

History of Tring Running Club

Chapter

The Long Distance Runner

"They stumble that run fast" Romeo and Juliet

Tring Running Club embraces all forms of the sport based on covering the ground on two feet - road racing, cross country, fell running. Many members start to run with the club with the aim of improving fitness alongside like-minded individuals. Once the first 5k is done, runners often advance to a 10k and even to the half marathon distance. Some can't resist the challenge of the full 26 mile marathon but there are a minority who, literally, don't stop there. Ultra distance running embraces any distance over 26 miles and often takes place across remote and hilly locations.

The early days

Peter Hamson writes:

"When Tring Jogging Club was founded in Spring 1981 it was inspired by the running boom of the time caused to a great extent by the running of the first London Marathon in April 1981. I remember when the first London Marathon was announced most runners thought it would not catch on. It had been modelled on the New York marathon which had been going for a few years but surely it would not catch on here. They may get a few hundred runners but that would be all. In the event there were over 7000. I was one of them (but not running for Tring RC in those days). I still remember it was a damp and miserable day but from that day on marathon running took off. It was no longer an event solely for the elite but for the masses as well.

When I got home I watched the highlights on television and I remember watching some poor runner struggling to cover the last few yards to the finish. He was trying to finish in under three hours but his legs just would not support him any longer. He kept trying to stand up but his legs just went from underneath him. After several minutes he managed to cross the finish line but by then the three hour target had slipped away. I forgot about the incident for the next twenty years until I joined Tring Running Club when I discovered the runner was actually from TRC – it was our very own Bob Garland. (I must add that since that first attempt he did manage to break three hours)"

1980s Ultra Distance Running – Chris Dove's achievements

As well as marathon running there has always been a tradition of ultra-distance running within the club. Probably our most successful ultra-runner was one of the early members of the club, Chris Dove. Chris competed in the once famous 53 mile 'London to Brighton' road race. In its day this was the flagship event of the Road Runners Club which was effectively the governing body of long distance road running at the time. Several TRC runners have since completed the London to Brighton but none have got near Chris's time of 6 hours 43 mins. Chris also completed several

100K events. His 12 hour time trial involved running round a circuit of a Tesco car park for 12 hours. This might sound a little boring but in fact these sort of events can be very sociable events. You can always see your fellow competitors, you have got plenty of time for a chat, there is always someone to run with even though they are probably not on the same lap as you. You experience a multitude of emotions during an ultra distance event but one that you never experience is boredom! A more detailed account of Chris's ultra running is in appendix 1 of this chapter.

1990s Ultra Distance Running – from Mike Gaunt onwards

After Chris's period there was probably a bit of a lull in ultra-running but it wasn't long before Mike Gaunt came along. Mike had run many marathons and decided it was time to move up to ultras. His first Ultra was in 1997 and was from Nottingham to Grantham - a 33 mile race mostly along soft grass track alongside a canal. Mike Mitchell and Bill Salkeld also ran. His next ultra was 34 mile Dartmoor Discovery in June 2000 followed by 55 mile London to Brighton in October that year.

The following year saw him at Comrades Marathon in South Africa. This is the world's largest and oldest ultramarathon race. It is an annual event of about 56 miles and attracts over 10,000 runners. For atmosphere and crowd support it betters the London Marathon by a considerable margin. He enjoyed it so much he went on to make the 11,000 mile journey to compete again in 2002 and 2003.

In 2001 Colin Rees and Bill Salkeld also ran the London to Brighton. They chose the wettest year on record to attempt the run but still completed the event in under 10 hours. In 2002 the feat was also achieved by Tom Griffin who completed the event in under 10 hours.

In 2004 Colin Rees turned 60 and his first race as a vet 60 was the London Marathon where he came second place in his age group in a time of 3:02:40. This was a stunning run from Colin and must surely have been the best placing for any Tring runner in such a high profile road race.

Colin hadn't finished with ultra marathons yet. In 2004 he completed the Comrades Marathon. A full account is in Appendix 3.

LDWA events

In 2002 Peter Hamson joined Tring Running Club. Peter was already an experienced ultra runner having competed in several 24 hour road and track races and many times in the national ultra trail running championships which were held along the South Downs Way from Petersfield to Eastbourne (this event no longer exists but the ultra trail running championships have been incorporated into the Ridgeway Challenge – more about that later). Peter also had a history of competing in LDWA (Long Distance Walkers Association) events. These are not races but challenge events which can be run or walked. They are off road events and you are normally supplied with a written route description which must be followed very carefully if you want to stay on the correct route. More recently they also supply a GPS file which can be loaded onto a Garmin which makes navigating considerably easier although this is considered to be

cheating by the old timers. The distances range from 26 miles to an annual 100 mile event.

In 2003, Brian Layton also joined Tring Running Club. He came more from a Mountain Marathon background and was described in a newsletter as "Mountain Marathon Man" but had also competed in LDWA events.

From then on the LDWA 100 became a major event in the annual calendar for several members of the club. In 2004 Peter and Brian were joined by Mike Gaunt for the Exmoor 100. We all successfully completed and Mike was delighted to complete his first 100. His account of the event is given in appendix 4. A year later he completed the Chiltern 100 in a time which he claimed was a PB by 7 hours.

Since then the list of TRC members who have completed an LDWA 100 has grown and now includes Colin Rees, Mike Gaunt, Dave Sawyer, John Manning, Brian Layton, Tom Griffin, Peter Hamson, Kim Reed, Tony Hill and Steve Mayne. Brian and Peter have both completed 20 100s and Tony has completed 11.

The LDWA 100s are held in different parts of the country each year. There are other 100 milers in which club members have participated, notably the Lakeland 100. Each 100 brings its own challenges but the overriding memories are the camaraderie amongst the competitors, the friendly support at checkpoints where you just sit down and are waited on by volunteers who bring you food and drink. Then, of course, there are nights to go through and the relief when dawn breaks with the freshness of the early morning. The aches, pains and blisters are usually soon forgotten as are the times when it rained non-stop for 24 hours, the long never-ending tracks, the exhaustion and lack of sleep!

The Ridgeway Challenge

Away from LDWA events the most popular ultra within the club is the Ridgeway Challenge trail race. This is an 86 mile event covering the complete distance of the Ridgeway National Trail, starting at Ivinghoe Beacon and finishing in Avebury. It is also the Trail Runners Association National Championship which means it is very competitive at the sharp end. Several TRC members have completed the event (too many to mention all of them) but the most consistent are Brian Layton, Tony Hill and Kim Reed. Between them they have won several age category awards. The most notable performance was by Tom Sawyer in 2018. Much to the surprise of many he won the race. The following comment was made after the race:-

Congratulations to Tom Sawyer on his amazing run to win the Ridgeway Ultra. That's the complete Ridgeway long distance path from Ivinghoe Beacon to Avebury - a distance of 86 miles which he completed in 13hr 22mins. He was aiming for the club record which had previously been held by John Millen in a time of 15:41 which was achieved in 2013. When Tom passed us at checkpoint 2 he was within a minute of the leaders. I checked again later in the evening and he was just ahead. Looking good - or had he blown it. Obviously not as he gradually increased his lead to 13 minutes to finish at 1:22 Sunday morning. After finishing he said "I didn't mean to go that fast. I was aiming for 15 hours"

His Dad, Dave Sawyer, also wrote:-

I had the privilege of watching Tom cross the line, and anyone who has seen him at the end of a normal Wednesday night run would have assumed that was all he'd done! Apart from a loud expletive! I was at the 80 mile checkpoint when he came in, barking instructions about water bottles being filled. He spent less than a minute there before setting off, convinced he was being run down. When the second runner arrived he was obviously feeling it more and left much more slowly. The marshalls looked at me and said 'there's no way your lad is being caught, he's the winner'. And so it proved. Well done Tom, your incredible hard work in training has paid off. The bar has been raised.

Tom was not the only person to get special recognition however. Brain Layton also got a special award and wrote the following:-

For my part I had decided to take this one very steady as I had a very busy week ahead of me. Anyway, that's my story and I am definitely sticking to it. This was my 11th start at the event having started and finished the previous 10. On the start line for the championship race, the race director, Tim Mitchell, with about 3 minutes to go, presented me with a very fine silver plate commemorating my being the first person to finish 10 races. On the reverse he had very kindly had engraved all of my 10 results, including my 5 Championship M60 and M65 wins over the years. What a kind and thoughtful man.

Other Ultra Performances

In the last few years popularity in ultra distance running within the club has increased dramatically and there are too many performances to mention here. However, the following are especially notable:

In 2018 Kim Reed completed the 'Marathon Des Sables' – a 250km race over the Sahara Desert run in five stages over five days. This involved carrying all your own food to last you for the five days and a sleeping bag and any personal objects you required. It is hard to imagine what this must have been like. Five days running in sweltering heat, no showers at the end of the day, the only food being what you had carried from the start of the event. Kim wrote an excellent account of the event. The first page will give you a flavour and is in appendix 7.

TRC also has two members of the Centurions Walking Club. To be a member of this club you must have **walked** 100 miles in 24 hours. No running is allowed in their events. Anyone caught running is immediately disqualified. In 2014 Tony Hill joined the centurions by walking 100 miles round an athletics track in 23 hours 40 mins. Kim Reed was also in the race but on this occasion after 24 hours she was less than two miles short. However, in 2016 Kim succeeded in joining the club by walking 100 miles round the streets of Redcar in 23 hours 25 mins.

Also, in case readers are thinking Kim is the only female ultra runner in the club, it should be noted that Becky Rafferty has completed several ultras including the CCC and the Ridgeway Challenge. The CCC (Courmayeur, Champex, Chamonix) is the second half of the famous UTMB (Ultra Tour De Mont Blanc) which is a circuit of Mont Blanc, passing through part of France, Italy and Switzerland. In the Ridgeway

Challenge she holds the ladies club record of 20 hrs 51 mins. An account of her exploits is in Appendix 5.

The Gauntlet Trophy

There is no award for the fastest ultra distance runner but what we do have is the 'Gauntlet Trophy'. This was originally introduced by Mike Gaunt in 2005 and was called the 'Forrest Gump Trophy'. Three years later, to honour Mike, it was renamed the 'Gauntlet'. Originally there was just one trophy but in 2015 a second one was introduced, thanks to Brian Layton, so we now have a men's and a ladies' trophy.

These are awarded to the runners who have done the highest number of competitive miles in the year. One thing no one envisaged at the time was that the same person would win it every year. So far Brian Layton has won all fourteen of the men's competitions and Kim Reed has won all three of the women's competitions. Not only that but the way things are going at the moment no one is going to beat them in the foreseeable future.

Both Brian's and Kim's mileages have been truly remarkable. A list of their 2018 events are included in Appendix 6 of this document

Marathon Running

Ever since the club started the London Marathon has always been popular with probably at least ten runners from the club competing each year. Off road marathons are also popular, in particular the Beachy Head Marathon which gives the runners fantastic views over the South Downs and Seven Sisters.

There are far too many excellent marathon performances to mention here but no account of long distance running within TRC would be complete without mentioning two runners.

Firstly Lynda Hembury. Within her age group (F60) she is pretty well untouchable at any event she chooses to run. Probably her greatest achievement was in 2017 when she set a UK age best for the marathon in a time of 3:14. This gave her an age related score of 94.93%. A full account of her exploits can be found in Appendix 2.

Secondly Luke Delderfield who holds the club's marathon record in a time of 2:33:06 in the 2016 London Marathon. A list of his best performances can be found in appendix 8.

The Future

With more and more ultra events appearing on the race calendar there are endless opportunities for running ultras for anyone so inclined. The local company XRNG runs several local 50K events which are useful for anyone wanting a taste of an ultra.

Centurion Running offers a variety of quite local 50 and 100 milers, for example the North Downs, the South Downs and the Thames Path 100.

For anyone wanting something a bit more extreme there are a variety of 100 milers in mountainous areas; the most popular in this country being the Lakeland 100 or in the alps the Ultra Tour De Mont Blanc.

Finally, for anyone wanting to understand the mind of an ultra distance runner they can read Tom Sawyer's excellent account of ultras in New Zealand:-

<https://justonemilemore.wordpress.com/>

Appendix 1 - Ultra Running reminiscences – Chris Dove

“I believe I was the first ever member of Tring Jogging club, as it was then, to run an Ultra. Most club members thought I was mad and perhaps I was, a little. One thing I really enjoyed was entering as a Tring Jogger, to the amusement of other competitors from serious running clubs, and then beating them. Gotcha !

It all began for me in 1986. I had reached a plateau in my running having broken 3 hours for the Marathon the previous year and I was looking for a new challenge. I had read Tom Osler’s famous book about ultra running and was struck by his idea of taking planned walk breaks all through the race to rest the muscles. I tried it on training runs and found it worked and enabled me to keep up a steadier pace over a long race. I continued to use this method in all my ultras and I realised that sometimes you could combine a walk break with an uphill section and so lose less time – cunning!

With some trepidation I entered the 1986 Lincoln 100k which advertised itself as welcoming novices and offered advice on pacing. My first thrill was to meet, at the pre-race pasta party, the great Don Ritchie who was the world record holder for 100k on the track and one of the few men who have run 100 miles in under 12 hours. I was to see him again during the race when I was approaching Lincoln, the half way point, and he was on the other side of the road on his way back about 5 race miles ahead of me. I finished in 23rd place in a time of 9 hours 52 min. Who cares about the time, I had done it and I finished still running while many others could only walk – thanks to Tom Osler’s walk breaks. My running diary simply says - Wow !

Later that year I did my first London to Brighton (then 53.3 miles), again using walk breaks and aiming simply to finish. My time of 7 hours 43 was better than I expected. The race was won by a Belgian, whose name I forget. It just happened that my race supporter was himself a Belgian so he went and congratulated the winner in Flemish. He got a blank look in response. It turned out that the winner was no Belgian but world-famous South African Bruce Fordyce running incognito to avoid the sport ban on South Africans which was in force at the time.

In 1987 I did another 100k which I finished in 8 hours 30min, taking over an hour off my PB. You don’t get to do that too often ! (I was later to get it down to 8 hours 15.) That was followed by another experiment - the Nidd Valley 12 hour race which was run on a circuit around a Tesco car park, much to the puzzlement of passers-by. I ran over 300 laps and achieved a distance of 82 miles 1393 yards to come third. I ended the year with a PB of 6 hours 41 at London to Brighton which was to be one of my best ever running times.

Finally I got into off-road Ultras completing the South Downs Way 80 twice (it was actually not quite 80 miles), best time 11 hours 41 and the Swiss Alpine Marathon at Davos an exciting and exceptionally tough race over roughly 44 miles of mountain trails and including a pass at over 9,000 feet. Time irrelevant 7 hours 28– just try to finish ! Spectacular !

I ran my last Ultra, London to Brighton, in 2005. Sadly I was not well trained and although I finished it was incredibly hard work. I decided that there was a message in that and took up golf.

During this whole period I think I was the only club member doing Ultras and I am glad to hear that there are now a number of ultra runners in the club. I wish them all the satisfaction it gave me. We may be a little mad but we do the impossible each time we run. “

Appendix 2 – Lynda Hembury’s running highlights

“As a background, I started running at Tring Parkrun in November 2014. I entered a few local races, ‘caught the bug’ and joined Tring RC in May 2015. Later that year I was inspired to run my first Marathon by Judi Hopcroft, who mentioned to me that she was running Beachy Head Marathon. I knew nothing about this race and despite warnings about how difficult it was, I decided this was to be my first Marathon attempt. I had no idea about ‘training’ for such a race but thought it might be a good idea to tackle a ‘long run’ as the farthest I had run before was 13 miles. I took myself off and managed to complete 18 miles - I figured if I could run that far I would be able to run/walk the rest. My time at Beachy Head was 4.04 and I have run this race every year since.

My first road Marathon was a year later in the Autumn of 2016 - Bournemouth - in a time of 3.32 (85.60 %). This time qualified me to run in the England Masters Team at Chester in 2017, where I was joined by fellow Club member Ian Needleman who had earned a place in M55. I finished in 3.14 (94.93%) in gold medal position and am currently the all time fastest F60 at this distance in the UK. In 2018 I had a Good For Age entry for London Marathon which I completed in 3.28 (89.92%) and 1st F60-64. In the Autumn of that year I also ran again in an England vest at Chester, this time in 3.18 (94.72%) and earned another gold medal.

I put a lot of pressure on myself and that makes road marathons quite daunting. However, I do enjoy longer distances. Inspired by, and with the support of my fellow Club members, I have now completed several ultra races which were thoroughly enjoyable. My closing comment is that it is never too late in life to try something new and I am very much looking forward to my next running challenge - whatever that may be!”

Appendix 3 – Colin Rees' Comrades Marathon 2004

“Arguably the greatest ultra marathon in the world, where upwards of twelve thousand runners try to complete approx 90 kilometres between the South African towns of Pietermaritzburg and Durban. The first race was run in 1921 and was organized by Vic Clapham who was born in London and emigrated with his parents to the Cape Colony. The Comrades Marathon is a living memorial to the spirit of the soldiers of the Great War; it is now a cherished national treasure that attracts thousands of spectators and television viewers.

Mike Gaunt first got me interested in Comrades and was the first Tring R. C. runner to complete this gruelling event running in support of the COCO charity. Steve Cram is the high profile director of this charity which concentrates on education projects that aim to improve the life chances of children who would otherwise have a grim future. Every year COCO organizes a party of runners from GB to take part in the Marathon this helps to raise funds for the charity. This years race was uphill starting from Durban; each year it alternates from uphill to downhill, remarkable in spite of the 7000ft of climb in the uphill race the fastest recorded times for up and down are almost identical.

On July 12th my wife, Freda and I departed Heathrow with the rest of the COCO runners destined for the heat of Durban on our first visit to Africa. We had decided to include the race as part of a month long holiday in South Africa; I would run and Freda would support. I had four days to get acclimatized to the hot and humid conditions; the temperature during their winter can climb to 85f. I took the opportunity of travelling on an organized coach trip over the race route and I soon became aware of length and steepness of the hills as the driver of the coach was forced to select low gear for most of the way. Marked out along both sides of the route were small areas where people had already laid claim to their own picnic spot where they and their friends could watch the race. We eventually arrived at this years finish at a delightful historic cricket ground built in 1892; the pavilion is modelled on the one at Chesterfield in Derbyshire and I thought how glad I would be to reach the ground on race day.

On the morning of the day before the race Freda went down with a tummy upset, resulting in her not being able to stray far from the loo. Then disaster for me as I go down with the same complaint. Twelve hours later at 2am on the morning of race day I was still suffering diarrhoea. I find myself sitting on the hotel toilet worrying that I will not be able to take part in the race. By 4.30am I feel a little better and depart the Hotel for the start of Comrades at 5.30am with plenty of loo paper stuffed in my shorts in case of emergency. As a result of my walk to the start I feel a sudden need for a toilet stop but all of the portable toilets have long queues and I join on the shortest. Twenty minutes later I am still queuing and only five minutes to the start time, as I am in pen 'B' and the toilets are near the last pen 'G' I decide to take a chance and make my way to my starting pen.

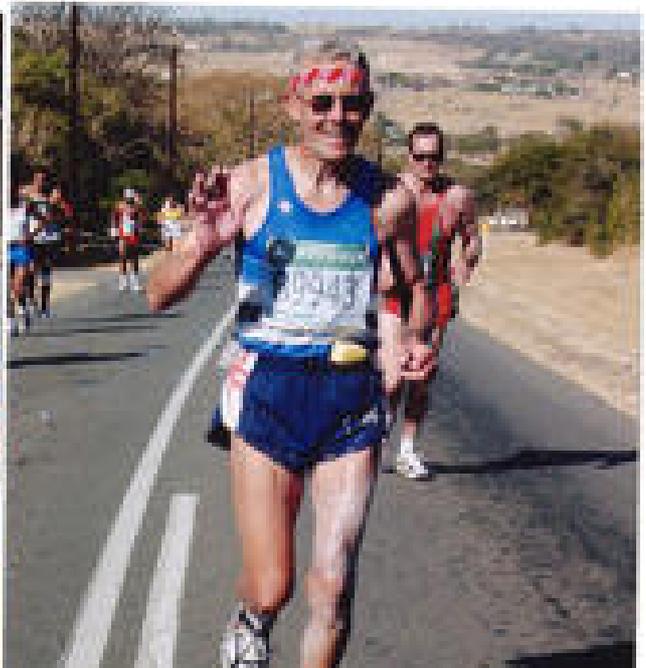
The start gun fires at 5.30am and off we go though the dark streets of Durban with thousands of people lining the route and cheering us on. Luckily there are drink stations every two kilometres so I could start getting some fluid into my badly dehydrated system. I decide to run at a 6min per kilometre pace which should take me to the finish in approx. 9 hours and in the first 20% of the finishers. There are five

major climbs, but the rest of the course requires running uphill to reach the climbs. I continue taking on fluid for the first two hours until my stomach feels uncomfortably full. The sun has now appeared and the temperature is well on its way to 80f, but I still manage to keep to my 6min pace. By now hundreds of runners from the rear start pens have passed me; either I am running too slow or they are all running too fast. After the second hill I start to overtake most of the runners that had passed me earlier on as I maintain my steady pace very pleased with myself for running up all of the hills so far.

Having climbed the third major hill I see in the distance what looks like the finishing gantry of the Flora London Marathon. This gantry across the road is advertising the 2005 London Marathon and informs you that if you run the London race it would be over by this distance. Yet we were not even half way in the Comrades Marathon! My time at the 26mile marathon distance is 3hours 59mins and I reach the half way point in 4hours 23mins, still on course for my nine hours finishing time. The crowds of spectators lining the route have by now been eating and drinking for hours so a real party atmosphere prevails. I manage to catch and stay in the company of a gang of Zulu runners on one of the hills. When they approached the start of the climb they all started singing in harmony keeping in step with the rhythm of the song. I was surprised how much easier a climb can be when a whole mass of people approach it in unison.

The last of the major climbs is called Polly Shortts and is 10 kilometres from the finish; this is where the leader normally breaks away from the rest of the field to win the race. By now I am really dehydrated and feeling tired so I run up the start of the hill and then have to walk the two kilometres to the top. When I started to run again, cramp strikes both my legs, I stand bent over in pain, and suddenly a first aider is applying liniment to my legs and giving me a much needed massage.

After that I manage to slowly jog towards the finish. When I enter the packed finishing ground the tannoy announces that "Number 9934 Colin Rees is entering the ground, Colin is an overseas visitor from Great Britain and is finishing seventh in his age group, give him a big cheer". The crowd erupts into deafening cheering and I cross the line feeling elated that I have finished in a time of 9 hours 5 mins. I can now call myself a true Comrade. Or can I? It is pointed out to me that you can only consider yourself a Comrade when you have completed an uphill and a downhill race. Ah well there is always next year."



Appendix 4 – Mike Gaunt’s account of the Exmoor 100 in 2004

“Over the years I have met up with fellow Tring RC members in some pretty diverse locations. One that will always stick in my mind was the St John’s treatment area in the library at West Somerset Community College, Minehead, 3:00 a.m. on Monday morning. We were all elated at having finished the LDWA Exmoor 100:

Peter Hamson	35:18 (extra badge and applause as it was his 10 th 100)
Brian Layton	35:46
Mike Gaunt	40:49

Pete had the consideration to get washed and changed and was being rewarded with a very neat rollover bandage to cover the whole left foot as I showed up. Having just had the rather large blister on the base of my right foot burst 500 yards before the finish it was becoming a tad painful and as the adrenaline level subsided, further movement was out of the question. It was reassuring to learn that my feet were by no means the worst they had seen over the last few hours and they were cleaned and taped up in next to no time. Most runners felt the problem was caused by a couple of steep, long descents down stony gullies over the last 5 miles – made even harder when run at night with a failing head torch in my case!

The adventure started 6 weeks previously on a Wednesday evening, running round the golf course chatting to Pete wondering what to try next after completing my 100th Marathon at London. He mentioned that the Long Distance Walkers Association may still be accepting entries for their annual 100 mile event and felt I would have no problem getting round inside the 48hr cut off limit. Entry posted next morning, acceptance and route description showed up a few days later. Apprehensions started to set in on realising there was at least 16000 ft of ascent and 100 miles looks a hell of a long way when plotted out on an OS Explorer map. This became worse when Brian started to wind me up with war stories about previous events; 50% drop out rates, long detours due to navigation errors, 10hrs of solid rain, trench foot..... Nightmares started. Thank heavens it was not until talking to other entrants at the start line that I realised many had been training since the route was published in February and had reconnoitred large chunks of the route.

Not having spent time in this part of the world before I found the scenery to be stunning. There was a lot of climbing especially over the first 27 miles, but each ascent was rewarded with a panoramic view and the knowledge that you were heading closer to the next checkpoint. In fact there were 15 of them, the volunteers at each one trying to out do the others by their hospitality and variety of refreshments available. At halfway we even had the opportunity for a shower, change of kit and a full blown English breakfast! How they lay all of this on for the £32 entry fee is one of life’s mysteries – long may it continue.

Camaraderie amongst the competitors was brilliant. Everyone realised this was a tough one for a first timer and did not hesitate to help me out when unsure about navigation or offer a few words of encouragement as I hit the odd purple patch. I was

really amazed at the round of applause for finishing at 2:50 a.m., but this went on all night and became even louder as competitors arrived closer to the 10:00 a.m. cut-off.

I entered the race very much as a one off, but by the following Wednesday plasters were off my feet and I had already ordered an LED head torch for next year's event which happens to be on our doorstep in the Chilterns – can't wait.....”

Appendix 5 - Becky Raftery's CCC and Ridgeway

In 2010 I entered a 12 hour adventure race called the Scotland coast to coast (one I highly recommend). There I met my now husband Tom (who I thrashed in that race I should add!) When Tom and I moved in together we started to do some longer races and in 2013 entered the 10 peaks in the lake district. What a great race that was- a self-navigating 73km course with 5600m of ascent climbing the 10 highest mountains in the lake district. Pleasingly I managed to win that year and Tom and I were joint 6th overall in a time of 18hrs and 2 minutes- I broke (or even smashed you could say) the woman's record at the time by 4 and a half hours... since that time however I believe it has been further smashed by a whopping 5 hours! Anyway we were on the race page relishing in our results and Tom spotted a little symbol saying 'UTMB qualifying race' . Neither of us had heard of the UTMB before so did some google searching... ooo that looks like fun, said Tom, and look we have enough points to get into the CCC- and so it began.

The CCC covers 106km with 6,100metres of ascent. It starts at Courmayeur, in the Italian Alps, and its climbs include some of the most amazing views the Alps can offer: Mont-Blanc and the Grandes Jorasses. The race enters Switzerland at the Grand col Ferret (2537m) and then France at Vallorcine, and ends in the heart of Chamonix.

The start line at the centre of Courmayeur has such an amazing atmosphere it makes you tingle with excitement and nerves. Throughout the race you are treated to non-stop spectacular views which will forever stay in my memory and made the pain in my legs and tiredness I felt all worth-while. Then day turns to night and little blobs of light could be seen slowly making their way up and up the next climb. Cow bells rang and bonfires were lit at the night aid stations and smiling encouraging faces were there to cheer us on. I have to say, despite all the training miles Tom and I put in and long distance walks in the hills, and many many reps up Incombe Hole I don't think anything quite prepared me for the challenge of this one. It didn't help that I generally was having one of those 'off days' you sometimes get at the start of a race. I was in tears walking into the halfway point at Champex-Lac and Tom was looking concerned. Then I looked up and looked at the other competitors that filled the tent, more than half were sat, head in hands and looked broken, despondent and I was not the only one with tears rolling down my cheeks. For some reason this slightly lifted my mood, ok, I thought, I am not alone, I



went outside and had a bit of a talk to myself and came out feeling brighter and ready to carry on (after getting down as much food as I could stomach).

The second half of the race, although very tough, seemed a bit more manageable and Tom managed to keep me going with a few entertaining dance moves (he was fairing a bit better than me for much of the race). I recall drifting off to sleep midway up one of the last climbs-luckily a shot of caffeinated banana flavoured gel sorted me out and much to Tom's despair I had a bit of a surge up Tete aux vents, the final climb. From there on in spirits were high and we knew we would complete it. And what a fantastic lead into Chamonix it was, the atmosphere was epic and we were overjoyed to cross the finish line. It took us 24.34 hours (a mere 12 hours behind the winner) and afterwards we enjoyed a celebratory pint in our UTMB gilets and then off to bed for a quick snooze before returning to the finishing area to cheer all on the other runners and soak up the atmosphere. A race I would highly recommend and we stayed to enjoy the alps for the rest of that week. My feet were the main things that suffered, or more specifically my toenails. Note to self, innovate x-talons with minimal support are not the best shoe choice for a rocky 106km race.

Back to the UK and a couple of children down the line Tom and I along with my sister and brother in law were doing a self-organised Welsh 3000's to raise money for charity and had been getting in a good few training miles to prepare for that. So when Peter Hamson sent out the email about the ballot for the free ridgeway place, Tom and I decided one of us should do it. I had always liked the idea of doing another ultra but one close to home, so this seemed perfect. Having helped out at the Tring checkpoint for the ridgeway a couple of years before I was successful in winning the free place.

After the Welsh 3000s, training was a bit of a challenge, mainly fitting in the long runs alongside our busy summer plans, I was hoping to fit in a 50K race before-hand but they all seemed to be on weekends we were away. I just about managed to squeeze in my longest training run which was just short of 30 miles on the way back along the ridgeway from meeting friends on the outskirts of Oxford. Also getting midweek long runs helped - a few times I ran there and back to Wednesday Tring training nights so that way managed to get in a good 18 – 20 mile mid-week run. Race day soon approached and I felt I had done just enough miles to get me round but had no concept of how long it would take me.

Tom had kindly agreed to be my support crew and meet me at all the aid stations along the way. I had a lovely reception in Wendover woods as Tom, along with our 2 little ones and a group of 10 or so friends had gathered with banners to cheer me on and obviously it was great to have welcome Tring club faces cheering me on too.

I chatted to lots of fellow competitors along the way which is always the best bit about any off road race and heard stories of training, races to put on the list and interesting energy shake recipes someone had waiting for them at the half way point (the same someone I saw after the half way point slowly walking along stating he wished he would have tried said shake before and that perhaps the combination of peanut butter, chocolate milk and syrup was a little too much in a litre bottle!). I ran around 30 miles with a girl who told me she could only fit in one run a week and I wondered how I would cope just running once a week- not well I concluded!

The girl I met stayed a little less at each aid station than me and so at the halfway point when I vowed to get as much food in as I could, pasta, noodles, tea, I let her head off and so was subsequently running solo for most of the second half. I think this did affect my pace and I found I really had to concentrate to speed up (well, to run/jog/plod faster than I would walk).

The first 20 miles was by far my favourite, not just because of the friendly faces of Tringers and local friends but the hills of Wendover, the views from the beacon and the variety of smaller woodland tracks then onto rolling open meadows, it made me appreciate what a great place we live and run in, it's not the Alps but it is still pretty awesome. The second half of the race, and night section was more of a head down and keep on plodding. Not too undulating and good wide tracks for much of the route. Some pretty fields and sections where route markers could be easily missed. Thankfully I had met with Tring's expert and ultra-marathon guru Brian Layton a couple of weeks before the race and he had kindly gone through the route with me and which sections to take extra care on.

I was very grateful to him for the tips as I almost went astray on a section near the latter part of the route but when referring back to my notes I corrected my error before it lost me any time.

I was pleased to have completed the Ridgeway and did so in a time of 20.51 (a mere few hours behind fellow Tringer Tom Sawyer's epic 13.22). I did really enjoy the countryside and running through the night with nothing to see other than faraway headtorches bobbing about and sounds of night time animals scurrying. Completing that race though, made me realise how much more I enjoy the hills, which is what the Ridgeway lacked a bit for me. Proper hills, with cairns at the top of them. Lakeland hills, the alps. I haven't mentioned the ultra Tom and I ran in Nepal a few years ago- now running round the Anapurna range, that was something else! I also realised how much I enjoy running in the company of other people. Tom and I have just this weekend completed a 32 mile Ultra in Exmoor (run by a great company called Endurancelife). We ran the race together and when you have someone to play 'jelly baby trivial pursuits' with, it really does help pick you up from those low points- even with general knowledge as poor as ours.

Appendix 6 – Results of the 2018 Gauntlet Trophy

These are the mileages achieved by the male and female winners of the Gauntlet trophy in 2018:-

Kim Reed's events:-

1. Stansted Stagger 25
2. Winter Tanners 40
3. Stonehenge Stomp 26
4. Punch Bowl 30
5. New Forest Marathon 26
6. Marathon Des Sables 156
7. Oxon 40
8. South Downs Way 27
9. Kent LDWA – 100
10. Pick and Mix 12
11. Chiltern Ultra 32
12. Tring Ultra 32
13. Ridgeway 85
14. Chiltern Marathon 26
15. Founders 26
16. Beachy Head 26
17. Sundon Saunter 26
18. Gatliff 32

Total 767 miles

Brian Layton's events:-

(01)	01/01/18	The Surrey Inns Kanter	20 Miles.
(02)	06/01/18	The Reservoir Roundabout	20 Miles.
(03)	07/01/18	The 17th. Stansted Stagger	25.5 Miles.
(04)	21/01/18	The 40th. Winter Tanners	40.5 Miles.
(05)	27/01/18	The Woodhenge Womble	7 Miles.
(06)	28/01/18	The 30th. Stonehenge Stomp	25 Miles.
(07)	11/02/18	The 49th. Punchbowl Marathon	30 Miles.
(08)	18/02/18	The 25th. Hardwick X-Stream	6 Miles.
(09)	24/02/18	The 36th. South Shropshire Circular	26 Miles.
(10)	24/03/18	The Charnwood Marathon	27 Miles.
(11)	14,15/04/18	The Wye Forest 50	53 Miles.
(12)	21/04/18	The Bath Beat	26.5 Miles.
(13)	22/04/18	The Pewsey Downsaround	35 Miles.
(14)	28,29/04/18	The Raid Azur Mountain Marathon	30.5 Miles.
(15)	05/05/18	The Oxon 40	40 Miles.
(16)	12/05/18	The 57th. Ridgeway 40 Challenge	40 Miles.
(17)	13/05/18	The Marsworth 10Km. Fun Run	6 Miles.
(18)	26,27,28/05/18	The Cinque Ports 100	101.5 Miles.
(19)	01,02/06/18	The 22nd. Lowe Alpine Mountain Marathon	31 Miles.
(20)	16/06/18	The Greensand Ridge Relays	Solo 35 Mile
(21)	22,23,24/06/18	The South Wales 100	100.5 Miles.
(22)	30/06/18+01/07/18	The 40th. Saunders Lakeland Mountain Marathon	26 Miles.
(23)	04/07/18	The 8th. Wendover Woods Hill Race	5 Miles.
(24)	07,08/07/18	The Afoot In Two Dales	50 Miles.
(25)	15/07/18	The 1st. Hannington Hike	27 Miles.
(26)	11,12/08/18	The 4th. Herts Stroller	54 Miles.
(27)	15/08/18	The Shipton Star	25 Miles.
(28)	25,26/08/18	The 15th. T.R.A. Ridgeway Challenge Ultra (R86)	86 Miles.
(29)	29,30,31/08+01/09/18	The 55th. Across Wales Challenge	135 Miles.
(30)	15,16/09/18	The 39th. Mourne Mountain Marathon	27 Miles.
(31)	22/09/18	The Cotswold Challenge	26.5 Miles.
(32)	29,30/09/18	The 12th. ROC Mountain Marathon	30.5 Miles.
(33)	06/10/18	The Gower Ultra 50	50 Miles.
(34)	13/10/18	The 22nd. Founders Challenge	27 Miles.
(35)	21/10/18	The 1st. Doddle West	26.5 Miles.
(36)	27,28/10/18	The 51st. Original Mountain Marathon (O.M.M.)	36.5 Miles.
(37)	10/11/18	The Six Dales Circuit	25 Miles.
(38)	18/11/18	The Sundon Saunter	27.5 Miles.
(39)	25/11/18	The 35th. Gatliff Marathon	31.5 Miles.
(40)	22/12/18	The Wem Winter Wonderland	20 Miles.

Total Number Of Events = 40.

Total Mileage For The Year = 1,462 Miles.

Average Miles Per Event = 36.55 Miles.

Appendix 7 - Adventure in the Sahara Desert April 2018 by Kim Reed.

(This is just the first page of Kim's account – I'm sure Kim would be happy to supply the full account upon request)

"The 33rd edition of the Marathon des Sables (MdS) covers approximately 250km in five timed stages and one compulsory charity stage. Daily distance ranged from 30-86km.

As I set off for the airport I was asking myself ...had I done enough training; would I have enough water; how would I cope in the 50 degree heat; How would I get n sharing small space with 7 others , Would I actually be able to complete the world's toughest footrace? Read on to find out

I boarded the plane at Gatwick with 180 other UK MdS competitors; the air was filled with nervous excitement at the adventure we were about to embark on. We arrived in Quarzazate, Morocco where we were met by the MdS organisers; we boarded a bus for a 6hr transfer to the first bivouac (camp).

During the journey I received the route book which had details of each stage. Despite being in the desert, only about 20% of the course was sand dunes the rest was rocky climbs and descents, dry river beds and rocky sandy tracks.

When we arrived at the bivouac I was allocated tent 131 along with 2 others, the other flight from the UK had been delayed, by morning 5 others had joined us. The tents were very basic Berber tents with two open sides and a rug to sleep on and would be our luxurious accommodation for the next 8 days. My tent mates for the week were Andy, Chris, Jonnie, Darren, Kerry, Anna-Marie & Jenny who have now become friends for life after sharing such an amazing experience.

Saturday we had a free day in camp before the race started to do all the admin checks; handing in our ECG's and medical certificates, collecting our salt tablets, water card and most importantly the SOS tracker. Bag weighing – you have to carry a minimum of 6.5kg, There is a compulsory kit list – (Compass, survival blanket, Safety pins etc.) Anything else you choose to carry is down to the individual – extra clothes were my priority, I heard it gets cold at night. My bag pre-water weighed in at 10.4kg! Gulp! Add another 3kg for water and you have one heavy pack! We were to receive 6 litres each evening which was to last until checkpoint 1 on each day. Throughout the day we would receive either 1.5 litres or 3 litres at each checkpoint. There was more than enough water even on the very hot days. "

Appendix 8 - Luke Delderfield's notable performances

2010 Virgin London Marathon, 2.39.43
2012 Berlin Marathon, 2.38.42
2013 Virgin London Marathon, 2.35.32
2016 Virgin London Marathon, **2.33.06**

Fastest 20 miler:

2016 Milton Keynes festival of running, 1.54.22

Fastest half marathon:

2013 Watford Half, 1.13.49

Fastest 10 miler:

2015 Fred Hughes, 55.28

Other notable performances:

2012 Bob Graham Round with Ross Langley, 21h 30m

2019 Country to Capital Ultra, 4.56.35