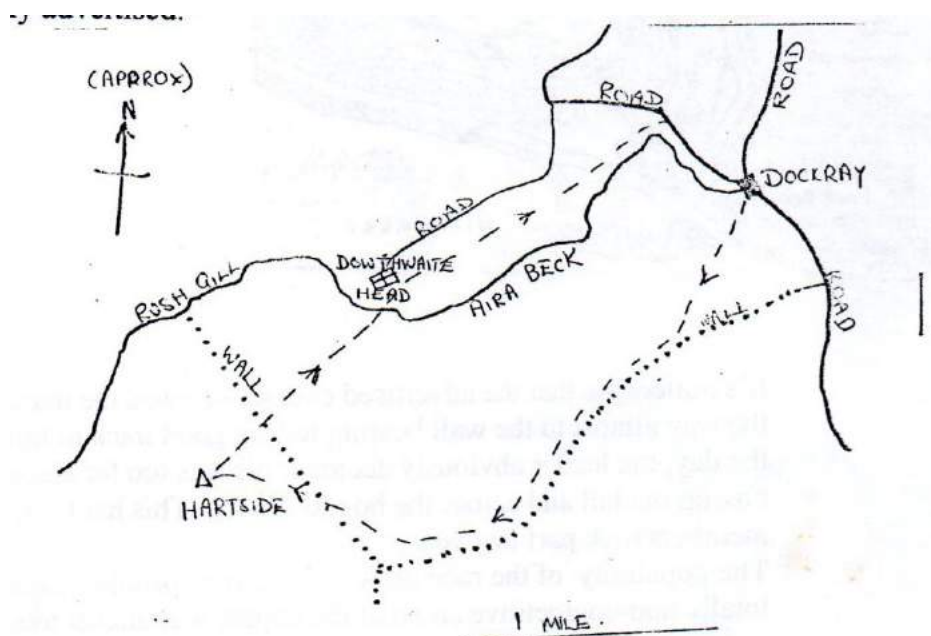


## GOWBARROW FELL RACE

### A brief history – October 2004 club newsletter

The fell race was first held in 1982. The previous year, the first ever club dinner was held at the Red Coach (now Toppers nightclub!) hardly a promising venue for a fell race. The following year the dinner moved to its spiritual home at Dockray so that a fell race become more appealing. It was initially advertised as “probably up and down Hart Crag and back to the Royal in time for a lunch time pint” — a tad optimistic perhaps. By the following newsletter, someone had obviously looked at a map and actually realised where Hart Crag was and that perhaps Hartside would be a better option. The following course was duly advertised:-

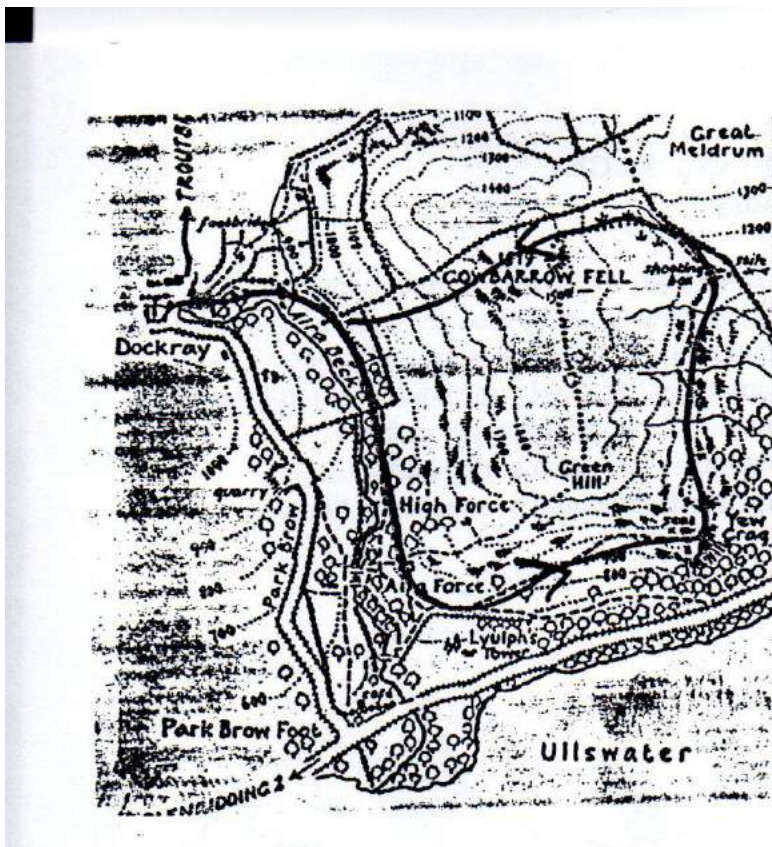


When the big day came, a grand total of nine club members turned up. In true EVMC tradition, heads were scratched and mutters were muttered along the lines of “Hartside seems a long way away — why don’t we go up Gowbarrow — at least we can see the top.” And so it came to pass that we all ran up and down Gowbarrow NB not the now traditional round the back course. Memory does not recall who won the inaugural event but it would undoubtedly be Harry who was yet to achieve oldest man in the world status and was still in his prime.

The following year the same course was used and the event was attracting some unlikely competitors. Jimmy “nae grips” Beveridge was persuaded to enter so he did some reading around the subject of long distance running. He saw the paragraph about dehydration but he gave up reading halfway through. Consequently Jimmy drank two pints of orange juice immediately before the start. All was going well on the run down the lane but as we hit the climb, he leapt over the wall to deposit the contents of his stomach in a heap. He hasn’t done the race since then.

In 1984, the dinner moved to Tirril so a change of race venue was tried in an attempt to encourage more members to take part. A quick trot up and down Hallin Fell from the church on top of Martindale Hause was chosen much to Harry’s disgust — “not worth putting your shoes on for” so he didn’t bother to turn up. This paved the way for the Lizard’s only victory mainly due to Ron’s flu symptoms which slowed him a bit and Anne Salisbury forgetting her fell shoes making the wet descent a nightmare for her.

In 1985, the race moved back to Gowbarrow and for the first time used the now traditional course shown below:-



It's noticeable that the advertised course followed the track past the shooting box and all the way almost to the wall bearing left on good track to follow the ridge up to the top. On the day, the leader obviously decided this was too far and cut directly from the shooting box up the hill and across the bog to the top. This has been the course ever since. 15 members took part that year.

The popularity of the race grew each year as people realised that the event was fun, totally non-competitive and that the course was almost totally downhill. The club was becoming more involved in running, to the horror of the climbers in the club, and in 1988 the "Streets Race" — up and down the New Streets in Penrith was held from the now lamented Beacon Inn in Fell lane. This event was popular for a number of years but then some real runners got to hear about it so with the ritual humiliation that ensued, less and less club members took part.

Back on the Gowbarrow course, in 1990 Ian Miller (68 years young) and Harry completed the course in less minutes than their age. This prompted the Lizard's now widely respected handicap system of Age Weighted Climber Units AWCU which ranks finishers time with reference to minutes over and under their age their age. Satisfyingly, it means that none of the bright young things have a cat in hell's chance.

In 1999, Brian Horne broke with tradition and initiated a multi-event extravaganza involving a climbing competition at the wall (still going strong) , a bike race for the terminally insane up and down Kirkstone and a bizarre endurance event in freezing cold water where the competitors refused to come out and were only lured from certain hypothermic death by Brian's police cunning trickery. The fell race started from Patterdale Youth Hostel, up to Angle Tam, down to Hartsop and back to the hostel.

The following year we reverted to tradition . A sign of the nature of the club was that the youngest member taking part in the race (apart from children of members) was 37.

2001 brought foot and mouth and by November, Gowbarrow was still closed. Kate devised a course on Watermillock Common not unlike the original planned course of the very first race. She added the extra spice of fancy dress, an innovation that was fortunately short lived. Gary just doesn't need yet another excuse to wrap himself in lycra.

So there you have it, the Gowbarrow fell race — 23 years old this year and there is one club member who has done every one.