



## Tom's marathon horse challenge

This year's Llanwrytd Wells annual 'Man versus Horse Marathon', which takes place against a scenic Welsh backdrop on Saturday, 12 June, will have a special interest for Tom Gill (23) who currently lives in Clapham, South London, but originally comes from Stratford upon Avon where his family still live.

Said Tom, who works as a researcher for a film company: "The man versus horse marathon has been run since the 1980s and is the biggest horse race of its kind in the country. It covers 22 miles (less distance than a normal marathon) but with an ascent of 3,000 feet it is more like fell-running over very rough terrain. Last year there were 300 runners and 50 horses and riders."

It's not often two legs can beat four over a marathon course but Tom, after hearing about Huw Lobbs, a south Londoner, who was the first man to beat a horse over the Welsh course, became inspired to take up the challenge in memory of his cousin James Hurd who died at the age of 14 in 2002, after being diagnosed with a rare and very aggressive rhabdoid brain tumour .

"It was in 2004 when Huw won in two hours and five minutes, finishing two minutes before the fastest horse"

"For the last six months I've been in training to take on this challenge of a lifetime. I have made several blogs on "youtube" of my progress and will be filming the event itself."

Says Tom, "James was one of the most wonderful human beings I've ever met. I have always struggled with his death and question why such a lovely boy, who wouldn't hurt a fly, was taken away from us. I am trying to raise money for Brain Tumour Research so that other loving, wonderful people won't be taken away from their families and friends. I'm hoping people will give generously to this as it means everything to me. I'm going to do everything I can to try and beat a horse and raise money in memory of James."

James was two years younger than Tom, he was very caring and had a fantastic sense of humour. Tom has many great memories of him. He lived in York, with his mum, dad and sister Becky.

"James's funeral was in the middle of my GCSEs. A service for the celebration of his life was held in York Minster, where many family and friends attended.

**Brain Tumour Research**  
The Business Centre, Padbury Hill Farm, Padbury, Buckingham, Bucks MK18 2BN  
Tel: 01296 733011 [www.braintumourresearch.org](http://www.braintumourresearch.org)

Tom always said he'd run a marathon for James, but never thought he'd get round to it.

"I often have trouble committing to things that I have said I will do, often not finding the time, but this is a great opportunity to put my promise into practice"

Tom started his training just before Christmas 2009, having not done any running since school. Six years ago he was quite good at cross country and represented Chipping Campden School. Slowly he has built up his stamina. Initially his chest was tight and sore after just 10 minutes' running! Now he does up to two seven or eight mile runs in the week and a 15 to 20 mile run at weekends.

"Doing it sounds and is probably crazy, but trying to beat a horse is a good way to have fun and most importantly raise money for an excellent cause and, whatever the outcome this weekend, I hope people will donate generously."

Donations can be made at [www.justgiving.com/manvshorse](http://www.justgiving.com/manvshorse) and more information is available at [www.manvshorse.co.uk](http://www.manvshorse.co.uk)



**Man vs Horse**

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**Tom Gill**

**-ENDS-**

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## **Brain Tumour Research – background notes:**

**Brain Tumour Research** represents the united campaign voice of the Brain Tumour Research group of charities. The charity was launched in April 2009 to raise the profile and funding for brain tumour research and improve the chances for brain tumour patients.

Charities who have united together to create Brain Tumour Research include:

Ali's Dream, Andrea's Gift, Anna's Hope, Brain and Spine Foundation, Brain Tumour Action, Brain Tumour Research Campaign, Brainstrust, Brainwaves, Charlie's Challenge, Children's Brain Tumour Research Centre, Ellie Savage Memorial Trust, Hammer Out, Levi's Star and The Diana Ford Trust.

Originally set up in 2004 as an informal partnership of a number of UK brain tumour charities under the banner of the United Brain Tumour Campaign, these charities committed themselves to working together to achieve a common goal: to **raise funds for research** into the prevention and treatment of brain tumours, as well as ultimately **finding a cure**.

Each of the members was galvanised into action as a result of personal involvement with brain tumours, having realised that there was relatively little being done to support brain tumour patients or carers, or towards funding research into finding a cure.

Today there are 14 UK brain tumour charities represented within the Brain Tumour Research group, giving the charity nationwide coverage.

In 2009 these charities jointly raised over £1 million.

Funds raised will be allocated to existing UK centres where brain tumour research is already being carried out. Funds will be granted following an invitation for applications and will be subject to peer review.

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