

Peter Hoskinson, aged 50 years and his running mate Cameron Crawford set off from Devonport on Jan 14 2013 to run the Tasmanian Trail, approximately 460 kilometres. It is something that has been in his head for over 15 years. Cameron was forced to take a more direct route due to injury but finally completed the trek.

The following is Peter's fascinating record of the epic journey that took 6 long days.

Basic details

Day 1 Devonport to Deloraine (R)Road, (GR)Gravel Road, (T)Trail 90k 14hrs

Day 2 Deloraine to Poatina Hwy R,GR,T 83k 15hrs

Day 3 Poatina Hwy to Bronte Park R, T, GR 66k 9hrs

Day 4 Bronte Park to Hamilton GR, R 73k 10hrs

Day 5 Hamilton to Judbury R, GR, T 79k 11.5hrs

Day 6 Judbury to Dover GR, T, R, T 66k 11hrs

Officially by me 5 and half days.

All days had some very steep sections, day 2 had a section at the end of the day 4 to 5 kms Caves Track, almost 2 hrs walking. All days I took between 1/2hr and 1hr for lunch at towns. We slept at towns each night and was mostly unsupported. Time was also taken getting lost, herding alpacas and crossing creeks.

Pre Race

I have known about Tasmanian Trail for over 15 years and decided about 6 months ago that it would be my 50th birthday present to myself.

I had done some basic planning, when one of my massage clients, Cameron Crawford an Ironman Triathlete started talking about Tassie Trail, after 2 minutes he said I was the first person who was still listening after this long. He then said he was planning 9 days sleeping on side of road, which I said that won't work! Why he asked? I said I am doing it in 6 days and plan to sleep in real beds and get a good meal each night.

After some talk about it for next 2 months, I sent him a planned schedule with a date, Jan 14th to finish before Jan 20th my 50th birthday. I was going; this was real for me now.

I hadn't trained for ultras since 2008. I ran the last Colac 6 day race in 2005 and trained for the cancelled ones in 2006, 2007, and 2008.

Since then I have created and run a training group with some great people going from 1st runs to marathons. One of my proudest days was the Sunday 13th Jan, the day before the Tassie Trail, I ran the half marathon with one of my runners Jane aiming to break 2hrs, Jane deserved it and I felt we had done enough, but the race clock said 2:01, we later learned the course was 400m long.



Devonport first marker

I had a great sense of worth as Mick and I ran in with Robyn to finish the marathon to the cheers of members of the group. At the presentations 2 of my runners got 2nd and 3rd female Tasmanians in the marathon. Wow life is good.

OK time to get a little selfish and enjoy myself.

In the 8 weeks before I did 7 weeks over 115km I did 5 or 6 runs over 4 to 7hrs, with my Fairydown pack of 15 years and things felt very natural. I did a block of 225km in 7 days, with a 40k, 50k, and 66k which gave me great confidence. I trusted my 20 year base was going to repay me.

Two wonderful people Peter and Catherine Wheatley (both multiple Ironman finishers) volunteered to take us to Devonport. We got to our accommodation and found good food just near the start line.

Day 1 Monday Jan 14th 2013

We started at the Spirit of Tasmania ferry terminal at 5am after staying at the nearby caravan park the night before.

The 1km walk to the start was full of excitement. What had we forgotten? How would we go?

We had minimal packs with us. Enough food for 2 days, 2 water bottles, a change of running clothes, GPS with trail preloaded, EPIRB, phones, basic first aid and not much more.

At 5am we photographed the first Tassie Trail marker, and set off up the road. A gentle stroll alongside the Mersey River as the sun rose, life is good. We pass a massive Tassie Trail sign in Latrobe which feels inspiring.

As we go down Old Deloraine Road, in the distance we can see "The Triple Tops" mountains Mt Claude, Mt Roland and Mt van Dyke way off in the distance. I said to Cam, they sit behind Sheffield where we will be having lunch. "The Triple Tops" is a great trail run held in November. It is only 18k, but if you run under 2hrs, you will top 3 if not win!

These 3 mountains became our guardian angels for the day.

We had an eat and walk at Hoggs Bridge and looked up to a massive tail plume coming from a plane from Melbourne?

Got to Railton, no need to shop, but use the facilities and chat to a local out walking the dogs. Ran out through a lovely trail out to the "Norman Sykes" sanctuary.

<http://www.townoftopiary.com.au/images/Downloads/SancturyPark.pdf>.

As we came back onto the gravel road, Cam said he needed to stretch his ITB, as it was painful. This was his good ITB/ knee that had never worried him.

Some nice hill climbs up Goss Rd and Sheffield Rd. Head through the bush and farmland along flat running. We find an old railway deckspike, I decide 450km is too far to carry it. I got one from the ABT railway, when I ran through the railway in 2000 with Mike Maddock, before it got redeveloped.

I climb a locked cattle gate to find the small gate unlocked, much to the pleasure of Cam who walks through. We head into Sheffield (past the Tassie Trail turn 1km out of town.) at 10am 40k in 5hrs. This is going to be typical pace, taking into account hills, trails, gates, food, drink and toilet breaks.

My first food selection is a Dim Sim (haven't had one for 2 years) followed by egg and bacon roll and coffee.

The Triple Tops mountains are close by, just 2 or 3km away. After 20mins we fill the water bottles and head out Old Paradise Rd into Paradise Rd.

YES this is paradise. Life is good.

After a couple of kms of flat the hills start to come. The climb out of the new bridge over Minnow River is a great chance to test the legs.

My technique on long steep hills is;

- 1) Give myself my word, where I plan to run to.
- 2) Drop down in gears, until you find one you can LOCK in.
- 3) Use your arms to set and maintain momentum.
- 4) Don't always look to the top, set some small goals.

I feel strong, drink and eat to refresh. We head down the rural roads towards the forest plantations. Get invigorating fresh water from one of creeks. We turn into Star of West Rd into GOG plantations. Lovely running on well made roads, with lots of hills, sometimes you can see 2 or 3 climbs ahead.

Just put head down and do the work.

Had food/drink break at top of climb and look back at Triple Tops mountains that are finally starting to get smaller. We start to run away from these majestic mountains. We are about 60kms in, but have quickly learnt not to focus on time or distance, just enjoy the journey.

The terrain, hills and navigation dictate the speed. The Tassie Trail markers are great to see and install confidence we are on the right track.

I change from Forth to Meander 1:100000 maps. You could use 1:25000 maps for more detail, but more to carry. The Trail Guidebook notes are great, I am using an abridged version I made and Cam has printed out the .pdf file copy on 4 to a page. Thanks to the people who put this together and put up and maintain the trail markers.

At 3pm we make it to a rough campsite beside Lobster Rivulet. After 10hrs we welcome a small rest and the chance to top up and food and water.

The hut could be used for overnight stay if you wanted a shorter day than we had planned, but you would have to bring sleeping bag and food. The mattresses were filthy, but the bedsprings were inviting. Time to move.

Walked down to the edge of Lobster Rivulet, oops 6 ft deep here, better have a look around. We find the trail markers leading across the Rivulet where it was only up to our shorts. It was flowing fast enough to push you over. Shoes off, the water felt fantastic on feet and legs. Cam got to 2m from the bank before drinking half the river as I got a friendly leech off, while I was putting shoes on. A couple of nasty little hills, another creek crossing, this time over a log.



Heading downhill on a steep gravel section, a 3ft tiger snake is heading up before deciding I was too big and ugly. He was a very green tiger snake as opposed to the standard black tiger snake we saw on day 6. All Tasmanian snakes are venomous so we carry a compression bandage. I did say to my wife, I had more chance of getting hit by a car running on the roads for 6 days than getting bit by a snake.

We head through a couple of quarries and downhill back onto the bitumen of Mole Ck Rd. A 15k run into Deloraine sounds easy, but we had been on our feet for over 12hrs. We arrive in Deloraine right on 7pm.

Down a can of cordial while booking in. Sugar is important. Shower, change into clean clothes we dropped off on Sunday.

FOOD! Pumpkin soup, 2 chocolate milkshakes, chicken schnitzel, banana split and ice cream. I had to force feed myself the chicken, but essential to get that food (fuel) in. We had half of Cam's chicken schnitzel for breakfast. I am big believer that gu's and bars are good over shorter distances, but over multi-days it is essential to eat normal meals with a good mix of carbs and protein. Fats and sugar also help.

I slept well, the body had a little trouble controlling body temp, so had hot and cold moments. Drank about 2 litres of water from time got to bed to time ready to leave. Had 600ml bottle of water going out the door, with a strip of chicken schnitzel.

Day 2 Tuesday Jan 15th 2013

Day 2 was always going to be a special day. I had planned a big 120km day to make it to our accommodation at a friends shack at Miena. If anything goes wrong it will be an interesting day.

I wake at 4:40 after hearing Cam in the shower. Coffee and some of Cam's chicken schnitzel for breakfast.

Out the door at 5. Walk for 5 minutes to warm the muscles up, then I turn the legs over and a run comes easily. I check behind and Cam doesn't look happy. Cam's knee is worrying him and he decides to tape it for support. The morning is cool, carrying minimal gear, I go for the thermal while we walk to test Cam's knee. We have 7km down the highway until a major turn, so I decide to run to give Cam some space.

At the turn onto Highlands Lake Rd, Cam catches up and we discuss options. Cam says he doesn't think he can run on the trails, so the only option for today for him is a 60k road leg down the western side of the Great Lake. This has a climb of over 800m in it. We separate and will not run together until 3½ days later.

I make a mistake reading the trail markers. Not thinking straight, thinking about all the possible scenarios. We had already lost an hour, and now my mistake costs me another half hour and some hills legs. As I am standing at a cross junction thinking I have not seen any markers on this trail, Cam rings me and tells me he has found trail markers on the main road. So no choice but backtrack. Really important not to chase and try and make up time.

Cam will need to walk the next 12hrs, to manage the pain and maintain functionality. A very strong mind is needed. He doesn't know what is in front of him. He needs to focus on today, so he has a chance for tomorrow.

For me there are lots of steep tracks, single tracks and motorbike trails. I climb to the top of the ridge, where there are a maze of tracks, some corners are missing markers. I go down the obvious track, but loose the markers. My gut says I am in the right place, I check the map, houses make sense but I can't see the road, powerlines come straight over the hill which doesn't help. I come to a gate with a sign "Private Property". I try to respect these wherever I can, so I stop I am carrying GPS with the track pre-loaded. May as well use it.

Simple. GPS says I am track. Will I jump the gate? No, I will go and chat to the man at the house 200m up road. He tells me lots of bike riders get lost here. He has a herd of about 10 alpacas. He soon tells me the name and gender of each. He has a stud male, but two young bucks need separating from the girls. So I get my first lesson in alpaca herding, after 10 minutes, the young bucks are not happy about being in their own paddock. He then tells me the road is 200m above his gate. If I had jumped the gate and seen his rural road number, I would have worked that out and saved myself 15minutes. Hey but I learnt something. I can now add alpaca herding to my CV.

Dave my support crew for the day rings, as I am well late. I suggest I am 10 minutes away as I turn the corner and see him 500m away. Wow Dave, chocolate milk and fruit buns my favourites. Pat Farmer put me onto chocolate milk in 1994 when he ran in The Tasmanian Run multi-day race. Pat won the Stage from Strahan to Queenstown, beating winner Kruglikov and Kouros. The AIS has done research saying chocolate milk is better than any of the "ADE" products (Powerade/Gatorade).

I ask Dave to do a drink drop on Cluan Tiers Rd. I misjudge this road from the map as being a decent road. It is only a forestry road from the 1970s as per signage saying when trees were harvested and planted. As I run along I realize the road has seen very little activity, and Daves tyre marks stand out. Dave comes down the hill. (So the road is a no thru Rd.) Dave describes the road as a steady incline (didn't seem too bad in the car). I push on and get to the junction I agreed with Dave as a drop point for drink and food. I look around. Nothing. I run on and find the drink at a junction about 2k down the track. Thanks Dave, very funny.

I was soon running out of road and hadn't seen any markers for a while. I have plantation on my left, which is the next turn direction, so I push on a little slower. I come to a junction with a left branch and am excited to spot a marker. I am on the trail.

Dave rings shortly after and asks "Where are you?" I answer "I know I am on the trail, but I have no idea where I am on the map". In my head I record the time, every time I see a marker. 11:45,11:55,12:00,12:05 all good.

Over the top of the ridge and start heading down a rough track. Haven't seen a marker for a while, ah – there's one. A sign on old gate "Trespassers Prosecuted" Another "Trespassers Shot" Another "Stay out – Bush Law applies."

No markers, but I am moving quickly downhill. I cross a gate with lots of signs depicting Forestry Operations. Dave rings and says "He is sitting on the gate" Not my gate, he says "he will go on to the excavator." I come around the corner and see the excavator in a big quarry compound. No sign of Dave!

2 roads head downhill, I pick road B, as I head that way I look down road A and see Dave, OK change of plan. Have a nice flat 10k run into Bracknell for lunch.

I have pushed hard for the last 6 hours and am feeling low on energy. We get to Dave's car in Bracknell at 1:20, plan was for about 11. Need to eat and re-plan the rest of the day. A can of Solo straight away.

Contact Cam, he is pushing hard, restricted to walking by pain. I buy a pastie, but can't do one bite. I sit down and try and relax. Eat banana, chocolate icecream, another can of Solo, and some biscuits. Not ideal lunch, but it is fuel. Today was planned to be 120k, but with several problems; slow start, lost 1/2hr, lost time with Alpacas, I have to rethink and come up with a new plan.

With Cam working hard, but struggling to make good time as well as being in pain. I would need to run to at least midnight to complete today as planned. Dave is staying with us, so he can drop me out on the road the next morning. Easy, we have to add in another day and stay at Bronte Park overnight. This will give Cam a relative easy day of about 35k, and my day should be less than 70k. That is all do-able and will give Cam a chance to recover and get me off the road in the daylight.

I pull myself out of the car, I am tight and sore. That was a big morning. I hear Dave say "Ouch" as I walk the first 200m to get going. After a toilet stop, I run the bitumen and gravel roads well, doing 25km in under 2½ hrs.

Dave is taking the car forward and running back and meeting me and we run to the car and grab a drink and some food. We repeat this 4 or 5 times. This is good for me as it allows me to run with just a bottle and a bumbag. No pack, so I really stand up tall, have a stretch and maintain good form. About 3k before the end of Hop Valley Rd, I come over a small bridge. Out of the corner of my eye, I see a big snake, at least 5 ft tiger on his side of road. I say "G'day Mate" and keep running.

I run on and meet Dave, after telling him, I wish I had taken a picture. Hey you will just have to believe me! Caves track on the map is only 4 to 5km long, but the contours sit on top of each other. The guide notes, described this as steep, rough and rocky. I originally planned to bypass this section and go to Poatina, However after talking to John Dawson www.tassierambler.org who mountain biked the trail in 5 days, I decided this section was too good to miss.

The track starts at a private house and goes up. I didn't know what the track would bring, but it was steep and rocky underfoot. I also thought I am completely on my own here, so don't rush it, and don't make any silly mistakes. Climb, climb up, but what a magical place.

Around every corner I was in awe of the pioneers who put this track in, and must of taken horse and carts over here, maybe in my lifetime, certainly in my parents. I went past the caves from which the track derived its name and wondered how many people had slept in the comfort of those ledges above a roaring fire.

I could hear the creek flowing just 10m away from me, the dense forest hiding it from view. My favourite spot was where the track narrowed to just over a 1m with towering manforns forming a roof over. On the bottom side the ground fell away as far as the vegetation would allow me to see, and on the topside was near vertical sandstone cliffs.

"I wonder what the poor people are doing."

What a privilege to be here. I need to keep moving up, mostly walking, running where the conditions will allow. On my right is a massive ravine, almost 20m across and at least 5m deep, lucky I don't have to cross it as the track keeps heading up. Then I realize the track turns right and has been washed out by the water, which created the ravine. I spot a trail marker 3m up a tree on the opposite bank. How the hell did someone put that there?

I later spoke to the man who put the marker there, standing on the back of his horse. Well, that's where I am going, back 20m across the ravine and back on trail, all pretty easy actually, 5 minutes for 5m not the pace I planned. I had planned to be at the top by 6pm in 1hr 40m, however 6pm brings a blast of phone messages as I come into an area of reception.

Checking messages, I almost miss a right hand turn. I decide none are urgent enough for a reply, except for a missed call from my darling wife Chris. Don't really feel like talking, so just text SAFE and hope that does.

I stop and have a GU and check my map. The turn takes me across 2 creeks where I grab fresh water. I know where I am, maybe 1k to the top. Switchbacks in tracks usually mean one thing STEEP.

As I work my way up the track becomes a little clearer. The sight of an old beer can excites me, people who leave these don't usually walk very far. Around the corner and I see the road, I scream with excitement at what I have achieved and maybe on seeing Dave's car as well. A sit down, chocolate milk and fruit bun tastes great. 6:45 I know I have more work to do.

I need to check on Cam, last time we spoke our conversation went like this:

CAM: "I can only walk, and that is slow about 5km per hr."

PETE: "OK well keep pushing. How far from Pub do you think you are?"

CAM: "About 15k, I should be there in an hour and a half."

PETE: "Mate I think you need to eat and drink" (and then re-do your maths).

CAM: "Good idea, talk later."

Ok getting late, I need to get in 10k so I leave myself a good day tomorrow. Less than 80k. I set myself a small goal of 2k to "Poatina Intake Rd", things come out OK so I reset my goal to Cramps Bay Rd about 4k away. I am running freely and steady on legs that are feeling good after 14hrs on the go. I keep pushing on, but am conscious that Cam would be close to finishing. On a slight downhill stretch I decide that at the end of this that will be a day. I will leave myself a hill start in the morning, that's OK I like a walk to warm-up.

Dave marks the finish point with a drink bottle and some tape. In the car I feel good and take on more food and drink. A call from Cam says He is at the pub, shivering. We measure the 6km of Poatina Road until the turn onto gravel Rd which will lead me down to Arthurs Lake in the morning. We drive back to the pub where we find Cam in a bad way. Tired, cold and mentally drained. We get Pizza and lasagna at the Pub to save cooking and time. We get back to the shack for a refreshing shower and a bed. We recheck our gear as I got food and drink dropped off at the shack. What to take? What to leave?

Dave can do a drink drop on the way, and can leave a box of goodies at Bronte Park where we have booked accommodation for Wednesday night. Otherwise we have to carry everything we want for the next two days. I ensure I get 2litres of water in before bed.

I feel strong and get a good sleep.

Day 3 *Wednesday Jan 16th 2013*

I wake at 5, thinking I should be able to eat, drink at get out the door by 5:30, as we have a 25min drive back to the start point. I am looking at a 76km day.

Muesli for breakfast, a drive to the run, just feels like a normal day. Cam has an easier day about 45km. We drop my pack at the 6k turn. Dave drops me off and heads off home. I plan to walk the first two hills, but I feel good and break into a jog part way up the second hill. I just have my bumbag and water bottle. I am moving really well and must be running at 11km/hr. I don't run with a GPS, but my internal one is well calibrated after 20 years. After 35min I get to the 6k turn and grab my pack. A 'Growling Dog' protein bar is an ideal 2nd breakfast as I head down the gravel road.

Before 7 I head off the road down towards the powerlines. Simple from here, follow the powerlines for the next 4k. A beautiful clear morning besides Arthurs Lake. I see a lone woman out for a morning walk, as I come up behind I wonder how I announce myself, a loud "Good Morning" causes her to jump.

I walk and talk with her and her Blue Heeler dog "Blue". Blue goes to get breakfast and returns with a kangaroo carcass, "Ribs and tail", she stays out of reach of her pleading owner "You can't take that home Blue."

At the pump station I head back to the road and up a steep hill to Arthurs Flume Road. The flume is a big concrete channel, which is used to transfer water between Great Lake and Arthurs Lake.

At the top of the hill, I stop for a GU and a poo. Cam rings and tells me the sign says 28km to Bronte Park. I assure him that it is 38km and to get on with it.

The Arthurs Flume Road is soft and flat without any rocks, this allows for fast easy running at about 11km/hr. A wonderful view makes for a great morning. Good running on a gravel road heading to the main road. Nothing in nature has the triangular shape of a 'Give Way', and I can pick this one from over 1km away. A Tas Fire Service 4wd passes by reminding of the dangers some Tasmanian communities are in from fire. We will bypass an area of the trail, which has been burnt out by fire. I have approx. 7km along the bitumen road to the shack, where we stayed last night. From the shack it is 5k to the Great Lake Hotel and Shop. I told Cam it was 3k to get him started this morning.

I stop at the shop and get a chocolate milk and a double choc chip muffin. I call a running mate Mick Soden and ask him how many kilojoules in my muffin, he said "Don't worry" I only eat a little and don't feel refreshed at all, as I head back out onto the road. I check the sign and it definitely says 28km, I had planned for 38k I think I have made a mistake, YOU BEAUTY!!

On a gravel road called Malborough HWY, a downhill and a climb out of Ouse River, the end of this river is over 100km away by foot. I will cross that tomorrow afternoon. A little cold patch and some rain, hopefully will help the fires. A midday view over Little Pine Lagoon, a fisherman waves maybe thinking "Why is he doing that?" I return the same thought back.

I cruise nicely along for 2hrs. The last hour is tough mentally as I get ahead of myself. I start wanting the days running to finish, as I think about tomorrow. Just relax and let the finish come to me, don't rush towards it. PUSH and RUSH are only one letter different, but are so completely different.

Cam rings from the comfort of our accommodation for the night. He has been in for an hour, showered, and fed. I tell him I am 10 minutes away. I get to Bronte Park at 3pm Bronte Park is an old Hydro Village from the 1950's which was a base for dam building in the area. I buy us an icecream and walk to our accommodation, another day's work done. I shower and then go through the drop box Dave dropped off this morning. I find a can of Spaghetti, which I eat with much joy and vocals. Much to Cam's amusement. I comment "Sometimes you just get things right in life." 4pm asleep on bed with legs up the wall, to drain the toxins away.

2hrs sleep, feels like I could run again. Food. Lasagna again, 3 nights out of 4. Tonight's is homemade, wonderful. We share the dining room with shearers and road-workers. They drink 4 beers while waiting for tea and say they are going to have a few beers as it is their last night here. I am glad they get their massive meals, or else they may have eaten me for tea. Cam tells me they were up and making noise at midnight. I didn't hear a thing.

Day 4 Thursday Jan 17th 2013

Bronte Park to Hamilton 73km today should be a straight forward day, 4km out the gravel Malborough Hwy, left onto the Lyell Hwy for 2kms, left onto Victoria Valley Road, mostly gravel for next 52kms to Ouse, then 15km to Hamilton. This last 15km is not part of The Tasmanian Trail, however the Fires have destroyed part of the trail and with 30 deg temp. and high fire danger we avoid Repulse Rd and Broad River area. Also Ellendale township and surrounding areas have been hurt by fires and are still under threat. Simply we go down the eastern side of the Derwent River and avoid the Western side.



Cam is predominately walking at an average of 5km per hour, so an early start is necessary for him. He rises at 3:30 and said "See Ya" and walks out into the dark at 3:37. I go straight back to sleep and wake to the alarm at 5. I go to the toilet, start shaking uncontrollably with cold, so I jump back in bed.

The phone rings, I think it is my alarm, but its Peter Wheatley ringing to check on us. I rise and have some muesli in a cup with frozen milk. Drink a litre of water, because water may be scarce today.

Cam rings and says "Going down f.... highway, missed the turn", which means he has a couple of massive hills in and out of the power stations.

Out the door just after 6, walk the first km in clear light and break into a jog easily. A little tight and sore, but re-energised after a good feed and sleep. Make it easily on the highway and then pull left in Victoria Valley Road, the turn Cam missed. 2 cars pass, probably heading to Bronte Park for a 7am start. I run comfortably for the next hour or so, drinking a little water as I have only 1.2 L with me. It's a beautiful morning, peaceful and serene, pass an echidna, that's one every day.

I come to the little settlement of Dee Lagoon about 10 shacks. One shack stands out, a beautiful garden, and a tap. As I turn the tap, I think the pump will come on, so a quick drink and I go. I say good morning to a couple 3 shacks down.

The next 10km pass easily without seeing anyone. I make it to Victoria Valley, where I was hoping to get water, but the creek looks stagnant. I decide to take it easy and ration my water. I head towards Osterly an old township, which has about a dozen houses spread over a 3 or 4 kms.

Down the hill to the lowest point in the road. A quick walk and something to eat and drink before the climb. A farmer comes out of his property and stops for a chat. I ask whether there is water at The Osterly Hall, he says NO, but ask at a house up the road. He leaves saying he is going to visit his Mum.

I climb the next hill and head along the flat when I see the farmer standing at a gate with a bottle of water. Nice and cool, I drink half and top my bottle up with the rest. As I run off I see the farmer walk up his drives on his crutches. I think how lucky I am, being able to make choices and do the things that bring me pleasure.

Another few kms under my belt, I come across 2 cows on the road. One gets past me, but the other one keeps running away from me. I walk and have a GU, I offer the cow a GU, she comes to her senses and runs past me. 6km out of Ouse I crest a hill to see the devastation of the fires on the hills in the distance.

I ran onto Ouse feeling great. 7½ hours on my feet with a litre and half of water. Not stressed, but need and drink and a feed from the roadhouse. I grab a drink and sit down. 2 bike riders are sitting at the table beside me. The woman says "Happy Birthday" I think what? I have never seen you in my life. She says "You must be the other runner, we seen your mate up the road."

We chat as I eat the best steak sandwich and have another drink. A long stop, but no need to rush. I chat to Cam he is moving well, but will be in Hamilton over 2 hrs after me. 15km to Hamilton in 30degs. heat on the bitumen. Nice and steady.

My parents meet me with a cold drink and a cool towel. I book Cam a room at The Hamilton Inn, which he renames Fawltw Towers. We drive to New Norfolk 34km away I stay with my parents. My business partner Paul

comes up and gives me a massage. He says my legs feel better than some he massaged from the Cadbury marathon and half marathon this week. I get a call from John Shoobridge, the President of The Tasmanian Trail committee who has heard about my run and is keen to use it to promote the Trail.

I have a good rest and a long sleep. We will see Cam in the morning.

Day 5 *Friday Jan 18th 2013*

Hamilton to Judbury 79km. Today starts with a sleep in. Awake at 6. Muesli and coffee for breakfast and we head out at 6:45 to catch Cam on the road. We meet him about half way between New Norfolk and Hamilton. He looks like he is moving OK albeit walking. He says he started about 3am and had a little 7 minute sleep on the soft grass beside the road. He is 4 hours down in a big day. We give Cam food and drink and take any non-essentials from him to lighten the load. I get dropped off at Hamilton and start with a walk at 7:30. Say good morning to some cyclists. I break into a jog almost immediately and easily head up the 3km hill out of town.

Wow feel great this morning, start to eat bars at top of hill and drink water. This is familiar territory for me, I lived at New Norfolk for most of my life and have run this mornings course many times. I run well at close to 10km per hr. About 15km in. I listen to cars go by and then hear voices. It is the 2 cyclists from yesterday, we chat as we cruise along, just as they are about to leave the guy says "I have you a birthday present." He throws me a chocolate bar, but doesn't check for cars so I nearly get run over trying to catch it. I say thanks and put it in my bumbag. They head down the road never to be seen again?

I am running well, I realize that the chocolate bar has added extra weight to carry. Only option, I better eat it. Chocolate, sugar, caramel. Yum!

I run into the next town Gretna, the shop is open, however all is good, plenty of food and drink, no need for toilet, so don't waste time. It is always a fine line between necessary time for refuel and rehydrate and wasting time, and when you are looking at 12hr days you cannot waste time, the kms still have to be run. I head downhill looking across at Rosegarland hill, a steep 500 or 600m. I choose to walk it, drink and feed and save energy. Its around 10am not yet 3 hrs, and I know the track at the end of today will be rugged, rough and lumpy. I run downhill towards the drink drop we dropped on the way up. I see my uncle and aunt about 30mins apart heading in different directions, this gives me a real sense of comfort as I head towards my parents for lunch. I get to the drink drop, but no bottle, Cam thought it was so good he took the lot! He tells me later he took 2 sips and dropped it at next guide post. My fault I missed it. Luckily I always keep a mouthful in the bottom of my bottle. I know it is about 4k to a house of another runner 80yr plus Stan Harrex so I drink the mouthful and keep moving.

I get to Stan's and fill my bottle from a tap. Stan surprisingly looks out the window, I give him thumbs up and keep moving. About 8k to lunch, a decent hill, I run easily, reminiscing that 20 years ago when I first started training I would have walked this hill 30k into a 40k loop. I get to the outskirts of New Norfolk and ring my mum to ask her to start lunch.

Steak and eggs please (I must need protein). I tell her I will be 20 minutes. I have a quick chat to Cam, he is eating lunch and sounds good. He tells me later that he called my parents Baden and Joy and my father walked out to meet him. Apart from his comment "Not another bloody hill as he went up the driveway", he was pleasantly surprised at what he found at my parents. His gear was laid out on the outside table. Drink bottles full of icy cold water. Baden pointed to the kitchen where Joy was just finishing cooking lunch and then to the toilet. Cam smiled and said "One I can sit down on" He said all was good until I rang, as soon as he put the phone down, Baden and Joy said in unison "You better be gone before Peter gets here." He finished his lunch and headed out the door with a water bottle around the corner to Blair St Hill. Another bloody hill.

He made good time as I couldn't see him as I approached before 12. I finished his baked beans as entrée before downing my steak and eggs. Baden was keen to catch up to Cam, but I said no rush he will at the Lachlan shop at 1:30 I left refueled and full of energy. I went with just a cold water bottle as it was getting warm. Baden and Joy came past and gave me a new bottle of water. They caught Cam as he was about to take first step towards shop. They let him keep moving forward while getting him an ice cream. I get to the car and grab my ice cream, Cam rings to confirm straight ahead at a junction. This is something that shouldn't be underestimated on a run like this. Navigation is crucial. I tell him I am just a couple of minutes behind him and head off. He is trying to have his first serious run in 4 days up the 1k straight, I can watch him. He walks, then over about 20m his posture changes as he encourages his aching body into a run. Even though it is painful he runs for 200m, it only takes about 5m to go back to a walk, and a quick look over his shoulder to see where I am. He repeats this 4 or 5 times until I catch him at the car at the end of the straight.

We reload our packs with enough food and water for planned 5hrs I think it will take me to get to Judbury by 7pm. I ask Cam what is his plan? He can follow the track for 1st 15km out of 33 and then pull left to the little settlement of Crabtree, else he may be looking at a midnight finish, which is not on after a 3am start today off less than 3hrs sleep. He has to take his wife and son to the airport in the morning, so I presume he will finish a day later than me on Sunday. We walk the 1st km together up Jefferies Track, the first time we have been together since early morning on Day 2.

It feels funny, as I set a corner where I will start running and ease away from him. This track has been used to link the Huon and Derwent Valleys for over a hundred years. The main road trip is closer to 100km than the 33k I will cover. Running is good on well established 4wd track for 4 or 5km, then I encounter some massive wheel

ruts that would almost reach my head if I went in them. I leave Cam a cold sausage and a banana in the middle of the road on a big rock, but he misses them.

At 3 or 4 critical junctions, I create stick arrow signs and write CAM in the gravel to ensure he takes the correct turn.

At the final one at 15k, Cam goes left, and I go right heading towards the timber plantations and down towards Judbury. I last run this about 15 years ago. New forestry roads "change the rules" compared to the trail guide. I just trust my gut and keep moving forward on the main road looking for a Tassie Trail marker.

This section is rough going and quite lumpy, but I know there is a couple of big creeks where I can get a refreshing drink, just a km down the track. I drink a couple of litres and fill both 600ml water bottles up. That should last me for the next hour it will take to cover the rural roads that lead me into Judbury.

I use the rural road markers to calculate distance to go. 593 means 5.93 km from the junction which is finish tonight. I make sure I keep chewing away at some bars as I run, and even let myself get a little excited about the thought of tomorrow. I make good time and see my darling wife's car at 6:50. I stop and take my pack off, before being attacked by our 2 white fluffy Maltese Schitzu dogs Ernie and Dolly. We jump in the car, I ask Chris to go down this road to check which way I am heading in the morning.

Checked and ready to go.

As we drive to have a picnic by the Huon River, Chris says romantically "You smell like a hobo". Love is sweet. Home to rest, ready to be picked up at 5am by Robyn for a 6am start.

Day 6 Saturday Jan 19th 2013



Judbury to Dover 66km. Robyn picks me up at 5 and we head to Judbury.

Today is exciting, I ate muesli for breakfast, but use the travel time to eat more fruit buns and drink a litre of iced coffee. It seems a long drive, once we get there all I have to do is get out and start running for a day. Robyn has to organize some gear, so I say "I will heading down that road, you shouldn't watch me walking for first 200m anyway." I think it is going to hurt more than it does and easily break into a run.

A toilet stop, and I nearly miss a turn down a major rd. This next section is interesting, cause the Trail website says this section is closed, but if you haven't read this it must be open. Would have

shortened day by over 7k. This was a nice run, so nice that I missed a turn. I had got lazy and relied on Robyns GPS rather than pay attention and the track although obvious was missing a marker and the marker there was burnt.

The next climb was rough and slow.

I was going slower than I thought and almost to a wrong track due to thinking I was further down the track than I was. We soon got onto the rural roads. We head towards the main transmission line, Robyn stops and takes photos for her job managing these lines. We head down the hill and into the forestry roads, nice open running. We head into Geeveston running freely. Although it has been a slow running morning, time has gone quickly. We meet another 3 runners from my group for lunch. Too much chat means lunch is a little long. We head out of Geeveston, the Trail guide doesn't take into account going through the town. This maybe OK on mountain bike, but on foot takes time. We run through nice patches of forest; blackwood and bluegum and beside 2m tall ferns.

At a major Xrds there are no signs, so I re-read the guide notes and take them literally and descend into the fern gully, the road is quite steep and I am excited to see the trail marker. I see it well before the others but I have had plenty of practice. We head up another hill before cresting out onto Swearing Bobs Plain. Lots of interesting names along the way, must check out the history of this one, I am only 15k from home, I am starting to drop Robyn as I get excited to be so close to the finish. I run the uphill strongly and run downhill like a kid, almost faceplanting once. Its fun. I point out a small tiger snake sunbaking in a coil on the edge of the road. He doesn't mind us taking his photo. Less than 10k to go.

Lots of turns and gate, so navigation is still important, exciting because every navigation done is one step closer to finish.

Wow onto the last page of the notes.

We head across a paddock towards a radio tower. A glorious vista over Dover and the coastline. It's almost 5pm, so we slowly head down a steep track to Dover.

The Tasmanian Trail sign says "END" Congratulations on completing your trek! I have done it.

Robyn insists on photos. I feel good, not exhausted or trashed. Body feels great. We call Scott and he picks us up. I reward myself with an icecream.

I haven't heard from Cam all day so I give him a ring. He is excited, he ran from Grove to Geeveston along the road, as he realized running the trail and getting in by midnight would not have been possible. What a great effort to get back running again. He got good rest and iced his knee, his belief that he could run today was strong. He is heading out of Geeveston, full of spirits.

We decide to surprise him and track him down on the last km of 4wd track. He is annoyed cause I caught him walking after he had run most of the last 6 hours. We give him some food and drink.

More importantly I give him my mental notes on every turn as he will need to be certain of his navigation. He will do the last 2 hours in the dark. We leave him, I say ring me when you finish!



Cam – End sign

The phone wakes me out of a deep sleep before midnight. Cam says "I have finished".

Fantastic Effort!

Sleep well, we will catch up tomorrow.