

Chairwoman's Corner

Message from The Chair

Put the kettle on and pull up a chair, for this Newsletter is the best one yet. Get ready to be entertained and inspired!

So, what have you awesome Plums been doing since the last Newsletter? The desire and appetite for Plums to keep doing crazy things has not decreased, with impressive parkrun PBs, half and (almost) half marathons, international marathons and Ultra marathons. Last month we eagerly followed the progress of our experienced Ultra runners Steve Morris and Annie James as they undertook the challenge to Escape from Meriden. The article from Steve and Anny reveals all, you are both an inspiration to us all. As I look through the feeds on social media, we are getting better and better, the number of Parkrun PBs every week act as a reminder of how our weekly sessions are helping and developing all our runners.

At this time of year, it's important to think about your safety when running in these dark winter nights, to make sure you are visible. Please consider wearing hi-viz reflective clothes, let somebody know where you are if you are running on your own and carry a mobile. Stay safe Plums!

On behalf of all Plums I want to thank Mike Wilson for his tremendous effort in doing the Race League, it gets harder and harder as the club is growing so fast. Mike is standing down at the end of the year and we say a very big THANK YOU for all your hard work.

For those of you "Plodding into Christmas", good luck, not many days left to go.

I wish a wonderful Christmas to you all. Reflect on what amazing things you and your friends have achieved over the last 12 months and start to plan your challenges for 2020.

Suzanne Price
PPP Chair

New Plum Website

Our new look website will go live soon and features some cleaner looking pages. It also includes a new kit shop to place your kit orders. Each complete order will go to our kit officer Sally for collation. All payments still need to be paid to the club bank account as you do currently.

persoreplumplodders.co.uk

Steve Molland
webmaster@persoreplumplodders.co.uk

Leaders in Running Fitness

As I'm sure you are all aware, the Club now has 5 more fully qualified run leaders, Ann Hewlett, Kate Le Chevalier, Elinor Cordiner, Steve Nicoll and Tom Marshall.

While they are there to help guide you on a Plod night, they will also be pencilling some "extra" training in once a month, such as intervals, hill reps etc, so keep your eyes peeled for dates soon.

Additionally, we also have some 'responsible helpers', Susan Woods, Mandy Neal and Ian Pollitt who help out when there is a shortage of LiRfs available or a different pace is required at the Plod.

PPP LiRF

Kit update

Unfortunately, the Heavy Hoodie has been discontinued. I will be talking to the suppliers in January to find out if there is an alternative available.

I have Buffs and Race Clips in stock, you will be able to order these off the new website page. Until the site goes live you can pay for these with cash when you see me at Parkrun. Buffs are £10 and Race Clips are £4.

Next order will be placed in January, date will be posted on Facebook closer to the time.

All orders and enquiries about kit to be sent to kit@persoreplumplodders.co.uk

Sally Nash
kit@persoreplumplodders.co.uk

Entertainment Update

Hi all,

The Plum Christmas Doo will once again take place at Persore Town Football club and will take the same format as last year with a buffet and disco for your delectation.

The date for your diaries is December 27th, kicking off at 1830hrs all at the same price as last year, the princely sum of £8 a head.

If you can help with venue set up on the day, please drop me a line, as any help would be greatly appreciated

Nick Herbert

Tourist Parkrun Dates

PPPTPR is still going strong so jump on board if you fancy joining us. It's always a lovely morning.

Dates and venues for 2020 are yet to be confirmed so please keep your eyes peeled and your ears to the ground.

When attending a PPPTPR or another Plum event that someone has setup on Facebook. Please click on "going" under the chosen event so you then get ongoing notifications, info and announcements regarding the event in your timeline.

Tom Marshall

Race League 2019

The Race league is still in full swing and is slowly creeping towards the business end of the year! The Evesham Festive 10k is now all that stands between the prospective winners.

The ever-speedy Kate Le Chevalier still sits atop of the overall ladies' standings, with Bex Chatterton snapping at her heels, who will be crowned Queen of the Race League?

David Pound has now usurped Simon Gardner and sits atop the men's league. Having won previously, will he again beat the crowds breathing down his neck with just one event to go?

Please don't forget to check out the Race League Table on the PPP website for full results of the different Age categories and for details of the next League Race.

Please note that not all dates of League events have yet been confirmed, so keep checking back for further details.

Looking ahead to 2020, we are making some changes to the races eligible for members to run. We asked for your feedback in a recent survey and as a result Cricklade 10k and half marathon will be removed and the Bugatti 10k and the first Ilmington (Winter Series) 10k will be added.

The full list of races for the revamped race league is:

Worcester Parkrun
Pendock Spring Chicken
Scenic 6
Cheer 5
Crowle 10k
Cleeve Cloud Cuckoo
Malvern Joggers 10k
Bredon Bash
Evesham Town 10k
Bugatti 10k
Worcester City 10k and ½ marathon
Ilmington (Winter Series) 1st 10k

PPP Committee

info@persoreplumplodders.co.uk

There was earlier in the year a 'rumour' about the possibility of a Plum ½ marathon to either run alongside the existing plum 10k or as a separate stand-alone event.

We as a Committee would like to state that there are no plans, immediate or otherwise for the Club to hold a ½ marathon.

Thank you.

PPP Committee

info@persoreplumplodders.co.uk

Planning Ahead for A Fast Half Marathon?

Some plan their running calendar some months ahead so this race report is partly aimed at those Plums who might be thinking of a fast road half marathon next Autumn (almost a year ahead!). Perhaps even a PB if that's what you want? Or just enjoy a run somewhere you haven't run before high fiving, taking in the sights and jelly baby eating.

There are lots of half marathons in September / October and I didn't do them all! I ran the Cheltenham Half at the end of September and the Manchester Half in mid-October but, as well as these ones, lots of Plums do Cricklade which is very flat (and there were some amazing runs there recently), Cardiff looks great (big city atmosphere combined with Welsh hospitality) and a few looked as though they may have actually enjoyed Oxford despite the torrential rain. There are lots of others too so take your pick. This is a great time to aim for a half (perhaps even your first one?) because you've had the Summer weather to train.

Here's a few thoughts on the two I did ...

Why Cheltenham? It's nearby. The start / finish at the racecourse is perfect – easy and ample car parking ; great toilet facilities (because they open up the full racecourse) so you can side-step those portaloos ; shelter if it's freezing cold or wet ; short distance to start area ; an interesting course, generally flat but some inclines – nothing too serious but enough to make Cricklade or Manchester better options if you are PB chasing ; good crowds - if you haven't met Bex Chatterton's family or friends, you can tick them all off in a single day because they are all over the course like a rash! Some find the last mile or so around the racecourse a bit demoralising because you feel as though you've got back to your final destination but you haven't – I must admit that I'd been warned about this, was dreading it to some extent but it was not as bad as I'd built it up in my head so it was fine (expectations vs reality).

Why Manchester? For me, it's a family thing with my mum, sister and brother all living right on the course. So, either bring your own family or I'll rent mine out for the day! Aside from that – it's flat and fast and attracts really good club runners (you know the ones who just look like runners) as well as thousands of others ; the course is wide from start to finish so, from mile 1 onwards, you're free to roam without breaking your stride although I saw reports that the start was 'sticky' if you were further back in the pack (I'd whacked in an ambitious 1:30 predicted finish time so was able to run free from the start) ; unfortunately it starts at Old Trafford (rather than the Etihad Stadium) but this means that you can get to see both the football & cricket grounds (which are 5 minutes' walk apart). The biggest disappointment was the end – a medal but no goody bag or T-shirt so, for the price, it was very thin and lots of people were sceptical about the organisers claim that they were investing the money in community running (rather than lining their own pockets). Do it if you want a fast time in a great city. Don't do it if you're a bling-junkie.

I'd do both again but may try one I haven't done before next Autumn.

Ian Pollitt

Escape from Meriden



Just over a year ago I became aware of an Ultra Marathon called Escape from Meriden, the premise of which is to leave a central point and get as far as you can by foot in 24 hours, self-supported. A truly simple concept all in all and one which appealed to me greatly.

Meriden is the Geographic centre of England and is marked by a stone pillar in the middle of the village green. At midnight you, as a prisoner, are released to go in any direction you'd like.

The kicker is that any award is only measured As The Crow Flies (ATCF), so you could cover 20 miles only to find that you had only done 15 ATCF, hence a detailed and well thought out plan of action was/is required.

Awards are given for those covering certain distances ATCF:

Complete less than 30, you get a certificate.

Between 30 – 60 you get a silver medal.

Between 60 – 90 you get a gold medal.

Over 90 miles you win the coveted and rarely awarded black medal.

I knew that the date for entries was fast approaching and kept a keen eye on the 'Beyond Marathon' Facebook page for any updates etc. 24 hours before general release the organisers put a teaser out to say that there were a small number of early bird places available if you were clever enough to work out where they were.

I spent a frantic 3 hours trying any obtuse or what I deemed to be possible way of trying to get a place, finally giving up just before midnight and resigning myself to general entries the following day.

The following day I found myself sat in a telephone exchange at 1145hrs, poised ready for the 1200hrs release of places. 15 minutes later the deed was done, I was in!!

Fast forward 10 months and I thought I'd best start thinking about what I was going to do and how I was going to do it, or at least try to, anyway.

A quick look at a map and I decided I'd head for Worcester and then try and push on towards Hereford, all familiar(ish) roads for me. With the end goal of Pontrilas which was approximately 70 miles on foot and just over 60 miles ATCF.

I'd ordered a new running vest, enough energy bars to feed the 5,000 and extra running gear, so had all bases covered, well I thought I had anyway.

Around this time, I was collared by Simon Gardner at the Plod and asked if I wanted some company on the trip down to Worcester. I happily accepted

the offer, but did reinforce that it was a midnight start, still the offer stood, so we were on!

I began packing things a few days in advance, checking, unpacking and re-packing again and again. It was like a military operation with a bag for each planned stop, all under the keen eye of Operations Commander, Selina 'The Long Haired General' Phelps!

D-Day dawned and after finishing work early I popped out for a last-minute massage, quite a mission, due to the flooding in the area and got back, packed the car, ate and tried to chill out a bit.

Heading North later in the evening I was nervous, but also relatively relaxed about what was to come, "what will be, will be, right?"

Parking up near the village centre in Meriden, I tried to get a few minutes extra kip, eventually rousing myself and making our way down to the meeting point at about 2215hrs. Booking in, I grabbed a set of the orange overalls for the full prisoner effect and had a natter with Steve 'Bradders' Bradley about what was to come. A Veteran of the event, he was again aiming for Worcester, so I was hoping to glean a few last-minute tips from him.

Anny James arrived and did the same as me, nervously got herself sorted, checking and double-checking kit, food and everything else that would be required to at least get her to her first RV with Jules, her main support for the event. I felt for Anny as she'd had to revise her planned route several times due to the recent flooding and I think she was on plan F by now!

We had our briefing, took in a few do's and don'ts then made the short walk to the start. The sight of over 100 'nutters' gabbering away in the cool drizzle must have been a bizarre spectacle for the local's and anyone who happened to be passing by.

Selina had by now, popped off home for some much-needed sleep, so she'd be ready to meet me later. I sent a quick message to Simon to let him know we were almost good to go and then

stepped back to take in the atmosphere one last time.

Then we heard the word, "Go" and that was it we were off! People bomb burst in all possible directions, Anny, Bradders and me among them.

In our enthusiasm to get moving Bradders and me, tootled off – IN THE WRONG DIRECTION! A quick correction and 2 extra miles later we were back on track and soon joined by Simon, who'd been wondering where we'd got too after everyone else had ran past, apart from us two. I explained that we had been geographically embarrassed, temporarily, but now we were back on track.

I'd recce'd the route previously and had made a rough route card to get me down to Worcester. Hampton in Arden came and went, Catherine De Barnes, was soon behind us and the bright lights of Solihull loomed large ahead. Sweating like maniacs, Bradders and me abandoned our jumpsuits, we were wet enough from the persistent drizzle, let alone anything else! After another quick map check we were out of Solihull and out into the countryside again. I knew there was a 24 hour garage up ahead and had planned to stop, get some food and drink before cracking on again.

Sure enough the garage was there and open too, thankfully. The chap behind the 'night till' took one look at us and buzzed us into the warmth of the shop, where we proceeded to stuff our faces and drink plenty of fizzy pop.

Now we really were heading out into the dark countryside, Alvechurch was the next landmark I was looking for, specifically the bridge over the canal, where I was hoping to use the tow path. We duly hit the bridge and after a quick conflagration we decided to take the towpath despite the possibility of it being a tad soggy underfoot. We needn't have worried, we ploughed on down the towpath and hit the bridge I'd recce'd in due course, this was our cue to get back on the roads.



Chatting more about our options we decided that we'd now head towards Bromsgrove and cut South following the A38 to Worcester.

Bradders was looking forwards to a hot drink at McDonalds in Wychbold and thought that appealed to me too, so as soon as the 'Golden Arches' loomed into view we took the opportunity to warm up and grab a drink and some much-needed food too.

We were asked by a random bloke while there, what we were up to? When we explained that we'd ran down from Meriden, he offered to buy us all a hot drink, we politely declined explaining that we were going to eat as well. It never ceases to amaze me how kind people can be and goes some way to restoring your faith in humanity, don't you think?

While we were in the warm, I took the opportunity to check the tracker and see how Anny was doing. We were all pleased to see that she appeared to be going strong and was heading South in a completely different direction.

20 minutes later it was time to head out again, so we got ourselves moving and got set to push on South once more, Droitwich awaited us in the burgeoning light of the dawn.

It became clear after 10 minutes back on our feet that Bradders was going to call it a day in Worcester and he was also travelling slightly slower than Simon and me. So, we said a brief goodbye, good luck and with a shake of the hand, off we went.

Droitwich came and went, Fernhill Heath too, we hit Perdiswell, where I expected Simon to peel off, but he decided to stay with me a little longer, support I gratefully accepted. Finally, into Barbourne in the daylight Simon finally turned for his daughter Emma's. His support and company, along with Bradders had been invaluable to me through the dark night and it was no surprise to me that he'd ran 33 miles, his furthest distance ever! Top man Simon Gardner, thank you for everything.

I'd arranged to meet Selina at Bransford with an approximate time of 0930hrs. Checking my watch I seemed to be on track to hit our RV and text her to let her know I was crossing the bridge in the City Centre, St Johns bound. Up through Rushwick I came out onto the main road and Bransford was only a short distance away.

A bit of dancing around a little floodwater and I was there, Selina, smiling and welcoming me with a hot cuppa and a hot breakfast.

I changed my clothes and trainers, charged my phone and took in the enormity of what I'd already achieved. 39 miles so far, 3 more and it would be the furthest I've ever done in one go! I have to admit that I nearly wrapped it at this point. I was comfortable sat down and beginning to warm up again, could I carry on? A pep talk from the 'Boss' and I agreed to get to Bishops Frome where I'd evaluate things again.

So off I went with the target of 13 miles to our next RV fresh in my mind. A couple of small villages came and went with only the odd passing car for company. Then as if from nowhere a sight for sore eyes came around a corner, Ian Pollitt was running towards me! Ian explained that he would spend an hour or so with me as he had some spare time while his good lady was busy at a cookery class. We nattered merrily for a while up a few hills, down a few hills. The time passed in a blur and all too soon Ian had to head off.



Ian's company had been fantastic, keeping me going and helping pass what would have been long, lonely miles on my own. Thank you, Ian Pollitt, for your support!

On I went, not far to Bishops Frome and a morale boosting chat with Selina. Stepping off to the side of a narrow road to let a car go past I heard a cheery "Bloody hell, you must be nuts doing this!"

It was my best mate from back home, Pete. Pete is something of a couch potato when it comes to all things exercise related, yet here he was in the middle of nowhere cheering me on. I could hardly believe it!

I told him I was due a stop at Bishops Frome and that I'd see him there, possibly in the pub. I'd already text Selina to ask if the pub was open as the thought of a pint of Guinness was hugely appealing right then. I hit Bishops Frome and met Pete again, where was Selina? That looked like my car, but no sign of her. Was she in the pub waiting for me? Did she have a nice pint waiting for me? I called her and she answered on the second ring, she'd been getting some well-deserved sleep in the car.

In all my haste to keep going I'd almost forgotten that she was also putting in lots of hours supporting me.

Pete, Selina and me put the world to rights for a few minutes, I topped up my drinks, ate what I could and decided to keep going, I was now about

11 miles from Hereford. Selina was going to head to my Mums and pick her up and then come and find me as I plodded on.

This is when I made a silly mistake, one which ultimately cost me any hope of getting to Hereford at the very least. In my haste I took a wrong turning and a mile later found myself on a very busy A road. Cursing myself for not taking the time to check my map I spent a mile and a half hopping up on to the verge to avoid fast moving cars coming towards me. I finally got to a turning, which would take me away from the busy road, and back to where I should be, but do I take it and put more miles on or continue to dodge the traffic?

In the end I decided that the quieter roads would be much nicer and turned off the shorter busier route. I was now heading for Burley Gate, a further 5 miles ahead of me, which if I'd gone the right way, I'd have been well past by now! Feeling pretty annoyed with myself I plodded on, the miles ticking slowly by as I ran/walked my way along.

Suddenly as if out of nowhere, I staggered to the side of the road. Correcting myself I carried on, 2 minutes later I did the same thing again. What was going on? Why was I staggering about?

Three times more I did the same thing! The realisation finally hit me; I was done! My Escape from Meriden was coming to an end on a quiet country road in Herefordshire.

I text Selina, "I'm exhausted!" She rang straight away and we arranged to meet in Burley Gate. 30 minutes later I was climbing into the car with Selina and my Mum and that was it! I text the race organisers and turned off my tracker.

I checked my watch; I'd gone almost 56 miles, my furthest run by over 14 miles. I later worked out I'd gone 45 miles ATCF. Pontrilas had eluded me!

Back at Mums, I climbed into a hot bath with a cold Guinness and reflected quietly on the last 15 hours since I'd left Meriden.

Was I disappointed? Yes, undoubtedly. Would I do things differently if I were to do it again? Yes, I would definitely. Would I do it again though?

I ate well that night and slept like a baby and woke the next day tired, but content that I'd given my all at the time.

EFM is no small undertaking and there is no way on God's green Earth that I would have been able to get as far as I did without the support of those people in our brilliant running club, whose support and generosity never ceases to amaze me.

Most of all however I wouldn't have got as far down the road as I did without Selina, she was a constant 'rock' for me, prior to, during and after my run. Her belief in me when I doubted myself pushed me to go further than I have ever been before and for that I'm eternally grateful.

Would I do it again?

I answered that question 5 days later when I signed up for EFM 2020! You never beat the Crow, but maybe, just maybe I can pluck one or two of his feathers next year!

Steve Morris

Autumn Running



Golden shades of leaves from the tree

Carpet the tracks, the pavements and scree

It's frosty and cold - though not too cold to run

Clouds whirl, rain lashes; no more fall sun

Lace up dirt-stained shoes, hat on and gloves

Head for the car park which every Plum loves

It's already dusk, head torches shine bright

Punnets of Plums spill out into the night

Milling about, what's my comfortable pace?
Find an orange run leader, then fall into place
Which route are we going? The floods and the rains
Left us with no choice; go out through Nogains

Brambles have shed blackberries to pick
They still line the path on the roadside to Wick
And when one sticks out, arm up to brush past
Unfortunate timing springs back at the last
One more new ailment, though not from a race
Once on a plod, a thorn in my face

Parkrun begins, from winter start it's a dash
Muddy puddles aplenty; no escaping their splash
Passing me by is a much quicker Plum
I struggle a greeting but today I'm not glum
For I know this; when the finish line came
I'd eat far more cake than that speedy, svelte frame

I'd drink much more tea and will chat, pass the breeze
Forgetting pulled muscles and strains in my knees
For I'm with the Plums at the post-run café
Gossip only of plodding, all else put away
The next half, ten, five and full twenty-six miles
Or last week's ultra, recalled with shared smiles

Who wants to go home, when we're having a laugh?
Forget about washing or taking a bath

Let's go round again, or at least half-way round
All that new gusto we've suddenly found
And plan for our next run or next-run-but-three
As long as we remain injury-free

Geoff Marchant

PORRIDGE TO PASTY

THE 2019 JOHN O'GROATS TO LANDS END (JOGLE) WORLD RECORD.

This summer David and I were involved with Sharon Gayter's world record End - End run. Sharon and I have been good friends for many years since we both ran for the GB ultra-distance team. Sharon coming onto the team a few years before I bowed out. We often roomed together and have remained very good friends since. When Sharon said she wanted to try and regain the women's world record for the JOGLE I volunteered to help support her and persuaded David that he really did want to spend 2 weeks driving our campervan from one end of the British Isles to the other and then back again!

We spent 2 days driving up and highly recommend the Tebay services. There is a superb Farm Shop and cafe with views to die for from the windows.

The start date was 21st July at 7.30am. This being a Sunday meant we were able to take in one of the most northerly Parkruns at Alness on our journey. A great start to our trip. It was unusual as the only bit in the park was the start and finish. The course ran through woods, down to the sea and then out along the 'pier'. This was a narrow, gravel bank leading out into the sea for a considerable distance. We then turned around a cone and headed back the same route. David did his usual trick of falling over and cutting his knee but was happy to be picked up by 2 attractive young ladies!

Sharon and her husband, Bill joined us here and we also met some of the locals who came out to cheer us when we came through on the following day.

At John O Groats we met up with 2 more crew members, Trevor and Linda, also in a campervan. They would be in charge of compiling the statistics and information required by the Guinness Book of Records. A huge amount of detail has to be collected nowadays and everything filmed and recorded. Witness statements collected and video footage taken en route. Luckily, we were not involved in that, though I did have to produce a document afterwards showing my involvement.

Sharon had arranged her days into 3 blocks of 8hrs and her target was to break the existing record of 12days 15hrs. My job was to cycle or run with her carrying her supplies of food and drink. David and I volunteered to take the first shift of the day starting at 5am. In theory this should have meant I would be off duty by 1pm giving us the rest of the day free to drive to the predicted overnight stop.

As with the best laid plans' things do go wrong. Sharon had been let down at the very last minute by 2 crew members, with no time to find replacements. Luckily (for me!) she was able to find someone who could join us on the 4th day. Until then I was the only one available to accompany her.

Her schedule was; 7 sessions of 3hrs running followed by a 30min break for food, drink and rest. The 8th session being a 3hr sleep break. My plan was to cycle with her but aiming to get at least a 10km run every day. I was very unsure how my new hip would hold up to such exertions. However, once I discovered that her 2nd support crew wasn't able to come I found myself doing a double shift for the first 4 days. David was tasked with driving the camper ahead to a designated lay-by where he would prepare food for me.

Sharon had spent 2 years putting her run together; planning the route to get the shortest and best possible way to Lands End. She had put in several off-road sections which I found particularly challenging especially if I had my bike to push! As she got more and more tired her pace slowed so that cycling slowly was too difficult and I found myself doing much more running/walking. The weather was very mixed throughout, with several

spells of heavy rain and road works. Causing unfortunate diversions that meant some rapid route changes. Sharon suffered from badly blistered feet which resulted in her doing lengthy walking spells but she was always in reach of her target, though having to miss out on much needed sleep in order to stay in contention.

After 12 days, 11 hours, 6 minutes and 7 seconds of gruelling work she did succeed in her mission. She regained the ladies world record for the fastest on foot time breaking the old record by 4hrs!

We were highly delighted to see her succeed and while I thoroughly enjoyed the experience David was bored to tears. A little light relief was provided when he was faced with persuading the local traffic police to allow Sharon to continue to run down the A34 in horrendous traffic.

En route to Lands End David and I were also able to take in the St Helen's park run. Our plans to also get Yeovil park run in on our way home were thwarted by our late arrival at Lands End on Friday night.

We did however, divert to Barry Island to take in the 10km race there and meet up with the lots of the Plodders who had a club coach trip to the event.

Eleanor Robinson

Chicago Marathon 2019

I have never had any inclination to visit America, but of course as soon as I realised, I had a qualifying time the Chicago Marathon, I couldn't resist entering!

Malcolm and me arrived in Chicago on the Wednesday evening before the marathon on the Sunday. On the Friday we visited the Expo to collect my race number but we only really stayed long enough to check the T-shirt was the right size because it was absolutely heaving! Before I knew it, Sunday morning had rolled around and it was time to head to start line!

We hopped on a train at 6am and headed to Grant Park with around 45,000 other runners. I had the obligatory half an hour wait for a disgusting portaloo (or portapotty if you're American!) and headed into my starting pen. It was 5 degrees in the morning so I was pretty close to frozen by the time we set off! Chicago has an earlier start than a lot of the other Major marathons, the gun went off for Mo and the elite runners at 7:30am and I crossed the start line at 7:45.

As many of you already know my training had been a bit of a disaster, my longest run was 15.5 miles and that was about 8 weeks before the marathon. I had several weeks of 0 miles in the lead up and some fairly major issues with my IT band which meant this was a "just get round in one piece" kind of run - there was no way I was not going to do it!



The first half went by fairly smoothly, I tried to control the pace, as I knew the lack of long runs was going to see me suffer later on. A guy running in Crocs and a barefoot runner who appeared to be wearing a bin bag passed me! I was also

tapped on the shoulder by a guy who said he was from Evesham and had recognised the Plum vest!

From about mile 18 I, started to struggle and mile 22 onwards was really hard work! There was a bitterly cold wind that appeared from nowhere at various points (they don't call Chicago, the Windy City for nothing!). I caught up with an Almost Athlete from Cheltenham and had a little chat with him, then in the last mile over took a Vegan runner from Sweden who told me to 'push on and finish strong'.

Right at the very finish there is a (little!) hill!! Luckily the wind was behind me and pushed me up the slope! Crossing the finish line was a massive relief; the finish area was lined with marshals, who continually congratulate you, which was brilliant! I was handed a beer- probably the best beer I have ever tasted! I managed to locate Malcolm fairly quickly and we headed to a nearby pub for more beer, a burger and a catch up with some friends of ours from Aberdeen who were also in town for the marathon.

Considering the lack of training I was really pleased with a sub-4hr time. I'm pretty sure it was my beautifully painted Plum nails that got me round! The crowds around the route and the atmosphere on marathon day are just amazing- I would totally recommend it to anyone thinking about it!



2 majors down, 4 to go...!

Kate Le Chevalier

Snowdonia Marathon

On a rather soggy Friday afternoon in late October, Ken Butler and myself drove to the darkest depths of North Wales to embark on a little jog around Snowdon.

First things first, we went to registration and collected bib numbers from a rather damp gazebo. Next to find the luxurious hotel. I do believe if we were Welsh then we may have had towels in the rooms!!

We ventured into Bangor to visit a few hostelryes and "carb up" on Guinness!

The morning of the run was the usual mix of nervousness, long queues for the toilet, trying to find a parking space, and general apprehension about whether enough training had been done... I knew in my case this was a definite NO. The previous few days of torrential rain meant that the off-road parts were going to be a bit slippery as well.

This was my fourth time for Snowdon but the first 5-mile incline always catches me out; it's not steep but feels never ending.

Onwards on a gentle 4-mile downhill stretch was a good place to get into the rhythm and chat with fellow runners.

It is such a friendly event with a mix of people from all around the world.

The halfway point came and went with a few more tricky inclines to negotiate but I was feeling relatively good.

Then the "beast" at mile 22 is a real bugger, I can only say it's like running up a two-mile Holloway in Persore only steeper.

I think I only saw one person trying to run it whilst the rest of us lazy 'runners' had a nice stroll.

Mile 24 is the best make shift Cafè serving well-earned sandwiches, tea, coffee and cake, I took the opportunity to rest for a while in a well-positioned deckchair before the 2 mile off road bit on stream descent.

It was a tricky run avoiding mud baths and fallen runners but the tarmac of Llanberis soon appeared.

I crossed the line in a respectful 4.30 ish, which I was really chuffed about.

The ballot is open on the 1st December for 2020... don't delay, give it a try!

Unfortunately, Ken couldn't run this year due to injury but never fear he will be there next year.... will you???

P.S.

Also, I am running the Uganda marathon in May next year and have been asked if I could take any old running shoes that you may like to donate, preferably clean.

They can be dropped at the Bell, Eckington or message me and I can collect.

Steve Leighfield

The Birmingham not quite Half Marathon

A punnet of Plums and Parkrun friends completed the Birmingham Half on Sunday 13th October, albeit only 11 miles! For some it was their first half marathon.

The weather forecast was for heavy rain so we all turned up prepared with our ponchos and bin bags. We made our way to our respective pens and that's when we were informed that due to flooding in Cannon Hill Park the route had to be cut short by a mile, so we now knew we would only be running 12 miles. Never mind at least we were still running after all our training we had done.

We were very lucky as just as we were starting the race the rain eased and we ended up with a pretty much dry race, unlike Oxford! There was plenty of support around the course, music playing, lots of water stations, it really was a very enjoyable race and even better because we were running with friends.



However, when we got to the 12-mile marker we quickly realised that the course had actually been cut short to 11 miles, slightly disappointing.

Everyone had a good run though and completed their fastest 11 miles. It wasn't until later that day that the press had released a statement saying that the route was actually cut short due to a suspicious vehicle in the Cannon Hill Park/Edgbaston area and the race organisers had been advised by the Police to divert away from there, after all safety comes first.

A good day was had by all; but this race was more special to me as I was running it in memory of my Dad for MacMillan and I raised over £500, he would have been very proud.



**Dawn Pound
Club Secretary**

Escape From Meriden

When I saw the description of Escape From Meriden, I thought the adventure sounded fun but entries sell out within a few hours of going on line and I missed a place. However undeterred I waited until a transfer became available and snapped it up.

It was then I started to realise that the logistics of completing a self-supported, self-navigated, 24hr race were not straight forward. We started planning in August, Julian and I went out most weekends, either walking or on bike, to recce a section of the planned route. I also explored the Gloucester Sharpness Canal during breaks at work and Will accompanied me when he was off school. My training plan was somewhat different to the usual, I didn't do many sessions over 10 miles but I did lots of back-to-back runs, body pump and effort sessions and also 2 training sessions in a day to get the body used to working while tired. Realising fuelling was going to be key; I'd eat just before and during a run to understand what I could eat while on the move. This form of training was actually quite enjoyable, there was no pressure and if running seemed too much I'd walk because, being the most dreadful walker ever, practicing to walk efficiently was also important

Everything had been planned meticulously; route, food, lights, comms, but then a few weeks before the race it rained and part of my route became impassable. Will and I went out and found a re-route but then it rained some more and so in the week leading up to The Escape I re-routed again. This was quite a handy distraction to how I was feeling as, even though I didn't tell anyone because I didn't want them to talk me out of it. I woke a few mornings that week scared and 'I don't want to do this'. Then came more rain the day before and the flooding got worse, I joined every Facebook Flood watch group I could find and kept looking, wondering, worrying what I was going to do should more parts of my route become under water.

Eventually though, I decided I needed to give up worrying, pulled my big girl pants on and got into 'bring it on mode', I was doing it whatever. This mode did however have to come with a promise to those around me that I would make sensible decisions if I came to any challenging points on the route.

I'd not really accounted for the midnight start and what it would be like, Friday was a normal day for me, I tried to take it as easy as possible, did a bit of work, shopped for last minute provisions, did the school run, cooked and made the final preparations. Will and Anya were given their instructions for the weekend and to their credit they were amazing. As they got themselves prepared to run with me the following day, I made it clear that I'd like them to run with me but only if they didn't complain as, I explained to them, I was going to be very tired and patience, let alone any parenting skills would be lacking, fortunately they chose not to take advantage of this.

So at 10pm on a dank, Friday evening Julian and I left for this crazy adventure. At registration I was handed my tracker and an orange jumpsuit, at which point I claimed I was not going to put it on, I did not want to look that stupid and how could you run in it anyway. But everyone else was putting theirs on and I realised that as I'd learnt to run/shuffle after food and a large cup of coffee, I

was probably capable of doing it in a boiler suit, and it would provide an extra layer in the rain and on the canal which would get cold. So, on the suit went and sure enough during that first night it did the job of keeping me warm and dryish. Soon about 120 orange boiler-suit clad people, some chained together, made their way up the road to the centre of England where an old stone cross and a rather festive Christmas tree stood ready for us to wait for the countdown. It was quite a strange moment as the countdown ended and everyone set off in all different directions.

The focus and concentration started immediately, I needed to follow my own route, set my own pace and not worry about anyone around me. A few of us set off down the road to Hampton-in-Arden – some went off real quick and by the time I reached Hampton there were only a few people around me but they all went straight on as I took a left to make my way down to The Grand Union Canal and all of a sudden I was on my own in the dark and I didn't see another runner for the next 24hrs.

It wasn't too bad but everything looked quite different to the daylight, I stopped a couple of times to check I was still going the right way and was glad to get on the canal towpath where I knew I couldn't go wrong – as long as I went the right way along the canal of course! Fortunately, I did just that, the path at this point wasn't too bad and it wasn't long before I met Julian coming the other way on his bike, now he thought I was crazy running along the canal in the dark, but riding a bike?! I didn't question it and was glad of his company and extra light for a few kilometres before we got to the van. A quick pitstop of banana and lights check and off I continued down the towpath. From here-on-in it got a bit more serious, there was mud, squelchy mud and waterlogged path, I suppose some must have run through it – someone got to Stratford 3hrs before me - but I felt it safer to walk through the tricky parts and kept plodding when I could until the junction with The Stratford Canal where I moved onto that.

There were parts of this towpath that were stony and runnable but there were a lot of muddy parts, which did have the advantage of making me, slow my pace. At one point I came to a fallen tree

blocking the way, I didn't want to turn back but remembering I had to be sensible I checked where the water was lying the other side and clambered through the branches and leaves as best (and safely) as I could.

The terrain was tough but with a bright moon, that first night running was very calm and quiet. Listening to a couple of podcasts distracted me for a couple of hours as I made my way to Stratford. The lights of Stratford were a welcome sight but I realised I was starting to get a bit dehydrated and wanted water (I only had my energy drink in my hydration pack). Fortunately I timed it just right and Morrisons was opening so, having discarded the convict's suit so as not to draw too much attention to myself, I bought a bottle of water from the garage and then this thought hit me that I could visit the toilet and sit on a proper loo. The main store was a few hundred yards out of my way but the luxury of the first of my three proper toilet stops was bliss. Keeping well hydrated was really important but it would mean lots of wee stops, I'm well used to 'wild wees' and finding a hedge wasn't too much of a problem to me, in fact on the second night while on the trails I didn't even bother to find a hedge, I just stopped, squatted and wee'd! The squatting bit got harder and harder as time went on, but Ant Middleton says you must focus on the positive and I decided that, even though it hurt, the stretching of my quads while squatting was doing some good.

While running down the Greenway towards Long Marston the light started to come up, I could see the floodwaters either side of me but the slightly higher path of the disused railway avoided any serious flooding, although there were some rather large puddles I had to run through. I did have a little chuckle as two runners came towards me, we reached either side of a big puddle at the same time and I just waded through, I was about to say 'morning' and that they'd meet a few more on their run when they promptly turned round and ran back the way they'd come from! Soon, Julian with a cup of tea in hand (for me) was a welcome sight that was only slightly squashed by the flooded road I was going to have to cross. He said he'd give me a lift through but I decided that this was cheating, and so wading through the cold icy water

I set off on my way to Honeybourne and then Wickhamford my next rendezvous point and the promise of bacon sandwiches.

The precision and attention-to-detail of my 'crew' – This seems to be the ultra-running term for your support - was a big factor in the distance I travelled. From the egg sandwiches (I find I crave egg, they're high in amino acids so I go with what my body is telling me) my Mum had prepared and cut into little squares which were just the right size to easily eat and fit into my vest pocket, to carrying a spare head torch (which came into action when my light failed). Julian had lights, batteries and comms ready when needed and there would be a cup of tea or coffee ready to drink so that I didn't have to wait for it to cool down and everyone said the right thing at the right time. Some people do this type of event on their own but for me my crew were crucial and it was truly a team effort.

Even though they were wet and swampy, I'd enjoyed the trails between Long Marston and Wickhamford, the sun had come out and I was feeling quite good but then I made the decision of taking the main road to Sedgeberrow as my route was extremely wet 2 months previous when we tried it out. The A46 was just awful, there was no footpath in parts and even though the verge was wide, it was unkempt with brambles making a constant trip hazard. The only safe thing to do was walk along here but even so my foot caught a bramble and I fell over, it was a quite innocuous fall and pride apart from anything else meant I bounced straight back up but just after the highways police came past on the other side of the road and had a good look. I did my best to look like I knew exactly what I was doing and as the footpath was not too far away they left me to carry on.

The whole main road thing was making me feel quite fed up and I suspect I didn't look too good as a cyclist passed me and asked if I was OK. I said I was fine and made the decision to get back on the trails to Ashton-under-Hill, as soon as I could. This of course led to crossing more waterlogged fields but that was infinitely better for me than the noisy, dangerous traffic on the road, and the wet fields meant that the bull that should've been in the field

was tucked up nice and warm in his barn. I met the farmer in the bull's field looking for his terrier, this was the first of 2 people I met looking for lost dogs, quite ironic as when I got home our own dog had run away and got lost (we have since found her).

As crossing flooded roads, waterlogged fields and sitting on a proper toilet for a rest had become the norm, the next few hours through Beckford and Aston-on-Carrant passed without incident and then at about 2:30pm I picked up Anya in Ashchurch to run with me for a few miles. She seemed excited to be running with me, told me how she'd prepared and chosen what she was wearing, and frequently updated me on her step count. She also took up this exuberant skipping, galloping style, which until we got into the muddy fields to slow her down, I found a bit off-putting for my metronome shuffle. I took a wrong turn with Anya and we had our own little adventure crossing bramble covered stiles and a rather rickety sleeper bridge and got shouted at as we tried to climb over a fence to get back on track. Somehow, we both managed to stay positive and with Anya still chatting away we eventually ran into Stoke Orchard where I did a swap and picked up Will.

I'm not sure if his ability to walk fast alongside my shuffle was more off-putting than Anya's skip and gallop but we kept plodding towards the bustling sounds of Gloucester. We were running along Hatherley Brook with the welcome sight of Gloucester Cathedral ahead of us when we saw a fireworks display. I'm sure they were just to welcome us as we approached Gloucester, they were a great distraction from the cold and wet but perhaps too much of a distraction as our natural path took us towards the fireworks rather than following the brook and after they'd finished I realised we'd gone the wrong way again. Fortunately, I could see the road so we climbed over a few more fences, with no one shouting at us this time as it was pitch black dark, and eventually got back on track.

Gloucester was very busy and noisy and I felt a little vulnerable, I was glad to have the accompaniment of Will who, despite that I am still able to beat him in an arm wrestle, is now a bit taller than me. It wasn't long before we got to

Sainsburys on the Gloucester Sharpness Canal to change my running partner to Dad and take on the final stretch of the 24hrs. It was here that we realised that the 60 mile As The Crow Flies medal was still a possibility so Dad and I set off at a brisk walk leaving Julian investigating the best possible route to go. Not far down the canal I had the message that it was going to be tight, we needed to get off the canal a few miles down and get onto the A38. As we came off the canal my legs were really hurting and there were a few tears but after a quick cup of tea some determination set in, I had about 2hrs to do 9 miles, if I could keep going there was a possibility, I'd make it.

I've travelled much of that part of the A38 between Hardwicke and Slimbridge plenty of times to and from work but on this Saturday evening it just seemed to go on forever. Julian was driving up and down updating us on my progress and when we were told that we had 90 mins to do about 7.5miles, Dad reluctantly got in the van and left me to push as hard as I could. I'm always fascinated by the power of hormones and at this point adrenaline must've really kicked in because suddenly my legs felt loose and I was running freely, it felt like I was running like the wind but I knew from experience that it was still quite slow. Adrenaline was working well but after 22.5 hrs of moving, the mental challenge was much tougher.

The landmarks I knew on the road just didn't seem to appear, I stopped a couple of times completely dejected but then Dad and Ju would appear and give me some encouragement and push me on. At about 4 miles it was still on if I kept pushing (mileage is approximate at this point because to be quite frank, technology was not giving the accurate measurement it always promises, my watch had long lost battery and it now looks like the tracker must've been sending data a bit behind me)

After 75+ miles, 4 miles at the pace I was trying to sustain was just hell, I kept stopping, walking and crying. It seemed that any promise of sensible decisions had long gone out of the window and the aim of 'my crew' was just to encourage me to continue shuffling and staggering down the A38. I've read other run reports about how they trust

their support to pull them out if medically necessary, but otherwise they will always encourage their runner to keep pushing and I was now in that realm, if Dad and Julian hadn't been there I'd have sat down on the grass verge well before the Slimbridge turn.

But push on I did even though I was longing to be told it was midnight and I could stop. When that time finally came, it was absolutely gutting to find that from the provisional data I was half a mile off the 60 mile as the crow flies mark. For the next few days, I had to keep reminding myself of the positives, I'd done somewhere around 80 miles in tough, wet conditions and 14hrs of dark and I'd achieved well past my goal.

The tracker got sent back on Monday and after all trackers had been analysed the results came out on Wednesday afternoon and there it was, I'd crossed the 60 miles ATCF line and had gained a gold medal and even though I was physically and mentally exhausted it helped just pick me up an extra bit.

It hasn't really sunk in yet what I have actually achieved, I still feel rather brain-dead, but what I do know is this race was 4 months in the making, and while I did the work in running it, the efforts of my crew – AKA my family - made this awesome adventure happen. I would not have been able to achieve what I did without the amount of preparation we all put in and how calmly it was all executed. There were hiccups through the 24hrs but we all just took them without fuss or drama and carried on.

Looking back, despite those hiccups I cannot believe how much like clockwork the run went. I was also amazed and humbled by the amount of 'remote' support I had, I didn't realise until the Sunday how many had followed my dot online and I'm truly grateful for this. Perhaps this goes to explain to some extent how the support of our running club really does go a long way to help you achieve the seemingly unachievable as 5 years ago, my goal as a new member of the Persnore Plum Plodders was to get round the first lap of Parkrun without being lapped. Some have called their Escape From Meriden life changing, I'm not

sure if mine is yet, time will tell, but it has been incredibly empowering and I hope sends a message that with some belief both from yourself and those around you, you really could achieve beyond your dreams.

Anny James

Hull Marathon 22nd September 2019 – 5h 30m Official Pacer

This is the fifth consecutive year I have completed the Hull Marathon. I think it's a very underrated marathon, and a tiny field of runners compete compared to the likes of Manchester or Liverpool, but in my opinion, it's one of the most friendly and enjoyable races you can do. The cut off time is 6 hours and this year I successfully applied to pace five and a half hours.

The day before the race I went to collect my pacing pack. No screwdriver was supplied and as it turned out, a needle and thread were also needed, as well as a large amount of common sense to put it together, luckily Mom and Dad were on hand with construction and sewing skills (the rucksack was way too big for me!) and we got it sorted.



Following the obligatory Carlisle-style marathon preparation of a few beers the night before, I got a

lift to the start line courtesy of the taxi of Mom and Dad (been a while since I caught one of those). They left me there and I soon clocked some firefighters I had seen the day before collecting their race numbers. I was immediately chuffed about this as I was worried, I wouldn't have much company for the duration and I figured surely firemen in full kit would be running around 5 and a half hours? I wandered over to the place where people seemed to be congregating and spotted Phil my partner in crime. He seemed to know everyone and had a very loud voice and it did cross my mind at that point that this might turn out to be the longest 5 and a half hours of my life to date!

And so, it turned out to be. The first few miles were fairly uneventful, having cleared the bridge within the first 3. It was pretty blustery on there which turned out to be significant as it goes, but more on that later. Phil and I got chatting and I kept on reminding him to slow down, the firemen were long gone by this stage with the 5-hour pacers and the pair of us were fairly lonely at the back apart from a few Jeffers (and plenty of efferes from Phil).



Soon after the bridge, Phil announces to everyone in the street, "I need the toilet in a minute and not in a good way if you get my meaning!" Quite what he was expecting me to do about it I don't know, but it seemed he felt better for sharing. After a few more yards, he approached a couple who had made the unfortunate mistake of standing in their front porch to cheer on the runners and asked if he could use their facilities. What the outcome of that was I'm not sure as I left him to it, calling over my shoulder, "catch me up, I'll see you later!"

At around the 5-mile mark was where I noticed something brushing the back of my legs and after a quick comedy swivel round discovered the flag pole had snapped in half and was hanging down the back. Phil was back in the game at this point and managed to pull it apart for me whilst still attached to my back and whilst still running along the road. I then had to carry all the various components, screws, poles, etc. to a safe place where I could release them (namely the next time I spotted my parents). Unfortunately, the backpack had to stay in situ as I had no other way of carrying my gels and food (and Phil's as it later turned out!) without the side pockets.

The next few miles were luckily fairly uneventful until we reached the City Centre and the Carlisle clan were once again spotted outside a watering hole – after all it had just turned 11am – so I joined them for some light refreshment and hydration.



It was around this time I caught up with James and walked with him for a bit as I was getting bored of Phil moaning about various things – the crap drummer at mile 10, the lack of toilets, etc. One of the great things about the 5-and-a-half-hour pace is that you can walk sections and easily get yourself back on pace again so you can actually chat to people and enjoy it. We started catching up with people who had fallen foul of the going off too

quickly scenario. James, it transpired, was only 18 years old and competing in his first marathon. He was tired but in good spirits and after giving him a gel, I left him and got back on track. The other great thing about a more sedate pace is that you get to play the role of the grim sweeper and as you pass people. You get groans and comments like, "oh no, you're the last person I wanted to see going past me" luckily, I had no flag so I blamed it on Phil and pretended he was doing all of the work when in reality it was me.

Around the 20-mile mark was where we really started to see some people suffering. The last 10k I pretty much walked alongside people for a bit, trying to raise their spirits, before running to catch up again. Phil didn't, he just kept on his merry way and did a fair bit of moaning to anyone who'd listen including me every time I caught him up. I was starting to wonder by this point why he wanted to be a pacer or even run a marathon at all in fact!

At mile 24 we overtook the 5-hour pacers, who were also suffering. After a quick chat with them I discovered they had failed to take on enough water and were really struggling. The firemen had also overtaken them by this point having kept with them for pretty much all of the race. In actual fact, by this point, I could just about seem them in front of me but frustratingly I had to stick to my pace and I couldn't catch them.

I literally had to drag Phil round the final 2 miles, especially the park at the end, which entailed having to pass the finish line before running round the perimeter. This pretty much finished him off and also me. I found myself snapping, "FFS Phil, look at your watch, we've only done 25 miles, surely you didn't think you'd be crossing the finish line yet? Don't let it get to you, it's messing with your head, just get on with it!" I'm not known for my sympathy I have to say but, in my defence, I had endured nearly 26 miles of it before I finally snapped.



As we approached the line, I was over the moon to see the clock was on 5.29.55, in fact I was gobsmacked! Job done! I gave Phil a quick hug (well, we had shared an 'experience' after all) and I quickly cleared off to get my goodie bag and wait for some of the runners I'd helped in the latter stages to cheer them across the line. I was delighted to see James about 15 minutes later crossing and getting a massive hug from his girlfriend, in fact I'm not ashamed to say that I cried.

And what of the firefighters? Despite crossing the line only, a couple of minutes before me, they were well and truly half way down a can of Strongbow by the time I finished...

I've said it before, and I'll say it again, you can do a lot worse than the Hull Marathon – entries for 2020 are now open.



Helen Carlisle

Guide Running with New College Students.

A few of the regular Plodders may have noticed that I have been missing from the Wednesday Plods and those that follow me will see that I am running on the track. During term time I help out with guide running with students from New College, the college for visually impaired students located on Whittington Road in Worcester.

Each Wednesday during term time a group of students join a group of guides to go for a run on the track organised by the Black Pear Joggers. The students we guide are aged 12 – 18, but usually around 15 years old. All guides have to be DBS cleared with New College and must hold the official UK Athletics Guide Running Licence. I currently guide with New College on alternate weeks.

Whilst they do sport at school, the running tends to be shorter distances, so on Wednesdays the aim is to get them to practice running further. They generally start with a walk or gentle run for a couple of laps and then some interval training often between running and walking followed by two or three continuous laps. Like most youngsters they often want to go off too fast but can't maintain the pace. There's also an efforts session, practicing different paces between cones or even skipping or jumping. Some of the lads aren't impressed about the skipping, but their co-ordination has improved. Skipping lessons included!

The students have varying degrees of visual impairment, some need to use a tether and others just need someone to help them stay out of danger of collision as they have restricted vision.

The students are encouraged to run at their guides pace, but sometimes get a little too enthusiastic and I struggle to keep up with them when they sprint during the effort's sessions. I get a good lung workout at times.

I always enjoy chatting with the students, most play musical instruments and tell me about other hobbies they have too. They tell me about the dinner they've had and the pudding, which always makes me feel hungry!

One day it would be good to get some of the students to Parkrun. Due to their age it would take some organising, but if it does happen, please come and say hello to them.

Guide running is very rewarding, I started running with Lee Greatbatch some years ago and I urge anyone to give it a go, even if it is walking. Lee is currently injured and would be grateful of a walk or slow run and will show you the ropes, so contact Lee if you are interested in giving it a go.

Ann Hewlett
