



RUNNING INT' FELS EXHIBITION: CELEBRATING EVERY FELL RUNNER

REVIEWED BY
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Based at the Armit Museum in Ambleside, Running Int' Fells is an exploration of Lake District fell running. Not just focused on what is often referred to as the "golden age" of fell running, it looks at the evolution of fell running right through to its present-day and its significance in the Lake District. Exhibits include an array of fell running gear and technologies, trophies and medals, photography from the people who run on the fells, routes and maps and a whole host more. Looking through the gallery, it is amazing to see just how much fell running has changed, yet, at the same time, how it has stayed the same.

I was invited to the opening of the exhibition, alongside a whole host of runners, photographers and people who had given up their time to help this show come to life. The day of the launch, Valentine's Day, seemed appropriate for it was certain that, one way or another, everyone in the room loved running in the fells. I myself have loved fell running ever since I pulled on a set of studded shoes in an attempt to move on from the stagnation I felt while walking in the hills. On arrival at the gallery, I was unsure what to expect. I wondered how much a not-very-good fell runner such as myself could relate to this exhibition. Would it just focus on the giants of the sport, the Joss Naylor and Billy Blands of the world? Would it be heavy on achievements, records and triumphs on the fells? Would your run-of-the-mill fell runner be able to glimpse themselves in these exhibits?

The simple answer was yes, they could (well, at least I could and I am about as average as you can get). While there was the expected mix of awards: cabinets of medals, trophies, a massive shield and, for some reason, a winner's kettle, there was plenty for me, as someone who doesn't even own a kettle let alone having won one, to relate to. Alongside the hallmarks of success and triumph, there were routes of current races, races that I had done or was due to compete in. I did not feel like I was looking at something great from the outside, but that I was part of something great myself.

In a gallery filled to bursting with fell running history and memorabilia, by far the most poignant exhibit for me, was a wall filled with images

of people running in the fells. Everyday pictures, not people racing or completing rounds, just out on the fells for the joy of being there. Each one of the images, captured in a single moment, was a snapshot of a magical day out, and a whole host of mountain days that lead to that moment. The beautiful landscapes and the joy-suffused faces showed the real passion for the sport, and that whoever you are, just getting out and running on the fells is an achievement to be celebrated.

I left the show and did what felt most appropriate: I went for a run in the fells. In the cold and the dark, I thought of the exhibition, of all the hours that were put in, all the people who had given up time to help make it what it was. The work of Pete Todhunter, as well as the team at Running Int' Fells, had really come together to create something special. I thought of what impact it would have. I knew it would interest current runners, but could it also inspire people to take to the fells for the first time?

For a sport that involves just running up and down a hill, there's quite a lot to it.

Running Int' Fells can be visited at the Armit Museum in Ambleside until December 2024, visit armitt.com for more information and opening times.



OPPOSITE PAGE: A shot from inside the exhibition © James Kirby

RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM: Some of the old fell running equipment on display; guests admiring some of the photographs; Peter Todhunter and a representative from the Armit Museum formally opening the exhibition © James Kirby