

## **Louise Millard, ran the London Marathon for the Born Free Foundation and here's why.....**

In September 2012, as my boyfriend headed off for a six month tour of Afghanistan, I decided (not as a natural runner!) that now was the time to 'bite the bullet' and set myself a challenge. I secured a place to run the London Marathon for The Born Free Foundation.



Training went well, despite worrying about over or under training and risking an injury and the lead up to the 'big day' was nerve wracking.

Race day arrived and it proved to be fantastic. Reading other runners' t-shirts at the start line was incredibly overwhelming – every single person had a different reason that had brought them to this point, yet everyone was united in anticipation (and trepidation!). The crowds were amazing and the atmosphere extraordinary, made all the more unbelievable by the tragic event that had unfolded, only six days before in Boston.

The most iconic memory I have is running over Tower Bridge, basked in April sunshine, crowds three to four people thick and spotting my parents and then only 50 metres further on, seeing my boyfriend and brother; that gave me a massive push.

Miles 15-17 were the hardest, as spectators were much thinner on the ground at this point. Prior to the marathon, I did not realise how motivating the support from spectators are.

My second greatest memory of the day was meeting my friends and family at the finish and seeing the pride in my dad's face – I won't forget that in a hurry.

The whole day was a once in a lifetime experience. There is definitely something very special about being part of the London Marathon, from running the same course as the elite athletes, to the generosity of spectators playing music out of their windows and handing out oranges – it's an event which brings everyone together.

Louise Millard