



Chevy Chase (20Mile)

1st July 2023

I vowed never to do this race again but here I am making my way up Wooler for the start of another (my 4th) Chevy Chase. For those that are not aware of the race it starts in Wooler, goes uphill for 7.8 miles or so to Cheviot (2675ft), then a sharp 1-mile descent, then up again to the top of Hedgehope (2349ft) then a run downhill (mostly) all the way back to the finish at Wooler

I would like to say it's all Steven French's fault but he merely entered it and I thought why the hell not, it will be good training for my Lap of Windermere in September.

I was surprised to see it had been 5 years since I last did this race, just long enough to forget how flipping tough it is.

The forecast was for dry and warm weather, not too hot thankfully but as an added fun factor it was supposed to have 40 – 50 mph winds an hour into the race, more on this later.

After a relaxed drive up to Wooler with the odd rapid overtaking manoeuvre we arrived at the designated parking area, got our kit together, and made our way to registration at Wooler youth hostel. The walk to registration was a hilly affair in itself!

Upon arriving at the hostel it was lovely to see Jon French and his wife Ruth with their two dogs. We quickly registered, got our number and electronic tag, had a quick loo visit, an obligatory prerace photo then off to the start we went, a short 5 min walk away.



The start itself is on the road on the outskirts of Wooler, on a hill of course, it's a relatively small race with a couple of hundred starters and at 10am we were off, on tarmac to start for the first mile before a gentle left turn into the hills.

Steven's legs really don't like a hilly start to a race, he gets quite a lot of pain in his calves so we took it very steady and stuck together so that steves legs could loosen off. Within the second mile, we were walking up the first of many steep hills towards the farmhouse at mile 1.5. It was at this point Steven made the very wise and rather tough decision to pull out of the race as his legs were no better and not loosening off at all. We bid him a sad farewell and Jon and I headed up towards Cheviot.

Jon and I chased down and passed several runners, running and walking to save our strength and catch our breath and we made good progress to the foot of the last steep bit up to Cheviot.

It was around here we bumped into Graeme Hare, an old running buddy who has his own running youtube channel ([\(499\) Northern Fell Running - YouTube](#)), great to see another familiar face.

Jon was really strong on the hills having done quite a bit of walking in the Lakes of late and this was the last I saw of him to till the finish as he strode up Cheviot.

Now I mentioned that it was due to be rather windy and as we made our way higher up our little mountain it certainly made its presence felt. It's tough enough walking up the last mile to the summit with the gradient getting as steep as 32% but the wind just made it that much tougher. It took over 26 minutes to do that singular mile. Once we finally crested the top we ran along the big stone slabs to the 3rd checkpoint, barely managing to stay on our feet, hats off to the marshalls braving the weather at this point!



After the checkpoint it was a jink left and now came the tricky bit, the very steep bit down Cheviot to the little stream at the bottom. I hate this bit. Having learned from past experiences I saved my quads as best I could and really took my time coming down, some of it sliding down on my backside as it's almost impossible to stay on your feet in parts, with the steepest gradient peaking at -45% and dropping 1200 feet in the 1 mile decent.

Having finally got to the bottom in one piece, and without turning my ankle so far, it was not time to traverse the stream and make the way up through the heather to Hedgehope. It was mostly walking to the top of Hedgehope but I managed to get a few places back from those that passed me on the descent from Cheviot. From the stream up to the halfway point at Hedgehope it is an 850ft climb over 1.5miles, and it's a slog that took me 33 minutes to do. Just before the last steep but the wind really kicked in with some rain and I grabbed my waterproof, eventually managed to get it on and then headed up the last bit. It was really rather wild at this point but with the wind now on our backs it was actually a help to get up the hill. The next checkpoint was at the top of Hedgehope with the wind nearly knocking us off our feet, I really felt for the marshalls!

Normally I would take a breather at the top and grab some food and a little rest, but not today, it was straight on and down the other side, to get out of the wind and rain asap. Whilst coming down Hedgehope isn't quite as steep, it is still a nightmare. I remember the first time I did this race my quads were so ruined from coming down Cheviot I had Doms on the same day! Which meant the journey down Hedgehope was really rather painful. But I do learn. I took it really easy, walking most of the way down whilst a good number of people ran past me. At the bottom of Hedgehope, I removed my rainjacket, got a quick bite to eat and sat for a couple of minutes then got up and cracked on.

At this point, I had just over 7 miles to go and now it was time to get this done and finished. Whilst it was still a bit steep in places going down I had saved my quads from the worst of it and was able to run at a decent pace. Again I caught up with and passed most of those who had passed me on the descent and a few more besides. As I ran past a couple of lads I heard a shout from behind me "he's saved his legs!" I simply replied "Yup " and kept going.

I caught up with Graeme Hare at the 14/15 mile mark, he had zoomed away from me on the descent of Cheviot and bless him he was struggling with a lot of cramp, thankfully I had a couple of salt tablets spare so I gave him a couple in the hope that they would help. I ran with Graeme for a little while but he told me to go, so after humming and harring a bit, not wanting to leave him, I made sure he was ok and ran on.

I finally got to Carey Burn and then ran/walked along the river to the point where we rejoined the out route. It was quite tricky along this path in parts, having to use my hands several times to clamber over rocks. I was starting to struggle a bit now but it was time for the sting in the tail, the Hell path, which we had run down early in the race. It's a

half-mile incline gaining 250ft to just over the 17-mile point at the top. This was tough. But once at the top, it's only 2.5 miles to the finish and after passing the last checkpoint I pushed on again, trying to catch a few more runners.

I was trying to catch one more gent from NFR as we ran back down the trail and then back onto the road but I was more or less done, I did close him down but he had enough to keep me at bay. It was great to see Steven just before the turn to the finish line then it was back along the little path to the finish.



At the end of the little path, it's a sharp little hairpin to the finish line, I barely stayed on my feet trying to get around! Then it was over, I hand over my electronic tag and got my time and position printed out, I was quite chuffed to get under 5 hours. I then saw Jon and Ruth and gave Jon a big hug, I was so chuffed he had managed to finish as his last 2 tries at this event had ended in DNFs. Turns out he did a cracking time too!.

I then got my goodie bag and t-shirt then wandered inside for a cup of tea. A nice surprise was that we also got some chips! (I had forgotten!) so I grabbed my little cornet of them, slathered them with salt and tomato sauce and joined Jon and Ruth on a chair they had managed to get. I was so very grateful for the sit-down! Best tasting chips ever as well!

I was just so very grateful to have gotten to the end without hurting myself, I did go over on my ankle a couple of times but thankfully not too badly and was able to run them off.

I was glad Steven had made it back ok, and thankfully his legs had returned to normal and managed a decent little walk whilst waiting for us to get back.

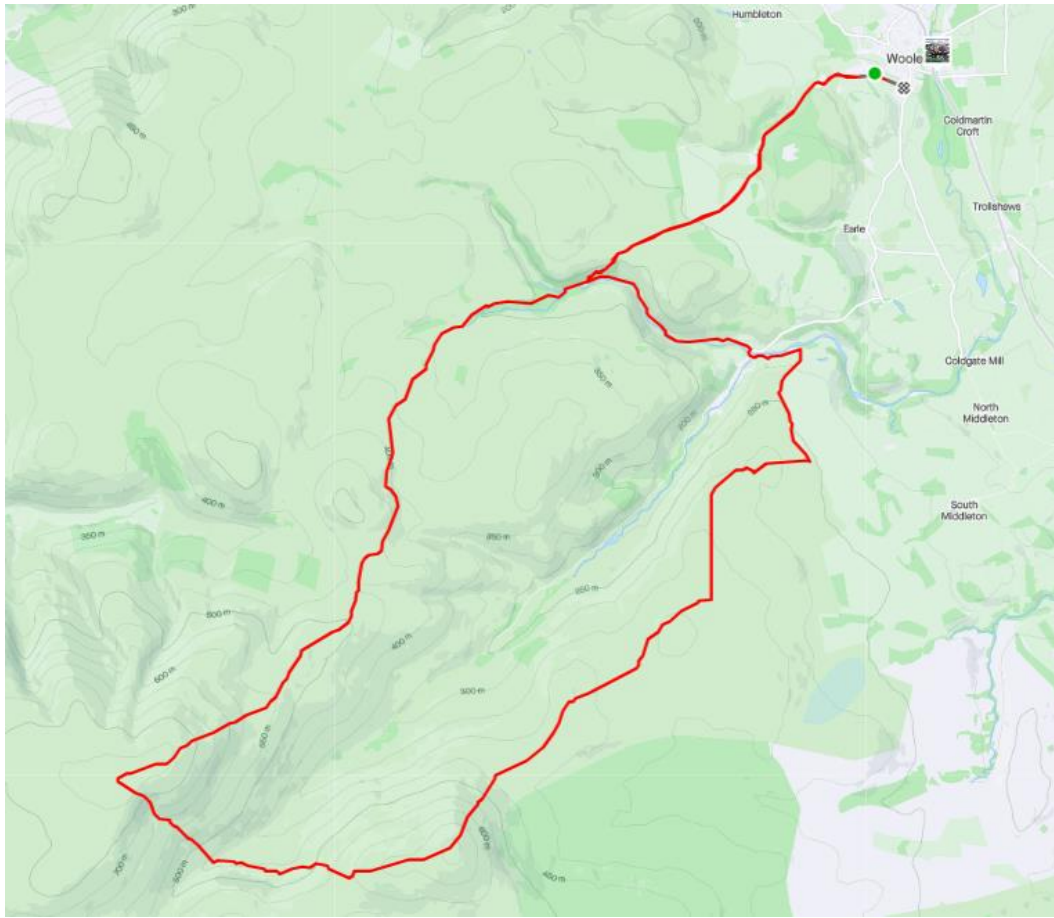
So, would I do it again? Probably not, maybe.....

Thanks for reading (results, map and relief below), total number of finishers 172.

Steve D

All

Pos	No.	Name	Team	Category	Time	Behind	Local	1 Broadstruther	2 Cheviot Knee	3 Cheviot	4 Hedgehope	5 Langlee Craggs	6 Brands Corner	7 Hell Path	Finish
57th	100	Jon French	Blyth Running Club	MV40	04:13:13	+01:34:17		00:46:52 127th=	00:28:32 82nd=	00:33:54 60th	00:43:38 42nd	00:24:51 41st	00:15:51 22nd	00:38:50 50th	00:20:45 39th
								00:46:52 127th=	01:15:24 109th	01:49:18 91st	02:32:56 67th	02:57:47 61st	03:13:38 60th	03:52:28 59th	04:13:13 57th
106th	142	Steve Dobby	Blyth Running Club	MV50	04:48:37	+02:09:41		00:46:54 129th=	00:28:46 87th	00:39:09 122nd	00:58:20 153rd	00:32:37 116th	00:17:45 53rd	00:42:59 85th	00:22:07 58th
								00:46:54 129th=	01:15:40 111th	01:54:49 113th	02:53:09 125th	03:25:46 124th	03:43:31 111th	04:26:30 108th	04:48:37 106th



Splits

Mile	Pace	GAP	Elev
1	11:05 /mi	9:51 /mi	171 ft
2	13:20 /mi	10:04 /mi	343 ft
3	11:43 /mi	10:30 /mi	-55 ft
4	11:19 /mi	9:23 /mi	255 ft
5	14:46 /mi	10:45 /mi	382 ft
6	14:54 /mi	11:50 /mi	272 ft
7	21:14 /mi	12:04 /mi	611 ft
8	17:39 /mi	11:51 /mi	-1 ft
9	17:44 /mi	13:41 /mi	-824 ft
10	21:44 /mi	12:17 /mi	644 ft
11	16:04 /mi	10:46 /mi	-748 ft
12	9:57 /mi	10:11 /mi	-144 ft
13	13:16 /mi	12:56 /mi	-73 ft
14	9:28 /mi	9:31 /mi	-148 ft
15	10:04 /mi	10:29 /mi	-406 ft
16	13:13 /mi	12:36 /mi	-114 ft
17	16:42 /mi	13:38 /mi	241 ft
18	10:38 /mi	10:08 /mi	-49 ft
19	9:42 /mi	10:00 /mi	-250 ft
0.59	8:50 /mi	9:24 /mi	-141 ft

