

South Wales Traverse 2005

It was early in the morning, a typical South Walian day. The clag was down, temperatures were barely above freezing, visibility was 100 yards and 7 grinning idiots were looking forward to a day of pain, misery and hardship. The day was not to disappoint.

Rumour had gone around that Pete was to make his 4th attempt at the South Wales Traverse. Before his wife had a chance to yell, "Divorce" he was joined by fellow Harlequin, Ed Whiting and 5 from MDC (John, Alan, Rhys, Jules and Dan). The Traverse is one of those great ideas thought up by someone after imbibing too much fermented hops. Kent must have run dry that particular year. It involves a run over the 2000 foot peaks of South Wales. It totals 73 miles and 18500 foot of ascent. Before the early morning start, two arrived by car, three opted to spend the night under canvas and two to sit on the veranda of a motorhome sipping Gin and Tonics complaining about the view being spoiled by the tent city.

Despite the protestations that this was not a race, Dan, Rhys and Jules, kicked their heels and disappeared into the swirling mists. Older heads, being carried by even older legs bumbled along behind. But the older heads had listened to the words of the great sage, philosopher and consumer of the odd chicken curry or two – Martin Lucas. Martin had said go over Foel Fraith not around it. Those who did had the great satisfaction of seeing the young 'uns passing them again before heading up Carreg Las.

Fans appeared and passed in the blink of an eye (the eye in question having had a bad accident with superglue). Thanks to Jo and Algi who did the sterling work of handing out the food and drink and making the obligatory comments of, "you're looking good" to those who didn't. Thanks to Ruth for moving the motorhome to Storey arms to pamper the afflicted and hand out cups of tea to complete strangers. The sun was shining, all was well with the world, the runners stripped off and headed up Pen Y Fan. Mother Nature was watching and carefully chose the moment to release the thunder, lightening, hail and strong winds. As the day trippers, following the motorway to the top, piled on the thermals, fleeces and waterproofs, the runners surged past them. The problem is trying to look "real 'ard" while shivering uncontrollably. Pete and Ed wisely headed for sunnier climes to put on more layers. By Abercynafon Alan was seen to shamelessly steal the shirt off another mans back (thanks Phil). Ed decided to retire on the grounds that he had not yet passed on his Genetic material to the next

generation. Pete, after dropping down to the Neuadd reservoir to re-cloth himself, rejoined the battle with the elements. Thanks to Sam and Melissa for patching the running wounded and supplying hot drinks.

On going up to Merthyr common Alan and John were heard to sing the praises of Del Man (Del Boy lost the claim to his former title after electing to drive a Volvo). His directions proved spot on. However, the advantage was soon lost as they got hopelessly lost amongst the shake holes and quarries on the way out. Next stop was the Black Lion Inn, Llangynidr. While the support party (thanks Chris and Zsuzsa) were watching the footie and getting legless inside, the runners were last seen trying to break into their car to retrieve night lights and clothing.

After that Pen Cerrig Calch loomed. It has only one redeeming feature, that being it is the last major climb on the route. The rain and wind set in again and despite the extra layers, "suffering" took on a new meaning. We swam our way to the top. Waun Fach lived up to its reputation as the boggiest summit in Wales. The trig point at the top is desperately trying to join its cousin in Australia. As darkness fell the rain fell heavier. The descent down to the Gwynne valley through the forest kept the local wildlife amused as Alan and John were seen to trip over every bit of bramble, branch and bracken. I hope we enriched their understanding of the beautiful and descriptive power of the English language. Thanks to Sam who went beyond the call of duty to give fresh supplies and look after the seriously hypothermic Dan (I run lighter than anyone) Booth.

Nearing the top of Rhos Dirion, John and Alan thought that the cold was making them hallucinate when they saw a revolving lighthouse on the top of Lord Herefords Knob (don't snigger – this is a serious article). It was then joined by a second and we realised it was Rhys and Jules telling us to catch them if we could. We couldn't – we were too busy shivering. The ridge back to Llanthoney never seemed to end in the dark and rain. Alan and John ended up water skiing down to the priory.

Dan after sleeping for 5 hours and defrosting his giblets carried on alone to finish. Pete, after his detour down to the Neuadd reservoir re-climbed Cribyn to continue the route and with the support of Ed and Martin finished in a remarkable time (considering the extra miles and climbing he did) and was still in a fit state to run the entire length of the ridge back to Llanthoney.

Score for the day; 7 starters, 6 finishers, 4 within 24 hours.

Finishers Times;

Rhys	21hours 6mins
Jules	21hours 6mins
John	21hours 51mins
Alan	21hours 51mins
Dan	25hours 10mins
Pete	25hours 58mins

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