

# **THE WAINWRIGHTS ROUND**

**A record of completions and attempts  
of the continuous traverse of the 214 Wainwrights  
in the Lake District**

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# INTRODUCTION

This is a record of all those who have taken the seven pictorial guides and set out to complete the Lake District's longest endurance challenge – the Wainwrights Round.

The round has become increasingly popular and there have been many attempts of various forms. The purpose of the document is to record in one place a simple chronological history of the Wainwrights Round.

This log covers both attempts and completions, and contenders with various degrees of support. It begins with the honourable inclusion of Chris Bland's 1981 achievement and continues to the present day. The descriptions of each attempt are relatively short with the exception of the three major achievements of the 1980s from Chris, Alan Heaton and Joss Naylor.

The information has been drawn from a large number of sources. Where these are specific books and articles, details are set out in the list of sources at the end. But many elements have been drawn from various social media and internet forums, which are harder to codify.

Unless otherwise stated, each modern-day contender used a route either identical or very similar to Steve Birkinshaw's route from 2014 (which went in a clockwise direction from the Moot Hall).

There is limited information on some of the attempts; any additional facts would be very welcome. Similarly, while every attempt has been made for accuracy, any notifications of any errors would be gratefully received.

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## ORIGINS OF THE ROUND

The Wainwrights as a set of 214 Lakeland fells crystallised when the seventh and final book was published in 1966. But while widely read, the guides did not land in the lap of the same long-distance community we are part of today. At that point, even 24-hour rounds were exceptionally rare, let alone multi-day efforts.

During the 1970s, Wainwright's work started to provide inspiration for fell runners looking to push the boundaries, but the source was his Pennine Way and Coast to Coast books rather than the pictorial guides. These point-to-point journeys were the prologue to the Wainwrights. Among the records they fostered, Alan Heaton's Pennine record of 4 days, 5 hours and 10 minutes (jointly with Mick Meath) is as good a point as any to mark the birth of northern English ultra-distance fell running.

It is impossible to confirm, but research suggests Alan was also the first fell runner to seriously consider assembling the 214 fells into a single round. According to Bill Smith, his interest stemmed from preparatory work undertaken by John Beech, a fell walker and Liverpool school teacher. Inspired by Joss Naylor's 72-peak 24-Hour Fell Record in 1975, John produced a plan and schedule for how all of the Wainwright fells might be traversed in one continuous route.

For a long while, all this was purely hypothetical and the idea of 'doing the Wainwrights' incubated in Alan's mind for a decade. But before he could hatch a plan, Chris Bland stepped up to the mark.

Chris, cousin of Billy, had had similar thoughts to Alan. In 1981, he decided to inaugurate the Wainwrights challenge as a means to raise money for repairs to his local church in Borrowdale valley, for which he was a warden. Sited on the outskirts of the hamlet of Stonethwaite, it is the same church where Bob Graham lies buried.

Circumstances meant Chris had only a short preparation period so there were only limited opportunities to recce the route. Or seven routes, for Chris's plan was to take each of the pictorial guides over consecutive days, thus completing seven books in seven days. To this he added a further constraint: each day must start and finish at a valley church, reflecting his cause. While this would not be a continuous traverse, the overall distance and scale of the challenge was very similar to what would become the round.

Four years later, Alan Heaton was ready for his attempt. Unlike Chris, he wanted to take on the Wainwrights in the form of a round; indeed it was he that coined the term 'Wainwrights Round'.

He worked on his route with Fred Rogerson, well known for Bob Graham schedules, making several variations to the original plan put forward by John Beech. Alan was a bus schedule clerk, so the task may have come naturally, but it still would have been a huge undertaking without the aid of electronic mapping. He measured his route at around 390 miles (perhaps an overestimate) with 120,000 feet of ascent, some 20% longer than today's route but with a similar amount of climbing. Gone was the concept of a book a day; instead the plan was for a continuous route that criss-crossed Wainwright's hand-drawn borders, balancing the most efficient course with the logistical necessity of regular support points.

Alan completed his Wainwrights Round in July 1985. One year later, Joss Naylor did the same with a route based on Alan's but with a number of revisions. The round was thus established.

## MODERN-DAY STORY

After three incredible performances between 1981 and 1986, it was not until 2014 that the Wainwrights Round saw its next success. This 'long gap' was almost precisely the same length as the period between Bob Graham's original 1932 round and Alan Heaton's reprise in 1960.

Why such a gap? During the 1980s and 1990s, the focus was on fell racing rather than endurance running, which has grown much over recent years. Moreover, seven-day fell runs are the preserve of a very small number of competitors and few could contemplate the challenge. Perhaps the real oddity was that three different men went for it in the space of five years, rather than that no one else did for the subsequent 28.

Steve Birkinshaw's excellent book tells the story of how he came to the round. Steve was and continues to be a keen orienteer and fell runner, no stranger to long distances. He made two valiant attempts on the Lake District 24-Hour Fell Record in the 2000s and set a very fast time for an anti-clockwise Bob Graham.

In preparing for his attempt, Steve wrote the playbook which the majority of today's attempts choose to follow. When it came to the route, Steve began with a blank sheet of paper and managed to improve on Joss's route by a modest but important percentage (estimated by Steve to be around 16km shorter, with 2,000 fewer metres of ascent). This has now become modern-day standard that contenders tweak rather than redesign.<sup>1</sup>

Steve reduced Joss's record by twelve hours (nine hours of moving time; three hours of resting time) and was the first person to go under seven days and hit the target originally set by Chris Bland in 1981. Five years later, Paul Tierney took a further seven hours off the record, largely through resting time. In 2021, Sabrina Verjee was the first person to go under six days, on her fourth attempt and to great acclaim. While she was fourteen hours slower than Paul on the move, she completed the round with twenty – yes, twenty – fewer hours of rest. John Kelly reduced the record by a further eleven and a half hours earlier this year.

The over-arching story is therefore more of reducing rest rather than moving faster over the fells. Over the years, this has meant that the distinction between day and night has been gradually eroded. While they pushed the candle at both ends, the early record-holders still aimed for substantive stops at the end of the day, either at a waiting van or a nearby accommodation. In contrast, sleep is now a commodity to be consumed in purely bite-sized times, irrespective of time of day. While the fells themselves are timeless, there are countless other differences between modern-day attempts and those from the 1980s.

As of today, more than 20 people have made attempts in one form or another. The majority of these have been supported, but, just like the Bob Graham Round, the full array of variants has now emerged, including winter, solo, self-supported and unsupported.

Overall:

- There have been 33 attempts at the Wainwrights Round in one form or another
- Of these, 17 have been successful completions

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<sup>1</sup> By way of a research project, a group of students used algorithms and aerial imagery to generate by computer an 'optimum' route. This was initially claimed to be significantly shorter than the usual route, but the details of their report suggest that, when optimising for time, the savings are likely to be significantly less. Regardless, all of this is yet to be tested by any contender in practice.

- 21 different people have attempted the Wainwrights Round in one form or another (including Chris Bland). Of these, only three – Mel Steventon, Sabrina Verjee and Carol Morgan – have been women
- Eight contenders have made more than one attempt
- Laurie Crayston has made the most attempts (five); then Sabrina Verjee (four); then Carol Morgan (three)
- James Gibson is the only person to have completed a winter Wainwrights
- There have been as many successful completions in the past two years as the preceding four decades

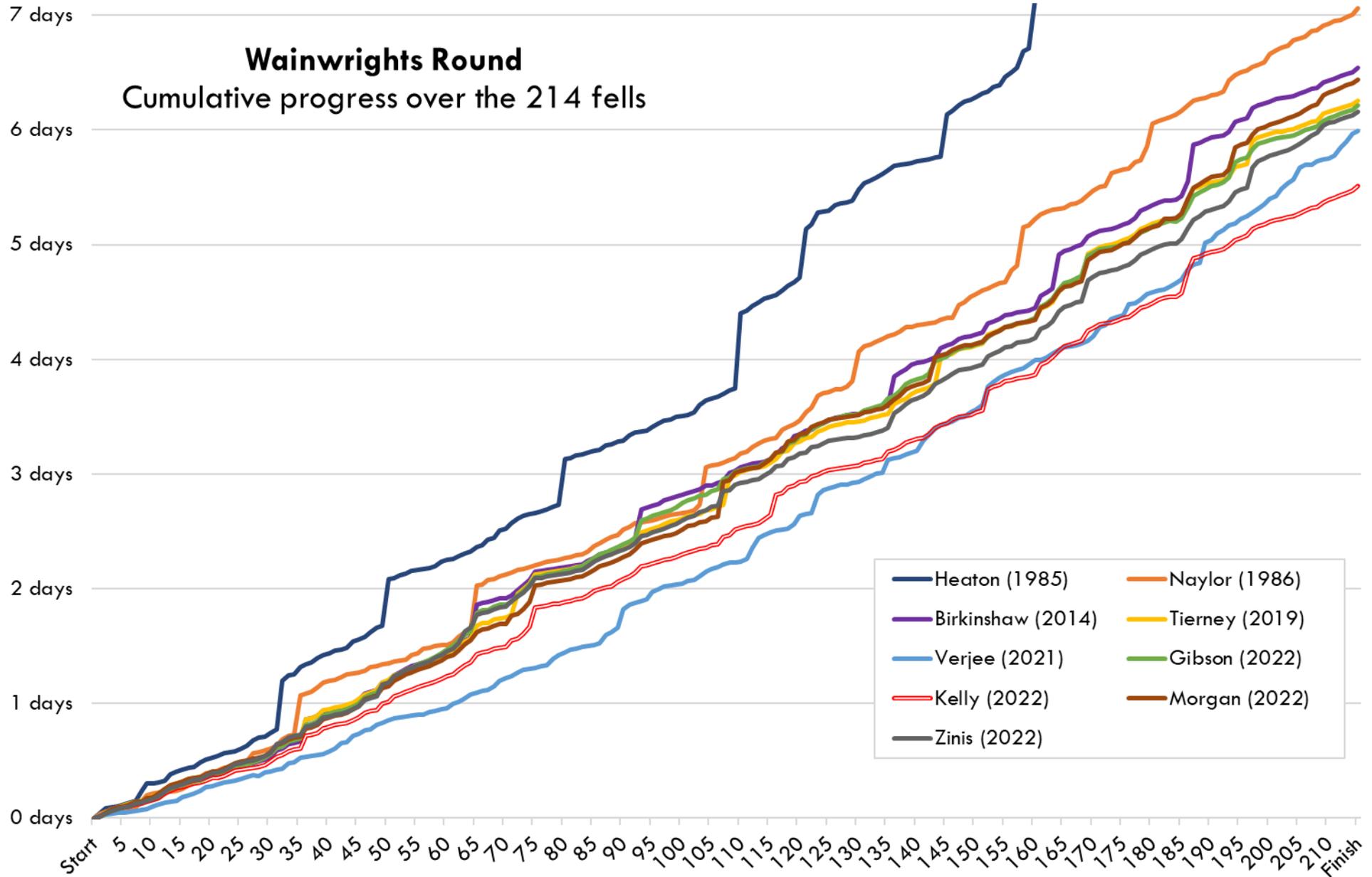
## SUMMARY TABLE AND CHARTS

Name	Year	Form	Start / finish	Completed	Duration	Description
Alan Heaton	1985	Supported	Moot Hall	Yes	9d 16h 42m	First men's completion
Joss Naylor	1986	Supported	Moot Hall	Yes	7d 1h 25m	New men's record
Steve Birkinshaw	2014	Supported	Moot Hall	Yes	6d 12h 58m	New men's record
Simon Barnett	2017	Supported	Moot Hall	Yes	14d 9h 30m	Men's completion
Jack Roberts	2017	Self-supported	n/a	Yes	25 days	First self-supported completion
Colin Ibbotson	2018	Solo / self-supported	Kendal	Yes	42 days	Men's completion
Laurie Crayston	2019	Solo / unsupported	n/a	No	n/a	Attempt
Paul Tierney	2019	Supported	Moot Hall	Yes	6d 6h 5m	New men's record
Dom Ainsley	2020	Supported / Winter	Moot Hall	No	n/a	Winter attempt
Sabrina Verjee	2020	Supported	Moot Hall	No	n/a	Attempt
Sabrina Verjee	2020	Supported	Moot Hall	No	6d 17h 51m	Completion with assistance
James Forrest	2020	Solo / self-supported	Moot Hall	Yes	14d 11h 6m	New self-supported record
Mel Steventon	2020	Supported	Great Mell Fell	Yes	13d 12h 16m	First women's completion
Laurie Crayston	n/a	Solo / unsupported	n/a	No	n/a	Unsupported attempt
Laurie Crayston	n/a	Solo / unsupported	n/a	No	n/a	Unsupported attempt
Laurie Crayston	2021	Solo / unsupported	Moot Hall	No	n/a	Unsupported attempt
Sabrina Verjee	2021	Supported	Langdale	No	n/a	Attempt
Tom Hollins	2021	Supported	Moot Hall	Yes	6d 21h 33m	Men's completion

Christopher Gaskin	2021	Solo / unsupported	Moot Hall	Yes	11d 10h 58m	New unsupported record
Carol Morgan	2021	Supported	Moot Hall	No	n/a	Attempt
Sabrina Verjee	2021	Supported	Langdale	Yes	5d 23h 49m	New overall record
Carol Morgan	2021	Supported	Moot Hall	No	n/a	Attempt
Jason & Dom Ainsley	2021	Solo / unsupported	Moot Hall	No	n/a	Unsupported attempt
John Kelly	2021	Supported	Moot Hall	No	n/a	Attempt
Laurie Crayston	2021	Solo / unsupported	n/a	No	n/a	Unsupported attempt
Tom Hollins	2021	Supported / Winter	Moot Hall	No	n/a	Winter attempt
James Gibson	2021	Supported / Winter	Moot Hall	Yes	8d 6h 44m	First winter completion
Pavel Paloncy	2022	Supported / Winter	Moot Hall	No	n/a	Winter attempt
James Gibson	2022	Supported	Moot Hall	Yes	6d 5h 23m	Men's completion
John Kelly	2022	Supported	Moot Hall	Yes	5d 12h 14m	New men's record
Carol Morgan	2022	Supported	Moot Hall	Yes	6d 10h 40m	Women's completion
Dougie Zinis	2022	Supported	Moot Hall	Yes	6d 3h 47m	Men's completion
James Forrest	2022	Solo / self-supported	Moot Hall	No	n/a	Self-supported attempt

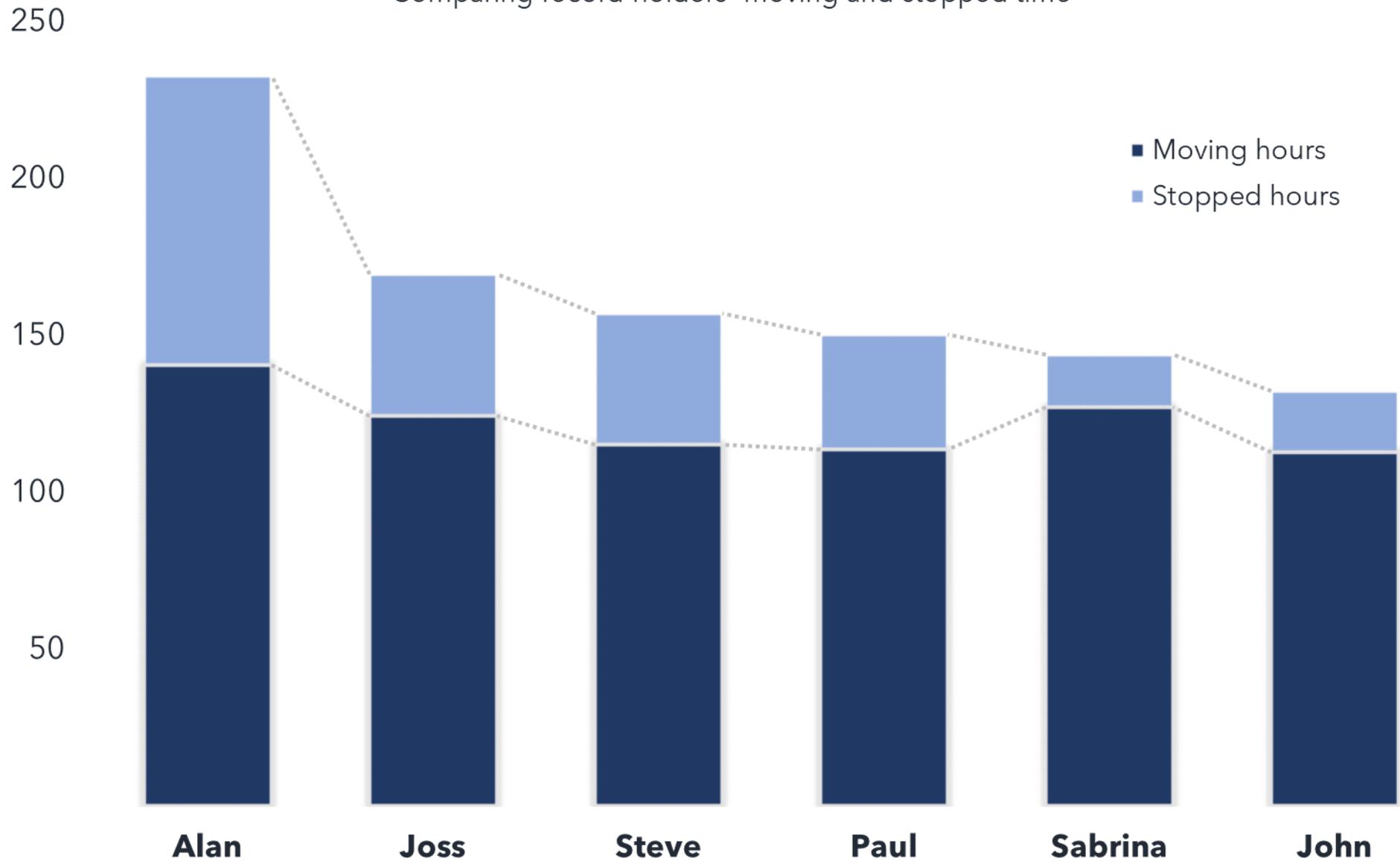
# Wainwrights Round

## Cumulative progress over the 214 fells



# Wainwrights Round

Comparing record-holders' moving and stopped time



# LOG OF ATTEMPTS AND RECORDS

## CHRIS BLAND – JUNE, 1981

### First attempt at completing all the 214 fells as a single challenge

*Start date and time: Saturday 27 June 1981, 4am*

*Finish date and time: Saturday 4 July 1981, 3.56am*

*Overall duration: 6 days, 23 hours and 42 minutes [not a continuous traverse]*

*Route: Chris's self-devised seven routes for each pictorial guide*

*Form: Supported*

Chris was using his round to raise funds for Borrowdale church roof, so he planned to start and finish each the seven days at a valley church. He began at Matterdale Church at 4am on 27 June, embarking first upon the Eastern fells. It would have suited him perfectly to fix the roof while the sun was shining, but he was instead met by a June week that was “*colder than Christmas*”, so he spent most of it in a tracksuit.

Chris completed the first day without incident, but he fell behind schedule on the second, choosing to cut the day short rather than run late (bagging only 27 of the 36 Far Eastern fells). He was concerned about the knock-on impact so early in the week and – in his own words – “*got into the wrong state of mind*”. Spirits began low on day three, but Chris persevered with a full completion of the Central fells, a helpfully timed shorter book. This in combination with “*enormous amounts of food*” lifted the mood and brought the challenge back on track.

While the Southern fells of day four brought another partial completion (17 out of 30 peaks bagged over tricky ground), this time Chris was buoyed by how much had been achieved in spite of the wind and poor visibility. It set him up for a full house over the three remaining days: the Northern, North Western and Western fells, respectively. The last of those, a beast of a pictorial guide, took nearly 20 hours to complete. At 3.42am, and with 18 minutes to spare on the 7 days, Chris and his pacers trotted into Lorton Church, bringing an end to his ground-breaking week. Overall, he had 14 minutes to spare on the 7 days, suggesting he made the right judgements to call two of the days short.

There is one striking reflection from reading Chris's account: the almost complete lack of bodily complaint. Fell runners are a hardy bunch, but we are used to stories of contenders taken to the darkest of places. Either Chris did not feel it or he chose not record it – “*descents getting a bit painful*” is the furthest he would venture. If anything, he seemed to get stronger as the week went on; he might not have been the fastest of the Bland clan, but his physical stamina was unquestionable.

*“That I failed to complete the entire programme no longer worries me,”* Chris concluded. *“Before the event, I was so terrified of failing miserably, that when things went so well, this was the greatest mental and physical boost I could have hoped for.”*

Overall, Chris estimated that he covered 308 miles and 102,000 feet of ascent over the 192 fells, statistics not far off the modern-day route devised by Steve Birkinshaw. Even if it was not a full completion, it was probably a record for the most fell miles covered in the space of a week. Having set a target, he welcomed the prospect of others stepping up and beating it: *“My great hope is that the idea catches on.”*

## **ALAN HEATON – JUNE, 1985**

**Inaugural Wainwrights Round**  
**Overall record held: 1985 – 1986**

*Start date and time: Saturday 29 June 1985, 3.30am*

*Finish date and time: Monday 8 July 1985, 8.12pm*

*Overall duration: 9 days, 16 hours and 42 minutes*

*Start and finish point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Route: Alan's self-devised continuous route [based on John Beech's work]*

*Form: Supported*

Four years after Chris, Alan Heaton was ready. At 57 years old (Chris had been 40), he wanted “to mark the end of an era of long-distance fell attempts which began when I completed Bob Graham’s round of fells.” It was a career that included making ten attempts on the 24-Hour Lake District Fell Record, setting the Pennine Way record in 1972, inaugurating the Lakes, Meres and Waters run in 1982 and, naturally, embarking on the first full continuous traverse of the Wainwrights Round (as he christened it).

Starting at the traditional Moot Hall on 29 June, Alan began with the low-lying Whinlatter fells before turning to complete the whole of the Skiddaw massif. The day was broadly equivalent to a 19-hour Bob Graham, albeit with less ascent; this was the pace he needed to meet his seven-day schedule.

Days two, three and four focused on the Eastern and Far Eastern fells, all of which went largely to plan, although at times he suffered from stomach trouble. However, by the half-way point he was badly suffering from a greater ailment – feet that “felt like they were on fire”, which would plague him for the rest of the round. He began to fear he might have reached “the beginning of the end”. The only relative respite was cold, wet ground; luckily, the day ended with some of the boggiest territory in Lakeland, the infamous Pewits of the Central fells.

Sadly, bog-trotting could not see him through the rest of the week and by morning he was compelled to head to hospital to treat a septic toe. Departing the infirmary, there can hardly have been a worse convalescence plan than a further 190 miles of running, but that is precisely what was on the cards. Alan’s only nod to reality was to focus on completion rather than hitting his seven-day target.

A shortened day five completed the Central fells and day six took him over the Coniston and Langdale ranges. The Southern fells came next, bringing tough terrain that is now traversed at a much earlier stage of the round. The Westerns then sandwiched an overnight stop at Joss Naylor’s farm. Despite experiencing his lowest ebb over these fells, Alan soldiered on, most of time only slightly slower than his pre-hospital pace. Just like today, the Coledale and Newlands fells were reserved for the finale, but even with only three to go his tormented feet gave “so much pain that [he] flopped down into the wet grass for a few minutes to regain [his] composure.”

Alan returned to Keswick 9 days, 16 hours and 42 minutes after he set out, completing both a full course of Wainwrights and prescribed antibiotics. His time on the fells (including stops on the route but not overnights) was just over 6 days.

## **JOSS NAYLOR – JUNE, 1986**

**Second completion and new men’s record**  
**Overall record held: 1986 – 2014**

*Start date and time: Saturday 28 June 1986, 4am*

*Finish date and time: Saturday 5 July 1986, 5.25am*

Overall duration: 7 days, 1 hour and 25 minutes

Start and finish point: Moot Hall, Keswick

Route: Modified version of Alan Heaton's route

Form: Supported

Perhaps it should not have been a surprise to see Joss Naylor line up at the Moot Hall some twelve months later. By this point, a clear pattern had emerged: Alan would inaugurate a challenge and set a mark; Joss would come along and break it – usually by a healthy margin. It began in 1971 when Joss beat Alan's 24-Hour Lake District Fell Record; then repeated in 1973 with the Pennine Way; then again in 1983 with the Lakes, Meres and Waters. But while the scoreboard may appear one-sided, there is an extra challenge in being the 'first' and a clear advantage from having a yardstick to chase.

Like Alan, 50-year-old Joss felt the Wainwrights was an apt way to mark a 25-year fell running career. The route was based on Alan's but with a good number of variations, often reflecting the fact that Joss had no problem with steep, direct lines.

Joss started at Moot Hall on 28 June 1986. Heatwave conditions were the single biggest theme. Averaging 25 degrees on the tops, *"it was like breathing in from an open oven, the heat burned the inside of the mouth."* But he seemed to acclimatise to the temperature and made good progress.

By day four, he was past the point of his previous longest run (the Pennine Way) but still opted to make it a long day, going into the night with multiple head torches lighting the best lines around the Coniston fells. The late finish meant the team needed to hastily make new overnight arrangements; somehow, a guest cottage was found and its front room turned into a bunkhouse for twelve.

The next day, Chris Bland met him on the Central fells at the summit of High Raise with a tin of macaroni pudding – *"there should be more it on the summits"*, said Joss. Beyond pasta, the day brought two things that had not been seen since the start: clouds and Joss's own bed. Both were welcomed but neither proved transformational as by now his body had significantly deteriorated. The following sections were in his backyard and, on paper, an opportunity to gain over familiar ground, but he could get *"nowhere near"* his usual times.

Joss was no stranger to pushing through the pain threshold, indeed the sheer act of becoming a fell runner had been mind over body given the medical problems of his youth. He was neither a man of complaint nor emotions. The rawness of his Wainwrights account is therefore all the more striking. There is no better way to describe it than by quoting directly:

*"It was a pain that bit into me all day... even when I stopped, it was sore like red-hot needles shoved into my ankles... I was drained to a point I had never been to before... It was as though someone had got hold of me and squeezed all the energy out... We had to drag from ourselves not only our accumulated fitness and basic strength, we had to reach even deeper into ourselves... I just do not have the words to describe the discomfort, the physical pain, the frustration, and the worry we all had to suffer."*

To manage the ordeal, Joss preferred to drive to a house at the end of each day for a proper rest (and Guinness – *"a couple, or was it a few?"*). But when it became clear the round would stretch into a seventh day, he elected for an unplanned fell-side bivvy. Assembled at the Kirkstile Inn, his pacers for the evening leg were asked if they might kindly carry Joss's sleeping bag and bunk down in a sheepfold with no equipment for themselves. Naturally, this was no trouble at all. Once the sun came up, Billy Bland paced a leg, but by this point even highly runnable ground was travelled at a walk.

Joss ultimately finished in 7 days, 1 hour and 25 minutes – a huge advance on Alan's time. Three-quarters of the gain came from stopped time; the remainder from moving slightly faster. He initially suggested he might have made it in under seven days were it not for his feet, but in later years he concluded, *"I put down a time that was the best I could do."*

## **STEVE BIRKINSHAW – JUNE, 2014**

**New men's record  
Overall record held: 2014 – 2019**

*Start date and time: Saturday 14 June 2014, 9am*  
*Finish date and time: Friday 20 June 2014, 9.58pm*  
*Overall duration: 6 days, 12 hours, 58 minutes*  
*Start and finish point: Moot Hall, Keswick*  
*Route: Devised by Steve*  
*Form: Supported*

Steve Birkinshaw's excellent book, *There is No Map in Hell*, tells the full story of his preparation and record round. After significant planning, he set off in June for what was set to be relatively settled and warm weather. His strategy was to take less rest than Joss, but he still broadly kept to a diurnal pattern, generally sleeping between midnight and 4am.

Steve's account tells the story of his difficulty in sleeping and significant troubles with feet. He was nervous entering final two days as it was at that point when Joss body had really deteriorated. He was just about on schedule overall, taking longer than planned for the stops (mainly due to feet care) but making up the time by moving well over the fells.

By the time he started the last day, Steve knew he had the record so long as he could finish. By the end, he had taken 12 hours from Joss's time. The effect of the exertion would stay with Steve for a number of years.

## **SIMON BARNETT – MAY, 2017**

**'Fast hike' completion**

*Start date and time: Friday 19 May 2017*  
*Finish date and time: June 2017*  
*Overall duration: Around 15 days*  
*Start and finish point: Moot Hall, Keswick*  
*Form: Supported [although majority solo]*

Many walkers have completed the Wainwrights in relatively short, intensive periods, but, to the best of my knowledge, Simon Barnett was the first to do so as a continuous challenge. He used Steve Birkinshaw's 2014 route, was supported at road crossings but was often solo on the fells.

## **JACK ROBERTS – JUNE, 2017**

**'Fast hike' completion**

*Start date and time: 21 June 2017*  
*Finish date and time: 15 July 2017*  
*Overall duration: 25 days*  
*Start point: n/k*  
*Route: Own route*  
*Form: Hiking (equivalent to solo, self-supported)*

Jack completed a continuous traverse over 25 days with no transport support. He carried his own equipment.

## **COLIN IBBOTSON – APRIL, 2018**

### **Continuous traverse of Wainwrights, including Outlying Fells**

*Start date and time: 23 April 2018*

*Finish date and time: May 2018*

*Overall duration: 42 days*

*Start point: Kendal*

*Route: Own route*

*Form: Hiking (equivalent to solo, self-supported)*

Colin Ibbotson's achievement is most notable for the fact that he adapted the Wainwrights Round route to include the 116 Outlying Fells. This is the only continuous round to have included this large additional set of fells. All told, it made for a 42-day round of 330 fells.

## **PAUL TIERNEY – JUNE, 2019**

**New men's record**

**Overall record held: 2019 – 2021**

*Start date and time: Friday 14 June 2019, 8am*

*Finish date and time: Thursday 20 June 2019, 2.05pm*

*Overall duration: 6 days, 6 hours and 5 minutes*

*Start and finish point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Supported*

Paul initially considered an attempt in 2018 but instead chose to use the Tour des Geants as an apprenticeship. He followed the same route as Steve, who helped significantly with advice on preparation for the attempt.

In broad terms, Paul's approach to beating the record was largely about taking time out of the rest stops rather than moving time over the fells. The weather was initially tough over the weekend but improved by the half-way point. It then stayed fine until the end.

Overall, Paul reduced Steve's record by around seven hours, of which five came from shorter stops and two came from saving time on the fell. A big part of the time saved at stops arose from the fact that his body – and in particular feet – held up remarkably well. He slept for an average of two hours each 'night'.

## **DOM AINSLEY – FEBRUARY, 2020**

**First winter attempt (unsuccessful)**

*Start date and time: Sunday 16 February 2020, 7.14am*

*Attempt ended: Wednesday 19 February 2020, around 5pm*

*Start point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Supported*

In early 2020, Dom Ainsley set out ambitiously to be the first person to complete the continuous traverse outside of summer. While it was towards the tail end of seasonal winter, the conditions were very much those of hard winter, with snow, wind and ice.

Being the first winter attempt, there was no yardstick to judge against but, even so, progress was tough and the attempt had to be curtailed for reasons of safety after three and a half days. Dom was initially keen to pursue a summer attempt and to re-attempt a winter completion, but neither of these happened in the end. He did set out briefly on a self-supported round in 2021 – see below.

## **SABRINA VERJEE – JUNE, 2020**

### **First women's attempt (aborted)**

*Start date and time: Tuesday 2 June 2020, 3am*

*Attempt ended: Wednesday 3 June 2020, around 10am*

*Start point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Supported*

Sabrina wanted to begin her Wainwrights Round from as soon as Covid regulations would allow. Unfortunately, multi-day endurance challenges were not expressly considered in the making of the law, which made it difficult to decide what was the right side of the line. After setting out early on a June morning, a decision was made to abort the attempt after around 30 hours. Sabrina's schedule was for a round of just over six days.

## **SABRINA VERJEE – JULY, 2020**

### **First women's completion (with physical aid)**

*Start date and time: Monday 6 July 2020, 3am*

*Finish date and time: Sunday 12 July 2020, 10.51pm*

*Duration: 6 days, 17 hours and 51 minutes*

*Start and end point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Supported*

One month after her aborted attempt, Sabrina set out again. The first few days of the attempt went well and a record looked very possible. Unfortunately, her knee became very painful and swollen around the half-way point. Once the reality was appreciated, the priority was finishing to round rather than setting a record pace. Because of difficulty descending, Sabrina received physical support on a number of occasions. As such, her continuous traverse cannot be officially recorded as a completion, despite the fact it is still a hugely impressive time and the first time a woman had attempted the round.

## **JAMES FORREST – AUGUST, 2020**

### **Solo and self-supported record Self-supported record held: 2020 – 2021**

*Start date and time: 24 August 2020, 9.28am*

*Finish date and time: 7 September 2020, 10.34pm*

*Duration: 14 days, 11 hours and 6 minutes*

*Start and end point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Solo, self-supported*

James was the first person to seriously set out to record a fast time for a self-supported round. He carefully planned the attempt, including through depositing caches of supplies at various points along the route. He finished in just over two weeks, making it through some tough conditions.

## **MEL STEVENTON – SEPTEMBER, 2020**

**First women's completion**  
**Women's record held: 2020 – 2021**

*Start date and time: Thursday 10 September 2020, 7.41am*

*Finish date and time: Wednesday 23 September 2020, 7.57pm*

*Duration: 13 days, 12 hours and 16 minutes*

*Start and end point: Great Mell Fell*

*Form: Supported*

Mel completed the Wainwrights Round as part of a longer set of walks to raise money for a Nepalese charity. While her original schedule was for a completion in around 10 days, the combination of weather and injury meant the round took just under a fortnight to complete. Regardless, it marked the first official women's completion and, therefore, the first women's record.

## **MINGMA TSHERING SHERPA – JANUARY, 2021**

**Non-continuous winter completion**

A brief honourable mention is merited for this non-continuous winter completion. Over two weeks in January, Mingma Tshering Sherpa bagged all the Wainwright fells. Each outing was completed solo. The total moving time was five days and six hours.

## **LAURIE CRAYSTON – 2019 TO 2021**

**Five attempts at a solo, unsupported completion**

Between 2019 and 2021, Laurie Crayston made five separate attempts at a solo, unsupported completion of the Wainwrights attempt. To the best of my knowledge, no other person has made so many attempts on the round (Sabrina Verjee comes next with four starts).

Laurie's fourth attempt is of particular note because he managed to complete 150 Wainwrights before having to abandon due to poor weather. He started on Monday 26 April and ended the attempt on Monday 10 May.

His fifth and final attempt came after Christopher Gaskin set a solo, unsupported record of eleven and a half days – see below.

## **SABRINA VERJEE – APRIL, 2021**

**Unsuccessful attempt**

*Start date and time: Friday 30 April 2021, 7.30am*

*Attempt ended: Tuesday 4 May 2021, around 4.30am*

*Start point: Langdale*

*Form: Supported*

Despite her injury, Sabrina recovered well from her 2020 Wainwrights attempts, going on to set records on the Pennine Way and Coast to Coast routes.

Unlike her previous attempts, she chose to start the route at her home in Langdale for a more low-key departure. To ensure like-for-like comparisons with previous completers, she included the Moot Hall as a checkpoint midway through the round.

She set out very well, but the weather turned around the half-way point. This in turn led to asthma trouble caused by breathing in the cold air. Sabrina battled on, but the combination of the winter conditions (in May!) and asthma meant the attempt had to be called short 95 hours into the round.

## **TOM HOLLINS – MAY, 2021**

### **Men's completion**

*Start date and time: Sunday 16 May 2021, 9.40am*

*Finish date and time: Sunday 23 May 2021, 7.13am*

*Duration: 6 days, 21 hours and 33 minutes*

*Start and end point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Supported*

Tom was a previous Spine winner and had also made an attempt at a double Bob Graham Round. He had hoped to challenge Paul Tierney's record, but the round was completed in very poor weather and he was not able to stay on schedule. Tom went on to attempt a winter round later in the year – see below.

## **CHRISTOPHER GASKIN – MAY, 2021**

### **Solo and unsupported completion Unsupported record held: 2021 – present**

*Start date and time: Tuesday 18 May 2021, 8.39am*

*Finish date and time: Saturday 29 May 2021, 7.40pm*

*Duration: 11 days, 10 hours and 58 minutes*

*Start and end point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Solo and unsupported*

Veteran Christopher was using his attempt to support armed forces charities. Consistent with the unsupported nature of the challenge, he carried all his food and equipment for the entire journey (estimating it at 14 days). Like many others, he was affected by the unseasonably poor weather during the late Spring season. He was able to finish a good amount ahead of schedule.

## **CAROL MORGAN – MAY, 2021**

### **Unsuccessful attempt**

*Start date and time: Friday 21 May 2021, 6am*

*Attempt ended: Friday 21 May 2021, around 10pm*

*Start point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Route: Anti-clockwise Birkinshaw*

*Form: Supported*

One year after claiming the Lake District 24-Hour Fell Record, Carol set her sights on the Wainwrights. Sadly, she had to abandon her attempt Lonscale Fell due to poor weather. She would go on to make two further attempts, the final one being a successful completion – see below.

## **SABRINA VERJEE – JUNE, 2021**

**New overall record and new women's record**

**Overall record held: 2021 – 2022**

*Start date and time: Friday 6 June 2021, 7.03am*

*Finish date and time: Friday 11 June 2021, 6.52am*

*Duration: 5 days, 23 hours and 49 minutes*

*Start and end point: Langdale*

*Form: Supported*

Sabrina had started four attempts in just over a year and was single-mindedly pursuing an 'official' completion. Similar to her attempt earlier in the season, her route began from her Langdale home but included a visit to Moot Hall.

Remarkably, both her and her team were ready to go again after barely a month from the previous attempt (which had gone on for four days).

The weather was good and the round largely went without incident. By day five, it is was clear that a record was very largely secure, but the prospect of completing in under six days kept her speed up. In the end, she managed it with eleven minutes to spare. Her dedication to the round was rewarded with her first completion, a new women's record and a new overall record.

## **CAROL MORGAN – JUNE, 2021**

**Unsuccessful attempt**

*Start date and time: Saturday 26 June 2021, 6.08am*

*Attempt ended: Tuesday 29 June 2021, around 10am*

*Start point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Route: Anti-clockwise Birkinshaw*

*Form: Supported*

Just over a month after her prior attempt (which ended at the end of day one – see above), Carol set out again. She started well and was keeping to a strong pace. Unfortunately, she had to pull out of the attempt after around three days (and just over 200 miles).

## **DOM & JASON AINSLEY – JULY, 2021**

**Unsuccessful unsupported attempt**

*Start date and time: Thursday 1 July 2021, 8am*

*Attempt ended: Thursday 1 July 2021, around 6pm*

*Start point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: 'Solo' (pair) and unsupported*

It is unclear, but the available information suggests Dom and Jason Ainsley were attempting an unsupported round as a pair. The tracker suggests it was aborted very early in the round.

## JOHN KELLY – JULY, 2021

### Unsuccessful attempt

*Start date and time: Saturday 17 July 2021, 10am*

*Attempt ended: Monday 19 July 2021, around 1.20pm*

*Start point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Supported*

After setting the record for the Pennine Way and completing his self-devised 'Grand Round', it was perhaps logical for John to turn to the Wainwrights Round. He set an ambitious schedule of under five and a half days.

Unfortunately, he had to abort the attempt after 53 hours on the fell because of heat (conditions were very warm) and feet problems. He would go on to make a further attempt in 2022 – see below.

## TOM HOLLINS – DECEMBER, 2021

### Unsuccessful winter attempt

*Start date and time: Wednesday 1 December 2021, 6am*

*Attempt ended: Sunday 5 December 2021, around 1am*

*Start point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Route: Birkinshaw route with variations*

*Form: Supported*

Having completed a so-called 'summer' round six months earlier, Tom was the first person to go for a second official completion. He made a large number of changes to the route to reflect limited winter daylight and support points, largely to the beginning of the round in the Borrowdale area. Critically, for a winter round, additional opportunities for 'escape' routes were also built into the course.

He did not know about James' parallel attempt (see below) until just before he began. The pair crossed paths on the slopes of Low Pike. There is a great picture of the two stopping for a chat; what the image cannot convey is the high winds swirling all around.

Tom initially made good progress given the conditions. A particularly stormy night beckoned over the Far Eastern Fells but, unlike James, Tom was not scheduled for a rest at Kentmere. As a result, he expended significant energy battling through the weather on the tops. In the end, he was forced to cut short the attempt around 1am after Branstree. By this point, the snow and wind was making for very slow progress. He had summited 122 fells.

After the attempt ended, Tom praised his support team. It is worth quoting to give a sense of the demands on 'pacers' during a winter attempt:

*"Eating and drinking yourself is a luxury. And your fingers are always freezing as your own gloves are on and off to get things out of your pack. Several runners had to physically form a wind break in the later stages so that I got less of a battering.*

*"You would have thought that the experiences above would have made people pretty miserable. But all I got was constant smiles and support and care. I could feel the lift of every single person wanting me to succeed, despite them being in adverse conditions themselves and putting themselves through extra adversity for me.*

*“On my side I tried to say thank you every time but I am sure I was also focused on the task in hand. Thank you to those who reminded me to lift my eyes to the surroundings. So many beautiful things to see even with 15 hours of darkness each day.”*

## **JAMES GIBSON – DECEMBER, 2021**

**First winter completion**  
**Winter record held: 2021 – present**

*Start date and time: Wednesday 1 December 2021, 7am*

*Finish date and time: Thursday 9 December 2021, 1.44pm*

*Duration: 8 days, 6 hours and 44 minutes*

*Start and end point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Supported*

James had originally planned a winter attempt for the previous year, but Covid meant he instead had to settle for a Steve Parr Round (which he completed).

When James set off from Moot Hall, it was initially hard to compare progress with Tom given the differences in route, but after a while they were following similar paths.

Unlike Tom (see above), James was scheduled to take a rest at Kentmere, which proved fortuitous as it was an awful night's weather. He rested for eight hours while waiting for the worst of the conditions to pass. He then continued. Later on in the round, over the Northern Fells, he opted to drop down to Mungrisdale for a substantive stop to wait out the weather. It proved inspired, allowing for Storm Barra to pass and allow for valuable rest. He went on to complete the round in excellent spirits.

James would go on to complete a summer round in 2022 – see below.

## **PAVEL PALONCY – JANUARY, 2022**

**Unsuccessful winter attempt**

*Start date and time: Sunday 30 January 2022, 8am*

*Attempt ended: Tuesday 1 February 2022*

*Start point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Partially supported*

Three-time winner of the infamous Spine race, Pavel had started to plan his winter Wainwrights long before Tom and James set off in December the previous year. Unlike them, he wanted a simpler affair and intended to be out on the fell “mostly alone, carry[ing] all my kit and food, and do[ing] the navigation.” But this was not a formal solo, self-supported attempt and he was happy to welcome any runners who happened to join him.

Unfortunately, Pavel had to call the attempt off after serious problems with his Achilles. He had battled terrible weather on the first night.

## **JAMES GIBSON – APRIL, 2022**

**Successful men's completion**

*Start date and time: Friday 1 April 2022, 9am*

*Finish date and time: Thursday 7 April 2022, 2.23pm*

*Duration: 6 days, 5 hours and 23 minutes*

*Start and end point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Supported*

After completing a winter round in tough conditions, James set out four months later on a 'summer' attempt. On the basis of 2021 experience, perhaps we should have expected that early Spring would bring a difficult set of conditions for a non-winter Wainwrights Round. So it proved.

Towards the end of the round, his pace was strong, which suggests he might have gone faster had the weather been better. Overall, James was around an hour faster than Paul Tierney, so he set a new men's record but Sabrina safely kept the overall record.

James is the only person to have completed the Wainwrights in both 'summer' and winter.

## **JOHN KELLY – MAY, 2022**

**New men's record**

**Overall record held: 2022 – present**

*Start date and time: Monday 2 May 2022, 10am*

*Finish date and time: Saturday 7 May 2022, 10.14pm*

*Duration: 5 days, 12 hours and 14 minutes*

*Start and end point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Supported*

Given the schedule he had set himself for 2021, there was an expectation that John was a potential contender for the overall record. He scheduled a second attempt in 2022 for immediately before his return to the USA.

The schedule was again relatively aggressive, but he started well and continued to move well over the entirety of the round. He took around 12 hours from Sabrina's the record, despite taking 3 more hours of rest (to compensate, he was around 15 hours quicker over the fells). Even so, he took under half the total amount of rest of Steve Birkinshaw (and he noted in his account how hard it was to stay awake over the long sections).

## **CAROL MORGAN – MAY, 2022**

**Second women's completion**

*Start date and time: 8 May 2022, 6am*

*Finish date and time: 14 May 2022, 4.40pm*

*Duration: 6 days, 10 hours and 40 minutes*

*Start and end point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Supported*

Around a year after her brace of attempts in 2021, Carol set out again, this time in a clockwise direction. Despite coming only a week after John Kelly, her weather window was a fair amount worse and she suffered from high winds for most of the week.

Carol completed in a highly respectable time, some two hours quicker than Steve Birkinshaw in 2014. Carol was the third woman to complete the Wainwrights Round after Mel Steventon and Sabrina Verjee.

## **DOUGIE ZINIS – MAY, 2022**

### **Successful men's completion**

*Start date and time: Saturday 28 May 2022, 10am*

*Finish date and time: Friday 3 June 2022, 1.47pm*

*Duration: 6 days, 3 hours and 47 minutes*

*Start and end point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Supported*

In terms of endurance fell running, Dougie is perhaps best known for his record for the fastest double Bob Graham Round. He set the third fastest overall time for his round (and the second-fastest men's time).

## **JAMES FORREST – MAY, 2022**

### **Unsuccessful solo, self-supported attempt**

*Start date and time: Wednesday 1 June 2022, 5.03am*

*Attempt ended: Sunday 5 June 2022, around 5pm*

*Start point: Moot Hall, Keswick*

*Form: Solo, self-supported*

While James set a new solo, self-supported record in 2020 (see above), Christopher Gaskin's solo, unsupported time took his crown because a self-supported time must be quicker than the equivalent unsupported time. Perhaps this is what inspired James to set out again – to see if he could make self-supported quicker than unsupported.

Back in 2020, he had generally suffered from poor weather on his first round, so a faster completion was potentially on the cards. He took a similar approach to preparation, including stashing a number of boxes with supplies at various points along the route.

James' target was to beat 11 days, but unfortunately he had to call time after 4 days and 75 Wainwrights.

## SOURCES

As noted in the introduction, this document benefits from a very large number of more informal sources, in particular various updates posted to different social media and blogs. The list below focuses on substantive texts and is therefore very partial.

Chris Bland (1981). 'Seven Books in Seven Days'

Alan Hankinson (1981), 'Rough Bounds: Running the Wainwrights'. Originally published in *Climber and Rambler*. Available [here](#). [Relating to Chris Bland's Wainwrights]

Alan Heaton (1985). 'The Wainwrights Round'

Bill Smith (1985). *Stud Marks on the Summits*. [Relating to Chris Bland's and Alan Heaton's Wainwrights]

Joss Naylor (1992). *Joss Naylor MBE Was Here*

Steve Birkinshaw (2017). *There is no Map in Hell*

Simon Barnett (2017). 'A History of the Wainwrights and Some 214 Record-Breakers'. Available [here](#)

Simon Barnett (2017). 'My Walk of Life'. Available [here](#)

Colin Ibbotson (2018). 'Interview: Colin Ibbotson and his monster 330-fell Lake District hike' / *The Great Outdoors Magazine*. Available [here](#)

Inov-8 (2019). 'Paul Tierney Breaks 214-Peak Wainwright Record'. [Website blog](#)

Colin Ibbotson (2020). 'Wainwrights and Outlying Fells'. Available [here](#)

Mel Steventon (2020). 'Wainwrights'. Available [here](#)

John Kelly (2021). 'Wainwrights DNF – Warm, Wet & Steep With a Side of Bracken'. Available [here](#)

## TRACKER LINKS

Much of the commentary in this document could not have been prepared without the reliable trackers provided by James Thurlow and his Open Tracking team. We are very lucky to have such functionality.

*Note: these links are unlikely to be permanent (especially for older rounds)*

Paul Tierney (2019)	<a href="#">Tracker</a> / <a href="#">Strava</a>
Sabrina Verjee (2020) [attempt 2]	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
James Forrest (2020)	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
Sabrina Verjee (2021) [attempt 3]	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
Sabrina Verjee (2021) [attempt 4]	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
Tom Hollins (2020) [summer]	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
Christopher Gaskin (2021)	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
James Gibson (2021) [winter]	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
Carol Morgan (2021) [attempt 1]	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
Carol Morgan (2021) [attempt 2]	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
John Kelly (2021) [attempt 1]	<a href="#">Tracker</a> / <a href="#">Strava</a>
Tom Hollins (2021) [winter]	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
James Gibson (2021) [winter]	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
James Gibson (2022)	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
John Kelly (2022)	<a href="#">Tracker</a> / <a href="#">Strava</a>
Carol Morgan (2022)	<a href="#">Tracker</a>
Dougie Zinnis (2022)	<a href="#">Tracker</a>