

## Cosmic Bullsheet



The News Sheet of

The  
Cosmic  
Hillbashers

<http://www.cosmics.org.uk>

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### Editorial : Fiona McDonald

Greetings Fellow Cosmics,

A big thanks to everyone has contributed to the Q2 2009 Bullsheet – it's certainly a bumper issue. We have reports about everything from moonlit runs in Yorkshire to the exotic Kor-unce series.

I find out some interesting facts about Jenny Boyd and we have some introductions to new members. Well done to Shunter for introducing most of them to the Cosmics!

I won't apologise for not editing Bruce's article about extreme adventure racing in Patagonia as I thought it was a great read. After racing or marshalling at Clachnaben this Saturday what better way to spend Easter Sunday than settling down with a cup of tea (or maybe a Deeside Beer) and reading some hill-running tales.

Happy running this summer,  
Fiona

## A Cosmic Planetary Run

**By Steve Rivers**

Feeling left out of the Cosmics Moonlit Runs that have been organised since I moved down to Yorkshire a few years ago, and following Derek's example of his highly enjoyable (to read) Kor-unces, I decided I'd have to organise my own. The first attempt was the night after the full moon in December and followed a familiar route mainly off-road along next to the river Ouse. This was a bit of a cloudy night and I definitely needed the torch.

The next night out was last week. My wife Laura & our girls had gone away since it was school half-term so I had a Wednesday evening with nothing to do. Hmmmm! I'd been looking into longer routes & trails recently so decided on the cycle route from Selby to York. I'd run parts of it before and at 15/16 miles it was probably achievable considering my current fitness in under 2 hours, especially as like everything round here it would be very flat. (Don't believe anyone who says Yorkshire is hilly, the bit I live in hasn't got one for about 20 miles).

So after work, I cycled to York railway station and took the 15 minute journey down to Selby with all the other commuters, I don't think many were going back to York that night, and certainly not the route I was going to take. A quick change and off I set. As usual, for me at least, getting out of the town the right way caused a little difficulty, but then I picked up the cycle path signs and set off along a path between the river and a main road, luckily with enough street-light not to require a head-torch, but unluckily with persistent drizzle getting me wet fairly quickly.

The route took me northwards through Barlby and Riccall but back on tarmac, but at least after 40 minutes I'd reached the most interesting bit of the route – the disused railway and a chance to get off-road. As it was still raining, getting cold and pitch black on the track ahead I pulled a hat from my rucsac, donned my head-torch, took a quick drink and carried on. It was at this point that I realised I was doing a variation on the Moonlit Runs and was on a Planetary Run. Along the trail York Uni students have created a scale model of our solar system with the Sun many miles away next



to the York ring round and all the planets at their appropriate scaled distances between there and me. (Further information online here: <http://www.solar.york.ac.uk>). So I had some interesting waymarks to look out for and judge my progress, however I managed not to discover Pluto or Neptune and found Uranus first, and I certainly wasn't going back. This part of the run was well away from street lights and very dark, so I tried running without lights, but soon realised that was a crazy idea as there was no moonlight whatsoever. Just after I'd turned the light back on, I saw a movement towards my foot, gave a cry of alarm and swung my head and torch to the right just in time to see a startled badger disappearing off into the hedge.

Saturn eventually arrived after I'd spent some minutes wondering whether I'd missed it as well. I thought about using it's gravitational pull to slingshot me off towards Jupiter but as the model was smaller than my head this idea was never going to work. Jupiter arrived and then it was through part of the village of Bishopthorpe, then in quick succession came Mercury, Earth, Venus, Mercury and finally the 8m Sun. Checking my time from Earth I quickly calculated that I was running much faster than the speed of light ("relatively" speaking).

The watch showed I'd now been running for 90 minutes and much more of the trail had been laid with tarmac since I'd last been on any of it so my legs had taken more of a pounding than I'd expected, but at least the rain had stopped and I'd dried out a bit. The next section was through York Racecourse and a couple of grassy sections gave some much-needed relief, then it was down to the river and the run into the city centre where I finally saw some more people and was glad I'd chosen this direction as I knew exactly how far and where to go. I gratefully stopped back at the station after 1hr 58mins, put some dry clothes on to look partly respectable and went off for a welcome pint of Black Sheep.

I've got several ideas for my next big outing, but won't pin myself down, just look out for more reports.

Keep on running,  
Steve Rivers

## Jenny Boyd - an interview to be enjoyed!

by Fiona McDonald

### **How and when did you start running?**

In 1999 when I decided to do the Inverness half-marathon and started a training plan. I was really pleased as I managed 8 minute miles, finishing in 1 hour and 49 mins.

### **Who introduced you to Cosmics and when?**

I gate crashed the Cosmic Christmas party last year dressed as a theatre surgeon. (*Yes - I remember a few people in scrubs. Ed*) I was dragged along by Colin and Pauline. Pauline and I have known each other for a quite a while as we both have horses at the same stable near Westhill.

### **What is your favourite run?**

I've got two favourite runs. Countesswells because it's on my doorstep, I can run from my house and I know it like the back of my hand and Crathes because it's so pretty and there are lots of little paths meandering about so you can just turn off and let the route unfold.

### **What hill races did you compete in last year?**

The Krunce series, Balmedie, Mither Tap, Glamaig, the Comrie Relays and Bennachie.

### **What is your favourite race?**

Well - I still haven't competed in that many hill races but my first hill race Glamaig was very memorable! (*Impressive one to start with! Ed*) The whole weekend was great fun with all the socialising pre and post race and I even managed to get on TV!

### **What was your toughest race?**

Strathnuffer 24 hour mountain bike race. OK it's not a running race but there were lots of Cosmics competing! I was in a team with Simon. Over the 24 hours we clocked up a total of 700 miles. I rode 7. The real low point was about 3am when I



total exhaustion. I felt sick, my lips were tingling and I was really shivery. Luckily Uncle Wilson was on hand to give me a pep talk which involved trying to shove pasta down my throat but I gradually recovered before the next lap. The hard going paid off in the end as we finished 2<sup>nd</sup> mixed team (2<sup>nd</sup> only to the A team – Rob, Ian, Tim & Mona) 8<sup>th</sup> team overall and won a very fine hand painted mug. Even when the event was finished there was no time to sleep as prize giving was calling, then we had to dismantle the small village that had been our base camp and drive all the way back to Aberdeen – a mere 32 hours with no sleep!

**So will you be doing the Strathpuffer solo next year?**

Definitely not!! But I would like to enter an all girls team – any takers?

**Who is your greatest adversary in races?**

Probably Lois, I strive to beat her at the Krunces. (*Better watch out this year Lois! Ed*)

**What is your most startlingly running achievement so far?**

Finishing Glamaig with both ankles intact! I'd started off the year with an ankle injury and had been taking it easy up to then. The descent off Glamaig was worse than I imagined and I had to tiptoe all the way down!



**Do you have a favourite Scottish hill?**

Ben Wyvis – it dominates the skyline in Inverness and I used to have a wonderful view of it every morning when I lived in Inverness and drove across the Kessock Bridge to work. Funnily enough I only climbed it for the first time last year as I'd done more horse riding than running/hill walking when I lived there.

**What is the most exotic hill you've climbed?**

I'm not sure if you'd class it as exotic but An Teallach was the first real hill I climbed – a 9 hour day not long after I moved North to Inverness.

**What is your best bit of kit?**

Smart wool socks. (*Rob – you haven't managed to sell her a Cosmic buff yet! Ed*)

**What are your favourite running shoes?**

Last year I only had one pair – my old Asics that I dragged out of the cupboard. However, I treated myself to some new Salomons at Christmas so I'm hoping they'll help my descending this year.

**What do you prefer to eat pre-race?**

Flapjack!

**What do you prefer to eat during a race?**

I've not done a long enough race to know yet.

**..and post-race?**

I'm not good at eating post race either – usually wait for a big meal in the evening.

**What is your ideal training week?**

Monday – easy recovery jog

Tuesday – road bike for 1 hour in the winter but Cosmic runs in the summer

Wednesday – mountain biking for 2 hours on local hills

Thursday – swimming with Fleet Feet

Friday – feet up in front of the TV

Saturday – long mountain bike ride 3 - 4 hours

Sunday – road bike with Deeside Thistle – 40-50 miles

**What do you do when you're not running or should I say when you're not biking?!**

I used to do a lot of horse riding and still have a horse called 'Kingswells Speedy', a grey Connemara pony. I really enjoy dressage competitions which are a bit like gymnastics for horses – you perform a series of movements in an arena and get points for suppleness, flexibility and obedience. I'm down at the stable at 7-7.30am each day to muck out and feed Speedy and then back again in the evening. Speedy is going to go on holiday to Inverness for the summer though so I should have some more spare time for running!



I also spent a year competing in sprint triathlons in 2007 and hope

to have a go at some longer triathlons.

**Which other club(s) are you a member of?**

Fleet Feet and Deeside Thistle.

**What do you do for a living?**

I'm a Veterinary Nurse. I helped set up the practice at Bucksburn so I've been there from the start. I love getting my hands dirty, surgery, taking bloods, putting in catheters etc. The job's great as there is always lots of variety.

**What is your favourite tippie?**

Red wine – I'm not fussy – just make sure it's a large glass!

**Were you devastated when Gillian won the Christmas mince-pie competition?**

Of course! I think I was unfairly treated – my pecan, cranberry and orange mince pies were divine – or so my parents thought! *(But there was no alcohol! Dennis, mince pie judge)*

**Are you planning any particular races next year?**

Bealach Beag in May, Glen Affric Duathlon, Correyairick Challenge (*– hang on a minute these aren't exactly hill races! Ed*) Well they do involve lots of hill climbing and some running... I'd also like to do some of the longer hill races like Ben Rinnes and maybe a half Ironman.

**What is your most memorable hill run?**

Running up Mount Keen very early in the morning in midsummer. I left Aberdeen with Liz Chellingsworth at 2.30am, we picked up Ian Diack and drove round to Glen Esk. By 4am we were running up Mount Keen. It was a really beautiful morning and a fabulous setting. We were back down for breakfast at the Diack's in Banchory by 08.30am!



**Wenger Patagonia Expedition Race 2009**

**by Bruce Duncan**

It all started about 2 weeks before the race was due to start, I got a phone call from Nicola MacLeod, asking if I was keen and able to head to Patagonia to take part in an expedition adventure race.

I jumped at the chance, and managed to get the time off work no problem. Next came the hard bit, trying to sort out all the logistics and kit needed for a 10 day, 600km expedition race, that usually required a few months of preparation, we had less than 2 weeks. Many emails and phone calls were had over the next few days to work out what we had, what we needed, and who would be providing what. And then, before we knew it we were ready to fly out of the UK to Punta Arenas, at the most southern point of Chile.

My journey did not start well; I awoke to heavy snow, and Aberdeen Airport being shut! Disaster. As I sat at work trying to sort some alternative out, the snow eased and the airport reopened, and all was ok, just...

Meeting with Nicola and Andy in London, we gasped at the amount of kit we all had, and as we checked in we did our best smiling and got away without having to pay any excess baggage. Some 20 hours later we arrived in Santiago, where we were taken to visit Prunesco, our sponsor for the race, whose generosity had enabled us to fly out at such short notice to compete in the event. We had a guided tour of the factory, where some 55000 tonnes of prunes are prepared and exported per year! After being given a 15kg box of prunes, and almost missing our flight due to traffic, we arrived in Punta Arenas, with all our kit, and were taken to our hotel for the next few days.

We spent the ensuing time preparing for the race, buying out the supermarket of noodles and chocolate and nuts, and other such tasty supplies for the race. Sorting our kit out to make sure we had the correct equipment in the correct transition bag. Skills tests were carried out to make sure we could handle the kayaks and climbing sections. And finally we were given the route and split of disciplines.

This was my first expedition length adventure race, almost 600km made up of 90km kayaking, 100km mountain biking, 55km trekking, 140km mountain biking, 88km kayaking (including a 17km portage), and a final 120km trek. So I was a little apprehensive at the start to know that I had to get through all this, especially when the longest kayak I had ever done was only about 35km! The maps we were given were not really maps, but 1:100 000 scale satellite images, complete with shadows and clouds, not the best for fine navigation, as we were to find later in the race.

After a long evening sorting all the kit into the correct bags for the race ahead, we had our final night sleep in a real bed, before heading north to Lago Grey in Torres Del Paine National Park, where the race was due to start at 9am on Tuesday the 10<sup>th</sup> February. The journey north took a long time, and wasn't helped by the flat tyre the coach got at 11pm or whatever time it was. But the lamb BBQ we had shortly after did make up for that!

Race day finally arrived, and as we awoke, packed our bags for the last time, and ate as much breakfast as we could, we looked at the stunning view of Torres Del Paine, and where we would be kayaking in a few hours.

The start was on a very windy beach at the outflow of Lago Grey. Due to the high winds the paddle on the lake was cancelled, and we just headed off straight down the river with the wind behind us, well most of the time it was. Getting off the shore was the hardest part, and as Nicola and I headed off, in the lead, we wondered if we had done a false start as people were still on the beach, but we couldn't stop, we were in the flow of the river and heading off on our 600km adventure.



The river provided a good first challenge, reading where the deepest fastest flow was, battling hard into the head wind and rain, avoiding the wash created by the press boats, taking in the amazing views of glaciers and mountains surrounding us the whole time. We pressed on well and kept in close contact with the French

team, finishing the curtailed stage only about one minute behind. The stage was cut short at the sea due to winds of 80 to 120 knots!

A short rest was then had while the other teams all caught up, we made the most of this by drying out, and drinking hot soup provided by the café we had finished at. A ferry then arrived to transport us to the start of the mountain bike stage, so after the kayaks were loaded and all bodies accounted for, we set off down the coast to where our mountain bikes awaited.

The weather was pretty unpleasant, windy, raining and generally cold and miserable, which made putting the bikes together a hurried affair so as not to be waiting around too long. The race effectively started again here with a mass start at 7.30pm. Not all the teams were ready to go though as some very tasty lamb was being served in the restaurant we were starting next to, we were tempted, but didn't want to get comfy, we wanted to get out and really get going with the race.

100km of mountain biking lay ahead of us, all of which was on pretty good quality dirt roads, which made for pleasant cycling, and a chance for us all to chat as we rode along. We set off at a steady pace at the front of the pack, and before we knew it we had dropped all the other teams. We constantly looked over our shoulders but no one was to be seen as we pressed on. 5hrs later we reached the end of the stage at the foot of an imposing cliff. The bikes were packed away, and we ate as much as we could and got prepared for the 55km trek and initial 80m jumar up the cliff. Our bags started to weigh a lot with all the food we would need, along with the supply of warm kit we might need if the weather continued to be cold and wet, but for the moment it was dry, but windy.

The jumar was my first in a big race, so I was pretty nervous, 80m, 4 rope changes, no safety rope, and a very windy dark night! But once on the rope it all went ok, hard work, but some stunning views back down the track of groups of 4 lights of the other teams cycling along. We had about a 45 minute lead here already. At the top of the jumar, we headed into the first of many 'Forests of Hate'. A forest so thick you had to fight your way through, crawling at times, arms in front of your face, snapping branches off



to gain any distance. In the midst of this we found a fence line, why anyone would want to build a fence in such a forest was lost on us, but it did give us a slightly, but only slightly easier line to follow through.

At 4.30 in the morning we took our first sleep, a quick 15 minute powernap in the trees. When we woke we all felt really good and continued to battle on through the forest until we came to the foot of the hill we were aiming for. A short fight through the thick shoulder high bushes got us onto some scree and free of vegetation for a while. Dawn was breaking and as we could see other lights in the trees we turned ours off and headed around the hillside in search of the next valley.

After briefly getting cliffed out and having to climb a little to drop into the valley, we had the next pass in our sights, and set off across the huge marsh having our energy sapped by PESH (the Pink Energy Sapping Monster), or turba, a pink moss that just sapped all your effort as you crossed it. Many hours later, and very wet feet later we climbed up to the shoulder between the 2 valleys, and we could almost see the transition, well we could see where it might be, some 15km away down the valley.

We set off at a good pace and tried to get as close as we could during daylight, as we knew that come darkness navigation was very difficult. It was at this time that I didn't eat or drink enough, and once we had bumbled through the forest in the wet and cold for a few hours hypothermia started to set in. I have never been so cold and tired and felt so rubbish, and I am aware now how useless I must have seemed. After failing to find the transition and with my situation deteriorating, it was decided to put up the tent, put me in my sleeping bag, and throw some food down my throat. With a few hours sleep I didn't feel much better, and felt like giving up. Luckily it's a team sport, and the other guys made me carry on, and when after a short walk in the morning we found the forest track that the transition was on I started to perk up, but I only really recovered when we rounded a corner to come face to face with a photographer. We were very happy to be out of the trek, and when we were told we were in first place we could not believe it at all.

We were very tired, wet and cold, but the news that we were in the lead was a huge mental and physical boost, so after a short transition, getting the bikes ready, eating as much as we could, drinking fine coffee from Organikos, we were ready for the 140km mountain bike stage.

The bike was split into 2 sections, about 60km to get to a ferry to cross a short section of water, and then a further 80km along the coast of an island to get to Rancho Sutivan. The weather was pretty bad, wet and windy, which made the dirt roads very muddy, and I was very glad of my glasses to keep my eyes clear of all the mud. The sun then finally came out, but the wind did not go, it probably got stronger, which was fine when it was behind us, but as we turned to have it side on we all got blown off our bikes, I was weighing about 100kg with all my kit, so that gives you an idea of how windy it was.

We reached the ferry knew we had to wait till but were also aware that was 2pm, so it showed up we had a 2 wait we got all the kit and wind, which at the same time got ferry sailed shortly quickly rushed some down our throats, and bikes to get to Rancho could.



shortly after 11am, and 12 for the next sailing, the next crossing after meant that if no one hr lead. During our out to dry in the sun cheered us all up, and some good rest in. The after 12, and we tune and salsa wraps jumped back on the Sutivan as quick as we

The weather stayed good the whole way, but the wind was very tough, and with km after km into the wind, our energy levels were dropping. We had regular rests to eat and drink plenty, and with a chain gang approach we managed to set a good pace all the way to the end at an average of just under 19km/h.

On reaching the ranch, we expected a quick transition, then a short paddle to get some distance, and then have to camp on the shore to wait out the dark zone. Sadly the race deemed we were moving too fast, and for logistics purposes and for safety boat cover, we

would have to wait till the next day to paddle. This was a real shame as the wind had dropped, and looked spot on for paddling. However we took the chance to get a good rest, to eat plenty of food, including our first hot food of the race, and by now it was evening on day 3. We were told we had to sleep in our tent, but as the rain poured down we snuck into a sheep shearing shed and slept in a sheep pen, well all of us except Nicola who decided to sleep in the tent anyway. In the morning we saw that the French had arrived, but as they had got in later than us, they hadn't had the same rest, and were a bit stressed with the situation. We got on with getting our kit sorted for the kayak, and set off on what was to be the longest paddle in the biggest water any of us had ever done.

The water was lovely and flat when we set off shortly after 6am, but the wind soon began to pick up, and as we headed along hugging the coast the white caps in the middle of the channel got bigger and bigger. We felt that the stage would be cut short, and we would be transported across the major channel, but no message was ever given, and we decided that if we were going to cross we needed to start now, before we got too side on to the wind. As we entered the bigger swells we had a huge sea lion leap out of the water between the 2 boats, a pretty amazing sight, and our only real wild life spot.

The crossing was only about 10-15km wide, but with possibly a force 4 to 5 wind blowing, and 3 to 4m swell it was going to be a beast. We paddled strongly, not even able to take our hands off the paddle for fear of losing it to the wind. Some 4 hours later we reached the far side and shelter from the elements, we had battled non stop to get across and we were all very tired, but relieved to have made it across to the fjord, where we thought we'd have a tail wind all the way to the end.

The wind however had other ideas, and after times of a tail wind, the direction would swap and we'd be battling a head wind, and feeling more and more tired as we reached the end of the fjord, where we were once again joined by the hoards of journalists and photographers following the race. It was here that we had to head through the 'Indian Pass' a portage of some 17km through forest, marsh and small tarns.

This was a beautiful section, peaceful and with lovely views surrounding the waterways we were paddling along and dragging the boat between. 4 hours after entering the section we exited down a river to the sea, however this was also 10pm, which meant we had to stop at the beach to sleep out the dark zone till 6am.

Mark then skilfully built a shelter for us using the 2 kayaks and paddles and our tent. We settled down to sleep, knowing that this would be our last good sleep of the race, so wanted to make sure it was a good one.

It rained most of the night, but we kept dry and warm and were well rested by the time we had to set off for the short paddle to the next transition in the morning. The wind was behind us, aiding our progress, and the weather was kind. We were told that this was a place we might see some whales, but sadly they were all in hiding as was kayaked along in the quiet dawn light.

The final transition came into sight, and as we beached we got changed and ready to set off on the 120km final trek. We cooked up some food, changed our bags to have the right kit for the long stage ahead, and as we were preparing the French team arrived. They hadn't been too far behind us the whole previous day, but we knew we had a time bonus over them, but 5 hours was not going to be much on a trek that was expected to take 3 days. They did look tired however, and we all felt well refreshed after our 2 nights of good sleep, so we took some comfort from that.



As we exited the transition in our warm dry clothes, we immediately had to cross a river! We knew we'd get wet quite soon, but within 30 seconds was a bit annoying. The maps we had were not ideal for foot navigation, and involved a degree of gambling when looking for a possible route. We chose to get up high on the ridge on the southern side of the valley we were heading along. Fortunately when we got to the ridge top we were rewarded with a lovely undulating ridge with spectacular views and easy progress, much better than the trees and rivers in the valley below, where we could see the French battling along.

The rain had started by now, and it wasn't to stop for over 12 hours, it was cold and windy, and the only way for us to stay warm was to move at a fast speed, the going was relatively easy for us, and with the navigation proving ok in the daylight we made a great distance, crossed huge rivers swelled with the heavy rain, looked at waterfalls being blown back up the mountain, and marvelled at the mountains we were passing between.

As night fell on the 5<sup>th</sup> day we had got down to the bottom of the next valley, navigation was not too bad here, we had to head north along the valley for 10km, then turn right for a further 30km to our next big river crossing.

The forest we had just entered however had a different plan in mind for us. It was the toughest thickest forest we had ever seen; it truly was the forest from hell. We spent over 8 hours in the dark moving slowly north, and by daybreak we had only moved 4km. A frustratingly short distance, considering we had done almost 30km in 12 hrs the day before. The whole time we felt there must be a better route just to the left or the right, but we never found any easy going. At day break we decided to get out and head up to the ridge to our right, and hopefully get round the mountains, out of the trees and cover some more distance.

This involved a steep climb up a landslide and overhanging trees, not the best of routes, but finally we made it to the tree line, and looked back to the valley and the forest we had been moving through. There seemed to be no way through it at all, no fast route, no easy way around, for which we were relieved as we worried the French might have come past us at night, and we'd have no idea that we were now chasing down the other team.

The views from the top of the ridge were again breathtaking and really buoyed our spirits after such a horrid night going nowhere. We could see all the big peaks, including the regions highest mountain, which stood at about 1200m, not that high, but very imposing as it was covered in glaciers and snow, with steep cliffs all around it. Sadly our route up here gave us no advantage, as the ridges were too steep, and we had to head back to the valley. We had gained about 4km distance and had avoided the rest of the awful forest, and we could see that the valley ahead was clear and

much more easy going.

As we got back to the valley floor we re-focused and trekked on, thinking that the sooner we get done, the sooner we could rest. The valleys here seemed to go on and on, and as afternoon drew in, we got tired, and decided we needed another wee sleep; we'd only had 10mins the previous night as it was so cold. So in the sunshine we had a quick snooze, and then carried on trying to get as much ground covered during daylight. We tried to calculate how far we could get, and thought maybe if we kept at the pace we were we might finish shortly after dawn, but little did we know how slow the going would be later on.

As darkness descended for almost the last time on our race, we trekked on, on a bearing, keeping an eye on the big ridges either side of us, knowing we had to stay left to drop down to the river where we had been told we must cross. At 3 in the morning, we decided we needed to stop, we were unsure of our exact location, and continuing could take us into the forest at the wrong point, which could add on a lot of distance in very slow moving terrain. We all huddled into the wet tent, in our wet sleeping bags to get a wee bit of sleep and to wake at dawn to continue the trek.

When we got up and ready from our wet sleeping place it took about 30 seconds to pinpoint our position, and we were off again, on a good route, feeling confident of how we were progressing. Dropping down into the river, we hit the point spot on, and waded across what we had been told could have been an impassable water way. There was no sign of any other footprints, so we were pretty sure we were still in the lead.

Climbing up out of the valley and along the side of the river, again, the forest became slow going, so walking up the river was the easiest way to proceed, freezing your feet and lower legs in the process. We finally came across a nice marshy meadow, giving us good going for a number of hours, and then the sea came into view, and what a sight that was, knowing that we were getting close to the end. The sea never seemed to get nearer though, and as time passed we seemed to be going nowhere, and more worryingly the lovely plateau we were on was about to drop down into the valley to be filled with forest. The final 4km to the sea





took us over 2 hours in thick forest with the occasional open marsh to speed us up slightly.

Once at the beach we knew we just had a 7km trek along the coast to the finish, but the 7km seemed to go on and on, and darkness began to come round again. At just after 9.30pm we startled the 2 photographers on lookout duty; they had been too busy making coffee! And soon the whole camp knew we were there. The finish was not at the beach, however, but up at the Southern Cross, some 400m above sea level, which we now had to trek up to, a surprisingly hard task considering everything else we had been through to get here.

Mark set a fast pace to get us warm and finished soon, and my body started to complain, it knew it was almost over and decided it would stop just short if it could, but I hung onto Andy's coat tails and made it to the End of the World, where we were greeted by camera flashes, cheers and the race director Stepjan.

The journey to the End of the World was over, but we were still stuck at the Southern Cross, with no way back to Punta Arenas. We were quite happy with this however, as we had a comfortable camp, with a fire, we had food for a few days, and the race organisers had plenty too, so we could eat some nice food from them! As a team we also wanted to see the French finish, and if we could the Canadians and Americans who we knew were only maybe a day behind the French team. It was a strange atmosphere at the camp however, we were in our own little bubble, and had no idea what was going on in the outside world.

Almost 24hrs after we finished, and shortly after the French team had come in, I managed to get a satellite phone and call my Dad. It was only when I was chatting to him that the emotion of what we had done really kicked in, to hear him say how many people he had told of the event, and our win, really made our achievement hit home, as did all the messages and emails we got when we were back in Punta Arenas.

Finally after being at the finish for 2 days we were told there was a boat coming to get us, initially it was due at 3pm, then it was 6pm, it eventually arrived at 11pm, and we finally got onboard at about

midnight for the 4hr trip back to Punta Arenas. It was a very cold journey, and sleep was almost impossible, but the stars made up for it, it was a beautiful clear night and the Milky Way was clearly visible.

We were collected by minibus and taken to a sports hostel, where we managed a few hours sleep before escaping to our hotel where we had left our spare clothes. After a shower and shave we were almost unrecognisable, and we all felt so much better, and the first destination on our minds was a fine restaurant where we could go and toast our success.

The next day and a half was spent eating lots of food, sorting out all our kit, and catching up with the other teams to hear what had happened to them out on the course. But our main concern was that the Americans still hadn't finished, and we kept saying little prayers hoping that they were ok, and they would be back soon.

The prize giving and final night banquet was held, and still no sign of the Americans, but then news came in that they were on route, by helicopter, and had been seen in the hospital in not the best of conditions, Mark Lattanzi was on a stretcher, Sara was recovering from hypothermia, but the other two were not too bad. A short while later and the team arrived at the party, to a standing ovation of relieved people. It was great to see Mark looking pretty well all things considered, and the rest of the team in good spirits, if very weak and hungry.

The final party was good, great to see everyone all together, it was brilliant to hear all the stories, especially the Americans who really stole the show, and fair play to them, what an epic we all had, but some more than others. I am still waiting to hear the full story from Mark.



Sadly all too soon it was time to leave, and we had to head back to the hostel to pack our kayak kit which had just arrived, as our flight left at 6am, so we had to be ready for 4am! Another night with no sleep.

So now we are back home, reflecting on what was a truly epic race, racing in a team pulled together only 2 weeks before the start, taking on some of the toughest weather and terrain Patagonia could throw at us, and to win the race as well was just fantastic.

I think we are all keen to return to race again, to Patagonia and other places as we enjoyed racing together so much. So once our bodies have recovered I think we'll get the diary out and see what else we can do.

Well done for getting to the end of this report, maybe it needs editing a little, but so much happened I felt it was good to get it all down on paper.

Thanks  
Bruce  
And Nicola, Mark, and Andy from Team Helly Hansen Prunesco.

*Editor's Note: Unfortunately Bruce is leaving Aberdeen to take a career break from work to get even fitter and compete in even more crazy events around the world so we won't be seeing much more of him on Tuesday nights. Good luck Bruce and send us some more stories.*

## Two Breweries and a Stag Do

By Matt Brettle

What better way of celebrating my upcoming matrimonial hitch than combining three of the things I love most, running, beer and more beer! The date for the Two Breweries hill race of 27<sup>th</sup> September 2008 fitted in well with my incipient marriage to Marjon. Inviting a contingent of the Cosmics along was also an excellent idea, as my future bride joined the club specifically as she heard it was packed with lean male runners and me. The race is an 18 mile jaunt with 4,900ft of climb, which as it says in the title, starts at Traquair House (the oldest continuously inhabited building in Scotland) and ends at Broughton - both which have breweries that produce

excellent ales.

Who better to act a Chief of Logistics for the Stag of the year than the Cosmics guru of organization - Rob Brookes. Naturally, being Rob he went about the role with the eye for detail that would surpass many of us. The accommodation was identified as Toftcombs House - the former home of William Gladstone with 8 bedrooms, 9 bathrooms, 10 acres of garden, a kitchen larger than my flat, dining room with surrounding balcony, several large public rooms, a full sized snooker table and turret with sniper position. A serious question was raised early on when several Cosmics women - notably Elaine, Anita, Gillian and Sarah expressed an interest in doing the run. A straw-poll was drawn, with an Essex born Cosmic stagger suggested this wouldn't make for a traditional stag-do. As no strip-club, or cling-film was planned, this event wasn't intended as traditional, so lady invites were therefore permitted. At about the same time, old university friends - Knobby went out shooting and hanging his own stag for the main course meal and Iain spent hours in the kitchen experimenting with various pudding concoctions. My brother Jim also started a special stag home-brew, thereby making this event a three brewery challenge. Arriving at Toftcombs House it was clear this was going to be a very special weekend...



The morning of the race involved the normal getting food and water down, checking kit and generally talking the race talk. Little did I know that special stag race gear was required - garter, fetching tutu, veil and white gloves. Needless to say, non of the extra bits of gear were made of Pertex - but several were from Anita's own big-day. No better mascot was required, and numerous photos of the bridezilla were taken with both the boys and girls.

At the race start, my overriding thoughts were on my veil and the

drag it generated. By the end of the start hill, I removed it and placed it in my bag. Only the tutu remained, but the garter restricted flow to my pumped thighs and the gloves were clearly not designed for man sized hands. Luckily the chat was good on the first climb up Grieston Hill - comments were passed on how lucky the groom must be, and how never a prettier bride had been seen on these hills. The traverse to Orchard Ring was easy, but the temperature was clearly on the rise, as the stag chat diminished. Birks Hill and Birkscairn Hill were ticked off, and the steep descent to Glensax commenced. This knee busting tumble to and across Glensax Burn certainly opened up the field, sorting out the men and brides from those who had turned up for just the cake. The following climb up Hundleshope Heights was a monster, and several handfuls of jelly babies were required - thereby making this race a shot-gun wedding. Then traversing the hilltop to Stob Law I was faced by a smaller, but seemingly equally tough climb to the summit. For most of the run until this point I was running with Essex boy Ian Wilson and friend George Tait. We descended Stob Law to Glenrath together and dived on the drinks station, like single ladies scrabbling for the tossed bouquet. By this point the weather was overcast but warm, and I knew I had to get down a good dose of water. While Ian carried on I remained to gag down another two cups of liquid. I'm glad I did, as the following climb up the woody Whitlaw hill was humid. By this stage the tutu seemed to be doing a good job at chaffing my inner thighs and collecting hungry ticks.



A brutal short climb through the last part of the forest required hands to tear through the heather. Topping out by a mountain rescue landrover, there were wolf-whistles, but my mind was only on pushing on to the right turn at aptly named Dead Wife's Grave, where I could see Wilson legging it down-hill. After catching him up we ran down to Stobo Castle together, and along the road. Road was the last thing required at this stage - feeling like blades of

glass being inserted into my calves. The gentle ascent through Tarcreish forest was cooler, but my muscle was seriously flagging. Leaving the wood the vista opened out to reveal the final deadly dirk, up the grassy flank of Trehenna Hill. A couple of day-glow yellow ant-sized Cosmics were ahead - Bruce and Sean, and they had already started their ascent. The climb was an all fours job, but felt remarkably short. Spotting the second brewery at the finish, I felt strangely refreshed, so I stepped on it and started the descent down a well trodden but rocky path. The final grassy descent was fast, and I felt the finish getting closer. By this stage I'd caught up with Sean, and the last 500m on road was - like signing the marriage register - a mere formality. Crossing the line I felt the tutu and remembered I had forgotten to replace the veil. Always the bridesmaid but never the bride... at least I had reached the alter in good time.

The free beer on flow at the finish was good, and we spent an hour cheering in our fellow Cosmic stag team. Our return to Toftcombs House was celebrated with many bottles of cava, a quick game of snooker and readiness for our luxurious evening meal. Needless to say this is where the 'what happens on tour stays on tour' rule kicks in - suffice to say men wore dresses, women also wore dresses, and Ian Wilson introduced us to his peg. Ian was also heard to say how much better a stagger is when Cosmic women attend.

Many thanks to Rob 'Bobby' Brookes for organising the stag do of the century. I can't wait for the anniversary - just make sure you don't forget the date - OK?

### **Cosmic Placings**

- 24<sup>th</sup> Rob Brookes 3hr 14
- 69<sup>th</sup> (!) Kevin Harper 3hr 47
- 97<sup>th</sup> Bruce Manning 4hr 06
- 104<sup>th</sup> The Stag - 4hr 07
- 105<sup>th</sup> Sean OSullivan - 4hr 08
- 114<sup>th</sup> George Tait - 4hr 14
- 115<sup>th</sup> Ian Wilson - 4hr 14
- 121<sup>st</sup> Garry Gutteridge - 4r18
- 122<sup>nd</sup> Anita Hamilton - 4hr18
- 123<sup>rd</sup> Elaine Stewart - 4hr19
- 140<sup>th</sup> Alistair Shawcross - 4hr30

143th Tim Makley – 4hr 33  
154<sup>th</sup> Gillian Clunas – 4hr43

Several weeks later I had to raise a wry smile when catching the sleeper train from Aberdeen, the dining car had both Traquair and Broughton beer for grabs. Naturally, I had to have one of each, and attempted to calculate how long it would take to travel the same 18 miles on the train...

## Carnethy 5 2009

By Anita Hamilton

Ten Cosmics headed down to Edinburgh for the famous Carnethy 5 race. There was less snow in the Pentlands than in Aberdeen, but still enough to make the course interesting (one did wonder at registration when there were people selling crampons - but it was just a jumble sale for the local Mountain rescue). No sunshine but at least no precipitation either. The dress code varied - some people were in vest and shorts, some wore their "full body cover" for the whole race and there were two in kilts.

The race started after a rendition of Flower of Scotland by all and a rendition of poetry(?) by a guy with that great big sword they have. It might have been a mistake to wear the new Innov8 MudRocs I'd bought at registration, but by the time I'd run through the bog and marsh after the start (might have been better if it had been colder and this had been frozen) I couldn't feel my feet anyway. There was the usual crush through the gate and stile, and the struggle for places while slogging up Scald Law, the snow underfoot making it even more difficult to overtake. Miraculously everyone seems to be sorted out by the time you get to South Black Hill and you have a little space. The snowy descent off West Kip was great fun and I overtook a few people there, then at the final descent to the Howe the marshals were advising us to "bum slide" - quicker than running down. The climb up Carnethy seemed to pass quite quickly, then the descent - disappointingly not too much snow here, then the final slog back across the bog. Thanks guys for

cheering me on at the finish - if I hadn't sprinted those other two women would have passed me!

The Adventure Show were filming the event, and there are some photos on the [SHR site](#). Don't think I've ever seen so many race photos of people on their bottoms! Gillian is obviously the most photogenic of us as she appears 4 times, Stuart twice, then Elaine, Colin (Reid), Lois and myself once see the [Cosmic Flickr Group](#) ([http://www.flickr.com/groups/cosmic\\_hb](http://www.flickr.com/groups/cosmic_hb)). Dennis, Richard (Lang), Colin (Larmour), and Murray must have run past too fast to be captured!

Rob Jebb won for the 4th time in 53.02, closely followed by Prasad Prasad only 7 secs later. Times were slower than usual but not as much as the 15 mins mentioned on the Carnethy website the night before. Cosmics were 14th male team, 8th female team and I got to keep the F50 trophy. (*Well done Anita! Ed*)

## Ko-runce Series 2009 Round Up

- By Derek Johnstone

So, how many of you were thinking that the Kor-unce series had fizzled out due to lack of interest? Well nothing could be further from the truth as, in fact, numbers remained consistent throughout the whole series. Originally intended to last for the traditional six months, the Kor-unce committee decided that, due to the unflagging popularity of the event, it should be extended for an additional three months to make a one-off, nine race competition. It was decided that the final Kor-unce should be held on Friday 27 March to allow the competitor(s) to recover from Derek's work's do on the Wednesday night (rumour has it that some people didn't get home until 9:00am!) and also to allow any Cosmics time to return to Aberdeen in time for the 1st Krunce in April.

The results of all 9 Kor-unces have now been recorded.



They are:

Kor-unce 1	(07/08)	winner:	D Johnstone	(Cosmics)	73:12
Kor-unce 2	(08/08)	winner:	D Johnstone	(Cosmics)	62:07
Kor-unce 3	(09/08)	winner:	D Johnstone	(Cosmics)	56:50
Kor-unce 4	(10/08)	winner:	D Johnstone	(Cosmics)	52:53
Kor-unce 5	(11/08)	winner:	D Johnstone	(Cosmics)	56:27
Kor-unce 6	(12/08)	winner:	D Johnstone	(Cosmics)	52:25
Kor-unce 7	(01/09)	winner:	D Johnstone	(Cosmics)	52:27
Kor-unce 8	(02/09)	winner:	D Johnstone	(Cosmics)	51:20
Kor-unce 9	(03/09)	winner:	D Johnstone	(Cosmics)	49:38

In all seriousness, I did complete the race series as I would the Krunce with proper training (according to my own standards) and it is, I believe, a fair reflection of my improvement over the year. If you ignore the first 2 races (the heat and humidity made them incomparable with anything else) it is still an improvement of 12.6% for the year which, at my age (and bearing in mind that I was pretty fit back in July), is not bad going. The secret? Well, it could be all that Korean ginseng I've been eating, or a secret training regime, or perhaps even an increase in 'stealth training' (see Lois or Mike Stone for details). But it's a lot more simple than that. I put it down to 2 things: a year's injury free running (every run was done on the hills with no road running at all) and the fact that I live at the bottom of a couple of bloody big hills. Basically, I have 3 main routes from my apartment. The first one is steep, the second one is very steep, and the third one is just plain silly. So, if you want to improve on your times - all you have to do is move house, and stay off those roads!

Derek

PS. I am soon heading to South East Asia for some (well deserved) R & R so will not manage the start of the Krunce series. What happens after that depends on where (if anywhere) I get a job next. Watch this space for news of the 'Ja-runce', 'Tha-runce', or possibly even 'Viet-runce' coming to a country, not near you, soon.

## A Big Welcome to All New Members

This section aims to introduce Bullsheet readers to some of our newer members so that you can be armed with some interesting facts to quiz them about during the summer runs. So meet Colin Russell, Lucy Greenhill, Chris Croly and Tom Blasdale....

### ***Why did you join the Cosmics?***

Colin: To meet more people who enjoy getting out in the hills.

Lucy: To add more structure to a pretty ad-hoc running regime and meet adventurey types.

Chris: I joined the Cosmics mainly because I was looking for a new challenge in running.

Tom: I've always liked hill walking/climbing but have recently got more into running - I thought it would be a good idea to combine the two through running in the hills

### ***Who introduced you - or how did you find out about us?***

Colin: I'm a member at Aberdeen AAC but last year I did a lot more hill running so decided I should join a hill-running club to get more 'hill-fit'. I've raced against a few of the Cosmics before so have known about the club for a while.

Lucy: A 'jolly random' doing reps at that little hill by the beach, and then further info from Stu Hunter.

Chris: I was introduced by Stuart Hunter, but I also work alongside Jason Williamson, so have known about the club for quite some time.

Tom: Stuart Hunter - His partner, Zoe, used to work with me

### ***Have you done much running before? If so, what do you think is your best achievement/most memorable event so far?***

Chris: I have been running for about 6 years now, though mainly on the roads for the first while. The best event so far was the LAMM last year (my first mountain marathon) and I had a great time.





Mind you, the only thought going through my head at the end of the second day was how ridiculous it was to voluntarily run up and down hills for pleasure.

Lucy: I've mainly used running as fitness training for other activities and not for its own sake, but have done some adventure races. Best and most memorable AR was the Arctic Team Challenge 5 day race in Greenland Aug 07, ah good times...

Chris: I've been running 'seriously' for about 2 years now, and try to keep my mileage around 30 miles per week, depending on time. The best race I've done so far was the Aviemore Half Marathon, largely because of the great scenery and also because it was pretty much down hill all the way!

Tom: I did the 2006 Edinburgh Marathon in an unimpressive 4:30 (it was a very hot day!) but enjoyed it.

***Which was your favourite session at Kings over the winter?***

Colin: You can't beat a quality 12 x 400m!

Lucy: Anything that wasn't 2 mins out and back...

Chris: I do much prefer longer runs, and runs in the countryside.

Tom: I'm sure they all did me a lot of good but I can't say I enjoyed any enough to call it a favourite.

***What is your favourite run?***

Colin: Pretty much anything off-road.

Lucy: Countesswells area which has been pleasant even when knee-deep in mud and hung over. Looking forward to exploring elsewhere!

Tom: I haven't really got a favourite – I like exploring new places.

***Which races/events/runs are you looking forward to this year?***

Colin: The LAMM, and hopefully quite a lot of hill races I haven't done before.

Lucy: LAMM, Loch Ness Marathon and some other multi-activity stuff hopefully.

Chris: This year I am looking forward to trying out the marathons at Moray and at Loch Ness and (with some, i.e. a lot of, trepidation) the Lairig Ghru.

Tom: I'd like to do the Lairig Ghru race this year... if I can get fit enough by then.

***Tell me an interesting fact about yourself eg hobby/pet/favourite running shoes/odd habit.... (the stranger the better!).***

Colin: Erm, is the fact that I speak Swedish at all interesting?! Other than that I would absolutely love to get a husky and then I could do some CaniX events!

Lucy: Mmm...I used to clean up oil spills for a living. And I'll eat pretty much anything apart from ginger nut biscuits.

Chris: I was in Athens in February and on my first morning was out for a run and decided to run past the Parliament Building, to see the national guards in their traditional outfits. Whilst running past them I disturbed one of the legion of Athenian stray dogs (there aren't any Dog Wardens in Athens). The dog came tearing out of the national gardens after me. I went from leisurely jog to flat out sprint, much to the amusement of the guards (even as a dog lover I was sort of hoping they would shoot the thing!).

Tom: I know loads of fascinating facts about fish. Just ask!

**COSMIC CHAMPIONSHIP RACES 2009**

Sat 10 Jan	El-Brimick	NJ 848109	1100
Sun 7 Jun	Scolty		1400
Sat 25 Jul	Ben Rinnes		1200
Sun 9 Aug	Glen Shee 9	NO 138781	1200
Tbc	Tap O Noth		
Sat 19 Sep	Morven		1300
Sat 26 Sep	Cairn William		1500
Sat 26 Sep	Two Breweries		1200
Sun 4 Oct	Bennachie		



**TUESDAY NIGHTS**  
(meet at venue for 1845 start)

<b>14<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>Carn Mon Earn</b> at NO-769925 then Old Mill Inn, Maryculter
<b>21<sup>st</sup> April</b>	<b>Durris</b> at NO-761915 then Old Mill Inn
<b>28<sup>th</sup> April</b>	<b>Kerloch</b> at NO-699917 then Old Mill Inn
<b>5<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> KRUNCE</b> of season at Rotten O'Gairn, NJ-852045 then Bielside
<b>12<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>Mither Tap</b> from Visitor Centre at NJ-698217
<b>19<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>Carn Mon Earn</b> at NO-769925 then Old Mill Inn
<b>21<sup>st</sup> May</b>	<b>DURRIS HILL RACE</b> at 7pm from NJ-761915
<b>26<sup>th</sup> May</b>	<b>Scolty</b> (preview) at NO-687948 then Burnett Arms
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> June</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> KRUNCE</b> of season at Rotten O'Gairn at 7pm NJ-852045 then Bielside
<b>9<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>Kerloch</b> at NO-699917 then Old Mill Inn
<b>16<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>Cairn William</b> from Monymusk then Grant Arms,
<b>18<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>BALMEDIE BEACH BASH</b> at 7pm, NJ-976181
<b>23<sup>rd</sup> June</b>	<b>Clach na Ben</b> from Glen Dye NO-649867 (Mid-summer run)
<b>30<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>Millstone</b> from Donview CP, NJ672190 then Grant Arms, Monymusk

**RACES AND SATURDAY RUNS**

Date	Location	Grid Ref.	Time
Sat. 11 <sup>th</sup> Apr	<b>Clachnaben Race</b>	NO-647902	1200
Sat 18 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Green Hill from White Hill Stone Circle CP	NJ-654131	0945
Sat.25 <sup>th</sup> Apr	Rowan Tree CP for Bennachie	NJ69222448	0945
Sat 2 <sup>nd</sup> May	Peter Hill from Sawmill CP (New!)	NO-590915	0945
Sat 16 <sup>th</sup> May	Durris preview	NO761915	0945
Sat. 6 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>Glas Tulaichean Race</b> (uphill) Spittal of Glenshee		1320
Sun 7 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>Scolty Race</b>		1400
Sat 13 <sup>th</sup> June	Forest of Birse	NO-532906	0945
Sat 20 <sup>th</sup> June	Mither Tap (Bennachie) from Visitor Centre	NJ-698217	0945
Sat 27 <sup>th</sup> June	Green Hill from White Hill Stone Circle CP	NJ-654132	0945

**Lift Sharing**

If you would like to share lifts check out the Cosmic Yellow Pages (membership list) for details of other members who may live near you and check the Cosmic yahoo email group for last minute messages.

For more details about Cosmic races or runs see the website [www.cosmics.org.uk](http://www.cosmics.org.uk) and for other races see the SHR website [www.shr.uk.com](http://www.shr.uk.com).

