

2013-2014 SEASON RUN REPORTS

1. Forest Hills Hotel, Frodsham (07/09/2013)

(By Joe Park)

An excellent run of 8.6 miles inclement weather started along Overton Hill and past Shepherds Houses to the Telecom mast and over to Newton. A bit of road led down to Belleair across Paint Ball wood on to Bradley Orchard and the River Weaver. An enjoyable route led up to Bradley, Five Crosses and the Caves and home to Beacon Hill.

Bell (injured), Ridings, Mason, Winterbone and Ruddock L walked some or all of the route. A large group Potter, Eastwood, Wells, Riley, Wells A, Markham, Stanton and Ruddock S, using their physical and navigational skills made steady progress. Norman, Whitehead, McHarry and West-Samuel performed as expected.

Is that Fast Taylor up front going well?. Is that Fast Taylor now behind us still going well?.

Nsf Taylor didn't like the road bit and was determined to avoid it but was quickly put back on the rails. Brown and Shipley, mostly on their own, are in the process of building up speed and stamina. Jones towards the end devised a characteristic alternative route.

22 sat down to an excellent four course meal which all agreed was excellent value for money.

Park demanded a recount of the trail marks as Whitehead thought Park had sent him a note on trail laying after Buggy and had been scoring him low ever since. Shipley fessed up to sending the note so now has little chance of winning Trail Trophy as Whitehead claims to have friends!

2. The Navigation Inn, Buxworth (22/09/13)

(By Steve Murray)

Some dark clouds with the odd highlight at the start of the run, but mild. Taylor (Anthony) and Whitehead (Geoff) were back from trail laying before the packs set off. Geoff had obviously been worn out by the pace that Tony had set but felt enough pressure from his peers to volunteer to go round again. Tony just smiled his quiet smile. Taylor (Mark) set off first (2:00pm) with A.N. Other, a family friend staying at Hayfield with Mark and others in his gang. Mr Other had brought enough water with him to cross the Gobi and it was felt that dehydration would not be an issue for their little running group. Early on, Butler (Peter) was worried that there'd be no one with him in the fast pack but West-Samuel (Adrian) and McBride, (Bobbikins) were there to spoil his day.

Sometime after 2:00pm, a large medium to slow pack set off with some groaning and some unconvincing excuses for lack of vitality (it being early in the season and excuse making being a skill that takes a bit of practice). Along the canal and along the canal, stopping only to read the stone weather forecaster. Much concentration and quiet lip moving at this point; by the end of the run everybody had got the joke. Along the canal a bit more; then for our group, a right, although by all accounts, not for everyone who ran the run.

We dropped down over a stile to a path through a fine crop of thistles. At this point the mild cloudy day was becoming a very warm and not so cloudy day and before we turned left near Peathill, there was a general stripping of layers. Jenkinson (Ian), revealing his berserker ancestry, stripped to the waist and remained stripped for the rest of the run. No blue body paint but who knows what colour his grundies are?

Eastwood (Mike) was leading at this point and keeping the pack together, with Stanton (Graham) generally at his shoulder, occasionally dropping back to rally the troops. At the back, needing rallying were Murray (Steve) and Wilson (John). Murray was carrying a cold and some injudicious training methods from the previous evening. John was carrying a something year old Wilson body. As the ground started to rise, John and Steve started to fall. Somewhere along Shedyard Clough, a certain amount of daylight appeared between the pelaton and the Wilson/Murray grouping. Eastwood spotting his fallen comrades did a Rolf Harris (NOT THAT SORT) and fell back to succour his struggling fellow athletes. The leaders at this point were completely unaware that they were running themselves out of the commentary. Oh I bet they're sorry now.

The incline up to the television transmitter was such, that a person who considered himself a runner and was not suffering from early-in-the-season-syndrome could just put his head down and take it on. Wells (Paul) did just this as did most of the pack. For Wilson and Murray, this was their first run, they'd missed Frodsham and just perhaps it was showing. Eastwood made polite conversation to hide his despair. New Mills and Birch Vale in the valley looked even better than they do close up.

A right not long after the transmitter and a new skyline even better than the one we've left behind. We're descending now, though not at any kind of rate that could legitimately have the word pace in it. An Eastwood or a Wilson could easily churn out a list of names that those distant hills could be and Murray would be none the wiser. Put 'em together and we have checks and stops in place to prevent blether. Mount Famine might have been one of 'em. The rest... I forget.

Down below us to the left, our eyes were drawn to a flock of sheep streaming over a stream. There was the farmer, we worked out and there was the sheepdog doing his rounding up and come-byeing. We watched the "sheepdog" move back from the flock,

obviously letting the sheep have their head, then falling back further and then scarpering away completely away from them, back towards its owner, half a mile away, who obviously hadn't thought fit to keep it on a lead.

Not much further on a strange pinging noise turned out to be Eastwood's hamstring. A little bit of a stretch and a massage later everything was fine, except there wouldn't be any more running from Eastwood. Murray's background in Eastern philosophy proved invaluable at this point as he introduced the concept of Zen running. Running without running... and so we Zen ran, back down the hill in the warm and the sunshine, picking and eating blackberries(very sweet) in an extraordinarily Zen way.

Near Holin Wood we met Ruddock (Steve) and Goulder, (There's only one) who hadn't lost trail but had met a strange elfish woman with sparkling emerald eyes who had led them away from the path with glammers and enchantments. They left the Zen pack behind quite quickly.

Beers were excellent, Landlord and Pride of Spotland (or similar) amongst others. 19 sat down for the meal and all of us ate it. Hot pot and apple pie with custard. How many times will I be typing that out this season?

3. Rivington Bowling Club, Rivington (05/10/13)

(By Joe Park)

Eastwood and Stanton laid a tough trail of about 9 miles over country that brought back memories to the veterans of the Hall Barn runs.

The weather was overcast and decidedly cooler than anticipated.

The trail started out along the east side of Upper Rivington Reservoir and up in the direction of Yarrow R onto the moors. The first couple of miles were on tracks but soon we hit the black stuff as we wound our way up to the TV masts. From here we went fairly directly across to the Pike and down via the closes to the Hall Barn then Chapel House to the club. Bell and A Taylor were first away followed by Shipley and Whitworth. Brown, Winterbone and Jones were shortly to follow.

The midfielders were Blackshaw, Potter, Jenkinson, Dawson, Norman and Park. Norman led the way as he prepared for Coniston while the rest of us stayed back to watch the others disappear into the deep wet peat.

The tour de force consisted of West-Samuel, Whitehead, McHarry and David (guest).

The guest beer was Abbeydale Distinction, a pale strongly citrus flavoured brew at 4.1% ABV.

The meal, hot pot and apple pie was sparse and expensive.

With NF we had to take most of the black odorous mud home with us.

4. Cock and Pullet, Sheldon (19/10/13)

(By Steve Murray)

The day was as warm as you could possibly expect for this bit of October although it was overcast. The Romiley group consisted of Graham Stanton, Burston (Mike), Markham (Tom), Riley (Dave), Wilson (John) and Murray (Steve). The lift from Eastward (Mike) did not materialise on account of 'im bein' in Spain; a fact unavoidable to some, on account of 'im sending delightful texts, regaling us of his pleasurable experiences.

Upon our arrival at Sheldon, The Cock and Pullet was surrounded by its namesakes and Joe Park. We had the use of a room and a shower. The rare party had left very early even before el Presidente had arrived. Burston Wilson party left very quickly after arriving. When I say very quickly, perhaps it would be more appropriate to say very soon after arriving; I wouldn't want to give the wrong impression. Potter (John) arrived just as the medium rare party was considering leaving, so they hung around for a bit, them being decent folk. Whilst awaiting the Potter, a committee was formed to seek out the first piece of sawdust. Fine community spirited women of the parish were roped in to help out, whether we wanted help or not. The first sawdust cast was found.

The Potter appeared carrying his arctic weather gear. We were off

The first section of the run consisted of a tranche of fields and stiles, fields and stiles. Flat fields and slippery stone stiles. West through fields, west over stiles. People commented but what's a man with a bag of sawdust to do when faced with fields and stiles? Cast the sawdust regardless. For those of us whose previous evening's preparation had consisted of a 40th birthday party (Potter) and a sportsman's dinner consisting mainly of Hobgoblin (Stanton), it made for a gentle introduction to running with ample opportunity for little breathers. The pack stayed together. Markham informed all who would listen that an old teacher of ours had popped his clogs. Right out of the blue. Even though he was very fit generally. A very short section of road and then more fields separated by gaps in walls and steps embedded in walls that allowed egress from one field and ingress to the adjoining field.

We could see Flagg. We knew Flagg. We'd been there before. We turned right before we got to the city centre. At this point Stanton placed his foot injudiciously upon a cow deposit which launched itself at the Markham's leg. He was not too pleased. It spoiled the balance of his outfit. He now looked like a rough boy. He stopped to clear himself up. At the next stile, Stanton felt the sting of the Ying to his earlier Yang. What had previously gone around, came around and he launched himself at the ground. He was generous enough to hang around for the Markham to savour his misfortune.

We had turned right before Flagg and now headed North or some version of it. It was still flat fields. Stanton kept referring to milk based foodstuffs. "Cheeses" was heard at regular intervals.

At some point before Taddington, kerpow., non-fields and non-flat stuff appeared. Gentle hills and leafy green paths and lanes. Top stuff. Murray regretted the lack of fell shoes. Potter came into his own and took point, the previous night's revels now a distant memory. Medium rare passed the rare group. Burston was suffering from having been working abroad.

Then at Great Shacklow Wood, what Brian (Trail Layer) Whitworth, referred to as the "feature" of the run. Steps. Steps going up. A lot of steps. Steps and more steps. Up and more up. After some minutes of steps Potter suddenly recalled last night's revels again. "I've made a decision", he said. "I'm having a break". He found a suitable tree and he leaned on

it. Riley, never one to let a man lean on a tree on his own joined him. Murray and Stanton powered? on. The sun came out and the wood gained depth. Above was the reward of sunshine.

We could smell the cooking before we could see the pub. Vinnie Jones was there to greet us.

Several top notch real ales including Timothy Taylor's Landlord and Black Sheep. What sort of hot-pot were we going to have? None of it. Not a bit of it. Choose from the menu, the landlady said. CHOOSE FROM THE MENU? DEEP JOY. Maybe somebody missed the hot-pot but then again maybe not.

Personally I had the chicken breast in a blue cheese sauce. Best meal since the trip to the Beehive at Ripponden when the carrots had been "drizzled" with lemon juice. An extra quid for a dessert and Jocys was obliged by the landlady with an early dessert to facilitate his early dart.

CHOOSE FROM THE MENU!!. Woohoo!!

5. The Bulls Head, Tintwistle (02/11/2013)

(Steve Murray)

The Bull's Head on a grey and overcast hangover of a day. I arrived late, with Tom Markham with me, that making him late as well. All sensibly paced parties had left already, leaving only Tim Norman, Pete Butler and Mark Taylor pacing the slabs in the vault. Tim elected to leave with the Markham Murray party and we set off. We stopped. We looked for sawdust. We looked for a paper trail. What we found was evidence of a recent torrential downpour that had effectively cleaned the gutters and pavements...of sawdust. Up the hill a bit and we find some traces stuck to moss on a wall.

We're off. A gradual climb East up the north side of the valley, through a farm and some plantation before dropping down, crossing the road and reservoir. Markham seems happy enough as Markhams go. Tim is taking it easy as he has a half marathon to run on the following day. He's bin trainin'. Along the reservoir for but a short distance and then a right up t'hill. Gosh it's steep and rocky. Those of a terpsichorean bent skip, dance and whirl up the path.

Tim has definitely been trainin'. He barely breaks a sweat. Murray's sweat is in a pile ready to be swept up and put in the bin. Markham is taking it easy. He has a job to do. He has to select the right rock to dive towards and crack with his head so he's taking it easy and watching where he steps. At some point we can see a line of runners either on or just below the skyline above and to the right of us. Markham gives Murray an excuse for a breather and just for form's sake Tim pretends to be taking a breather as well.

At the top, with Markham well to the rear, Norman and Murray head of down the path stretching ahead. Markham calls us back as we've missed the right hand cutback. "Thank-you Tom." "You'd still be up them 'ills now if it weren't fer me." "Yes Tom thanks again." "You went right past it."

Murray and Tim now set off across the bog, never allowing Markham to get within crowing distance again. Good bog. Soft underfoot, but not so wet that you could press a body into it by standing on it. Now for many, a right angle to the left up past some shooting butts. Many choose to ignore this left and head straight on, eventually to meet up with the outgoing path, to retrace their steps. They so enjoyed the dance that they do the same thing backwards.

Our party is passed by Butler at the left turn, his navigator Taylor deciding to help his partner out, takes a corner off so Butler can stay warm. Speaking of warm, Murray is turning blue at this point and breaks into a run. This startles all those who can see him. I'm sure that was Murray... but it was running and it wasn't talking. It WAS me. Ha haa, From there a really easy and fast downhill with a fair bit of road but I've got a new pair of trainers with maximum cushioning for those of us, less svelte than we were in our youth.

The non-turning left party has missed out on a hop, skip and jump of a finish. They love it though. They laugh at an extra few miles of hard terrain. For the left turners, joy of joy's, back before the threatened rain.

The Bull's Head's staff as friendly as ever, even the zombie in pink pyjamas. Beer excellent. Missed the food but it looked fine if you like those crusts that they pop on top of the stew, at a jaunty angle at the finish. The kitchen is huge and very clean. The landlord is currently applying for planning permission for the pumpkin in the main bar. (Not you Paul). Spiffing.

6. The Lord Raglan, Nangreaves (16/11/2013)

(John Jocys)

Twenty two members of The Cheshire Tally-Ho! Hare & Hounds Club and one invited guest runner gathered at the Lord Raglan, an establishment well-known for its excellent Leyden Brewery. It was, of course, pure coincidence the Club had chosen this fine pub as a venue to run from.

The trail-layers shall remain nameless for fear of potential litigation, but both Blackshaw and Jocys had set off from the pub at 11am, armed with bags of sawdust -just for the hell of it. The traditional trail length of 8 miles wasn't quite adhered to, although the additional 1.7 miles didn't seem to cause THAT much of a problem to those fine members of the club who take their fitness very seriously. Both of them.

And anyway, 9.7 miles is the new 8 miles.

It should be pointed out that the original route was around 11.5 miles, but fearing a lynching and possible excommunication, the nameless trail-layers (Blackshaw & Jocys) thought it prudent to shorten the route. Unfortunately this had the effect of adding around 3/4 mile of tarmac to an otherwise green(ish) trail.

Anyroadup, the sawdust trail led north from the pub, over tarmac for around half a mile but then over more traditional boggy, slippery ground that the Club is more used to. Fallen leaves concealed a treacherously slimy surface that caused many a member to curse as they descended to the bottom of the Irwell Valley. Swearing was reported to have been heard. The more alert members of the Club may have seen a steam locomotive running on the East Lancs Railway line that followed the valley bottom. Those that didn't really should pay more attention.

Once past the railway the route started to climb. The busy A676 marked the beginning of another short section of tarmac –and civilisation. The residents of Ramsbottom had been forewarned and so they weren't surprised to see groups of well-disciplined runners all adhering to the Club's pack system. Oh well, next time....maybe.

The route had so far been quiet, but crossing this busy road was more than a bit hairy. Unscathed, the runners sort of ran up a back street in Ramsbottom, religiously following the extremely well-laid trail. (Koff).

Then there were steps, loads of them. Up through a wood they went. Not as many steps as at Sheldon, but steps. And steep 'uns at that. At the top of the steps Mark Taylor was seen to slow down, he had sensed the Shoulder of Mutton. Fortunately the rest of his pack dragged him past. Either that or he'd forgotten his money and nobody would stand him a pint.

The trail now went north along Moor Lane, a pleasant track that afforded excellent views over Ramsbottom and the eastern side of the Irwell Valley. And that damned wind farm.

After 1.5 miles of gentle ascent the trail turned west for around 500 yds and suddenly the ascent wasn't gentle any more. Our heroic runners ran up onto Holcombe Moor, famous for soldiers waving red flags and shooting at each other. Fortunately this was the day that had to stay at home with their mums so it was safe. Well it was safe if you weren't John Wilson. He reckoned he'd tripped and fallen, resulting in cuts and bruises. That's what he told me, and why should I disbelieve him? He's a decent bloke after all. Isn't he?

The next couple of miles were without doubt the best of the route, the running was excellent and the views wonderful. It would have been very easy to trip up and fall flat on your face through not looking where you put your feet. If you weren't careful you could end up with a nasty cut on your face and multiple lacerations to your hands, sustained as you tried to arrest your tumble. It's just so easily done.

The trail turned south and followed good ground with not much mud or bog at all. It was in effect a ridge run, gently undulating and easy to trot along. The first point of interest was Pilgrim's Cross on White Hill, then over to Harcles Hill and eventually to Peel Tower where there were views over to Winter Hill, over Manchester –and even Shutlingsloe in the far distance.

The initial descent from Peel Tower was easy enough, good paths and pleasant fields. And then there came Redisher Woods. Reports of cursing and vulgarity were dismissed as being too far fetched, a bit of a steep descent was all in a day's running for these fine fellows. It was a mere hill after all. No members at all resorted to sliding down on their backsides, after all we're a Running club, not a Sliding Club. Those finishing the run with muddy backsides probably just hadn't managed to wash their kit through from the last run.

A bit more tarmac took us past the Hare & Hounds where a beer festival was under way. Taylor M missed this fact. And the pub. He'd not brought his money anyway.

The route now followed part of the course of the Peel Walk towards Brooksbottoms, just in time to see the East Lancs Railway vanish into a tunnel. A bridge took our gallant heroes back over the River Irwell and before long the trail was climbing once again, this time through sludgy mud, until....a bit more tarmac.

Soon after crossing the A56 / M66 the Lord Raglan came into view. The lights were on, it was a welcome sight. Before reaching the end of the run, an axe-man, a donkey and bloodthirsty barking dogs with big teeth and red eyes (They just wanted to play. Honest.) had to be encountered. After safely negotiating these final hazards there was the serious business of getting cleaned up and changed in order to not frighten the horses. Oh and to be able to enjoy a beer and dinner without smelling too much.

Vinny, Big Ian, Fast Whitworth, Even Faster Shipley, Merciless and Murray were amongst the first in. Compliments flowed: 'A good try', 'Not as bad as Tintwistle' to quote just two. Praise indeed. Other comments cannot be repeated for fear of causing offence.

Eastwood's return to running fitness meant he hadn't much to complain about, other than the tarmac of course. Jenkinson had also been under the weather, a severe bout of Man Flu had slowed him down to the velocity of a speeding bullet. It's good to see such athletes powering through adversity.

A Wells came along as an invited guest runner. I think he enjoyed it. He enjoyed having his Dad buy him beer if nothing else.

The bathing facilities at the Lord Raglan weren't too brilliant. The tin bath was in the brewery –although it might as well have been outside in the car-park, it was adjacent to a large opened door. The water wasn't too warm when the anonymous trail-layers returned from their operations –so cool in fact that they didn't even bother filling the tin bath. When the REAL runners returned the water had heated up considerably and the Hon Sec was later seen to be doing impersonations of a freshly cooked lobster. Some members just made do with a quick wipe down rather than a proper bath.

The food in the pub was tasty enough: hotpot for the meat-eaters, something without any dead animals in it but looked very nice for Des. Apple crumble & custard for afters. There just wasn't enough of it.

The meals really weren't big enough to satisfy the appetites of runners who had spent the last couple of hours charging around the Lancashire countryside. There were rumblings (stomachs) and grumblings (the runners).

There was a very good reason for this....and I hope you're listening at the back: only 13 (that's thirteen in real money) runners told the Hon Sec they'd be attending. Consequently 13 dinners had to be shared between 24. That's why there weren't seconds. Nowt to do with the pub.

The beer was good though, there was plenty of that!

7. The Crag, Wildboarclough(30/11/2013)

(By Joe Park)

'A RIDGE TOO FAR'

A cool overcast day with no wind or rain.

From the Crag we headed South West on an old Championship trail to Oaken Clough then down the muddy lane to the Hanging Gate (the new owners of the Rose and Crown).

We carried on down to Lowerhouse and soon picked up the Gritstone and the tough climb to the Mast. The trail followed the Gritstone before dropping into Greasley Hollow and up to the Wild Boar. Mark and Park took up the trail from the Hollow and led on round the shoulder of Hammerton Knowl and down the lane to finish along the road.

Ten miles was a little too much for some but the trail layers were frustrated by a footpath deviation. Cars piloted by Ade and Pete went out to pick up stragglers.

After a hot tin bath, coal fires and Wincle ale followed by a roast dinner the day was deemed a success.

Mason was congratulated on having achieved 50 years membership while Eastwood, Winterbone and Park had achieved 40 years.

25 enjoyed the facilities.

9. The Tigers Head, Norley (04/01/14)

(By Steve Murray)

"Son...do you fancy a couple of pints and a pub meal on Saturday?"

"Yeah, sure".

"That's a goer then. Oh yes. Forgot to mention; there's an 8 mile run across the wilds of Cheshire beforehand"

So Saturday the 18th January we end up at The Tiger's Head, Norley. Murray Senior, Murray Junior on his first Tally Ho outing, plus people who run properly. In deference to the young one's inexperience, the young one and the older one set off in advance of the medium party; the Markham opting to join them. We three unwise men set off into the grey. It was grey, but it was still and a not too bad 8.5OC according to the LCD display on the automobile. The pace was steady and the flat terrain suited a body that'd been Christmassing and New Yearing hard. The young'un had obviously been a trainin' in his time away and wasn't suffering the way the older one thought he might. In fact nobody was. You've seen the strange patterns in the cornfield left by aliens. A couple of miles in we met a similar thing but in sawdust.

"I believe that this is the place where the outward trail meets the returning trail and the sigils are indicating the different directions to take for the outward and return route", opined the older'n.

"Yep. That's right.... and them's not sigils, them's arrers and it's a good job we met Tim Norman on the way out of the pub so he could tell us about this bit", the Markham . (Turns out Brown did not catch on and is probably to be found still wandering the woods).

"Quite"

"And lay off on the opinin'"

"As you say"

Still a steady pace. Age and youth and multiple Martinis were not halting or even slowing the steady sound (wetter than pounding, drier than squelching) of running shoes on mud.

"You're running well Tom", the older Murray offered.

"How do you mean?" Smug, smug, smuggety smug went the little white Markham.

"Doing much at the moment Tom?"

"Building a cage for a toytoise"

"Siberian toytoise Tom?"

"No. Just an ordinary one. Nice wooden one so it can sleep in the hall"

"Not a sabre toothed toytoise then?"

"Nope"

"Just wondered"

Much rounding of meres and some more woodland and the odd bit of a climb ensued. At this point a long slow climb appeared before us. Long and slow and straight and muddy, with walkers on it, who would spot us if we stopped for a breather. The young 'un has definitely been training. The Martinis are having no effect. Age however has finished its holidays and is back at work and Tom is noticing. In the air is the whiff of evaporating smugness. Still, not bloody bad for somebody who arrived here with the Vikings.

Old Pale was crested and for a few moments we dallied and took in the vista (a swear word in computing circles). Liverpool, The Irish Sea, Angels and Frodsham. We noticed the cool and so headed down to the right of the camping and caravanning site we'd just seen from the viewpoint. Back through more deciduous, past the sigils (or arrers) and home.

Dinner was a rather magnificent meat pie and the vegetarians had a spicy bean chilli. Beer, as always at the Tiger's head, bazzing.

Tom approached, "Steve, a word. The bondage of Karma ties us down to an existence that is more often than not full of misery. Misery is one of the cardinal truths preached by Buddha. Liberation comes when realise this and bitter becomes beautiful."

"Right Tom; got the message". "Two pints of beautiful and a pint of lager please".

10. The Knott Inn, Rushton Spencer (18/01/14)

(By Steve Murray)

Rushton Spencer. Two of my favourite people and a small village in Staffordshire.

“Morning David”. (Bell’s first run out since injury in the spring of 2013.) “You’re a bit early David.”

“Good morning Adrian West-Samuel, Stephen Murray and Graham Stanton.”

“Been here long David?”

“The traffic wasn’t as bad as I thought it might be”.

“How long David?”

“Well I set off early so as not to miss anything”

“Have you let your wife know where you were last night David?”

“She knows”

“You will give us a half an hour head start won’t you?”

“Of course. See you later”.

Cool and windy at the start. Cool? Hellfire that wind is quite beastlily cool. Let’s get going before we have bits falling off. Graham supervised Adrian’s loading of the sawdust and after a short discussion, the call was clock-wise. Clock-wise. Murray’d recce’d anti. Obviously the trail layers weren’t on speaking terms during the preparations. Off we go. Mud. Gentle climb. Mud. More gentle climbing. Mud. More gentle climbing. With each climb, The Cloud’s dominance of the landscape was whittled away; after a spell, The Cloud appears really quite a lot less impressive than it does from the plain below. The wind dropped quite early on, leaving us with just the mud.

There was chat, there was sawdust and there was mud underfoot. There was the view from The Cloud; on that day, the best place in that part of town to see that part of town. The sun threw a shadow for thirty seconds during the whole run. Felt good though.

We crossed the main road by the river and then along the old canal. Rushes everywhere. All I could think of was Mauro Giuliani’s Andante in C Major (Theme tune from Tales of the Riverbank). There was a fantastically huge puddle just across the road from The Knott Inn, which allowed the runners to dance and clean their incredibly muddy trainers, puzzlingly upsetting a local, out walking his dog.

A really tight bomb pattern as far as the return of the runners is concerned. All within fifteen minutes, barring the walkers Easstwood and Burston. Wilson decided to make it clear how he felt after the run through the medium of free-form dance and lay motionless in front of the real fire. Markham wandered towards the ladies (toilets, let’s be clear here), before being put right; it had been an energy sapping 2 hours.

The Knott Inn. What a meal? If you’ve watched the television chefs you know that nothing can beat in-season, locally produced fresh ingredients. What if you live in Britain, it’s January and you don’t like swede? We’ll tell you what. Chips...that’s what. To the questions about lonely one handed trees, clapping in the forest, we don’t have a clue. Ask if we want extra chips (the lady did ask us) and we know the answer. If anybody read this rubbish we’d tell ‘em “Eat at The Knott Inn”, (I’m really not doing the menu justice by stressing the chip issue but we are simple folk). The leek and chicken pie was home-made and exquisitely chickeny and leeky and damn the spell checker. The beer selection and quality was top notch.

The ladies who were also in the pub, celebrating somebody’s fortieth (birthday we hope), were intrigued by the tales of the tin bath and it has to be said they doubted us. Murray (the fool) had conscientiously but prematurely (where has he heard that phrase before) emptied

the bath. When they ventured into the gents, Estwood and Burston ought, by rights, to have been naked in the bath (together? well one naked and one hovering and chivvying). The ladies instead were treated to the sight of the bath, empty and erect, propped up near the urinals. I like to think that their evening, or indeed their lives, would have been enhanced if only Murray had been a little less hasty.

11. The Robin Hood, Rainow (01/02/2014)

(By Steve Murray)

'White Nancy appeared again'

A cutting, bitter cold wind, blowing through the runners at the start of the Rainow run; dry but not looking to stay that way. Murray added an extra layer. In my group eight of us, headed by Taylor and Wilson set out from the pub and up the road for a quarter of a mile. Shame really because the trail crossed the road after ten yards and headed out across the fields, south towards the blazing sun. Blazing somewhere but completely obscured by cloud here. Turned east after a bit towards (as it turned out), the beautifully named Lamaload; doesn't that sound pagan?.

A bit of trouble with the trail at a particularly muddy bit that may once have been a stream of some kind and onwards. Wilson and Taylor are definitely keen today and tuck their chins in and take on the first muddy grassy uphill before realising that the chin tucking has lost them the trail. Slow boys take the shorter route involving sawdust.

A good chunk of the route today is familiar to Turkey Trotters of the past. Past Lamaload (according to Costain, the first concrete reservoir in England) and now we're heading in such a direction, that in the distance we can see White Nancy again and again. On the main road Murray, Markham and Jenkinson are trailing and it pays off. This time, Wilson has opted to head off up the main road when the trail crosses shortly after the building site of a past Tally Ho pub. The sawdust is definitely there, it's just hanging about insouciantly, keeping its head down.

The theme continued for the whole run as a form of mass hysteria grabs the group. A quick Vinnie Jones must have run at least 3 miles more than the rest of us. What faith we have in those at the front; following is so much easier than thinking? The weather kicked in and rain was added to the cold. The group stretched out only to be re-united after various trail malfunction.

Towards the end we go past the foot of White Nancy and in the cold rain rejoice that we are eschewing her delights having been teased with her for most of the run.

Back at the ranch and after changing, Murray offers to Hoover up some bits of mud, destroys the Hoover, blows all the fuses in the extension and ends up being helped out by a cowboy electrician. A fully qualified cowboy electrician that is, wearing chaps and tassely leather bits. I'm afraid I thought it too obvious to ask. The stew was all meat, a kind of "Death by Protein". How often do you hear " Why have you got potatoes in your stew and I haven't"? The service was not the fastest; I think the staff stopped to watch England-France. The dessert has probably arrived by now.

12. The Cross Keys, Uppermill (15/2/2014)

(By Joe Park)

After a morning of heavy rain and strong winds over the Cheshire Plain it was pleasant to sit in the Barn by the roaring stove and watch the weather improving.

Steve Ruddock turned up with a rare copy of Henry Oxley's Tally-Ho history covering the first 21 years to 1893. He had bought it from Derek Weaver who found it in a local flea market. From the 80 Year History....." On December 13th 1893 the club celebrated the 21st Birthday by a dinner in the Grosvenor Hotel. It was attended by 50 to 60 past and present members and each received a copy of the History of the Club, presented by John Lockwood the President, and compiled by Henry Oxley ".

Fast forward 120 years to today's run of 9.5 miles laid by Tom Markham and Mark Taylor. The trail was a tough undulating course with a surplus of mud and water.

We started off down past the church and carried on to Dobcross where we soon picked up the Tame Valley Way which we left at Summer Hill Clough.

We carried on to Spring Hill and then North East to cross the Castleshaw reservoirs to Dirty Lane, paradoxically the cleanest part of the entire trail.

At the Castleshaw Centre, an outdoor and environmental education establishment, we turned South East to Harrop Green where we picked up the Oldham Way to Shaw Lee then Fair Banks and Running Hill Head to the Cross Keys.

20 enjoyed a selection of J W Lees, cottage pie and mushy peas (not Mark) on a very small polystyrene tray followed by apple pie and custard.

13. The Bee Hive Inn, Ripponden (01/03/2014)

(By Steve Murray)

Sun. Oh sun. Yes sun. It's the Beehive Ripponden and it isn't raining. The turnout is not great, obviously people aren't as keen to go a running-o if there's no sheetin' wind or howlin' rain. The Romiley group are seen hunting around for another door, confused by the "Private Party" sign. The thoughts are obviously along the lines of "We're not a private party; we're just The Tally Ho." The fast pack, medium pack and all but The Lone Vinnie (spotted from the car) and the slow pack set off as one. Murray has done part of the route with one of the trail layers and he immediately notices two things. One, he ran it the wrong way round (again) and two, he is not wading through swamp.

We drop down the valley a bit before turning off to the left and contouring the valley for a spell before dropping down to the bottom of the valley and crossing the road. Taylor has his tracker head on this week and spares us all a couple of yards by spotting the cutback. We follow the river; we've had an easyish start to this run. There's a magnificent cast iron drain that's gushing into the river and we all stop to admire it. Well you had to be there. Now we climb but we've warmed up and it's only sharp for a short way and it's not going to kill us. As we rise we're cheered on by a rowdy bunch of pensioners. We love rowdy pensioners. Some of ours are ones, come to think of it. The route skirts a playing field and bypasses a peak that we're sure had our names on it. There's a fine view of a housing estate that catches Stanton's eye. There's some kind of poetry in that man's soul. Eventually back down to the bottom of the valley, across the road and back up its other side. A level cruise back to the pub.

The meal is really very good but quite expensive by Tally Ho standards. Well what do you expect if your pudding is garnished with strawberry and your meal is served on square plates? Riley is on some kind of wife imposed diet and has to be warned against repeatedly proposing marriage to any woman holding a plate of carbohydrate. Excellent beer (one ale was off but was exchanged without a murmur) and the Jenkinson, passed on an opportunity to practice his usual moderation and had a really good time after the trail laying. He was very grateful to Mr Butler for driving today.