



COSMIC BULLSHEET

The Bulletin News-Sheet
of Cosmic Hillbashers

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Editorial

Phill Thompson

Well a complete turnaround from the last edition with a full, fun-packed 24 pages of the Bullsheet this time. I think it must be the summer months that get people going doing their various challenges and races. This time we've got writings from as far a field as Tajikistan, Austria, the Hebrides, Wales, England, Ireland and various Cosmics ascending Bens Nevis and Rinnes.

Me, well I have managed to run up a few Majorcan hills and have the photos in a Cosmic vest to prove it. Unfortunately my heroics in the Buckie 10k hardly warrant a mention in the exalted company of the writers in this edition - although I'm more than happy to relate how I powered away from two rivals, in true Cosmic fashion, up the huge hill that is Slaughterhouse Brae. And of course at the time of writing this I should be powering up Morven, but heh, dedication to the Bullsheet must come first. "So how many hill races have you done this year?" I was asked recently "Nearly five" I said. "What you've done four?" "Nope, nearly Clachnaben, nearly Morven and really nearly Ben Nevis, for which I'd pre entered" Oh well there's always next year..... Think I'll set a target of "Nearly 10 Hill races" for 2003.

Finally, congratulations to Carl Pryce who broke the Cosmic Ramsay curse in August by completing a clockwise Ramsay Round in 22 hrs 51 mins. Look out for an account of his exploits in the next edition.

Phill

Note we have entered an Open Team in the FRA Relays on 19th October in Langdale. Any one wishing to run should contact Steve Rivers.

(A Grand Day Out with the Wrong Trousers)

I saw the email on the Cosmics newsgroup; the Ben Rinnes Five Tops race at Dufftown was coming up and it was a 'good toughie', whatever the darnin heck that meant in Ewen-speak. It was, I thought, about time I tackled a big race. I've been running with the Cosmics for about two years now, doing the Tuesday outings to Bennachie, Clachnaben and all the rest, slogging round the sodden rugby field at Kings College over the winter months. If this was the bread-and-butter side of the club, the excursions to races far and wide was the jelly and ice-cream. At fourteen miles and nearly five thousand feet climb with a Highland Games thrown in, Ben Rinnes sounded like a decent bowlful.

On the Saturday morning I got my gear together and set off for the meet-up at Elaine's flat. As I was walking I got the nagging feeling that something was wrong. There was a breeze around my ankles that shouldn't be there...with dawning horror I realised I was wearing the Wrong Trousers. A pair of my beloved's jeans had found their way into my wardrobe. This was not a good start to the day and I fervently hoped that cross-dressing Englishmen were not targeted for cruel and unusual Celtic punishments during the Games.

Despite the cunning delaying tactics of several tractor-drivers and the cheerful bickering between Ann (driving) and Derek (jabbering), we arrived at Dufftown in good time. A few miles out I caught sight of Ben Rinnes for the first time. It looked big and pointy (note to self...must buy

thesaurus). The route information (with helpful photos) on display outside the changing-rooms showed that it was a there-and-back race, first a slow climb up Little Conval hill (soup), then a six-hundred foot dip before Meikle Conval (hors d'oeuvres) followed by a steep descent to the water station before the main climb up Ben Rinnes (the entree). The return leg would feature Meikle Conval (dessert) and Little Conval (coffee and mints) before the finish line where I would pay. Dearly.

Forty-seven competitors lined up for the start. The race organiser was giving out information at the front, but from where I was at the back of the pack his voice was drowned out by the Master of Ceremonies on the PA system. My mind wandered. Suddenly there was the crack of the starting pistol and I found myself standing on my own. With hindsight, this poor start probably cost me the race. We circled the field to polite applause (Mummy, why have all those silly people got numbers on them?) and more booming from the PA system telling everyone what a fine bunch we were and that hardly anyone ever died in hill races these days. With a final ripple of applause we were out of the field. The noise of pipes, people and PA faded away and was replaced by the thud and patter of feet, the rustle of pathside vegetation and a lot of increasingly heavy breathing.

My usual sin in races has been to start out too fast and pay for it later. As I'd never done this kind of distance before I decided that I was going to have to take it slow and steady and concentrate on finishing; just getting around the damned course without injuring myself. Twice in the last year I've sprained ankles in races and both times it was due to losing my footing while trying to pass people. So, I jogged up towards Little Conval and just tried to warm up and get a rhythm without worrying

about the numerous people going past me. The track started broad and gravelly, going up between fields of horses and cows. We skirted along the edge of a deserted golf-course before the route went sharply uphill through long grass and boggy patches of heather. Pretty soon I was walking and scrambling rather than running. The climb got easier as we approached the rounded top of Little Conval and I was running again as I passed the summit cairn checkpoint. Half an hour, so far so good.

Taking my eye off the path for a moment nearly cost me a lost shoe in an unexpected boggy patch. I managed to open out into a good pace on the downhill into the saddle, but had to slow down again as the going got heavier and less certain underfoot. The rough, muddy path up Meikle Conval cut my pace to a fast walk; maybe people CAN run up this kind of stuff but I'm not one of them! As I passed the cairn checkpoint, Ben Rinnes came into view for the first time in the race, now looking scarily bigger than before... but no time to dwell on it as a fast-paced downhill section opened up, demanding careful footwork through patches of gravel and hummocky heather. Exhilarated, I crested a ridge and found myself looking down a steep heathery slope to the distant road and a cluster of tiny cars and people round the drinks station. The heather wasn't too deep and there was just the hint of a path to slither and skid down, but I was daunted by the thought of the steep climb on the return.

Down at the drinks station I gulped two cups of some odd-coloured isotonic drink (bleagh! ghacch!) and then it was straight up a wide, switchbacking landrover track to Ben Rinnes. I worried about the two-and-a-half hour forced retirement cutoff at the drinks station on the way back: would I make it? I briefly chatted to a guy from a Moray club; another Ben Rinnes first-timer. After a few minutes I let him pull ahead,

still wanting not to force my pace. I came out onto the shoulder of the mountain and got a good view of the final ascent, the path a wide, badly eroded scar leading up to the summit crags. To my left was a spectacular view over a valley; patches of sun breaking through the clouds and haze to lighten the deep greens of the hillsides. I passed through some gates and the path started deteriorating to rubble as it climbed. Suddenly I saw movement coming towards me and the front-runners blasted past, descending at a terrific pace. John Duncan was in the lead with another guy right on his shoulder. I looked on in envy and turned again to slugging up the slope, pushing my hands on my knees for the steeper bits. I broke out the chocolate bar I'd been saving up and shared a bit with the Moray runner who I'd caught up with.

Runners started coming down more regularly now, all with that crazy-concentrated downhill running expression on their faces as they shot past. The wind picked up and big, heavy drops of rain started whipping into my face. I dragged my showerproof top out of my beltbag; I hadn't expected to use it but the wind and rain was cooling me rapidly even on this summer day. The ascent dragged on, now a lot less fun in the rain. Suddenly there were big rocks in front of me...the summit outcrop. I'd made it! I checked in with the marshall, rounded the summit (the wrong way) and started down again. I'd like to say the view was stunning but I was more concerned about getting out of the rain. The rocky, eroded path didn't make for easy descending but I went as fast as I dared and passed one or two people.

The rain eased off. I felt I was making good time and really started enjoyed the descent; my worries about missing the cut-off time faded. A rock bounced and clipped my left ankle; stinging it and making me a little

more cautious. Despite this I was back at the bottom faster than I'd dared hope and feeling surprisingly good; I took another two cupfuls of bright blue whatsit at the drinks station (hccahg! hgaelb!) and started the slog up the heathery cliff of Meikle Conval. Two guys I'd caught up with at the drinks station rapidly outdistanced me up the slope. Very soon I realised that the Ben Rinnes section had taken the best out of me; the strength ebbed from my legs as I started on the main drag up to the top. Smelling weakness, the insect life of Scotland found me; a cloud of black flies buzzed into my ears and bounced off my face. I wasted precious energy flapping my hands about trying to drive them off, but they dogged me until I finally got to the breezy top of the hill.

Coming down off Meikle Conval was only slightly easier than going up it; the path was too rough to get up any decent speed until nearly at the bottom. Only one climb left now, but I was well past my best and barely managed fitful spots of jogging as I climbed Little Conval. The flies were back, too, but this time I just tried eating them. The climb slowly, slowly flattened off and I tried to rally my energies for another downhill dash. It didn't work. The best pace I could manage was a kind of plodding, robotic jog. I realised there was no-one else in sight. Was I in a race, or had I imagined it all? Keeping my pace going started to demand more and more concentration. Things were getting tough. My feet were hurting. If I stopped running I knew I wouldn't be able to start again. Now I was past the golf-course and running along footpaths, past the cows and horses. Every time I turned a corner I expected to see the final stretch, only to find another interminable section of footpath. Finally I heard the faint sound of the crowd and turned the last corner to see the short stretch of road leading into the field.

There were a couple of shouts of encouragement from various Cosmics and then I was on the field, a ripple of applause following me around as I did the final lap and the master of ceremonies called my name out over the PA. Inexplicably, these polite little tokens of respect almost brought me to grateful tears. I crossed the line and collapsed next to the drink station. I'd finished the race in just under three hours and twenty-three minutes and come thirty-seventh out of forty-five finishers. The important word was 'finished'.

For the next half an hour, my body felt as if it was in shock. I was barely coherent, looked like death and had to fight off occasional waves of nausea. I had a cold shower (the only kind available to us poor tail-enders) and gratefully dived into dry clothes. Another runner in the changing room was having agonising cramp in his calf muscles, which were writhing under the skin like worms. I tried to help him stretch them out before the first-aid crew arrived; fortunately they seemed to know something about massage. I left them to it and staggered outside, making for the field but needing to sit down every ten paces or so. Finally my guardian angel arrived; Elaine with a cup of tea and a slice of cake. Ten minutes later the sugar had hit my bloodstream and I was back to rights, enjoying the final march of the massed pipe bands. And I had to admit that the trousers were getting kind of comfy.

Comment on Ben Rinnes from Stewart Whitlie Carnethy who was 2nd Male and first vet : "Had an enjoyable race with John Duncan. Having run together for the first hour and 40 mins and after several failed attempts to leave him on the climbs, he seemed to find another gear and pulled away coming off Meikle Conval. I think it must be something to do with long legs and heather!"

Vauxhall Four Peaks Challenge 2002 Neil Proven

Cosmic irregulars Trevor Ancell & Neil Proven teamed up with fellow Hash House Harriers Mike Eastgate and Julie Donald to take part in the 2002 Vauxhall Four Peaks Challenge. Starting from Ben Nevis the 50 teams of 3 runners and a driver each made their way to Helvellyn, Snowdon then by ferry to Carrauntoohil in Co Kerry. The event was organised by the Wooden Spoon Society to raise funds for disadvantaged children. Our team raised over £11,000 this year, some of which will go to the £60,000 that the WSS is donating to the Archie Foundation in Aberdeen.

A sunny afternoon on Thursday 4th July found our team at the foot of Ben Nevis following an early morning start from Aberdeen. Eager to get under way we made our way early to the kit check - just as well, as the marshals turned their noses up at the carefully laminated OS map extracts which we had brought with us. Only the full OS map would do! A hasty return to the vehicle and the necessary sheets were dug out. With most of the field already on their way, we had plenty targets to aim for on the way up. As it turned out we were 10 minutes from the top before we met any of the earlier teams coming down. We reached the summit in for us a reasonable time of 1h45min so expected to descend as normal in 50 mins or so for a round trip of 2h35m. Unfortunately Mike suffered an injury early on the descent, limping in on a strained calf at the finish. Long faces all round, as we scraped in at 3h03m a good 20 minutes down on the leaders. It seemed that our competition may be over, with Mike doubtful whether we could do much more than walk the remaining hills, or maybe draft in our driver Julie as reserve runner. A post-run dip in the River Nevis gave much amusement to the other teams, but proved to be beneficial.

After the overnight drive to Penrith, a drearily wet early morning start on Helvellyn saw us bounce off up the hill. Mike's calf appeared to be holding up with the help of remedial massage, lashings of Diane's specially formulated massage oil, and copious amounts of Ibuprofen. A rapid ascent to the mist-shrouded summit however was followed by a painful and slow descent - things were not quite right yet. However a reasonable time of 1h34m was posted and not too much ground was lost on the leaders. Off we headed to Snowdon, where the wall of a pub beer garden served as a massage table, drawing amused stares from passing motorists, coach tours and curious sheep (must have been the camomile in the oil!).

The preparation proved worthwhile as we put in a solid performance on Snowdon posting 1h57m with 2nd - 5th places coming in less than four minutes apart. It seemed that as the event dragged on our stamina and the months of training were beginning to show. A bit of a cock up with the ferry - it hit the dock at Holyhead and ripped a 6-foot high gash along it's side - meant that we were delayed by 6 hours in heading over to Dun Laoghaire. Although we were keen to get on our way, this turned out to be a good opportunity to have a meal and kip down on the dockside to wait for the 3 a.m. sailing. This also avoided the enforced 3 hour pit-stop in Limerick, instead we headed straight down to Carrauntoohil and piled almost straight from the car to the start line.

The weather had not improved much, but at least it wasn't pouring down here as in previous years, and a jazz band was on hand to see us off up the hill. We were now on a roll and pushed this one all the way, aided by the experience of Mike and Trevor on their previous visits. "How far to the top" I asked as we cleared the Devil's Ladder. "About 200 metres, probably 10 minutes" Mike informed me. Half an hour and several false summits later, the iron cross of the summit came in to view through the thick mist. A quick obligatory photo stop and we were off - until the marshal called us back to take a snap for himself - apparently tartan lycra shorts are in vogue this year. Then, after an all out descent we were pipped in to second place by just 5 seconds! A close result given that we were running blind, with teams being set off at 1 minute intervals.

To add insult to injury, as first team off the hill by a good 10 minutes we expected to have first go at the free Guinness bar - only to be told that we had come in too early and the beer hadn't arrived yet! Luckily backup was at hand as we had stashed four bottles of champagne in the vehicle. A good feed was had from the barbeque, kisses were exchanged, bottoms slapped and general drunkenness ensued. As an added bonus the cloud lifted and the summit could be seen for only the 3rd time in 13 visits. Much to the surprise of Mike who could now see the actual distance from the Devil's Ladder to the summit, about 4 times what he had thought! At this point we were not at all sure how well we had done - fastest on Carrauntoohil would have been a suitable reward. It wasn't however until the presentations in the evening that it became apparent how close things had been. As one-by-one we missed out on the 'minor' awards it dawned on us that we must be in with a shout for top spot. In the end, a dead-heat was declared between ourselves and Bioforce Herbal Harriers, with them having collected more points on

the hills and us making up the deficit through the amount of funds raised. More cheers, more beers and jigging to the Irish band finished off a very enjoyable couple of days.

OK so this wasn't the elite of hill running, but with 5 teams closely matched it was an enjoyable, rewarding and knackered 48 hours. In fact, a stroll compared to the effort put in to the fundraising! Here's looking forward to next time...

For more info and pics see www.fourpeaks.org.uk

Neil Proven

Tales from TajikistanRick Allen

Greetings to everyone with whom I have failed to communicate for months, here is the summer story.

Our second season of business (ad) venture in Tajikistan is over and I am recovering here at work in Kazakhstan while our clients are recovering all over Europe. No, they all had a great time, or so they said in the feedback forms that they sent to us. Immigration control in Kazakhstan seems to be getting more difficult, at least if you are working here. My visa was due to expire one day before my flight out. What will happen if I run over, I kept asking? You had better leave the country before it expires, was the only reply. After a seven week work hitch (the longest yet) I visited friends Martin and Maggie in Almaty and scraped out of the country with a few hours to spare before my visa expired.

Tajikistan, by contrast is more relaxed than before and visa's are now issued on arrival - a breeze. Spent a couple of days unwinding from the long work hitch and getting sorted out for the mountains. Went on a picnic with friends from the nascent church. Why are church picnics the same all over, too much sitting around? Behaved badly, went for a long exploratory walk up the glen and made everyone late.

It was hot, 40 ish and some of us headed to a popular lido type artificial lake about 15k out of Dushanbe. Got burned being too long on the paddle boat with Jimmy. A crowd gathered at one end of the lake. I guessed what was wrong and thought, so many people won't be able to contribute anything. The crowd didn't disperse, it just got bigger and more agitated. Finally I went over at about the same time as Jimmy's wife Laura. Members of the increasingly desperate crowd were trying to revive a girl who had been underwater for about 10 minutes but they were completely ineffective. Laura and I knew what to do but got pushed aside. Probably too late but felt sick for the rest of the day for my hesitation.

Met the clients off the flight from Frankfurt at 6.00 in the morning, a family from Holland and a couple of Brits who had encountered us at the adventure travel show at Olympia in January and not been put off by us or the Foreign Office advice. Next day we headed North for the mountains and stopped at an old soviet style holiday base at Isskander Kul - Alexander's Lake. Alexander the Great was supposed to have stopped here but then he was supposed to have been almost everywhere between Macedonia and the Khyber Pass during his briefly meteoric career. On next day to Penjikent near the Uzbek border for a night with a Tajik family and then up to the mountain base of Artuch in the Fann Mountains. For those of you with just a Times atlas handy, we are in the purple patch about the width of your little finger to the right of Samarkand. From there we headed next day up though summer pasture with half a dozen donkeys carrying tents and food for a week.

We crossed a low pass the next day and descended to the spectacularly beautiful azure lake of Alloudin. From there the donkeys were to take our gear to a high camp below Chimtarga pass from where porters would help us across the pass. Everyone was coping well with the walking, the hot sun, the cold nights and intermitent bouts of stomach trouble. One porter failed to show up but the other lads were strong and willing so we threw away surplus water melons and packed the loads. I knew the loads were big but the lads were unrealistic about what they could carry and 45 kilos each was just a little too much. Unfortunately they didn't admit this until it was too late to do anything about it and we had to abandon crossing the watershed, although almost everyone reached the summit of the pass. We took an alternative route to return to the base and everyone was relaxed about the outcome.

After a marathon drive back to Dushanbe we had a day for wandering the bazars and visiting the museum of antiquities followed by an evening of Tajik singing and dancing. This involved some audience participation and turned into quite a party. Our clients were a great group who gelled naturally and I could not have wished for better companions for the whole fortnight.

After seeing them off at the airport I had a day climbing with some local lads which turned into a marathon and we finished up bivouacking on someone's veranda at midnight after our taxi driver had given up all hope and gone home.

In between negotiating for a new Kazakh visa to enable me to return to work I took a client rock climbing in the Varzob gorge. The end of my stay in Dushanbe coincided with a party at the British Embassy where the new ambassador, Mike Smith of Aberdeenshire and the Gordons, hosted an evening of scottish country dancing. After warming up with a Dashing White Sargeant I thought that it was a little brave to move straight to Machine Without Horses but our international set coped surprisingly well. The German ambassador declined to join in the Reel of the 51st Highland Division, perhaps sensing the provenance of that dance, but the whole evening provided a glorious finale.

After three busy weeks in Tajikistan it was a relief to return to Almaty and relax for a few days in and around that beautiful city before heading back to work.

That is the story of just one of the trips that the GGT co has run this year. Next year we expect lots more clients and shall need more guides and translators. If you are interested in joining us in any of those capacities or just want to pass on details to a friend, check out

www.GreatGameTravel.co.uk

My next trip will be pure indulgence, two weeks of rock climbing and scuba diving in Thailand. Optimistically, still hope to see many of you somehow before Christmas, which will probably be spent here again.

Love to all, Rick

Glamaig is one of the best races, hill race or other, which I've competed in. It starts and finishes outside a pub, has a course, which once run will never be forgotten, and there are 2 free pints and a meal to all participants.

The race starts outside the Sligachan Hotel on Skye and involves a climb up Glamaig, one of the Red Cuillins. A good crowd turns out to see this event and it's easy to see why. Not only can you watch the race while having a beer in the pub car park but the hill is big and steep and on a clear day, you can watch the whole race.

A group of nine Cosmics made the trip, mostly on the Friday evening, and were rewarded with a late licence in the hotel till one in the morning. Maybe not the best preparations for a race but the entertainment and the atmosphere proved too attractive. There were some hangovers the next morning but that was okay as it was an afternoon start – 3pm.

After the usual mad rush from the start I found myself behind Gary Gutteridge at the base of the hill. The ascent is very steep and very difficult to run. It's almost a scramble rather than a run. I passed a few people on the ascent but then so did Gary and he was still in front of me at the top. We both descended to the top of what Ian Searle has termed the Green Banana and then took a sharp left onto the scree and the fun part of the race.

For me the descent of any race is the part I enjoy the most and I'm prepared to accept the odd fall while doing this. Most people seem to fall while descending Glamaig and I was no exception. Once off the scree, Gary continued down to the river while I contoured round to meet up with the route used for going up. Gary's route is slightly longer but there's the advantage of the path along the river to follow. Just before I lost sight of Gary I could see Findlay, a friend of Liz's who had come along for the party and decided to enter the race, following the same route as Gary. I fell a couple of more times in the bogs near the road but managed to keep my momentum going and reached the road at the same point we left it on the run in. I then caught sight of Finlay moving quickly towards the

bunkhouse on my left but there was no sign of Gary. I legged it towards the finish and managed to hold off Finlay. I was expecting to see Gary there but he was nowhere to be seen. I was first Cosmic home. This is not something that I'm used to and it's a nice feeling. The only downside was losing my watch during the race - or so I thought - somehow Ian found it and handed it in at the end.

The full list of Cosmic finishers were: -

Stuart Hunter - 33rd

Gary Gutteridge - 36th

Cathy Mangham - 49th

Derek Johnston - 50th

Lois Noble - 58th

Toni Hocking - 60th

Elaine Stewart - 64th

Liz Horton - 67th

Ian Searle - 70th

We were lucky with the weather and had some great views of the Cuillins. Staying in the bunkhouse 2 minutes from the hotel is another bonus. The free pints and meal plus the ceileidh and the surroundings make this a tremendous weekend away and I would recommend it to anyone even if they don't want to do the race (although you would be mad not to).

World Mountain Running Championships

The 'World Trophy' takes place every September. In 'even' years it is uphill only, in 'odd' years it is up & down. This is fell running without steep descents and on well graded paths. It is not the real thing, the 'pure' British type of hill running, but it is good fun!

I went to the trial for the England team in August, and made the team of 6 by finishing 5th in the trial. So on 12th September I was off to Innsbruck in Austria to race.

Uphill only is a beast. A lung-busting, angry, hungry and quintessentially alpine beast. But a beast that is fun to play with. The course was 11.7km with 1400m climb. It started in the main square in Innsbruck, ran for 2 km on the flat streets before starting the climb. Essentially up the line of a downhill ski slope, with a few wiggles.

We went out on Thursday. The women and junior men & women raced on the Saturday, whilst we raced on Sunday. The weather was tip-top all the time, hot and sunny, except for Sunday morning (our race) when there was thick mist and low cloud and it was raining. In the town it was cool, but a nice temperature for running. 1400m higher, however, it was a lot cooler, 2°C to be precise, and it was sleeting. Runners arrived there after a very tough hour very tired and very cold, dressed as they were in vest & shorts.

I ran in this race 2 years ago when I finished 45th, and was hoping to run better this year. I was disappointed not to, as I finished 54th, but on reflection my time was closer to the winners in % terms and over a longer course, so looking at it that way is not so bad.

The winner was Jonathan Wyatt from New Zealand. He was 5th in the Commonwealth marathon, so is clearly a class act. He has now won 3 world titles at the uphill championships, but he can't run down hill and we would stuff him in a forest! No one could get near this guy. He finished 3 ½ mins clear of 2nd place. Different class.

The England team finished 6th of 41 nations, so respectable I think. Next year the championships are in Alaska. Up & down. I hope to run the trial if it doesn't clash with the World O Champs. Think this would be a good trip!

Cosmic Social Events – Quarter 4 Year 2002

Social Secretary – Elaine Stewart

Social Retrospective

June Tuesday 25th

Thanks to John & Sue Buchan for having us back to their house for food and drinks after the Grandholm charity run.

July Weekend 20th/21st

This was another successful Cosmic Jolly Weekend away to Skye for the Glamaig Hill Race. As usual too much alcohol was consumed on the Friday night leaving us wondering if we could manage the race on the Saturday. We had good weather, hell of a race, followed by free drink, free food and a good night, what more could you ask. Some of us managed to get up Marsco on the Sunday, great hill for views of the Cuillins, Blaven and Glamiag.

August

Thursday 8th

Ballater is one of the best when it comes to Highland Games, the hill race attracted about 70 runners the biggest turn out so far. Dan won it with Ian Donan second winning himself £75. If you've got good eye and hand co-ordination then you can enter the game of 'tilt the bucket'. If your co-ordination isn't so good then you get soaked, some chap got it right by wearing a waterproof hat and jacket combined that seemed to be joined at the neck, bare bodies look far better to me. Stuart Hunter opted out of camping that night and gave himself the luxury of staying in a hotel, he refused any of Lois's garlic spread, then took home for his girlfriend a bunch of plastic tulips, plug them in and they light up, mmm... Mind you Dan's mother wasn't having him take home a £3.50(reduced) flowerpot, yeah looked exciting!!

Friday 30th

Thanks to Lois for organising a night out to see the Afronauts, and having us round to her house for some food before hand.

September

Thursday 5th

It was Derek Johnstone's leaving 'do' as a few Cosmics and Stockets gathered at Carmines to see Derek off. The party continued to Under The Hammer then onto O'Donoghues. His ranting and raving will be sadly missed. He's off to study at a French university in Toulouse, should be back in about 6 to 9 months time, or not, if he manages to find himself

some French totty!! If you would like to communicate with him, he can be contacted at derekjohnstone49@hotmail.com.

Forthcoming Features

October

Saturday 5th

Catherine Mangham has moved yet again this time to Sunny Brae Lodge Aviemore, PH22 1PZ, Tel: 01479 812209. She's going to have a joint house warming party come Tony's birthday celebrations. The plan is to play out during the day...weather dependant and party in the evening 6:30 onwards. BYOB and BBQ stuff. She can't offer accommodation but tent space is available and there's plenty in town.

Saturday 19th/Sunday 20th

It's the Meall a' Bhuachaille Hill Race followed by the Scottish Hillrunners 'Annual Do' held at Glenmore Lodge. The run is 6miles, 2000ft, starts at 1:00pm and costs £5 to enter. If you want to stay over for the party on Saturday night then accommodation is available at Glenmore Lodge either as B&B at £18 or there is chalets, phone 01479 861 256 to book your own, there is always the cheaper option down the road at the youth hostel. There will be tickets available for the evening 'do', which will include a meal, will let you know once I find out the details. There is also the option to go mountain biking at Inchriach Forest on the Sunday.

November

Thursday 14th

Carmines, Theatre, Lemon Tree....Drinking

Jon Crowe's house warming party, date yet to be decided.

December

Tuesday 17th

After the last day of training at Kings there will be a get-together at my house. I will supply some food but please bring some of your own plus drink. Party games as thought up by Ewen Rennie.

Congratulations to John Dalton and Constanza who got married sometime recently at the Bucksburn Registry Office. Must have just rushed out in his lunch hour. Maybe there will be a proper party to celebrate the occasion.

DON'T FORGET..... TUESDAY NIGHT IS PUB NIGHT.

Having had a relatively easy Summer, no racing just decorating, I decided to make my racing come back at Ben Nevis. I had been running on and off during the summer, nothing too serious so decided to enter the Lonach Hill race a few weeks before the Ben to gauge my level of fitness. It is true what they say you always think you are fitter than you actually are. After a relatively poor run at Lonach I had two weeks to get some hard training in.

We decided to make a long weekend of it, going over to Fort William via an over night stop at Pitlochry on the Thursday night, arriving in Fort William on Friday afternoon just as the heavens opened. It rained all Friday night (probably the edge of what caused the bad flooding in Inverness). However, race day dawned with sunny skies and the odd scattered shower so conditions would be good albeit wet underfoot.

At the registration area in Laggan Park we met up with Carl Pryce and family and Dennis who had driven over on the morning of the race. Clutching our miniature of Ben Nevis whisky we mingled with the other runners and waited for the start of the race. The usual parade of runners behind the piped band was followed by the final check in and kit check. Not too many familiar faces in the field, most appeared to be people from English clubs.

The race was started by some 'Ben' race veteran. I did not catch everything he said but I think he was 80 something and had run the Ben race in the 40's (probably in hobbed nailed boots and tweeds). It started with the usual cavalry charge round Laggan Park out the gate and along the road to Auchintee. The elite runners, Ian Holmes, Dave Rodgers, Robb Jebb etc were quickly away in the distance. My race plan, not having done too much over the summer was to try to stick with someone I knew, this time it was John Hepburn, I thought if I could stay with him I would managed to get under 2 hrs. My previous attempts at the Ben were over 2 hours. My plan lasted all of 30 secs, no sooner had the gun gone I was off round the field and down the road like a scared rabbit. In hindsight I now know I overcooked the first mile or so but you learn from things like this. The easy road running finishes at Auchintee, which marks the start of the tourist path up the Ben. The race route for those not familiar with it follows the tourist path the majority of the way to half way, Red Burn, there it turns straight up to the summit rather

than follow the zig zags of the tourist path. The return route is as the way up to Red Burn, the down something called the Green Wall (a very steep / slippery grassy slope) to eventually rejoin the tourist path about 1/3 rd of the way up, thereafter the route is the same as the way out. There are a few places where the path starts to zig zag on the lower slopes, so the race route just cuts straight across these. A relatively straight forward route, with, no real places to get lost just a couple of steep drops to avoid near the summit.

With my plan out of the window I started the ascent not feeling to bad, the only rain shower hit just as the race hit the base of the climb. With leaders now in the distance, a steady stream of runners who had taken a more leisurely start began to pass me, the only ones I recognized were Ronnie Gallacher and, John Hepburn. I managed to climb / fast walk not too bad to Red Burn. All the way up the lower slopes you pass groups of walkers providing lots of encouragement. At Red Burn, apart from being the first cut off place, you get a great view of the ascending runners so there was a big group of people giving encouragement. Just what you need before a straight climb of approximately 2500 ft to the summit. I tried to stick in behind someone on the way up as it helps pull you along and you can just concentrate on the person in front and not thinking about how much further there was to go. I had a bad patch about $\frac{3}{4}$ qtrs of the way up, I looked behind and there was my regular training partner Carl Pryce. Obviously training for the Ramsay Round had done something to his climbing ability. He was climbing like a demon. This gave me the kick up the backside I required and I started to feel better once we were able to start running again near the summit.

Reaching the summit I handed my number tag and started the return journey. Carl was a just few minutes behind and I passed him on the plateau just before he reached the summit. The weather was being very kind, the summit was clear so the views would have been great if you were not concentrating so hard on where to place your feet.

The race was now on, the question going through my mind was could I stay ahead of Carl on the descent, as he descend quiet well. I tried to follow a couple of locals as they would probably know the best way down. They did that alright. I was unable to stay with them as they hurtled head long down the scree / stones and grass. I got down to Red Burn and still had not seen Carl, so either he was still behind me or had passed me further round the hill. Onwards down the Green Wall, just as steep and wet as I remembered. The

first time I did the Ben I think I spent a lot of time on my backside trying to just get down in one piece. This time I managed to negotiated the Green wall and just as I was about to rejoin the main path I lost concentration right in front of a group of spectators and fell over. Quickly picking myself up, more embarrassed than anything, I went of in pursuit of the runner ahead. I managed to pass one person just before hitting the road again and could see the next one in front. Despite my legs felling totally knackered I went off in pursuit of the guy in front.

The last mile on the road is always hard. It is up and down and feels more like 2. I looked behind and there was no sign of Carl so I was safe or had he already finished. There is no greater feeling than entering Laggan Park knowing that you have nearly finished. I achieved my main objective of getting under 2 hrs, I did 1 hr 47 mins still short of Dennis's 1 hr 45 time. I waited at the finish expecting to see Carl appear very soon but he did not appear for ages and ages.

Then Dennis came in just over 2 hrs and still no Carl. Dennis then said he had seen Carl at the summit and that he had fallen over and bashed his face so had decided to pull out of the race. He must have fallen just after I had passed him. For a while we were expecting him to be airlifted from the summit but this proved unfounded as Carl eventually walked down unaided. He had tripped and basically fell flat on his face causing a bleeding nose, cuts and bruises to knees and elbows. A bleeding nose always looks worse that it was. It was quiet worrying waiting at finish especially when you keep over hearing people say things like 'did you see that guy at the summit in a survival bag, blood everywhere'. Once Carl was checked out we did have a laugh about it. This was the second time Carl had suffered misfortune in a race, only a few weeks ago he was leading the Tap o North race by ½ mile only to get lost and eventually finish runner up. This is not the only time a Cosmic runner has come away from the Ben with more than sore legs, Bob Sheridan broke a finger, and I twisted an ankle the first time I did it.

Although this is a hard race, I would recommend people do it once. It has one of the biggest field for a hill race in Scotland. It makes a great weekend. Yes, my legs were stiff and but it is funny to watch people round the town trying to negotiate steps sideways. We had a nice trip up the Anoch Mor cable car on the Sunday and watched the mountain bikes tackle the new down hill MTB course constructed beneath the cable car. Go on have a go next year, remember to enter early, why not make it a Cosmic weekend.

Hebridean Challenge 2002 Thoughts from Team in the Buff

Katy Boo

If you only do one race in 2003 you won't do better than the Hebridean Challenge – 5 days of glorious running, cycling, mountain biking, sea kayaking and last but not least, swimming, which take you the length and breadth of the Western Isles.

There are several factors which make this race so good:-

1. The weather – I've done this event 3 times and we've had brilliant weather every time. Imagine climbing out of early morning mist to see clear views of the whole Inner and Outer island chain in front of you; running across golden sands in early morning sunshine; cycling in the flat calm of sunrise. (You may have noticed that all my memories are of the very early mornings. One of the challenging aspects of this race is the early starts)
2. The format – whilst it is a team event, it is a relay race, albeit a complicated one. This means that most of the time people are travelling at their own pace rather than having to go at the pace of the slowest, or trying to keep up with the fastest. Consequently, each team member can play to their strengths. Thank god I didn't have to keep up with Fiona. Wind her up and off she goes. The problem was stopping her! Make sure you have at least one Fiona on your team.
3. Because it's a relay race there are breaks where you can eat, recuperate, re-organise.
4. Logistics/team organisation play an important part in the team's success or otherwise! Working out how best to utilise your team as well as route choices is part of the challenge of the event. The team that can move the fastest is not necessarily the most successful; especially if they're moving very fast in the wrong direction. We reckon having Helen A on your team, equipped with a well stocked stationary box is the key to success. Pack your post-its.
5. You don't have to keep going non stop. Everyone stops overnight, although some get to stop for a lot longer than others. It sometimes felt like we were on the go all the time when we got to bed at midnight and were up again at 4.00am. That made us popular with the local B&B's.
6. The food – each evening a group of local ladies serves up huge quantities of delicious grub in the village hall

7. Obviously the scenery – it doesn't get any better than the Western Isles when the sun is shining.
8. It's a very sociable race, wherever you are in the pecking order. There are races within races. You tend to keep meeting the same people at change overs (or Fiona and Helen seemed to. I seemed to keep being sent on long, lonely hill legs whilst they socialised!)
9. There has to be a reward for all this effort – it's the end of race Party! The outpouring of bonhomie is palpable and it is truly amazing that even the most shattered body can be pushed through one last strip the willow (ask Peter!)

Naturally those already in awe of Team in the Buff (both for their athletic prowess and sartorial elegance) will be thinking that this event is for super athletes only. Not so, as a team of rather portly rugby players from Brighton completed the event (sort of) and enjoyed it (probably). So there's no excuse!!!!



Saturday Runs and Races

Sunday 6th October - **BENNACHIE HILL RACE** so no Saturday run –
2pm from Back O'Bennachie CP near Oyne

Saturday 12th October – **Carn Mon Earn** – NO768924
meet Duthie Park Boating Pond 9-15am or 9-45am there.

Saturday 19th October – **FRA Relays in Langdale, Meall a'Bhuachaille**

Saturday 26th October – **Hill of Fare 9-15am Hazlehead for 9-45 there**
but also Karrimor weekend – beware of last minute partnerships!

Saturday 2nd November - **Bennachie** variations from Rowan Tree Car Park
NJ685245- meet Hazlehead 9-15am or 9-45am there.

Saturday 9th November – **Kerloch** – NO699917
meet Duthie Park Boating Pond 9-15am or 9-45am there.

Saturday 16th November – **11am - ELRICK EIGHTSOME RACE**
(Straight race NOT relay – 3.5miles,670feet)

Saturday 23rd November - – **Fetteresso** – NO830873 –
meet at Duthie Park 9-15am or 9-45am out there.

Saturday 30th November - **Glentanar** – NO479964 –
meet at Duthie Park 9-15am or 9-45am out there.

Saturday 7th December - Back of **Clachnaben** from Glen Dye –
NO649868 - meet at Duthie Park 9-15am or 9-45am out there.

Saturday 14th December - **Mither Tap** from Visitor Centre – NJ698217
Meet Hazlehead at 9-15am or 9-45am out there.

Saturday 21st December – **Forvie Sands**- NK003270 –
meet Seaton Park 9-15am or 9-45am there.

BEACH BUM FUN RUN ????





COSMIC BULLSHEET

The Bulletin News-Sheet
of Cosmic Hillbashers

ISSUE No 32
QUARTER 4 - 2002

Editorial

Phill Thompson

Well a complete turnaround from the last edition with a full, fun-packed 24 pages of the Bullsheet this time. I think it must be the summer months that get people going doing their various challenges and races. This time we've got writings from as far a field as Tajikistan, Austria, the Hebrides, Wales, England, Ireland and various Cosmics ascending Bens Nevis and Rinnes.

Me, well I have managed to run up a few Majorcan hills and have the photos in a Cosmic vest to prove it. Unfortunately my heroics in the Buckie 10k hardly warrant a mention in the exalted company of the writers in this edition - although I'm more than happy to relate how I powered away from two rivals, in true Cosmic fashion, up the huge hill that is Slaughterhouse Brae. And of course at the time of writing this I should be powering up Morven, but heh, dedication to the Bullsheet must come first. "So how many hill races have you done this year?" I was asked recently "Nearly five" I said. "What you've done four?" "Nope, nearly Clachnaben, nearly Morven and really nearly Ben Nevis, for which I'd pre entered" Oh well there's always next year Think I'll set a target of "Nearly 10 Hill races" for 2003.

Finally, congratulations to Carl Pryce who broke the Cosmic Ramsay curse in August by completing a clockwise Ramsay Round in 22 hrs 51 mins. Look out for an account of his exploits in the next edition.

Phill

Note we have entered an Open Team in the FRA Relays on 19th October in Langdale. Any one wishing to run should contact Steve Rivers.