

## **Boot fitting at Cotswold Hedge End**

I cannot remember when my feet were last measured, but it was probably when Mum pushed the boat out and bought me some Clarks shoes for school.

Well, this time it was Cotswold's Ben Jones who got the measuring gear out as a first step towards finding me the right type and fit of boot for my 1,200 mile John o'Groats to Land's End (JOGLE) walk. He measured the size of my feet with my weight both on and off of them, then observed as I walked shoe-less up and down the shop. All this time Ben was scribbling down numbers and hieroglyphics on a form that would apparently guide his subsequent advice.

We discussed my preference for leather boots rather than fabric due to them being more weatherproof, and how I would rather not have the ankle support too high, having experienced a rubbing injury here in the past. I explained that I found wearing two pairs of socks helped to prevent blisters, so Ben suggested that I use a Smartwool Liner sock in combination with a Smartwool Light Cushion sock.

A number of boots in my size were pulled off the shelf for me to try. We agreed to avoid Brasher for this fitting as I had already accepted an offer of some Brasher Hillmaster boots from another source. This was fortunate, as I needed two pairs of boots for the distance I would be covering. We agreed that I would use the Brashers for the route south of Sheffield. Ben could therefore concentrate his efforts on the selection of a pair of boots that would work well for me on the Scottish part of my walk and on the Pennines. After looking at various boots made by Meindl and Scarpa, the short-list quickly came down to the Scarpa Terra GTX and the Scarpa Ranger GTX. Though the former felt softer and initially slightly more comfortable, the latter seemed more ruggedly constructed. After some discussion, it was concluded that the Rangers would soon soften with use, so this was my final selection.

From Ben's earlier measurements, he had noticed that my arches tended to collapse slightly as I walked, tipping my feet inwards. This could cause problems not only with my feet but also with my knees and hips. He recommended Superfeet insoles, and we established the appropriate size and fitted them into the Rangers.

After a few more tests, which including walking up and down slopes both head-on and with my feet angled sideways, he exclaimed that he was satisfied if I was. I was. The final part of the process was to advise me on boot maintenance using Nikwax products.

As soon as he was out of view, I sneaked out of my bag an old pair of insoles that I had used in several previous pairs of boots and had walked on for over 1,000 miles without any foot problems. As far as I could see, their shape was identical to the Superfeet Ben had selected for me!

STH

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