

John Hewitt 21/8/1962 – 15/3/2018



From Ian Johnson:

My friend John Hewitt, of Glossopdale Harriers passed away on March 15th, aged 55.

He loved Jura and was so proud of his achievements in the Jura Race. I think it was the pinnacle of his racing career.

He first did the race in 2007 and only missed one year in 2008, doing it 9 times. Last year he made a huge effort, even getting permission to leave hospital, to be able to come one last time to his beloved island. He was ill with a brain tumour.

You may know that he was kindly allowed to do the first stage last year, with help from Rob Taylor and others. It meant so much to him and to his friends that he did that. He was such a strong man, a happy man, he loved the hills and the wild places, and had so many friends in running and elsewhere. His funeral is at the Manchester Crematorium, 2pm Tuesday 24th April.

I wonder if it might be possible to put a short note about his death on the website. If you wish or if appropriate I can provide more details. The photo is of him proudly wearing his first Jura T shirt in 2007.



John at Ben Nevis, 2013

Ian adds:

John was born in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, and went to University in Manchester, where he stayed for the remainder of his life.

Always a keen mountain walker, John began fell racing in 2002.

John had always loved the wild, rugged and untamed landscapes. His favourite races in the Peak District were the Trigger (Marsden to Edale, John said 'you can't call yourself a fell runner until you've done the Trigger'), and the Hayfield Championship Series races, amongst which favourites were The Kinder Trog and Kinder Downfall races. In the Lakes he liked the challenge of The Old County Tops and the Hodgson Brothers Mountain Relay Race. He won a number of prizes in the Vet 40 and 50 categories.

He was inspired by the ruggedness of Scotland and did as many races there as logistically possible.

Around 2016 he was proud to have completed the Scottish Long Classics Series.

One gruelling weekend he and three Glossopdale friends completed both the Arrochar Alps and Lairig Gru races, fuelled by a shared bottle of whisky in the tent in between races. John particularly enjoyed races which were part of a Highland Games meeting, On one occasion, he was running back into the finish area, which was still being used by a Pipe Band marching in formation. John weaved amongst them, shouting at them in his booming voice to get out of the way!

At the Creag Dhubh Race he ran, sampled whisky and feeling ravenous, entered the Haggis Eating contest He wolfed down the haggis in a winning time, beating off some sturdy local competition!

In 2013 he did the Ben Nevis Race, in a time of 2hrs 9 minutes. He also did the LAMM on numerous occasions. At the end of April 2017, John was diagnosed with a brain tumour. Despite this, he managed to walk to the LAMM half-way stage, and camp overnight and enjoy the company of friends.

However it was The Isle of Jura, with its majestic wildness, rugged mountains and white sandy beaches that he loved the most. John first went there in 2007, did the race, and walked all over this beautiful island. From then on he was hooked, he did it every year, except 2008. His best time was in 2012 with 4 hours 36 minutes.

In May last year John was in hospital in Manchester. He was determined to make it to Jura come what may, even if he had to discharge himself from hospital. In the end they agreed to let him go. It is thanks to John's friend Julie and others, that he was able to get to Jura. It was a huge effort for him, both mentally and physically. He was tired out.

Just to be on his beloved island one last time meant everything to him. Then thanks to the organisers and the help of Rob Taylor, Julian and Jasmin, he was able to complete the first stage with his Glossopdale kit and race number.

The last time he ever 'raced'. The abbreviation – 'dnf' in the results table, belie such effort and bravery. [Has now been altered to 'started and finished']



John and Rob Taylor at CP1, May 25th, 2017

Below is first-hand text from Julie Eyre who was always in the Jura party - and was a marshal last year.

Julie Eyre writes:

We always went to the whisky tasting, usually on the Thursday, the day before we left, and that would be a very leisurely day for us all, usually slightly overdoing it on the tasting!

Being on Jura with John was like being at a big party the night before the race, and the night after. Our little cottage - Heatheryknowe - is 5 minutes walk from the distillery, the race start line, and the campsite. Friday night was always 'pre race pasta night' and John would invite everyone he knew, and more, and we would improvise with cutlery, crockery and seating in order to accommodate up to 20 people, in a cottage that normally accommodated maybe 4-6. John also invited everyone to come and use our bathroom, so, especially if the weather wasn't great, we would have people turning up on the doorstep after the race, covered in mud and holding a towel, desperate for a hot shower!

Saturday nights would be the same dinner arrangement, with the addition of a bottle of Jura whisky, usually donated by Jasmin from her race winnings!

Sunday mornings were usually pretty sociable - John would be 'spent' from his race efforts so, especially on sunny mornings, we would be hanging out on our 'front lawn', drinking tea and chatting. A lot of runners would wander up and join us. Our shopping for Jura always included large quantities of teabags, and tea was always made in a teapot!

Last year was my first year as an official marshal - prior to that I had 'helped out' at Three Arch Bridge. Last year I was on Check point 1. I didn't think John was going to run but whilst up there I got a message from one of our group telling me John's race number. The runners came through CP1 at regular intervals and eventually we were missing just two runners - one was John and the other was Rob Taylor. Through binoculars we could see John, Rob Taylor, Julien Minshull and Jasmin Paris (plus Moss the collie) walking up the race route. The race organisers had agreed to let Rob accompany John. It was tough watching John struggle but he made it to CP1, which had been his aim. He rested there for some time, taking on food and drink. Rob was allowed to continue on with the race, even though he was 'timed out' at that stage, and I walked back down the race route with John, Julien and Jasmin. He struggled going down too but he was tough and wasn't going to give up. We were all very proud of him.

John was funny, strong-willed, generous and loyal. He loved the challenge and the



camaraderie of fell racing. It is no exaggeration to say he was addicted to it. He is sorely missed by his many friends from all walks of life, and by his father Desmond. A fell race has

been named in his honour, the Jura trips will continue and many a glass of Jura whisky will be raised in his memory.

From Graham Arthur:

This is very sad news, and we knew it was inevitable. Personally, I was immensely privileged to have met John when he came to Jura last year, 2017, and it was wonderful talking to him. I had not previously known him, but later on, looking at his hill racing record, was mightily impressed. Later on last year, we had an even more interesting chat at the LAMM, when he filled me in on a lot of what he had done in the past. He was very lucid, and you would never have suspected his illness.

Our condolences to John's family and friends – he would have had many.