

# Striders of Croydon AC

**JUNE 2013 MAGAZINE**



**Our successful 'mob match' against Blackheath & Bromley –  
March 2013 in Lloyd Park**

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## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Sunday 23 June – Richmond 10K (Surrey Championship & Road League)  
Monday 24 June – Southern Veterans League – Ewell  
Wed 3 July – Rosenheim League – Battersea  
Monday 8 July – Southern Veterans League – Croydon (Striders co-hosting)  
Sat 13 July – Elmore 7 (Surrey Road League)  
Sunday 21 July – Elmbridge 10K (Surrey Road League)  
Wed 24 July – Rosenheim League – Tooting  
Sunday 11 August – Wimbledon 5K (Surrey Championship & Road League)  
Sat 7 September – Surrey Steeplechase Championship – Sutton  
Sat 14 September – Surrey Road Relays – Wimbledon  
Sun 29 September – Switchback 5 mile race (Striders marshalling)  
Sat 19 October – Surrey Women's Cross-Country League - Lightwater  
Sat 19 October – Surrey Cross-Country League – Richmond Park  
Sat 9 November – Surrey Cross-Country League – Wimbledon  
Sat 7 December – Surrey Women's Cross-Country League – Coulsdon

## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER JUNE 2013

The Marathon season seems a long way away now. Congratulations to everyone who ran and achieved their goals whether at Brighton, London, Paris, Edinburgh, Halstead or anywhere else, even Romania (though only a half). There are plenty of reminders in this edition so I won't add to them except to say, from personal experience at Brighton, if you never run beyond 20 miles in your training, don't be surprised if you hit the wall at 21 miles as I did. The fact that you have run one before with no problems is no guarantee you can keep going the next time. However, the crowds and the thought that if I didn't beat 4:30 I would have to do it all over again kept me moving .... just.

I finally finished in 4:17, feeling completely knackered and, judging from the photos, with a 45 degree lean. However, a short rest, a banana and some fluid and I felt fine. So I strolled along the sea front, waited to cross the finish straight to celebrate at the pub with the rest of you, felt a bit faint, and next thing I know 6 paramedics are standing over me asking if I am OK and I am then wheeled over the finish line for the second time in a wheelchair to the cheers of the crowds!! Fortunately at about the same time as Steve Tyler who very kindly came and rescued me from the medical tent. The moral of that story is don't take too long between finishing your marathon and finding a seat in a pub to celebrate your achievement.

Meanwhile life goes on. Thanks to John Gannon and all of you who helped at the London Marathon the following week. Thanks to everyone who helped at the Croydon Half the week before, again a successful event and again very lucky with the weather. The event netted over £10,000: £5000 has gone to the local charity Nightwatch, £2500 to Sandilands and £2000 to Croydon Harriers. The club gained a race clock worth £2000 which you may have seen at the last handicap race.

If you wonder why we donate £2K to Croydon Harriers, who in other circumstances are one of our major competitors, they do marshal a quarter of the route for us, Nicola and Mike Fleet have provided considerable support and advice in getting the event off the ground, but more importantly we can't and don't support junior runners except for one or two siblings of club members. The £2K is our way of supporting and encouraging juniors for whom track-based events are much more appropriate.

### Coming up:-

- The final of the Handicaps on Wednesday the 10th July. It was pleasing to see 47 of you ran in the second heat and that a large proportion of you stayed behind for food and drinks afterward. Even if you haven't run in either of the heats come along and have a go. You can't win the Goodall Trophy but you can win the race.
- We will need lots of helpers to set up and marshall the Race For Life on July 19th, So please volunteer when the call comes.
- There will be a few more Sunday morning runs and rides before August 4th and the London Ride 100. After that I aim to offer more away runs, at the very least the circular runs from Chartwell, one of the circular runs from High Elms, and the route round and over Box Hill which we haven't done for a few years.
- Finally, Striders' very own Triathlon World Championships is now fixed for Thursday August 15th.

May all your runs be through sunlit forests.

*Robin Jamieson*

## THE GANNONS IN ROMANIA (by John Gannon)

When – May 11th 2013

What – Mountain Race

Where – Moieciu de Sus, Romania

Why – Seemed like a good idea at the time

Details – 14k or Marathon

Race Web Site - <http://www.ecomarathon.ro/home>

Now Romania is not usually the first place that springs to mind when considering a race or even holiday destination. However as our neighbours and fellow Striders, Lucy and Swavek, had recently moved there to live and work and were sending back reports and photos about how great it was out there, Wendy and I decided to take up their kind invitation to stay with them, travel around some of the country and to take part in one of the mountain races that are held there in May of this year. I think it would be fair to say that we both wondered what we were letting ourselves in for, but decided that we would travel to Romania with an open mind, putting any preconceptions we might have had to one side.

We left a cold UK from Luton Airport early on a Thursday morning and landed at Bucharest Airport in glorious hot sunshine to be met by Lucy and Swavek some 3.5 hours later. Romania is 2 hours ahead of the UK so when we landed it was lunchtime, so Swavek suggested we stop near the airport for some lunch before beginning our journey. The restaurant that they had chosen in some ways summed up Romania, it was located in a slip road by the main road out of the capital Bucharest to the Airport and the north of the country, when we pulled up outside it looked a bit drab so we wondered what we were been taken to. However once we walked around the corner into the restaurant courtyard, we were greeted with a beautiful sight of a courtyard filled with flowers in hanging baskets and the like! As for the food, it was simple but very tasty, a lot of grilled meats and salads. And that was Romania in a nutshell! Might look a bit dodgy from the outside but once you explore, beautiful! Although it feels like more than one country as it has a more Mediterranean feel to it in the south and especially around the capital, Bucharest, while it's more Alpine the further you travel north in to the mountains of Transylvania.

After lunch we drove north for an overnight stop in a delightful town called Brasov, which nestles in the foothills of the said Transylvanian Mountains before travelling the next day to our final destination of Moieciu de Sus, a small but enchanting mountain village, which was where the race was to be held. We enjoyed an evening meal with a more Italian feel to it (something quite common in Romania) in a busy market square that even with a few bottles of wine plus starters came to no more than £100 for 4 of us. The following morning we woke to clear blue skies and wall to wall sunshine (as in fact we did every morning during our stay) and after breakfast at the B&B we stayed at, interestingly known as a Pension, we took a slow drive up into the Mountains, stopping at several points, including the Castle reputed to be the one on which the Dracula story was based, to take in the sights and views of the countryside and snow-capped mountains before we arrived about mid-afternoon in Moieciu de Sus. Lucy and Swavek took us to the Guest House where we would stay for the next two nights, then introduced to our hosts Natalie and Mehi, who were also the joint race directors, a delightful friendly couple, who made us more than welcome. In fact the house was the unofficial race HQ so we could not have stayed in a better place!

We registered ourselves at the official Race HQ, picked up our Goodie bags, as you get these before the race, which is a much better idea than being presented with them after the race in my opinion, and then spent the rest of the afternoon exploring some of the woodland paths that surround the village and that we would be running over. It was here that we could enjoy the wonderful countryside at first hand and fret over how steep some of the paths were! We later enjoyed a pre-night race meal at one of the many small restaurants located in the village before retiring back to the Guest House for an early night.

The next day was race day, the village centre was buzzing by the time we walked down from the Guest House to the race start. The race itself was either a 14K or full marathon distance with the marathon being 3 different loops over the mountain trails that surrounded the village, with each loop

being roughly 14K, so that the race started and finished in the village with those doing the marathon passing through the village twice. The 14K option that they called The Cross was the 1<sup>st</sup> loop of the marathon course. We gathered at the back of the start. Lucy and Wendy, who was doing her first race of more than 5k for some years, and myself were doing the Cross, while Swavek, for some crazy reason, was doing the Marathon.

We set out at 9am in 30C heat. The first 3K was along one of the country lanes that climbed slowly out of the village. Although the pace was easy I noticed that my heart rate was higher than expected; I later discovered that the race started at 3,000 feet which could have explained this. The country lane soon turned into an unmade road/track and before long we turned off the track, crossed over a stream and then started the first uphill climb, I was pleased to see that everyone in front of me had slowed to woking pace as there was no way that I, even if I wanted to, was going to run up this hill! To compare, take the steepest part of Croham Hurst and extend it by 2K. The path zig-zagged its way to the top or what I thought was the top as we all broke out into a jog but this proved to be a false dawn as there was more uphill to encounter. Some of my fellow runners were armed with Nordic Mountain Sticks to help them get up the hill, I relied on the old fell runners' trick of putting my hands on my thighs to assist them push up on the steepest parts. The top of the climb was reached in 5K where there was a welcome water stop, and then a slow run along the tree-lined ridge where we tried to get our legs working again before I heard the shout, in English, 'Downhill!' Thankfully the climb down was not as tough as the way up but unfortunately for me I could not enjoy this experience as much as I usually do as I had twisted my ankle on a club run the week before and had also gone over on the same ankle during the run up, so I ran downhill like a big Jessie for which my reward was to be overtaken by the world and its brother/sister. However, I noticed that I caught up with a lot of these people once we had got to the bottom of the hill and the route had flattened out.

There were no Kilometre markers, in fact there were no marshals on the course! Let's try that at next year's Croydon ½ Marathon! There were just arrow markers painted on the trail or on boulders beside the route and some tape hanging from trees that we passed, but we managed to get around the route okay, just a case of following the person or persons in front. I was therefore glad that I had my Garmin so I could see that I was by now half way round. Another water stop came into view at about 9K, well when I say water stop it was more of a food stop as there was not only water but fruit and power bars on offer, in fact it appeared that some people had stopped for a picnic! I took some water, which helped with the Energy Gel I had with me, plus a segment of orange and was on my way once more. The course by now was more undulating and we were passing a few farm buildings; however I found myself walking up hills that I would normally run up. I'm not sure if that was down to the heat, altitude or the mega hill we had hiked up or perhaps a combination of all three, but as everyone around me was also doing the same I felt no shame, thinking when in Romania, do as the Romanians! When we reached the top of one long climb and I could hear the sound of the race PA, I knew we couldn't be far from the village; the view was breathtaking at this point but then for me came the worst part of the race, a steep 1.5K downhill that put even more pressure on my already sore and swollen ankle. Again I turned into big Jessie as more and more runners went past me, with some as we reached the steepest parts almost throwing themselves down the hill like crazy goats! I knew that once we had reached the bottom of the hill we would be back on the village road we had originally run up, so hopefully I could make up some of the time, but by the time I did it felt as if someone had attached weights to my quads and it was all I could do to hold my place until the finish where I was happy to have finished, picked up my medal and more importantly, a bottle of water!

I had run the slowest but most challenging 14K of my life, finishing in just under 2 hours according to my Garmin but 2 hours 10 officially, which would be explained by my water stops. I finished in 368<sup>th</sup> position out of 528 finishers of the Cross, with the last person finishing in 3 hours 57. There were 418 finishers in the marathon; the winner's time was an incredible 3 hours 31 with the last runner coming some 6 hours later in 9 hours 22.

Once recovered I just had enough time to go back to the guest house, change and return to the finish and wait to see Lucy and Wendy, who had decided to run together, finish in just a minute outside the 3 hour mark. To say I was proud of Mrs G for completing such a race when not really a runner is an understatement! It was a tough race for any runner let alone a newbie like Wendy, so well done old girl! We all returned to the guest house before Lucy and I returned to wait for and support Swavek as he passed through the village to start the 3<sup>rd</sup> leg of the race. Unfortunately the lack of training leading up to the race and the heat on the day prevented him, wisely in my opinion, from continuing in the



race as he dropped out at this stage, not that he was the only one as the heat did seem to claim quite a few victims.

However every cloud has a silver lining, not that we saw any clouds that day, as it did give us more time to enjoy the post-race Pasta Party that was held at our Guest House, where we enjoyed the food prepared by the race helpers and enjoyed the local wine and a drink called Perlinker! A spirit drink made from fruit, which certainly helped, if we needed it, a good night's sleep! The atmosphere here was really laid back and relaxed as everyone chilled out in the sunshine after the race.

The following morning we enjoyed a leisurely breakfast chatting to fellow runners while swapping stories of each other's race experiences before packing up and saying a long goodbye to all our new friends who said that we would receive an even warmer welcome when we return for next year's race! In fact they added there was no reason to wait for the race and to come back sooner if we could. The next leg of our journey was to spend a couple of nights at Lucy and Swavek's flat in Crioiva, a city more towards the south of the country, before driving to Bucharest for our final evening stop over. Our final night was spent in Bucharest; while totally different from where we had just come, including a very modern hotel, it was not without a charm all of its own and has a very continental feel to it. We enjoyed a relaxing evening in the old town part of the city where we indulged in a very good meal, in both flavour and value, in one of the many restaurants that are located in the that area. We also had time to take in some of sights of the capital including the impressive palace built by the former Communist director Nicolae Ceausescu, which is now a government building, before we sadly had to head for the airport for our flight home.

I'm really glad we kept an open mind to visiting Romania as we certainly had our eyes open to the charms of this remarkable country. Would I go back? Yes. Would I do the race again? Yes; and if I could get myself fit for it, I would even consider the marathon. Would I recommend doing the race? Yes I would, if you fancy something different from the usual races we take part in and a challenge then this is the one for you so come and join me next year and we can train for it by running up and down Addington Hills and Croham Hurst! And oh that hill on the Merstham run? Bring it on!

So many differences between UK and Romania, race wise, this is much more do-it-yourself so don't expect to find any marshals on the course or even around the finish! I found myself acting as unofficial marshal directing runners away from the finish area and on to complete the last loop, just can't stop myself sometimes! Country-wise, the health and safety brigade have not arrived as yet, which is not such a bad thing in my opinion and in some parts of the country they have not fully embraced the anti-smoking view, so smoking is still allowed in bars and restaurants with there being no-smoking areas (as if the smoke knows that!) However that was not a problem in the village as we were surrounded by like-minded runners.

(Details of the race including results and photos, thankfully none of me but will give you a view of what the scenery is like, can be found at the web site detailed at the top of this report)



## ECO TRAIL DE PARIS (by Ian Campbell)

If you like trail running then you are going to enjoy this beautiful route through the Ile de France region of Paris. I had heard about the Eco Trail via a few comments made on Facebook and on Talk Ultra, a really great podcast released every fortnight. The Eco trail sounded appealing and I wanted a target race for early 2013. I checked the website in about November 2012 and entered online. No ballot, no qualifying races, times etc. just pay up and you are in. The 2013 edition was going to be the 6<sup>th</sup> time the race would be held. The Eco Trail is actually a series of 4 events, 80km, 50km, 30km and 18km. I had entered the 80km race, which offered 2 UTMB points for completion.

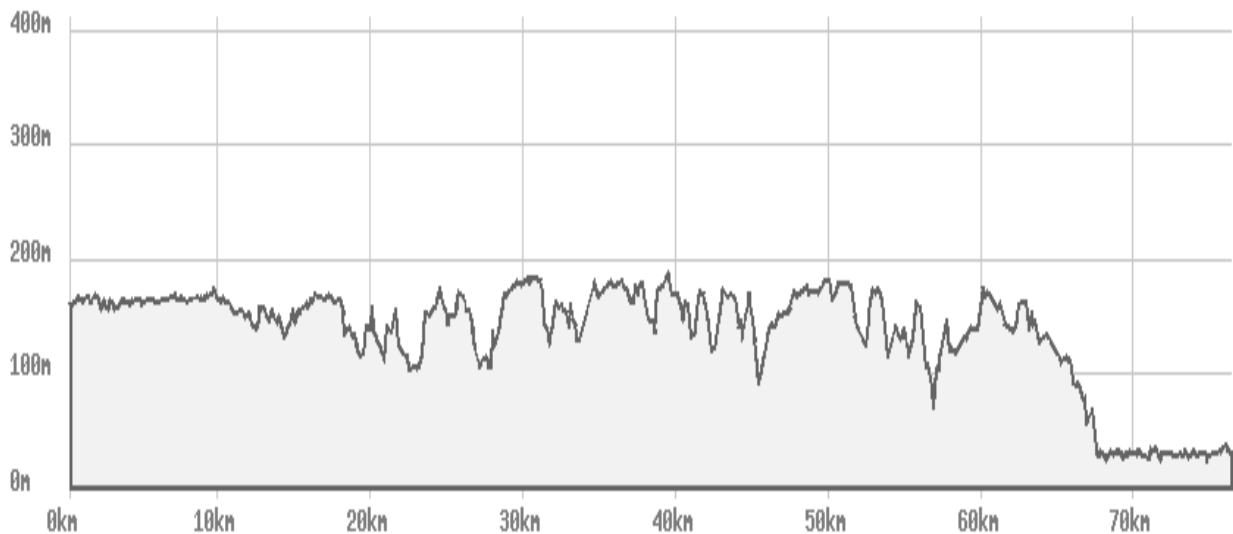
Setting targets is a really positive way to motivate you in your training. But one thing I have forgotten to mention was that when I entered the race I was injured. I had had plantar fasciitis since the end of October; it had actually plagued me for most of September and October but in my determination to not stop running I thought it would just go away. How wrong I was. Eventually I succumbed to the fact that I needed to rest and rehabilitate my foot. Not really a good start to my training plan for the Eco Trail when I did not even know when I could start training. So my priorities were to get my foot in order and then devise an easy training plan that could ease me up to do a 80km race. Timeframe 14 weeks. I was determined that to give myself any sort of chance I would have to start back running again by January. Then I would have 11 weeks of training. Not much time but I have a fairly good level of endurance already so I reckoned I could do it.

I love having a target to aim for, it really focuses the mind and all your efforts towards that goal. So my first target was to actually get rid of my plantar fasciitis and get back running. I examined all aspects of my running and tried to establish how I could have got the injury in the first place. I have had hamstring injuries, knee pain, ITB and even a sprained ankle but did not have a history of plantar issues. I did lots of research on the internet and sent emails to various people I had heard that had the same injury. I looked at my shoe choice, the type of training I had been doing over the last year, my post run recovery routine and even nutrition. A holistic approach you could say. When I really came to investigate the situation I found out some home truths, a) I never really had a proper stretching routine, b) I had run quite a lot of my road runs on the same low level trail shoes probably giving me more impact and the root cause of my plantar issue and c) I probably needed to improve my core strength and stability further.

So my first actions were to take some direct action and so I designed a stretch routine for my calves and soles. This was done three times a day. No equipment needed other than a stair, stretch band and a hard cricket ball. Basic routine consisted of calf stretches against the wall with and without a towel under the foot and heel raises on the step (3 sets of 30 secs each foot), and lastly and most painfully applying the foot on a cricket ball and rolling it along the sole with as much pressure as possible. Painful, ouch! In all cases treatment was to the injured foot as well as to the healthy one. As I was not running I needed to maintain or not lose the level of fitness that I had managed to reach over the summer. I needed low impact aerobic activity, and the more the better. The elliptical trainer! Not my favourite but you know when you are not running anything will do. So I set hour long sessions on this infernal trainer. I tried every program going, even manually programmed sessions but nothing replaces the feeling of being outside with the wind, rain and snow! To give myself variety I started doing fartlek sessions on the rowing machine combined with short burst sessions on the bike. They were hard work but were giving me the desired results, physical fatigue and I started to feel stronger. I had also upped my strength training program as I had more time. Check out various Crossfit routines on YouTube!

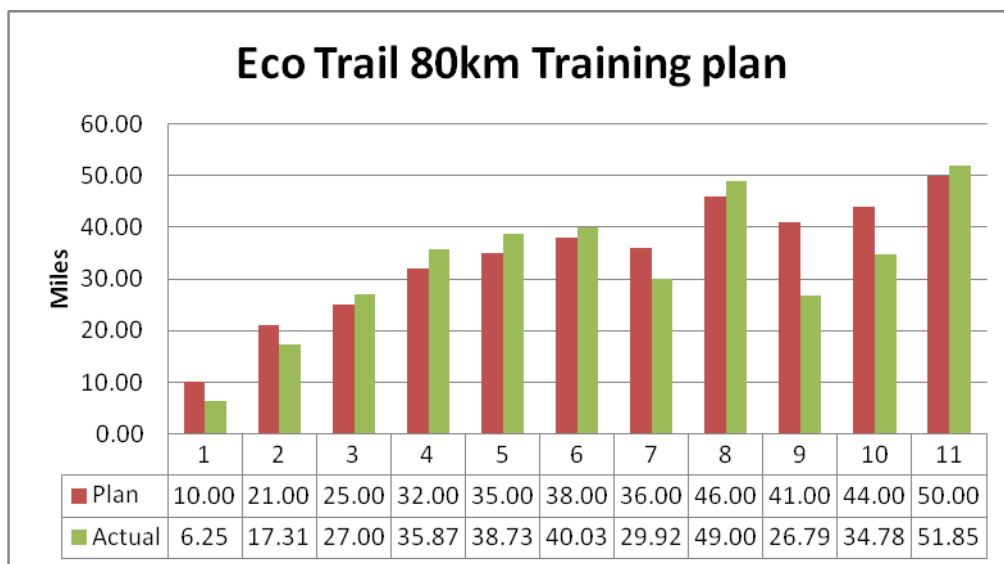
Nutrition wise I decided to go semi-Paleo. I wanted to give myself enough protein for all the strength work I was doing and become leaner so cut out unnecessary carbs like bread and pasta. By the end of December I felt strong. I had also reviewed the type of training shoes and decided I needed to give myself as much cushioning as possible. Two sets of Nike Air Pegasus (Goretex) were purchased and were going to be used religiously. It was now time to go out for a very easy run. Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> December I ventured out in Lloyd Park and covered 2.5 miles in 24 minutes. It was OK but a bit sore. Four days break and then another go. This time I did a 6k run, not bad. I had one day's rest and then 10k. All run at very easy pace. I resolved that I would take three weeks of easy running before incorporating any form of interval and hill work. I wanted to make sure that I did not injure

myself; patience is a virtue and a challenge for a runner coming back from injury, and having some restraint now would pay dividends.  
 Oh btw did I mention the profile of the Eco trail? 1500m of ascent with about 10 big climbs. By week three my longest run was 12 miles and weekly mileage 27 miles.



**The Eco Trail 80km profile**

I steadily built up my weekly mileage, long runs (with plenty of hills) and incorporated mid-week semi long runs. I managed to get out to Box Hill for some hill session work. So everything was looking good and according to plan. I did mess up on one thing. I had planned to do the Steyning Stinger offroad marathon as a good training run but I left it too late to enter so in the end did a 20 mile training run instead. What did I say about planning! Here is my actual training plan mileage chart. As you can see not big mileage but there were plenty of longer runs and back to back runs.



So I was ready, both physically and mentally. So on to the next phase. This is the fun part to me. Getting to plan the race strategy, working out the pacing, what equipment, nutrition, back-up plan.

What is always good fun is getting kit ready. It's an excuse to try out new stuff. Runners love new kit and gadgets. So as well as a training plan I set out to make sure that kit wise I had tried out all the options. The considerations were as follows: profile of the course, how many and where are the checkpoints, what do the checkpoints offer in the way of food and drink, what is the weather likely to be, how long do you predict being out on the course? The interesting thing about the Eco Trail is the



race starts at 12 noon so anything more than a 6 to 7 hour schedule and you will be running in the dark. This reminds me, all my long Sunday runs were done off-road with a headtorch to simulate race conditions. You also need to note that there is a mandatory gear list for the race. So make sure you have it all and you know how you are going to pack it and use it on race day. You don't want to be fumbling around in the dark looking for your headtorch or for new batteries because you didn't put fresh ones in at the start!

All my long runs were with a Salomon pack with a bladder that I intended to use on race day. My long runs tend to be on a Sunday heading out early so that I am back in time for breakfast with the family; therefore I tend to go out fasted and will only use gels after 60 to 90 minutes and then one every hour or so. However, in the race there would be food options available at the checkpoints, and in a race this long you could do it all on gels although you would need to carry them all. So my preferred option is to go half and half, i.e. load up on food at the checkpoints and use gels in between the CPs. I would recommend trying this out in training before race day. I know my stomach can handle most things without any problem. I have even had Sunday lunch and gone out for a run shortly afterwards!

I had worked out a preferred pace for the race and worked out how long I would take to each CP and therefore how many gels I would need. I also planned what to eat on race day as we would have to leave Paris at 0800 so took food and drink to make sure I had a decent breakfast and something to eat before the race.

So now all that was left to do was to go for it. I had planned on a 10 hour finish time. My actual finish time was 10.20.15. Unfortunately coming off the final hill heading down to the Seine my left hip gave way. This meant that I had a 5 mile speed march to the finish. I tried running sections but found it quicker to actually speed march the distance. I covered 5 miles in 75 minutes. Which brings me to another fact about ultra-running: it is OK to walk. The one point I would make is that you should speed march with a concerted effort so you are moving at a reasonable pace and that your heart rate is raised. So even though you have resorted to walking rather than running it does not feel that you have failed because you are still motivated to get to the end at the fastest pace you can go at. I speed hiked all of the steeper climbs, something I also practiced in training on Box Hill for example.

So there you have it..... the Eco Trail de Paris..... really well organized... scenic..... well supported..... and an amazing route through woods and forests to reach the Seine and then travel along the Seine to the Eiffel Tower. This year the race finished on the road opposite the tower due to construction work taking place on the tower itself. Usually, the race ends by you ascending one of the legs of the tower to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, quite a climb after doing 50 miles. So it looks like I will be back next year to do the full route up the Eiffel Tower!

#### My tips for getting over injury.

1. *Be realistic about your injury.* There is a difference between niggles and injuries. I class injuries when they stop you performing your sport i.e. running. If you are not honest about how the injury occurred then how can you treat it and prevent reoccurrence?
2. *Investigate.* The internet is a wonderful thing. Don't just read one article but research lots of them. You won't necessarily find the prescribed solution but you can gather common features in rehabilitation and design something yourself. Contact lots of people and see how they did or did not resolve the same injury. Of course go to a sports physiotherapist but it's good to know something about the supposed treatment plan yourself beforehand. Write down some case history notes. It helps speed up the diagnosis phase.
3. *Set yourself a target.* Have an overall target but break that down into segments. That way you will see and gauge progress rather than waiting for the end target.
4. *Use the down time well.* Being injured is not great but it's also an opportunity to fine tune and improve areas that you may not focus on when you are training. Think about what you want to improve and help you overcome or prevent injury and do something about it. Whether that is a stretching program, strength and conditioning or aerobic improvement you will find it more rewarding working towards your target. And lastly.....
5. *Stay positive.*

# TAYLOR'S GUIDE TO THE MARATHON (by Taylor Huggins)

(A very long-winded guide to your first marathon for intermediate runners)

## Part One: The mindset

On the Sunday club run after I ran the Paris marathon, I was met with a small round of applause as I walked the creaky boards past the few to put my bag in the changing room. It was a bit like the day I saw Bradley Wiggins walking down Oxford Street. Everyone was fighting to shake his hand but this time, in Sandilands, I was Wiggins. Despite my sad bushless sideburns and a nose considerably bigger than his, we could be one and the same, and I am sure we would both share the same warm feeling inside should we ever receive such a reception again. It was a lovely way to start my day. Thank you.

Like many this season, I ran my marathon at goal pace. Some of you may be curious as to how a single middle-aged man who still lives at home with his mum managed to achieve that. My method may not be better than yours but my secret is very straightforward. The key is simple; you just need to be more like me, single. Just believe — you can do it too. So if you are in a relationship, take steps to break up; if you have children you should consider selling them, and if you live in your own house, burn it down. Then, when all you own can fit into a satchel, you should move back in with your mum. This may seem drastic but your Marathon performance will be greatly improved by the absence of a love life and teenage dependants; you might also find the benefit of clean and folded sportswear advantageous too. There are only two rules to remember when striving for a PB. Rule one — it's going to be very difficult for you to realize your athletic potential if you have any sort of life. Rule two — If you want to avoid sleeping amongst the snails in the shed, don't break Mummy's weekday curfew; the door is bolted at 9pm. So don't delay, put all those running distractions in a box now and get on with it. (Warning - if humans are going into the box, remember that a few air holes may be required to avoid a criminal conviction).

If all this sounds a bit dull and you would prefer to ride off into the sunset on a motorbike with a woman's arms wrapped around your waist and a fag hanging out of the corner of your mouth, so would I and the probably the rest of the world for that matter. But, steady on Easy Rider, remember you are a Strider, we were 'Born to be Mild'. Don't go down that road of loose women paid to squeeze you tightly around the middle and pretend that they love you. That is a one-way ticket to financial ruin and mental bankruptcy. In any case, at a pound a mile do you really have enough savings to get you any further than Kings Lynn; and who wants to go there anyway? No, let's be realistic and focus on the positives. James Dean was not the 9th Strider finisher at the Nork Park XC this season. That was me! (In your face Dean).

Who knows what the future holds for us, but for now let us just concentrate on our running. Let us be content with the weekly parkrun update emails and our Kate Bush poster. It's all we need to get us through the hard times. As we all get older we may need our Blu-tac refreshed from time to time, otherwise we will dry up and fall to the floor. (I was thinking of the Bush poster again, although this equally applies to veteran Striders and to those who like a drink.) So let us pick ourselves up, clean up any messy mishaps and continue to support and encourage each other. Let's share our secrets, successes and disappointments. Let's break records and slow down together. Let's be friends and share our happiness. We can achieve all this running together side by side.

## Part Two: The training

Let's face it, running is difficult; training to run fast is tougher still, and reading more than a page on a State education is almost impossible. Worse still, training is a science, and although Striders have some very smart individuals/scientists, namely Natalie the Vet, Dr. Debra aka the Penguin Whisperer, and to some extent (but less so) those who teach drama, unfortunately I am not one of the gang of scientists. I am no coach either, but if like me, you're more Beckham than Hawking and have limited brain capacity for research, you might find my schedule of some help. Below is a link to that schedule.

[http://www.coolrunning.com/engine/2/2\\_4/127.shtml](http://www.coolrunning.com/engine/2/2_4/127.shtml)

This may not be the program for you, but given my curfew restrictions it was the program with the highest mileage that I could manage in a week and still sleep in a bed. That said, mileage is important but it is the way you run those miles that will make all the difference to your race. Sit down now, you will need some blood in your brain for the next bit – the technical part is coming next. Your goal time will have a Minute a Mile pace. Work out what that is. Enlist the help of a club whisperer if you struggle with the calculation. All your runs will be based on that pace either slower or faster.

My goal training times are as follows; yours will be similar.

Slow runs: 1-2 minutes slower per mile than race pace, sometimes a lot slower.

Tempo runs 8-12 miles: 20-30 seconds faster per mile than race pace.

Distance speed work 4-8 miles: 20-40 seconds faster per mile than race pace.

Speedy speed work: 40-60 seconds faster per mile than race pace.

At the start of your program you might not be able to run these times at all, and even when you can you probably won't be able to maintain the times from session to session, I couldn't but that is OK. Don't worry, have faith; work hard, keep trying, it will come.

If you have a stubborn attitude, you will do well. If you teach drama, are a fireman, are employed by the postal service or work for the queen, this will come naturally to you; but if you don't, you will need to work on that. If you miss a session, make it up. If you drop miles, add them on to another session. If you can't make up a session, make sure you don't miss two. Just remember you have the time now – school runs and anniversaries are now a thing of the past. I missed five sessions due to illness and another waiting in line at the passport office. A word of caution; if you end up in the same line one day before your international race, wondering if your only way out of the country might be the way you came in, covered in goose fat floating across the English Channel in an oil drum, all your hard training might go to waste. Organise yourself properly.

The above is not gospel, it's just another opinion, but it's the best I can offer you, take or leave it at your will. However, what I can say with certainty is that all your hard work will be rewarded. Unlike children and lovers, running will always give back to you what you put in. Dedicate yourself to a goal that will not take your best years away from you and condition you to leave the toilet seat down after every tiddle. Be confident that your goal would never get you to install a new kitchen, then kick you out of your own home before you even had one glass of water from your new tap; and your goal would certainly never move in their driving instructor 'Friend' into your bed just the moment after you have gone. Choose your side now, you have been warned.

### **Part 3: The race**

Let's not pretend you didn't spend your youth trawling Croydon's mucky bars looking fabulous. I know what you're like. So you will feel right at home on race day. You will know all about crowds, being hot and sweaty, bumping into people and getting chatted up by people with sometimes unintelligible accents. Looking good is in our blood but if, like me, yellow and green does nothing for you - I have already made enquiries on your behalf. Unfortunately Robin could only offer two words as a design solution, 'Accessorise Darling'. Which was somewhat, but not a lot, more comforting than the two words offered to me by John G. So, if some body glitter and a hair bow is good enough for our leader, it should be for you too! Luckily, it's probably all we need; it is true that the Striders are possibly the prettiest and most handsome group of people ever assembled to form a running club. If you have seen the state of Belgrave Harriers, you will know what I mean. They may be quick but they are a visual embarrassment, take note Mr Morgan. So slap it on and let's get on with it. It's your day - look good, run fast and be fabulous.

Now you may be reluctant to take fashion tips from me, a stinky shed-dweller, but may I suggest that you buy a proper pair of race shorts. Textile technology has moved on somewhat since the humiliation we were subjected to in the 1980s. Thankfully, the decade of terry towelling shorts and McEnroe-styled headbands are well and truly behind us. Fair play to Alan, anyone who can run a 10k in 31 minutes in what amounts to nothing more than a race nappy is due a great deal of respect. Who knows what he might have achieved in a decent pair of 21st century shorts?



**1980s running shorts, as modelled at the 1988 Croydon 10K**

Don't overlook this cut-price opportunity of running comfort; you might never find a more breathable bargain on the high street and still manage to get a penny change from a fiver. Hurry while stock lasts ([www.sportsdirect.com](http://www.sportsdirect.com)).

A word on lubrication – I am led to believe that Vaseline has a variety of recreational uses, but it has no place on a man's foot. Don't be seduced by any pleasure gained at the time of application: you might come to regret that moment of satisfaction at some point in the race. I would leave the stuff at home unless you suffer from cracked lips or nappy rash. (That's not a reference to you Alan - purely coincidental.)

Now you made it to the start line; you are fuelled, watered, greased and looking super-sexy and have a great chance for a PB. When the gun finally goes off, stick to your race pace – don't be tempted to go too much quicker, you won't need to. If you have trained hard, you will zip along the course. You will probably not notice the Eiffel Tower or the Louvre or the man break-dancing on the pavement by the Seine; you will be moving too swiftly for that. At some point you may see a veteran runner in front of you in Lycra: catch the disgrace and pass him. You might also hear Corinne's voice shouting support from the roadside; don't stop – it's not her. It is an imposter: there are hundreds of them out there. Keep going.

The first 20 miles will come and go with effortless ease but ready yourself for the next turn; something wall-like might meet you there. Now it might come as no surprise to you that I have never given birth, nor have I ever passed a gallstone; but I once did catch my penis in my fly. So I do know a thing or two about pain, but surely nothing compares to the agony of those last six miles of a marathon. You will need a mental toughness from this point onwards, a toughness that escaped me on the day. Prepare yourself; it will get tough, but you will overcome it. Keep going.

Now you might never be quick enough to get to the Olympics; that doesn't matter. Some of you may never be brown, ripped, Bond-like, have fuzzy hair or own a pair of Asics, but you should never stop believing. Finally and without a doubt, despite your best efforts, some of you may still never learn to read, but you will finally break your ribbon and when you do, you will feel like a champion and rightly so. I won't try to describe the feeling of relief, pride and excitement that will be bubbling inside you as you cross the line; you will need to experience that for yourself to understand it truly. I hope you get there – it really is something not to be missed and certainly is a feeling worth the expense of your family storage fees. Well done to everyone who ran a marathon this year – it makes you officially a



super-special person. If you're planning to join that club, start planning now. There is a wealth of knowledge at the club to support you through your journey; use it.

So set a goal, train hard and start growing your sideburns out now for your big day (that includes you Serena). Remember all Striders have big hearts and long welcoming arms (I am not sure if they are quite monkey-length, but I will ask Debra to confirm). Win or lose, rest assured that a guard of honour will always be waiting for you back at the club house when you return.

Wishing you success, continued friendship and happiness always.

Taylor x

**Disclaimer:** Writing this review has been considerably more difficult than I first anticipated. I must admit I have had some help from someone at Croydon College (now that place has really gone downhill). So if you think that some of this is incoherent, rambling and irrelevant, you're not alone, I do too, but I paid for it so was reluctant to let it go to waste. If you're offended in any way, don't blame me, blame the student imbecile who has my money.

### Some useful Websites:

[www.kidsforsale.com](http://www.kidsforsale.com)

[www.whoresonbikes.co.uk](http://www.whoresonbikes.co.uk)

[www.vaselineadventures.com](http://www.vaselineadventures.com)



Taylor (third from right) at the South of England Cross-Country Championships

## THE PARIS MARATHON (by Steve Tyler)

Paris. The self-proclaimed most beautiful city in the world and stager of one of the world's five big city marathons. A nice marketing slogan, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder and certainly there is some justification for this claim at least from the bits that I saw in the showpiece centre.

Moving to the event itself, travel was a doddle – in my view, you effectively have two choices namely plane or train. Whilst the train does take longer, it is counterbalanced by the lack of waiting around at the station compared with the airports. So for around £70 return, I decided on Eurostar albeit with an unearthly departure of 07:30 hrs on the Friday. But once settled in my seat, that was it and in just over two and a half hours, the train pulled in to Gare du Nord.

When in a foreign country, it is always best to try and blend in with the locals and so I travelled dressed in beret and hooped jumper with bicycle and lots of onions hanging from the handle-bars. Okay, I'm joking – I went as a gendarme saying "Good moaning" to everyone!

Paris has the usual big city drawbacks the same as London – the ubiquitous beggars, buskers going up and down the metro with their piped professional music and their own out-of-tune efforts proffering a cup for your contributions, dossers on the stations surrounded by their empty bottles and pedlars selling tacky souvenirs.

Schoolboy French got me through although the natives who use English all the time had a massive head start on me. I had my excuse ready "Je n'ai essaye pas la langue francais depuis quarante ans!" Happily this weekend, I didn't have the opportunity to use my piece de resistance "Elle pi avec la pluie!"

My carnet was purchased and I headed down to the metro to work my way down to the Expo. Le soleil brille at that time and it was a pleasant spring day albeit with a slight nip as I collected my number etc. and then tried to find the hotel without properly looking at my map. Hence me alighting at the top end of the Champs Elysee in error and having a long, long walk before cutting across to Madeleine and jettisoning my gear.

An evening trip to the Eiffel Tower which hasn't really changed since I went there as an eleven year old in 1966 and the following day sightseeing on the tour buses around town, taking in the historical parts of the city. However, Saturday showed that winter wasn't over; it was overcast for the most part and there was a bitter east wind especially when on the open top bus.

There were a number of very impressive sights, Trocadero across to the Eiffel Tower and L'ecole militaire (the same view as Hitler took in on his only visit in 1940 mais sans buskers and touts (Excuse-moi, Monsieur Adolf mais voulez-vous acheter un souvenir de votre visite?)), Arc de Triomphe / Place d'etoile and La Louvre looking up the Champs Elysee having squeezed through the arches on Rue Tivoli.

Inexorably, Sunday morning arrived and whilst Robin was co-ordinating the half-marathon, Paris was waking up to its annual 26.2 mile extravaganza – ostensibly a 08:45 CET start (07:45 BST). Runners were penned according to their predictions: it took me around fifty-two minutes to cross the start line – and there were two bays behind me.

It was to be a marathon of contrasts – not what one would expect from a city marathon rather a rich mixture from urban to suburban to rural and back again. And after a coolish start, spring decided to make an appearance to produce a balmy afternoon.

The wide, cobbled surface of the Champs Elysee heading down towards La Place du Concorde. Onwards to La Bastille which is passed twice and was hitherto used as a cut off point. Water is provided every 5k and a cup of energy drink around the half-way point but you do get offered sultanas (a raison d'etre?), bananas and other fruits on the way round. I quickly gained the opinion that the event is staged to show the city off in its best light whereas London utilises some of the older and less salubrious parts in its annual extravaganza.



We headed east, suddenly leaving the built up area and circumnavigated the zoo, heading into the greenery of the Bois de Vincennes with its impressive Chateau to the left. Save for the runners, the silence was deafening and we eventually passed the immaculately maintained Hippodrome du Vincennes (it's a racecourse) before the 19k marker when we returned to the suburbs.

Encore une fois La Bastille at 22.5k and we headed to the river where there were police launches in case anyone took an impromptu dip. To have done that would have been insane in my view! For those who have run London, imagine Blackfriars to Westminster with the river on the left but in this case, a few road tunnels as the sun started to welcome spring. Notre Dame on L'île de la cite plus all the other history on the bank opposite.

We followed the river round to the resplendent Eiffel Tower on the opposite bank and then gradually angled away from the Seine at 31k through Molitor towards the Bois du Boulogne, another large area of greenery. Past Roland Garros (he sends his regards to all Striders, by the way) and then Longchamps around 35k when, barring disaster, you know that you should be able to finish. The wide avenues where the distance markers progress ever so slowly towards the magical 26 or 42, passing the Eiffel Tower (I can't recall any other fancy dress competitor) in the final stages. Suddenly, round the corner the final marker on the Avenue Foch with the finish line in sight and L'Arc shimmering in the bright sunshine a tad further on.

Medal, poncho, kit etc and then the slow ramble to the Metro to collect my baggage from the hotel and the wait at Gare du Nord for my Eurostar slot. Back home by 23:00 hrs and ready for work in the morning!

Well worth doing, this is on the ref's recommended list – I'm going to apply for next year as soon as it goes on line! The race is scheduled for 6 April 2014, a week after the Croydon Half-Marathon.



## THE BRIGHTON MARATHON (by Steve Tyler)

Other members can report this event but it would be fair to say that after a dampish start, it brightened up considerably - spring arrived with a vengeance and it became a gloriously sunny afternoon. A far cry from the conditions we had trained in since the turn of the year leading to a few lobsters on the finishing line a few hours later!



## THE BOSTON MARATHON (by Steve Tyler)

As we bask in our own reflected glory (or otherwise) having completed our own events, we cannot forget the aberration of the bombs at the end of the Boston Marathon. There can never be any excuse – political or otherwise – for such an atrocity and we should remember those who lost their lives and those who have been maimed either physically or mentally for the rest of their time on this earth.



## THE HALSTEAD MARATHON (by Corinne Carr)

A May marathon...so that's after Paris, Brighton and London...hmm...good because I get an extra month of training. Bad...for the very same reason. I find it tough to keep my motivation going the last four weeks. I attend the club drinks after London and feel I am celebrating before my show. Understandably, everyone else is proudly wearing their medals.

12<sup>th</sup> May – I get much appreciated last minute words of support and wisdom from the guys and girls and I am on my way. I think I'll be at Halstead 45 minutes before the race starts. Well, it doesn't quite work out that way. For those of you who don't know where it is, Halstead is 65 miles away, in Essex, north of Braintree, off the A12. A very pretty village ... once you find it. I don't have sat nav, rely on my notes and memory ... and get lost. I also manage to follow the directions to the marshals' car park instead of the runners'. End result: I am 10 minutes late. Everyone has already left and the chipping mat has been rolled up☹. I vaguely panic then remember it's a chipped race anyway so agree with the organisers to deduct 10 minutes from my end time. To minimise stress, I take my watch off and run the whole course not knowing how I am doing time-wise. I solely rely on how my body feels and adjust speed accordingly, something I will definitely do again.

There is no time for nerves to kick in. I just start running asking passers-by if the runners had gone left or right and we all laugh as I try to catch up with the rear of the field. I soon see the sweeper bike and start overtaking runners. That's what I do for the next few hours, up to the finish line. That's the good thing about starting last, you keep overtaking ...

Let me tell you about the Halstead marathon itself now. It is a small event (500-700 participants). The race is mainly through quiet and picturesque country lanes almost all on secondary roads, undulating with small valleys and some off-road. Five water stations serve the runners ten times. Similarly, two sponge stations serve the runners four times. There is a useful service to deliver runners' own drinks to the water stations.

Halstead is a two-lap course although the loops are so big that it doesn't really feel like you're running in a circle. During the first lap, I am taken by the beautiful scenery on a perfect spring day: bluebells everywhere, thatched roof cottages, old church – postcard picture like. During the second lap, I could be anywhere. I just try and concentrate on keeping on going and not being affected by some of the runners who have given up by now and are sitting at the side of the road.

Support by marshals and locals is good. However, further down the field where I am, there are long stretches of road with no other runner, marshal or supporter in sight which I love. I am "in my zone" with no-one else around, enjoy the solitude and self-reliance, taking in my surroundings.

Would I recommend the Halstead marathon? If you like a big event, with crowd support, music and external stimuli, Halstead is not for you. If you're looking for a small, well organised, friendly marathon with a challenging, pretty and hilly course, then give it a try. The medal is very nice and the goodie bag generous. Of course, it helps if you have sat nav to find it in the first place ☺!

Yours, needing to improve map reading skills,

Corinne



## FAITH RESTORED (by Pauline Howes)

I know that race reports and in depth examinations of them are usually put elsewhere, but we feel that the Halstead Running Club deserve a special mention.

The Halstead Marathon on Sunday 12 May 2013 attracted many 100 Club members. It was John Dawson's 399th marathon. Well, towards the end of the marathon with approximately half a mile to go, John tripped on the kerb. John was all for completing (as we all would want to) but because he is over 65 and had banged his head, he had to go to hospital.

We left the hospital after eight o'clock and went back to where John had fallen to allow him to complete. What we didn't know was that one of the marshals had asked that Bill phoned them to let them know how John was. Bill did this and explained that John wanted to complete the run so that he could do his 400th marathon in Furth. Four Halstead members turned out to make sure it was official and to cheer John on. It was all very moving.

This showed the difference between a run that is organised solely for profit, where the organisers don't always understand the importance to people like us, who are in the 'numbers game' and serious about reaching certain targets. Last year there were two people at Stratford who were completing their 100th and 400th but the organisers cancelled when the runners were about to set off.

We are a strange lot but there are lots of us in this world of 'running'. Every so often you meet people on runs who inspire or as yesterday, restore your faith in the human race.



**Editor's Note.** This was submitted by Nick Kyritsis who, as most Striders will know, is a first-claim member of the 100 Marathon Club as well as being a second-claim member of Striders. Nick completed Halstead in 3 hours 48 minutes.

## **SOUTH DOWNS WAY 50 & NDW50 (by Debra Bourne)**

Three days before the SDW50, the BBC was forecasting pleasant running weather for the south coast - about 8-9 °C and white cloud. By the following day however, the forecast had changed, with light rain expected late morning and heavy rain, with strong winds from the south and later the south-east, before lunchtime. Unfortunately the later forecast was right.

Saturday morning was lovely while we were getting ready for the race, and I was able to sit on an outside bench, rubbing Vaseline on my feet, without getting cold. Number pick-up was straightforward and kit check rapid, concentrating on real essentials such as a proper waterproof coat. At 0850 all the runners gathered for the pre-race briefing, including some strong warnings about the likely weather. At nine o'clock, there was a brief count-down and we were off! With my left ankle not yet 100%, and a strained inner thigh muscle as well, I wasn't expecting to be very fast, so I set off at a conservative pace, chatting with other runners.

Weather-wise, the first two hours or so were very pleasant, then the breeze began to pick up, and a few drops of rain spattered in. Heading for an uphill stretch I stopped and put my windproof jacket and trousers on, and just minutes later was very glad I had done so, as the strengthening wind was getting chilly.

Then the rain started. As it grew heavier, I stopped briefly again to exchange my windproof for my waterproof jacket, just in time, as it began to rain in earnest. I had been running with Owen (in training for the Leadville 100, but suffering from a chest infection, courtesy of his children), but lost touch during the brief pause, and dropped further behind a while later when I stopped in a tiny bit of shelter in the early section of the drop-down to Housedean Farm, to exchange my windproof trousers for the waterproof ones – in retrospect I should have done that a bit earlier. I saw Owen leaving Housedean Farm (approx. half way point) as I was arriving, and ditto at the next checkpoint. By this time I was running with Simon (whom I had met running Lloyd parkrun as part of his training for the London Ultra 50K this February), and we accompanied each other most of the rest of the way, finding waymarks, commiserating about the wind and generally keeping each other going.

The wind on the tops was relentless, mostly a strong side wind from the south, but sometimes veering to become more of a head wind. Even on the downhill stretches it made running slower and much more difficult, and uphill was definitely walking only. The sloppy, slippery mud footing in some sections was an additional challenge. I was very glad that my peaked cap and the hood of my waterproof coat were keeping the rain off my face, as it was definitely stinging when I did make the mistake of looking to windward. The leeward side of my hood was snapping in the wind so loudly it was almost painful.

Visibility was down to 200 metres at best on the tops, sometimes under 100m, and we were extremely grateful that, where there was no chance of attaching the red-and-white marker tape to anything, Centurion crew had sprayed bright orange arrows, labelled "50", to confirm the route direction. This was particularly necessary in some of the areas where the trail was not well trampled across featureless grassy hilltops. Everyone helped everyone else with the navigation. One "highlight" was reaching a tied-shut gate, with no apparent signage until another runner spotted that on the far side of the gatepost was a SDW Acorn sign – so we climbed over the gate and 200 yards further passed a very-welcome piece of red-and-white tape confirming we were still going the right way.

At Southease Aid Station I got assistance to drag my warm top on; this made a significant difference to my comfort level when we were on the tops. Either here or at Alfriston (I can't remember which!) there were a couple of runners sitting shivering in foil blankets, and a couple of others, who had been discovering that their jackets were not really waterproof, were tying their foil blankets around their torsos to keep them warm while they continued.

Coming out of the last checkpoint at Jevington, we were please that there were less than five miles to go, and headed back up into the wind and rain philosophically. After a while up on the top, Simon slowed and commented that it had been a while since we saw any red-and-white tape - it dawned on us that we had managed to follow the fingerpost for "Beachy Head and Eastbourne" and we were going the wrong way... Just then we met three other runners, the same group, I think, as we had met at the closed gate, one of whom had a proper GPS map/route. This was a real low point for me as we all headed back up the hill, first on the trail then veering across (following that GPS map) until we finally saw the trig point and the sunken path heading towards Eastbourne. Another of the spray-painted arrows confirmed we were back on track! The other three runners leapt ahead, I followed more slowly, very glad of my bright hand torch illuminating the obstacles underfoot, with Simon just behind me.

Emerging onto the road, Simon expressed his intention of trying to finish at under the 11 hrs 30 minutes mark, and I told him to go for it. Meanwhile, I remembered that I had promised to ring my husband when I reached the last checkpoint, and had totally forgotten, so I stopped and dug in my pack briefly, but failed to find my phone. Getting going again was hard, and my pace was horribly slow. Nevertheless I finally turned off the path and towards the Sussex College athletics track. Passing the car park I spotted our car and veered off to wave to my patient husband before dragging my very weary legs around the track and in through the finish (in 11.41), where Aidan was waiting.

#### Highlights:

- Meeting some great runners.
- The Centurion crew and volunteers. The crew had done a fantastic job of marking the route. Everyone at the checkpoints/aid stations was really helpful.
- The food. Centurion did a great job with stocking the aid stations, including vegetarian jelly beans, green-ear Percy Pigs and cheese sandwiches/wraps. They even provided vegetarian sausages in buns at the finish.
- Finishing!

The weather for the NDW50 was quite a contrast – warm and sunny, but not too warm, and with very firm ground underfoot (rather a change from last year). In fact, ideal conditions for running, as shown by the finish times of the leaders. I however, was not one of them! I ran a couple of miles at the start with Richard Fox, whom some of you will know as a regular at Lloyd parkrun, although he wasn't accompanied by his husky. Soon I dropped back as the reduced training forced by my ankle injury began to affect me.

Considering everything, I did okay for about the first 30 miles, then two problems really slowed me down: my left inner ankle (posterior tibial tendon strain, for those who like to know) started to really hurt, having been upset by a long hillside traverse, and a "phantom blister" on the back of my left heel – which felt like it was about two inches across – started to burn with every step. Even the ice cream cone provided by the fantastic crew at the Caterham aid station couldn't help very much (but it did taste good). At the last aid station I was still on course for under 11 hours, but the combination of the heel and the ankle, which was complaining increasingly about the rutted ground underfoot across the final fields, slowed me even further.

As a final insult, the finish line was a couple of hundred yards further on than last year, and up an incline! My final time was 90 minutes slower than last year, so I definitely have unfinished business with that course.

The biggest lesson? Keep smiling!



(SDW photo courtesy of Mark Fox)



## SURREY ROAD LEAGUE 2013: MID-SEASON TABLES

### Men's League

Club	
Clapham Chasers	93
Tadworth AC	88
Ranelagh Harriers	85
<b>Striders of Croydon</b>	77
South London Harriers	77
Stragglers	76
Elmbridge RR	75
Reigate Priory AC	72
Hercules Wimbledon	69
Guildford & Godalming	61
Collingwood AC	57
Sutton Runners	55
26.2 RRC	55
West 4 Harriers	48
Epsom Oddballs	46
Camberley & District	44
Herne Hill Harriers	38
Haslemere Border AC	38
Wimbledon Windmilers	38
Dulwich Runners	37
Dorking & Mole Valley	29
Epsom & Ewell Harriers	29
Lingfield RC	29
Croydon Harriers	27
Redhill Royal Mail RC	26
Woking AC	15
Waverley Harriers	13
Belgrave Harriers	10
Thames Hare & Hounds	6
Windle Valley Runners	0
Kingston AC & Polytechnic H	0

## Women's League

Club	
Elmbridge RR	83
Stragglers	80
South London Harriers	72
Haslemere Border AC	71
Clapham Chasers	67
Collingwood AC	66
Ranelagh Harriers	66
Epsom Oddballs	66
Reigate Priory AC	66
Sutton Runners	65
Herne Hill Harriers	61
26.2 RRC	60
<b>Striders of Croydon</b>	57
Camberley & District AC	45
Woking AC	38
Wimbledon Windmilers	34
West 4 Harriers	29
Lingfield RC	29
Dorking & Mole Valley	25
Croydon Harriers	24
Epsom Allsorts	16
Dulwich Runners	14
Epsom & Ewell	12
Hercules Wimbledon	11
Guildford & Godalming	7
Kingston AC & Polytechnic H	0
Belgrave Harriers	0
Waverley Harriers	0
Thames Hare & Hounds	0
Windle Valley Runners	0

## THE SURREY MASTERS CHAMPIONSHIPS (by Alan Dolton)

Following the last edition of this newsletter, one of our readers commented that it seemed to be very heavily geared towards long-distance events. That is a fair comment, but it seems to reflect the interests of our membership (and particularly the minority of our members who contribute articles). In the last 12 months, more of our members have competed in marathons and ultra-distance events than have competed in track and field events. Our membership contrasts very sharply with our local rivals Croydon Harriers – almost all of their members compete in track and field events, and only a handful have competed in marathons.

Nevertheless, we do have some members who enjoy competing on the track. For some of our most track-minded members, the main focus of their season is the annual Surrey Masters Championships. Usually these take place at the end of May, but this year they were held on 1 June, at Ewell. Six Striders entered: one of these was sidelined by injury and was unable to compete, but five of us made the trip to Ewell in search of county medals.

Appropriately, the first Strider to enter the action was the longest-serving member of the squad, Kevin Burnett, who was largely responsible for Striders initially registering as a track and field club in the mid-1990s. Kevin currently holds all the club's over-70 records, and had entered seven events, beginning with the M70 discus, in which he claimed a silver medal with a throw of 18.34 metres. He followed this with the M70 javelin, which was the only one of Kevin's events in which he was unable to gain a medal, finishing in fourth place.

While Kevin was throwing the javelin, the track events began with the 400 metre hurdles. Striders did not have any competitors in this, although Daniel Hasset's recent club record would have won the event. This was followed by the 100 metres, in which we had two runners. Paul Stanford was the first to take part, finishing third in the M40 race. Kevin ran in the final race and took M70 gold with a time of 19.8 seconds.

The 100 metres races were followed by the 800 metres, where Steve Massey and I represented Striders. The organisers had scheduled four races, with Steve in the third race and myself in the fourth race. However none of my three scheduled opponents reported to the marksman, so I was moved into the third race. Steve finished fourth in 2 minutes 37.7 seconds, which gave him a silver medal in the over-45 category. I finished one place behind him in 2 minutes 41.6, but as I was the only competitor aged over 55, this was sufficient to gain me a gold medal.

Meanwhile Kevin was competing in his fourth event, the M70 shot put, in which he gained another silver medal with 6.34 metres. He followed this with the hammer, in which he completed a full set of medals by placing third.

From the club's formation in 1982 to the end of 2011, no female Strider had ever won a Surrey championship in any event. Last year Sandra Francis made club history by competing in these championships and winning three gold medals, in the over-55 women's 80 metre hurdles (20.5), long jump (3.09) and triple jump (5.83). Sadly, injury dissuaded Sandra from defending her titles, so this year our women's section was represented by Kim Ford, who had entered the 3000 metre walk. Kim has been a regular competitor in the 2000 metre walk in our Veterans League matches, but this was her first attempt at this distance. The programme showed that she only had one female rival. On the day that rival failed to put in an appearance, leaving Kim to compete against five men of varying ages. She paced herself well to finish fifth of the six walkers, setting a club women's record of 23 minutes 55.0 seconds and becoming only the second female Strider ever to win a Surrey championship.

The walk was followed by the 1500 metres. In this event, unlike the 800 metres, I did have some older rivals. My time of 5 minutes 22.1 seconds was one-tenth of a second faster than I had run the year before, and was sufficient to win me another gold medal in the over-55 category.

While I was running in this race, Kevin was competing in his sixth event, the heavy hammer. This is not held at any league meetings, but is included in the Surrey Championships. Kevin won his third silver medal of the meeting, with a throw of 6.93 metres.

On the track, the 1500 metres was followed by the 200 metres, where Kevin gained his second gold medal of the day, winning the over-70 race in 42.3 seconds. Paul Stanford took bronze in the over-40 category and Steve Massey placed fourth in the over-45 category. This in turn was followed by the 5000 metres. Bearing in mind that Striders are primarily a long-distance running club, one might have expected this to be the most popular event with our members, and indeed four years ago Justin Macenhill won the over-35 race. However, on this occasion, this was the only flat track event in which we did not have a competitor.

There were two 5000 metre races, one for women and one for men. The men's race saw a wide variety of ages, but the women's race did not see any runners aged over 50, so any of our over-50 women could have won a county title. The time taken by these races allowed Paul and Steve to recover from their 200 metres and prepare for the final event of the day, the 400 metres. Having won bronze in both the 100 and 200 metres, Paul saved his best performance for his last event and won the over-40 gold with a time of 60.9 seconds. Steve won his second medal of the day, placing third in the over-45 race.

So our small team of five athletes finished with a total of 14 medals (six gold, four silver and four bronze). Between us we competed in 16 events and were never lower than fourth. Our roll of honour was:

Gold (6) – Kevin 2, Alan 2, Kim 1, Paul 1  
Silver (4) – Kevin 3, Steve 1  
Bronze (4) – Kevin 1, Paul 2, Steve 1  
4th place (2) – Kevin 1, Steve 1

It was interesting to see that our local rivals from the Harriers — who are based at an athletics track whereas we are based at a cricket ground — only managed a total of eight medals (six gold and two silver), and that five of their gold medals were won in field events, whereas all six of our golds came on the track.

I realise that some Striders find the prospect of competing in a county championship intimidating, but in facet the standard was very varied. There are a handful of genuinely elite athletes such as Ayamba Akim, the Woodford high jumper whose leap of 1.74 metres not only won the women's event but easily beat all her male rivals. But there are also many older athletes whose performances have slowed with age but who still enjoy competing: the 3000 metre walk saw 82-year-old John May win a gold medal in 25 minutes 01, while the 1500 metres saw 79-year-old Brian Shave win a gold medal with 8 minutes 23, a time which the great majority of Striders could achieve. Although the sprinting and throwing events were reasonably popular, there were some small fields in the jumping events and also in the middle-distance races, meaning that most Striders would have a realistic prospect of a county medal if they entered the right event. So I would certainly encourage more Striders who have reached the age of 35 to consider entering this event next year.



**Competitors in the 1500 metres, with an age range from 56 to 79, photographed by Ray O'Donoghue. On the right is Brian Shave – a gold medallist at 79.**

# BOOK REVIEW – BETTER TRAINING FOR DISTANCE RUNNERS

(by David Martin and Peter Coe: reviewed by Alan Dolton)

David Martin was a well-known American coach and professor of physiology at Georgia State University. The late Peter Coe, who died in 2008, was best-known as the coach and father of Lord Sebastian Coe, who won the 1500 metres at both the 1980 and the 1984 Olympics, and is still the only man to win this event at two Olympic Games. They combined to produce this 435-page book, originally published in 1997, which contains a great deal of information about training for events from 800 metres to the marathon.

The book is divided into eight chapters, as follows:

- The Biomechanics of Running
- Muscle Physiology of Running
- The Energy Dynamics of Running
- Heart, Lung and Blood Adaptations to Running
- Developing Running with Periodisation of Training
- Developing Total Fitness
- Preparing to Race
- Managing Balanced Training

The chapter on biomechanics explains how runners need to strengthen the muscle groups involved in running, while also maintaining or improving their joint flexibility to help achieve the most efficient stride-length. It explains how poor biomechanics can lead to injuries. The book reproduces a well-known photo of the finish of the 1986 European 800 metres championship, where British athletes won all three medals. The winner (Sebastian Coe) and the silver medallist (Tom McKean) both display excellent biomechanics, but the bronze medallist (Steve Cram) has his left foot rotated outwards, placing extra stress on his lower calf; and anyone studying the photo will not be surprised to learn that Cram's subsequent career was blighted by calf injuries.

The second chapter, on muscle physiology, explains the difference between 'slow-twitch' and 'fast-twitch' muscle fibres. This helps to explain why some runners, who have more 'fast-twitch' fibres, are naturally more suited to the sprints, while others, who have more 'slow-twitch' fibres, are naturally more suited to marathons and ultra-distance events. (And, conversely, those of us who have an average mixture of the two types of fibres are naturally more suited to 'middle-distance' events such as the 5000 metres.)

The third chapter, on the energy dynamics of running, contains a great deal of scientific information and some readers may find that certain sections are not as readable as they might like. However it does contain some interesting information on anaerobic metabolism (as used in short efforts such as sprint races) and aerobic metabolism. The authors comment that 'at marathon distance and beyond, metabolism essentially must remain below the threshold at which anaerobic metabolites such as lactic acid accumulate in the bloodstream, otherwise the discomfort cannot be tolerated for this extended period. The goal of training is to improve the ability of muscle cells to increase oxygen utilisation so that at any particular pace the anaerobic contribution is smaller than before.'

The fourth chapter is entitled 'heart, lung and blood adaptations to running'. It is the last of the more theoretical chapters, and at 80 pages long, it is the second longest chapter in the book. It describes the cardiovascular adaptations to training. It explains how training can improve a runner's maximal oxygen uptake ability (VO<sub>2</sub> max) and can raise a runner's lactate/ventilatory threshold, enabling a runner to maintain a faster pace during sustained running without accumulating excessive lactate in the blood.

After four chapters which have included a significant amount of scientific detail, many readers may be relieved to turn to chapter five, which is the longest chapter and is the core of the book. It is entitled 'developing running with periodisation of training'. It includes some very interesting examples of the training which Seb Coe was doing as a 16-year-old. The authors comment that 'hard work over a long period of time is the primary route to developing athletic performance potential. The art of coaching is to identify the smallest amount of the most specific work needed to ensure continual progress in performance ability. All other training is overtraining and increases the risk of injury, excessive fatigue or the problems of staleness.' The authors also observe that 'unless there is recovery, there is no chance for even performance restitution, let alone performance improvement. Thus, regenerative rest is absolutely essential to the training process. Good nutrition, fluid replacement, adequate sleep, use

of recuperative modalities such as warm and cold baths and massage, and enjoyment of activities that contribute to the wholeness of life beyond running are all important. ... The most successful training plan is one that provides the greatest gains in VO2 max and elicits the fastest pace at which one can race the selected distance. The higher the VO2 max, regardless of race distance, the less the lactate production at any given work load, and the faster one can race before lactate begins to accumulate.'

The sixth chapter is entitled 'developing total fitness: strength, flexibility and health'. The chapter begins with the statement that 'the art of running is a fundamentally simple form of exercise, but it is also highly specific in that certain skeletal muscle groups are stimulated out of proportion to others. ... Athletes with such large imbalances in strength and endurance among major muscle groups have an increased risk for injury.' The chapter is illustrated with photographs of various exercises to improve strength and flexibility (although the athletes demonstrating the exercises are all young and flexible, and I certainly wouldn't advise middle-aged Striders to begin doing 'leap-frogs'). The chapter also includes a useful discussion of 'the dangers of being too thin'. I have known a couple of teenage Harriers who have suffered from this, although I can also think of a few Striders who are definitely not at risk. Conversely, the authors also comment that 'it is important not to be burdened with excessive non-functional weight'.

The authors conclude the chapter by observing that 'after training, probably the most important contributor to improved performance is remaining injury-free for long periods. ... Distance runners who simply run tend to have more injuries than do distance runners who engage in a comprehensive total-body fitness program intended to improve the output capabilities that assist running and that also contribute to overall joint strength for injury prevention. Complete body fitness also includes an adequate program of stretching exercises to maintain effective joint range of motion.' However, runners 'should not strive so diligently for improved flexibility that stretching injuries result'.

The penultimate chapter is entitled 'preparing to race'. The authors devote 25 pages to the various track distances from 800 metres to 10000 metres inclusive, and devote 20 pages to a discussion of the marathon. This includes a pace chart, although the authors' background in dealing with elite runners rather than mixed-ability runners is betrayed by the fact that this pace chart does not cater for anyone running slower than 5 minutes per kilometre (which will give a time of 3 hours 31 for the marathon). By contrast, the pace chart in the book by Pfitzinger and Douglas which I reviewed in our previous magazine caters for runners who are aiming for times of up to four hours. The section on track racing also includes a pace chart, although it does not cater for anyone running at slower than 90 seconds per lap (which will produce times of 11 minutes 15 for the 3000 metres and 18 minutes 45 for the 5000 metres).

The final chapter of the book is entitled 'managing balanced training'. The authors discuss what they define as 'the continuum between adequate training, which brings improvement, and excessive training, which is counterproductive to improvement from any of several consequences: injury, physical burnout, and mental staleness'.

The book does contain the odd eccentricity. For example, when discussing interval training, David Martin describes an interval as the period for an athlete runs (e.g. each 400m in a session of 400m reps). As the British coach Wilf Paish pointed out in a review of the book, most coaches and athletes use the term 'interval' to refer to the break between two periods of running (e.g. 90 seconds of rest between 400m repetitions), and this is more consistent with the definition in the Oxford English Dictionary.

As the book was written in 1997, it is inevitable that a few sections now look out of date. For example, there is a discussion on how soon a woman will run a marathon in less than 2 hours 20 minutes. I doubt whether the authors will have anticipated just how much Paula Radcliffe would improve the world record in the early years of this century, although anyone reading the book will not be surprised to know that her subsequent career was marred by a series of injury problems. The book includes a comparison of the various male and female world records, in which they observe that the percentage difference between the male and female world records was significantly less in the sprint events (100 metres to 400 metres) than in the events from 800 metres upwards. The differentials for the 800m record and the marathon record were remarkably similar at 10.2% and 10.1% respectively. However, since then, the women's 800m record has stayed the same (although the men's record has been improved) while the women's marathon record has improved by almost six minutes. Despite some of the doubts which Western commentators have voiced about the records set by Chinese athletes, Wang Junxia's 10000m record (a 9.8% differential) is only slightly better than Ingrid Kristiansen's 1985 marathon record, and is certainly not out of line with Paula Radcliffe's subsequent marathon records.

This is quite a demanding book, but it does contain a great deal of interesting and useful information.



## 50 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN 1963

The winter of 1963 saw unusually heavy snow: but while football and horse-racing were postponed, cross-country races continued. The Surrey Cross-Country Championships took place at Reigate on 5 January 1963. The senior race was won by Roger Robinson of Guildford, while South London Harriers won the team event. Their team included Mick Firth, who is still active as a coach.

The under-20 race was won by Fred Stebbings of Croydon Harriers. Fred was a very successful steeplechaser and was a leading member of Croydon's track and cross-country teams for several years before moving to Luton, where he later became the club secretary. Sadly, he died in 2012. Belgrave won the under-20 team event. Gordon Biscoe of Mitcham won the under-17 race, and also led Mitcham to victory in the team event. The under-15 boys' race was held six weeks later at Morden. Mitcham again won the team event, and also had the individual winner in Steve Badgery.

The Surrey Cross-Country League had been started in October 1962 and completed its first season on 9 February 1963, with a match at Addington, hosted by Herne Hill Harriers who had used this as their home course since 1947 (and continued to do so until 1966 when they moved to Streatham, closer to their original home). Belgrave won the match but Walton AC, who had won the previous three league matches, won the league championship. Belgrave finished second with Mitcham third, Hercules AC fourth, Herne Hill fifth, and Surrey AC (who were based at Motspur Park) sixth. Some of the leading Surrey clubs, including South London Harriers and Ranelagh, had declined to join the league, preferring their traditional inter-club fixtures. Croydon Harriers were competing in the East Surrey League, which they won in 1962/63 for the second successive year.

The Surrey 3000m steeplechase championship was held at Wimbledon on 11 May, and was won by Fred Stebbings of Croydon in 9 minutes 18.6. The main Surrey championships were held at Motspur Park on 25 May. Croydon's Nick Morgan won the shot with a putt of 14.66 metres. Paul Nihill, who lived in Addiscombe and competed for Surrey Walking Club, won the two-mile walk (13.53.6).

With the London Marathon many years in the future, the major marathon for British runners was traditionally the Polytechnic Marathon, held in June on a point-to-point course from Windsor to Chiswick. It was won by American schoolteacher Buddy Edelen, who set a new world record of 2 hours 14 minutes 28 seconds, becoming the first man to run a marathon in under 2 hours 15 minutes.

The AAA Championships were held at the White City Stadium, in Acton, on 13 July. The three-mile race was won by Bruce Tulloh of Portsmouth in 13 minutes 23.89 seconds, with Don Taylor of Herne Hill placing third in 13 minutes 27.4. Paul Nihill placed third in the two-mile walk in 14 minutes 03.8.

Don Taylor made a number of headlines in the South London papers that summer. On 22 June he had won the Southern 3 mile championship at Welwyn in a time of 13 minutes 31.6, beating Mel Batty and Bruce Tulloh. On 5 August, in a match against the USA at the White City, he placed second in the three miles in 13 minutes 29.0. Bruce Tulloh won the race in 13 minutes 22.4. On 23 August, in a match against West Germany at the White City, Taylor won the 10000 metres in a UK record of 28 minutes 52.4 seconds, which placed him fourth in the world rankings for the year. (It should however be stated that this time was marginally inferior to the British six-mile record of 27 minutes 49.8 seconds, which was jointly held by three runners: Roy Fowler, Mike Bullivant and Ron Hill. At this time, races in the UK were normally still held over the 'imperial' distances; British athletics did not go metric until 1969.)

In 1963 the British and Southern Leagues were still six years in the future, and the main events for UK clubs were the traditional inter-club 'trophy' meetings. The most prestigious of these in the South London area was the Brockman Trophy, which was held in July 1963 at Wimbledon Park, with twelve clubs competing. Thames Valley Harriers won the trophy with 49 points, while Blackheath and Herne Hill placed equal second with 43 each. Of our local clubs, Croydon Harriers placed seventh while South London Harriers were tenth. Croydon's Mike Fleet won the 880 yards in 1 minute 50.1 seconds. Mike is of course a very well-known figure in local athletics: he served as Croydon Harriers' secretary for 38 years before retiring in 2002, and he is still the Harriers' senior coach.

## 10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SUMMER 2003

The annual Dorking 10 mile road race was held on 8 June. Striders did very well to take second place in the team event. Justin Macenhill and Tony Sheppard had a close battle, both finishing in 59 minutes 55 seconds. The judges gave Justin the verdict and he placed fifteenth with Tony sixteenth. Dave Shaw placed 33rd in a personal best 63 minutes 12, and Damian Macenhill also ran well to place 36th in 63 minutes 27.

Striders held an annual inter-club cross-country relay in Lloyd Park on 18 June. South London Harriers won with Striders second. Our team comprised Justin Macenhill (14.24), Damian Macenhill (15.52) and Tony Sheppard (15.18). We also had the first women's team to finish, with our three women running within half a minute of each other. New member Kerry Backshell gave us a good start, completing the four-kilometre course in 19 minutes 26 seconds. Steph Upton ran the second leg in 18 minutes 58, while Emma Haillay completed the team in 19 minutes 25.

The Surrey Veterans Championships took place at Kingsmeadow on 21 June. Striders had two gold medallists, both in the walking events. Alan Dolton won the over-45 2000m walk in 20 minutes 33.13 seconds (and also placed third in the 1500 metres run in 5 minutes 08.83), while Dave Hoben won the over-50 2000 metre walk in 20 minutes 44.53.

The Dysart 10 kilometre road race, which was the third race in the Surrey Road League and incorporated the Surrey Championships, took place on 29 June. Striders had 20 of the 454 finishers and climbed to third place of the 24 teams in the League. Ciaran Osborn ran well to place 13th in a personal best 34 minutes 51 seconds. Justin Macenhill was 19th in 35 minutes 21 and Tony Sheppard was 29th in 35 minutes 59. Striders' women also did very well to place third in the Surrey Championships, and climbed to fourth place in the Surrey Road League. Diane Ballard placed 16th in 42 minutes 25, while Steph Upton was 33rd in 45 minutes 18 and Emma Haillay was 35th in 45 minutes 56.

On 20 July Striders had a good turnout of 17 runners in hot conditions in the Elmbridge 10K. Justin Macenhill placed 24th of almost 600 runners in 36 minutes 10. Gerry Crispie returned after injury and placed 50th in 37.59, one place and ten seconds ahead of club colleague Tony Sheppard. Damian Macenhill placed 60th in 38.23, ahead of veterans Alan Dolton (87th, 39.37) and Peter Yarlott (125th, 41.16). Striders' first woman to finish was Emma Haillay, who placed 244th overall in 46 minutes 08. The other scorers for our women's team were Kerry Backshell, who placed 289th in 47 minutes 35, and Karen McDermott who placed 477th in 56 minutes 27.

The final Southern Veterans League match of the season took place at Crawley on 22 July. Both our men and women had finished fifth in the second match, at Ewell on 2 June, and sixth in the third match, at Kingsmeadow on 23 June. Striders' men did better in the final match, finishing fourth, although we remained sixth (out of eight clubs) in the overall league table. For the first time since we joined the league in 1996, we failed to field any women competitors for this match. Despite this, our women managed to cling on to sixth place in the final league table.

On 10 August Striders completed a fine Surrey Road League season in hot conditions at the Wimbledon 5K. Our men's team finished the season in an excellent fourth place of the 24 competing clubs, which was (and so far still is) our best placing ever in this league. Our women's team were sixth. Striders' first man home at Wimbledon was Justin Macenhill, who placed 19th of the 180 finishers in 17 minutes 8 seconds. He was followed by veterans Tony Sheppard (28th, 17.32) and Gerry Crispie (37th, 18.26). Damian Macenhill was 42nd (18.45) and Chris Morton 53rd (19.21). Striders' leading woman was team captain Emma Haillay, who was the 20th woman to finish, recording 22 minutes 37. Emma's consistent performances over the season won her the individual championship in the women's under-35 category.

The World Championships were held in Paris in late August. Croydon's future Olympic medallist Tasha Danvers (who was a first-claim member of UK Womens League Division One club Shaftesbury-Barnet) competed in the 400 metre hurdles, placing sixth in her semi-final in 55.48 seconds. She also ran in the 4 x 400 metre relay, helping Britain's women to finish sixth in the final.

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