

Ely Runners Peak District trails weekend - September 2025



This year's signups for the ever popular '*same but different*' club trip to hit the trails in the Peaks were returnees: **AJ** (Ellwood), **Alex** (Levantis), **Andy** (Brown) and **Andy** (Thompson), **Baz** (Woodward), **Bethany** (Spalding), **Debbie** (Fisher), **Goska** (Leslie), **James** (Fisher), **Kristian** (Skinner), **Lizz** (McKiernan), **Neil** (Krajewski) and **Peter** (Royle). And joining them as keen first timers were: **Barry** and **Gwen** (Graves), **Iain** (Smith), **Janette** (Palmer), **Lizzie** (Ludlow), **Michael** (Hendry), **Naomi** (Course) **Natalie** (Andrews) **Richard** (Lee) and **Selica** (Sevigny) with **Toby** (Kay) taking the headcount to 24.

From the newbie camp, I wasn't sure that I knew or would recognise Naomi, but as soon as we met I said to myself, ah *that* Naomi (of) Course! Michael broke new ground by letting the train take the strain, casually strolling up to St Michael's Environmental Educational Centre from Hathersage station just after 4.00 and in time to help with the sizable Ocado food delivery.

SMEEC was once again our base for the weekend, a field centre of seven rooms or dorms with 38 beds in total. ~~Beyonce~~ Bethany had her eye on the biggest upstairs dorm being reserved for 'all the single ladies' (all the single ladies) while Barry & Gwen, having had a tour of the premises, clocked the bunk beds and decided that their decision to tough it out in the Alphard camper van was a wise move.

Beds selected and bags stowed, Andy T had worked out a way how to get power from the kitchen, through the scullery, out of the window, round the corner and into his new electric car (with Barry on hand to take over the extension lead setup for the Alphard when AT59 maxed out at 100%, just to make sure Andy's Cupra didn't runneth over) and we were almost ready to hit the trails.

The first run of the weekend was scheduled to start promptly at 6pm, but with ten minutes to go there were still several cars yet to arrive. Several hasty FB Messages later and all expected parties *did* rock up in time, with Baz taking it to the wire at 17:59, but he too was lacing up and ready to run about 30 seconds later.

Friday evening - run 1 (of 4) - 'the Riverside Run'

Freshly scoped out on a summer recce, this '*New for 2025*' route would see us threading our way along part of the Steel Cotton Rail Trail, a recently designated path through the Hope Valley that follows the rail line that once linked Sheffield's steel workers and Manchester's cotton mill workers (and is now used by sparkies from Ely and vicars from Littleport).

The route quickly left the leafy lanes of Hathersage village and meandered along the River Derwent before pitching up at a set of fun-to-some / pointless-to-others stepping stones that had Natalie displaying her best Twister moves mid-river before we did a 180 and retraced our steps to carry on from this carry on.



<< Revd. Andrews, getting ready mid-river for the next Twister instruction

Our run route then left the relative flat of the river path to head uphill through a field to a gate out on to the lane where we were met by a friendly farmer on an ancient ATV, who waved us all through with a cheery, 'Ee, enjoy the pull up that hill, it's a steep one!'

With the climb now behind us and views of the village and the valley off to our left, head torches were switched on as dusk was setting in fast and we had a technical descent through darkening woods to navigate, full of drop-off and gnarly roots. All safely out of the trees, it was then a fast downhill through a large open meadow, dodging the cowpats as best we could (surprisingly skiddy if not avoided, as some found out) where we clambered over a stile in the drystone wall to land upon a sea of acorns, so comically slippery underfoot (pesky almost) that Toby was convinced Peter had been out earlier to scatter them – *Home Alone* style - to make the run just that touch more treacherous.

Lizz then suggested that it was up to a few frontrunners to get back Quick-as-U-like in order to get the spuds on for the mash, to ensure all that peeling and chopping for x25 wouldn't be in vain.



<< A simple but delicious supper, cooked by Debbie, Lizz, Kristian, Goska and Lizzie (and Naomi)

Back at the ranch and in the queue for the Harringtons Bangers (freshly made that morning at the butchers next door, so food miles just 30 metres) and Lizz's mash, Natalie on a rare weekend off could be seen just chilling in her comfy **JUST CHILL** hoodie, a simple instruction to follow. Much like Richard's colourful **Run** cap, both items of clothing a visible reminder of what we were here to do.

Saturday morning - run 2 (of 4) - 'a new local parkrun '

For the parkrun beano, we were about 20 strong as one or two of our party had decided to take Natalie's sweatshirt directive as gospel and opted for a lay in, several had decided to go for a walk locally, while Andy B headed over to Chester to buy a new car (as you do).

Situated in Hillsborough Park and in the shadows of Sheffield Wednesday's stadium, Hillsborough parkrun would be ER's fourth local course to be completed.

The RD gave Ely Runners a brief mention before the run got underway, and it would prove to be a lovely course of three laps with nice sweeping bends all run entirely on footpath. The first timer briefing had made mention of nine hills in total, but they were more gentle gradients and did nothing to trouble Ely's frontrunners (none clearly saving anything for the run later or the race tomorrow). Amazingly, out of a sea of x573 runners, Natalie was spotted in the crowd by one of the volunteers, an old acquaintance from her theology training days.



^^ Team photo ahead of Hillsborough parkrun

Three laps done and now downhill all the way from Library Corner, four Ely Runners impressively finished in the top 12, with only 15 seconds between them all. ~~A-Jay~~ AJ went under the radar as UNKNOWN in 8th place, with Toby seconds behind in 9th (in 19:12), and Baz and James one second apart in eleventh and twelfth. Natalie finished in position 121 and could then be seen having a natter-ly one-to-one with her old buddy, now freed up from marshal duties.

Coffee and cake were now deemed the order of the day, mainly to sample the very smart community café that had just opened a few weeks before. In fact, the café was SO impressive a space (and with parkrun loos better than Ben's, even) that a unanimous vote was declared there and then, that *'we want to come here again next year'* (and thereby messing with Peter's 'same-but-different' approach to keeping things fresh - hmmm...)

Now back in Hathersage, you'd have thought that Alex 'The Man from' Levantis would be game on for a swim, but strangely he decided to sit this one out and instead snuggled down with a good book in Bank House, a coffee-cum-cocktail bar on the main drag. The appeal of the heated lido was cooled somewhat before we'd even got our kit off and togs on, as word on the street (well, on an A-board outside the entrance) was that due to an electrical issue the water temperature was hovering somewhere near the 20-degree mark. All did brave the chillier temps and no refunds were offered / demanded, thankfully.

After about 20 minutes, Toby was the first to relent and head for the showers with withering (and shivering) looks from everyone else still in the water (apart from Barry, seen running laps of the pool bare-chested to keep warm) but we all soon took Toby's lead, purely so that we could crack on with the next run of course...

Saturday morning - run 3 (of 4) - Stanage Edge and Higger Tor

Setting off from our base camp at St Michaels after a quick lunch of DIY filled rolls, we left the village by hanging a left off the High Street, up past the cricket field, where we then crossed a few fields, clambered over many styles of stiles, spanned a couple of small bridges and quickly gained height on the climb up to Stanage Edge. The trailing group missed a turn which saw Gwen (Graves) picking up the parkour mantle and giving it a go, scaling a wall in such a way that the (also) alliterative arachnid Peter Parker would have been proud of.

Janette led the charge on the final haul up to the edge proper, scrambling now up the rocky route up to High Neb to get busy trig bagging. With a 2025 goal set at 50 and 45 under her belt so far and the chance to claim two more on this run alone, Janette was a happy as a pig in muck (as she'd go on to prove later).



Breath caught, there was no time to hang around as we had the other group to catch (those opting to take a slightly more direct route with less of an incline) for a photoshoot rendezvous with the Ely Runners flag. The ER ensign was one of the key items in Peter's backpack, along with two heavy tubs of eagerly pounced upon chocolate treats (tray baked by Debbie and Lizzie, enjoyed by all) and an RNR first aid kit (to be later sampled by Iain for a bloodied knee, grazed on the rough limestone).

<< The Hartley Hares at High Neb

Richard, posing with Selica for a photo on a rocky outcrop, saw a gust of wind whip his 'Run' cap off, sending it over the edge of the Edge and Richard 'running' after it. 'Hats off to that man', quipped Baz, getting a high five from Toby for his quick wit.

>> A (briefly) behatted Richard and Selica

With the next agreed meet point for the two groups the pub back in the village, like Janette's trig the flag was duly bagged and we were off up the Edge, with no two people taking the same path, such was the delightful choice of terrain ahead of us. Naomi considered a quick game of 'rock, paper, scissors' to decide whether to run on 'rock, grass or trail' but (being a member of Ely Tri Club) settled on all three, and taken at some speed too.



The local 'Fat Boys' run club host the Stanage Struggle fell race each year but it coincides with the Round Norfolk Relay so is never a suitable weekend for a Peaks trip, but it does use the same edge that we were haring along now. One particular speedster could be seen taking a racing line up the edge, but this was no slim Fat Boy 'back once again with some rock hopping feats' but our very own musician Baz, redlining on the rocks as best he knew how.



<< High jinks up on Stanage Edge, with B & K 'lounging'

At every stop to catch our breath or admire the amazing views, all unanimously agreed that this was such a fun route. Our two groups kept leapfrogging each other but it really did seem that slow and steady wins the race, partly due to some group A Hartley Hare wrong turns and retracing of steps.

From the second high point of the run up top at Higger Tor, the faster bunch that checked the map less often could easily see the group who'd opted for the (marginally) shorter route already well underway on their homeward descent, so took that as a challenge to play catchup and sped off down the hill with what can only be described as reckless abandon.

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Conditions were great, and we'd lucked out with the weather as, while a little cloudy, it had stayed dry all the while. We only encountered one bit muddy enough to potentially have James worrying about his new trainers, a large area just south of Scraperlow House, full of dark gloop (that Toby decided looked '*mostly faecal*') but with a route across via a few small rocks that most successfully traversed. But having not attended the lido session earlier, it was exactly at this point that Janette, for some unknown reason, decided to go for a swim, with full immersion and losing a shoe to boot. With a mucky hand extended from the mire looking for some assistance, Gwen (just out of reach) sensibly looked the other way and pushed on. I think even Natalie may have turned the other cheek here too.



<< The ER takeover of The Scotsmans Pack

With the run done, after a well-earned pint in the garden of The Scotsmans Pack, followed by another in the snug of the lounge, Alex suggested that we repair to the outside space ('*it has heaters!*') of a fancy new joint closer to home – VINTNERS on the Brook - as he'd done the necessary reconnaissance the night before. With lots of entz to pack in, Baz & his Guitar then had the time-saving bright idea of taking his guitar to the pub. *Perfect!*

On site and suitably set up, El Bariachi scattered a few set list song sheets, someone bought that man a beer and we were off! Debbie kicked off proceeding by requesting *Handbags and Gladrags*, and a few songs (and Kronenberg Blancs) later, Toby was by now well into the swing of things, happily providing the hands-aloft '*Boardwalk*' in his best baritone to Baz's cued-up crowd-pleaser, '*Under the...*'



Andy B took on the role of hype man and could be seen hustling nearby tables, handing out set lists with an entrepreneurial '*Here you go, three quid a track*' (and actually getting some takers, one group treating Baz as a solo Oasis tribute act and filming it for their mates, who were at that point at the Wembley gig that they couldn't score tickets for).

Now nearing time for supper, Baz entered his swansong phase – where 'Barry does Barry' - by launching into his closing number, '*Oh Mandy / can't you see / they're calling us for tea...*'

<< Andy T & Baz's Guitar, plus roadies

Back at base, we were treated to a choice of '*Soups by Neil*' (Creamy chickpea and kale, or spicy Egyptian lentil, both totally delicious) with pitta by Peter, followed by an impressive selection of huge lasagnas - classic beef / aubergine parmigiana (v) / gluten free (vv) - expertly cooked by Lizz, Kristian, Goska, Janette, Lizzie and Naomi (who was already busy planning next year's menu – *aye carumba!*) with Richard on kitchen porter duties and washing up everything placed in front of him.

The dessert of yesterday's apple crumble and Goska's chocolate brownies were demolished and then we moved over to the lounge area for Peter's quiz. The specially commissioned cryptic crossword clue '*Perhaps Mo Salah's opposed to cycling after initially experiencing pain (8)*' fell mostly on deaf ears (FLIPPING EK, where were past Peaks attendees Emily Knight or Andrew Berrill when you needed them?) but was quickly got by all when the 'easy route' option was read out '*... and was the nationality of the soup we had earlier*'. EGYPTIAN, easy (although I'm sure someone said Lebanese).

Some may well have got a top score of 10/10, but that was only the preamble, and it was Michael '*Who in the room shares a surname with a seven-time world snooker champion*' HENDRY who solved the 10-letter anagram

first to proffer the word HATHERSAGE and win a box of Cadburys chocs, immediately opened and chomped by all.

As Barry and Gwen headed out to the Toyota, Selica and Richard sparked up the Tesla and let it drive them back to their digs at Chatsworth some 20 minutes away. Back in the centre, thoroughly pooped from a very busy day, all were in bed by 10.20.

Sunday morning - run 4 (of 4) – *The Undulator!*

The Undulator (8.5 miles, 457m of ascent - a classic BM fell race with a challenging mix of fells, trails and lanes) was a delightfully low-key affair set in a small clearing just up from the Lime Kiln pub.

To prevent bottlenecks at the bridge as seen last year, the RD explained to the assembled crowd that there were now *two* starts to this race (basically, steep and slippy, or steeper but shorter) and if anyone was having second thoughts about their chosen route then *'it was time to, as Mike Read used to say, Runaround now'* (a reference probably enjoyed by just those in the V50 age groups).



^^ Ely Runners ahead of taking on... The Undulator!

The route starts in Stoney Wood in land reclaimed from Stonecroft Quarry, and during the run would go on to cross, touch or skirt Middle Peak Quarry, Ryder Point Quarry and Brassington Moor Quarry respectively. That's a lorra quarry action for one race!

It quickly became apparent why the Undulator was so called, but the frequent lung-busting climbs were being ticked off in quick order. Approached at speed and using short steps on tippy toes was the order the day, advice as dispensed to an assembled ER crowd by Rebecca Curtis-Hall from Matlock Athletic Club.

The race route was well marked and marshalled, and my focus was on keeping up with Becky from the 'lock (don't be fooled by the rocks that she hops) as her earlier primer on how to tackle the terrain, put into immediate effect, was proving very handy. I followed her lead at every stile, apart from the one where she hurdled it - RCH going full-on KJT! - as I wasn't that brave/quick/daft (delete as applicable).

Somewhat ironically given that we were up north, there was trouble back at t' mill for Richard, who on one climb could be seen busy on the phone and needing to call the fire brigade, some sort of alarm at Hockwold Hall back down south.

The varied terrain was made up of grass, path, trail, the odd narrow rocky gully, steps and farm gravel tracks where you could stretch the legs and up the pace a little. Outside of a V8, there's no better sound than that of running shoes on gravel (whereas *inside* of a V8, Andy B and I had fun overtaking everything in sight, but that was not to be the case out here on the hills among the trail-hardy locals).



<< Lizz, Andy T, Goska and Bethany finding time for a photo mid-race

Mid-race, we'd encounter several large wind turbines, where we ran slightly disconcertingly in the shadows of the turning blades and with a very definite *whump-whump-whump* sound overhead. That led on to not one but two clay pigeon shoots, where apparently the H&S advice given to The Undertaker, sorry *The Undulator* RD from the clay-master (let's call him Paul) was along the lines of, 'sure, depending on the wind direction, the falling clays may hit you, but they shouldn't hurt'. Ulp!

'They're shooting! Aww, made you look...' As they really were shooting, and now with Nas's 'Made you look' lyrics now firmly embedded, I did indeed sneak a look and got great views looking back up at Harborough Rocks, an outcrop of dolomitic limestone popular and today awash with climbers, hopefully easier targets for the gun club than us moving runners.



At this point of the race, we're almost halfway and at 1230 ft above sea level with fantastic scenery in all directions, including stunning views of Carsington Water, a man-made reservoir that opened in 1992.

<< Nat and Selica, Barry and Iain, mid-Undulator

But onwards, and downwards, to the High Peak Railway path, pancake flat and straight as an arrow for a mile or two (unlike Hopton Hall's unusually shaped crinkle-crankle boundary wall that we would also soon pass) where I managed a bit of a coup and overtook AJ (*you Go, Pro!* – Ed.) who would later say that he was like his camera drone from yesterday's run, low on

battery power and at serious risk of crashing.

At the top of one of the many stiff climbs, one marshal offered up a '*Rather you than me, pal*', clearly going off-script from the standard issue marshalling handbook, but to be fair he did have a point.

Several lumpy pastures and a road crossing later, another marshal more helpfully said that there was about a mile to go and with lots of downhill to finish, so time to up the ante as much as possible and enjoy the last stretch to complete a superb race over a brilliant course and with great organisation and support.

Everyone now safely home, as Natalie watched on it was then left to Toby to bring forth and unveil the miracle of the five loaves and two (dozen) eggs, which Lizzie and Beth had earlier transformed from some humble leftover sliced granary and 50/50 into a feast fit for twenty hard-boiled and famished runners.



<< 'Make mine a 99' - Alex before and after

All agreed that it was a fantastic race! Unlike last year, Alex in bib no 99 had no hesitation in completing my Jay-Z opener, 'I got 99 problems...' coming straight with '... but a fell race ain't one' with a huge grin on his face.

Wirksworth RC and the RD Mark Crawshaw were a very welcoming bunch and we would on to get a shout out on their website where out of the 100 or so runners that took part, **'special thanks goes to the twenty visiting runners from Ely Runners'**.

The unique qualities of the quirky fell races chosen for the Peaks weekend are a real winner and a great note to finish on, and The Undulator was no exception, going straight in to my top 5 (top 3?) of races, it really was THAT much fun – in fact, as was the entire trip. *Go Ely!*



^^ They're shooting! Aw, made you look... Barry, Selica, Lizz and Gwen take in the views

(Peter Royle, ER SocSec)



Ely Runners