



ULTRARUNNING WORLD

M A G A Z I N E

ROAD, TRACK & TRAIL MULTIDAY & ULTRA DISTANCE NEWS

// ISSUE 28





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With the 28th edition of Ultrarunning World being published less than two weeks ago, we are delighted to start the New Year with the January issue. We will have a slightly shorter version for now to make it easier to publish on time and we will continue with our usual format though we had no space/time in this issue for Recent and Upcoming Races. We are also providing a more mobile-friendly version of the magazine and many people, over 40% of readers, took advantage of that option with the last edition. New issues will be published in the first week of the month and submissions should arrive by the 14th.

We open this issue with South African duo Debs and Dawn who will share their plans and preparations for a sub-24 hour 13 Peaks Challenge which links summits on Table Mountain and in the Cape Peninsula area.

Jeremy Mower, one of Wales most consistent ultrarunners for many years on track and road took to the Cotswold Way last year with friend Darren Jewell after a race cancellation and shares the experience.

Ben Davies was one of the lucky few who had a race in 2020 and his Snowdonia Slate Trail report reminds me that the event is now under new management, Apex Running, and for those who fancy something a little shorter they are introducing the 82k Daffodil Trail in October this year.

Leah Atherton put herself in the way of challenge in the form of an FKT attempt on the South West Coastal Path and she survived to tell the tale.

Another friendship, this time between Tina McIver and Christiane James produced an account of their adventure at Ultra North 55 and this leads neatly into an interview with women's race winner Rosie Holiday and whose husband Michael won the men's event.

Katrine Stilbo very kindly sent us a report on the 24 hour National Championship in Copenhagen and how the event unfolded from their planning a year in advance.

Miriam O'Connor shares why the Connemara 100, which took place in August, needs to be on your bucket list and the following month John Boyle introduces the Kerry Way Ultra Running Festival billed as Ireland's longest and toughest off-road race.

Its all in the mind, an oft quoted phrase and Elliot Robinson offers some thoughts on how to do some mental house-keeping with a look at what meditation is.

Tripolar by Tim Davis is reviewed by Emily Adams, the story of how an endurance athlete was able to move forward despite being in a very challenging situation.

We close this month's issue with our Hall of Fame ultra walker Sandra Brown whose husband Richard, was featured in our last months HOF.

We hope you enjoy this issue and though the Covid situation doesn't seem to be slowing atm, we hope that the worst will be over by the time the next issue comes out.

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- Ana Sanchez
- Helen Hayes
- Emily Adams

Graphic Designer
Copy Editor
Book Reviews

• Front cover

- Sabrina Verjee during her Wainright's Coast to Coast run which she successfully completed in 55:58:39 after setting off from St Bees, Cumbria on Boxing Day 2020.

• Back cover

- Peter Windross on his way to victory at the 2020 Gloucester 24 Hour race - photo by [Tosh Simpkins](#).

Ultrarunning World January 2021

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Send inquiries, original and previously unpublished race reports/articles to the email address above. Last dates for article submissions: January 14th, February 14th, March 14th.

Please include some accompanying photos (if you have any) with articles/race reports, a 40-50 word bio, and a headshot for the contributors page. More details for submissions on request. Thank you.

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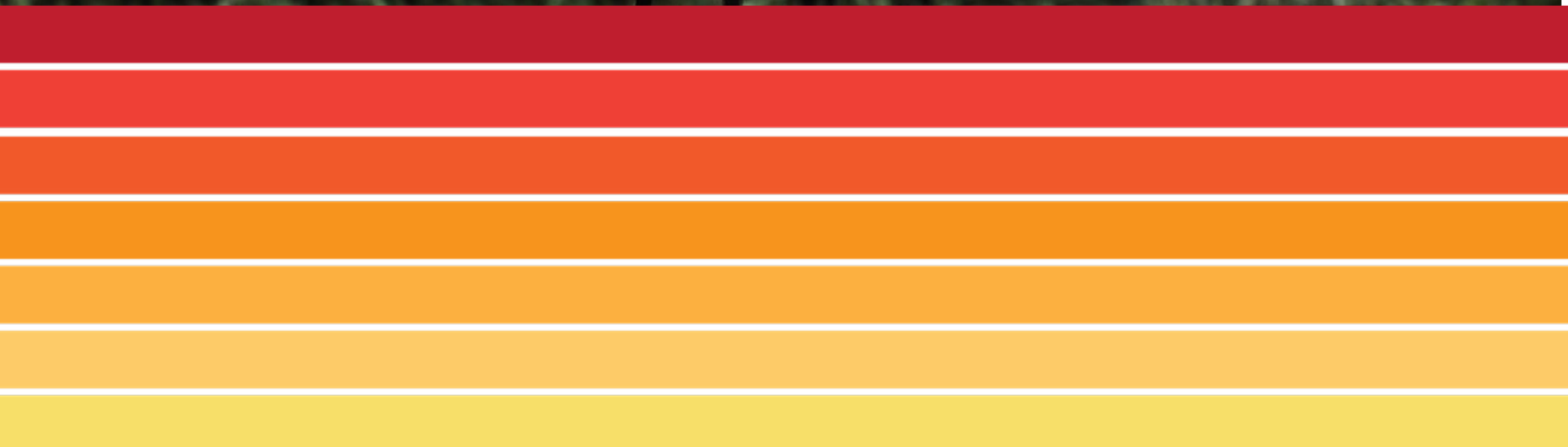
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Inaugural World Mountain and Trail Running Championships set for Chiang Mai



The first edition of the **World Mountain and Trail Running Championships (WMTRC)** will be held 11-14 November 2021, in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Over the four days, the action-packed championships program will include 40/80 km trail races, vertical uphill mountain races, short and long trail races for senior athletes and the classic mountain races for both seniors and juniors. This new biennial event replaces World Championships previously hosted by WMRA (mountain running) and IAU/ITRA (trail). Details on the [IAU website](#).

The Ultra-Trail® World Tour announced their schedule for the New Year which features 28 races organized in 6 continents and 22 different countries with Ultra-Trail® Snowdonia being one of the newly added events. The UTWT which first began in 2014 brings together the best athletes by offering a real-time ranking, an annual championship title, prizes and advantageous travel arrangements. The ranking is based on the four best results of each runner over the last 36 months after the cancellation of the 2020 championship due to the pandemic. Iconic events such as the Madeira Island Ultra-Trail®, the Western State® 100-Mile Endurance Run and the UTMB® Mont Blanc (UTMB®, TDS® and CCC®) have confirmed that they will continue to be part of the circuit. [Ultra-Trail World Tour](#).

Transgrancanaria HG will be the first of 10 events in the opening edition of **the Spartan Trail World Championship**. The Championship will be divided in two categories: "Trail Run Championship" and "Trail Ultra Championship". The first one will have races up to 49 kms while the second one will include races over 50 km. Each event offers prize money and details can be found at: [Spartan Trail World Championship](#).

January the first saw HOKA ONE ONE® announce the launch of the Carbon X 2, "a lightweight and propulsive shoe designed to help all athletes break their own records." To showcase this new footwear, HOKA will host successive 100K world record attempts in the United States and Japan by several of its athletes on January 23, titled Project Carbon X 2 which will be streamed live.

Jim Walmsley and Camille Herron, Elov Olsson and Caitriona Jennings, Japanese athletes Aiko Kanematsu and Yoshiki Otsuka and over three dozen HOKA global athletes will attempt the record in Chiba, Japan and

the Phoenix, Arizona area at 7am JST and 7am MST, respectively. Jim Walmsley (pictured below) will be attempting to break the current men's 100K world record which is 6:09:14 set by Japan's Nao Kazami in 2018; the women's mark is 6:33:11, set by Japan's Tomoe Abe in 2000. More details on the [HOKA ONE ONE® website](#).

The **Golden Trail World Series**, was founded upon 6 iconic races, Zegama, the Marathon du Mont Blanc, in Chamonix, France; Dolomyths Run, in Italy, Sierre-Zinal, in the Swiss Alps; Pikes Peak, in Colorado, USA and Ring of Steall in the Scottish Highlands, UK. After the last race of the series, an overall ranking will define the top 11 men and women who will be invited to participate in the Grand Final. The Grand Final, on November 6th, 2021, travels to the far reaches of South America: Villa La Angostura, Neuquén, Patagonia, Argentina, for the K42 Adventure Marathon; a race that began in 2003 with a mere 345 runners, and now gathers 2000 runners. More details at the [Golden Trail World Series website](#).



ULTRA-TRAIL®
WORLD TOUR

Podcast Corner 28

BREAKING TEN

DAN LAWSON

RUNNING 825 MILES
- LAND'S END TO JOHN O'GROATS -
UNDER TEN DAYS

dm
two
A DMTWO FILM



RERUN
PRE-LOVED RUNNING
CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT
PRESENTED BY

This month a bunch of new movies/videos are popping up in feeds and we'll get to those after a quick look at some recent podcasts.

Kilian's attempt at the 24 hour record drew a lot of attention and Camille Heron discusses the subject with Ian Corless on [Talk Ultra Episode 199](#).

[Trail Running Ireland](#) podcast Ep. 12 Highlights Show with Winner of The Kerry Way Ultra Gavin Byrne (See John Boyle's Kerry Way Ultra report on p.38). The show is hosted by Eoin Flynn, UTMB Finish Line Race Announcer and 10 times Irish International Mountain Runner.

Becoming Ultra is an American coaching and media platform meant to leverage some of the best coaches in the industry to help runners to their first ultra including Amanda Basham. Checkout the [Becoming Ultra](#) podcast on Stitcher. Simen Holvik joined the **DaznBone podcast** to chat about the Kilian Jornet/Salomon event to break the 24 hour World Record, the Phantasm 24 Hour. Kilian managed 10 hours but over 2 million unique viewers joined the live streaming - an unprecedented audience for ultrarunning and especially 24 hour track running. Part 10 in the [Legends of Spartathlon](#) series.

Run The Riot podcast by David Theriot has an interesting library of conversations with ultrarunners including Episode 50 - Tim Davis - The Tripolar Ultra-runner whose book gets a review in this issue on page 42. Checkout [Theriot.run/podcast/](#)

Amy Palmiero-Winters - Extreme Ultra Endurance Athlete and first female amputee to finish Western States and the Badwater Ultramarathon featured in a [Tough Girl Podcast](#) last November. TGP also more recently features Megan Al-Ghailani - who in 2018 became the youngest woman to run from John O'Groats to Lands End (JOGLE) solo and unsupported.

Fullsteam podcast talks with [Brutal Claire](#) Smith, creator of Brutal Events after last year's unsupported JOGLE run and who will feature in February's issue of Ultrarunning World.

Recent Videos and Films

On the 16th August 2020, Dan Lawson completed the Land's End to John O'Groats run in 9 days 21 hours 14 minutes and 2 seconds, beating the previous peer acknowledged and authenticated record by Richard Brown which had stood for 25 years. [Breaking Ten](#) documents Dan's journey.

[The Legends](#) - stories from the 1992 and 2012 editions of the Dragon's Back Race® featuring legends Martin Stone, Helene Whitaker and Steve Birkinshaw and the company's most recent film is [Modern winners of the Dragon's Back Race®](#)

The [Via Alpina](#) documentary tells the tale of the self supported 2,650 km crossing of the Alps by Guillaume Arthus in 44 days. A breathtaking adventure with

150 000m of elevation through landscapes as difficult as it is beautiful.

In 2019 Kristina Schou Madsen (bottom left) assembled a support team to help her complete the Bob Graham Round, 42 mountain peaks in the Lake District in less than 24 hours - 66 miles and 26900 feet. Watch the 8 minute trailer [Bob Graham - The Kristina Madsen Story](#). The full movie will be out on January 15th 2021.

Also like to mention [A Trail Life](#) - by our correspondent Sarah Cameron produced by Eyes & Trails TV and **Like Harvey Like Son**, watch the trailer of [Harvey Lewis running the Appalachian Trail](#) and finally checkout [The Corris Round](#) - a lockdown inspired Ultra Run in Southern Snowdonia featuring 12 year old Tom Gilbert.



6 Day Races 2021

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21.03.2021

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18.04.2021



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18.06.2021



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DEBS & DAWN'S Adventures: *13 peaks*

Debbie is from Johannesburg while Dawn lives in Durban, South Africa. By car it is a 7 hour drive or one hour flight to get from Joburg to Durban. Yet, we met during the peak of the coronavirus in South Africa in June 2020. We are both coached by Coach Neville and he had set up zoom exercise classes for us, which Debbie led, to keep us motivated during this hard time of no races and heavy restrictions. In South Africa we had a full lockdown for 5 weeks where there was the infamous garden running craze, thereafter we were allowed a 5 km radius outside of our home but in specific hours. Once the lockdown started to lift, one of the runners on the group, who is from Cape Town, trained for 13 peaks and completed it well under 24 hours.

13 peaks is a challenge which Cape Town based ultra trail runner Ryan Sandes created. It links 13 prominent peaks in the cape area. On completion it covers over 100 km with a whopping 6000 m vertical climb. Ryan has set up a 24 hour, 48 hour or a multiday badge which you can aim for to complete the 13 peaks. You need to start at one point tagging each peak as you go along, and then finish where you started having run the whole route on foot. The beauty of it is that you can have people seconding and pacers to help you along your way, so you don't need to pack for the whole challenge but you can replenish along the way. Debs and Dawn then met on a zoom chat about 13 peaks and decided that this was an event we are both keen to do, TOGETHER! We have realised how alike we are, always

game for fun, trails and adventures. So was born Debs and Dawn Adventures with 13 peaks the aim for 2021, which we want to complete in under 24 hours. We have spoken to a number of runners who have completed this challenge as well as Ryan himself. We have also managed to get a few sponsors on board to make this more an event and adventure than just a once off run that we do.

Our expectations are that it is going to be tough, but we are tougher! We have, however, the best coach to get us in shape for the challenge, and we both are committed to training in running, strength and mental focus as we are prepared to give it our best. We have run a few times together and get on so well that, despite not being able to train regularly together, we will fit into our stride and have a blast.

Gear is such an important component and we have already tested out most of what we will use on the day. Now we need to focus on building up our mileage and getting our team together. We feel that it is vital to have the right people pace and second us so that no time is wasted, they keep us light hearted and happy, and have all our gear and nutrition ready for us. One of our concerns is getting lost. Both



of us aren't the best navigators. To ensure the best possible outcome we will head to Cape Town to recce parts of the run that will be done at night as well as gathering the trail experts in the Cape to join us or pace us for these sections so we will stay on track.

Nutrition is also a vital part to our training on those long runs and enables the body to be efficiently fuelled. We will ensure that we regularly fuel during the 13 peaks challenge, whether we feel like eating or not: small amounts frequently taken and liquid nutrition especially for the latter part when it is often harder to swallow solid food.

Choosing the right time of year and time to start is so important. At the moment we aim to run in October 2021 and we are leaning towards an early morning start (4am). We both enjoy running early in the morning and feel that this will be what our bodies are used to doing. Also, the first part of 13 peaks is very technical so it may be best done in the

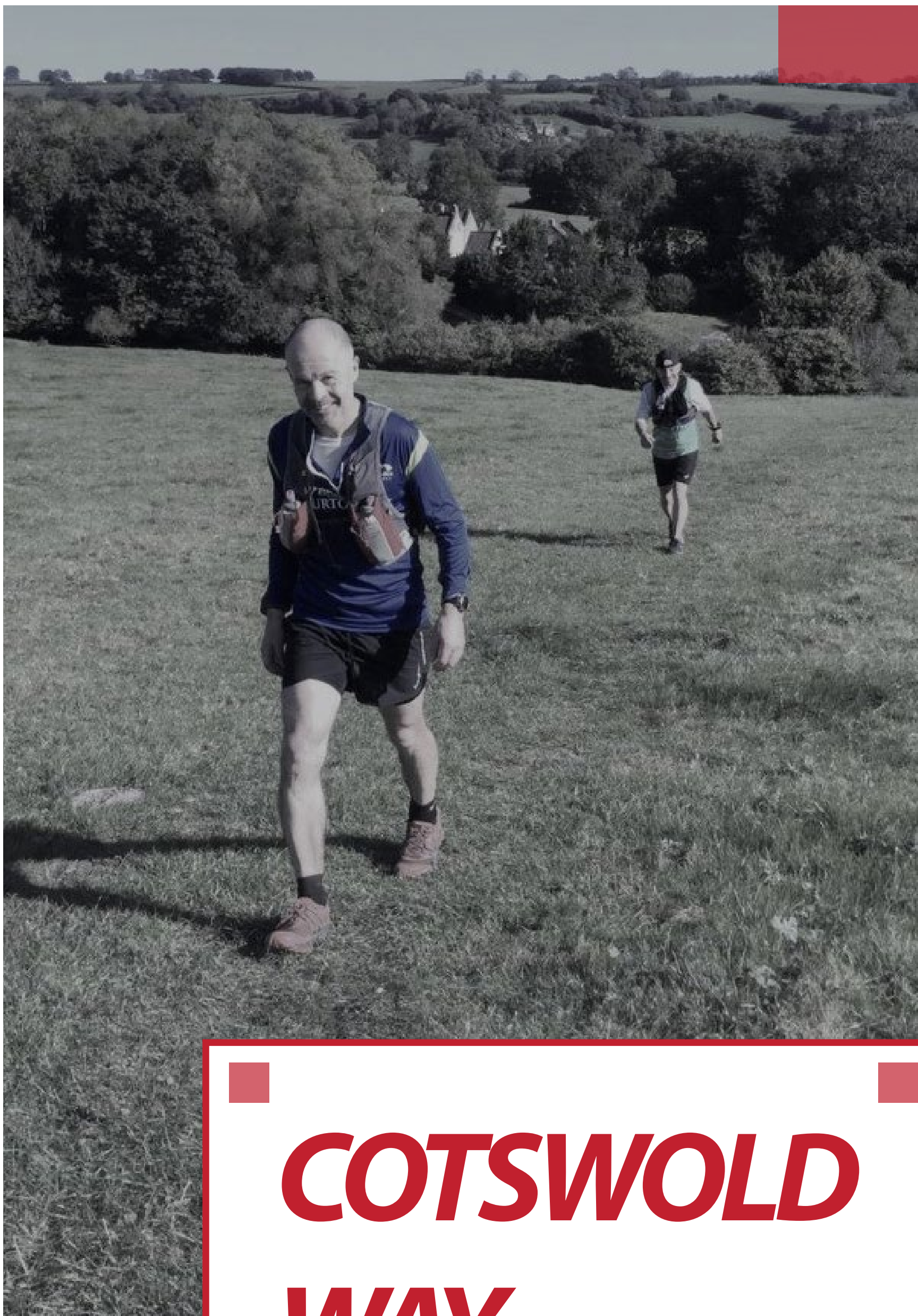
light. The weather should also be more favourable at this time of the year.

Specific training is essential. Back to back long runs, hours on our legs and a great deal of hiking and climbing will be our regular trail runs. Thankfully we will not have to train with a heavy pack as we can replenish as we go along. Debbie is a very accomplished personal trainer and Dawn is a Physiotherapist. We both regularly do strength work as we know that with a strong core and body, we are better equipped to run the distance and prevent injuries. Runners often neglect specific strength exercises and we both know the difference that this can make in our running.

What are our expectations? The lack of sleep may be difficult at some points although doing this together we feel that we will be able to encourage each other on our "low" points as well as our crew. The possibility of getting injured is in the back of our minds but we will put the training in and recce too so that we can get familiar with the more difficult terrain. We will also ensure that

we train on similar technical trails with steep climbs to prepare our minds and bodies for the challenge. Wearing the right gear and having the best crew will make our journey a lot smoother. We are investing time into planning our challenge and ensuring a great, encouraging and knowledgeable crew to team up with us. Lastly, the weather. We are climbing mountains and the cape is known for drastic changes in weather in short spaces of time.

It is a community affair. This is an adventure and we love to share our joy of the trails and journey with others. The 13 peaks will be the celebration of all the training and planning. No matter the outcome, it is going to be EPIC with friendships formed, memories made and new adventures planned to conquer. You can follow our journey through Instagram or Facebook on [Debsand-dawn](#).



COTSWOLD WAY 103 Mile Run

By Jeremy Mower

Following the cancellation of the Anglo-Celtic Plate 100km, I decided to join Darren Jewell of Stroud Athletic Club in running the entire 103 miles of the Cotswold Way from Chipping Campden to Bath Abbey.

We set out from Chipping Campden at 12.00 on Saturday 26th September with the intention of doing the route in one day. Darren had split the route into ten sections and organised a guide from Stroud Athletic Club for each section as we only knew about 40 miles of the route ourselves. We also had a live tracking device for people to follow. The first section was going well and ahead of schedule when we got a phone call to say we were a mile off route and needed to turn back up the large hill we'd just descended. Turned out we'd followed one of the Cotswold Way Circular Walks and not the Cotswold Way sign. Our guide was more upset than we were about the mistake, but we were calm as these things happen and, in the end, it turned out to be the only error for the entire route. We got to our first checkpoint at Stanway only a few minutes off schedule to meet our support vehicle and Alan Venn who would be crewing for us on the route. There I had a cheese and ham sandwich and filled up my bottles with Active Root Ginger sports drinks which I find is very good on the stomach. During the run I was taking Maurten Gels, Tunnock's Caramel Bars, Mars Bars, and protein bars.

I used to live in Bishops Cleeve so I knew the next section well and it took us up past Bellas Knap to Cleeve Hill. We arrived ahead of schedule which I was a bit concerned about as gaining too much time early on in an ultrarun can mean the inevitable drop in pace hitting you earlier. Our next section was to take us to Seven Springs and I'd run this section only a few weeks ago so no navigation problems but I had developed a pain in my lower back which was unusual as I don't normally get back problems. I don't often take painkillers when running but it was slowing me down and I did not want to spoil the run for Darren so I took some ibuprofen which did the trick and the back pain went. I'd purchased some running shoes specifically for the event which were Altra Lone Peak 4.5 which has a lightweight rock plate in the midsole to protect your feet, unfortunately after 32 miles of running on hard ground with a few rocky/stoney sections my feet were really feeling sore. I commented at the time that it felt that there was not actually enough cushioning in the shoe and the rock plate was not that great. I changed over shoes to my Saucony Peregrine which have a fantastic rock plate in them and well cushioned but I find it a little narrow for my wide feet on long runs. The Altra Lone

Peak 4.5 is a good shoe but probably better suited to shorter trail runs or ones without a lot of rocks or large stones. The change of shoes and ibuprofen sorted me out and at our next stop at Cranham Corner we enjoyed some risotto. The next section we stopped off at Ebley Mill in Stroud and by now it was dark and time for our head torches. I had a Led Lenser H7R.2 head torch which lasted me over 8 hours on one charge as I did not have it on full brightness for most of the duration. This section took us past Cam Peak which was very steep and into Dursley where again we met up with Alan. From Dursley we headed out to Wotton-Under-Edge and although my legs were fine, I was finding it hard to concentrate as it was the early hours of the morning and my body wanted to sleep. One of the duties of the guides is not only to keep you on the route but also on pace and all the guides did a fantastic job. At Wotton-Under-Edge we stopped and ate a Pot Noodle and that was a mistake for me as I could not digest it and it felt like I had a brick in my stomach, I was feeling pretty rough but again my legs were fine. Darren had no problems with the Pot Noodle which shows what works for one does not work for others. I've no problem eating pot noodles at home but it seems running after does not work for me. By the time we reached Old Sodbury my stomach had almost recovered, and we were greeted with a McDonalds breakfast and strong coffee which revived me. Our final section was Cold Ashton to Bath. My legs had begun to get a bit sore several miles before Cold Ashton but I was still moving well. By now I was using the ultra shuffle technique but at a good pace. When we hit Bath the Cotswold Way signs seemed to disappear which is strange and it was great that Devon Phipps knew where we were going as I'd not been to Bath for several years and had no idea how to get to the Abbey. We arrived at Bath Abbey 24 hours 20 minutes after our start and were both elated to finish in a little over one day. It would have been nice to break 24 but that was not important as we had finished in a good time. This would not have been possible without the aid of our guides Lee Stopford, Nick Coyle, Chrissie Horak, Tony Liviabella, Alan Pitt, Sabrina Pace-Humphreys, Alison Robinson, Alastair Cambell, Rupert Denny, Jason Barry and Devon Phipps.





Trail Ultra

SNOWDONIA SLATE

By Ben Davies

At the start of 2020, I had lost almost all of the previous year to injury, and I had a place in the Mac Mac 100 in South Africa scheduled for May. I needed to rebuild race fitness by then, and I was reluctant to take on such a challenging event without testing myself first. So it was that I reluctantly signed up for the Snowdonia Slate Trail Ultra, organized by Up Hill Down Dale.

The Snowdonia Slate Trail Ultra starts and finishes just outside Bangor where the railway station cafe does the best bacon bap in the UK, as far as I can tell. The Slate Trail itself is an 83 mile circular path that showcases a lot of the less well known parts of Snowdonia. It avoids the mountain summits, weaving its way among the gorges and abandoned slate quarries of the area. Even regular visitors to Snowdonia are likely to gain a new perspective on the area from taking part in this event. With 4,000 meters of accumulative ascent and descent, it is not a flat course, and it is tricky underfoot in places. The Slate Trail Ultra is 90 miles in length, given that the race headquarters are not on the route itself.

The race starts and finishes at Bangor Rugby club, which has fairly spartan facilities. The 19.00 start time does at least allow you to get the first night section out of the way while you are still fresh, but at the start line for the 2020 event, the rain was already begin-



ning to fall. This was a sign of things to come. The event took place the weekend after Storm Denis, and it turned out that Storm Denis had a sting in his tail. The weather conditions were the most extreme I have ever encountered in a race. Water ran along footpaths, as if they were streams, and we found ourselves battling against headwinds and driving rain. The conditions made progress slow, and the race rapidly turned into a grim battle for survival. I found out from the checkpoint staff, that a quarter of the field had dropped at the first checkpoint, just sixteen miles in. I have been a participant in a lot of hundred-mile races, in all kinds of weather conditions, but I have never encountered that sort of an attrition rate so early in a race. It truly seemed that we had a mountain to climb to complete the full ninety-mile course, but everybody seemed to be determined, and we pressed on.

I found myself running with Nick Smith and Benjy Barks, two friends from the army, who had come to Snowdonia, hunting Ultra Trail du Mont Blanc qualifying points. We were moving at a similar pace, and all had slightly different navigation tools, so it seemed to be a logical coalition.

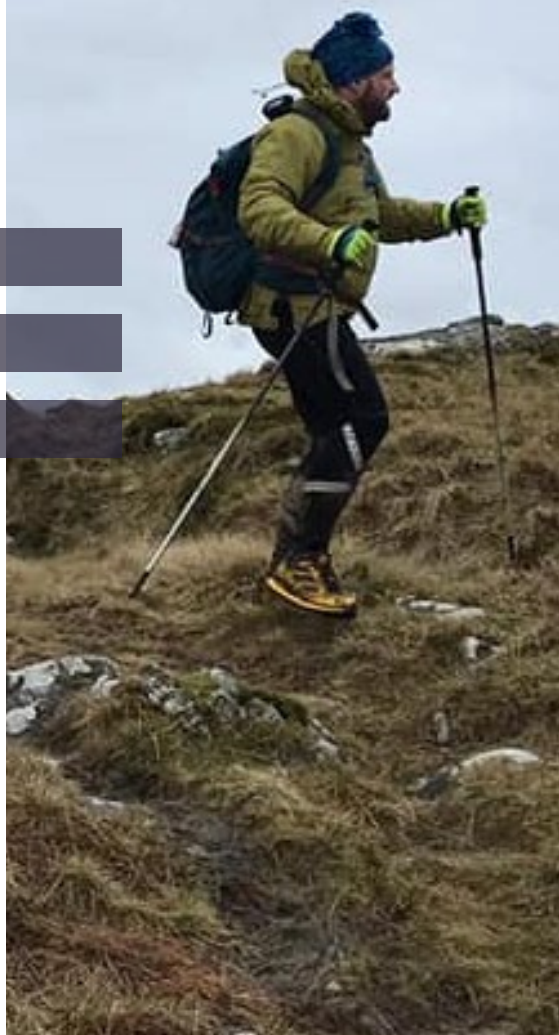
As the sun came up in the morning, and gaps in the weather emerged, we started to appreciate the majesty of the Slate Trail. The course weaves its way through a lost world of slate paths, that were once used by the quarry workers, abandoned quarrymen's communities, and the rusting remnants of a bygone industrial age. In places, piles of broken slate slabs tower over the trail, the discarded by-product of an industry

that once supplied most of the world's slate. The route also affords a number of spectacular views of the neighboring summits and valleys.

The heavy rain had turned a lot of the course into a boggy, impassible morass, and the parts that were covered with slate had become slippery and treacherous. I think my feet were basically wet for the entire race. At one point I found myself almost knee deep in water, and it looked so ridiculous that Benjy stopped to take a picture.

The Slate Trail Ultra only has three checkpoints along its entire length, due to the remote nature of the course. They are, however, indoor checkpoints with generous facilities. The toughest section of the course is the grueling 33-mile stretch between the 37-mile checkpoint at Beddgelert, and Betws-y-Coed. By the time we got to the checkpoint at Betws-y-Coed Memorial Hall, just over seventy miles into the race, we had entered the second night section. The sleep deprivation was starting to affect us, and my two companions suggested a ninety-minute power nap. I was inclined to press on, but I knew that we could afford it, and I wanted to keep the coalition together. I knew that a group of three had much more chance of persevering through the storm than one person on his own. Besides, any chance of a fast time had been extinguished by the storm some time ago.

After an hour and a half nap, we left the checkpoint feeling fresh, thinking that the worst was perhaps over, but then the Snowdonian climate opened its jaws. We found ourselves on a long straight section, walking into a seemingly interminable headwind with driving rain. We felt ourselves getting weaker and weaker, and we knew that we were going to be in trouble, if we did not soon get a change of terrain, to something with more cover. Eventually we decided that we could not afford to continue in this way and took shelter behind a dry-stone wall, to get some temporary respite. I put on every stitch of waterproof clothing that I had.



and when we resumed our onward march, I was wearing a Paramo smock along with a Gore-Tex jacket and trousers. We eventually cleared the long section with the headwind, but we were soaked and cold, and once again in a grim battle against the onset of hypothermia.

By the time the sun came up in the morning, we were starting to shiver. I have been hypothermic during races before and recognized the symptoms. With still fifteen miles still to go to the finish line, I realized that time was not on our side. Just when it looked like we were all about to suffer a hypothermia related DNF, we found a public toilet, with a hand dryer that produced a blast of warm air. This enabled us to dry ourselves, and warm ourselves up, and we were soon back on the trail with a new lease of life.

During the final section, one of my companions said, "I wonder how Tyson Fury got on last night?" Tyson Fury had challenged Deontay Wilder for the World Boxing Association heavyweight title the previous evening, and it soon became apparent that we were all boxing fans. We had all sacrificed the chance to watch the fight to take part in the Snowdonia Slate Trail Ultra, and we agreed that we should find out what had happened.

An iPhone was produced, and eventually we got a signal, and found out that Tyson Fury had won the fight and brought the World Boxing Association Heavyweight title back to the UK. We all agreed that since Tyson Fury had



delivered, there could be no excuse for our failure now.

Eventually we arrived at Bangor Rugby club, and were presented with our finisher's medals. The extremely challeng-

ing weather conditions that we had overcome, made the taste of victory all the sweeter. I also felt reassured that I would be able to mount an effective challenge to the Mac Mac 100 in May. After a shower and a change of clothes, I was soon headed to the railway station, for a bacon cob, and a train back to Leicester.

When the dust settled, the final DNF rate stood at 47%. It was one of my hardest finishes, and I say that as somebody who has crossed swords with some of the harder 100-milers out there. On the best day I ever saw, I would have completed it a bit faster, but I would still have gone life and death with the weath-

er conditions. With ideal weather conditions for the time of year, it would have been somewhat easier, but any race in February must be treated with respect. The checkpoints are few and far between, but the organizers get it right where it counts. My advice for anybody attempting this race in future, is to come armed to the teeth. Carry more equipment, not less, especially in the matter of clothing. Some sort of GPS device is mandatory for this event, and it is not hard to see why. Bring poles if you get on with them.

Not long after the Slate Trail Ultra, the pandemic drove a horse and coaches through everybody's race plans and events started getting canceled. My dreams of running the Mac Mac 100 in South Africa soon burned to ashes and blew away in the wind. It had been my need to prepare for that event, coming off a long period of inactivity, that had persuaded me to take the risk of entering the Slate Trail Ultra. In retrospect, I was grateful to have one significant finish, to show for what would otherwise be a disappointing year.

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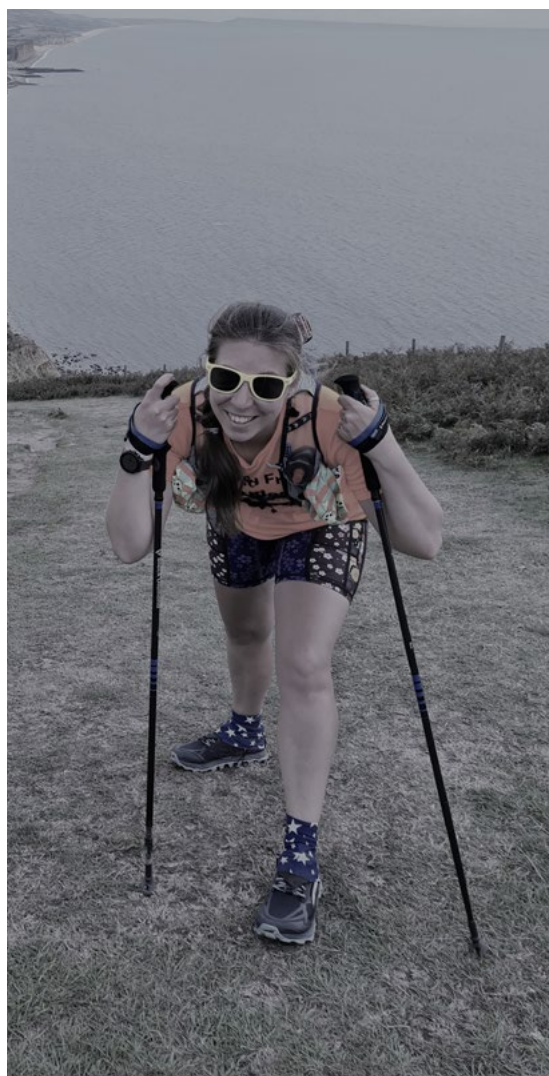
ALL YE WHO LOST HOPE,

ENTER HERE

By Leah Atherton

2020 has been a year of cancelled races, cancelled adventures, and cancelled plans. It has been a year when we have been forced to look at and redefine our relationship with our sport, our priorities, and crucially, our connections to others.

Despite a string of cancelled and postponed races and smaller adventures, I was incredibly lucky to be able to go ahead with my planned FKT attempt in September. The plan was simple, I was to set out from Studland Point in Dorset on Sunday 6th September, keep the sea on my left, and eventually rock up to Minehead in Somerset 630-ish miles later sometime around Thursday 17th September.



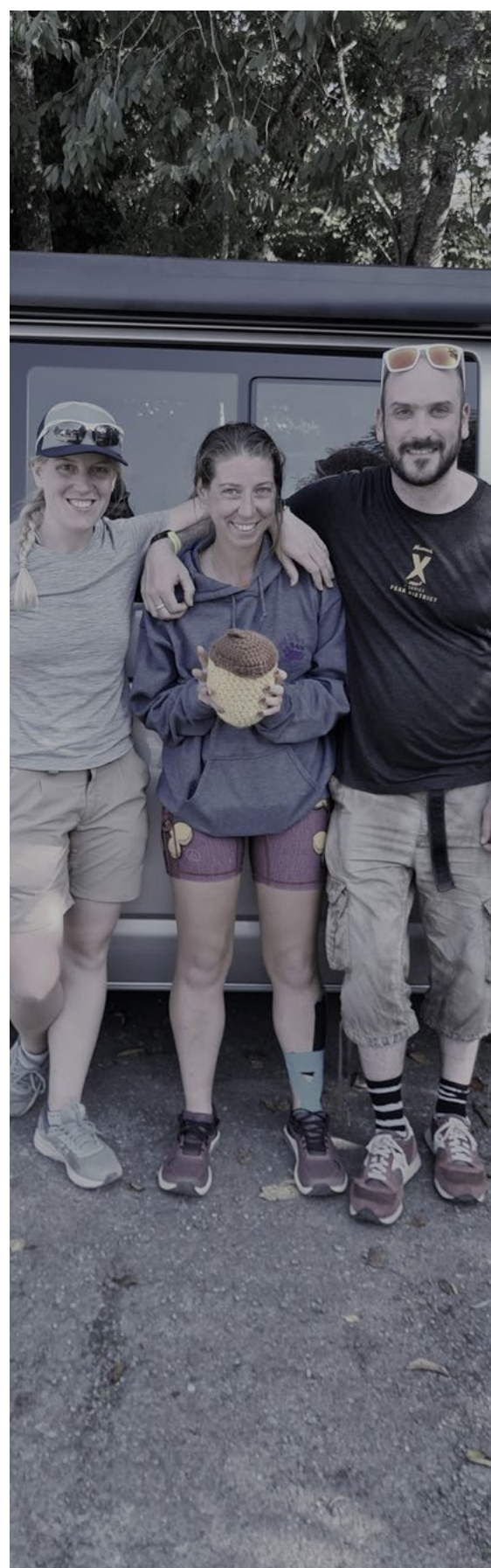
Spoiler alert: it didn't go to plan, and my attempt ended with me passed out on a bench somewhere in Port Isaac, some 500-something miles later.

It would be tempting to view this as a spectacular failure. I had after all spent nearly 18 months pouring time and energy as well as my own funds into making the attempt. Alternatively, the other easy view to take would be that I, a nobody runner who has never troubled a podium, am just not cut out for the kind of extraordinary feats reserved for the elites. Both of these views are simultaneously true, and completely wrong.

It was never only about the record, to view it as a failure would be wasting a gift I am still only beginning to understand.

When folks who don't run hear about the sort of challenges ultra-runners take on, the most frequent response is an aghast "But why?!"

Our 'whys' vary, but I think it is fair to say that for many of us, toeing the start line of a challenge is akin to stepping into the arena to fight our internal demons; be they a bereavement, stress, poor mental health or addiction.



It may not vanquish those demons on its own, I remain steadfast in saying running does not replace therapy or medication if that's what you actually need, but by confronting them in this way we are able to manifest in a very literal sense the things we need to learn the most.

In my case, I came to the FKT attempt on the Coast Path having fought my way out of one of the worst depressive lows I had ever experienced, and what I learned is that facing a seemingly impossible challenge in any arena is an exercise in grit, grace, and trust.

GRIT

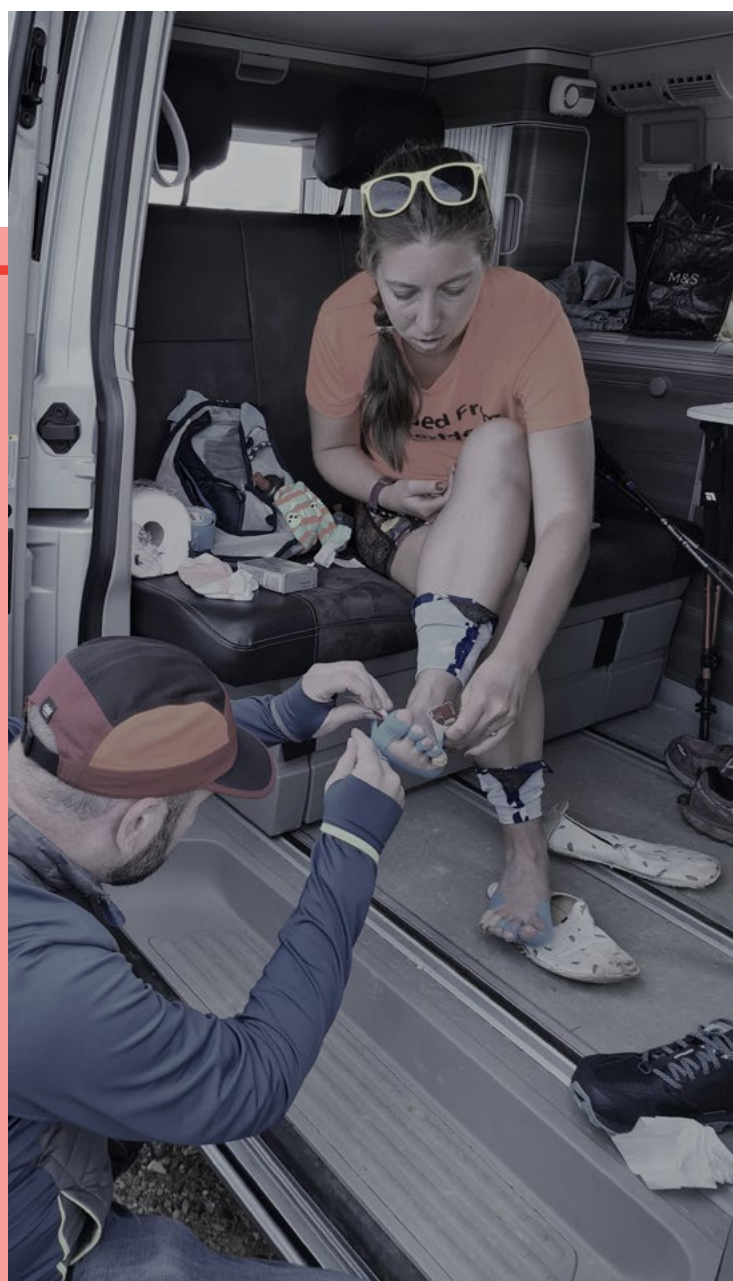
The plan was terrifyingly simple, and hinged on three basic questions. First: "can you run 50 miles?" Then, "can you run 50 miles with a whole lot of big hills, rocks and beaches in them?" And finally: "can you run 50 miles over tough terrain, then get up and do it again for 12 days?"

When I talked it over with my coach, the answer to the first two questions was a simple "yes". I had completed enough other races that 50 miles wasn't really a scary prospect. The answer to the third though, relied on a combination of experience from fastpacking adventures, a training plan tailored to big back-to-back days, and a gamble on just how deep I would be able to go come crunch time. We worked on building my physical strength through lockdown, but there is only so far training can take you when it comes to building the mental resilience required to get an already battered and exhausted body out of bed and out onto the trail. What did build that mental muscle was the repeated action of stepping into the arena of my own mind, and choosing to do the training assigned. Choosing to go to work. To eat. To break, to relapse, to wish I wouldn't wake up in the morning and waking up, getting up, and doing what needed to be done anyway. There is a kind of redemption in this.

There was the first lesson: the question isn't really "can you do it again tomorrow?" The question is "will you make yourself do it again tomorrow?"

The SW Coast Path is brutal and beautiful in equal measure. The terrain is unrelenting, and I make no pretence: by the end of each day I was beat up, crying from exhaustion and struggling to keep my eyes open. I knew that if I wanted redemption, and the record, then I would have to get up again in 4 hours and do it again, but that question of how much I wanted it became harder each day as the toll on my body and mind added up. When we hit a setback on day 5 with a route error that meant I had to repeat a section. When my feet swelled and my hips ached from the impact until I could barely sleep. When I fell off a rock on day 7 and injured my leg. When that injury became so painful over the next couple of days that it felt like I had been shot and I could barely move. When it cost me a huge amount of distance and I started to see the record slipping out of my grasp. When we managed to tape it up enough that I could hike





on it, and accepting that covering enough distance to get the record would mean much longer days and less time to recover. When I was reduced to numbly sob-trudging. Every day found a new way to ask “How much do you want it? How much are you willing to hurt for it?” Every day I dug in deeper to find “This much”. I held on to record pace and every day the demons got a little bit quieter.

GRACE

There is a magic in moving beyond physical suffering to soak in the first blue light of a sunrise you didn't know you would see. Likewise in running through a herd of wild roe deer at twilight. These are the graces I might have expected. There is also magic in the following: surprise pizza; terrible flask tea; letting your crew tape your feet; scream-crying along to Disney tunes; and being painfully vulnerable in front of near strangers. These, I did not expect.

Let me be clear: I am a control freak. The FKT attempt was planned and scheduled to the mile. I had prepared in training to know what food I could eat, I had double checked diversions, I had set out kit in advance, labelled and sorted, so that in theory, all my crew had to do was execute the plan with the minimum amount of mental work. However, like any battle plan it lasted about a day before things started going out the window.

On day two I was nauseous thanks to my period arriving early, and was unable to eat any of the food I had practiced with. My crew found alternatives I could stomach. On day 4 the swelling in my feet got to the stage that I no longer fit into the shoes I had with me. My crew liaised with a local running store and they got fresh shoes to me in a larger size.

On day 5 the route error put us behind the plan, and we realised I would not be able to realistically meet the distances I had so carefully planned out. So the crew threw out the spreadsheet, and the plan, and focussed solely on getting me to Minehead on track for the record. Between them they organised company for me on the trail, checkpoint stops, overnight sleeping arrangements, and posted updates from the attempt to my socials.

Surrender in this way does not come naturally to me, but finding the grace to let my team take care of the mental work so all I had to do was keep moving, was priceless. I had chosen my crew because I trusted them to get the job done and to keep me in one piece, but it was a different thing altogether actually trusting them with myself. To accept the setbacks and just keep moving with faith that what they asked me to do would be enough.

TRUST

Tracy the PT was the one who explained it to me best. “Doing these crazy challenges brings people together, and that is a gift”.

It's only with hindsight that I understood, these adventures and non-race challenges create a unique opportunity for people to come together for a common cause to help make something happen. It's the running equivalent of a barn-raising.

One person hears the call out for company, or a guide, or knowledge. They tell a friend, or bring somebody along. That person links in a contact of theirs further along the trail, and so on, creating an interconnected web of people.

It began slowly, I had put out a request to the Trail Running SW group on Facebook for local runners to help with navigation at night as the path can be tricky to find after dark. In the antithesis of the advice so often repeated by parents of my generation, I was very literally asking strangers from the internet to meet me, in the dark, in the middle of nowhere, on some gnarly cliffside trails. It sounds like the beginning of a cautionary tale; and yet, it is this very act of radically trusting strangers that proved to be the greatest lesson of the entire adventure.

My first trail angel was not planned. Mike the Forrester was just out for a fastpacking weekend and we ran together through the Lulworth Ranges. Then there was Morgz, who helped me negotiate the Isle of Portland, which had recently seen path diversions due to landslides and coastal erosion. There was the Jones family on Portland, who contacted the team directly to offer their drive and use of their kitchen to make pizza. And so it went.

Tony and Sam (who organise the Grizzly) saw us through a night section into Sidmouth, and then surprised us by driving 3 hours to meet me again in Hayle. (They also supplied the crew with Grizzly hats and rum, which went down well) Jamie from Trail Running SW rallied the troops in the Torbay sections. Speedy Sian met me through Slapton and Hallsands, gave us beds for the night, and then came out again for 25 miles in North Cornwall. The Looe Pioneers sent smoke signals and relayed me into Cornwall with love and cheers, one chap, Clive, even ran down to set up an aid station on the trail.

And then the Cornish trail community really turned out. Some I knew from previous adventures, but most I didn't. There was Ambulance Gill who became a real trail mum, and made me promise I wouldn't have to see her in a professional capacity. Ellie the Poet who found the team and with whom we had an impromptu open mic as we trudged. Andy B and Andy G organising the Helston Trail Runners via their "Leah's Helpers" group chat, so I was never alone. North Devon Darren, who drove all the way down to South Cornwall to do a section with me round Mullion. Jen from St Ives Bakery, who offered a spare room before she'd met us, and who made sure I got through the tricky Zennor section in one piece. Tracy, who understood exactly what I was going through from her own experience on the North Coast Challenge, who rearranged her PT clients, saw me through my hardest mornings and nights (including one frightening one on St Agnes Head in the fog) and gave me permission to cry.

At the time I felt guilt alongside the gratitude, these people had given so much and I wasn't sure if I could deliver them a record in return for their efforts. I felt bad for being poor company, for crying on them as we ran, hiked and trudged. What I know now is that this was misunderstanding the gift.

The gift is people coming together. It is trusting vulnerability and pain to another person in the rawest of ways. It is listening to others' stories of their struggles, of their joys, their hopes, their challenges, their dreams and aspirations and holding a space for them. It is in the men telling me they hoped their young daughters would be inspired by what I was doing. It is in my own running peers and friends, all amateur runners, starting to believe in themselves by watching someone equally ordinary take on something enormous. It is in being a part of a larger story for a few miles, or for the whole thing, not because of any expectation of glory by proxy, but because taking part in the story is an end in itself.

The gift, the real gift, is that I may not have come away with a record, but I came away with a family that spans the SW coastline.

And that family, the crew, the old friends, the new friends, the remote cheers, the helpers by phone were the ones who put me back together when it all finally fell apart coming into Port Isaac when grit was no longer enough and my body shut down around me. They were the ones who made sure I was safe, who advised my crew by phone, and who provided a harbour of love and understanding where I could start healing.

2020 has been a year full of cancella-

tions, disappointments and challenges the like of which we have never faced. It has been a year that forced us apart, and a year that showed us what it really means to come together as a community.

My 2020 was meant to end on a high note with an FKT. What I got instead was the gift of community, of people who stood by me as I stepped into the arena and who picked me up when I was face down in the sand. And it was finally accepting that gift that helped truly tame the demons, once and for all.

"All ye who lost hope, enter here."



Ultra 55

NORTH

By Tina McIver and Christiane James

Preparing amidst a pandemic

Running has formed an integral part of our retirement, keeping us busy, happy and healthy. As we live only a few miles away from each other, we regularly run together and spur each other on. We can't quite remember when the idea was first mentioned, but having completed a number of marathons in our retirement, we both decided that this was going to be the year we took it to the next level. It was time for our first ultra.

The moment we entered Bamburgh's 50k Race to the Castle, scheduled for June 2020, it felt very daunting, ambitious and exciting all at the same time. Clearly more of the latter than the former, though, as we also put our names down for the Kielder 50k, due to be run in April.

But 2020 hasn't been the year where anything worked out as folk planned.

Although both in our 60s, the pandemic didn't deter us from our training. Lockdown even spurred us on, as running became an escape from the strange and worrying events occurring around us.

But our running events did not evade Covid's disruptive reach, and both ultras would not survive the year, re-arranged for more hopeful times in 2021.

Still determined to do an ultra despite the circumstances, we continued training, running separately but gradually longer, eventually clocking in runs of over 35km. Then we noticed that the Ultra North 55 was going ahead. It meant Saturday 3rd of October would be our day, and we'd be ready for it.

The day of the run

Our first ever ultra-marathon would take place under brooding grey clouds and lashing rain. In fact, it proved to be the UK's wettest day since records began! Yet we felt no nerves as we lined up. No butterflies, or worries. Just excitement.

The start was so different from all our previous marathons. The crowd was smaller, runners and officials wore face coverings, and a gentle hubbub replaced booming motivational music. After months of detachment, it was uplifting to see familiar faces in the small crowd.

Maybe the low-key nature of the build-up reduced our anxiety? Or maybe we were just confident knowing that we'd put all the training in. Whatever it was, we felt full of energy as our adrenaline levels rose while we chatted to a few other first-timers, all of us jogging on the spot to keep warm.

With both our homes only a few miles away, it gave us confidence that we were familiar with most of the course, which began and ended in central Newcastle. At least if things went badly, we could easily get home.

The race begins

We began the race in a group of four, alongside running mates Simon and Ross. Jogging parallel with the sodden banks of the Tyne, we made efforts to keep a steady pace and not let our excitement bubble over, trusting the advice of our more experienced friends. Thankfully the banter flowed like the swollen river as we made the gradual climb up then down through Lemington and Newburn towards the first checkpoint in Wylam, at around 13km.

It was here that we encountered the huge advantage of a local race, the support! We really appreciated so many friends and family who braved the weather and stood in driving rain to cheer us on. At Wylam we ate, drank and took photos before crossing Wylam Bridge to begin a punishing elevation that would do its best to wipe the smiles off our faces.

At this point we were joined by Leanne and David as our group of four became six. We kept our distance and ran in pairs, chatting to distract from the muddy hills making their mark on our squelching trainers and splattered socks. Our companions reminded us to drink, to eat, to slow down. Was this really an ultra? It didn't feel too bad. Shouldn't we be running faster? No! Came the reply, you need to pace it!

The elevation continued through the suitably named High Spen, reaching 150 metres at the 25km checkpoint in Chopwell Woods. Here we replenished, and there was more rain, more mud, more laughs. With one more climb to the peak elevation of 220 metres, we took a boost from knowing that it would be largely downhill and flat from then on.

We had imagined the elevation to feel a lot worse. And, despite the steely greyness of the sky, the autumn colours of the trees in the woods brightened up the way. We walked the ups, ran the downs. Once out of the woods



we hit an unavoidable flooded stretch, meaning we had no choice but to go ankle deep in freezing, murky water, causing our feet to go numb with the cold. Thankfully, at the halfway stage, our legs still felt strong.

At Hamsterley Mill we'd reached the most southerly part of the course, now making our way north back towards the city centre finish line. Our next checkpoint at Rowlands Gill, around the 36km mark, couldn't come soon enough. Our waterproof jackets were no longer effective, our feet were soaked, our gloves like sponges. As the rain continued relentlessly, our mood changed. Heads down, we ploughed on in sodden silence.

A boost from friends and family

With sore feet, shivering bodies and our spirits and stamina beginning to wane, Rowlands Gill proved to be our sanctuary. Family and friends fussed around us, making us feel like professional athletes. We had cups of hot, sweet coffee pressed into our hands as we guzzled energy boosting snack bars and sweets. Just as importantly, we were helped into fresh dry clothes, revitalised and ready for the last 20km.

The banter picked up again, and we even jumped to avoid puddles, to keep our new trainers dry. As a group of four once again, we knew that the remainder of the course, mainly downhill, shouldn't daunt us.

As we made our way through the Derwent trail there were no other runners in sight. Were we last? We didn't care, we were just happy to be running an

ultra and feeling so positive. It was hard to believe we were this far on and still feeling okay, we certainly felt stronger and more chilled than in previous marathons. Is this why folk prefer ultras?

The Millennium Bridge was a welcome sight, especially when we saw more family waiting to cheer us on. We bounded towards them full of smiles and enthusiasm. As we took more photos, our family couldn't believe how energetic and cheerful we looked. Should we be feeling so good? It was like a great day out with friends, and we were so close to the finish.

After that, the final 3km, once again alongside the Tyne, felt like a long stretch. It was mainly flat, but the clouds decided we hadn't got wet enough and the rain somehow got heavier. We needed the end. Finally, up a slight incline, the finish line came accompanied by a small crowd cheering us over it. We had done it!

On reflection

Ultra North 55 proved the perfect event for our first ultra. It was well organised, well signposted and the event staff were friendly and supportive whilst also complying with Covid guidelines. We were lucky to have such fabulous support from family and friends, they made us feel so special and encouraged us so much.

It's hard to explain how we felt at the end. Elated, powerful, emotional, tired. The finish time felt irrelevant, it was

more about completing the course, feeling good and enjoying it. Maybe we could have been quicker, but would it have been as good an experience or as enjoyable?

In the days that followed, our feat of endurance began to properly sink in. Especially when we learned about the record rainfall, and that we'd been the two oldest runners in the race. That's some achievement!

The early morning training in all weather had paid off. Running a race like this is not only a physical challenge, it is a mental one too. It's only you that stops you getting out of your comfort zone, but the motivational help of our fellow runners and supporters really makes a difference.

We motivated each other before, during, and, as we plan our next challenge, after! We're living proof that anyone, of any age, can run an ultra if they put the training in and believe in themselves.

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After the Ultra North 55 race, the Ultrarunning World editor, Abichal Sherrington, had an opportunity to chat with Rosie Holliday a P.E. teacher who has been teaching for 14 years and has always been involved in sport. Rosie started Park running 8 or 9 years ago to rehabilitate after a knee injury. Keen supporters of Parkrun, Rosie and her husband, Michael, run locally every week. When Rosie was 30 she set herself a challenge to run a 30 mile race. That was 5 years ago and since then it's developed into ultra distances. They live near the Lake District and are involved in the local trail running community as well as fell and ultra running.

***Why
wouldn't
you
want to
do it?***



UW What attracted you to the Ultra North race?

R We had 6 or 7 races cancelled this year including four ultras and Ultra North came up. We knew someone who was involved in the organising and I spoke to him about it, what was it going to be like, and he said definitely give it a go. So we were really happy that it was going ahead and both myself and my husband ran the 55 km event.

UW The organisers promoted the race as being suitable for novices. Was it a nice course?

R Yes, it was nice and varied. There were parts on a road, parts through a forest, sections by the river, in residential areas, there was a lot of variety in the scenery although the weather was really bad. In terms of the terrain, I would say it was good for someone coming to this as one of their first ultras, especially if you're not used to doing lots of running off-road.

UW How was the organisation of the race?

R It seemed really good. There was good communication prior to the event and in terms of being COVID-secure I think they couldn't have done any better and it felt very safe. We were given a 10 minute start window based on the time you thought you were going to complete the event in and then you set off in groups of three at minute intervals. You also had to wear a mask until you were on the start line. The Aid Stations were fantastic, everything was pre-wrapped and safe. The volunteers were excellent, telling us what to do. You had to sanitise your hands as you entered the tent, to grab something and fill up my water-bottles if I needed to. I had a 5 minute walk-out of an aid station and to eat. I tried not to stop for too long at AS's and just kept moving. It was also very wet on race day so you don't want to hang about for too long without moving. At the finish they encouraged you to finish and leave which is completely understandable and again I felt very safe.

UW I guess you didn't see many women during the race?

R Because it was a staggered start, it was very difficult to know your position. I think I set off towards the back end of the staggered start so a lot of the women and other runners had gone before me but there could have been another lady behind me or more in front, I just didn't know. I set off at a pace I felt comfortable at and thought I would still be comfortable with in 10-15-20 miles time. I tried to keep a steady pace and not worry too much about positioning and try and enjoy the day out.

UW You didn't have any reference points really. A lot of people are in that boat aren't they? Y'know, how good am I? What kind of shape am I in?

R I didn't have any idea. I ran a hilly off-road 50k last year in 6 and a half hours so I knew that if I had a good day I wanted to get around the 6 hour mark. I managed to run under that, which was my main goal for the day. Coming first lady was very unexpected. I was just looking at a time goal really depending on how I felt.

UW So you did well then, your plan worked out.

R Yes I was really pleased. As you just said there is no reference point, you're doing all this training but you don't know how good you are until you get into a race and because there's not been any races, you just don't know. I had no expecta





tions or pressure, so I guess that's a good thing.

UW Absolutely, because quite often we put these pressures on ourselves and then if something doesn't go right it can bring us down.

R I'm definitely someone who doesn't run well under pressure so I try not to put that on myself before a race. I see it as just a day out and enjoy the adventure. I try not to think too much about anything else.

UW What about your husband? Did he go to the race thinking about winning?

R No, no. I don't think he ever goes to a race thinking about winning. He just loves running. He was really happy to be able to run in an event. He's been working with a new coach for about 3 months now and I think he wanted to see how he would fare after having some coaching input. An ultra is a long way and a lot of things can go wrong as there are a lot of variables. I think at mile 13 someone told me I was the first women but I put that to the back of my head as there was still 21 miles to go! I think we both try to run on feel and we don't worry about positions. What it comes down to is that we both just love running.

UW That's a fruitful approach.

R My husband was first, and he ran 4:18 and even though he's a very good runner and successful, he tries to run without any expectations. He doesn't put any pressure on himself either, we're both similar like that.

UW Does your husband have any goals? Any special races, Mont Blanc?

R He has run out in Chamonix twice before, the OCC and the MCC and we were due to go there in August this year. He would love to do UTMB, that would definitely be a big goal of his and maybe get some quicker times over 50 to 100 mile courses, for him that would be his goal moving forward into the next year.

UW You've run a few races before, like the Kielder 50k, the Lakeland 50 and the Cumbrian Way, did you do a lot of training for Ultra North?

R I had been training for an off-road marathon that was going to take place at the end of October and I knew Ultra North was coming up so what I tried to do during the lockdown period was to keep my fitness up. I completed a virtual marathon and a number of virtual challenges and distance challenges over the last couple of months and in the lead up to the race I was making sure I was getting out, off-road doing longer miles. I was feeling ready to run a long distance but obviously with ev-

everything that has gone on this year I still didn't really know how it was going to go because I hadn't run in a race environment.

UW I guess a lot of it will come down to what's actually available to run. Things don't look very good at the moment. I'm sure this is just temporary but I didn't think we would be here now.

R Me neither, waiting for another announcement this evening (from the Government).

UW It's been difficult in terms of races and the future is still uncertain.

R Yes, but what we have got is that we can still run. OK, the races are not there but the joy of running is still there and provides so many people with some kind of escapism from everything that's going on, that's something that's important.

UW The whole mental Health issue has been brought into the light because of the pressures that are on people. Running is a big part of many peoples' lives and as you say it's a way for them to channel energy that otherwise is difficult to process properly
Do you have any races in mind?

R For next year I have the Lakeland 50 and the Kielder Dark Skies marathon. Hopefully the Kielder 50k too, I do like the 50k distance. I've run 50 miles before and I'm quite keen to do that again to see how I do, as last time I ran 50 miles I was 10 weeks pregnant. After a good year of running and getting more endurance and training under my belt, it will be nice to see what I can achieve. I would love to run UTMB in Chamonix, I think that would be my ultimate goal. I'd also love to have enough time to train for a Bob Graham as well.

UW There seems to be a lot of people with that idea at the moment, the Bob Graham.

R There was the second fastest time ever yesterday, he beat Billy Blands' record. A local guy from Cumbria, George Foster, he ran 13:44, which is really amazing.



UW What kind of drinks do you use?

R I usually use Mountain Fuel raw in one bottle and water in another. I also use Torq gels, as I really like their flavours. I try and eat normal food like malt loaf and bananas. I ran past one guy and I said 'hi are you ok?' and he said 'I'm just having my lunch'. He was walking and eating a sandwich on his ultra run and I think that's just wonderful. It speaks volumes about the ultrarunning community, just stopped for a couple of minutes to have your lunch because you are running for that long. I thought that was great!

UW That's as simple as it has to be. That's what life is all about, connecting with something that gives us joy. We don't have enough joy. Life is just hard. We're so busy doing stuff to survive, these things are very precious.

R I think it gives us joy, and also when you do something like that you have nothing else to worry about for those 5,6,7 hours or however long you're running for, even if it's 10 or 20 minutes. All you have to think about is putting one foot in front of the other and it's the simplicity of it which resonates with me.

UW Would you do Ultra North again?

R Yes. I like a bit more rocky off-road terrain in the hills, mostly because of where I live and where I do a lot of training so I wasn't fully prepared for the amount of tarmac on the Ultra North route. I think my strengths are in something that has more elevation and more varied terrain. That's the kind of running I've done in the

past in terms of ultras but that being said I enjoyed it and it was well organised. If I did it again I would do a bit more training on the road.

UW Work on your speed more?

R I don't really like speed work. I just like going out for a run. I don't like interval training but I know that if I want to improve that's what I'm going to have to do.

UW What about longer events? 24 hour races?

R I couldn't do a 24 hour track race. Our parkrun in Carlisle is three laps and that enough for me. I'm not going to say never to a 100 mile race. The boundaries are being pushed constantly by the people around me. I never thought I would run 50 miles and I'm already signed up to another. If I was serious about a 100 miller I would need to build up over a few years. I've seen my husband do it a couple of times and supported him, and yes it is something that maybe one day I would like to have a go at but 30 and 50 mile races is where I am at the minute.

UW What about your gear, your shoes, are you a fan of shoes?

R Yes, just before the lockdown started I bought myself a pair of Saucony Peregrine's, trail shoes. I found them really comfortable but usually off-road I would use Inov-8, however I've done a lot in the Peregrine's. They've actually got holes in and I was a bit worried about that for

the race last weekend but I wore them anyway and they were absolutely fine. No blisters or anything at all. I really like Inov-8 for base layers so I had those on and I ran in an UD Women's pack which I find really comfortable. I wore my Inov-8 rain jacket the whole time because it was absolutely chucking it down. I don't really mind though, I live near the Lake District and I'm pretty used to rain and I'm quite happy to run in that weather.

UW So your recovery was pretty quick. Do you do a lot of stretching?

R I'd love to say yes but I don't. I have a yoga class every Monday. I would say that my recovery is helped by walking. We have a baby and a dog so we can't just sit down and relax the day after a long run. On the Sunday after the race we went out for a 2-3 mile walk and I did the same on the Monday and I teach PE three days a week so I'm really busy on my feet all day.

UW I think being active really helps keep flushing things out.

R The week after I've run an ultra I find myself hungry so I have to keep on top of fuelling myself that week to make sure I keep the energy levels up.

UW Do you have a favourite food during the race?

R I like malt loaf, Mountain Fuel flapjack bars etc I find it difficult to eat during a race, it's something I have to be conscious of, making sure I get enough calories in as it's hard to keep eating so I have



small mouthfuls rather than eating lots in one go. I found miles 27-29 difficult in the race and eating at that point was hard.

UW Was it like a 18-20 mile wall in a marathon?

R *I think so. I tried to keep on top of my eating and not to panic and tell myself it's ok, everyone has bad moments. When I got to the last aid station at 29 miles by the time I'd filled up my water bottle and had half a banana I felt absolutely great again and ran well the last 5 miles.*

UW Do you ever have any down moments?

R *I try and strike up a conversation with someone, I've chatted with some really nice people during a run. Some people are doing their first ultra, some their 10th ultra, you meet some really experienced and interesting people and I find that really helps pass the time. I know it sounds crazy but I had a difficult birth with my son, it was very long and I thought, 'you have managed to do something that was 30 hours long which was a lot more painful than this and you survived', So that helps me keep pushing on and also thinking about family. Quite often when*

things get hard I think of other people I know who maybe struggling with something at the moment and I think "come on Rosie it's only 4,5, 6 more miles and this person has been struggling for months and they're poorly or unwell". That helps me too, to think how lucky I am. Usually by the time you've thought all that through and had something to eat you feel better again and the bad section has passed.

UW Do you listen to music?

R *No, never. I think you miss out on so much if you listen to music. You miss out on the sound of the birds, the sound of the rain. If I listen to music I feel unsafe because I don't feel like my senses are working properly. My husband runs with a podcast sometimes but I can't.*

UW I think it may be more helpful over the longer distances, especially in the multadays. I had some times where it really helped.

R *It's not something I'm completely against but for the distances I've run I've not needed it.*

UW Sometimes as you say just talking to someone helps. It often doesn't take much just to give us a little lift. It's the little things that can make a difference in these events.

R *When you're talking to someone in an ultra, you may not be the same as them, the same age, the same gender or from the same area but*

you're both running the same race so you have something massive in common. That's one of the great things about running and ultrarunning, the people that you meet and the stories you share with each other and you can always pick up a bit of advice from someone or you can hear about a new race or new piece of kit. Whatever race I've done I've always learned something from another runner and I think that's one of the great aspects of it. Some of my friends have said, "I could never do that"; "why on earth do you want to run 50 miles?" and because I've experienced it I always think "Why wouldn't you want to do it?". I've got so much from running.

UW You mentioned before that you completed a 50-mile race while pregnant.

R *Our son is now 21 months old and I completed the Lakeland 50 mile race while I was pregnant.*

UW How pregnant were you?

R *About 10 weeks so it was in that first trimester which can sometimes be a bit tricky in terms of not feeling particularly well. I was aware that I was pregnant but I had this feeling that everything was going to be ok. It was an intuitive feeling, I just knew it was the right thing for me to do. I ran throughout my pregnancy up to 42 weeks so I was very lucky. I've written a blog all about my experience of running through pregnancy and the first year. So that might be something your readers would be interested in. I found there was no information about women running long distances while pregnant or just after birth. There is a lot of information about low-level activity and keeping active but there was nothing really about how much is too much for an amateur runner - I'm not a professional so I decided to write about my experiences.*

UW Do you have a blog/website?

R *I haven't written anything for a while but my blog is about running through pregnancy and*





the first year after that. I ran an ultra 6 months after my son was born. I had to breast feed and express milk during the ultra which was an experience! I think that being a mum has made me a better runner, definitely.

UW That is really interesting because there hasn't been a lot written about that kind of thing because it's still pretty new really.

R Absolutely, that's why it's important that these areas are discussed openly.

UW Maybe you'd be interested in writing something about that for the magazine.

R Yes I would. I think it's really important. A lot of people are worried, and rightly so during pregnancy and after pregnancy about their bodies. What I found was that I felt supported and able to continue running, but obviously it's just my experience. I'm not saying everyone has to run but I want women to be able to do that if they want to, and to feel empowered to do so. I would definitely say that in the last year and a half I've become a better runner since I've become a mother. I just think I have. I'm not sure what's changed but I feel more motivated to run now. I use my time better, probably because time to myself is more precious now!

Visit Rosie's website, [Rosie Runs](#)

Ultrarunning & Pregnancy Resources
[Baby On Board: Long-Distance Running During Pregnancy](#) - www.irunfar.com

[Running While Pregnant](#) - Alyson Allen - Ultrarunning Magazine

[Pregnancy Loss and Ultrarunning](#) by Claire Stein - Ultrarunning Magazine
[Becoming A Running Mum](#) – Jasmin Paris

[The rise of ultra mums](#): Sunday Times (Pay wall)

[Running During Pregnancy](#) Mountain Land Running Medicine Podcast

LIFE IS LIKE A BOX OF CHOCOLATES...

By Katrine Stilbo



From an organiser's perspective

In the Autumn of 2019 we started planning the Nordic Cup, the Nordic Championship is a 6 hour run and an open race for everyone who wanted to run for 6 hours. The scene was set at the centre of Copenhagen.

With only 6 weeks to go Covid-19 got the best of us and the rest of the world and like many others we were forced to postpone the event.

After a lot of considerations we decided to go ahead and reschedule the event for October 3rd 2020. During the early stages of planning one of our teammates was taken from us. Just a few weeks after a walk and talk, Peter Leisted Bøgevig passed away and left a huge gap in the Danish Ultraworld. Honour be his memory. During the walk and talk Peter advocated for allowing the Danish Championship in the 24 Hour run be a part of the event and so it was.

Just when you think all is good covid-19 sends you another challenge. The Danish government made restrictions on how many people were allowed in the same event, that number was 50.

50 isn't a lot. Not at all. Not when officials, coaches and supporters count. We all understood the reasons why it had to be that way but it still made us into a group of toddlers stamping their feet because they were promised a trip to the carnival with a no limit ticket to all the rides and now were told they couldn't go after all. On top of that once again the world closes down and we had to face the fact that some of the nations wouldn't be able to travel to Denmark because of the restrictions made by their respective governments. A Nordic Championship with only one or two nations doesn't make sense so after consulting both IAU and DAF we de-

ecided to cancel the Nordic Championship but proceed as planned with the open race and National Championship in a 24 hour run.

In the weeks prior to the race there were a lot of questions from the runners and we honestly didn't know how to respond to all the questions. It truly was a first for a lot of things but we met

You never know what you're gonna get. That is true and I think that whether you are a runner or organiser in an ultrarun you know this.



nothing but understanding and patience from everyone. When we finally were able to send out the race regulations it was very different from what we were used to. No supporters for 6 hour runners, no manned "supply-zones" - it was all Bring Your Own, 24 hour runners were not allowed supporters until after 7 hours into the race because of the "no more than 50 people at the same event" rule, 6 hour runners had to leave as soon as all the ceremonies were held (to leave room for the 24 hour support teams).

As an organiser you literally hold your breath when you tell participants this kind of news, but as before everyone just accepted the terms and they were even thanking us for making it all possible and in truth the word "cancel" came up a couple of times but it was never really an option. We all needed something to succeed. And it did! On race day a heavy wind was blowing all day (and night) but at least it wasn't raining (until it did at 5 in the morning) but it didn't mean anything for the coolest runners ever.

The results proved that the runners were ready; obstacles or not: The Danish Women's team on the 6 hour set a new record w. 216kms (3 runners) and the men as well with a new record



of 237kms. Individually the first woman was Helle Blak Petersen with 73.084km and first the man was Brian Arreborg with 82.952km.

The winner of the 24 Hour Run was Johnny Visholm with 223.252 km qualifying for the national team and Anne Marie Geisler Andersen 202.217 km confirming her place on the national team. Congratulations! In all, we the organizers, have planned and held countless races but this one was special because despite a minimum of officials (6 of us) we were met by happy runners with the biggest smiles and most positive attitudes ever. Amazing. It made us forget the panic we felt when the medals and bib numbers weren't in our mailboxes until the day before race day, the constant worries about new restrictions making the event impossible. It was all worth it.

From a runner's perspective

I was very excited to be able to run 24 hours and curious about how it would be under the new corona restrictions. Right up to the last moment I feared that the race would be cancelled due to ever stricter covid-19 rules.

Luckily we were allowed to have our race and it turned out to be a great experience. Corona safety was a high priority with the organisers; while also taking good care of race-timing/time-control and food given to the runners.

The track itself was a bit more challenging than many other circuit races mainly due to



the darkness by night, and the tours around the quiet lake could at times be a bit scary and lonely. However, to me that also made it interesting and a change from many of the more generic routes I've tried in 24 hours.

During the last hours of the night and into the early morning hours there were few runners left, so instead of the party ambience there was a feeling of gratitude that we were even allowed to run a 24 hour race this autumn; not to mention a championship race. A fact we much appreciated since most races have been cancelled this year.

It turned out to be a very well organised race and I also appreciated that we were at all times kept updated on covid-19 restrictions and changes to the setup of the race to accommodate the new restrictions.

I hope that the race will also be taking place next year and with rules that allow even more runners and spectators to enjoy the event.



CONNEMARA 100 August 2020

By Miriam O'Connor

The challenge:

A 100 mile road race, 30 hour cut-off, bring your own crew (who'll carry all you need) in the rugged and beautiful Connemara in the west of Ireland. 2020 was the 12th running of the event.

The background: Usually 20-30 runners with a 50:50 split between first timers and repeat runners seeking to either complete what seems an impossible distance or do better than last year! Conditions vary from wet to very wet, calm to windy, hot to cold, and that can be in the first 50 miles. This year was my fourth CNM100, my brother's (Thomas) sixth time and joining us were two friends (Declan & Shane) who were moving from marathon distance to 100 miles for the first time.

Preparation for 2020 CNM100 was different to any other year due to COVID19 (as with all events in 2020). For a period in March and April, we were restricted to training to within a 2km and a 5km limit. Like the rest of the world, planned Irish and international marathons and ultramarathons were cancelled and deferred but CNM100 Race Director, Ray O'Connor, kept CNM100 in the diary and it came to pass that the Irish lockdown lifted in time for the event to happen. The usual race briefing the night before was replaced by on-line updates in the weeks leading up to the event as we heard of the record number of 50 entries.

August 7th: With the car packed with enough gear for all weather events and food for crew and runners, off we went to Clifden in Connemara in Galway.

Race day 2020: Saturday August 8th: 4.30am, breakfast. 5.59am countdown from the RD and the word we all waited months to hear: "GO". Forty-nine eager runners took off. This race starts with a one-mile loop of Clifden (more of loops much later) which is pretty quiet at 6am and then off we headed into the heart of Connemara for the 2020 adventure. A beautiful dawn gave us an inkling that we were going to be in for a treat this year. The sun came out and, unlike the usual Connemara weather, it stayed for the day and runners and crew were treated to the beauty of a blue skied Connemara. The first 20 miles are quiet rolling roads with the sea on one side and the Connemara mountains on the other with an occasional lake or sheep on the road thrown in. During these miles, I met some of the other runners and chatted about their hopes for the day ahead, but as the early hours passed by we gradually spread well outside of what is now called social distancing.

One of the lures to return to CNM100 is the camaraderie of the runners and crews, this year was no different. Every crew member is interested in every runner getting to the finish line and there's an instant "do you need anything?" when



you meet someone else's crew. Running CNM100 is a lesson in slowing the world down to admire and appreciate the scenery, soak up the atmosphere, meet some of the locals (sheep), ignoring getting through the tough miles and winding the 100 miles down one mile at a time. We pass the villages of Letterfrack (mile 10) where the field of runners has become well spread out and progress into the picturesque Inagh Valley. The first checkpoint is beside Inagh lake, Inagh Valley Lodge (mile 27), even in these socially distanced times they had a welcome for us.

On from there and the next stop for me is at mile 42: Maam Cross and Peacocks hotel. I caught the end of the regular Saturday market and after a short rest, some food and more sun-cream, it was then off into the wilds and beauty of the Maam valley. Mile 50 is an unmarked spot (all part of the CNM100 charm, where the only important race markings are the 6am start and the finish line) but my watch does alert me to the halfway mark. It's still pretty hot and my crew have been doing a super job of keep-



ing me hydrated, fed, sun creamed and generally providing anything I could want to help those miles go by. By now, the crew advise that Thomas is cruising along miles ahead and Declan and Shane are a consistent few kms ahead. I am happy to let my pace continue as it is, there's still another 50 miles in this race.

Mile 55 and checkpoint no 2: Leenane, the village featured in "The Field" marks the start of running along by the Killary fjord. Before I turn for the Inagh valley again, there's time to pause at one of the many churches dotted along Connemara but this one has a sign "Stop and Pray" which always seems apt as it's at the 62 mile mark and one is starting to think prayer may be of benefit. I start the Inagh valley this year in daylight and by the time I get to the end of it at mile 70, night-time has come with the car now sitting on my tail protecting me from the sheep that are on the road and the occasional car that passes. CNM100 night-time has in the past yielded falling stars, sightings of the international space station or fog! 2020 was a warm clear night. The roads of Connemara quieten, and the only sound is the hum of the runner's car which sits on the tail of the runner throughout the night and ensures every runner's safety.



Roundstone, one of Connemara's popular summer destinations, is at mile 82 but it's also where RD's brother Ken and his wife Grainne welcome all the runners with offers of sustenance and words of encouragement for the last 18 miles. There's also a few who may be on their way home from a late night in the pub who are keen to support you even if it makes no sense to see someone running in the middle of the night. Having spent most of the day surrounded by mountains, this last stretch to Clifden is back to the smell and sound of the sea and I know that I've the back



broken on this race again even if the pace slows. The next village is Ballyconneely (mile 90) and by car, it's minutes but my race is now a mix of slow walk with the occasional jog and the very occasional burst of a run so it takes time to wind in the miles. As I near Ballyconneely this year, two of my CNN100 2020 highlights happened, word came through that Thomas had finished in 22.17 and therefore set a new PB for him and I met up with Declan and Shane who'd been ahead of me all day and either I'd wound them in or they kindly decided it was time to wait for me.

As dawn slowly brightened up the skyline, Declan, Shane and I reflected how we'd come to this point of CNM100 (being on the go for 24 hours does make one reflect!!), on our training through COVID (night-time runs, lockdown virtual marathons), how fortunate and appreciative we were of our crews, what a magnificent experience CNM2020 is, how close we were to the finish line as we wound in the final few miles and how privileged we are to take on the challenge.

Suddenly, 24+ hours later, we're back in Clifden with three loops of the town (the same loop we'd done Saturday morning) to do three passes of the finish line on the main street before we can stop. Those loops give plenty of time for our collective crews to gather and cheer us over the line where RD Ray awaits with our 2020 finisher medal & plaque.

CNM100 – put it on your bucket list, a 100 mile ultra road marathon where the crew carry all the gear and all you have to do is savour the scenery and keep the legs moving to that finish line!



move light,
live slow



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KERRY WAY

Ultra Running Festival

By John Boyle

Photos: Valerie O'Sullivan

All roads led to the kingdom of Kerry on the first weekend in September for the much anticipated annual Kerry Way Ultra Running Festival.

Now in its eighth year, this event has gone from strength to strength from its humble beginnings. Ireland's longest and toughest off-road race was already an ITRA 6 pointer for UTMB hopefuls and this year it also gained the distinction of being classified as a qualifier for the Western States 2022 event.

In a year when precious little proceeded elsewhere in the way of competitive ultra-races, both domestically and internationally, Kerry proved to be the mecca for Ireland's ultra elite which added an additional spice to this year's proceedings.

Observing and maintaining the required social distance and adhering to Health Services Executive and Sport Ireland Covid-19 guidelines was the order of the weekend during all of the races.

A huge test of endurance and willpower, it involved a 200km non-stop endurance race, over 40 hours, traversing the MacGillycuddy's Reeks and Iveragh Peninsula's ancient trails.

There were four races in total in the form of the 200km Kerry Way Ultra, the Kerry Way UltraLite (50 Kms), from Sneem to Killarney, and a new Kerry Way UltraNite (100 kms) from Waterville to Killarney, and the relay team event.

The not-for-profit race director is Eileen Daly and together with support crews and volunteers, they circumnavigated the Iveragh Peninsula's byroads and butter roads to sup-



Winner Alright... Aoife Mundow, Winner of the Ladies Race pictured on Drung Hill, Mountain Stage, Kells, Co Kerry.



Going the distance for the 7th consecutive year, John Boyle, on Drung Hill, Mountain Stage, Kells, Co Kerry. All athletes adhered to social distancing, HSE and Sport Ireland Covid19 guidelines.

[Route Map](#) // [Elevation Map](#)

Kerry Way Ultra Website <http://www.kerrywayultra.com/>
Facebook Link <https://www.facebook.com/TheKerryWayUltra/>

Full results link <https://statistik.d-u-v.org/getresultevent.php?event=64593>



port athletes from 5.00 am on Friday to late on Saturday night. All runners were GPS tracked on the Kerry Way route, making locating their whereabouts on the Kerry Way more manageable.

Gavin Byrne was first home in 23:37.17 with the second fastest time ever recorded for the race since it began.

The first lady home, for the second year in a row, was Aoife Mundow in an amazing time of 25:26.49, knocking off almost five hours from the record she set last year.

Winner of the Kerry Way UltraNight was Robert Janowski in a time of 9:10.53 and Claire McCann was the first lady home in a blistering time of 9:51.28.

Winner of the Kerry Way UltraLite was John Keogh in 5:03.50 and in the ladies' race it was specialist ultra-runner Laura O'Driscoll in a time of 5:48.05.

Winners of the relay event were Dublin Mountain Running Club. Race Director, Eileen Daly, said because of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was feared that the race might not go ahead but, because of its remoteness and ease of social distancing, it could proceed.

"We were able to meet all the criteria set out by the National Park and Wildlife Services and Kerry County Council. We are always indebted to the kindness of the Kerry Way landowners and South Kerry Development Partnership," she said.

The event reached a phenomenal online audience who engaged via the live tracking facility on Facebook.

Plans are already underway for next year's event which will be held on the first weekend in September 2021. For further details, visit the [Kerry Way Ultra](#) website.

HOME IS THE HERO... Overall Winner of the Kerry Way Ultra 2020 is Gavin Byrne, in the Bridia Valley, undertaking a 200km nonstop endurance race - The Kerry Way Ultra Marathon, a daunting 40 hour, 200km, nonstop race, which traverses the MacGillycuddy's Reeks and Iveragh Peninsula, on the longest trail route in Ireland.



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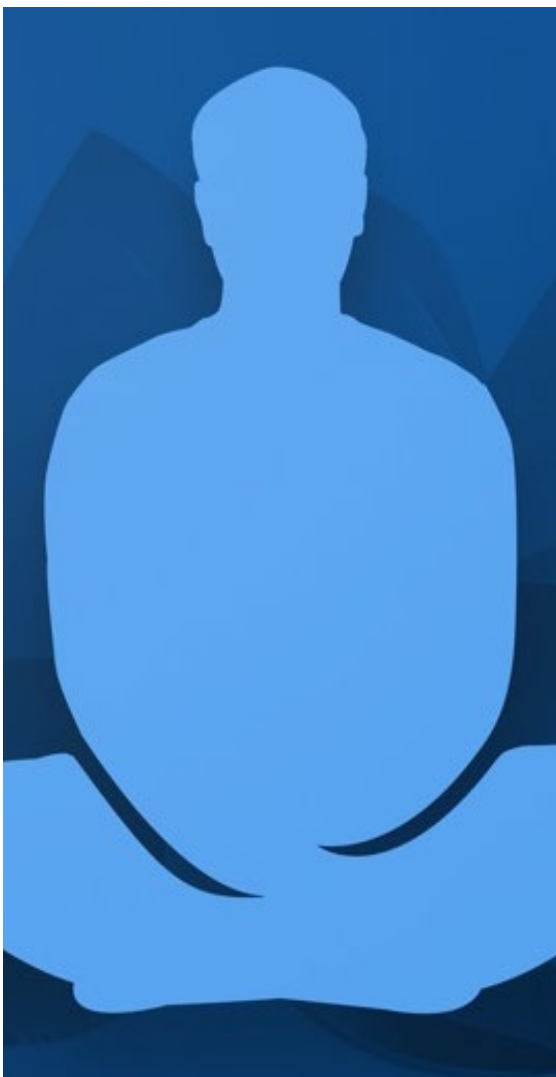
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Running, Meditation, and a Healthier You.

By Elliot Robinson

Yoga Postures may not be that appealing to your average runner, but something that goes hand-in-hand with it, meditation, may already be practiced to varying extents by people who'd never even consider doing yoga.

Most people think of meditation as sitting in a quiet room and thinking about the mysteries of life, but it's not often like that. That focused look of a runner half-way through the track, or the steely gaze of a powerlifting athlete as they're about to break their own record, they could already be in a naturally occurring meditative state and don't even realise it.



What is meditation?

While most people have vague ideas about how meditation is beneficial, they also think about it as setting aside time solely to meditate, and... in a way, do nothing. So hardly anyone ends up doing it, because not many people have the time and the patience for it.

But what exactly is meditation? Simply put, meditation is a practice which trains our attention and awareness, a state where, over time, you become more aware of yourself and your surroundings. And through practice, this keen sense of awareness could develop into a healthy balanced mind and body. Meditation is also the ability to be present and fully engaged in the moment.

When you're running and you're aware of your body, your breathing and each footfall, that can be you al-



ready in a meditative state.

Benefits of Meditation

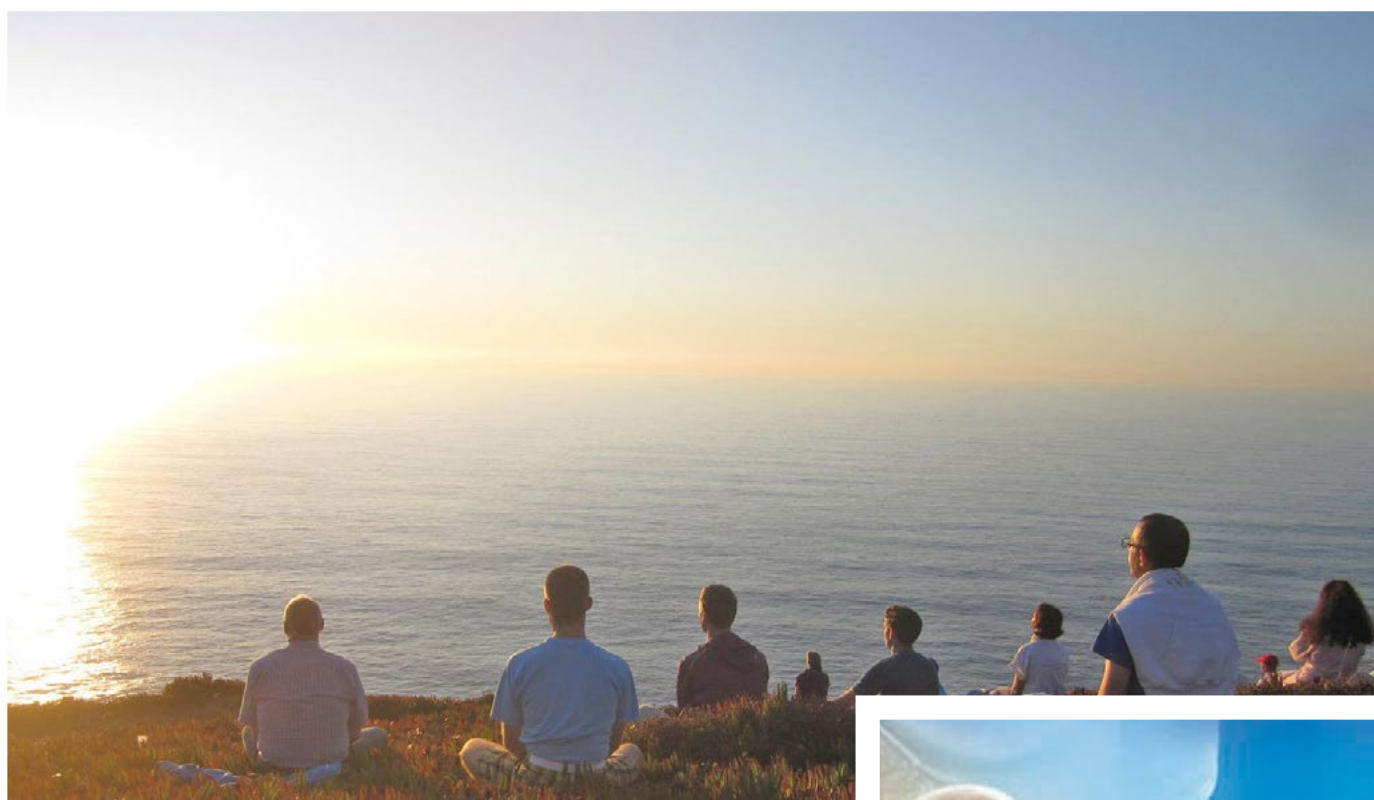
Of course, being intimately aware of yourself and your surroundings greatly helps you when you're running. When you're paying attention to your breathing and form, an easy byproduct of that is you'll avoid accidents on the track.

Beyond that, other benefits of meditation could be an improved mood, reduced fatigue, better stress management, mitigation of anxiety and depression.

When you're a more consistent practitioner of meditation, you'll even see improved learning and memory, emotional regulation, and increased self-awareness.

How to meditate?

There is no one way to meditate, there are many techniques but generally, gently letting go of thoughts is a start because thoughts are always arising. Meditation techniques help us recognize we are elaborating on these thoughts and then help us to let them go.



Paying close attention to yourself, your breathing and the sensations you feel, etc. Then consider how that relates to your immediate surroundings. Focus your attention on the feel of the ground against your foot. The coldness of the air as it rushes in your lungs.

Try to breathe in through your nose, letting your chest and stomach inflate a little as you do so, and exhale from the mouth all the way out. Making sure you're breathing in the best way possible goes a long way in calming yourself and making it easier for you to focus on the task at hand. You can practice this before your run, or even as you run.

While most people would be comfortable with a little noise so they feel like they can really pay attention, some practitioners of meditation may prefer playing music and letting that sound fall into the back-

ground as they run or exercise.

However you approach it, undoubtedly, a healthier mind leads to a healthier body and the same is equally as true vice versa.

About the author:

Elliot Robinson is an international fitness model and a competitive athlete. When he's not working towards competing at the Arnold Classic in Barcelona, he writes for Gunsmith-fitness.com.



TRI-POL-AR

THE STORY OF A BIPOLAR TRIATHLETE

Reviewed by Emily Adams

Tim Davis

In *Tripolar*, Tim Davis gives his brutally honest account of his struggle with drug and alcohol addiction, which dominated decades of his life. After the tragic loss of his father at a young age and the turmoil left in its wake, Davis turned to alcohol and drug abuse as a way of coping with life and numbing the pain he felt. Unable to break the vicious cycle of addiction, his personal relationships and ability to uphold responsibility come under tremendous strain which lead him to eventually seek help to overcome his destructive cycle.

Recovery however is never a straight line and Davis finds himself relapsing several times, with each time he becomes more desperate to find ways of enabling his habit and concealing the truth from those close to him. During one of his attempts at getting 'clean' he is diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder, something which he has difficulty in accepting. It takes an accident which had the potential to be fatal for Davis to finally come

to terms that he cannot continue on his path of destruction and make a real commitment to turning his life around for the sake of his family.

During his recovery, he reconnects with exercise as a way of managing weight gain caused by the Bipolar medication and subsequent overeating. Replacing one addiction for a healthier one, it doesn't take long for Davis to become hooked on the natural high that comes with exercise. He begins by competing in a sprint distance triathlon and soon wonders whether he can go further. After completing pretty much all of the various triathlon distances, he yearns for something more challenging and through a friend starts running ultramarathons. Initially completing 30 miles, then 50 miles before taking on the challenge of 100 miles. The original objective was just to complete an event of this distance but then he falls into the addictive runners chase of wanting to get quicker and targets faster finish times and multiple 100 mile

belt buckles. Against all odds he harnessed the power of physical activity to positively manage his situation and becomes an accomplished ultra-endurance athlete.

Roughly two thirds of this book are about Tim Davis' battle with alcohol and drug addiction so this isn't strictly all about triathlons or ultramarathons, more about his life story of personal redemption, overcoming addiction and living with a mental illness. That being said, I found myself emotionally invested in his life journey and unable to put the book down as I willed him on in beating this disease. He is very honest about his experience with the highs and lows that come with addiction, which at times puts him in situations which can make for uncomfortable reading. The book bravely lays bare all of Davis' shortcomings and personal demons, it is a captivating and eye-opening insight into overcoming addiction and living with a mental illness.

Sandra Brown

By Helen Hayes
Photo by Mark Easton

Sandra Brown is the world's best ultra distance walker, she is also a world class ultra distance runner. Her inclusion in UW Hall of Fame is undeniably warranted. We are taking a look at this illustrious ultra distance career.

Sandra was born in 1949, the seeds were sown by participating in long family walks, this early rambling off the beaten track inoculated Sandra with a natural affinity for long distances. At school she wasn't particularly enamoured with organised sporting events and preferred to pursue her interests in languages and history. At university she met the equally incomparable Richard Brown. This union was to ignite one of the greatest long distance duos of the modern era. A shared passion for long distances became a unique driving force.

Echoing the childhood rambles, Sandra and Richard began to go on walks in the countryside near their new home in Luton. A few miles soon turned into rather more. In 1982 at the age of 33, Sandra entered her first marathon. That was it, the gene was truly unleashed, a 100 km in April followed by the Long Distance Walkers Association (LDWA) 100 mile Pilgrims Way in May 1982.

Sandra's preferred method of traction is walking although she intersperses this with running. In the early 1980's not all races allowed a mixture of walking and running but gradually this changed to "go as you please" events. It was also a prevailing notion during this time that women were not capable of completing a hundred miles, Sandra was able to ignore these sexist views and smashed the barriers, gaining 7 Centurion badges completing the 100 miles in less than 24 hours.

In 1989 Sandra completed the first of four Paris-Colmar distances of 221km between the two cities. Notably in 1995 she completed 830 miles from Lands End to John o'Groats in 13 days and 10 hours, until she was eventually superseded by Sharon Gaytor. During 1996 in Australia, Sandra set women's records for 1000km in 8 days, 12 hours, 16 minutes and 20 seconds and 1000 miles in 14 days, 10 hours, 27 minutes and 20 seconds. These still stand today in the top three of all the performances just behind Eleanor Robinson. Sandra has been described as "the clockwork doll", wind her up and she goes at a steady pace until she runs out of fuel. For Sandra, ultra distance events are a way of life, "I like to keep

busy do all of events, walking, proliferation of events that Sandra entered meant that she was the first woman to reach one hundred "hundreds". In 2019 from Dublin to Belfast she completed her 200th hundred miler. Sandra described the experience, "It's quite a tough event, far from flat, and you need to carry a pack with all necessary gear including clothing, torches, food and enough drink etc for some longish distances. The time limit was 36 hours and Richard and I walked all the way in about 27 hours and 50 minutes." Not bad for someone who turned 70 two days later.

Sandra is not stopping, Richard said, "We will keep doing this until we drop. We would go mad if we stopped." She continues to enter races appropriate to her age group and turns out high quality performances born out by statistics like this, 160 of her 196 hundred miles were completed in less than 24 hours.

Sandra's achievements have shaped not only the British 24 hour running scene but her influence and example are an inspiration to those who follow in her footsteps.

Here is a summary of Sandra's ultra distance achievements and why she very much deserves to be in the Hall of Fame.

- First person in history to reach 100 x 100 miles
- Has finished the most 100 plus miles ever (200 plus and counting)
- Is the only person in the world to be awarded all 7 centurion medals
- Has finished the most British Centurion races in the world under 24 hours with 35
- Has finished 30 Centurion races in less than 20 hours
- Has reached 100 miles in less than 20 hours about 45 times
- Still holds world walking records on track for 100k, 100m, 12 hours and 24 hours



Further Resources

Books: "One hundred Years of Walking with the Surrey Walking Club 1889-1999" by Sandra Brown

"Long at the top: Richard and Sandra Brown" by Dudley Harris. Website: www.ultrabrowns.co.uk/



- Chip Timing solutions for races of any length and complexity
- Multiple timing splits
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Ben Davies I first got into running eleven years ago, because I unexpectedly got a job in a running shop and felt embarrassed because I did not run. I immediately became addicted, and since then I have completed seventy marathons and ultras all over the world. I will travel pretty much anywhere for an ultra!



Christiane James who is retired, ran her first marathon at the Virgin Money London Marathon aged 59 in 2017 and has completed a marathon every year since; Edinburgh in 2018 then Liverpool in 2019. "An ultra-marathon felt like the natural progression in 2020" at the age of 62.



Elliot Robinson is an international fitness model and a competitive athlete. He's currently working towards competing at the Arnold Classic in Barcelona. He's very active on Instagram, check him out for nuggets of fitness and lifestyle gold at [Gunsmithfitness.com](https://www.gunsmithfitness.com).



Emily Adams has been a runner for over a decade but has only recently ventured into ultra-running. Having crewed for her husband at various ultra-marathons she was inspired to give it a go herself completing her first 50km race in 2018. Her aim is to crack the Arc50 in 2021 and ultimately progress to completing a 100km race. Living in the flat lands of Essex, she is strangely attracted to mountains and hilly coastal trails.



Jeremy Mower is an ultrarunner who has made a record number of 16 international appearances for Wales. These include 15 Anglo-Celtic Plate 100km races and he was part of the Wales team that won team Silver at the 2011 Commonwealth 24 Hour race. The 55 year old competes regularly for Welsh Masters at cross country and road races. He is a Director of a small engineering company in Gloucester and also a UKA Level 2 Endurance Coach.



Helen Hayes lives in a small town on the East coast of Ireland. Surrounded by majestic mountains and the ever changing sea, there are ample opportunities for running, cycling and swimming. As a regular contributor to Ultra-running World, Helen has an interest in writing and all things ultra. she can be found most days walking or running with her dogs on the beaches and hills.



John Boyle started running marathons back in 1980 and moved onto the ultra scene over the last 15 years. He lives close to Wicklow mountains in Ireland where he does most of his running today. He has completed over 300 marathons and over 60 ultras both at home and abroad and currently holds the records for the most completions in the Connemara 100 road race (6) and the Kerry Way Ultra Trail Race (7). When not running he is a marketing director for a professional services firm.



Katrine Stilbo is 46 year old ultra virgin but hopes that changes in 2021! Though she haven't done any ultras yet she has organized quite a few. For a living Katrine is a social worker/teacher for young adults with special needs
3 x Half Ironman finisher
2 x Ironman finisher
5 x marathon finisher
A lot of Half marathons.
Find out more about the [Nordic Challenge](#).



Leah Atherton can usually be found poeting about on long adventures in pretty places. Her debut collection, 'A sky the colour of hope' came out this summer with Verve Poetry Press. She believes in strong coffee, campfire whisky and the power of muddy shoes. Checkout Leah's Facebook page, [Poet On The Run](#).



Miriam O'Connor
My first marathon was New York in 2000 having started from a base of 0 running. In recent years, I've moved onto ultramarathons & trail running and enjoy the headspace they give as well as meeting like minded runners. Encouraging others to take on the challenge of a half / full / ultramarathon is almost as good as crossing any finish line!



Tina McIver is retired and at 65 years young is fitter than in her 20s! Tina ran her first half-marathon aged 48, her first marathon at 57 and has since completed five – four in retirement. Ultra North 55 was Tina's first ultra.



Debs and Dawn are on an adventure. In 2021 they hope to complete the 13 Peaks Challenge in Cape Town...and finish it in under 24 hours.

Debs is from Johannesburg and Dawn is in Durban – they met via Zoom through their coach and clicked straightaway. Follow their progress on their [Facebook page](#).



ULTRARUNNING WORLD
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Peter Windross
Photo by Tosh Simpkin