



# SPECIAL

## London Marathon by Rose Harvey

Two Years ago in 2009 I took part in my first London Marathon. It was something that I had always wanted to do, but never thought I could achieve it. I had even been told that there was no way I could do it! Never let anyone tell you that you can't do something!

In 2009 it was the unknown for me. I was scared, nervous and excited. I wanted to complete it in less than 4 hours. Unfortunately I didn't manage that and it took me 4 hours 13 mins.

Last year I was very upset at not getting into London - I was desperate to do better than the previous year. Personally I was going through a very difficult time as well. I needed a goal so I entered the Taunton Marathon. What a day. I did it in 3 hours 29 mins! I was first Female Veteran 35. Most importantly I had my "Good For Age" place. This meant that I could automatically get a place for the 2011 London Marathon.

I was so chuffed. Unfortunately after my "great" time in Taunton I suffered with an Achilles injury and was unable to run for months. I lost my confidence, my speed and I gained weight which made me even slower. I wasn't even sure if I would get to the London start line, let alone complete it.

Training finally began in December/January. I didn't follow a programme as such (I've never been any good at following instructions or doing anything the right way) I just knew I had to work on my fitness.

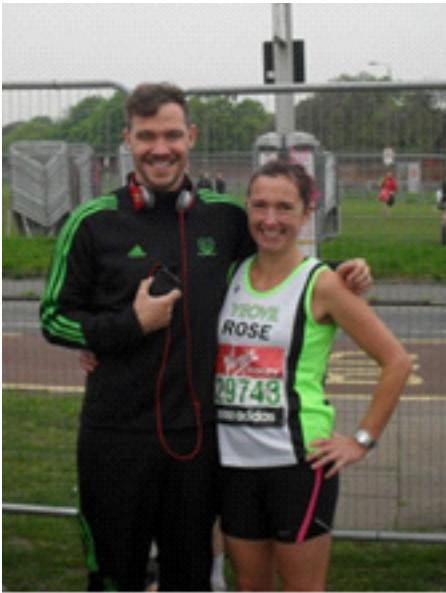
I trained sensibly. I listened to what my body was telling me (in other words - SLOW DOWN) Having support from family is also important as it does take up a lot of your time.

At the beginning of March Rod and I did the Silverstone Half Marathon. This was a good warm up for London as it is organised by the London Marathon. It also introduces you to a hectic and busy race start. I then did my second 22 mile training session on Friday 12th March. The following day I did The Great Western 10km which was a fantastic race. Unfortunately I was then struck down with a horrible virus. So tapering began there and then! I couldn't do anything other than walk the dogs and even that was a struggle.

I did the Yeovil Half marathon, which I really enjoyed although I was still not feeling fantastic and ended up having to take antibiotics. The following week I managed to complete the Taunton Half Marathon (and thoroughly enjoyed the hot Bovril afterwards - what a fantastic drink!). I went to London with no confidence at all, but a determined stubbornness!

Rod and I went to London on Friday. We travelled up on the Berry's coaches and stayed at the Novotel Hotel in Hammersmith (ideal as it is just two minutes walk from the bus station). We used a "marathon travel" company called WRP Tours. They were wonderful. They organise everything and take the stress out of the weekend. The hotel was lovely and their organisation was fantastic.

We had to go to the Expo centre to register. This is so well organised and doesn't take too long. I thought it would take hours but literally you walk in, go to your number range and sign the papers.



Then you go and get the chip, which will be attached to your shoe for the race. It is your choice then if you take a look around the stands. It's good fun. There are trainers' clinics, running shops, charity information, and nutritional advice - a bit of

everything. There is also the pasta party. One of the speakers at this is Martin Yelling who is married to Liz Yelling. Martin and I were good friends at school - he is always amazed to see me as I was not in the least bit sporty at school. His talk is everything you have heard and read before - but it still helps and I do remember his words ringing in my ears during the marathon itself.

Sunday morning we got up early and had breakfast. Rod was only a spectator this year but he was able to come to the start with me. At the start I met Will Young - I'm not a big fan but wanted a photo anyway. He was charming and was chatting to everyone.

I was at Green Start this year which was lovely as it was very quiet (see below for the Marge Simpson hairstyle!). There were unfortunately not enough toilets - very difficult for someone like myself, but I got over that major hurdle.

I made the start with minutes to spare, plugged myself into my iPod and went for it. I took off like a rocket - not a good idea but it was my plan and I regretted it later. However it did mean that I avoided the "people traffic" and the "costume traffic". Wow it was a hot day!

At 6 miles I was ready to give up. The crowd in London do keep you going but also you know that if you need to stop there will be plenty of help. Thankfully the "Harvey Stubborn Streak" kicked in and I kept going. Running over Tower Bridge is amazing. It is such an iconic symbol of London that when you get to it during the marathon it sends shivers down your spine. The noise on the bridge is amazing - there are just so many people! Plus you know that you're almost half way.

At about 14 miles you run down a dual carriage way on the opposite side the elite runners were on about 22 miles. It was great as the motorbikes, cars and television cameras came along and then came the Elite men. It is just incredible to see how a marathon should be run. I felt half dead at 14 miles and they looked as fit as a fiddle and incredibly fresh and they were at 22 miles! Just awesome!

When I also got to 22 miles on the other side of the road, back at 14 miles, was a camel and Sonic the Hedgehog - it was such a hot, humid day I have no idea how people in costumes managed it. Also the week after the marathon there was a smog alert - so surely that can't be good for breathing and your lungs. Occasionally there are "showers" which are basically sprinklers on the side of the road. They are wonderful. I was also so dehydrated and very hot that at every water stop I was taking a bottle, drinking a bit and then pouring the rest over my head to help cool me down! A marathon is hard physically, emotionally and mentally. At 24 miles



I wanted to be sick but I thought "Rose you have plenty of time in 2.2 miles to be sick - don't do it here in front of thousands of people".

At 25 miles a man in a wheelchair had almost given up. He was stopped on the side of the road with his shirt off. The crowd were cheering madly just trying to encourage him to keep going. He slowly got going and it was a very emotional sight. I don't know if he finished - I really hope that he did. There were so many people struggling, a man dressed as a nun certainly didn't have God on his side. People



were collapsing and being supported. Bat Girl literally flew past me with 800 metres to go!!!!

Running past the Millennium Eye, Big Ben and Buckingham palace is brilliant as you know you're almost there. Then you turn that final corner and see the end!

Wow what a fantastic sight! It looks so much bigger on the television!!!! The clock is above the finish, ticking away and suddenly your legs come back to you. Crossing that finish line is a fantastic feeling. At the end the organisation is fabulous. There are people waiting to cut the tag off your shoes. The you get that all important medal and a goody bag with your t-shirt. A little bit further on you collect your bag (that is handed in at the start).

All that training, all the worry, all the build up, all those injuries, all the hype - it's all over! Making your way back to Horse Guards parade to meet your loved ones is the longest walk but so wonderful when you see them! I struggled to get back to Rod but fortunately Richard Westgate of Maiden Newton Running Club saw me, saw that I was struggling and helped me find him!

Using WRP Tours meant that once I got back to the hotel I was able to have a quick shower and then a leg massage, lovely. A small meal is prepared for you - pasta, salad and sandwiches, which is much needed. I will also admit to a big glass of red wine - probably not recommended but bloody wonderful!!! And so, for me, the London Marathon experience is over for another year, but hopefully with my time of 3 hours 39 mins 21 secs means that I will automatically qualify next year as a "Good For Age" place. Although my marathon time was 10 minutes slower than Taunton last year, I was so pleased. I actually ran 26.61 miles according to my Garmin (but that is the weaving which is unavoidable) so next year I hope to be at Green Start again. The marathon is 8 days after my 40th Birthday and I think running the London Marathon in 2012 will be an amazing experience - it will be a warm up for the Olympics!!!!

If anyone thinks they can't run a marathon - THINK AGAIN. I was never a runner. I began running about 5 years ago when I took part in the 5km Race For Life at Sherborne Castle. I was terrified when I took part in my first 10km and over the moon when I completed my first half marathon. My best advice for anyone wanting to take part in a marathon is do it. Don't let anyone tell you that you can't achieve your goal. It doesn't matter if you complete it in 3 hours (I wish) or 8 hours. If you get to the end and you get that medal then you've done it!

## A Ballot Place – by Malcolm Maxted

Last year I watched my son run his first London Marathon. I enjoyed the occasion very much but decided that I was not a good spectator and would prefer to be running rather than watching.

I therefore, applied for the 2011 race. This resulted in the usual reply in September that my application was unsuccessful but yet again thanked me for my annual contribution towards the playing fields for London! So I decided to enter the Club ballot and to my delight I was told after the annual dinner that I had been successful.

Thus my training started with the excesses of Christmas and the New Year and a long period of snow and ice. My coldest outing was when I ran four miles in a temperature of -7 degrees.

On Club nights I was touched by the concern of those who were unsuccessful in the ballot who regularly enquired whether I was in good health or if had sustained any serious injury while running the previous week!

Fortunately I remained injury free, making good progress in both speed and distance until I pulled up with a hamstring injury while doing a track session on 28th January. This resulted in no running for three weeks and I missed the Blackmore Vale half marathon.

I gently returned to training on 22nd February then developed a heavy cold. Despite this I ran the Eastbourne half marathon on 6th March, which I probably shouldn't have done but I was getting way behind with my training schedules. The cold was followed by a sore throat and I did not run until 13th March, a week later, when I did the Ashby 20. I decided that if I could not do that then I would have to withdraw from the Marathon. To my delight the race went well and I completed the course in under three hours, which gave me hope that I would make the big day.

My next race was the Yeovil half marathon, which went well but when I met up with members from the Club I was dismayed to learn that two other unsuccessful ballot members had been offered places but had had to withdraw because of injury.

On the big day I was on the blue start and crossed the start line after only two and a half minutes. Unfortunately we then all came to a halt and the first mile was very stop start. I eventually got going at two to three miles and was back on schedule by the time I saw my family on Jamaica Road. By this stage it was getting really hot and I tried to run in what shade I could find and keep well hydrated. Although I missed the family at Canary Wharf, I got a tremendous boost when I saw Lesley Nesbitt and friends who shouted words of encouragement. However, at twenty five miles it was 3 hours 52 minutes and by the time I saw my family at Westminster I realised that I was not going to get in under four hours so I continued at the pace I was going and soaked up the atmosphere in the Mall and at the finish. My official time was 4:04:09. It was a wonderful experience. I am so grateful to have been lucky in the Club ballot.

# My London Marathon – by Judith Wilson

I qualified for the 'Good for Age' category with a 4:06 at the New Forest Marathon in 2009. I decided to use this place to raise funds for the Royal British Legion, to help returning soldiers and service veterans, and families in need. After entering London I changed my club from the Trail running Association to some rural set-up by the name of Yeovil Town RRC. This change of club necessitated ringing the VLM helpline in order to change my details, which, although I spelt it out, led to my club appearing on the results as 'Yoville'! What could I do?

Training progressed well during the winter and with a few races by the way - including the Rough and Tumble, Longleat 10k, the Hestercombe Humdinger, Salisbury 10M and the Hogweed Hilly Half. Partway through this campaign I began to have worsening problems with my Achilles tendons, a new site of trouble for me. I had to tone down the training and have a more restful taper than planned, culminating in a week off before the race due to panic about the slowness of healing.

I started my marathon from the Green start, having arrived at Maze Hill on an early train that was nearly empty. Having made my way up the hill to the venue, my gaze was arrested by a very colourful gladiator and a feathery yellow chicken. Apparently this start was host to those fancy dress runners who were attempting to break a Guinness Record, and I learned later that a number (I believe 36) achieved their goal. There were also a number of celebrities, all in a pen like the sheep at the Bath and West show. I recognised Jamie Baulch and Iwan Thomas, and also Cheryl Baker, but a number were wasted on me as I never know who celebrities are. The bravest starter was David Rathband, the policeman shot and blinded by Raoul Moat, who walked accompanied and completed successfully.

After an interminable wait in the Loo Queue, I made my way to gate 6 for the final, nervous few minutes before the start. The gun almost caught me by surprise, but everyone seemed to get into their stride quickly without too much shoving. It was intimidating at first to

be running in such a solid wall of people, but I settled as the miles progressed. Unfortunately the state of my Achilles did not progress, and it soon became clear that this was to be a 'Plan B' day where finishing would be the name of the game. It was fascinating to run in the Capital with the roads closed for us, the tall buildings visible above the heads of the crowds making it obvious exactly where I was for most of the time. I distracted myself from the pain (which began disappointingly soon after the off) by spotting famous buildings, and looking out for the live music bands and cheering points. I managed to miss the Royal British Legion marquee at the 13 mile point, where my poor husband was waiting. He didn't spot me either, actually, as I seemed to be amidst a big bunch of runners at that point. My time was still reasonable at halfway, but soon afterwards my right hip began to cramp up - probably in objection to the crablike waddle I had resorted to. This problem did lose me a lot of time in the latter stages, having to walk and stretch every few minutes. Stretching would sort it out for another two minutes or so and then it came back.

Apart from those little stretching walks I did run all the way, albeit with crampy little strides. Determined to enjoy my day out, I waved and enjoyed the sights all the way. I still felt strong in the latter stages and fully appreciated the huge crowds from the Embankment through Birdcage Walk and along the final straight. It was amazing to come through that famous finish, and to receive my medal.

I found my husband at Horseguards, not difficult as he was wearing a white rugby shirt with violent red poppies all over it, and carrying a red bucket with a picture of me on it. He also carried a tall pole with an arrow pointing downward and so was visible above people's heads and impossible to miss!

Then on to the In and Out Club where the Royal British Legion had a champagne reception for runners and their teams. Champagne on an empty stomach - Heaven!

# A "fast and loose" London by Paul Rose

London is my favourite road race it has an atmosphere & organisation second to none; I've been fortunate to be able to take part in the previous six & always enjoyed a good race. This year I was expecting a more difficult run as all my training had been hampered by an ongoing problem with my right hip. If I had not been running for the Stroke Association I would have given the race a miss this year.

I arrived at Blackheath early before it got too busy & made my way to the Championship area on the Blue Start where I settled down & relaxed in a corner of the changing tent. As conditions were good at this stage & I had run a decent half marathon a couple of weeks previously I set about convincing myself that I was in PB shape & ready to run the race of my life. There were a few familiar faces from the local running community around I wished Jenny Moore & Ian Habgood luck before lining up in the road alongside Gerry Hogg. A line of stewards slowly led us to the start where the elite runners joined & we applauded as the World's best were introduced to the crowd.

Starting at the front of the field does present one problem in that it's difficult not to get carried away & go off far too fast, but being a fairly experienced marathoner surely I wouldn't be making that schoolboy error. The race started with the elites sprinting away & in the early miles it seemed hundreds if not thousands had passed me so I thought I was ok & not running too quickly. So it was a surprise to run through 5K in 18:24 which is 2 hour 35 min marathon pace – 'oops looks like I've got it wrong again.' I deliberately eased back the pace a little but was feeling reasonably comfortable with the hip feeling remarkably good (Ibuprofen working). At about this stage I was passed by Superman who clipped me on the back of the head

and wished me well, the superhero turned out to be Exmouth's Dave Stone who I had run alongside for much of Eden Project Marathon. I passed through 10 miles in 60 minutes, by now the temperature was rising & also it seemed quite humid & uncomfortable. The crowd support crossing Tower Bridge was as always a highlight, this helped me get to the halfway mark in 1:19:14, still feeling confident that sub 2:40 was possible. But at around 16 miles I started to get stomach cramps which gradually deteriorated & I slowed a little each mile from then on. Fantastic support again through the Docklands & Canary Wharf got me to 20 miles in 2:03:30 but at that point I was starting to drop back through the field & trying to desperately override my brain which was telling me to stop. I really appreciated the cheers & support from Club members in the crowd especially in the last few miles when I was struggling & concentrating on just completing. I crossed the line in 2:47:08 but didn't take that in at the time; all I was interested in was finding the nearest toilet.

After collecting my kit bag I made my way to a post race party organised by the charity. I can remember feeling unwell and a little wobbly as I walked to the venue, on arrival I passed out & woke up on a physio's couch! I was really well looked after & once I'd taken on some fluid and rested for a while I was fine. My dodgy stomach had prevented me from taking on any sports drinks & during the final 10 miles I had only felt confident taking an occasional sip of water; this added to the fact that it turned out to be a hot day had probably caused me to become a little dehydrated. However, the good news is that thanks to the generosity of family & friends including lots of club members £650 was raised for The Stroke Association.

# The North Dorset Villages Marathon by Matt Driver

It doesn't bode well if, ten days before the marathon, you fly head over heels and bruise your pride on a Tuesday night, and then struggle to finish the evening's run! However, as you see from the picture, I was going great guns at 4 miles with a good knee lift and a big smile.

Everything was going to plan and I was running just inside my target of 5 minute kilometres. That speed should be relatively easy compared with times that I'd do a 5K in, but of course this has to be kept up for much longer. Actually, the 5 minute kilometres felt quite slow and I had to stop myself getting competitive with other runners!



At Marnhull, there is a big hill which another competitor and I ran together maintaining speed to the top and then relaxing on the downhill, which meant my target pace was kept in check but on target. After this the route goes around a sweeping junction and a great photo opportunity for spectators. Unfortunately, just before this corner I had felt a bit uncomfortable, nothing to do but take an energy gel and drink, wave to the Missus for the photo and get on with it.

Half a mile down the road and I'm looking for a gateway for a pee! This is obviously why I feel uncomfortable and as soon as I've relieved myself I'll be as

right as rain... Or perhaps not! Suddenly my hips and knees are aching with every stride and I'm feeling depressed. Every look at the Garmin tells me that I'm still on for a pb, but I've got to keep running. A first DNF (Did Not Finish) was recorded at Taunton Marathon last month and there is no way that is EVER happening again!

"OK Matt, we need a plan here, we'll run for a mile and then have a walk for a few yards, repeat that and as soon as you know it we'll be home." So I try that and get about 400 yards before





I'm walking again. Now my hip flexors ache with every step and my stride length is tiny. Jog, walk, jog, walk. It's all I can do.

Wife Sara hasn't been seen for miles and I'm thinking she probably thinks she's missed me.

Hang on, that's her at the side of the road on this hill at 22 miles, I'm going to have to run so that she doesn't photograph me walking, no evidence please! At least I can explain I might take a bit longer than expected. I'm hoping I got away with the walking...but apparently not!

So, nothing for it but the last four miles of pain, with no knee lift at all and running 100 yards is a struggle. Lots of support from other runners who are either working at a slower but maintainable pace as they go past, or from fellow strugglers in various levels of pain. The last mile and a half is along a gravel track and the sun comes out to add heat to my woes. Finally, I

estimate the finish to be about a kilometre and I work out that this is probably about 200 paces. Of course, after 200 paces I've hardly moved because that's not the correct maths, can't be thinking straight so I tell myself to just get on with it. In the final stretch I manage a decent "sprint", after all a few moments of pain to finish off will hardly matter.

4:13:57 – This is my slowest marathon except the one done for the Ironman. A week later and I'm still depressed about it. I know my shoes need replacing, I know my training needs to be more structured, but I still think about the 3:28 I was on target for at half way!



## Deb Neal's North Dorset Villages Marathon

So, this is me approaching the last mile or two which is off road. It was the Sunday following the Royal Wedding when I had organised a bumble around the pubs. My plan was to take it easy, especially as I had a dodgy toe injury and wondered if I'd be able to get round at all. Due to not enough training or long runs I took it slowly and enjoyed it! My time was a slow 4.37.15 but I felt strong, overtaking throughout and managed a fair imitation of a finishing sprint over the last quarter mile.

# London – As seen by Andy Margrett

What a day! 48 hours after standing in Greenwich Park with 35,500 other slightly insane runners excitedly waiting for the starting gun and I still have a silly grin thinking about the event. Abs and I spent Saturday night in Sydenham with family having left Amy (the baby) and Lily (the boxer dog) with my mum for the weekend (first night away from Amy for the parents ...)! Sunday morning duly arrived and after a twenty minute train journey which included an unexpected sprint along Lewisham Station's platform to try and find a coach that wasn't rammed with runners and their supporters, we joined the ant like throng heading for the start. Blue start for me and I was amazed at how relaxed everyone seemed although I did have to think twice when I handed over my bag to two cheeky looking scallies. 9.45 duly arrived and we're off. I'm pleasantly surprised when I'm on my way properly by 9.47; a big wave to the camera and taking careful note of the "BUMP AHEAD" shouts which didn't prevent a few crashing to the ground.

Soon the cool start gave way to what felt like an August heatwave. Oh how I longed for those -10 temperatures and snow that I had trudged through during the winter training. An easy pace at the beginning more by necessity than anything else due to the number of runners and a very welcome sight of family and friends at Greenwich was making the run very enjoyable at mile 7. I had planned for 8 minute mile pace and continued to progress on schedule by 13 miles. The crowd around Tower Bridge and the half way point were amazing and the the temptation to join in with a bit of Bon Jovi at this point was irresistible; there was such a party atmosphere. It was so loud that I missed my family and friends who were screaming encouragement. There must have been many a spectator with no voice at the end of the day. At the half way mark, the course route meant that we were lucky enough to see the leaders running opposite us making it look very easy. Incredible! First half done and going ok...

Second half - a different story. I had somehow found myself in a 3:30 pace group around mile 11. Great I thought and for 3 miles this was fine but then all of a sudden they are pulling away from me and the first doubts are starting to set in. With another 10 miles to go, it was starting to feel like a very long way. Around Canary Wharf my legs were suggesting that a final surge for podium finish was unlikely and now it was a case of mind over matter to get home. Not sure why but despite drinking plenty I was still struggling to quench my thirst and I was taking every opportunity to take a drink. This included at mile 21 a beaker of coke, scrounged from a very kind family who clearly saw that my need for something fizzy was probably greater than theirs at that moment. A final effort up the embankment and crowd seemed to be seeking out those of us who were in need of vocal motivation. Any attempt to slow down to anywhere near a walk even for a few metres was met by a hail of verbal encouragement that couldn't fail to raise a fearful smile. Who knows what they would have done if I had stopped. Last few sightings of friends and family and I'm passing Buck House (no smile for ma'am I'm afraid) then at last the London Marathon medal is hung around my neck. 3 hours 50 minutes; slower than planned but pleased nevertheless.

All in all it was a fantastic experience, not only the race but also the training. I have never trained so intensely for an event and although ultimately I picked up an injury which prevented me training for the last 5 weeks I really enjoyed the different runs required in the programme. Last but by no means least I managed to raise £1500 for St Margaret's Hospice (St Margaret's will have received about £20,000 as a result of the London Marathon). Would I do it again? Definitely, as someone told me it takes 3 or 4 marathons to get the hang of it and if successful in the ballot for next year I will also have completed the Eden Marathon in October, better prepared mentally and physically to beat that 3:30 time.

# A Little Bit Further

## by Iain McCallum

### Here's a race report for you from my little adventure the other weekend.

Having completed the 46 mile Ultra Marathon in the Brecon Beacons in November I tried something a bit further this weekend. I along with 46 others stood on the Shell Bay beach at Studland at 1825 with 78.6 miles of the extremely hilly Jurassic Coast ahead of us until the finish at Charmouth with only 24 hours to complete it in. For the more observant out there that does not give a lot of spare time and the event is effectively non-stop.

The evening started with lovely weather and we all set off along the soft sanding beach. Not even the distraction of running through the nudist area (it was empty) could distract from paying careful attention to not going too fast too soon.

The first checkpoint in at Swanage was arrived at in good time well within the cut off time with there being only one significant climb out of Studland to contend with. The next leg around the cliff top path to St Alban's Head saw the sun go down and the head-torch come out. Despite being only metres away from a large drop into the sea and it being dark the running was superb on a mostly well worn path. To help out the sky was cloudless with a full moon out. This made it a bit cool but I was generating more than enough heat through the running.

Check-Point 3 (CP3) though was the start of the tough times. Here we entered the Army range complex but there was no firing going on, but it meant it was time for the serious hills to start. I have walked and run on most of this coast and was aware of what to

expect but I have never been in the normally active ranges, it was a lot harder than expected. The stage from Lulworth Cove to Osmington Mills was very tough and known as 'The Rollercoaster' for obvious reasons. I struggled through these two stages and had to dig deep to avoid pulling out for mainly mental reasons.

The next stage was not too bad with only one climb until the descent into Weymouth. Running along the seafront through Weymouth was interesting 'interacting' with people stumbling out of the various clubs and pubs. The route now took a cruel twist and rather than head directly west instead went for a lap of Portland. As many of you will know there is a major climb as soon as you get onto the Isle and this was rather tough but on good ground. The sun came out during this stage and was very welcome. It was odd to be running when the sun went down and even odder to still be going as it rose-very surreal! The route went in a clockwise direction and thankfully at the southernmost tip of the Portland Bill lighthouse the support team had a pasta meal which was gratefully accepted. The run back out of Portland was rather pleasant until the horrendous descent down some steep steps at Chiswell. It was here that I started to have serious problems. The drag back along the causeway made me realise that I was in trouble and needed to start to pick it up somehow.

The route now followed closely to the inland coast edge rather than on Chesil Beach. This route though is far from direct and by now I was having trouble running and was mostly walking. This stage also started my hate affair with style gates and a love affair with 'kissing' gates!

CP9 took us inland slightly inland over some cruel but gentle hills before the descent into Abbotsbury

and back onto the coast itself. The next few miles were almost completely flat but I was down now to a painful walk. I now knew I was doubtful to finish in time but still pushed on. Unfortunately the route from here to the finish is far from flat and includes some very nasty cliffs. I somehow managed the climb and descent into West Bay and now after being passed by numerous OAPs I knew my day was over. I was making very slow progress. The climb out of West Bay and subsequent descent into CP11 at Eype's Mouth was absolute torture and I pulled out here. I could have carried on as I was still inside the cut off time but with only 9.1 km to the finish and 2 hrs 11 mins to get there which I should have been easily able to make I knew my day was over. I was going so slowly uphill and the descents were absolutely torture, if it was flat I would have been okay, but it wasn't. There are 3 major climbs and

descents including the totally evil Golden Cap near the finish so the only option was to pull out.

I ended up with a total time of 21:49:32 and completed 117.6km out of 126.7. Out of the 47 starters only 27 finished which by itself speaks volumes for the severity of the challenge.

24 hours after finishing I've picked up numerous injuries from the expected blisters, purple toe nails (they'll be gone soon) a sore knee, and two very painful thighs to bizarrely cramping hands and fingers. Standing up and sitting down is painful and stairs are an almost no go except I don't live in a bungalow! Still I expect to be out running with a week or so though.

It being the same weekend, yes I did think about those "lucky" people running around a "short" 26.2 miles in London! I doubt I'll be at the club for a couple of weeks but see you soon.

# Edinburgh Marathon Weekend – by Lisa Gunning

The weekend of our marathon had finally arrived after months of long runs in preparation. After a hideously early start at 5am on the Saturday we caught our flight from Bristol to Edinburgh at 7am. Only an hour's flight and then a thirty minute bus ride to the city and we were at our hotel. Jury's Inn hotel was in the perfect position for the start as it was only ten minutes walk away. We decided to take a bus tour of the city, not wanting to wear our legs out for the next day and then did a spot of shopping; well Mel did the shopping and then wondered how she was going to fit her new purchases into her case as we were only taking hand luggage! The answer would be to wear the clothes in her case layer upon layer and then put the new purchases in the case!

The morning had arrived, porridge for breakfast and then off to the start. The course was very flat which was great, but to my surprise was mostly along the coast and at points we could see other runner's miles away in the distance. I was actually enjoying this run, mainly because I had decided to run with how my body felt rather than being a slave to my Garmin. The miles seemed to flow past quite quickly with a few heavy showers on the way but nothing to really complain about. However, the last five or six miles felt more difficult as we had the full force of the wind against us, which made it much harder than it need be! I heard someone shout only two miles to go, great I thought but took a look at my Garmin which told me there was another 2.5 miles to go, he was obviously not a runner as we all know that extra half mile seems a long way when you are

doing a marathon! The finish line beckoned and still feeling pretty good if a bit tired, 4.08.05 a pb for me! Sian followed in next 4.17.29 followed by Mel 4.19.55 and the Cath 4.21.09. We had all done pb's and Cath had done her first ever marathon!

Baggage claim at the end took ages as they didn't have a clue where any of our bags were but we finally managed to locate all our belongings and now had to walk for about 20 minutes to get the bus. We get on the bus and about fifteen minutes into our journey the bus breaks down! We now have to wait for another bus to come and get us, so off we all clamber with sore legs and get onto the other bus. Time is getting late now so we decide to head into the nearest pub we can find and have a few drinks. Wonder why no one sits in the seats next to us?! Best go and get cleaned up then before heading out for a meal and a few more drinks!

The following morning it is lashing down with rain and gale force winds so we head off to have a big fry up for breakfast and then meet with Cath and John at lunch time and spend the rest of the day eating and drinking! We get into the airport and most of the flights are being cancelled or delayed due to the weather, so things are not looking too good. We are now getting worried as the ash cloud is due to cancel all flights tomorrow so if we don't leave tonight we are going to have to get the train back, which would be a long journey. Luckily our flight flags up to be leaving three hours late, but at least we get home! It was a great weekend and would recommend this marathon for any first time marathon runners!

# The Dartmoor Discovery – My First Ultra

## Nigel Moysey

**H**AVING almost given up after The Stagger at the end of October, missing the “must be done races” (Ilminster 10k, Brent Knoll Race and Monty) cutting back the training to only about 15 miles and a couple of gym sessions each week through November and early December, the Christmas break signalled wake up time and getting back into some more organised and serious training. Thwarted by the snow and a couple of base over apex falls the mileage remained low, and attitude certainly not positive, until the second week in January.

Stepping up the miles a little produced a significant change in the mental approach but targets were needed. Marathons and ultras were the main aim this year but a race over “all the distances” to qualify for the Grand Slam Hat – and the new Super Slam Hat by including an ultra of 50k or longer – was also on the agenda.

Looking at the calendar the Longleat 10k was less than three weeks away. The training had been slow and the reduced activity, and over-indulgence, over a ten week period had

resulted in the weight shooting up by about 20lbs! Still, decided to give it a go, but then what? Having been unsuccessful in the ballot for the Grand Union Canal Challenge for the second year, what about an ultra at around about the same time? Although less than a quarter of the distance of the GUC race the Dartmoor Discovery at between 32 and 33 miles appealed. Got the entry in, just making it at 187 of the 200 limit!

OK. The Discovery doesn't compare with the GUC in distance but there's nearly 3,600 feet of vertical ascent whereas the race from Birmingham to London is downhill all the way! Perhaps that doesn't exactly make up for the additional 113 miles though. So, what else along the way? A training slog from early February until The Dartmoor Discovery on 4 June didn't in itself seem at all attractive.

There was the new Yeovil Half Marathon at the end of March and the Taunton Marathon the first weekend in April. Why not enter those races too? At least they'll liven up the training a little, although they won't be “target

“races” themselves. The North Dorset Village Marathon on 1 May was, though, a perfect target race on the way to the Discovery so got the entry in and sorted out the training programme. A couple of tweaks to the Discovery training programme were needed to accommodate the planned races along the way and training started in earnest on 16 January, three weeks before the Longleat 10k on 6 February. Having done no speed work at all and anticipating a time of up to 56 minutes the 51:50 at Longleat was quite pleasing.

On with the training, through the remainder of February and the beginning of March I concentrated on building up the miles. With hindsight, inclusion of more “quality” sessions and less “grinding” sessions would probably have been more effective. In particular, perhaps, turning up at Tim's and Peter's track sessions on Friday evenings. As it was the Yeovil Half crept up having done virtually no quality running. The decision was, therefore, to take it easy through the first half of the race, till the top of Hendford Hill, and then decide

on the plan for the remainder. Feeling comfortable, the pace picked up a little at about 7 miles and at 9 miles decided a bit more effort was required. There seemed to be quite a lot in the tank and was pleased to overtake upwards of 60 to 70 other runners in the last 3 miles or so. Having started out only to beat the "2 hour barrier" the chip finishing time of 01:48:53 was satisfactory, to say the least.

All bode well for the Taunton Marathon the following week. Although this was to be a training run rather than a race there was a race plan. Get to the bottom of Rumwell Hill the first time averaging 8 minutes 40 seconds per mile, lose only a couple of seconds per mile on the climb, get to the bottom of the hill the second time in the low 8:50s and make it to the finish in average 9 minute miles to break the 4 hour barrier by a couple of minutes or so. Or at least, that was the plan. The ride back from the 20 mile mark in the ambulance wasn't part of it!!! What went wrong I don't and probably never will.

At 16 miles the pace was averaging 8:42s and feeling really comfortable. At 18 miles it had slowed a little to 18:45s but still comfortable and saving a little for the second time up the hill. Even

3 hours 50 minutes could be on the cards with a bit of effort over the last three miles. Then it all went wrong. I didn't take much notice of my right knee buckling under me thinking I'd trodden on a stone that had rolled under my foot or something but then it happened again, after a few paces again, again and again... Having the longer term objective in mind I slowed and by the time I reached 20 miles when my right leg was straight I had difficulty bending it and when it was bent I couldn't straighten it! Three cheers for St John's Ambulance.

They had me in the back of the ambulance, checked me over and had an ice pack wrapped around my knee in next to no time. What's more they gave me a lift back to the finish! OK, I had to put up with constant monitoring of pulse rate, temperature and blood pressure, with one last check over back at their base before they let me go, but their quick application of the ice pack was, I'm sure, the reason why I was able to resume (gentle) training two days later. It's annoying that it happened in the race, getting the dreaded "DNF" in the results. It may be that there was a stone or something that caused the problem in a leg that was more tired than I'd appreciated but up until a week before the Discovery

I had absolutely no problem with it.

With only three weeks to go until the North Dorset Village Marathon an intensive schedule that included a mix of distance runs and quality training was drawn up, with the objective of going the distance more than anything else. This all seemed to go reasonably well then – disaster. It's not ideal to include a long run only a week before a marathon but this was, of course, all part of the plan building up to the Discovery. On Easter Sunday the final long run prior to North Dorset was a failure. On a scheduled 21 miles I fell apart at about 14 and had to give up at 16! Being a mental and physical wreck, as far as running was concerned, what should I do?

The next day was the Easter Bunny 10k at Yeovilton and I went along to help out. Talking to Nick Brooke convinced me that a thought I'd had in the back of my mind was possibly not so stupid after all. The confidence gained by completing a 20 mile plus run before the marathon the following Sunday would in all probability outweigh the effect on freshness on the day. So, that's what it would be – a 20 miler the following evening – and I cruised around it feeling absolutely fantastic and with miles left in the

legs at the end.

So on lining up on 1 May what was I hoping for? 4 hours 20 minutes would be disappointing, 4:10 would be just about acceptable but could I get under 4 hours? Setting off at a pace that would average a little under 9 minute miles and allowing for a couple of hills in the last few miles the 4 hours was doubtful but running comfortable managed to gradually bring the average down to under 8 minute 40 second miles. Looking good for 3:50 at that pace – and then, at a little over 19 miles who's that I spot ahead but Matt Driver (Matt, Debbie Neal and I were the only three YTRRC members in the marathon). Matt was having real problems and I overtook him at around about 20 miles – and shortly after hit my own wall. The pace dropped dramatically and in the last 5 miles I lost almost 10 minutes against the average pace at 20 miles to finish in 03:56:31, with which, although absolutely drained, I was delighted.

Recovery took longer than expected and for the next couple of weeks I was unable to do any serious training. Not ideal for the fourth and fifth weeks prior to the Discovery. With 3 weeks to go a couple or three long runs had to be fitted in as well as quality and hill sessions. I'd have

only a few days taper rather than the advised two weeks but the training really was necessary. A couple of evenings at Sonny's beer festival the weekend before the race didn't do the cause much good either.

So, the big day, Saturday 4 June, arrived with the alarm going off at 4.30 a.m. Should I get up and do this thing or should I stay here in bed? If I go and do it will I manage to finish? All the doubts in the world descended.

Managing to get myself moving we (my wife and I) set out for Princetown at about 5.30 a.m. arriving a little after 7.00. Still not convinced I registered and collected my number and then labelled my drinks and gels and placed them in the bins which were to be distributed at 3 mile intervals around the course. Get changed, line up and we're away. I found myself running beside a guy I'd seen a couple of times before, at the Torbay 10k a few



years ago and at the Anglesey Marathon (my first marathon) in September 2008. He is recognisable by both his running style and his socks – the latter being multi-coloured hoops, although the present ones aren't quite up to the standard of his "originals". We had a chat for a couple of miles and then he stopped to answer the call so I lost touch with him. In the meantime I'd caught up with and overtaken Judith Wilson, the only other YTRRC runner taking part. Judith went off rather quickly through the first two or three miles and was to pay for it later and be forced to withdraw from the race.

The first 11 to 12 miles are technically downhill in that the lowest point of the race is at the 11 to 12 mile mark. However, there are two huge climbs in that first part as well as some very steep descents. Then at the 12 mile point is an almost 3 mile climb out of Ashburton up onto the moor again, followed immediately by a drop down into Buckland in the Moor, a further almost 2 miles climb back up, down again into Widecombe in the Moor, back up towards the marathon distance and from there undulating, on an upward trend, to the finish back at Princetown.

My splits were 00:55:05 at 10k,

01:52:56 at 20k (and getting excited that I'd be close to 5 hours), 03:10:21 at 30k (with the two climbs out of Ashburton and Buckland in the Moor in this – and now would be delighted with anywhere near 05:30:00), deteriorating further to 04:43:18 at the marathon distance (had a nature call at about 20 miles and started cramping afterwards) with the final 6 miles or so taking a further 80+ minutes (final mile almost 20 minutes) to complete for a total time of 06:04:00 placed 114 out of 146 completing the course and 17 DNFs!

I was absolutely out of it at the finish and almost "carried" over the last couple of hundred meters by a guy from the hosting club, Teignbridge Trotters, absolutely screaming support and encouragement. Dehydrated, despite taking on at least three litres during the race, starving and in a sort of twilight blur unable to see more than a couple of yards ahead there was tons of support at the finish with water, snacks and medical assistance if required.

The race was won by David Tomlin from the hosting club, in a time of 03:57:48. David had taken part several times before, always finishing in the top few and this was his year. Well done David.

This really was an excellent

event. The atmosphere and marshalling were second to none. Particularly at the drinks stations, the organisation was such that runners own drinks were always there handed out to them. The crowds were not huge but with runners' supporters travelling around the route, stopping and then leapfrogging over again there was plenty of encouragement for all runners. Full marks go to Roger Hayes, his team at Teignbridge Trotters and their legions of other helpers. Entries for next year open in August and I'll have mine in straight away!

With the experience I'll train differently. I'll know the race route now too. I'll control my weight better – get a stone off this years' race weight – definitely no beer the week before! Although it seems a huge improvement I'll be looking to beat the 5 hour barrier – a 4 hour marathon leaves an hour for the last 10k. What next? Well, there is an aftermath and I do have a "knee" that has to be x-rayed. All being well a couple of weeks rest or easy training should see me off again. There's the "Round The Rock Race" – a 48 miler in Jersey – on 6 August. A couple of easy weeks, a week back running and then think about it!

# Man v Horse Marathon, Llanwrtyd Wells

## Richard Boulter's Story

Autumn 2010 finds my wife & I sitting in The Neuadd Arms in Llanwrtyd Wells. We had just finished a 15 mile trek in some Welsh Mountains as part of the 'Real Ale Ramble'. This is a Beer come Walking Festival where you walk for a few miles, sample some Real Ale, stagger a few more miles & try another sample until you hopefully get back to the Neuadd Arms. As we sat recovering with a cup of tea(!) and cake, opposite us was a Roll of Honour for the Man v. Horse Marathon.

"I fancy having a go at that sometime" came from somewhere. Was it me or the beer talking?

June 2011 & we are back in the Neuadd Arms for the pre race Pasta Party and a half of real ale, as a sort of thanks offering. Word is that it's pretty muddy up in the hills and also learn that popular wisdom has it that the course is 2 miles shorter than advertised at 20 miles. Next day sees breakfast in the B&B with 3 other runners & a horse rider. Plenty of nervous banter including this pearl from the horse rider "I've never ridden the horse I'm riding before..."

On the start line with a couple of minutes to go, it's raining heavily & wandering why I am stood here like a drowned rat. A hooter goes & all hell breaks loose. There are plenty of slow runners at the front so it's bit of a slalom for the first half a mile. Feel terrible, no warm up, too much carbo loading & general tension conspire to make my brain say "you don't want to do this, stop now and save yourself the bother". Has anyone ever given up in the 1st mile before? I distract myself from the discomfort with the thought of the sadistic 1st climb coming up. I'd found it tough during the walking festival, so not sure how it would be trying to race up it. It starts off comparatively easy, about the same as Ham Hill, then as you get to the top of Ham Hill, instead of levelling off it gets even steeper and goes up the same again on a stony, single track path. By now

I have forgotten all thoughts of abandonment & surprise myself by running nearly all the hill. I would have expected to have walked a lot more than I did, a good sign for hills yet to come?

Now running with a man in a distinctive 'The Beano' comic shirt. If he'd only keep still I could read what it said! About 4 miles in comes what some regard as the hardest part of the course. It's not even hilly but is a long stretch of boggy heathland that requires strength & careful footwork to leap from tussock to tussock to avoid the soggy grey soil & mud that conspire to bring progress to a crawl. Make good time across here, feeling pretty confident & leave the group I was with behind. 5 miles gone and downhill for a mile or so to the 1st checkpoint so time for a bit of a breather. Suddenly, there's a shout from behind, "Coming by". "What's this? Only 5.5 miles gone & the 1st horse comes galloping past".

The horses actually start 15 minutes after the runners for safety reasons and have their times adjusted accordingly. Nevertheless I didn't expect



to get passed quite so soon. I won't be going home with the £1,000 for beating the horse today then. Carry on down through a river crossing & out onto the road which is lined with 4x4's with 5 pint milk cartons full of water stood alongside. I soon learn that whilst runners get a plastic cup of cold water to drink, horses get a couple of 5 pint cartons of water thrown over them to cool them a bit.

A sharp left turn & onto the part of the course I haven't walked before. It's a long, long 2 mile climb which is unrelenting in its upwardness (not sure that's a real word but it just went up & up for 2 miles without relent). A few runners pass me and likewise I pass a few others. You quickly learn to look at each runner's wrist as they pass by as it gives away whether they are a solo runner or 'just' a relay runner only running 7 miles. Eventually start descending as a horse catches me, though he seems to like my company as he stays alongside for a good quarter of a mile, literally running shoulder to shoulder. Brilliant! As we pass through a 5 bar gate the horse slows to a walk – "It's the halfway point & compulsory vet's examination before they can carry on." It goes without saying that it's a good job no one inspects the runners...

Another few miles pass until yet another climb where 2 horses catch up &, like their earlier stable mate, decide to stay alongside for a while. Eventually they slow to a walk and the 1st rider says soothingly "There's a good boy, its hard work isn't it". "You talking to me?" was my instinctive response! Swiftly through the 2nd checkpoint and out onto a road & its bedlam. Take a narrow Welsh country lane, fill one side of it with parked cars & 4 x 4's with water filled milk cartons, add cars arriving & cars leaving as well as pedestrians then add galloping horses & runners going in the opposite direction & it's a safety officers worst nightmare. Leaving the checkpoint behind the hardest stage begins with another sharp left off the road & again I remember this climb as being a bit of beast. The sun is burning down on us now, until

eventually reaching a descent via a narrow, steep path through a picturesque oak forest and both ankles are suffering. Never mind, there is a nice cool stream to wade through at the bottom (aka an iced bath!), before we immediately go straight back up the other side of the valley. We spotted several Red Kites here last year but I'll be bu\*\*\*\*ed if I'm going to look for any today. Reduced walking up part of the climb & eventually stagger over the top with only 5 miles to go.



Run past a lone marshal "Its 4.5 miles to go & its flat" she shouts. In another half mile another lone marshal shouts, "Its 4.5 miles to go & its flat". "Ok, but I don't believe either of you!" Toward a farmyard now that I remember has an extremely extrovert collie chained up that could 'bark for Wales', no trouble. I have been slowly catching a runner for a mile or so and as we approach, I can hear the dog going berserk, "Oh bother, he's broken his chain & going at 90 mph straight for us, chain and all." The chap in front stops dead but me being either, a) fearless, b) stupid or

c) too knackered to care, carry on running. The dog runs in a circle behind us still doing a good 90 with the chain flying through the air like he's rounding up his sheep. Fortunately the owner appears & one word from her & the dog drops to the floor like he'd been shot through the heart. Thank goodness he's a real sheep dog who has been trained!

Panic over & 4 miles of mostly downhill to go until a long, very narrow, very wet & very muddy descent eventually brings us out through The Woollen Mill & back onto the main road leading to the finish. Going well, passing runners regularly and hot on the heels of my next victim and not seen too many horses either. "What's that arrow pointing right for, are we going off road again?" Before us lay a half mile of, admittedly not too steep, but nonetheless uphill climb through some grassy fields. After 19 hilly Welsh miles grassy fields take on a dimension all of their own. I succumbed to walking for a while up here as I entered in a delirious state where my mind was conscious of what was going on, but not too sure that it was making the decisions anymore. Closing on the next victim though my progress momentarily hampered by stepping into what I thought was going to be a puddle only for my leg to sink half way up my calf and not come out again. I think suitable terminology is 'Doing a face plant'. Eventually extracting the leg I resumed my quest to overtake the man in front & achieve success just before we burst out onto the road & the last quarter mile 'sprint' for home. Down goes the road to a switchback turn onto a track and a full blown 'river' crossing, complete with a very nice footbridge alongside lined with spectators. I leap in & immediately get a big cheer as I accomplish another 'face plant'. At least I look lovely & clean in the finish line photos, if a trifle wet. Literally stagger across the river, the bed being strewn with unseen boulders making it impossible to tell what sort of landing each step will bring & emerge from the raging torrent like Ursula Andress in 'Dr. No'. Well

maybe not but it's a better image than a Yeovil Town running vest smeared with the sweat of man & horse & not a few Welsh bogs. Passing my last victim as terra firma is reached and manage a 'sprint' for the last few hundred yards to the line.

I actually don't feel too bad, and a few minutes after finishing it starts to rain again, funny, I don't remember it ever stopping though it obviously did as the sun has been shining. "Where's my jacket to put on?" "Oh, I left it in the car..."

300 solo runners, 125 relay teams of 3 and 50 four-legged rivals took part in this the 32nd event. The winning horse & rider finished in 2hr 8m 37s, and was presented with 1,000 guineas, finishing just over 17 minutes ahead of the first runner, Charlie Pearson.

I finished in 46th place overall (excluding the Relay teams) in 2hrs 54 m 55s and was 29th individual runner. Though beaten by 17 horses, I still managed to beat some 33 others. The 1st horse to pass me at 5.5 miles eventually finished in 4th place, despite having won 3 times previously. It isn't just runners who start too fast and overcook it then.

Now, I'm sure I've seen something about a 'Race the Train' event somewhere...

**And so... on reflection,  
it is possibly best  
not to ask too many of  
the above contributors  
about how to run  
marathons.**

**Suffice to say,  
it's all about  
YOU!**