

Walk/Run 6 – Saturday 4th Stretton Hills (Shropshire) skyline including the Longmynd, Ragleth, Willstone and the Caradoc. 1490m climbed, cumulative 6,606m



Jim Macgregor

Today at 7:04 AM · Shropshire Hills AONB, England

Walk/run 6 of Jim's 50,000m at fifty Stretton hills



Distance	Elevation Gain
19.67 km	1,490 m

Moving Time	Steps
3:12:05	24,898

Calories	Avg Heart Rate
1,682 Cal	129 bpm

[View Analysis](#)

An unexpected visit to see my mum in Shropshire gave me the opportunity to get a run in on the beautiful Stretton Hills. I was born in Shrewsbury and spent a really happy first 20 years of my life growing up in All Stretton. I was never a child who was bored (My mums quote was always “only boring people get bored!”) Well growing up me and my mates used to get out into the hills so much and make up our own games. When I wasn’t with them I would often take myself up into the hills either with our family dog or my bmx. I was probably the fittest ever when I was 14 with 3 paper rounds in Church Stretton and each included hills.

Well back to the run I decided I was going to set off around 7am to save taking my headtorch with me. The longmynd is a large plateau with deeply incised valleys into it. My plan was to go up and down 4 valleys near to their entrance to gain maximum height. Setting off from my mums home with Ruby (my search & rescue pointer) we quickly got into a rhythm. I love it when I am blowing steam going up a steep hill and she looks back at me with a quizzical face. I never tell her this, but stopping for selfies is great for the blog, but also allows a sneaky rest while I scale the hills.



Me and Ruby climbing out of Cardingmill Valley

From Cardingmill Valley (a “National Trust” valley destroyed by signs everywhere) we climbed steeply to cross the Burway. This is a steep road, not for the faint hearted. Last year I took part in a brutal race that ran up and down the road. Stretton 10km they advertised it and not checking the route before I thought it would be good exercise. I challenge anyone to have a go at the race for the lung busting effort, but also how beautiful the area is.

We then crossed down into Townbrook Hollow and up Yearlet. At this point both me and Ruby were feeling it a bit so a swig of juice for me and some left over pork rind for Ruby and we are all set again. Running this route on the Longmynd means no footpaths so I was uber cautious not to twist my ankle with Mt Toubkal only two weeks away. After dropping into Ashes Valley we ascended up the other side for our last climb of the Longmynd to Grindle Hill. This was where we met our first person of the day who was powering up the Mynd with his two sticks. He seemed a very cheery chap.



Myself and Ruby on Grindle Hill with Yearlet behind and Willstone and Caradoc in the background.

Traversing through Little Stretton which is a pretty village (although obviously not as nice as my home village) Ragleth looms above you. The last time I went up here was with 3 strangers on the Longmynd Hike which is a 50mile race. Ragleth was the last hill of the hike and in the dark my fellow racers had to wait for me as I was blowing quite badly. Today seemed much easier and we reached the summit in no time.

There is then a small piece of road around Hazler Hill and down to Gearstones farm. It is clear with both the time of day and proximity to population, that I start to meet lots more people. Ruby is doing much better today and unusually for her, has conserved her energy early on. Still time to squeeze in a few dog biscuits and enjoy the views from Willstone which is the opposite side to the Longmynd, on the Stretton Valley. The view starts to go hazy as the rain rolls in from the West. We are now over the 10mile mark and although I feel I am gradually getting fitter with the challenge, I am still certainly feeling it. The last climb is up Caradoc or to give it its proper name Caer Caradoc. It certainly is a lump of a hill and probably my favourite. Its summit is to the NE at 459m with a great ridge extending down to Church Stretton. Just time to send some photos to my mum as a photo quiz to see if she could work out where I had been. We met a few fell runners now and all were getting a bit of weekend practise in.

Descending down the ridge brought a smile to my face of a distant memory. When my Gran was over 80 she wanted to go up the Caradoc. So we got permission off Steve (the land owner) and I took my 80 year old gran up on the back of my Scrambler. All going really well until I had a slight mishap! While she was at the summit with my mum enjoying the view I thought I would take the motorbike down the hill, seeing I had permission. Riding back up the ridge I forgot a certain sloping rock and catapulted over it bending the handle bars. Not ideal when your 80 year old gran is marooned at the top. Well a quick yank of the handle bars aligned the wheel again (admittedly quite loose) the mission was successfully completed.

The last mile was an easy back to my mums house and even had time to wave at the train heading down to South Wales. I am probably most pleased so far with my knee and how it is holding up. Must make sure I don't get carried away and start to push it too much.



Myself and Ruby on the summit of Caradoc, clearly feeling the effects of this effort which I am nick naming "Ben Nevis before breakfast"

Walk/Run 7 – Saturday 11th Laxey, Clagh Ouyr, Snaefell & Mullagh Ouyr 1006m climbed, cumulative 7,612m



Well back on the Island and I knew it would happen sometime by getting ill, but certainly didn't expect it to happen so soon. In the last week I have come down with a chest infection and am on a 7 day course of antibiotics. Although restless for a lot of the night before and coughing really badly, Svet turns up at 7.00am and its game on for another climb!

The night before I left my van at Bungalow (Where the trams cross the TT Course) and took my mountain bike down the rough track of Laxey Valley. While focusing on getting the height in, I am aware of going too far with distance and how long my knee will hold out.

It was a much milder morning this morning so the two of us set off with Ruby my pointer. I have also now learnt to take additional food for Ruby in case she needs the extra energy boost. It's in Ruby's nature to hunt and she is quartering the hillside. Me and Svet discussed how far extra she was doing and maybe we should track her with a GPS sometime. I know my old search dog Star used to often run about 3 times the amount I did when we used to do exercises searching.

Even with the chest infection we actually ran up the Minorca Hill and the Gretchvane Lane in Laxey without stopping this time. Again I pose the question "Maybe I am getting fitter?" With no snow around this time it seemed much easier and I estimate we were about 30mins ahead of ourselves by Snaefell. Again the icy blast hit us on Clagh Ouyr, but we have got used to not hanging around up there.

Coming off Snaefell out of the mist was quite magical and discussions came to how much further to do. I now know when I'm done and ruled out an extra climb to Beinn-y-Phott much to Svet's amusement who in no uncertain terms insisted he could "get my arse up there!" Not today Svet. We avoided my comfy van, running past and did a final up and down Mullagh Ouyr to just tip it over the 1000m mark which I was very chuffed with. The drive back

down the mountain was bliss with my favourite tippie of full fat Coke. I have built up a bit of a reputation at Civil Defence for drinking it and then going a little crazy. Well there are worse things out there!



Myself and Svet with the Gretchvane Lane behind descending into Laxey.

Walk/Run 8 – Tuesday 21st Col & Summit above Imlil, Morocco 1009m climbed, cumulative 8,621m



Jim Macgregor

February 21, 2023 at 9:43 AM · Asni, Morocco

Morocco day 1. Walk 8 of Jim's 50,000m at Fifty

Not possible to do Toubkal due to heavy snow and Avalanche risk but a good day hiking in the Atlas mountains



Distance	Elevation Gain
15.26 km	1,009 m
Moving Time	Steps
2:40:41	12,066
Calories	Avg Heart Rate
1,460 Cal	99 bpm

Well firstly you may notice a bit of a break with the challenge. A long silly story but lesson learnt is don't try and run with Steel toe capped boots = Calf muscle pulled. This was going to put my whole Morocco trip in jeopardy and required me to be bed bound for 4 days prior to the trip. With proper rest, a lot of KT tape to strap my calf muscle up and borrowing a calf support bandage, I thought I would give it a go.

We set off Monday lunchtime just the two of us (Myself and Johnnie from Civil Defence). To say we were like bunnies in headlights when we arrived at the guest house

Monday Night is an understatement. Neither of us ever having visited Africa before! We were quickly given the bad news that it would not be possible to climb Toubkal (The highest mountain in North Africa) due to crazy amounts of snow and an avalanche risk. This then resulted in a few days lower level trekking. The other point to make is that it is compulsory to have a guide after the tragic murder of two Scandinavian Women in 2018.

Tuesday morning we met our guide Mohammad. His favourite saying is “this is life” which was quite a philosophical outlook and one which soon got us over our disappointment. Imlil is already at a height of 1,800m and even so the touring peaks above us looked very



Myself and Johnnie at the start of the first trek.

Impressive. The sun was out, snow on the ground and even got overtaken by a donkey! We also were joined by a young German lad who Mohammad insisted walked with us as he did not have a guide. Coming out of the valley we watched from a distance a village elder being buried. Soon after there was a really strong smell of Juniper bushes which surrounded the slopes. We reached the Coll only to find the speedy donkey already there delivering fresh oranges to a make-shift café that was selling fresh juice and tea to the tourists. Berber tea is certainly very sweet but welcomed after a steep climb. Myself, Johnnie and the German lad climbed another 200m to a nearby peak while our guide socialised down at the café. The walk down was uneventful apart from meeting lots of other tourists also disappointed not to get the chance to climb Toubkal. We did walk through the village where the wake for the funeral was taking place and quickly realised how many people our guide actually knows! “This is life”



Speedy Donkey.



Towards the summit.



Looking up at the summit.



Neighbours house!

Walk/Run 9 – Wednesday 22nd New summit above Imlil, Morocco 820m climbed, cumulative 9,441m



Well after an evening of walking around Imlil gradually getting used to people constantly hassling to sell you things, we ate our daily obligatory Tangine and then slept early by 9.00pm after the days efforts. After the usual breakfast of warm bread, jam, boiled egg and cheese with sweet tea we set off for our second trek. Probably the most frustrating thing was this was supposed to be summit day of Toubkal. The weather was clear and bright with no wind and Toubkal was there teasing us as we set off.

We wished good well to the German lad that Mohammad had managed to persuade to pay for a night in our guest house. We climbed steeply out of the village. Probably the most surprising thing is how anyone knows where to go. Around the houses are a maze of little alleys with an amazing irrigation system of concrete channels which supply the walnut and olive trees. The aim today was to climb up a long ridge to a slightly lower summit today and then descend on another ridge through Mohammad's village of Aroumd and back. This was certainly preferred over the out and back route.

Half the ridge was still covered in snow and we could see where trees had been planted in the National Park to try and stop the advance of the Sahara Desert. The main thing that hit us today was how quiet it was where Mohammad took us. All the other tourist seemed to decide to take a route up a road for 2 hours to reach another peak so Mohammad certainly made the right call for us!

The last 100m climb above the snow, Mohammad again let us do our own thing. Passing strange nests in the trees we waded through melting snow to reach the top. This gave us uninterrupted views of the high Atlas Mountains. After a few photos I had decided to take my waterproof trousers with me and both of us slid down the snow like kids back to Mohammad, partly as it was easier but also can you really take the kid out of us?



Deep snow with Atlas Mts.



Strange birds nests.



At our summit for the day

On the steep descent we met our first goat herder. The agility and fitness of these blokes is to behold and they do this each day! We passed young kids taking their old set of skis up to the rocky slopes for a bit of after school fun. Now I must confess my main fear in life in snakes. Well Mohammad stumbled on a rock on the path and carried on only to disturb a 3ft long snake behind him. I would like to say I was brave but I wasn't!



Descending into Aroumd (pictured) we were met with another typical Berber village. It is clearly quite a basic way of life and Johnnie was often shocked by the construction techniques and safety of the buildings. Mohammad took us to the "big house" where his mate gave us tea and then expected us to buy a carpet or one of his wares. More haggling again and we do now feel like we have started to get the idea of this as nothing ever has prices on it.

Walking back into Imlil we met an American from Montana who was hoping to climb Toubkal. Another great opportunity for Mohammad to get some more work/money from the hapless tourist!

We explained to Mohammad that Thursday night we were staying in Marrakech and in no rush to get there. Che-Ching, Mohammad offered to guide us for another day with lunch for 500 Dirhams each (About £40 each). Well we both agreed we would rather trek in mountains than spend too long with city life, so Mohammad was hired for another day. After more sweet tea and Johnnie having a cut throat shave for £3 we were left shattered after our day. After again the obligatory Tangine for supper. "That is life"

Walk/Run 10 – – Wednesday 22nd New footpath above Imlil and down to Aguersioual, Morocco 745m climbed, cumulative 10,186m



Since Covid and with Toubkal being closed more often, the area has decided to dig new paths into the mountain sides for tourists and locals to take lower level routes. We were told there were gangs of 20 who would use hand tools to dig the paths. Sometimes they could do 60m in a day but often only about 15m, especially when working through tough granite!

We set off steeply up the hill having packed out bags that were going to be picked up by the taxi later. Not long into the route we were over taken by three local men and a woman who were off to the next village 10miles away! All had normal shoes on and no water which makes you feel a little silly with hiking boots, walking poles and a 35ltr rucksack.

The track was built wide enough for the obligatory donkeys that some tourist pay extra to have a rather posh lunch in the middle of nowhere with amazing views. We reached our highest point and with my desire to do a minimum 600m in the day, Mohammad sat down again and allowed us to scale a further 200m above him. Little bit like groundhog day I guess. Well it was worth it at the top and after a short break we descended for what seemed ages until we came to the outskirts of another Berber village. Mohammad had arranged for a meal (Tangine and salad) and we ate out looking at the amazing views. Passing through further villages we eventually reached the main road and waited for our taxi.

Mohammad had been dropping hints all afternoon as to how nice our outdoor gear was. Think it works with a lot of people but neither me or Johnnie were prepared to give up our

coats! “This is life”. After giving him his tip of 60 Euro we were taken by taxi for 1.5 hours down to Marrakech. The hotel was great but after just an hour of snake charmers, performing monkeys and the craziness of the souks where every line under the sun is used to get you to buy things we retreated to the hotel. We both agreed the whole trip was quite an experience but most likely, a one off experience!



Near the summit and on top.

Obligatory Tangine.

Old Berber Village



Final evening in Marrakech, finishing the trip just like we started “Bunnies in headlights!”

Walk/Run 101 – – Sunday 26th Walk Laxey to bungalow and then the Snaefell and tholtans race 1105m climbed, cumulative 11,291m

Jim Macgregor
 Yesterday at 8:14 AM · Laxey, Garff

Walk run 11. Of Jim's 50,000m at fifty
 Walk up from Laxey and then Snaefell and Tholtans fell race

Distance	Elevation Gain
16.58 km	1,105 m
Moving Time	Steps
2:50:57	20,250
Calories	Avg Heart Rate
1,590 Cal	116 bpm

Back on the Island again I decided with a bit of extra fitness from Morocco I would have a go at the 3rd fell race of the season. To gain a bit more height and because it was such a cracking morning I decided to walk up to Bungalow which from my house in Laxey is around 400m elevation. It was a cold morning with ice in the sheltered spots. With only occasional sheep and cattle for company I quickly reached the TT course where signing on for the race was taking place.

The fell races are categorised short, medium or long. This was only a short race with around 10km of running although not on footpaths, just rough moorland and with a 600m elevation of climbing. Lots of people were attempting the short and the long race. I was considering taking my walking poles on the race with me as my calf muscle was still strained! After a few strange looks I decided to ditch them and joined the start line. Usually in races most runners head in the same direction but this was not a usual race and the pack split 50:50 right at the start. With hindsight I would say going left was quicker although I chose right! This was not my only faux par of the day. There is a word called a recce where runners practise before they do the event. I would always recommend this and next time I might consider taking my own advice.

Me and Svet made very steady progress and recognised a few runners who would usually be quite a way behind us. Thrashing through rough gorse was certainly not a good plan. It still made for an enjoyable race and although the legs were heavy from the trekking I was still pleased how our efforts paid off. A massive jump of two places from the last race!

70	3	1:28:43	Svetlin	Krastev	MSEN	Manx Fell Runners
71	83	1:28:43	Jim	Macgregor	M40	Northern (Isle of Man) AC

