

achieving the impossible...

TRAILWALKERS

and they thought it was going to be a pleasant stroll in the countryside...

ODAWARA TO YAMANAKAKO, JAPAN, 18TH - 20TH MAY 2007



100KM; A 3500M CLIMB; 7 PEAKS; 31 HOURS NON-STOP

In the spring of 2007 Oxfam Japan held its first ever Trailwalker fundraising event, with over 160 teams / 640 masochists tackling one of the toughest mountain treks in the history of the universe. Ever. Amongst these teams were *The Blisters* and *The Longlegs*. This is their story.

The scene: In a bar, central Tokyo, Japan. January 2007

Joseph: Sponsored walk anyone? In aid of charity, should be a laugh!

Friend A: Ooh, that sounds interesting. I could do with a bit of exercise.

Friend B: Yes, does sound rather spiffing! I could bring along a picnic hamper, and the Pimms!

Joseph: Jolly good. I'll put you down for it...

How the scene should have been played out:

Joseph: Sponsored walk anyone? In aid of charity. It sounds pretty hardcore!

Friend A: That's not the Oxfam Trailwalker is it? I've heard of that.

Friend B: Oh yeah, didn't it start in Hong Kong in 1981 as a military training exercise organised by the Queen's Gurkha Signals?

Friend A: Yeah, that's it. My friend from Oxfam Hong Kong was over in Japan last week to check out the course - he said that the Japanese course is much harder than the one back home - an absolute killer he reckoned.

Friend C: You'd have to be mad to take part in that! Its not just a sponsored walk. It's a *matter of survival*. A friend sent me a link to their homepage last week. Have you seen how many mountains you have to climb? And within a 48 hour limit? No way!

Joseph: So, I'll put your names down for it, yeah?

Ignorance is bliss: (Left to right) The Trailwalkers Osamu, Taro, Jon, Nigel, Vicky, and Joseph with their support crew leader Takashi at the start of the course



TEAM MEMBERS



Exchange students attempt to avoid grammar homework

Joseph Tame, Jon Perry and Nigel 'Warbadger Chinchilla-head' Dryden are all exchange students from Sheffield uni.

Trailwalker provided them with an excellent opportunity to walk off verb-conjugation-induced headaches and avoid the horrors of kanji.

Following three months of intensive training and fundraising, on Friday 18th May 2007 at 9am The Blisters and The Longlegs set out on a 100km / 31 hour sponsored hike across the mountains of South-East Japan.

Arriving at the start point – a municipal gym located an hour West of Tokyo – our team of six (Joseph Tame, Jon Perry, Nigel Dryden, Vicky Berry, Osamu Yokokura and Taro Tsujimura) felt a little out of place. We were surrounded by people whose skin-tight leotards clinged to rippling muscles; they were equipped with comfortable hiking boots, walking sticks and all manner of professional paraphernalia - whilst we could be seen in our trainers & jeans, blissfully unaware of the Path Of Death ahead. At that point, we strongly believed that we could do it our way, and thus when the starting signal was given we proceeded at a steady pace, ignoring those teams that ran from the line, quoting extracts from the tale of the Hare and Tortoise to one another.

And so we plodded on. Check point 1, 2, 3, the 640 participants gradually drifting apart. We were in good spirits: the course was tough, but we

still felt pretty fresh - we could do this no problem! 10 hours and 39km later we met our support team (Takashi, Satoko and Misako) for the last time that day. They'd been doing an absolute superb job, keeping us fed, watered and in good spirits, meeting us at checkpoints with specially-imported supplies of nuts, dried fruit, Green & Blacks chocolate and McVities Ginger nuts! However, as the night drew in at 7pm it was time to bid them farewell, as we faced the prospect of stage five: the deadly Mount Kintoki.

Nigel picks up the story:

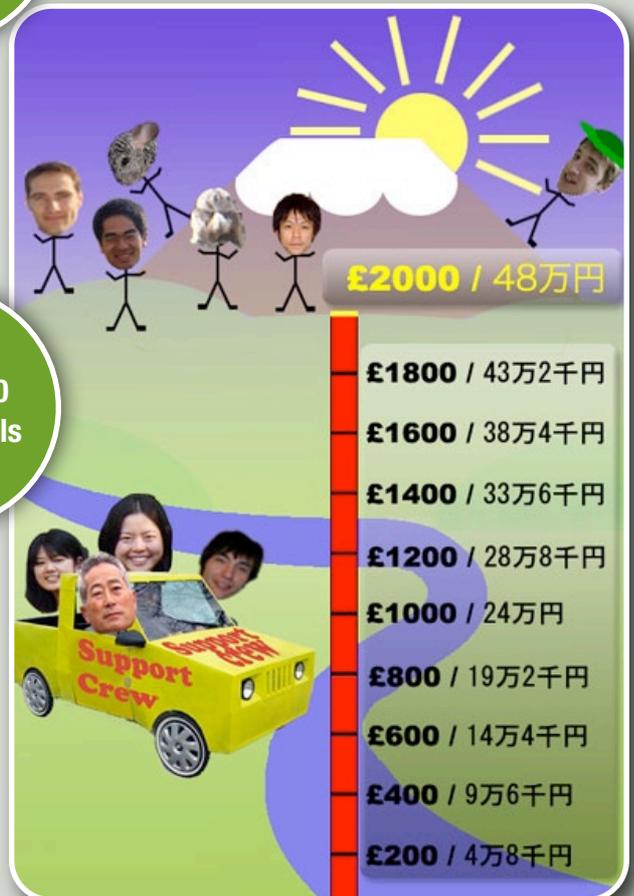
"It was clear that the course was beginning to sort the men from the boys. Many teams were stopping to camp for the night, but our team, in all its wisdom, had decided to walk straight on through.

Thus, with headlamps secured we set off into the cold, foggy night on what was the hardest part of the whole walk. It was a harsh climb up the slope, with extremely low visibility. However, before long we attached ourselves to the team in front, the *Rambling Bureaucrats* from the British Embassy in Tokyo – we were grateful to be able to follow the backs of their shoes as we scrambled up the slippery, muddy slope. In order to take our minds off the pain in our legs, we spent much of the time debating the best British Biscuits, favourite crisps and most loved films. It was quite a surreal experience!

£2,350 raised for Oxfam Japan

...that's 320 life-saving mosquito nets

...or 40,000 school meals



“It was a long night for us all. The course was merciless in the pitch black, and after 21 hours of almost continuous walking we were shattered...”

Finally we arrived at the summit of Mt. Kintoki, were, buffeted by icy winds we soon decided to make the dangerous descent. This proved to be an absolute killer. In the pitch black, and with such a treacherous path we had to take it slowly; there was a constant asking of “Daijoubu desu ka?” (“Are you OK?”) as team members stumbled and slipped.

Joseph continues:

“The sense of relief once we made it off the mountain around midnight was immense – yet short lived. The decent had proved to be too much for my joints, and without warning my left knee gave way; the pain was intense - I literally couldn’t walk another step. Thus, it was with immense disappointment and a few tears that it was decided that a rescue car needed to be called: the remaining five team members would continue the trek before exhaustion hauled them to the ground.

It was a long night for us all. The course was merciless in the pitch black, and after 21 hours of almost continuous walking the team was shattered. Finally, at 6.30am the remaining 5 members made it to the Check Point 7, where mats had been laid out for weary walkers to take a rest. Meanwhile, after a two-hour wait spent sitting alone in bear country, I was picked up, and following a sleepless rest of several hours was treated by the most gifted of physios to have ever walked the Earth. He really was a miracle worker, and thanks to his magic touch (and many metres of bandaging!) I entertained the thought of trying to get back on the course. I was so desperate to rejoin my team mates - the physio recommended that I didn’t, but added that if I were to give it a go my knee would probably hold out that long.”

The final 23km saw us really pull out all the stops. With the finish line now only two mountains away, we powered on despite the pain that we were *all* now feeling in our knees and ankles. Finally, after 30 hours of walking, we emerged from the final forest, into the dazzling sunlight and a magnificent view of Mount Fuji rising from the shores of Lake Yamanaka. It was a spectacular sight, and enough to give us that final spurt of energy that we so needed to cover the last few kilometres.

Arriving at the finishing line was a very emotional experience, some of us having to fight back the tears! What an incredible challenge it had been – but we’d done it! The sense of achievement that we all feel will remain with us for a long time.

Arriving back in Tokyo we felt a bit like soldiers returning from a war zone. We’d all faced an incredible challenge, but together, with the help of Green & Black’s chocolate, we’d survived and emerged victorious.

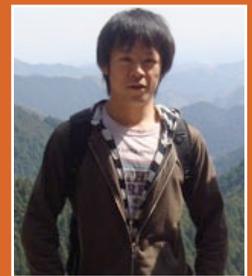
Oxfam Trailwalker will definitely be one of the highlights of our year in Japan. In addition to the actual walk itself, we also surpassed our fundraising target - our total stands at £2,350 - and that’s thanks to you.

So, shall I put your name down for next year’s challenge then...?

The team at the finish. Tired, but happy.



TEAM MEMBERS



The unstoppable Vicky Berry (Doctor, and Sheffield graduate) powers ahead showing the boys how it should be done; Tokyo University postgrad student Taro Tsujimura, and nuclear expert Osamu Yokokura laugh their way through forever worsening pain thresholds

(for more information on team members please see our website <http://www.tamegoeswild.com/trailwalker>)

THANK YOU!

This event could not have happened without your help; a huge THANK YOU you to all of our sponsors

We are very grateful to all of the following donors (in random order): Steve Perry, Andrew Dryden, Colin Chamberlain, Satoko Nagamine, Brenda Dryden, Katie Elliot, Ann and Shigeo Kobayashi, Miyu & Tom Kobayashi, the entire Nagamine family & Morris, Takeda Reiko, Anne and Peter Tame, Ksenija Benes, Glenn Hook, Jenny leech, Hugo Dobson, Susie & Nic Tranter, Vida Dabestani, Miyuki Nagai, David Cox, Jo Ling, Jason Newton, Jessica Aidley, Anne Cahill, Family Christophers, Gemma Fitzpatrick, Jessie Taylor, John Szczepaniak, XinXin, Jenny Ayres, Larch, Kimberly Croteau, Jason Leather, Diccon Allen, Nick Slater, Hiroko Takeda, Emmie & Russ, Jen Timmins, Kathryn Zasada, Kathryn's mum, Ryan Jendoubi, Marc Cove, Doubi, Calum Lyndsey, Victoria Brown, Amelia Cook, Simon Morris, Nicola Josey, J R A

Warren, Lisa Robinson, Malcolm & Sue Harrison, Helen Carter, Nobu san, Catherine Westoby, The folks at NOVA, The folks at Hat-sudai, the folks who went to the Sheffield Reunion, Gabriel Vogt, Benjamin Clarkson, Louise Stinchcombe, Mari san, Charlotte McKee, Kayoko san, Vix Standen, Matt Jollands, Stephen Tame, Kate Evans, Matthew Standley, Heath Rose, Helen Schofield, The Daily Mumble Readers, Hirai san, Diccon Allen, Duncan Lang, Oxfam's student volunteers, Jon's friends in Japan, Anna Forshaw, Lynne Whydle, Alice Stafford, Melanie Rebbeck, Dave Start, Shinobu san, Nakamichi san, Madoka san. Mayumi san and Tokura san. Sincere apologies if we have left your name off this list - let us know if we have!

THANK YOU EVERYONE!



Takashi,
our fantastic
support team
leader

Our AMAZING support team!

Our thanks also go to our incredible support team, without whom we just could not have even attempted this great challenge. **Takashi** (centre) drove over 500km in order to provide us with food, drink and warm clothes. He was accompanied by the lovely **Satoko** (left) and **Misako** (right) who made sure we always looked forward to reaching the next checkpoint!

Thanks also to Tom who was forced to pull out due to illness on the morning of the event. Tom provided Joseph with lots of great advice and inspiration for training - without which Joseph wouldn't have made it past checkpoint 1!



How you can donate

We are still collecting donations for Oxfam Japan. If you would like to contribute to our fund to help Oxfam in its vital work in some of the poorest regions of the world, please visit <http://www.tamegoeswild.com/trailwalker/donate.htm>

In the News

Our Thanks to the **University of Sheffield Media Centre** for assisting us with publicity for this event, resulting in articles appearing in

- The Sheffield Star
- Sheffield Base
- The Hereford Times

This newsletter is © TGW Publications 2007 <http://www.tamegoeswild.com>

The Trailwalkers

- **Team Homepage:** www.tamegoeswild.com/trailwalker
- **Official event homepage:** www.trailwalker.jp

email: thetrailwalkers@gmail.com