

PRE-ENTRY NOTES FOR THE GRAND UNION CANAL RACE BRITAIN'S LONGEST ANNUAL EVENT

By kind permission of British Waterways

Thank you for interest in the GUCR 2008. I hope you will find these notes useful in making the decision whether or not to take part. Even if you have taken part previously, please read **all** of this information before completing the entry form. There are subtle changes to the rules and new terms and conditions. **N.B. YOU MUST READ THE TERMS & CONDITIONS DOCUMENT PRIOR TO ENTRY.**

Consider carefully whether you wish to enter as supported (with your own crew) or unsupported (tended by our checkpoint crews). Each year I receive more applications for unsupported places than we can cope with and have to turn some down. Each year someone who has entered as unsupported turns up with a crew! While I am grateful for the extra fee, I would much prefer the place to go to one who genuinely cannot get help. If you are able only to get partial support, please make a note on a separate sheet of when that support will be attending and include it (and the £50 fee please) with your entry form. **N.B. I REGRET THAT WE CAN NO LONGER ALLOW SUPPORTERS OR BUDDIES TO BE BICYCLE MOUNTED.**

It is a tradition of the event that all runners, and crews, help each other as much as possible. Please help us uphold the tradition. Along with their race numbers, supported runners will receive a notice to be displayed prominently in a window of their support vehicle for easy identification by other participants. If you enter as unsupported you will see examples of the notice at Registration so that you know what to look out for.

We try to keep things simple, but have found the need for the rules as listed on the entry form. Please excuse me for dwelling on some of them further.

The Cut-off Time of 19 hours for 70 miles is very generous. Each runner has a responsibility toward other entrants and with limited back-up we cannot allow too much "race spread" as we have to move on to other feed points. Please do not be selfish - if you realise you are not going to reach the cut-off point at Bridge 64 by 0100 Sunday, call Race HQ as soon as possible. The Race HQ phone number is my home number. It will be manned (i.e. wifed) 45 hours throughout the event. Please do not "leave calls until morning", call as soon as you have reason, whatever time of day or night. If necessary, your message will be relayed to the Race Van mobile. In an emergency, calls can be made direct to the Race Van mobile. Both phone numbers will be printed on your race number and transfer charge calls will be accepted - *so no excuses!* **All runners are expected to report their retirement directly to the home number.** Transport to the nearest station, or (eventually) to the Finish, will be provided for **unsupported** retirees.

The overall time limit is 45 hours, to finish by 0300 hrs on Monday. The checkpoints at 100, 120 and 133 miles will each have a fixed closing time. Runners will be advised if they are unlikely to reach the next check before it is closed and asked to retire. If they insist on continuing they may find the next check deserted. If they reach the Finish beyond 45 hours, they will not be entitled to a certificate and finisher's award nor will they be listed in 'The Hall of Fame' (*unless in the race referee's opinion there are exceptional circumstances*).

The reason for the maximum time stopped (at one place) being 40 minutes is to make the point that this is a non-stop race rather than a series of 'short' runs with rest breaks in warm, comfortable vehicles.

Please write any medical information on your race number and please, please, **wear it prominently, full size, on your front throughout the race.** For your safety (and our peace of mind) we **have** to know which checkpoints you have passed. The race number identifies you from your buddy (or anyone else out for a jog) and indicates to other towpath users that you are taking part in an official event. It also provides anyone unfortunate enough to stumble across an injured or unconscious runner with telephone numbers to contact. I appreciate that it is inconvenient if you make kit changes during the race (for this reason we supply two numbers) but **if you cannot be bothered to wear your number properly, please do not bother to enter.** **This is my thirteenth year of organising this race and I am sick to death of those who will not abide by this rule. I will be brutal about disqualifying anyone (yes, even those who have competed/completed many times before) who is not showing their number AT ALL TIMES, INCLUDING THE FINISH.**

The checkpoints at: Catherine De Barnes (10.7 miles); Hatton Locks (22.5 miles); Birdingbury Bridge (35.9 miles); The Heart of England (54 miles); Navigation Bridge (70.5 miles); Bridge 99, South of Milton Keynes (84.5 miles); The Grand Junction Arms (99.8 miles); Springwell Lock (120.2 miles); The Hamborough

Tavern (133 miles); The Finish; will provide tea, coffee, hot chocolate, cola, water and squash for all runners (if they ask nicely). We aim to have unsupported runners' kit-bags available at all sites **except** Hamborough Tavern. Hot food & snacks for unsupported runners will be at the sites shown underlined. NB. Checkpoint sites are under review for 2008, but will be very similar to current spacing, if changed at all.

Competitors should note that there is no crew access allowed at Fenny Stratford Lock.

If possible, please complete the entry form on your computer before printing and signing it. (If not, write clearly.) Please also keep a copy of the entry form first page and these notes. (*Every year somebody asks, 'What maps?'*)

There is no need to include envelopes for race information or results with the form, I will provide these.

If your entry is accepted (**this time I will accept 110 and allow 'natural wastage' to reduce it to 90**) you will receive confirmation by e-mail where possible, or bank statement if not. Please let me know immediately if, for any reason, you are unable to take part. I can then offer the place to another runner or, at least avoid waiting unnecessarily in Gas Street! **Any cancellations before 1st April will receive a full refund.** In late April or early May you will receive your race numbers and other information by post.

Keys are required for most British Waterways facilities. If you would feel happier with a key for the toilets and water points en route, either for yourself or for your supporters, they can be purchased from British Waterways' offices for about £7. If unable to do so, contact me at least 3 weeks before the race on the form mentioned below. Loan BW keys will then be available for collection at the start on payment of a £10 deposit per key.

Further information (listed below) will be either posted or e-mailed as appropriate:

A pre-paid envelope and form. To be completed and returned as soon as possible and at least fourteen days before the race. This will enable a final list of competitors and contact numbers to be compiled.

A Route Description. It is possible for supported runners to complete the event without reference to the GEO Projects maps using this sheet. **Unsupported runners MUST carry the maps**, or copies, in order to pinpoint their location should our transport need to collect them upon retiring.

T-shirt order form. T's and sweats for both runners and crews will be available 'payment with order'.

Advice for Support Crews, a list of possible meeting points (ref. GEO Projects maps Nos 1 & 3) and a route description through Milton Keynes. Please give these to your crew well in advance of the day.

A list of checkpoint details including opening times.

Street maps showing Start and Finish locations.

NEW THIS YEAR! All runners are required to carry a space blanket.

There will be a kit check for space blankets (and maps for unsupported runners) at registration.

We may arrange group accommodation near to a new venue for the Friday night pre-race gathering – details will be sent to confirmed entrants early in the New Year.

Other details of accommodation in and around Birmingham can be found at www.beinbirmingham.com or by phone from 0121 643 2514. Information on the canal network is at www.britishwaterways.co.uk The maps are available from www.britains-waterways.com and bookshops.

A reminder to unsupported runners; think about your homeward journey as we can only guarantee transport to the nearest appropriate station or to Little Venice. *Of course, we will try to arrange further help and lifts if at all possible.*

Please be courteous to other towpath users as we dare not lose the goodwill of British Waterways.

A final reminder that First-Aid cover is minimal and that there are **NO TOILETS, bushes or trees at the Start!** (Toilets at car park within 300metres). Please do not copy or e-mail your entry form for others.

Reading through this, I realise that a lot of it sounds very straight and serious. I would like to add that this is a light-hearted and friendly (except for those who won't wear numbers properly) event which I am sure you will enjoy. Please feel free to phone me at home, evenings, (01635 578536) if you have any queries.

All the best, Dick

Footnote! In recent years many runners have contracted cellulitis in their feet during, or immediately after, the canal race. This is a potentially serious condition. Please go to

www.bbc.co.uk/health/ask_the_doctor/cellulitisinfection.shtml and take note of the advice given there.

P.S. Pun intended.