1,000 MILES: A RUNNING YEAR

Posted on December 20, 2017 by Eddie

So here's to another year of sore calves, the wind in my face and the fells under my feet.
Category: Observations

This weekend, on top of a moor, in glorious sunshine but with ice underfoot, Â I hit my target of running a thousand miles in 2017. It was a nice way to finish things off.

Almost all of those miles have been run off road, some on very rough ground in Yorkshire or the Lake District and some on the gentle tow-path of the Leeds to Liverpool canal. Running on roads is faster and easier, but it is much less fun.

Probably the best run of the year was in the spring when Sue and I were camping in Langdale. I ran down the valley, then made my way up towards Blea Tarn, over Side Pike and then along Lingmoor Fell, dropping back down into the valley just beyond the campsite. It was a glorious morning with amazing views and there is nothing quite like running along a Lakeland ridge. I would run on some of the same paths, but in the opposite direction in my first ultra-marathon of the year a few weeks later.

I took part in four races; two ultras (UT55 and St Begas Trail), the Wharfedale Half-Marathon and the Four-Passes (where I had my first DNF). I much prefer the longer distances; there is much less pressure on your to go quickly and what could be better than spending a long day in the Lake District? I'm not sure what races I'll be able to enter next year; I'm doing a local trail 10K in February and I have unfinished business with the Four Passes, but I've got other running plans for the year which might make it difficult to fit in organised races - more of this nearer the time.

Over the last year or so, I've struggled to find the right running shoes. I happy enough with the pair of Hoka Ones, which I wear for my rare forays into road running, but trail shoes have been a different story altogether. I had a couple of pairs of Brookes Cascadias, which really suited me, but they didn't cope with slippy ground or mud very well. I replaced them with a pair of Innov8 something or others, which were super-light and super-grippy. However, they had a very low drop from heel-to-toe and I found that they gave me really tight calves. Hoka Speedgoat, are great for long distances, but I don't feel very secure on rough ground. Towards the end of the year, after my Innov8s gave up, I replaced then with a pair of LaSportiva Mutants. So far, so good. They are much better on my calves and apart from a couple of slides on sheet ice, they've been nice and grippy on every surface I've tried. The other bit of gear that I'd highlight is my new Raidlite running backpack; it was fairly cheap and is very comfortable.

Moving from the Chilterns to Yorkshire has been interesting in all sorts of ways; not least in terms of running. Yorkshire is definitely hillier and prettier. However, it isn't quite so accessible; I'm reluctant to run on the high hills alone at this time of year, whereas I could jog up and down the Chilterns in any weather without much fear for my safety. As a result, I've spent a fair bit of time running along the canal, which is fine, but not good for strength.

Talking of strength, I've started CrossFit classes to try and build up my general fitness and to improve my running. So far, I am clearly a lot stronger than I was, however, I'm also a lot more tired. My legs have felt very heavy since I started lifting weights and doing cardio-intervals. I need to find a way to balance my various forms of exercise so that I get stronger, but can still run.

This year I've been part of a 1,000 Mile Facebook group sponsored by Trail Running Magazine. The group has been extremely supportive and I'd encourage any runner who is looking to cover 20 or so miles a week off-road to consider joining it.

One last thought; in June I went to see a physiotherapist because my calves were tight and it was affecting my running. The physio told me that if I ran silly distances at my age, then I could expect to hurt. However, if I just sat on the couch, I would far more aches and pains, but I would just accept them as normal. So here's to another year of sore calves, the wind in my face and the fells under my feet.



Langdale in the spring



Bald man in the sun on Lingmoor Fell



On the UT55



In the hills near home





My first run with Zaro, on the summit of Ingleborough. Hopefully, he's going to join me much more often in the year to come.



A soggy selfie on top of Castle Crag - better than being indoors!



Our Dave showing me how it's done on the Four Passes.



Why wouldn't you run? God showing his handiwork along the Leeds-Liverpool canal.