



COSMIC BULLSHEET

The Bulletin News-Sheet
of Cosmic Hillbashers

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Editorial

Phill Thompson

Well that's another year gone – almost! As ever the year-end is a time for reflecting on what we have done this year and what we will do next year. This years' AGM was particularly interesting in terms of both reflection and forward planning. There was much discussion about the club, its ambitions progress etc. It does seem that at times we are just drifting along, enjoying social runs on Tuesdays and Saturdays, gathering together for the odd social evening and weekend, entering the odd hill race and sometimes putting together competitive teams for races. We have definitely stagnated of late, but no one seems to want to pick up the baton of moving us forward, maybe we are happy with what we have got. ?

There is inevitably a comparison with orienteering given the large numbers of Cosmic orienteers. Individual orienteers rarely go a year without organising, planning or controlling an event and virtually everyone helps out at an event on a regular basis. Helping and running is not so compatible with our events but we have managed to get into a situation whereby only two people, Ewen and Dave Armitage, organise events. (Well I suppose you could include John B's race as well!)

As it is that time of year for making resolutions then resolve to do more for YOUR club. One of my New Year's resolution is to offer to organise an event next year !!

Have a good Christmas and New Year , Cheers
Phill

Social Retrospective

October. Good turn out of Cosmics to Carmine's and then on to the Doug Scott lecture.

November. Ten Cosmic's turned up on a nice sunny day for the Meall a Buachaille hill race and Annual Do at Glenmore Lodge followed by the buffet dinner and disco. Unfortunately no gossip to report and no trap for Gary. Well done to Dan for winning the race and setting a record of 51:03, and also to Mandy Gilbert with a pb time completed her first ever hill race, don't let it stop there!! Some of us still had some energy left on the Sunday for a bit of mountain biking around the forests at Glenfeshie, thanks to Katy for showing all 15 of us around.

Forthcoming Features

December Friday 26th Lois has invited everybody around to her house on Boxing Day after the traditional 3-mile Banchory run. The race starts at 11:00 from the park and runs round the streets of Banchory and on the old railway line. Most of you will need a little exercise after the Xmas dinner, so do the run then go to Lois's. Bring some contribution of food and drink with you, if you don't want to do the race then go to Lois's for about 1 or 2 o'clock. Showering and changing facilities at Lois's.

January Saturday 17th

To change the theme and format of previous years I thought that we should go for a meal out. I will book Little Italy for Saturday 17th of January, menu and price will come nearer the time. There is also scope for a bit of dancing afterwards, usually on the tables, just make sure that you've eaten your dinner first! Send me an email to book your place.

February Saturday 14th Cosmic jolly weekend away for the 34th 'TISO' Carnethy Five Hill Race in Edinburgh. The same format as previous years, run starts at 2 o'clock, followed by a free meal at the school and the compulsory "Carnethy Five" St. Valentine's Ceilidh!!! at night, followed by hitting the high spots of Edinburgh if you haven't yet had enough. I will have a look for some suitable accommodation; so let me know if you want to stay over. Entry forms available from me or off the Carnethy website www.carnethy.com Race entry is £10, ceilidh £5.

March Weekend Friday/Saturday 26/27th I have provisionally booked the Mar Lodge Stable Block bunkhouse in Braemar for the above 2 nights. There are four bedrooms providing sleeping accommodation for twelve people. A large kitchen, common room, dining room, toilets, showers, laundry and drying room are provided. The location is excellent for running, hillwalking, biking or maybe even skiing. The cost is £10 per person per night, let me know if you want to be booked on for the weekend. The place is also ideal for doing a communal meal with everybody bringing something along.

DON'T FORGET..... TUESDAY NIGHT IS PUB NIGHT It would be nice to see some more faces turning up at the pub for the social get-together.

Time and tide (according to Chaucer) wait for no man. (except a woman over 30 -) With this thought in mind, I began to think about all the possibilities a determined Cosmic could undertake next year and I thought I'd try to inspire a few Cosmics to try something different.

Closest to home has to be the Club Championships, the races for which have just been decided at the recent AGM, and are probably detailed elsewhere in these pages. Open to any club member, these awards go to whoever has been the best overall performer in local races, so there's not far to travel and you never know your name could end up engraved on one of them (Men's, Ladies, Men's Vets or Ladies Vets). The list is quite varied over the years and doesn't just include the likes of D. Whitehead, although he is there.

In a similar vein is the Scottish Hill Running Champs. Organised by SHR, this is a best 4 of 6 series throughout the year across Scotland, with a team event thrown in too. For 2004 the races are Screel, Meall an Suidhe, Carnethy, Clachnaben, 2 Breweries & Pentland Skyline. Cosmic turnout in 2003 wasn't great, so how about giving this a go, and seeing if we can at least win the team competition (men's or women's).

If you are old enough (and no JB I'm still not a vet) you could follow Mark Rigby's successful footsteps and go for the Vets Champs.

Perhaps the lure of a longer race will grab you. Speyside Way and Lairig Ghru are just a couple of the local classics that take quite a few hours, but if you find they are a bit short, there is always the West Highland Way. Longer than a marathon and mainly off-road, you'll have to get a support crew together first though.

For a full day out in the hills a big round is hard to beat. Down in The Lakes is the Bob Graham Round which last summer saw a successful completion by Catherine Mangham. Is it Charlie Ramsay next? Try as we might, of the Cosmics only Carl has so far made it in 24 hours, but I'm sure Dennis will be setting off from Glen Nevis again next summer and he'd welcome some company for at least part of the way. Last summer I had a great 6 hour run with him in fine weather (always needed for such a day to be a success), got a tan and bagged a few Munros for myself too.

If 1 day isn't enough, go for 2, and double the punishment. Mountain Marathons provide a different challenge, with more kit to carry (well you can't camp under a bag or sleep in a bum-bag no matter how big they are), more navigating and route choice and a partner to drag along or chase after. Ewen's recent retirement from racing means that he's no longer on the lookout for partners, but Gary Gutteridge definitely seems to have the bug these days.

Messing about in boats, lounging around on deck, seeing the coast from a different perspective. Sounds great? Not if you've got to sail from Oban to Mull to Jura to Arran to Troon and run up several mountains on each island in the Scottish Island Peaks Race. You start running whenever the boat reaches land, regardless of time of day (or night), weather, mealtimes, tiredness, dryness. Then it's up a mountain or 3 and back to the boat while the wind decides whether you are going anywhere.

Closer to the water, in fact in it, and with 2 wheels, Bob Sheridan has been competing against FleetFeet (amongst others, and who are also home to a few other Cosmics) in various duatlons and triatlons. He says that he's glad the running sections are usually last as it gives him a chance to pull back some places, but does running with that jelly-legged feeling ever get any easier?

In early autumn hill runners from around the world gather for the World Mountain Running Trophy, and although they make the mistake of having the finish line at the top of the hill every other year, it's a great chance to experience a race in a different country. I can still remember cycling through Southern Germany in 94 wondering who I would meet up with for some running and beers (I found several HBT and Leeds Uni to be precise and had a great time). The locations have been a bit further afield in recent years, Alaska, Ascension Island and Malaysia spring to mind, but there is a new separate Veterans version which has been going for about 3 years, is still based in Europe and still low-key enough that anyone can turn up and get a race. Dave Armitage for one has partaken of some of these, and the O60 world champion is Scotland's (and Carnethy's) very own Bill Gauld.

Perhaps something more sedentary but just as fulfilling may beckon. For the majority of us to be able to compete requires a number of willing race organisers, who are always in need of help, whether it be marshalling on the day, organising things beforehand, registering running or taking times & positions. Why not make this year the time when you put a little back into our great sport.

Now, whatever you do don't be tempted by the tarmac or the tartan (or is it still cinder tracks in Scotland), they are usually far too flat and you won't enjoy them.

As for me, what will I be doing? You'll have to get out there and see where I turn up. I might even make it to Tuesday training at King's this winter and re-introduce myself to everyone. ☺

A hill walk offers time to take in the scenery around you at the price of carrying a rucksack of clutter and squinting at map and compass. A hill race offers exhilaration and freedom at the price of heavy exertion and the risk of falling on your face. A music festival offers a cultural feast at the expense of mud, squalid toilets and nights spent in tiny tents with blokes called Gary. A mountain marathon, as I saw it, offered none of these benefits and combined all of the costs. However, it was something I'd never done before and I wanted one of those little 'KIMM' stickers that you can put in the back window of your car. So, I replied to Gary Gutteridge's email when he started looking for a partner for the 2003 Karrimor International Mountain Marathon.

As a MM first-timer I had no idea what the event would entail, apart from the basics that it was a 2-day event, you carried equipment for a night outdoors and it involved some navigation. Gary had done one MM previously, the 'Saunders' in the Lake District, but this had been a summer event rather than the potentially wintry October KIMM. My camping experiences were confined to sheltered lowland sites in summer (my biggest challenge had been, as a teenager, waking up to find my sleeping bag covered in dog diarrhoea) and I'd never run while carrying more than a bum-bag. I was also worried about navigation; I knew roughly how to use a map and compass and I'd done one or two 'fun' orienteering events, but what level of navigation would be demanded in the KIMM? Five control points or fifty? Then there was fitness... I'd started the year well with some long hill-races but it had all tailed off a bit towards the end of summer as work, conferences, holidays (and the small matter of getting married) had diverted time and attention from running. Was I really up to it? Well, there was only really one way to find out...

Getting hold of the right equipment was vital. Gary and I begged, borrowed and (in my case) stole most of what we needed without too much hassle (I didn't *mean* to walk off from Tuesday training with Graham's favourite fleece...it just happened that way). Without the help of other club members we'd have had to spend a few hundred pounds or make do with some wildly unsuitable gear. Now we had lots of good stuff. In fact, with my spare room now resembling a branch of Millets (with a particularly impressive head-torch department), I had too much

good stuff. To whittle it down to a manageable pack, I spent an evening with Gary's (infamous) equipment spreadsheet printout and a pair of kitchen scales, weighing the various bits and deciding what to take. With the equipment side sorted, I also needed to get a last gasp of badly-needed training runs in. After outings to Clachnaben, Kerloch and Bennachie I just about reassured myself that a) I hadn't turned into a jelly and b) running with a rucksack on wasn't too bad. We also got confirmation that we'd made it into the 'C' class category of the event; Gary had initially entered us in the 'B' but I'd been worried it might be too demanding for me after my lapses in training. Relief!

We co-ordinated our travel plans with Dennis MacDonald and Carl Price, also competing this year. On Friday they picked me up in Aberdeen and gave me a lift to Gary's place in Stonehaven; soon we were thundering down the motorway towards the Borders. The KIMM was being held in the Langholm Hills, just north-east of Lockerbie, and that night we all stayed in a B&B in Moffat. The morning dawned chilly but the skies were mostly clear; an encouraging sign. Carl and Dennis were up and off at an unfeasibly early time for their 'A' course start, but we had a more leisurely 10.35 slot and got to eat breakfast whilst being eyeballed by the extremely fluffy resident B&B pet animal (cat or monkey, bit difficult to tell). We seized our packs and set off. Gary drove us briskly to Ewes down a twisty A-road, giving me an invigorating burst of adrenaline and a refresher course on bladder control. We arrived in plenty of time for registration and found the site bustling. The KIMM is a big event, and (to my eye) looked very well organised. There was a big parking field, camp-site and various marquees for the event. The competitors varied from grannies in stout boots to rangy guys with zero body-fat, close haircuts and rucksacks the size of handbags.

We registered, had a cup of tea and waited a while in the warm car. I was feeling a half-pleasant sense of anticipation...but only half. Our time came and we walked up to the starting point. It was further than I thought and we arrived with only a minute to spare before our time-slot was called and we lined up, paused for a moment at the tape, and were sent on our way. We grabbed big, unwieldy laminated maps and had a first look at our course. There were nine controls, first taking us west then zig-zagging north before a long section north-east and a final little 'hook' around the overnight camp-site. Of course, I didn't take this all in at first because I was trying to fold the map, climb a hill

and get my bearings at the same time (none of it fast enough for Gary's liking).

As we climbed the ridge the hills opened out around us. This was hill sheep-farming country, a landscape of round-topped hills and ridges around the 400-metre mark covered in rough, often tussocky grass and heather with patches of bracken spreading over some of the slopes. Paths were few and far between but fences were useful navigational aids, the bends and junctions providing landmarks. We walked the uphill, jogged the flats and downhill and seemed to be making our way up the field fairly quickly. I gradually got the hang of the map, but not before we'd made a minor slip-up on the third control point, overshooting and then having to backtrack. We should have paid more attention to the stream of teams heading down to the sheepfold, but then there was always the chance that they were on another course...

The fourth control took us down into a plantation woodland, navigating along open rides before we climbed back out onto a long ridge taking us north-east into the long, straight section. We were now a good two hours in and I was losing my shine a little as we made it out of the wood. The sky was overcast and it started to rain, not heavily, but it wasn't encouraging. Out came the waterproof trousers and jacket. That's it, I thought gloomily, it'll be rain all the way now. Taking a tumble just after the fifth control didn't cheer me up any, but cramming my face full of flapjack helped raise energy levels and spirits a little. Checking the maps, we realised that the best route to the next checkpoint was a 180 m climb up Comb Hill (one of the few named hills), sliding off to the north before reaching the peak. It was a sharp ascent that slowed me right down, even on a broad track. On the plus side the rain had eased off and we found ourselves passing teams that had set off two hours earlier than us, which made all the effort we were putting in seem worthwhile! Coming down off the hill was very rough underfoot and boggy in places, and we had a few moments confusion near the sixth control trying to work out why a line of pylons wasn't on the map (later we found the small-print stating 'Powerlines Not Shown', something a more experienced team would have known).

With the camp-site in view, we felt we were on the home straight. However, there was still the 'hook' section to complete which took us two kilometres off to the east before bringing us back to the finish. At the seventh control we found we had to duck under a road through a culvert, the stream finally soaking my Walshes right through. The 'hook' provided us with our first real route dilemma; over a hill (about

150 m ascent) or around it? We chose to go over it, descending to take controls eight and nine before charging down along a stream valley and completing the final section of track at a jaunty jog. This got my adrenaline going enough that I felt moved to sing (or at least yell) a version of Bohemian Rhapsody as we finished off our Day One course. Gary and I grinned at each other and did some back-slapping. It had all gone pretty well, so far.

At this point in the day, after five and a half hours on the move, what I needed was a nice hot shower, a Chinese takeaway and an evening in front of the telly. None of this was going to happen, though, because we only had what we were carrying. The campsite was three-quarters full when we arrived, but we spotted a pitch and started making camp. Initially I couldn't quite believe how small the tent was...it looked more like a windbreak, not something that two fairly large blokes were going to get a night's sleep in! First priorities were dry clothes and getting water from a nearby stream for cooking and drinks (cold on the hands). As we sat in the tent and watched the water boil a short but heavy shower drenched the campsite; we'd set up just in time. The only downside of our pitch was the steadily ripening smell from the port-a-loo toilets ten metres away. It didn't put us off our dehydrated chilli and supernoodle dinner much (though, to be honest, the chilli was a bit grim). After we'd eaten and had a cup of tea we checked out the noticeboard for Day One times and were pleasantly surprised to find that we were twenty-first out of a field of two hundred-plus. That done, we were at a loose end. We couldn't see anyone we knew on the site, and the cooling temperature and occasional drizzle didn't really encourage standing round in the open socialising. So, at around seven pm, with the light fading, we decided to turn in.

It wasn't the best night's sleep I'd had. First of all there was a continual banging of toilet cubicle doors with people coming and going, added to some heavy snoring from neighbouring tents and a few overly loud conversations. Then there was Gary's digestive system to contend with, which made it sound as if we were under intermittent heavy machine-gun fire all night (maybe a chilli containing half-cooked kidney beans hadn't been the best choice). From three onwards it started getting much colder, and by six (when we'd both given up trying to sleep) there was a heavy frost on the ground and my Walshes had gone crispy. I bagged them up and dragged them into the sleeping bag with me, hoping they'd thaw by the time I needed to put them on. At seven

o'clock some brutal psycopath started playing the bagpipes outside our tent and, short of garotting the b*stard, there was nothing for it but to get up. It was achingly hard to sacrifice the little island of warmth and shelter in the tent and force my feet into wet, cold running shoes. We fuelled up on muesli and tea and broke camp. The weather was looking good, scattered cloud on a mostly blue sky.

Our start was at eight thirty-five, and I was shocked when I picked up the map and saw a route that seemed just as long as Day One (although, looking at it later, it was about five kilometres shorter). The route took us east about six kilometres, then south another four before bringing us west again, with a final short leg south to the finish. At first we followed farm tracks, a pleasant enough warm-up, but then we had to get into gear for a plodding 250 m climb up Millstone Edge. After negotiating the tussocky summit we had a steep descent, with Gary building up a big lead on me. We lost all the height we gained and then had to claw 220 m of it back to reach the first control, followed by another descent to cross a valley for control two. Although it was early in the day, this rapid alternation of climbs and off-track descents was fast taking the strength out of my legs and ankles. A short section of farm track provided some respite on the way to control three, but soon we were climbing again. To reach control four we had to run along below the crest of a steep ridge. I found the sideways slope really tough on feet and ankles even with grippy Walshes; the local sheep were obviously working to rule and not making tracks to ease the runner's plight. Thankfully we were soon up on a ridge and could follow the summit fence to point five and a good slice of the way to point six. It looked good on paper, but by the time we left the fifth control I was feeling past my best. The next leg to point six was only about four kilometres but it felt more like forty. I started to feel nauseous, knowing I should try to eat but worried that anything that went down might just come back up. I could also feel blisters starting to nag at my feet. We ploughed along the ridge, following the fence but hitting frequent boggy patches. Suddenly the ridge ended, we dropped down and were faced with a steep 100 m climb up Pike Fell. Not a big climb in the scheme of things, but everything was hard, hard work by now. Gary saw me lagging and offered to carry my rucksack up the hill. Pride made me want to refuse, but then I rationalised it as a teamwork issue and probably the best way forward. I forced my way up the hill at a slightly improved pace and claimed my pack back at the top. After a couple more lumps and bumps and a bit more contouring we made it to point

six, then a steep downhill to a very welcome section of track, skirting a hill and climbing a logging trail paved with splintered wood. Now we were within sight of the hilltop patch of trees marking point seven and, tantalisingly, the distant marquees of the finish. This was the last climb, and it needed to be because I didn't have any more hills left in me. From seven it was a short downhill dash to the finish. We'd done it.

Still not quite believing we'd finished, we took our team tag to the computer download station and walked, aching, to the refreshment marquee. I had an emotional moment as I was handed a polystyrene cup of soup and came close to bursting into tears and telling the guy who was dishing it out that I loved him, but Gary slapped me a few times and brought me round. The soup lasted until we'd made it down the queue to Wilf's greasy spoon van, which was dishing out burgers, bacon rolls and stew. We picked up bowls of stew and found seats next to Dennis and Carl, eating and exchanging notes. They'd managed fourth place in the 'A' class. I had a look at the course map and couldn't quite believe how much ground they'd covered compared to our course...I wouldn't be upgrading to 'A' anytime soon. After half an hour's recovery we felt the need to find dry clothes and vacated our seats to give some of the pale-faced new arrivals a chance to sit down. Gary and I changed back at the car and wandered back to look round the Karrimor shop (where, it shames me to say, I bought the T-shirt AND the mug) before going along to applaud the winners at the awards ceremony. At one point I looked up to where our last control point had been and saw people still coming down off the hill in the fading light.

Back at Gary's house in Stonehaven we went online and got our official time: 10:21:31 (the winners did 8:25:28). We were place 21st out of 212 finishing teams, with something like 85 teams dropping out. This was satisfying, considering our lack of experience, but, in my mind, the main thing was simply to have completed it. And, despite a couple of frank exchanges of opinion during the tougher patches, Gary and I were still on speaking terms. Now, having done a mountain marathon, I'm not sure I'm any clearer on what, precisely, makes it worth all the effort, discomfort and expense. But then, I'm not sure people on their tenth or twentieth event are any the wiser, either. Maybe I'll just have to try another one to find out...

Thanks to Elaine, Ewen, Alastair, Adrian, Graham and Margaret for loaning of equipment (sorry if I've missed anyone), and to sundry Cosmics for bits of advice and support before and after the event!

WEEKEND RUNS and RACES

BEACH BUM FUN RUN – Sunday 28th at 10am (£3 present)

Saturday 2nd January – KERLOCH – meet Duthie Park 9-15am or
out there 9-50am Grid Ref. NO 699917

Friday 9th Proms 3K

Saturday 10th January - EL-BRIM-ICK DASH 11-00am

Saturday 17th January – MITHER TAP – Hazlehead 9-15am or
Visitor Centre 10am Grid Ref. NJ 698217

Saturday 24th January - DURRIS – meet Duthie Park at 9-15am or out
there at 9-50am Grid Ref – NO 762916

Saturday 31st January– **DEVIL's BURDEN RELAY – Fife 11am**
or HILL OF FARE at 9-45am

Saturday 7th February - KERLOCH – meet Duthie Park 9-15am or
out there 9-50am Grid Ref. NO 699917

Saturday 14th February - **CARNETHY FIVE** & Social in Auld Reekie
or FETTERESSO at 9-45am

Saturday 21st February – CARN-MON-EARN – meet Duthie Park
at 9-15am or 9-50am Grid Ref. NJ 768916

Saturday 28th February – back of CLACHNABEN from Glen Dye –
meet Duthie Park at 9-15am or 9-50am at Grid Ref. NO649868

Proms 3K 5th March 1pm

Saturday 6th March – GLENTANAR – meet Duthie Park 9-15am or
10am out there Grid Ref NO 479964 Remember £1 for parking

Saturday 13th March – DURRIS – meet Duthie Park at 9-15am or out
there at 9-50am Grid Ref – NO 762916

Saturday 20th March – MILLSTONE and beyond – meet Hazlehead at
9-15am or out at Donview for 9-50am Grid Ref. NJ672190

Saturday 27th March – CLACHNABEN PREVIEW – meet Duthie Park
9-15am or 10am at Race Parking Point at Grid ref. NO648903

COSMICS at KINGS

Each session will probably split into 2 or more packs.

Some compulsory road sessions by popular demand!

6th January	4x(400m,jog,1000m,jog)
	Seaton for continuous hills
13th January	Up and down the clock, 300m recovery
	Seaton for hill reps
20 th January	300m,4x (2minutes out/back)
	Hilton for hill reps
27th January	ROAD SHOES - Seaton for continuous hills
3 rd February	Up and down the clock,300m recovery
	Seaton for hill reps
10th February	12x400m
	Hilton for hill reps
17th February	ROAD SHOES - Seaton for continuous hills
24 th February	300m,(4x2minutes out/back)
	Seaton for hill reps
2 nd March	Up and down the clock with 300m recovery
	Hilton for hill reps
9th March	ROAD SHOES - Seaton for continuous hills
16th March	12x400m
	Seaton for hill reps
23rd March	Up and down clock with 300m recovery
	Hilton for hill reps
30 th March	Countesswells Wood from Riding School CP – A Phill Thompson special