

Joss Naylor's LAKES, MERES AND WATERS OF THE LAKE DISTRICT

Loweswater to Over Water: 105 miles in the footsteps of a legend



Vivienne Crow with Joss Naylor
Photography by Stephen Wilson



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By Vivienne Crow with Joss Naylor

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CICERONE



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Cicerone
Juniper House, Murley Moss,
Oxenholme Road, Kendal
Cumbria LA9 7RL
www.cicerone.co.uk

Photography by Stephen Wilson
(www.granddayoutphotography.co.uk)
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Front cover: Wasdale sunset from the slopes
of Yewbarrow, showing the farmhouse at
Bowderdale (right) and with Joss Naylor inset

Pages 2–3: Ennerdale Water in autumn
(Chapter 2)

Right: The road snakes its way along the
shores of Wastwater (Chapter 2)

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▲ On the fells above Haweswater, with the North Pennines visible in the distance (Chapter 8)

SYMBOLS USED ON MAPS

route

Joss's original route

start point

finish point

direction of route

peak

railway station

Relief

	1000m/3280ft
	900m/2953ft
	800m/2625ft
	700m/2297ft
	600m/1968ft
	500m/1640ft
	400m/1312ft
	300m/984ft
	200m/656ft
	100m/328ft

Contour lines are drawn at 50m intervals and labelled at 100m intervals.

SCALE: 1:100,000

0 kilometres

1

2

0 miles

1

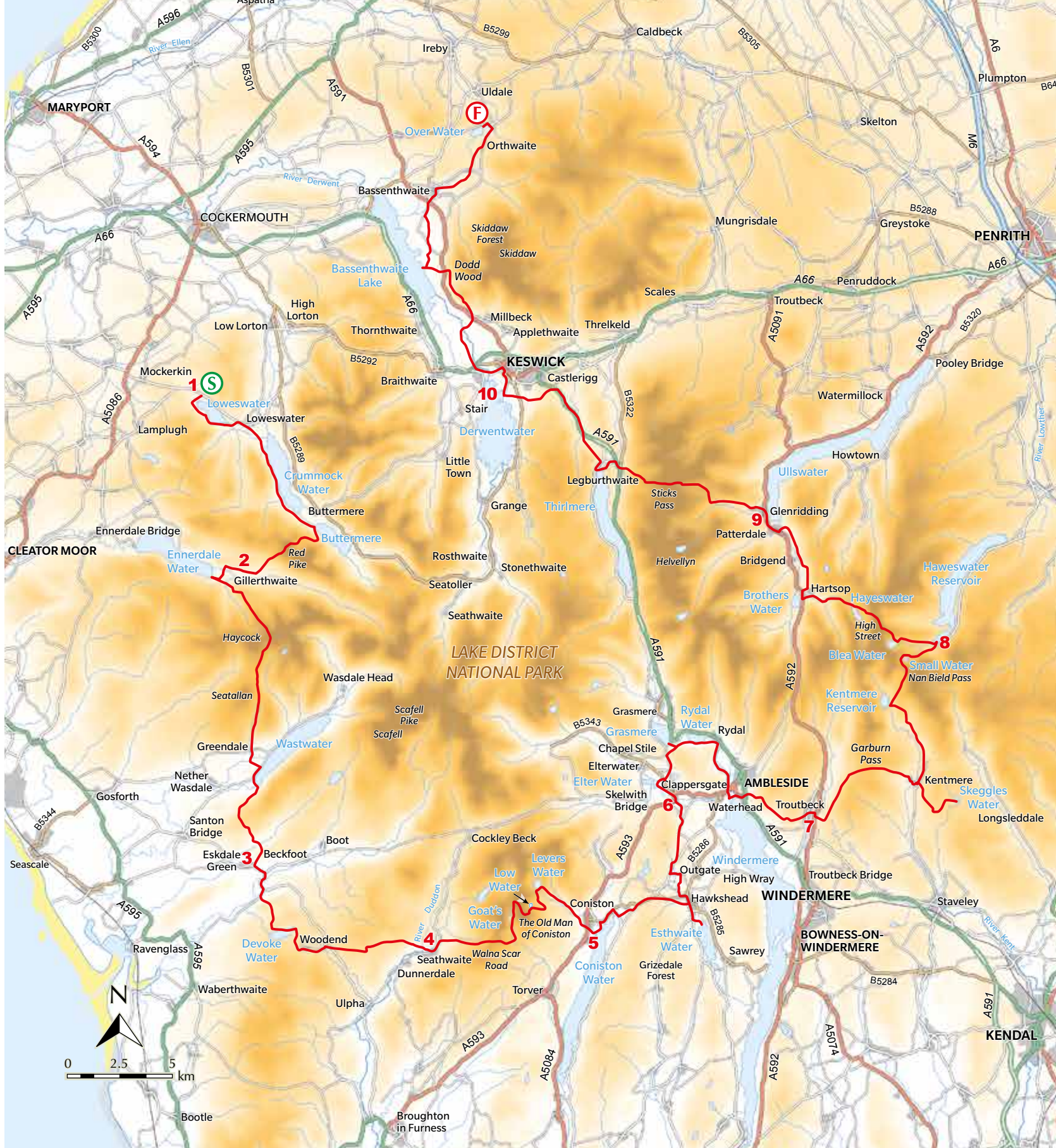
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GPX files for all routes can be downloaded free at www.cicerone.co.uk/1087/GPX.

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Any walk or run that takes in fells or mountains has its dangers, and the route described in this book is no exception. All who venture into the mountains should recognise this and take responsibility for themselves and their companions along the way. The authors and publisher have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this book was correct when it went to press, but, except for any liability that cannot be excluded by law, they cannot accept responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person using this book.

In the UK, to call out the Mountain Rescue, **ring 999**: this will connect you via any available network. Once connected to the emergency operator, ask for the police.



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A large number of people went out of their way to make this book possible, doing everything from helping track down Joss's running companions to sharing their cherished memories of a very special day on the fells. My apologies to anyone who feels they have been missed off the following list; it's nothing personal, but some of the details have been lost, or at best blurred, by the passage of time.

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Excerpts from the late Leo Pollard's account of his 1981 route are reproduced with the kind permission of the Achille Ratti Climbing Club. Back copies of the FRA's *The Fell Runner* magazine were invaluable, particularly for research into Joss's lifetime of achievements and for Alex Smith's write-up of the day.

I'd like to extend a special thank you to David Frazer, for introducing me to Joss, and to the members of 'Team Joss' for turning the summer of 2020 into 'summat special' – they are Stephen Wilson, Dave Elliott, Pete Todhunter and, of course, Joss himself. The quality of Stephen's superb photography, used throughout this book, speaks for itself. Dave's memories and photographs of the 1983 run as well as his help with tracking down marshals and runners were crucial to the background work. Pete was instrumental in getting this project off the ground, organising our days on the fells, tracking down archive images, carrying out detailed research, tirelessly answering every question I threw at him and, let's not forget, holding gates open. And Joss was just Joss – an absolute legend.

Vivienne Crow
July 2021



▲ The 2020 team – from left, Stephen Wilson, Dave Elliott, Joss, Pete Todhunter and Vivienne Crow (Photo credit: Vivienne Crow)

FOREWORD

Back in June 1983, I ran all 27 of the lakes, meres and waters. It gave me an opportunity to have a good look at the Lake District and to visit places where I wouldn't normally have gone. I've covered a tremendous amount of ground in the National Park over the years, but this was one of the most picturesque things I ever did. It was a lovely, sunny day, and it made me realise that I lived in the most beautiful part of the world. The Lake District has everything, and I feel very honoured to have called it my home for the last 85 years. It was a magic day, and I hope that the people who buy this book get as much pleasure out of reading it and looking at the pictures as I got from running the route.

I would like to thank everyone who made that day possible – all the marshals, runners and the support team – because it's one that has always stuck in my memory. I hope too that they enjoyed it as much as I did, because it was something very, very special.

My part of the proceeds from sales of this book will go to the Brathay Trust, a local charity that mostly helps young people from deprived areas. It really does turn their lives around and I'm proud to support it. I am delighted that Cicerone as publishers will be matching my share – effectively doubling the contribution to Brathay.

Joss Naylor MBE
July 2021

Joss Naylor and Lassie on the Lake District fells ►



INTRODUCTION

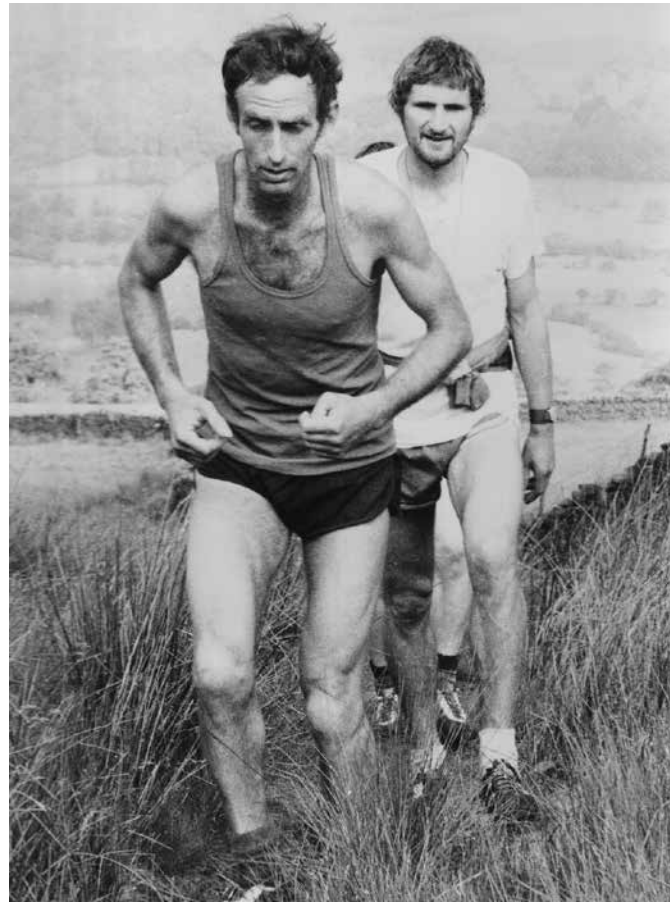
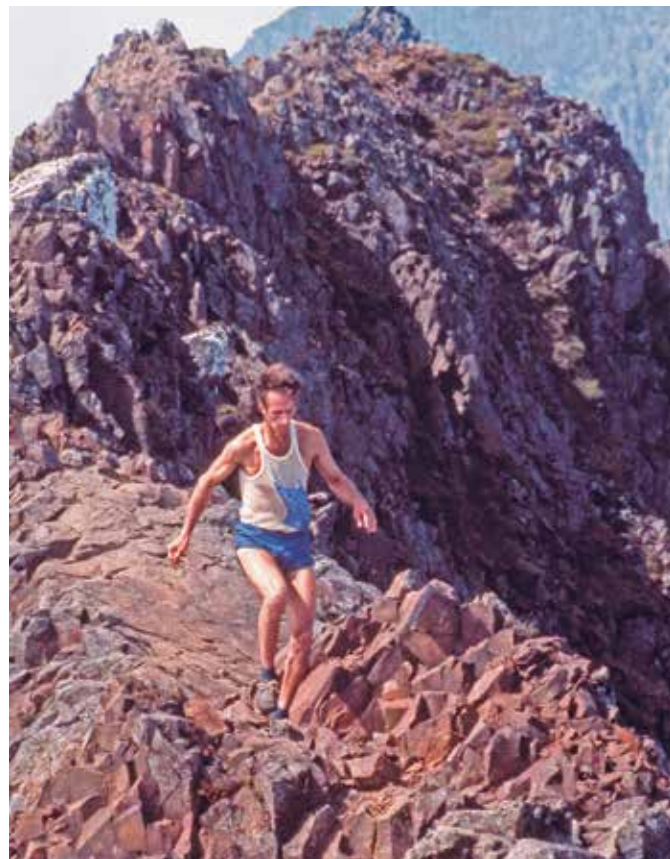
A round of the National Park's lakes, meres and waters

‘It’s summat special, like.’ Ask Lake District fell-running legend Joss Naylor why he always describes the Lakes, Meres and Waters (LMW) as one of the best routes he ever ran, and that is the answer you’ll invariably receive. Spend an entire summer with him – rewalking the route, chatting about his memories of it, immersing yourself in it – and you begin to understand that it was one of those moments in his life when landscape and weather, and mind and body, were perfectly aligned. On that day in June 1983, when Joss was 47 years old, everything just came together – and he was able to visit 27 of the Lake District’s largest bodies of water, running 105 miles over fells and along valleys, in little more than 19 hours, a record that still stands.

‘It’s summat you couldn’t really explain to anybody,’ he says when pressed further. ‘It was like a dream. It was, honestly! My legs just went well all day, I never had a bad patch. I ran all the hills at a steady pace – I was legging on to be honest – and it wasn’t draining me body. It was just good, relaxed running, over all sorts of terrain, and it continued like that all day.

‘Looking back afterwards, I thought how privileged I was to have done it because it’s a beautiful thing to do. It gave us a chance to have a good look at the Lake District and go to places where you don’t usually go. I don’t know why more people don’t do it. The likes of the Bob Graham and that are flogged to death, but you see the valley bottoms more on this – you get a better view. It’s one of the most picturesque things anyone can do. The Lake District is one of the nicest places in the world.’

The route was the brainchild of fell-runner Dave Meek, but the first person to complete it was Leo Pollard in 1981. Dave originally envisaged a round of the National Park’s lakes, meres and waters, starting and finishing in the same place, but it was Leo who got a map out and realised that Dave’s list missed out two of the bodies of water named on the Ordnance Survey sheet – Skeggles Water and Over Water. With their inclusion, the chance of ever completing the challenge as a round and within 24 hours became almost impossible. Leo made an attempt at a round with Pete Schofield in 1980, but it was abandoned. ‘I soon realised that to keep the Lakeland 24-hour tradition alive the route had to be a point to point,’ Leo



▲ Clockwise from top left: Joss Naylor touches Loweswater at the start of his 1983 run (Stage 1) (Photo credit: Dave Elliott); with Pete Trainor on the Pennine Way in 1974 (Photo credit: Tommy Orr); Joss in 1971 at Dunmail Raise during his first 24-Hour Fell Record, with Alan Walker (left) and Fred Rogerson (Photo from Joss's own collection; photographer unknown); tackling the Welsh Three Thousanders in 1973 (Photo credit: © John Cleare/mountaincamera)

later wrote in an account of the run for the Achille Ratti Climbing Club. 'To give the best advantage, Loweswater to Over Water or Over Water to Loweswater.' This route, he felt, also benefitted from keeping 'the percentage of road to fell down'. With members of the climbing club supporting him and accompanying him as pacemakers, he completed what became known as the '26 Lake, Meres and Waters' [sic] in 35hr 29min in 'atrocious' conditions in June 1981. The following year, Alan Heaton managed it in 25hr 16min.

When Joss heard about the route, he already had several major fell-running achievements under his belt and held a number of important records. He'd broken the 24-Hour Fell Record on three separate occasions in the early 1970s, clocking up 61 peaks in June 1971 (before that, Alan Heaton had managed 60 in July 1965), 63 peaks in June 1972 and then extending that to a massive 72 peaks during a heatwave in June 1975. It was a record that had seemed unassailable – until 13 years later, in June 1988, when Mark McDermott added another four peaks to the total. (At the time of writing, the men's record-holder was Kim Collison, who managed 78 peaks in July 2020, while the women's record of 65 peaks was taken by Carol Morgan in August 2020.)

In July 1971, less than two weeks after his first 24-Hour Fell Record, Joss completed the fastest National Three Peaks Challenge, climbing Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis in 11hr 54min – achieved with the help of rally driver and climbing shop owner Frank Davies at the wheel of a souped-up Ford Capri. He'd also run the Welsh 1000m Peaks in 3hr 37min (1972), broken the record for the 14 Welsh Three Thousanders (4hr 46min in 1973), taken the record for the Pennine Way (3 days 4hr 35min in 1974) and won countless fell races and Mountain Trials. (His historic seven-day round of the Wainwrights, a record that stood for 28 years, would follow in 1986.)

Joss was good friends with Leo, and when he heard about Leo's massive Lakeland odyssey, he thought it 'sounded like a nice thing to do' – and, of course, he might manage to topple yet another fell-running record in the process. Joss being Joss though – very much his own man – he decided to add Kentmere Reservoir to the existing list of 26 bodies of water. It meant dropping into Kentmere, climbing out (to visit Skeggles Water) and then dropping back into the valley again, but he wasn't put off. Fitting it in between work on his farm at Bowderdale, Wasdale, and his job as a storeman at the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing site, he managed a recce of the entire route the weekend before he was due to attempt the run.

Beginning at Loweswater, the route visits Crummock Water and Buttermere then goes over the high fells into Ennerdale, along Wasdale and Eskdale, over into Dunnerdale, across pathless

ground on the Conistone Fells, down to Conistone Water and through the valleys to Windermere, into Kentmere, up and over the Nan Bield Pass to Haweswater, back over the fells and down to Ullswater, over Sticks Pass to Thirlmere and then on to Derwentwater and Bassenthwaite Lake before ending at Over Water. Joss calculated he could do it in 19hr 20min, which would have shaved nearly six hours off Alan Heaton's time. The night before the big day, he informed Fred Rogerson, who maintained records for this and other fell-running challenges, of his intentions. Despite Joss's reputation, Fred was sceptical. Joss recalls: 'He asked me, "What time you coming through?" I told him and he said, "There's some bloody chance of that".' The rest, as they say, is history...

Thirty-five years later, with Joss now in his 80s, he decided he wanted to create a permanent record of that amazing day – a day that is as much a part of fell-running folklore as it is a part of one man's personal story. He also wanted to share the route with others – walkers and runners alike – so they could follow in his footsteps. With the help of his friend and fellow fell-runner Pete Todhunter, he began to build a team to make this possible. The result was that, in the summer of 2020, I joined Joss, Pete, Dave Elliott (a crucial part of the support team in 1983) and photographer Stephen Wilson in the Lake District, rewalking much of the LMW.

As everyone will recall, it was a summer like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic meant our original plans had to be shelved and new strategies developed as the situation evolved. We'd wanted to get out walking as soon as Joss returned from his annual winter sojourn in Spain, but lockdown put paid to that. We'd also planned to walk linear sections of the route, leaping in and out of each other's cars as we moved around the National Park, but social-distancing rules and the risk of infection made that unthinkable. Okay, so Joss may be one of the fittest, healthiest 84-year-olds anyone could ever hope to meet, but we had to bear in mind that he was in a vulnerable age group. He'd also had a bout of pneumonia the previous year, so we kept a watchful eye on the infection rates throughout Cumbria, ready to cancel planned walks should the figures begin to rise. Like everyone else, we had to adjust to a new, constantly changing reality.

Joss didn't want to delay it; he'd been toying with the idea of turning his legendary run into a book for several years now and he wasn't getting any younger. He also wanted to create something that would feed into the fundraising efforts of his favourite charity, the Brathay Trust, for years to come. The Ambleside-based organisation works to improve the life chances of children and young people, particularly those from deprived backgrounds, through engagement in challenging outdoor and creative activities. 'It does a tremendous

He decided to add Kentmere Reservoir to the existing list

CHAPTER 1

Loweswater to Ennerdale

(Loweswater, Crummock Water, Buttermere)

Lakeland's high fells are still slumbering beneath a light summer blanket of cloud as the lithe Wasdale farmer leaps from the car and walks down to the shores of Loweswater. It's five o'clock in the morning – that soft, slightly sombre time, just before the sun reaches the valley bottoms, but there's already a sense of promise in the air. This will be a special day. The grazing sheep don't realise this; they don't even look up as the man passes through their meadow and crouches to touch the water. How would they know? There's no fanfare. Not even a photographer from the local newspaper to capture the moment when legendary fell-runner Joss Naylor embarks on his attempt to break yet another long-distance record. Yet this is a day that will live on in fell-running lore, and one that Joss himself will remember as among the finest in his life...

This is a day that will live on in fell-running lore

The day was 25 June 1983, and Loweswater was the starting point for a 105-mile (169km) journey, with almost 20,000ft (6098m) of ascent, that would see Joss visit 27 of Lakeland's largest bodies of water, the so-called Lakes, Meres and Waters (LMW), in 19hr 14min. 'It's a lot tougher than people are aware,' Joss explains as we retrace his steps almost exactly 37 years later. 'The shorter course – without doing Kentmere twice – there's only a dozen done it, if that. I don't know why, because it's a beautiful thing to do. I took a lot in that day and, when I finished, I felt I'd achieved summat very special. Maybe it's just beyond the ordinary runner – it's a big step up from the Bob Graham; all that extra mileage.'

As we set off on 24 June 2020, the sheep seem just as uninterested as they did in 1983. With the heat already building, Joss – wearing shorts, baseball cap and sunglasses – notes that the weather conditions are also similar to those of 37 years earlier. Aside from the early fell-top mist, some disorientating low cloud near Haycock and a spot of drizzle late in the day at Keswick, it had been a warm, sunny day with temperatures getting up to about 20°C. Joss, having touched the water, turns his back on Loweswater and we're off, making our way through the western valleys at a fast walking pace.

◀ Looking down on Loweswater, with Grasmoor and Crummock Water in the distance



◀ Early morning, 25 June 1983, and Joss makes his way down to the shores of Loweswater (Photo credit: Dave Elliott)

Joss turns his back on Loweswater and we're off



▲ Touching Loweswater in 2020

Whiteside's scree slopes and the dramatic, gully-ridden western face of Grasmoor dominate the scene ahead, while dark Mellbreak stands aloof to the south. The next lake, Crummock Water, puts in an appearance too as we stand beside the village hall, watching house martins dart in and out of its porch. 'It's good to see the swallows and house martins,' says Joss. 'There's two house martins landed at ours about 10 days ago. They built a nest. They're late coming this year – about two or three weeks behind – but the swallows were early.' He tells of how one neighbour, several years ago, had about 20 nests removed because the birds were leaving their droppings on his window ledges. 'Summat like that nettles me; the birds were doing no harm.'

The driver of a United Utilities van pulls up and winds his window down to say hello. It turns out to be Carl Bell, of Keswick Athletic Club, the current British and English men's fell-running champion. 'They're like London buses,' laughs photographer Stephen Wilson. 'You go out with one fell-running legend and another turns up out of the blue.' This is the first of dozens of similar encounters throughout the Lakes over the course of the summer where we bump into Joss's friends, acquaintances and admirers. Fell-runners, walkers, farmers, forestry workers...many want to stop and chat, and Joss, always generous, has time for them all. A spark of friendly recognition in the eyes of others – sometimes shy, sometimes uncertain – confirms we're in the presence of Lakeland royalty: the King of the Fells.

Beyond that icon of Lakeland pubs, the Kirkstile Inn, the route follows a series of walled lonnings. These ancient lanes and pathways criss-cross Cumbria, connecting many of the county's settlements. While a few, now swamped by brambles and bracken, are impassable, most are still public rights of way that are regularly used. 'Aye! They're lovely, these old lanes,' exclaims Joss as he stops on Park Bridge to admire the stonework. It doesn't matter that he's not on the fells; he's clearly enjoying everything around him, every little detail – the walls, the cottages, the wildlife...

Passing beneath Mellbreak's northern crags, we skirt the edge of Green Wood. It lives up to its name today, sumptuously verdant in the middle of summer. Come winter though, the oaks' bare, gnarly branches take on a more sinister appearance, reaching out like withered limbs to passing walkers and runners. These aren't the grand, towering, pedunculate oaks associated with the English lowlands, but smaller sessile oaks, typical of upland areas with high rainfall and acidic soils, particularly in the north and west of Britain. Once upon a time, these trees, draped with beard lichens, would have formed an immense forest that cloaked the whole of Europe's Atlantic coast – all the way from Portugal to Norway. 'There's some



▲ Summer in the western valleys

ancient ones there,' says Joss, indicating the oaks. 'There's a massive one on Irton Pike, down by Parkgate Tarn. Tremendous girth on it.' Both awe and respect are clearly evident in his tone.

A path of close-cropped turf leads away from the trees and then down to the edge of Crummock Water. 'There's a bit of bounce now that the ground's not so hard; the rain's softened it without making it too wet,' notes Joss. He recalls how, on his LMW run, he came thundering down this slope and couldn't apply the brakes fast enough; he ended up almost ankle deep in the lake. This time, he manages to stop at the shore. He stands quietly for a few seconds, looking across to Grasmoor and then says: 'That's lovely, in't it?' No fancy words; just a moment of simple, heartfelt connection with the surrounding scenery.

It is a moment of simple, heartfelt connection with the surrounding scenery

And that scenery grows in grandeur as the route makes its way south along the western shores of Crummock Water. All focus is on the ground for the first few hundred yards, as the waterlogged peat threatens to suck shoes from feet that err. Beyond that though, it's the fells that command attention. In her essay 'The Lake District' written in the middle of the 19th century while on a tour of the Lakes, the social theorist Harriet Martineau described Crummock Water as 'less celebrated among the lakes than its peculiarities and beauties appear to deserve'. The same is true today, as tourists drive past it, giving it only a cursory glance as they hurry on for Instagrammable images of its more famous neighbour, Buttermere. 'From stations on its rocky and elevated shores the most striking views are obtained of the noble surrounding mountains...' wrote Martineau of Crummock.



▲ Crummock Water

Immediately above the lakeside path, grass slopes quickly give way to steeper, rockier ground that leads to the 1680ft (512m) summit of Mellbreak. On the other side of the water, Grasmoor again, its vertiginous arêtes and dark gullies looking impenetrable from this angle. (Yet you can almost guarantee, on a dry, calm summer's day like this, there will be an adventurous few making their painstaking way up Lorton Gully, a grade-three scramble that cuts into the mountain's western face.) Up ahead, to the south, the Buttermere fells close in as if guarding a gem or concealing a secret.

Joss disturbed a small gaggle of geese as he ran, solo, along these shores in 1983. 'There were about half a dozen of 'em on the ground beside the lake. I was a bit surprised to see 'em because that's not typical grazing ground for geese – you normally see 'em in fields. But as I came near, they took off and settled on the lake.'

The going becomes soggy again as the route crosses flatter ground where Scale Beck enters the lake. Upstream, but out of sight from the shore path, is Scale Force, Lakeland's longest waterfall. Hidden away in a narrow ravine, it consists of several slender drops which, when added together, fall a total of about 170ft. A few weeks earlier, and Joss would've been able to see Rannerdale, bathed in its annual bluebell glory, on the far side of the water. By late June though, the wildflowers had wilted and lost their radiance.

We rest for a while on the tiny humpback bridge that spans Buttermere Dubs, the short beck that connects Buttermere and Crummock Water. At the end of the last glacial period, the two lakes were one and this area would have been under water. It's only as the becks, pouring off the fells, deposited their loads of rocks and soil that this new, fertile land formed. For us, it's a chance to rest and take stock before heading up those water-scoured slopes for the first big climb on the route – up past Bleaberry Tarn and on to Red Pike. It's a punishing ascent, gaining more than 2000ft (600m) in altitude in just 1.3 miles (2.2km). With more than 100 miles to go, putting a climb like that into your legs so early on would be unthinkable for many runners. 'I never really thought about how hard it was,' Joss says, looking up at the wooded slopes. 'You've just got to be running right. You can soon lose five or ten minutes on a climb like that if you're not running right. You start off with short strides while your body adjusts and then you put the pressure on, lengthening your stride. You'll go that la'al bit faster.'

There would've been no apprehension about the long day ahead beyond this big climb, then? 'No, you just get on with it. Concentrate on the next section you're doing, and don't go beyond

that. You put things together as you go along. And you put pain to the back of your mind.'

Before Red Pike though, the route pays a visit to what Joss describes as the 'most picturesque bit of water in the Lake District' – Buttermere. 'There's summat magic about it. This la'al valley has got summat very, very special when you catch it on the right day. When I did my 70 at 70, I stopped on top of Hay Stacks and you could see every detail in Buttermere. The lake itself was beyond a looking glass, it was so sharp; it was sharper in the water than it was out. It was just the right time, the right light. I sat down for a couple of minutes, just took it in.'

The '70 at 70' to which Joss refers is just one of the many seemingly superhuman runs that he has completed – this one involving 70 Lakeland tops spread over a distance of more than 50 miles (80km) with more than 25,000ft (7620m) of ascent. All achieved in less than 21 hours on 5 July 2006, just months after his 70th birthday.

At the age of 47 though, his LMW attempt had only just begun. The checkpoint marshal Ian Richardson recorded him dipping his hands in Buttermere at 05:37, already five minutes ahead of schedule. He stood and paused – barely long enough to take in the mountains jealously guarding this beautiful spot – to gaze up at Fleetwith Edge, the fine shoulder of rock rising unerringly heavenward from the opposite end of the lake. Then he was off again.

From Buttermere, the route climbs, first through the forest and then up open slopes. The gradient briefly eases as the well-walked path nears the corrie. Now, the bucolic niceties of the lowland pubs and lonnings are forgotten as the mountains draw ever closer. The headwall looks formidable – Chapel Crag straight ahead, rising in an arc to the dark buttresses of High Stile, while the still waters of Bleaberry Tarn sit sullenly at their feet. Our way goes off to the west though, up to The Saddle before tackling the haematite-stained scree of Red Pike itself. One final pull and Joss reaches the bare, stony summit – at 2476ft (755m), one of the highest points on the entire route.

Red Pike is part of a procession of high tops that splits the Buttermere valley from Ennerdale. As part of that ridge, it marks the point at which the moody moorland to the north-west gives way to the rockier, more mountainous terrain leading up and over High Stile and High Crag. From this vantage point, Joss could look back down on Crummock Water and Buttermere. The fell views are expansive too, taking in all of the major groups apart from the Conistown Fells. They're all there – Scafell Pike, Great Gable, Skiddaw, even Helvellyn and High Street far to the east...

The 'most picturesque bit of water in the Lake District' – Buttermere



▲ Resting above Buttermere on the way up to Red Pike

'I was climbing well,' Joss recalls in his typically understated way. From Red Pike's summit, he explains, he would've descended into Ennerdale on a good path through the trees. 'You'd drop in at the top of the lake, but that path's gone now. Last time I was there, it was full of briars and you couldn't use it. Now you have to drop down on to the forest road itself. Things alter.' Today, the best way into Ennerdale from Red Pike is to follow the high-level alternative of Wainwright's long-distance walk that links St Bees on the Irish Sea coast with the North Sea fishing village of Robin Hood's Bay. While most Coast to Coasters keep to the valley route through Ennerdale, enough of them climb Red Pike's south-western slopes to have worn a path through the heather.



▲ Buttermere was the third body of water on the run (Photo credit: Dave Elliott)



▲ The Wild Ennerdale project began in 2003

Nearing the valley bottom, the rough, spiky grass – what Joss calls ‘benty grass’ – hides numerous lumps and bumps spread over the landscape. Some are natural but many are of human construct – prehistoric cairnfields as well as the remains of longhouses and cultivation terraces dating back to medieval times. Back then, this part of Ennerdale, known as Gillerthwaite, would have been home to a small community of pastoralists. Today, it’s better known as being home to one of this remote dale’s two hostels – and, thanks to Wild Ennerdale, one of the richest, most diverse natural habitats in the Lake District.

The Wild Ennerdale project began in 2003 when the valley’s three main landowners – the National Trust, the Forestry Commission (now Forestry England) and United Utilities – decided to embark on an ambitious scheme that would return the area to a more ‘natural’ state. The partners’ vision is ‘to allow the evolution of Ennerdale as a wild valley for the benefit of people, relying more

It is one of the richest, most diverse natural habitats in the Lake District

on natural processes to shape its landscape and ecology’. Nowhere is this lack of human interference more evident than in the meandering River Liza. Probably one of the most natural rivers in England, it is not constrained in any way. In fact, when the river changed course in autumn storms a few years ago and overwhelmed a public right of way, a decision was made not to divert the new channel but to divert the path instead.

Semi-wild Galloway cattle roam freely in the valley. They were introduced in 2006 when ecologists advised the Wild Ennerdale team that the grazing and disturbance caused by large herbivores, largely absent from British forests, was necessary to open the way for different plant species. Like everything else in the valley, they are mostly left to their own devices. Calves are born unaided – the mother going off to a secluded place to give birth and then returning to the herd a few days later.

As a result of these management decisions, biodiversity is benefiting. The valley and the surrounding fells are now home to more than 100 species of bird; the endangered red squirrel maintains one of its last English bastions here; and, following a reintroduction programme, England’s largest population of the rare marsh fritillary butterfly thrives here. Joss recalls standing on a bridge over Smithy Beck, close to where it feeds into Ennerdale Water, and watching five pairs of one of the rarest fish species in Britain, the Arctic char, heading upstream. They had been on the brink of extinction, but the numbers spawning in Ennerdale increased from just a handful to more than 500 within three years of the creation of a hatchery and the dismantling of pipe bridges. ‘Only time I’ve ever seen ‘em,’ says Joss. ‘They were probably going upstream to spawn.’

We rest for a while on logs beside the forest road, listening to the birds, admiring the amazing fell scenery. At the head of the valley looms the massive, scree-girted dome of Great Gable, while, on the other side of the River Liza, the ground rises abruptly to the peaks of Haycock, Steeple and Pillar. Pillar Rock, a formidable tower on the north face of its parent fell, is supposedly where the sport of rock-climbing was born. Local man John Atkinson first scaled the rock in 1826, and the first ‘tourist’ to climb it, a Royal Navy lieutenant by the name of Wilson, followed 22 years later. Even today, climbers come here to test their mettle on a complex crag that is home to many classic routes



▲ Stage 1 ends in Ennerdale

At the head of the valley looms the massive, scree-girted dome of Great Gable

of varying degrees of difficulty. While we absorb this landscape, both dramatic and historic, Joss remains standing. It’s clear that, even in his mid 80s, he’s not used to being still for long periods of time. ‘Come on, then. Let’s go and look at this lake!’ As the rest of us slowly gather our things together, Joss is off again...

DAVE’S STORY

Dave Elliott was apprentice instructor at Sellafield at the time Joss was working there in the early 1980s. He gathered a team of volunteers, all Sellafield apprentices and Duke of Edinburgh Award candidates, to act as marshals along the route of Joss’s 1983 run. ‘The idea was to have at least two people at each lake, mere and water,’ says Dave. ‘They all had to synchronise their watches with the “speaking clock” before they left home in the morning to get the accurate split times.’ Some of the apprentices also joined Joss on sections of the run, as did Sellafield instructor Alan Jackman.

Dave, incidentally, was also the man who, in the absence of a press photographer, took all the photos of the LMW used in this book. He used a black-and-white film at the request of the local newspapers. (It was still a few years before most newspapers would move to using colour photography.)

Soon after Dave dropped Joss off at Loweswater, he met up with other members of the support team in the car park at Buttermere.

‘It was about five o’clock in the morning. There must’ve been two or three vehicles there, support people – people who were there to help with food and drinks, massages, equipment changes plus any strapping or medication that may have been required.’ They were all eager and excited; the anticipation of this day had been building for weeks.

‘It was a lovely morning and we were chatting away, not realising the time of day. Then this rather well-spoken chap stuck his head out of a window of one of the rooms in the pub and waved us over. “Excuse me. Have you got a moment, please?” Very polite, like. So I walked across and said, “Morning, can I help you?” He barked back, “Yes! You can eff off! We’re trying to get some sleep here.” We’d forgotten that, while Joss was out running and we were doing our bit to help him, most other people were still sleeping. We left immediately, apologising as we did.’

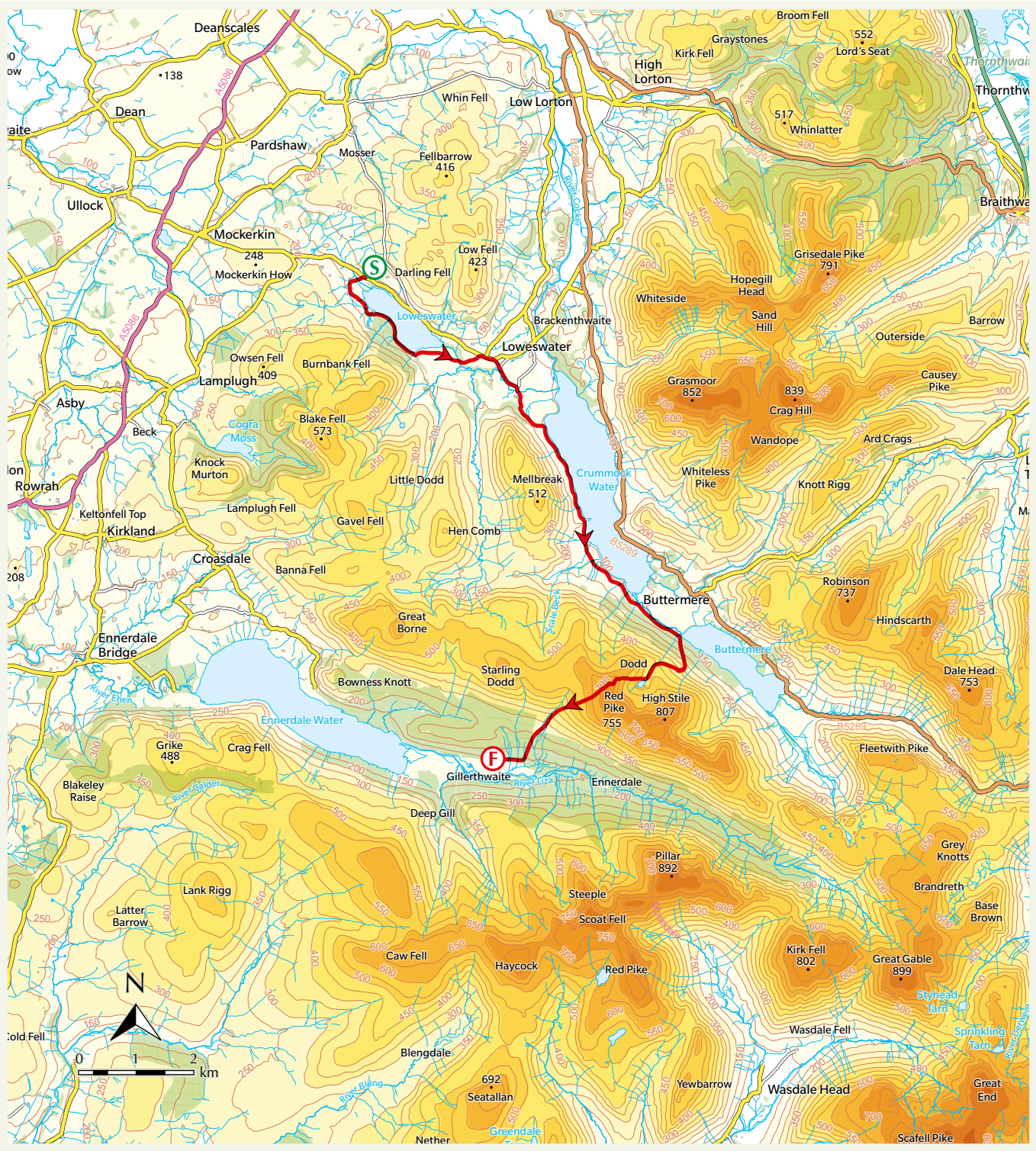
STAGE 1

Start	Roadside parking opposite driveway to Askill and Miresyke at Waterend, Loweswater (NY 118 224)
Finish	YHA Ennerdale, Gillerthwaite, Ennerdale (NY 142 141)
Distance	9.1 miles (14.7km)
Ascent	2710ft (826m)
Approximate walking time	5hr–5hr 30min

- ▶ Go through the pedestrian gate at the western end of the lay-by. Cross two meadows to a lane and turn left. Two gates mark the end of the lane just after the farmhouse at **Hudson Place**; go through the left-hand one. Follow the track into **Holme Wood** and then turn left along a surfaced path to reach the southern shore of **Loweswater**. Rejoin the main woodland track just beyond the stone-built bunkhouse. Beyond the trees, the track passes **Watergate Farm** and climbs to the road. Turn right.
- ▶ Turn right after the village hall. Turn right at the pub and keep left as the lane immediately splits. Take the next lane on the right. Keep left after crossing Park Bridge. The lane, rougher now, ends at a gate. Go through, follow the grassy track for about 35 metres and then swing up to the right, through a gate in the wall. You'll soon join a clear path along the edge of Green Wood. Beyond the trees, keep following the line of the wall on the left – down to the shores of **Crummock Water**. Head south, with the lake on your left. (The path is peaty and indistinct beyond the bridges crossing the two arms of Scale Beck; simply stay parallel with the lake.)
- ▶ A stony path continues beyond the southern tip of Crummock Water to reach the north-western end of **Buttermere**. Cross the wooden bridge over Sourmilk Gill and, in a few more metres, take the path on the right heading steeply uphill through the trees. Beyond the forest, this climbs to **Bleaberry Tarn** and then continues, on an increasingly eroded path, to the top of **Red Pike**.
- ▶ Head south-west, soon picking up a faint path, cairned in places, descending Red Pike's southern slopes. After fording Gillflinter Beck, the trail descends between two arms of the forest to reach the valley track in **Ennerdale**. Turn right, reaching the YHA hostel at **Gillerthwaite** in 320 metres.



▲ Bridge over Sourmilk Gill



- ▶ *follow in the footsteps of a legend on this 105-mile route*
- ▶ *relive Joss's 1983 adventure and share his experiences from his 2020 rewalk*
- ▶ *plan your own walk or run on this quiet and charming tour of the largest lakes, meres and waters in the Lake District*



In the summer of 1983, legendary Lake District fell-runner Joss Naylor set out to visit the 27 main lakes, meres and waters of England's largest National Park. Over the next 105 miles, mind and body, landscape and weather came together to enable him to complete the challenge in a record-breaking 19 hours and 14 minutes. It was, he says, one of the most beautiful things he ever did.

Thirty-seven years later, Joss set out to create a permanent record of that memorable day, so that others – runners and walkers alike – could follow in his footsteps. At the age of 84, he rewalked most of the route with award-winning outdoor writer Vivienne Crow and photographer



Stephen Wilson. This book is the result: part memoir, part guidebook, part photographic odyssey, but mostly one man's ode to the hills and valleys of his home.

As Joss recalls his 1983 run, and other tales from his running and shepherding life, readers are led through Lakeland's varied landscapes – over rugged fells and along idyllic dales. Accounts from others involved, including pacesetters and marshals, help explain why this day lives on in fell-running lore.

- ▶ varied terrain, highlighting the best of the Lake District
- ▶ route passable all year round (though be prepared for snow and ice in winter)
- ▶ no special equipment needed, although map and compass skills are essential

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