

Where to start with this one?

It's become apparent that there's some real interest from friends and family about January's experience on the [Winter Spine MRT Challenger North](#) race.

Rather than trot out the same stories time and time again and running the risk of becoming a Spine bore, it's probably best just to write down what I remember of the event and how I coped with it at the time. That way, if folk genuinely want more details, then they're here in black and white. And there's always the possibility that they'll provide a little chunk of inspiration or maybe some technical advice for anyone diving headfirst into the world of Spine racing themselves.

With the completion of the MRT Challenger North and a third out of three events finish, it feels as if I've reached the end of my personal Spine journey. As mountain rescue team members, we're privileged to have a generous subsidised entry into either Challenger events. This means that folk like me with no previous pedigree or indeed interest in ultra distance events can take a punt without committing too much on the financial side (although more thoughts on that later!!!).

[Oldham Mountain Rescue Team](#) are firmly embedded into the history of the Spine Series Races. One of our most stalwart members, Matt Torr, has not only competed in Winter series races but also was the first to moot a separate event for the teams who had traditionally provided support along the Pennine Way. Our present team leader, Dave Wyatt, was an early full Winter Spine Race finisher and a veteran of Challenger South events as are several other colleagues. Over the years, many of us have learned about the Spine through long shifts up on the A62 crossing point, handing out brews and Park Cake nibbles, refilling water bottles and generally trying to motivate tired racers with banter, Christmas lights and cow bells!

Inevitably, some of us have gone on to think, "could I do this?" Well, the only way to find out is to enter, but thereby lay the problem for me. With some joint and tendon issues which have since been diagnosed as a rheumatoid condition, it felt like an almost impossible ask to attempt the full distance race of 268 miles and a massive risk committing over a thousand pounds to an entry.

Lo and behold, the [Winter Spine Sprint](#) came along in the nick of time – a feasible 46 mile snap shot of the full event without any of the logistical baggage such as checkpoints or drop bags to worry about. In January 2023 the race started from Edale in damp but improving conditions and 13.5 hours later I was collecting that first coveted Spine medal at Hebden Bridge.

Itch fully scratched? Obviously not!

Several weeks later, the opportunity to enter the 110 mile [Winter Spine MRT Challenger South](#) event was too good to miss. Spin forward nearly twelve months and the start of the race arrived. We were all lucky to be blessed with great weather and ground conditions on the first day although subzero temperatures, high winds and painful heel bursitis on the second made it necessary to go into limp mode for the final sixty miles. I was lucky to buddy up with Wes Cole who'd also hurt himself and with just two good legs between us we pushed each other to the finish in Hawes. Definitely remember saying "never again" to entering a Spine series event but a few weeks later when entries for the following winter went live I was sucked back in, this time on the Challenger North...

One thing I sussed out after the Challenger South is that it's a big step up from the Sprint in several ways. Apart from the attrition of the extra mileage, there are logistical, nutritional and tactical matters to address plus the nightmare of sleep deprivation. The Challenger North at 160 miles, ups the game even more with multiple checkpoints and more responsibility to yourself to treat blistering feet and other injuries that can threaten to stop the job.

At this point I'd like to mention some folk who made getting to the 2025 start line in Hardraw possible. I've known David Riley from [Beyond Wild Adventures](#) for many years and he's a fixture on the Spine scene having completed several events including two full Winter Spine races. Partly down to his supremely positive outlook on everything and also his professional role as a Mountain Leader, he motivates and inspires by example. Training with him over the last couple of years has taught me

a thing or two about going big in the hills and together with his lovely wife Amanda and border collie Flinty, we've had some memorable days (and nights) out together in the Pennines where we all live.

Ryan Townrow is a friend and neighbour in Marsden plus a bit of a legend in the local fell running scene. His interest in the Spine was started when I finished the Sprint in 2023 and he completed 2024's event in a smoking time. However, when he saw the state of Wes after his Challenger South effort when we had to lift him out of our car, he declared he'd never do it himself! But yeah, you've guessed it – he couldn't help himself and completed this year's 110 mile event in diabolical ground conditions. We've not trained much together because of individual injuries but have constantly been at each other's houses sorting kit out and making sure we were prepped for our respective events this year.

Everyone needs a Dredgey (Iain) and an Athers (Ian). These two are core members of OMRT and the bedrock of any enterprise they get involved in. Their help in getting back from both Challenger events and saving Lizzie lots of grief needs acknowledging. They're also Spine veterans themselves and familiar faces at the A62 crossing at Standedge. If these guys have your back then you're bomb proof...

Paul Stapleton and I buddied up early on in the 2023 Winter Sprint and couldn't have been more compatible. Since then, he's become a great friend and as you might read later, was there for me during a rough time towards the end of the route.

Reserving the top spot for my wife and all-round rock Lizzie – no-one could have done more support wise than this lass. Happy letting me disappear into the hills at a moments notice, often at night, to run around after me in the car and not give me a moments grief about an obsession that could be viewed by many as selfish. As the occasion of the race drew nearer, she didn't bat an eyelid when parcels arrived almost daily containing gear acquired to shave weight and 'guarantee' a finish! It's also her birthday during Spine week and we'd usually go away to celebrate for a few days – that's willingly been sacrificed to back me up in all manner of ways these last two years.

Lizzie booked a cosy little apartment in the centre of Hawes when we saw how rough the weather looked – prior to that we were going to van camp but driving the 3.5 tonner back in the snow would have been stressful for her. So, we chucked ourselves, kit and Gyp the collie into the Land Rover and headed up the day before kit check to have a little bit of chill time together.

Sunday's kit check went fine – the Montane Trailblazer 30 pack with water and food weighed around 9.5 kg which was a kilo less than the previous year. This is where extra spending, plus the generosity of manufacturers such as [Scarpa UK](#), [Montane](#) (the race's sponsor), [Sidas UK](#) and [Bridgedale](#) had made a difference and why the expense of the entry is only part of the financial outlay for each competitor. The weather and ground conditions forecast made me beef up the minimum spec of the kit list and put in proper micro spikes, extra layers and a better glove/mitt system. Once that was over, we could relax till early the next morning and the start...

We got to the start for tracker fitting at seven in the morning and met Gary Binns, an avid Spine competitor from near Penistone. We'd met the year before and agreed to share at least a few miles this time to see how we got on. Gary's brother Les is well known on the scene and has not only climbed Everest but is also entered in the 2025 Arctic Spine Race. He saw us off as we crossed the start line feeling strong and headed up Great Shunner Fell and into the clag.

Really quickly, it was obvious that micro spikes were a must, so we banged ours on as all around us folk were slipping and sliding. It's a mystery to me as to why people soldier on so long before inevitably donning them. The ground conditions varied from sheet ice to big drifts to rapidly thawing deep bogs – the ultimate Spine nightmare!

We knew from reports of the Challenger South event that progress over the high ground was going to be slow and difficult. So pacing was important – it'd be really easy to blow up on the first couple of climbs and have to retire. That was proved a few hours later when after reaching Tan Hill, several

competitors left the race. After the most expensive, tepid half cup of tea ever, we pushed on into the afternoon – Gary was going well and we felt like a decent team. The terrain North of Tan Hill to the A66 was diabolical snow-covered bogland and we were in and out of large holes often covered by ice that wouldn't weight bear. But so far, all was looking good and we were making reasonable time. And then the wheels nearly came off completely for me...

Just coming up to the bleak A66 crossing point, my right foot went over on itself with full weight applied, there was an almighty pain and a popping noise. I screamed like a banshee, partly in agony but also in frustration because I knew immediately I'd sprained it. Two months earlier in the Lakes, I'd done exactly the same thing on Cat Bells and it had taken weeks to heal.

So that was it then. Day one and only 21 miles in – a total balls up. All that prep, Lizzie's endless hard work to get me to the start – all up the Swannee. It's hard to convey how pissed off I was in that moment. Two guys came out of the mist towards us and Gary told them the score. At that point, although the ankle was super sore, it had dulled off enough for me to know I could hobble to the A66 for a lift out. I told Gary to crack on with the two lads as there was nothing they could do for me and I didn't want to jeopardise his chances. Being a good mate, he was very reluctant to leave but I convinced him I could look after myself and after getting me to two SST guys on the road he carried on. The guys told me they could get me evacuated by car if needed but I was starting to man up and think about something Gary had said. "If possible, after a drama, get yourself to the next checkpoint rather than abandon immediately. Once you're out, you ain't getting back in again." With this in mind I asked the guys how far Langdon Beck was and they told me twenty miles. I'd deliberately brought extendable poles that could be used as a makeshift crutch so if all else failed I could still move. The other thing was that all the standing around in freezing bog water and snow seemed to have numbed the ankle so much I could now stand on it without too much pain. I told the guys I'd try to crack on and they promised to make CP1 aware of the situation. It's a testament to their accurate assessment of my condition that they let me carry on and didn't end things there on the A66.

Alone for the first time since the start and now in the dark, I got going. The first couple of miles were bloody tough but more immersion in the frigid bogs worked wonders and before long I was almost walking normally again. After about four miles there was respite in the form of the wondrous ladies of Clove Lodge and their morale boosting tea and soup! Fifteen minutes resting there was the tonic needed to start power limping again and four miles later and very unexpectedly, the lights of John and Gail's aid station at Nettlepot came into view. John soon had a brew in my hand, closely followed by a mince pie. There are so many kind folk out there supporting the runners day and night – it restores faith in humanity and makes you feel very humble.

OK, now it gets interesting for you proper Spine aficionados...

Brew in hand, I noticed a light coming down the hill towards me at speed. John said, I think that's the full Spine race leader Kim Collison. Soon, a guy arrived looking strong but still in need of a brew and before you know it he was sitting next to me. We exchanged pleasantries and were ready to set off again at the same time. We did a few hundred metres together, at which point I found my jobbed ankle was running quite happily again on adrenaline and that starstruck feeling you get from being around someone famous!

In under a mile, we topped out on a small hill and started descending. "Fancy running a bit?" said my new companion and started trotting. Worth a try I thought and set off alongside. Amazingly, there was no issue keeping pace – in fact things felt good again for the first time in many miles. Initially I felt like a stalker intruding on someone's privacy – I'm generally happier on my own doing stuff like this but Kim said he was happy to have company. I can honestly say that this twelve mile, three hour encounter got me re-invested in the race again, so big thanks to Kim who let's face it, had more on his mind than some old dude with a dicky leg!

As a comic aside, at various intervals we'd come across groups of other competitors who through the tracking system, knew that Kim Collison was on their tail and were stopping to cheer him on. In one

such group, I saw my buddy Gary with his two new partners and as we flashed past them, I heard a very puzzled Gary say "I'm sure that was Si!"

My new buddy and I alternated between running and fast walking up the valley from Middleton to Check Point One at Langdon Beck where staff swooped on him and after a quick high five, he was ushered into the building away from sight. His story is well documented now and I was chuffed to bits hearing later that he'd nailed the win of 2025's most brutal Spine Race after laying the ghosts of previous years to rest.

Langdon Beck was chaotic to say the least but the Spine staff as ever were phenomenal. The nearest I've been to feeling like a king is at a Spine race checkpoint where your every need is anticipated and delivered. I don't think any of us can adequately thank these angels enough...

Inside, there were so many tired and muddy racers and very little room for them to sort themselves out. Many were just sat in a sea of packs and drop bags with thousand yard stares, struggling to comprehend what to do next. I did the obvious – shoes and socks off, charging plug out and connected to phone, watch and headtorch. A guy came with food but I simply couldn't eat at that point so went in search of a bed to lie down for an hour or two. Only floor space was available at that time, but the room was warm and although impossible to sleep, a couple of hours leg rest was had. Going back into the melee downstairs, more food was offered and this time welcomed while also putting kit back on for the next stage of the route. At this point, I spotted Gary who was also looking ready to depart and we happily teamed up again after the previous nights separation.

Finding the diversion route across fields in the dark from CP1 took some doing but pretty soon we were cracking on towards the top of Cauldron Spout. This was easy terrain for quite a few miles and a respite from the previous day. Gary looked strong and was chatty for a couple of hours but as we approached High Cup Nick his demeanour suddenly changed and to my massive surprise he started talking about retiring. As a new father to twin babies, it wasn't just a physical battle he was fighting, it was also the strain of missing his family at a time when he felt they needed him most. I tried to cheer him up but after a while he was adamant he was finishing at Dufton and rang both his wife and brother Les to let them know the score. I could hear Les also urging him to reconsider and at least wait till Dufton, but I could tell Gary's race was over. He was in a safe place, on easy terrain and with plenty of competitors behind so with his blessing I wished him well, gave him a hug and left him to wander down to the village and a lift home.

Dufton is a lovely village and after checking in with the Spine crew, there was a great opportunity to feed up at the excellent Post Box Pantry café before the start of the days main event – Cross Fell. After stuffing the next four hours paracetamol and codeine mix down my neck and chatting with Stuart Smith back at the check point I felt ready to take on the beast which I'd heard lots about but never been near.

I felt strong on the way out of Dufton and curiously free of any responsibility to anyone now I was on my own. It's the way I often prefer to be in the mountains – headphones on and the right music playing to motivate and distract from the discomfort of sore joints and feet.

There was a slight navigational balls up climbing Green Fell but after that, progress was swift once the almost endless plateau from Knock Fell to Cross Fell was reached. Ground conditions were now at that half way house of part frozen, part thawing and there were a few excursions through the ice into thigh deep bog. It was a privilege to arrive on the summit of Cross Fell just as the sun set and an inversion rolled up from the valley. After taking a few photos, it was time to descend the difficult ground down to the oasis of Greg's Hut and John Bamber's famous Chilliwick noodles.

Hats off to John and his team who live up at the remote hut right through the duration of the race. The circle of tents clustered around the bothy looked like a scene from an Antarctic survey station – volunteering as Spine staff is no cop out from doing the race itself!

The six and a half mile descent down from Greg's Hut to Garrigill is quite brutal despite being on a broken track and was to have serious repercussions on my race. Running a fair bit of the distance, I started feeling big pain to the balls of my feet. That should have been the time to investigate and maybe break out spare socks and the wonder Gurney Goo. But you get in a rut at night where the imagined complication of stopping and taking your pack off becomes more admin than you feel you can handle.

After Garrigill, what would usually be easy riverside footpaths down the valley to Alston were in fact miles of quagmire. This meant the feet were sliding around sideways causing the skin to shear against inevitably wet socks.

Check Point Two at Alston was slightly less chaotic than Langdon Beck but still very busy with a mix of Challenger North and Full Spine racers. My drop bag looked as if it had been dropped in farm slurry but I was so knackered I really didn't give a monkeys any more. I booked a bed for three hours but got up after two – unable again to sleep. Investigating the foot damage done the night before, it was obvious that remedial action was probably too late to stop some gruesome looking blisters developing so I whacked Compeed and KT tape over the whole mess.

Back on the trail again, I had high hopes that this would be a respite day – no real mountainous terrain – just rural landscapes, river valleys and farm land to traverse till Hadrian's Wall. What a total underestimation that was! I've never encountered mud and soft ground so hard to travel over as that section from Alston to Slaggyford. The snow had melted so fast that what was left was a deep shoe swallowing gunge where two steps forward resulted in another step backward. But there was a morale boost part way along when a figure loomed out of the dark holding a sheepdog on a lead. Nice to see any friendly face at this time in the morning but even better when that face turned into that of my friend Ray who lives in Slaggyford! We had five minutes chat which did me the world of good after feeling massively sleep deprived since leaving Alston.

It was a deep relief to get onto the old South Tynedale Railway and feel solid ground again for a few miles but it was soon back to the mud again. At a road crossing on the A689 near Lambley, some absolute Samaritans had left out two boxes of provisions for Spinners. This type of kindness needs recording and was very welcome. A packet of crisps and a bottle of water later I was headed towards the nemesis they call 'Blenkinsopp Common'. A few miles later I was also treated to meeting Ray's wife Viv who'd found a place where the PW crossed a minor road.

Such an innocuous name and at such a low altitude it doesn't even rate the name 'hill'. But Blenkinsopp Common after a thaw could be the wrecking ground of Spine dreams. Boggy, off piste terrain to rival that above my home village of Marsden was plodded through, greatly aided by a meeting with Adam who manages that section of the Pennine Way and was on a inspection walk to check storm damage with his two dogs. Leaving Adam at Greenhead and after having a quick fuel at the aid station there, I was excited to be starting East along Hadrian's Wall.

The weather at this point was beautiful and the prospect of an afternoon on the wall with its well-drained terrain was quite appealing, despite the raging pain in my feet. I was really starting to feel the love for all things Spine when once again I went over on my ankle and there was that familiar 'pop'. All sorts of bad language emanated from my potty mouth as this time it felt more serious than the A66 episode. There was no freezing bog to calm the swelling and pain down – just miles of undulating, rocky ground and no prospect of any medical intervention for hours. Well, walking on it the previous time seemed to sort it out, so it was worth trying again. This time though, the pain was way more intense and wasn't lessening. Was I going to have to press the panic button after all these bloody miles? After a couple of miles though, a river cut across one of the gaps in the wall at a place called Burnhead. I climbed down the bank and immersed the ankle till it went properly numb – after more codeine and paracetamol the job was done. I was confident now it'd hold till Bellingham and then we'd see.

As the sun went down over the wall, it was again possible to appreciate the wonder of the Pennine scenery. When every footstep generates sharp pain, it's necessary to try to distract your mind away from the immediate discomfort. For many on the route, that involves banter with a companion or two but that wasn't an option for a solo competitor. So I turned to Andy McNab, that doyen of the survival game and one of his audio books. In fact, whenever the s**t hits the fan in my outdoor life I often think, "what would Andy do now?!!!"

And now to the sleep deprivation induced dark times of the third night out...

Coming off the wall in the dark and heading North again, the terrain and navigation once again became difficult and there was a mix of bog, steep ground and miles of forest. My buddy David Riley had given me chapter and verse on the hallucinations he suffered on his full Spine races but I hadn't experienced any on the Challenger South the previous year. Well, the North was about to make up for it! It started with ghoulish faces in rocks and quickly progressed to bushes and tree stumps morphing into people and animals as I approached, to shrink back to reality after passing. The most disturbing was seeing the crazy looking 'banjo boy' from the film Deliverance rear up out of a tree to run alongside for a few seconds.

At other stages during both night and day, I was absolutely convinced that my sheepdog Gyp was with me and I kept turning around to check his progress. Thankfully for the old boy, he was safely tucked up in his basket at home with just his twice daily excursion up Pule Hill with Lizzie to stretch his legs. Should mention that he'd done plenty of shorter training runs with me through the Autumn but has had to throttle back considerably this year at the grand old age of nearly fourteen.

It was a long night getting from the wall to Check Point Three at Bellingham and it knocked the hell out of me on the lack of sleep front. A couple of times I just lay down in the heather and power napped which generally sorted things for an hour or so. After passing a couple of SST guys after a spell in the forest, there was a section over a low hill. Being pretty confused at this point and with the battery on my Garmin Fenix long gone, I had to map read this bit and went off course. At this point I was probably wandering around in circles and had to give myself a bit of a talking to. After equilibrium was restored, there was just one more dodgy moment on a river crossing plus a biggish climb before arriving dead on my feet at the checkpoint..

Bellingham seemed pretty civilised by comparison to the two previous CP's as there was plenty of room. However, it doesn't have beds so after an abortive attempt to sleep on a cold wood floor I sacked it off and set off in the dark up the long ascent from Bellingham to Abbey Rigg. The temperature was still subzero and the lack of sleep was making even the simple act of one foot after the other seem impossible. At about a thousand feet above the village I made the decision that I had to lie down and sleep so I rolled my bivvy bag with mat and sleeping bag out on the frost. After ringing Spine HQ to let them know I was stopping for an hour, the phone alarm was set and I climbed in. Zonk. Out like a light until the alarm tone of Arnold the Dog jolted me back into life again.

That hour's proper sleep was a massive tonic and I started picking up the pace by running again. Soon, I'd passed a few familiar faces such as Ralph and John who I'd seen on previous days and was starting to feel strong again in every aspect apart from the feet. Battering on towards Byrness it was actually starting to look like the finish might be possible – 'only' the notorious Cheviots to go till Kirk Yetholm...

Byrness was a boost as the staff were awesome. Food and drink were consumed and the medics had a look at my shredded feet. They admitted there wasn't much they could do now for them but whacked more KT tape on to hopefully do the last twenty six miles.

Climbing up onto the Cheviots in great weather again raised my spirits, particularly since I met John and Ralph again and enjoyed their excellent company for a couple of miles. Then I pulled ahead by running and just before Hut 1 came into view, night fell. Squeezing into Hut 1 for a brew and dried meal, I let Ralph and John catch up and set off ahead of me. I was confident I'd soon overhaul them again and we could maybe all finish together. But things were about to come apart...

On the climb from Hut 1 to Lamb Hill, there was a sudden, almost unbearable pain from under the left foot. No matter how carefully I put it down each step, it wouldn't let up. At one point I thought of back tracking to the hut but decided to man up and try to block it out with more pills. I got maybe a mile further and then I couldn't weight the foot at all. So out came the poles as a crutch again and some slow progress continued. My phone was on at this time although the battery was nearly dead and I saw a message from Paul Stapleton, my Spine Sprint buddy from 2023. It simply said, "Hut 1 now. Got this have we?"

I replied, "Left hut 1 but down to limp mode cos of horrendous blisters. Pain killers aren't working so it'll be a slow job. Struggling to do 1.5mph."

Paul did some sums in his head and came back with this.

"1.5mph is probably fast enough to get this bad boy done. You've got time."

It's a weird feeling being out on your own in the dark on a freezing hillside and yet knowing that someone miles away (Cornwall!) has got your back! So you need to crack on and not disappoint. But after another painfully slow mile it was obvious that something had to give. This ridiculous pain had to be investigated properly and a remedy found. There was no shelter from the ever increasing wind but I put my back to it and stripped off socks and shoes. In the light of the headtorch it was apparent that there was a raw, red wound and in the middle of it, the KT tape that had been put on at Byrness had come off, rolled up and was now embedded like a toothpick sticking out of the sticky flesh. Loads of dead skin matter was also stuck in there and the act of putting body weight on the whole shebang was causing the issue.

A couple of days prior to starting, I'd bought my last item of kit, a tiny Swiss Army knife called an Classic SD Allox. This now became an indispensable instrument of surgery and was absolutely instrumental to me finishing. As an ex foot health care professional, I never thought I'd be carving up my own foot but after excising the tape, some skin and a bit of flesh to reduce the pressure, I put the soaking socks back on followed by the shoe. Now was the test, to stand up...

Amazing! The pressure had gone and the pain level was now only the same as the other foot – well bearable. I got another ping on the phone from Paul.

"You OK big guy?"

"Had to take some skin away with knife – moving again..."

"Yes. Go get it now fella!"

I phoned Lizzie to tell her not to worry. She'd been dot watching right through the night and was nervously wondering why progress had stopped in the middle of nowhere.

There was now a vicious little descent to Hut 2 where a quick brew was waiting and the usual fantastic encouragement from the hardy staff. I have to admit, I thought it was all over bar the shouting at this point but that wasn't the case...

On the way in the dark again, the climb up to the summit of the Schil at nearly two thousand feet seemed interminable. And what's crazy is I was convinced I'd been there before – it was like I knew every twist and turn of the route. But Kim was talking about hallucinations three days earlier and said that déjà vu was a common experience too during sleep deprivation.

All the way up the Schil and down the other side, I 'knew' the route. But I couldn't have because I've never been there before! The wind strength on the exposed slopes must have been hitting seventy miles per hour and made my already wobbly progress even slower. Descending down the other side of The Schil, I tried to open a gate but it was pinned shut by the wind and I couldn't manage it. After climbing the fence with difficulty, there was now just a long morale sapping trog down a narrow valley which seemed to go on for ever. At one point I was swearing at the top of my voice at the unreasonableness of having to do this last bit – why was it necessary?

Just when I thought the soles of my feet couldn't put up with any more, headlights appeared, and with them a sight for sore eyes! It was my buddies Athers and Dredgey from Oldham MRT in a truck. "Just over a mile now Si – follow the road..."

The very last comic cut from the whole episode now kicked in. I'd seen headtorches behind me and got paranoid I was being caught (like it mattered!). So I started running, ignorant of the fact that the road was rising steeply uphill. After the guys had driven past, I speeded up and then peeked behind. Bloody hell, they're right on my shoulder now – cheeky sod! Running even faster now and ignoring the blinding misery of the sore feet, I was convinced that this interloper to my solo effort was going to pip me to the post. Round a corner lay Kirk Yetholm and the finish arch. Now I was running as fast as an old gimmer with shredded feet will ever run and as I crossed the line I looked behind to see... ...Nothing!

A skeleton crew were up to meet me – given the antisocial hour, I was grateful to see anyone to be honest! The photographer asked me to make the traditional kiss to the wall but I didn't feel I'd earned that right having just completed part of the Spine route. Maybe one day there'll be the chance to try the full deal and then we'll see...

So, there it goes, the Winter Spine MRT Challenger North. If you've read through this then you've probably endured more than I did but I wanted to get the experience down on paper before the memories faded.

The boys did a stellar job lifting me home and the only lasting fallout health-wise are the bruised, swollen and blistered feet. Not too bad a price to pay for a very unique experience...

Kudos is massively due to two colleagues in the team who also completed their respective events. Ruth Topham made a really strong finish in the Sprint, and the well known Colin Green came into Kirk Yetholm after nearly 162 hours of effort to put the full Winter Spine route to bed.

Quite a few folk have also asked about the kit used on the event – being an ex professional gear freak I'm happy to detail it in another post which I'll write soon.