

## **Shak's Tracks**

### **Mud, glorious, mud**

When it's feeling 'back-endish', starts in the early morning and evening mean that my old friend, the head torch is essential. Tomson will be wearing his collar with the red, flashing lights and no doubt, reports of UFOs will circulate again as we head out into the dark. What better way to face an autumn day then, than to run on a route that takes you past a great pub within the first two miles? Off we go for a worthy six miler !

We'll start at the Dixon Drive end of Carter Lane and go down the track toward Peck Mill Farm (1). Beyond the farm track, we'll probably hit some deep mud. Keep in mind that the deeper the mud, the better the exercise and press on, keeping close to the hedge on your left in the first field,. Cross the next two fields and eventually we'll start to pass the buildings of the David Lewis Centre on our right. David Lewis was a successful retailer of the Victorian era who left his fortune in trust to be used for the benefit of the working class people of Manchester and Liverpool. A group in Manchester who wished to provide facilities for people with epilepsy applied to the trust for support and in October, 1904, the David Lewis Manchester Epileptic Colony opened at Sandlebridge. Over a century on, the centre still provides social, educational and medical care to help people toward living independently in the community.

When we reach Mill Lane (2), we turn right and run on the right side of the road with care as there's no footway. Further on, on our left, we'll come to that other temple of social enlightenment, The Stags Head (3). Be strong as the aroma of well-kept beer and home-made pie calls to you and press on to the junction with Merryman's Lane, where you will find immediately in front of you, a fingerpost pointing down the drive that is the path from temptation. Follow the drive around to the right to emerge in the yard of the Baptist Chapel. This is the time for a respectful breather, so we'll walk past the chapel and admire the elegant, homely building before we pop through the gate and turn left onto Merryman's Lane (4).

Press on toward the junction with Alderley Road and when we get there, we'll cross to the stile and head across the fields. Navigation is a bit tricky here. If in doubt, keep angling left. When we get to Soss Moss Lane (5), we turn left. What next? The clue is in the word 'soss' which means 'slop'. We'll make the most of the firm surface of the road while crossing the railway bridge before turning right over the stile just before Gatley Green Farm (6) and plunging into more mud. Follow the path across the fields to the rear of Nether Alderley Rectory (7). This was once the home of the ex.MP Neil 'Cash for Questions' Hamilton and his wife, Christine. More recently, this illustrious couple recorded a 'world cup song' entitled 'England are Jolly Dee'. Hmmm, it's high time to get out of here in the direction of Rector's Plantation (8) and from there, across the next two fields to Heawood Hall.

The following three fields will see us on the drive to Yarwoods and from there we'll go to Stubby Lane (9). This should be familiar territory by now. A right turn from Stubby onto the path behind George's Wood and a mile and threequarters by the sandpit and the old school will get us back to the cattle arch by Marshall's in Chelford.

Wouldn't it be great if this route ended at the Stag's Head ? Sadly, success in this sport depends on our ability to train both body and mind to accept moderate discomfort. So, it's a pint of water and a hosing down to get rid of the lumps of Gatley Green farm that are probably still clinging to your legs.

