

FRED ROGERSON: 1921-2010

The passing of a Lakeland Legend

Three men who were not fell runners themselves played a prominent role in the organisation and development of amateur fell racing in the Lake District: Joe Long of St. Bees, Fred Rogerson of Lindeth and Frank Travis of Seascale, together with their highly supportive wives, Hannah, Margaret and Janet respectively. All three can additionally be credited with pioneering orienteering in the Lake District, Frank and Joe in West Cumberland, Fred around Windermere and the southeast Lakes in general, his involvement covering coaching, organising and competing himself.

Fred, the last surviving member of this elite trio and their wives, passed away in Westmorland General Hospital, Kendal, aged 89, on October 23rd last year, having been admitted five days previously. He had in fact been ill since early in the year but was always cheerful and upbeat whenever I phoned him to see if he was well enough for me to visit him, though sadly this never came to pass and I think the last time I

saw him would have been around January or February. Visiting Fred in his isolated cottage at Lindeth Farm among the low, rolling hills south of Windermere town was always a great pleasure and we'd while away a pleasant few hours discussing the Bob Graham Round and fell racing in general.

A Monumental Compilation

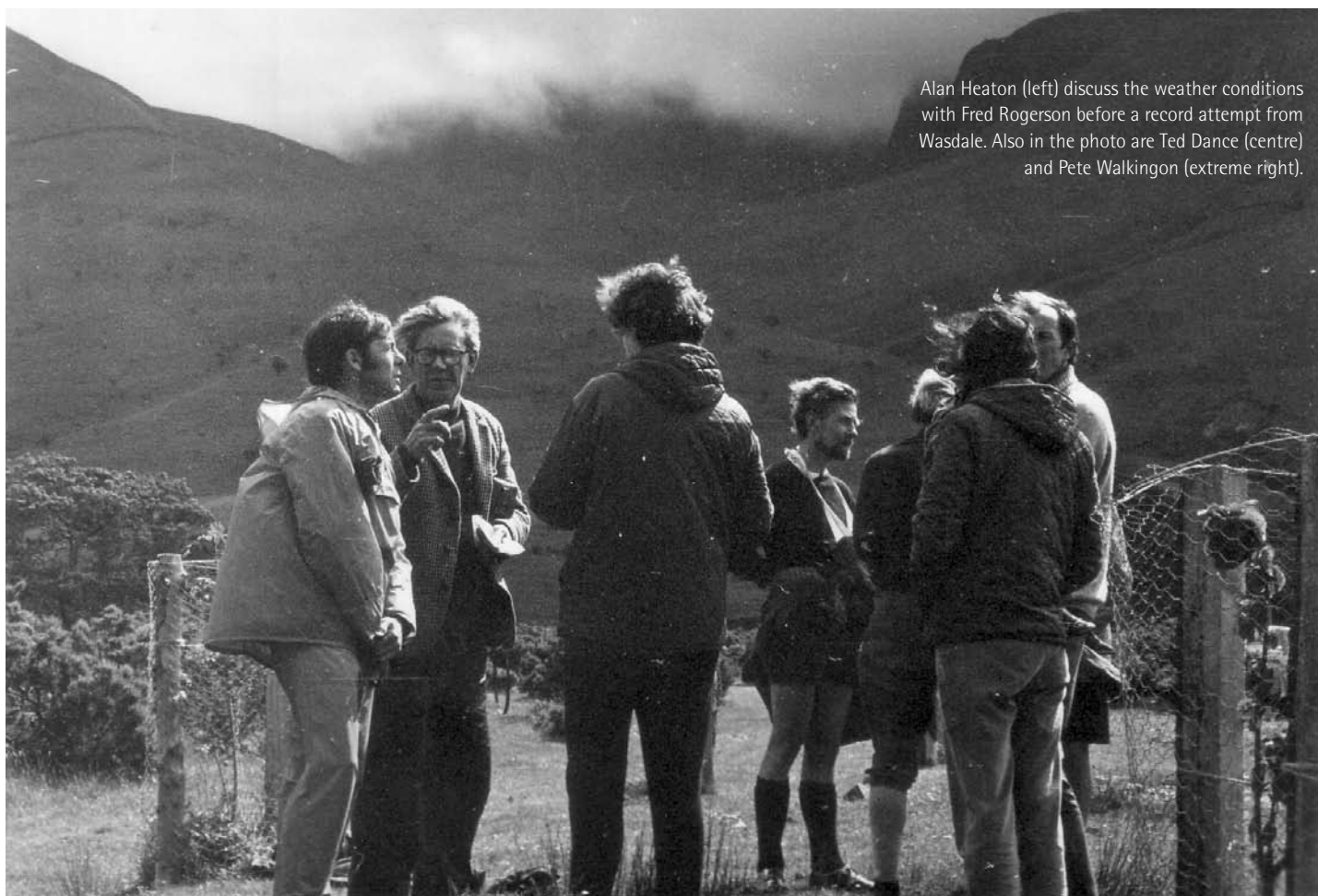
Fred Rogerson was, of course, chiefly responsible for the formation of the Bob Graham 24 Hour Club and for the way in which the Round and the 24 Hour Record have developed since he first became involved in 1960, though his initial interest actually dated back to 1945 at the end of his war service with the Border Regiment and the Indian Army Ordnance Corps. Prior to being posted to the Far East in 1942, Fred had been stationed at Lindeth Farm and here met his future wife, the farmer's daughter Margaret (1922-95). Born in Kentmere in 1921, he was a builder by trade and came from

a family of builders, an old *Westmorland Gazette* report of the opening of the Kentmere Institute in February, 1926 naming the construction team as James Gilpin and the Rogerson brothers of Stavely.

Fred had been unable to attend when Alan Heaton (Clayton) broke Bob Graham's 28-year-old record on June 25, 1960, by completing the same course in a faster time, but was present a fortnight later when Alan's clubmate, Stan Bradshaw, also broke Graham's record. That was the start of a long involvement with the standard Round of 42 peaks and attempts to improve on the 24 Hour Record by adding extra peaks, plus other long-distance record attempts further afield like the Pennine Way and Coast-to-Coast. Both Fred and Margaret would often be present, providing food and shelter in their campervan, and lots of encouragement.

In 1972, Fred published his monumental compilation, *History and Records of Notable Fell Walks 1864-1972 within The Lake District*, and followed it up with an updated edition six years

Photo © Tommy Orr



Alan Heaton (left) discuss the weather conditions with Fred Rogerson before a record attempt from Wasdale. Also in the photo are Ted Dance (centre) and Pete Walkington (extreme right).

later. Included is an account of a successful BGR attempt in 1975 by the Clayton runners, Harry Ball and Eddie Hill, in which the latter describes the moments before they set off from Keswick: "Fred's firm handclasp and smiling good wishes were as reassuring as the sight of our support group in full array." One of the highlights of a joint attempt by another Clayton runner, Andy Churchill, and Brian Covell the previous year was recorded by Andy: "... To witness Fred, clad in heavy fell boots, running halfway up Robinson in order to get some cine shots ..." And in 1976, John North (Clayton) set a new record of 19 hrs 48 mins for the 42 peaks and observed in his report "... I don't think Frank [Travis] and Fred know how much it means to runners when they turn up out of the blue ..."

Ken Heaton (Clayton – Alan's brother), who raised the 24 Hour Record to 51 peaks in 1961, wrote in his Foreword to Fred's compilation: "All who are interested in our Lakeland Mountain Heritage will understand Fred's desire to perpetuate all that is known of Notable Fell Walks, his insatiable enthusiasm and strength of purpose for all he loves and believes in is personified by this unique publication."

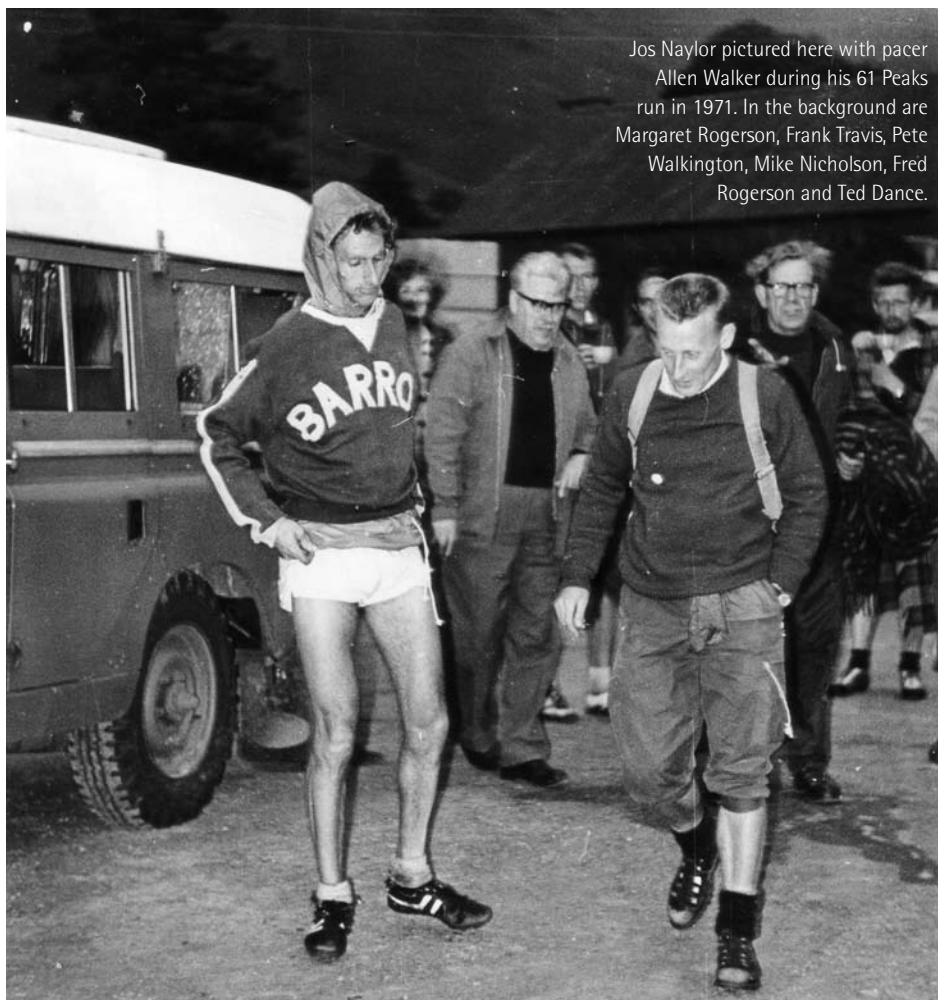
An Inspiration

Following Fred's funeral, the former Kendal AC runners, Pete and Jean Dawes, made these comments: "There have been so many days we have spent together. We can't pick out any special occasions as there was just constant care and encouragement always. His greatest legacy has been to encourage so many of us to spend hundreds of hours in the fells, extending our knowledge and fitness. It has been a great honour to have known and spent so much time in the company of both Fred and Margaret." Jean was the first lady to complete the BGR in 1977, while Pete had achieved both a BGR and a 52 peaks circuit in 1974 and the following year broke Joss Naylor's Pennine Way record.

Selwyn Wright and John Brockbank of Ambleside AC were together the first men to complete a sub-24 hour Winter BGR and Selwyn took over as Chairman of the Bob Graham Club when Fred retired from the post in 1998. Selwyn delivered a eulogy at the funeral and afterwards had this to say: "Members of the Bob Graham Club will miss Fred hugely. Quite apart from the fact that he started the Club in 1970 and was our Chairman for 28 years from that date, he made an immense personal contribution to the Rounds completed by large numbers of us. The advice and support he gave unstintingly never failed to inspire, and his presence at Dunmail and other crossing points on the route was always uplifting. He was one of the great characters of Lakeland and his dialect-injected speeches were eagerly awaited if not always completely understood. The energy which Fred put into the development of the Club was fantastic and he enriched the lives of many runners, mountaineers and other outdoor folk who took up his challenge."

Fox Hunting

Aside from fell running and orienteering, Fred's interests had also encompassed athletics and sport in general, wildlife photography and fox



Jos Naylor pictured here with pacer Allen Walker during his 61 Peaks run in 1971. In the background are Margaret Rogerson, Frank Travis, Pete Walkington, Mike Nicholson, Fred Rogerson and Ted Dance.

Photo © Tommy Orr

hunting with the fell packs, and particularly with his local Coniston Hunt. One of his favourite books was Joyce Stranger's fine novel, *The Running Foxes* (Hammond, Hammond: 1965), though his bookshelves mainly held factual works on sport and the outdoors, including *Hark For'ard! The Life of A Lakeland Huntsman* by Anthony Chapman, edited by Anne Bonney (Helm Press: Natland, Kendal, 2004). Chapman was the Coniston huntsman and Fred had known him well. He once told me an amusing tale about a pre-hunt drinking session in a country inn when hunt reporters were plying Anthony with drinks. The evening was growing late and the Huntsman was till knocking them back. When Fred admonished him, reminding him that he had to be up early for the morrow's hunt, Chapman replied: "Fred, it's an insult to refuse a drink!"

One of his most treasured possessions was the volume of tributes from Bob Graham Club members that was presented to him at the 1998 club dinner to mark his retirement from the post of Honorary Chairman. In 1965, he had been a co-founder and committee-member of the Lake District Mountain Trial Association, and became a course-planner for the Trial and also organiser of the Fairfield Horseshoe for 25 years when it was an LDMTA event. His close association with the Heaton brothers, Stan Bradshaw and other members of Clayton-le-Moors Harriers led to him becoming a Vice-President of that club.

Fred's funeral took place at Lancaster Crematorium, followed by a second service at St. Martin's Church, Bowness, and then refreshments at the Belsfield Hotel, Bowness. It was attended by many Bob Graham Club members and other friends and relatives. His passing will be mourned

by all fell runners and particularly by Bob Graham club members, not to mention orienteering and fox hunting folk.

We offer our condolences to Fred's daughters, Cathrin, Elizabeth and Sheila, who all provided sterling support during his declining years and final illness.

Acknowledgements: My thanks to Pete and Jean Dawes, Neil Shuttleworth and Selwyn Wright for their help in compiling this tribute. A more detailed account of Fred's life appeared in the article "Mr. BGR: An Appreciation of Fred Rogers" in the Autumn/Winter, 2007 issue of *The Fellrunner*.



Fred Rogerson in his garden at Tethers End, August, 2007.

Photo © Bill Smith