

## Scafell Pike Trail Marathon Race Report

**The 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Scafell Pike Trail Marathon was held in tough conditions...**

Climbing to the summit of England's highest peak, this is arguably one of the toughest trail marathons in the country, through some of the most dramatic mountain scenery in the Lake District. Although the route incorporates over 6,000' of ascent this isn't the only challenging factor. The sheer variety of terrain in this route makes it a real classic, from gentle lakeshore paths to rock slabs and boulder fields, it takes a good all-rounder to win this event.

This year competitors were faced with strong winds & very low visibility on the mountain section. Combine this with wet & slippery boulders on the descent from Scafell Pike, it was going to be a real test of endurance and skill to prevail.

Based from Keswick, the initial opening kilometres follow the wooded lakeshore trails on the shoreline of Derwentwater, climbing past Castle Crag, before reaching the hamlet of Seathwaite at the head of the Borrowdale valley. A blistering pace was set by Hugh Torry (Serpentine RC), Harry Geaves (Army AA) & Dan Anderson (Dursley & District AC) on this first section quickly opening up a gap on the rest of the field. In the women's race GB Ultra Runner Tracy Dean (Team Raidlight UK) was also setting a fast pace in these early stages.



Arriving at Seathwaite

Crossing the old packhorse route over Stockley Bridge the course ventures into the heart of the high fells. The path becomes steep, climbing cobbled and stone-pitched paths up to the first checkpoint of the day at Styhead Pass, located at an altitude of 1,600'. With Anderson leading, the lead trio reached this in 1:27:41. Likewise, Dean was establishing a good lead climbing onto the mountain section reaching Styhead in 1:42:11, 12 minutes ahead of Nicki Barron (Vegan Runners) & Eleanor Howard.





© Stephen Wilson  
[www.granddayoutphotography.co.uk](http://www.granddayoutphotography.co.uk)

#### Approaching CP1 at Styhead

The next section involves the ascent of the infamous Corridor Route. This is a testing rocky trail that makes a spectacular rising traverse across some of the most rugged yet spectacular rock scenery in England. With Wasdale far below, it traverses under the dramatic crags of Great End and Broad Crag, crossing a number of deep ravines, climbing up a series of rock slabs and paths, eventually leading up to the summit of Scafell Pike.



© Stephen Wilson  
[www.granddayoutphotography.co.uk](http://www.granddayoutphotography.co.uk)

*"The weather proved testing, causing the rocks to be greasy and every opportunity to slip and slide your way to the summit. Anyone who is familiar with Scafell Pike, will know of the corridor route with the boulders and the technical terrain nearer the top which is pretty incessant"* Tracy Dean

At an elevation of 3,209' the summit plateau of Scafell Pike is a vast boulder field. First to the summit checkpoint was Anderson in a time of 2:03:28, winning the 1<sup>st</sup> to Scafell Pike summit mountain prize in the process, followed by Geaves in 2:03:44 & Torry 2:04:07.

With low cloud shrouding the area and visibility dramatically reduced, picking the correct route off the summit can be difficult in such conditions. With no defined trail at this point and only a series of rock cairns to follow full concentration was needed, especially as a fine drizzle had made conditions underfoot really treacherous.



Reaching the summit of Scafell Pike

*"We got a bit lost coming off the summit. It was so misty we couldn't see the cairns. Sometimes we couldn't see from cairn to cairn, and had to wait for the wind to gust away the cloud so it could appear for a second"* Frances Taylor

Dean continued running strong, reaching the summit checkpoint in 2:27:19, but could not afford to relax at any point. With scree slopes to either side, the rugged path descends steeply off the summit. The route is then a rocky roller coaster as it continues its high level traverse past Broad Crag and Ill Crag heading towards checkpoint three at Esk Hause shelter.

*"It is a difficult descent passing broad crag and heading for Esk Hause and Sty head. The difficulty is with the changing terrain and simply not being able to get complacent or take your eye off the ground. It's the English mountains at their best, there is nothing manicured about the tracks and limited obvious path at times. I took a total of four falls during the course of the race & believed I'd lost so much time that I was soon to be caught by the ladies behind."*

From Esk Hause the route passes below the imposing crags of Great End, crossing the shoreline of Sprinkling Tarn to the checkpoint at Styhead. The lead group were still together at this point as they started the fast descent back into the Borrowdale Valley, retracing the route back to Seathwaite.



However, closing fast at this point was local runner Jonny Hume (Keswick AC). After being 7minutes behind the leaders on the summit, Hume now joined the lead group on the descent to Seathwaite.

The route then followed the Cumbria Way across the valley floor to the village of Rosthwaite, a welcome change of terrain from the rough & stony slopes of the earlier stages. However, a sting in the tail awaited as the route climbed steeply into the Watendlath valley. At the 34k point this climb was punishing, catching a few runners by surprise.



This proved to be a decisive point in the race with Torry gradually pulling away from the others on this climb, reaching checkpoint 5 in 3:51:41. Geaves followed in 3:52:55 then Hume in 3:53:24. In the women's race, Dean continued to lead, however, Maria Andrade was running strongly & had moved to within 3 minutes of Howard in third place at this stage.

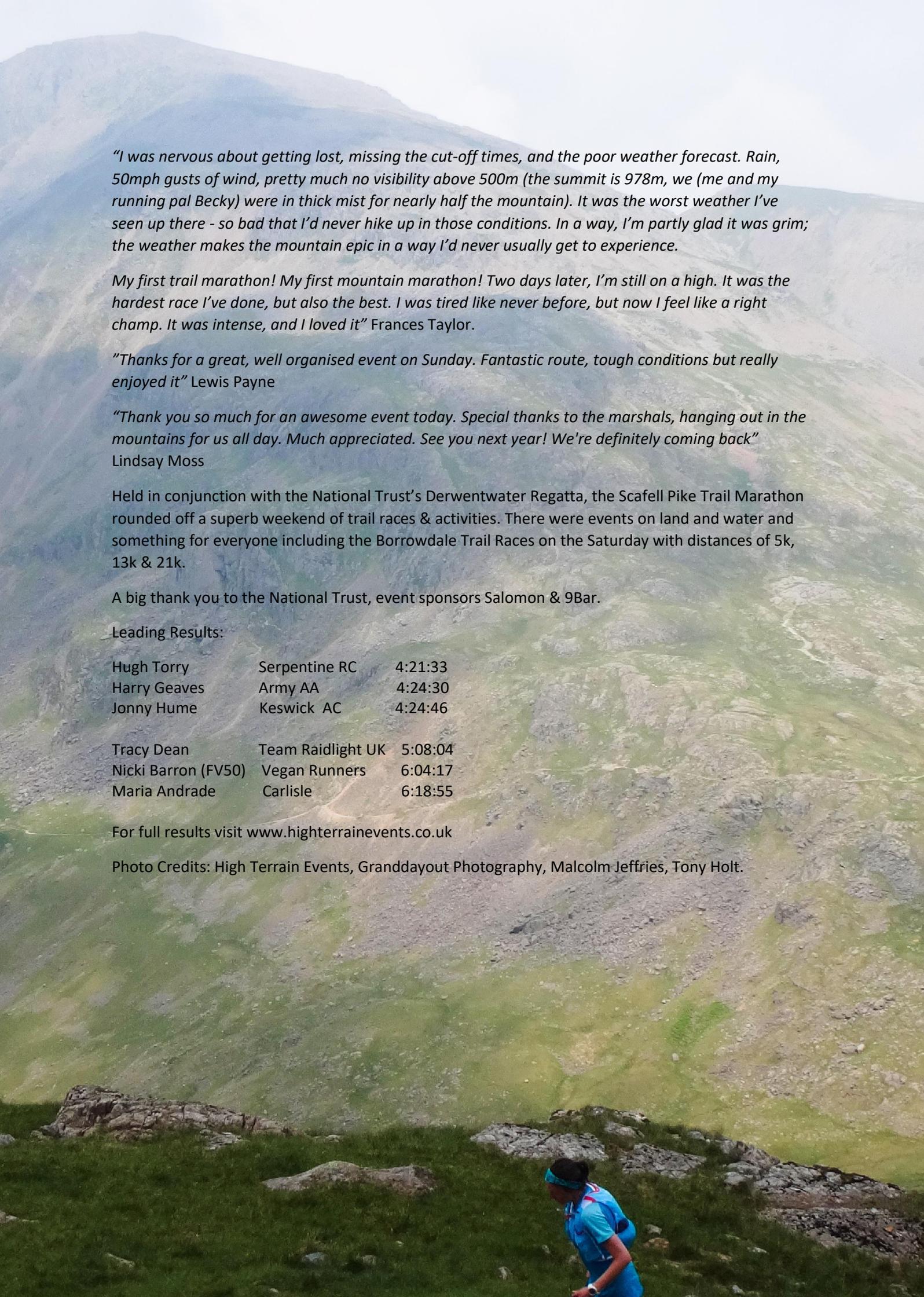
Anyone with the energy can savour the views in the final kilometres as the route descends back towards Keswick, with stunning panoramas across Derwentwater & the Skiddaw range opening out. However, none of the leaders could afford to relax as even a small tumble at this point could cost them the race. At the finish, it was Torry who triumphed in 4:21:33 followed by Geaves in 4:24:30 & Hume just 16 seconds later in 4:24:46.





Demonstrating her all round ability, Dean was a clear winner in the women's race in a time of 5:08:04, a fantastic time in such conditions. Barron finished comfortably in second in 6:04:17 but only one second separated Andrade 6:18:55 Howard 6:18:56.



A panoramic view of a mountain range with a runner in the foreground. The runner is wearing a blue shirt and a blue headband, and is running on a rocky path. The background shows a vast, hazy mountain landscape with a valley and a river winding through it. The sky is overcast and the overall atmosphere is misty.

*"I was nervous about getting lost, missing the cut-off times, and the poor weather forecast. Rain, 50mph gusts of wind, pretty much no visibility above 500m (the summit is 978m, we (me and my running pal Becky) were in thick mist for nearly half the mountain). It was the worst weather I've seen up there - so bad that I'd never hike up in those conditions. In a way, I'm partly glad it was grim; the weather makes the mountain epic in a way I'd never usually get to experience.*

*My first trail marathon! My first mountain marathon! Two days later, I'm still on a high. It was the hardest race I've done, but also the best. I was tired like never before, but now I feel like a right champ. It was intense, and I loved it"* Frances Taylor.

*"Thanks for a great, well organised event on Sunday. Fantastic route, tough conditions but really enjoyed it"* Lewis Payne

*"Thank you so much for an awesome event today. Special thanks to the marshals, hanging out in the mountains for us all day. Much appreciated. See you next year! We're definitely coming back"*  
Lindsay Moss

Held in conjunction with the National Trust's Derwentwater Regatta, the Scafell Pike Trail Marathon rounded off a superb weekend of trail races & activities. There were events on land and water and something for everyone including the Borrowdale Trail Races on the Saturday with distances of 5k, 13k & 21k.

A big thank you to the National Trust, event sponsors Salomon & 9Bar.

Leading Results:

Hugh Torry	Serpentine RC	4:21:33
Harry Geaves	Army AA	4:24:30
Jonny Hume	Keswick AC	4:24:46
Tracy Dean	Team Raidlight UK	5:08:04
Nicki Barron (FV50)	Vegan Runners	6:04:17
Maria Andrade	Carlisle	6:18:55

For full results visit [www.highterrainevents.co.uk](http://www.highterrainevents.co.uk)

Photo Credits: High Terrain Events, Granddayout Photography, Malcolm Jeffries, Tony Holt.