

The Tunnel Ultra 200 (by Cockbain Events) - 28 February 2025



“You’re not doing that again”, was what I commonly heard when I said I was going back to try to complete this challenge. I first took the challenge in March 2019, to me it was the ideal way to run 200 miles. Laps of Coombe Down Tunnel, 1 mile each way 200 times through the tunnel. No navigation, weather not an issue (it actually does make a difference), always close to my kit. That attempt ended at 73 out and back laps. Exhaustion finished my race when I fell asleep standing up in the middle of the tunnel. I was so close, I needed to go back.





In 2021, because of Covid the race was moved to September. I had trained lots of road running through Covid restrictions and felt training was going well.

I was at another event in June when I was charged and trampled by a cow, this stopped my training in its tracks and I spent the next few weeks recovering enough to be able to even run again.

I decided to go and see how I got on, the accommodation and event were both paid for with no refunds, so I may as well. This time I struggled with pain in my left leg, by 50 laps I was in agony and decided to call it a day.

At a later date I found out that my left leg had been broken in the cow incident. No wonder it hurt.

In March 2023 I planned to have another go. In August 2022, due to ongoing vision issues a trauma cataract was found in my left eye and I was put on a waiting list for a cataract replacement operation, that came through for 1 Feb 2023.

Following the op I was not allowed to run for a month so I walked loads. I could see better but had some issues still. The main one was halos in my vision in low light. This made the tunnel difficult as it had low lighting. This was tiring for my brain to cope with, I was managing my leg pain but not the vision issues, then at 51 laps 20 minutes before the 50 mile cut off time, I convinced myself that I did not have enough time to continue, handed in my chip and quit.

At this time I was never going back. I was managing my leg pain but there was nothing I could do about the lighting. By May 2023, the opticians had made my vision more balanced.



In March 2024 I enviously spent 55 hours tracking friends and strangers who were tackling The Tunnel Ultra 200.

Later, one repeat competitor told me that the lighting had been upgraded. I discussed it with Billy and we went to Bath to check this out. It was true, brighter lighting and my better balanced vision allowed me to believe that after 6 years I could take on the massive challenge again.



Old lights



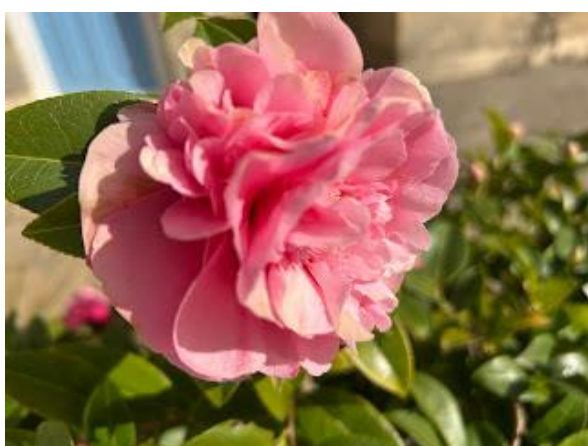
New lights

So, on Thursday 27 February 2025 Billy collected me from work and we headed for Bath. We had booked a cottage as close as we could get to the Southern entrance to Coombe Down Tunnel. Sadly, the house was not as clean as we would have expected and too much time was spent at gone 9 pm chasing flies from the bedroom and messaging the vendor.

Friday 28th dawned a beautiful day.



I prepared my kit, re jiggering my 60 litre box time and again to get everything in, had lunch and we drove to the Hope and Anchor at Midford for the walk to the start. At least it was not pouring down like 2023.





From the race instructions:

The tunnels can be accessed from Bath and you will need to walk through the short and long tunnels to reach the start. The path is called the Two Tunnels Greenway path.

There is NO car access. Whichever way you come you will need to walk a few miles to the start so bear this in mind when planning a drop bag/box.

If coming from the SOUTH, the nearest drop off point is the Hope and Anchor pub Midford, Midford Road, BATH BA27DD. You can then walk around a mile north up the Two Tunnels Greenway path to the start. DO NOT PARK AT THE PUB OR BLOCK THE GATE TO THE PATH.

We will start at exactly 3:30 PM on Friday 28th Feb. Registration is 2-3pm at the start. GIVE YOURSELF PLENTY OF TRAVEL TIME TO GET TO THE START. IT CAN TAKE HOURS TO DRIVE A FEW MILES IN BATH, ESPECIALLY ON A FRIDAY. TAKE THE TRAIN.

You will be given a number and timing 'chip'. You cross the timing mat at each end of the tunnel and your distance will be accumulated. Your distance will be updated which can be viewed remotely. A link will be added to the Cockbain Events group on the day. Do not ask us how far you have covered, unless you are still running by late Sunda afternoon.

This a low-key event. We will provide water, basic snacks and a toilet. We will try to provide hot water when possible.

There are no baggage/items allowed in the tunnel and walking sticks/support/pacers/headphones of any type are banned. There are NO OBSERVERS/SPECTATORS allowed, please tell your family/friends to stay away from the Tunnel. You can put ONE medium/large waterproof bag OR ONE medium/large plastic box ONLY along the outside of the tunnel (we accept no responsibility for personal items). There is NO personal baggage storage or secure area, and space is limited. NO TENTS, NO LARGE SEATS. Small, folded seats can be used that stay folded while you run. Trolleys must be minimal and folded during the race to maximise space. KEEP ALL ITEMS OFF THE PUBLIC PATH

Note The Tunnel is open to the public during the entire event. I do not expect many to use it during the night, but we will get bikes coming through fast during the day. You MUST wear Hi Viz. You should always be aware of your surroundings, which means again absolutely NO headphones and be courteous to the public. The tunnel will be pitch black from 11pm through to 5am every night, so a good torch is a must.

This is NOT a 'see how far you can go in 55 hours' event. If you have not covered 100 miles in HALF of the total allotted time (27.5) hours you will be forced to retire.



Walking past the castle, it was lovely to see the donkeys in the field, last time I saw them they were sheltering from pouring rain under the tree, today they were enjoying the sunshine.



The donkeys followed along the edge of the field and then found a gap though and came to the fence to see us.

We crossed the viaduct over the fishing pond at Trucking Mill.



We were soon at the event set up, a gazebo over a picnic bench and a portable toilet. There was a lot of standing water and the portable loo was standing in a puddle.

Time to find a place to put my box and chair. I had planned to leave my dry robe over my box, but decided to leave it in its bag behind my box as it was not taking any space. I placed my kit by the CCTV pole as it was a good marker to aim for when tired. I had a catch up with other competitors and went to register.



I had decided to wear my running dress so that I had somewhere to pin my number, I did not want to put pins through my Ronhill gortex running leggings or my Proviz run jacket.

Time to rest as much as possible before the start at 15:30.

I was going to wear my Salomon run vest so that I did not have to come out of the tunnel too often, I had sandwiches, crisps, drinks, bells, spare hat and gloves and a warm layer in it.



*Ready to go. Time for
race brief*

*34 of us were lined up along the
side of the path.*

I managed 1 lap before I needed to leave the tunnel to negotiate the puddle for a loo visit.

From there I set off conservatively but felt I was going a bit quickly, I checked my watch and noticed my heart rate was a bit higher than I would have liked so slowed a bit more.

You can't pace in the tunnel because there are no satellite signals so I had time of day, race time and heart rate on my watch face.

I settled into a steady run and a walk at each end. The tunnel felt uphill on the way out and downhill on the way back.



It didn't take long for my leg to start hurting, I aimed for managing the pain with an occasional paracetamol but did not want to start until at least after a marathon.

Time has no real meaning in the tunnel, 1700 meters out and 1700 meters back. On previous years there was a sound installation in the centre third of the tunnel which I had always used to tell where I was now I had to use the markers every 100 meters on the floor.

The light changed at the ends of the tunnel as we entered the first night. There we're less cyclists and other pedestrians in the tunnel now. Everyone was running their own plan, the single file rule made conversation limited, I could just hear the rhythmic pitter patter of runner's feet. I missed that annoying screechy music.

At 11 pm the lights went out. Head torches were on and now there were no members of public in the tunnel, just the runners.



The Tunnel looks bigger by head torch.



It was a bright starry night in the outside world.

Eventually the light changed at the ends of the tunnel



Day 2 was just more of the same, around 30 laps I felt a blister pop, disappointing as I had thought I had got away so far without blisters. I went out to sort it out. Removing my socks revealed 4/10 toes blistered. I raked in my box for my foot kit and settled down to wrap my toes and change my injinji toe socks for a thinner version and some dry max socks on top and then put my bigger pair of Brooks Ghost Max, (donated by Billy) on. Feet cosy again, back to it, the laps felt like they were taking longer, they were, I was walking a little more, but walking fast.

I was now struggling to stay awake. A familiar issue but I was not expecting it to be so soon, I normally get around 36 miles into an ultra before the sleep monster battle.

The tunnel was warmer at the north end, at the south entrance where our kit was it was freezing. I went and sat in my chair with my feet on my box and covered myself in my dry robe. I closed my eyes and stilled my brain for a few minutes before stuffing my dry robe back in its bag and folding my chair back up before heading back into the tunnel.

Before long I was struggling again, I went back and repeated my brain stilling routine, it was even colder. After packing my kit back up I went to the support tent for coffee. Hopefully a hot drink would help, caffeine gels were making no difference. Time was ticking and I was struggling, my feet hurt and I was so tired. I thought cut off was 6 pm but I was slogging it out. Finally, I had 10 + miles to do in 2 hours.

It was not going to be possible, I might make 47 or 48 laps. Then I re-worked out the times. I had till 7pm. I might make it. But could I do it all again. I needed to sleep more than anything and that would make the next 50 laps impossible. If I slept I wouldn't have time, If I didn't sleep I would not be able to continue anyway.

Me and The Tunnel Ultra were over once and for all. I am no longer fast enough to complete this challenge.

Billy came to take me home. I was so cold, I could not get warm, I had my warm top on, warmer gloves and my dry robe. I handed back my chip.





I had completed 50 laps (170 km) in 27 hours 33 minutes 46 seconds still a feat of endurance to be proud of.




[Chip Timing](#)
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The Tunnel Ultra 2025

[Registration](#)
[Participants](#)
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Position *	Name *	Lap Count *	Distance *	Avg Lap *	Last Seen *	Time *	
5	Giacomo Squintani	76	152 miles	29:01	Home End	36:45:05	☆
6	Christian Mauduit	75	151 miles	29:20	Far End	36:56:40	☆
7	Adrian Martin	75	150 miles	29:03	Home End	36:17:12	☆
8	Tom Hayward	71	142 miles	31:09	Home End	36:50:51	☆
9	Julius Iannitti	70	141 miles	31:17	Far End	36:47:35	☆
10	Kendra Wedgwood	69	139 miles	31:34	Far End	36:45:28	☆
11	Karl Baxter	68	136 miles	31:55	Home End	36:09:33	☆
12	Agnieszka Kaminska	66	133 miles	33:18	Far End	36:57:29	☆
13	Martin Heggie	61	122 miles	35:55	Home End	36:30:28	☆
14	Polly Wells	56	112 miles	36:46	Home End	34:17:50	☆
DNF	Colin Scarle	66	132 miles	30:25	Home End	33:27:06	☆
DNF	Stu Wilkie	54	108 miles	31:52	Home End	28:40:00	☆
DNF	Michael Thomas	51	102 miles	31:59	Home End	27:10:21	☆
DNF	Stephen Redfern	50	100 miles	30:57	Home End	25:47:15	☆
DNF	Stuart Shipley	50	100 miles	32:26	Home End	27:00:53	☆
DNF	Helena Conlin	50	100 miles	33:05	Home End	27:33:46	☆
DNF	Elizabeth Hilton	46	92 miles	35:19	Home End	27:03:44	☆
DNF	Andy Nesbit	45	90 miles	34:51	Home End	26:07:50	☆
DNF	Grant Grego	44	88 miles	33:50	Home End	24:48:18	☆
DNF	Tom Marsh	43	86 miles	33:27	Home End	23:58:04	☆
DNF	Johnny Breen	42	84 miles	31:17	Home End	21:53:42	☆
DNF	James Parsons	36	72 miles	25:12	Home End	15:06:48	☆
DNF	Vanessa Kellie	35	70 miles	39:07	Home End	22:48:34	☆
DNF	Mark Le Huray	34	68 miles	31:02	Home End	17:34:45	☆
DNF	Vic Owens	33	66 miles	26:38	Home End	14:38:35	☆
DNF	Danny Cunnett	32	64 miles	27:46	Home End	14:48:15	☆
DNF	Ianvill Elliot York	30	60 miles	32:10	Home End	16:04:26	☆

Result Details						
	Lap	Lap Time	Out Leg	Return Leg		
	1	23:14	11:36	11:39		
	2	27:16	14:57	12:19		
	3	24:42	12:40	12:02		
	4	24:45	12:46	11:59		
	5	25:05	12:51	12:14		
	6	27:19	13:37	13:42		
	7	27:42	13:59	13:44		
	8	25:43	13:47	11:57		
	9	25:15	12:51	12:24		
	10	29:57	18:33	11:25		
	11	26:32	12:59	13:33		
	12	27:11	13:41	13:30		
	13	30:09	14:47	15:23		
	14	31:24	16:57	14:28		
	15	36:30	23:13	13:18		
	16	27:19	13:49	13:31		
	17	28:54	15:41	13:14		
	18	36:13	21:00	15:14		
	19	29:36	14:44	14:53		
	20	30:13	15:02	15:12		
	21	30:35	14:49	15:46		
	22	29:49	15:19	14:31		
	23	47:03	33:45	13:18		
	24	34:05	19:18	14:47		
	25	30:36	15:56	14:40		
	26	36:47	20:59	15:49		
	27	35:48	18:03	17:45		
	28	44:24	31:01	13:24		
	29	32:09	16:39	15:30		
	30	28:54	14:34	14:21		
	31	27:25	13:39	13:47		
	32	32:54	17:29	15:25		
	33	41:46	28:16	13:30		
	34	34:05	20:24	13:42		
	Michael Thomas		51	102 miles	31:59	Home End 27:10:21
	Stephen Redfern		50	100 miles	30:57	Home End 25:47:15
	34	34:05	20:24	13:42		
	35	32:48	17:20	15:28		
	36	32:12	16:55	15:18		
	37	35:41	19:58	15:44		
	38	55:43	39:24	16:20		
	39	36:46	20:10	16:37		
	40	35:15	20:52	14:23		
	41	34:20	16:23	17:58		
	42	36:15	19:33	16:42		
	43	39:58	19:43	20:15		
	44	36:20	18:13	18:07		
	45	37:29	21:02	16:27		
	46	34:04	16:37	17:27		
	47	38:01	19:04	18:58		
	48	38:29	19:18	19:12		
	49	38:46	22:00	16:46		
	50	40:55	19:55	21:01		
	Michael Thomas		51	102 miles	31:59	



On the way home in the car we decided to get fish and chips for tea, I chose just chips. I began to feel unwell whilst Billy was in the chip shop but we were minutes from our accommodation.

I struggled to the house and had to have a little rest, before cleaning up, having my chips and sleep, the long-awaited sleep.

I did still wake at 3 am as I have done since forever, I checked the tracker for those still running. I did get back to sleep though.

I awoke stiff and sore but with a bit of practise my legs remembered how to walk. My ankles were so stiff and the blisters pulsating on my toes.

We decided to go home a day early. I spent the rest of the day tracking the runners. 7/34 finished the 100 laps in under 55 hours.

Alex had been running consistently for the whole event and thoroughly deserved the win, First female winner and new course record too.

The Tunnel Ultra 2025						
Position	Name	Lap Count	Distance	Avg Lap	Last Seen	Time
1	Alex Marshall	100	200 miles	24:47	Home End	41:16:43
2	Colin Crowhurst	100	200 miles	28:50	Home End	48:02:08
3	Adrian Martin	100	200 miles	30:00	Home End	49:57:58
4	Christian Mauduit	100	200 miles	30:31	Home End	50:51:04
5	Hem Rana	100	200 miles	31:04	Home End	51:46:26
6	Tom Hayward	100	200 miles	32:27	Home End	54:03:51
7	Kendra Wedgwood	100	200 miles	32:48	Home End	54:39:44

Thanks to Mark Cockbain for coming up with the challenge and for Matt and Karen for timing over the years.

Thanks to my fellow tunnellers over the years for your support and thanks to friends and family for support.

Thank you most of all to Billy for putting your life on hold to support my 4 tunnel attempts. For supporting my training and tolerating my crazy ideas.

I am now do feel that I never need attempt The Tunnel Ultra 200 ever again.

Helena Conlin