

TRENTHAM HARRIERS RURAL PURSUITS Or Close Encounters of the Bovine Kind!

by Teresa Tito

It was a cold, but crisp and clear morning in Feilding as a bunch of Trentham Harrier Club members stumbled out of bed, somewhat bleary-eyed, on Saturday 14 September. No, we were not partying the night before - we were suffering from sleep deprivation. Seems our motel on the main road is a rendezvous point for locals to congregate in the middle of the night and make lots of noise!

Why were we in Feilding? The Marton to Wanganui relay had lured us up there in numbers - and Marton just didn't have enough beds for our crowd.

"Follow me", said Patrick, "I know the way". So our cars fell into line (somewhat dubiously) behind his red van and we headed for the back country. The runners started their 68km course in Marton, while the walkers were starting further on, at Lap 3, for a 50km total distance. For the walkers the course was largely undulating, with two legs marked "hard", one of them being a 3km slog up a steep hill, but most legs were about 5-8 km in distance.

Though the breeze was cool at times, the sun shone brightly all day, and with spectacular rural outlooks over lush fields and forests, every participant enjoyed their stints and agreed that it was a great way to get our exercise that day.

As most of you know by now, the day was not without drama. A mad cow menaced several of the walkers, putting two into the ditch, surprising one who had ducked behind a strategic bush for the usual reason, and had me leaping over a big fence which turned out to be electrified! However two or three good zaps to my legs did me a good turn and I fair powered up the rest of my hills! Patrick (now to be known as El Matador) put the bull bars on his van to good use and herded the beast up the road and into the farmer's shed.

More drama occurred at the end of the race, at the Red Lion pub in Wanganui. Fire alarms were ringing as Carolyn and I approached it, having just parked her car. Something came flying out of an upstairs window and exploded on the road, just in front of us. Apparently it was a rubbish basket that had caught fire - though it was not recognisable as such. A truckload of firemen in full kit, were on hand to restore order and their visit was, thankfully, a short one.

The course had a cruel twist to its final leg - a steep downhill zig zag to the finish line at the Red Lion. Hell on already aching legs. Geoff Iremonger completed his first ever marathon walk and continued on to cross the 50km finish line - a great achievement. Trentham's only solo runners, Andrew Shelley and Steve Bligh, completed the solo 68km run, placing 4th and 7th respectively. The three walking and three running teams performed well as did the children's running team (placing 2nd).

Trentham Harriers came away with a good haul of spot prizes too. All in all it was a very successful weekend and could well become a regular feature on our calendar of "must do" events.