

Derwent Valley Heritage Way - 52 miles - 4/5 November 2011

The Derwent Valley Heritage Way is a superb 52 mile route running from Ladybower Reservoir in the north of the Peak District down the Derwent valley to the confluence of the rivers Derwent and Trent near Shardlow south of Derby. As we had a number of people keen to take this challenge on but at very different paces, we decided to have two separate teams – one running, one walking – to simplify the logistics.

Runners story – Start time 8.10pm from Ladybower and completed in 10.5 hours



Robin Carter (left) and Jon Kinder (right) sporting an impressive pair of head torches!

The running team of Robin Carter, Mark Fowell and Jon Kinder were dumped out of the car on the shores of Ladybower with tremendous timing just as the torrential rain stopped. They were joined by a special guest cyclist Andy Dodsley who was there out of curiosity, to see for himself what all of this ultra-running is about. Within 50 yards of going off road on the route, we turned up towards Win Hill and had to descend the lower part of the HPM route off Win Hill, which must have been a nightmare for Andy but he didn't complain. Then Andy went over his bars in a pothole between Shatton and Hathersage plus he had a few more minor spills. Mark rolled his ankle badly twice and Robin was very ill from the outset so it was surprising that it went so well in the end! On a brighter note we stayed dry the whole time, enjoyed having the Derwent Valley to ourselves on a really mild night, we got up close to the deer in Chatsworth Park. Speaking of wild life I'm sure owls are on the increase and the views from High Tor were great (Andy wisely skipped that section). Also my sister served tea, salad potatoes & mars bars at Belper at 2:45am so hats off to her.

We somehow missed the walking team; I think we passed them near Whatstandwell, so they probably think that we stayed at home and made all of this up! Robin peeled off at the A38 island (which is an amazing achievement under the circumstances) and Andy at Derby Railway station, in the end we clocked 52.5 miles so we didn't have to run the towpath back to Shardlow to make the marathon x 2 distance. Robin very kindly picked us up so we were home and dry for just after 7am.

Jon Kinder

Walkers story – Start time from Ladybower at 4.10pm and completed in 18.5 hours

The walking team of Alan Pollock, Julie Smith, Malcom Marchant and Steve Leach were given a lift to Ladybower by Malcolm's wife Bev where we started our walk at 4:10pm. We stuck pretty much to our 3 m.p.h schedule with a few breaks for food. We stopped at Malcolm's in Matlock for a cup of tea and picked up some more food which certainly helped. My GPS clocked the distance to Derwent Mouth at 51.5 miles so with the walk back to Shardlow we covered just over 52 miles. We managed to get off route a couple of times (my fault – I thought I knew the route but things look different in the dark). The first was near Thornhill where we missed a fork in the path and ended up wandering around a woodland Quaker settlement trying to find a tunnel under the nearby railway line. After backtracking we got back on route. The other was trying to find the route back onto the canal from the A6 after High Peak Junction as the main canal path was closed for bridge works (it was around this point the runners must have overtaken us in the dark). Aside from a heavy shower early on, the evening was good and surprisingly mild. And like Jon and his team we did see and hear numerous wildlife including owls hooting. We also discovered (and used) every open toilet on this route, always a bonus. Alan Newby turned up between Ambaston and Shardlow to cheer us on. We finally finished at 10:25am so our total elapsed time, including stops, was 18:15 hours. The finale was being met by Julie's partner at Shardlow in his gleaming Audi limo and we were chauffeur driven home, a great way to finish an epic.

Steve Leach

Worst and best moments for me. My little toe having what is now commonly called 'a Swifty moment'. Best moment literally within one mile of that, seeing a silver Audi pull up and Alan Newby get out. He had tracked back from the finish to see where we were and if we needed anything. Somebody cared!

Julie Smith