

NOTES ON THE ORIGINS OF TRAIL RUNNING SA.

Part 1. The Yurrebilla Trail.

David Close

" I know, the Yurrebilla Trail" said Terry Cleary with a visionary gleam in his eyes. The occasion was John Glowik's 60th birthday party in Sally Buckett's home, in mid-2007. This was the conception of The Yurrebilla Trail 56 km Ultra (YUM), and, as it turned out, the start of a revival of trail running in SA. A few minutes later, further discussion was cut short when the candles on John's birthday cake triggered the smoke alarm. Perhaps this was an omen of some sort.

After this evening, Terry spent much time exploring the Yurrebilla Trail, which then was poorly marked, and making arrangements for refreshments. He told me that he was influenced by one of the most famous trail running events in Australia, the 6 Foot Track in New South Wales. On 25 November, he led 22 other runners for a long and memorable run along the whole 56 kms of the trail. Having promised his wife Gay - who organised the catering with great success - that this run was a once-off affair, he left Adelaide immediately afterwards to work in Alice Springs.



Terry Cleary, with myself, Doug Smart and Ken Graham in 2012.

I was at the time bird watching in Peru, but resolved after his return in December that this adventure could not be allowed to die.

Up to this point, organised trail running in SA had a long history - from at least as early as the 1980s. In the 1993, Peter Allmand, formed the Off Road Division of the SA Road Runners Club (SARRC). With help at first from Sally Piccinato, this group covered the 1200 kms of the Heysen Trail in sections (about 20 kms each month), starting from Cape Jervis in May 1993 and finishing in Blinman in October 1999. The Trail was not as well marked, or mapped, as it is now; and Graeme Page produced excellent maps of each section. In 2005 the Off Road Division covered the Yurrebilla Trail, again in sections.



The Off Road Division of SARRC on the completion of the Heysen Trail in Blinman in 1999. Peter Allmand is fifth from the left.

But it seems fair to say that in 2007, the trail running scene in Adelaide was relatively quiet. The only proper trail running events (timed, with formal admissions and services to runners) seem to have been these two, both outside SARRC: the Black Hill Challenge (15 kms, with about 150 people entering each year) and Trailblazer (with varying distances up to 100 kms). SARRC was by far the largest running club, and organised 2 casual social events each year that went partly or wholly along trails (the Easter Bun Run, (10 kms), and Belair National Park (12 kms). Within SARRC, the Wednesday evening running group, and the Friday morning running group, ran into the hills in summer months.

Contrast this with the situation today. There were, by my count, 18 trail events around Adelaide in 2017, many with entries of well over 500 people. In

addition, there was the weekly Park Run in Cleland Conservation Park. There are widely advertised group runs in nearly every week when there are no events on. The proliferation of informal runs by groups or individuals in the last 10 years has been just as great.

Returning to the early days, in February 2008, with John Glowik's strong support and in Terry's absence, I moved successfully at a SARRC Board meeting that YUM become an official event, with myself as race director, which I remained for the next 3 years. At that time, the event seemed novel and experimental in SA.

The first YUM event was held in late September 2008, with the essential support of Terry who in July returned from Alice, without a job but with plenty of enthusiasm for trail running. Only 57 people entered but there was very keen support from quite a number of core SARRC members; so that the event was a real collective effort. YUM has been going ever since with increasing numbers of participants.

After I retired as race director in 2010, successive directors of YUM were Sonya Conrad, Sadie Cranston, Doug Smart and Barry and Bev McBride (for 3 years). After Barry and Bev, the event was organised from the SARRC office. Successively, these race directors built up the event to national status.



Start of the first official Yurrebilla race in September 2008. Some especially keen supporters of trail running are pictured: second from the left, Stan

Trepacz , third Kathy Moylan (in the blue top), sixth from the left Sally Bucket (in the red and white top), on her left Sonja Benn, and on Sonja's left, Kym Williams (in the dark top and white cap). From the right, second is Sarah Murpy (in the red top), then David Close (kneeling), then Sue Tyson (in the yellow top), sixth (head just visible) is Paul Rugless (aka The Rocker), next to him, in the white cap and white top, Doug Smart.



The start of the Yurrebilla race in 2009. By then we were organised in waves, and this was the second.

