

Hardmoors 160, 26-28 May 2023 – Lena Conlin



160 miles starting at Sutton bank at 5 o'clock on the 26th of May 2023,



Registration 16:00, time for an ice cream and catch up with friends before crossing the road like a school trip under the watchful eyes of Jon and Shirley. Race briefing was just after the road crossing and at 5 pm we were off, the route takes you from Sutton bank along the cliff edge past the gliders and down down through the woods to the Whitehorse carpark checkpoint one done.



What goes down must come up; up the steps - who were they designed for some of them are knee-high and I've got long legs. The steps are challenging even at this point about 1 1/2 miles how was it going to be at 150 odd miles? Once at the steps quite a nice little trek into Helmsley from there. It was a warm evening so already having to try and regulate my temperature as well as run and walk at quite a low heart rate with such a long way to go. Every mile was I didn't have to do again. I was way back in the pack as we approached Helmsley, in fact I could only see a couple of runners ahead of me, but I had to keep reminding myself that was a long way to go, this wasn't a race for me it was just about completing it. It was lovely to see Sarah as I came down into Helmsley and then round to the marketplace where Billy was waiting to refill my bottles and I could grab a little bit of food which I didn't really want, because I just set off really only 10 miles in, but I grabbed a lump of shortbread, a sandwich and some malt loaf. I stuffed the malt loaf and sandwich in my pack for the hill later and ate the shortbread on the way out of town.

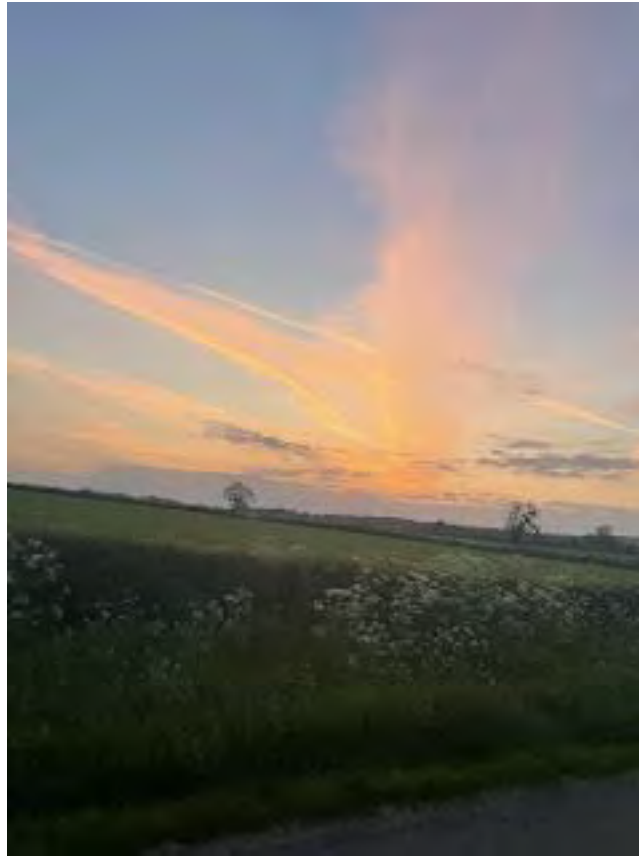


The next section to Fadmoor started with an uphill section, not massively uphill for the first bit so I just ran/walked little bits keeping a low heart rate as much as I could knowing that as soon as I hit the turn, about 3 miles in, it definitely would be uphill. That's where I grabbed my sandwich and ate my sandwich walking up the hill. I Who is with Richard and Claire at this point it's good to just chat when you're doing these things because it's not like a 5K away is running like mad to be able to get from the start to finish as quick as possible. You are still trying to get from the start to finish as quick as possible but in a different way; it's an adventure you meet people on the way see things on the way take your time to look around. Claire's bag broke at this point what I do not in it for her so that she could keep going but she stopped at the next road crossing with her support to sort that out so that it was mainly Richard and I and a couple of others back and forwards Ed and Kev mainly. It was nice to get into Fadmoor in daylight but time to put on the head torch. It was getting dark slowly but surely as I entered into the woods; it felt really dark so head torch had to go on because it was rough underfoot. Heading towards Hutton Le Hole Richard caught back up with me, we were heading through one field on the list some giddy horses they were running up the field to start with as we were halfway across they started to be interested in us, Richard went wide probably the best move, I tried to stay closer to the path but then in the end the horses cornered me against the hedge, a few feet from the stile. Deep breath, they stopped an arm's distance from me, I slowly worked my way to the stile talking softly to them. I crossed the stile, Richard had found a gate further down the field. There was a horse in this field but it didn't pay us any attention. The trails look different by head torch, the abundance of cow parsley glowing on

country lanes. I enjoyed the road sections because I could get a bit of a trot on. There were a few of us as we approached Stape I was jogging along with Claire and my head torch started to flash, signifying that the battery was running out. This was not right as my battery was fully charged. Claire offered to stay with me to Stape but I told her not to worry as I had a spare torch in my pack. I got it out and held it, giving me a better light.



At Stape, Billy gave me his torch and I set off for Hole of Horcum. I did most of this section with Richard, we had a bit of a fright as we caught a herd of cows in our head torches, they were mainly laid down, but the one stood on guard was massive, we were glad to get out of that field. We were soon joined by Ed and we walk/jogged our way to Lavingham where they motored up the hill and I fell back a fair bit. I did catch back up on the moor. We were all on our own adventures, doing our own thing. Sometimes we were together sometimes one would be ahead, another fall back. I missed the Badger incident, heard the animal shrieks but saw nothing, Richard and Ed said that 2 badgers had run out in front of the runner ahead and got a right fright. It was getting chilly on the moor, we could see the lights on the road but the trail takes you away and then back, It was good to get to the checkpoint, 43 miles done.



Setting off for the next checkpoint at Cockmoor Hall, the sky was brightening, the first night was nearly over. Very quickly it was late enough to take a head torch off the head. They were well in the distance I was on my own for the section. I don't mind I knew it knew where I was going went wrong last time the tracks how long left side Dalby Forest are good, they're wide and easy to navigate. I have put my coat on because it was chilly leaving whole of Hole of Horcum, hadn't realised that my hood had covered over my tracker. At one point I went on my phone just to check on the tracker to see who it was ahead of me, it was Davy. I saw that my number, 36, was still at the checkpoint. I wasn't at the checkpoint, I was miles away, I tried texting Billy to tell him where I was because otherwise, he wouldn't be ready for me coming up to the checkpoint for my breakfast. There's also no signal in this area so I had to keep slowing to try again every time my phone kept telling me the message had failed. I was relieved when it finally sent. Cockmoor Hall, 50 miles, breakfast. I had breakfast, changed my socks and shoes, put on sunscreen and was ready for the day ahead. Soon I found myself with Richard and Ed again, moving well, down off the hills towards the coast. As we approached Scalby, Ed and Richard would be meeting their crews near the village, I was meeting Billy at Crookness, a couple of miles on, so I left them and cracked on. It was great to see the sea even though I knew I would be sick of the sight of it by the time the 40 miles of coast were over. I passed by Davy having a little rest in the early morning sunshine. The sun was sparkling off the sea as I approached the Crookness checkpoint.







Billy was there waiting, to refill my bottles and food. The checkpoint Marshalls had ice lollies, wow! I gratefully took a rocket lolly and was on my way. It was already so warm at 25 past 8 that it was melting. The coastal path was rock hard under the blazing sun, any shade was welcome as I slogged up and down steps. Hayburn Wyke was a welcome respite from it as the cool shade from the trees enveloped me, a massive plus to equal out the horrible steps. I startled 2 deer in the woods, they startled me too. The next section was a slog, I always find it a slog, Ravenscar is like a carrot on a stick, always not quite in reach. It felt like forever to get there. I was so relieved to reach the village hall, have the opportunity to use a proper loo. It was lovely to see Jon and Shirley there. I ate rice pudding and drank coffee prepared by Mark Dalton and his team. At this point I had only seen a couple of Hardmoors 110 relay runners.



Quarter to 11, time to head for Whitby, Meeting Billy at Robin Hoods Bay along the way. I had hot spots on my feet at this point but was fighting on. I messaged Billy to let him know that I would need the blister kit. Rutted hard paths, steps, sun, I was starting to feel the 74 miles that I had covered since 5 pm yesterday. Boggle Hole to Robin Hoods Bay was busy, it was lunchtime, it was nice to chat to people on route, who were incredulous at the challenge and always wished me well. What a slog up the hill to the grass patch by the car park for lunch, a hero's welcome to lift the spirits.





Billy brought a chair, and he sorted my hot spots which were now blisters. I don't normally get blisters on my heels. I'm used to them on my toes and can ignore them to a point, these on my heels were so painful. I had my lunch, soup and trifle and took an ice pop, hobbling off to the cheers of the crowds of support crews. By now, there was a mix of HM110s and HM160s on the route, passing and being passed up and down the steps, and there are many steps on the 7 mile stretch to Whitby. Some satsuma segments at the Hornblower were refreshing and gave me a boost. I met Hayley and Martin on route to meet Davy who was just behind me and then Matt, Jill and Lily. It was so good to see the Abbey in the distance, the caravan park, the pier and then Karen with a 99 at the top of the steps. The ice cream helped settle my nausea. The steps were so busy, getting through town to the market square where I was planning to visit the loo. I paid my 40p and went in, there was a queue, It felt like it took forever. Back out into the streets, it was so difficult navigating the crowds and clouds of vape. I decided not to stop for a slush as I had lost so much time in the toilets. Richard caught up with me and we set off for the Whalebones together. I dropped back by the golf course though. My feet hurt and I was nauseous again. Sandsend felt so far away, but I managed a trot down to the village and met Billy, he was with Matt, Jill, Jane, Ruth and Stuart who were waiting for Davy, who arrived at the same time as me. I sat in the chair in the car park, forced some food down and changed my bottles.





I followed Davy out of Sandsend, next stop Runswick Bay, from there I would have the first of my support runners to keep me focused/distracted to the finish. This section is a long 5 miles, I could see a village in the distance and convinced myself that it was Staithes, as I rounded another headland, I could see it was Runswick Bay but thought that I had to do Staithes first, I was so relieved to start the decent to the beach, a tricky descent, I was glad it was dry as it could have been worse. On the beach I made for the hard sand to reduce getting sand in my trainers. I hate the hill to the

checkpoint, its such a slog. At the checkpoint, Billy sorted my feet again and I ate a little food, took my poles and set off with Lee-Ann.

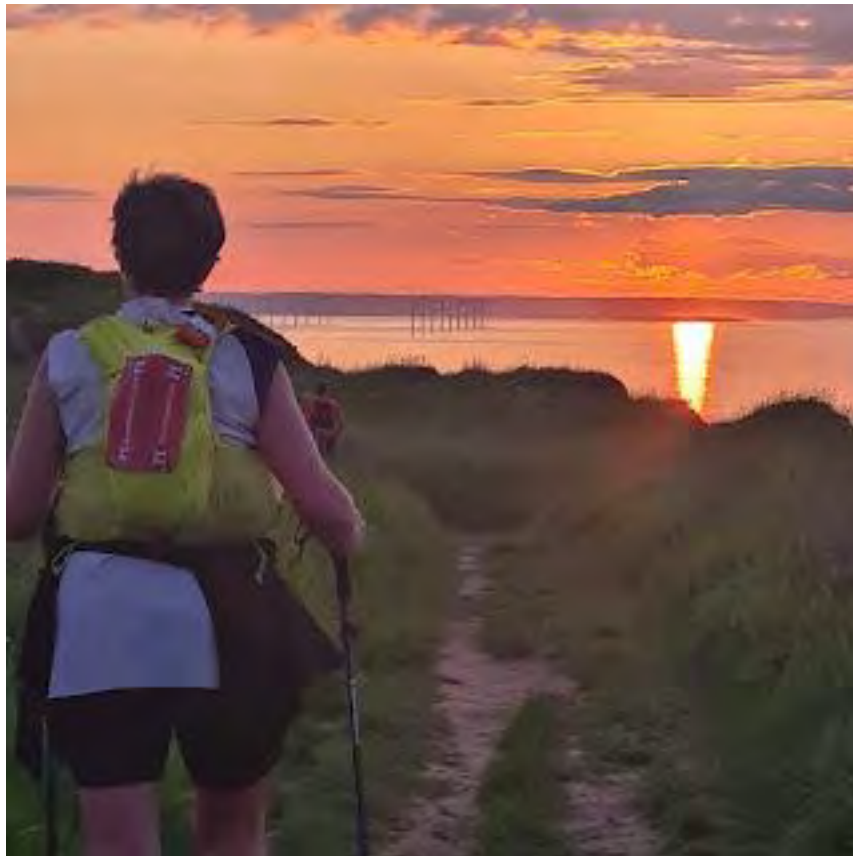




I had been going over 24 hours now and had been awake since 6 am Friday morning, my feet were sore from travelling 89 miles, I felt sick and so probably was not the best company, but Lee-Ann chatted away, distracting me, reminding me to drink and eat. Keeping my spirits up as we approached one of my most dreaded climbs at Boulby. I was relieved to get it over and start heading down towards the farm, the coast would soon be over. As much as I wanted to get to Skinningrove, I was also dreading it, the fine sand on the beach would flood into my shoes increasing my discomfort. I stopped at the top of the steps to empty my shoes and brush my socks off. The sun was setting as we approached the Charm bracelet a couple of miles from Saltburn, it was a stunning image. A couple more miles and turn inland, this thought kept me going. I wanted to get to Saltburn in daylight. I had no idea of time, in my head it was still Friday as I hadn't been to bed yet. But the sinking sun pushed me onwards, I could see the pier, I could see the pub, the steps, and Billy, waiting

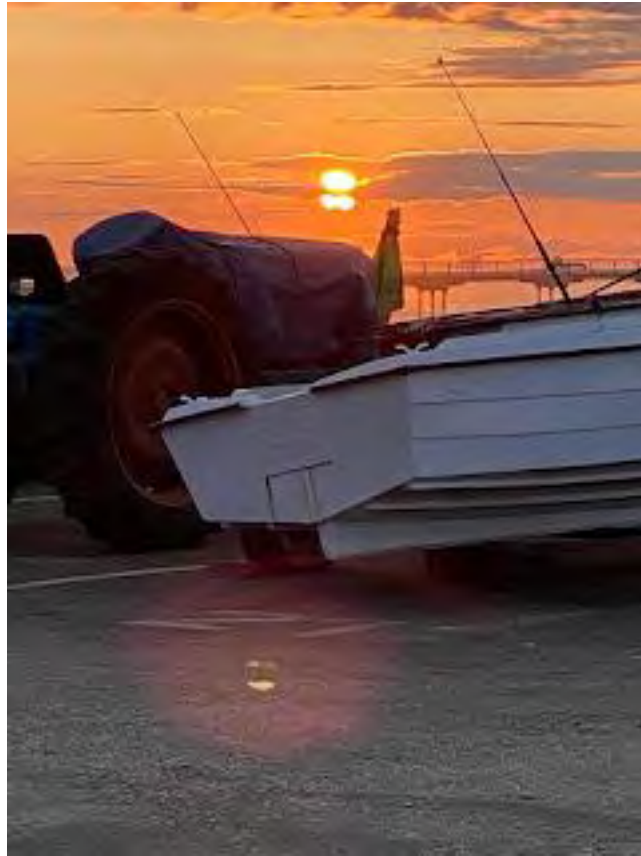
with Davys crew. We walked to the main car park and I said I needed to just shut my eyes for a few minutes. It was getting cold and I was tired. AND my feet hurt. 101 miles done.







I sat in the van with my eyes shut, I couldn't sleep, my brain was telling me to get going, stop wasting time, perpetual forward motion. After about 5 minutes, I started to sort myself for the next section to Slapewath, I needed to get going, I put a warmer top on and Lee-Ann Billy and I set off for the checkpoint at the bandstand. After checking in I missed the entrance to the Valley Gardens and then once in there made another mistake. I gave myself a shake for not concentrating and we got set off on the right track. I hadn't realised how uphill it was to Slapewath, a long slog on a lot of rocky track. I turned my ankle at one point but waked it off. The descent was horrid, some of the steps were broken and I was so annoyingly slow.



Another 5 minutes eyes shut in the van, I thanked Lee-Ann and said goodbye to her, and I set off for Roseberry with Tom. Guisborough Woods were a right trek. I checked the route on my watch and realised it had gone off. It should not have run out of battery. I dug in my pack for my charger and had to start a new activity. I now think I knocked it off when I turned my ankle, looking at the activity maps. I know I was losing time, but this is a tricky section, Tom kept me going, telling me we had a lot of work to do to make Kildale by 5 am. Roseberry was horrific for me, the stones hurting my feet, struggling with depth perception. Tom would walk ahead and shine his torch back. So I could work out where to put my feet, he also suggested I use one pole, that made a huge difference, I felt way more balanced. We could not afford to stop at Gribdale, I just sorted my head torch and we cracked on.



Up Up Up to Captain Cooks monument, it felt endless, but eventually we were there, a left turn into the woods, more rocky ground, I was frustrated by the level of pain in each step making me unable to run much at all. I normally love the road down to Kildale, but it hurt my feet and I didn't run much at all. We could see the village hall lights as we descended, not far now, would we make it? Could we make it? 04:15, phew! Toilet, coffee rice pudding and back out the door, far too close to cut off for my liking.



The hill out of Kildale, like all the hills felt like it had been pumped up, but it was daylight now and that always makes me feel better. Tom kept me focused, Kildale checkpoint had said we needed to be at Claybank by 8 am, that is a big ask, 11 miles in just over 3 hours at this stage, 115 miles in my legs and over 35 hours since the race start. Tom guided me the smoothest possible route towards Bloworth Crossing, it felt way more uphill than it ever had, I was starting to struggle with double vision, I would periodically stop, close my eyes and get going again. The track was so rocky, beating my feet up, my quads felt like someone had taken a rubber mallet to them, but I kept going. I had wanted to be at Clay Bank by 06:30, now I was pushing my luck to get there for 08:00. I was trying so hard and making so little progress. But we did it, Tom chivvied me all the way and we made it to Clay Bank at 07:25. I said goodbye to Tom and thanked him.



After a few minutes in the van where I had breakfast and put my contact lens in, I set off with Hazel for Scarth Nick, about 9 miles but with a few inclines on the way, we had to be there by 12:30. Hazel walked behind me on the inclines in case I lost my balance. My vision was a bit more stable. Hazel kept me focused on the time, telling me that we were losing time on the inclines but would make that up later. I was glad to get these climbs out of the way. Hazel kept reminding me to eat and drink. I found caffeine gels were the only thing I could really manage now and the occasional sweet. We got to the Highland cow field, they were not there, but as we crossed, by the track were some other brown cows, we went the wide route round the field. We were nearly there, but there was no chance to let up, there were more steps lying in wait to stop me getting to Scarth Nick in time and the double vision was back. Gosh they were tough, but they were not stopping me. We made it to Scarth Nick at 11:48. We took some sweets from the table and set off.



When I attempted this in 2020 the cut of was 12:30 at Square Corner and I could not make that in time so stopped in Osmotherley. This year I had made the cut of because it was about 4 miles earlier. I did my best to keep going to not lose more time. Hazel had managed to keep me 45 min ahead. We had been caught by the sweep, Nik, he was very jolly and accompanied us to Square Corner, no time to stop, just Thank Hazel and say goodbye, she was going to work the checkpoint at the finish at Helmsley now, after wandering the countryside with me.



I set off with Anita and Nik, the climb up Black Hamilton is really rocky, but I knew it was a bit better at the other side. What a slog, we kept good spirits and perpetual forward motion, the double vision was bad now, so I had one eye shut a lot of the way. I was still running short sections but mainly walking, Anita reminding me to eat and drink. It was good to reach High Paradise Farm, I could tick off little sections. Even though we were moving at a reasonable pace, in my head, I was trying so hard to speed up, but my feet were agony, and I was seeing faces in trees and people where there were no people. It was apparent I could not get to the White Horse in time. I was so sad, I'd come this far, destroyed my feet and could not finish the race. I wondered if I could continue. Nik asked and as long as I was supported, I could continue but not competitively as long as I did not take too long. Nik went off to catch up with the last person in the race. I was no longer in the race just completing the course, I felt sad, but determined, it felt like forever to get to Sutton Bank, there are always sections that I forget exist, no matter how many times I go along there. Billy was waiting, I said goodbye and thanked Anita.

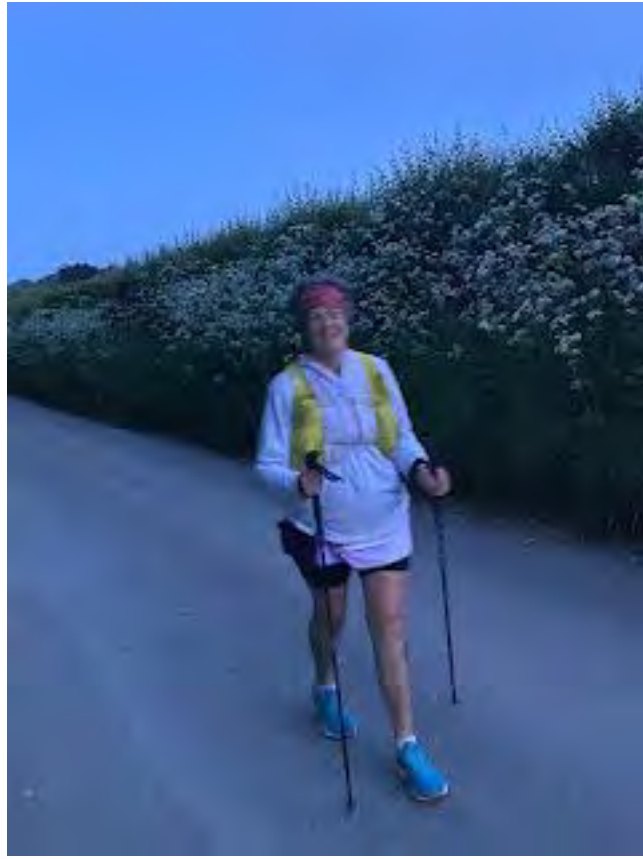


Last bit, 10 miles, 150 miles travelled since I was here last. Stuart was my support for this leg, he is an experienced sweep and he swept me along to the White Horse. The descent to the woods was awful. The worst part of the whole journey was when Tony, who had been so lovely in waiting for me at the White Horse car park, cut off the tracker. I was a massive 1 hour 20 minutes over time. But no hanging about, Stuart chivvied me onwards, up those awful steps, past the gliders, At the hotel Karen and Billy were there to see us onto the last section. I ran (if you could call it that) down towards the gallops. Stuart from this point stayed just a head, drawing me on. Waiting when I faltered and picking the smoothest routes where possible. The point where the route leaves the road with 2 miles to Filey, the hallucinations proper started, it was dim in the woods and the trees had faces, the rocks were shiny and when I focused on them, they were like ice or glass with faces and people trapped in them. I had to keep stopping to close my eyes for a moment. If I looked into the trees, it was like a horror movie, so I would look at the floor as it was the least horrible. Back in daylight it eased and then back into the trees, those steps! Nearly there, I can see the castle the track is very rocky though. A couple more gates and the relief of tarmac by the car park. Stuart said something about the café, I looked, it was covered in monsters, no bushes. They do good ice cream there, but not at this time of night. Round to the sports fields, what a slog, but it was nearly done. Billy was there, and Hazel, and Nik, and Jon and Shirley. I wasn't expecting that. I thought there would just be Billy, we would get in the van, drop Stuart at Sutton Bank for his van and go home. But there was a little finish crowd, all waiting for me to complete the 160 course. Jon gave me a medal and Shirley made note of the time, just under 53 hours. Thank you everyone for waiting for me. As Jon says, now I don't have to do it again.





It's Wednesday now, I still can hardly walk, I can't believe I forced myself onwards, on such wrecked feet. Mind you, 5/10 toes don't have blisters, under normal circumstances that would be a big win. The real problems were the blisters on the sides of my heels that run under the heels and my heels are bruised as well. That's a new one for me.



What an adventure, what a team, what memories.

Huge thanks go to Billy who only got home after competing at Ironman Lanzarote on Tuesday night and was my vehicle crew for the duration. Lee-Ann, Tom, Hazel, Anita, Stuart and Karen, for giving your time, effort and infinite patience in order for me to complete the course. Jon and Shirley for having faith in me and allowing me to carry on. Tony for waiting to collect the tracker. Nik for still being there at the end, and Sarah (Renew Your Running) for tough coached sessions of hills and steps.

So many people were part of this journey, I can't mention everyone, but you know who you are. Photos are a mix, from Billy, Lee-Ann, Tom, Hazel, Karen and myself.

David Allen completed the race with time to spare in 49:33:43

33 started including 4 women.

17 people did not finish the course.

15 people including 1 woman completed the race in under 50 hours and 1 (me) completed the course.