



Rossendale Harriers

Kit – particularly for the fells.

All runners need kit and there are as many ideas about what you need as there are runners.

This is a review of my first ideas drafted in 2007 and is aimed at runners new to the fells. My original paper was replete with ideas stolen from Jon Broxap of Pete Bland Sports. However it seemed time to update the ideas as there are a lot of new names around in the kit world and the fell and trail range of trainers has changed considerably.

This version has a number of contributions from fellow Harriers. Thanks to them all.

Do not assume that any kit mentioned will necessarily protect you. Conditions on the fells can be severe and can change quickly. Running in very light kit is a significantly different risk than walking with a full rucksack of spare gear. See the last paragraphs from Jim Godwin. Beware and enjoy.

You will have your own needs and ideas. Check them out - ask around.

Whatever you do:

- Buy from a specialist runners sport shop which is likely to get you good advice. For Fell running the specialists are Pete Bland Sports, who have a kit van at many fell races; Running Bear; Up and Running; Lakes Runner and similar shops plus Run Direct, run by John and Linda Bostock and who are at many races with a van – particularly good for reduced price road shoes.
- I have also heard good things about Complete Runner in Nelson but understand that they don't give club discount.
- Look on the internet for these and other outlets. There are lots of bargains to be had. Wiggle is a bike shop, with some good bargains for runners. Planet Fear – web site only seem to offer good prices.
- For some items you may need to look beyond these shops to Outdoor shops
- Don't forget to look in stores, like Boundary mill, which stocks a range of outdoor gear from Lowe Alpine, Craghoppers etc. or even Winfields for basic gear/
- Decathlon and their range of Quechua clothing do not have specialist fell kit but are worth considering for general running gear.

- You may want to include that Aldi does some very competitively priced sports gear (tops, lycra shorts and leggings, shower tops, gloves hats, buffs) at various times throughout the year and is worth looking out for, particularly socks. I've had some great wool sports socks (never thought I'd wear wool) from Lidl that are incredibly hard wearing and cost a fraction of the better known sports brands. (Cath Hignett.)
- Remember to try our club summer series sponsors, Ultimate outdoors, who have 5 shops, including the one in Skipton which support us.
- Most of the kit manufacturers and shops mentioned advertise in the Fell runner – see website for details of how to join the Fell Runners Association.
- Do not pay full price, if at all possible. There are loads of bargains to be had.
- If you have to pay full price use your club membership card to get 10% off, sale and discount items accepted – if you can't get a discount go elsewhere.

Basics.

All runners need:

- Shorts – try pertex which are wind resistant. Otherwise there are many good makes. I understand female cut shorts can be difficult to find. Increasingly male and female runners seem to be using Lycra shorts, the men especially in ultra distance races where they reduce chaffing; knee length shorts; ¾ shorts and full length leggings. No gussets so under shorts, knickers or underpants required.
- T shirts. Surely no one wears cotton. Ugh. Hugs water and can be very cold. Technical T's are easy to get and cheap – long or short sleeves. Running Bear worth considering.
- Club vest – UK Athletics requirement, although never enforced, to my knowledge, on the fells in regular races. Still you should have one and wear it. Club colours available on club nights from the T bar.
- Socks. Lots on the market. Cheap ones are often a pain. Pete Bland and Running Bear sell good socks. 1000 mile worth looking at. In my view the current best are Hilly and Mono Skin socks, both dark blue with red lettering. Quechua are reliable but short. Bridgedale very good but expensive for regular running.
- A number of runners, especially in ultra long races are now wearing knee length compression socks. They may work but are expensive. Check out the research. <http://www.pponline.co.uk/encyc/the-benefits-of-compression-clothing-35846>
- Sports bras. With advice from my in house resident expert – Clare. Runners need specialist sports bras to stop both discomfort and permanent stretching. I am informed that well endowed female runners wear two bras for additional support. See article in Summer 09 Fell runner and <http://www.boobydoo.co.uk/?gclid=CI3wwdaPg50CFYIA4wodUXqfZw>
- Road trainers. Even fell runners will own road shoes. Don't go for fancy expensive ones. You may need trainers that give specific support or want light ones for races. There are many available at reduced

prices. Many makes have good and bad trainers. If you are not sure what you want have them fitted by an expert i.e. in a running kit shop, taking any orthotics with you.

- My suggestion would be to try New Balance for road trainers. Third best selling shoe in USA and sell trainers in different widths, which can be an advantage. They sell discounted shoes at their shops in Keswick and Shap. My last ones cost under £30.
- Hint. I am told that growing young male runners may benefit from trying ladies sizes with narrower fit.

Key kit for the fells.

Basic kit for FRA A category races and relays, where they are compulsory and optional at other races – organiser's discretion.

- You will need – map for the course
- Full body cover – top and leggings. At a minimum these must be windproof but the organiser can insist on waterproof, with a hood.
- Gloves and a hat
- Whistle and compass – Silva a good bet. Put onto a boot lace or other string to tie onto your bum bag or put round your neck so you don't lose them
- A bum bag to put it all into. Pete Bland's do a good small one but if you want to carry drink and food the Lowe Alpine one is bigger and better – more on this later. Now there are dozens, bum bags that carry water bottles upright or at an angle or which take drinks bladders – from Inov 8. The OMM bag is light weight. Take your pick
- Many organisers insist of some food in longer races.

The above should enable you to take part and survive in most fell races. Keep the kit in your bum bag and take the pack with you when ever you go on the tops. You will need more kit for overnight; two day and similar ultra or winter events.

Essential bits of kit:

- Hats and gloves.
 - Some people seem to run all year without gloves whilst people like me need them in summer. Simple polypropylene gloves or fleece ones are usually OK. After that there are a huge number of options and some are very costly
 - Standard fell head gear would be a Helly balaclava or a wind/waterproof fleece lined hat with ear covers and peaks. Lowe alpine makes good ones.
 - Other alternatives – head bands; Buffs; hats; in summer peaked hats
- Thermal top. Smelly Helly Hanson's aren't as smelly now and come in lots of nice colours. Lady fit/sizes as well. Fell running standard bit of kit. Last for ages. Some now have zips at the neck and collars.
- Club member Cath Hignett writes 'On the smelly helly topic. For some people, even the new non-smelly hellys will stink - take it from me, they **do not** suit Jeff and in fact the new type are actually more smelly

than the old ones; he only has to look at one and they reek something awful. What he has discovered is merino wool tops in various weights. - short or long sleeved etc. Not only do they not smell but they can be hung up dripping in sweat and dry off (very quickly) and are completely odourless. I was very sceptical that this could be the case - but it is.

They may be more expensive but are very definitely worth it. The extra cost is probably saved in the reduction in washing costs.

- Other makes also have similar tops including new lines from Odlo; Capestorm; NRG; Concurve
- Wind/waterproof tops. Don't risk yourselves on the tops with kit that can be perfectly OK on the road, such as a Ron Hill cagoule.
 - Basically Pertex is windproof and may be accepted by some race organisers as complying with FRA rules. Worth getting a very lightweight one – the lightest being Montane's Featherlight currently available at £30. Being so light it won't last forever. Heavier and very durable are the Buffalo wind shirts with side venting zips and useful front pocket. Hoods come separately.
 - A good waterproof cagoule with a hood. Basic FRA requirement. There are two alternatives. Non breathable and waterproof. We have Mountain equipment and Lowe Alpine cags which are very similar. About £70.
 - Paclite and similar, light breathable and waterproof material and expensive.
 - Inov 8's cagoule is supposed to but doesn't, roll into its pocket/belt and has a whistle on the belt.
 - In our view the current best is the Haglof's Oz Pullover. Recommended price recently moved from £170 to £190. Shop around but real discounts difficult to obtain.
 - My current suggestion is the OMM top selling at about £110. Not last years model which seems to 'sweat' but which sells at £65
- Long warm leggings. Some events required these and you will need them in any case. Three alternatives.
 - Lycra – not always acceptable in mountain marathons;
 - Tracksters from Ron Hill or other makes – virtually indestructible and available from the club and
 - Thermal tights from Helly Hanson and others and worn under your shorts – now going out of fashion but in my view still the best option of a cold winters day.
- Wind/waterproof leggings – another FRA requirement. You won't wear them very often. Pertex are fine and very light but not very durable. Try Montane Featherlight. Waterproof – try Inov 8s Mesolite.
- Pairs of fell and trail shoes.

It is generally impossible to get Fell shoes discounted.

However it may be possible to get seconds of Walshes from the factory in Bolton or New Balance trail shoes from their shops in Keswick or Shap and you will see discounts when manufacturers change colour etc.

Basically there are two main ways of making a fell shoe which divides the market.

- A. Board lasted. Traditional method now only used by Walsh and Running bear's Gladiator.
- B. Slip lasted used by everyone else.

I have split the type of trainer into 3. Nearly every regular fell runners will be running in one of the trainers listed below. They're others on the market but in my view there is good reason for the popularity of these trainers – they work.

1. Out and out fell shoes.

This type of fell shoe has:

- Good studs
- A narrow last, particularly at the heel to avoid getting sucked into mud and rocking your ankle when you hit rocks; allows your ankles to go between rocks; and a low profile/limited mid sole to keep you low to the ground.

Basically slippers with studs on. Must be able to cope with wet grassy descents.

There is a very limited range of makes.

Walshes. The original fell shoe and still much the same as when they first came out. Probably still the best on wet rock. Seem to have overcome problems with poor quality. Lost their pre-eminence recently.

- PBs. The original – Blue and yellow.
- BPs Ultra. Wider – also blue and yellow or black and white
- Extreme PBs or Ultra. More durable outers and may give more support if you supinate or pronate. Black
- Racers. Light weight. Green and red

Walsh makes some models in a boot version with higher ankle support.

Running Bear Gladiator, based on the old ETA last. Seem to be too long for the foot but this doesn't cause any problems. Light; good for short races on grass. Recently changed the uppers and I am awaiting reports.

Inov 8s. Set the world alight 7 years ago. Imported from China.

Make a plethora of trainers – 22 at last count. Now outsell Walshes.

Can be difficult to get orthotics into due to low heels. Problems with quality and the tops of some of the makes tend to shred easily. Never the less the market leader. They now do waterproof trainers as well in the range.

In this category look at:

- Mud claw 270. Silver top. The stickiest soles but the uppers don't last long.
 - Mud claw 330. Yellow side bands. Aggressive studs but heavier than the trainers above. These trainers used to have a severe problem with the thermo plastic hell cup so they needed breaking in or softening with steam of a hair dryer. Recently the heel cup has been changed and is now softer.
 - XC Talon 212. Orange soles. Gaining in popularity but being light they have little mid sole and seem unlikely to be a favourite in longer races, say over 90 minutes or on rocky terrain. Juniors, being light and taking part in shorter races speak highly of them.
2. Trainers that will be suitable for most fell races and trail races. If you want just one pair especially if you don't race a lot the following would be my suggestions.

They have less aggressive studs than the trainers identified above but retain narrow footprint/heel.

Inov 8s – All have oblong studs

- Mudroc 280 Green
- Mudroc 290. The original Inov 8. Black and grey
- Roclite 315 – men/282 women Orange or blue strapping
- Roclite 305 – men 260 women Light blue

La Sportiva. Crosslite. Better known for their climbing boots and seem to sell only one style in this country. Yellow lettering on black. Horsehoe shaped studs. Expensive at £75.

3. Trail shoes. For training, longer races and trail races.

Generally heavier, more mid sole, less aggressive studs and wider heel than fell shoes.

There are many available – a selection would be

Montrail Highlander. Men and women's versions. Indestructible. Three pronged star shaped studs. Best trail shoe in my view.

Mizuno Wave Harrier. Bright yellow. Wider width. Growing popularity. High heel might cause Achilles' problems.

Rosy Harrier Jane Adlum says 'I recently purchased some Mizuno Wave Ascend Trail Shoes - loads of support and as comfortable as a road shoe. Sole is very chunky much like the Adidas version and the laces are the same sort of figure 8 design as used on New Balance shoes which means they stay fastened much better when wet and muddy. They were £65.00 purchased at She Runs He Runs (Sweatshop) but asked for club discount of 10% making them £58.50.

Walsh

Producing a new range of trail shoes in 2010 using their existing sole compound. No reviews as yet.

Inov8's.

- Flyroc 310 – men/284 women
- Terroc 330 – men/308 women

Salomon Cross 2. Recently featured in the Fell Runner. Black. Wave studs. Soft mid sole so may not suit pronators/supinators.

Adidas Swoop. Not an out and out racer. Bright blue.

Rossy Harrier John McIntosh writes.

TRAINERS

First thing first: there is no such thing as the perfect or ideal running shoe: road, trail or fell.

Everyone's feet are different, as are our running styles. So what suits me might not suit you, and vice versa. You need to try on lots of different makes and models in the shop before you buy. You also need to accept that it is possible, after a few runs, it looks like you've made a mistake and your once shiny new shoes aren't right for you. I've found Nike and Mizuno don't suit me but Asics and Reebok are fine – I'm sure others will say the opposite.

It is also the case that what works well on one surface will be rubbish elsewhere; what is good on grassy slopes might be rubbish on stony paths or slippery rocks. That is why Inov8 make several different off-road models. A good idea, but most races and training routes cover more than one type of terrain. Anyway the best sole might not be fitted to a shoe that you find comfortable. So we have to compromise.

Of the serious off road shoes available at the moment I like the Montrail Highlander: they can take my orthotics (unlike Walshes), they are pretty hard wearing and there were some good offers on last year so I stocked up.

For trails and paths Asics work well for me; the sole is usually worn out before the upper starts to fall apart.

I used to swear by Saucony but managed to poke my toe through the upper long before the rest of the shoe wore out; whether that is a design fault in the shoe or the result of how I run I can't say.

A final thought: there is some unfathomable relationship between sweaty feet and trainers; there is no way of knowing in advance the outcome of x

+ y in the odour stakes where x = your feet and y = your shoes. The particular combination of your feet and some shoes may be deadly and you won't know until your car stinks on the way home from a long run. In my case it was the ETA of the mid 1990s, they had to go in shed, never mind the garage the pong was so bad.

John McIntosh

You are more than welcome to add your comments and I will post them on the club site.

For Juniors the Walsh PBs are the business as they start in small sizes, including half sizes and are much cheaper than other models. I am told about £40. Mizuno and Inov 8s now have some trail shoes in ladies sizes.– see below for a review of Fell shoes

Other kit you might want or need.

- Helly and other firms also do thermal underpants and knickers for those very cold days and nights on the tops. Ski shops a good bet.
- Other tops.
Gear freaks love tops...
Fleeces and other second layers. Assuming you wear a T or thermal base layer second layers could be
- A second base layer, such a technical t shirt
- Thin single weight fleece. Running bear do a good and cheap one – bit heavier than some others. Crag hoppers Micro fleece is excellent.
- Gilet. A number on the market. Light and keeps chest warm and arms free. Good ones and cheap from JJB Sports.
The rest are pricey!!!!
- Gore windstopper. Expensive but can be worn next to the skin replacing two layers with one
- Paramo Vexel smock – two bits of gear in one – you won't race in one but worth having.
- Soft shell tops. Warm and wear better than fleeces – can be used as an outer but not waterproof. Montane worth looking at.
- Wool. Helly do a wool/synthetic mixture as a second layer. Smartwool and other makes have merino wool tops that are all the business but costly. (See above comment from Cath Hignett in relation to Helly's)
- Harrier Jom Godwin says 'I bought a Keela multi-activity Odin jacket for the 2007 OMM. Low tail, pit zips, thumb loops, hood, mesh inner for £50. It's definitely not an ultra lightweight item, but our R&D manager at Pertex rated the technology very highly. I've worn it at -6C with just a base layer when moving, and felt snug and secure'.
- Pertex and fleece lined cagoule top. Most mountain rescue teams seem to wear the Buffalo version and I cross country ski in mine. Great to pull on after a race and feel instantly warm. Designed to be worn next to the skin. Montane also makes one.
- Other socks. Water proof such as Seal skins or Inov 8 Mudsoc. Can use scuba diving socks. Great in very cold weather. They are thicker

than normal so take your fell trainers with you and try on. Better and more flexible than buying Goretex fells shoes.

- Headtorches. The old standard was the Petzl zoom with the flat battery on the back. Battery difficult to get hold of.
You can now get LED lights. In my view you need both bulb and LED. Try Black diamond with 4 x LED and one bulb. I am told Aldi sell good basic head torches. However for the full monty read the recent article in the Fell Runner of . This recommends the HOPE 2, which is great and well worth the investment.
- GPS. Not allowed in most fell races, although you can use one in many continental races and the Lakeland 50 and 100. Timex or Garmin or the Navman R300
- Altimeter. Suunto are the standard.
- Walking poles. Increasingly used in Ultra distance races but not in normal fell races. Either standard poles or light weight racing poles at about £100.
- Bladder in a rucksack. More runners, like cyclists are using drinks bladders, with or without carbohydrate drinks powder. Makes include Camel bak; Leisure lakes, cycle shop in Bury; Platypus.
- Day sacs. Some runners find bum bags uncomfortable and use a day sac of about 10 – 15 litres. Lots of makes including Lowe Alpine. In my view the best is the Raidlight, which will take a bladder. Generally only available via the internet, as it a French make and imported.
- Sacs for 2 day mountain marathons. Used to be standard at 35 litres but with modern kite getting lighter and smaller there are 30 and 25 litre ones available. Be sure that you can get your kit in if buying a smaller one. Should come with pockets on the waist belt; pockets on the outside; chest strap; take a bladder internally and have compression straps to stop kit bouncing around in them. Women runners may find some long in the back and in this regard the bright/dark blue OMM one is worth looking at and is very light. Other makes include Lowe Alpine.
- Bivvy bags. These come in either silver foil, about £10 or plastic, cheaper. Some events, including the Welsh 1000's insist you carry one. These are not space blankets which are thin silver foil.

Finally – following neatly on from the Bivvi bag item - hypothermia and getting cold a friendly warning from club member Jim Godwin.

I think the other item to take onto the fells is the ability to recognise the symptoms of hypothermia in oneself and others, and take appropriate action. On the 2008 OMM, both Adam (Godwin, Jim's son and a Harrier as well.) and his partner felt the very early symptoms and were able to eat and drink enough to stave off further deterioration. They also elected to retire back to HQ as they considered they were getting too close to their limits to continue. Lefty's article on the club website spells it out very well, and new runners would be well advised to read it.

It never fails to amaze me the extent to which runners will attempt to avoid carrying kit. The main question to ask is "what will I do if I have to stop?" either myself or for another runner. Depending on conditions, the general

view seems to be that a runner has about 8-10 minutes from stopping moving before hypothermia requiring hospitalisation sets in. In other words you have to act decisively and instantly. I always carry a plastic wheely bin bag in addition to conventional jacket, trousers etc. Although flimsy, it does at least give a cocoon effect, if desperate.

It is also essential to get out of the wind e.g. behind a dry stone wall, into bracken, anything. Adam has found it more effective to keep the neck warm rather than the head, presumably because the arteries are close to the surface.

The Calderdale and PB are real baptisms for new runners. Even waiting at the start of a leg has its problems. (I speak as PB Leg 3 marshal, who adopts a style somewhere to the right of Attila the Hun in carrying out kit checks and trying to keep runners warm). Some of the kit I've been presented with has been so inadequate as to verge on lunacy. Strange how they always seem to find the missing items!

As you've probably guessed, this is something I feel strongly about, mainly because I spent most of my, so called competitive running, on my own at the back of the field. Therefore I had to be self sufficient.

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