



Striders of Croydon AC

SEPTEMBER 2013 MAGAZINE



Michelle Campbell and Linda Daniel chase Epsom's Jane Davies in our final Southern Veterans League match of the season (photo by Hannah Musk)

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wed 25 September – Striders Annual General Meeting
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 SEPTEMBER 2013

As I ran and cycled briskly round Richmond Park in the London Duathlon this weekend contemplating the meaning of life... No, that's a lie for a start... As I slogged my way round Richmond Park with increasingly tired and sore legs in strong winds and light rain I asked myself, as you do, "why on earth am I doing this"? According to the article later in this magazine it's all in our genes. When we came down from the trees we evolved to run marathon distances so that we could run down the wildlife. Many animals can sprint faster than us but most would drop dead if they tried to keep it up for several hours. Obviously nobody has told the deer in Richmond Park that they are supposed to run away from us. The ones I saw just kept on eating the grass and ignored us loony runners.

Apparently natural selection didn't actually make us enjoy long distance running and in fact probably made us enjoy being slumped in front of the TV watching others run themselves into the ground. This way we save valuable calories for the next time we have to go hunting for food. However the runner's high is real and was to increase your awareness, focus, sensitivity while tracking and hunting for your elusive prey. Personally I think it's true for runs of around an hour or so when I most definitely feel better when I stop than I did when I started. Perhaps it's true up to half marathon or two hours distance beyond that it seems to be much more about hanging on till the finish. Perhaps the instinct is "I've been chasing this bloody deer for two hours I am not going to give up now".

Another experience for me this weekend was the cyclist's low. As it was four laps round Richmond Park, by the time I was on my third lap slogging along at about 12mph most of the cyclists were streaming past me at more like 20mph. Instead of being motivating to raise my pace I felt I may as well just enjoy the scenery. Perhaps the instinct is that once you realise you have lost touch with the pack that is hunting the deer you may as well just jog/coast along at the back and hope you can get a few scraps at the kill. It was about this point I started to think a bacon sandwich from the stall at the finish wouldn't be a bad idea.

And the final stage... when you get off the bike to run the last 5K and discover your legs no longer function properly, or you hit the wall in the marathon sometime after 20 miles and still keep going against all logic. I reckon it must be the realisation that if you don't keep going the lion which has been tracking the pack of humans, tracking the deer is going to get you and if you don't keep going it's curtains. In my case it was the feeling that if I gave up and walked I would never get that bacon sandwich.

Forgetting our hunter-gatherer origins, I think any kind of endurance exercise out of doors is instinctively satisfying as long as you stay within but keep pushing your limits and of course avoid getting injured. Which would of course been curtains 100,000 years ago and now just means you can put your feet up and watch other people doing it after hunting down your favourite food in Tesco.

May all your runs be through sunlit forests.

Robin Jamieson

PLANNED RUNS FOR MARATHON TRAINING SEASON 2014

The very provisional list of runs for the coming marathon training season. We are starting even earlier than previous year starting with the run back from Coulsdon at the beginning of November. The full details, route maps and the alternative public events will be published on the website in the next week or two.

Sun-03-Nov	Coulsdon 11	Run back from Coulsdon via the LOOP
Sun-10-Nov	Usual Sunday Run	
Sun-17-Nov	Beckenham 10 or 12	An extended run from the club house via Cator Park, Beckenham and Kelsey Park.
Sun-24-Nov	Usual Sunday Run	
Sun-01-Dec	Oxted 11	Run back from Oxted via the Vanguard way
Sun-08-Dec	Usual Sunday Run	
Sun-15-Dec	Farleigh 12	Extended run out towards Farleigh and Chelsham common and back via Featherbed lane
Sun-22-Dec	Usual Sunday Run	
Sun-29-Dec	Greenwich 6,12 or 13	The annual outing from London Bridge to Greenwich and back, finishing with English Breakfast at the Cafe Rouge
Wed-01-Jan	Addington 4	The annual club fun event where you work out your own handicap.
Sun-05-Jan	White bear / Coney hall 13	The Arctic 13 – Up Featherbed Lane to the White Bear, across to Coney Hall, past the end of North Pole Lane and back via West Wickham passing Iceland en route.
Sun-12-Jan	Wandle 14	Catch the train to Clapham and run back along the Wandle Way. Flat off road and opportunities to catch the tram.
Sun-19-Jan	Keston Ponds 6 or 14	Either run from the clubhouse or meet at sparrows Den for a circuit of the Bromley Three commons route past Keston Ponds.
Sun-26-Jan	Merstham 15	Catch the train to Merstham and run back along the North Downs Way, Then past Woldingham School, up to Warlingham.
Sun-02-Feb	Riddlesdown 14	Out to Riddlesdown via Kingswood and back via South Croydon
Sun-09-Feb	Warlingham to Sparrows Den 16	Run from the Club house via Warlingham, Little Farleigh and Sparrows Den.
Sun-16-Feb	London Bridge 16	For those not running the Brighton Half the longer version of the Beckenham 12.
Sun-23-Feb	Coulsdon 17	Start at Coulsdon to join Merstham route.
Sun-02-Mar	High Elms 17	Extended Keston run as far as High Elms
Sun-09-Mar	Regents Canal 18	Catch the train to Victoria. Run down the Thames to Lime House, follow the Regents Canal back to Paddington Basin, across Hyde Park and Finish on the Mall where the VLM will finish.
Sun-16-Mar	Kingston 11, 16 or 21	The reverse of previous years, Start from Kingston with a loop of Hampton court and Bushey Park then back down the Thames path to Clapham Junction with options to drop out at Richmond or other stations or if you drove to Kingston double back at Richmond.
Sat-23-Mar	Botley Hill 19	From the club house out to Botley Hill Farm.....and back.
Sun-30-Mar	Croydon Half	
Sun-06-Apr	Brighton Marathon	
Sat-13-Apr	London Marathon	
Sat-20-Apr	Easter Sunday	

Robin

FUND-RAISING FOR THE MO FARAH FOUNDATION

(by Jonny Burke)

I took part in the inaugural 10k for the Mo Farah Foundation on Sunday August 11th in Bushy Park. It was a blistering hot day and I only managed to get round in 50 minutes but the surprise for me was that I ended up being the top fundraiser managing to raise £641 for kids in Somalia. My website is still good to take donations and is below along with another website about the event and a picture of me crossing the line.

www.justgiving.com/jonathan-burke

<http://www.mofarahfoundation.org.uk/events/bushy-park-10km-sponsored-run/>

As the top fundraiser I was told I would get a call from Mo himself! I felt quite nervous about this. Last Saturday I got a call from an unknown mobile number so I let it ring. It was Mo leaving a message to thank me for the great work I had done raising money for the foundation and that he would try to phone me the next day. I sent a text message a short while later and he called back.

I was on for 5 minutes, he thanks me again and it turned out he was in the Pyrenees doing altitude training. He is focusing on the Commonwealth games which take place next year. I said how I had been inspired by his achievements at London 2012 not to mention the Worlds and wished him many more golds in the future. I said I would raise £1,000 next time if he beat the 5K world record to which he laughed and said he would do his best.



THE EXERCISE PARADOX (by Daniel Lieberman)

Humans are endurance champs – why do we hate exercise?

(An interview borrowed from the June 6th New Scientist, and reproduced with their permission, at the suggestion of our Chairman)

*Exercise confers huge health benefits, so why does it often feel like such a chore? Evolutionary biologist **Daniel Lieberman** explains the paradox.*

Why did you start to study the evolution of running and exercise?

I got interested in how we hold our heads still when we run. It began when my colleagues and I were doing some experiments with pigs as models. It is very uncomfortable to watch a pig run: its head bobs all over the place. But animals that are good at running, like us, are extremely good at keeping the head still, because it is important for gaze stabilisation. We started thinking about humans and chimps, and came up with hypotheses about how we evolved head stabilisation to run.

Why do you think head stabilisation evolved for running, and not another form of movement?

If you watch someone with a ponytail running, the ponytail bobs up and down. That's because of the pitching forces acting on the head. The head itself stays very stable. There are special mechanisms – the semicircular canals in human heads are greatly enlarged relative to apes, for instance – that give us a much greater ability to perceive and react to rapid accelerations of the head. Walking does not create such accelerations. And I don't think our ancestors were jumping on trampolines or hitting each other on the head so much. The only explanation we can come up with is running.

Being able to run is one thing – how did we then go on to become endurance athletes?

We evolved from very non-active creatures. A typical chimp will walk 2 to 3 kilometres a day, run about 100 metres and climb a tree or two. Your average hunter-gatherer walks or runs 9 to 15 kilometres per day, and we have all these features in our bodies, literally from our heads down to our toes, that make us really good at long-distance walking and running. I and my colleagues at the University of Utah, Dennis Bramble and David Carrier, think the key advantage for humans was persistence hunting, whereby you run very long distances to chase animals in the heat and run them into heat stroke. We can run for very long distances, marathons in fact, at speeds at which other animals have to gallop. That's not an endurance gait for quadrupeds, because they cool by panting – short shallow breaths. You can't pant and gallop at the same time. If you make an animal gallop in the heat for 15 minutes or so, on a hot day, you'll kill it.

But we have adaptations for this kind of endurance running?

Yes. Our bodies are loaded with all kinds of features: short toes that require less energy to stabilise and generate less shock when running; the Achilles tendon that stores and releases energy appropriately as we run; the large gluteus maximus muscles that steady the trunk; and stabilisation of the head. I'm a middle-aged professor, I'm not a great specimen of an athlete, but I can easily run a marathon at a speed that would cause a dog my size to gallop.

What's your best marathon time?

[Laughs] 3 hours and 34 minutes. There are guys who can run almost twice as fast as me.

Why, in spite of our adaptations, have we gone from endurance athletes to couch potatoes?

It was incredibly recently in history that a large number of humans have been freed from having to do physical activity. My argument, from an evolutionary perspective, would be that not having regular physical activity every day is pathological and abnormal. In a lot of medical studies, we compare people who are

sick with controls. But who are those controls? They are relatively sedentary Westerners. I'd argue that we are comparing people who are sick to people who are abnormal and semi-pathological.

If being inactive is pathological and abnormal, then how come we hate exercise so much?

There was never any evolutionary selection pressure to make us like exercise. If you are a Neanderthal or *Homo erectus* or an early modern human, you didn't think, "Gee, I'm going to go for a run so that I'm not going to get depressed". They had to go long distances every day in order to survive. Not exercising was never an option, so there was never any selection pressure to make people like exercise. On the contrary, there was probably selection to help people avoid needless exercise when they could. Some hunter-gatherers had diets of about 2200 calories a day. When your energy intake is that low, you can't afford to go for a jog just for fun.

So evolution selected for traits that made us relax or be lazy?

Of course. Just like any time you crave sugary, fatty foods – that would have been advantageous for early humans. It's only now that they have become maladaptive. When you walk into a train station and there is a staircase and an escalator, your brain always tells you to take the escalator. Given a choice between a piece of cake and a carrot, we always go for the cake. It's not in your best interest, but it's probably a very deeply rooted evolutionary instinct.

What are the consequences of the modern sedentary lifestyle?

It's hard to think of one disease that is not affected by physical activity. Take the two major killers: heart disease and cancer. The heart requires exercise to grow properly. Exercise increases the peripheral arteries and decreases your cholesterol levels, it decreases your risk of heart disease by at least half. Breast cancers and many other reproductive tissue cancers also respond strongly to exercise. Other factors being constant, women who have engaged in regular vigorous exercise have significantly lower cancer rates than women who have not. Colon cancer has been shown to be reduced by up to 30 per cent by exercise. There are also benefits for mental health – depression, anxiety, the list is incredibly long.

What can we do about our maladaptive traits?

If we want to practice preventive medicine, that means we have to eat foods that we might not prefer, and exercise when we don't want to. The only way to do that is through some form of socially acceptable coercion. There is a reason why we require good food and exercise in school – otherwise the kids won't get enough of it. Right now we are dropping those requirements around the world. If we are going to solve these health problems, we have to push ourselves to act in our own self-interest. As a society, as a culture, we have to somehow agree that it's necessary or face the consequence – which is billions of unfit, overweight people.

Has evolution given us any instincts that promote exercise?

Yes. It's important to recognise that the body isn't adapted only in one way or another. There are multiple competing adaptations. While it's true that many of our instincts are to not like exercise, we also have other adaptations that make us enjoy exercise. The most obvious example is the runner's high.

What's the evolutionary advantage of the runner's high?

Imagine you are chasing an animal, and you have to keep going. When you are chasing, you are usually also tracking, which is all about observation. You are looking for clues in the environment. What does a runner's high do? It makes everything more intense. It stimulates your perception and your sensory awareness. I can give you an example: I ran the London marathon a few years ago, and as I was nearing the finish I remember running by Big Ben and thinking, "Wow, Big Ben is really big." And then I remember thinking to myself, "Oh, I must be high."

THE LAKELAND 50 (by Debra Bourne)

The Lakeland 50 (or “Ultra Tour Lake District 50”) was always going to be the most demanding of my five 50-milers this year, particularly in terms of the terrain (more than 3,000 metres of ascent and descent, a lot of stony trails with easy-to-trip-on rocks), but also due to the need for navigation and the strong probability of this being compounded by finishing the last miles in the dark. This was also, however, the route most likely to provide outstanding views (weather permitting), it was in a location – the Lake District – which I love, and it’s the race which lured me into ultra running, when I first heard about it and thought “I want to do that!”

On the day, all of the above, and more, were incorporated into an amazing experience.

Like many competitors, I suspect, I spent the weeks before the race scanning the weather forecast daily, rejoicing when it appeared we would not be running in temperatures up in the high 20s, and then shrugging philosophically when it became apparent that it would probably rain: this IS the Lake District; rain is expected.

Arriving in Conistown on Friday evening, I went to register, which involved being weighed (and acquisition of a lime green wristband with my weight written on it in indelible marker), identification / registration, kit check (at which I was advised to carry a back-up bottle of water, if possible, not just always intend to have extra in my drinks bladder), hand-over of goodie bag, and finally acquisition of another band round my wrist, this one attaching the SportsID dibber which would be used to check me into each of the aid stations. With everyone wearing these wristbands it was easy to spot fellow runners – not so much a “Band of Brothers” as a “Brotherhood of Bands.”

Morning briefing included a reminder that the compulsory kit was carried for our own safety, not to satisfy the sadistic impulses of the organisers and slow us all down, then we piled onto the coaches for the long trip to Dalemmain, during which I realised I should have put more fluid in my drinks bladder – I’d calculated for Dalemmain to Howtown and not considered the two hours of coach ride and standing about before the start... At Dalemmain, while standing in the inevitable queues for the Portaloos, we cheered on each 100-mile runner as they came into the checkpoint. Finally, with 10 minutes to go, some sort of signal passed and we drifted towards the start, “dibbing in” as we entered the roped-off holding area. I met up with Emiko (who I first met at the 2012 London Ultra, and had seen on the recce), and we set off together. I clutched my route book and map, but I didn’t use the map at all and only used the route book in the later stages.

The initial loop round the Dalemmain estate was hot, my left foot was aching, as it had been on the bus, and my pace was slow. We were running across fields, with some rutted ground, hidden in grass, to trip the unwary, and some stiles to hold everyone up. Emiko soon started to pull ahead of me. Across the fields, through Pooley Bridge and then up the long incline onto the fell. The sun was quite hot and I was very glad I’d chosen to wear my Halo headband (I didn’t get any sweat in my eyes) and my Rohan baseball cap with a cloth section which drapes over the back of the neck. Several times during the race, when we passed a stream, I dunked the hat and put it back on soaking wet, which did help to cool me a bit.

In the Dalemmain-to-Howtown section I was just following other runners, which made for ease of navigation, but I would have no idea where I was going if I tried to recce that section alone! The inside of my left foot really was aching on this section (although no more than it had been doing in the bus) and I started to worry whether it would hold up for the rest of the race. Also in the last mile or so the pad on the back of my right foot (I’d put pads over both Achilles’s tendons, to prevent any problems with pressure points or “invisible blisters”) started to rub on the inside of the ankle. However, I got to Howtown with a few mouthfuls of fluid still in my drinks bladder, grabbed drinks, filled the bladder (adding my Elete electrolytes), ate a flapjack, and Vaseline’d the sore area on the right ankle to reduce the rubbing, which stung worse initially but then seemed to help. The crew at Howtown had put up a mixture of inspirational and funny slogans on the route in and out, including “It seemed like a good idea in September...”

Out of Howtown and into the first real climb over High Kop and the highest point of the course at 670 m, then into the descent, first gradual, then after the right turn (vaguely marked by a few stones, not really a cairn) more steeply descending towards Haweswater. At this point I was very glad I'd done the recce five weeks previously, as this all looked familiar and I definitely remembered bits like the gate through the deer fencing, and the scramble down the boulders near the waterfall, so I was sure I was on the correct path despite five extra weeks of growth by the bracken, which was high enough that you couldn't see the actual ground ahead of your feet, increasing the risk of tripping over stones.

Onto the flat section alongside Haweswater, 6 km where you'd think you could get a decent run, but keep losing your rhythm to climb over boulders. Had my first bad trip-and-nearly-fall, but managed to run out of it. Also had an amazing experience: a lizard, only about six inches long, crossed the track ahead of me and I had to pause for a second to let it finish crossing. This section is single-track, making it difficult to pass people, but everyone was very good about squeezing to one side for a faster-moving runner. I felt somewhat guilty when this was 100-mile runners giving way to me, particularly when I knocked against someone's walking pole, but I made sure to thank each person as well as calling extra encouragement to the 100-milers. One 50-mile runner I passed had run out of water, with still a couple of miles to go to Mardale Head, so I gave her my emergency 300 mL bottle; the fluid in my drinks bladder lasted me fine and it wasn't empty when we reached the checkpoint. I saw Emiko here (just about ready to leave the checkpoint as I arrived), for the last time before the finish (she unexpectedly came in after me, due to a route error).

After drinking water and soup, filling my drinks bladder and refilling my emergency water bottle, I grabbed a cheese sandwich and headed back out – on another long climb up Gatesgarth Pass, before a descent and another climb – lots of those on this course! At one point I had to drive away some freshly-shorn sheep which were getting much too interested in the gate that runners were passing through. Kentmere Institute had some good food, including fruit smoothies, but awful music, which drove me back out as quickly as I could grab the food and refill my fluids – this was where I first met Sheila (see later), who also didn't like the music. Then up again to Garburn Pass before the long gentle descent to Troutbeck – along this section I was able to call ahead and assist one of the 100-mile runners not to take a wrong turning. It rained very hard for a while and I put my jacket on while the rain lasted, despite the heat, to avoid the risk of being soaked through and then getting chilled if the air temperature dropped (I've skirted hypothermia before and it's no fun). Up again then down through Skelghyll Woods, where a runner called from behind that I was taking the wrong path but I yelled back what I'd been taught on the last recce: the right path after Jenkins Crag is a longer route but less steep and a lot easier to descend. He thanked me as he passed: "this path is much easier!" Then into Ambleside, running through and being cheered by lots of people, and to the checkpoint, first being met by my husband, then up the steps (!) into the Parish Centre, which had some good food but was hot and again filled with loud music, so I didn't linger. A quick kiss from Aidan and I was off again, telling him to expect me in Coniston about 90 minutes or so after I left Tilberthwaite.

Through the park and up the track to Loughrigg, a path very familiar to me from lots of walks, then after the stepping stones diverting left alongside the wall. I was determined to keep Sheila in sight on this bit because on the last recce I'd got confused by the lefts and rights at the end and I didn't want to be alone when I met the junctions again. In the end we were both hesitating but another runner said "this way!" and we both followed him. Sheila dropped back for a while due to a call from her seven-year-old daughter, and I ran alone for most of the section alongside the river, although with some other runners a little way ahead for most of it. I was pleased to discover I knew this part of the route well by now. Sheila caught up with me towards the end and spurred ahead in the last couple of hundred yards to the checkpoint at Chapel Stile.

Here Sheila and I decided that as we were travelling about the same speed, and it was getting dark, and two heads would be better than one for navigation, we'd buddy up. We were shortly joined by another woman and climbed up to the summit of Side Pike Pass together. The rain picked up again and I paused to get my jacket on. I was very grateful for my previous recces, as at the pass I remembered exactly where the route went so we crossed the road with confidence and turned off at the footpath sign sure we were on the correct path. We were even able to jog some sections! At the far end of Blea Tarn I'd somehow forgotten about the woods (Sheila remembered them) but did remember not to continue on the path over the bridge but rather to veer right through the gate for the "interesting" bit

contouring around the hill and through the bracken, making sure to stay above the worst of the bog. Horrible footing of boulder-strewn path overhung by concealing bracken, but we navigated it well, through the final bit of impossible-to-avoid bog and straight over the road to the dibber point, hitting it dead on. Looking back, we could see lots of headtorches of other runners traversing the hillside behind us. By now we were in a group of about six and we ran down the road and over the stone bridge to head up the track towards Tilberthwaite. Along here, I helped a toad across the road so it didn't get squished by all the feet (Sue told me that later there were lots of them).

Into Tilberthwaite aid station and we didn't hang around very long before setting off up the steps. This section needed more navigation: I spotted one junction which Sheila, in front of me, had missed, and Sheila found the next next natural route marking of a "lone tree" where we needed to cross a beck. As we climbed we were joined by several more runners until there was a group of six to eight of us again, all very pleased not to be up there in the dark alone. We jogged where the path was clearer, walked where it was more broken. Some runners were much more confident on the broken terrain than I was, particularly as we headed down the far side, and they pulled ahead. Pausing a moment and looking around, there was an amazing broken line of gleaming head torches winding down the hillside both above and below us. As we reached the clear trail and I looked at the roadbook one last time to double-check that we were headed in the right direction, one of the others said "this way!" and everyone else went pelting after him. By the time I'd closed the roadbook and looked around they were well in front. It was a bit surreal running down the track, with occasional glimpses of reflective bits on the backs of packs, and lots of twin reflections from the eyes of sheep sheltering against the wall by the side of the road – they had obviously worked out that the mad humans were mostly harmless, and barely bothered to look at us as we passed.

Finally I was on the last bit of road, running past the Black Bull, over the road bridge (thank you to the people quietly supporting from the shelter of the garage), down the road to the school and under the finish gantry, dibbing in before looking round for my husband. On into the hall, to the applause that was given to each finishing runner, wrist bands cut off, I collected my timing report (finished in 13.23.37, 188th out of 587 starters), medal and T-shirt, and looked for Aidan again. Still no sign, inside or out, so I called and found he was just leaving the B&B – I'd been faster than I'd expected over the last hill, taking only 75 not 90 minutes.

After an hour or so in the finish hall, eating a yummy baked potato with cheese, followed by ice cream with tinned mandarins, cheering in each finishing runner and generally unwinding, my husband led me through pouring rain to our B&B, a hot shower and bed where with aching feet and restless legs I barely dozed between 3.30 and 7.30 before I finally gave up, got dressed, and went down to ask for some newspaper to stuff my shoes!

Best bits: the views, the amazing lizard, the companionship and camaraderie.

Worst bits: the sapping heat at the start, the final dark descent over the rocks – I hate that path even in the light.

Will I do it again? Probably – I'd like to tackle it when fully fit and properly trained, see if I can come in at under 12 hours.

HIGH-INTENSITY INTERVAL TRAINING (by Alan Dolton)

One of our women has asked me if I could write a brief article about 'high-intensity interval training'. This is a form of training which alternates periods of short intense anaerobic exercise with short recovery periods, usually involving jogging or walking. The entire session usually lasts for no more than 30 minutes. The principle was originally developed more than 60 years ago, and was used by Sebastian Coe when he was being coached by his father Peter Coe in the late 1970s.

The principle of alternating periods of hard running with periods of easy jogging was used by the Finnish coach Lauri Pihlatalo and the athlete Paavo Nurmi in the 1920s. Nurmi won the 10000 metres at both the 1920 and 1928 Olympics and also won the 5000 metres in the 1924 Olympics. However Nurmi's sessions sometimes lasted up to two hours, so that although they were a form of interval training, they could not be described as 'high intensity'. Similar methods were adopted by the Swedish coach Gosta Holmer and by the German coach Woldemar Gerschler, who became director of physical education at Freiburg University. Gerschler was apparently the first leading coach to focus on the length of the recovery between repetitions: he suggested that an athlete should train with a heart rate of about 180 beats per minute, and should begin another new rep when his heart rate had dropped to 120 beats per minute. The athlete's fitness could be gauged by how quickly his heart rate dropped to 120, and in the case of a fit athlete this could produce a high-intensity session.

In the early 1950s Gerschler began coaching Gordon Pirie of South London Harriers. For much of his athletic career, Pirie would travel to Germany once or twice a year for physiological testing, and Gerschler would then set a training schedule based on the results. Gerschler set Pirie track sessions such as 20 x 300 metres with a brisk 100 metre jog as a recovery. These sessions were copied by many other distance runners of the period, although not many of them could keep up with Pirie's pace (and particularly his relatively fast recovery jogs).

A British coach who popularised the use of short recoveries to produce a high-intensity session for 5000 metre runners was Frank Horwill, who was the founder of the British Milers Club. Many of Frank's articles have been published on the Serpentine Running Club website. Probably the most successful of the athletes whom Frank coached in person was Tim Hutchings, who twice finished second in the World Cross-Country Championships. However Frank is probably best-known for mentoring Peter Coe in the early stages of Sebastian Coe's running career. Seb had begun training with Hallamshire Harriers, but his father (who was a former racing cyclist but had not been a runner) was dissatisfied with that club's emphasis on long-distance running at a steady pace. He met Frank through the British Milers Club and decided to begin coaching his son himself, using the type of sessions which Frank Horwill recommended. These included regular sessions of fast 200 metre reps with only 30 seconds recovery between repetitions. As Seb Coe grew older, one of his toughest regular sessions was 6 x 800 metres with only 30 seconds recovery. This type of training helped him to win the 1500 metres at both the 1980 and 1984 Olympics.

I think that many Striders could benefit from adopting some form of high-intensity interval training. As a teenager, Coe's 200 metre reps usually took about 30-35 seconds. Pirie's 300 metre reps usually took about 45-50 seconds, and were followed by a 100 metre jog in 25-30 seconds. This is similar to the guidelines set by the present-day American and Japanese proponents of high-intensity training: a popular session is 30-40 seconds of hard running alternated with 15-20 seconds of jogging or walking. Some runners try to do this type of training on a treadmill, although the drawback here is that many treadmills are rather slow both to increase and decrease speed. My preference is to do such a session either on grass or on a running track. A session such as 10 repetitions of 40 seconds fast followed by 20 seconds slow jog can be governed by setting a stopwatch alarm to sound each 20 seconds. A slightly easier track session involves running hard for 130 metres followed by a 70 metres jog. (On a marked track such as Croydon Arena, the distance from the line marking the end of a 4 x 100m relay changeover zone to the line marking the start of the next 4 x 100m relay acceleration zone is exactly 70 metres, and the distance from that line to the line marking the end of the next 4 x 100m relay changeover zone is exactly 130 metres). Fitter athletes may be able to cope with shorter recoveries: for example, some of Croydon Harriers' leading runners of the 1970s regularly did sessions of 150 metre repetitions with a 50 metre jog recovery.

SURREY ROAD LEAGUE 2013: FINAL TABLES

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Elmbridge Road Runners	121
Sutton Runners	111
Hercules Wimbledon AC	108
Collingwood AC	104
West 4 Harriers	102
Croydon Harriers	92
Epsom & Ewell Harriers	85
26.2 RRC	82
Wimbledon Windmilers	79
Epsom Oddballs	77
Haslemere Border AC	77
Camberley & District AC	68
Belgrave Harriers	63
Lingfield RC	62
Woking AC	61
Redhill Royal Mail	69
Dorking & Mole Valley	43
Thames Hare & Hounds	42
Dulwich Runners	37
Waverley Harriers	17
Windle Valley Runners	13
Kingston AC & Polytechnic H	0

Women's League

Club	
Ranelagh Harriers	140
Elmbridge Road Runners	136
South London Harriers	132
Stragglers	130
Clapham Chasers	126
Epsom Oddballs	126
Haslemere Border AC	124
Herne Hill Harriers	124
Sutton Runners	120
Collingwood AC	119
Reigate Priory	112
Striders of Croydon	105
26.2 RRC	98
West 4 Harriers	85
Hercules Wimbledon AC	80
Croydon Harriers	73
Woking AC	69
Wimbledon Windmilers	67
Epsom & Ewell Harriers	64
Camberley & District	53
Lingfield RC	29
Dorking & Mole Valley AC	25
Dulwich Runners	25
Guildford & Godalming	25
Thames Hare & Hounds	17
Epsom Allsorts	16
Kingston AC & Polytechnic H	15
Waverley Harriers	14
Belgrave Harriers	12
Windle Valley Runners	0

BOOK REVIEW – THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE WOMEN’S AAA

(by Mel Watman: reviewed by Alan Dolton)

The Amateur Athletics Association was formed in 1880, and immediately began to organise annual championships. However these championships were for men only, and did not include any women’s events. Similarly, when the Olympic Games were begun in 1896, they only provided competition for men. Women’s swimming was added in 1912, but no women’s athletics events were included until 1928. It was not until after the First World War that serious attention was given to providing athletic competitions for women. In England, the AAA remained reluctant to concern itself with women’s athletics, with the result that a separate Women’s Amateur Athletic Association was formed in 1922. Women’s athletics has tended to receive much less attention from historians than men’s athletics, so it is welcome that Mel Watman (a former editor of Athletics Weekly) has sought to redress the balance by writing a history of the WAAA.

Following the formation of the WAAA, the AAA rejected its application for affiliation. The WAAA adopted the AAA rulebook, but initially refused to sanction any track races of more than half a mile. The first WAAA Championships were held at Bromley in 1923. The winning time in the quarter-mile was 62.4 seconds, while the winning time in the half-mile was 2 minutes 40.2. In 1924 the News of the World promoted an international invitation meeting at Stamford Bridge, which drew an impressive attendance of 25,000. The meeting was repeated the following year, when Edith Trickey set a world women’s half-mile record of 2 minutes 24.0. The first WAAA cross-country championship was held at 1927 (there was a senior race for over-16s, but no junior races).



The British women’s athletics team from 1922

In the early 1920s, British women were required to compete in knee-length black shorts, plus long white tunics (equivalent to a baggy T-shirt) which had to cover the shoulders and extend to at least ten inches below the waist. Other countries allowed significantly briefer shorts, although these were still more conservative than the styles commonly worn by present-day track runners. In 1938 the

WAAA relaxed their rules to require dark shorts with an inside leg measurement of at least 4 inches "level across the bottom when worn and not more than 4 inches wider than the largest part of the thigh". British women continued to be required to compete in dark shorts until 1959. The conservative attire which was required of our female athletes can be contrasted with the thin silk costumes which Britain's female swimmers had been required to wear when they made their Olympic debut in the 1912 Games (see below).



The British women's swimming team who won gold at the 1912 Olympics

Women's athletics was first included in the Olympics in 1928, but women were restricted to just five events: the 100 metres, 800 metres, high jump, discus and 4 x 100 metre relay. The WAAA decided to boycott the Games in protest at the limited choice of events. However, only four other countries joined the boycott, while 21 countries took part. In 1932 the WAAA agreed to send a team to the first Los Angeles Olympics, although there were still only six women's events (hurdles and javelin had been added, but the 800 metres had been dropped after the 1928 Games when some of the competitors had reportedly finished in a state of distress).



The start of the women's 800 metres at the 1928 Olympics

Most readers will be aware of the publicity surrounding the South African runner Caster Semenya, whose unusually deep voice led to speculation that she had an unusual intersex condition, although the IAAF have cleared her to compete in women's events. It is much less widely known that Britain had a dubious record in the 1920s and 1930s, as two athletes who won WAAA championships were subsequently revealed to be male. The first of these was a thrower christened Mary Weston, who was registered as female at birth, and won the shot, javelin and discus at the 1929 WAAA Championships, but who later changed his name to Mark Weston, married and became a father. The second was a javelin thrower christened Edith Halstead, who was also registered as female at birth and won the javelin at the 1932 WAAA championships, but who later changed his name to Eddie Halstead, married and became a father. Mel Watman does not go into the scientific detail behind these two athletes, but the scientist Catherine Blackledge has explained this as the result of an unusual hormonal imbalance:

"This imbalance is known as 5-alpha-reductase syndrome, and results from a failure to produce the enzyme 5-alpha-reductase (which converts testosterone into 5-alpha-dihydrotestosterone). Although defined as genetically male – ie they have an X and a Y sex chromosome – such children are born with external genitalia that resemble female genitalia. This 'female' appearance occurs because their testes remain undescended, inside their body, leaving their scrotal sac looking like outer labia, and their penises are typically so short and stubby that they seem to be akin to a large clitoris. The only clue that this is not a typical clitoris is that they urinate through it. These children 'become' boys at puberty, when steep hormonal changes cause the male genitalia to continue developing ..."

The first British female athlete to win an Olympic medal was Dorothy Odam from Mitcham, who gained silver at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin with a leap of 1 metre 60. In 1938 she improved to 1 metre 66, which was eventually recognised as a world record – but not until 1947. The reason for the nine-year delay was that the record had been credited to a German who had competed under the name Dora Ratjen, but was subsequently known as Herman Ratjen and was removed from the list of record-holders on the grounds that he (like Weston and Halstead) was actually male. Similarly, the British 800 metre runner Gladys Lunn was denied a world record in 1934 when she was beaten by a Czech runner who was subsequently declared to be male. In 1936 the WAAA allowed women to compete in mile races for the first time, and Lunn set an inaugural world record of 5 minutes 23.0.

The problems posed by athletes of dubious gender seem to have diminished after the Second World War, and Watman is able to give more coverage to the way in which women's performances improved with more sophisticated training. In 1954 Diane Leather became the first British woman to run the mile in less than five minutes, recording 4 minutes 59.6. The following year she improved this to 4 minutes 45.0. Diane was also the first British woman to run the half-mile in under 2 minutes 10, recording 2 minutes 09.0 in 1954. She was unable to compete in the Olympics, as the women's 800 metres had been dropped from the programme after the 1928 Games, and was not reinstated until 1960 (the women's 1500 metres was not included in the Olympics until 1972).

The WAAA was very cautious about allowing young girls to compete in running events. Until 1963, the WAAA did not allow girls under 16 to race at cross-country, or to race more than 150 yards on the track. In 1963 they were allowed to race cross-country (of up to one and a half miles) and in 1967 they were allowed to run track races of half a mile.

The 1964 Olympics, in Tokyo, saw Ann Packer win the 800 metres (in a world record of 2 minutes 01.1) and Mary Rand win the long jump. They were the first British female athletes to win Olympic gold. Also in 1964, the Scottish cross-country champion, Dale Greig, completed the Isle of Wight marathon in 3 hours 27 minutes. This contravened WAAA rules, and the Southern Counties WAAA sent a letter reprimanding the organising club (Ryde Harriers) for allowing her to run. It was not until October 1975 that British women were officially allowed to compete in marathons, and not until 1978 that the WAAA held its first marathon championship. The first winner was Margaret Lockley, who ran for London Olympiades (her husband, Dave Lockley, ran for South London Harriers, who were still a single-sex club at that time; in 1982 he won the second Croydon 10-mile road race, while Margaret was the first woman to finish).



Dale Greig competing in the 1964 Isle of Wight Marathon

Until 1971, track and field competition for women was restricted to championships and trophy meetings. The British Athletic League and the Southern Men's League had both been formed in 1969, but both only provided competition for male athletes. The Midland Women's League was begun in 1971. It was followed in 1973 by the Southern Women's League, and in 1975 by the UK Women's League.

1975 also saw Folkestone Athletic Club put forward a controversial proposal for the amalgamation of the WAAA and AAA. This was defeated by 50 votes to 10 at a special general meeting of the WAAA. The debate on whether the administration of women's athletics should be integrated with men's athletics was to continue for a further sixteen years.

During the 1980s, the number of events available to women continued to grow. The WAAA held its first championships at 5000 metres and 10000 metres in 1981. In the same year the pentathlon (which comprised five events, and at which Mary Peters had become Olympic champion in 1972) was replaced by the heptathlon, with the 800 metres and the javelin being added to the original five events. In 1988 the WAAA championships were held alongside the AAA championships for the first time, as part of the Olympic Trials. The championships continued to be held together, and in 1989 the WAAA held its first triple jump championship.

The WAAA finally amalgamated with the AAA in 1991, after almost 70 years of independence. As Mel Watman comments, "the vast majority of female athletes themselves wished to belong to mixed clubs and compete in mixed meetings". Some of the clubs which had restricted membership to women suffered from such a loss of membership that they eventually disbanded. The most prominent of these was London Olympiades, which had been the leading women's club between the two World Wars. A more local example was Selsonia Ladies, which had been based at Tooting: most of their athletes joined Herne Hill after that club began accepting women as members. Other clubs chose to merge with a nearby men's club, such as Bromley Ladies, which merged with Blackheath Harriers.

Watman's book continues to tell the story of British women's athletics from the amalgamation with the AAA up to the 2012 London Olympics. It includes full lists of WAAA champions. It is interesting to be reminded that Croydon's Judy Oakes won the WAAA shot put championship no less than 17 times in the 22 years between 1979 and 2000, which is an exceptional feat of longevity (her principal rival was Myrtle Augée of Bromley, who won four titles between 1989 and 1999). Watman's book makes fascinating reading for anyone with an interest in the history of British women's athletics.

30 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN AUTUMN 1983

In September 1983 Striders moved the club headquarters to the CASSAC building in the south-west corner of Lloyd Park. The club also continued to hold lunchtime runs from the Philips office in West Croydon. The CASSAC building was to remain Striders' home until May 2001, when we moved to our current base at Sandilands. The building was subsequently demolished in 2007.

The Surrey Road Relay was held at Brockwell Park on 10 September. Home club Herne Hill led from start to finish to win this event for the first time for 21 years. There was a close battle for second place between South London Harriers, Croydon Harriers and Woking. Croydon's marathon international Don Faircloth took them into second place on the penultimate stage. However, on the last leg Francis Upcott ran an outstanding leg for SLH to overtake Croydon's Gary Bishop. SLH finished nine seconds ahead of Croydon, with Woking a further seven seconds behind.

The annual London to Brighton road race took place on 1 October. Croydon Harriers' ultra-distance runner James Zarei completed the course in 7 hours 9 minutes, becoming only the fourth member of Croydon Harriers to complete this event.

The third annual Croydon 10-mile road race took place on 23 October. It was held on the same course as the previous year: a relatively fast two-lap course starting in Oaks Road and finishing in the grounds of John Ruskin School. The school has subsequently been demolished, and Postmill Close now stands on the site. Striders subsequently adopted the course for our annual club handicap, until the arrival of Tramlink prompted us to switch to our current course for reasons of safety. The 1983 Croydon '10' attracted a large field of 1200 runners, more than 60 of whom completed the course in less than an hour. Andy Evans of South London Harriers won by almost two minutes, recording an impressive time of 49 minutes 19 seconds (Andy now lives in Settle in Yorkshire, but recently competed in the Lloyd parkrun on a brief visit to Croydon). Barry Heath of the Royal Marines was second in 51 minutes 11 and Ray Marriott of South London Harriers was third in 51 minutes 42. Host club Croydon Harriers had two athletes in the first six, with Gary Bishop finishing fifth in 52 minutes 16 and future Strider Alan Dolton sixth in 52 minutes 44. The first over-40 was Don Claxton of Herne Hill, who finished seventh overall in 52 minutes 47. The second over-40 was Robin Dickson of Croydon Harriers, who ran 53 minutes 24. Among the other runners who are still competing was Julian Dillow of Croydon Harriers, who finished 44th in 59 minutes 27. The first Strider was club chairman Steve Owen who ran a personal best 62 minutes 10, ten seconds ahead of club colleague Miles Mayne. Striders' third finisher was club secretary Mick Meech, in 62 minutes 32.

The first woman was again Margaret Lockley of London Olympiades, whose time of 61 minutes 58 seconds saw her finish more than five minutes clear of her nearest rival. Jennie Yeoell of Croydon Harriers was second in 67 minutes 34. In tenth place was Viv Hill of Surrey Beagles in 73 minutes 10 seconds. Viv is now known by her married name of Mitchell, and has competed for South London Harriers for many years. The first female Strider was Susanne Eyre, who placed 12th in 75 minutes 20 seconds.

The Surrey Veterans' Cross-Country Championships were held at Richmond Park in November. The winner was Fred Bell of Hercules-Wimbledon, with Don Claxton of Herne Hill finishing second and Robin Dickson of Croydon Harriers placing third. Croydon won the team prize. The first over-60 was Bob Penney of Croydon Harriers, with Jack Fitzgerald of Mitcham AC finishing second (Jack died earlier this year, at the age of 90).

The Surrey Cross-Country League began its 22nd season. Herne Hill won the first Division One match, but defending champions Aldershot fought back to win the next one. Individually Grenville Tuck (Aldershot) won the first match, with Gary Staines (Belgrave) winning the second. Omega Running Club won the first Division Two match while Croydon Harriers won the second (on their home course at Lloyd Park). The Surrey Women's Cross-Country League began its fifth season. Croydon Harriers won the first match, led by their outstanding 16-year-old Niobe Menendez. Niobe's father had left Spain after the Civil War, and the family lived in Thornton Heath. Niobe subsequently moved to Sussex and turned her talents to race-walking, where she twice represented England at the Commonwealth Games and is one of only six British women to walk 20 kilometres in less than 1 hour.

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN AUTUMN 2003

On 13 September Striders did well to field five teams in the Surrey Road Relays at Wimbledon Park. Our women did well to place eighth of 20 teams. New member Serena Stracey made an excellent debut for the club, recording a time of 18 minutes 56 on the first leg. There were also good runs from Kerry Backshell (20.23) and Emma Haillay (20.37). Striders' men placed 16th, with their best run coming from Ciaran Osborn, who ran the first leg in 15 minutes 27. Striders' over-40 men got closest to the medals, placing sixth of 17 teams. Don Kayum ran 16.36 on the first leg, and was followed by Simon Smith (17.51), Gerry Crispie (17.19) and Alan Dolton (17.52).

The annual Switchback 5-mile cross-country race was held in unusually hot conditions on 20 September. The winner was Steve Bayliss from local rivals Croydon Harriers, who completed the course in 27 minutes 40. Veteran Bob Treadwell of Redhill & Surrey Beagles placed second (29.49). Dulwich Runners won the team prize and also had the first woman home, with Meredith Pannett producing an outstanding run to finish sixth overall in 31 minutes 18. The first Strider to finish was veteran Gerry Crispie who placed 11th in 32 minutes 45, ten seconds and one place ahead of club colleague Peter Yarlett. Simon Smith was 17th (33.51) and Paul Finch 18th (34.06). Striders' women were led home by Steph Upton, who was 48th overall (41.02).

Striders' 2003 AGM was held on 1 October and heard the excellent news that the club's membership had reached the three-figure mark for the first time, with a total of 109 members (including 33 women). 2003 had also been the first year of the Owen Trophy, which was designed to encourage Striders of all standards to compete in local road races. The trophy was won by Tony Sheppard.

The East Surrey League held its annual cross-country relay at Wimbledon on 4 October. Striders' men finished ninth. The team comprised Don Kayum (10.58), Alan Dolton (11.53), Chris Morton (11.43) and Gerry Crispie (11.24). Striders' women placed second of the five women's teams. The team comprised Serena Stracey (11.59), Steph Upton (13.00), Emma Haillay (13.24) and Elene Kayum (14.07). The relay was preceded by the young athletes' race, which saw Daisy Collingridge make an excellent debut for Striders. She was the second girl to finish, beating most of the boys as she finished sixth overall. On the following day two of Striders' long-distance runners, Dave Shaw and Morgan Steele, competed in the annual London to Brighton road race, both finishing in the first 50 and comfortably beating the nine-hour mark.

The Surrey Cross-Country League began its 42nd season on 18 October. Striders competed in Division Two at Wimbledon, and finished in a disappointing eighth place of the nine competing clubs. The first Strider to finish was Ciaran Osborn, who ran well to place tenth, covering the five-mile course in 27 minutes 44 seconds. Justin Macenhill placed 24th (28.35), while there were also good runs from veterans Don Kayum (33rd, 29.12) and Gerry Crispie (39th, 29.34). Meanwhile, Striders' women finished a disappointing ninth in their Surrey Womens League Division Two match at Kingston. Diane Ballard led the team home ahead of Elene Kayum and Emma Haillay.

The 25th Croydon 10K took place on 19 October. Croydon Harriers' track star Jonathan McCallum won in 33 minutes 39. Vic Maughn of Herne Hill was second in 34 minutes 57. Striders' first finisher was Don Kayum who placed seventh in 37 minutes 04. He was followed by Gerry Crispie (13th, 37.35); Tony Sheppard (15th, 38.10); Damian Macenhill (25th, 39.00); Alan Dolton (27th, 39.16); Paul Finch (40th, 39.54) and Steve Muntzer (41st, 39.54). The first woman was Gill O'Connor of South London Harriers, who placed 32nd overall (39.32). Striders' first woman was Serena Stracey who placed 83rd overall in 43 minutes 15.

The East Surrey League held their annual cross-country race at Lloyd Park on 25 October. The winner was Steve Bayliss of Croydon Harriers. Harriers also won the team event, while Striders placed fifth. Our first three runners were all veterans. Don Kayum ran well to place 15th, covering the five-mile course in 32 minutes 28 seconds, four places and twelve seconds ahead of club colleague Gerry Crispie. Daisy Collingridge ran well to place second in the girls' race.



Meredith Pannett, first woman in the 2003 Switchback (photo by Tony Sheppard)

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