

# How I Became a Runner by Elaine Omand

**My relationship with running started when I left school and moved away for university. It came about almost by chance, as a couple of friends wanted to get fitter by going running, and I liked the social aspect, so tagged along.**

When they announced they were going to enter Edinburgh marathon for the following year, I was filled with awe, but had no expectations in my mind that I would ever be able to achieve something like that. To go from our little 5km ambles round town to 26.2 miles? No chance!

So the weeks went by, and I continued running with my friends as they built up, while I stuck mainly to the shorter distances. Until one Sunday a few weeks before the marathon, it was a lovely sunny day, so I decided to keep running with them a bit longer.

I have no idea now how long I did run that day as it was before the time of GPS watches, but I kept up for the whole of their long run, and absolutely loved it. Being out in the fresh air, taking in the smells and sounds, and seeing so much, gave me an adrenaline rush that I previously hadn't experienced.

When my friends completed the marathon a few weeks later, I was so proud and excited for them, but it also lit a spark in me, and I decided straight away that if they could do it, I wanted to give it a go.

I quickly signed up for the following year, and set about planning a training schedule, nutrition, kit. There was so much to learn about. I decided to enter a couple of local races beforehand to get a feel for what was involved.

I then joined a running club to get advice from other runners. Joining the running club has certainly been a life-changing experience.

The beauty of a running club is that everyone is equal. We turn up in sports kit, people from all walks of life, and it doesn't matter what

your profession is, how many kids you have, where you come from. It's all about getting out in the fresh air and enjoying life. Whether you want to be super competitive, or push your body to the limits, or just have a chat and a bumble with your friends, there is a place for everyone in the running community.

I certainly learned a lot from the people



there, and made many friends.

The most exciting part of training for your first marathon, is that every week when you do a long run, you are running further than you have ever ran before. Every week is a little victory. To go that little bit further, explore that bit more, push yourself that little bit harder, allows for personal growth and satisfaction that can only be achieved through something big like this.

As race day came around, I developed a

niggle in my knee, which only came on after 20 or so miles, but I couldn't sort it before the marathon, and decided I would give it a go anyway. I had done all the training, so I had to try. It was an unusually hot morning. My parents dropped me off near the start, and I walked along to find my starting pen and get myself sorted. I had never taken part in an

event so big, with people milling around everywhere. I found a little corner of pavement to sit on and save my legs for the race. I can still remember the nerves in my stomach at the thought of what I was going to attempt, and the doubt of whether I could actually achieve it.

The race started, and we got going, through Leith and out along the coast towards Musselburgh. It didn't take me too long to settle into my pace, and remember that I had done the training, and this was what it was all for. With the sun shining down, I took in the sights of the beaches, enjoyed the music of the bands along the route, and smiled at the crowds lining the streets to cheer us on. The atmosphere was intense and so positive, it was impossible not to enjoy yourself. I was a part of this movement.

We were 16,000 people, doing this for our own reasons, but doing it together.

About 20 miles in, my knee did start to hurt again, and the last 6 miles, were a pretty disappointing jog/walk to the finish. The worst part was getting passed in those last couple of miles by a giant Barney the dinosaur. However, when that finish came into view, and I knew I was going to make it, I certainly found the energy to sprint down the last hundred meters, cheered on by people on either side. I crossed the line, was congratulated by the volunteers and collapsed on the grass in the sun. Relieved, sore, but elated; I was a marathon runner. I had done it, and I was hooked. ■