

MAP MOUNTAIN

WORDS STEVE CHILTON

Close observers of recent copies of *The Fellrunner* will have noticed a series of maps accompanying articles on races or endurance events. These are welcome additions, and they showcase the cartographic skills of long-time fell runner Andy Ford. Recently I had a conversation with Andy, where we reflected on our respective careers, our fell and mountain running efforts, and also our shared love of maps, and of making them.

STEVE: Andy, I'd be interested to hear how you got into running. For me it came after thinking I was going to be a footballer. Failing eyesight, and an abundant lack of ability, stalled that dream. Post-education I made some poor lifestyle choices and became very fat. Inspired by the Sunday Times National Fun Run (remember that?) I started running, and eventually did the first London Marathon, in 1981, in a relaxed 3 hrs 5 mins.

ANDY: In many ways my path to running, or back to running, hasn't been dissimilar. I ran at school, but drumming was my main focus. After school, some questionable lifestyle choices left me in a similar position. You can't outrun or outdrum a bad diet and despite playing lots of gigs I piled the weight on. With a background of a bad house buy with an ex and wanting to escape the four walls, I started going walking with my brother and we'd do pretty simple

routes like Mam Tor to Lose Hill and back. It was on those walks that I spotted some wiry guys running around and smiling. I'd been thinking about starting running again and that pushed me over to actually doing something about it. Then it was 2013 and a 3-31 at the Paris marathon for me.

STEVE: Despite getting down to 2-34 for the marathon, I soon got bored with the road running scene. Being a keen hill walker, I made a natural move – to running the fells. My first race was Butter Crag, in 1981, and for some reason I loved that aching, washed-out feeling after each race, and I set about travelling up from London to run the fells as often as I could.

ANDY: I've got the marathon down to 2-47 at present, though I'm hoping to lower that at Manchester this year. It's always one for the day though if that sort of things happens or not. Winter Hill was actually a lot nearer to where I lived than Mam Tor and I started heading up there to run and was eventually recruited to Horwich RMI Harriers by the seeming one-man recruitment machine that is Ed Swift. I told him I wanted to do the BGR and he took me under his wing, before passing me over to Albert Sunter and Ian Charters for further running development. My first race had to be the classic Rivington Pike, in I think 2012, though I actually went back to running in the winter of 2007/8.

STEVE: My favourite fell race was probably the Fairfield Horseshoe. For someone who rarely got a chance to train on the hills this suited me, with its medium length, uphill start and mostly runnable middle section, I could really enjoy it. Having said that, the run along the finishing track after the steep descent always found me out. How about you, Andy?

ANDY: There are so many to choose from, it's difficult. I like some of the short blasts of midweek races in summer, but I think Old County Tops gave me the biggest sense of pride in a finish. The OCT shirt is not an easy one to get. That said I love Wadsworth Trog, Turner Landscape and the Short Duddon too, because they're runnable and you can spin your feet on the climbs, which suits me more than the hands on knees stuff. If pushed though I'll say OCT.

STEVE: Toughest fell race? I'll give you a short and a long. That Butter Crag race at Grasmere just shot my legs to smithereens. So steep. I also remember only just getting over the wall on the way up and seeing runners clamber ruthlessly over those that faltered. That wall got knocked about and I recall someone who had run the race going to reinstate the damage afterwards. As it was the Billy Bland years, and he had run that day (but not won), I like to think it was him that mended the wall. The long toughie was the Mountain Trial. It was the 1985 event, in Eskdale. It was wetter than wet, and I was coming to the last field only to find a river crossing to negotiate. I was half-way across and stumbled, going right under, unfortunately right in front of my wife and best mate, who both still talk about that dive at every opportunity. Billy won that event too.

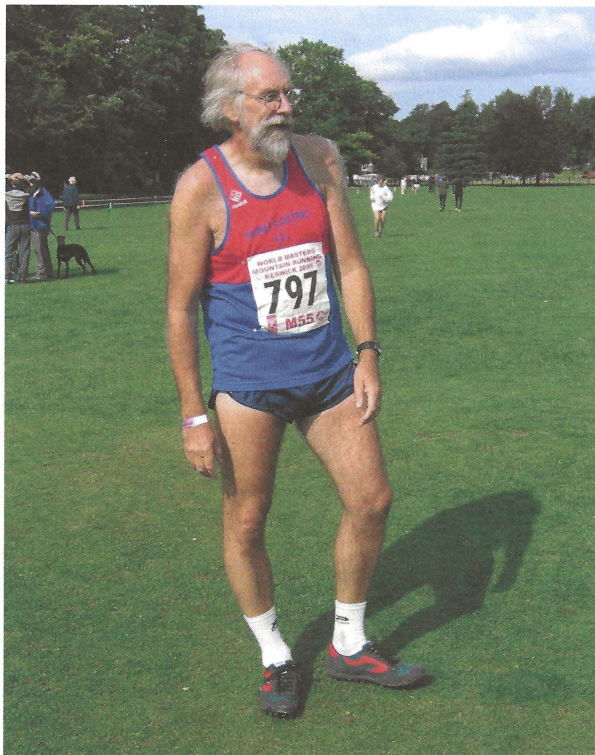
ANDY: I've never run well at Borrowdale and have usually been praying for it to be over by the time I'm halfway up Gable. It is always brutal going up there after coming off down to Styhead. For a short it's got to be the Screes race, going up Whin Rigg after that fast and pretty much flat start is heart coming out your mouth stuff. I was once fading toward the end of it and thinking there's no way I could catch the guy ahead of me. However, at the gate going back on to the road a figure held it open as I got there and said, "Go on lad, get him!". I glanced up to see it was Joss and then it became like a commandment from God to keep racing, so I wrecked myself from there to the finish and caught the guy. Tough race, great support from Joss Naylor himself!

STEVE: Not content with 20 milers like the Mountain Trial, I also did a few two-day Mountain Marathons. Particularly memorable, for me, was the Karrimor from Troutbeck, also in 1985. Once again, a problem is the reason it stands out. On the first day I managed to break my glasses, which didn't help my map-reading. Fortunately, my partner Mike Cambray took the burden. One thing about MM partners is that, for me, it was all about compatibility of temperament, rather than of running ability. Getting on together

when things go wrong was vital if you were going to still be friends after the event. Mike and I are.

ANDY: Well, as a pair I've only done the Saunders MM with Soph and while at times she wasn't too happy with me, I stayed out of striking distance on the first day after we missed the very first control! That was the Loweswater event in 2017 and I ran it with my broken wrist in a cast, not ideal as the rain came in at the end of the first day. I think we started the Mountain Trial that year too, but it was called off while we were out. We came back down from somewhere near Robinson before getting stuck behind gates that had been locked after everyone had started so had to go the long way round back to the start. She's put up with me since and we have a three-year-old now so it can't have been too bad having to run with me!

STEVE: Two days on the Cuillin Ridge stand out for me as another example of mountain companionship. We were walking the ridge with an overnight bivvy, getting up the second day to scramble up the Inn Pinn and abseil down the other side. It was hotter than hot, so water became an issue, as I had not carried enough. Two very differing incidents in our training for this crossing proved me once again to be capable of getting things completely wrong. On an earlier (failed) Cuillin attempt we had bivvied on the ridge in the summer, only to get a heavy snowfall in the night and having to



Steve Chilton before the 2005 World Masters in Keswick © Mike Cambray

skedaddle down rapidly. A couple of the team were the worse for wear because of the cold. In prepping for that event we had bivvied on the top of Tryfan. We used sleeping bags inside bivvy bags and were roasted that night. So, we decided to drop the sleeping bags for the Cuillin ridge and just use bivvy bags, which is where the cold night almost caught us out. Andy: I believe you have some 'fell issues' you could share with us?

ANDY: Cuillin sounds a little hairy! I think some of mine have already come up, but I've got history: a partially dislocated knee at Langdale and a helicopter ride to Whitehaven; and broke my wrist at Fairfield trying to stay with a group who had a much better line that I was too busy looking at. Didn't realise until I got home and couldn't put the car in reverse to park. Several others over the years too. I think it can be said that I need a Goldilocks Zone of conditions to run well and not injure myself in the process.

STEVE: Forward planning? Nah. We did the International Three Peaks at a fair old lick in 1995. Sleeping in the car at the bottom of the Ben seemed a good idea, as we wanted an early start and beds seemed superfluous. All went well and we came off Snowdon in great shape and headed for the Pen-Y-Gwyrdd Hotel for a slap-up meal in celebration. Unfortunately, we hadn't checked in advance and the kitchen was closed by the time we got there. A great day on the hills though.



Andy Ford touching Crummock Water with Joss Dog on his 26 Lake, Meres and Waters run in 2021 © Paul Swindles

ANDY: I've been so forward planned that I once got to Dunmail 24 hours early for a BG Leg 3 support! I think I'm fairly well planned, though I'm sure everyone forgets bits of kit now and again or locks their car key in another car at Pooley Bridge, Keswick, Dunmail etc, right?

STEVE: Going back, my career has revolved around maps, having studied a cartography course while I was up at Oxford. When I started cartography was very different to the way it is now. We used Rotring pens, scribing tools, and stick-down Letraset lettering. Fine skills to have, but useless now with digital cartography having taken over. My whole career was in academia (at Middlesex University), which I always say was better than working for a living. It was way more relaxed than the other top carto-career path at the time, which was working in the burgeoning oil industry. Your path into map making was a little different though, Andy?

ANDY: My route to it has been very different. I studied Philosophy at Uni, which was great for growing a beard and pondering, not so much for making maps. However even as a child I'd dig out maps, road atlases and the like and pore over them, wondering what these other places were and how to get there. It wasn't until later in a bit of a stopgap job that I was given some GIS work to do with underground pipelines and I wondered who made this stuff and how because it interested me too, much like the road atlases years before. After that I went and dug around online, finding QGIS and started playing with that, learning python and then playing with making my own visualisations and so on. Eventually I found myself at an interview with Harvey Maps. While I didn't get the job, it spurred me on to do more and learn more and that's where the Otter Maps stuff came from. It's been very much a make it up as I go along way of getting in to it all! The Otter name by the way is down to a select number of runners from Pennine FR who've long called me The Otter and can be heard at races shouting "he's just a wet cat" on the start line.

STEVE: The activities outlined above have allowed me to indulge my two great loves, maps and mountains. Preferably maps of mountains. Working in academia gave me plenty of chances to write about maps. I recall having great fun doing a comparative review of Ordnance Survey and Harvey maps. Using their maps of the Corridor Route in the Lakes I concluded that actually Wainwright's map of the area was the clearest, and most aesthetically pleasing, one of the area.

ANDY: I do like both OS and Harvey stylings but the latter always makes me think of racing on the fells and for that do prefer them. That said a lot of what I do is based on OS data and in the day job I also spend a lot of time wrangling OS data too. Things are certainly better now than my pre-fell running days when I'd drive over Woodhead pass and wonder what was around me, the only map

being more of a google or sat nav map with no real detail of the hills either side.

STEVE: I loved my time in the formal world of cartography, giving back as best I could by accepting the post of Chair of the Society of Cartographers, after being editor of their journal for 25 years. Now my involvement in the cartoworld is more informal, being mainly through the OpenStreetMap project (OSM). This awesome open-source crowd-sourced map of the world, and importantly massive geo-database, has been getting better and better for several years now. I have contributed loads of map data to the project, and was also (jointly) the designer of the main global map that is the front-facing aspect of OSM. I expect you have used a good deal of the data from OSM, Andy?

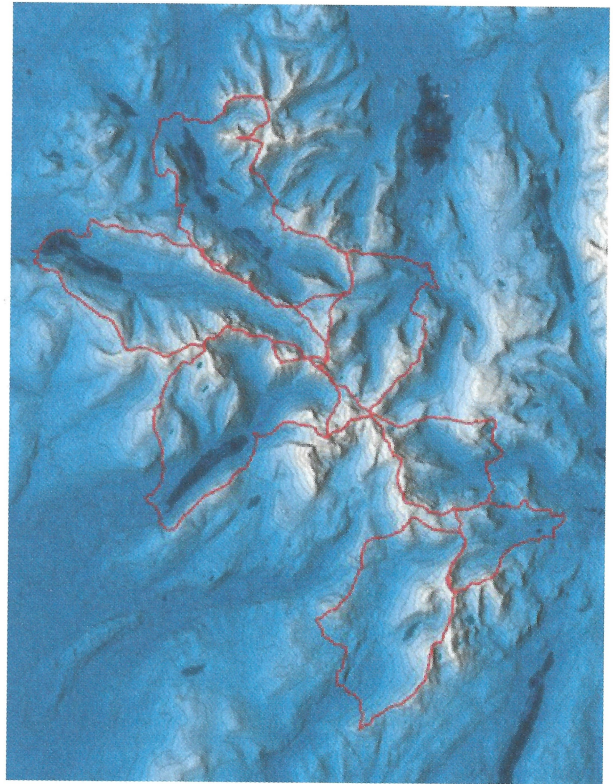
ANDY: A great deal of extras in my maps are derived from OSM. Either the OS doesn't really have it or over APIs I can go to a level where the OS will display so I start pulling bits of OSM into the map. I think I did work on a couple for The Fellrunner which were basically OSM maps that I'd added hillshading to. It's a great resource to be able to go to though. I think it did first come to my attention years back when I'd been reading about some acts of vandalism in the data! I recall one of your talks about being a benign dictator over the appearance and aesthetics of it too. I'd guess at those vandals had not been people you're keen on! On the Society of Cartographers, I think I only attended the one AGM where a vote was taken to dissolve it, that's a niche stat I reckon.

STEVE: I have used the OSM data to recently produce two map resources. Firstly, a black and white map of the Bob Graham Round route which is usable by anyone, as long as they comply with the ODBL licence and give credit where it is due. Secondly, I worked with Splashmaps to create their BGR map, which is part of their fabric outdoor map series.

ANDY: I have used OSM but not to that degree maybe. I'm not sure one of my abstract maps would serve a purpose on a Splashmap and I have a few disclaimers on my website asking people to not try and use my stuff to navigate anywhere. I haven't heard of it happening, but thought it better to head it off before anyone might try!

STEVE: Finally, having edited a book on the 50 Years of the Society of Cartographers, and written 4 books on fell running, my typing fingers are still active. I have just finished the manuscript of a book on female fell running pioneers, and am ploughing on with a huge tome on the history of the OS 6" map series, with a colleague from my working days. But sadly, no running now. What do you have in the pipeline, Andy?

ANDY: Well, I've been playing with some scans of the 6" maps and some others, adding hillshading and some routes (a great



The final version of the Spring 2021 Fellrunner cover - Tim Ripper's Lakeland Classics Run. © Andy Ford, www.ottermaps.co.uk

way to mix that kind of map with some GPS data) but nothing as grand as your plans. Other than that, I'm working on a set of minimalist Wainwright maps on a book-by-book basis, and there are possibilities of a book or two but for my part it's more illustrative maps and maybe a cover for another, but I'll have to see how those end up working out. For now, I'm just trying to carry on some form and fitness with my running. After my 26 Lake, Meres and Waters run - which at the time was second only to Joss overall and broke Alan Heaton's record for the original route (the way Leo Pollard first completed it) by 34 mins - I want to see what I can achieve. So really this year it's lower than marathon PB at Manchester and then focus on the Lakeland 50. I've also been convinced by a few CVFR guys to give the English Champs races a go this year, having avoided them since about 2014 and a dire run at Hodder Valley Show.

Details of his CV and both of the maps mentioned are available on the map resources page of Steve's blog, at: <https://itsahill.wordpress.com/>

Andy's map work can be viewed, and commissions requested, at: <https://www.ottermaps.co.uk/>