

## C 1153 Martin Payne

Isle of Man Open 100 Mile race walk 2015: 22.59.14

Club: Dark Park Fell Runners



The idea of attempting a Centurion was sown after reading Tara Williams' (C 1090) article in the LDWA 'Strider' magazine a few years ago. Walking round and round Lingfield race course to cover 100 miles within 24 hours seemed like utter madness – but a seed had been sown.

I have been a runner since my mid 20's and a member of Dark Peak runners since 2003 and it was during one of the club races over the nearby moors that I injured my left ankle. Running was out of the question but walking didn't hurt so, in order to stay sane whilst waiting for the ankle to settle down, I began walking longer and longer distances, sometimes on roads, at other times over the hills.

In October each year Rotherham Harriers & Athletics Club organises a brilliant 50 mile trail race which some walk, whilst others run it. With the race fast approaching and my ankle showing no signs of getting better, I decided to walk it in the 2013 event. Managed it in just over 12 hours so thought it would be realistic to consider attempting the next Centurion qualifier in 2014. I teamed up with a good fell running friend (Jim) who was equally struck by the idea and we started training in earnest.

We checked the Centurions 1911 website and contacted the Secretary but at that stage the venue for the British 2014 qualifying event was not known so we decided to enter for the Dutch race in Schiedam in June. Training involved regular Saturday outings and ranged from walking laps of Rother Valley Country Park for hours and hours to walking alongside the Peak Forest and Macclesfield Canal all the way to Congleton, followed by a train back to Sheffield and a couple of welcome pints. Schiedam soon came along and we were both taken with the friendliness of the race organisers but unfortunately they had no control over the weather which was really warm, and at times humid, as we bashed on and on around the 2.5 mile course in the park, whilst the bemused locals looked on as they tucked into their beers and BBQs. Sadly after approximately 60 miles Jim's resembled a pizza topping and although my feet were fine my mind was all over the place. We pulled out together and slunk off back to the hotel.

Unlike Jim I had also sent in an entry for the British event which was to be in early August around a 400m running track at a stadium in Southend. It was to be another warm day for the walkers. The first 4 hours were OK in contrast to the remaining 20 which were very tedious to say the least. I was very tempted to pull out at around 22 hours when I calculated that I was so far behind schedule that success was most unlikely. However, with encouragement from my long suffering wife, I stuck with it and covered just a shade under 97 miles which was disappointing in one way but encouraging in another after my performance in Holland a few weeks before.

When I hobbled away from that track in Southend I had no intention of trying again but after a decent night's sleep and some food I decided to go all out for another attempt a year later. In early 2015 I sent off my entry for the Isle of Man 100 and continued to bash out the miles each weekend. My weekly mileage was also topped up by choosing to walk to and from work following the death of my ancient car on the M1 in late December.

By the time the Isle of Man event came along I sensed that I couldn't have done any more training. I just had to succeed this time. I wasn't so much worried about my physical fitness as my tendency to just mentally throw in the towel if the going got tough. A very hard friend at the fell running club was often heard saying "stop your roaring and get on with it" to his youngsters during junior races and I decided to stick those very apt words on the back of my iPod should I have any doubts during the race.

Flew into the Isle of Man and got myself settled into a very handy pub in Castletown the evening before the event. The Manx organisers could not have been more friendly and welcoming. I had the good fortune to throw up a small tent with some spare gear and food right next to Dale Farquhar who was supporting his wife Jayne during the 100. I had met them briefly at Southend. They couldn't have been more supportive.

My plan was to divide the 24 hours into 6 hour chunks and I carried a small chart which gave me reasonable lap targets for each hour and this proved invaluable. I also carried a small bag of food in a bum bag together with some hydration tablets. The course was interesting (certainly more than the running track) and from memory I completed the first 50 miles in 11 hours 12 minutes so was well on schedule to succeed if I could just keep going.

It's weird what you go through during a 100. At times I felt a bit low whilst at others I felt aggressive but whatever my mood I just kept at it, trying to stay reasonably "level" during the whole event. The support provided by Dale and his mates was just brilliant. They provided cups of tea, coffee and even soup through the night.

The last 5 laps eventually came along and at that point I knew that, barring some sort of major cardiac event, I would succeed. During the last lap I thanked and shook hands with some of the marshalls who had been out there for ages and were always supportive and cheerful. Finished in 22 hours 59 minutes 14 seconds.

So relieved to have done it. A real weight lifted as it became a complete obsession throughout the year leading up to it. I've heard it said that people think about sex every 20 minutes or so – well, I had been thinking about the Centurion instead which I suppose, on reflection, was a bit worrying! I certainly didn't want to fly back home having failed again.

Would I put myself through it all again? Well, within minutes of finishing the answer would have been a definite "no" but, like the pain of childbirth, the aches and pains after a Centurion are soon forgotten so who knows?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Martin King". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long, sweeping underline.