

## C893 Ron Wallwork

Leicester W.C. 'Leicester 100', Hungarton, 1992; 22.26.07  
Club: Lancashire Walking Club

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**Hundred Mile Magic** Hundred Mile weekends seem always to be memorable occasions. I think the reason why they are is the longevity of the event, which allows time for people to chat and socialise in a way that the relative brevity of shorter events doesn't. Another contributing factor is the need for considerable numbers of people; officials, walk support teams, along with many people who have no connection with walking, who marshal, cater and carry out general dogsbody duties, all of which creates a rich social mix.



The atmosphere around the "tented village" is always electric, a mixture of carnival and concern as people in their varying ways, ensure that their walker(s) receives all the help, they need to keep them on the road, be it providing sustenance, physical assistance or simply giving the right vocal encouragement.

The patience with which the feeding Station team labour tirelessly to meet special and sometimes unusual requests that they inevitably receive, can only be marveled at. How the recorders maintain their outward calm, when the accuracy of their counting is challenged is laudable and indebtedness is owed to the first aid agencies, whose hallmarks are the provision of a professional but friendly service.

There can be no doubt that the most thankless task in any race walking event falls to the judges. They work in isolation and in ultra distance events where the action is less hectic, the boredom factor comes into play and it is to their credit that in such circumstances they manage to stay so vigilant.

Some volunteers who commence their duties with little real interest in the event and an eye on the clock to their finish time, suddenly find themselves becoming involved and reluctant to leave when their stint is up, or call back the following day to see what's been happening. This phenomenon also appertains to many first time walkers who are forced to retire without reaching their goal.

Whatever, the role, the greatest test for everyone, is how they cope with the vagaries of the weather which can create serious problems; heat stroke, hypothermia, trench-foot, leaking tents, poor visibility and so on.

Registration brings together old friends whose easy, but in no way boastful; "I've done it all before" manner contrasts sharply to that of apprehensive first timers or previously failed would be

*Centurions.* There are many introductions and much reassurance given, but still, until the event finally gets underway there is an edgy air of anticipation.

The first few hours of the event are usually uneventful. It is daylight; the walkers are confident and in high spirits and the various teams of people have time to settle into their roles and duties. After five or six hours on the road the initial adrenalin rush has passed and the euphoria that built up prior to the start, has like the light, begun to fade and everyone's body-clock is telling them that it is bedtime. From this point, onwards there will be countless dramas within the drama of the event itself, as the fatigue factor takes effect. There are invariably crisis points for the majority of participants when manageable situations suddenly become desperate ones. All will struggle to overcome them, but not all will succeed.

For me, this is where the real magic of the event manifests itself, in an over riding feeling, that everyone involved wants to do everything they can, to ensure that every walker gets the utmost out of themselves and attains their best possible result.

*Ron Wallwork C893*