

## **Devil Island Project Group Inc.**

18356 Tasman Highway,

(P.O. Box 105)

BICHENO TAS 7215

Telephone: 03 6375 1311

Fax: 03 6375 1736

E-mail: [benglefi@tassie.net.au](mailto:benglefi@tassie.net.au)

Website: [www.devilislandproject.com](http://www.devilislandproject.com)

## **DEVIL ISLANDER NEWSLETTER NO. 9**

**May 2008**

What a **huge** couple of months it has been for the Devil Islanders! Running a Marathon in London, opening the very first Devil Island at Nature World, appearing on 3 tv stations on the same night and the Devil Dash weekend..

I think everyone will agree it felt pretty good to see the first Devils released into the park and to be recognised for the hard work that all have contributed.

A big good bye to Dale Hunter who has resigned from the Devil Islanders. Thank you for your support with fund raising and being part of the team. Good luck with your teaching career. You will be missed.

### **From Bruce and Maureen**

As I ran over Tower Bridge and past the Tower of London my mind recalled all the terrible, history changing events that had occurred within those walls. The Princes in the Tower murder, executions of Kings and Queens and gruesome torture of politicians, artists and English patriots. Tortures almost inconceivable to believe. Then my mind drifted back to the present. At 65 years of age I had just run 35kms, past 60 London pubs without stopping for a beer, the temperature was 8 degrees C, it was throwing it down with hail which was bouncing off my balding head, my feet were wet and blistering, I was soaked through and shaking with the cold, my hamstring was starting to hurt and there was still another 7.2 kms to run. Surely this was torture worse than any conceived by my English forbears at the Bloody Tower---and this was self inflicted.

My mind drifted to the rest of the team and particularly Maureen, how were they all fairing. This marathon was proving one hell of a test. Then Fiona's words came back to me, if you think it's bad for us just think about the Devils, they are dying a slow painful death of starvation. My heart monitor told me I wasn't dying, a child leant over the barrier and offered me a sweet (lolly), the roar of the crowd increased and suddenly the will to finish returned. Yes, I had to start walking to protect my hamstring that had obviously not fully recovered

from the damage of six weeks previous, but I couldn't let the Devils or the team down. Bugger the rain, bugger the pain, bugger the insanity.

What amazing crowd support, only Poms would stand for six hours in the rain to cheer on a load of nutcases with such enthusiasm, stoicism and humour. Thank God they did because without them I was close to quitting. The Cockney who shouted, 'You Aussie ba--ds can't play cricket but keep going, you can run' spurred me on.

Then it was Buck house and the finish. Feelings I'd never felt before and probably won't again. A genuine life changing and defining moment. As I met up with Jim, Andrew and Belinda even they looked tired. Poor Debbie was shattered as she staggered in; an amazing time was matched by the pain. Covered by a thermal blanket her teeth were still chattering like Woody Woodpecker. A cup of hot sweet tea helped both Debbie and me. Then it was Linda and Joanna, and although I'm sure they weren't feeling like it, they looked like two elegant ladies just back from a gentle game of tennis. How relieved I was to telephone Maureen and hear that she, Fiona and Dale had just 5kms to go. They finished together like 'three little maids from school', working to get to the line. Had I really inflicted so much pain on those I love, could I ever be forgiven for this mad idea. Even my proffered cup of Earl Grey tea for Maureen was declined with a chorus of 'We want chips' from the three. Maureen must be feeling bad I told myself, a cup of Earl Grey tea has been the thread of holding a marriage together for 43 years and it was declined.

Six weeks later, the Devil Island project has been opened, a highly successful Devil Dash has been completed and I think I've been forgiven for the tortures inflicted on the team. Maureen is now accepting cups of tea, dinner and some new earrings so there's hope for me yet.

I can only reflect now on the wonderful response from eleven amazing 'Devil Islanders' from Tasmania, Tasmanians as a whole and people too numerous to name individually who have allowed me to complete a dream. Thanks.

## **Andrew**

Well....12 months down the track and we have come a long way. The upcoming Launceston Ten represents the first time we ran together as a team in an event. I remember feeling like I had been hit by a truck. I think of my personal journey through this and the Launceston Ten was a milestone for us in that it signifies the real public push that has happened to make Devil Island a reality.

Opening was a great event. Great when an idea becomes a reality. The Devils seemed happy and were in great condition (The real Devils! Ha ha ha). Loved London and the experience of the trip. Belinda and I had a great time together and the Marathon was a wonderful culmination of it all. I am not sure 20 kms a day walking the shops for a week before the Marathon was great Prep.

Am about to embark on the June School Break. The rest and catch up with family will be good. School will still be ticking with Child Care meetings and we are having digital projectors installed from the ceiling in each class and installing a Smart Board interactive Whiteboard. Come and see them some time...really cool and the kids love them.

There has been a huge amount of effort put into the last 12 months by everyone. Enjoy the rest after a hectic schedule. A great time to re-establish an activity that you may have neglected a bit lately. I am going to play some golf, be with Belinda and Lucy and might even do some gardening.

Well done!



### **Belinda**

To put it simply the experience of running a Marathon was awesome. It was incredibly hard, but to finish such a race made me extremely

proud, it will be a life experience I won't forget. An ordinary girl from Tassie had to pinch herself about half way round to make sure it really was her running. It was easy to be swept up in the emotion of the event, and was

hard to stop running when so many people were on the sidelines cheering. I'm undecided if I will ever run another but as the injuries fade, I am certainly tempted!

I am so thrilled that everyone crossed the finish line and in such fantastic times.

## **Fiona**

I thought I was prepared for the marathon – sun-block, band aids, hat, good shoes, protein bars, drink supplements, water – I thought I had it all covered! Ah, ignorance is bliss! I wasn't even remotely prepared for the pain of running on a hard, unforgiving stretch of sloping bitumen for nearly seven hours! Sore knees, sore hips, sore back and that never-ending road stretching on forever. Two months before the marathon I was advised not to run by chiropractors and physiotherapists so simply getting to the start line was a huge achievement in itself for me. Making it to the finish was a bonus!

Statistics show that 80% of the population will never run a marathon which is a shame as it was a great experience despite the pain. The atmosphere was fantastic and the crowds roared and cheered us on as if we were all winners. Even the bad weather didn't really detract from the magic of the day! It is certainly something I will never forget as long as I live, as is the team spirit shown by Dale and Maureen on the day. I would have been hard pressed to continue at some points throughout the race if not for their support and encouragement. Thanks girls!

Back home in Launceston it is great to welcome Shane Gould's support to our project. She is a very special lady with a lovely view on the world and an interest in looking after nature and its animals. Her photographic works are inspirational and I look forward to working with her in the future as we continue our efforts to save the devils from becoming extinct.

I'm under pressure to put on another "dance for the devil" this year and it looks like becoming a reality and promises to be bigger and better than last year! Many of last year's performers have put their hand up to dance again and the Hawthorn Football Clubs' mascot looks set to make his dancing debut on the stage! Should be fun!

Cheers,

Fee

## **Dale**

What can I say! Feeling good! It has taken me nearly a whole month to get my head focused and to feel half ok. It was a massive effort for all of us, never again!! So sorry I couldn't make it to the opening.

**Debbie** (aka Gizmo)

**We completed the London Marathon all 42.2 km.** I have to say it out loud every now and then, just to remind myself of the fact that it actually happened. Over the past year Joanna & I as well as the other team members have trained and participated in other fun runs and half marathons in the lead up to the London Marathon. There have been some wonderful memories collected.

Joanna & myself are still jogging and speaking for myself am still enjoying it. I am participating in the Launceston Ten in July, and as well as the Longford , Westbury & Devonport Fun Runs, still with my Devil Islander T shirt on. I'm also planning on doing the Burnie Ten again and the Point to Pinnacle in November. I don't know if I will run another Marathon, maybe next year.



Last Sunday, Joanna & myself along with our terrific support crew of one David jogged our first long run of 16km since the marathon. I pulled up a little stiff, but no sore knee's or any of the other aches' and pains that I suffered last year.

The long awaited Devil Dash weekend in May went as planned...well almost. There were a few little hitches but, mostly went very well. There was live coverage with ABC radio. Penny Marshall hosted the morning show for 2 hours and spoke to a lot of locals about the town, on local issues of the East Coast. We had 100 runners/walkers. At first I thought we may have had to cancel the family day as the weather wasn't very co operative. At 5am rain was pouring down as my helpers Dash, Jim & I were putting the drink stations and

the Witch's hat's on the road, things didn't look very promising...but by 10am the sun was shining and we had blue sky.

**" A BIG THANKYOU TO ALL OF THE TEAM THAT HELPED MAKE IT A GREAT WEEKEND"**

**Debbie**

**Joanna and David**

Pre race time we needed to pick up our race numbers and an electronic chip which was to be placed in our shoe laces so that we could be electronically tagged throughout the race so even though it would take us 10 minutes to cross the start of the race it wouldn't matter as each of us would be timed individually. The Expo where we picked our gear up took us 3 trains on the underground to get there and three trains back but we availed ourselves of a pasta meal (carb loaded) while there and learned a bit about the history of the marathon. This year was special as it is the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first race. As you can imagine this was all adding to the build up of the race and I was feeling a tad nervous as I had never run 42 km before (my best was 36 km). The expo was huge and I could have spent a fortune on running gear but I resisted!

The race day began at 5 am as the bus, to pick us up and take us to the start, was arriving at 6.15 am. The 32 thousand competitors' starting places and times were divided into area zones. Our zone didn't start until 9.40 so we had a big wait but it did go surprisingly quickly as there was a lot going on around us. Apart from a giant television screen and PA system to keep us informed, the fact that there were many charities using the event to raise money meant that a lot of the competitors were dressed in amazing outfits, such as a rhino suit, superman suit, Batman and Robin with car, 2 men inside a blue pig, a guy on skis dragging a sled (yes he went the whole way like that!), our Masai warriors who were in their national costume and many more.

As the day was cold we all wore extra clothes which were discarded as we warmed up after the start. Bruce had brought along some garbage bags which could use as an insulator and to keep the rain out if we so desired and if it rained of course. Some of us availed our selves of the bags and some didn't.

How can I describe the atmosphere of the event? Hmm...very difficult but imagine that there are about 70 pubs along the route and one and 1½ million

people lining the route...then imagine that a lot of the pubs hired bands to sit outside and play very loud music and that community bands also were strategically placed along the route and you begin to get the picture. There were percussion bands, jazz bands, a bagpipe band, a choir, pop bands...you name it...it was there. Then there was the crowd. Most of the competitors had some way of identifying themselves with their own name or their charity written on their shirts so all along the way people would identify you and yell encouragement. We were getting things like "Ozzy, Ozzy Ozzy, come on you can do it!" Or "Come on Tassie Devils!". Even the London bobbies who were many...were clapping and giving encouragement. Talking about clapping...we were clapped the whole route. It was amazing.

The morning started sunny but we had two rain showers on the way. As one of the showers had hail in it, it did get quite cold and our muscles did tend to stiffen but we just keep going and amazingly the crowd didn't leave but just donned their raincoats, hoisted their umbrellas and keep encouraging us.

The route took us past some very interesting historic sites but the highlight (apart from finishing outside of Buckingham Palace) was coming around a bend and being greeted by thousands of runners and spectators on Tower Bridge (the historic bridge near the Tower of London). The roar was deafening and atmosphere was so incredibly charged. As I rounded the bend on the approach all you could see was a sea of colourful bobbing bodies as they jogged their way across the bridge. And this is not mentioning the spectacular sight of the crowd which lined the bridge.

The event organizers had erected low barricades along the route so as to keep the crowds back from the street. Little kids lined up with arms outstretched all the way along so the runners could give them 'low fives'. People brought lollies along to give to runners and fruit as well (as well as what was provided by the organizers). The drink stations were every mile and the loos were also plentiful (there were hundreds of loos strategically placed along the way). Every contingency was thought of even down to silver thermal blankets for runners at the end. (They look like thin alfoil). I grabbed one of these after the 2<sup>nd</sup> storm and ran with it till the weather cleared.

I am pleased to say that I ran the whole 42 km of the race apart from drink stops (can't jog and drink at the same time). A couple of times at the  $\frac{3}{4}$  mark I did think I would walk and give me legs a bit of a rest and the crowd would start yelling encouragement and I just couldn't keep walking...not with all that enthusiasm around me...Anyway...it figures if I did jog the whole way I would get there faster! It took me 6 hours and 10 mins.

The last 800 metres was the hardest as my legs and feet were so tired and they had marked every 200 metres on the course towards the finishing line. But, I

got there and what a great feeling that was. After finishing and receiving my medal and some sports drinks and a few goodies I had to walk a further 50 metres to get to the international recovery area where we met the rest of the team. Everyone waited for each other which was great and even more so as it was cold and wet and we all felt wrecks!!!!.

We walked a further 1½ miles to the tube, got a train to the nearest station to our hotel had a most wonderful shower and then all met for dinner that night. Needless to say none of us needed rocking to sleep that night.

And that was about it. A once in a lifetime...never to be repeated happening. Amazing what one man's vision has achieved.

On a personal level it has been a wonderful experience for me. Not so long ago, if you had said to me that I would reach this level of fitness, fly ½ way around the world and run in a marathon I would have laughed and said you were crackers...just goes to show what one person's dream can do. Good ideas and dreams can be contagious and aren't I glad they are. We are all so pleased and enriched that we had a part to play in the Devil Island Project and in running in London and we are pleased to still continue our assistance and interest in the project, but will we run another marathon? The consensus is **maybe we'll stick to HALF marathons in the future!!!!**

## **Jim**

Following the marathon I went to Cornwall for 2 days, had a lovely slow walk along the sea cliffs with a GP friend of mine living at St Austell.

Then the next day his neighbour invited me for golf on an exclusive course! Fortunately I did not disgrace myself too much.

Then it was back to Australia and back to work at the Mersey Hospital.

As regards the actual marathon I enjoyed it, I guess one can't prepare for all the runners running but the crowd support was fantastic and it was an honour to be part of the team.

I was so tired and stiff in the legs at the finish I could not make it down the stairs to Charing Cross underground and found it easiest to stagger up to the hotel we were at.

Linda (in Cambodia at time of print) - lucky for some.

