

# ***The Trotter** magazine*

**No. 2 JULY 2023**



**One Happy Club Camper, Holywell Bay,  
Newquay, June 2023**



## ***“What’s in it this month?”***

### ***A few words from the editor . . .***

So much was going on in June that we had to defer publication for a while. First there was the DD—Dartmoor Discovery 32 mile Ultra— and this was shortly followed by a Club Camp that will go down as one of the best and will linger in the memories of those who were there. We’ve also had the Club Trip—and what a trip it was too: again hugely memorable for reasons quite apart from the lovely 10k Umborne Ug race. Nothing in this issue on the trip, but maybe someone will have things to say about it next time. We do however have a perspective of **Club Camp 2023** from **Chairman Roger Hayes** for starters (**page 3**).

Following this is **Kevin Besford’s stirring account** of his experience of being stricken by double pneumonia and his gritty fight-back to full recovery in a remarkably short space of time (**page 6**). Avid Trotter **Tim Synge** has some incisive comments based on his recent marathon distance experiences in which he has experimented, with measurable results, of using the **run/walk strategy**. Does it pay off? Find out on **page 9**. Finally we have first hand experience from the inimitable **Roger Easterbrook** of “**taking a punt**” at the DD (**page 12**). If anyone’s going to smash the Dartmoor 32-miler on next-to-no training, it’s going to be Mr Easterbrook.

More gems are expected in the autumn issue, and if you’ve got something to share with fellow Trotters, please let me know.

ON ON!

# CLUB CAMP 2023

Chairman **Roger Hayes**, aficionado of many Club Camps, gives us his take on this year's classic event



**H**olywell Bay (near Newquay) was the destination for this year's Club Camp, and what a cracking spot it was. Trevornick Holiday Park was our chosen accommodation, a campsite blessed with loads of great facilities. We were the first to arrive, albeit only 5 minutes before Smokes and Vic, who along with Nigel and Liz, came down on the Thursday. We were escorted to our pre-allocated pitch by a very nice man on his quad bike.

The first official club camp took place in 2001 and we've been to pretty much every one since. Our kids, who are now 22 and 23, have such fond memories, shared with many of the other Trotter kids, who in some cases are now bringing their own kids to club camp!

We started off in a small tent, moved onto one of those big old fashioned framed tents with the dark brown canvas, then an upgrade to a trailer tent before finally taking the plunge and getting a motorhome in 2016. This year the motorhomes/camper vans almost outnumbered the tents in the Trotters camp - even the Barnetts got in on the act!

A quick set up and a few drinks in the lovely warm sunshine, before we all decided we'd walk to the nearest pub. We followed the suggested route the campsite gave us, a rather lovely walk through the sand dunes and across the golf course. The sun was out and all was good with the world. A few rounds and then on to the next pub, a few more rounds, before, and I can only think it was the combination of the sun and lack of food, Liz was not just entertaining us, but all those sitting outside, with her very elegant example of 'happy baby pose' (see front cover).

The food was rather pricey, so we decided to head to Perranporth. It was 9.30 before we actually ate anything. A taxi back to the campsite and bed by 11.30. I tend to be a bit of a 'one night wonder' nowadays, therefore the next couple of nights consisted of a much lower alcohol intake!

Friday was overcast, not something we'd been used to during the past few weeks. We caught the bus into Newquay. Although busy, I thought it looked a bit tired. Going to different seaside resorts only underlines what a great place my home town Teignmouth is to live in. We thought



we'd check out the bingo which started at 7 o'clock. 20 minutes later and Oodey was £80 better off! Having spread the word of her winnings, Saturday night's bingo was somewhat busier. With over 25 Trotters playing for a £387 pot, surely one of us had to win. The excitement grew as our table had Jamie and Abbie Barnett only needing one number for a full house. Sadly, it wasn't to be, and the cash went elsewhere - great fun though.

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I've got in front of myself, let me take you back to 8.30am and the start of the runs - yes, we do actually run during these trips! Admittedly not twice a day like it used to be, but then we're all that much older! Oodey led the first group on their 5 miler and Del took the rest of us on a 7 miler. After some breathtaking scenery, stunning fields of poppies and tough sections across the soft sand it was back for a well-earned breakfast.

Nine of us played the superb 18-hole pitch and putt that was within the campsite. Smokes won and spent his winnings wisely - in the pub straight after! Most of the rest of the Trotters had spent an enjoyable few hours in the pool. We were blessed with a lovely hot sunny day and there were a few red bits that evening!

After the disappointment of no one winning at bingo it was time for the Barnetts' games. Who knew hammering a nail into a log could be so much fun! Old favourites of 'blind running' wearing a Trotter hoodie back to front and wheelbarrow racing followed. You really do place your life in someone else's hands when you're charging down a field, completely blind, trying to listen to left and right instructions from your so called guide. Last year Christian took out a tent full of Russians enjoying a BBQ, thankfully this year the only tents close by were ours.

Sunday morning was dry, always a bonus if you're packing up a tent. Goodbyes were said and we headed home. Another hugely successful club camp - roll on next year.

Our thanks to Nigel and Liz for organising it and for finding such a great campsite.

# Bouncing Back

**Kevin Besford** shares his recent experience of being temporarily knocked down through illness and how he fought back to guarantee his own recovery



Kevin at Easter Bunny 10k 2023

**M**y little Saturday morning group and a few others have been encouraging me to share my story, so here goes. And if it can inspire or encourage just one other then I will be happy with that.

In December of 2021 I was just a normal Trotter getting on with things albeit on the slow side and carrying too much weight, but then in January a life changing event that could happen to anyone came along.

On the 15th January, a day I will never forget, I woke with three medics over me and was rushed to hospital on the blue light. Apparently, Jackie had been unable to rouse me and called 999. I was to find out later that the family were told to prepare themselves for the worst.

I was admitted to the ICU for a few days before moving to a general ward in a single room and the diagnosis I was given was that I had double pneumonia. I was conscious and with it after the initial admission and was seen by various doctors. One suggested I needed a ventilator but thankfully I was stable enough to be able to refuse that and another suggested I could be in for three weeks. I didn't fancy staying that long as that would have gone over my birthday.

During this spell I received amazing support and love from my friends in the social media world and the whole spell was very emotional. A group of my friends told me after that they had done a meditation for me and sent healing to me. Not that long ago I would not have understood that and thought it a bit woo woo but my mind has been opened and perhaps there is a lot of good in simple things like that. Another of my friends up North in an emotional online chat said something that will always stick with me, just six words, it was "let's be blunt you nearly died", that is a reality check for the future.

After the initial couple of days, I experienced something that I still cannot fully explain or even understand. I felt like a bomb had gone off inside me and that my immune system had started to fight back and from that point my oxygen stats started to climb, and I could see a departure from hospital getting nearer.

The day arrived that I was released and the feeling of the fresh air and sunshine as I left was amazing and the little things in life meant much more to me. I had my wakeup call and had to make the most of life moving forward.

I was told that it would take several months to get my strength back and it was initially a struggle just to walk 50 yards or so with help. While recovering at home I must give a big thank you to everyone who came to visit me.



My walks started to get a little easier and it became important just to do something every day, it was great even to feel light rain on my face again, the simple things really were taking on a new significance.

Moving on to May, and I felt ready to don the shoes and join in the couch to 5k session with Skins. It was often just the two of us, but the encouragement was always there and many an evening I felt it a real struggle to achieve the amount of minutes required.

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At this point I had to take the plunge and set a target so I paid my money and entered the Easter Bunny 10k 2023, a full fifteen months after entering hospital. A first step towards that was to take part in the Sandycote Loop in July. I have in the past done this in 32 minutes but that was never going to be a close call and I dragged myself round in last place having run and walked it in 52 minutes, I was on the way back.

I started getting back to the Saturday morning runs and gradually got more able, first doing a mile non-stop then over time up to three miles and beyond, speed was never an issue it was always about just keeping going. I'm very grateful to everyone who joined me on these runs and dragged me round.

In addition to the running target, I had also by this time had a shock that my weight was coming in at 17 stone and that a direct result was that I was borderline diabetic! That was not going to stop me, and I set the goal of getting that down to 13 stone.

So fast forward to this year and race day approaching. I have managed to shed four stone and reach that goal and the running is now much easier without the extra baggage to carry. My diet has changed totally; I now hardly drink, not that I drank a lot before, and small things like stopping eating crisps and chocolate bars have made all the difference. I eat a lot more fruit and have also taken to drinking lemon water and pine needle tea.

Race day arrived for the Easter Bunny and I must admit an hour before the start with rain coming down in stair rods I was somewhat nervous but the rain stopped and the blue sky returned and all was good with the world. Sarah Blanchard ran with me, and we started at the back to keep things steady, the goal being simply to get round without stopping. We kept a decent steady pace with Sarah pulling me along though she would say I was pulling her along. Just before 9km we spied the hour pacemaker ahead of us and even though I did not think there was much left in the tank just had to give it a go and see if we could catch the pacer. I don't know how but we got there with a little to spare in a time of 58.02 with Sarah just behind, I had done it and could not have been happier, I was in my eyes back and could call myself a runner again.

So, what is next? I entered the club trip in June and our own Totnes 10k in August and the prime goal is to be on the start line for the Bideford Half Marathon next March. It is a big ask but I will be there whatever it takes.

The moral of my story or journey is surely that if I can do it after what I went through then anyone can, I am not the youngest of Trotters anymore after all. We will all get setbacks, bumps in the road and injuries but whatever happens it could always be worse and for many people it is.

A lot is going on in the world and I want to be around and active in it for a long while yet. On on.



Yasi, Sarah, Paul and Kevin enjoying a Saturday run

# Run/Walk - does it pay off?

Does a run/walk strategy give the anticipated results in a marathon? **Tim Syngé** has tried and tested this technique and here he offers his conclusions

I suspect that most runners who have attempted more than a couple of marathons will have experienced what many people refer to as hitting the wall. Eighteen or twenty miles of lovely running at your target pace, all is right with the world, and then the wheels come off. Some very painful miles ensue with a lot of walks and rest breaks, resulting in those often-uttered words as you collapse across the finish line: “Never again!”.

There is another way of approaching a marathon if the training hasn't quite prepared you for the event. I first tried adopting a run/walk strategy in the 2014 Windermere Marathon. I had completed Taunton in what was for me at the time a horrible 4:11 when I was targeting something like 3:40, completing the first half in 1:48 and the second half in 2:23. It rained on me and I walked several of the later miles, miserably wondering whether it was worth ever entering another marathon. However, I had Windermere in the diary the following month and I decided to try this run/walk thing I had heard about rather than go through the pain again.

I planned to run for nine minutes, then walk for one minute. This may sound odd and I felt very self-conscious at the end of the first mile when I started to walk. Would runners look down on me? What would everyone else think? In fact, other runners were quite interested, especially as I would often catch them up again on my running phases! It did lead to some odd moments, including walking down slopes and running up a couple of hills because that fitted the timing pattern I had set for myself. It is easy to manage in practice: every time the minutes on the watch reach “x9”, you walk for one minute until the minutes go to “x0”. There are obviously other variations and the 4:1 option is also popular. I got to around 22 miles and felt strong enough to run the rest without breaks. I finished in 4:15 this time, but with a 2:02/2:13 split and a real sense of satisfaction at being able to run for the line from several miles out. It seemed that taking some walk breaks *before* you needed them could be a really positive thing.



Why am I writing about this nearly ten years later? Some readers may have seen my recent blog about the wonderful North Dorset Village Marathon earlier this year and the rest of this piece is a revised version of that blog. I had a pressing need to do a long run in preparation for an upcoming ultra and the North Dorset Village Marathon offered an ideal opportunity for some miles. The problem: I was not marathon-ready! I decided to take the place that Graydon had offered up and to go for it. I knew I wouldn't be able to run the distance, as COVID and some laziness had hit my training plans, so I decided to resurrect my good old run/walk strategy.



The North Dorset Village Marathon starts and finishes in the small town of Sturminster Newton, a few miles east of Sherborne, and runs almost entirely on minor country roads as it visits several small Dorset villages. It has been on my radar for some years and everyone I know who has done it speaks very enthusiastically about it. Graydon had successfully negotiated Boston two weeks previously and London the following week and I think he deserved a weekend off. So, clutching race number "1", I set out for Dorset early on race day, trying to plan a race strategy on the back of a non-existent training plan.

What Graydon didn't prepare me for was the way that wearing the coveted "1" number marks you out. Before the start I was asked whether I was defending my title and in the first mile I heard a spectator telling his son

"that guy's going to win"! I entered into the spirit of things and asked several spectators "am I coming first?" which, as the field spread out on winding country lanes, occasionally felt possible.

Half a dozen fellow Trotters were at the start and we discussed tactics. My declared plan was to cover the miles and not to worry about the time and I estimated a time of maybe five hours on the back of a run-walk strategy which I hadn't really developed fully, although I knew it would be necessary at some point. I was expecting to walk quite a bit of it and I wondered whether a 9:1 run-walk approach might get me through at least the first 20 miles or so, but suspected the later miles might still be done at closer to walking pace.

- 1) 1mi - 9:44
- 2) 1mi - 9:34
- 3) 1mi - 9:33
- 4) 1mi - 10:00
- 5) 1mi - 9:49
- 6) 1mi - 9:41

Off we went and I decided to see how a 10 min/mile pace felt. It felt pretty good and I decided to introduce the walks a few miles in, maybe after five miles or so, rather than at mile 1.

I reached the six-mile mark in fractionally under the hour and felt very positive. This really is a well-organised event with plentiful drinks stations and well-measured mile markers. An *a capella* choir of village ladies had been singing "Don't Stop Me Now" as I passed them at around five miles.

The rain was holding off (for now, at least) and conditions were cool and pleasant. I had realised on reaching the school hall which served as race HQ that there was a drinks seeding service to selected drinks stations and I had run back to the car to pick up a bottle of Lucozade which I labelled and dropped into the 30km box. I was starting to look forward to that already, even though it was still at least a couple of hours away. In the meantime, I worked through the small stack of gels which I had packed in my waist belt. And so the next hour passed.

7) 1mi - 10:20	Twelve miles pretty much bang on the two-hour mark. Still going well, but I knew that I couldn't sustain this pace for a lot longer and, somewhere around the halfway mark, I threw in my first one-minute walk. All good and getting back to a run at the end of the minute was easy. Maybe this was a bit of a lax approach compared with my very disciplined previous effort at Windermere, but I was still feeling quite confident about the race as it unfolded. I explained to one or two of the runners around me what I was doing. In this part of the field, it turned out that there were quite a few ultra runners who could happily plod on for mile after mile. I found that, when I slowed to a walk, runners I had been with would gain maybe 100 yards on me. I would then catch them again within five minutes and resume whatever conversation we had been having.
8) 1mi - 9:38	
9) 1mi - 10:25	
10) 1mi - 10:02	
11) 1mi - 9:38	
12) 1mi - 10:12	

I didn't take my walk breaks regularly as I had expected to. Instead, after the first break, I decided to continue to run for 12 minutes, as there were 12 miles to go, then the next time I ran for 11 minutes as there were by then 11 miles to go. I think this might have ended badly if taken to its logical mathematical conclusion, but fortunately I got involved in various conversations and the pattern had no chance to develop! I think I probably had something like three or four more walk breaks altogether. By about mile 18, I 'knew' without doubt that I was going to be able to keep running and so I dispensed with the walks. As a result, I pulled ahead of several of the runners I had been grouped with and didn't see them again on the course.
13) 1mi - 10:08
14) 1mi - 10:13
15) 1mi - 10:26
16) 1mi - 10:57
17) 1mi - 10:35
18) 1mi - 10:13
19) 1mi - 10:46
20) 1mi - 10:28

Some of the miles were a little slower by now, but I kept running. At 25 miles, I was directed off the road and onto an old railway track bed which would lead all the way to the finish. There was a gentle incline in the last half mile or so, but nothing severe. Overall there had been one or two hills, but this event was such a change from the hilly trail runs that have been my default event type for the last few years, that it really felt like a pretty flat road marathon. Across the finish line in 4:27 and something, and delighted to go under four-and-a-half hours. And, what's more, not a single mile in over 11 minutes. My splits were 2:10/2:17 which I was pretty pleased with.	21) 1mi - 9:59
	22) 1mi - 9:42
	23) 1mi - 10:31
	24) 1mi - 10:22
	25) 1mi - 10:30
	26) 1mi - 10:03
	27) 0.37mi - 3:51

I finished 125th/167 with an official time of 4:27:23, which was probably better than I deserved on the amount of training I had done. In conclusion, two recommendations. One: do the North Dorset Village Marathon, as it is a super event. And secondly, if you are short on training or not confident about a marathon, consider trying out a run/walk strategy. It really can turn a slog into an enjoyable experience.

# Taking a punt at the DD

**Roger Easterbrook** explains just how to smash the DD on the basis of a somewhat unorthodox training regime...

I have witnessed the DD (Dartmoor Discovery) as a marshal, above Two Bridges, with admiration as the weary runners pass with a mile to go. The look of exhaustion and suffering makes you wonder - are they enjoying it?

In mid-April I decided the race needed my support as places were still available and it would be a real loss if I hadn't participated, and it was discontinued. My weekly mileage is 20m so not long till race day (3 June) to ramp it up for 32 hilly miles. My last long race was a flat Amsterdam marathon in 2008, when again my training was a shambles due to injuries.

Taking advice from several Trotters meant: Run plenty of hills, Practise eating and drinking, Do longer runs. The first two I understood, plenty of hills around which after an hour meant I was knackered.

And nutrition:



If doing long runs was going to be risky due to stress increase then wear yourself out was the advice, hence crap bike time! A weighty, slow, double suspension Apollo Spiral.



This meant running on tired legs was easily achieved.

By May I was up to running 90 minutes including hills, and 45 miles a week. My ankle didn't like this, so a change to 3 runs a week happened.

Mid-May, a long walk up the coast to Berwick-on-Tweed made do instead of long runs; it was flat terrain so not exactly like the DD, but still tiring. At least decent weather and nice views.

Two weeks to go and I bit the bullet and did a 3-hour run fuelled by a few jelly babies and some flat Coke. My ankles and legs were numb by the end, but I survived. Smarty kindly took me on a cycle round the route which was inspiring with terrific scenery but also concerning. The Ashburton to Buckland hill dragged on and on.



Overall, the training had focused less on miles more on hills and time on my feet. An issue was the risk of cramp, so salt and caffeine tablets begged from Ruth for the big day.

A week of camping with shocking sleep in the run-up included plenty of beer. The night before I decanted flat coke into plenty of bottles attached to SIS gels. My supplies included malt loaf, jelly babies, bananas *en route* from Tim, Gary and Eleanor, and the salt tabs.

Disaster as I lay awake with insomnia until 0330. After two hours' sleep I ate the recommended porridge for breakfast and had a glorious drive up for car parking duty. Seeing the Barnetts and Chairman at 0645 lifted my spirits, before heading to the car park to gesticulate at drivers, many of whom looked rather perky, and smartly turned out.

All done by 0900, a quick change, time for a drink, malt loaf, flapjack and the team snap.



I couldn't find the pre-race team snap, so here's the start instead. Advice had been to go easy till Ashburton, slower then - 8 minute miles - but I found myself on the front row and off we all went.

Had a chat with a few runners *en route* to Badgers Holt, plus sharing the jelly babies. Pride took over and I ran up the hill leaving my comrades behind, before clocking some foolish sub 7 min miles. The smiley face drawn on my stomach was nearly invisible, but hey ho. Thank the lord for the marshals, drinks teams, and supporters as I was now running alone until the finish.

After descending Poundsgate, up and over toward River Dart Country Park whilst swigging flat coke the legs were starting to feel it. First banana delivered by Tim at Peartree, Ashburton, which was just as well with the hill to Buckland coming soon.

I caught my first runner, a hobbling Okehamp-ton DD veteran, before Buckland, prior to the vicious climb to Pudsham Down.

Descending to Widecombe and the aches and pains were increasing as I passed halfway. Great to see familiar faces around Widecombe including another banana and the company of DD veteran Smarty on his bike. I was flagging as the route climbed out toward Cator; it felt like the wheels were falling off as the heat was rising.

The intake of regular Coke, sweets, bananas, and salt tabs couldn't hide the fact I was under prepared and 'writing cheques my body couldn't cash'. Cramp in the hamstrings hit a few times on the way to the full marathon point. Not much sympathy available from the marshals when I requested new groin, hamstrings, quads etc. At 3.25 on the clock, it was an excellent marathon although I looked like a beetroot-faced, shuffling, weary runner.

At last, the road to salvation arrived: the B3212 to Two Bridges. Only 5 more miles (which is more like my preferred distance). Water on the head to cool down, downing gels and Coke in a frenzy, just needed to focus on the tiny dots of runners ahead in the shimmering heat and grin at the kind marshals along the way.





The road undulated, so periods of optimism were followed by daunting upward sections but at least the breeze was from the side and cooling. At the Two Bridges hill and right -turn I hauled in two runners, as they walked, and I creaked my way past. Up the hill to Princetown passing Bones the skeleton and it was grit your teeth time. Mentally thinking: I don't want to let down the generous help of everyone making it a great event on the day.

Great to see the finish line, in 4.19: what a relief! My family turned up 30 minutes later, having estimated a slower 'hopeful finish' time.

To sum up, you don't have to be a long-distance runner to take part, but it helps. It is a beast, of course, so some tactics to consider. Heartfelt thanks to everyone doing their bit to make it a special day in the race calendar. A true comedy moment to hear (burger in hand) that we three had won the men's team category. On On.

Top team: Jamie Barnett, Roger Easterbrook and Christian Robinson



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