



Mynyddwyr De Cymru

Newsletter - September 2009

www.mdcwales.org.uk

Editors Rambles

Another 3 months has passed since you last had a newsletter. 'Where is my life going?' I hear you ask. Not fell running I reply, at least not judging by the lack of submitted articles received for publication.

Tour de Galles

Hot on the trail following the success of the British riders in the Tour de France, Toffer's and Wheeze's Welsh extravaganza meandered it's way around the Principality. A thoroughly masochistic time was had by all. The groans of pain and pleasure would have put a Parisian brothel to shame, I am reliably informed. Judging by the outbreak of spots captured in the picture below a pox was shared by many. Duggie and Martin from MDC shared in the contagion.....



If you fancy repeating this (*why?*) - here is the itinerary;

N/S/E/W and the 10 highest cols of Wales en route and a few others...

Prologue: Llanbadrig to Llanberis'ish (33.5 miles)

Stage 1: Llanberis'ish to Llangurig (117 miles)

Col de Penypass (Cat B) to A498, down to Dead Dog City, L to A4085, L on B4410 Rhydd to Maentwrog. A470 to Trawsfynydd, just beyond village L minor road SSE then L on minor road over Col de le Pen y Feidiog (531m), down to A494 at Llanuwchllyn, B4430 round lake Bala, R on minor roads via Rhos y gwalliau to Col du Cwm Hirnant (501m) and down to B4393 at Lake Vyrnwy, R on minor road to Col de la Bwlch y Groes (545m) and L

down to Dinas Mawddwy. A470/489 to Machynlleth, minor roads via Forge SE over Mt Rhiw Fawr (513m) to Dylife. R on to B4518 Staylitttle, round Hafren to Llangurig and Bluebell.

Stage 2: Llangurig to St Davids (122 miles)

A470 S to Rhayader, Newbridge on Wye, R on B4358 to Beulah, R on minor road to Abergwesyn, R minor road to Tregaron over L'escalier du Diable (475m), east end and Esgair Ffrwd (481m) west end. L on B4343 to cross A482 east of Lampeter, to A485. Minor detour via minor road to Mynydd Llanybyther, B4336, A486/484 to NEmlyn. B4332, B4329 over Preselis, minor road to cross to A219 and A487 again to sneak south of Fishguard. A487 to St Davids and out on minor roads to Western edge of Wales. (Easy day)!

Stage 3: St Davids to Cardiff (147 miles)

A487 to Haverfordwest, A40 to Ct Clears and then Camarthen. A48 initially then L on B4300 to Ffairfach, minor roads across to A4069, S over Col du Pen Rhiw-wen (Start of S Wales Traverse 493m). S to turn L onto A4068, L on A4067 to Abercraf, R onto A4109 to Glyn-Neath, back road to Hirwaun, R over La Grande Rhigos (503m), down to Treorchy, A4061 over the Col de la Croix du Bwlch and out and back to high point on Abergwynfi road(A4107) (527m). Down usual way to Bridgend then straight through to B4265 to St Brides (OGB's), continue to West Aberthaw, R minor road to Breaksea Point(S)/or Rhoose pending discussion. Back to Cardiff by quickest route!! (Toffs/wherever pending personnel overnight).

Stage 4: Cardiff to Monmouth (92.5 miles)

Start Whitchurch, Taffs Well, pick up Chas, Caerphilly Mt, Caerphilly, Y Mynach, Maescymmer, Sirhowy valley(A4048) to Tredegar, HOV at Beaufort. B4560 over Le Terasse du Cefn Onneu (518m), down to Llangynidr, back on minor roads to B4248 La Grande Tombe (Tumble) (512m), down to Llanfoist, AberG, Llanthony. Minor road to Hay Bluff and Pass du Gospel (542m), back down Golden Valley, Cross Ash to Monmouth. Finish on top of the Kymin!

Finish: Total 512 miles approx!

Virgin territory (in Canada)

by Gary Davies of Team Adventure Sports Mag UK

Have you ever tried paddling a canoe through Grade 2+/3 rapids in an adventure race? We did and are still alive to tell the tale. Natalie and I thought it was the most exhilarating part of the UntamedNE Adventure Race and it's a memory we'll both remember for a long time. We had lost significant ground to the leaders in the preceding 24 mile MTB section because we couldn't find a trail and ended up 'bush-whacking' 2km to the CP as opposed to taking a relatively easy ride on muddy paths. This was a common theme for the rest of the race!

The river was calm at the launch area and we were just settling into a rhythm when we saw a large number of spectators on the bridge ahead with

cameras. We soon found out why! Unknown to us almost every team through the rapids had been thrown from their canoe. We managed to keep paddling through it and keep the canoe in a straight line but it was soon full of water which made it sink lower in the river and take on even more water.

We were soon thrown from the canoe, holding onto it and trying not to lose our paddles. I had attached 2 maps to my legs with bungee cord and was worried that they'd be ripped out in the turbulent water. Natalie soon screamed to say that her backpack hadn't been secured to the canoe and we'd lost it. I was beginning to deal with the disappointment of having to pull out of the race because her backpack contained the other 10 race maps and the emergency satellite telephone. We swam the canoe to the nearest bank downstream of the rapids and managed to turn it over. The race was back on. Natalie's backpack had been trapped underneath. We'd only lost a water bottle.

More rapids appeared ahead on the 18 mile long paddling section and we successfully negotiated them all apart from one which we decided to portage around. This was the right decision. Another team behind us decided to take it on and failed. The female member in their group was suffering from the cold water and nightfall was approaching.

The subsequent 13 mile bike ride took us to the 'conservation project' where each team was given a pair of secateurs and a hand saw. Each team had to clear a patch of 500 sq ft of overgrown waterfront property that would become a new trail for the Northern Forest Heritage Park. I must admit that we didn't enjoy this part of the race especially as our mixed pair team had to cut down the same amount of vegetation as a team of 3 or 4! However I can understand that the race organisers want to give something back to the community for agreeing to host and support a race.

We had passed several teams during the MTB section before the conservation project and felt strong during the first night of the race. However our climb up the leaderboard during the subsequent MTB section was hindered by a locked gate across a trail and a less-than-accurate description for one of the CP's. However the description was the same for everybody.

We arrived at the next transition, based in a cafe. Several teams decided to sleep inside until it was light but we decided to continue after plotting the remainder of the CP's on the plethora of race maps that we'd received at the start. After 17 hrs on MTB or paddling, we ventured out onto the first trekking stage. The first CP on the 19 mile (26000 ft ascent) trek was the hardest to find as it was set in a stream which wasn't identified on the map. Several small streams had appeared in the wettest June the area had experienced for many years, and it took us nearly 2 frustrating hours to find it. The next CP was set at the top of Mount Rudolph. We decided to 'bush-whack' our way to the ridge and walk along it to the peak but this proved to be more time and energy consuming than the longer way around which was on trail. Lesson learnt!



Four optional CP's were available on this trekking section which awarded a bonus four hour time saving each. We didn't have sufficient time to get them but only a few of the top teams elected to collect one or two of these. By this point, all the teams were running later than expected and only 14 of the 44 teams were allowed on the water for the 2nd paddling section. The other UK team EnduranceLife managed to get to the launch area before the unscheduled cut-off but we were not so fortunate. It was a 17 mile paddle up a river which took longer than the teams had anticipated. It included a few portage sections which we had trained for but never got to use our portage wheels!

The next trekking section was shortened since even the top teams had missed the cut-off time! It started at nightfall for us and included a trek up a disused logging road which was difficult to find from the trafficked road located in the valley floor. We found the CP with the Towanda team from New York State

and we both decided to sleep for 2 hours until sunrise. We had gone 44 hours without sleep by this point!

No trails existed to the next CP which was 'only' 2km away and 700ft higher. We arrived at the knoll where we thought the CP was located but we were unable to find it. The CP description warned of a 'false summit' which had us checking every small knoll on the densely vegetated summit. Another team later stumbled upon this same area which they thought was the correct place however their altimeter placed it 300ft lower than what it should have been. We managed to find a small area where we could take sightings to some other summits and soon realised where we were on the map. We had trekked less than 1km through the dense forest to a small knoll and had over 1km to the true summit! Bush-whacking is truly very slow going! The descent from the summit to the valley floor was just as slow too due to very steep terrain and dense tree cover.

The next section was a 30 mile MTB section which ventured from New Hampshire and into Maine. We lost a considerable amount of time on this stage because there were many more tracks on the ground than were identified on the map. Several streams were not identified on the map which made matters worse so we resorted to checking the distances and bearings between man-made and natural features. Night had fallen by this time and it started to rain heavily after two glorious days of sunshine. We concluded that the track which we were meant to take didn't exist or was in the wrong location. We narrowed down the options and decided to head 2.5 miles down a track which showed very few signs of previous MTB riders. We stumbled upon another team frustratingly looking for the CP and after several hours we managed to find it. Hip hip hooray!

We missed the cut-off time for the ropes section which was disappointing and were faced with a 37 mile MTB section along the highway towards the race HQ. Sleep deprivation was taking its toll on me as my brain was trying to shut down at 2am on the 3rd night of the race. We had only slept 2 hours in the previous 68 hours and Natalie was seeing faces in the trees and we were concerned that wild moose would run across the road and hit us!

Big lightning forks were seen ahead and we were edging nearer to them and the thunder claps. The heavens soon opened and we tried to find somewhere to shelter to put on our waterproof trousers. We passed a white wooden house which had a small door underneath which was ajar. I stopped and told Natalie to turn off her lights and be quiet. I did the same and crept over to the door to take a peak inside. It was full of junk, firewood and an armchair! The rain continued to fall with ever growing intensity and the thunder grew louder. You guessed it...we decided to sleep. Wouldn't you?! Our alarms seemed very loud after an hour's sleep. We were quick to turn them off to avoid awakening the owners

upstairs. Natalie and I were very cold and were shaking uncontrollably after sleeping in our damp clothes. We crept out from beneath the house to find that the rain had stopped. We soon found a hill which warmed us up again.

We arrived at race HQ as daylight appeared. We had 5 hours until the race would close but we had one mandatory CP to collect and the choice of another 8 bonus CP's. We managed to find the mandatory CP with ease at the top of the Sanguinary Mountain ridge and decided to go for one of the optional CP's before heading back to the finish line. This involved descending 150m down a steep trail and ascending 250m up a near vertical path on the other side. We failed to find the CP before the self-imposed cut-off time and decided to head back. Unfortunately we failed to find the trail so resorted to running 250m down the hillside through the trees towards the finish line.

We finished the race with a strong run and were greeted with applause and horns, and given a bottle of Long Trail Ale to celebrate completing the race. This was Natalie and I's first outing in a multi-day Adventure Race and we finished 16th out of 44 teams. The race was the only North American qualifier for the Adventure Racing World Championship which will be held in Portugal in November 2009. Natalie and I joined 28 US, 13 Canadian, 1 Portuguese and one other team from the UK in this race. The teams included twenty-four 4-person-mixed-teams and twenty number two or three person teams. 18 teams failed to finish.

We learnt several things in our first multi-day adventure racing venture, which I've listed below:

- It's difficult to eat energy bars, gels etc – take 'real' food that you enjoy. They might contain less calories and carbs but at least you'll eat them.
- We consumed a lot less food than we expected and ended up carrying unnecessary amounts of food
- Good navigation can save you hours in a multi-day race. Fitness is not the be all and end all.
- An altimeter would have been a useful tool where visibility was poor e.g. dense forests and at night
- The human body can endure more than we thought.

If you'd like more information about the race please go to www.untamedne.com

Any Questions?

Back by popular demand is the regular column where you can ask our resident expert, the well known former polar explorer, Sir T. Fayed-Insane your burning fell running questions.

Q. I understand you spent some time in one of her majesty's prisons – what was that for?

A. *Sir T.* Something I didn't do.

Q. What was that?

A. *Sir T.* I didn't run fast enough – a mistake I won't make again!

Q. My foot hurts after a long fell race, what can I do?

A. *Sir T.* Limp

Q. How can a fell runner lose twelve pounds of ugly fat?

A. *Sir T.* Cut off his head.

Q. You look in great shape for a man of sixty. How do you achieve this?

A. *Sir T.* Pity, I'm only forty.....

Keep your questions coming. We hang on his every word.....

Transfan

Transfan- From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia "Tranny Chasers" are people who are sexually attracted to transgendered people. Synonyms include transfans or trannie chaser, trans catcher, and tranny hawk.....

I was expecting a low turnout given Martin's note, but had a phone call from John Sweeting on Friday night enquiring about arrangements. When I told him the only confirmed participant was me, he seemed to lose enthusiasm and rung off muttering about the possibility of him starting a bit earlier so we could meet up at the end.

So I turned up at Llanddeusant on Saturday to be greeted by - well silence - aside from the sheep and my support team there was nobody else to be seen. I still maintained some optimism that latecomers would turn up but 5 minutes before the start this had evaporated and the realisation that it was just me hit home.

So the wife started the stopwatch and I was off - the next 5+ hours were just a blur of discomfort, coldness and pain. The BBQ at Cwm Lluch was a quiet affair.

Andrew Blackmore

(Do I detect a lower lip tremble – Ed.)

Well done Andy - the awesome and magnificent Transfan Trophy is yours to treasure for the next year!

Martin

Club Kit

Douggy holds the following items of club kit for sale:-

Shorts L 4

Vests S 1, L 6, XL 2.

He forgets what the prices were, whether £10 for tops and £12 for shorts, but £10 per item seems fair!

He does not hold any cycling tops. Somebody young and dynamic or at least someone who attends more MDC events probably ought to take responsibility for holding club kit. Any volunteers?

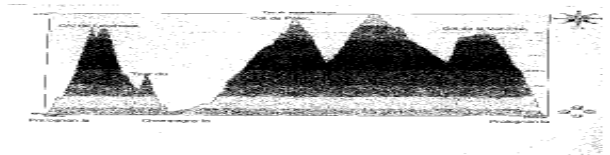
Andy Blackmore has one MDC cycling jersey (size Large) left - £35 to a good home. Please contact Andrew Blackmore on 07875 885566 or andrew.blackmore@uk.zurich.com to make your claim.

Tour de la Grande Casse

23.08.2009 by Douggy

This outing marked the end of my summer of fun as it has cured me of running for a while in the same way that Toffer's Tour de Galles cured me of cycling!

For more details, the Pralognan.com website has assorted information but in short, this is a 62km race crossing four cols totalling 3800m of climb in a circuit of the Vanoise area of the French Alps (specifically between the East end of the Trois Vallees and Tignes) going round the Grande Casse, the highest mountain in Savoie at 3995m, if I correctly remember. So it is not quite a double Transfan, but with some altitude chucked in as the high point is at 2747m and the other three cols are all 2500m+ and the first two more than 1000m each from the valley floor, Falling Stone might have a view on whether it is comparable.



Race Profile

This was a much smaller affair than the Mont Blanc marathon with only about 150 entries. The winner finished in just under a staggering 8 hours which on a hot and sunny day is moving some. I was 18th in 9:39 which I was quite pleased about even though it's only about 4 miles an hour; but, hey, a Transfan MoT is a five hour outing (or was when I was younger, fitter and stupider(?)) so 9:39 is not too far removed from a double Transfan. On the Dragon's Back we were only managing 3.3 as an average. I have to say that I had rather underestimated what it was going to be like in that the last 25Km took about 4hours 15 minutes so I was struggling somewhat by the end.

I drank 5 Camelbaks of water plus more at the feeding/watering stations, ate 4 raisin 'brunch' bars

(oatmeal, honey, chocolate, raisins) and 5 packets of raisins (plus stuff from the feeding points – orange quarters, bits of banana, apricots, a little bread and cheese) and reapplied sunscreen on the run twice! I thought that the little Salomon 'foreign legion' type hat I picked up in Chamonix was a good piece of kit for a hot day in the sun - did we get any of them this year? Otherwise it was a conventional shorts and synthetic T-shirt outing for me. There were lots of people wearing those long socks which are supposed to improve performance and improve recovery, which I remain to be convinced by, but which seem to be widely used in the trail community. But so too are super duper very thin and light telescopic poles. Somebody stabbed me with the point of theirs at the start, so I am not impressed by those either! But my legs are killing me so maybe I still have a lot to learn....

Extreme Fell Running



Haydn in the French Alps!

Huw Aggleton's South Wales Traverse

After getting myself as "running fit" as I have ever been for the London Marathon, I figured that this year would be a good time to have a shot at the South Wales Traverse (a 73 mile route taking in the thirty one 2000ft summits in South Wales, from Pen Rhiw-Wen to Llanthony Prior). However, after supporting Tom Gibbs on his Paddy Buckley Round, I was increasingly concerned not just by the fitness (my previous longest run had been 40 miles) but also by the will power and determination to keep going with the target of a sub 20hr completion.

Having gratefully assembled a support team including Aggers Senior, the date was set for midsummer weekend – starting just before sunrise on the Saturday morning with the target of getting to Llanthony Prior before a) it gets dark and b) last orders at the bar.

With Jules Carter supporting me for the first two legs from Pen Rhiw-Wen to Storey Arms, we set off into the dark and drizzle at 3.48am, aided by the headlights from Dad's car lighting the way up Garreg Lwyd. The rain and the first couple of summits passed quickly as the sun rose, though the cloud was down well below 600m making navigating to the summit of Bannau Sir Gaer without finding yourself contouring around it slightly more awkward – I was certainly very glad I had reced the section from the start to Fan Hir previously. Only after the descent off Fan Hir at the end of leg 1 did we get out of the cloud to meet Dad at the road to supply us with food (particularly scotch pancakes that were going down a treat) and drinks. By the end of leg 1, I was 13 minutes up on my 19hr 42mins schedule, feeling good and the cloud was slowly lifting.

Next was the "Transfan" part of the traverse – over the Unnamed Ridge before the infamous climb up Fan Gihirych, followed by Fans Nedd, Llia and Frynych, Rhos Dringarth and finally Fan Fawr. Although we were up in the cloud, the familiarity of this section meant that both time and distance passed quickly. Even the ascent up Fan Gihirych didn't seem too bad! The final climb up Fan Fawr, though, was a slog (but when is it not?) however descending out of the cloud to see Storey Arms it seemed a good distance was now behind me and it was only just past 9am. Again, we had made up a bit of time on my schedule, I was now 38 minutes up when once again we met Dad.

With Aggers Senior supporting and doing an awful lot of driving, we had arranged some careful car manoeuvring that meant that he could also do some running and he supported me from Storey Arms to Abercynafon. Pete Morfey (Cardiff Harlequins and multiple SWT attemptee) also joined us up to Pen-y-Fan. Still feeling surprisingly good and peanut butter rolls being eaten, Dad and I really enjoyed this leg up until the steep descent off Allt Lwyd through the bracken and heather. By the time we reached Abercynafon, blue sky was visible and the sun was shining. Once again we were ahead of schedule, it was now up to 53 minutes.

The short fourth leg from Abercynafon, across to Trefil (with a brief hello to Alice Bedwell who was setting up for an orienteering event) and down to Pyrgad I did on my own. Munching sausage rolls in the sun with Bruce Springsteen's Born to Run playing in my headphones I could have felt far worse considering I had now been on the go for 10 hours. However, by the time I descended down to Pyrgad my feet were getting sore and I was looking forward

to the change of shoes for the long road section through Llanbedr, the Glan Usk Estate to Cwm Gu. Matt Unsworth had extremely generously agreed to join me and his company certainly kept me going. Although the change of shoes initially felt good, I foolishly didn't change my socks and blisters began to cause me discomfort alarmingly quickly. Together with food and drink not going down at all well I was starting to struggle. By the time I reached Cwm Gu, for the first time I had not made up any time on my schedule, I was still 53 minutes ahead, but I was worried about how much my condition had deteriorated in the previous 90 minutes.



In "the Clag"

After a quick shoe change and some large swigs of ginger beer, I started leg 6 with Tom Gibbs at 2.45pm. This 12 mile leg starting with Pen Cerrig-Calch, including Waun Fach and Pen Y Gader-Fawr to the Grwyne Valley contains long ridge sections, so if I started slowing considerably I could find myself losing big chunks of time and even grinding to a complete halt. However Tom did a fantastic job, pacing me along and making sure I was eating and drinking sensibly in the warm afternoon sun. For the final descent of the leg into the Grwyne Valley, some previous recceing came up trumps, with the awkward route through the forestry plantation firmly fixed in my head. On reaching Dad and Astrid Gibbs, I found out I was now 1hr 47 up on schedule, making up 54 minutes on that leg alone. With this huge psychological lift I was ready for more ridges along to Gospel Pass.

Leaving the Grwyne Valley at 5.50pm, this lift quickly subsided and I was struggling once again. My feet were in agony from blisters, both ankles were extremely sore, my quads were very stiff and I still had 15 miles to go. Running became more like hobbling with my stride becoming more of a shuffle. Being able to see Rhos Dirion, Twmpa and Pen y Garn Fawr stretch out in front of me and the Beacons a long way behind I certainly realised just what a distance I had covered but I could see just how far I had still to go. By the time I got the descent off Twmpa I could barely run downhill, with Tom

seemingly speeding off to tell Astrid and Dad of my impending arrival. On reaching Gospel Pass at 7.45pm, I had been going for almost 16 hours (the record holder would have already finished 1hr 20 before in a staggering 14hrs 42 minutes), but I was 1hr 50 up on schedule and only had 8 miles to go.

For the final leg to Llanthony Priory, Astrid supported me, keeping me going whilst the sun set with the only thing that I could eat - wine gums. Although not normally a fan, I was extremely grateful for the stone slabs that run along the ridge, forcing me to lengthen my stride. I knew that I was going to make it now, but our concern was whether we would descend off the right spur in the gloom - getting this wrong doesn't bare thinking about. Thankfully Tom and Dad met us with precision timing at the 31st and final summit (Pen Y Garn Fawr) for the final descent to Llanthony. Realising that the finish was literally in sight, I hobbled down as fast as I could. At 9.37pm I crossed the line in a total time of 17hrs 47mins, elated but completely exhausted, as physically tired as I have ever been. A quick photo and a glass of champagne were followed by a slow shuffle to the Priory bar for a pint.

Huw

Results

As usual I only list runners entered as MDC members. For full results see the WRFA or race organizers websites.

Stretton Hills Race - 6th June

1	Mathew Collins	MDC	MS	41.35
11	Peter Williams	MDC	M50	52.44
13	Andy Stott	MDC	M50	54.45
27	John Sweeting	MDC	M60	63.38

Coity - 28th June 2009

113	Peter Williams	MDC	M50	1:02:27
138	Andy Stott	MDC	M50	1:06:2

Rhinog Horseshoe 4th July 2009

39	Sweeting John	MDC	MV60	4:55:26
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Tal y Fan 11th July 2009

42	Adrian Moir	MDC	01:45:54	MV40
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Waun Fach 11.07.09

6	John Syms	MDC	MS	59.12
12	Andy Stott	MDC	M50	64.50
14	Andrew Blackmore	MDC	M40	67.42
28	Dave Gilbert	MDC	M60	84.24

Fan Y Big 19th July 2009

18	Peter Williams	MDC	MV50	1:36.34
23	Andy Stott	MDC	MV50	1:38.49
31	Haydn Griffiths	MDC	MV50	1:42.10
39	Alice Bedwell	MDC	FV40	1:45.31
41	Alan Stone	MDC	MV40	1:45.42
52	Gill Stott	MDC	FV50	1:48.57
62	Caroline Dallimore	MDC	FV50	1:59.59
69	Dick Finch	MDC	MV60	2:20.38
75	Phillip Jenkins	MDC	MV40	2:43.53
76	Sarah Jenkins	MDC	FV40	2:43.53

Pen Y Fan 18th July 2009

11	Peter Williams	MDC	MV50	44.41
24	Andy Stott	MDC	MV50	47:38
36	Alice Bedwell	MDC	FV40	51:45
37	Dick Finch	MDC	MV60	51:57
42	Gill Stott	MDC	FV50	52:36
59	Sarah Jenkins	MDC	FV40	1:10:00

Llanthony Show Sat 1st August

5	Peter Williams	MDC	M50	36.09
9	Mark Worthing	MDC	M	38.57
13	Andy Blackmore	MDC	M	40.16
17	Sharon Woods	MDC	F40	41.20
27	Eric Meredith	MDC	M60	46.48
31	Les Pugh	MDC	M60	56.17
32	John Battersby	MDC	M70	64.39

Eddie Izzard - 43 marathons in 52 days

Congratulations to Eddie on this achievement. In finishing he proved what many thought was an impossible task: that a 47-year-old cross-dresser with no sporting inclination could complete an endeavour usually reserved for a small band of endurance athletes and masochists (*was The Times referring to people like us? – Ed.*).

A well known local fell runner was quoted by the Times. "Simon Blease, 51, a sports doctor and mountain runner who has been following his progress, was waiting on Tower Bridge. "I didn't think he could do it," he said. "Like a lot of people I thought he would have a good try but his body would break down. Someone with so little training, you expect the feet to break down or stress fractures in the legs. I find it extraordinary that he has done it."

Eddie had embarked on his 43 marathons in part as a celebration of the Olympics coming to London in 2012 and also in aid of the charity Sports Relief.

Q. Do you recognize this?



- A. The Bob Graham Round
- B. The South Wales Traverse
- C. The Paddy Buckley Round
- D. Martin Lucas's Front Drive

Scottish Islands Peaks Race

By Jules Carter

This classic race combines sailing and running around the Scottish islands of Mull, Jura and Arran. It starts with a 4.5 mile off road run in Oban, after which you are rowed out to your boat which then races to Salem on the Isle of Mull. From there the runners are rowed ashore to do the 24 mile run up Ben More and Back. Its then a longer sail to the Isle of Jura and the harsh run over the Paps of Jura. After that a hard sail round the Mull of Kintyre takes you to the Isle of Arran where the runners run up Goat Fell and back. It's then a final sail to the finish line at the port of Troon!



Huw and Jules share a cosy bunk!

For many years I dreamed of this race. Finally an opportunity arose and I found myself and Hugh Aggleton, teamed up with three sailors from the Quay Marinas company. Our boat is Odin -a small craft (a mere 28ft) – but of race design. Inside is spartan but functional. We meet our fellow team members for the first time in Oban itself and quickly become acquainted over a pre race pizza and few bottle of beer! True MDC race prep! Matt our skipper has done this race many times both as a sailor and runner and knows the score well. He runs through the routine and the plans. Simon and Stuart have tried the race once before, two years previously. However that year the weather was so bad the race had to be abandoned after Mull.....

The race started at midday and the usual pre-race nerves kicked in especially as I got wind of the quality of some of the other running teams! The run starts on the road outside the yacht club – a mixed bag of about 45 pairs of runners! The start is not too frantic and we keep it pretty steady. The course climbs onto the small hills around the side of Oban then drops back onto the road for a last rapid kilometre of running on the road. On arrival back at the club house we frantically looked for Stuart, quickly don our life jackets and are rapidly rowed out to Odin which is on the move as we board! Within minutes the tender is on board, we are below out of the way of the sailors and the sails are up. We were the fourth boat out of Oban – a good start! The sail up the Sound of Mull is exhilarating. As expected the big boats such as the J42's start to overhaul us.

Within a few hours we arrive at Salem which is our disembarkation point for the Ben More run. Prior to arrival the tender is pumped up, we are given the 5 minute shout and once again we are rowed at a hefty rate of knots! Its an assault landing and myself and Hugh dash up for the 5 minute time out and kit check. The Ben More run is tough especially as it starts with 10km of road before moving off road and then climbing the 1000 meters to the mountain top. Overall we make good progress, even though a route choice made by me proved pretty hairy as we traversed steep scree and rock outcrops at a higher level than we needed have. The road section on the return was hard on well used mountain legs! We arrived back at Salem and I somehow steal a swig of beer from a marshal, and then its back on the tender and out towards Odin. The weather is cold and the wind is picking up, with rain in the air. Its cold on the tender and for some reason Odin has moved too far out. We wait to be picked up and eventually she come round. However disaster has struck us and the reason for the slow pick up becomes apparent – the boon on the boat has just broken. We are out of the race.....

We quickly got back on board and out of the way while the sailors sort out the mass of sail and ropes covering the deck. We then slowly make our way back to Oban using a mixture of the jib and the little 5HP outboard that was the boats engine. We arrived back at Oban in the early hours and somehow the five of us squeeze into the four bunks for sleep. This involved me and Hugh top and tailing in a single bunk. Good job we're not fat b*****s!

Saturday was spent picking up fuel and food before limping Odin back to Quays marina on the Clyde at Rhu. Saturday we managed to sail a fair bit, and whilst the going was slow the scenery was superb. Eventually, in the distance, we saw where we should have been running that day – the Paps of Jura but now our destination was the Crinan Canal which cuts out the long sail around the Mull of Kintyre. By early afternoon we were in the Crinan Canal and negotiating the first lochs, but the canal shuts at

5.00pm at which point we were halfway through. Fortunately we were moored close to a decent pub and an evening of fine excess prevailed! Somehow the five of us again squeeze into Odins berths and a reasonable nights kip was somehow had.



Huw dressed for warm weather

As soon as the lochs opened again we were off, being herded along with three other boats including another retiree from the race. It seemed to take ages negotiating the lochs but eventually we found open sea again. In the end Sunday proved tedious. The winds were not kind and the only time we could sail on the jib was up the Kyles of Bute. The rest of the trip was under the constant din as the little engine gradually cranking along. The weather got pretty grim with the sailors getting the brunt of the c*** weather being stuck on deck. Later that evening we arrived at Rhu and. Simon arranged for us to kip on a floor in the marine complex. We then managed to grab a last orders pint at a nearby pub after which we said a farewell to our sailors as we had a 5am taxi booked for the airport.

There ended the adventure. Despite the disappointment of the boat breaking it was still a great trip. We got on really well with the sailors and made a great team. Hopefully we can try again in 2010! As it was only two boats (out of twenty) finished in our class - and this was only because they stayed anchored at Jura until the storm force winds around the Mull of Kintyre subsided. The chances are we wouldn't have got round anyway!

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Deadline for next issue: 30.12.09

Answer to Qustion above = C

Doing LEJOG

(5/7/09 to 14/7/09) –

John & Hugh (team Aggleton)

One of the dangers of MDC is that if you are careless enough to admit that you have a secret desire to travel by your own physical endeavour to some distant destination you will find yourself rapidly running out of excuses for not doing it. In my case it was cycling from Lands End to John O'Groats. I know it's not original and logically makes no sense (it's not as if either point is the most SW or NE in mainland Britain) but I just thought I wanted to do it. Two events made escape impossible; 1) Martin Lucas finessed all excuses by offering accommodation at the start and finish; 2) Hugh bought a touring bike. So on a sunny Sunday morning in July we set off (though the start post had been removed – it's only there when they can charge you for a privilege of a photo!).



Rather than detail every day I thought I would give you a list of ascending statistics:

0 - number of punctures and hills Hugh couldn't get up

0.25 – Road Bridge, spectacular cycle lane

1 – day 1 to Tavistock, climbs I couldn't make (Cock n Bridge, Lecht Road), number of Tibetan retreats that provided tea

2- number of cyclists (thanks Hugh), day 2 to Chepstow

3 – number of cyclists including Martin on first and last day, day 3 to Church Stretton

4 – days without rain, day 4 to Ecclestone

5- number of arrows on the Cock Bridge climb, days playing pub cricket, day 5 to Carlisle

6 – days with rain!, day 6 to Edinburgh

7 – Bridge, day 7 to Black Leunans

8- species of mammals flattened on the tarmac, day 8 to Tomatin

9 – A9 – best avoided, day 9 to Helmsdale

10 – to JOG

14.8 – average speed

20 – number of tea stops, % climb on Lecht Road

25- counties

45.6 – Hugh's fastest speed

61.8 hours in the saddle

63 – number of different bird species seen

70.4 – shortest days ride (Edinburgh to Black Leunans)

133 – longest days ride (Tavistock to Chepstow)

644m- Lecht Road (Cock Bridge- second highest road in UK)

670m – height of the Cairnwell (highest road en route and highest public road in Britain)

709 – the B709 – cycling doesn't get much better than this

915 – total miles

Huge thanks goes to Hugh (for the company, putting up with me, and carrying all my gear- what a star!), Tom, Astrid, Martin and Kaye (for unbelievable hospitality), Jane and Duncan for driving there and back again.

Timetable of Winter training runs 2009

Following on from the success of last years winter training runs it was unanimously agreed by me to hold another season of nocturnal joggling. All runs will start at 6.30pm and last for 1 to 1 ¼ hours. We hope to enjoy a meal at a local pub or with a club member after the run for those interested. Please bring a decent head torch as all these runs will be in the dark from start to finish. Please bring suitable clothing to cope with the likely (wintry) weather conditions. We will try to stick to main paths so as to minimise the trip risk. Please note that all runs are at individual risk and are not formally recognised club runs.

Tuesday 3rd November - Fox and Hounds, Ewenny Road, St Brides (SS894747). Run with Mark Bryant. 01656 880809

Tuesday 1st December - Meet at Ty Nant in Morganstown (ST127819) for a run up the Garth. Afterwards to Haydn Griffith's house for grub (35 Bishops Road, Whitchurch). Please telephone 02920251265 to confirm numbers for catering.

Tuesday 5th January - Meet at Storey Arms. Run up Pen Y Fan or Fan Fawr. After at Nant Ddu Lodge, Hotel, Bistro and Spa - if they'll deign to have us!

Tuesday 2nd February – Meet at Alice and Mark's house for a run around Twmbarlwm. Address is; Heol Gerrig, Twmbarlwm Lane, Risca. ST 258904. Please telephone beforehand to confirm numbers. 01633615586

Tuesday 9th March - Prince Of Wales, Kenfig (SS803818) for a run in the dunes. Martin and Kay will be our local guides. The tide is out. Canute has spoken. 01656 880009

If you have any queries please telephone me on 02920691045.

Alan Stone