

The Trotter

Issue 8 July 2022

True grit!



Mighty members' news

Charitable champions

Annual club trip

Welcome



This month's issue is a reminder of how much determination and a positive attitude can achieve. It's also a reminder of the ups and downs of life. Nothing like a run, walk, dance or catch up with a Trotter mate. Enjoy the read.



**BORN
TO
RUN**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

News

Fun and games -the Club at 40 3 & 4

Photo call—bring your smile.... 5

Regulars

Members' update -the latest from Kev Besford ...6 & 7

Captains' Corner - Natalie and Ben ... 8

Features

Totnes 10k— charity champions ... 9 & 10

Club camp: catch up on the gossip— Liz and Nigel ... 11- 13

Bob's positivity 14- 17

Annual Club trip— Skinns ... 18

Ruths 100 mile challenge 19—23

Contact details

Get in touch ... 24

Trotters celebrate in the sunshine



Chairman Rog reflects on an historic day

I remember our 25th anniversary at the Passage House Hotel. It was a formal occasion with a sit-down meal, somewhat different to our recent 40th anniversary! As I pulled the curtains back on the morning of Saturday July 9th, I was greeted with a beautiful blue sky without a cloud to be seen. It was going to be a hot one!

Preparations for the big day had started many weeks ago. A small, dedicated team had been assembled, meetings had been arranged and slowly but surely things started to take shape.

Newton Abbot Rugby Club was our chosen venue. They have one of the biggest marquees I've ever seen! Choosing a band wasn't easy, as so many of them were booked up as the wedding season was in full flow. We took a punt on a band called Basher Tate. That was the evening entertainment sorted.

We wanted the day to be a real family affair, something for everyone. A list of games was agreed - Nigel's British Bulldog never made the cut! We had a few old classics, like the egg and spoon and sack race.

Welly wanging, a club camp favourite, proved very popular. Nathan 'Lovely' Elphick won the men's competition, just as he's done at every previous one at club camp. Amy Proctor (John and Tina Caunter's daughter) won the ladies. That was one of four competitions that Amy won during the course of the afternoon. Her husband also won the conversion game, kicking a rugby ball between the posts, and Amy's daughter won the children's sack race. It was quite a day for the Proctor family.



The rounders match was a highly competitive affair! It was Ben's team (Men's captain) against Nat's (Ladies' captain). Nat's team batted first and scored 15 1/2 rounders in their allotted 20 minute innings. A dropped catch by Ben and a couple from Amy helped the total along! However, that score was never going to be enough, as Ben's team passed it with time to spare, eventually scoring an impressive 19 rounders. It has to be said that half of Nat's team seemed to disappear once it was their turn to field!

Whilst the games were taking place, Liz, Oodey and Ryan were slaving away on the BBQ. You can imagine how hot that must have been. What a grand job they did, cooking for over 150 people.

We had decided to do a charity draw and asked members to donate prizes. We had some fantastic ones given to us, thank you to all those that donated, you know who you are. The draw took place at 8pm, bang on schedule. Deb and Skinns did a superb job in selling tickets and putting it all together.

We raised £570, a fantastic amount for Rowcroft Hospice.



40th Anniversary continued

Basher Tate got going at 8.50pm, slightly behind schedule! They seemed to get better and better as the night wore on. The dance floor was packed and the place was proper rocking. They even played Mr Brightside by the Killers, a real favourite of mine and a traditional tops off song. Poor old Del never did find his shirt!

Whilst the band were packing away, Jules did a great job becoming our DJ for the remainder of the night. The dance floor continued to bounce, I'm not sure the band had witnessed such an energetic bunch of oldies before. Sadly, the night had to end, there were to be no more of those pink shots at the bar; it was gone midnight and it was time to go home.

The day/night couldn't have happened without our small dedicated team; Nige & Liz Barnett, Deb Hart, John Skinner and Oodey. Thank you, guys, it was a blast.

2032 will be our 50th anniversary and here before we know it!

On On



All photos by Suzie Mills

Time for an update!

We've had our new club kit for the best part of three years now, and thought it long overdue that we updated our club photo on our homepage that still shows us in our old kit!

Therefore, on Wednesday 17th August, Suzie will be taking a new photo to replace the old one.

Please arrive at the Rec for 6.45pm, as it will take a little while to get everyone in position. Of course you'll need to be wearing your new club kit, either vest or t-shirt. If you don't run but are still a member, you are also invited to join us, please wear a Trotters hoodie if you don't have a t-shirt.

I think we've got a 106 of us in the current photo; it would be great to top that! We probably won't do another one for a few years, so you really do need to be there.

If you haven't got any new club kit then you can buy it online via the membership link on our website. Or by contacting Jacki Woon directly at; clubkit@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk



Who knows what sort of creature we'll get this time?

Club Membership

Membership Secretary Kevin Besford shares membership news



We are fast approaching our year end and with all the issues we have had with our current provider, we are looking to move our membership subscriptions to SI Entries, who many of you will be familiar with if you have entered races with them. I am not yet fully up to speed with how their process will work but keep an eye on the Trotter Facebook group for more news. Please do not look to pay any future renewals via Eventrac.

In the new membership year, we are also looking to pass any requirements / communication with UK Athletics / England Athletics back to the individual members. At the last count we had less than 20 members registered and it has been decided to take this step for simplicity, moving forward.

The first programme of Couch to 5k, run by John Skinner, has been a huge success and with the new programme starting up again, I am looking forward to being a part of it on my continuing road to recovery.

Our membership number now stands at 289 and I am seemingly getting new members at a steady flow again. With our year end being October, I would expect to get over the 300 mark before then.

I have been welcoming new members and getting to know many that I have missed during my months away and will now be attending regularly on Mondays and Wednesdays with the new Couch to 5k sessions starting up.

If I have not met you, please do come and introduce yourself and, given time, I feel sure I will get back to knowing all your names.

Corinne has done a great job and been a great help when I have not been around on Wednesdays. Corinne will still be around to help me now that I am back. So for any new faces coming along, there are now two of us on a regular basis that you can call upon to introduce newcomers to.

So please do continue to encourage people you know to come along to the world's best running club and keep us both busy.

Group leader, Corinne Bright



Membership news continued ...

There have been a number of new members since my last ramblings so, in no particular order, we welcome:

Courtney Webb from Torquay, Andrew Paisey from Newton Abbot, Jake Gluyas-Harris from Liverton, Lilly Styles from Totnes, Caroline Bowden from Shaldon, James Long from Ashburton, Hamish Rae & Isabelle Cummins from Kingsteignton, Chris Culverwell from Newton Abbot, John Clarke from Denbury, Mat Doye, James Taylor & Cheryl Dunn all from Kingsteignton, Karl Mechaniuk from Stokeinteignhead, Chloe Olford from Bovey Tracey, Maura Hassell (wife of Tim) from Widecombe and finally we have the return of Molly Canham from Teignmouth.

Please make them all welcome whenever you find yourselves running with them in a session.



Its **happy birthday** to quite a large number of members who celebrate notable birthdays coming up in July, August and September.

Laura Holland 35, Sonja Hughes 40, Ronnie Jones 45, Sarah Charnley 50, Mandy Wheeler 50, Steve Blackburn 55, Barbara Crowe 60, David Evans 60, Robert Faulkner 60, James Saunders 60 and finally Alan Boone 65.

To all of you enjoy racing in your new age category.

On On.

Kevin Besford

Membership Secretary

Captain's Corner

Ladies' Captain Natalie Cusack



Hello Ladies, I hope you are well and enjoying the start of Summer. There have been some scorching races over the past three months.

A highlight for me has been attending the first relay of the year, Exeter Relays, where the Trotter ladies walked away with two 1sts; one for the FSen team and one for the Vet50s! We had a blast too, and also ran well in the Erme Valley Relays on 20th July. Please continue to check out the Trotters' Facebook for further info on future events, or email me at ladiescaptain@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk.

There have been some notable performances recently and PBs gained. First of all, I want to say a huge congratulations to Ruth Johnson for her epic 100 mile challenge across the South Down Way. First female trotter to complete a 100 miles foot race, let's hope there are many more!

Other Trotettes have been slogging out the Ultra miles this Summer, with three taking on the DD, a notable performance from Susanna who smashed her previous DD time.

Whilst the spring marathons have ended this year, two trotters ladies achieved their PBs, with both Rachel Steele and Debbie Proctor running good times.

So that is it for the mid-year update, if there is anyone with a big event, or a milestone that will be achieved, please let me know so I can mention you in the next issue.

Keep Running!

Natalie

Men's Captain, Ben Elphick, is ready to motivate

Also, keep checking out the Trotters' Facebook page for information on mens' future events, or email the mens' captain, Ben, at menscaptain@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk.



Totnes 10k

Bob Small explains why an extra magical atmosphere is expected at this year's Totnes race.

The annual Totnes 10K race is to be held on Sunday 7th August, starting as usual on Borough Park by the Sports Centre.

Since the outset of the race in 2000, Teignbridge Trotters have supported Totnes Caring, a local charity dedicated to supporting vulnerable, disabled, and older people to enable them to live independently and free from isolation.

To date, the race has raised £24,555.00, so with just £445.00 to go, this year, the landmark point of £25,000.00 will be passed. The ratio of runners to the amount donated to the charity means that, notionally, the 140th runner to cross the finish line will be the one who sees the total donated pass the £25,000.00 mark. So the **140th finisher will receive a special prize memento.**

And, as if that is not enough to celebrate, in the 21 Totnes 10K races to date, 9,733 runners have crossed the finishing line. So the **267th runner to cross the finish line this year will be the 10,000th finisher! This person will also receive a special prize memento.**

Claire Hill, Chief Officer of Totnes Caring, said, “What amazing significant events (are) happening at this years 10K! Totnes Caring has been very grateful for all the support Teignbridge Trotters have given us over the years and they have enabled us to support some very vulnerable local people. I feel extremely fortunate to celebrate the year they have raised the landmark point of £25,000 and I am looking forward to cheering everyone on at the race in August.”

Roger Hayes, Chairman of Teignbridge Trotters and long-time Race Director of the Totnes 10K, said, “The Totnes 10K is our club's largest race as far as competitors are concerned. It reaches its race limit of 625 each year, attracting runners from all over the UK, proving what a firm favourite it is on the running circuit. The kids' 1-mile fun run is just as popular, adding to the wonderful atmosphere that the event creates. As a club we are very proud to have raised such a huge sum for such an amazing charity. I'm sure the race will continue to flourish and who knows, in a few years' time that total might have reached £50,000.00!”

Bob Small, present Race Director said, “We're looking forward to welcoming all the runners from varying points in the country and we hope that everyone enjoys themselves at this very friendly race.”

To enter the Totnes 10K or the 1 mile Fun Run go to <https://www.teignbridgetrotters.co.uk/our-races/totnes-10k>
Entries are coming in quite quickly now so don't delay!

Totnes 10k continued



Photo by Mike Rego

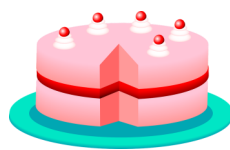
From left to right:-

Bob Small (Race Director); Ruth Johnson (Assistant Race Director); Calypso Byng (Sponsor - New Lion Brewery); Mary Popham (Totnes Caring); Jamie Heron (Sponsor – Sibelco); Claire Hill (Chief Officer, Totnes Caring); Kellie Pitty (Sponsor – China Blue); Roger Hayes (Chair – Teignbridge Trotters)

**Never too late, there's still time
to bake for our cake stall!**

**Please contact Susanne Westgate on Facebook about your delicious
contributions for Sunday 7th August .**

THANKYOU!



Freshwater Beach **HOLIDAY PARK**

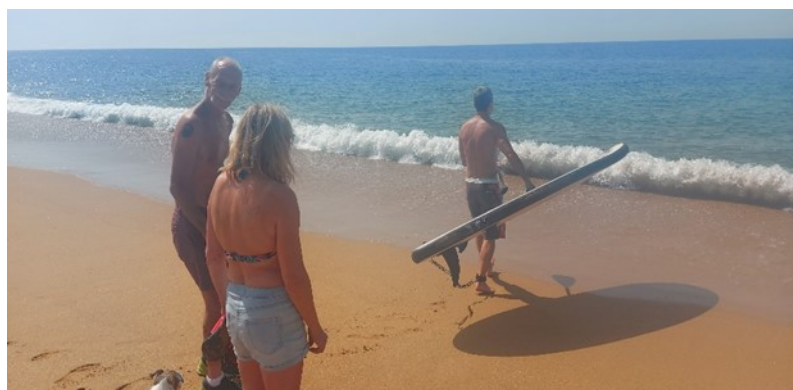
Club Camp 2022 - a great success!

The site certainly lived up to its reviews - fantastic location with amazing scenery, clean facilities, and friendly staff. Throw in a whole bunch of Trotters and you have a recipe for a brilliant weekend. The weather was its usual mixed bag but it's safe to say that many of us burnt on Friday (and had to check the guy ropes on Saturday when the wind and rain made an appearance!)



Tents up...

We had the beach pretty much to ourselves on Friday, perfect opportunity to get the paddleboard out.



Club camp continued



Friday night fun and games



What a fine bunch!

On Saturday morning two groups went out for the traditional Club Camp run, taking on a little of the Jurassic coastline. By the afternoon it was clear it was not going to be beach weather so some of us went off to the.....



What could possibly go wrong....??

Club camp continued

We rounded off the weekend in the bar – where else! When the band played, The Trotters hit the dance floor.

It all got a little too much for our chairman though....



The date of Club Camp 2023 will be 16 & 17th June. We've not decided on the venue yet but as soon as we know, you'll know.

Nigel & Liz

Bob Small



Let's talk about SEX!

'Whoa' I hear you say, 'this is a magazine about running not Sex'; true, but this is a 'gotcha' moment and now you're hooked so you might as well read on.....

For SEX read S for scans, E for endoscopies and X for X-rays – all of which, and far more, I've encountered in the last nine months. Last October I was diagnosed with bowel cancer and, since then, I've been on a journey quite unlike any other journey I've been on; scary? Yes, a little, but from the outset I was determined to treat it as a journey of discovery about myself and, of course, about the NHS system. Embracing the fact that I had cancer is probably too strong an emotional word, positivity though is the right word. After all, there it was, I had cancer and it had to be dealt with, so there was little point in being negative about it. Worried – yes, aware of the impact on my family – definitely. All the emotions have to be embraced – and that is definitely the right word. Cancer is always something that happens to someone else, anyone else, but never oneself. Well, a frightening statistic says that one in every two of us will suffer cancer of some sort or another in our lifetime. How did I discover I had cancer? I had absolutely no reason to think I had a problem as I had no pain of any sort, no eating problems, no excretion problems. I was running well, training hard (or what passes for hard at nearly 75!) and posting reasonable age group percentages of up to 80%, so I had absolutely no reason to believe I had a problem.

When the grand old age of 60 is reached, one should receive in the post a screening test kit –aka poo–sticks! These test kits arrive every 3 years or so and I can't emphasise enough how hugely important it is to use this kit and send the item back by post as soon as possible. This test is very important for two reasons; firstly it can save your life as an early diagnosis is vital in order that the cancer can be dealt with immediately, possibly preventing more serious ramifications further down the line; secondly it prevents much more serious problems, not only for the patient, but also for the NHS system, which doesn't need the substantial difficulties of dealing with serious cancer in older people if it can be avoided. Since being diagnosed I've met, or heard, of so many people who just ignore the screening kits and put them to one side; don't do that! Use them – it's so important.

Bob Small continued

I'm not going to go into lurid details of the whole process which I've been through but will try do a quick summary. Having completed the screening test I was very quickly informed that there was a potential problem which required a colonoscopy – a process where a camera travels up and down the bowel, identifies possible problems and takes biopsies for further examination. This was carried out at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital (RD&E) in early November and it was confirmed that I did indeed have one single cancerous polyp which required removal. A date for the operation was set for February 8th at the RD&E but, before which, there was much consultation with varying specialist surgeons, doctors and nurses to be sure that I was going to be receiving the correct treatment but also to reassure me every step of the way. I should say at this point that the RD&E and everyone connected with my particular case were brilliant - professional, friendly, on time and all very caring. I can't be more effusive in my praise. And, of course, all of this was overshadowed by Covid 19, which meant I had to take extra special care as contracting it at any time would have thrown a spanner in the works and would have brought about undoubted delays. With regard to life in general, and running in particular, I was told to carry on perfectly as normal which, in between the many appointments, I tried to do. As the operation date approached I have to admit that I did slacken off a bit as I knew I'd be missing at least six weeks training in any case.

The operation, by keyhole surgery, was carried out on the due date; I had been told that it was likely I would be discharged within three or four days but then an infection meant I was kept in for another week. Not a wholly enjoyable experience as I felt I was suffering along with the other patients on the ward, some of whom were experiencing real problems. Going home was a real treat - home cooking, home comforts and, of course, lots of TLC from my wife Tracy. At this point I must pay a huge 'thank you' to Tracy for her absolute understanding, support, both physical and emotional, and the time and effort she has taken to accompany me on many of the varying appointments – it's been so important to me. The recovery process speeded up exponentially and very soon I was up and about and looking forward to starting training again in about six weeks' time – but then I was hit by an unexpected blow. During the operation they removed eleven lymph nodes for testing purposes, one of which proved to have cancerous cells therein. This meant that I was to have twelve weeks of chemotherapy – a real blow but very necessary.

Chemotherapy has a scary reputation but, and I must be very clear on this point, it's a very individual thing. I understand that every cancer is different - so bowel cancer is very different to breast cancer which in turn is very different to, say, lung cancer and so on. Every chemo treatment for each of the varying cancers is different and the side effects are different for everyone. My own experience has been as good as it can be; an inexplicable tiredness which is debilitating to a greater or lesser extent - yes that really does go with the territory - but I haven't yet suffered from any of the other possible side effects for which I'm heartily glad! My treatment is four sessions of three weeks each: - an infusion and then two weeks of eight tablets a day, followed by a week off of all drugs. Yes, it's quite hard but it could be so much worse; it's just a matter of taking each day as it comes.

Bob Small continued

Now I hear you ask, what about the running? I had hoped to be starting again in perhaps mid-April; but then the chemo issue raised itself and that finished in early June. During this period I went out occasionally as and when I felt like it and even did a couple of Park Runs - very slowly. Then I started to walk Lola, our dog, on a much more regular basis walking as briskly as I felt able and then breaking into a run for two or three hundred yards as and when I felt like it. Walking is absolutely a great way of building base fitness in any case and I'm sure it's helped me over the years.

What I don't know is the long term effect of chemo on people of my age group who are runners; does it have a lasting negative effect? Does it have a short term negative effect? How will it affect my gradual build up - if at all? These are all questions I'm going to be asking of the specialists as well as of myself. I'm going to monitor my own training and racing programme very carefully, keeping detailed notes on my progress. I hope this information might be of use to others or might be fed into any wider study that is being undertaken.

What knowledge have I gained from this process this last nine months or so? The answer must be - lots! Fitness. Fitness is such an important aid to recovery and I'm absolutely sure that it's helped me and is continuing to do so right through to the last few weeks of chemo; this is where runners score so heavily, not just in post-operative recovery, but in many ways in life generally. One funny thing that occurred a number of times was that nurses were worried about my slow pulse rate (about 42 at rest) and, unbeknown to me, were calling other nurses or doctors as they thought I was in trouble; I had to carefully explain that runners tend to have low pulse rates! Having that level of fitness bolstered my own positivity which in itself is a key ingredient to possess when approaching a journey of this kind. Positivity in life has served me very well and particularly so this last few months. I think trying to take the best view out of what might be considered a bad situation is the very best way to counteract a possible mental decline.

So, that was a little about my own journey which has taken nine months. I think there are important messages to impart. Everyone is different. I opted at the outset to be totally open about my situation for reasons I don't really understand myself. Others may not wish to talk so openly about such personal matters - as I say, everyone is different. One significant benefit of being open is that I have received so much support from all my friends, be they from the Trotters, from my golf club in Tavistock, be they neighbours or extended family. To continue the openness theme, if anyone in the family we call Teignbridge Trotters ever has a need to talk to someone with first-hand knowledge of bowel cancer and chemotherapy - then I'm your man! It may be that it's been diagnosed within yourself or in a member of your family but if I can help in any way I'm more than happy to do so but, and this is very important, I can only talk about my own experiences. We are all different, cancers are all different, treatments are all different, the surgeons, doctors and nurses are all different - I can only speak of my own experiences.

Bob Small continued

Finally, what of the future? First I have to go through what I hope will be the final stage of the process – that of checking that the chemotherapy has been successful. After that the future remains to be seen of course but, and this is where positivity is once again a key factor, and here I'm back to talking about running. I ran seriously in the 60's, 70's and early 80's and then stopped, played cricket and golf, and didn't train at all for about thirty years. I started again when my daughter showed an interest in running and, low and behold, I was hooked and found my way back to a reasonable level - representing England in my age group in the half marathon. Just a short break of five months this time should be dealt with easily enough and, you know what, in some perverse way I've not missed running that much but I have missed my club mates though! Now, when I'm ready to start again, be sure that I shall be aiming to get right back to where I was, and turning 75 in November, there are club records to be challenged and another England vest to be won. Cancer and chemotherapy has been a blip but now it's back to the serious stuff!

Bob Small

You can contact Bob via the members' page on Facebook



Annual club trip



John Skinner on this year's exciting club outing

One of my favourite Trotter events in the calendar year is the annual club trip. If you've not been before, this is the one for you.

The day kicks off from the Rec, where the happy band of Trotters board the charabanc, after a brief stop at the Ten Tors to pick up the Kingsteignton Massif, we then journey to the selected race.

This year it's the Honiton Hippo, Sunday 18 September, which is now part of our Club Championship, replacing the Minster Challenge. This is a multi-terrain 7-mile race and there's also a kids 3K. All those who gained two marshal points from last year are entitled to a free entry into the race and a free coach place for up to three family members. If you don't have any marshal points the coach will be £5 per person including children.

Deb and I have taken on the mantel of the Club Trip this year so please let us know if you wish to reserve seats by emailing Deb at mrs.deb.hart@gmail.com

Race entries are now open - link to the race <http://www.honiton.com/honiton-hippo.html>
The idea is to swamp the field with a host of Trotters. It's important to have a significant presence at the front end, the middle section and the back end of the race – Trotters, Trotters everywhere like a tsunami, the Trotter wavey blue, green and yellow surges forth, sweeping all before.

Our work done, we charabanc off to a pre-booked Sunday pub lunch for food and drink. Sated, we make our weary way back to Teignbridge with perhaps a song or two. A great day will be had by all.





Ruth Johnson

Ruth describes her amazing journey to complete a 100 mile challenge

In March 2020, the world changed, that's also the year my running changed.

I already knew I preferred running longer distances, as when I started running in 2013, I went straight into marathons and the occasional ultra.

Over lockdown I ended up running for hours at a time, discovering local trails and footpaths I never knew existed. I was at my happiest with a backpack full of food and water, plodding along all day, mostly on my own or with Kim, my running buddy.

In 2021, although I had settled into lockdown, enjoying life slowing down a bit, family circumstances were getting considerably more difficult and stressful. My husband and I had become full time carers and it was taking its toll. I knew I needed to do something to keep myself sane through this period and started thinking about attempting a long challenge to keep me focused on something else. I had previously mentioned to a couple of people that I was considering trying running a 100 miles and the [Centurion South Downs Way](#) (from Winchester to Eastbourne) popped up in conversation a few times. This race has 13,000ft of elevation, 85% trail, but what they don't tell you is 70% of that is on a stony path, I was starting to get tempted!

I had a chat with Trotter Allen Taylor, who is a seasoned 100 mile runner, just to get some feed back on the training and if he thought I could do it. Before I had time to think I was in! You had to have a qualifying 50 mile race to enter, so I panicked and probably entered one of the hardest ones in August 2021, the Shropshire Way Ultra. It was horrendous, I hadn't trained enough as I rushed to get one in the bag. The terrain was difficult and it was torrential rain from beginning to end. I rang my brother and said, "I'm never running that far again, I'm not doing the 100," etc, but of course by the morning I'd forgotten all that!

Although I was pretty confident with my training from previous years, I had no idea how to train for a 100 miler. Training for a long event like this does take over your life for quite a few months and at the time I only ever planned to do this once so wanted to get it right. I looked at a lot of training plans, but the weekly mileage was way above what I thought it needed to be and I didn't want to get injured or overtrain. I spent a huge amount of time reading, listening to podcasts and watching YouTube, and talked to a lot of top ultra runners and trainers. I was a little obsessed, but I felt I had to immerse myself in everything ultra to get my training off to a good start.

I'd always ran three times a week and just before Christmas, I increased this to five times a week. Not huge mileage, short runs and more frequent, with the odd ultra thrown in. I also did a lot of hiking and a couple of three days training. Before I knew where I was, I only had four weeks to go and started my tapering. This was a hard few weeks to be honest, I was so ready to go, just hoping not to get injured or get COVID. I was so over excited that I was actually going to be doing it. I love the longer challenges, there are so many variables over such a long distance and that really appeals to me, not knowing if you'll get to the end and how you're going to feel.

Ruth's challenge continued

I met Allen for a coffee the week before. He gave me a pep talk and some good advice on the dos and don'ts for a 100 miles race. We went through the maps, check points, etc, which I was really glad of as I had the crew stops marked on my map and not the aid stations, which is what I needed! (On the day I didn't look at my map or watch once so it wouldn't have mattered).

The race was on 11th June. I drove up with my crew, Trotters Kim and Mark on the Friday and stayed in Winchester a mile from the start. We walked over to register on the Friday evening, which was a good idea as we realised it wasn't an easy walk, so we decided it was best if Mark dropped me off in the morning.

I woke in the morning bursting with excitement, I had no nerves at all, just couldn't wait to start. I'd tried to be laid back through the whole process from training to race day, as I wanted to enjoy the whole thing and at the end of the day it is only a race and if I couldn't finish, I'd try again!

The race started at 6am. It was hot, even at that time in the morning, but it was a little bit cloudy. I wandered around chatting, trying to get the time to pass faster and then noticed a lovely Montane top on a sale rail near the start of the race for £15- bargain! I had no money on me so they told me they'd take it to the finish line for me: what an incentive to get to the end!

Allen told me to stay at the back of the pack and if I thought I was running slow, run slower and not to overtake anyone. This was really hard, but I knew he was right, so I plodded along chatting all the way. I ran the first five miles with someone called Nicky and then came across Marc and Emily and pretty much stayed with them most of the way.

There were 13 aid stations on the route and Centurion really look after you well, with full tables of everything you might need. I also had my lovely crew Kim and



Ruth with Marc and Emily

Mark, who had designated stops enroute, separate from the aid stations. They had food, drink, change of clothes, shoes, etc for all eventualities.

The first 25 miles just flew by and my crew were waiting. Marc and Emily's crew were parked next to us too, which wasn't planned, but really handy that we were all together. The crew members became firm friends for the day, sunbathing and going off for a nice lunch when they weren't tending to our every need.

I was loving every minute of it, chugging along in the heat and then a thought popped into my head, 'Another 75 miles to go, probably 22 ish hours, that's madness!' I quite liked that feeling though, I was just having a good time and wanted to make the most of it, as I thought I would hit some low points. I changed my top and socks, reapplied my chaff cream (which was amazing) slapped on more sun cream and me and Marc were on our way again, Emily caught us up through the woods.

Ruth's challenge continued

One of my shoes started to rub a bit around 40 miles and it was great to call ahead and get the crew to sort out the bits I needed. It's around this mileage that people start to drop out. The clouds had disappeared and it was very hot all afternoon. Marc was clearly starting to struggle: it was his second attempt and we were really trying to encourage him to carry on, but his thighs and knees weren't having it and sadly he dropped out at around 46 miles. Emily was still doing well, but she did take a LOT of loo breaks. I preferred to keep moving, so walked ahead and told her to catch me up and then we would start running again. We were doing well and were about 1.45 ahead of cut off at every aid station. I was still on a high, the marshals at the aid station couldn't believe how happy I was looking. By this time in the race there was always a row of people sat down, looking a bit broken, waiting to be picked up, so I was trying not to look too over excited and pleased with myself.



Running the South Downs Way

The sun started to really get to me in the late afternoon, I had a bit of an upset tummy and I was longing for the night section just to feel cool and not have that sun blazing on my back anymore.

I was really looking forward to mile 54, as there was a hall with hot food, change of clothes, loos. There was also a lovely guy called Steve waiting for me to run a section (you were allowed one running partner from this point). I met Steve in Totnes the week before on a run and as we got chatting, he told me he lived on the South Downs; how lucky for me. He was happy to come and run with me and boy was I happy to see him waiting there. I had some hot food and changed and Emily had gone up the road to find her partner. I really don't like running with poles that much, but I did grab them from the car and we set off to pick up Emily on the way. She needed a bit more time and I really wanted to get going as I'd already had about 20 mins at the hall. One of the tips was not to wait for anyone, but it was starting to get dark and it didn't feel right leaving her behind, so we did wait around for another 20 mins. We eventually got going, heading into the night time section which was fantastic.

I'm used to running at night, but I was really glad I wasn't on my own. That was the only thing I was worried about before doing the race, I didn't want to get lost in the dark. They mark the course so well and all the markers are luminous. Steve obviously knew the route like the back of his hand, so I just followed him. We were starting to overtake a lot of people by then and I wondered how they would make it to the end, as some of them could hardly walk anymore. Steve stayed with me for 16 miles and had left his car at Ditchling Beacon. We said our good byes and lucky for us, a friend of Emily's had joined us to run the next section.

I started to feel a sharp pain under the shoelace on my left foot around 70 miles. I bent down to loosen it, but it wasn't tight at all- my foot had swollen and it was excruciating. I just had to block it out and keep stretching the top of my foot to ease the pain. I had about 7 miles to go to get to my crew where I had some freeze gel in my bag and I was hoping this would help. When I got there, they hadn't been able to stop, so I had to wait until the next one, another 8 miles! Because my foot had swollen a bit, it was causing a blister too, but I just had to try and forget it.

Ruth's challenge continued

I finally got to them and applied the gel which did take the edge off the pain. I decided not to take my shoe off and just carry on to the end. So many people were sat having their blisters patched up, but I was afraid I might not get going again if I did that! We weren't really running for long in the dark at all, the sun started to come up around 3.30 and it was glorious.

We got to the next aid station and had lost quite a bit of time: we were only an hour ahead of the cut off now. I wasn't comfortable about this, I didn't want to get to the last one and have 6 miles to do in an hour, after running for 26 hours. When Emily had her next stop, I decided to try and make up some time. She was with her friend now anyway, so I asked them to catch me up again and I forged ahead.

I was at 80 miles and I found out at the end this was my fastest five miles, run in one hour 15 mins. I was on a mission. Kim met me around mile 85 which was great. I was so appreciative of them both coming to support me and was hoping they would each get to run a section with me. It was so great to have Kim opening all the gates along the way. There were a lot and I was started to get tired now and just wanting to see the finish line. It was a bit bizarre when walkers were saying good morning; I was running into my second morning and time was starting to get muddled.

Mark drove to the finish and ran back to meet me at the last aid station, so he could run the last six miles with me. He had fallen over on the way and had cuts and blood running down his leg: he looked really hard core! I got to the aid station with two and a half hours to go, so felt I could relax a bit then.

On the last section you have to get to the trigg point with five pathways leading off. There was a lovely marshal there who said, 'Just the easy bit to go, it's all down hill for three miles from here and then a flat section.' Well, I don't think they could have found a worse down hill section after running 95 miles. Deep rutted single track with drop off and boulders. How some of the people I passed were going to manage it I will never know- they couldn't walk on the flat! Half way down there was a huge tree fallen across the track. I couldn't bend down to get under and it was hard to lift my legs up high, so I choose the option to sort of roll over the top. I did moan all the way down actually and Mark was great telling me the road was just around the corner. He was lying of course to keep my spirits up, but we did eventually get to the road and then had about a mile of tarmac to the finish.

Ruth and her epic crew,
Mark (Worzel) and Kim



Ruth's challenge continued

I suddenly saw the athletic track, which seemed to take forever to get to along the main road. Mark was still lying to me by saying, 'It's just here.' Some poor guy collapsed right at the entrance, his legs just buckled under him. I really hope he made it around. I seemed to sprint around the track, I was on such a high that I'd done it and was still feeling pretty much ok, obviously exhausted, but elated to have finished in 28.49.33. Emily finished with 15 minutes to spare. I would have been so stressed running that last bit, so felt I did the right thing.



Made it at last!

One of the Centurion crew was waiting for me on the finish line with my buckle. He promised me at registration he would be there to hand it over, what a lovely guy. I also got my Montane top, which is pretty nice!

I was a little stiff for a couple of days after, my muscles felt fine though, I didn't really have any aches or pains, apart from the tendon on the top of my foot. Was it that I had trained so hard or all the stretching or massages or running slower to not stress my body or being totally laid back about the whole thing? Who knows, but whatever it was, it seemed to work for me.

I'm enjoying recovery, lazing around and it's a few weeks since the race. My fingers seem to keep hovering over my laptop, which is a dangerous thing when you're on a high from a race like that. I seem to be looking at even more extreme events, could I run 200, could I run a totally flat 100 miler (that would be a real test for me), would I make it to the end? Well there's only one way to find out and I think I may have to try one day. Sorry family, you knew it wouldn't just be a one off, of course, even though my tattoo says different!

Contact us

President: John Caunter president@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

Chairman: Rog Hayes chairman@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

Secretary: Liz Barnett secretary@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

Treasurer: John Caunter treasurer@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

Membership Secretary: Kev Besford membership@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

Club Championship: Graydon Widdicombe clubchampionship@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

Press & PR: Chris Broadbent press@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

Men's Captain: Ben Elphick menscaptain@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

Ladies' Captain: Natalie Cusack ladiescaptain@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

Cross Country Captain: Wendy Goldthorp crosscountrycaptain@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

Mag Editor: Ali Clayton mag@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

Thank you to all contributors to this edition of The Trotter and to Keith Anderson for proofreading the edition.

