

I ♥ TRAILS



Nothing but a number

Doug Richards, author and grandad, on hot and cold running extremes

What drove you to start running?
My declining fitness when approaching my mid-30s, and a breathless dash upstairs to console my young son having a nightmare. Inspired by the 1981 London Marathon, I vowed to go for a run the next morning – and managed a mile!

How did your Running Hot & Cold book come about?

I would always write down memories of each running trip. I joined the University of the Third Age after retiring and a life writing group who urged me to collate them into a book.

Silver Trophy in Running Awards book category – how proud?

Very! The book was primarily a record of my running adventures for my family and interested friends. When it reached a wider audience I started receiving emails and messages from people I'd never met, saying the book made them think differently about their lives. When it was shortlisted for the Running Awards I was over the moon. To be there on the night and hear it being Silver Trophy winner was a really proud and unexpected moment.

So how does a bus-pass-bearing pensioner stay upright running on Greenland's polar ice cap?

With very hefty spikes attached to my running shoes! At my age I'd like to avoid any falls, but I can take a tumble on the most innocuous of surfaces! But, luckily, I didn't fall once.

How was the Rio de Janeiro half marathon?

Hot and humid. It was a lovely coastline route with one punishing climb, before tackling Ipanema and Copacabana beach roads. 36 hours before the start, I was struck down by a nasty bug. I was just on the mend for race day and managed to finish, though the last five miles were hard. I ran

straight through the finish tunnel to the Portaloos!

Confronted by elephants – how scary was that?

Our elephant encounter in South Africa was very real and, without doubt, the scariest moment of my life!

Your most emotional event and why?


A series of races throughout Sri Lanka just five weeks after the devastating tsunami of Boxing Day 2004. On the downhill section of a half marathon I was greeted by a group of six young children. One said 'Can we run with you, grandfather?' Soon we were holding hands and running together singing 'Run, run as fast as you can, you can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man.' More joined at each turn until there were 30 or 40 children with me as we entered their village. We were warmly greeted by their families in a 'never to be forgotten' moment, at a time when their country was suffering.

What is the Run England project?

I'm open and honest about the battles I've had with anxiety and how running has helped me overcome them. England Athletics announced a trial Mental Health Ambassador programme so myself

and a lady member put our names forward to represent Kingfisher Harriers. We help people who are experiencing mental health difficulties to start running or get back into running, and encourage existing members to continue running to improve their mental wellbeing. It's so satisfying to see people's progress.

How has running enriched your life?

Well, life can be a roller coaster. I feel blessed to have a wonderful daughter and son, and two delightful granddaughters. I have run with Holly (the elder) on several occasions already. Josie is a little too young yet. Also, I'd never have visited many of the wonderful places I have been privileged to run in, and meet their people. 

■ To read Doug's inspiring adventures, you can buy Running Hot & Cold here: <http://amzn.to/28WnKkT>.

Doug taking on the extreme temperatures of the Marathon Des Sables



SCARE YOURSELF LIKE DOUG!

Doug says: "Don't be afraid to take on challenges that scare you. It's only when you try something that feels way beyond the limits of your comfort zone that you truly discover just what you are capable of."