

Run Britannia. A journey from Land's End to John O' Groats

1. 'Darling, I've just heard about a race, and I was just wondering.....?'

If you're very lucky, sometimes life gives you a chance to do something amazing. You never know when that 'chance' will come along. When it does, is it a one-off, or like buses, is there another just around the corner? Nobody knows. So, if you can, grab every 'chance' you get.

My chance to do something amazing started with a Facebook post. Love it or hate it, social media (in one form or another) is how many of us hear about the latest news. For runners in particular, it's how we hear about races. The inaugural Land's End to John O'Groats Ultra Race (*Run Britannia*) came to my attention thanks to a certain Mr Steve Silver via the Ripon Runners Facebook page. Steve is a RR who seems to like suggesting events where his fellow members will suffer. A lot.



I generally get a gut feeling about races within the first 10 seconds of reading about them. If it grabs my attention, and my first thought is 'I WANT TO DO THAT', then that's usually it. I try to get an entry. If you overthink things, (the usual suspects: Can I do it? / Am I good enough? / It's too hard! / This is too scary, etc.), then you inevitably end up on the sofa, dot watching trackers of other runners disappearing off on fantastic, random adventures.

Don't get me wrong, there is a financial cost and time away from home and work, and a selfishness as well, to entering some events. Not all of us are lucky enough to have the spare cash, time and support from close family to do them. In short, you need a series of minor miracles to come together at once.

I genuinely appreciate that when the opportunity to enter Run Britannia came along, the stars had aligned that allowed me to 'GO FOT IT'. Honestly, I know how blessed and lucky I am to have had that opportunity. I think it's important to always acknowledge that. And as much as we might train hard, work hard, make things happen; let's face it, when life is good, it's mostly down to a huge amount of good luck!

2. 'The 3rd of June 2023, that's like ages away!'

So, on Friday 30th October 2020, with only 40 places available, online entries opened at 8pm. 80 minutes after opening, all 40 places had gone. I was in.

Only after the weekend, did I realise that I didn't have the insurance policy you could have opted for when entering. I made a quick call to Ratrace. Surely, I could just add this option, I mean, I only entered a few days ago? The answer, however, was 'no'. If it hadn't been selected when entering, then it couldn't be added now. We then tried to get independent insurance, but our broker could not find a company that supported this type of insurance. But I thought, "It'll be ok, it's 30 months away. What's the worst that could happen?"

Apparently, quite a lot can happen in 30 months. Covid restrictions can be lifted, then re-introduced, and then lifted again. We can go through three Prime Ministers. Even the monarchy changed. Personally, things were not quite right. In September 2021, I had a really bad headache. Jill took me to A&E. I was curled up on the hospital floor, hoping the pain would go, but it didn't. After a few hours in a cubicle, I was discharged as the pain had started to ease. Pain killers were needed for bad headaches, a scan wasn't (apparently).

Four months of headaches, some so bad I couldn't get out of bed on some mornings, and my hearing would suddenly go weird, making me feel like I was suddenly underwater. Two DNF's in races (one in the October 2021, the other January 2022), were my first ever DNF's in over 50 marathons and ultra marathons. I rang the GP as things were really bad, and I wanted a scan quickly. I would need to see my GP first, so an appointment was made, the next available one was 3 weeks away. One week in to waiting for the appointment, I jumped the NHS waiting queue, big time.

It was Friday afternoon, and I was driving to Masham from Ripon. On approaching the bridge that spans the river just before Masham, some temporary traffic lights were set up for bridge repairs. I had to slow down to a stop as they had just turned red. Then I started having a seizure. I don't remember any of it. Apparently, my car had gently veered on to a narrow grass embankment. Although my foot was hard on the accelerator at times, the car couldn't move due to it being stuck in the mud. A passing lorry coming the other way stopped. He could see from his elevated position I was having a seizure. Others helped smash the car window. I was laid out on the road, but the seizure was so violent I had to be restrained for almost an hour until the ambulance arrived. Eventually, I was taken to Darlington Hospital.

A scan revealed a blood clot. It was an old bleed, how old was impossible to say. But it was definitely there, and I wasn't going home until the neuro-surgeons at James Cook Hospital in Middlesbrough returned on Monday. I felt ok (ish) on the Saturday, so I dressed, went down 2 floors and met Jill for a coffee in reception (no visitors on the wards still due to covid). Same time, same place on the Sunday. The second time I didn't get to enjoy the coffee. Another seizure, this time witnessed by numerous doctors, meant I had to be restrained by up to 10 of them, until they managed to get me into an induced coma. On the Monday, I was transferred to James Cook, cameras inserted, scanned. No need to operate (phew!), and no other signs of another potential bleed (phew again). Eventually, after nearly 4 days later, I was brought out of the coma. I woke up sometime in the early hours of Thursday.

To get out of hospital, I had to walk, unaided, two lengths of the ward (the distance to the toilet). And eat and drink. Those 50+ marathons / ultras came in useful at last. Standing and then moving forward, then eating and drinking were the last things I wanted to do. But I'd managed to do these tasks when I'd been in worse conditions. The Hardwolds 80 in 2018, and Hardmoors 110 in 2016 spring to mind!!! and I'm sure there are many others. I managed The James Cook Ultra (all 10 metres of it), and was discharged on the Saturday.

Now home, I just had to start walking again. Getting upstairs without having to sit down twice was the first goal. Then walking outside, then start running, then get to Lands End in 16 months time.

3. Lands End & Week One

I was very lucky. The sub-dural hematoma hadn't killed me, and the blood clot hadn't either. The first seizure happened at traffic lights, not 5 minutes earlier at 60 mph on twisting roads. The second seizure didn't get me. I didn't need surgery. I recovered well. Ok, if I was a cat, probably half of my lives had been used up in less than 5 months.

But here I was on Thursday 1st June, on a train to Cornwall. I was picked up by another RB participant, Martyn, from Penzance train station; then driven to the Youth Hostel just outside Land End. It was hot, not English hot, but somewhere like Spain 'hot'. Over the Thursday evening, but mainly the Friday morning, 27 runners trickled into camp. 13 entrants hadn't made the start, a DNS of almost a third. Apparently, 1030 miles over 5 weeks is not considered the type of event to try and run off a few niggles. Who knew?

The first 5 to arrive were me, Martyn, Dave and brothers Robin & Stefan. We decided to walk the mile or so up to the stunningly beautiful village of St Just. Getting to know each other over coffees in the square, we started musing over how many of us will complete all 1030 miles. The test pilots who had recce'd the course in 2022, had a 3 out of 8 success rate for completing the whole of it. We threw numbers around, and came up 5 out of the 27 would make it. After week one, 5 looked very optimistic, but more of that later.

On the Friday night, James the race director, introduced himself and the crew, and then asked us to collect our RB T-Shirt and say a few words to introduce ourselves too. James then did what would become a familiar routine, the next day itinerary. This would comprise of:

- Issue GPX files
- Breakfast time
- If we needed to pack our main travel bag (when moving accommodation)
- Leave accommodation time / start running time
- Total mileage / elevation for the day
- Weather conditions / shoe choice
- Pit stop locations / distance
- Any other business

Regarding shoe choice, while some pondered over an Imelda Marcos (google her kids) amount of options, for me the shoe choice was easy, I was either going to wear my Inov8 210 X talons, or my other pair of Inov8 210 X talons.

Early on the morning of Saturday 3rd June 2023, the 27 runners plus crew all set off in 3 mini buses, and we were soon all congregating around the famous Land's End sign for selfies, group photos and the official Ratrace photos, taken by Leo.



Soon it was time to get running. With us all lined up, James gave the start signal, and off we went. For me, the relief was immense. All the worries of training too much, not training enough, wrong type of training, what should I pack, how will get there, can I do this, what have I done, were all gone. The immediate thought now was, 'Don't trip up in the first 200 yards'. That would have been bad, after all that training and waiting and expense, a twisted ankle after 200 yards and a DNF after 20 seconds. What would the neighbours say?



The South West Coastal Path was our friend for a lot of week one, and so was the heat. Every day was around 27 to 28 degrees, blue skies, not much shade. Just one morning, on Exmoor, had a cloudy, chilly feel to it. But within an hour, the sun had burnt off the cloud and the blue skies returned.

It didn't take long for the coastal path to start claiming victims. The first 2 days were less 'a gentle introduction', and more like 'straight into battle'. Day 1 was 33.5 miles with 3,796 foot of elevation, mainly off road. Day 2 was a bit harder 34.5 miles with 4,229 foot of elevation. Turned ankles, blisters, strained calf muscles, unhappy quads, the list was endless.



Seeing Nick at Pit Stop 1 on the second day was just one of many injuries. The amount of skin lost below his big toe (along with a scab on his knee from a bad trip), meant he was forced to sit out part of day 2. As you can see though, he never stopped smiling. A really nice, genuine man who was always positive. I took one look, and privately thought, "He ain't running again". He of course proved me wrong, bouncing back stronger than before over the next 4 weeks.



After Day 3, Stefan decided to set up 'The Marathon Club', which basically consisted of a few runners getting 'boosted' early in the day. For example, on a 36 mile day, the buses would drop everybody off, but then take Stefan and his gang 10 miles along the route, to complete 26.2 miles for the day. This would still be 31 marathons over 35 days, just over 800 miles. That was the really great thing about RB; if injury struck, it wasn't necessarily game over. You just adapted to the new parameters you'd set yourself.



For two though, (Bo and Kevin) it was game over. Bo started to struggle to even walk, eventually going home with a fractured bone in his foot. It was never going to heal, and everytime he even tried to walk, the condition just worsened. Kevin, from Australia, came down with covid, and called it a day. Eventually setting off back to Oz after a period locked up in a hotel room.





Week one was 7 days straight running, culminating in crossing the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol. As we crossed the 'Week One Finish Line', we drank and ate in the shadow of the bridge, and were then driven to the hotel for the first rest day. More importantly for me, Jill was visiting and staying the Friday & Saturday night. It was lovely to see her and catch up with everything outside the 'RB Bubble'.

We'd lost almost half the field from the chance of doing it all. It was only week 1 of 5. The St Just chat and estimate of 5 doing it all looked very optimistic

Week One Scoreboard:

27 starters / 14 completed all 241 miles / 2 withdrew from race / 25,525 foot of elevation

4. Week Two

After the rest day on the Saturday in Bristol (Day 8), we all set off on the Sunday for 6 consecutive days of covering an ultra marathon distance. I waved goodbye to Jill, knowing she would see me again in Wigan at the weekend. These regular visits from Jill really kept me going.

It's strange how man made structures and boundary lines made rules that acted as inspirational targets. One example was on day 9, as we ran across the Severn Bridge and entered Wales. It was a significant moment for me, and I think all of us. We were leaving England, and starting in a new country. Without realising it, I had broken the race down into 4 sections, South West England, Wales / England border, North West England, and finally Scotland. These moments were really special, and gave you chance to reflect on where you had come from to get there. It just seemed so impossibly far, to have left Lands End and then reached Wales on foot, even though I'd just done it.



It was almost inevitable on an event of this length, that one (or maybe several) day was going to break me. Well it turned out Day 12 was that day. For a couple of days before, I started to miss home, a lot. I was still enjoying the challenge, but on an evening, I spent more time alone, thinking of home. Thinking of just laying on the sofa with Lilly dog, watching TV with Jill, drinking coffee, relaxing, chatting.

Day 12 started steady, but there was no pick up in the pace after a few miles, the legs wouldn't work. But most worryingly, the mind was gone too. I've done enough long runs to know that when the head goes, the body always follows. The day was just over 41 miles long with 3133 foot of climb. So not a good day to have a complete mental meltdown. It was hot too, but that was just the norm by now. I was really blessed on this day to have Robin with me. Robin had studied psychology, so it was a like a free, in depth, therapy session while ticking off the miles. It would have cost thousands to have had this session privately 😊😊

For most of the time we gently jogged, but about 9 miles from the end, and just 2 miles from the last pit stop of the day, I persuaded Robin to run on and get an earlier finish. I'd decided I was pulling out at the next pit stop, and getting a lift to the end. I rang Jill to tell her my decision, and that when she came to see me at the weekend, I would be returning home with her. Bless Jill, despite telling me to keep going, how well I was doing, etc, none of it made a difference. She later explained that when she came off the phone she realised just how invested she was in the whole RB experience. She started panicking and crying, knowing that I just needed to get to the end of this day and everything would look different the next day. She realised I needed to be told the same thing, but by someone else. So unbeknown to me, she picked two people to ring me. She wisely chose Colm O'Cofaigh (a friend with a wealth of ultra running experience, who she knew I had the utmost respect for) and Kristie Taylor (my sports therapist – who she knows I'm slightly scared of), as her "phone a friend".

My phone rang twice, both times my brain and limbs wouldn't connect quickly enough to fish the phone out of my race vest and answer it, before it rang off! (What is it about modern phones that makes the 'swipe' to answer a call almost impossible at times?) The missed calls led to a voice message from the first, and then a text from the second.

The voicemail was from Colm and he left me a message with his soft, calming Irish accent that went something like:

"Matthew, it's Colm. I understand today is a tough one. You are doing amazing, it must be really hard right now, but I'm looking at the tracker and you're only 9 miles from the end. Just get to the last pit stop, sit down, eat and drink plenty and have a short break. There are others behind you, so you're no-where near last. Just hang in there, take care, and get today finished".

The text was from Kristie. It gave me an insight from a technical point of view of how we physically react to challenges:

*"Hi Matt, Jill's told me you're having a bad day. I just want you to know that this heat is a game changer to what you are doing. If your electrolytes are imbalanced you're most likely going to feel fatigued, weak, muscle spasms, tiredness, mood changes and general feelings of s***. Exhausted is an understatement. But it doesn't mean everyday is going to feel like this. Before you make any decisions, just hydrate and get some salts and get some food tonight. Once these levels are restored you can assess if it is that or if you've had too much exposure to heat. But hang in there for today mate. Get the medical team to check you over before you make any decisions".*

Two miles later I reached the last pit stop, in a pub car park! I used the pub's loo, and bought a pint of lime and soda with loads of ice, and drank it straight it down. Then I ordered another and drank that outside while having some fruit. As usual the Ratrace crew couldn't do enough for me. I re-read Kristie's text, listened again to Colm's message, and hauled myself up out of a chair. If I'd been a boxer, my corner would have thrown in the towel. Fortunately, my corner crew of Jill, Colm and Kristie couldn't see me struggling to get upright and start walking, so no towel appeared.

I started the long plod along the Llangollen Canal towards Ellesmere. It was flat, so should have been a relatively easy finish to the day, but apart from the odd bit of shuffling, it was a walk to the end. Eventually, the Ratrace flag could be seen at the end of the canal. A few hugs later from the

crew, then I laid down on the pavement. Completely exhausted, I ate the fruit and drank the oat milk offered, knowing I needed as much nutrition as possible. I took myself a few yards away from the crew and other finishers awaiting the last bus to the accommodation. A couple sitting on the next bench had a scruffy looking and very cute dog. I asked them his name, then mainly ignored them as I gave the dog a big cuddle. I started to feel better straight away.

Day 12 Scoreboard: 10 hours moving time, 11 hours from start to finish. A long day.

The last bus to the accommodation meant we had 20 minutes to book in, shower, dress and get back out for the bus to take us 20 minutes to the pub where we were eating that night. When you were one of the last back, it made a huge difference. Less time to relax, unpack, stretch, snooze, eat, drink, prepare for tomorrow.

The next day was indeed a new day. Although not 100%, my mood was better, and although the day was only 3 miles shorter than Day 12, I finished it 2.5 hours quicker. I was back in the game, and never had another meltdown. Tough times, yes; but not another "I'm out" moment.

Towards the end of Week 2 we re-entered England. Thanks for coming Wales, you were a right laugh. Jill was again waiting for me, and I think she was surprised by how good my mood was, given the phone call of only 48 hours ago. She'd tried desperately to book a hotel for the Wednesday night, and was now relieved that everywhere was fully booked, as she realised it would probably have been a wasted journey. She warned me to expect other days like 'Day Twelve' – and to remember that I'd pushed through. Thankfully, like I said, it never happened.

Week Two Scoreboard:

25 starters / Same 14 completed all 224 miles / 18,904 foot of elevation

5. Week Three

Week 3 was really special for me personally. We stayed in Kendal for 2 nights and Carlisle for 3 nights. On day 19 we went over High Street and ran along the ridge between Ullswater and Haweswater. At this point, if someone had taken my phone and garmin from me and said "run back to Ripon from here" I could have done. Although I was about 100 miles from home, I felt like I was on home soil. This was my backyard; I felt safe, and this relaxed me. At the end of this day, a nice reminder of home arrived in Steve and Lynn Silver. Although only a short stop and catch up, it was much appreciated. To take time out of their holiday to see a sweaty mess was much appreciated.



The other great thing about Week 3 was that because it was closer to home, Jill would arrive a few times throughout the week, just for an hour or two, but with Lilly Dog as well. This gave me a great boost. With Jill also coming out to see me the following weekend, I think the Ratrace crew started to count Jill as one of the entrants, as she was spending as much time in the Pit Stops as me.

Week 3 was also the day (Day 20) we crossed the border into Scotland. Ratrace stationed a Pit Stop on the 'Welcome to Scotland' sign, and we all congregated at the adjacent cafe. Ratrace had a bagpiper playing, and each runner was cheered in to Scotland by the crew and runners who had arrived earlier. It was a wonderful sunny day, perfect. You can never recreate those moments. They are so special, that all the pain is forgotten, and the whole team comes together as one. Nick was the last runner in, and we are lined both sides of the path and gave him a hero's welcome.

That night, after James had given the next day's itinerary speech, James asked the group if there were any questions. The usual footwear question was asked, then Nick raised his hand. This was very unusual, as Nick just quietly got on with things. "Yes Nick?" said James. Nick replied, "I just wanted to say thank you to everyone for the welcome I received for crossing into Scotland, it was the best day of my life". You could hear a pin drop, then a few of us suddenly developed watery eye syndrome. Coming from a truly lovely and honest man, it's a moment that stood out for me above all others.

Another Jill visit at the end of the week cemented her place as 'Best Support Spouse of RB 2023'.

Week Three Scoreboard:

25 starters / Same 14 completed all 174 miles / 10,354 foot of elevation

6. Week Four

Jill and I were joined by RR's Tom Hodson and Lee Ann Swires to start off the new running week. Jill turned back after 5 miles, but Tom stayed with me for 20+ miles, then Lee Ann took over 'looking after Matt' duties for the last 10 miles. The day went quickly due to the new faces, chatting away about all sorts of stuff. I really appreciated the effort to travel all that way, just to jog along with me. Thank you so much guys.

By now the nightly accommodation had been a good mix of either twin rooms or dorms of 4 to 6. The best nights were if you were staying the same place for more than one night. This meant you didn't have to pack your large travel bag, you could just leave it in your room, all ready for your return later that day.

We also got to share with the same people. I think James was of the opinion "if it aint broke, don't fix it". So, I ended up sharing a twin room with Karim most times. By Week four we were like an old married couple, (without the arguing)! I would usually arrive back first and shower, clean the shower down, make a peppermint tea, then relax on the bed. When Karim arrived, we would share a quick chat while I made him his peppermint tea, then leave him to shower and relax while I joined the others outside.

This was the week where we ran through Glasgow City Centre, then over the next days had the complete contrast of completing all 95 miles of the West Highland Way over 3 days. This was the great thing about RB, it was just completely different from day to day. A swim in a loch at the end of day 25 was amazing. We finished the week by circling around Ben Nevis, and then on to Fort Augustus. The scenery was mind blowing. A few photos will confirm this.





Week Four Scoreboard:

25 starters / Same 14 completed all 192 miles / 17,470 foot of elevation

7. Week Five

Week 5, for me, was the best. To be so far north, and still have 200 miles of mainland Scotland to go seemed mad. Scotland was turning out to be bigger than we ever imagined. The terrain was rugged, sometimes boggy, plenty of off-road trails. Just a pleasure to be there and run on. The best.





The highlands of Scotland presented a beautiful backdrop to all of those ‘this is the end’ conversations we were having with each other. It seemed like John O Groats was literally just around the corner, even though it was actually still quite far away.

Leaving Fort Augustus on the Sunday was the start of the end. This was our last Sunday together, tomorrow would be our last Monday together. Wednesday was the last time our baggage would be transferred. The next time we would wheel those bags out of a hotel, it would be on to planes, trains and automobiles; all taking us back to different parts of the UK, Canada, USA and Australia.

It was a week long goodbye. One that started with me picking up my first injury. I ended up walking between Pit Stop 2 and 3 on the Sunday. With the physio doing an excellent job of taping my sore ankle, I was able to walk pain free, then jog the last 5 miles to end the day.

That night, Dave and I were sharing a room (maybe Karim wanted coffee rather than peppermint tea?). He had his left foot elevated with an ice pack on it, while I was in a similar position on my bed, but with my right foot elevated. Dave chatted away, then took a call from a friend, the conversation went:

“It’s my foot. It’s not too bad, Matt, my room mate is here, and he is icing his foot too. But we’ve just looked at tomorrow’s route, and it’s only 31 miles with 2500 foot of climb. We will be ok.”

Yes, right Dave! Just 31 miles. What Dave didn’t tell his friend was although Monday was only 31 miles, Tuesday was 38 miles, Wednesday was 38.5 miles, and Thursday was 35 miles. But Friday was only 28 miles, so that’s ok!!!!!! But it seemed perfectly normal to be talking like this now.

Repeat strapping every morning for the last 5 days ensured I didn’t encounter any more pain. Ross the physio was a miracle worker.

The last week is a bit of blur, but seeing Jill at the end of the Thursday, was unbelievable. To have her there to enjoy the whole of the last day was really special. The Friday morning was so weird, a nervous energy mixed with so much happiness, all mixed with a party atmosphere. At 6am!

This was the day we hadn't even dared to dream of. The plan from James was brilliant. We would all set off, but with one huge pit stop at 20 miles, where we would all regroup. Once everybody had enjoyed their lunch, we ran the last 9 miles at our own pace, ensuring a steady stream of finishers, not too far spread out.



Finally, after rounding the far north eastern tip on Scottish mainland, we headed west for a mile to John O Groats. The Ratace flags and finish line were all set up for us, bagpipes played, glasses of champagne were handed over as you crossed the finish line. I hugged Jill. It was all over. We applauded those over the line who finished behind after me, while congratulating those who had already finished. Then we relaxed under glorious sunny skies, sitting on the grass and looking over the sea to the Orkney Islands. A perfect end.

Week Five Scoreboard:

25 starters / Same 14 completed all 205 miles / 14,163 foot of elevation

7. The End, what I learnt.....and what's next?

First of all, thank you. Thank you to James (Race Director), Jools and Jaqces (main support crew) and all the other support crew members, physios, admin support etc. This was an epic race, with an epic amount of effort to organise it. Thank you to the 26 who accompanied me, I will never forget a single one you. Thanks to Jill & Lilly Dog for the endless amount of time spent driving around the UK to spend a few hours with me. And thank you to Colm, Kristie, Tom, Lee Ann and all the others who sent messages of support. I felt like you were there with me.



On reflection, I learnt that I definitely got stronger as the weeks went by. To fast runners it might not sound great, but on Day 32 I managed to do the first 26.2 miles in sub 5 hours. This marathon included two pit stops, and over 1,000 foot of elevation. So, I was getting stronger not weaker. How long until the body packed up? I'm not sure, but I felt good on the finish line.

And another thing, you only need one pair of trainers for RB. My spare x-talons never came out of the bag, I managed all 1030 miles in the same pair. And I had done about 150 miles to break them in before RB. Don't believe all that marketing rubbish about changing trainers every 300 miles!





As for day-to-day life, it was a strange experience not working for 6 weeks. Having averaged only 2 to 3 weeks holiday a year for the last 20 years (and most of those ‘holidays’ would be punctuated by responding to emails / phone calls on a daily basis), Jill had my work mobile for the duration of RB. So she looked after everything on the business side. In fact, the only way I could justify (in my mind) taking 6 weeks off work was that I reckoned I was ‘owed’ 40 weeks holiday from the past 20 years.



Returning home, quite a few people said, “that’s the most amazing achievement ever”, shortly followed by “so, what’s next?”.

To the, “that’s the most amazing achievement ever” statement, I sometimes thought “so does running the length of the UK make me the best ultra-runner in the area”? Well, no, it doesn’t. To paraphrase John Lennon, who was once asked if Ringo Starr was the best drummer in the world, he replied, “Ringo Starr isn’t the best drummer in the Beatles”. Considering I’m married to Jill and my brother-in-law is Dave Allen, I would say, “Am I the best ultra-runner in the area? I’m not even the best ultra runner in my family”.

Don’t get me wrong, I think it’s a huge achievement, but with ultra distance events, every one of them is different. They all usually push you to somewhere near your limits, and sometimes beyond what you thought those limits were. But every event is different in so many ways. You just never really know when a good patch or a bad patch is coming. You just manage the best you can.

Although crucially important, the toughness of events cannot be judged by distance, elevation, weather, conditions underfoot, support, etc. I think it’s more a case of “how deep did I have to go to get to that finish line”. And that doesn’t always correlate to any of the points mentioned above. The ‘toughness’ is usually (or maybe always) judged by what is going on in your head.

As for “what’s next?” That was a hard one. For months, I would look at races and just wouldn’t feel the urge or the need to go and do them. So, I just ran for fun, when I wanted to, for as far as I wanted to. Since then, I’ve done a few events, and really enjoyed them. Here’s hoping to many more.

For the record: The grand totals were 1036 miles with 86,146 foot of elevation

