

WORDS RICHARD BULMER PICTURES TOTLEY AC

TOTLEY AC'S ETHEL CHALLENGE

Totley AC made history in the blazing sunshine on Saturday, 10th June 2023 by summiting all the 95 tops (Ethels) in the Peak District.

The Ethels are hills over 400 metres or other prominent tops in the Peak District. They are named after Ethel Haythornwaite, a Sheffield woman who worked on conservation and access to the beautiful countryside that surrounds our city, Sheffield. She was a pioneer of the idea of the Peak District becoming the first National Park in 1951.

In May 2021, the Countryside Charity designated 95 hilltops in the Peak District as Ethels, to honour her memory and encourage people to explore different parts of the Peak District. They've developed a neat App called "Ethel Ready" that describes each of the hills and details their location.

Running clubs have a tradition of embarking on challenges to get more people involved in running, hiking and scrambling on the hills. Keswick Athletic Club became the first club to summit all the Wainwrights in the Lake District on the same day. Carnethy Hill



TOP: The final Ethel - Totley AC members on the summit of Higger Tor
ABOVE: Tobias conquering Stannage Pole with mum Ruth Garbutt

Running Club did a similar feat completing the Munro Round of 282 mountains in Scotland in 2021, in one day.

The idea to complete The Peak District Ethel Round in 24 hours, started as a chat at Woodbourn Road Athletics Track, Sheffield at our Wednesday night speedwork session. Could we organise the Ethels in a day as a running club? That would be fun but, organising Totley AC would be like herding cats. The idea blossomed into a clear vision, then into a plan with intricate detail. But could we do it?

What we wanted to do, was to create a day that was inclusive and challenging. It had to be possible to get our children involved and encourage all our members to be part of the day. We also wanted to offer a challenge that would make our best fell runners raise an eyebrow.

Colin Osborne and Richard Bulmer, the unofficial Ethel co-ordinating partnership, set about testing the opinions of our members – perusing maps and interrogating the best map brains in Totley to design routes for all abilities.

The date was planned for mid-June to maximise the chances of sunshine and guarantee lots of daylight. Leading up to the event, we promoted the event with club members to get over 80 volunteers to become Totley Ethellers; on the day we ended up with over 100 people taking part.

We engaged Sheffield artist and club member, Tom Beaumont, to design an exclusive commemorative cloth badge. Tom Ward, from the Sheffield-based Kitlocker, also a Totley runner, agreed to produce these badges for free. The badges were treasured by all the competitors and can now be seen on hats, rucksacks, and hoodies.

The day began at midnight when Colin and Richard, the organisers, were joined by men's captain Charlie Baker to set the Ethel ball rolling. They reached the summit of Durham Edge in the dark at 12:30am on Saturday morning. The challenge had begun. We were lit by head torchlight on a beautiful, starry night.

The tougher routes on the day involved over 20 miles of fell running and bagging up to five tops.

One of our runners needed to rely on trains, buses and sturdy fell shoes to get to and complete a 19-mile round in one of the harder-to-reach parts of the Peak District. Tom Beaumont described his adventure as a 'tapering run' for his Lavorado 50K race in the Italian Dolomites at the end of June.

At the other end of the scale, we organised for toddlers and younger children to leave their parents in their shadows, as they raced up to some of the shorter routes. The amazing Tobias and his mum adventured up the rocky path to bag Stanage Pole in his sturdy wheelchair. Mum, Ruth Garbutt said, "We had a blooming brilliant day!"

Totley AC wanted to give something back as part of the day, so we engaged with Edale Mountain Rescue to raise funds, with the aim of buying two communication radios. At a cost of £462 each, we set an aim to raise £1,000 – enough to buy two. Mountain Rescue are such a vital part of the lives of all of us who venture out into our beautiful countryside, and they are 100% reliant on donations. We have several members of the club that are also volunteers and they agreed to bag a couple of Ethels – as long as they weren't called out!



ABOVE: Ollie and Charlie on the summit of Alphin Pike

We asked everyone who was doing an Ethel to send a selfie to a WhatsApp group to prove completion. By midday, we had 54 of the 95 completed. The pictures showed a babe in arms, children with smiles of achievement, and runners completing mega-rounds. Our youngest 'Etheller' was under six months old, and our oldest was in their seventies.

By 4pm, 94 of the Ethels had been completed and there was just Higger Tor on the outskirts of Sheffield to tick off. As a large group, we headed off from the running clubhouse at the Totley Pavillion with the local cricketers, who share our clubhouse, looking on from the field with the sound of willow on leather. The run from Totley to Higger Tor is 400 metres of climbing a steady five-mile route. At just after 5pm, Totley AC had completed the Ethel Round.

All that was now left to do now was fill the Totley field with stories of the day – the smell of the obligatory BBQ and the taste of refreshing drinks.

Edale Mountain Rescue brought their Landrover to say hello and thank us for our fundraising efforts. They were flocked by our excited younger 'Ethellers' to sit in the driver's seat and imagine themselves rescuing a casualty in the Peak District.

We have so far raised just over £1,700 for Edale Mountain Rescue. I'm hoping to persuade our club committee and treasurer to make the final figure up to £1,848 – enough money to buy four communication radios that Edale Mountain Rescue require to support their essential work.

Caz Kay, club lead for participation said, "The day was a triumph and it's brought together everyone with an immense sense of achievement and fun. We're particularly delighted to have raised so much money for the amazing Edale Mountain Rescue."

Susie Wall and families on Stanage High Neb

It had been in the diary for months, and after an exciting build-up talking about how best to tackle 'our mountain', 14 brave Totley AC members, including my two boys Rory (four) and Felix (three) (and another on the way!); Robert (eight), Elsie (four), Ada (two), Robin (one) and Elodie (seven months) set off on the big day to conquer Stanage High Neb.

We met at 9:15am to make the most of the morning before the serious heat set in; the adults and children were all keen to get going. A brief stop at the first small pond ended in a newt encounter – a little green wriggler which Felix (three) proudly showed off to the group. After checking the map, we took the second stile off the main path, bearing North through the lush, green bracken and making our way up towards the steeper climb. Never missing an opportunity for some scrambling on grit, the younger members of our expedition team explored the boulder features while I, at six months pregnant, took photos from the bottom and encouraged the little ones to stay away from the edge!

Into the steepest section, and Robert (eight) led the way up a lovely slab climb, followed by Felix (three) and Daddy; emerging round the back to meet the rest of our crew who had taken the scenic trod. A welcome breeze met us on the top of the edge; a quick 50 feet northwest and we spotted the trig! The kids took turns climbing on top. We took the obligatory team shot, before descending a short way to the nearby bothy for a well-deserved snack, sheltered from the wind.

A long game of 'floor is lava' brought us back along the edge, taking an alternate path to gently sweep down and meet the track. On the return, Elsie (four) was debating which Ethel we should 'bag' next, proudly telling us she plans to do the lot. A much quicker descent, with some decent fell running technique from Rory (four) led us back to the cars and home. A wonderful morning out, and an adventure we won't forget!



Charlie Baker (Men's Captain) with Ollie Hart on the Alphin Pike Round

The Masterminds of the Totley Ethels paired me with Ollie Hart – a local GP, Twitter's Doc on a Bike, an all-round good guy. Unfortunately for Ollie, he was paired with me and club mascot, Totters. I struggle with remembering place names, and Alphin Pike, Ashway Moss and West Nab seemed as elusive to the memory as they were to Strava heatmaps. I purchased Harvey's 'Dark Peak' map – dangerous territory was being broached. We drove in Ollie's electric dream machine and parked up for a little up-and-down of West Nab. The descent was pretty rough, and we were soon galloping through the heather wishing we'd brought some coconuts to clap together as we were quoting Monty Python's 'Life of Brian' and 'Holy Grail'. Men were outdoors, Men were running, Men were bonding, we had a pink fluffy llama, and the aforementioned Totley Mascot was with us for good measure.

We drove on to Dovestone Reservoir for what turned out to be an absolute stunner of a route. Not wanting to be ruled by the Garmin, we set off with map in hand and came to a house near the reservoir. It was a glorious, sunny Saturday, and three locals were sat outside enjoying a couple of midday beers and some sunbathing. I felt we were at the turning point and asked if the style next to us would lead us to 'Alphin Pike' "Where?". I assumed they were holidaymakers and didn't know. I explained we wanted to go up to Alphin Pike and I felt it was at the top of the hill. It turned out they lived there but didn't know the hill by name and were wondering why we would want to go up. They then asked if we were fell runners. I asked him if he'd heard of the 'On the back foot' fell running podcast [Charlie hosts this fine broadcast]. Oh, you'll be fine then and pointed us straight up the hill. Sure enough, we ran until we were out of sight and, ever the professionals, walked the steep climb once out of sight. It was Alphin Pike and we could see Manchester to the south of us.

We ran the edges to Westway Moss, and had a slight panic that there was no trig point before descending to 'The Trinnacle' – a stunning rock formation with a climber sat on it, and then a rocky steep descent before cooling our legs off in the pool. It was a great day out, Ollie had made a new friend; I hadn't – he hasn't returned a call since....

Then we went for a barbecue and beers at the club – a great day to be a Totley!

LEFT: 'We are family' with Susie Wall on Stanage High Neb

Pat Goodall (current English FRA FV65 champion) with Yvonne Twelvetree on Win Hill

I have belonged to a wonderful running club for 24 years and sometimes members excel themselves; this was one of those days. Colin Osborne and Richard Bulmer organised for us to tackle the Peak District Ethels in one day.

People were encouraged to run or walk with their families or friends, so it was very inclusive. My friend Yvonne Twelvetree and I were allocated Win Hill, one of our favourite tops which we have been up many times before, often on local fell races. There are stunning views over Ladybower, which never fail to delight. Other people travelled further afield and experienced new delights.

The day culminated in a mass run from our pavilion to our local Ethel, Higger Tor. Along with people who chose to drive up to the closest point, the group photoshoot was taken as we summited the last of the 95 Ethel's tops. What a day! A BBQ followed, where families and friends enjoyed the continuing hot weather for the social occasion.

Ruth Garbutt and Tobias conquering Stanage Pole.

Tobias loves a challenge and, when the club announced the Ethel Challenge, it seemed only right to give it a bash. But how? With a combination of superb off-road wheels, grit, determination, and a little bit of crazy optimism, we embarked upon our mission to reach Stanage Pole in a wheelchair.

I had reccied the route from Redmires the evening before and it was impassable, leaving us feeling quite glum. Then we got wind of the fact that Dennis Knoll had been fairly recently refurbished and was doable... or was it? There was only one way to find out. Without the opportunity of doing a recce, we set out, not really knowing if we'd make it but determined to give it our best shot.

90 minutes of pulling, pushing, and bouncing around saw us reach the top, where Tobias was able to experience the magnificent views and revel in our victory. In the words of Tobias, "Whatever you do, try your best, push yourself as hard as you can but above all, enjoy yourself!" I think we did just that.

Mark Buskwood with Ros Massey running the Brown Knoll Round

It's 8am on Saturday morning and we're lucky to find a parking space outside the Nag's Head in Edale. The sun is already blazing down, and the day promises to be punishingly warm, prompting us both to wear race vests with full water bottles.

We're aiming to tick off Brown Knoll, Kinder Scout, and Grindslow Knoll - the three Ethels which look down on Edale from the southern rim of the Kinder plateau. Our circular route features a single climb, Jacob's Ladder, followed by open moorland running and a fast (for one member of the team) descent back down to Edale.

Roz set off while I was still 'chuffing' with trail shoes and gels, and I had to push hard to catch her. Initially, we followed the lovely field path that skirts Broadlee Bank and drops into Upper Booth. From here, a broader stony track took us through more fields to the packhorse bridge at the foot of Jacob's Ladder. Although this was the 'big climb', it's actually a steady pull and we both managed to (almost) run up despite the increasing heat.

Brown Knoll, a quick out-and-back, was the first Ethel of the day and we were fortunate to bump into Greg Rimmer from Dark Peak Running Club, who offered to take a 'summit photo'.

We were on more runnable terrain now and, after another short climb past Kinder Low trig, we picked up a sinuous trod that led to the pile of stones that marks Kinder's 636m high point. Another quick photo and then eastwards across the bone-dry peat, with a sea of cotton grass, providing an amazing contrast to the dark soil.

Our trod disappeared, as they often do, so Roz and I dropped onto the edge path for the final section to Grindslow Knoll. By now, there were plenty of walkers about, and we got our third summit photo before the fast, dusty descent back down into Edale, with coffee and cakes at the excellent New Fold café.

RIGHT: A selection of photos from Totley AC members taking part on the day.

