

# Winter Stanza Stones 2025

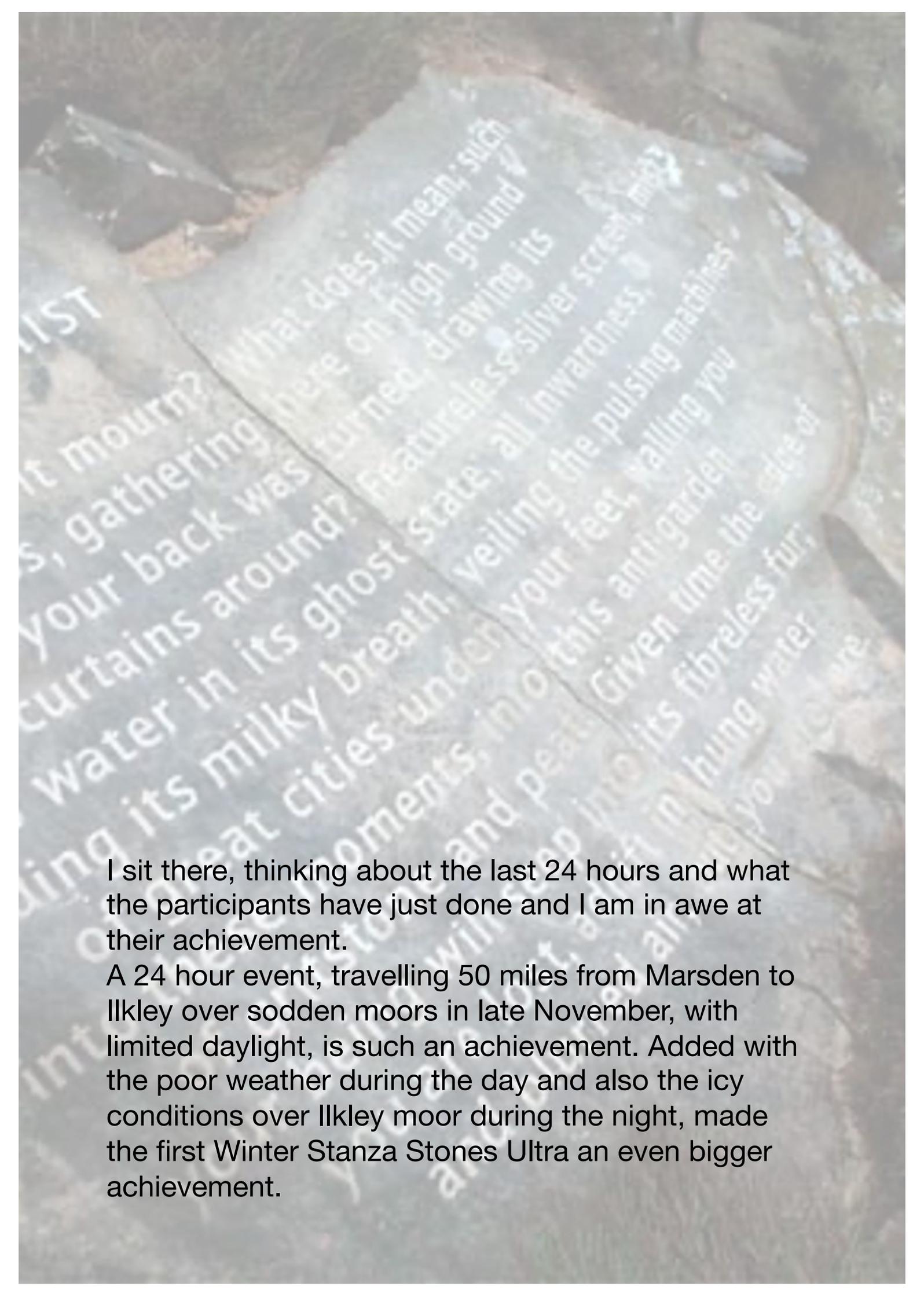
Race Directors Report

I'm sat in a cafe in Haworth, Sunday morning after the Stanza Stones event. I haven't slept for nearly 30 hours and the drive from Ilkley back home to Hebden Bridge had to be broken up into two halves for safety reasons.



I sit with Joolz and we just stare at each other, mainly me just staring, as I feel pretty dreadful but also over the moon after a successful first Winter Stanza Stones event. Maybe my mind cannot work out how I should be feeling at this moment, it's pretty tired.

It's been a long weekend, with setting up the event from Thursday morning, right through to the Sunday morning pack up. Luckily, I have a fantastic team behind me who have supported the event and myself so impeccably.

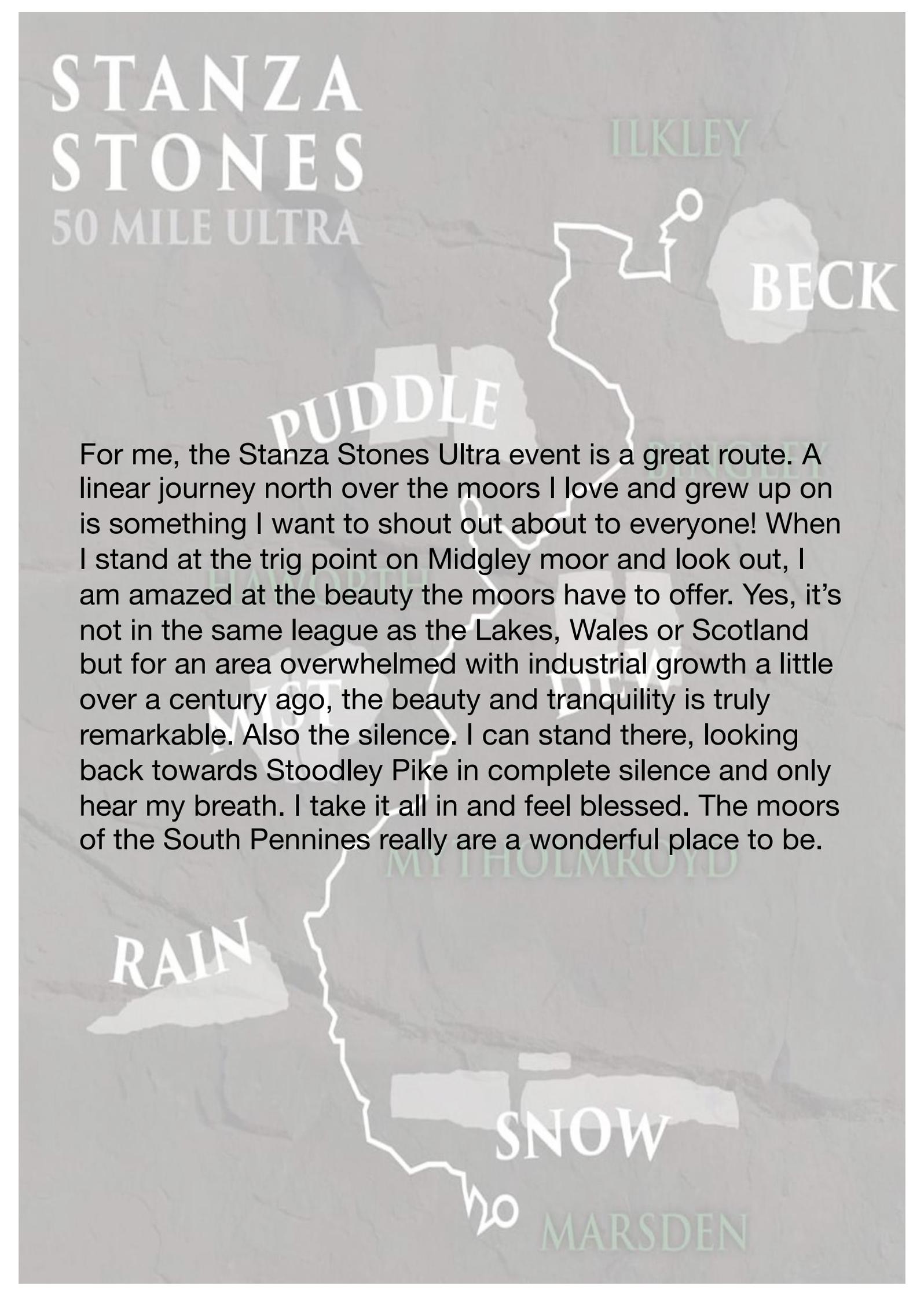


I sit there, thinking about the last 24 hours and what the participants have just done and I am in awe at their achievement.

A 24 hour event, travelling 50 miles from Marsden to Ilkley over sodden moors in late November, with limited daylight, is such an achievement. Added with the poor weather during the day and also the icy conditions over Ilkley moor during the night, made the first Winter Stanza Stones Ultra an even bigger achievement.

# STANZA STONES

50 MILE ULTRA



For me, the Stanza Stones Ultra event is a great route. A linear journey north over the moors I love and grew up on is something I want to shout out about to everyone! When I stand at the trig point on Midgley moor and look out, I am amazed at the beauty the moors have to offer. Yes, it's not in the same league as the Lakes, Wales or Scotland but for an area overwhelmed with industrial growth a little over a century ago, the beauty and tranquility is truly remarkable. Also the silence. I can stand there, looking back towards Stoodley Pike in complete silence and only hear my breath. I take it all in and feel blessed. The moors of the South Pennines really are a wonderful place to be.

The Stanza Stones Ultra has been running now for three years in the summer. The summer really does show off the route, especially with the many hours of daylight available. With drier conditions underfoot and better weather, it's been a joy to organise.





But I have thought about a winter edition for a couple of years now. The extra challenge of the route in winter would appeal to a wider audience, or would it? The number of participants at Stanza has always been low, but just enough to not lose money. But out of all of the CraggRunner events, it's the biggest logistical event we do and it needs to be financially feasible. I do believe that great things may happen to Stanza and I will always keep the faith in the event.

So opening entries for the first winter Stanza made me nervous. It's a big ask for volunteers who in most cases, give up their whole weekend for free to help on the event. Who would enter an event at the end of November, to run, walk and probably slide 50 miles from Marsden to Ilkley along the bogs of the moors? It takes a special person to do this mainly in the dark as well.



I personally don't like running or walking in the dark. It makes me feel sick and fatigued. I just don't like it. So when I see entries coming in, I know that with each and every entry, there truly is a hardcore person entering.

A photograph of two women running on a paved path. They are both wearing large backpacks and outdoor gear. The woman on the left is wearing an orange jacket, a black beanie, and grey leggings. The woman on the right is wearing a green hooded jacket and black leggings. They are both smiling and looking towards the right. The background shows a hilly landscape with power lines under a grey, overcast sky.

So come Saturday morning at Marsden and we are up and running for 6am. Mainly making tea and coffee but the team of volunteers at Marsden are set up and ready for action by 7am for the early arrivals. The 2 hours to race start flies by. The coach from Ilkley full of participants arrives around 8am and suddenly we have a full clubhouse full of chat and nervous energy.

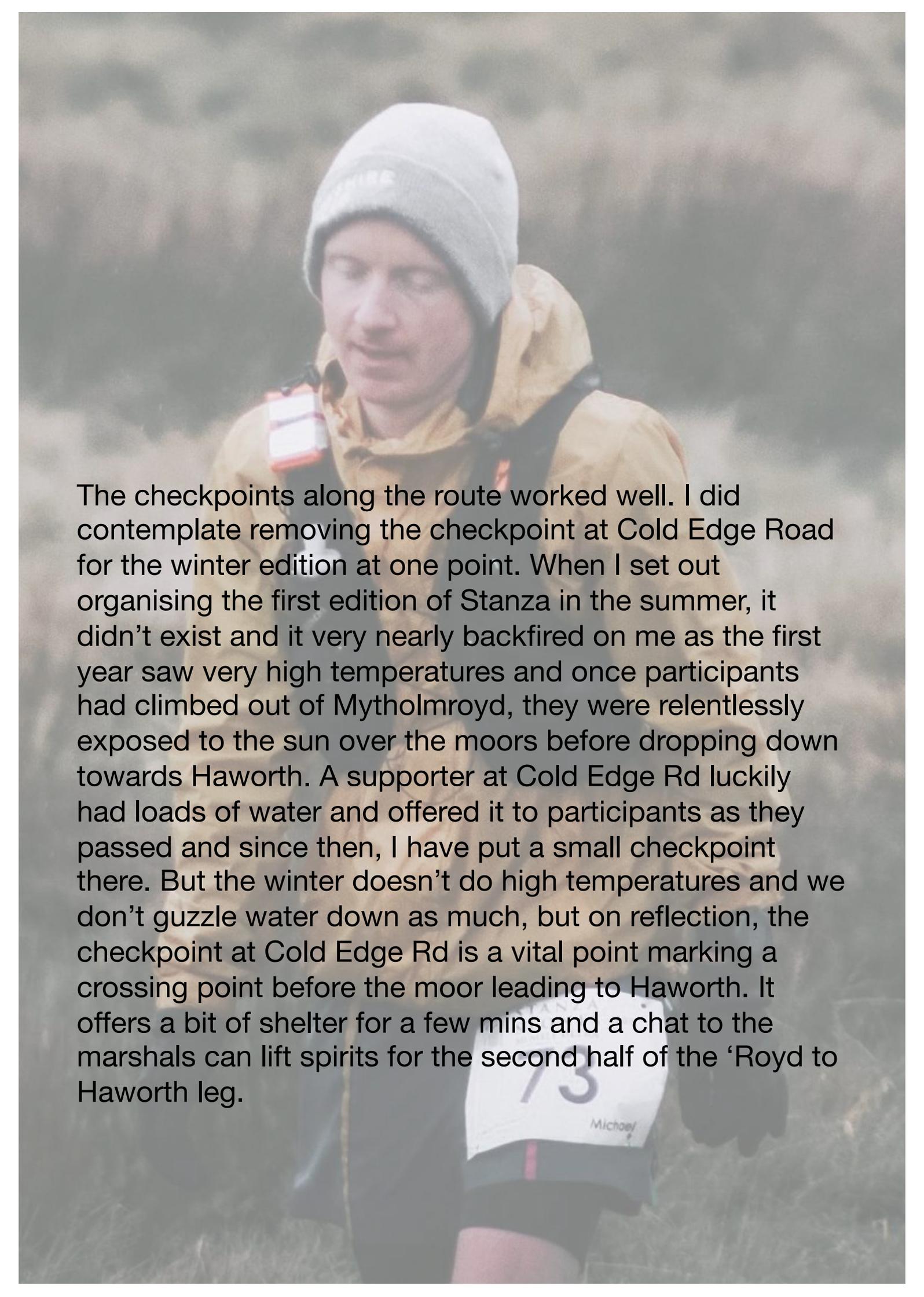
Kit check runs smoothly with no issues. Tracker allocation is swift along with taping, which is always a bottleneck on events, and most importantly, the tea, coffee and toast kept coming. It's 9am and thankfully the weather is by far much better than predicted. What was predicted as heavy rain all day turned out to be light rain, at best, with light winds, which was great news for the gazebo teams.



We had 115 participants signed up with 96 starters on the day, which was great for the first edition of the winter Stanza, even with the horrid weather forecast, but you don't sign up to a winter event expecting good weather.

The moors had been well and truly soaked over the previous weeks. Long gone were the memories of the dry moors in spring and summer. The wet moors were back and they wanted you to know they were back as well.

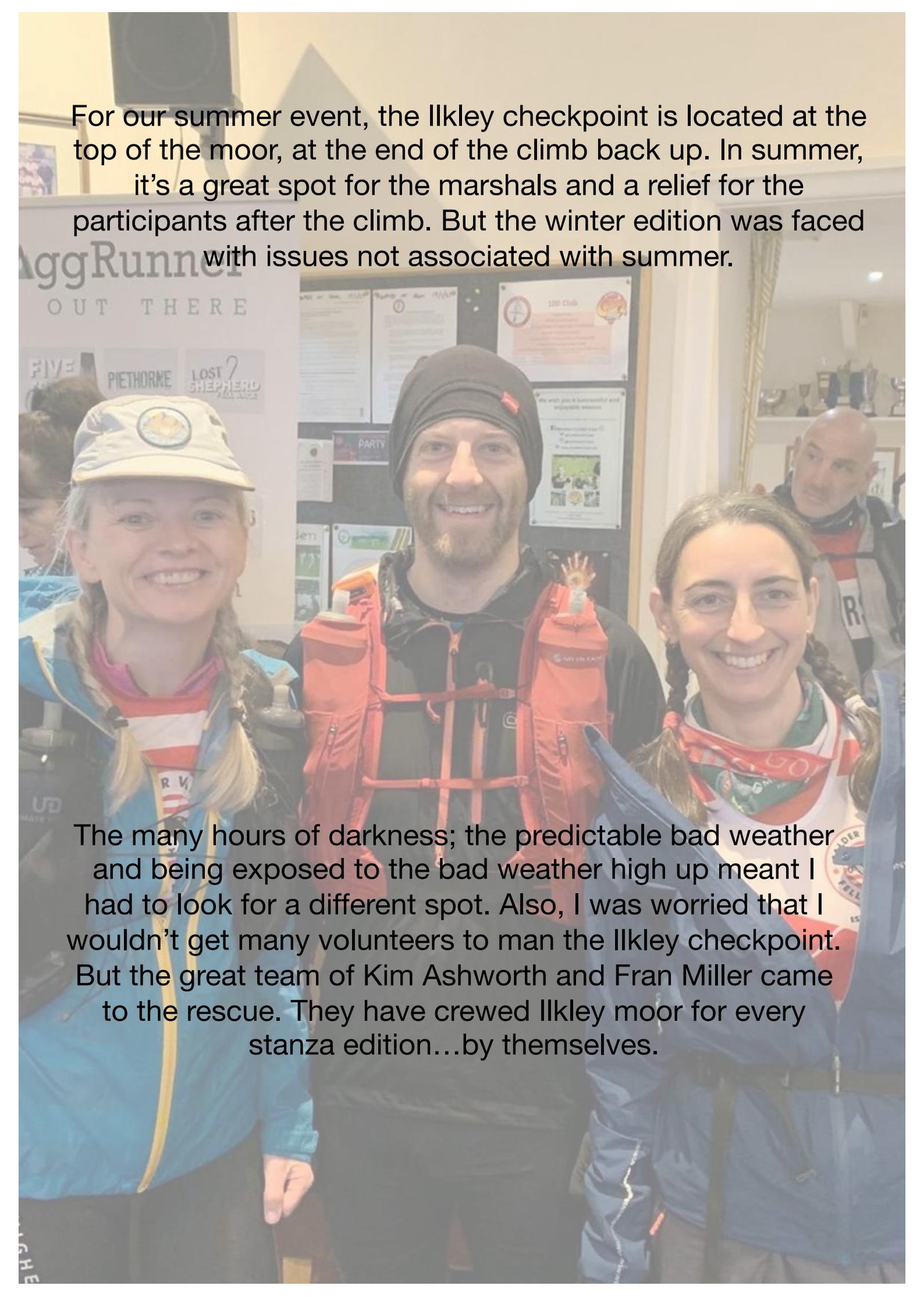


A person wearing a grey beanie, a yellow jacket, and a backpack is running a race. They have a white race bib with the number 73 and the name Michael on it. The background is a misty, outdoor setting.

The checkpoints along the route worked well. I did contemplate removing the checkpoint at Cold Edge Road for the winter edition at one point. When I set out organising the first edition of Stanza in the summer, it didn't exist and it very nearly backfired on me as the first year saw very high temperatures and once participants had climbed out of Mytholmroyd, they were relentlessly exposed to the sun over the moors before dropping down towards Haworth. A supporter at Cold Edge Rd luckily had loads of water and offered it to participants as they passed and since then, I have put a small checkpoint there. But the winter doesn't do high temperatures and we don't guzzle water down as much, but on reflection, the checkpoint at Cold Edge Rd is a vital point marking a crossing point before the moor leading to Haworth. It offers a bit of shelter for a few mins and a chat to the marshals can lift spirits for the second half of the 'Royd to Haworth leg.

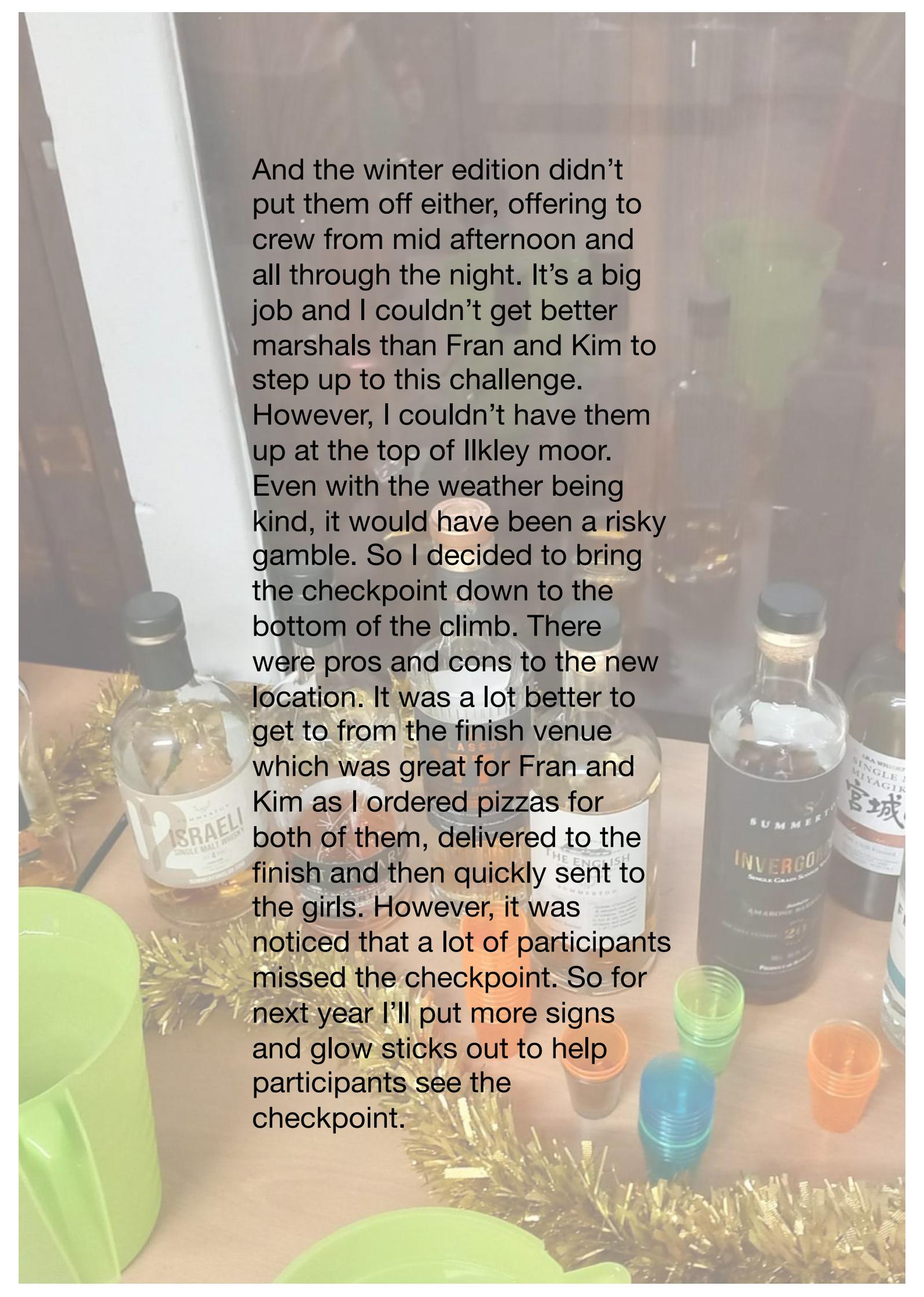
The outdoor checkpoints for the Winter edition were always a concern to me. Cold Edge Rd was a case of do I or don't I? The White House checkpoint is so exposed that I know one year we will be unable to put up the gazebo. Luckily, the wind was kind this year so we managed to set up with no issues. But it was the Ilkley Moor checkpoint that had me awake at night.



A photograph of three people smiling at an indoor event. On the left is a woman with blonde braids wearing a light-colored bucket hat, a blue jacket, and a red and white striped shirt. In the center is a man with a beard wearing a black beanie, a black jacket, and a large orange hydration pack. On the right is a woman with dark braids wearing a blue jacket and a red and white striped shirt. In the background, there are posters on a wall, including one for 'AggRunner OUT THERE' and another for '100 Club'. A man in a grey and red shirt is partially visible behind the woman on the right.

For our summer event, the Ilkley checkpoint is located at the top of the moor, at the end of the climb back up. In summer, it's a great spot for the marshals and a relief for the participants after the climb. But the winter edition was faced with issues not associated with summer.

The many hours of darkness; the predictable bad weather and being exposed to the bad weather high up meant I had to look for a different spot. Also, I was worried that I wouldn't get many volunteers to man the Ilkley checkpoint. But the great team of Kim Ashworth and Fran Miller came to the rescue. They have crewed Ilkley moor for every stanza edition...by themselves.



And the winter edition didn't put them off either, offering to crew from mid afternoon and all through the night. It's a big job and I couldn't get better marshals than Fran and Kim to step up to this challenge. However, I couldn't have them up at the top of Ilkley moor. Even with the weather being kind, it would have been a risky gamble. So I decided to bring the checkpoint down to the bottom of the climb. There were pros and cons to the new location. It was a lot better to get to from the finish venue which was great for Fran and Kim as I ordered pizzas for both of them, delivered to the finish and then quickly sent to the girls. However, it was noticed that a lot of participants missed the checkpoint. So for next year I'll put more signs and glow sticks out to help participants see the checkpoint.

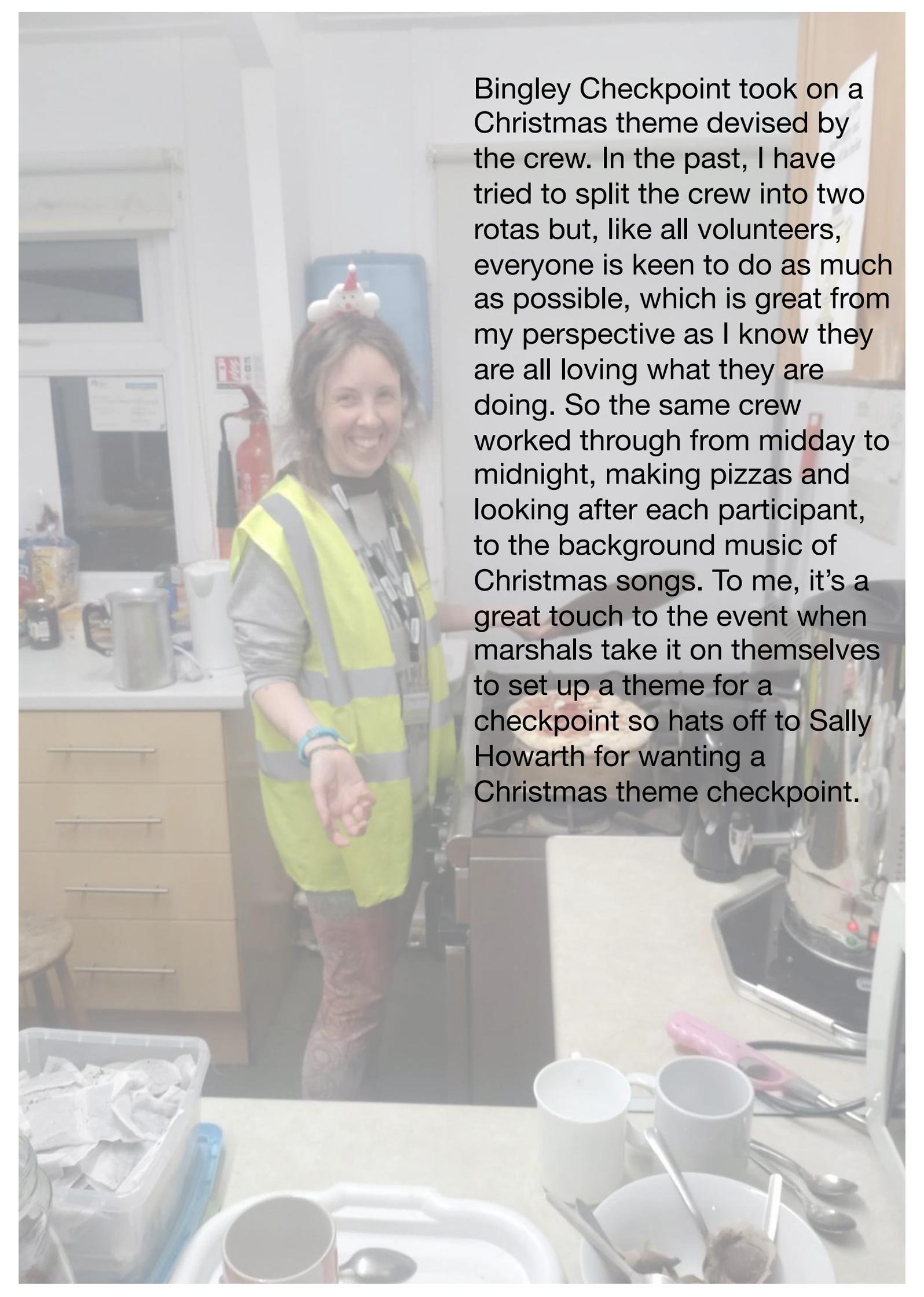
The three indoor checkpoints worked well as usual. Mytholmroyd Community Centre is a great stop. The manager at the centre is great and cannot do enough for us, even if there is a wedding going on in the big hall, he didn't mind all the muddy participants coming in through the main entrance.



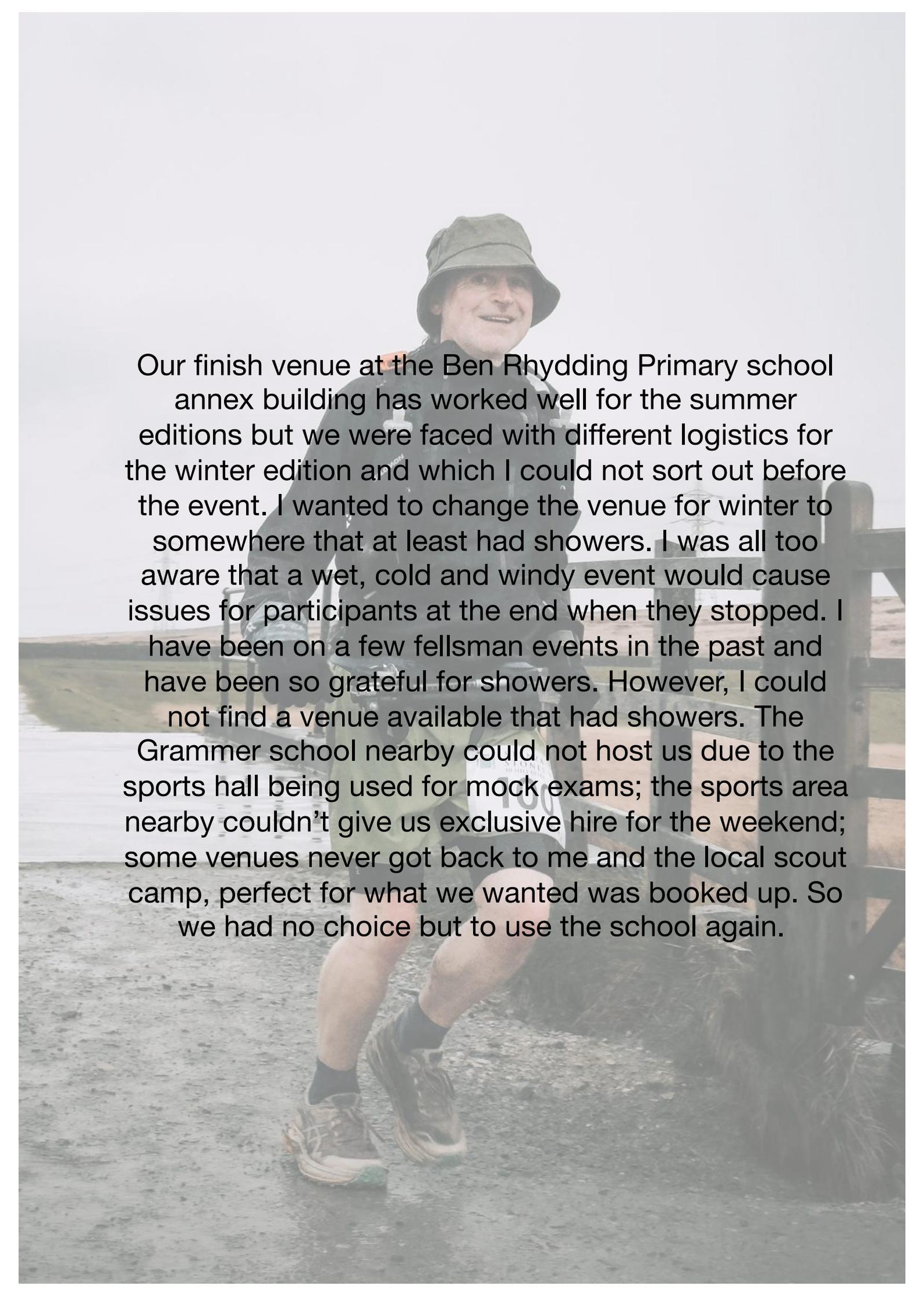


CraggRunner  
GET OUT THERE

Haworth was special. You all run down the main, cobbled street with the Christmas lights all turned on making it feel special. The checkpoint is a huge building with plenty of space. It does need a bit of tlc and I do believe work to restore the building will begin in the new year.

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a yellow high-visibility vest over a grey long-sleeved shirt and patterned leggings, stands in a kitchen. She is smiling and has a small Santa hat on her head. The kitchen has light-colored wooden cabinets, a white countertop with various items like a kettle and a fire extinguisher, and a stove with a pizza on it. In the foreground, there are white mugs and a bowl on a table.

Bingley Checkpoint took on a Christmas theme devised by the crew. In the past, I have tried to split the crew into two rotas but, like all volunteers, everyone is keen to do as much as possible, which is great from my perspective as I know they are all loving what they are doing. So the same crew worked through from midday to midnight, making pizzas and looking after each participant, to the background music of Christmas songs. To me, it's a great touch to the event when marshals take it on themselves to set up a theme for a checkpoint so hats off to Sally Howarth for wanting a Christmas theme checkpoint.

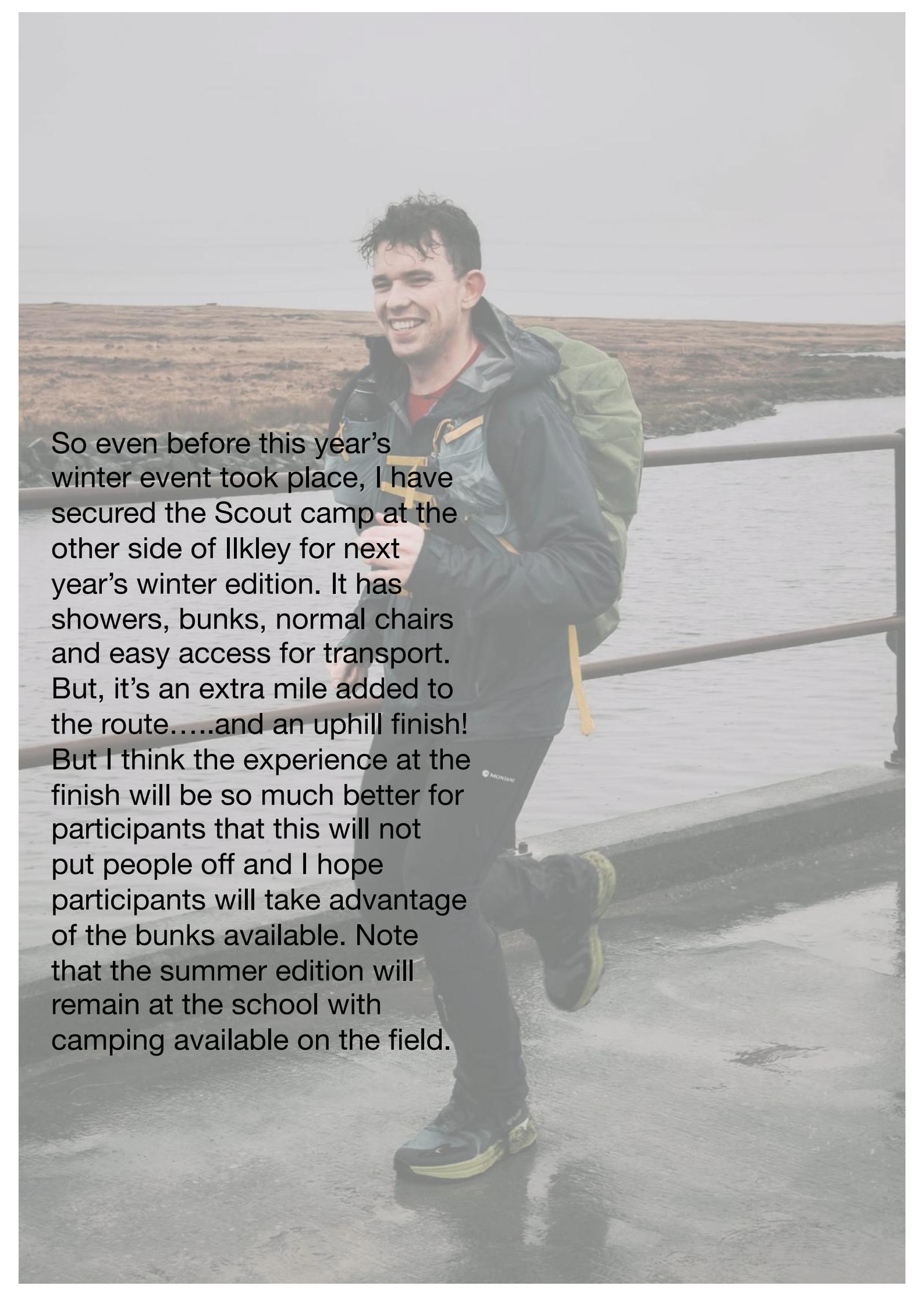
A person wearing a green bucket hat, a black cycling jacket, and a white bib with the number 100 is standing on a gravel path. They are wearing black shorts and brown cycling shoes. The background is a misty, overcast landscape with a wooden fence to the right and a body of water in the distance.

Our finish venue at the Ben Rhydding Primary school annex building has worked well for the summer editions but we were faced with different logistics for the winter edition and which I could not sort out before the event. I wanted to change the venue for winter to somewhere that at least had showers. I was all too aware that a wet, cold and windy event would cause issues for participants at the end when they stopped. I have been on a few fellsman events in the past and have been so grateful for showers. However, I could not find a venue available that had showers. The Grammer school nearby could not host us due to the sports hall being used for mock exams; the sports area nearby couldn't give us exclusive hire for the weekend; some venues never got back to me and the local scout camp, perfect for what we wanted was booked up. So we had no choice but to use the school again.

Due to the time of year, the field outside the annex building could not be driven on. I did it on Friday evening and just got away with it so come Saturday afternoon, there was no chance I wanted to drive on the field with a van, even with winter tyres on. So all the gear had to be carried to the venue from the road which really took a lot of time, something you don't have when you see the leaders flying along the route, not slowed down by the weather at all.

And don't even start me on the smaller than average chairs!

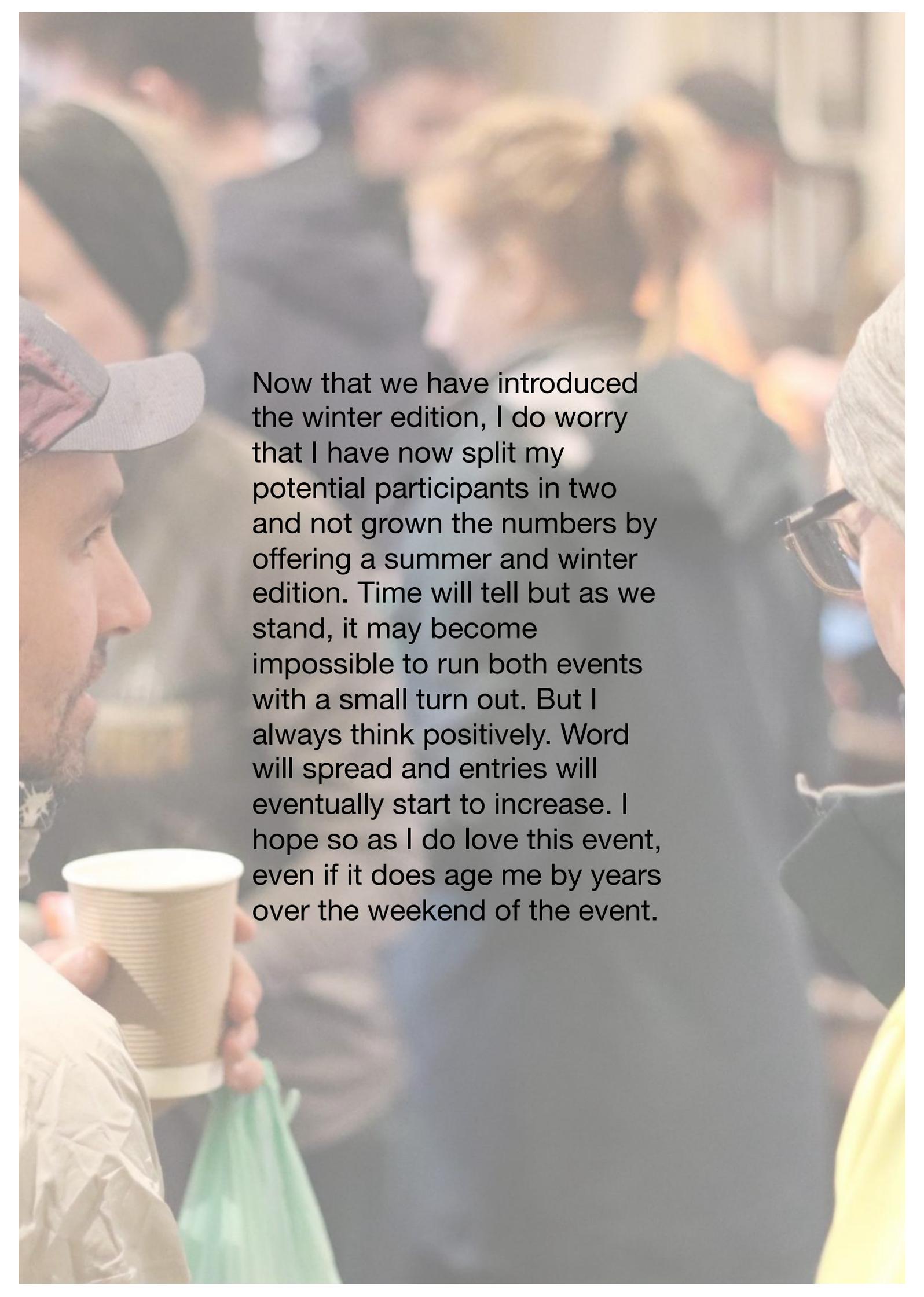


A man with dark hair, wearing a dark jacket and a large green backpack, is running across a bridge. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The bridge has a metal railing. In the background, there is a river and a hazy, overcast sky. The ground is wet and reflective.

So even before this year's winter event took place, I have secured the Scout camp at the other side of Ilkley for next year's winter edition. It has showers, bunks, normal chairs and easy access for transport. But, it's an extra mile added to the route.....and an uphill finish! But I think the experience at the finish will be so much better for participants that this will not put people off and I hope participants will take advantage of the bunks available. Note that the summer edition will remain at the school with camping available on the field.

We are going into 2026 with the fourth year of Stanza Stones Ultra. Although I do believe in the event, it hasn't ignited the Ultra world to attend in masses. It's never going to be a massive event, logistical reasons will keep numbers to less than 300 but it does need to grow. Every year, cost for everything continues to rise as we all know. And with the added safety measures put into place for the winter edition, the event has to grow.



A blurred background of a crowd of people at an event. In the foreground, a man on the left is wearing a grey cap and holding a white paper cup. On the right, a woman is wearing glasses and a grey beanie. The overall scene is out of focus, emphasizing the text in the center.

Now that we have introduced the winter edition, I do worry that I have now split my potential participants in two and not grown the numbers by offering a summer and winter edition. Time will tell but as we stand, it may become impossible to run both events with a small turn out. But I always think positively. Word will spread and entries will eventually start to increase. I hope so as I do love this event, even if it does age me by years over the weekend of the event.

So a successful event cannot be done by one person alone. Stanza is too big for me to do this on my own. On the day there was 49 marshals out and about along the course to ensure participants had a fantastic and safe time. Safety teams, checkpoint marshals, logistics teams and race control, all looking after you. It's a big job but getting the right people on the team makes it so much easier. So please, say a big thank you to the following people:



Venue Hire:  
Gareth at Marsden Cricket Club  
Jon at Mytholmroyd Community Centre  
Rhianna at Haworth Village Hall  
Bingley Council for Bingley Checkpoint  
Kim at Ben Rhydding School

C&C Catering for providing the excellent pie at  
the end.

Steels Coaches of Addington

The fantastic team at Open Tracking



Tim Winter and his team from Peak Medical and Rescue for their excellent service throughout the event.





Pilgrim Outdoor wear who continue to come along and support our bigger events and also for providing the CraggRunner headscarf/buff to everyone who finished.

But the biggest thank you goes to all the marshals who helped over the weekend. We all know that events rely on the goodwill of volunteers who give up their time at no cost to help out. They are all truly amazing and I am so thankful I have such supportive volunteers who willingly help out. So a big thanks to the following marshals:





Friday Registration  
Joolz Graham  
Steve Foster  
Sally Haworth  
Kieren Graham  
Dianne Graham  
Alan Davies

A photograph of a runner in a dark jacket and shorts running away from the camera on a dirt path. The path is surrounded by dry, brownish grass. In the background, there are rolling hills and two large white wind turbines under a grey, overcast sky.

Saturday Marsden Registration  
Claire Shaw  
Joolz Graham  
Charles Colbourn  
Richard Gilliland  
Mark Caffery  
Rachel Williams  
Jono Wright  
Nicola McAlpine  
Darren Phillips  
Danielle Butler  
Alan Davies

Saturday Ilkley Set up/Coach pick up  
Joe Walton  
Steve Foster  
Sally Howarth  
Mark Dalton

A photograph of two men in outdoor gear. The man on the left is wearing a bright yellow jacket, a headlamp on his forehead, and is holding a white mug. The man on the right is wearing an orange jacket, a headlamp, and is holding a yellow glove. They are standing in a room with grey lockers in the background.

White House Checkpoint Crew  
Katie Lockwood  
Beka Millington  
Giles Bailey  
Dom Camponi

Mytholmroyd Checkpoint Crew  
Dianne Graham  
Kieren Graham  
Darren Gillman  
Katie Samuelson  
Nicola McAlpine  
Darren Phillips  
Danielle Butler

Cold Edge Road Crew  
Keith Hopkinson  
Stuart Wolstenholme  
Mark Caffery  
Richard Gilliland



Haworth Checkpoint Crew  
Mel Whitmore  
Jane Slater  
Andy Slater  
Elise Milnes  
Lou Stringer  
Darren Smith  
Helen Smith





Bingley Checkpoint Crew  
Sally Howarth  
Mark Dalton  
Alan Davies  
Gareth Tosh  
Becca Chapman  
Zoe Smith  
Jack Cooper

Ilkley Moor Checkpoint Crew  
Kim Ashworth  
Fran Miller





Logistics  
Andy Regan  
Mick Cooper  
Jack Cooper  
Harriet Drouin - who did an  
amazing job flagging off Ilkley  
Moor, as she will no doubt tell  
you ;)  
Carl Read  
Chris Duro

So, if you enjoyed the event so much that you intend to return, then get the date in your diary for Saturday 28th November 2026. If you cannot make it, then please spread the word :)



# Stanza Stones

If you haven't reviewed the event on RACECHECK, it would be great for you to leave a comment so that future participants can get a feel of the event from past participants. You can leave a review [HERE](#)

So onwards to 2026. If this was your first Stanza event, or even CraggRunner event, then we also do a Summer version of the Stanza Stones. Same route, but with the additional daylight hours, you will see more sights along the way. Summer Stanza is on Saturday 6th June 2026.

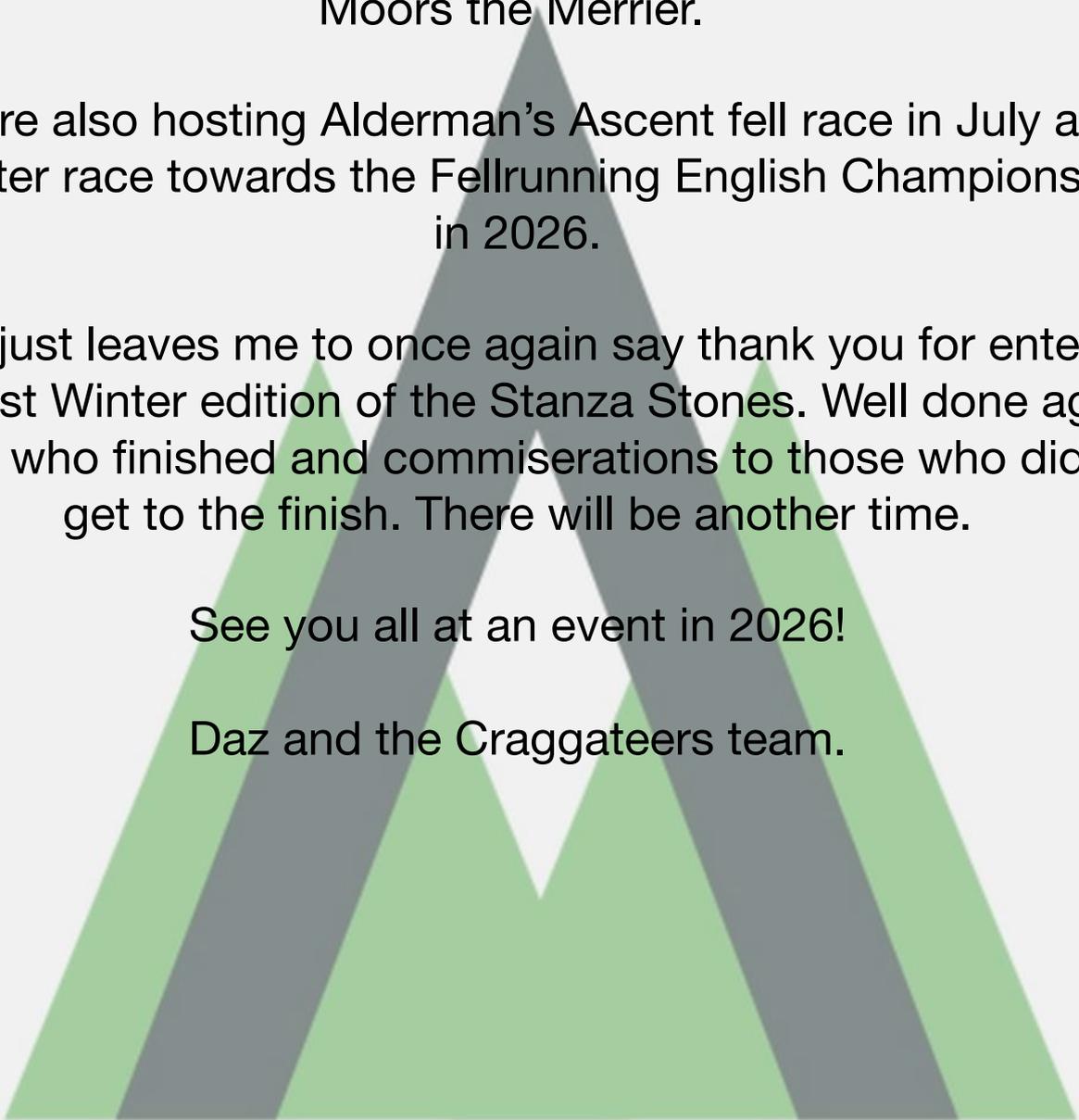
Along with the Stanza Stones events, CraggRunner has a full calendar of events in 2026, ranging from 5k Sprint events to longer distances such as Saddleworth Res's, Five Trigs, Peak District Birthday Bash, Dovedale Dipper and our Christmas Moors the Merrier.

We are also hosting Alderman's Ascent fell race in July as a counter race towards the Fellrunning English Championship in 2026.

So, it just leaves me to once again say thank you for entering the first Winter edition of the Stanza Stones. Well done again to all who finished and commiserations to those who didn't get to the finish. There will be another time.

See you all at an event in 2026!

Daz and the Craggateers team.



CraggRunner