

## GRIN AND BARE IT: The Gloucester Marathon “Barefoot”, Sunday 7 August 2016

### DONATIONS TO GLOUCESTERSHIRE HOMES FOR VETERANS:

<https://my.give.net/homelessandbarefoot>

From Baden-Powell downwards, they'd have been queuing up to tell me. Be prepared. The City of Gloucester held its first ever marathon on Sunday 7 August 2016, and gave me the chance to thrash out 26.2 miles without wearing running shoes. In fact, it was going to be the first time I had run any significant distance with just a thin covering of rubber under the soles of my feet. Be prepared.....for the worst.

All over the UK, an alarmingly high percentage of those recognised as homeless have spent time in our Armed Forces. Alabaré, based in Salisbury ([www.alabare.co.uk](http://www.alabare.co.uk)), runs a dedicated Homes for Veterans programme and this is active in Gloucestershire, with 2 homes in Gloucester (<http://www.alabare.co.uk/home/gloucestershire-home-for-veterans2/homes-for-veterans-england>). Since serving in the Coldstream Guards, I have been an ambassador for the Gloucestershire Homes for Veterans. This inaugural marathon provided me with the opportunity for the latest county challenge, and then I got distracted by a book.

As I dashed through the pages of Chris McDougall's BORN TO RUN, I heaved my old trainers over the nearest hedge and set off “barefoot” (which, in modern running parlance, means running on soles to prevent cuts, but with no cushioning at all). Being born without running shoes on, there seems a strong physiological case for running on the soles of the feet we have and I was hooked. Not wanting to let reality get in the way, I gave myself just 10 weeks to get up to marathon distance. Running on just the forefoot enables great pace, but it puts a completely different load through the lower leg, the result of which was having to get up earlier and earlier just to get down the stairs in time for breakfast. For the first 4 weeks of training, I could not run more than 2 miles at a time. Finding the balance between achieving the right amount of rest and increasing the distance was a tricky business and I knew I was not going to hit the start line in the right condition.

The experts say one should take 18 months to make the transition to running barefoot. Ignoring this was foolhardy, but it gives me a chance to make a bit more of a noise about the support that is needed by homeless ex-Servicemen within and without Gloucestershire. The remarkable detail about the care provided by Alabaré is that almost every single person that comes into their orbit makes their way back into a life of independence and that seems worth smashing up the soles of my feet for.



Race day itself was one of several sensations and emotions. Insufficient distances in training whacked me just after the 9 mile mark, leaving me feeling like several of my batteries had fallen out. My pace deteriorated thereafter and not a lot of arithmetic suggests that I was barely running by the end. Luckily, my feet felt completely different from one another, providing mutual distraction. Whilst the ball of the left foot may as well have been bound to an electric hob, my right foot felt as though an agitated traveller was banging their airport trolley into my Achilles tendon at every step. Carrying these screaming

limbs over the course gave plenty of pleasure on account of the stunning route and the intense level of support. All ages had turned out, armed with Jelly Babies, loud voices and cooling garden hoses. The marshalling was spot on and the other runners were as friendly a bunch as I have encountered. Several of them noted my skimpy footwear and were quick to chuck out words of support and encouragement.

To those of you who have made a donation, this comes with great thanks - on behalf of those needing this sort of care. Whether or not circumstances allow you to give money to the charity, what I would like you to do is to broadcast the work that Alabaré does and to consider that for those who are not caught by other military charities, homelessness is one of the lowest rungs on the ladder.

Charles Malet

Finish Time

04:03:29

Overall : 227 / 656

Gender : 187 / 467

Categ : 89 / 216

Race No           **477**

Gender           **Male**


Category         **Open**

Secondary Category   **GL**

Secondary Category Pos **55**

Status           **Finished**

Club


[View Race Photos](#)

Splits				
Split Name	Time From Prev Leg	O Pos	C Pos	G Pos
6.5 Miles	00:49:17	105	55	97
13 Miles	00:55:17	137	69	126
19.5 Miles	01:03:49	229	94	192
Finish	01:15:54	305	100	220

Finally, evidence of the trot itself. The table at the bottom demonstrates the change between being carried by one's body to being carried by one's mind.

Charles Malet

Gloucestershire  
9 August 2016

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