn't be seen.

Running for the club were three runners who ran the year before, Jeff, Christian and Steve, this being Steve's third run. Three other runners were taking the challenge for the first time, Giles, Sam and David. Also running within our group was Andrew, Nick's brother and Alan a friend of Christian who had done a lot of recces with Christian and Steve. I had spoken quite a bit about what a hard run this was since last year's run and felt that I had encouraged particularly Sam and David to do the race and want them to enjoy the challenge as much as I had.

After a briefing from the race directors the race was off and the runners set off across Butterley dam and up the Wessenden valley. Left behind in a strange quiet with me were Nick who was following Andrew and Susi following David. Susi decided to go to the top of Wessenden to see the runners and Nick and I decided to get some supplies and head to Crowden car park. When the first man came past at Crowden we got out of the car and walked to the top of the woods to cheer the boys on. Giles (no surprise) was first past us quickly followed by Sam, Andrew, Steve, Alan, and Christian then a bigger gap back to David and Jeff. All looked in good form and high spirits. Walking back to the car though we meet Paul who had been stood with Susi and David had told her he'd had a fall in the mud and was struggling a bit so we were a little concerned.

After Crowden we knew the runners faced the hardest part of the course, a climb up Lawrence edge and a rough crossing of Bleaklow which had a snowy covering. We made our way to the other side of Bleaklow on the Snake Pass to meet them again. This checkpoint is much higher than Crowden and when we got out of the cars you could tell. The wind was very strong and freezing cold. We walked a couple of metres down the wet and boggy track to wait for them. Whether they took a long time or it was the cold time seemed to drag on until Giles came through still

out in front of our group, closely followed by Andrew and Sam, then a gap to Alan and Steve and a further gap to Christian who seemed to be struggling a



bit but still came through smiling. After Christian there was a long gap and Nick decided to go on to the finish at Edale in case Andrew made it there before him. Susi was growing more a more anxious about David as we stood in the freezing cold for what seemed to be a very long time. When he finally arrived he said he was struggling and said to me "You didn't

tell me it was this hard". Also said that he had passed Jeff who would probably pull out here, so while Susi fussed over David with a warm drink and some food I waited for Jeff. When he appeared he looked to be running in OK but as he got closer I could see he was holding his leg back a bit. He told me straight away that he was done and we went to the checkpoint to tell the officials. Apparently on the Black hill section he had put his foot down in a puddle which turned out to be the gap between two slabs and hurt his shin and couldn't run properly after the climb up Lawrence edge. When he showed me the injury I don't think I'd have bothered trying to do Lawrence edge as he had a three inch bruise on the shin. We got in the car and drove to the finish in Edale.

When we arrived we were just in time to see Giles finish looking tired but still with plenty of running in him, his time 4:42. Next was Andrew who had kept in front of Sam and keeping under 5 hours with a time of 4:58. We waited for quite a while now expecting to see Sam, Steve or Alan next. Instead we saw them all and Christian who had caught up to them all, cross the line together in a great time of 5:19. That just left David and again Susi was getting worried about him shouting "come on Sadler" seemed to work and he came in looking much recovered in 6:04. The runners went to get changed, have a drink and some food at the hall down the road and all soon felt much better. I knew that Sam, David and Giles had enjoyed the run in the pub later when tales of how the run had gone started to flow.

Crewing for other people makes you realise what it's like for your loved ones when you're out on some of these runs. The worry about where you are if you've fallen down a pot hole and driving in the snow all make it a uncomfortable experience and although there's no physical pain, I think I'd prefer to be running.

### **JEFF'S STORY**

After last years' experience of getting lost on the Kinder Plateau, I was determined that this year would be different. How wrong I was to be. Recce's had been disrupted and sporadic, my training for the Frostbite 30, which I hoped would put me in good stead for The Trigger, left me with a confused mind about distance running, a troublesome hip and, with 10 days to go, I came down with a cold...but I was focussed and ready to go. My hip had eased, I was drugged to the eyeballs with loquets and lemsips and my only concern was the lack of running I had managed in the previous three weeks.

Andy had kindly agreed to give me a lift over to the start and the weather looked better than forecast, although the wind was still in good gale. It was great to see so many faces at the club house, and before we knew it we were off. The start is quite something for a distance race with plenty of jostling and bumping before settling in up the ever familiar Wessenden. Christian was just in front and David was alongside me, Giles had gone flying off, as I expected Steve had too, wasn't too sure where Sam was, but I felt ok, and even had to take off my hat and buff as I was getting a bit too warm. All that was to change as we took on Black Hill and the wind started to whip about, and blimey did it carry a chill... The flags were quite runnable and I was feeling OK until I managed to slip my left leg between two of them and, with nothing solid beneath, cracked my shin pretty hard. My immediate concern that I had properly hurt it gave way when I stopped and let the cold wind get on it. Couldn't feel any bleeding, and chickened out having

a look, so I focussed on the back of David and carried on the

## THE STATISTICS

1<sup>st</sup> – Neil Northrop – 3.36.06  
7<sup>th</sup> – Jasmine Paris – 3.51.30 (First Lady)  
54<sup>th</sup> – Giles Bailey – 4.42.51  
78<sup>th</sup> – Andrew Thompson – 4.58.22 (Nick's Brother)  
103<sup>rd</sup> – Sam Bolton – 5.19.48  
104<sup>th</sup> – Christian Lloyd – 5.19.48  
105<sup>th</sup> – Alan Hirons – 5.19.48  
106<sup>th</sup> – Steve Perren – 5.19.48  
159<sup>th</sup> – David Sadler – 6.04.32  
190<sup>th</sup> – Roger Ashby – 8.27.25 (Final finisher)  
DNF – Jeff Miller

Giles' Strava stats – 23.8 miles 3,933ft climbing



**Been racing? O.T.S.L. want to know all about it - email: [jeffmilleruk@hotmail.com](mailto:jeffmilleruk@hotmail.com) Photos and race reports are both welcomed and encouraged. Follow Meltham AC on Facebook for the latest results. Keep training, keep racing and we'll see you all next month - *On The Start Line...***



ascent. By the summit I couldn't feel my feet anyway, so concentrated on the descent to Crowden, one of the best bits of the whole race. I was feeling pretty good and cheered as I passed Andy and Nick at the gates and then Susi and Paul by the checkpoint...pinching a cheeky Jaffa Cake off Paul on the way.

I took it easy on the approach to Lawrence Edge, getting some fluids and food down me before again joining up with David for the climb. There simply are not words to describe the LE climb. If you have done it, you will know what I mean, if you haven't – don't. As I approached the top I was feeling the dreaded twinging of cramps in my calves, which had caused me problems at this stage last year too, and the last 100m of climb were becoming agony. At the top I stopped and tried to stretch them out, taking on more fluid and food whilst adjusting to the freezing conditions as the wind dug deep into my bones. I took a decent line and was on the Pennine Way much earlier than last year, but that had always been the plan. However, the deep, sticky mud was proving tough on my legs and I was struggling with cramps in both calves and thighs. Bleaklow seemed to take forever and although I met up with David on High Shelf, I admitted that I was struggling and may pull out. We dropped off the top together to Snake Pass and the speed with which David disappeared made me realise how slow I was now moving. The wind was now head on and I could see the conditions at Mill Hill, and knowing what was to come, I made the decision to retire. A tough call, and with Frostbite being my first ever DNF this was setting a standard I was unhappy about, but my sensible head was telling me I was no longer moving fast enough to keep warm. I informed the Mountain Rescue team as I arrived at the CP and was bundled into a warm van with two other guys who were pulling out. Andy Lang was there waiting for me and was brilliant in reassuring me that I was making the right decision for the right reasons.

Before I knew it I was back in the car and heading for Edale, still cramping (!). Once back I got some hot drink and some fresh warm layers before heading up to the finish to see everyone else in. I was disappointed, but it happens, and I still have a fantastic bruise / dent in my leg to remind me of the day.

Hats off to everyone involved, the runners, the support and the organisers: The Trigger is a great race and one to experience, but don't take it lightly; train hard and get those recce's in. I'm going to give it a miss next year...somebody please remind me of that when the entries open...