



ROAD, TRACK & TRAIL MULTIDAY  
& ULTRA DISTANCE NEWS

// Issue 33

# ULTRARUNNING WORLD

M A G A Z I N E



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## Welcome to the November issue of Ultrarunning World.

We start off with a helpful yoga sequence from Susan Lister that reminds us of how important our posture is. Good posture helps keep the mind balanced...

Our first running article comes from British ultrarunner Catherine Stonehouse who set an impressive first FKT on the 108 mile Greensands Way then Keswick AC runner Claire Warner introduces the Huw Williams Experience in the form of the Pen Llŷn 50 which takes place in North West Wales.

Pam Storey is the RD of the Crawley A.I.M Charity 6, 12 & 24 hour races, and she shares a few words about this year's races.

Recently accredited coach and regular contributor Dan Walker tried out the Catton 12 Backyard Ultra and US contributor Gary Dudney introduces the C&O Canal 100 miler. Harmony Waite and Nick O'Neill took on the Irrational SOUTH 200 Mile race, part of a new series of Australian trail multiday. Back in the UK we hear from Lynda Searby and Catherine Lawrence who ran the Sandstone Trail and more news from Michelle Lindstrom at the Survivorfest in Canada. We end the issue with Neil Harper's Becoming the Yorkshire Runner.

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Philippe Moulin at the Le Dernier Homme Debout, Vendée. Photo by **Sarah Cameron**.

#### • Back cover

Sarah Cameron during the MiMil'Kil 2019. Photo by **Vincent Dumont**

**S**arah Cameron lives on a vineyard in the south of France with husband Angus and two young children Felix and Taliyah and after starting running in 2012 ran her first ultra in 2014 at the Trail du Capuchadou where she came second. The following year Sarah won the 100km Festival des Templiers perhaps the oldest and most prestigious endurance Trail race in France. In 2017 she won the 6 heures du Lauragais setting a new French 6 hour record and **was filmed by Vincent Dumont** who Sarah had met at the 2017 Festival des Templiers where she came third. Later that year Sarah finished second at the 100 mile North Downs Way in the UK and in 2018 followed this with a win at the 100 mile South Downs Way.

In the summer of 2019 Sarah took second place at the 500 km Mi Mil'Kil and in October ran 215km at the 24 Heures d'Albi open race qualifying her for the GB 24 hour team. June 2019 saw another short movie by Eyes & Trails TV – **A Trail Life – By Sarah Cameron published.**

After a hip replacement in 2020 Sarah took up cycling to help regain her fitness until an accident in 2021 saw her break her hip and her arm, she is currently rehabilitating. With time on her hands Sarah translated Jean-Louis Vidal's book, published in July 2021, **Ultrarunning Made Easy** (see page 21) and is currently working on her own book. A qualified coach Sarah is working with Centurion Running in the UK to help and inspire ultrarunners reach their goals.

Vincent Dumont started making videos for Eyes & Trails TV in 2017 with videos inside the races and covering the French trail running scene. After a few years he started videoing ultra trail races outside of France and offering interviews with prominent figures in the sport including Katie Schide and Germain Grangier, featured in a previous issue of Ultrarunning World, and Courtney Dauwalter amongst others. You can follow Vincent's work on social media:

Youtube : <https://www.youtube.com/eyestrailstv>

Instagram : <https://www.instagram.com/eyesandtrails>

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/EyesAndTrails>



## Ultrarunning World October- November 2021

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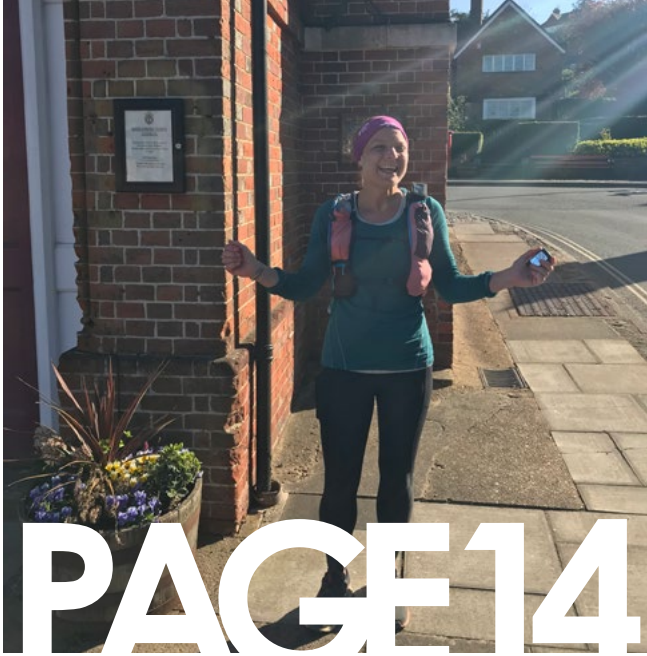


Send inquiries, original and previously unpublished race reports/articles to the email address above. Last dates for article submissions: December 14<sup>th</sup> and January 1<sup>st</sup>. Please include some accompanying photos (if you have any) with articles/race reports, a 40-50 word bio, and a headshot for the contributors page. More details for submissions on request. Thank you.

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# SHORT SEQUENCE FOR POSTURE CONTROL

When the first lockdown happened, I saw it as an opportunity to focus on fitness. I started every day with a run (minimum of 1 hour) followed by a one hour yoga practice. I am a high school maths teacher and I was working from home, so I had plenty of work to occupy my mind. No restaurants meant lots of home-cooked, healthy vegan food and no socialising meant no alcohol and early nights. The sun was shining, the garden looked good and I felt fantastic!

## ***Fast forward a year . . . .***

So many cancelled races have meant a loss of focus. The discovery of so many new takeaway options have meant I gained more than a few pounds and all of a sudden the weather is not great, my weekly mileage is in single figures and the garden is full of weeds!

I'm just not ready for races to be starting up again. As I launched into a new training plan I found myself having to adjust my running form regularly.

Whatever mileage you're working on it's important to practice good running form. It's easy to start off upright but if you watch the finish lines of most races you will see a lot of people hunched over.

As we get tired our posture starts to suffer. This not only means we are less efficient but also more prone to injury. Obviously strong core muscles and strong legs help to keep the strain off the back and keep us more upright for longer. However, practising good posture and breathing in addition to becoming more aware of how this feels can also be beneficial preparation.

Practice these exercises daily and start to get to know how your body feels when it's aligned properly. Then try to bring the practice into your everyday life, noticing your spine and re-adjusting yourself as necessary. Also notice how your posture feels when running and practice slight movements of your pelvis and shoulders to see what effects they have. Get to know your spine and how it feels in different positions.



If you find yourself hunching over ( driving, in front of a computer, running), you want to counter that in your practice. stretching/ opening your chest muscles and strengthening/ shortening your back muscles is key. As is increased mobility in the thoracic spine. Below is a short sequence designed to help improve your posture over time:

1. **Mountain pose (Tadasana)**
2. **Rag doll (Uttanasana )**
3. **Plank (Phalakasana)**
4. **Cobra (Bhujangasana )**
5. **Lunge then into warrior 1 (Virabhadrasana 1)**
6. **Wide fold with hands interlaced behind your back (prasarita Padottanasana )**
7. **Hero (virasana)**
8. **Bridge pose (setubandha Sarvangasana )**
9. **Shavasana**

Never overstretch, always start cautiously and breathe into the posture. Long, slow, controlled breathing allows your nervous system to listen, your muscles to relax and eventually lengthen.

Allow yourself at least 5 minutes in shavasana. This will improve your sleep and help to keep you in a relaxed and calm state. All of which will help improve your morning run.

*Happy training,  
Susan*

# YOGA FOR POSTURE

Do these exercises every evening before bed



## TADASANA

Standing seems simple but take some time to ensure your core is engaged, tailbone tucked under and shoulders back and down



## RAG DOLL

Bend your knees and reach up before folding over an taking hold of alternate elbows. Try to really let go of everything above the hips. Hold for at least 1 minute, working up to 5.



## PLANK TO COBRA

Move down into plank, holding for several breaths before lowering yourself to the mat. Place your hands under your shoulders and push the front body up. Open the chest and keep the shoulders back and down



## WARRIOR 1

Step one foot back and turn it to about 45 degrees. Bend the front knee. Take some time to tilt the pelvis back and forward until you find your neutral position . Balance your hips and reach up with your hands into a high prayer. Try to really lengthen the torso but relax the shoulders. Do both sides.



## WIDE FOLD

Take your legs wide apart with feet parallel. Interlace your fingers behind your back, gently pulling shoulders open and shoulder blades together. Fold forward from the hips and let the arms come up and over your head.



## VIRASANA

Sit down on your heels with knees together. Lift your bottom and move the feet apart. Sit down in between your feet. You may find that this is too big a stretch. Place a block or cushion under your bottom, increasing the height until you are comfortable able to keep the spine straight. Relax the shoulders back and down. Sit for a minimum of 1 minutes, working towards 5 minutes.



## BRIDGE POSE

Lie on your back and bring the soles of your feet on to the mat. Place the heels about a hands distance from your bottom. Tilt the pelvis up and Slowly begin to peel yourself of the mat. Try to keep the knees together by squeezing the thighs. Kee your hips up for several breaths before slowly lowering yourself back to the mat. Repeat another 2 times.

# News



On October the 2nd 2021 the IAU announced that the IAU Executive Council had approved a new version of the IAU World Records (IAU WR) Guidelines that replaced the previous World Best Performance Guidelines effective as of January 1st, 2022.

Notable were several new features including:

- 1. World Athletics (WA) has replaced IAAF.
- 2. 1000km, 1000 miles, and 6 Days are no longer recognized as IAU modalities.
- 3. The following events will be recognized by WA and WA conditions must be fulfilled for a performance to be ratified: 50km and 100km.
- 4. In addition to the above, the following events will be considered for ratification as IAU World Records: 6 Hours, 12 Hours, 24 Hours, 48 Hours, 50 miles, and 100 miles.

On October the 11th the IAU published a new post which included the following text:

Our decision on discontinuing records for 6 days, 1000km and 1000 miles was based as a package of several other initiatives including establishing the terminology IAU WRs for previously called WBP, initiating 50 mile IAU WRs and working with the World Athletics on 50km WRs. Our decision was made based on the current following of participation in various events.

Following our announcement, several multiday enthusiasts have reached out to us and discussed with us the historical significance of the 6 Day event and also expressed the immense future interest in the event. We have listened to their feedback as we do for every initiative that we put forward. Listening together makes us stronger.

As a result of these discussions, the IAU Executive Council in cooperation with the Records Committee has decided to reinstate the 6 Day event as an officially recognized event with the IAU. However, due to the declining interest in 1000 kms and 1000 miles (1 event with 3 participants), we will discontinue recognition of these distances as of January 1, 2022. Nevertheless, the Records Committee will continue to monitor the event over the next couple of years and if there is a surge in an interest for the distance and an increase in the events we will revisit the inclusion of these distances. The current records for those two distances will be saved and archived in our documents and also be available at IAU website as historical results so that those interested can see them at any time (the records will be frozen as of Jan 2022 and will not be updated).

Meanwhile the multiday community had responded by creating a new organisation, The Global Organization Of Multi-Day Ultramarathoners (GOMU) dedicated to the history and record keeping of the sport of multiday ultrarunning and to promoting World Championship events in various modalities at different locations around the world.

On October 19th a new committee was announced and its inaugural meeting took place on November 2nd 2021 when the seven Executive members were voted in.

Trishul Lorne W. Cherns (Canada, USA) – President, Yiannis Kouros (Greece, Australia) - Vice-President, Viktoria Brown (Canada, Hungary) - Vice-President, Jess Mullen (USA) – Secretary, Rick McNulty (USA) –Treasurer, Eoin Keith (Ireland) – IT, Bob Hearn (USA) – IT, Arun Kumar Bhardwaj – India, Abichal Sherrington – Wales, Brian Teason – USA, and Eric Frank Wright – South Africa.

GOMU is determined to encourage and support the World Championships at 6 days and 48 hours from 2022 onwards. When asked when the previous multiday World Championships were held Trishul said "There have been only two World Championships, the 1985 IAU 48 Hour World Championships in Montauban, France, Yiannis Kouros won that and in 1988 the 1000 mile world Championships were held in Queens, New York. Yiannis set the still-existing WR of 10 days, 10 hours".

GOMU is accepting bids for 2023 to host 2, 3, 6 and 10 day GOMU World Championships. The prospective race must be an established certified event to be considered. [Contact via Facebook.](#)







**Backyard Ultras**

November 15th 2021 Laz wrote a general interest post for those putting on backyard ultras, planning to put on a backyard, or running in one:

The [Backyard Ultra](#) Association was formed to provide service to Backyard Ultra organizers and participants worldwide. As a service organization we are not anxious to create a

lot of rules and restrictions. Mostly we have been focused on building a structure for the sport. What we offer the affiliated races is a promotional platform, championship structure, and rankings for the participants.

Growth has been rapid, with the number of affiliated races roughly doubling every year. We currently have over 300 affiliate races in 65 countries, although those numbers are increasing all the time.

We have reached a point where we have to set some standards. Not for the purpose of eliminating or handicapping the grassroots events, but quite simply so that we can fulfill our purpose.

Read the rest of the post on the [Backyard Ultra Facebook group](#).



**Other News**

November 2022 Eric Clifton has been inducted into the [American Ultrarunning Hall of Fame](#) as its 19th member.

Its been a while since our last recent races and we will put that straight in upcoming issues. So for now just a quick recap of some of the major recent events.

[Nicky Spinks](#) set a new women's Lake District 24-Hour Record on 15th August 2021, breaking the previous record of 65 peaks set by Carol Morgan in 2020 in a time of 23:45. Nicky was third at Tor de Geants in September and 1st woman and 11th overall at Open Adventure Lakes In A Day 50-miler in October.

The [Adelaide 6 day](#) was won by David Bilet (AUS) with 609.156 km and first woman was Sarah Barnett (AUS) with 529.135 km. The 3rd [Delirious W.E.S.T. 200 Miler](#) (AUS) was won by Shane

Johnstone in 54:50:34 and first woman was Meghann Coffey (AUS), third overall in 67:09:51. The [Grand Raid des Pyrénées - Ultra Tour 224 km](#) (FRA), one of several race distances, was won by Ramon Casanovas (ESP) in 38:27:21 and first woman was Consuelo Velasco Barros (ESP) in 60:56:54. [Les 48 heures de Royan](#) was won by Annie Paringaux (FRA) who in July had crushed the [Mi MIL'KIL](#), Annie produced another outright win with 361.997 km and first man was Jimmy Boubakeur (FRA) with 302.226 km. [L'Étoile Verte D'Éguzon](#) a 298 km/6 day stage race in France won by Rene Strosny (GER) in 24:31:27 and first woman was Anne-Gaelle Cherdel (FRA) in 29:46:03. In the UK, [Ultra Great Britain](#) a 215 Miles/346 km coast to coast Race Across Scotland following the Southern Upland Way saw Adam Tango Holland (GBR) take the win in 60:13:00 with Joanna (Joasia) Zakrzewski (GBR) second overall in 62:20:00. Farther south in Wales at the 6th Dragon's Back Race Simon Roberts (WAL) took the win in 45:42:11 and first woman was Katie Mills in 61:12:54 (ENG).

[The Tunnel Ultra](#) , a Cockbain Event running 200 miles in a tunnel outside Bath , in 55 hours saw Christian Mauduit (FRA) finish in 51:40:10 and Mandy Foyster (GBR) the only woman finisher, was fourth overall in 54:55:32. A few weeks later saw another Cockbain challenge, this time a Trans-Wales crossing 250 miles from Holyhead to Cardiff, [Lon Las Cymru Ultra](#) won jointly by James Bassett (GBR) and Stephen Davies (GBR) (pictured) in 76:28 with Vic Owens (GBR) becoming the first female finisher in the history of the event in 87:59 in a dramatic finish just before the cut off.

**Big's Backyard Ultra**

Harvey Lewis (USA) was the last man standing at [Big's Backyard Ultra](#) which began October 16th 2021 in Bell Buckle, Tennessee. Completing 569.980 km, 85 loops, Harvey outlasted the assist, Chris Roberts to set a new BYU record.

**British and Scottish 100km road championship 2022**

The Anglo Celtic Plate will take place on April 3rd as part of the Sri Chinmoy 100k at North Inches Park, Perth with Open 100km/50k ultra distance road races. The 100k race also incorporates the annual British and Scottish 100km road championship for 2022. The 50km race incorporates the Scottish 50km championship for 2022. More details on the [race website](#).



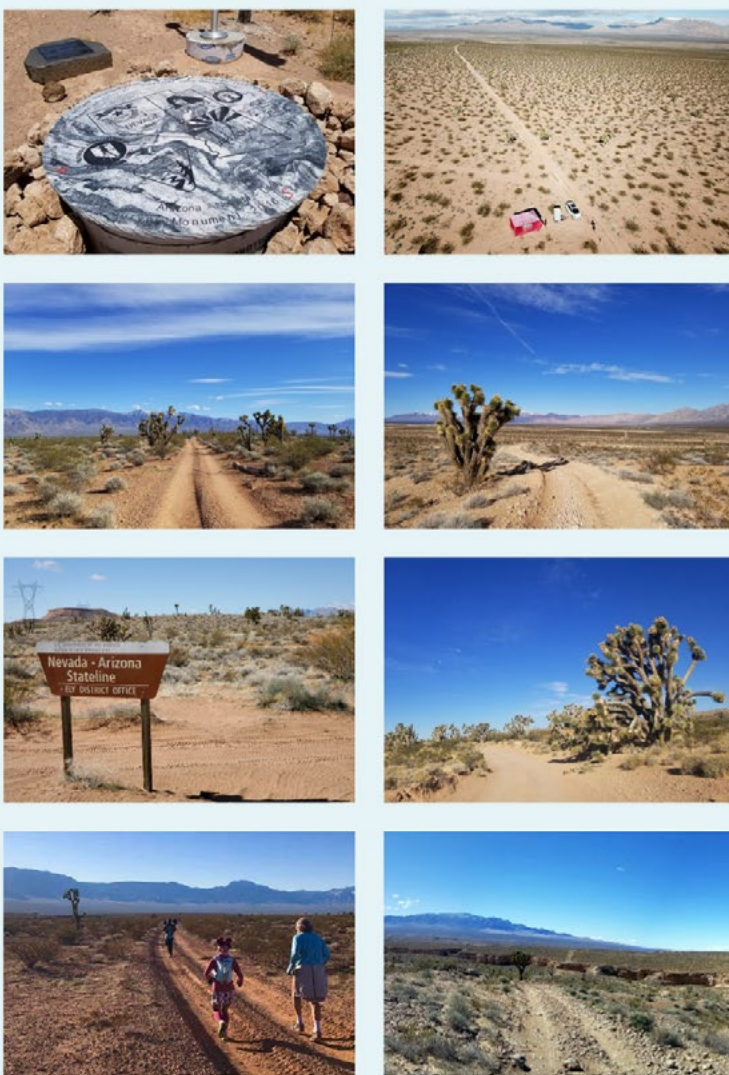
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# PODCAST CORNER

## PODCAST

Paul Bonnett is no stranger to Western States 100. He has raced it 6 times and helped pace his sister Karen to the finish line in 2017 which happened to be her epic DFL finish with only 9 secs left on the clock. **GRR #18 / PAUL BONNETT** (DFL AT WESTERN STATES 100 2021) GottaRunRacing

**GRR #26 ANNIE HUGHES** (Winner of Leadville 100 & Moab 240) GottaRunRacin

Annie Hughes is an up and coming ultra runner that had an incredible year in 2021 with an outright win at the Collegiate Peaks Trail Run 50 miler. She followed that up with wins at Leadville 100, becoming the youngest female champion ever, and another epic win at the Moab 240 just six weeks later.



### Everything Endurance - Anna Troup

In this episode, Will and Anna talk through her journey to the finish line of the Spine Race, starting with her journey into running, her preparation for the race, and the events of her 80hr charge along the Pennine Way. Interested in a Backyard Race or inspired by the format? The movie Stephen Cousins made for the **Suffolk Back Yard Ultra** in June is still available on Vimeo to rent or buy. Camille Herron on **10 Junk Miles**.

**81 Yards - A Backyard Story** In June 2021 Backyard History was made in Suffolk, England, the world record distance was broken for the Backyard Race format. John Stocker broke the previous 75 hours/Yards record with a staggering 81 Yards (337.5miles). This film follows 4 runners who had hopes of being that last one standing.

Everything Endurance #76 | **The Long Journey to the 'Double Lon Las' with Tom Garrod**

**Backpacker Radio** is a show all about the wonderful world that is thru-hiking and long distance backpacking. Co-hosts, Zach "Badger" Davis and Juliana "Chaunce" Chauncey muse on the backpacking life and the latest from the trail every other week.

## TALKS

**An Evening with Damian Hall**, a record-breaking ultramarathon runner who's represented Great Britain and taken part in some of the world's toughest races, setting seven fastest known times (FKTs) along the way. Square Chapel, Halifax February 16th 2022.

## VIDEOS

Long Shorts - **Behind Courtney Dauwalter & Francois D'haene's Ultra-Trail Races** at Hardrock 100 and UTMB.

The Mindset Behind The Most Challenging Ultramarathon Running with Stephen Redfern | **To Be Human #036**

**Ultra X Wales 2021: The Full Race Documentary**

**Iwan Thomas 400x400 Challenge** - former World Champion 400m sprinter taking on his first ultra-marathon to run 100 miles.



## EVERYTHING ENDURANCE PODCAST



# ten junk miles

Camille  
Herron

LONG RUN #155

November 19, 2021

A RUNNER'S PODCAST

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### Contact

Race director : Adrian Bontiu

email : [transylvania6days@gmail.com](mailto:transylvania6days@gmail.com)

tel : +40749593321



Having become very familiar with the Surrey end of the Greensand Way, through training and running around my hometown of Guildford over the years, it has long been an idea of mine to try and set a woman's FKT on the trail. Knowing that there wasn't one already meant I could at least hope to be the first!

The Greensand Way runs from Hamstreet Kent, 108 miles all the way through to Haslemere in Surrey. The route is mainly a well marked trail with small road sections, and it winds through stunning areas of outstanding natural beauty. It sits nestled between the North and South Downs and follows the Greensand Ridge. Starting in Hamstreet the trail takes you through gorgeous rambling farm fields and orchards. Prior to setting off we roughly planned "checkpoints" every 7-10 miles or so where the trail passed road sections so I could meet my long suffering and patient crew for supplies. Having never taken part in an event, or crewed anyone before, Mark probably didn't fully realise what he'd unwittingly agreed to. Luckily, we made sure that several of the checkpoints were at pubs, and with the sunshine out, there were worse ways he could have had to kill the time waiting for me.

I planned to try and get as much of the run done in daylight as I possibly could, which meant a 3:45am start from home in Guildford to get to the start in Hamstreet in time for a 6:30am set off. With the benefit of hindsight there are many things that I would do differently, one of them being to stay near the start the night before so that you can avoid being sleep deprived before even setting off.

The start of the run was glorious, I've never really spent time in Kent and I was stunned by the beautiful countryside and landscapes around me. The route starts off relatively flat and for the first 40 or so miles it felt really pleasant with the sunshine showing off the best of Kent's orchards, Oast houses and farms.

A brilliantly bonkers friend, and strong ultra-runner herself had somehow let herself be persuaded to join me for the night section. I was craving some company and was really looking forward to temperatures cooling off during the evening. I hadn't fully anticipated how chilly it would get, or how sleep deprived I would be. By the time she joined me as night fell my poor

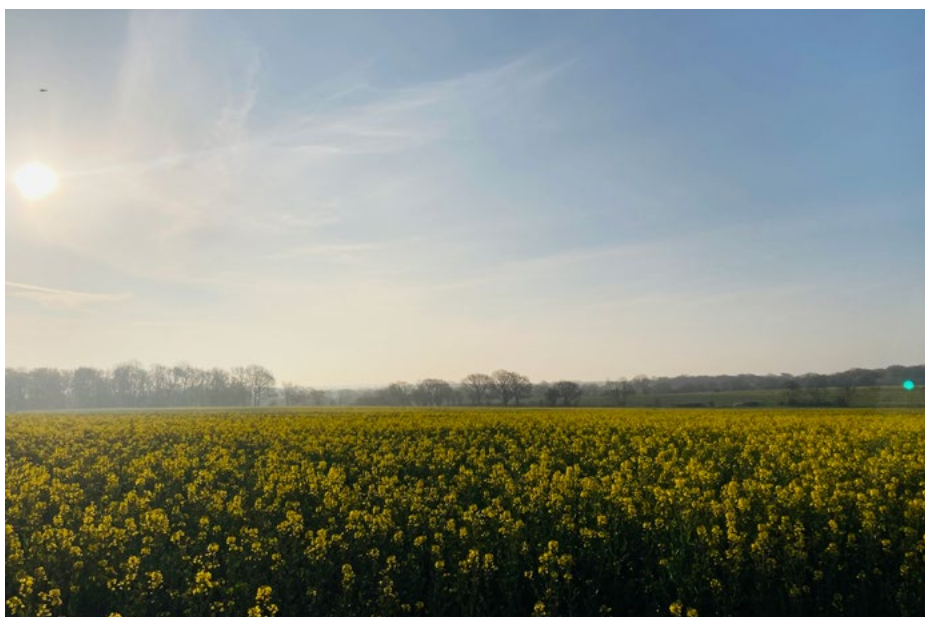
# FASTEST KNOWN TIME: GREENSAND WAY

By Catherine Stoneman



friend had to accompany me on a steady but slow trudge whilst I complained about feeling sick and begged for a nap. At about 3am, in a layby in South Nutfield, Mark spoon fed me tepid baked beans from a thermos mug, and I suspect we both questioned some of our life decisions.

Eventually, at around 5am, somewhere near Dorking, I succumbed and took a full hour's sleep. By this point I was seeing things in the woods. I knew better than to say anything as I recognised that the giant hand reaching through the trees towards us, and the diggers and work men in high viz in the woods were hallucinations. With 30 miles to go I called it a day. I knew that all I could do was walk, and the prospect of a slog like that on my own felt like more than I could muster. I messaged my family WhatsApp group and told them I was out. Sophie, who had run with me through the night, was done and didn't want to come back out into the dawn and I could tell how tired they both were. Mark however rec-



ognised that I had more in me, he gave me some tough love, told me to go out on my own for a bit and make a final decision in 5 miles time. Slowly grinding towards Leith Hill as the sun came back out gave me time to wrestle my demons and with the words of a brilliant friend ringing in my ear, I realised that I had no good excuse to give up - I wasn't injured or timed out and so I should keep going. I was completing not competing as she likes to say. The next 11 hours would be a painful and blister filled trudge.

Hitting the section in the Surrey Hills as daylight came gave me a boost, knowing that I was on familiar (although hilly) terrain gave me a much-needed mental breather from the constant map checking, and a coffee and cheese sandwich breakfast picked me up to get me through Leith Hill, Holmbury Hill and Pitch Hill.

The miles were really crawling along as every step was making my feet protest more and more, they had swollen, something I've never experienced before, and the swelling was causing throbbing angry blisters. With 19 miles to go I was wishing that I had quit when I still had 30 miles to go. 19 left felt like I was in too deep to stop, trying to calculate how long it would take with the tragically slow speed that I was capable of was extremely depressing.

Eventually, with about 9 miles remaining, I found a tiny smidge more mojo as I set myself a new challenge to try and scrape through in under 35 hours. Before I had set out my Dad had predicted I'd finish in 35-40 hours, and I decided that was a good gauntlet to try for.

In the meantime my crew had driven to Haslemere where I knew my Mum and Dad were waiting in a pub. As I came down from the Devil's Punchbowl, a nasty steep kicker that late in the route, I was joined by



Mark and Sophie who had walked out along the trail to find me for the very last bit. With just half a mile to go my Mum appeared coming along the path towards me and with 4 minutes to go before my fake cut off, we all walked/limped to Haslemere Town Hall 34 hours and 56 minutes after setting off. I didn't think I'd ever taken for granted the work that race organisers do, but taking on an FKT like this has truly made me appreciate the amazing work that happens behind the scenes to let runners just concentrate on running. There is an invisible army that makes events possible and work seamlessly, taking on a challenge like this on your own gives you even more gratitude for everything they do!



# THE BEAUTIFULLY BRUTAL PEN LLŶN 50

By Claire Warner

I'm going to share with you a little of what led up to me entering the Pen Llŷn 50 before telling you about the race. I discovered running in my late teens at university in Leeds and started my running life as a Kirkstall Harrier. Over the next decade or so I did a lot of road running up to half marathon distance and found that running made such a positive difference to my mental health.

Fast forward to 2017, when I started working at the outdoor retailer George Fisher in Keswick and met the increasingly famous Jacob Tonkin of Tonkin Massage Therapies, who convinced me to try fell running and join the local running club Keswick AC. I immediately fell in love with both trail and fell running but must admit I had some trepidation about joining a running club with such amazing athletes. Keswick AC made me incredibly welcome and regularly training with them brought on my running in leaps and bounds.

I entered my first marathon in 2018, completing the Lakeland Trails Coniston Trail Marathon in just over 6 hours on a very hot day. Prior to that race I had believed that a marathon was my absolute limit and wasn't completely sure that I would get round. Achieving a marathon instilled some confidence in me and I wanted to challenge myself more. I won a free entry to the Coniston Marathon the following year so my first goal was to go back and beat my time. A chance meeting with my very good friend Geraint introduced me to the beautiful Llŷn Peninsula in North Wales and also the world of Beautifully Brutal Pen Llŷn Ultras. I signed up for the Pen Llŷn Winter Ultra for November in 2018 and was so excited to take part with my partner as my support crew.

It wasn't to be. My partner was diagnosed with terminal bowel cancer and despite him being determined that I should race we decided that deferring

the entry to the following year would be most sensible. After an incredibly brave battle, he passed away at the beginning of December 2018. He made me promise that I would keep on running, so that's exactly what I did. Running was my coping mechanism to handle the grief and Keswick AC were amazingly supportive. I made the decision to run the Winter Ultra in 2019 in his memory and fundraise for Macmillan Cancer Research. I also made the decision to train to become a nurse and started my adult nursing degree in September 2019.

A 5 hour finish in the 2019 Coniston Trail Marathon and just over a 4 hour finish in the Solway Coast Road Marathon were good preparation for the ultra. I will never forget the race briefing for the Winter Ultra, and I hope that you can print this. Race organiser Huw Williams, in his orange NASA outfit, told us that the weather is shit, it is going to get shitter, and then it will be shit in the dark! For the entire duration of the race we had gale force winds, snow, hail, sideways rain and freezing temperatures.

It was incredibly tough but I enjoyed every minute of it and was ecstatic to finish about twenty minutes before the 10 hour cut off. There was an incredibly high DNF rate for that race but not finishing was not an option for me. I had raised almost £2,000 for Macmillan and I felt like I couldn't let my partner and all those people sponsoring me down. There were happy tears at the finish line





when Geraint hung the medal around my neck. So that brings me on to the Pen Llŷn 50. At the end of the Winter Ultra, despite being soaked through and chilled to my bones, I felt like I had more in the tank. I immediately signed up to the Pen Llŷn 50 for 2020.

And then Covid-19 happened and the world changed. To keep it brief, I contracted Covid-19 working on the Covid ward at my local hospital at the end of March 2020 and was seriously unwell for a month. It was actually a relief that races were cancelled because I was in no fit state to run a 5km, never mind an ultra. It's been a long recovery, I was diagnosed with Long Covid earlier this year and managing the overwhelming fatigue and breathlessness whilst trying to



train has been a big challenge. Throw in an ankle ligament injury in May and sciatica only 12 days before the race and I was relieved to even make it to the start line on Saturday the 3rd of July.

My parents and sister very kindly came down to Wales to support me and we stayed with Geraint and his lovely wife Eryl at their holiday cottages at Rhosydd Bach. My sister, Kate, got up at 4am to drop me off at the start line at Abererch Sands Holiday Park near Pwllheli. It was pouring down at the race briefing so my new Gore-tex Shakedry jacket came out whilst catching up with ultra running friends on the start line. At 5am we set off on the beach just as the sun was rising, not that we could see it with the dark bank of clouds on the horizon. The route headed West along the beach for a mile or so to Pwllheli (where I ditched the jacket as the rain lightened and I was quite warm). Then around Pwllheli harbour and onto the Welsh Coastal Path for a few miles before another section of beach and then up hundreds of steps and onto Llanbedrog headland to the first selfie station – the Tin Man. On the Winter Ultra there had been honesty books hidden on the course and you had to find them, rip out a page and hand it in

at the next checkpoint. Obviously with Covid restrictions, hundreds of people touching the same book was not an option, so the race organisers had four selfie stations where you needed to take a photo of yourself and show it at the next checkpoint or face a 2 hour time penalty.

The Tin Man is one of my favourite places on the Llŷn so that was a great way to start the race. I was feeling good and running 10-11 minute miles. I had to slow down to pick my way off the steep headland and down to the next beach section before Abersoch. Here the 50 mile course leaves the 75 mile course and heads inland and north across the peninsula. My parents met me just before the first checkpoint in Mynytho 12 miles in with a banana, some cold cooked sausages and a piece of

homemade flapjack. Then it was onwards across fields and quiet roads to the next selfie station, a rather creepy scarecrow!

Checkpoint two was at the 20 mile mark, I showed my selfie, had some lovely local cheese from the checkpoint, topped up my soft flasks with water and then shot off down the next road section, carelessly missing the route turning off along a footpath. I ran on for a good half mile before myself and two other runners realised we had gone wrong and retraced our steps. Once located the footpath was very pleasant across fields to Edern, where my parents and sister fuelled me up and ran a short section with me.

The route differed from the Winter Ultra by heading initially West from Edern

to pick up the Welsh Coastal Path on the North Coast and then start heading east. Selfie station 3 was the coast-guard station on Porthainllaen headland and I expected it to be less than half a mile away when I reached the coastline. To see it at least 2-3 miles in the distance along a rugged section of coast destroyed me mentally, and then stepping in dog poo really finished me off. I walked much of this section (and stopped to wash my shoe in a river) and was miserable as sin when I reached the iconic Ty Coch pub at the 27 mile mark where my family were waiting. Kate said to me, "Well done pal, it's all downhill from here". Sadly she wasn't familiar with the course and had no idea what was in store for me. They agreed to meet me at Pistyll, to which my response was "If I make it that far."

The section immediately after Ty Coch from Nefyn to Pistyll was the darkest point for me on the Winter Ultra too (despite coming much earlier in the race). That time I had got my nutrition seriously wrong and ran out of energy. This time my nutrition was fine at this point, my legs felt great, but my head was in a bad place. I felt so tired that I

nearly lay down on a bench near Nefyn for a sleep. Thankfully I was caught up by another runner, Rowland, of the local club Hebog, who started chatting with me. We walked through Nefyn, passed Checkpoint 3 and on to Pistyll and interestingly Rowland (a veteran of the 50) also finds this the toughest section mentally despite not being technically challenging. I will be eternally grateful to him for getting me through that tough patch.

Reaching my family and also Geraint within a few minutes of one another around Pistyll was a real boost to my improving spirits. I refuelled and headed towards Nant Gwrtheyrn, but I've never been able to run all of this section due to my fear of heights and the steep drop of hundreds of feet down to the sea and also the knowledge of what comes after Nant. I had a good chat with Guy and it was great to reach Nant and find my family and Geraint having a cuppa in the café. It was amazing to use a real toilet and then it was off up the insanely steep road to Checkpoint 4, where I started to feel extremely nauseous.

However, the twist was that you couldn't visit the checkpoint until you headed left off the road and up onto Yr Eifl, a fell with a BT mast on the side that was the next selfie station. The concrete steps up the mast are affectionately known as the 'Steps of Hell' and had never been included on the 50 course before, but I had already tackled them on the Winter Ultra. I was gutted in the race briefing to discover that BT were doing essential maintenance works so the course had been altered and we were required to take our selfie at the bottom of the steps and not the top.

On reaching the Steps of Hell at around 4pm I discovered that the maintenance work had finished and asked the marshals if I could go up. They asked why I would want to when it's not part of the course and another runner commented, "she's going to do it, she's got a twinkle in her eye". I couldn't resist and sprinted up the steps, ensuring to take a selfie at the bottom and the top, just to be safe. The steps really got my adrenaline going and I was able to run back down to the checkpoint where a marshal kindly made me an excellent cuppa in my collapsible cup. I was



still extremely nauseous and hoped the tea would settle my stomach.

Not far from the checkpoint I met my family again and changed my Adidas Terrex trail shoes for a pair of Solar Boosts, my favourite long distance road shoes. What a difference that made! I breezed through the remaining road miles through Llithfaen, Llannor, and Checkpoint 5 at an average 12 minute mile pace and felt really great, especially as Eryl came out to cheer me on. I was just so happy that I was going to finish it. Then my trusty Suunto Spartan Sport Trainer watch clocked up 50 miles and I realised I was nowhere near the finish, as I knew there was a beach section at the end and yet I was nowhere near the sea. My navigation error has cost me and on realising I had at least two miles to go I stopped and walked and honestly could have cried. I was so very tired by this point and the nausea was overwhelming, I hadn't managed to eat or drink anything since Checkpoint 4 at the 37 mile mark.



I eventually climbed over the sand dunes onto the beach and the fatigue overwhelmed me and I couldn't work out whether I needed to go east or west. A quick phone call to Geraint to check and I was heading east plodding along the sand on very tired legs. Eventually the finish came into sight and I could see my family on the beach. They came to meet me and accompanied me off the beach and insisted I had to run the last short section to the finish line in the camping field.

Crossing that finish line was an awesome feeling, the marshals were amazing and immediately apologised for the lack of music or party atmosphere. I gave them my race number #253 and they congratulated me on being the unofficial winner of the 50! They said that I was the only runner to have taken on the Steps of Hell and therefore I was the only runner to have completed the original course. So I finished in 14 hours 38 minutes and 25 seconds with 52.19 miles on the watch. I was delighted to learn afterwards that I finished 15th lady.

This was by far the toughest challenge I have taken on and I certainly couldn't have done it without the support of my family, Geraint and Eryl, the fabulous marshals and Beautifully Brutal team, Mountain Fuel nutrition for their Sports Jellies and Recovery Fuel and Adidas, Montane, Tikiboo, Gore-Tex and Salomon for their top quality kit. On reflection I went out far too fast and I paid for it later on, so I know there is room for improvement. Several people have asked me if I am going back next year for the 75. No, I'll be doing the 50 again, I'm not ruling out 75 for the future but for now I want to improve on my 50 time. I am about to start bespoke coaching with Katerina Townshend of High Peak Running and I'm excited to see where that takes me. I would recommend the *Pen Llŷn Ultras* to anyone thinking of doing their first ultra or looking for a bigger challenge. The mix of terrain makes it so interesting, the landscape is simply stunning and the support from the local community is outstanding.



# ULTRA RUNNING MADE EASY



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IF YOU WISH**

**Jean-Louis  
VIDAL**

## CRAWLEY A.I.M. CHARITY 6, 12 AND 24 HOUR RACE 3RD/4TH JULY 2021

Race Director Pam Storey

Well I have to say this year's race was the most stressful event I have ever organised. Covid-19 did everything it could to prevent this race going ahead. April 2020 was postponed to April 2021 and then, yet again it could not go ahead. So, I took a step of faith and found a date in the summer knowing that many of the runners who had deferred from 2020 would not be able to come as the date would clash with races they had already entered. However, all was well and as usual I had a full entry list with a long waiting list.

I managed to get the U.K.A track licence and I.A.U. Bronze label after providing a Covid-19 friendly risk assessment. Everything was in place for, hopefully, a successful race.

Three weeks before the race, sadly, Norman Wilson, my Race Referee, passed away and, at short notice I recruited Hilary Walker to take his place. Veteran Don Turner, a long time RRC member was also there as one of the timekeepers. It was great to have them as part of my excellent team.

Two days before the race my 'chip-timing man', Chris Mills announced he was unable to come as he was 'isolating' but had made plans. Paul Corderoy, the Race Director of the Gloucester 24-hour races was coming to help me and, fortunately, he knew how to set up the necessary gear so that Chris could time it from his home in Gloucester. What a relief that was...



So, after the race briefing and a one minute silence to remember Norman, the races got underway with 27 starting the 24-hours and 12 starting the 6-hours. Everyone turned around after 4 hours. Once the 6-hours had finished the presentation of prizes and medals took place, and the 12-hour runners started to arrive for their night run. 17 runners toed the line joining the 24-hour runners.

The weather forecast had not been good but, in actual fact, we had very little rain and all was going well. Sadly, as always happens at these ultra distance events a few runners withdrew, some with injury and others not feeling well. Those that were left turned direction every 4 hours. At around 7.00 pm the hot pasta and vegetable soup arrived and this was duly devoured by both runners and my team throughout the night. So, on and on through the night and all too soon the sun came up and at 8.00 am it was time for the 12-hour runners to finish. Again, another presentation ceremony then we were left with the remaining 24-hour folk on the track.



Before we knew it the horn was sounded to end the race with several runners needing assistance as is usual when they have given it their all... After the prize-giving they hobbled off home! And so, to the winners:-

6 hours -  
 First Lady Gaynor Watts 38.45 miles  
 First man Ollie Garrod 52.66 miles

12 hours -  
 First lady Jennifer Wood 80.32 miles  
 First man Norbert Mihalik 92.84 miles

24 hours -  
 First lady Katie Beckingham 103.25 miles  
 First man Damian Carr 163.37 miles

Damian's splendid result places him in 4th place in the all time U.K. 24 hour track rankings!

Race photos by Jon Lavis

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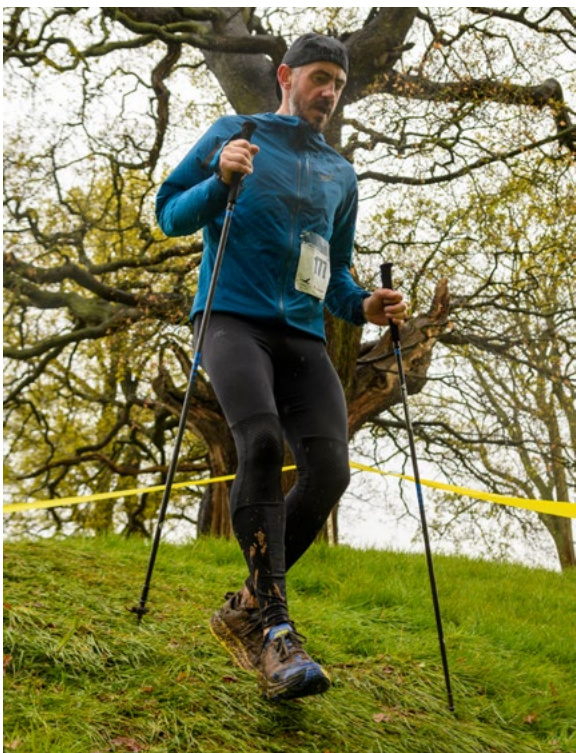
Photo X. Mauban



# CATTON 12

## BACKYARD ULTRA

By Dan Walker



Unless for the last 6 months you have been living under a stone you will not have missed the recent uptake in a new phenomenon called the “backyard ultra”. The race is the brainchild of Lazarus Lake, the race director of the famous Barkley ultra. This race takes no prisoners with its five laps of Tennessee trials and 60 hr cut off and a course distance of around 100 miles. Up to 2021 the full race has been finished only 18 times by 15 runners, so the bar is set high.

So, what is it? The race is a last man standing event; it is a lapped course of 4.167 miles to be completed in an hour. Easy I hear you say, maybe so but the problem is it's every hour on the hour until the last man standing wins. That means no finish lines, you just keep pushing and pushing until you or the others give up. This has given way to some massive distances being completed and the limits of human endurance tested. Most recent was a closely fought race between John Stocker and Matt Blackburn at the Suffolk backyard ultra. John pipped Matt by completing 81 laps as Matt stopped at lap 80. 123 runners had started on the Saturday and both Matt and John smashed the previous record held by Belgian dentist Karel Sabbe in the previous October of 321.5 miles in 75 hours. The record now held by John stands at more than 337 miles.

So, when tasked to write this article I decided to enter a new backyard ultra called the Catton12. What better way to experience something than to try it yourself? I had good reason as well as I had a 160-mile race to prepare for and what better way than to test my fueling and pacing to see if it works for 12 hours on a reasonable course.

Catton12 is, as it says, only 12 hours long and located in Catton Park, Derbyshire and home to another endurance event, the Thunder run. Organised by PVS events LTD, it was the first time it had been run, and due to the norm in these COVID times



all protocols were in place for a safe event. Turning up early to register I could see the dark rain filled clouds approaching and was aware of the local forecast of rain until mid-afternoon. I registered and said hello to some fellow runners as I made my way back to the car. Slowly more and more runners turned up, setting up club gazebos and tents to fend off the impending rain.

As 9am approached people started to congregate in and around the start area, lines had been sprayed onto the ground so that social distancing could be adhered to, and people nervously chatted amongst themselves waiting for the off. At 0900am the race began with cheers from the crowd and a big countdown clock to beat. The course was a mix of woodland trails, gravel tracks, a few hills and mud... Plenty of mud. The weather did not disappoint with a steady but heavy downpour for most of the day resulting in the trails being turned into thick mud making the final descent of the lap a fun one as I careered down the wooded hill trying my best to stay upright.

I paced my laps in or around 14 min miles, enough time to be steady but sure to finish. Others were already in the start/finish area when I arrived after running 30/35-minute laps in the same mud I could not stand up in. As the day wore on, the crowd became more vocal, supporting not only their runners but everyone else who were now becoming familiar faces as lap by lap fell by the wayside and the field grew thinner. When the clock counted down and the final runners came through for that lap, a tape was pulled up to count out anyone that was falling short. The crowd began to chant "ONE MORE LAP, ONE MORE LAP" as again weary men and women made the decision to go again.

Some had turned up with a target of a certain distance or so many laps. Some had turned up because it was

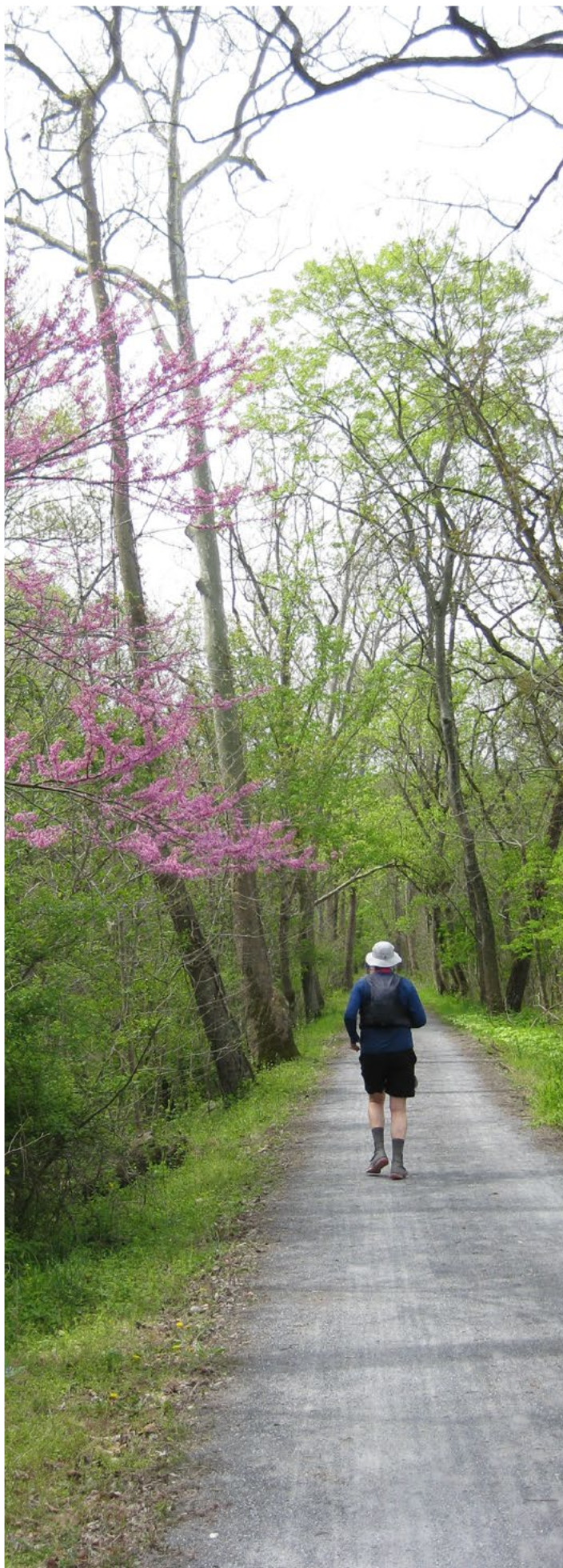


something new. One guy I spoke to was doing it because in his words "it's just down the road". What did spur me on was watching others who I had run with make the decision to stop. That is one more down I'd say to myself. Ultra-running for me is not about winning, I am a middle of the pack runner who does it for my own personal challenge so having a little bit of competition got the better of me.

On the final lap head torch-

es were donned as the runners, for the twelfth time, toed the line and as the lap began the crowd cheered and clapped as we trudged up the first bank and into the woods for one last time. I finished as I had started, nice and steady, just over 51 miles in 12 hours and bang on target for where I wanted. One hundred and fifty-two started and of those number 26 males finished and 6 ladies. The question now is, having had doubts about a lapped event, would I do it again? Yes, I would, the downside for me is a small event like this will get bigger. Naturally, it's what the organisers want to make something successful. It had everything needed for the first time, very professional in how it was run and organised. Being a small event, it was very personal and as already mentioned the crowd became pivotal in its support for the runners and, I believe, making some decide to go back out for one more lap. If you can and it's something that takes your fancy, enter one if only for the fun of something different after all that's what we run for, fun and an escape.

Photos by [Wayne Jackson on Flickr](#)



## THE C & O CANAL 100 MILE:

# RUNNING ON HALLOWED GROUND

By Gary Dudney

Here is a tip on a very “doable” 100 Mile race in the USA that will bring you to a beautiful and historical area of the country that will make the trip worthwhile even if you fail miserably at completing the 100 miles.

If you’re ever going to run a 100 mile race where the key word to describe the experience would be “pleasant,” it’s going to be the C&O Canal 100 near Knoxville, Maryland.

Forget tripping down gnarly, technical trails; forget brutal heat or icy cold; forget lung busting, quad burning steep slopes; in fact, forget any elevation change at all.

Imagine instead a tree-lined lane, banks of wildflowers, a wide peaceful river flowing by always on one hand or the other, and a surface to run on free of rocks, ruts, and anything that would require your attention. Even a night of rain during the 2021 edition (April 24, 2021) of the race produced no puddles or mud, leaving runners free to enjoy the scenery with no care for what their feet were doing.

The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal operated from 1831 to 1924 from Washington, D.C. to Cumberland, Maryland. A planned section linking the Ohio River to the canal farther west never materialized. One of the nation’s first large-scale engineering projects, the C&O was built to bring the riches of the West, coal, lumber, and agricultural products to market in the East. George Washington, America’s first President, had imagined such a project but initially it took the form of a series of five skirting canals that allowed shallow-draft boats on the Potomac River, which runs through Washington, D.C., to bypass areas of rapids and waterfalls.

The remnants of the old canal that runners see today are all across the towpath from the Potomac. The finished canal consisted of 74 canal locks, 11 aqueducts to cross major streams, and more than 240 culverts to cross smaller streams. The handsome stonework of the crumbled canal works and the occasional remaining service buildings for the canal are strewn along the course as are gigantic modern railroad and auto bridges that cross the Potomac. A freight train passing overhead in the middle of the night near Harper’s Ferry was certainly enough to wake me out of the trance of padding along the towpath in the mesmerizing dark and steady rain. Running the race was often a solemn, quiet experience with the woods and stillness of the grassy ditch to one side and the Potomac flowing by on the other. There were geese on the river, rows of large turtles sunning themselves on slimy logs in the swampy areas of the canal, squirrels, cardinals and



woodpeckers flitting through the branches overhead, and even a bear cub that had lost its mother, we learned later, and was rescued by the park service.

At other times, because of the loop nature of the course (basically three loops that take you up and down the canal), you were passing the other runners in the race or dodging the many hikers and bikers enjoying the towpath with you, especially near Harper's Ferry where the Shenandoah River majestically joins the Potomac. Taking the few hundred yards of technical trail back up to the Start/Finish at Camp Manidokan at the end of loop 1 and 2 was a crazy break from the routine of the towpath. Dealing with a little mud and slipperiness reminded you of what you were not facing during the rest of the race.

And yet while the historic canal, the relaxed race pace, the joy of sharing the trail with all the other runners, and the gorgeous scenery were all wonderful, for me the whole experience was vastly deepened by yet another dimension to this race, the area's American Civil War history and especially the proximity to the Antietam National Battlefield that makes it truly hallowed ground. A visit to the battlefield the day before the race is a must. The serene beauty of the place is surreal juxtaposed against the fact

that Antietam was the single bloodiest day's battle, not just of the Civil War, but of all American history.

During the race, you pass right by a spot on the Potomac known as Packhorse Ford (also known as Blackford's Ford, Boteler's Ford or Shepherdstown Ford). It's the very spot where Southern General Stonewall Jackson's unit crossed the river en route to the Battle of Antietam; and it's the same spot where Robert E. Lee's entire Army of Northern Virginia escaped to Virginia the day after bloodying George McClellan's Army of the Potomac but failing to vanquish the Northern army or continue the South's first invasion of Union territory. Lee would be here again a year later to cross the Potomac on his way to what would become

the most decisive battle of the war, Gettysburg. The organization for this race was phenomenal. Race Director Lance Dockery sent tons of information pouring over the transom online leading up to the race. The COVID precautions were well handled. There were a lot of runners yet you always felt like there was a volunteer or two on hand to help. An overnight rain that lasted for about 10 hours certainly presented an extra challenge for the volunteers but they managed to preserve a warm and dry place for runners at each aid station.

The race, in short, was a fabulous running experience, and it's located in a great area to have an extra day or two to explore. Don't miss the Antietam Battlefield under any circumstances, but also leave some time to visit the historic towns of Sharpsburg, Frederick, and Harpers Ferry. The American Civil War is probably the most consequential event in the history of the United States, and Antietam was one of the war's most consequential battles. If you're curious about what makes America America, here is a good place to explore that question.



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*Photo X. Mauban*

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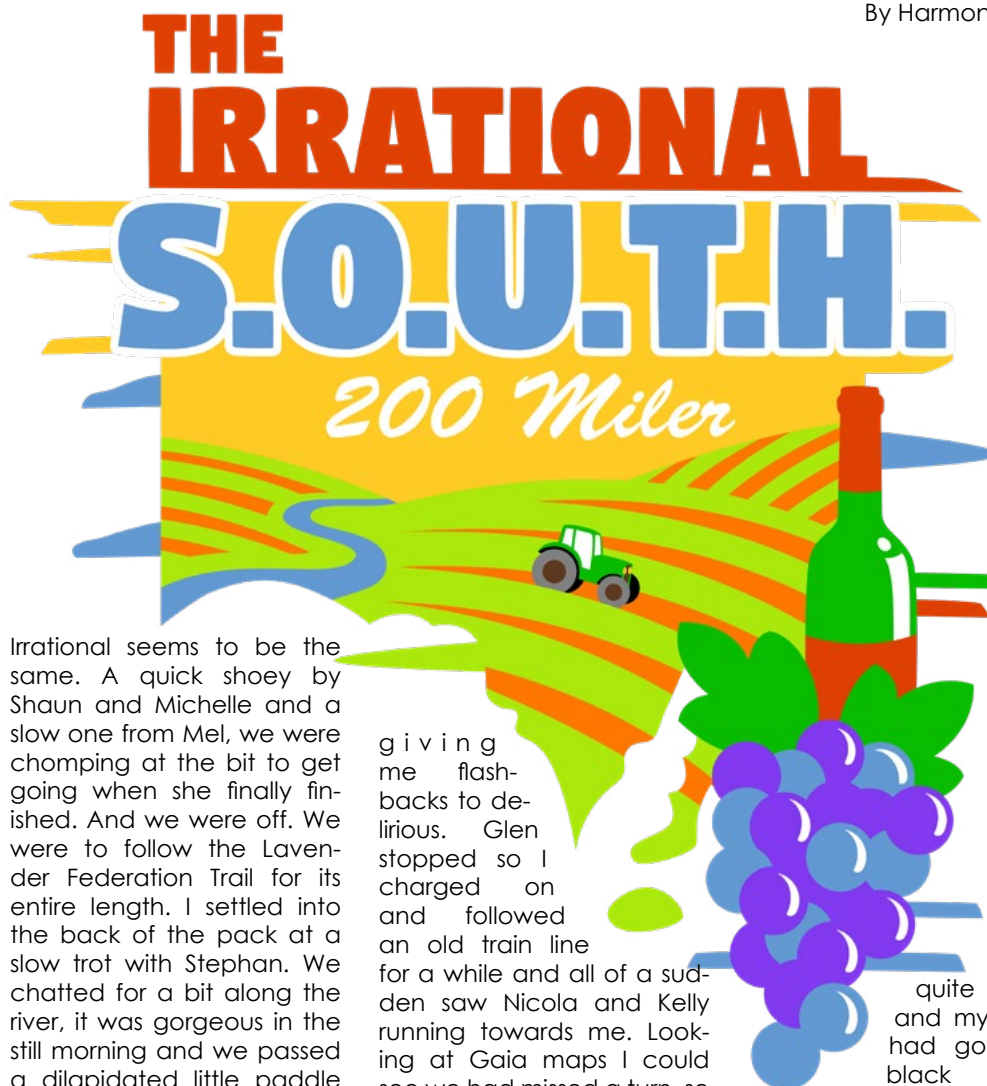
*of* **MULTI-DAY ULTRAMARATHONERS**

Irrational SOUTH 200 Miler has been my 'A' race for way too long. 2020, I was all pumped to run it but we all know what happened. By mid - March with no job, I had more time to train and counting my blessings I refocused on the October rescheduling. Uncle Mark's border restrictions soon had that canned too. Oh well, roll the entry over to June 2021 and I shifted my focus to Delirious WEST in February. One lockdown later and the delirious rug was pulled from under my feet. But U know what, third time (well fourth haha) is a charm and I couldn't quite believe it when my daughter Juliet and I were actually on a plane flying to Adelaide.

After a restful night in an Airbnb in Adelaide, Ted, my step dad picked us up and drove us to Murray Bridge (he had driven over from Perth with my caravan, I nicknamed it Winterfell for the race, my very own castle). We checked in, had the briefing, watched my daughter do the silly op shop opposite sex fun run for crew and vollys and then a lovely roast dinner at the pub. After some last minute shopping at Chemist Warehouse for hand warmers (I got the last pack) we retired to our motel room, I got my kit ready and crashed out. I slept ok but Juliet had set her alarm for half an hour before mine so I was pretty grumpy that she had robbed me of the sleep. It was an omen of how my sleep plan would unravel in the days to come.

Quick stop at Macca's for a breakfast of champions (hash browns, hot cakes and coffee) and we were straight down to the Bunyip for the start of the race, hiding in the car from the cold. As the light gradually increased, the start line revealed the gantry on the glassy calm majestic Murray River.

Delirious tradition dictates a shoe starts the race and



Irrational seems to be the same. A quick shoe by Shaun and Michelle and a slow one from Mel, we were chomping at the bit to get going when she finally finished. And we were off. We were to follow the Lavender Federation Trail for its entire length. I settled into the back of the pack at a slow trot with Stephan. We chatted for a bit along the river, it was gorgeous in the still morning and we passed a dilapidated little paddle boat that looked so picturesque. I found myself alone but with folks in sight ahead and behind winding out of Murray Bridge.

We came through a tunnel and into Rocky Gully Trail, some very nice single track for a while and I couldn't help but push the pace a little and happened to notice my heart rate going up a little. Probably due to having my buff over my mouth and nose so I backed off. I caught up to Glen and chatted with him for a while about our journeys into running. And for a long time we were running along a heavy duty fence line that was the Monarto Zoo. I ended up seeing bison, giraffes, ostriches and zebras, very endemic to SA. Perhaps not.

Glen stopped me from taking a wrong turn and we were on a sandy single track

giving me flashbacks to delirious. Glen stopped so I charged on and followed an old train line for a while and all of a sudden saw Nicola and Kelly running towards me. Looking at Gaia maps I could see we had missed a turn, so we ran back together and found it. We ran through a campground and then up a road back onto a lovely single-track again following a dried up creek bed before popping out at Aid 1 Highland Rd. Can't remember who it was but she had made these amazing peanut butter balls, soooo good. Thank you.

Nicola had been in and out super quick at the aid station but after about 15 minutes, I caught up to her and we stuck together for a while. We were in a wide field when the heavens opened and we had to get our jackets on quick sticks. It didn't last long but the wind was picking up and I felt much better with it on. We talked about her recent adventure on Stirling ridge walk. I was really unsure of my navigation so I was checking Gaia

quite often and my phone had gone into black and white for some reason, making it harder to see which was annoying but I didn't have the time or patience to fix it. Again at Aid 2 Bondleigh Rd, Nicola was in and out in a flash while I lingered and enjoyed some hot buttered spuds and various pastries, yum thank you.

Out of Aid 2, I headed down a steep road and then ribbons led me through a gate and up an even steeper fence line. It was a doozy and took me a while at a slow slog to crest it to which I was greeted with a view of Nicola rejoining the trail as she had gone wrong again. We muddled through the next section of fields and fence lines together. We soon realised that the marker instructions were really precise: 'walkers follow fence' meant follow fence until the next marker. This was a bit difficult as sometimes the

Photo by Ian Lilburn

fence would peter out to nothing so we would have to use Gaia to make sure we were on track. Shaun the ED joined us for about a kilometre which was nice, I think he likes to try and run with everyone at least once during the race just because he's a top bloke.

I was running alone again, the wind was picking up and I was going over stile after stile along fence line after fence line big roller coaster ups and downs but all gradually up to one last climb at Mount Beevor. It was blowing a gale up there so after a quick pic it was back down again, along a ridge. I caught up to Katie and we headed down, down, down the hill to Aid 3 Harrogate Rd. I was ahead of schedule but glad to see Ted and Juliet there, my crew for the first time since the start.

Nicola, like a machine, was in and out and Katie was quick too. I sat down and enjoyed some amazing spuds and donuts. An RMA volly I'd been chatting with on FB, Beth introduced herself. I tried to dig out my head torch from my pack as I knew I'd need it in the next leg. I'm so glad I did as I couldn't find it anywhere and realised it was missing. Thank God I hadn't waited until I was out in the trail and it got dark to try and find it. Maybe it had fallen out in my haste to get my raincoat on in the downpour earlier. Anyway, it was gone and I had to grab one of my spares from the ute. I could feel the temperature dropping rapidly and I decided to swap into a dry top for the next leg as the wind was picking up too. This took a bit of time and it was soooo cold but soon I was ready to go again.

Climbing out of the Aid station and back onto the trail along a ridge top fence line, I barely warmed up in a bitter wind and the rain was sideways as I battled against it, hoping the trail would



drop off the ridge or change direction soon. It seemed like forever but eventually I emerged into a valley and onto roads. Just before the sun went down, I saw a lonely lamb in a field crying it's lungs out, it sounded so forlorn, it broke my heart. I hope it found its mumma and flock. I put my music on to cheer me up.

As it got dark, it got even colder and windier. I was getting so tired but I dared not slow down too much so I could stay warm. I used my music to rev me up and keep me going. Thankfully the reflective trail markers were a lot easier to spot in the dark with a head torch. Before I really knew it, I was running on a road and into Aid 4 Tungkillo.

I had beaten my crew there, so I sat down and had a couple of different cups of soup, some lovely jelly slice and sorted out my pack for the next leg. I was getting quite cosy in that warm hall so I decided I might have to leave soon. The lovely Naomi from Glen's crew literally gave me the long sleeve shirt off her back to wear and Sarah also lent me a thick merino top. I'd just finished dressing when Ted and Juliet arrived. I grabbed a dry rain jacket, and Juliet put some hand warmers in my merino gloves and I was off again.

I don't really remember much about this leg. More Stiles, more fencelines. Cows dim glowing eyes in my head torch. Juliet's hand warmers were heaven. Trying to move as fast as my tired legs could carry me. The wind was relentless. I had 3 buffs on my head and face but I really wished I had grabbed a beanie, lesson learnt. So I had to keep the hood of my jacket on to keep warm but the weight of it with all its full pockets was causing havoc on my neck and thoracic. I knew I was going to have to figure out something different for the next night but just had the grin and bear it.

Soon I was on the road and I was pretty sure I could see the lights of Springton, but the next minute the trail turned away from the lights. Oh well on I trudged, then turned to see the lights again and slowly saw them get bigger only to turn away, doh! Then finally I knew I was on the spur trail into Springton as I could see the other arrows, yes. I got into Aid 5 Springton an hour earlier than scheduled at 1am.

The volly there freaked me out a little when he said the cut off at the next aid station was 9am as I was planning a sleep here but it was soon agreed that what was in the manual was correct 12 noon. I was extremely relieved to retire for the prescribed 3 hours sleep. As I'd

gotten in earlier it was more like 3.5 hours. After a heavenly hot shower, it was divine to be horizontal. I slept ok but everytime Juliet moved in her sleep I would wake and then notice the soreness in my feet. I was warm and I did dream but it wasn't the most satisfying of sleep. And sorry for TMI, but I woke up on Day 1 of my cycle (perfect timing, boo). I was up and out of the aid station by 5.50am.

I have since found out that Springton is one of the coldest parts of the area with local pipes regularly freezing in winter. The predawn chill and wind was bitter. I was just finishing the spur trail, when the sweep caught up to me and we chatted as it began to get light. I had expected to be last as it was my strategy to get to sleep before the sleep station and I knew most would overtake me while I slumbered. I'm so glad he was with me as he stopped me missing a left turn over a stile into a paddock off the road. Apparently Stephan and Glen had not been so lucky and I quickly caught up to them both and overtook them.

There were some pretty valleys and we followed a river for a while. So many big roos around which bound over the fences away from me easily. I remember thinking they were show offs "but could U run for 200 miles, skippy?!?!". Into more farm-

land, there was a gorgeous rocky ridgeline hill. Waiting for me to climb the stile and into his paddock was a beautiful palomino horse. He gracefully walked over for a tickle, I wish I had something to feed him but he was happy with the tickles and as I continued, I looked back to see him looking down the trail patiently waiting for the next runner. I wonder if he got any more runner love.

More fences, more Stiles, rolling hills, stony house ruins. I was gradually gaining on two runners. I was focused on them and not on my footing, when I twisted my ankle, felt it pop and face planted on the grass. I lay there for a while a bit stunned and in a bit of pain. Felt sorry for myself for about 10 seconds before deciding to get up and test it. Experience has taught me to always test it before getting too worked up about a twisted ankle. It was a bit sore but I walked it out, caught the runners who turned out to be Wilma and Andy. They reminded me of Cheryl and Mark from our WA tribe. Friends sticking together no matter what, for every single inch of the race. Amazing admiration for that kind of relationship.

I could see Keyneton before I got to it. It looked so far away and I was concerned when the trail turned away from it again but realised we weren't actually heading into town but to a hall. There was a photographer just before I arrived and I mustered a jog and a couple of little jumps. In the warm hall at Aid 6, I found my daughter asleep on a bench under a heater. I tucked into some soup and coke and coffee and pastries. I had A LOT of cups on the go and Ted cooked me some mushies in truffle oil, yum, but I could only get through half of them.

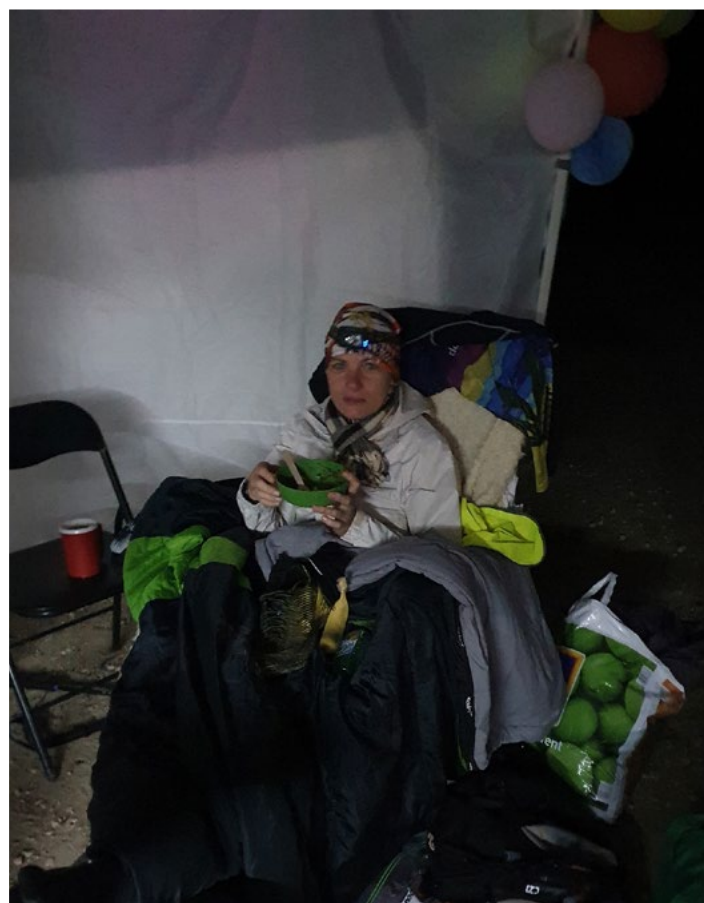
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Mel 'the Vegemite Sambo making champ' at Delirious, canaried a Vegemite sandwich sitting on the table for me and emphatically gestured for me to NOT eat them. Friends don't let friends eat bad Vegemite sandwiches. Thanks for taking one for the team, Mel. Heather checked out my ankle. There was no swelling, only slight bruising, only slightly tender to touch. All good to go.

A few months before I had put the call out on the main Running Mums Australia page for any South Aussie Mummas who might want to pace me for some night sections of the race. The response was overwhelming and in one post, a couple of days of group chat, I had every single leg from Keyneton to the Finish covered by 6 amazing SA RMA. I'm a very social runner, love meeting new people and a good yarn distracts me from the pain and the distance/time. Even though I didn't know these ladies I knew we had enough mutual interest to while away the hours.

So with some excitement, I picked up my first pacer Melissa. She was a local from Truro near the next aid station and had hitched a ride with a school mum to Keyneton and planned to run the 3.5km home after she finished. I felt confident that I had a local with me who knew the trail well and I could tell she was quite proud of her stomping ground, pointing things out to me that only a local would know. I never had to worry about navigation and barely got my phone out trusting her completely. At the start I had a good jog/walk rhythm going although toward the end there was less jogging and more walking and sighing. She showed me where the trail went past a road that led to her house and explained that's the reason she could never do this race as she would be too tempted to just go home hahaha.

We entered into a rocky field of ankle busters and headed down towards a huge



rocky gorge. I was glad to have her as she picked a better line through the scattered boulder creek line than the track markers did. Once out of the gorge, we had a big climb through more ankle busting fields to the top of the hill. More fields, more Stiles, the light was starting to disappear and the wind was feeling colder in the afternoon gloom. The Aid 7 Sturt Hwy aid station loomed and we arrived. I sat down in front of the fire and ate some vegie casserole, I thanked and farewelled Melissa, she hopefully got to warm up on her 3.5km run home. I was a bit behind schedule but decided to try and get 2 hours sleep as fatigue was setting in hard as it got dark and the next section was long and hilly.

Juliet accidentally miscalculated sleep time and woke me up at 7pm after only just over an hour's sleep. I was so grumpy to once again have my precious sleep in-

errupted but my back did feel better for lying down. Even in the caravan I could feel the deep chill in the air and decided to think more about my layers. I put a merino layer of my Mum's on (she had thrown them in at the last minute, just in case, thanks mum knows best) then a tech shirt, my trusty op shop British hiking jacket with a million pockets that was fast becoming my best friend, then my hydration vest, 3 buffs, blessed beanie, Juliet's hand warmers in gloves, scarf and finally a long down jacket on top in case I was super slow and freezing. I also had track pants over my legging and shorts combo. A welcome addition was also my hiking poles for the first time in the race.

My next pacer Nicki was patiently waiting by the fire in the dark night. She grabbed a last minute fluffy jumper tied around her waist in case I was super slow. I had an experimental little jog and de-



cided it wasn't gonna happen. My left foot/ankle was sore and I was so tired, like I hadn't even slept at all. After about a km I had warmed up and tied the down jacket around my waist. About 2km after I stopped and took my tracky dacks off too and they went around my waist. Luckily I have a fairly ample length waist, for superfluous clothes. It wasn't as windy as the night before but still cold and they were light enough that I wasn't sorry I'd worn them. I might still need it yet...

We settled into a good power hike rhythm and chatted, I noticed that her navigation skills were not as good as Melissa's and she freely admitted she sucked at directions so I knew I would have to have my phone out and pay attention. We got to a creek through a little gorge and had to pick our way over rocks from marker to marker, crossing the creek lots of times. It was quite frustrating and slow going. I started to really think at this point that I was in some kind of purgatory as I felt like I was making no progress at all. At one point we had stopped on a little risen bend in the creek and I tracked a big black squat beast moving very quickly down the creek bed with my head torch. I asked Nicki what it was but she said she didn't know. I thought it might have been a feral pig. I found out later that it had probably been a wombat. Yay! I've never seen a wombat in the wild. It's a shame I didn't know that's what it was right then. I didn't know they could be black.

Coming out of the creek bed and back into farms and then tracks we chatted about Nicki's Ironman aspirations this December in Busso and her four kids. As we came into the tiny town of Dutton we saw goats in the fields and I thought of my daughter, she loves goats. Now on roads I could feel the fatigue setting in hard and I got quieter and quieter. I was allowing my eyes to shut occasionally as the mix of bitumen and flat gravel roads was like a holiday compared to the farmland and gorges we had come through. I mentioned being desperate enough for a dirt nap but Nicki said no. I told her it was a 200 miler thing and all the Americans and top runners did it, but she still said no. On we went...

I was starting to stagger and could barely keep my eyes open, it was a kind of karma I guess as my daughter Juliet had just completed a 50 mile ultra with me in May and for the last 25km all she had wanted to do was lie down and go to sleep but I had kept her moving. I asked Nicki one last time and she succumbed to my request but seemed doubtful that it would work. I just said I'm gonna lie here, wake me in 10 minutes. As I closed my eyes it looked like the sky was falling down, just like chicken-licken. It was cold but felt so good to be flat and close my eyes. I curled my hands into

my chest, used my track pants as a pillow and had my down jacket pulled down my legs. My mind started wandering and I was dreaming about my son Jimmy playing with Juliet. My hip was uncomfortable and I had to move it a few times but got back into that same dream straight away. When Nicki woke me it felt like I'd been there for at least half an hour but it had only been 12 minutes. Wow! I felt so much better. Not fresh as daisy by any stretch of the imagination but a lot more alert and ready to go again. And the sky wasn't falling down anymore! I always thought I was too much of a princess to ever take a dirt nap but here I had popped that cherry.

We were back into fields

again, over stiles, following fences, it was gradually getting hillier and the ground more uneven with the camber and little tussocks or rocks. We came to a blessed flat grass section and up ahead I saw a tiny miniature friesian cow about 6 inches tall. It was grazing and then pulled its head up to look at me, with its eyes glowing orange and I thought that was so cool they bred tiny cows here. As I got closer it turned into a rock. Oh boy!

Further along, I saw a miniature kangaroo grazing then it lifted its head and hopped a few inches off the trail. As I got closer it turned into a leaf. I was starting to stagger and I actually was enjoying the sensation of feeling drunk. We were going up a steep rocky fence line with

quite a steep drop to our left when Nicki said I had to have another dirt nap now. Ok mum and down I went. This time I was completely comfortable, like I was lying on the most luxurious mattress and I was out like a light and didn't stir until Nicki woke me again after 10 minutes. It felt a lot longer for me and I was much refreshed and revived.

This was good because my navigation had to be en pointe over fields following markers up to Leake lookout. We reached the top rather anticlimactically as we couldn't see any of the promised sweeping views in the pitch black moonless night. So down the other side we went, followed fences, over stiles, followed markers through fields until

it instructed us to follow a fence down probably about 30% gradient. Surely that is not right. Check Gaia, yep that's the way. There were rocks and little tussocks and the soil in between was treacherously slippery. First Nicki slipped onto her bum and then I did. We tried throwing some zigs and zags in to break up the descent but we were getting further away from the fence. Whenever we got back close to it we would start slipping and sliding again. It seemed to go on forever but eventually we made it to the bottom. I'm not sure whether I'm glad I did that in the dark or not, that's one section I would love to go back and see during the day.

A few more fences, hills and stiles and I made it to Aid 8 Leake Pass Rd just before 5am. Everyone said I had a really good time through there. Dirt naps for the win! I thanked and farewelled Nicki. Her other half was waiting for her to take her home and then she had to go to work. What a trooper.

Ted couldn't bring the caravan up there and Juliet was sleeping in the front. Katie was just vacating the one and only stretcher so I decided to lie there and try and get some solid sleep. Ted got me some earplugs and a pillow and threw a couple of sleeping bags on me and I was out like a light. I stirred a couple of times when the vollies were moving around or talking but it was a good sleep. I woke up to the smell of sausages cooking and feeling the cold from underneath me. I was shivering. The morning light was doing nothing to warm me yet. I'd had about 2 hours and again it didn't feel quite enough. Wilma and Andy were there and just being served their sausage sizzles and I asked if there was another of those bad boys for me. Yep, breakfast of champions, thank you. It was good to go again.



Photo by Ian Lilburn

## IRRATIONAL S.O.U.T.H 200 MILE RACE

By Nick O'Neill

The Irrational S.O.U.T.H 200-miler is a 200 mile (326km) point-to-point trail race, run almost entirely on the Lavender Federation Trail in South Australia.

It leaves Murray Bridge riverside in Murray Bridge SA and terminates in Clare SA.

The race is the second instalment of Ultra Series WA's 200 mile series, the first being Delirious W.E.S.T run in Western Australia.

The inaugural race, which finally got off the ground after Covid-19 and several false starts was run on the 9th of June 2021; the final wash-up of border restrictions meant that only 17 racers would toe the line.

The race commitments begin for runners the day prior, with check-ins, pre-race brief and the lighter entertainment of the 'crew and volunteer' race. This 4km race takes the participants from the Murray Bridge Motor Lodge, dressed in opposite sex style clothing

bought from the op shop, to the Murray Bridge Hotel. The costumes were entertaining and not entirely weather-friendly with a trio of gents wearing skimpy Hawaiian style coconuts and skirts in biting cold and drizzling rain.

The morning of the race was seasonably cold but free from rain. On the banks of the Mighty Murray River spot-trackers are checked, a final photo opportunity and a dedication to the ancestral owners of the land. It is time for the countdown. Like its sister event, the race is begun once each race director has skulled a beer from a shoe, the now iconic start line ceremony.

The first section is 24km on a gradual incline, with a mix of footpath, country road and single trail. The runners follow the footpath along the Murray before skirting the outer limits of the town then angling their way north towards the train line. Before reaching the train line runners jump rock to rock under an

overpass then

Following a craggy single trail along the creek, clear of the creek, runners follow alongside the boundary of the Monarto Safari park, which turning right will potentially give you sights of zebra, buffalo and giraffes. Really! Not early delirium ;). Following the boundary, you'll encounter the train line and following the trail markers turn left, vigilance is required as the turn off this straight can be easily missed. Turning left you will pass an oval onto a local road and travel along this till the next marker directs you into some farmland. A lovely sweeping section through some young tree growth along the banks of the creek until you meet the Highland Rd aid station crew. Usual fanfare and treats welcome you warmly before sending you on your way for the shorter 16km section to Bondleigh Rd.

Following the road for a couple kilometres you will climb a stile (ladder to cross a fence) and cut along the fence through the paddock, before picking up some more road. This section seems to be on repeat: climb stile into paddock, climb stile onto road, climb stile into paddock.



Markers give the description of your actions, 'Walkers follow fence', 'Walkers follow road', 'Walkers follow track'. A nice little downhill frolic will see you reach the aid station at Bondleigh Rd, check-in check-out, and prepare yourself for the first section of more consistent climbs. Mountain climbers may not think the hills are much, but they certainly give you something to think about with their relentless regularity.

The 17.2km section is hilly, the weather can be chilly and this year's instalment had a cutting wind making you earn every 'summit'. The Beevor lookout at the top of the last climb provided some great views of the surroundings and a grand photo opportunity, but damn it was cold! A lovely (sarcasm) little detour on the way down to the aid station at Harrogate Rd added an extra climb to get back on course after a refuel and check-in.

Tungkillo is the next stop on the itinerary, a small town 19kms from the previous checkpoint with a friendly community, who happened to set up the hall as the aid station, provid-

ing warmth, hot food, coffee and respite from the elements. Depending on your timing, this aid station provides a chance to change into fresh clothes, and your night attire, high visibility vests are mandatory in addition to a head torch.

The next delight comes in the form of 27.2km of mostly paddocks of undulating scenic farmland by day, undulating rocky grassland by night, many stiles to be crossed, and by night keeping your eye on the markers is recommended.

This brings you to Springton, another small village, but if timed correctly the aid station is directly across from the local pub. Crews may use this while they wait as they anxiously peer out the window to see if a headlamp is approaching. Rinse, repeat, eat, warm up, check-in, check-out then stretch out the legs and push the final 23kms into Keyneton, the first of 4 sleep stations. A sleepy hamlet with a warm heated hall set up as the sleep station, a welcoming sight especially if the night is similar to 2021.

Waking up at Keyneton, refueling is recommended for the 29.3km picturesque section to the Sturt Hwy crossing aid station. An easy few kms on road to shake the sleep out of the legs turns into rolling paddocks and navigation around fallen trees whilst following an old rock fence. The last 7 or so kms will give you the opportunity to traverse paddocks to the gorge, a great sight, with rock-hopping and wildlife sightings guaranteed.

An aid station attendant will accompany runners across the Hwy then send you on the way through the hill; this section was changed from the original plan, for the better, although most were frustrated by the convoluted section, you get some grand views, pass by numerous wombat warrens, criss-cross creek beds and reach the Leakes pass Lookout which gives you a long range view of the countryside. Friendly aid station volunteers listen patiently to your tales of woe while feeding you.

The change in Leakes Pass means that the push to Eudunda sleep station is shortened by at least 2kms. Eudunda provides warm showers in addition to the other welcome fayre available. This section I found pleasurable early on; nice and reasonably flattish, easy to navigate and I even spotted some wombats. Notable course markers include: 'Follow creek for 1.8kms' and a long section of 'Walkers follow road', which at the time was very welcome. Excitement builds when the lights of Eudunda can be seen from the road before a spanner is thrown in the works; and you once again enter paddocks to wander towards the Holy Grail of Sleep Stations. Not without working for it, these particular paddocks seem to enjoy ducking down into valley after valley after valley. Choosing to shower is optional but highly recommended; refreshed you can push to the aptly named Inspiration Point aid station 21.8kms distant. Some early paddock navigation followed by country road; you are treated to some easily reached views, a fire and tasty eggs and bacon.

The next 23.2kms starts with a stile crossing, then traversing the range there are some ruins to admire, sheep to talk to, and kangaroos to call Skippy. The windmill line watches you navigate your way across the hill before crossing over and down into Waterloo, another sleep station in a fully equipped hall, this aid station provides its customers with a variety of warm and cold foods to suit all tastes.

26.4kms of quiet country roads makes navigation of the run to Mintaro easy, a slight rise and fall of terrain and the potential to catch up some time is accessible. A chance to lay your head down if you want, eat a burger and prepare yourself for the last 'big' climb of the run.

The 21.9km run into Penwortham starts on a bitumen road, this gives you about 5kms of reasonable flat surface before following a driveway to the base of a tall range, the next portion has a relentless climb following a fence, after several kms you are treated to the inevitable downhill, overlooking the township of Watervale a frolic downhill is an enjoyable experience. Navigating the main street of Watervale you duck right and pick up the Riesling trail, which is followed till the glorious lights of Penwortham and the final aid station greet you like an old friend at the airport.

The final section was found to be navigationally challenging; if you have a pacer pray they can help. Whilst not as challenging climbs as the previous section, there are many and frequent, run mostly on common trail; you reach a lookout, you descend, you climb again. Some friendly single trail before finally ejecting you into town, you follow the streets backwards and forwards and eventually reach the BP service station oasis. The task to finish off this final 21km section of the epic 200 mile adventure is a straight run down the main street of Clare for 3kms into the Clare caravan park where the welcoming sight of the finish line looms large and the cheers of the crowd and immortality awaits.

The mortality rate for the event was impressive for a small field with only 2 runners falling victim to injury and having to withdraw.



# LYNDA AND CATH'S SANDSTONE TRAIL CHALLENGE

Fuelled by salted potatoes and a mid-life crisis, on Saturday 24th April, Lynda Searby and Catherine Lawrence completed their first ultra, running from Whitchurch to Frodsham on the Sandstone Trail in the northwest of England. Here's Lynda's account of training for and completing the challenge.

Three years ago, aged 41, I set myself a life goal: to run an ultra before I turned 45.

For many readers who regularly run 30, 40, or even 50 miles, this might not seem particularly ambitious.

For me, as a freelance writer and mother of three who spends most of life frantically juggling copywriting commissions with kids' activities and PTA meetings, it was a big deal.

I am a moderately paced club runner (Northwich Running Club) but would describe my athletic ability as 'recreational' rather than 'elite'. Most of my training takes place after the school run, flanked by the three other founding (and only) members of our informal running club 'Mums on the run' and our four-legged friends.

Canine companions  
It was my dogs that got me into running about seven years ago. They are working cocker spaniels, a breed that is renowned for having insatiable energy. In an attempt to tire them out, I took up running. Then I entered a 10K. Then a half-marathon. Then I discovered I loved trail running. Next thing I

was training for the Grizedale Montane Trail 26 Marathon. Then the Snowdonia Trail Marathon.

An ultra was the logical progression. My running buddy Cath and I entered the Sea 2 Summit ultra – 32 miles with 7000ft of elevation along the Offas Dyke Path. The race was scheduled for the last weekend in April 2020.

However, I struggled to muster the motivation to take my mileage to the next level, so when the pandemic forced the cancellation of this event, inwardly I was relieved. I simply wasn't prepared.

My entry was rolled over to April 2021 and this time, I was ready, thanks to running PT Anne Chinoy.

Previously, when I had trained for hilly distance events, I had cobbled together my own training plan, which involved one long run every two weeks, hill rep sessions whenever I could fit them in and pilates to prevent injury. Nutrition didn't come into it.



### Strategic training

Anne's approach was far more strategic. She devised a 21-week programme for getting us from half-marathon to ultra fitness. This prescribed five runs per week: two easy and one tempo/speed/hill rep weekday sessions with back-to-back or long runs at the weekend. The focus with the longer runs was time on feet rather than mileage, although the plan did include two 20-mile runs and a marathon in week 14.

We tested out different nutrition strategies and by week 17, when we did a 5.5 hour 'time on feet' run in the Peak District, we were confident we had nailed it: a banana 45 minutes in, followed by hourly snacks thereafter. We alternated between savoury (salted new potatoes) and sweet (home baking). Hydration was a combination of water and Tailwind.

What really helped this time round was the amount of strength training we did in the months leading up to the ultra. Gyms were closed, but Anne designed twice-weekly core, leg and upper body strengthening sessions delivered via Zoom and utilising equipment we had at home, such as kettlebells,

dumbbells, stability ball, resistance band and TRX. Lunges, squats, dead bugs, jack knives, crunches, bridges, press ups, hamstring curls and runner's planks all became second nature.

As the date of the ultra neared, the pandemic raged. Once again, the race organisers were forced to postpone.

### Going it alone

At this point, Cath and I decided to do

our own ultra. With the Welsh border closed and government advice to stay local, the obvious course was the Sandstone Trail.

This 34-mile trail traces the ridge of sandstone that rises dramatically from the Cheshire plain. The landscape varies from farmers' fields and canal paths to forest trails and lowland heath, interspersed with historic landmarks. It is undulating (4000ft of elevation) and takes

in several hills that reward thigh-burning climbs with panoramic views, although those who like their terrain extreme and their peaks high might find it tame.

Most walkers start at Frodsham and follow the route south, ending at Whitchurch, but we chose to run south to north, covering the flatter Llangollen Canal stretch early on. Our rationale was that flat miles would seem interminable on weary legs.

Sections of the trail (in particular the field just north of Beeston Castle) can get notoriously muddy after prolonged rainfall. We were fortunate with the weather and underfoot conditions, which were unusually dry, although the warmer temperature meant we had to carry more liquid. With no aid stations along the way, we had to be completely self-sufficient.

### Civilised start

We set off from Whitchurch at 8:30am and covered the early miles with ease. We left the canal at Willey Moor Lock and cut through the Cheshire plain before our first ascent onto the ridge past Maiden Castle and onto Bickerton Hill.

After descending Bickerton, it was up to Raw Head, which at 227m (746ft) above sea level is the highest trig point, then Bulkeley Hill. But at this stage I wasn't complaining about the hills. This section of the route is trail running at its best; woodland paths, pine trees, tree-root dodging, rock hopping and stunning vistas.

When we passed Beeston Castle I was starting to flag a little, but I was buoyed



by hitting the 17 mile mark three and a quarter hours in.

Reaching Delamere Forest seemed to take forever, but the thought of our other two running buddies, who were meeting us at Ashton Road to accompany us for the last eight miles, kept us going. By then, our chatty conversation had subsided and we were focusing on putting one foot in front of the other. My toes were starting to feel the effects of trainers with an unforgiving toe box (Salomon Speedcross 4).

#### The last leg

When Sarah and Hannah came running towards us at 26 miles, I felt so emotional that I could barely hold back the tears. Their bright company went some way to helping us forget we still had ten miles to go, although I could hardly muster a grunt in response to their questions. I was feeling exhausted and slightly nauseous.

A road section after Manley Common gave us the chance to pick up the pace before heading off-road



up Woodhouse Hill. By this point, my breathing was becoming more laboured and my stops more frequent. My whole body was protesting.

When Frodsham golf course came into view, the relief on (navigator) Cath's face was visible. We were on the final stretch. An obligatory photo in front of the memorial on Overton Hill, then it was downhill all the way to the Bear's Paw in Frodsham, where our families were waiting.

We posed for photos, grateful that the monument was there for support, ecstatic and emotional that we had com-

pleted our challenge in just over seven hours.

Never again, we vowed.

Two days later, we signed up to the 35-mile Gritstone Grind in September.





Survivorfest 2021 champion Wayne Gaudet showing his steady determination & strength.

A photograph of a blue running track at an outdoor event. In the foreground, a man in a grey t-shirt and black shorts is running. In the background, there are several black and blue tents. One tent has a sign that says "66 DAYS 7200 KM 1". Other people are visible under the tents, some sitting and some standing. The background shows green trees and a clear sky.

# SURVIVORFEST - POST RACE REPORT

By Michelle Lindstrom

The second annual 24-hour Survivorfest Running Event took place on June 12 and 13, 2021. Yet, due to the pandemic, only the first race in 2019 was an in-person event. Survivorfest raises money and awareness for sexual assault survivors and the Saffron Centre at Sherwood Park, an Alberta-based sexual assault centre.

It was a hard call to make, but due to health restrictions in Alberta where the event is hosted, Survivorfest's race team decided on May 2nd to cancel 2021's in-person event and switch gears to a live-streamed virtual event.

Live-stream race commentators (event volunteers) gave hourly updates on athletes, sponsors, and the importance of the Saffron Centre's elementary and high school educational programming.

"Athletes were asked to share some personal information prior to the race so commentators could describe to the audience their athletic history, reasons for running Survivorfest, while also giving hourly status updates," says Laura Townsend, Survivorfest co-founder and race director.

Last year, the Association of Canadian Ultramarathoners (ACU) chose Survivorfest to be the official 2021 six-hour and 24-hour Canadian National Championship. But due to the pandemic, it was uncertain if the possibility would still be there for athletes to qualify for Canada's 24-Hour Team, which would then compete in Romania for the World Championship 24-Hour in October 2021.

On June 2, just 10 days before Survivorfest, the ACU announced it would form a 2021 team, providing the motiva-

tion seven athletes needed to organize their own in-person, physically distanced race at Strathcona Athletic Park's (SAP) 400m track in Sherwood Park, where Survivorfest would have been held, if in-person.

SAP holds the International Association of Ultrarunners (IAU) bronze certification through Survivorfest, enabling those seven athletes to rent the facility, timing equipment through Zone 4 Timing System, and gather their own crew of one or two volunteers in an attempt to qualify for Team Canada.

One satellite Survivorfest race was organized in Montreal, Quebec and led by Stephanie Simpson, who obtained an IAU bronze certification for McGill University's track to be considered an ACU-qualifying location for her and six other athletes to race on.

In Alberta, 19 solo athletes and two relay teams, a foursome and twosome participated in [Survivorfest's celebration of strength, sacrifice, and survival](#) in various locations in-and-around Sherwood Park, including 400m-loops within athletes' neighbourhoods, a campground, SAP's track, an old asphalt track, and one treadmill (for 100 miles!!). Four solo athletes chose to do the six-hour event, and the rest chose the 24-hour option.

As a surprise kick off to the event, Townsend arranged for local celebrity and famed Edmonton Oilers hockey anthem singer, Robert Clark, to sing "O Canada" from the middle of SAP's track for everyone, in person and via the livestream, to hear.

After that, Townsend began her "roving race director" duties,



requiring some of the sixteen loyal volunteers to chauffeur her around for much of the 24-hours, visiting virtual athletes at their sites.

"I wasn't motivated to do a virtual race," says Townsend. "It took a while to wrap my brain around the idea, but when I thought about roving around to visit all the virtual locations and athletes, then I got excited."

The roving crew stocked up with goodies from XACT Nutrition to coordinate two visits at each of the 12 athletes' locations beyond SAP. By the end, they drove more than 550 kilometres.

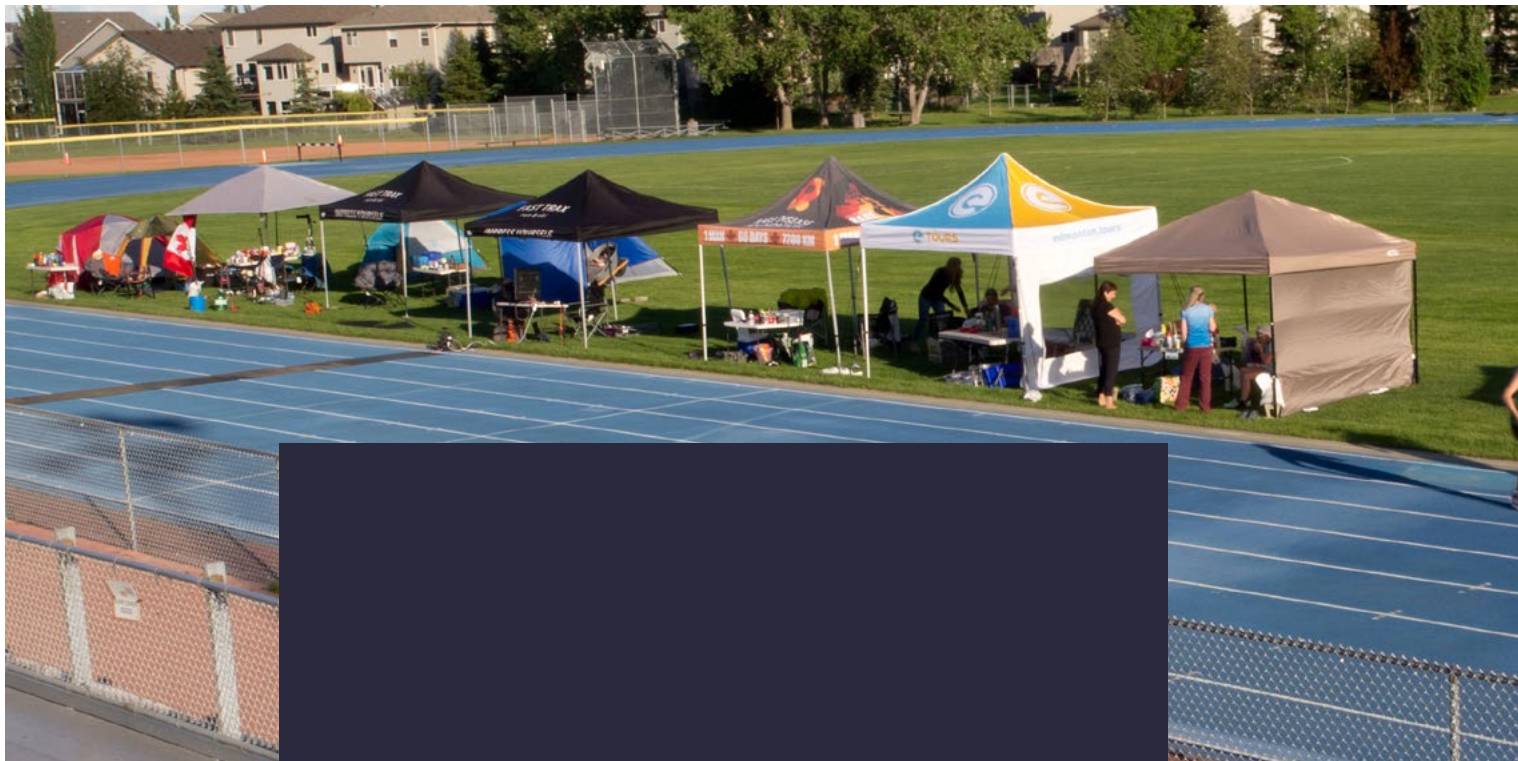
And although Townsend did not participate in the race, she kept up with her daily 30-min-or-more run streak, reaching day number 589 and 590 while running alongside some participants during her roving tour visits. (See more about Townsend's running background in Issue 32's "In it Together at Survivorfest")

Despite having fewer athletes than the inaugural event in 2019, this year's donation money is still trickling in, totalling over \$6,000CDN for the Saffron Centre, double 2019's fundraising total.

Another increase this year was the number of belt buckles awarded to athletes who completed over 100 miles (160.9kms), including Wayne Gaudet who ran 213.2kms and Dave Proctor



Dennene Huntley-Pangle grabs some food while her crew works on changing her socks & shoes



with 208.8kms. Both qualified for the Canadian National 24-Hour Team.

Yet for some athletes, the midday sun and late-night chill caused havoc for their record crushing dreams, like Simpson in Montreal, who attempted to break the Canadian Women's 24-hour 100-mile record, and Dave Proctor at SAP in Sherwood Park, who wanted to become the new Canadian Male (40-49 age group) 24-hour record holder.

Even with the many ups and downs of this past year, 2021's virtual Survivorfest had a serendipitous find: each virtual athlete personalized his or her running experience, making it even more community-focused and meaningful than expected.

"It was so impactful to have athletes participating in a variety of ways in their own neighbourhoods," Townsend says. "It was amazing to see."

Race organizers decided that for every second weekend in June, **Survivorfest's** celebration of strength, sacrifice, and survival will have a virtual and in-person option in Sherwood Park, Alberta for survivors, athletes, friends, family, and community members to participate in.



Athlete Adele Salt & RD Laura Townsend share a laugh.

# MY ULTRA JOURNEY - BECOMING THE YORKSHIRE RUNNER

By Neil Harper

As I stood in the car-park of Durham services in 2010 finishing my cigarette, with the taste of a sausage and egg muffin still lingering in my mouth, it did briefly dawn on me that perhaps I wasn't fully prepared for the Great North Run.

My training consisted of one 9 mile run, a hung-over 5 miles on Torremolinos beach and two or three 2/3km runs. Halfway through the race it struck me like a bolt of lightning, I actually loved running and soaking up the energy oozing from the crowds lining the route, including the children throwing water over me as I ran. It turned out lightning does strike twice but the next bolt was of pure exhaustion and lifting each foot became the most honest of battles with myself being the enemy. As I write this it has just become clear that it wasn't the crowds or the bragging rights of completing this distance but since this day in 2010 I have been chasing that feeling. The feeling of being unable to carry on, the feeling of being so close to failure, the feeling of being face to face with my inner demands and refusing to let them win. When I dropped down the last hill and turned the corner for the final mile and the crowds started to build, the atmosphere was growing to a level that I felt like the crowd was now physically helping me wobble to the finish line. I saw quite a few people lying on the side of the road broken and confused, this was something I didn't expect to see but it spurred me on to not become a confused pile of sweat and dismay but to be one of the finishers. 2 hours and 59 minutes after I stood on the start line, I had finally begun my journey to running an ultra-marathon.

From this story you'd expect that the next year I completed an ultra or at the very least a marathon, but it has taken much longer to get the mindset of being 25% confident in completing one. Men will always try something if they are only 25% confident of success whereas women will work hard and/or train until they are 75% sure of success, this does explain why women live longer than men.

From 2010 I spent the next 10 years a bit lost, trying all sorts of different challenges, I started by simply picking one



event/challenge per year the first few happened to be whilst I was travelling around the USA; building a company, buying a house, extending the house, moving home whilst also getting married and raising a family. It's fair to say I had fallen into the trap of consumerism and levitating my status by working 60+ hours a week to build a business which mentally destroyed me and ultimately left me with nothing and fighting for the things I'd forgotten are the things that make a life fulfilling, but this is a whole other story.

The start of getting more serious into one year events was in 2016 when a long term friend ( Fraser Smith-love) and I entered a white collar boxing match ( which I won easily) for charity which very quickly brought my fitness back to point of acceptability and started my return to running albeit only 2/3km at a time. I completed another UWCB match in 2017 and this one pushed me to the limit of my capability and fitness. I was left standing in the middle of the ring broken, sweaty, struggling for breath and with both arms by my side due to 1 point. In the shower after the loss I had a realisation that I had done all I wanted in the ring and wanted to find a longer lived victory that couldn't be so easily taken away by a point.

In 2017 I was sitting in a pre-school committee meeting when a guy called Jason Wilkinson walked up and sat next to me and even though we had just met I was laughing as I had 2 chocolate bars for a 2 hour meeting... I hadn't seen a problem with it at the time but reflecting yet again on the slippery slope of putting the weight back on with no events booked in this was dangerous. By the end of this meeting Jason had convinced me to buy a road bike and in 2 weeks we were pounding the pedals and booked in to bike from Carlisle to Harrogate via Barnard Castle (no eye test required but it was a good spot to stay over).

Jason and I had become firm training partners and trained together for a Triathlon in 2018, a few sportive events including UCI and Tour de Yorkshire, peaking with an ironman 70.3 in 2019. I loved the ironman! Closed roads, big crowds over 6 hours of giving it the beans. But it left me feeling a bit empty... Why didn't I go for the full ironman? Why had I doubted myself? What was I more scared of failing or not attempting? The fact that when I'd tell people I had completed an ironman my friends and mainly my wife would erupt in a chorus of HALF! All in good jest but it was playing on my mind...

How was I going to fill this gap of knowing my limit? But before I could answer this question my business was failing perhaps training for the Ironman (HALF) had caused me to take my eye off the ball, perhaps I didn't want this life of working all hours and trying to fit in my family and feed this ever growing need find fulfilment in competing challenges/ events. In January 2020 we closed the family business which became an unbearable strain on my mental health and my family relationships. What never wavered was the support from my wife, without her amazing stability and ever present sense of humour I shudder to think where I'd be now.

March 2020, Covid 19, furloughs and lockdowns. This gave me the chance to reset my brain and spend 24 hours a day for 6 weeks with my wife and children. April and May 2020 have been the best 2 months of my life coupled with the most worrying. In 2020 a friend of mine called Tom Daniels mentioned he wanted to do the Hardmoors 60, no word of a lie 5 minutes after he told me I'd whipped out my credit card and paid



for my place in September 2021. The training alone for this event has made me do more challenges than I've ever done. Including Harrogate ringway loop ( 34km), 30 day running challenge, running Pen-y-Ghent, Yorkshire 3 peaks (41km), Yorkshire coastal run (25km) along with numerous local trails which I now have a deep love for due to the years I spent trudging around the Scottish wilderness as a child ( again a whole other story). I still have more training challenges to complete before September including Mount Snowden, Scafell Pike, joining Sean Conway in the Yorkshire dales on one of his 15 in 15 national park challenges and some night runs. Needless to say, this isn't a story of completing an ultra-marathon but simply a brief prologue to the main event.

To be continued.....



**Catherine Stoneman** started running in 2011 after a friend persuaded her to enter Edinburgh marathon for charity, since then she has taken on many marathon and ultra-marathon races. By day she works full time as an HR and Operations Director and is also a qualified Pilates instructor.



**Claire Warner** 31 year old student nurse from Cumbria. I love road, trail and fell running and challenging myself with increasing ultra distances. You can follow my running adventures in the Lakes and further afield on Instagram [@clairey152](https://www.instagram.com/clairey152).



**Dan Walker** Hi, I am Dan, since deciding to run a marathon for my 40th birthday I have since clocked up 24 ultras. The biggest being the HM110 and always learning from each one. Currently training to be a PT and owning a black lab I'm always on the move.  
Strava: Dan Walker  
Instagram: [@the\\_running\\_dann](https://www.instagram.com/the_running_dann)



**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.



**Gary Dudney**, is a longtime columnist for Ultrarunning magazine in the USA. He's published two books on the subject of the mental side of running, *The Tao of Running* and *The Mindful Runner* as well as numerous articles in all the major running magazines. He's completed over 200 marathons and ultramarathons, including seventy 100-mile races. His home base is Monterey, California.  
<http://thetaoofrunning.com/>



**Harmony Waite**, From Perth, Western Australia, Harmony is a Mum of 2 who has been running since 2013. She loves really long ultramarathons, exploring trails with her daughter and volunteering at local running events. She has completed a couple of 100 milers and 200 milers and loves to travel for events completing her back to back Comrades in 2018.



**Susan Lister** is a back of the pack ultra runner and Yoga teacher. She provides a variety of online seasonal yoga classes including yoga specifically for runners. She loves to spend her time jogging around her local Scottish trails. Check out her website [Ananta Yoga](https://www.ananta-yoga.com) for more details.



**Michelle Lindstrom** is a Canadian freelance writer, editor, and certified group fitness trainer. She started You Be You (UBU) programs to boost youth's confidence and interest in physical activity, while combating stats of young girls dropping out of sports. Catch Michelle writing articles about people crushing goals, big and small.  
<https://u-b-u.ca/>



**Neil Harper** also known as the Yorkshire runner (@theyorkrunner), I'm 36 years old family man of a girl and a boy with a super supporting wife of 15 years. My main job is in construction materials which I have a passion for but the call of adventure is never far from my thoughts!



**Lynda Searby** is a mother of three and freelance journalist ([www.clevercopy.co.uk](http://www.clevercopy.co.uk)), specialising in copywriting for business-to-business markets. Being self-employed gives her plenty of flexibility on the running front and her two working cocker spaniels – Buddy and Boscoe – are always willing accomplices. A lover of hills and mud, Lynda is a keen trail runner and member of Northwich Running Club's cross-country team, although maintains she is built for utility rather than speed. Lynda is new to the ultra-running scene, having just completed her first ultra - Sandstone Trail Challenge. The speed at which her toenails grow back will determine whether she becomes a regular on the circuit.



**Nick O'Neil** I'm 41 from Western Australia and took up running for weight loss and lifestyle change 6 years prior. The gateway drug of parkrun followed by a progression to half marathons, marathons and then Ultra's. I've since completed 2x 200 milers including this one, 2x 100 Milers, several 100km races and a number of other smaller ultra's.



**Pam Storey** has been running ultras for over 20 years as well as multiday events around Europe. The RD of the annual [AIM Crawley 6/12/24](https://www.aim-crawley.co.uk) hour race, Pam has been a member of RRC for many years and is currently the Chairman of the Council.



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