

## PRESS ARTICLE

After a year's enforced break due to covid restrictions, Deestridders was able to bring back its popular Couch to 5k programme in the New Year and in the past couple of weeks the Green Army has been proud to congratulate ten "couchies" from its programme as they successfully complete the 5k distance, culminating in graduation at Chester parkrun for those able to go.

Starting in January with sessions on Tuesday and Thursday nights organised by the club and well supported by existing members, participants followed a walk-run course, also doing a third weekly session in their own time, with the walking sections gradually giving way to running.

Some of the group had never run before, others were returning to the sport after a time away but all saw significant improvement and shared a huge sense of achievement as they reached the sought-after 5k goal. They thoroughly enjoyed the sessions (even if sometimes after the event) and found themselves made welcome by the Deestridders and supported to reach their target.

Graduate Elaine Hewitt said "It's been tough at times but well worth all of the effort in the end. The Deestridders are kind, considerate, supportive and give you so much encouragement to carry on when you feel like jacking it all in. They have given me the urge and conviction to carry on running."

Added Gilly Mayes, who completed the warm Chester course on 26 March in an impressive 32 minutes "The Couch to 5k programme really gave me back my enthusiasm for running and realise that we could achieve our goals with the support offered by Deestridders. Every single member has been patient, supportive and positive - this is a wonderful club that encapsulates the fun and mental/ physical benefits of running."

Those who've gone before them were only too happy to be there in support throughout. Vikki Foulkes, from the class of 2019, said

"We graduates totally agree, that's why we are still with the club, through the dreaded pandemic and beyond. Welcome to Deestridders."

Indeed, whilst there was no requirement or expectation to join at the end of the programme, the response from the former couchies in terms of taking up the offer of a free 3-4 week trial period has been exceptional, with many already having had their first Developers sessions (the group on a Tuesday and Thursday night suitable for new and slower runners looking to build mileage and confidence) and some already signing up to join as members, where they will be able to continue their running adventures.

Deestridders organise weekly sessions for a range of abilities and terrains on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings. Contact the club through its Facebook public page or email [nigeparr@gmail.com](mailto:nigeparr@gmail.com) for more information.