

Leeds Country Way (64 miles) in a Day, Saturday, 9 September, Glen Johnson

Garforth, Woodlesford, Rothwell, Stanley, Alverthorpe, Ardsley, Gildersome, Tong, Thornbury, Lower Fagley, Apperley Bridge, Rawdon, Horsforth, Cookridge, Golden Acre park, Eccup, Harewood, Wike, East Keswick, Bardsey, Thorer, Barwick, Scholes, The Podger.

Seizing the opportunity: Since 2015, (the first time I dipped my toes into ultra-territory) I have been a little obsessed with the Leeds Country Way and trying to run it in one go. This year in a twist of fate the opportunity arose and it happened. Not only is the LCW almost perfectly 100k but it is right on my doorstep as well! What a brilliant way to gain a completely different view of this very busy and hectic City, get away from the bustle and enjoy an entirely different view point of Leeds. Seeing as there were no medals or T-shirts on offer (and I wasn't prepared to do it for nothing), inspired by Nathan and his beautiful wife Karen, I did the charity thing. With a whole lot of barraging I raised £901.70 for St Gemma's. I'm chuffed about that, thank you to all that donated.



On the day: 9 of us set off from Garforth Leisure Centre at 6:10 (was supposed to be 6:00 but unusually I was late) with 2 of us focused on running the lot. "The lone wolf" (aka Stuart) had already set off at 5:00 because 6:00 wasn't early enough and he was inevitably going to get lost on Leg 2!!

Leg 1: The nine of us ran together on Leg 1 until the girls constant watering of the LCW split us up. As we cantered on we bumped into Richard Howarth along the way and again at the end of Leg 1. Great support my friend, thank you. Thanks also to George Schofield and Andy Longfellow. You helped to make the most mundane Leg a whole lot happier. At this point I kind of figured that the wet outlook that had been forecast for this day was going to be accurate and it was going to be rainy but you can only get wet once ...right?

Leg 2 Nathan Vaughan was intending to run the first 3 legs with me so we plodded on into Leg 2 leaving Daniel Gaunt behind. He then ran his longest distance ever, 26.2 quality miles. This was not a race for me but I did of course have a target, Emma Longfellow subtly mentioned we had been ages!! So we picked up the pace.

All was well until mile 5/6 (East Ardsley) where Nathan gained an issue with his knee, unfortunately he had to leave me there. 17 great miles mate!! Leg 2 was a doddle, I know it well, feels like a friend of mine.

Leg 3 was comfortable. Nice and easy. I reflected upon my 40 miler whereby leg 3 had been the final 12 in that run. Fond memories. I made a couple of phone calls (being mindful of the battery life, wasn't going to lose that precious Strava map) and looked very, very forward to seeing the TP's and my food at the end.

An added bonus, as I came down towards the railway crossing, the end of a rainbow was in the field next to me!! There was no Leprechaun and I'm not wealthy (no gold) now but it was quite gorgeous!! On the hill, lovely Julie took me to lovely Tracey and lovely Tracey were I indulged in a marvelous array of fodder. This was truly a treat. Prior to the run, I had envisaged a sarnie from McColl's, honestly, thank you. Xx.

Apparently Stuart was still somewhere in leg 2. I was disappointed not to see him but good to know he was well.

Leg 4 I got changed into dry kit and off!! As I got to the end of the field about 100 meters, it rained again! Not a great way to start what is probably the toughest leg on the course. All was well, I was running steady. 10 minute miles & less. I knew the course time to be 12 hours 15 minutes and felt confident of sub 12, however, as I ran out of Apperley Bridge I started to feel an ache in my achilles. There is a pretty infamous spot by a wall where it is horrible under foot. It's a narrow ascent, tough on the ankles. Well, it had been raining again and this was basically a stream! Hard work! The climb up through Rawdon, Cookridge and Horseforth was okay as I had peeps to look forward to seeing.

Into Golden Acre Park then were first of all I met the very lovely Sophie Cullen who had Coca Cola, crisps, other goodies and a welcoming smile. This was also where I met 2 good friends from Sheffield, Robert Greensmith and Simon Rodgers. Assured hill runners but they had never ran over 15!

Leg 5 Re-fuelled, a very rare ibuprofen and off we went. Nice and steadily away. The guys took some photos in Emmerdale and loved Harewood. On our way back up through Harewood it completely deluged. Soaked again, FULLY. The cows were out in Wyke. Cows are stupid animals and I always wonder what they are thinking and what they will do next. I have been charged upon by cows before. All you can do in that situation is wave like a maniac, clap loudly and act a bit like Bez out of the Happy Mondays!! Anyway, they were well behaved as we soaked up the views on that hill. Through to Bardsey. I introduced the lads to Englands' oldest pub and we felt a tad "hard done by" as we ran passed it. The achy foot was apparent but I was feeling strong as we replenished in the church yard. Big hill, drop to Thorner and then who was there? The TP's; Tracey Piper and Tracey Parsons again. Like bloody angels but with coconut water! Thanks again.

Leg 6 the glory run. Have to say, it's the easiest leg of all and a blessing. As we trundled up to the track to the woods, it was clear that it was taking its toll on Rob but we walked/jogged through to the Boyle. My legs know this hill better than any other and this day, I loved it because I knew what was at the top. The wonderful and ever supportive Katie doll, my Sister Emmie, her partner Damien, my niece Freya and my Uncle Alan were all there to greet me. Hugs, smiles, pride, gasps and a comedic chase around the Maypole ensued.

Off again, through Barwick and onto the back fields to Scholes when Nathan turned up!! He'd caught a bus from Wakefield, got home, had a bath, watched the footy and run back out to bloody Scholes to support and run the last 6 or so. I was truly in awe, what a top man!

Tickety boo until the M1 crossing where 3 miles out we were walking. The sub 12 was dwindling away but I was determined to stick with the boys and reach the end together. We did. Katie, my Sis and co were there along with Daniel and Freya ran the last 100 meters with me. The Sheffield lads had to go and do another couple of miles to notch 20 but they did!! Very proud of them and extremely pleased for their support.

Mission complete: My time was 12:03, my mood was absolutely elated and I'll be completely honest, at that moment, I could have ran another 36 miles to do a 100. This is good to know as that will be a target to be notched off at some point soon. Of course the obligatory pint in the Podger followed (I'd pictured that moment many times through the journey). Once that was downed, I got myself cleaned up and changed to wait for the other 2. My day was finished off with more beer and an Aagrah!! Thinking back now, I made the whole thing easier for myself due to my preparation and practice but it was far, far easier due to the camaraderie, generosity and sheer kindness devoted to our cause from the Club. I'm pretty certain there is interest in the event next year and I look forward to returning the favour. Thank you all. Xx

P.s. I always thought that once you're wet you're wet and you can only get wet once, both are lies!!!