

MAN VS HORSE

With the horses having a break, the runners were able to overtake again, including Robin who at this stage had no idea he was, in fact, in the overall lead. 'By halfway I was feeling good, the horses had to rest halfway, and I was just running my own race and enjoying the views across the Quantocks.'

Meanwhile Glenda and Boysey were now out of the vet check, still the first horse and rider, and gaining ground on the runners. 'I thought, I wonder if I can get past all the runners, but I didn't know if I would. I reached another water station, and they told me there were just a few runners in front of me. Then I came to a huge hill and at that point, I guessed there was just one runner in front of me. That was when I met Robin.'

That hill was Dowsborough, later described by some runners as 'brutal', coming as it did so near the end of the course. The steep incline meant Robin inevitably lost his advantage. 'I was running with the lead horse, but they beat me to the top of Dowsborough Hill Fort,' he remembers.

The course drew them back down into the welcome cool of the woods.

Here the tracks were too stony for Boysey to keep up his pace and the tables turned yet again. 'Robin came down behind me and asked if he could pass, and I said yes, so he went by,' says Glenda. But a final stretch of flat road evened things up: 'It was a better surface for Boysey and I, so we were able to speed up, Robin was sprinting along the road, and we were beside each other, the faster Boysey went, the faster Robin went, it was like something in a film.'

The final stretch of the race took them through a gate and across a field. With the finish line in sight, Robin recalls there was little between them: 'It felt pretty magical running neck and neck with a horse. I wasn't aware I was the first runner, but I wanted to do my best, so was just trying to keep up with the horse.'

Spectators spotted the approaching contenders and started cheering and clapping. As Robin and Glenda and Boysey crossed the finish line, it was a result that no one could have predicted.

'I was so surprised that I had managed to tie with a horse over a 23-mile race in such tricky conditions,' says Robin.

For Glenda, there was a nail-biting wait while Boysey passed his final vet check, before the historic tie between man and horse was officially announced. 'You don't take it in that quickly, I just thought I've finished. I was exhausted but Boysy was fine, he'd have gone on!'

Both Glenda and Robin will return on October 18 this year, to contend the title again. 'It is a challenge,' says Robin. 'But the scenery is magnificent and running with the horses just adds that extra element to it.'

'It's about preparation and fitness,' says Glenda. 'You've got to believe you can win, but it depends how it all falls together on the day, I think it's anybody's race.'

Further information about this year's race, including the best places to watch the action, is available on the event's Facebook group page: [facebook.com/groups/1038387157588816](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1038387157588816)

PHOTOS: MEL ROOPER

