

End to End Walk

The old End to End Course which was 39.5 miles started in 1961. The route started at the Point of Ayre, through to Bride and left into Ramsey where it followed the eastern coast road through to Maughold, Laxey and Onchan. From there, the route went down to the Quarterbridge, through Santon to Ballasalla, passing the airport, down to Gansey and up towards Cregneash and finally down to the Sound Café.

There were 61 starters the first year and Stan Cleator won it in a time of 7hrs 19mins 08secs.

Until 1983 the race was always held on the last Sunday of September around 8am. Interestingly enough the Post Office who always had several walkers featuring in the Parish and the End to End walk (Stan Cleator, Graham Young and John Cannel to name but a few) always seemed to have their annual post office coach trip the night before i.e. pub crawl round the likes of the TT course. This meant of course that several of the competitors invariably were 'hung over' on the morning of the race. Perhaps this could explain why in the early part of the 1960's the times were quite modest.

One talking point in 1967 was when Albert Johnson who had led for most of the way collapsed at Gansey when the weather had been dreadful with headwinds and driving rain for much of the race. Albert had started off too quickly and had paid the ultimate price. Graham Young went on to win that year in exactly 7 hours with Ian Turnbull finishing runner up. That same year Albert, had created history in the Parish by being the first walker to break 16 hours when he set the then record of 15hrs 54mins.

Then in 1984 saw a change insofar as the race started in April (the year Derek Harrison won it). Quite why it moved from September is not clear; perhaps it was seen as a 'warm up' for the Parish walk in June. The following year in 1985 John Cannell won it in atrocious wintry conditions with frequent hail showers causing a great deal of discomfort to the competitors. John arrived at the Sound Cafe almost with hypothermia and certainly blue lips and chattering teeth. Up until then John had been runner up in the End to End on 6 occasions. It was around the early 1980's that a 50km championship was introduced which was built into the E2E walk. The 50km mark was around Ballasalla.

In 1993 the End to End walk did not take place and I can only assume it was either because the Boundary Harriers or the organising club could not round up enough marshals that year. Perhaps also there was the Lugano Cup on and it took away several officials, judges and timekeepers who wanted to watch the race. But I think it was the only year it didn't take place. The event on the old course finished in 2001. The reason for this was down to the volume of traffic, particularly through Onchan, past the Grandstand, Bray Hill to Quarterbridge section. In other words it was becoming too dangerous to marshal and manage. There were several instances where walkers were nearly knocked down particularly on parts of the course round the everlasting bend in Laxey.

Murray Lambden holds the course record was the old route when he recorded a time of 5hrs 50mins in 1980.

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Rather than scrap the event altogether it was decided to stage the race in 2002 using the route of the western coastline (39.22 miles) as opposed to the eastern coastline. The reason being that it was deemed as a safer alternative walking through to Peel via Kirk Michael as opposed to going through the much busier Onchan/Douglas area of the old course.

In 2002 it was held in September again but the following year (2003) for whatever reason it was held as late as the third week in October. This was only done once as it was becoming too dark and dangerous for the walkers who were finishing in around 10 hours. It is now held on the third weekend of September.

Jock Waddington holds the course record for the new course in 6hrs 37mins.

Ron Ronan has now completed 29 End to End walks i.e. including the old and new course starts.

2011 sees the 10th anniversary of the race on its current, western route and the popularity of this event grows year-on-year with yet another record field entering this year.

Robbie Lambie
2011