

Saxon shore trails Thames 60

We woke to a wet & misty morning, at 7am we waved the 100 milers off, & set off on a coach for gravesend pier, the views were non existent due to the fog but we set off within a few miles we found ourselves in a stone yard which was a dead end, hmm lost already, eventually we found a guy on a forklift truck who pointed at the smallest path in the world which was covered in the biggest blackberries in the world, we set off again & eventually found the first checkpoint, apparently everyone had gone wrong.

After grabbing food & a quick drink we set off again, the next section was a lot greener, & even a bit of woodland, i came into the checkpoint feeling really tired, this wasn't good, I never feel tired after 17 miles. Refuelled on haribo & coke & set off in the vague direction of Gillingham.

The next aid station was further along than we expected, & this was the first bit of coastal path we had seen, the aid station guy was practically hyperthermic, for some reason he had been given a race t shirt to wear so hadn't got his coat on, we assured him we were last & he could sit in his car for a couple of hours until the 100 milers started to come through, we all put our coats on here as the rain had definitely gotten heavier.

Running through Gillingham town centre was interesting, the market traders all geered us although we ran along the coast for a while again & over a bridge towards Rochester castle & church which were nice. & made up for Gillingham but we still kept getting lost.

The aid station at upchurch was the halfway point & boasted it had hot food, as we ran along the road through a little village we were all getting very excited at the prospect of food, & were saying silly things like we thought there would be massages & hot tubs etc. when we rounded the corner we saw a van with a

camping stove in the back, we all huddled under the overhang of the locked village hall & drank spaghetti in orange water feeling very depressed.

The next section was through fields & pear tree orchards, eventually onto a road, we could see the biggest flyover & a chap who had shot off at the beginning was walking along the road, which spurred us on a bit, our group had disbanded at the last aid station & we had seen the others a little way in front. The aid station was just a table with water under the flyover, this had to be the most depressing aid station ever, partly because this was as far as I had ever run before. I knew anything now was unknown territory. The guy said he was pulling out, which spurred us on, I looked at my pal & we cheerily set off round the corner...this was where it really started.

We flew along the grass verge past paper mills & sewerage works & gas stations, we both commented on how great we felt, we even dared mention the rain might be easing off a bit...

We carried on like this for sometime until we reached a bridge at sittingborne the bridge took us into the middle of an industrial estate, we we lost again. The light was starting to go & we were against the clock, we stopped at a roundabout & got a phone out, we were going to have to use gps. We could see the wooded area we needed to be in but no way of getting there, eventually we set off & found a path ankle deep in water which went past so e gypsy caravans & lots of disused electrical items, into the woods, we were off. We eventually came onto a grassy verge with water on one side & mud flats on the other, it wasn't quite wide enough to run side by side, so I trundled on behind singing random queen songs in my head (no idea why) the verge twisted & turned & we tried guessing where the lights in the distance were. Eventually we came to a marina, we ran along side it for another mile, which was eery, as we could hear the boats rocking & their bells but it was too dark to

see them. Eventually we came to the road & a guy with his car boot open & full of cake & haribo. We asked if we were ok to carry on & he said the winners had been 3 hours later than expected due to weather & navigation issues so we were fine. (thank god it wasn't just me then)

& we ran out of the 47 mile aid station feeling really good, we ran through a field for about 10k & again found a car boot of goodies, my friend asked if we were ok to keep going & the guy looked at us as though we were mad & said do you want to? I said I've got 6 miles to go, I'm not giving up now, grabbed some chocolate cake & set off running.

Oare to eastling was a doddle compared to the rest of it, we ran along the road & the last couple of miles were uphill but the rain had actually stopped & it was quite a nice night, we chatted & plodded on, eventually we saw the sign for Eastling, wow we were almost home, a mile on & we rounded the corner into the village hall car park ducked under a string with well done signs made by children pinned to it & into the room we had registered in that morning.

It was then we discovered we were not last, in fact we were 11th & 12th out of 30 plus that was nuts! Where had they all gone? We had tea & stew & a natter with people when 2 guys turned up, they were 100 milers who had dropped at 100k so although they had run a different section they had run the same distance as us.

When we woke the following morning, we got out of the van & wandered into the village hall, where we discovered one guy had completed the 100 miles, his parents had come to pick him up, everyone else had dropped. I also learnt that I was 3rd lady !! Wow I had run for 16 hours & been 3rd! I celebrated with a cup of tea & a full (vegi) English & then drove for 10 hours to get home! By which time I was stiff as a board!!

Jilly Davidson

