

Tring Runner

April 2008

Club Runs:
Every Wednesday
7:30 pm Running from Tring Cricket Club

Main Forthcoming Events

Sunday 13th April – London Marathon followed by Post Marathon Bash and Annual Prize Giving in the evening. The Prize Giving will be held at the Club House starting at 8:00pm. Food will be available.

Sunday Apr 20th – Aldbury Cross Country 5 miles. The next event in the off road championships. Entry forms available on Tring RC website

Saturday Apr 26th Yorkshire Three Peaks Fell Race. One of the classic fell races.

Monday May 5th Pednor 5 mile road race

Wed May 14th - Invitation Evening – Local clubs are invited to join us on our Wednesday evening run

Wed June 4th - Pub Run to Cholesbury
More details later

Wed June 18th - Midsummer Fun Run
A date for the diary – lots of help will be required

Wed July 9th - Rick's Tring Park Relays
More details later

Newsletter contributions to **Peter Hamson** by 27th April please.

Email: phamson@caci.co.uk

VISIT OUR WEB SITE

<http://www.tringrunningclub.org.uk>

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And much more

It's that time of the year again when you may find yourself reaching for the sun-cream before going out for a run or alternatively it may be snowing, hailing, raining, blowing a gale force wind and muddy and slippery underfoot.

Last year I ran (or attempted to run) the Edale Skyline Fell race where we endured what were definitely the worst conditions I have ever encountered in a race. This year I have done two events where the conditions were only marginally better. Firstly the Compton 40 mile trail race which was run on Easter Saturday with a 20-25 mph North wind to contend with. Intermittent snow storms kept us cold but fortunately the snow was not settling which was just as well otherwise the route markings, which were flour on the ground, would have totally disappeared.

The following week I ran or walked the Surrey Tops 50 mile LDWA event where it rained non-stop from start to finish and was like wading through a quagmire.

At least I gather there were far better conditions in the Edale Skyline this year.

Good luck to all runners in the London Marathon

You may be interested in reading the poem 'The night Before the Marathon' written by an ex-TRC member and re-produced here on page 7.

Whether or not you are running don't forget the Post Marathon bash and Prize Giving at the clubhouse in the evening.

Peter Hamson

Race Results

All road race results published here will count towards the club championships.

Berkhamsted Half Marathon

Runner	Posn	Time	PB
Ross Langley	13	1:22:05	
Alan Whelan	15	1:23:34	
Jonathan Smith	84	1:33:18	Y*
Michaela Colwell	92	1:34:07	Y
Jon Scullard	107	1:35:16	
Jon Court	111	1:35:27	
Anthony Ruberry	149	1:37:38	
Maurice Bond	195	1:40:24	
Nigel Kippax	226	1:42:13	
Alex Aitchison	275	1:44:23	
Verna Burgess	316	1:46:25	
Sarah Hunter	325	1:46:57	
Richard White	328	1:47:06	
Oliver Gaunt	338	1:47:10	Y*
Louise Berry	389	1:49:24	
Gemma Wright	409	1:50:18	
Kim Reed	442	1:52:01	
Sue Halliwell	454	1:52:37	
Anna Scarth	504	1:54:57	
Kirsty Barnett	531	1:55:39	
Nikki Burgess	619	1:59:33	
Elizabeth Daniel	641	2:00:43	
Edda Aitchison	647	2:00:09	*
Geoff Dennis	649	2:01:12	
Nigel Millwood	654	2:01:31	
Jane Porteous	688	2:03:55	
Helle Hennings	767	2:09:59	
Kev Buckingham	827	2:15:55	
Mike Gaunt	872	2:24:32	
Pam Burley	911	2:34:36	

* times supplied by runner – not the official times

Tring came 4th team, the team comprising Ross, Alan, Jonathan and Michaela.

Berkhamsted 5 mile fun run

Runner	Posn	Time	PB
Maria Cook	56	0:40:16	
Nick Pierpoint	60	0:40:41	
John Shelton	166	0:50:49	

Finchley 20

Runner	Posn	Time	PB
Colin Rees		2:29:50	

Congratulations to Colin who was first over 60

Wendover Gap (26 miles LDWA event)

Runner	Posn	Time	PB
Simon Barnett		3:37	
John Manning		4:18	
Geoff Head		4:39	
Peter Hamson		4:40	
Tony Hill		4:46	
Colin Rees		4:47	

This was a local event, starting and finishing in Priestwood and organised by the Long Distance Walkers Association. It made a pleasant alternative to the Berkhamsted half, being a non-competitive, off-road event on a good scenic course.

Compton 40

Runner	Posn	Time	PB
Peter Hamson	25	7:42:24	
Tony Hill	31	7:56:33	

53 Finished

Compton 20

Runner	Posn	Time	PB
David Sawyer	120	3:36:27	

197 Finished

Conditions were far from perfect for this event. Competitors had to contend with strong winds and driving snow storms as well as muddier than usual footpaths. It brought back memories of last year's Edale Skyline event. There was one particularly unpleasant section of about four miles along a dead straight track, concrete in places, and into a head wind. However, of course, some of the time the wind has to be behind you and the last few miles were a real pleasure as we sailed along effortlessly with the wind.

Congratulations to Tony who had an excellent run to break eight hours at his first attempt in this event.

Sandy 10 – 30 March

Runner	Posn	Time	PB
Callum Bonthron	109	1:13:12	
Michaela Colwell	140	1:15:18	
Mandy Bonthron	197	1:20:13	
Richard White	208	1:21:09	

408 finished

Mandy writes: No one achieved a PB, as Michaela was carrying a knee injury and Richard was not on best form. This was Callum's first 10 mile race, he ran really well. I was only 46 seconds slower than last year, so I was quite pleased. The weather was hot, dry and sunny, which makes a lovely change and start to the summer.

Kingston 16 mile

Runner	Posn	Time	PB
Oliver Gaunt		2:16:00	

Oliver (Mike's son) writes: This was a 2-lap race, running along the Thames at Kingston and then looping back. Flat race and quite a nice distance before London.

London Half Marathon (Silverstone)

Runner	Posn	Time	PB
Richard White	522	1:37:55	ym

This was a 'sort of' PB – at least a millennium best. In fact this runner was running for Truro RC but could well be the same person as a certain member of Tring RC.

Oakley 20

Runner	Posn	Time	PB
David Heron		3:03:56	
Oliver Gaunt		3:04:15	Y

Oliver writes: This was my first 20 miler and a very tough one to boot. On top of the rain / cold / hills it was very windy which made miles 13 and 19 very hard. A true highlight was the 10ft long 1ft deep puddles before the up hills, which meant that your shoes were like little lead weights until they dried out. Feel another black toe nail coming...

Milton Keynes 5 mile fun run

Runner	Posn	Time	PB
Geoff Roser		28:49	
John Shelton		29:43	

Breakfast Run Report

Dear TRC Gang

Slightly later than planned breakfast run report! (Busy girl I am!)

24 early risers turned up for the run on Sat 23rd Feb, it was a lovely morning. We gathered outside the Ivinghoe Tea Rooms and we set off, led by the effervescent Bob Ford who had kindly planned a great route for us, including some new footpaths that had just opened up, always nice to run on new territory.

One hour or so later we trooped into the Tea Rooms and had a really good breakfast and, as ever, lots of sociable chat. The Tea Rooms are relatively new and very nice indeed with an attractive patio and good views out the back.

Many thanks to all who turned up, a really good turnout, great to see the breakfast runs being so well supported! Plus thanks to Bob for the fab route!

I suppose I'd better get on with organising the next one!

Cheers all

Maria Cook

Wendover Woods Marathon

Ambition Events run a series of ultra events throughout the year including Tring2Town, Thames Path Ultra and the Pennine 100. On Sunday March 16th the Tough Challenge took place in Wendover Woods. The morning introduced itself as the previous day said goodbye with pouring rain. However a few brave souls faced the adversities of wind and rough weather and lined up just next to the new Go Ape Centre by the cafe for one of the three events, 10K, 1/2 marathon and full marathon. These included Sarah Hill and me.

The full marathon took in 21 laps and some 6,000 ft of climb. By the end of lap 1 conditions were very muddy and slippery. So much so that the largest and steepest hill could only be ascended by climbing up one of the 4 strategically placed ropes. Lap counting was impossible after the third lap, but I did still have the presence of mind to identify Sarah Hill being photographed, claiming her trophy for first female, third overall in the 10k. I did cheer in praise but felt that as I was totally drenched and covered in mud I was unrecognisable as a fellow TRC runner.

I think it is fair to say that the marathon is a gruelling, energy sapping challenge - one I heartily recommend to all of you - I'll even come and support you, well at least watch through the cafe window.

Michael Burgess

Results:-

10K	Sarah Hill	1:04:00	3 rd overall, 1 st lady (18 finishers)
Marathon	Michael Burgess	4:48:00	3 rd overall (31 finishers)

Surrey Tops 50 Miles

I spent a very pleasant 15 or so hours sliding around in the mud and rain on the LDWA Surrey Tops 50 miles on the Last Saturday in March. I started on the runner's start at 1:00 pm which meant doing about half of it in the dark. We had a route description which was not particularly easy to follow (they never are). I inevitably went the wrong a few times and badly wrong once which was a bit frustrating. I was on my own and met three of the runners who had started with me coming in the opposite direction. They said we had gone wrong and should be on the NDW which was on the hill on the other side of the valley. Stupidly I believed them and turned round and went the way they said, only for the lady who was leading to admit this was still wrong. In fact we were on the right route in the first place. Still - we got a good view of Guildford out of it. I never learn not to trust other people's navigation

The last 10 miles was just thick mud where there was no way round. Several times I was up to my ankles in mud. I finished at just after 4 o'clock on Sunday morning and had a shower and meal and drove straight home. I got home at about 6 o'clock and wasn't up to much on Sunday.

Brian Layton was also running. He did about the same time as me but started two hours earlier than me so I didn't see him until the end.

Typically the weather on Sunday was great.

Peter Hamson

Further tales of a novice fell runner – Edale Skyline 2008

From my short experience of fell running so far, I was convinced that this form of running only takes place in conditions where you can't see, get frozen, sink waist deep in peat and reach the end cursing and vowing 'never again'. In fact, last year's Edale race, my first, was strangely reminiscent of Bob Dylan's Mr Tambourine Man – "my senses have been stripped, my hands can't feel to grip, my toes too numb to step".

What a difference a year makes! Edale 2008 took place on 30 March in bright sunshine, clear skies and temperatures, which, if not summery, did not result in the frozen fingertips of last year.

286 runners started and, unlike last time, most of them finished. The route circles 21 miles round the top of the Edale valley but, of course, starts in the bottom of the valley so there is the obligatory climb of 1000ft before anything like running happens, except for Rick, Simon and Alan who "did a Brian Layton" and raced up the first field to avoid the massive traffic jam through the gate. For all I know, they ran all the way up to the first turning point, Ringing Roger – I certainly didn't. And in fact, this first 20 minutes was a little like last year because at the top, once again, it was cling on with all four limbs to avoid being blown sideways and back down the side of the hill.

Up to Win Hill and down to the valley bottom again at Hope where Bertie Bassett was directing us up the next hill! This may have been something to do with the free bags of Jelly Babies being handed out at the start but the vision of a 6 ft tall liquorice allsort half way round a fell race brought on that hallucinatory feeling – what was Mr Tambourine Man about after all?

As you can tell, this race has some nice quirky features – last year it was a single aluminium ladder to cross a barbed wire fence. It went up one side but didn't come down on the other leaving a death-defying jump. Fortunately they had found the ladder for the other side this time.

There were one or two gusts of wind that threatened to twist the legs into a reef knot especially along the exposed ridges near Mam Tor. The veteran fell runners told me that it was wetter and boggy underfoot than last time. I didn't think so, which may have been down to my superior navigation and route selection skills but was probably more to do with me having wiped from memory the atrocious conditions of 2007. But when I finished, I used that foolproof method of measuring the PQ (peat quotient) and found that the brown stuff had only come about half way up my calf. Result! We won't mention the splatters over my face and front.

All in all, a great experience once again. I really can recommend it. The scenery is inspiring and finishing the race with a smile on the face and in a half-decent time, for me, was a bonus. Simon deserves special mention, having spent the previous week recceing the Bob Graham Round in the Lakes, he came in 20th overall.

As the Terminator says, "I'll be back".

John Manning

Results

1	Lloyd Taggart	2:46	88	Alan Whelan	3:54
20	Simon Barnett	3:21	146	John Manning	4:16
38	Rick Ansell	3:29	223	Kirsty Barnett	4:41

Grizzly 2008 – ‘Armageddon Again’

Somewhat uniquely, the course for 2008 was very similar to the course used in 2007 – which had been delayed until the autumn, due to the Napoli running aground at Branscombe beach and shedding its load. So I knew what was coming, but our Best Man didn't. As nobody from TRC wanted Kirsty's place, we tongue in cheek mentioned it to him on Saturday afternoon and to our astonishment, he accepted. Ash had an advantage over you lot in that he lives in Exeter, but in the minus column was the fact that he'd never run more than 7 miles before and had a basketball match to play on Saturday evening. He appeared to enjoy telling those around him these facts during the race, which by all accounts didn't make him too many friends.

In September I had started too fast, being about 15th off the beach (the first half mile was on shingle) and then demoralisingly lost 35 places during the course of the race. This year I planned to run within myself early on, which I did, but worryingly ended up being 9th off the beach. Running through Beer (yes) to Branscombe Mouth I slid back to about 25th, but then as I pulled myself up the steepest hill on the course, using a rope that hadn't been there last year, I started to consolidate my position, and it stayed that way until the end.

The middle 10 miles were only slightly less disorientating than last year but the bogs were muddier and deeper – even at the edges they were above knee deep. We missed one loop and instead ran up a vague path that was a carpet of wild garlic underfoot. I found it overpowering, so what it was like for those further down the field I can only imagine. After the second beach section (the best part of a mile long) we climbed up a long flight of steps and instinctively, after having taken a drink from my Mum, I turned right for the standard last 3 miles back to Seaton. But to my horror the course looped left instead – back in the direction we had just come from. I moaned that I didn't want to go this way to a runner who had overtaken me whilst I had been wasting a couple of seconds heading the ‘wrong’ way. Just my luck that of 1379 runners, it turned out to be the Lean Mean Runner Bean – aka the race director. So I spent the next minute finding out if we had any more surprises and thanking him profusely for another great event.

Back through Beer and along the final section of beach it became clear that I was going to have my best Grizzly yet. If I could have gone 25 seconds quicker I would have been top 20, but 23rd was more than I'd hoped for. My performance in this race has got to plateau soon. In consecutive races I've gone from 152nd (31 mins behind the winner) to 158th (39 mins), 88th (27 mins), 49th (29 mins) to 23rd (15 mins). I must be doing something right at the moment as I managed to go 17 minutes faster than 07. Looking at other people's times the course seems to be have been around 4 to 5 minutes faster in 08 compared to 07.

Ash finished in 3:50, still smiling, in 661st position, 17 minutes in front of Brian Layton who defied his ongoing injuries to complete his tenth and “toughest” Grizzly. Ash has no immediate plans to get married, but told me afterwards that I wouldn't be his Best Man as and when the happy day ever arrives. We've already alienated my sister's boyfriend, who upon finishing last year, in a very credible 245th (not bad for a cricketer) promptly threw up in a nearby skip. In no uncertain terms did he tell us what we could do with the spare place for this year. We couldn't persuade my sister either. In short I think we've exhausted all local options. So upon the occasion that we ever have a spare place going again, it'll be down to one of you to step up to the mark. In the meantime, I'm sure that Tony will be only too happy (!) to escort you round the pub run, also organised by Axe Valley Runners.

Grizzly Results

Winner	2.24:34	Torbay AAC
Simon	2.39:37	23 rd
Ashley	3.49:06	661 st
Brian	4.06:42	859 th

Simon Barnett

The Night Before the Marathon

In 1983 ex-TRC member Jill Fowler ran her first marathon at Guildford. During her months of putting in the miles she passed the time by composing verses in her head and later wrote them down. The one below clearly illustrates her thoughts.

Is everything ready? What shorts shall I wear?
For Goodness sake choose the most comfortable pair.
Do I dare wear my Nikes, or are they too new?
I daren't take the risk, the old ones will do.

And where is my number and map of the run?
I must get the drinks and the sandwiches done.
We've got to start early. Do you know the way?
Is the car full of petrol? You filled it today?

I ate too much supper. I shan't sleep tonight
Though I've set the alarm and put out the light.
I'm planning the miles, the first four at nine.
Must remember my watch, make sure of the time.

Will it be hot? I hope it will rain.
Do I feel in my leg a slight twinge of pain?
Am I getting a cold? My throat's feeling sore.
Could it be that I'm nervous? I'm not really sure.

Tomorrow's the marathon, twenty-six miles.
Something like London to Chalfont-St-Giles.
And it suddenly struck me, contemplating the day
That twenty-six miles is an awful long way.

Jill Fowler

Fund Raising Venture from the Cricket Club

Tring Park Cricket Club (in the guise of Gareth) is to launch a fund raising initiative in which individual members (not the clubs per se) can invest. Details are as follows:

- The initiative will take the form of a fund raising draw.
- In a joint venture with the hockey, tennis and running clubs, the 50/50 draw will give you the chance to win one of many cash prizes whilst raising money for your club.
- By being a joint venture it enables TPCC to offer higher cash prizes for those taking part.
- The cost of the draw is £ 1 per week, payable on an annual basis, by cheque or direct debit (can be quarterly if you prefer). This will enter you into 51 draws. There will be one 'double draw', where prize money is doubled. There will also be a jackpot, which should it not be won will rollover.
- Nearly £21 of your money will go straight to the club of your choice.
- Mandate forms will be available shortly so make sure you sign up to this exciting new draw.
- Weekly draws will take place at 7pm on Saturday's between October and March and 9pm between April and September.
- At the moment the start date for the draw is set for Saturday 19th April.

This is open to all members of Tring RC. It is up to individual members as to whether or not they want to participate.

Call Gareth on 07739 807279 for more information.

Jonathan Mulcahy

IRHH Goodnight Walk 2008

David Heron writes: A few of us helped out on this last year when it was round Aylesbury, it was good fun (ask Gemma or Kim).

This year Ruth Barber, the Community Fundraiser of The Iain Rennie Hospice At Home, has made the following plea:-

It is that time of year again when we are desperately trying to recruit marshals for the Iain Rennie Hospice at Home (IRHH) Goodnight Walk 2008. Last year we raised a staggering £40,000 and this could not have been done without a team of hard working marshals making sure the 250 ladies completed the walk safely and with plenty of encouragement!

This year the walk starts and finishes from the Amersham Community Centre and we would love to have you come along on the night and support our women walkers. You will be given a goody bag full of snacks, a luminous marshal jacket and a hot breakfast from the BBQ.

It is all happening on Saturday 7th June from about 10.30pm onwards and we are hoping for around 500 walking women! There are plenty of jobs on the night that need filling so please come along and join the fun.

*We are also looking to recruit **lead** and **back** walkers for and would love to see you there!*

If you are able to help please do not hesitate to contact Ruth Barber on 01442 890222 or rbarber@irhh.org

Predicta Run

The Wednesday evening Predicta Run involved running the Bell loop (Approximately 8.1 miles) without a watch and predicting your time as accurately as possible. John Boielle took our predictions and set us off and timed us back to the clubhouse. The winner was *David Heron* who predicted his time to within 19 seconds.

Thanks to John for doing the time keeping.

PREDICTATIME. Wed 26 Feb 2008

NAME	ACTUAL TIME	PREDICTED TIME	DIFFERENCE (SECONDS)	TIME IN 2006	POSITION
Ian Verchere *	46.06	42	246	75.24	15
Martine Cooper *	47.22	59	698	N/A	25
Jane Bowen *	47.22	60	758	N/A	26
Kevin Harding	49.01	56	419	47.42	21
Ross Langley	50.26	53.18	172	N/A	6
Rob Brown	52.56	58.19	323	N/A	17
John Manning	53.02	59	358	59.25	19
Joe Mitchell	53.58	58	242	56.17	14
Paul Cowan	56.00	59	180	N/A	8
Nigel Kippax	58.26	59.50	84	59.22	4
Rob Yeates	59.40	47	765	N/A	27
Richard White	60.25	63.22	177	60.54	7
Alison Harding	60.34	61.23	49	60.41	2
Mandy Bonthron	62.35	64	85	63.04	5
Jonathan Mulcahy	66.17	56	617	61.53	23
Kim Reed	66.18	56	618	N/A	24
Darren Hogg	66.20	60.30	350	N/A	18
Ashley	66.34	74.37	483	N/A	22
Mike Gaunt	68.08	72	232	84.35	13
Geoff Dennis	69.06	75.12	366	81.36	20
Edda Aitchison	69.12	72	192	75.12	10
David Heron	70.06	69.42	24	N/A	FIRST
Nigel Lacey	73.12	72	72	72.59	3
Bob Ford	77.39	74.22	197	71.20	11
Peter Hamson	78.05	75	185	67.39	9
Nicky Burgess	84.28	80	268	N/A	16
Beth Dennis	86.12	90	228	N/A	12

* = Ran to Crow's Nest and back

Ask Marge

(There has been some argument as to whether the picture below is upside down or the right way up. Maria insists it is upside down and I say "Naaa – it's the right way up". Anyway – take a look and see what you think. It may be that my version of **word** does not support upside downing so the picture has come out the wrong way up (ie the right way up). If it appears to be the right way up to you I suggest you do one of the following:

- Rotate your screen through 180 degrees
 - Turn the page upside down (if you are reading a paper copy)
 - Have a few glasses of whisky and take another look – then it is bound to look upside down, I mean the right way up – just as she would look in Australia where, off course, everything is upside down.
- I hope this is clear - PH)

G'day my little wombats guess where I've been!



You might think "on the jolly juice" but you couldn't be more wrong. I took a break from my marathon training to take my good chum Basil from Bearbrook on a super little trip to the bottom of the southern hemisphere. I had decided on a whim to visit my dear second cousin Edna who lives in the outback. Now, for once my earwax had not built up too much, thanks to a recent and very efficient syringing by my pastry chef friend Luigi with his icing nozzle, (he had kindly squeezed me in between his cream horns), but poor old Basil had obviously not had the same privilege. He had popped round on his way to the barbers, a waste of time if you ask me, I'd buff him up with a J-cloth and Pledge at a fraction of the price. His fellow BB runners call him Mr Sheen in honour of his fine bald pate – Basil loves it, he thinks they mean he drives his motorbike fast.

Out of my lounge window I saw him on the doorstep clutching his helmet in one hand and reaching up for my knocker with the other. I opened the door, beating him to it.

"We're going to visit Sydney" I shouted.

"What – we can't". His hearing aid shrieked like a banshee, sending my tabbycat, Gagalog, hurtling through the cat flap. Shame I'd locked it shut to keep out next door's Siamese, Shagalot, the local prostitute.

"Why not" I bellowed, "Sydney is lovely this time of year".

"Well I'm sure he'd be very glad to hear you say that but he's away at a dominoes convention in Grimsby with his wife Dot".

Gagalot showed his displeasure by living up to his name.

Why do I bother, my little parakeets, why do I bother?

We turned up at Sydney and were met by Edna who was looking amazing in a snazzy new pair of glasses.

"This is my second cousin Edna" I shouted "Dame Edna Everage".

Basil looked startled. "Edna Beverage? Sounds nasty. Did she scald herself or poke her eye with the teaspoon? In fact, would that explain the glasses?"

His hearing aid screeched and I resolved to propagate and nurture my next batch of earwax. Deaf is good.

Again, my little cockatoos, why do I bother?

Onto your latest predicaments, and dear readers, as I am on holiday I have enlisted the assistance of Oz's famous Agony Aunt, my dear second cousin Dame Edna Everage.



Hello possums! What a wonderful treat for me to be your mentor and guiding light through the difficult and thought-provoking marathon training months. I am with you my little koalas, I feel your every sprain, blister and wrench, I do I do. So Marge, let's see if I can help out these troubled TRC trotters.

Dear Marge and Edna

Whilst I was out on my marathon training run last Sunday, I inadvertently ran straight into the side of someone's house. It made me feel quite ill. What happened? Have I lost my sense of direction?

Alarmed of Tring

Dear AoT

No possum, you are a classic case of hitting the wall. You obviously need more carbs, I suggest partaking of six cans of amber nectar when you see a large brick-built construction looming up in front of you. You should find you will wobble quite happily round the edge.

Dear Marge and Edna

I would really like to run the Sydney marathon but I am worried about the time difference as Sydney is 11 hours ahead. How can I prepare?

Jet-lagged of Berko

Dear JLoB

Oooh easy peasy my little koala, here's a terrific training tip for you, yet so simple. Just make your way round to the Sunday morning marathon training sessions 11 hours earlier than usual and start running. You may find that you bump into nasty little groups of hoodies generously donating their twelve pints of Carlsberg to terracotta pots of primulas down Grove Road or JB wobbling his way back from the Black Horse, but it will be worth it.

Dear Marge and Edna

I purchased some of those 1,000 mile socks but am sorely disappointed. I donned the aforementioned footwear items and made my way out the door to run to John O'Groats but within 2 miles I found I couldn't go any further. Was I cheated?

Miffed of Tring

Dear MoT

Oh what a shocker! I also had a similar experience recently when I bought some skinny fit jeans, I popped them on and I looked just as fat as normal. So I took them back and complained. You too were

truly robbed and you must return to the shop immediately and demand your money back which will enable you to purchase a train ticket to Scotland, soooo much easier possum!

Dear Marge and Edna

I recently joined Tring Running Club and was startled to find that we do not have a club song. I am sure, that just like the WI, a good cheery rendition of Jerusalem, or similar would give us that extra zing before we venture out on a Wednesday night or before marathon training or one of those ghastly fell races. What do you think?

Crooner of Berko

Dear CoB

By jingo, what a splendid idea! I suggest we vote on this at the next AGM but in the meantime we could gather suggestions. I propose that gorgeous Iron Maiden classic "Run to the hills" as a starter.

Dear Marge and Edna

I am a road runner but have the backbone of an amoeba and have been bullied into signing up for a fell race. My new found peers tell me I have to obtain a pair of studs otherwise I could slip off the mountain. I ordered them from the Interweb but when twin brothers Neil and Ben Dover arrived they said they knew nothing about fell racing but they did know a lot about slipping off things. Where did I go wrong?

Bemused of Berko

Dear BoB

You haven't possum! Don't waste any time, cancel the fell race and enjoy a peak of a different variety.

"Is that it Marge? Can't see any more plain brown envelopes that need opening..."

I stirred from my hammock and reached for my laptop.

"Edna my little kookaburra, before you nip off to the opening ceremony of the didgeridoo fanciers conference, we have to answer Problem of the Month from my email postbag. This month's was kindly sent in by A Member on behalf of A Friend. Now, we mustn't say who the Member is as I fully believe in anonymity and sparing blushes, particularly John Manning's. He's a jolly sensitive sort you know.

"Very sensible possum. Let's see what I can do to help this tortured soul".

Dear Marge and Edna

A few years ago I ran down Marshcroft Lane and along the canal. It was just for fun and fitness. The sun shone, the birds sung, everything was rosy.

After a few months, I saw some other people doing the same thing but apparently in groups. I didn't think about it but not long after I noticed an advert for a "running club". I was curious. Could this be where the other people were coming from? But I know about clubs and I tried not to take any notice.

Still, the curiosity wouldn't go away so one Wednesday night I went along to see what went on.

I suppose it all really kicked off there. I started to "run with the club" – on roads at first but then someone talked me into going "offroad". I thought they meant on the pavement. I don't know why but I agreed – it still seemed pretty innocent. But offroad turned out to be muddy paths in Wendover

Woods. Offroad turned into “cross country” and then, weirdest of all, I started to do it in the dark with a torch.

The next thing I knew, it was odd distances. Why did I run thirteen miles? Was I losing my grip? I thought to myself “Next thing, I bet some idiot suggests running 26 miles”. Guess what? They did.

The other week, I went ‘up North’, followed a bunch of people running to the top of a big hill, staggered around in a cloud, got stuck in a peat bog and ran back down again.

Am I going mad? Should I be taking something? Should I buy some of those really short shorts?

BLoT (Bow-Legged of Tring)

Dear BLoT

My my possum you are a mess aren't you? Marge and I had to put our heads together for this one. The first thing we noticed is that you said you had “started to do it in the dark with a torch”. Your problem here lies with Mrs BLoT, who is obviously dodging your advances. Try a heat-seeking missile instead of a torch.

Onto your running issues and gosh there's a lot going on there isn't there! Yes, you are probably going mad but there is little we can do about that apart from suggest that you join John Boielle at his weekly seminar at the Institute for the Persistently Perplexed in the village of Baffle which is held once a month biannually. Turn up on a Tuesday unless there is a full moon, in which case it's a Thursday, unless it's raining. Otherwise it's a Sunday unless the Great Bear is in Uranus and then you've really got problems.

As for taking something, well BLoT, you should be taking it easy! We both think you have overdone it, it's all too much too soon. It is a well known fact that “off road” and “up north” are not for the faint-hearted and you should be broken in gently. Same goes for those ghastly marathons. Take heart possum, we have cunningly devised a super new training schedule especially for you:

Monday: Flick through a copy of *Runners World*. This is a publication specifically aimed at people who wish to make their way from one place to another faster than walking pace. Familiarise yourself with words such as *tempo*, *reps* and *Deep Heat*.

Tuesday: Time to go shopping. Don't buy any of those “short shorts” quite yet. We secretly obtained this picture of you which clearly demonstrates that anything other than high-waisted knee-length breeches is a no-no, however, do purchase a pair of braces. Take a look around “The Sweat Shop”. Look at the prices of their socks. That will make you perspire if nothing else will.



Wednesday: Club night. Come along and observe. You will see grown men in short shorts, even if it is -20c and snowing. You will see grown women in long leggings, even if it is +30c and sunny. Walk up to Tring Park and skulk behind a bush. Watch the “off road” runners run by. You will hear them talking about “last week's fell run”. Listen to their excuses. “... if it wasn't for my cold...” or “I had athletes foot...” or “I wish I'd booked my triple heart bypass and leg amputation for the following week...”. Take careful notes.

Thursday: Walk up to Tring Park and try running past the bush you skulked behind. Try out the excuses and see how they trip off the tongue. Some will be easier than others. Work on them.

Friday: Rest day and you deserve it possum.

Saturday: Visit your local pharmacist and purchase a tube of *Deep Heat*. Remember to do a patch test on various areas of your naked flesh first in case you react to it. How will you know I hear you ask? Well, a bad reaction would be as soon as you smear it on, you feel an urge to leap up and sprint round the block. A good reaction would be to get dressed first.

Sunday: Club marathon training sessions. You can achieve a high mileage by cadging a lift in Mike's van. The miles will fly by. Watch the other runners out of the window and imagine how it would be if you ran with them. Use the time profitably by eating all Mike's bananas and trying on all the ladies spare tops and wondering what it would be like to have boobs. Finish off properly though by asking Mike to drop you at the bottom of Dundale Road. Jog up to meet the other runners and eat two packets of JB's Jammy Dodgers.

Good luck possum!

Maria Cook

Medoc Marathon

Bonjour mes amis! The Medoc Marathon is held on Saturday September 6th 2008.

This unmissable event is sold out but you can get an entry through the agency that Richard and I used last year . You have to buy the package which is:

Race entry + 2 nights accommodation and breakfast at 2 star hotel = 235 euros (per person, shared twin) or 305 (single). The good thing is you don't have to register at the race, your number etc will be waiting at the hotel reception for you.

The agency will also do an airport pickup, bus to marathon and return, and airport drop off, the rates are pretty cheap. Plus optional pasta party. We thought the package was very good.

EasyJet flights from Luton to Bordeaux currently work out at around £100 per person return. Last year we went on Friday and returned Sunday afternoon. You can book extra nights with the hotel if you want to extend your visit, all these options are on the booking form.

I recently emailed all the required documents (entry form, hotel booking form etc.) to the group but do let me know if you want me to send them to you. Here is the marathon URL for yet more info. <http://www.marathondumedoc.com/>

Richard and myself are definitely going, let's get a good gang of us, it will be magnifique! Dave Jones and his posse have already bought their entries and sorted themselves out so we already have a contingent.

Any queries, do ask. It was by far the most fun race I have ever done, in fantastic surroundings and great weather! Everyone dresses up – and I mean everyone. If you run in normal kit you will stand out like a sore thumb! It's a very easygoing race, 23 wine stops, even more water stops, and in the last 5K you get a cheese stop, steak stop, ice-cream stop, oyster stop and one or two more foodie stops which escape me at the moment. If anyone wants to read my write up of the race, by the time you read this I will have sent it round to the email group.



Bonne chance!

Maria Cook