

The OUCH Relay Run 2018 – Coventry to Oxford via the Coventry and Oxford canals, Sat 2nd and Sun 3rd June.

Day 1 – Coventry Canal Basin to the Wharf Inn, Fenny Compton via Rugby and Napton.

Legs 8, distance 44.0miles.

Weather – Sunny. Temperature – Broiling.

I emerged from Coventry railway station to see banks of waving flags and lines of cars and motorbikes revving their engines and honking their horns in readiness for the OUCHers “Grand Depart”. It was quite a welcome, the council had even closed many of the roads in the town centre to cope with the crowds. I’ve heard it said that some of the people were actually there for the local motorsport event taking place in Coventry over the weekend, but I like to think that was second fiddle to the OUCHers relay.....

The closed roads made it awkward to cross the town centre but eventually I got to the Canal Basin starting point just as a car load of OUCHers arrived from the other direction. We were ready to go – and we were off! Two minutes early too!



The first leg, through the back streets of Coventry, avoiding the local dogs and past the Ricoh Arena football ground was not the most scenic of the weekend but make it to the change-over we did, only to find OUCHers already encamped in the local pub. Coffees and cakes only, surely?



One of the reasons we choose to do a Relay Run along a canal is for the easy route finding. You just can’t go wrong! You just follow the water. A doddle. Particularly if you’re a senior member of the Club with the

experience of several relays and many miles under your running shoes. However, on this run the Grand Union canal and the Oxford canal cross. And it's just possible that if you close your eyes, ignore the direction of the sun and don't read the sign-posts you could maybe take a wrong turning - and not notice until several miles later on. Not an OUCHer or two surely?? But yes...! No names are needed but take a bow!



The days of the Relay run are quite long and tiring. Particularly if it's very hot - as it was. So it's generally a good idea to share the burden at the end of the day by arranging short legs to speed us home. Except that on this occasion the last leg was the hottest and longest and in the heat of the day. A sweaty, hard 7.5 miles. Which is why most of us were checked in to our half-way home, the Wharf Inn at Fenny Compton, and had our feet up with restorative cold drinks well before Richard . and Anu appeared under the final bridge. Well done guys. Glad it wasn't me....



The Wharf Inn proved a home-from-home with food, drinks accommodation and glamping. And not too far from other B&Bs too. If you like a walk after a long day's run....



Day 2 – The Wharf Inn, Fenny Compton to Oxford via Banbury, Upper Heyford and Kidlington.
Legs 7, distance 37.9 miles.

Weather – Sunny. Temperature – Broiling again.

Like all keen athletes, the OUCHers were up early and flexing their creaking knees ready for the day ahead. Good breakfasts were had – though the subsequent decision to start half an hour early meant that those on the first leg rather regretted the extra slice of toast.

A flashing 5 miles led us to picturesque Broadmoor lock where even those on foot have to be careful with the low bridge.



And then 5 more to Banbury and another 5 to Aynho



Only 22 miles to go now, less than a marathon, but the sun still shone and legs were tiring. Would we make it home?? You bet we did!



So where for 2020? Another canal? A river? Forests? Fells? A coast path perhaps? Just order the weather early and make sure it's not YOU doing that last leg on the first day.

