

# THE TROTTER

Teignbridge Trotters est. 1982



August 2018

## SUZIE-STAR!



If there's one person who's been on an epic journey with their running it's the inspiring and unfailingly positive Suzie Mills.

She talks candidly to Emma Percy about her amazing achievements so far - and what is yet to come... Read inside for more.



## Editor's letter

What a wonderful summer we've had. It's almost been wall to wall sunshine: not exactly great conditions for racing but doesn't it showcase Devon in all its countryside green and topaz-blue sea glory? I've really enjoyed exploring the trails and

taking part in some tough races set in our beautiful county. I hope you've been able to get out and about too. It won't be long before those nights start drawing back in...



But let's not dwell on that for the moment. In this issue we focus on finding your running mojo in great places and with great people. First up is our cover star Suzie who is exploring places with her epic 12marathons in 12months fund-raiser. Read her story on pages 10-12. Our ace coach Jacki Woon gives you an excellent in-depth look into how coaches and leaders go about making sure our running sessions look effortless and Graydon finds his motivation in the mountains on page 13.

I explore why your running (and your running tribe) is more important than you think and Chairman Rog also has a fantastic idea for a run in outstanding surroundings on page 15.

There's plenty in between too. Don't forget we have two more of our own races coming up: the Ladies 10k and the Templer 10. In each case, we're hoping you'll get involved and be a big part of both. There's also the small matter of the Club Championship too and you'll find an update in this issue.

I hope you enjoy the magazine. I'd love to hear your feedback or ideas for what we can include in here in the future. For now, let's make the best of the rest of the summer.

Em x

**RUN HAPPY**  
**RUN GRUMPY**  
**RUN SPEEDY**  
**RUN SLOW**  
**RUN A LITTLE**  
**RUN A LOT**

**JUST RUN**



## STUFF AND NO-NONSENSE. What's new? Here's the news.



Congratulations to **Mark Walker** who successfully landed the London Marathon place offered to the club by the Towersey Foundation. The charity, based in Newton Abbot, provides music therapy for those in palliative care. They offered us one place in next year's London Marathon and, as a local charity, looked to their local running club as their first port of call! Good luck Mark - better get training (and no, that doesn't mean extra beer as a reward for all those extra miles you'll do!).

### QUIDS IN

For those of you who like tucking into some good grub after a Wednesday night training session, you're now going to have to find a whole new one pound as Lou has revised her food prices from £5 to £6. This is still represents great value for money and Lou puts on a great spread each week for us. If you've not tried it, well what are you waiting for? Come and join us!

### WOMBLE RUN

The Womble Run & Run/Walk is coming! At 10am on Sunday 9 September, you're invited to take part in a run that will also involve some litter picking. It will be a one-hour run, or run walk to suit all ages and abilities. Come and help Teignbridge Trotters clean up our local area by joining in on our Womble Run!

Bring the family, bring the kids, bring dogs. There will be a number of groups heading out in different directions for a bit of fun and whilst we are at it, cleaning up the mess others leave behind (that's what the Wombles used to do). Meet at Courtenay Park, Newton Abbot. Arrive 20mins before departure for a briefing and to meet your run, run/walk leader. Wear gloves as rubbish can be icky, or bring your own litter pickers. We will provide rubbish bags and a few pickers too. We will meet back at Courtenay Park afterwards to see how much rubbish we have collected. We will dispose of it all. Event details are on our Facebook page.



### A REMINDER OF THE RULES...

Yes, we know we organise some outstanding races and yes we know it's very hard to resist the temptation not NOT enter but we need to gently remind you, our club members, that you're only able to take part in a maximum of two of the five Trotter races each year. Many of you are brilliant in giving up your free time to help and as our races get more popular, we need as many pairs of hands to help as possible.

Please help us by sticking to this policy and it will help us in not having to bollock people when they fall foul. We hate doing that, we'd rather stick pins in our own eyes than get the hump about these things.

### CAKE IS LIFE

Remember that baking a cake at three of our races (with the exception of the Dartmoor Discovery) will gain you a marshal point. Four marshal points within in a year gains you entry into the draw for one of a number of free entry places into a race of your choice (currently to the value of £75). Two marshal points gets you a free club trip entry and place on the bus. Apart from the DD, where you get a delish pack lunch, all marshals/helpers are entitled to a free tea or coffee at any of our races. Something to accompany all those lovely cakes you can buy!

### BAD NEWS - BIBS ARE BACK

Depressingly, we all need to start wearing reflective bibs from Wednesday 5 September. If you need one, please speak to Jacki Woon who sells them for a fiver. You'll see reminders in our Facebook group too.





## Membership Secretary Kevin Besford gives us the lowdown on who's in the club

We seem to have gone consistent in that the number of new members this issue are the same as last issue. We continue to set a new record membership each month (*well, let's wait until renewal shall we?! - Ed*) and now stand at a total membership of 335. How much higher can we go? Judging by the new faces that keep turning up to try us each week I would say a little way yet.

Renewals for England Athletics have come and gone and it is disappointing to see the number registered with EA has dropped and is now short of 100. If any of you are unsure what England Athletics is or are not sure if it is for you then please ask me and I will fill you in with all the details.

I continue to hear very positive feedback of the club both personally out on the various runs and sessions and via posts on social media which just goes to prove what a great job you are all doing in making everyone welcome. I have been adding more great comments on the membership section of the website so if you have a positive testimonial or experience of the club then please let me know.

The club trip this year was a great success and there is a write-up on that great day on the back page of this issue. Since the last Trotter 11 new members have joined us and so, without further ado, let's give them a big welcome...

**Elizabeth Blakesley**, 27, from Kingskerswell. Elizabeth has joined us as a new addition to the Blakesley family membership. She has started by joining in with the beginners group and has made excellent progress already.

**Narina Shorland**, 35, from Chudleigh. Narina is an experienced runner having previously been a member with Hayle Harriers before moving to Chudleigh. Sure she will be seen on the racing scene in Trotter colours before long.

**Amanda Wallace**, 33, from Newton Abbot. Amanda is another of the growing number of teachers to join the Trotter ranks. She has gone straight into the faster groups very comfortably.

**Alison Prior**, 35, from Totnes. Alison originates from Australia and was encouraged to join by fellow member Sharon Still. She has jumped straight into the Improvers and is enjoying her running in the group.

**Rory Donnelly**, 41, from Totnes. Rory is partner of Alison and took a few weeks longer to take the plunge and come along after Alison had paid a joint membership. Rory has started gently getting into the beginners group but should not be long before he progresses to the Improvers.

**Max Conroy**, 26, from Totnes. Max has until now been running as an individual and done a number of 5k and 10k events. He has also dabbled in cross country and has now decided to take the plunge and join a club - us, of course!

**Steve Fletcher**, 27, from Plymouth. Steve joins us as second claim with his first claim club being Plymouth Harriers. Steve has a preference for shorter events of 5k and 10k though back in April completed his first marathon at Taunton in a great time of 2.59.23. He is hoping this will be enough for a good for age place in London 2019. Steve's half marathon PB is 1.21.23 and is hoping to break 1.20 this year.

**Richard Jellyman**, 33, from Newton Abbot. Richard's Father, Keith, was a Trotter a number of years ago and Richard has picked up the running bug from him. Richard used to run for Staffordshire County at secondary school and is now getting back into running. Richard has a particular liking for cross country and 10k events.

**Kate Cantwell**, 38, from Newton Abbot. Kate has lived in Devon most of her life but in Newton Abbot only for a year. Kate has previously run with Exeter Harriers and a hashing group. Kate has no plans to compete but just to

improve and enjoy her runs and the social side of the group.

**Jason Trevenen**, 47, from Kingskerswell joined recently - welcome!

**Scott Knight**, 39, from Newton Abbot. Scott joined the club very recently having tried us for a few sessions. Scott came to us as a result of recommendation of Emma Ray and the weight loss group he was part of.

It's happy birthday to quite a number of members who celebrated notable birthdays in June and July.

Oli Prouse 35, Kate Williamson 35, Louise Gentry 40, John Holland 40, Chris Jones 40, Paul Sharples Jnr 40, Craig Hobson 45, Becky Heale 45, Adrian Handley 50, Nicky Cowling 55 and Vanessa Hurst 55.

Happy birthday to all and best of luck in your new age categories on race days.



## CALLING THE LADIES!

In a few short weeks our Ladies 10k race will be upon us. New Race Director Tracey Jolly and her army of helpers are already busy preparing for it. Don't forget that this race is one we encourage all our female members to take part in. It's a really enjoyable morning out and you get to explore some lovely rolling countryside lanes. This year prize winners will get a beautiful bespoke piece of glassware and every finisher will receive a special picture courtesy of famed Devon artist John Skinner.

Enter online via [teignbridgetrotters.co.uk](http://teignbridgetrotters.co.uk)

# THE LIFE OF A COACH & RUN LEADER



**There's much more to simply rocking up to club training and legging it around while someone shouts motivating words at you. Here, club committee member and kit manager Jacki Woon (right) explains what's involved in actively leading sessions.**

At the time of writing we have over 300 members in our club and of those, about 40 are approved Run Leaders and Coaches. Most of the Coaches start off as Run Leaders, and have to be approved by the committee and pass a criminal and safeguarding check, known as a DBS. The committee will consider reimbursing a Run Leader for the fee to do a coaching qualification, once that person has shown that they are actively taking coaching sessions.

On each training night the club offers five sessions. Mondays are led runs of differing distance and pace. Wednesday nights centre on coaching with three focussed sessions, although there is also a led run for Improvers and a faster 8-mile run.

Providing this array of options for you, our treasured members, requires much organisation and commitment. At the head of our tightly organised ship is our Coach Co-ordinator Captain Mark Walker. His work goes mostly unnoticed by the majority of our club members but without him there would be no training, and therefore no club!

Every few months Mark asks all leaders and coaches for their availability on each Monday and Wednesday for the forthcoming few months. He persistently chases us to reply - to the point where he names and shames the last few. And yes, his approach does work because he does it so nicely!

Also every few months, Mark calls a meeting of all the coaches and leaders to discuss how things are going, new ideas and thoughts on new sessions etc. There is always a lot of input as everyone has their ideas and has different experiences of different groups, and we all want to keep things exciting and challenging for the club members.

Mark maintains a rolling plan of Wednesday coaching sessions, and meets with Clare Youngman and me to review and tweak this. We have been doing this for a couple of years and hope it is getting better each time. Each Wednesday there are sessions described as Speed, Endurance and Mixed. It's difficult to decide on the sessions sometimes so that they aren't too similar, and to find suitable locations. We try to get a short speed, a longer endurance and a hill session in each week and build these up week on week, but it's not always possible to do this and fit the sessions with a suitable location, especially in the winter when lit areas are harder to find. Brunel gets very boring but it's so close to Rec, is well-lit and quite traffic free so we use it regularly!

We also try to make all the sessions suitable for all abilities. There should be no reason why any member turning up on a Wednesday night can't find at least one of the sessions to try, whatever their experience and ability. These are where you will push yourself and get results. If you haven't tried one yet, please do. If you have any concerns, speak to the coach and they will give you advice and support. We're quite friendly really.

Once the sessions are set, Mark has the unenviable task of allocating coaches to sessions and leaders to all the planned runs. It's not just a case of names being slotted according to availability either as the leaders need to be suitable for the distance and pace they are leading.

So that's it. Job done, right? Yes, well, that would nice. All the leaders and coaches do their roles voluntarily (as



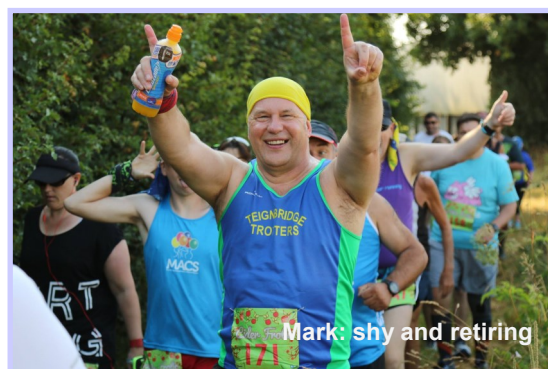
does everyone with any role in the club). Even we get sick and injured, or sometimes life just gets in the way and find we're not going to be able to make it to club but we're down to take a group. What do we do?

We have a coaches Facebook group which we use to discuss sessions, exchange ideas or ask for help if needed. After every club night, each leader/coach adds a post saying how many runners have been in their group and Mark collates all this information so that we can see how many members are turning up for training, what sessions are popular, identify peaks and troughs in numbers and why that might be.

As a leader, when we have a run to lead we need to consider an appropriate route of the right distance. That means thinking about the weather, the terrain, how well-lit the route is and whether head torches are needed, perhaps where the group went the previous week, where there are safe places to cross busy roads etc. Coaching a session also requires planning - is the allocated location suitable, how exactly are you going to run the session, will the numbers in the group affect how you manage the session, how are you going to get the group to the location...etc. There's lots of planning and some of us try the location or recce the route in advance.

One of the main concerns for all the leaders, coaches and the committee is the safety of you, our members. Here's some helpful guidance to keep you safe.

- Listen to your leader/coach regarding the route, the session information and any other instructions.
- Cross roads as a group under the instruction of your leader/coach. Don't follow the herd! When you're deep in conversation with another runner about your last race, you can forget what you're doing and just follow the person in front.
- Wear suitable clothing for the weather and eat/drink sensibly beforehand.
- When running at the front of a group, remember to loop back regularly and when asked to do so by your leader. This ensures the group stays together and no one gets left behind, or gets lost by going too far ahead.
- Don't be afraid to step up to the next group, especially if it's encouraged by your leader. You won't get left behind - let the leader of that group know that it's your first time and they will watch out for you.
- Check the website and Facebook to find out what sessions are on offer and any changes.
- If you decide to leave a group for any reason (for example to run straight home after a session), tell your leader/coach.
- Respect your leader/coach's judgment and decisions.
- Let your coach/leader know if you have an injury or start to feel unwell during the session.
- Wear an In Case of Emergency tag (if you don't know what this is or don't have one, ask any leader/coach or membership secretary Kevin Besford).
- Wear a hi vis bib from the dates given when you're advised to do so. They may not be high fashion but they could save your life. Additional hi vis clothing/accessories are welcome but a bib is still required. Your leader/coach has the authority to refuse you to join the group or cancel the session if you're not wearing a bib.
- Please read the Code of Conduct on the website (under the 'Training' tab).
- Leading/coaching groups is very enjoyable and rewarding. If you'd like to know more speak to any leader/coach and if you think you would like to join our ranks, please contact Mark (pictured). All we ask is that you show lots of adoration to your leader/coach!



Mark: shy and retiring

## LADIES CAPTAIN ELEANOR TAYLOR REFLECTS ON A GREAT SUMMER OF RUNNING SO FAR

WELCOME to all new female Trotters. You made the right decision! Over the past few months, there have been some great runs from lots of female Trotters.



One of the highlights of the Trotters Captains is the Erme Valley Relays, held at the beginning of July, starting and finishing at Ivybridge Rugby Club.

Each runner runs 2.5 undulating miles. 16 women donned their Trotters vests for this event. Mandy Wheeler, Kathryn Steemson, Kim Knight and Tracy Elphick took first prize in the FV45 category, ahead of the next team by nearly four minutes.

With a great time of 16.22, Mandy was the fastest female Trotter on the night. Special mention goes to Becky Harvey, who first wore her Trotters vest at this event last year in a time of 20:45. She was three minutes faster this year!

Although it's only August, a glance at the Club Records shows that six of the women's' have been broken already this year. Jacki Woon and Mandy Wheeler have broken three each! In the Fast Friday in March, Mandy and Jacki broke the FV45 and FV50 10km records. Jacki then moved up an age group and smashed the FV55 Marathon record. It had been 4.00:25 and is now 3.35:28.

In another popular event in Chudleigh in July, Trotter women won first women's team trophy, and were second team as well. Well done again to our ladies team who came first: Mandy, Sarah Pike and 2017 Club Champion Kathryn Steemson. Trotter women also scooped many of the age-group prizes. It's really good to see our females running so well and picking up silverware for their efforts.

Many races have team prizes, where, for example, the first three women in a club count as the first team. This means that all we have to do is turn up and run and land in a team depending on your time – how neat is that! This weekend we are preparing for the first Torbay Relay event, a new running competition. Good luck to all those taking part.

For those taking part in the Club Championship, don't forget Lustleigh 10k is this coming Monday, August 27. September 16 is Relish Running's Killerton Half Marathon and will take you on two laps around the grounds of the National Trust property. Could be a lovely route and a new one for the Champs!

September sees the annual staging of our Ladies 10k on Sunday 23 September. Please do consider taking part in this race. I'm sure you won't regret it!

*Until next time - Eleanor*





## CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP - CHAMP SECRETARY GRAYDON FILLS US IN



While Devon has been basking in glorious warm weather, the Club Championships have been moving full steam ahead.

Most of us have been enjoying the nice weather and getting out on some different routes, although the heat is not always great for running or racing in; nevertheless, Trotters have been performing well.

We've had Dawlish Dash, Torbay Half, Muskies Madness, Otter Rail (Club Trip) and Chudleigh Carnival, and at the time of writing there's still the ever popular Lustleigh 10k to go along with Relish Running's Killerton Half Marathon to come.

Thoughts are already turning to 2019 what races will be in the Club Championships. With so many fantastic ones close by it's sure to be a hard choice again. We'll endeavour to have a good mix of favourites and new races.



A potential issue was averted with Torbay Half as the ever-present issue of non-EA affiliated Trotters not being listed as Trotters in the race results reared its head again. Fortunately, Chairman Roger Hayes spoke with the race RD, and the results were amended to show all of our runners as Trotters, which is required for an individual to be counted for the Club Championships. Our committee is always mindful of this issue when choosing races for the Championships, and fortunately our good relationship with Torbay helped in this case.

Turning to the ladies standings, Jacki Woon is running very well and is definitely the lady to beat. Jacki regularly gets in the 80s for her age grading percentage, which is proof enough of how brilliantly she's running. Whilst Jacki is riding high, others are also putting in great race performances - Kathryn Steemson and Sarah Pike to name but two - which is great to see and there is still lots to play for!

For the men, Geoff Davey has completed the Championship in terms of the number of races/categories, and is currently leading in the competition. There is time to still mount a challenge though, and it will be very interesting to see if Garry Smart continues to tick off races over the rest of the year to challenge Geoff's top position.

Looking at the list of the other men in the Club Championships, it is great to see some fantastic results being produced. I'm reluctant to single out any individual, as anyone who attempts the competition deserves credit, but I wanted to mention both Christian Robinson and Paul Sharples. They are so far doing very well in the Club Champs, while also performing well in other races – most notably Dartmoor Discovery where they both did brilliantly in this year's 34-mile version of the course.

As always, if you have any comments or questions please email me at [gwhiddicombe@icloud.com](mailto:gwhiddicombe@icloud.com)



Kate Williamson, Ruth Johnson and Emma Ray



Garry Smart

# SUZIE'S STORY

**Suzie Mills, 39, has been a Trotter for coming up to four years. In that time she has undergone a major transformation: from someone who hadn't really been interested in running to someone who is now doing 12 marathons in 12 months.**

**She shares her story so far with Emma Percy...**

## ***When did you become interested in running?***

I wouldn't say I ever became interested in running. I had been trying to lose weight for a couple of years and had managed to lose three stone. I knew I needed to start doing more exercise and Mark and Donna Walker had previously both said I should come running. A drunken conversation just before Christmas 2014 saw me go to the first Trotters session of 2015. The rest as they say is history...

## ***What got you into running? Was there a defining moment or reason?***

My defining moment when I really started to get it probably happened nine months after I started, by this time I had done my first race as a Trotter and signed up for a half marathon in the October, but I was still really struggling. I was being incredibly hard on myself, still didn't believe I could do it or was good enough and I was constantly comparing myself to others, something I think we all do. I then met Ben Smith when the Trotters organised the route and support for him on Day nine of his 401 marathon challenge. (Ben ran 401 marathons in 401 days, raising in excess of £330,000). I ran further that day than I ever had and I started to believe I could do it, that it didn't always matter about times but just getting out there and giving it a go.

## ***What do you enjoy about being a Trotter?***

The Trotters are an amazing bunch of people who are so supportive and encouraging. It doesn't matter your reason for being there, whether it's to train for a race, get fit or lose weight, as long as you turn up and try your hardest you will have the support of the rest of the club. It's not all about times. It's about doing the best that you can on any given day. There are loads of examples to me of what it truly means to be a Trotter, but two stick really out and both experiences were at marathons. My first official marathon in Manchester where there was a merry band of Trotters waiting for me at the finish line and some would have been waiting around for over three hours. The second was at Munich marathon last year, running around the stadium I suddenly heard a roar of Trotters shouting me in, again many of these would have been waiting around for hours since they finished the 10k, the half, or the marathon, but they waited and they cheered and supported the last person over the line.

Then there are the non-running social events, or the post running social events if you haven't got involved in any of these then do they are a great way to really learn about your club mates.

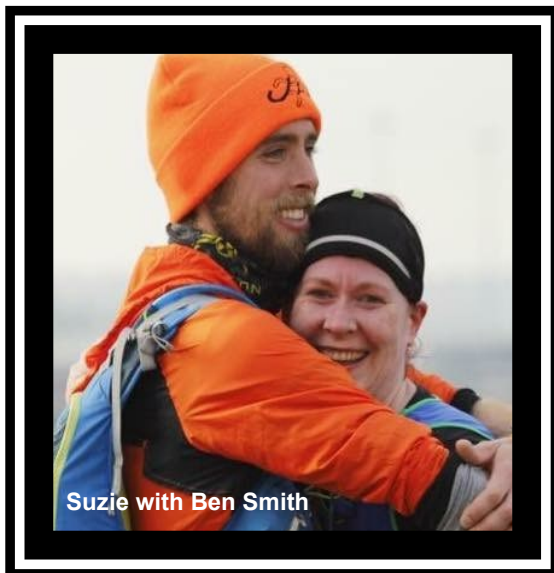


## ***How would you describe the club culture at the Trotters?***

Supportive, a little competitive in a good way, inclusive, train hard, party harder.

## ***You took to running marathons easily - what motivated you?***

I always said I would never run a marathon, I didn't think I could do it, and I didn't want to set myself up for failure. My first marathon was a surprise to many people for that exact reason. I think three or four people knew what I was up



to. I had come up with the idea after that first run with Ben, we joke now that this is all his fault although he denies it. He encouraged me to do it he had complete faith in the fact that I could achieve it so I went up to Liverpool and ran my first marathon distance with him exactly one year after my first beginner run with the Trotters. It wasn't quick, it wasn't pretty, it was tough mentally and physically, but I did it. It was an amazing feeling, and I was lucky enough to run every single step with an amazing and inspirational friend.

That first marathon with Ben gave me the belief in myself mentally and the belief that my body can do whatever I put my mind to. And there started the love for marathons, I guess you could say I was well and truly bitten by the marathon bug.

***Tell me about how you built a relationship with Ben '401' Smith. What drew you to his cause?***

I nearly didn't meet Ben! I do wonder if I would have got as far as I have today if I hadn't but luckily I had a very understanding boss that gave me a day off at very short notice and I have a lot to thank him for. It is no secret that over the years I have struggled with my mental health, so what he was doing and why he was doing it was something I really wanted to support and get involved with.

I was lucky enough to meet Ben early on in his challenge and was then able to run with him several times, and we built a friendship from there, I came up with the idea to run my first marathon with him after my second run with him, and he was so supportive and encouraging.

He had been where I was; an overweight, smoker and drinker, who previously had no interest in any exercise. I think Ben actually sums up our friendship in Vassos Alexander's book really well: *"she ran her first marathon with me in Liverpool a year to the day that she started running. Being part of that was so memorable. Her journey related so much to mine and we've shared something special. It's one of the major memories of the challenge."* It is really worth a read if you haven't read it and then there is also the mutual appreciation of Thatcher's cider!

***You've talked in the past about mental health - how has running helped you with that?***

Running gives me that time where I can switch off completely if I need to, the time when I am not thinking and just taking in what is around me. It really does give my brain a rest. Conversely, if there is something I need to figure out or work through I find I focus better when running and seem to come up with some of my best ideas. The mental health benefits also come in the form of now believing I can do it, that my body is capable and even when it is screaming in pain I can push that little bit further or little bit longer. Whether it is running or walking just being out in the fresh air, with like-minded people or on your own it always makes me feel better.

I am in a much better place mentally because of the exercise. I now know and understand my triggers and when I may be heading towards a dip, and for me I make myself get out for a run and a walk. I clear my head or I work out what's troubling me. Running for me is not all about races and times and being physically fit. It's about keeping myself mentally fit and making time to do that.

***You're now doing 12in12 to support 401. How is the journey going?***

I am loving it, it's tough mentally and physically but that's why it's a challenge. I won't be getting any PBs this year but that's not what it about. The winter marathons were hard: the first couple were in driving wind and rain and the cold and now in the summer we have had incredibly hot days from April. There doesn't seem to have been any in-between this year. But I have met so many amazing people along the way. I have some mini-personal challenges along the way and I definitely haven't made this easy for myself, potentially I will end up doing 15 in 12! Soon I will be doing two marathons in two weekends and the third weekend will be doing marathon distance over two days. It won't count towards the total but I will be pushing my body with very little recovery time and I really don't know how it is going to react.



# SUZIE'S STORY... continued



## ***For the benefit of newer members can you explain what 12in12 is all about?***

Ok so 12in12, for me I have chosen to do 12 marathons in 12 months for charity, it could be 12 half's in 12 months. Or 12 10ks in 12 weeks, it really is up to you but it's about setting yourself a challenge.

## ***What's people's reaction been like?***

Everyone has been really supportive and encouraging, I have had 'you're doing what' and 'why would you do that' and 'you must be crazy' as I have got further into the challenge I think a few people are surprised that I am still going - and nearly getting to the full 12!

## ***What attracts you to a marathon race?***

I do like the big city marathons for the atmosphere but I have discovered that I really enjoy doing the smaller marathons and this year I will complete most of my marathons with two companies: White Star Running based in Dorset, who are all about the inclusivity and making it fun, and Saxons Vikings and Normans

based in Kent. These are all lap based marathons with very small fields but again it is all about inclusivity whether it takes you 3 hours 6 hours, or my longest one this year nearly eight hours.

## ***Do you have a favourite run or race so far?***

I don't think there is a stand out marathon I have enjoyed them all for very different reasons, at the time of running them I may not like them but as soon as I have finished and manage to get a pint of cider I forget the pain. If I had to pick one from this year it would probably be Giant's Head Marathon. It was tough mentally and physically, it was hot and hilly, but the views were amazing. I ran with some amazing people and the sense of achievement at the end (and the medal) made all the pain worthwhile.

## ***Which race in your calendar are you most looking forward to?***

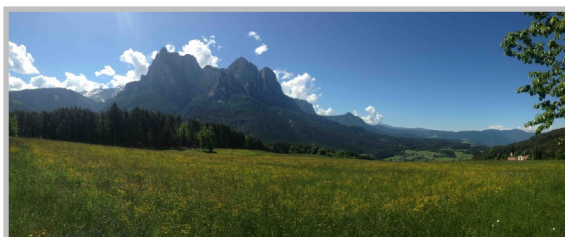
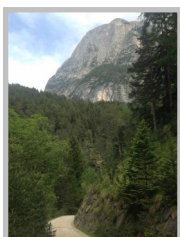
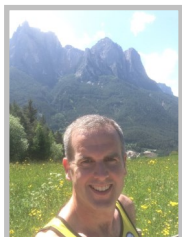
I am really looking forward to City2Sea at the beginning of September. It is effectively my home marathon this year and I am really hoping that there will be lots of Trotter support out there. I am also really looking forward to my last marathon this year, I am venturing up north to do the Christmas caper by It's Grim Up North Running. I will be joined on this one by two ladies who I have met through the 401 Challenge and they have become good friends and will be running the marathon with me on the 8 December

## ***What do you fancy doing after completing your 12in12?***

I want to keep the marathons going but maybe not quite as many each year, I do want to look at getting my marathon time down as well, so that means putting in lots more structured speed and endurance training in. Hopefully a sub five-hour marathon!

If any of you want to follow the rest of this challenge I have a Facebook page where I am posting updates. You can also find me by searching for @12marathons12months, and if you want to donate the link is <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/12marathons12months>

# MOJOS AND MOUNTAINS



**Graydon Widdicombe** was in the doldrums with his running. Rather than trying to move mountains to find it, he ran around them and discovered it hiding in plain sight...

I'd been struggling with loss of my running mojo for a while and tried everything to get it back: having a break, entering events to focus the mind, mixing up routes, running events and not caring about the finish time, running alone, running with friends. Alas, nothing was working! My mojo had well and truly vanished.

All that changed when I went to Italy on holiday. I visited Verona, the Dolomites for a friend's wedding and finished with a night in Venice. Verona and Venice are lovely but the standout location was the Dolomites in Northern Italy.

Before going I checked it out on the internet and the area looked amazing. I'd hoped to get some runs in while there. Although I had nothing specific planned, the first glimpses I had of how breath-taking the area was were on the 45-minute bus journey up the hill from Bolzano/Bozen to Siusi/Seis, near where the wedding was taking place (this area in South Tyrol has place names in both Italian and German, as well as having its own dialect). The bus up the twisty and narrow road with its sheer drops was nerve-wracking but incredibly picturesque.

Siusi (a ski resort in winter, and a haven for outdoor-types in the summer) is 1,000m above sea level and was the base for my runs. The place is incredibly well set up with maps showing all the numbered running and walking trails, so I picked a route of around six miles, donned my running shoes and off I went. For almost the entire run, I hardly saw another soul (apart from a field of cows with their cow bells jangling) and I was amazed by the area I was running through. The stunning Seiser Alm mountain dominated the landscape on one side, while I picked my way along tree lined trails through which a clearing occasionally opened up where I could see views right across the valley on the other side.

Every few minutes I couldn't help but stop to take in the view until I eventually reached a lake in nearby Völser Weiher, which is where the wedding would take place later that holiday. It was among the most breath-taking that I'd ever run. It's hard to explain but somehow the air felt and tasted so fresh and on getting back I was keen to check out other routes to tackle.

I ran four times in the Dolomites: a 6.5-miler (1,300ft of elevation), an 8-miler (1,335ft), a 5K (700ft) and a 5.5-miler (1,300ft). Each route was different and each was stunning. The 5.5-miler was so steep that it made my ears pop at the highest point while the 8-miler was essentially two different loops on the way to and from the next village, Castelrotto.

I went hiking, lake swimming and ate a lot of very good pizza, ice-cream and tiramisu which I think is just what the doctor ordered to get that often-elusive mojo back! Honestly, if a runner can't get excited about running here then there's no hope!

I barely scratched the surface with trails all over the mountains reachable by bus, ski lifts and chair lifts. I left with a real urge to return to the area again. I'd love to go back. Of course they have a marathon there and one in nearby Verona. Both events have made their way onto my ever-growing list of marathons I'd like to do! <http://www.brixenmarathon.com/en/> and <http://veronamarathon.it/en/>

I'm pleased to say the wedding went off without a hitch with the Italian bride and South African groom having a great ceremony on a jetty overlooking the lake, with the stunning Schlern mountain as a backdrop. The Minister (a close, personal friend of the couple) really got across how simple their lives are, away from all the modern distractions, as the newlyweds have lived in a tent in the Kalahari for the last 10 years. They're professional wildlife photographers and have had some lucky escapes during their time, so never has "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" been so fitting for the first dance! I loved the wedding, the Dolomites were spectacular and I left feeling revitalised and 'connected' in some way; connected to my friends – old and new - but also to the stunning environment.

Thankfully, my running mojo seems to have well and truly returned, and long may mine - and yours - last.

# JUST KEEP RUNNING

**By Emma Percy**

At its most base level, we run to survive. Before we had the internet, before we had steam trains, before we tamed and rode horses, we ran to hunt prey and flee from prey. We ran to save our lives.

But running remains a funny old thing, really. It's completely individual, yet we compete against others. You run your own way but often do it with other people, perhaps even join a club like ours. Yet, essentially, we run to survive. I can't imagine for one minute our ancestors worried themselves about staying hydrated or to stretch after they'd had a sabre-toothed tiger hot on their heels. Pheidippides ran for his life not for a personal best, but to announce the military victory against the Persians at the Battle of Marathon.

It's only later that we learned the science and health benefits, both physical and mental, and started the vaguely ridiculous-sounding activity of carb-loading (eating more spuds than normal) and tapering. Now it's perfectly acceptable to talk about going for a piss twenty times in twenty minutes before a race and to proudly proclaim you have '*NO TOENAILS, NOT EVEN BLACK ONES!*' Some people even post pictures of their sullied digits on Facebook.

Running enables us to celebrate defining moments in time: Katherine Switzer breaking free from race officials in the 1967 Boston Marathon to become the first woman in history to finish the race with a bib number, Roger Bannister running the first sub-four minute mile. We celebrate people: Jesse Owens, Joan Benoit, Flo Jo, Paula Radcliffe, Haile Gebrselassie, Usain Bolt, Mo Farah and Wilson Kipsang Kiprotich. There have been countless greats.

But it's not just about being remembered in the annals of history as a running legend, getting a PB on that race you've been targeting or putting in a sprint finish to snatch seconds back. Sometimes it's just about running and having a bloody good laugh with people you feel an affinity with – or perhaps you don't feel the affinity but like family members who've seen us at our best and worst, you take the good with the not-so-good and accept that's that.

Earlier this year, a few of us spent a sunny Sunday walking/jogging around sections of the South West Coast Path, Otter Valley and Exe Estuary in a 26-mile self-navigation event organised by the Cornwall and Devon Long Distance Walking Association. It was a walk that you could run but it wasn't a race. There was checkpoints with tables groaning under the weight of food and drinks manned by smiling volunteers, coastal views, maps to read, muddy paths to cross, water to wade through and moments of delirium to get through, especially after 20-miles in.

We weren't clock watching or looking at mile splits because we were busy being in the moment, tolerating each other's increasingly bad jokes, posing for photos, stuffing cake at the checkpoints, or puzzling over Ordnance Survey map symbols. The pace of running and life generally felt like it had been slowed down, and we were running because we really, really wanted to just be running. We weren't running for our lives, or chasing a time; we were just putting one foot in front of another and enjoying it.

Running is a sport for individuals that brings us together. We find friends, lovers, competitors. We find kindred spirits. We become stronger in every sense of the word. Even when we are not strong, through injury or through losing your mojo (as Graydon talks about on page 13), there are people who you can seek support from and boost your mental resilience. Sometimes, tragically and senselessly, we lose people we've met through running. It's at those times we have our running mates to turn to, to act as a guiding light when the world seems a dimmer place.

Running creates clubs populated with a rich breadth of personalities. Of people who bake cakes for you, not because they can bake but because it's a club-organised race and they want to help. There are people who organise





runs in new places and sort out somewhere to eat afterwards. There are people who sit in a small portable cabin every month and carry out the administration of running a running club. There are people who sit at home and think hard about putting on coaching sessions that'll be fun and help us improve.

There are those who will get up at silly o'clock in the morning and travel up the M5 to run with you, not for time or glory but because they love it as much as you. There are also those who will travel with you because they want to whip your ass and the asses of everyone else around them. And that's fine – that's running.

Let's be honest, the world is a better place for running. How would we survive without it?

## NOT FOR THE FAINT HEARTED?

With the disappointment of no lads weekend away this year, I thought I would try something a bit different. Of course I know it won't appeal to all of you but for the those who like a real challenge followed by a night on the beer this could be right up your street! If are any ladies would like to join us then you would be more than welcome. The more the merrier.



Depending on numbers, I can take nine others in my van, I will drive up to the Brecon Beacons on Friday 16 November. We would have to leave Newton by 1pm (an afternoon off work!) to arrive in the village of Talybont-on-Usk in plenty of time before it gets dark so we can put up our tents! Yep that's right, camping in Wales in November - as the title suggests, it's not for the faint hearted. It is however a real bargain - only £8 a night.

Then it's over to Brecon (6 miles away) to register and pick up our race numbers. Now this is where it sorts out those who are up for the challenge - for you will have entered the Brecon Marathon! A stunningly scenic trail race that certainly packs a punch. The route takes you up (and down!) Pen-y-Fan (886m South Wales tallest peak) and Cribyn (795m). For those of you that have been up there before, you will know all about the spectacular views at the summit.

As it's in November and the weather in Wales at that time of the year can be unpredictable, a rather extensive list of compulsory kit must be carried by all entrants. The race starts a short stroll away from our campsite at 10am on Saturday morning. There is no real time limit imposed because there is an ultra (46 miles) that takes place on the same day and is two laps of the marathon course. The marathon only costs £28 if you enter before 3 September, after which it's £38. You get a medal and much cherished t-shirt for finishing.

After the race, once showered and changed, we'll head for the village pub for a bite to eat and a few beers. Apparently it's a great atmosphere in there after the race. There are other pubs in the village if we want to stretch our legs and meet more of the locals.



We'll return to Devon on Sunday morning, hopefully arriving early afternoon. If you want a weekend away that will guarantee a lot of laughs, a real challenge and sense of achievement and a few celebratory beers afterwards then please let me know ASAP and I can start organising it.

*On On - Chairman*

Check out this ace poem by new Trotter **Nejla Andrews**, who came on our club trip. It sums up what a great day it was!

"We ventured out on our first away day with the Trotters. The Otter Rail and River run was organised by Sidmouth Running Club, is an undulating off-road 10k in Tipton St John. It was good to see that a quarter of the participants were wearing the blue and green jersey!

The route was scenic with obstacles along the way; stiles, fords and loads of branches to 'duck'. As Kevin had promised – the weather was booked. It was a hot and sunny day, leaving us all gasping for a drink. Lucky for us, our finishing goody bags contained an Otter ale and a half pint glass.

It was a fun day out for all with games, a barbecue and plenty of shade at race HQ. The kiddies stole the limelight with a quick two lap race before the award ceremony. There were several awards for the Trotters, including a club trophy for supporting the event. Special thanks were given to Race Director Jo, who after 12 years is handing over the baton.

We finished the day off with a meal at The Bowd Inn, a beautiful pub with a big garden for all to enjoy. The food was delicious, service was great and the company even better. It was a great day with partners and children in tow. The day was planned with meticulous detail - making our day care-free, easy and fun. From pick up to drop off everything was looked after - too bad the bus driver didn't have a map!

*Saturday was a proud day to be a Trotter,*

*Running in Tipton alongside River Otter,*

*After the trail we drank some ale,*

*No surprise I was the pace of a snail.*

*One of the hottest days for a run,*

*After 10k everyone looked done,*

*The music games on the bus,*

*Made Skins swear and cuss.*

*The driver got lost on the way home,*

*But such high spirits no one was to moan,*

*Good day out from Kevin the don,*

*Signed off no other way than "on on"!*

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## The Trotter

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