

These are a few of my favourite things by Simon Bennett

This is down to you Craig Thorpe. About three years ago you asked me what my favourite race was.

Trail, road, fell, parkrun or cross-country? 5k up to 100 miles (and beyond)?

parkrun. Bella's favourite. Nostell, Pontefract, Frickley or Tourism? Trail running at Sierre-Zinal or Lakeland Trails? Yorkshire Coast 10k for the post-race Fish'n'chips. Malta, Tissington or Carsington half (you're having a laugh!)?

Marathons in Manchester or Hull. Or Paris or Athens. So that's an easy choice then!

50 miles Round Rotherham or from Milngavie (pronounced 'Mul-gay') to Tyndrum on the West Highland Way. 100 miles along the North Downs, the South Downs, the Thames Path, the Cleveland Way or the UTMB (Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc)? Or the Grand Union Canal Race (GUCR) from Birmingham to London?

Bleasdale Circle, Buttermere Horseshoe, Haworth Hobble, Mearley Clough, Midgley Moor, Stirton, Steel Fell, Tigger Tor, Trigger, Trunce or Isle of Jura Fell Race. Almost all are universally appealing. And you get your feet wet.

None compare to the camaraderie and friendship on the Bob Graham Round where it was so good to have so many ARR's helping on the fells and at the checkpoints. You know who you are. Not enough space here for the full story so if you want it go to:

[<https://bowlandfellrunners.wordpress.com/2019/07/30/running-the-world-simon-bennett>]

And who would have thought that any of this would have happened when I ran competitively ('ha!') at the Clitheroe Triathlon in 2009? A 400m swim (breaststroke), 30k bike ride (on a 'sit up and beg' bike) and a 10k run. Obviously, none of us runners ever remember our times. Ever. Mine was 1:02:44. And 12:11 for the swim 1:30:16 on the bike, since you ask.

Times are not important to me!! At my age it's all about 'age graded performance'. Unless I get close to a PB at parkrun, 10k, 10 miles or the half marathon. Obviously a PB at marathon is meaningless. The only thing that matters there is a good-for-age qualifying time.

Apart from PB's at any distance on the road, it's fell, trail and ultras for me. The great beauty of these events is that time and pace become irrelevant. Except at the 100 mile distance if you're chasing:

- A PB over the distance
- A sub-24 hour time
- To beat the time you set last time you did the same event; or
- To beat the dreaded cut-off times.

Averaging 4 kilometres per hour (kph) is good enough at UTMB. No need to be fast, just persistent. 6kph downhill and 2kph uphill. Around 40 hours into the race, still more than 4 hours from the end, I was moving uphill at about 1kph. Families out for a walk with young children and dogs overtook me.

At Cumbrian fell races it's nice if you can avoid coming last. They seem to breed them tough up there. My mind is still scarred by coming second last at the short, sharp Steel Fell Race in 2013, overtaken again by children, women, the elderly and infirm.

Simon Bennett, May 2020