

# Runners on their marks for Pilgrim Marathon

THE Farnham Pilgrim Marathon and Half-Marathon will return for a fifth year on Sunday, September 21, at The Sands Recreation Ground.

Since its inauguration in 2010, the Pilgrim Marathon has attracted thousands of runners to the area, and is one of Farnham's biggest annual sporting events.

It is organised entirely for charity by the Rotary Club of Farnham Weyside and has raised nearly a quarter of a million pounds for a wide variety of charities.

Each year the Rotary Club nominates a main charity. In the first four years these have included Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice, Sportability, Shelterbox and Sailability.

This year's main beneficiary will be Combat Stress, which provides support for military personnel whose experiences have produced mental problems.

In addition, the Rotary Club of Farnham Weyside makes annual payments to several local charities using the proceeds of the event.

After the 2010 inaugural event, the Farnham Pilgrim Marathon was awarded a trophy by the readers of the leading running magazine, *Runners*

*World*, for The Best New Event.

Since that date the Farnham Pilgrim has been rated consistently in the top five events of its type in the UK.

A spokesman for the Rotary Club of Farnham Weyside said: "Sir Ray Tindle has been a regular sponsor of the event, together with a number of other local businesses. We are very grateful for this support.

"The local community rallies round to support the event, such as Barry Smith of Sandy Farm gives us a five-acre field to use as a car park, and the local Hampton Estate helps us in many ways.

"We use about 200 marshals around the 28-plus miles of footpaths and tracks of the two courses. These helpers comprise, in addition to members of Farnham Weyside Rotary and their families, help from other local service clubs including the Lions, Hedgehogs and other Rotary Clubs, as well as many other local volunteers."

New to this year's event, Seale Recreation Ground will be transformed into a site with a village-fair atmosphere, with refreshments, sales outlets, a children's play area and live entertainment from the Farnham

Brass Band.

And the event will also celebrate a number of individual runners' milestones, including the original designer of the Farnham Pilgrim courses, Hillary Carter's 150th full marathon and Haywards Heath Harriers runner Mark Johnson's 100th marathon.

In addition, 'Tyre Girl', a member of the Runnymede Runners, will be running the course dragging a car tyre - this her 47th tyre-pulling-round-a-marathon attempt in aid of environmental charities.

And another runner, Robert Young, is attempting to run a world record number of marathon distances in a year, in aid of Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Overall, 20 of the 1,000 runners signed up for the event have completed more than 200 full marathons. But a large number will be running their first full marathon (26.2 miles) or half-marathon (13.1 miles).

Entries come from around the UK and other countries, including two runners from the USA, many of whom are raising money their own chosen charities.

The full marathon runners set



Runners taking part in last year's Pilgrim Marathon

off at 9.30am and the half marathon at 10.30am. The fastest runners are expected to finish just before noon while slower runners will be coming in up to about 4.30pm.

There are still places available

for either the full or half marathon. Entries may be made online at [www.farnhampilgrim.org.uk](http://www.farnhampilgrim.org.uk) or in person on Friday afternoon, September 19, or all day on Saturday, September 20, outside Alton

Sports' shop in East Street, Farnham. Entries are also possible on the day (at a higher entry fee).

Full details, including maps and lists of runners, may be found on the event website.