

Calebreck - 28th Feb 2010

Hares- Santiago and Brother Henry

February Hash News - I wish I'd brought my toboggan!

It's both a leap of faith and an insight into what goes on in somebody else's head when someone sets a hash for the first time. This time it was David and Santiago that bravely ventured forth into the Caldbeck Fells armed with little more than a bag of flour and a sense of adventure.

David was clearly straining at the leash to set off on time - as it turned out, this wasn't so much driven by a mania for punctuality, but rather the fact that he knew fine well that if we didn't get a shuffle-on we'd need the OS Map for Caldbeck in Braille to find our way home, such was the adventure that he had in store.

Usually when a hare tells you, 'bye-eck, I was up at 3 O'Clock in't mornin' setting this trail' you instantly know that (a) it's a wind up, and (b) they have a fascination with Hovis adverts of the 1980's.

However, when it's a new hare you never quite know whether to believe them or not, and so it was when David started telling us that he set out at 8am, at which point the runners nervously looked at each other, as if to say, surely it's a wind up!no really, I really hope he's having us on!

The runners brief started with a speech, the like of which Laurence Olivier would have been proud - indeed, it was a scene from Shakespeare's Henry the fifth - it goes something like, 'and if you're mad enough to run for over 2 hours through knee high snow, then you shall be my brother etc.' Standing there shivering looking up at the snow clad fellside, I must admit to wondering whether brotherhood is all it's cracked-up to be, but it was really compelling stuff, so off we went. Oh' by the way, this performance surely merits a hash handle of 'Brother Henry'!

Anyway, we started from the cattle grid at Calebreck (note: not Caldbeck). It was yet another snowy hash where we tested the visibility of flour to its limits and beyond - it was 'two blobs and you're on' and both Happy Sac and I headed upwards on separate tracks (hashes nearly always start going up don't they?), and having counted one blob in 200+ metres of climbing, we both started looking across at each other as if to say 'have you given up yet'. Brother Henry finally called us back and we headed north west on a gradual incline through sodden reedy fields - we'd barely been out for 10 minutes and 'trench-foot' was already taking a hold!

Finding blobs of flour on low lying fields mottled with snow proved to be somewhat of an art form - indeed it called for tracking skills that Ray Mears would be proud of since the footsteps were more visible than the blobs, unless you're of Eskimo blood and have

eleventy twelve different shades of snow that you can tell apart. In a way the tricky conditions were a bit of a blessing, yet again we had a 'proper runner' in our midst - Peter from Cumberland Fell Runners had joined us, and thankfully, rapid progress was hindered by the need for close attention.

We continued to ascend and the snow became thicker and a few snowballs just had to be launched, well it would've been rude not to. Being the Caldbeck fells, we weren't exactly having to squeeze through the crowds, but it does have a wild beauty about it, and I'm sure that had we been on Latrigg, we wouldn't have been met with the fine spectacle of a hare in full flight at such close quarters.

Having been on the go for a good three miles or so, and still heading away from the start, it was dawning on us that this really was going to be a long one. It must be down from here? But Brother Henry had different ideas, at this point I think Happy Sac's dad Barry (Daddy Sac?) was wondering if he'd rather be back in the flatlands of Bedford! But the five brothers departed the security of the pleasant track we'd found ourselves on and headed directly up the seemingly ever steepening sides of the fell - in the general direction of High Pike I think. [Shortly above chez Huggy and Slasher who had the good sense to leave Cumbria for the weekend] Spirits stayed high though, there were clear views out towards the Solway and the pace of ascent was keeping us warm enough despite the snow. Finally, at around 1,400 Ft, we stopped ascending (directly anyway) and started a traverse in the general direction of Calebreck which was actually very pleasant especially after having climbed for so long. The snow was knee deep in places and we moved at quite a respectable pace, with Brother Henry pointing out at one spot that just over the brow we'd be able to see the cars - sounds a little thing, but after miles of running without really knowing where you're going it never fails to be uplifting to simply see your car parked in the valley below.

Peter picked up the pace down the fellside towards the cars with myself and Brother Henry in pursuit. It was great to be greeted with a little round of applause and some beer on arrival back at base, and it was impressive that David (now Brother Henry) had set this epic route earlier that morning, and had the stamina to do it all over again.

All in all, this hash (for runners at least) was not one for the 'softy hasher' and I'd judge it as a great success. Thanks go to Santiago and David for entering into the spirit of things and setting this hash, and we hope it will be the first of many!

Mr Sheen (aka Jock Strap, and formerly Clint)

