



**BEST FOOT FORWARD:** John Woodward, who ran 60 miles barefoot on his 60th birthday.

(D71124MH1)

# Bare-foot runner pulls off new feat

A PRACTITIONER in the science of running barefoot has proved he has feet as tough as diamonds after covering a non-stop 60-mile marathon around the Furness peninsular, reports Daniel Orr.

John Woodward, from Kirkby-in-Furness, started his solo mission at 4am in Ulverston on Friday to celebrate his 60th birthday.

He then ran around the Duddon Estuary and up the coast to Whitehaven, ascending Black Combe on the way.

But despite running for 14-and-a-half hours with just a half-hour break in between across terrain including concrete, seawashed turf, sandflats and fell, the Alexander Technique specialist said his feet remained in top form.

Mr Woodward, who teaches natural running - where people learn to run using gravity and the balance and energy afforded them by their own feet - said he was euphoric after completing the challenge.

"I ran the length of the Lake District for my 50th birthday, so I wanted to do something for my 60th, the next milestone, that was also linked to my fascination

with the design and natural capabilities of the foot.

"It is able to do incredible things that we restrict with shoes. It is my mission to find footwear that allows our feet to do what they are designed to do.

"I was generally surprised at how it all went, but I didn't need to do anything to my feet afterwards.

"There wasn't a blemish or a blister on them."

Mr Woodward is well-known for rarely wearing shoes in his home town of Kirkby-in-Furness, where he runs L'aal Barn, an Alexander Technique practice, as well as the Bashful Alley Centre in Lancaster.

He claims friends are disappointed if he arrives at

the pub with something on his feet.

He said he had taught hundreds of runners about the theory and technique of running barefoot, which provides an extra 50 to 60 per cent traction compared to a shoe, on his

natural running courses.

"The run really shows the robustness of the foot and what learning to run naturally can do," added Mr Woodward.

"I'm just delighted it went so well."