



The Routh

If you mention 'The Routh' to anyone who has spent time at Uppingham, the image of pupils setting off on an often-muddy, sometimes icy, cross-country course will come to mind, along with recollections of their own experiences running this prestigious race.

Much of Uppingham life over the centuries is well documented and we have a wonderful archive to delve into, despite this, the story of how this historic and well-loved race began remains unclear. We know that The Routh Cup was first awarded in 1895 by Dr Charles Routh, but years of research has failed to establish his connection with the School. He isn't listed as a teacher, pupil or parent.

Cross-country running has always been a part of the School's sporting activities however and, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, races were known as 'Paper Chases'. These events involved two sets of runners, the first to start were known as 'hares' and would leave paper trails behind them, the second team were known as the 'hounds' and it was their job to follow the trails and catch the hares. Allowing pupils the freedom to choose their own routes, Paper Chases were often twelve to fourteen miles long, with hedges, streams and ditches presenting welcome challenges for the runners. The early races attracted small numbers, with as few as a dozen participants, but by 1897, 70 boys took part – the more competitive in stylish knickerbockers and blue trimmed jerseys, others just in their school trousers tucked into their socks. Staff also participated in these events and it is documented that in 1881, J H Skrine (Housemaster of Brooklands) finished in the first 12.

By the turn of the century, cross-country running had become a highly competitive sport and just two years after the first Routh Cup was awarded, in 1897, the first interschool competition took place against Cambridge University. By the early 1900s, The Routh was a firm fixture in the sports calendar. The runs were quite short in those days, taking less than 15 minutes to complete with no deviation from a set route – the days of the pupils creating their own courses around the Rutland countryside were over. Only 19 runners took part in the Routh in 1941, but this figure has steadily increased over the years, as Houses entered teams, competing for a House Cup, as well as the Individual Challenge Cup.

By the 1970s, professional runners within the pupil community took the race very seriously and those less able brought with them a more light-hearted spirit by running three-legged, backwards, being carried or simple walking, often in less than traditional apparel.

The Routh's course is now set at 5-miles and an incredible 699 pupils and 42 members of staff completed this year's race held on 23rd March.

The Routh has seen many changes over the past 128 years, becoming the iconic, all-inclusive event for the whole school community that it is today, and we are sure it will remain so for many generations of Uppinghamians to come.



The Routh, Uppingham Archives (date unknown)

To view a bird's eye view of the gate race from the Routh 2021 and stunning footage of the route [click here](#).

2023 Results

Fastest boy ~ winner of Challenge Cup

A Highfield L6th pupil, completing the race in 30:47

Fastest girl ~ winning the won the EHJ Cup

Samworths' U6th, in 35:53

House Trophies

Highfield won the Horsfall Cup, a record breaking 7th consecutive win
Constables won the Shipton Plate

Fastest member of staff

Gareth Matthews, former Head of Cross Country, in 30:53.

OU

Cross Country Run & Dinner

Saturday 13th January 2024

Your chance to re-live your routh experiences by running a slightly shorter (albeit hilly) cross country run around The Middle, commencing at 2.30pm, followed, in typical Uppingham fashion, by a celebratory and season-opening informal dinner in the Kendall Room from 6.30pm.

The event offers a great opportunity for OUs to catch up with friends, members of staff and make new connections. Partners are welcome.

Email ou@uppingham.co.uk for more details

