



## OUTDOOR TRAINING, WHATEVER THE WEATHER!

Grahamslaw & Son battle the region's first private outdoor gym.

By quarter past six on a Friday evening I'm usually preparing to fall spectacularly into a vat of Guinness, yet, this week, I found myself limbering up for one of the region's most intriguing fitness challenges.

Perhaps best known for his all-weather beach bootcamps, David Fairlamb, has been at the vanguard of the North East's health & fitness industry for two decades. David is committed to trimming the region's waistline and offers award-winning personal training, small group training and lifestyle advice from his 3 studio base in North Shields. Now, with his latest venture, David appears to have spotted an untapped gap in the market.

Outdoor gyms may be all the rage in LA, yet are still to take off in these chillier climes. It seems many are unaware of the enormous health benefits of training outside with this outdoor facility the first of its kind in the region.

In a striking example of Geordie ingenuity, the site, which was formerly a disused compound at Queen Alexandra College, has been comprehensively transformed. Monkey bars, battle ropes, sledgehammers, tractor tyres and even a climbing wall are to name but a few of the obstacles to be navigated.

One glance at this chamber of horrors was enough to strike fear into a man a few pounds over his fighting weight, but David assured that this is a challenge for all levels of fitness. Exercises are designed to suit all and can be made as easier or as difficult as you desire. On the other end of the spectrum, this could prove a true test for those with strength & conditioning

experience. The obstacle course element caters for those intrepid folk gearing up for events such as the Rat Race or Tough Mudder challenges.

Our session took place on a biting cold evening so we first took part in a thorough dynamic flex warm up. Craig, our instructor, was a good-humoured – if seriously punishing – taskmaster who would really put us through our paces.

The super-circuit involved 16 work stations in total. Exercises are undertaken for one minute before moving on. This super-circuit would involve a lot of working in pairs, so fortunately Jack – my leaner, suppler son – was also on hand. Some stations allow you to take a breather whilst your partner does the hard yards, whilst others require you to launch straight into the next exercise. Cosmic.

First up, were medicine ball throws, into medicine ball slams into chest flies. Gor blimey! Then came, battle ropes, into sledgehammer swings followed by wall sits. When I finally reached the beer keg I thought I'd found my calling. Little did I know this would be –not drank– but cleaned, then pressed above my head. Oh deary me. I barrelled on through; deadlifts, knee raises, chest presses and tyre pulls. Then tyre flips, tyre walks and more sodden battle ropes. Keeping going Mike. Finally came, monkey bars, push ups and –worst of the lot – tricep dips.

With the circuit over we sucked in the oxygen and breathed a collective sigh of relief – followed by an agonising groan. We were: Going. 'Round. Again. GORDON BENNETT!

So came more medicine ball slams, more sledgehammer swings and more tyre flips. Finally, we reached the finish. The whole ordeal was over and we were left to bask in the feeling of the endorphin rush on turbocharge.

Throughout the session, both Craig and David were immensely encouraging and spurred us on far further than we'd ordinarily go in the gym. Of course, everyone's allowed to take things at their own pace, yet there was definitely a bit of the old Father & Son competitive streak at play!

This floodlit, outdoor facility really offers something different to your current training routine. Whether you're after an introduction to functional fitness, looking to rev up your current regime or training for an obstacle-based event, this new concept has to be tried. Sessions run every Wednesday and Friday (18:15 – 19:15) and offer great value at £5 a go.

Following a quick blast in the showers, we left calmer, re-energised and ready to enjoy the weekend. Let's just not tell David about the 8 Guinness that followed....