



# ULTRARUNNING WORLD

M A G A Z I N E

ROAD, TRACK & TRAIL MULTIDAY & ULTRA DISTANCE NEWS

// ISSUE 29







**82 MILES**  
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**BRUTALEVENTS.CO.UK | APRIL 10TH | JURASSIC COAST**

Several virtual challenges drew to a close with the end of January including Kris Kostman's virtual Badwater and Mark Cockbain's Frozen Accumulator which have sprinkled my fb feed with inspiring deeds on a daily basis. However just before the dawn of February GBUltrarunning began a new challenge, Race Across the Alps, kicking off on the 30th January 2021



at 8am with virtual distances of 5km, 10km, Half-Marathon, Marathon, 50 Mile, 100 Mile, 663 Mile, 763 Mile (GHT) and 1592 Miles to choose from along a variety of routes. The Race Across The Alps follows GBUltrarunning virtual events in 2020 that culminated in the 2020 'Race For Britain' raising almost £15,000 for the Foodbank. The GB Ultrarunning Community has been and continues to help distribute food and essentials at their local Food Banks across the UK throughout the winter. Well done Wayne Drinkwater and the GB Ultrarunning Community.

RunSignUp's RaceTrends report says that virtual events and challenges formed a third of all events in 2020. With the freedoms virtual events allow along with support from online communities, it looks like virtual events are here to stay.

Some events are still taking place around the world, there is hope and Spring is on its way with each week seeing the afternoons begin to stretch out. It won't be long now.

And of course we are delighted to bring you the latest edition of the magazine which starts off with Rosie Holliday discussing Ultrarunning and Pregnancy, South African duo Debs and Dawn get to grips with change in their article, Adaptation. Claire Smith, the Queen of Brutal battles with limitation in an attempt to complete the Oner Ultra Trail Run, My Achilles Heel. Ben Davies is back with another tale from Sherwood Forest at the Robin Hood 100. Antonio Codina went to one of the most popular series of races in the UK, Hardmoors, this time to the 55 mile event along the Cleveland Way in his article Race in the time of Covid-19. As most of us are impacted in the same way at the moment Oliver Smith creatively found a route that encircled Cardiff. Who knew? Thanks to Oliver the bar has been set and Run The Border tells how it's done. Sabrina Verjee, on the cover of our last issue, writes about her Wainwright's Coast to Coast adventure to another hangout of our favourite outlaw, Robin Hood's Bay. Further south and east, Martin Illott introduces another point to point event, the Dolihos Race from Delphi to Olympia in Greece, an ancient and sacred route. Antonio Codina reviewed Running through the night by David Byrne for our book review section and Helen Hayes honours Geoff Oliver in this month's Hall of Fame.

## The House:

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Book Reviews

### • Front cover

- Jim Walmsley setting a new American 100km record in Chandler, Arizona

### • Back cover

- Audrey Tanguy the women's 100km winner in Arizona in her debut on the roads and at this distance. Both photos courtesy of [HOKA ONE ONE](#)

## Ultrarunning World February 2021

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Send inquiries, original and previously unpublished race reports/articles to the email address above. Last dates for article submissions: February 14th, March 14th, April 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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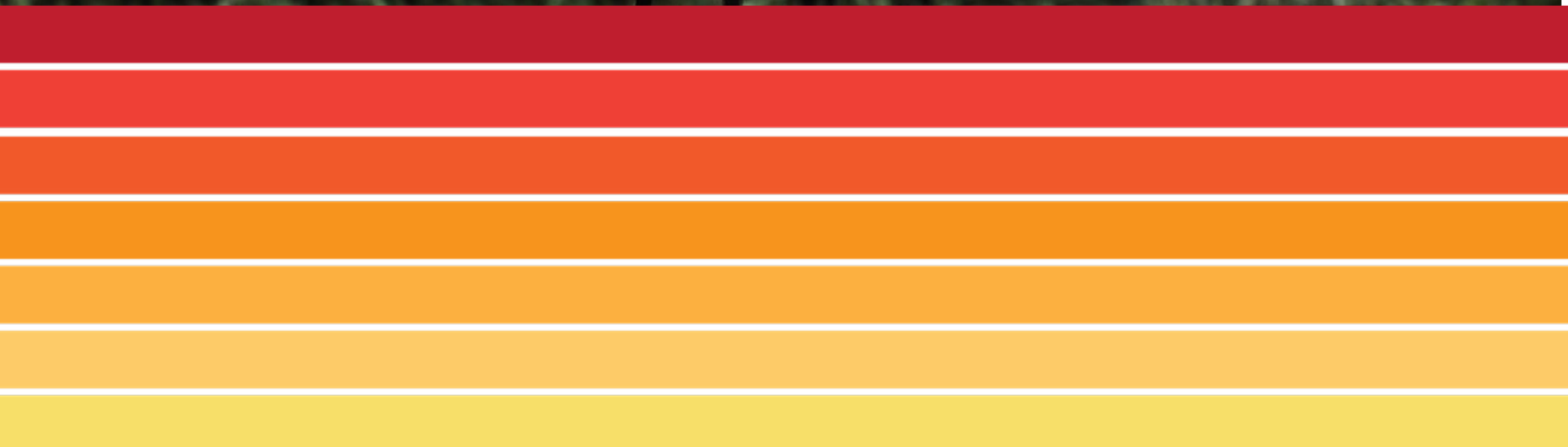
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The **IAU 24H World Championships**, Romania are being postponed from 22nd/23rd May until October 2nd/3rd 2021. Currently there are restrictions on travel inside and to/from Europe. In addition public activities are limited in Romania and this brings additional complexity to the preparation for the Local Organising Committee (LOC) who are also considering changing the venue of the Championship to Bucharest, due to limitations in the course in Timisoara and more choice for direct travel for federations.

The **2021 USATF 100 mile Road Championships** are set for April 23 in Henderson, NV

The **2021 USATF 50km mile Road Championships** are scheduled for June 13th at East Islip, NY.

The **Barry Track 40 Miles and the Welsh Ultra Championship** is rescheduled to Sunday 23 May, at 10 AM in Jenner Park.

The **Belfast 24 Hour International Road Race** in Victoria Park, Belfast, on the 19th & 20th June 2021 will be incorporating the AAI Irish National Championship.

The date and venue for the 2021 **Anglo-Celtic Cup 100km** championship has yet to be announced.

**ULTRA  
LONDON**





# Recent Races

Jim Walmsley (USA), ran an amazing 6:09:26 to set a new American record missing out on the 100km World record by a mere 11 seconds on Saturday January 23rd at the Gila River Indian Reservation in Chandler, Arizona.

The event was set up especially by HOKA ONE ONE® as part of their launch of Project Carbon X 2 a lightweight and propulsive shoe designed to help athletes break their own records. As part of the launch celebrations of this new shoe, Hoka sponsored an attempt to break the 100K world record by HOKA athletes from around the world wearing the new Carbon X2 footwear. Headlined by HOKA US athlete Jim Walmsley 13 men toed the line, while Camille Herron, who was forced to drop out after several hours with an injury, was the pre-race favourite among the 6 women starters. In the end, only Jim Walmsley came close to the World record by clocking a stunning 6:09:26 averaging 5:57 per mile becoming the second fastest 100km runner in history.

The women's race was won by **Audrey Tanguy** of France who crossed the line in 7:40:36. The current men's and women's 100km world records are held by the Japanese runners. Nao Kazami set the men's record of 6:09:14 in 2018, while Tomoe Abe set the women's World record of 6:33:11 in 2000. [Full results.](#)

**Florian Neuschwander** has beaten the 100km treadmill record of 6:39:25 set by Mario Mendoza in June 2020, in a new time of 6:26:08 on January 30th.

19 year old **Kartik Joshi** is the second-time winner of the India Backyard Ultra after 41 hours and 170.83 miles. He was assisted by Munish Dev. Full results: [Indiabackyardultra.wordpress.com](#)

Moving Ahead Development Agency (MADA) in South Africa launched a new virtual race on the 28th of January. **The Two Cities Ultra Marathon Virtual Event** will take place on March 14. Runners have three distances to choose from - 10km, 21km and 45km.

Former Comrades Marathon champion Gift Kelehe and Lizzy Babili are

the race ambassadors and will run the 45km race. The inaugural race will honour Covid-19 survivors. Runners can nominate their Covid-19 heroes and run for those people. There is no prize money, and all proceeds will go to charity. Those interested can register online ([www.twocities.co.za](http://www.twocities.co.za)).

**ULTRA LONDON** will return to the UK capital on Saturday 31 July 2021. After a hugely successful inaugural event in 2019, the event was sadly cancelled in 2020 as a result of covid-19. The fully waymarked event follows sections of the Capital Ring, a relatively unknown but spectacular 78-mile public footpath around London. The surprisingly green and picturesque route promises participants a chance to explore London's iconic scenery on a mix of hidden trails, footpaths, parks, disused railway lines and woodland around the capital. After a hugely successful inaugural event in 2020, **ULTRA NORTH** will be back in the North East on Saturday 5 June 2021 with an improved shorter route and a new start and finish in Derwenthaugh Park, just a few minutes from Newcastle in Gateshead. ULTRA NORTH 55 will take competitors on a tour of the region, passing iconic landmarks such as the Tyne Bridge, Millennium Bridge and 9 arches viaduct, and following iconic footpaths including Hadrian's Way, Wylam's Wagon Way and Derwent Walk. Visit [ultranorth.co.uk](http://ultranorth.co.uk).

**Jamie Peacock**, who played for the Bradford Bulls, a professional Rugby League club in the north of England will run a 45 mile ultra marathon around London on March 5 for the sports and mentoring charity Greenhouse Sports along with Simon Dent, a keen endurance runner and founder of sports marketing agency Dark Horses.

The decision to independently run the 45 miles comes after the announcement that Green Man Ultra Marathon, which Jamie was due to run, has been postponed as a result of Covid-19. He is looking to raise a target of £30,000, which will provide a fulltime Greenhouse Sports Coach to a school for a whole year. Greenhouse Sports use a unique combination of mentoring and sport to help some of the 4 million young people in the UK who are living in poverty reach their full potential, both at school and then into employment.

## ULTRA NORTH



[Ultrarunning History](#) Podcast traces the history of the sport of ultrarunning in America and is currently examining the development of 100 mile races.

Trail Runner Nation Two Fun Adventures - Mike Foote and Rob Krar set an FKT on a Grand Canyon R2R2R crossing in the frigid temperatures of December 31, 2020.

[Trail Running Podcast](#), KristianUltra, showcases interviews from Ultra runners situated all over the world. The latest edition is [Appalachian Trail Legends](#) with Warren Doyle, Scott Grierson aka Maineak, David Horton, David Blair aka Lone Wolf.

[Aid Station](#) is a magazine style podcast aimed at providing support, coaching advice, information, inspiration and motivation to mid and back of the pack ultra runners. Hosted by England Athletics qualified coach Kevin Munt. Episode 2 contains Aid Station's first face to face interview with ultrarunner newbie Elizabeth Gatherer.

[Bad Boy Running](#) Ep 251 - The Kit Episode with Wiggle.

The Inspirational Runner Podcast. [Episode #137 Paul Tierney The Wainwrights FKT.](#)

#### Videos

[Journeymen - Running a hundred miles.](#)

This video is about two ultra runners, Daniel Podzimek and his friend Eric who decided to run 100 miles (approximately 155 kilometers) through the Frysian Forests in Netherlands.

[Through The Pain - Featuring Shelli Gordon, Ultra-Runner.](#)

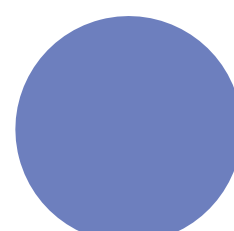
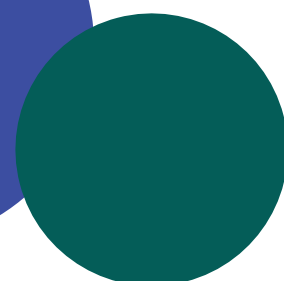
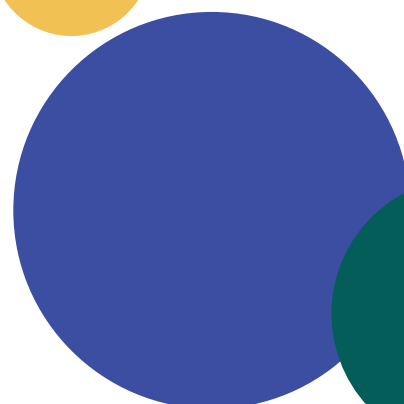
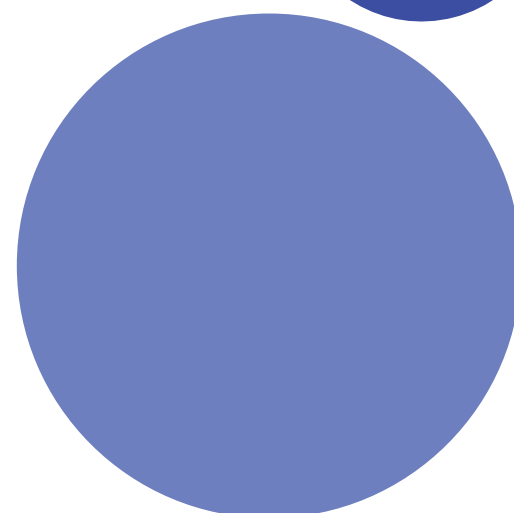
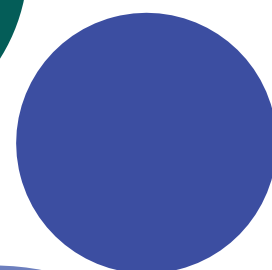
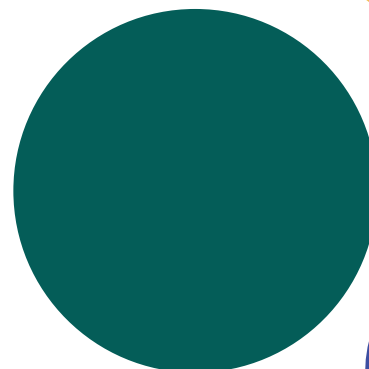
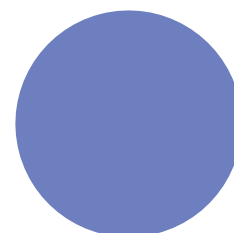
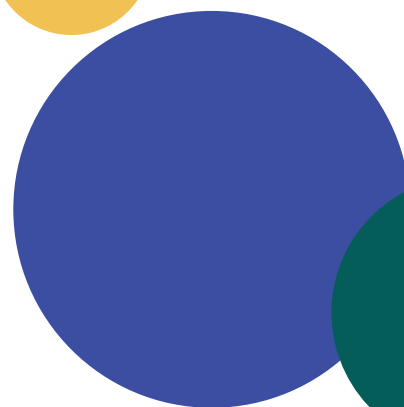
Shelli Gordon owns the running shop 'Lets Run' in North Yorkshire which she set up with her partner Tony and who took his own life in 2018. Through The Pain is Shelli's story of how she ran the 268 Spine Race along the length of the Pennines in Tony's memory raising over £30,000 for CALM.

[Always Moving Forward: The Story of The Hardmoors 55.](#)

Documentary Film about the Hardmoors 55 Ultra Marathon. Exploring the unique culture surrounding the race series, the beauty of the Cleveland Way and the different reasons people choose to take on feats of Ultra endurance.

Summit Fever Media - How to prepare for an FKT with [Damian Hall](#) #TotallyFKT.

A virtual version of Badwater ended on Jan 31st and for anyone thinking about doing the race, this movie is a good place to start. It's long but tells the story of Akos Konya in his debut at the 2006 event. [Above and Beyond Badwater.](#)





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# Ultra Running & PREGNANCY

By Rosie Holliday



The baby was planned, we were over the moon but as soon as the two blue lines appeared on the test, I frantically tried to work out how far along I would be on the 28th July. Did it make me a bad person that I really wanted to run this race as much as I wanted this baby? Running has become one of the most important things in our lives, socially, mentally and physically. If I gave up running who was I? This question of balance is one that constantly hung over me, even now as my son approaches his second birthday. How can I be a good mum as well as satisfying my passion to run, train and race?

I started to search 'Ultra Running and Pregnancy' and unfortunately, there were not many hits. There were a couple of articles about elite runners but nothing at all about amateur ultra-runners. Everything focused on how exercise was good during pregnancy but as long as the 'intensity and duration' was low. I was stuck, I didn't know what to do or where to turn. So, I did the only thing I know how to do when I feel

stressed, anxious and worried, I went for a run, and I felt absolutely fine. It became clear to me that I would carry on with the training and just take things run by run. My husband Mike was completely supportive (he was also running the race) and at the end of that week we managed a 15 mile recce run on the route and I felt good. At times I felt slightly more breathless, cue more worrying when I got home and more unhelpful internet searches. A few weeks later I did find a really helpful podcast called, the Running Medicine Podcast. Their episode titled 'Running During Pregnancy' is excellent. Although not specifically about ultra-running it is full of helpful research into the topic and the positive impact running can have during pregnancy. It really helped to settle my mind.

In the week that followed I started to develop some pretty bad nausea and fatigue, all common pregnancy

symptoms.

Eating was a bit of a struggle,

I would fancy one thing for about 24 hours and by the next day it would make me wretch. Looking back over my strava I've commented that I had 'a few wobbles' during a 10km run. I remember it was hot that week too and I think I underestimated the additional fluid and fuel I needed to take on during this time. I started to make sure I always had something to snack on, usually in the form of plain crackers or fruit. Fresh air always made me feel better so I tried to spend as much time as possible outside. I never felt sick when I ran and if anything, I would feel better and more energised afterwards. The tiredness was tough; I was teaching PE full time and also trying to continue to run. I would come home from work and sleep for 30/40mins before driving to the Fells to meet some friends for a training run.



*When I found out I was pregnant I was six weeks away from running my first 50 mile Ultra, the Lakeland 50. I had never ran this distance before and over the previous four months I had thrown myself into my training for the event.*



These short naps worked wonders. I had a rough training schedule in my head but every run I did during this time was on feel. If I felt good, I would keep going but if I didn't I would stop, I took the pressure off myself and just tried to enjoy being outside.

At 8 weeks pregnant, I ran my last race before the Lakeland 50, The Borrowdale 21km trail race. I know the route well, having previously completed it. That morning I woke up feeling terrible. I remember thinking to myself, just get to the start line, set off and see how you feel. If you still feel awful after a few miles then you can stop. I downed two bacon rolls (my craving of choice on that morning!) and toed the start line. It was great, my nausea subsided, mostly helped by the incredible views over Derwentwater and I got round in a time I was more than happy with. Mike won the race and then came 3rd in the Scafell Marathon the next day. The weekend finished off with us cheering Kilian Jornet into Keswick as he broke the Bob Graham record. I was full to the brim with running motivation and enthusiasm.

I think one of the biggest issues I

faced during this time was my concern about what people would think when they found out, would they think

I was selfish and a bad

mother before the baby even arrived? A week before the race I decided to tell my parents and Hannah, my sister. Hannah was also running the race and we had planned to stick together. They all work for the NHS (two doctors and a nurse) and my Mum used to be a midwife. Once the excitement calmed down, the question then came up 'but what about the race?'. My family were behind my decision to run and I trust their opinions completely. They of course told me to take it easy and to be careful, knowing I had the support of my sister on route.

The first 12 weeks of any pregnancy are hard and there seems to be an unwritten rule that you need to shroud them in secrecy. It is the time when you are at your most vulnerable, but have the most questions and need the most support. Many times, I felt anxious about the decisions I was making. Sharing my news with my close family helped enormously. They knew my situation and my capacity as a runner. This gave me some much-needed self belief in my own ability. Sur-

rounding yourself with people who are supportive and believe in you is a confidence boost that cannot be replicated by anything else. With the race now just around the corner final plans were made to run steady, eat and drink lots and enjoy the day out.

**Further reading: Baby On Board: Long-Distance Running During Pregnancy :**

[www.irunfar.com](http://www.irunfar.com)



# ADAPTATION

By Debs and Dawn

As with life at the moment, there are constant changes and adaptations that need to take place in order to manage, survive and even thrive. Debs and Dawn have changed plans and ideas... We have thought about the 24 hour target for the 13 peaks challenge (over 100 km and 6000m climbing in the mountains of the Cape, South Africa)...and to be honest...we are not ready. It would be an extremely difficult goal to achieve and we are not physically, or mentally prepared to do it any time soon. So we adapt.

We do not live in Cape Town so we cannot train on the route on a regular basis. Or at all at the moment. But never fear, as we have plan B in place. The question - why are we doing this? - comes to mind and there are many answers. Yes, we have goals and dreams and want to push ourselves to

the limits. In the same breath we want to have fun, share the journey together and have time to take a few pictures and remember this incredible event which we have looked forward to completing for so long. So the plans change and adapt. We are aiming at a two day 13 peaks challenge possibly in May this year. This largely depends on covid, the state of the country and restrictions with training and traveling. Health and safety come first. It is, however, great to have a rough plan to work towards too - to dream, plan and train for. We also plan on getting a great team together to help, assist and cheer us on. We want to make this an event that friends and runners can follow, to inspire,

to set goals and achieve dreams. It has been such a hard time for so many people with the virus affecting our daily lives in so many ways...but there is HOPE. Our mes-

sage is to keep dreaming. Set goals. Maybe there aren't official races on at the moment but we are working towards getting those personal bests (pb), 5 km or being consistent in our training. It always helps when we are accountable to someone or are able to train together with like-minded goals.

Go for it! The only thing stopping you...is YOU!





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# My ACHILLES HEEL

By Claire Smith  
Photos Kathi Harman

Every step down is painful, and I'm trying to avoid the slippery flagstones, dreading that I lose my footing and fall. My IT bands have tightened and are pulling on my knees, and the pain on the front of my ankles is almost unbearable and at times, making me cry out loud.

I can see the car park below, but it is taking forever to reach it. We have completed 55 miles with over 6,600 feet of elevation, but we still have 28 miles and another 3,500 feet more to climb.

And we have less than 8 hours to do this in...

Do I know that we won't be going any further at this point? I think so, I think I've known since Weymouth, but I've been hoping that despite being in so much pain and with the time slipping away, we can still do this.

Deep down, though I know, it's over and that I have failed again.

The Oner Ultra Trail Run is 82 miles over some of the UK's hardest coastline in Dorset with a strict 24 hour cut-off. I have tried and failed the Oner 5 times before.

Yes, you read that right. 5 times.

On my first two attempts at the Oner, the race was being organised by another company (Votwo Events), who I subsequently started working with. In 2014 I took the Oner over and it became part of the Brutal Events family of races, which ob-

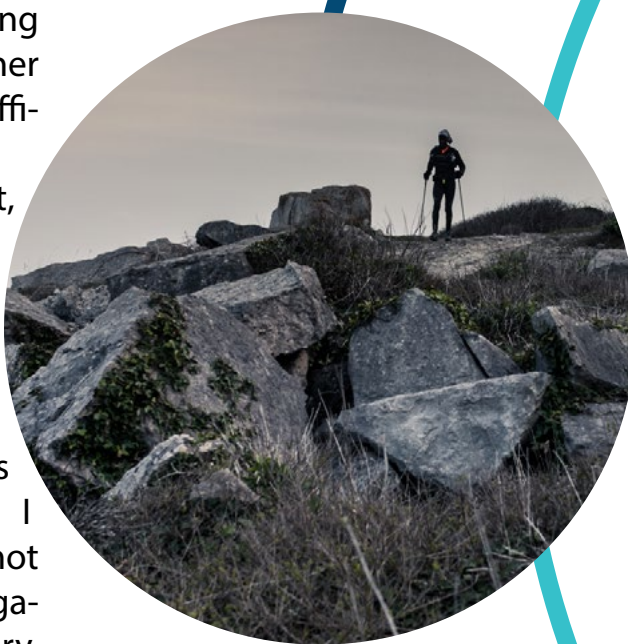
viously made it hard to take part in whilst working on it. This meant the other 3 attempts were all unofficial solo challenges.

But every attempt, whether official or DIY, ended in failure, it burned inside me, and I promised that one day I would do it.

My main issue was time, over the years I had struggled with not eating enough, navigation, blisters and injury. Looking back, most of the problems I had wouldn't stop me now, but that comes with experience in endurance events. It takes time to learn how far you can push your mind and body, it's always further than you think.

In December, my 6th attempt would be sandwiched in between a COVID lockdown and another endurance challenge, I finished (an off-road Double Ironman) and in hindsight it was a bad idea. Still, I'm not known for making sensible decisions...

To help me reach the end this time, my friend and now Brutal Event's race director, James Page, would be running with me. He has finished not only the Oner but also the Two'r, and yes, that's exactly what it sounds like. The Oner, twice. It took him (and fellow ultra runner, Jon Cox) 60 hours to complete the 164 miles in 2017. That was one tough weekend!







Our crew would be Justin, who is known for dressing up as a giant Squirrel during our events. There is nothing like a 6ft ex-forces bloke leaping out of the bushes, dressed up as a huge rodent to make you run faster.

We meet in a car park in Dorchester at 6:45 am. I'm super stressed and carelessly drop one of my Garmin watches as I move my kit into Justin's van. Everyone looks for it with their head torches, and finally, Justin spots it, and we can resume the kit loading. Once I'm in the back of the van, I try to relax for the 45 minutes it takes to get to Charmouth.

After we have sorted our kit and taken a few selfies, we check the trackers and press the start buttons on our Garmins. We say our goodbyes to Justin, and we are off.

From the get-go, I'm struggling. I can't catch my breath or keep up with

Jim. Panic starts to creep into my mind. I try to relax and push the negative thoughts away. After an hour or so, I tell Jim that I'm having issues. He tells me I'm doing well and not to worry. I know he's lying to try to make me feel better.

We go through CP1 quickly, but stop a little longer at CP2, and I take the opportunity to use the public toilets here. I swallow some painkillers, away from Jim and Justin. Not wanting them to see. I give myself a stern talking to; I can do this, I say but I'm not even close to halfway, and already I'm exhausted and taking paracetamol.

We push on, and I get my head down to get the miles ticked off. As we get near Ferry Bridge and the isle of Portland becomes clearer, something strange



happens, I start to feel better, stronger, and my pace picks up. We stop at the beginning of the causeway and gulp hot, sweet tea and eat as much as possible. I'm keen to push on, my hopes are up; maybe I can do this?

By the time we reach the infamous Portland Bill lighthouse, it's getting dark. A few of the Brutal crew, Matt and Karen meet us there along with Justin, and we stop a little longer to eat and add lay-

ers and head torches. Our spirits are high when we leave the CP even though we both know that it will get a lot harder from here on.

The pain at the front of my ankle (an old overuse injury from my Double Deca) is getting worse, and by the time we have left the island, my left ankle is also hurting. This worries me as I know how painful it got in Mexico, but I remind myself that I didn't stop then, so I can't use this as an excuse now.





We briefly stop again at Ferry Bridge, grabbing some hot food from Justin and leaving our poles with him for the Weymouth section to eat our Firepot meals. As we power walk through the town, we are both quietly struggling to eat and eventually give up and put our half-finished meals in the bin.

I'm now in agony, shooting pains from both ankles, making me wince and Jim is feeling sick and also suffering from a sore ankle. But we both crack on, nobody mentions giving up.

We pick up our poles from the end of the seafront at Weymouth, just before we hit the coast path again. Another Brutal crew member, Nancy, hands us hot chocolate, and we add more layers with the temperature dropping fast now. We all know what's to come, but again, nobody mentions stopping.

From this point onwards, I feel good again, I'm still in pain, but my pace picks up again. Jim is still feeling sick, and this worries me. He spends some time in the public loo's at CP7 (Osmington) but still feels bad. The hills get bigger, we take our minds off them by chatting and looking at the huge, brightly lit cruise ships that have been forced to moor in Weymouth Bay during the global pandemic.

I'm dreading the start of the roller coaster hills as my IT bands have both now tightened, making downhills extremely slow and painful. Jim is feeling better and is ahead of me again; I try to keep up. Just get to Lulworth I tell myself. The set of white, chalky steps leading down to the car park takes forever to descend, and I keep slipping, just managing to stop myself from falling with my poles. I look up, and I can see Justin ahead, I breathe a sigh of relief and try not to think about the hundreds of steps still to come...

Jim and I sit down, stiffly and painfully. We both stare out into the darkness. "We're not going to make the cut-off" Jim says, matter-of-factly.

"I know," I say. And I've known since Weymouth; I just haven't wanted to say it out loud.

"We can push on," Jim says "we will probably only be an hour over."

I shake my head. "There's no point, I need to do this in under 24 hours, or it's not an official finish."

We sit a while longer as if there is still a chance and a choice to be made, but as the cold starts to make us shiver, we pull off race vests, and mud-covered shoes and climb into Justin's van to head back to Dorchester.

As I drive home, the negative thoughts rush in like the tide and fill my head, there is nothing I can do to stop them. Once home, I pull off my gators and leggings, and I'm shocked to see bright red and purple bruises blooming on the front of my ankles, the right one being the angriest looking. Secretly, I'm a little impressed as I've never managed to cause myself such visible damage from the inside out before.

My ankles aren't the only thing that is bruised though. My mental state has taken a battering, and over the next few days, I have to constantly remind myself that I'm the one that keeps banging on about not being afraid to fail and stop beating myself up so much. Failure hurts, especially when it's something you have repeatedly screwed up and want as badly as this.

Will I try again? Of course (stubborn is my middle name) and maybe this attempt will be with a little more prep and less miles in my legs beforehand. And who knows, maybe the 7th time will be the one...





# DARK SKIES

## YORKSHIRE DALES

### NIGHT TRAIL RACE



DALES, HILLS, CHILLING THRILL OF THE DARK NIGHT  
AND THE SKY LIT UP WITH BILLIONS OF STARS

DISTANCE: 30 KM  
ELEVATION: 2770 FT  
PLACE: SETTLE  
DATE: 27<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2021 (TBC)

## 3<sup>e</sup> ETOILE VERTE D'EGUZON

*Val de Creuse - Berry - Limousin*

**300 km**

**6 étapes**



**29 août**

**03 sept.**

**2021**

- ◆ 1 Val de Creuse Nord 50 km
- ◆ 2 Val de Creuse Sud 45 km
- ◆ 3 La Gauloise Verte 52 km
- ◆ 4 La Limousine 65 km
- ◆ 5 La Berrichonne 55 km
- ◆ 6 Le Tour du Lac 29 km (GR)

*Au pays de l'arbre et de l'eau*

Infos : [transegaule@wanadoo.fr](mailto:transegaule@wanadoo.fr)





# ROBIN HOOD 100

By Ben Davies

Like most members of the ultra-running community, I spent most of 2020 watching my dreams turn to ashes, as one race after another was cancelled due to the pandemic. I had started the year well enough with a finish in the Snowdonia Slate Trail Ultra, but my hopes of completing a major overseas 100-mile event were quickly dashed. As summer turned to autumn, I became desperate to find a 100-mile race that would go ahead this year. Eventually I settled on the Robin Hood 100, organized by Ronnie Stanton of Hobo Pace. It was located close to my home geographically, which avoided the need to use a hotel, and it looked as likely to go

ahead as anything. I had finished the Robin Hood 100 before in 2016, so I had a good idea about what to expect.

The race starts at South Wheatley Village Hall, and most of the first twenty miles are along the Chesterfield Canal. The runners then complete two thirty mile loops of the Dukeries, which are mostly undulating forest trails, taking in Sherwood Forest, Creswell Crags, and Clumber Park. For the last twenty miles of the route, runners head back to South Wheatley, along the Chesterfield Canal. It is a fairly flat event, and a suitable choice for a first 100 mile race.

I f

you want to get a flavour for this race before you commit to it, then the 30/40 mile Dukeries Ultra will give you a good idea what the two forest laps are like.

A 100-mile race during a global pandemic posed a unique challenge for me as an ultra-runner and also, of course, for the race director and marshals. The race organizers put exten-

sive measures in place to socially distance runners and avoid cross contamination. Instead of the usual massed start, there was a staggered start between 6.30 and 8.00 am, with runners starting in groups of four or less. The race briefing was delivered online, a day before the event. Never one to miss a trick, Ronnie even delivered the online race briefing

dressed as Robin Hood. Runners were required to sanitize their hands upon entering and leaving checkpoints, and the food was doled out in brown paper bags, to avoid more than







one runner touching it. The checkpoint staff stood back and took a more distant approach from the runners than would have been usual, but they still managed to give a lot of encouragement. For my part, I knew

that it would be necessary to cross a number of stiles and kissing gates during the event, and that these were potential cross contamination points between runners. I considered using disposable gloves, but given the length of the race, I settled on carrying a small bottle of hand sanitizer and

sanitizing my hands after each stile or gate. The weather conditions were ideal for a 100 mile race, being warmer than normal for September and dry underfoot. This at least significantly short-



ens the odds of a finish in a hundred mile event. I went into this race very uncertain about how I would perform. I had lost most of 2019 to injury, I had managed to complete an ultra and a trail marathon in early 2020, before the pandemic hit, and I had been able to maintain reasonable mileage in training during lockdown because I live near to some remote trails. However, I went into the race knowing that I had not completed a race since February, and that I had not regained my pre-injury level of fitness then. I turned up at South Wheatley Village Hall and joined the socially distanced queue of facemask clad runners. After collecting my race number and tracker, and checking that all my gear was in order, I walked to the start line. I found myself standing with three other runners. A marshal with a clipboard told us that if we wanted to start the race now, she would record our start time as 7.31. We all agreed and were soon underway. After a few miles of fields, we joined the canal, and I decided to get some miles banked while I still had the flat terrain. I caught up with Victoria Yeomans, whom I know from events of this type, and ran part of the 2016 event with, and her friend Nicole Atkinson, with whom I would end up running the return canal section.

I soon reached the Dukeries and had completed my first lap of the forest trail by the time it was getting dark. On arriving at the 52 mile checkpoint, I was dissatisfied with my performance. It had taken me nearly two hours longer to reach this point than it had when I'd completed the event back in 2016. Even so, I knew that the timing was good enough for a finish within the 30 hour time limit. I just wouldn't have much of a cushion to fall back on, if the wheels came off the wagon later in the race, and I couldn't afford to spend too long at the checkpoints. I told myself that this was just what the slower finisher has to contend with in every 100 mile race. When I thought about it that way, I almost scolded myself for thinking like a spoilt child.





For most of the course, the aid stations are every four to six miles, meaning that you don't have to go very far before you encounter a checkpoint. This helps to break up the course psychologically and gives you ample opportunity to replenish food and water. However, at the Hazel Gap aid station you must complete a ten mile loop, arriving back at the same place as your next checkpoint. This is not so bad the first time you do it during daylight, but it is dark by the time most runners start their second loop out of Hazel gap, making that section a real psychological drag. I ended up completing most of the second loop out of Hazel Gap on my own, and I was heartily glad when I caught up with some other runners, just because it gave me a bit more human contact.

When you leave Hazel Gap for the final time, you are at mile 70.5, and the aid stations are pretty regular up to the finish. A lot of negativity was running through my mind, and I was becoming confused about the calculations regarding my finish time. This is something that happens with me very often in tough races. In my sleep-deprivation-addled brain, I become obsessed with the idea that I am going to DNF. In hindsight, I was putting on a strong performance in the second half of the race and clawing back time. Despite my lackluster first half, I was coming on strong, and had no problems with fatigue, hallucinations, sickness, or any of the myriad problems that often beset you in the second half of a 100 mile event. I came home in 28 hours and 15 minutes, to claim my eleventh hundred mile finish. I thanked the marshals for putting on an event, in



what were obviously very challenging circumstances.

When I crossed the finish line, I was pleasantly surprised that I had taken only seven minutes longer to complete the race, than I had in 2016. This despite having taken somewhat longer to reach the halfway point. My attempts to regain ground in the second half had been more successful than I had imagined possible. My mum and dad were waiting at the finish line to cheer me in, and I was presented with my T-shirt and finisher's medal. Race director Ronnie Stanton personally engraves the name of every finisher on their medal himself, which I always thought was a nice touch. Owing to the needs of social distancing, he performed this service before runners crossed the finish line this year!

I have seen the future of our sport, staggered starts and the taste of hand sanitizer in your mouth at every aid station. However, the type of social distancing measures employed at the Robin Hood 100 will allow some continuation of ultra-running through the current crisis. The final DNF rate was 41%, which is a bit on the high side for an event of this nature, but it was obviously undertaken under difficult circumstances. Owing to the serial race cancellations and disappointments of 2020, I was grateful to have managed a 100 mile finish this year. With the number of cases of COVID on the rise again, this might well be my last race of the year. One finisher would later comment that this was his only race of the year. I told him that if you could only have one race finish in a year, then this was a pretty good one!



**ROBIN HOOD**  
**100 MILES**





# Race in the time of Covid-19

By Antonio Codina



With so many cancelled races this year, it was a privilege to participate in the hardmoors 55 last October. We were so lucky to be able to run it, only a week after the race a second lockdown in England was announced for November. This is a race that I have close to my heart as it was my second ever ultra and it felt extra special to come back to racing it in 2020.

For those not familiar, the Hardmoors is a series of trail races based in the North York Moors National park in the north East of England. The park includes the Cleveland hills in the North West edge, large areas of heather moorland and ancient forest and the beautiful coastline on the East making each race a different experience. The Cleveland Way national trail takes both the hills and coast to make a beautiful route. I find that the trails here are a bit less steep and technical than those in the Lake district for example and that makes them more runnable and generally fast. The HM55 route covers the 55 miles of the inland section of the Cleveland way between Guisborough and Helmsley and is run in a different sense each year at the discretion of the race directors. This year we ran from Guisborough to Helmsley (East to West). Hardmoors races are low-key and limited to a few hundred people. There is a marathon and an ultra series, and it is possible to do slams i.e. run 3 or 4 ultras in a year. They also have a 1000 mile club and a category that I have never seen anywhere else

for runners that weigh over 14 stone! Most marshalls are runners too and the full thing feels like a very large family.

Back to the race itself, there were many measures in place to ensure social distancing. They affected mainly the start, checkpoints and the finish. I must say the event ran with fantastic precision and once out on the trail I found it did not spoil the race at all. Jon and Shirley Steele (HM race directors) and all the volunteer marshalls have already organised several of their events this summer and the organisation was fantastic.

I took the bus provided to reach the start line. Face masks were compulsory and the busses run at 50% capacity. When we arrived we had to wait for our allocated time and most runners waited in the Costa cafe. The wind was blustery and cold at 7:30am, a good sign of what the weather had ready for us. You could only go to the start 20 minutes before your allocated time, and then you were provided with your tracker, race number and started in a group of maximum 6 people that left every 2 minutes. I would say after 1 hour the groups were shuffled as runners picked their pace. It was quite hard to know how you were doing in the field but it was a boost to pass a runner as you knew they had set off before you. I actually quite enjoyed the staggered start.



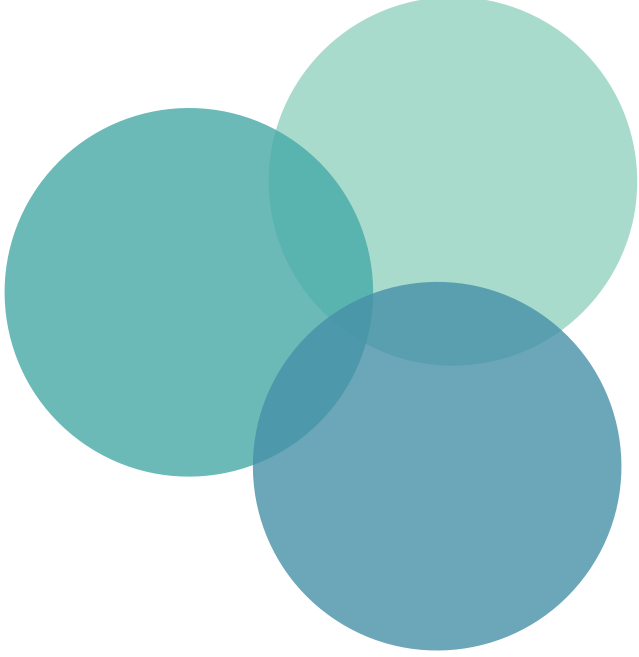


## *Hardmoors 55 race report, October 24th 2020.*

The race starts with a climb to the escarpment, followed by more climbing to reach the Roseberry Topping. A very steep but short hill that we climbed and descended back the same way. The route then follows a very exposed line at the edge of the escarpment with beautiful views (on a clear day) of the valley below. After the second checkpoint we passed a tribute to Ian Gorin. A well loved Hardmoors runner who lost the battle with his mental health last year shaking the Hardmoors family. His number 32 hangs now high in a tree on the Cleveland Way. I never met him in person but I watched some of his YouTube videos and I thought about him as I passed below his tree.

The weather was far from perfect with a very blustery wind and a succession of steep and short climbs and descents that make wonders to your legs. The wind crossed paths with the trail continuously and you were either thrown about or stopped in your tracks. By the afternoon the wind calmed down but then the rain started and it continued for the rest of the day covering the trails in mud with the consistency of soup. The runners were not the only ones having a tough time, the amazing marshals (or Hardshals as they are called in these races) were also getting very wet as all the checkpoints were outdoors.

My race was going very well and I ran many miles with Claire Howard who finished as first lady. Unfortunately I did not pace well and with 15 miles to go my legs seized up and I had to slow down a bit. Only towards the last 3 miles I managed to recover my pace to finish



in 35th position with a time of 11h 1m. I think I was carried away by the joy of racing again and I hit the hills a bit faster than I should. It has been a difficult summer plagued by injuries and races cancelled, I was not in my best form either, so I was very happy with my performance. Despite the bad weather conditions I knocked down more than an hour from my time 3 years ago. It shows how important experience is when running ultras. The first male was Ben Hamilton with a fantastic time of 8h17m and the first lady was Claire Howard at 10h12m.

The finish was again very low key. You arrived and were handed a bag with your medal, a T-shirt and a chocolate bar, and there was not the usual food or prize ceremony. Still the race was a great experience and a great show of fantastic organisation from the race directors and all the volunteers. Racing means a lot to many people and I am very grateful that I could spend the day running on a beautiful course in the company of many like-minded folks.



# RUN THE BORDER

By Oliver Smith



RunThe-  
Border2020, with non-essen-  
tial travel outside of Cardiff banned, the ulti-  
mate challenge to become the first person to run the entire  
unmarked city border was created..

Lockdown completely threw normality out of the window, but there were still options, rather than dwelling on what you couldn't do, I decided to focus on what I could. RunTheBorder2020 would push me to my limits, enable me to raise money for the Bigmoose Charity, and inspire others to get outside too.

I should have researched the route a little more comprehensively before I committed. If I had, I'd have realised there isn't a footpath network around the Cardiff boundary, and those who had previously attempted a run around the City had been forced to stick to the roads. I soon realised there would be river crossings, major road crossings and a lot of fence hopping if I was going to complete the challenge. Fast forward 4 weeks and the alarm was set for 4am, giving me time to fuel up and jog the two miles to the start line ready for the 5am start. With Storm Aiden starting to hit, I was already soaked by the time I pressed go on the watch. On the first ridgeline the rain was coming horizontally, taking the visibility from the head torch down to a couple of meters.

About 6 miles in I reached the first unfamiliar section. Digging out the OS map I kept to the right path as I passed under the M4 and crossed a stile onto farmland. Scouring the bushes for a footpath, I found a signpost buried in the undergrowth. Forcing my way through the brambles it quickly dawned on me that my run around the city was going to give me a lot more than I had bargained for.

After nearly falling into a drainage ditch, I realised I was going to have to go even further off the beaten track. The next 15 minutes were spent in a knee-deep bog, still in the pitch black treeline. Following the noise of distant traffic, I was ecstatic to emerge from the grips of the bog onto a relatively dry trail, and quickly (and quietly) ran through a couple of farms before finding a bridge over a dual carriageway. I was back on track and still in the race.

The original plan was to forge a cross-country path to the coast, but a run in with some young bulls saw me sprint for cover in a nearby industrial estate. That, coupled with the extent of the flooding on my planned route, determined that I stuck to the road. Whilst only 9 miles in I was feeling ok, able to stay with the target of 5-6 mph and keep to the borderline.

10 miles in I crossed onto the Wales Coast Path, an elevated route running alongside the sea. The winds strengthened, but the rain stopped and I was treated to some beautiful dawn skies which gave me a mental boost. Despite the headwind and another bovine run-in, I kept to the schedule. But this progress was short-lived, a few miles further along the coast I hit the Cardiff foreshore. A mile or so of litter strewn estuary brought me to a head high, angrily spiked fence. With the route in danger of being cut off by the tide I had little choice but to scale the fence into a solar farm (not marked on the maps), where I had to contend with the first water feature of the challenge. What appeared to be a shallow puddle ended up being thigh deep, I'd have been quicker swimming, 14 miles in, and I felt like I'd been on an obstacle course. It was turning into a nightmare. Once through the flood I even



tu-ally found a gap in the fence, and made it to salvation in the form of a road. I was once again making progress.

After a few hundred metres the Coast Path once again took me along the estuary and onto another 'beach'. Following the back end of the steel works, it quickly turned into an apocalyptic waste ground, strewn with rubble, tyres and gnarly bits of metal. I made slow progress, but after jumping a rotting sheep, I eventually made it to the beginning of the docks where I rewarded myself with a baked bean pasty.

Here I was surprised by Dean, who had been following my tracker. We raced to the middle of the Barrage, before swiftly U-turning to avoid straying into the Vale of Glamorgan. Back in the Bay I had a much needed refuel at Sainsbury's and saw my first well-wishers at the Wetlands centre, which briefly helped divert me from my growing aches and dying motivation.

Sticking to the Cardiff Border was taking a big toll. Without a support crew nor a sign posted route, the challenge was proving a whole lot more draining than I originally envisaged. The number of overgrown and impenetrable paths was growing, and what had looked relatively gentle on OS Maps was turning into some serious scrambling over the hills. With house-builders constantly diverting footpaths, I was also jumping more fences and becoming increasingly worried that I would get accosted by an angry landowner in the East Cardiff borderlands. This mental fatigue all came to a head in the back lanes of Ely, shortly after being joined by Tuds, an old mate. I stumbled on a curb and ended up in a puddle on the outskirts of an industrial estate. I was in such a state I couldn't be bothered to put my hands out, and it was more like a free dive than a fall. I just lay there, in two inches of mucky water with grazes on my hands and knees, thinking 'this is nice, lying down'. Tuds figuratively got me back on my feet (social distancing meant he had to do it by shouting from afar, rather than physically picking me up), and I actually began to feel a little more human. A few hundred metres of walking and a pain au chocolat later, and I got a little energy back.

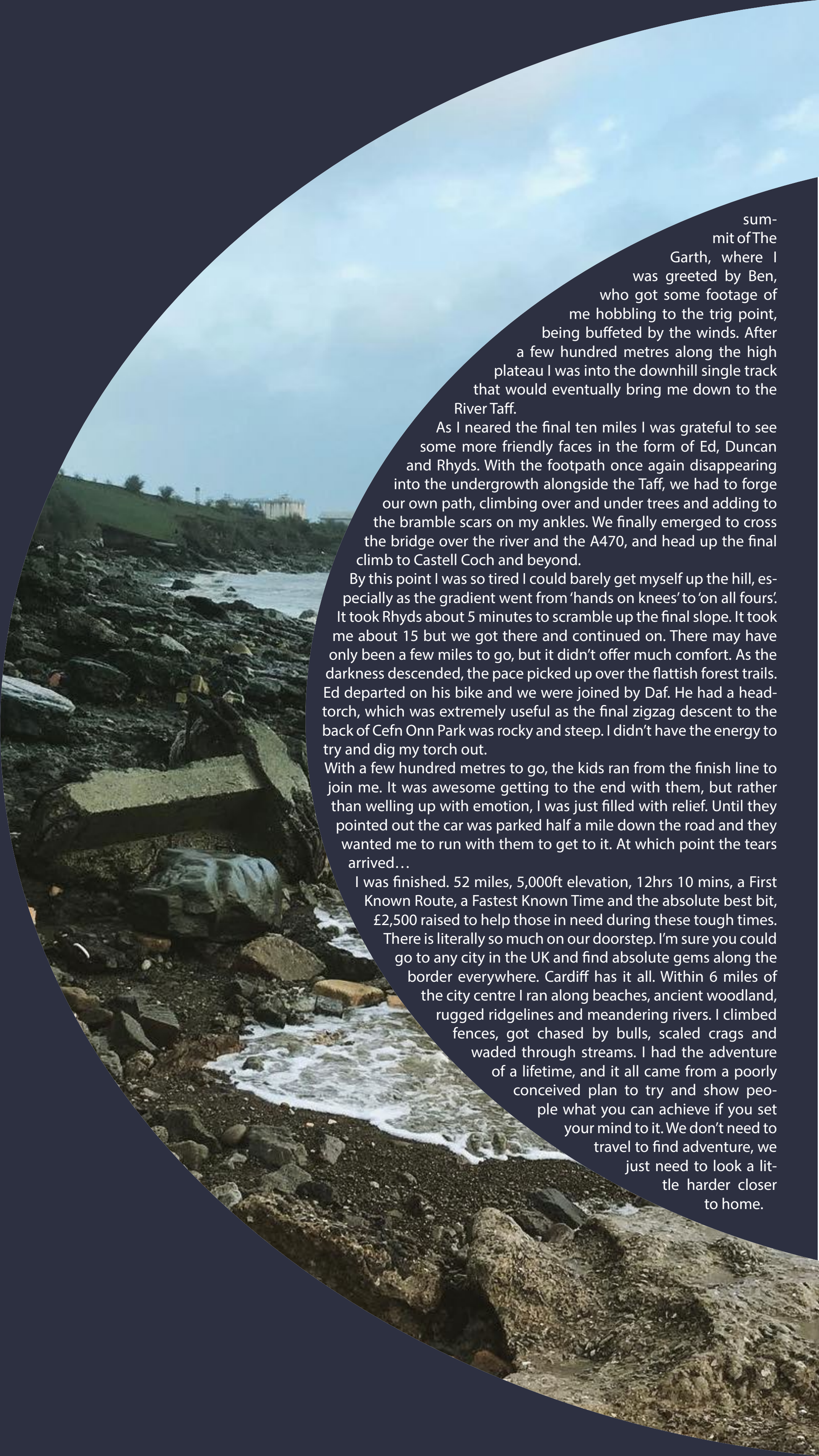
30 or so miles in and I was beginning to move, with the route winding under and over the A4232, we went past a number of unknown gems, including the imposing Caerau Fort, before a couple of miles of housing estate cut throughs got us to St Fagans. Once we'd safely navigated the boggy ancient woodlands around the Museum of Cardiff Life, my impromptu running crew left me to my own devices.

Shortly after, I stumbled past a grade 2 listed windmill and got stuck in yet another field, running all four sides of it before I could find a way out, much to the bemusement of the resident sheep. From there on in it was a long slog up Llantrisant Road, where I was greeted with a screaming car of supporters. The energy lift from that was palpable, not least because they drove next to me for a couple of hundred meters.

As the skies began to slip toward darkness the rain picked back up, but I was happy as I traversed once more from country lane into woodland, marvelling at the dramatic changes in terrain that Cardiff has to offer. I was brought swiftly back down to earth after getting lost in the spaghetti junction of trails. The OS app also gave up, so under the shelter of the forest I dug out the paper version once more to figure out where I was. Into the final 10 miles and I had the last







summit of The Garth, where I was greeted by Ben, who got some footage of me hobbling to the trig point, being buffeted by the winds. After a few hundred metres along the high plateau I was into the downhill single track that would eventually bring me down to the River Taff.

As I neared the final ten miles I was grateful to see some more friendly faces in the form of Ed, Duncan and Rhyds. With the footpath once again disappearing into the undergrowth alongside the Taff, we had to forge our own path, climbing over and under trees and adding to the bramble scars on my ankles. We finally emerged to cross the bridge over the river and the A470, and head up the final climb to Castell Coch and beyond.

By this point I was so tired I could barely get myself up the hill, especially as the gradient went from 'hands on knees' to 'on all fours'. It took Rhyds about 5 minutes to scramble up the final slope. It took me about 15 but we got there and continued on. There may have only been a few miles to go, but it didn't offer much comfort. As the darkness descended, the pace picked up over the flattish forest trails. Ed departed on his bike and we were joined by Daf. He had a head-torch, which was extremely useful as the final zigzag descent to the back of Cefn Onn Park was rocky and steep. I didn't have the energy to try and dig my torch out.

With a few hundred metres to go, the kids ran from the finish line to join me. It was awesome getting to the end with them, but rather than welling up with emotion, I was just filled with relief. Until they pointed out the car was parked half a mile down the road and they wanted me to run with them to get to it. At which point the tears arrived...

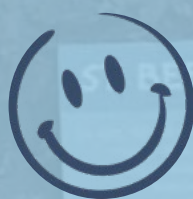
I was finished. 52 miles, 5,000ft elevation, 12hrs 10 mins, a First Known Route, a Fastest Known Time and the absolute best bit, £2,500 raised to help those in need during these tough times.

There is literally so much on our doorstep. I'm sure you could go to any city in the UK and find absolute gems along the border everywhere. Cardiff has it all. Within 6 miles of the city centre I ran along beaches, ancient woodland, rugged ridgelines and meandering rivers. I climbed fences, got chased by bulls, scaled crags and waded through streams. I had the adventure of a lifetime, and it all came from a poorly conceived plan to try and show people what you can achieve if you set your mind to it. We don't need to travel to find adventure, we just need to look a little harder closer to home.



# Wainwright's Coast to Coast Winter 2020... Fun Run!

By Sabrina Verjee



A massive thank you to everyone who got involved, it was all last minute but lots of peeps came out to help and showed support which made it fun and special. James Thurlow (tracker, lift, road support), Steph and Mike (run and road support, cake and soup!), Debs and Scot White (campervan, road and run support, cake, hot food), Caroline and Ian (campervan, road and run support, an entire menu of hot food and drinks all the way from Reeth to RBH), Ben (facing storm Bella with me from Patterdale to Kidsty Pike), Scott and Andy (more Storm Bella frenzy from Kidsty to Shap – the largest cake selection in the world) Leigh-Ann (Shap stop, hot food, warm fire) Lucie Barnes and Paul Nelson (run and road support, thanks guys you are always there for me 😊) Sam Johnson (Freshly brewed coffee, run support, road support) George Marchant (run support, various food goodies) Jennifer (run support, Panini, hummus wrap, Biscuits) Jess (run support) Claire and Ali (run support, tea holding, various yummy goodies to eat) Adrian (run support, snickers, tracker, holding half eaten bananas, LOL) Richard (bananas) Lady who met me on Glaisdale Rigg with awesome mince pies !!! Running granny, Lucy Noble (art work on the road), Matt and Dave (run support and a van full of goodies, home-made hummus and guacamole) Martin Stone, Derek, Krystal, the people who came to cheer me in at RBH and anywhere else along the route that I have forgotten to mention.



## St Bees

8am, dry, not too cold, not too windy, not what I was expecting.

James Thurlow counted me down and I headed off along an undulating coastal path, heading northwards. James met me again at Sandwith and I ditched my primaloft, I was definitely overdressed. I stuffed in some Christmas cake and water and cracked on.

The next part was a mixture of roads, boggy fields and tracks with slightly tricky navigation in parts but it didn't take long to get to Cleator. I headed up to Dent, the wind was picking up a little but thankfully it was still dry. The views through here were lovely and there were a few folk out on the Fells that I passed on my way to Ennerdale. At Ennerdale Steph had brought a wonderful spread and I stuffed in some cake and tea before heading off with Mike. A slightly technical run alongside the lake: a bit rooty and rocky in places so it wasn't the fastest flat running.

Storm Bella was picking up momentum, fortunately, we were headed Eastward and the tail wind was like a gentle hand shimmying me along my way. The run along the forest track up to Black Sail hut was easy and quick before I knew it we were at Seavy Knott. The wind picked up some more and the grassy descent down to Honister was speedy. In fact we took Steph by surprise as she had only just made it there. I had some cold soup, delicious and home-made, and some vegan sausages (I'm sure I swore I would never eat one of those again).

We were in Rosthwaite before we knew it and as it started spitting we turned southward into the wind. It felt a bit slow pushing up the Cumbrian way and I tried to hide behind Mike as much as possible. He did a great job of sheltering, navigating and providing my food and water for the leg. As we had anticipated Storm Bella was raging and we were not able to speak much between Calf Crag and Helm Crag. We got blown over a few times and sometimes my feet wouldn't go where I wanted and I'd be blown off on a tangent having to fight my way back to the path. It was a wonderful surprise to be greeted by Scott White on Helm Crag and even better to find out that he and Pharoige(collie)were accompanying me to Patterdale as originally I was going it alone on this leg.

The four of us descended into Grasmere and I was spurred on by some cool purple writing on the road saying "Go Sabs" as I turned the corner into the village, I was greeted by some cheering and cow bells, it was so nice to see Lucy Noble and the gang. In the little car park I grabbed some Amaretto cake from Steph, oh yes this was the food of kings and what keeps my legs going.

It was getting dark as we headed up to Grisedale Tarn. It was fairly calm in the valley but as we ascended we felt the wind stronger and

stronger on our backs, we were not able to make much conversation. The paths were turning from bog to ice and there was a persistent rain spatter. I was glad for the studs I'd put in my La Sportiva Mutants as they gave me some nice extra grip without the faff of putting spikes on. Grisedale Tarn was raging with sea horses, I'd never seen it like that. We were blown over a lot, so much so that one had to adopt the brace position for the gusts and crouch as low as possible. Poor Pharoige would slip on some ice and then get blown for metres down the valley but he never failed to get himself up and trot off again with his tail wagging.

Once off the high ground the track was easy, solid and quick so we arrived in Patterdale in good time. It was now raining quite hard and I was glad to see Debs and Ben, I put on an extra primaloft knowing that the next bit, the highest section was going to be very challenging, windy, wet and cold. I prepared Ben for the worst. We took gels knowing that we would not be able to faff with food up there and agreed that we probably wouldn't be able to talk either. I put a balaclava on to protect my face from the potential sleet/hail/snow.

Ben and I knew the route well so at least the navigation was not challenging although Bella tried her best to push us off the path at every opportunity. It was true we could barely stand up. As we got up around Angle Tarn the storm was raging and fierce and really unpleasant. I was getting really annoyed with not being able to see because the wind kept blowing my hood over my head torch so I had no light and the balaclava kept slipping over my right eye. There was no possibility of adjusting it there so I just had to put up with it but it made me fall over even more as I couldn't see where or what I was putting my feet on. We were both elated and relieved when we made it to Kidsty and met Scott and Andy.

The rain was now heavy and there were torrents of water coming down the paths, I was so grateful for my knee high waterproof socks. The descent was tricky, ice, slippery grass, bog, fast-flowing streams and being shoved by Bella, it was hard to stay

up - right and at times we had to link arms to stop being blown away and pushed over. The fields across from Burnbanks were so waterlogged, it was like wading through soup and you couldn't see the path. The roads weren't much better as they were like swimming pools. Should have brought a kayak. Scott had an endless supply of cakes, rocky road, tiffin, battenburg and orange and almond cake. I didn't feel much like eating but I managed some of these yummy delights.



Cake Photo by Scott Newburn



Finally, we arrived in Shap like three drowned rats. I changed my clothes here and it was amazing to get into the dry and warmth. I had some cheese and pasta and tried to stuff in as much as possible, I allowed myself the respite, I deserved it. I had known setting off that if anything was going to stop me it was the section over Kidsty Pike and I had made it, nothing would stop me now.

I was in good hands again, Paul Nelson who was local to the Orton Fells navigated the next section seamlessly, charging on ahead, he kept me going at a decent pace. Through horrendous bog and ice and streams we just kept ticking along and the rain kept pattering down. I did wonder how much more water could be left in the sky?

On the way into Kirkby Stephen I was cheered on by more running friends even though it was late in the night. Martin Stone popped along for a bit too. Finally, I got the

long awaited Guinness Cake that Laura had made and took a little respite in Debs' campervan.

The track up to Nine Standards was pretty good and quick but I was lacking a bit of energy. Getting food in now was becoming a little hard despite all the yummy things I'd been offered so I just kept banging in the Mountain Fuel jellies. The Cola ones also had caffeine in them and so prevented any sleepiness. I wanted to be able to push on a little faster and keep up with Paul but I was now feeling it. It seemed to take far too long to reach Nine Standards Rigg but I was so glad when we got there. The very boggy and icy descent was not very quick and also went on forever. I managed to eat a bit of a sandwich and a bite of cake but I just wasn't getting enough food in. At least the dawn was coming and the rain was easing off. I fell in a deep bog, one that fills your clothes with muddy water, Paul pulled me out quickly and



Here we are about a mile from Keld ... or maybe 10!  
photo by Paul Nelson



On my todd in the sunshine



we changed my gloves. "Just over a mile to go to Keld Sabs", phew that's not so bad. Then 30 minutes later, "About a mile to Keld Sabs"... errr..... I'm sure we've done at least 2 miles since you last said that. In another 30 minutes he said, "About a mile to Keld now Sabs". – "Paul you can take your mile and shove it!" I think I'm angry.

Here we are about a mile from Keld or maybe 10! Sunny, cold, Keld, icy roads and deep river crossings and then finally, Debs' campervan but no George. I decided to take some time out here, I was not in a good place, I knew I hadn't eaten enough and my energy was low, I knew I had to sort this out here before going on. Debs had made me so many wonderful things to eat and I tried to get some of it down, a porridge with mountain fuel recovery drink in it seemed the easiest thing to eat and I did manage a bit of pasta. The bad news was George, who was supporting me on the next leg, was not here so I would have to go it alone to Reeth. I couldn't complain I had experienced such amazing support and people had pulled together in the last minute to come and help, I just hoped he was ok. I set off with plenty of clothes, I risked not taking a race vest and instead stuffed a bit of cake, my soft water flask and a gel into my pockets and just hoped that I'd run into some support soon to refuel. As the food kicked in my mood improved and my legs found a way to trot along the icy paths. This section was stunning, snowy covered hills and glinting sunlight, I was happy on my own.



Photo by Samuel Johnson



Old lead mining works at Gunnerside Beck



Photo by Samuel Johnson



Proper winter conditions. Photo by Samuel Johnson



It was a nice, easy run to Reeth in the sunshine with good company and chat. Photo by George Marchant



Not far from Surrender's Bridge Sam came to find me, he had brought fresh filter coffee, I was being really spoiled. I managed to eat a banana and some OTE cookie flapjack thing. It was here I felt a sharp pain in my left knee ... oh no! I could only walk for about 30 minutes but then the pain seemed to subside and I managed to get trotting again, it didn't bother me too much after that.

Not much further and we ran into George. He had set off from Richmond and just not made it to Keld because I was ahead of my schedule.

At Reeth there were quite a few people to greet me. Jennifer, Caroline, Ian, and Sam and I were inundated with food and also got a Panini from the Dales Bike Centre. The next section was fun, fairly easy road sections interjected with annoying boggy fields but it went quickly as we were all chatting and I was managing to get food in. We were joined by Matt and Dave for sections, fellow ultra runners who knew what I needed, tea, home-made guacamole and hummus with falafel and lentil chips.



We arrived in Richmond just before 4pm. I remembered because all I wanted to do was sleep but I didn't want to let myself sleep during daylight so I pushed on past Richmond to Colburn where I could finally lay my weary body to rest. Sadly, I lay down and couldn't sleep. My breathing rate was too fast at 90 breaths a minute and I was wheezing and coughing. I don't know how I hadn't noticed that my asthma was so bad. I tried to use my inhaler but I just kept coughing the salbutamol out before I could inhale it. At least as I lay there my breath started to settle. I might have managed a few minutes asleep before Caroline came to get me up.

So off into my second night with Jess and Ian. Jess knew this section which was great because in the dark the navigation was impossible and the GPX trace was dodgy here. Unfortunately, although this section was flat it was hard to gather speed because the ground conditions were terrible, muddy, boggy, fields and waterlogged ways. There was a lot of road to Danby Wiske, which was tedious but a hell of a lot better

than bog. The full moon was a welcome distraction and so bright and clear that we could turn the head torches off. Caroline did an amazing job at meeting me frequently, as I could then eat some proper hot food, and she always found something new and exciting to cook. Ian made what could have been a terribly long night a fun adventure, chatting and distracting me and making sure I ate and drank. I felt stronger and stronger as I got the calories in. I was so glad when I got to Ingleby Arncliffe and this was definitely a turning point, I felt better and the route was getting more interesting again.

It was such a beautiful night in the moonlight, it was dry, it was not too windy, it was so enjoyable to trot along the paths and climb up the hills. The only problem now was that after 40 hours on my feet and only one hours kip I was getting quite sleepy. I kept taking Cola gels but the effects would not last too long so I had three more 10 minute naps during the rest of the night to get me through to morning. These were short and efficient and also gave my body time to digest some food, I had chorizo pasta, noodles, a fried egg bap, couscous, cheesy pasta, all good sustenance that I ate when we met Caroline in the van and then while out on the hill it was mainly gels and occasionally some Christmas cake and fruit and nuts.

At Claybank I think Ian had enough of me so Caroline took one for the team. It was nice to have a good natter up Clay Bank. The footpath here would normally provide an easy surface for a trot but it was covered in ice and snow, water and bog and it was hard to see what was what so you had to really watch your footing.

As we approached the Lion Inn another day was dawning, another good day promising sunshine and a beautiful end to a wonderful journey. Adrian took over here and I scoffed his snickers, then a tracker and I was about to polish off another tracker bar when a wonderful lady turned up with two mince pies, so I ate these. I got an energy burst, a spur on from the sun and pushed it on into Glaisdale almost on schedule. I tried not to waste

too much time here and just stuffed some more food in and continued. Adrian knew the way which made things a lot easier, but unfortunately the roads were icy and we had to watch our step. There was a fair bit of bog slog from Littlebeck but I could smell the sea. At May Beck I was joined by Claire and Ali, it was great to have a good female contingent for the final run in. Adrian left us at Hawsker, he'd done a great job of navigation and feeding so I was feeling good. Not far to go! I'll admit the Wainwrights route here is massively frustrating, it's a long detour to run along the coast which I wouldn't have minded except that the coastal path is just a boggy mess, slippery and slidey and so slow when all you want to do is get to the bay.

We were joined on the coast by a lady and her son. It was [1] so nice to see a few folk along the way who wanted to run with me and cheer me in, I am so grateful. A final push to RHB down a steep descent and I had to dip my toe in the ocean, or rather wash off all the mud in the sea before Ben would let me in the car.

Soggy, boggy fields! Photo by George Marchant



Last few kilometres running to the sea



So much water. Photo by George Marchant




Photo by George Marchant



Icy slabs on the Cleveland Way







An amazing journey and fun adventure, I would recommend the Coast to Coast route to anyone, whether you walk it over 14 days or run the Northern Traverse Ultra in a few days it's a beautiful route. Thanks to everyone for helping me [2], I couldn't have done it without you.



**move light,**  
*live slow*



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# The Dolihos. A 255 Km ultra from Delphi to Olympia with a 48 hour cut-off. September 18th -20th 2020

## Martin ILOTT, United Kingdom

The Dolihos is an iconic Greek ultra-race that starts and finishes at two World Heritage archaeological sites; Delphi, the religious centre of Classical Greek society in the foothills of Mount Parnassus; and Olympia, a sanctuary to Zeus and later the focus of Pan-Hellenic sport, at the confluence of the Alpheios and Kladeos rivers.

The full race is a 255 Km continuous race with a 48 hr cut-off, following beautiful coastline and mountain trails between the two ancient cities, crossing the Rio-Antirrio Bridge, 2.7 Km in length linking mainland Greece with the Peloponnese. For those looking to avoid a two-night ultra, there are two shorter options: the "PameRio" from Delphi to Rio, (111 Km) a mesmerising night journey along the rolling coastline of mainland Greece or the "RiOlympia", 144 Km through challenging mountain terrain and forests of the Peloponnese between Rio and Olympia.

**Route Map: Dolihos 255 Km (Blue+Red), PameRio 111 Km (Blue), RiOlympia 144 Km (Red).**

With a total ascent of 5500 M and 60% of the course on trails, most runners take well over 40 hours to complete the course battling the three cut-offs (Rio, 111 Km 17hr, Kalentzi, 187 Km 32 hr, Olympia 255 Km 48 hr). The race typically attracts a relatively small field of 30-50 runners for the main race with a finishing rate less than 50%. There are few races to match the physical and mental challenge, camaraderie, scenery and hospitality of the Dolihos race team and supporters. The 2020 race was special for many reasons. The fact that it took place at all was a miracle given the lockdown and travel restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the race had moved from its usual date in April to September. My journey from the small remote town of Armidale in the Northern Tablelands of Australia to Delphi was a tortuous one involving many flight cancellations, frustrated calls to airlines and anxious moments trying to anticipate test and quarantine requirements. I approached this year's race with some trepidation without the usual network of support and faithful running companion for over 30 years, Laurence (who came within touching distance of a finish in 2017).

**Maria & some roaming Spartans greet Athletes at the Panathenaic Stadium for transfer to Delphi.**

Transport was generously provided from Athens to Delphi and runners assembled outside the Panathenaic Stadium to catch the minibus for the three hour journey to Delphi. We were greeted by Maria, a long-standing supporter of the Dolihos with her multi-lingual talents and patience in managing ultra-runners. There were some familiar faces from previous years, a group of Danish runners, Kent, Soren and Johannes all aiming for their first finish. Jiri from the Czech Republic was new to the Dolihos but had a wealth of experience running trail races. We stayed in a charming hotel, the Pythia Art, with fine views of the surrounding countryside.

**View of the race route towards the Gulf of Corinth & race briefing route markers.**

Dimitra and Yiannis, Race and Technical Directors respectively, held the race briefing and warned of heavy storms for the Friday evening and Saturday of the race, advising to pack suitable clothing. There are 28 Checkpoints, 5 Km to 13 Km apart all with the possibility of drop bags. The 2020 race included runners with some impressive ultra performances; Lukasz SAGAN (7th in the 2017 Spartathlon in 24:51) aiming for a sub-30 hr finish and Eusebio BOCHONS, a multiple winner with a best time of 36:33 in the 2017 Dolihos.

It was an honour to discover I had been allocated race number "1" and placed on the race poster for the 2020 event. Having completed three previous Dolihos, the race has become very special with so many memories accumulating over the years. Now deep in the winter of my ultra-running career, reaching the finish line within the cut-off of such events is an emotional celebration of the battle against Father Time.

**Delphi start line, with me proudly wearing race number 1 and (from left to right) Jiri (Czech), Johannes, Kent & Soren (the Danish trio).**





The race started at 17:00 on Friday 18th September, the first autumn running and ninth edition, outside the Archaeological site with clouds looming towards the west. We descended the steep trails towards the coast, passing through olive groves with grazing sheep before joining the coastal road for approximately 100 km to Rio.

**The coastal road to Rio and fellow runners, Dimitrios Ziambaras & Maria Stamouli, appear in good spirits in the early stages.**

Dusk comes early in late September and we were soon running with only head torches and the glow of civilisation lighting our paths. Heavy rain pelted the runners and I was fortunate in packing foil blankets and bin liners to keep warm and dry.

The first major checkpoint was Eratini at 48.8 Km and the first bag drop collected near midnight. The post-marathon distance marked the start of the ultra and I now focused on reaching the Rio-Antirrio Bridge by dawn. With rolling roads, pretty coastal villages and welcoming checkpoints dotted along the way, time and distance passed quickly despite the wind and rain. Over the years, I have learnt there is nothing to beat a high quality, full waterproof bin liner in such circumstances.

**Pretty villages line the coastal route from Delphi to Rio. Arriving at the coastal village of Monastiraki (CP9, 85.6 Km)**

As dawn rose, I approached Monastiraki (85.6 Km) and the sight of the magnificent cable bridge spanning the Gulf of Corinth. The bridge was opened in 2004 just before the Athens Olympics, and fittingly, torchbearers were the first to cross, including the Greek football coach who won the Euro 2004 championship for the nation (a German incidentally).

The rain had passed, but sadly, strong winds channelled by the mountains resulted in its closure to pedestrians. We were shuttled across the bridge to the Rio checkpoint by bus appreciative of the warmth and rest before embarking on the next stage, the climb into the mountains of the Peloponnese.

**Morning Day 2** arrives with views of the Rio-Antirrio Bridge

From Rio to the checkpoint at Pournarokastro (132 Km), a distance of 21 Km there is a climb to the summit of the Panahaiko Mountain, which at over 1000m brought most runners to a crawl through a combination of gradient and gales. From Pournarokastro, the route passed through beautiful meadows before descending steeply to a small river crossing at Kefalovryso village (CP14 139 Km). The road then led to one of the toughest sections of the race, a 1.5 Km dry(ish) riverbed of rocks, boulders and pools that have to be negotiated with care.

**A rainbow from the Panahaiko Mountain and view towards the Gulf of Corinth & Rio Bridge**

At the next checkpoint in the village Mirali (CP 16, 155 Km), I was offered delicious homemade custard cream desserts with cinnamon & hot coffee, a much needed energy boost before dusk descended on Day 2. I was on the border of the cut-offs at this stage and was encouraged to "run hard" to make up some time before the "next major ascent". Leaving Mirali there was a long gentle descent with the only obstacle being a herd of goats, one with an appetite for trekking poles.

**Goats on the road to Valamantura (CP 17, 162 Km) one with a penchant for trekking poles.**

Darkness fell during the climb to the next major aid station at a cafe at Kalousi (CP 18, 169 Km). Here I collected supplies and warm clothing for the second night. Yiannis and his son, Andreas, were there greeting runners like old friends. We were informed that the cut-offs had been extended due to the adverse weather conditions. It was good news, as I was now at the back of the field struggling to keep in touch. I hurriedly consumed a plate of chips and coffee, and encouraged by the race team, headed into the night hoping to make up time and come in under the 30 hr cut-off at the second central station in Kalentzi (CP20, 170 Km)

In past years, the nights in April could drop to near zero, but autumn nights seem warmer and with cloudy weather and the absence of rain, conditions were good for running. However, a second night with sleep deprivation took its toll with "power-naps" required on the trail floor to shake off a staggering, semi-comatose running style, broken by loud cries of "pull yourself together MARTIN!" (And worse).

**Kalousi village, Christos Pagonis, still cheerful after nearly 30 hr on the trail and welcome sustenance in the café to fuel night two.**

It was at Kalentzi that I met Soren, who had been separated from his Danish friends having sustained a leg injury, but was determined to carry on. The checkpoint was a small warm hut offering massages, hot food and sleep and it took some effort to head out knowing there were still many hours of darkness and nearly 80 Km to cover. I ran-walked with Soren for several hours and we kept each other awake and motivated. However, time was slipping away and as our running became more erratic, we drifted apart. His cries of "Martin! Martin! Wait! Where are you?" still elicit feelings of guilt, failing the test of ultra-race comradeship. I later discovered that Soren subsequently went off trail into a remote mountain village adding many additional kilometres to his run. A last emotional call to Soren on his dying phone gave him the motivation to carry on, retrace his steps and reach Olympia.

The sun came up on Day 3 and it was an opportunity to marvel at the stunning section of the race that passes through the magnificent Foloji Oak Forest, a unique ecosystem and protected area dominated by Hungarian oaks and ferns. In classical times, the forest was said to be inhabited by centaurs and dryads (tree nymphs) and was named after the chief centaur, Pholos, acci



dentally shot by Hercules during a battle with less friendly centaurs. I was convinced I could see both creatures during my journey, but sadly, they do not appear to be captured by the iPhone. All who visit the Peloponnese should visit the forest.

### **Morning in the Foloji Oak Forest, an EU protected ecosystem owing to its unique flora**

The section from the Foloji forest to the next major station in the village of Pefki is mostly downhill apart from a very steep ascent after crossing the Peniakos Ladonas River. At Pefki (CP25, 226 Km), I collected a bag of fresh clothing, bathed my feet under a cool tap, consumed a Starbucks canned latte and Greek yoghurt and focused on running the last 30 Km. It was a warm, pleasant Greek morning and it felt good to have built up a small cushion of time. Andreas was there to provide further encouragement. I was still at the back of the field but felt confident of reaching Olympia within the 48 hr cut-off.



The route followed a tarmac road, and then descended a track to the old abandoned village of Persena (Checkpoint 26, 232 Km). I sat for a few minutes with Yiannis and the checkpoint volunteer enjoying some fresh fruit and a view of olive groves.

### **Lush autumn foliage and streams that characterise so much of the race route**

There then followed another upward track with fine views of the valley below. I caught up with Kent and Johannes, who were making good progress and asked after Soren. It was a great performance from Johannes, his first race further than 100 Km and he was going to finish if he could manage his intestinal issue.

Olive groves, mountains and blue skies so typical of the beautiful Peloponnese

A steep descent into the village of Neraida and the final climb to the penultimate checkpoint 27 (242 Km) in the village of Kryoneri marked the realisation that another finish was in reach. The friendly couple operating the station had laid on a generous supply of sandwiches, fruit and a range of drinks. They come every year from Athens to support the race and their dedication epitomised the spirit of the race that makes the Dolihos so special.

### **A short rest after the steep climb to the penultimate checkpoint at Kryoneri (CP27, 242 Km), only 13 Km from Olympia and downhill all the way. Spyros Archimandritis and his wife, Maria, welcome runners with smiles, good food and much needed shade.**

From Kryoneri there is a long downhill section of road and trail to the last checkpoint at Kladeos (CP28, 249 Km). With water and electrolyte gel flasks depleted it was an opportunity for rehydration to bridge the last 5 Km to Olympia.

The route meandered through Olympia, leading to the entrance of the archaeological site and views of the magnificent 8th Century remains. I was met with a warm welcome from Dimitra who placed an olive wreath on my sweaty head. After nearly 48 hr, 255 Km and 6500 M of ascent, fatigue became overwhelming and I shuffled to a bench in the shade of a small tree, happy and contented to have completed Dolihos number four as race number 1.

Runners were taken to the Kronio race hotel in town by taxi and after the race presentation in the town square to the superb Ambrosia restaurant where memories of the race were exchanged and plans for the future discussed. One race fixed in the 2021 calendar is the Dolihos. It is planned for the 17-19 September, will mark the 10th running, and will be an unforgettable experience whatever the outcome.

### **Finish of the Dolihos in Olympia**

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Dolihos race information: <http://www.doliho.gr/en/home>

### **Footnote: Selected race times for the 2020 Dolihos:**

Lukasz SAGAN	1st	36:48:42
Eusebio BOCHONS	6th	43:11:15
Jiri HALEK	7th	44:40:55
Martin ILOTT	10th	47:00:06
Kent MOELLER	11th	47:51:36
Johannes PETERSEN	12th	47:51:38
Christos Pagonis	13th	48:03:44
Soren SKYTTE	15th	48:48:21
Dimitrios Ziambaras	DNF	119.2 Km,
Maria Stamouli	DNF	170 Km.







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# RUNNING THROUGH THE NIGHT

Ultramarathon  
Adventures in Europe

Reviewed by Antonio Codina

DAVID BYRNE



T h i s  
book is a running autobiography by UK based athlete David Byrne, describing his ultra running races from his first race in 2009 to completing TDS in 2018. David's story will resonate with many ultra runners. He is an amateur runner with a normal job and a very understanding partner that has managed to tick off an impressive list of ultra races thanks to his hard work and dedication. Proof of this dedication is that while David lives in the 'flat part of England' as he describes it, he trains for mountain ultra races in Europe using a treadmill with incline.

It took me a while to get into the first chapters, but this is probably because David explains how he got into the sport and the basis of the ITRA points system. As I had a very similar experience as David when I was starting to run ultra races I did not find this part so engaging. I don't want to sound too negative, all this information is excellent and will be useful to people thinking about getting into the sport. For those readers there are a lot of tips for training and a very good list of kit that he has tuned over the years.

Most of the races described in the book are located in Europe. CCC, UTMR, Ecotrail and Transilvania races, Zugspitz Ultra and TDS among others. This book may be interesting for people who are contemplating completing one of them. David describes with scientific detail his training going into those races, the travelling arrangements and accommodation and the sightseeing before and after the race. He then gives a race report for each of them with a lot of information about the food and support that can be found at the stations.

I found the description of the travelling to the races or sightseeing too detailed and sometimes not so interesting, but that is just my taste. What I did enjoy was his account of races that I have completed myself (Lakeland 100, TDS) and the chapters about races that I would like to do in the future or races that I had never heard of and now I would love to do. The account of the Transilvania and Zugspitz races is fantastic and I have added them to my ever increasing list of races to do.

In summary, this is a good read if you want to get into the sport or if you are interested in doing ultra marathons in Europe once travelling and racing comes back to normal.



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# Geoff Oliver

## Hall of Fame

Here is a modest man who has reached the grand age of 88 years old and has been running since he could walk. Geoff Oliver is the embodiment of an ultrarunner in the purest form. He runs because he runs. Along the way he has set records and garnered accolades, these are the recognition by others of his achievements. There happens to be a consensus amongst runners that putting one foot in front of the other over long distances is labelled "ultrarunning". Whether Geoff was given recognition, or not, he would still be compelled to run these distances. Labels aside, here is a brief synopsis of Geoff's remarkable dedication to ultrarunning.

There is poetry in his movement, Geoff a former teacher has quoted Alexander Pope, "Know then, thyself", qualifying this by acknowledging that he ran with "...a little madness and a little bit of masochism but also we should all be struggling to know then thyself."

Geoff was born and bred in the English Midlands in Leicestershire. Never one to sit around, Geoff was driving army recruits to their runs over Dartmoor, Geoff put on his boots and joined in. The running continued as a private enterprise, it was only in his fifties that Geoff began to enter competitive races. In 1983 he progressed from marathons to ultra distances. He broke his first world record at 65 years of age.

Geoff has an interesting style, he leans into his running, he commented that the key is to keep going, and to stay on the track, not stopping for breaks, eating on the run and only the occasional nature break. He runs to his own internal rhythm and manifests running within himself. Geoff is old school, with a spartan aesthetic, he arrives at events by train, with one bag of spare clothes, minimal technical gear and eats from the trackside provisions. He is self sufficient, not for him a support crew and a car boot full of energy gels.

"Some runners get tangled up in PB's - I just run as I feel and the rest

takes care of itself." Simplicity personified.

Geoff is synonymous with the Sri Chinmoy Self-Transcendence 24-hour race at Tooting Bec in London which first began in 1989. It is here that Geoff loquaciously achieved his inspirational new world records. A slew of V75 records and in 2013 he completed a total of 380 laps of the track to record a distance of 94 miles and 1108 yards to set a new world over 80 record. He returned in 2014 to break his own records, missing 100 miles within 24 hours by a whisker, although he determinedly carried on to complete the 100 mile mark. In september 2018 at the age 85, he set 8 world records for his age group, he recorded new records at 30 miles to 100km for the over 85 category. In fact there was no V85 until Geoff created it, whatever he did would be a record. In the pouring rain employing his stooping lilt, carrying a purple umbrella contrasting with his green jacket, ever the sartorial sprite. He covered an impressive 77 miles in 24 hours.

"Ultra running teaches you the perfect mixture of physical and psychological control."

This intelligent and vastly experienced ultra runner is still running in events and we hope to see him in Tooting Bec this year. He is a precious elder in the ultrarunning community who has decades of experience to emit. Those who have had the privilege of sharing the track with Geoff attest to his positive presence and self effacing wisdom. The Ultrarunning community respects and reveres runners like Geoff and that is why he is included in UW's Hall of Fame. Geoff was ultrarunning before the word was invented, he offers inspiration to us all and through his achievements shows us that age is no barrier to our joy. He will never stop running,

"There's just something euphoric about it."

Geoff is running the race of his life.



# TREES NOT TEES

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## ***Ultras are setting the pace with 'Trees not Tees'***

As ultrarunners we often seek out nature at its purest, traversing mountain passes or strafing through woodland trails. As ultrarunners, we also like to think we're more environmentally conscious; many races have done away with plastic cups, and when training we have a 'leave no trace' attitude. However, the sport we love has a greater impact on the environment than we would like to admit; every gel in plastic wrapping, every new piece of gear we didn't really need, leaves its own trail behind in the environment.

One project working to counter this is Trees not Tees, who have a growing presence within the ultra running community. As the name suggests, Trees not Tees enables race organisers to offer runners the chance to say, 'I don't want my t-shirt / medal, plant a tree for me instead'; it's really that simple. On average over 20% of runners are choosing the green option, each one helping avoid the pollution of another 2KG of ECO2, which is created when a new t-shirt is produced, all for nothing if they end up in a drawer or in landfill.

For every runner who chooses the green option, a tree will be planted in the UK as part of their sustainable reforestation project, The Future Forest Company. Each runner also receives a personalised e-certificate, with a photo of their tree, the species and what3words location. Organisers just pay Trees not Tees what they would have paid for the race t-shirt, down to a base of £2.50 per tree.

It's really that simple, as James Elson from Centurion Running points out:

"There's literally no downsides. We are helping to arrest the climate change issue, helping rewild areas of the UK, providing the option for runners to get something really wonderful when in the past they may have just taken a t-shirt they didn't need. Everyone's happy.

If a runner has finished a long-distance event and it's their first one, they can still take a tee, but for a lot of our runners they're returning year after year, so they really don't need another t-shirt."

Centurion Running were one of the first to launch Trees not Tees across all of their events this year and have already helped plant 335 trees, as well as helping promote the project with other races. In the trail space, organisations such as Big Bear Events, Hardmoors, Great Owl Running, Scafell Sky Race, SVP100, Camino Ultra, Freedom Racing, UK Ultra, The Salomon Serpent Trail, Dragon's Back and XNRG have all implemented Trees not Tees in recent months, as well as partners such as SI Entries helping spread the word to their races.

If you'd like to find out more, check out Trees not Tees on Instagram @treesnottees, their website on [www.treesnottees.com](http://www.treesnottees.com), or get in touch via [hello@treesnottees.com](mailto:hello@treesnottees.com)





**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!



**Antonio Codina** I am a runner based in the North East of England. My sporting background is in mountaineering and rock climbing, and I started running ultras four years ago. This probably explains my interest in mountain and winter races such as TDS, Lakeland or the Spine races. My dream race is Tor de Géants.



**Claire Smith** Mother of two, Claire Smith, is the founder of [Brutal Events](#), organisers of tough endurance challenges. Claire completed a Double Deca Ironman (20 x Continuous Ironman) in 2018 and in 2020 she took on a self-supported 865 mile JOGLE run raising over £6,000 for Forest Holme Hospice in honour of her friend who passed away. Claire has a book out now *No easy Day*, available on her website, [Brutalbranded.com](#)



**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](#).



**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 *Ultrarunning 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.



**Martin Ilott** hails from Windsor in the UK and has been running marathons since 1989, clocking up nearly 200 and ultras since 2000. He has completed 6 Spartathlons, 11 GUCRs, the London to Brighton, La Saintelyon, LLCR, C2C, Brisbane Valley Rail Trail 100M, Falls Creek, Tarawera to name a few. In 2003 he ran LeJog and in 2007 Trans-America (LA to NY) in 72 days. Currently down under.



**Oliver Smith** completed his first Ultra in 2017, The Gower 50 which awoke a hunger for all things trail and endurance and has since completed a number of coastal and mountain Ultras. Amongst juggling full-time work commitments and family life he is also the Director of The Dare12, a South Wales based trail running festival, where he finds his inspiration in sharing his love for the outdoors with others. You can follow Oli's adventures on instagram @ [dadventurer\\_](#) and find out more about the Dare12 at [www.dare2run.co.uk](#).



**Rosie Holliday** lives in a small village just outside Carlisle with her husband Mike, her young son Alf and their border terrier, Agnes. As a PE teacher, Rosie has always been involved in sport but only really got into running when she started to do parkrun in 2013 to regain her fitness after a knee operation. Since then she has completed a number of races, including 5 Ultras. She loves nothing more than being in the Cumbrian Fells. Visit Rosie's blog. [Rosie Runs](#)





**Sabrina Verjee** is one of the UK's leading ultrarunners, having completed the five-day Berghaus Dragon's Back Race in Wales three times, finishing first Briton in the 2020 Montane Spine Race along the Pennine Way, fifth overall. Sabrina became the first woman to finish the 214 Wainwright's in 6 days 17hrs 51mins, the third-fastest recorded time for the challenge. Sabrina is a Veterinary Surgeon who created the Carnforth Pet Care in Lancashire. Photo by Michael Hirst.



EDITION



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