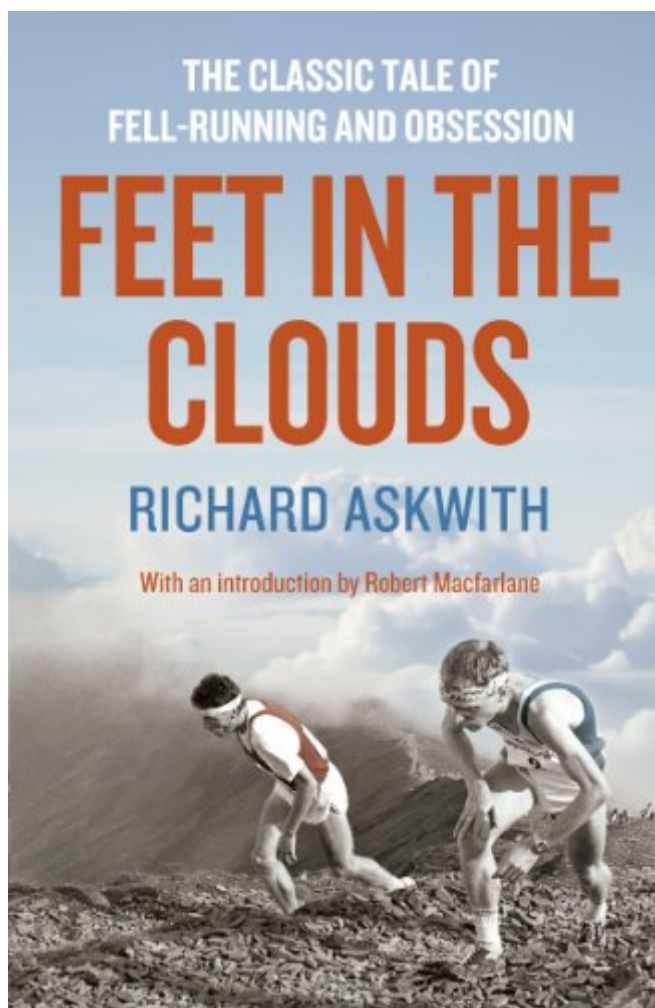


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Feet In The Clouds: A Tale Of Fell-running And Obsession



Synopsis

Nearly 10 years after its first publication, Aurum are re-issuing this classic running book which has defined a genre. It includes an introduction from bestselling author Robert Macfarlane and an epilogue from Richard Askwith. The concept of fell-running is simple: it's a sport that involves running over mountains; sometimes one, sometimes many. It's also immensely demanding. While running uphill is a stamina-sapping slog, running pell-mell down the other side requires the agility and even recklessness of a mountain goat. And there's the weather to contend with. It may make the sports pages only rarely, but in areas like the Lake District and Snowdonia fell-running is the basis of a whole culture; indeed, race organisers sometimes have to turn competitors away so that fragile mountain uplands are not irrevocably damaged by too many thundering feet. Fixtures like the annual Ben Nevis and Snowdon races attract runners from all over Britain, and beyond. Others, such as the Wasdale and Ennerdale fell runs in the Lakeland valleys; gruelling marathons of more than 20 miles; remain truly local events for which the whole community turns out, with many of the runners back on the same fells the next day tending sheep. Now, Richard Askwith explores the world of fell-running in the only legitimate way: by donning his Ron Hill vest and studded shoes to spend a season running as many of the great fell races as he can, from Borrowdale to Ben Nevis: an arduous schedule that tests the very limits of one's stamina and courage. Over the months he also meets the greats of fell-running; like the remarkable Joss Naylor, who to celebrate his fiftieth birthday ran all 214 major Lakeland fells in a single week; Billy Bland, the combative Borrowdale man whose astounding records still stand for many of the top races; and Bill Teasdale, a hero of the sport earlier, professional days, whom he tracks down to his tiny cottage in the northern Lakes. And ultimately Askwith's obsession drives him to attempt the ultimate challenge: the Bob Graham Round; a non-stop circuit of 42 of the Lake District's highest peaks to be completed within 24 hours. This is a portrait of one of the few sports to have remained utterly true to its roots; in which the point is not fame or fortune but to run the ancient, wild landscape, and to be a hero, if at all, within one's own valley. Feet in the Clouds is a chronicle of a masochistic but admirable sporting obsession, an insight into one of the oldest extreme sports, and a lyrical tribute to Britain's mountains and the men and women who live among them.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Richard Askwith is a self conscious southern fell runner, making inroads into the mountain running communities in Cumbria, Yorkshire and Scotland. The book is about three things: the yearly racing calendar, history, politics and the current runners; Notable runners of the past and woven throughout the book are his attempts to run the Bob Graham round, and other personal feats of endurance. He interviews many of the big names and assimilates into a Cumbrian running community. His observation of the world and the community he surrounded himself in is very sensitive. In one section he wrote about Wasdale Head: "It's hard to imagine it or, at least, I find it so that, scarcely twenty-five years ago, a part of England can have been so cut off from the comforts of modern life. Not that being without electricity necessarily implies hardship; but for those of us who have never known a world without electric lights and television and Hoovers and fridges, it's a useful reminder that life in the late twentieth century Britain came in more than one from it and that the lives with the fewest mod cons were not necessarily the most impoverished." I came away from the book wanting more. I was sad to put it down,

so I laced up my running shoes and went for a run.

I bought this book for my husband who is an Ultra runner, but I've started reading it myself too. Being a British publisher, I hadn't seen this title before but I'm glad it popped up as a recommended read. We've enjoyed the book very much, especially the way the writer puts you into the experience with vivid details and a consistent pace. The writer is obviously a real fells runner since nobody who's faking it could possibly understand and write about the experiences this way. An unexpected plus was that the chapters are fairly short. Since we a lot of our reading is done just before falling asleep at night, it's nice to have more chapters that are shorter versus trying to stay awake to finish one.

Great inspirational story that have several parallel tracks - one is of course how the author gets started and after a while tries to complete the Bob Graham Round in 24 hours - another is meeting quite a number of people that are/have been influential in the fell-running culture. This is woven together in a clever way that makes for a very interesting read and really makes you want to pull on your running shoes and head for a run. Good thinking about respect for nature and weather and that we need to take full responsibility when out among the fells. The trigger for me to buy the book came from completing the 3peaks cyclocross race in Yorkshire Dales - couldn't help noticing that many of the strongest guys there came from a fell-running background. Next trip to England I may skip the bike and just bring my running shoes;)

I'm a road runner not a trail runner, but I could not put this book down. If you like running of any sort read this and Askwith's Zatopek bio. They'll make you love running more than you do now.

Great summary of UK fell running and a source of motivation to running in NZ hills too

Richard Askwith grabs us from the opening sentence...heck even BEFORE the opening sentence! The disclaimer is a first. Exhaustive research, but clearly a man's passion (so can we really call it work?), is ours to enjoy. Thanks Richard!

The reasons we fell or trail run, brilliantly articulated. If you don't already do it, then this book should provide the inspiration - or at the very least explain why some of us are mad enough to.

Askwith gives us a history of fell running in this interesting book. Anyone who runs, or more specifically, trail runs, will find a lot here to enjoy. The strength of this book really are the profiles of the fell runners themselves, a hardy lot who, although still with us, seem to speak to us from a bygone era. Kinda like I imagine my great-grandfathers would have been. From an American perspective, the historical minutia gets a bit tedious, however that's the only knock against this great read.

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