

'We're hoping big race will run and run'

BY DANIELLE HOFFMAN
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THE organisers of Yeovil's very first half marathon are already hoping that the event will have a lasting legacy.

Since meeting through the Yeovil Town Road Running Club, Steve Elliott and Jody Foy had grown used to hearing complaints that Yeovil did not have its own 13-mile race.

They put their heads together and devised a challenging course, set to launch for the first time in March.

The event has been welcomed by the town council, South Somerset District Council, Somerset County Council and the police, and more than 180 people have signed up to take part.

Although the details of the race are still being fine-tuned, Mr Elliott, 48, is already looking ahead to the future.

He said: "So many people over the years have said that Yeovil needs its own half marathon, and we found ourselves in a position to be able to organise one."

"The plan for year one is to get between 500 and 1,000 people involved to start getting



the race known, but by year four I'm certainly hoping for around 2,000.

"I see no reason why the Yeovil half marathon can't be on the same scale as the Taunton one, as we know the demand is there."

The Yeovil half marathon will link up with the town's healthy living initiative GO Yeovil! as its official launch event, ahead of a GO Yeovil! week of fundraising and activities in June.

Mr Elliott said that the race would not only promote a healthy lifestyle but also serve as a promotional activity for the town.

He said: "I would say 70 to 80 per cent of our entrants will come from the South West, but we have already had one entry from County Antrim in Northern Ireland and Sheffield."

"We want people to see that



FITNESS TEST: Organisers of Yeovil's first half marathon Jody Foy and Steve Elliott meet up with Inspector Jackie Gold of Yeovil police at Yeovil Town Football Club to try out the route on bikes and decide how many route marshals will be needed. Picture by James Dadzitis WGLC20110117G-001_C

Yeovil is a welcoming, warm and friendly place, and this is an excellent opportunity.

"Even in the South West Yeovil is sometimes seen as a B-listener in terms of the region's towns, so this will help to put it on the map a bit."

"It's a good course, maybe not a personal best course, but we're hoping it will be quite a fast one."

"I've done it about four times myself now managing 1 hour 45 minutes. I'm hoping to get that down to one hour 30 minutes at

some point in the run up to the race as I won't be taking part on the day myself."

The half marathon will take place on Sunday, March 27, starting at 9am at Huish Park.

For more information visit www.totalbuzzevents.com.

Dangerous vehicle campaign success

A CAMPAIGN launched by police in Somerset to crack down on drivers of dangerous vehicles has been hailed a success.

Operation Fluid was in full force in Street and Glastonbury on Thursday and police handed out four prohibition notices to drivers of cars deemed to be unsafe.

A faulty headlight, dangerous exhaust and insecure driver's seat were some of the defects picked out by vehicle inspectors.

Three of the drivers were given verbal warnings and another was handed a fixed penalty notice.

Police said a total of 13 young drivers were referred to road safety education sessions so they could avoid prosecution.

PCSO Melanie Rowlands said: "We are really pleased with the result of our vehicle checks and the message this has sent to people who use our roads."

"Word has already spread about our activity and I hope this will encourage other people to use their vehicles safely and responsibly."

Organist performs

CRUMPETS will be served following a performance by organist Chris Mahon at St James's Church in Shaftesbury on Sunday.

Mr Mahon, resident organist at the church, will commence his performance shortly after doors open at 2.30pm.

Tea and crumpets will be offered to music fans at the back of the church after the recital.

Admission to the "Crumpets with Chris" event is priced at £5, with proceeds to be donated to the Friends of St James's fund.

For more information and tickets contact Jo Churchill by emailing jo.churchill@enmoregreen.co.uk or phone 01747 850432.

We are wassailing

RESIDENTS of Tolpuddle will be out wassailing on Sunday when they visit different parts of the village to serenade the apple trees and ensure a good harvest next year.

They will be setting off at 6.30pm, and will end the evening with two glasses of mulled cider and a pork casserole supper at the Martyrs Inn costing £10 per head.

To join them, or for more information, please contact Angie on 01305 849242 or Clare on 848286.

Community fair

A COMMUNITY fair will be held in Crewkerne on Saturday, March 26.

The event organised by A Better Crewkerne and District will give residents the chance to see what activities happen in the community.

There will be displays by local groups and organisations in the Victoria Hall, Market Square.

The fair runs from 10am until 1pm.

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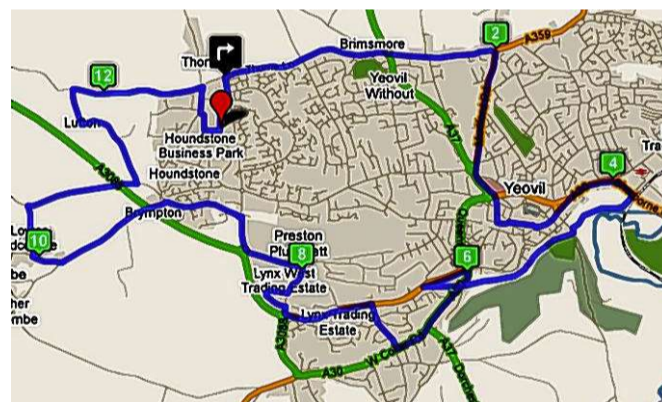
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RUNNERS' ROUTE: The challenging course for Yeovil's first half marathon in March.

Demolition work backed for author's former home

PROPOSALS to demolish a wing of the house where author John Fowles wrote *The French Lieutenant's Woman* have been approved by planners, despite a claim the move will virtually write him out of the house's history.

Mr Fowles lived in Belmont House, in Lyme Regis, from 1968 until his death in 2005.

As the *Western Gazette* has reported, the Landmark Trust plans to convert the 18th century villa into self-catering holiday accommodation.

Removing a late Victorian building is part of the plans which will cost £2 million.

The house is grade II listed because of its association with Eleanor Coade, the inventor of artificial Coade stone, which was used to decorate the house.

The trust plans to remove the Victorian wing added by a local doctor to return the building to its Coade stone heyday.

But the Victorian Society

asked West Dorset District Council to reject the plans, saying it was wrong and old-fashioned to wipe out everything done to the building in the last 200 years.

English Heritage also raised concerns and West Dorset's listed building officer recommended the scheme be refused.

Conversely, the Georgian Society welcomed the plans.

And West Dorset District Council's planning and development control committee approved the plans, with conditions.

The Landmark Trust acquired the house in 2007 in accordance with Mr Fowles' wishes that it be protected.

A trust spokesman said the scheme will "recover its former beauty and significance by restoring it to its original form, as well as enabling public access to the house and its gardens, and providing a place to learn about Mrs Coade and John Fowles."