

RINGS OF FIRE 1994

see note inside

On Friday 19th August the cloud was down to 500ft. as I drove along the Queen's Way towards Clatteringshaws. "A typical Galloway Hills greeting" I muttered, & just knew The Rings would be plagued by bad weather that weekend as it had done on the 2 previous occasions. But it wasn't! The weather was kind to us (rain waited until Tuesday to hit Galloway hard) & it was a great event, not just in numbers which exceeded previous events by a big margin, but great too in spirit, of participants & helpers alike. 59 of you from all over Britain set off through the jungle around Caldons campsite at 9.04 a.m., mostly with the ambition of just surviving the arduous & romantically named terrain in the challenge times of 12 hours for the 20 mile, & 24 hours for the 50. Some of you hoped to go faster, & the quality fields in ideal weather did indeed produce some very impressive achievements, with 12 hour & 6 hour barriers being broken for the first time. But whether you treated it as a race or a challenge walk in the best L.D.W.A. tradition you were made welcome, & your comments suggested that we managed to cater for a wide range of needs & speeds.

Of course the event would not have appeared nearly so well organised without quality amongst the helpers too, & I have had tremendous support from so many competent people from all over S.W. Scotland (several of whom have been with the event from the beginning). They represent the great spread of walking & running, from Munroists & ultra hillrunners, to dog walkers & fun-run joggers. People who have sufficient experience & initiative to do the right thing without directing. Suffice to say, the secret of good organisation is to pick the right people to delegate to: they can all take pride in having produced such a worthwhile event.

So my sincere thanks go out to the following: Colin Butler who put out & collected up controls, lent punches, & marshalled on wet & windy Targessock. Peter & Liz Foulds who put out & collected up controls, marshalled on Targessock, & made flapjack. Bob Peace who marshalled at Loch Dee & then at Dee Brig, & afterwards collected up controls. He says he heard nothing but good comments & that it was nice to see faces who had been before - "That speaks for itself, surely". Andrew Peace made 'scrunch' (one B.C. man claimed this as his main reason for entering!) manned Loup of Laggan, then afterwards, with his father, manned Dee Brig & collected controls. Mack Smith & Don Watson who marshalled on Millfjore, collected controls, & then spent a cheerless night in bivvy bags on those evil forest rides, having been unable to make it to the civilisation of Gala Lane before dark. Dave Martin & Lesley who gave much needed succour at Gala Lane when the weary bodies finally extricated themselves from the clutches of the forest. (I heard tales of them running a bistro, & Dave says their night was spent sending off 2 Shetland ponies & an XL size goat which were determined to eat the tent). Pat Wallace baked fruit pies & managed the catering magnificently; helped by husband Tony, & Ray McCutcheon, the 3 of them ran the finish on both Saturday & Sunday. (She commented on the disappointing amount of food eaten on the Saturday - were you all in such a hurry to rush off?) Denis Rowlands gave up pre-start relaxation to help with kit checking. Peter Trenchard likewise, & also helped at the finish on Sunday. Ronald Turnbull took time off from proof-reading his book "Across Scotland on Foot" to put controls out, work on registration & kit-check, marshal at Loch Enoch, & collect up controls. (Ronald has a pithy & droll style which amuses even when you are the one being made fun of - he knows just where to draw the line at being offensive. His book is a good read for all who like to make long journeys into the hills). 2 scouts from Stranraer, Duncan & Nicholas, joined the team this year & made themselves useful in many ways - hope they were not put off the hills by witnessing such extreme stuff! All marshals said how much they had enjoyed the experience; thanks for the enthusiasm.

Kath Peace, Peggy Irvine, & Grace Crichton didn't get to the event but produced some superb mouth-watering baking for us again this year. Several people helped with the promotion of the event by photocopying the entry form & distributing them, but none more so than Reg Kingston who hawked forms around many L.D.W.A. events from Devon to Yorkshire in the 3 months leading up to The Rings. Others who worked hard on this aspect were Peter Trenchard, Martin Sellers, Ronald Turnbull, Bob Peace, Phil Smith, Ray McCutcheon, Peter Cairns, Ian Leighton, & Billy Hamilton. Ronald was exceptionally generous with time (& a donation last year from the Durisdeer hill race fund), but long hours, freely given, are a feature of this event, & all the above people represent a considerable commitment of time & effort - I make no apologies for writing such a long list to read through! Actually, this must be the first year in which hours of participants have exceeded hours spent by the organising team in preparing & running the event, but to know that so many people enjoyed themselves does make it

all seem worthwhile. I would also like to thank the 2 local sponsors of this home-grown event. The Galloway Gazette (mainly via Wendy) did a generous amount of free photocopying, something which has previously been such a drain on resources. Together with the record level of entries they have made the event financially viable for the first time, even to the point where a donation can be made to the Mountain Rescue Team. The 3 Forest Enterprise districts of Newton Stewart, Castle Douglas, & Dyrrshire/Arran have given encouragement from the event's inception, lent keys, & granted permission to use Forestry Commission land. Newton Stewart Forest District has always been particularly kind to the event, & this year (via Jock Livingstone & Stephen Stables) again lent pitches & provided us with facilities & concessionary rates at Caldons campsite, where wardens Mick & Kath Askew, have always gone out of their way to be as helpful & understanding as possible.

With such an impressive list of credits you may well wonder what the organiser spent his time on, but his long-suffering wife can vouch for the fact that the spare bedroom has been a tip for weeks, & much back-sliding has occurred re smallholding duties. At one point in the final week I had so many lists & messages to myself, that my wife referred to this "office" as "the place where postmen come to die". Too cryptic for my highly stressed brain at that time, but it must have had something to do with all your envelopes which were being recycled into dozens of lists. I must thank her for tolerating my time-wasting activities with such forbearance, & not delve deeply for hidden psychological meanings.

All who love "journeying" (hope you don't have this word copyrighted Nigel!) in the hills know the extreme disappointment of having to retire injured from an event, so condolences go out to Richard Lane, Robert Black, Maddy Jacob, Mike Wells, Neil Gillies, Ian Leighton, Jim Robertson, Brian Hall & Simon Brown. Thankfully we didn't have to call the Mountain Rescue boys out to collect any of you.

Condolences also to those who saw the terrible evidence of the escaping jelly which coated the floor of the pick-up. I did my best to keep it covered up so that you weren't put off your food. It was made at 2 a.m. on Saturday 20th. August & had not set properly firm by 6 a.m. Instead of cutting my losses & leaving it behind, my numbed brain suggested that I drive off down our bumpy track & hope for the best.... The moral is not to make jelly the night before, & certainly not to compound the disaster by trying to stabilize it with cold custard (that just made the mixture spit all over the boxes, instead of simply flowing). The mess haunted me for 8 hours until it was finally banished by sphagnum moss at Loch Dee. Next time I will leave the food business to those who understand it.

My position as co-ordinator makes me realise how much kindness is necessary to make for an outstandingly successful event, but however good the back-up it does need noble spirits to enter. This was no stroll in the Pentlands, but the wildest, toughest, most beautiful land in Southern Scotland, where height is a paltry indicator of how ferocious the terrain can be. How fitting therefore that so many brave & determined hearts took up the challenge. Thank you all for supporting this event so enthusiastically (especially those of such resilient fibre that they came back again!), & so vindicating my belief in the need for tough events in these soft times we live in. Thank you also for all the kind comments & letters, (presumably the dissatisfied just went home quietly). Sorry if anybody felt that some sections were unnecessarily cruel - for a true appreciation of these hills you need to experience the evils (like those lovely sword paths through the forest as seen from Corran of Portmark!) as well as the joys.

I've received various suggestions: radio links (Bob); badges (some entrants); certificate immediately on finishing (Tony); diversion onto alternative finish routes for Heart of Granite (Ronald); more of the team present at the frantic 2 hour before the start, but, best of all, opportunity for marshals to participate. This is something I've been secretly hoping to do since the first event, & with such dedicated helpers on the actual WFE it could become reality in 1996. If you have any strong views on the event or were upset by any aspect, please give me some feedback, & we will do our best to rectify the problem & have an even more efficient event next time.

In the Spring of 1996 I hope to send out entry forms to all who entered in 1994 - you may not want to do it again even though the mental scars have healed, but maybe know somebody else who would appreciate Galloway terrain! New addresses please let me know if you want contacting.

Alan Jones Sept 1994

BRUCE'S CROWN

This tough biennial event, known to some as "the mountain marathon without tent", this year had a total of 32 people entering. One cancelled & 2 changed to Heart of Granite before the day. Then on Saturday 20th. 2 more transferred to Hog L., & 3 D.N.S. However, of the record 24 who did start, only 4 had to retire, & all 20 finishers were within the 24 hour challenge time, which is a noble achievement over such terrain. I've done it 4 times & no easy short cuts have revealed themselves to me. The fastest 2 times will take some beating & are quite remarkable having broken the 12 hour barrier. We all need standards to measure ourselves against (whether or not we admit it), but such magnificent yardsticks as these are somewhat intimidating to ordinary mortals such as myself.

Although the first hills were shrouded in cloud, the weather relented to allow plenty of views from the Rhins of Kells & Awgul Hand ranges. Also hope you enjoyed the short turf on the tops, which is a suitable reward for all that climbing up such rough hillsides. Did anybody resist a seat on one of the quaint stone chairs at the King's Well? Pity about the pipe being plastic! The midges were abominable at the halt site, so I was surprised that nobody took the option to continue before 9 p.m. Obviously modern repellents & nets (& Alan Whiteside's pipe!) are making this option more congenial. It wasn't just that longer times were probable by continuing that same night, but that the carpet of needles under the thick spruce canopy made a far more comfortable mattress than expected; thus the weaknesses of the weary body took over from noble aspirations. Sunday morning exodus from the dark depths of the forest was likened by one wag to a post-holocaust scene where the first wretched bodies crawl from their hiding places. As Ken Falconer says, in the excellent report on Bruce's Crown which he's written for Strider, it is "--- for those who are looking for a new dimension in challenge walking".

	DEE BRIG	MILL FIRE	GALA LANE	HALT SITE			"REST" TIME	TAR FESS	FIN ISH	NET TIME
				IN	P.	OUT				
David Wallace	12:10	13:45	16:09	16:58	1	8:12	15-14	9:39	11:59	11-41
David Rogers	12:05	13:45	16:03	16:58	1	7:55	14-57	9:25	11:45	11-44
Philip Gwilliam	12:10	13:45	16:04	16:58	1	6:16	13-18	7:50	10:34	12-12
Colin Brash	12:25	14:10	16:30	17:27	4	6:16	12-49	7:50	10:34	12-41
Richard Townsend	12:25	14:33	16:59	17:56	5	6:16	12-20	8:20	11:15	13-51
Gerry Orchard	12:51	14:50	17:25	18:30	7	7:06	12-36	8:54	11:36	13-56
Andy McIntyre	12:12	14:10	16:46	18:03	6	5:52	11-49	8:25	12:22	15-29
Denis Rowlands	12:55	15:05	18:05	19:32	11	6:30	10-58	8:47	11:49	15-47
Nigel Rose	12:45	15:05	18:08	19:21	8	6:38	11-17	8:55	12:31	16-10
Patrick Green	12:55	15:10	18:05	19:23	9	5:58	10-35	8:21	11:58	16-19
Steve Robinson	12:55	15:10	18:05	19:23	9	5:58	10-35	8:21	11:58	16-19
Ken Falconer	13:30	16:00	19:14	20:46	13	5:31	8-45	7:54	11:44	17-55
Jim McWhinnie	13:45	16:10	19:24	20:37	12	6:40	10-03	9:14	13:41	18-34
John Gibson	14:16	17:10	21:09	23:12	17	7:08	7-56	10:09	15:01	22-01
John Wrightson	13:57	16:50	21:20	23:07	14	6:14	7-07	9:20	14:27	22-16
Paul Wrightson	13:57	16:50	21:20	23:07	14	6:14	7-07	9:20	14:27	22-16
James Drummond	13:55	16:50	21:20	23:07	14	6:14	7-07	9:20	14:27	22-16
Michael Bunting	14:56	17:55	22:11	00:04	19	6:39	6-35	9:21	14:19	22-40
Ken Fancett	14:56	17:55	22:11	00:04	19	6:39	6-35	9:21	14:19	22-40
Alan Whiteside	14:15	17:30	22:11	00:04	19	6:39	6-35	9:21	14:42	23-03
Ian Leighton	14:16	17:30	21:33	23:24	18	Retired at bivvy: Knee				---
Brian Hall	14:15	17:30	22:11	Retired at Gala Lane: Knee				---		
Jim Robertson	13:55	---	---	Retired at Dee Brig: ankle				---		
Mike Wells	---	---	---	Cut leg badly after Mulldonach				---		

HEART of GRANITE		LOCH DEE	LOCH ENOCH	FINISH	TIME
Nick Hambrey	Carnforth	10:58 (1)	12:49 (1)	14:57	5-53
Paul McClintock	Galloway	10:58 (1)	12:50 (2)	15:11	6-07
Billy Hamilton	Galloway	11:02 (3)	13:19 (4)	16:01	6-57
(Ronald Turnbull)	(marshal)	—	—	—	(7-07)
Dan Farley	Cumbria	11:10 (4)	13:18 (3)	16:19	7-15
Felicity Martin	Perthshire	11:25 (5)	13:55 (5)	17:09	8-05
Stewart Chapman	Fife	11:58 (15)	14:23 (8)	17:28	8-12
Julie Bushell	York	11:30 (6)	14:22 (6)	17:28	8-24
Jim Richmond	Ayrshire	11:32 (9)	14:22 (6)	17:48	8-44
Chris Greene	Lancs.	11:30 (6)	14:32 (11)	18:02	8-58
Kate Foster	Glasgow	11:32 (9)	14:27 (10)	18:08	9-04
Mike van Beinum	Glasgow	11:32 (9)	14:25 (9)	18:08	9-04
John Howarth	Bolton	11:30 (6)	14:33 (12)	18:11	9-07
Robert Roalfe	Birmingham	11:42 (12)	14:48 (13)	18:28	9-24
Paul Millard	Somerset	11:49 (14)	15:02 (14)	19:20	10-16
Julian Ridal	Glasgow	12:03 (17)	15:16 (16)	19:24	10-20
Michael Morrow	Newcastle	12:07 (18)	15:35 (21)	19:29	10-25
John Bell	Newcastle	12:07 (18)	15:35 (21)	19:29	10-25
Peter Trenchard	Ayrshire	11:45 (13)	15:03 (15)	19:31	10-27
John Everett	Cumbria	11:58 (15)	15:16 (17)	19:31	10-27
Craig Love	Dundee	12:14 (20)	15:34 (18)	20:03	10-59
Neil Hannan	London	12:14 (20)	15:34 (18)	20:06	11-02
Ian McNulty	Dundee	12:14 (20)	15:34 (18)	20:09	11-05
Chris Hunt	Leicester	12:16 (23)	16:03 (23)	20:52	11-48
Chris Black	Durham	13:26	Retired at Loch Enoch		
Reg Kingston	Cheshire	13:16	Retired at Dungeon		
Julie Wright	Cheshire	13:16			
Calum Berry	Galloway	13:16			
Robert Black	Durham	13:26	Retired at Craiglee		
Maurice McMillan	Durham	13:26			
Tony McAndrew	Galloway	12:52			
Simon Brown	Galloway	12:52	Retired at Loch Dee		
Derek Harding	Reading	14:00			
Neil Gillies	Arran	—	Retired before Mulldonoch		
Maddy Jacob	Leicester	—			
Richard Lane	Arran	—			

The 50 miler is extreme stuff - & it's meant to be - but mile for mile, the H. of G. is a tougher proposition. 12 retireals out of 35 starters is too many so we shall have to consider modifications. Ronald Turnbull says his CIP was at one of the very nicest corners of Galloway. He continues: "I thought it a successful event & so did the participants as far as I gathered. A shorter course & shining sun were meant to make it easier, but it remains the case that a mile in Galloway is worth 2km. anywhere else: for walkers 12 hours is barely enough. First past me & Duncan were hard men (& 2 hard women) looking slightly suprised that a course only 2 miles & 1000 ft. more than the "Pentland Skyline" should take twice as long. Next came slow runners, some springing through the tussocks like young Galloway goats. Last through Loch Enoch, with one minute to spare, was Chris Hunt, tired but determined to finish (he made it too, & in under 12 hrs.). Thanks to Maurice McM. for escorting injured Robert B., & to Tony McA. for reporting his retirement to me at Loch Enoch".