

Trainee Challenge stage 2: Trek

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26 July 2019

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On Friday 12th July, an ambitious group of trainees finished work and set off from Browne Jacobson's London, Birmingham, Nottingham and Manchester offices and descended upon Monyash, a quiet scenic village in the Peak District.

Here we arrived at the YHA Hartington Hall where myself and Kerry Cahalane, who had travelled early in the afternoon from the Manchester office, enjoyed ice-creams and a lovely game of chess in the hostel grounds before venturing out to make friends with the local livestock. During the rest of the afternoon, our fellow trainees began to arrive in groups and we soon settled into our bunks and gathered for dinner, followed by a good night's rest.

We woke early the next morning and made our way down for a hearty breakfast. With our laces tightly fastened, our toes wrapped in blister plasters and our rucksacks packed with essentials (mainly food!), the nominated drivers drove to the starting line and we registered for Derbyshire's White Peak 26 mile trek. Looking before us, we could see the rolling hills stretching far into the distance and the magnitude of the challenge was overwhelming but there was no backing out now. Hundreds of runners and trekkers lined up for the 10 a.m. start and clutching our checkpoint cards, we rushed to join them, taking the opportunity to snap some pictures as we waited.

Suddenly the mass of trekkers migrated forward and the trek had begun. We watched as athletic runners jogged past with only a small pouch carrying essentials and wondered how much of the snacks we had packed were actually going to be eaten. Nevertheless it felt comforting to have it with us 'just in case'.

Excluding the start and finish, there were 8 checkpoints manned by volunteers, where we stamped our cards and gratefully accepted refreshments and biscuits. During the trek, the sight of a checkpoint table was so motivational and pushed us to maintain our pace. However we could not rest our feet for long as each checkpoint was timed and we had to reach them before they closed. After the 3rd checkpoint has passed, we learnt to peel off our rucksacks, re-hydrate, empty the stones from our walking boots and apply further blister plasters or pressure bandages to prevent more rubbing... although we knew by this point it was probably ineffective!

We pushed on in individual groups, trying not to lose sight of those ahead so we wouldn't have to navigate independently through the forests and fields. When we weren't looking at the ground to avoid standing in cow poo or wet mud, we took a few moments to reflect on the beauty of the Peak District, with its glorious patchwork of green and yellow. Some fields were full of grazing cows and sheep and we tentatively made our way through, swatting away the flies. On the way we met up with other trainees and trekkers, each sharing their own experiences and stories with us until we reached Checkpoint 8: Long Rake.

This for me, and many others, was the biggest hurdle. By this point we had been walking continuously for over 10 hours. Forcing myself to ignore my thoughts which were screaming at me to stop and rest, and urging my battered toes to continue with one step in front of the other, I was truly struggling to continue. The steep slope appeared never-ending and every time we reached what looked like the top, it continued into another swirl of uphill tarmac, demotivating me further. With heavy breathing, clenched fists and gritted teeth, I received well-timed outcries of motivation from Nikita Manro and Valentina Tosato telling me to push through. We all rallied each other and then

Nikita shouted that she saw a white table in the distance which indicated the final checkpoint and the end to this monstrous slope! With a second wind, we all sped to the checkpoint and crashed to the floor for a well-deserved break.

The last part of the trek would be a 3.3 mile 'downhill' walk back to Monyash Village Hall. Our spirits were raised as we neared the finish line and we held hands on our approach to the end. Bursting into a room full of applause and cheers we felt victorious and ever so proud for finishing the trek and handed over our cards to record our times. We were handed our certificates and badges and then ushered to a table to receive our pies and peas along with a cup of hot tea. The relief of our rucksacks being taken off our backs and the chance to sit down and take the weight off our feet was indescribable. We sat and laughed over various moments during the trek with others who had finished, breaking into applause and cheers every time another group of trekkers crossed the finishing line.

It was an amazing feat by everyone who took part in the 26 mile trek that weekend, not least to have done this for our brilliant office charities:

- [Edward's Trust](#)
- [Step One](#)
- [Praxis](#)
- [Coffee4Craig](#)
- [The Friary](#)

If you would like to donate then please do so through our [Local Giving Page](#).

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