



Striders of Croydon AC

DECEMBER 2013 MAGAZINE



Helen Furze (1965 – 2013)

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat 11 January – Surrey Cross-Country League – Reigate
Sat 11 January – Surrey Women's Cross-Country League – Putney
Sat 8 February – Surrey Cross-Country League – Lloyd Park (Striders co-hosting)
Sat 8 February – Surrey Women's Cross-Country League – Lloyd Park (Striders co-hosting)
Sun 23 March – Sport Relief Mile – Croydon Arena
Sun 30 March – Croydon Half-Marathon (Striders marshalling)
Tue 3 April – East Surrey League Road Race – Ewell
Sun 13 April – London Marathon (Striders marshalling)

CHRISTMAS / NEW YEAR RUNS: CHANGES TO USUAL SCHEDULE

Tue 24 Dec – no speed sessions
Wed 25 Dec – Lloyd parkrun: no evening club run
Thu 26 Dec – morning run at 8.30am
Mon 30 Dec – morning run at 8.30am
Tue 31 Dec – no speed sessions
Wed 1 Jan – Lloyd parkrun at 9am: Addington 4 from 11am: no evening club run

MARATHON TRAINING RUNS 2013/14

	Planned Run	Start	Finish	Route
Sun 29 Dec	White Bear 13	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=2479863
Sun 5 Jan	Greenwich 13	London Bridge	London Bridge	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=2170782
Sun 12 Jan	Wandle 14	Clapham Junction	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=2366613
Sun 19 Jan	Keston Ponds 14	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=2558460
Sun 26 Jan	Merstham 15	Merstham	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=1550627
Sun 2 Feb	Riddlesdown 14	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5240872
Sun 9 Feb	Warlingham 16	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5312946
Sun 16 Feb	London Bridge 16	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=6063471
Sun 23 Feb	Coulsdon 17	Coulsdon South	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5474783
Sun 2 March	High Elms 17	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5317891
Sun 9 March	Regents Canal 18	Victoria	Victoria	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5833749
Sun 16 March	Kingston 21	Kingston	Clapham Junction	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5846244
Sat 23 March	Botley Hill 19	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5856502

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER DECEMBER 2013

A very full magazine this time; people seem to have been off doing some very interesting runs.

Sadly the headline item is the loss to cancer of one of our most successful women runners Helen Furze. Following this is a very comprehensive summary of her achievements and a wonderful memorial to a lovely lady who will not only be hugely missed by Neil and their family but also by very many of us at Striders of Croydon.

For those of us who attended her funeral it was a very emotional event.

In celebration of Helen's contribution to the Club we are proposing to introduce a new competition and Trophy for all the Women members of the Club called the Helen Furze Cup. The exact rules have still to be worked out but it will be along similar lines to the Sandilands Cup but for a wider range of races.

As Helen was a long time member of Wimbledon Windmilers before transferring to Striders it was suggested that a Helen Furze mob match against the Windmilers would be a good idea and as their secretary was also at her funeral Chris is already in discussion with them about arranging a date probably at the Wimbledon Common parkrun.

There was an in memoriam book to sign at the funeral which Neil hopes to be able to bring to the club house so that more of us can sign it.

In the rest of the magazine, read about the Leiden Marathon by Tim Bett. I notice this event is completely flat. The complete opposite of the Jog Shop 20 over the South Downs as described by Corrine Carr or The Beast 13-14 miles over the Purbeck hills as described by Linda Daniel or the Purbeck Marathon which looks like an even tougher version of a similar route but starting in Swanage. Instead of these pretty tough options you could of course take a 5 day break in Tallinn and choose your distance and do some sightseeing as described by Mick Turner. Or if you need extra training before doing these you could always take a holiday in Lanzarote as described by Victoria. Or just come swimming on a Thursday night.

To reassure us of more mature years I see that at the World Masters Championship there was several over 90 and over 95 categories; fortunately I think I could still beat their times though not by much.

Alan reviews the book British Marathon Running Legends of the 80s. Which features Croydon's own Don Faircloth; a Harrier not a Strider but he did train a lot in Lloyd Park.

And finally I see that 10 years ago we won an inter club match in Lloyd Park promoted by Croydon Harriers. It's nice to see that 10 years later in the mob match at the Lloyd Park parkrun we can field 51+ runners vs. Harriers 30. We may not have been first home but we weren't far behind and beat them by sheer weight of numbers.

Congratulations to everyone.

Happy Christmas and a Speedy New Year.

Robin Jamieson

HELEN FURZE (1965 – 2013)



In the autumn of 1999 a group of Striders, including Neil Furze, visited the well-known resort of Club La Santa in Lanzarote for a week of warm-weather training. Also there at the same time was a group from Wimbledon Windmilers, including a talented runner named Helen Perkins who had run 3 hours 06 minutes in the 1998 London Marathon. Neil and Helen became engaged in June 2001 and married in June 2002.

Initially Helen joined Striders as a second-claim member and retained her first-claim membership of Windmilers: some years later she became a first-claim Strider. She ran 3 hours 17 minutes in the 2003 London Marathon, despite having suffered from knee and hip injuries in the build-up to the race. In 2004 she took a break from training to give birth to Oliver, but she made a successful return to racing and in April 2005 she was the second woman to finish the Croydon 10K road race, recording 39 minutes 40. In September 2005 she was the first woman to finish the annual Switchback cross-country race, and in October she was the third woman in the Croydon 10K (which at that time was held twice a year), recording a club over-35 record of 39 minutes 42. She repeated that position in the April 2006 race, recording a club over-40 record of 39 minutes 55.

In September 2007 Helen had an excellent run to be the first woman in our annual Switchback race, beating all but six of the male competitors as she finished seventh overall. Helen missed most of 2008 to give birth to Keira, but she boosted our women's team for the 2009/10 season, having changed her first-claim club from Windmilers to Striders. She made her first appearance for our Surrey League team at Reigate in October, and was our first

woman home in all four of the Surrey League matches, placing fourth in the Division Two match at Dorking in November, and placing sixth in both of the last two matches of the season, at Richmond Park and Wimbledon. She led Striders' team to second place in the Division Two table, which gained us promotion to Division One (the photograph on the front of this magazine was taken in the final match of the season, at Wimbledon).

In April 2010 Helen produced an excellent run in the Maidenhead ten-mile road race, where her time of 66 minutes 49 lifted her to third place in the club's all-time women's rankings and was a club veterans' record. In October she was the second woman to finish the Croydon 10K road race, recording 41 minutes 44. At cross-country, she was the first Strider in all four of our Surrey Womens League Division One matches in the 2010/11 season, which was the second successive year that she had achieved this feat.

In April 2011, in the Maidenhead 10-mile road race, Helen set a club over-45 record of 67 minutes 34. Less than two months later she was only one second slower, on a significantly harder course, in the Dorking 10-mile road race, which incorporated the Surrey Championships. She was the sixth woman to finish, and the first woman finisher in the over-40 category. Later in June she set a club over-45 10 kilometre record of 40 minutes 32 at Epsom, and in August she set a club over-45 half-marathon record of 94 minutes 49 at Burnham Beeches. In September she was the second woman in our annual Switchback race.

Injury prevented Helen from competing in any of our cross-country matches in the 2011/12 season, but in June 2012 she made a rare appearance on the track, in our Southern Veterans League match at Ewell, where she placed second in the over-35 5000 metres. Sadly this was Helen's last appearance in a Striders' vest: she was diagnosed with cancer the following month.

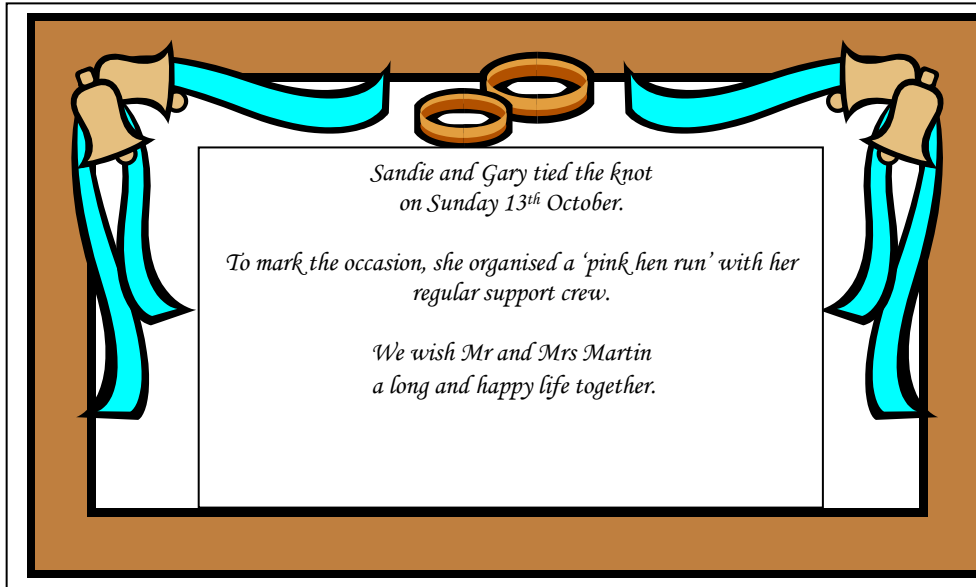
On a personal note, Helen was one of my first female sports massage clients, as she visited me for several sessions of treatment in late 2001 and 2002, when she had been suffering from knee and hip injuries while training for the London Marathon. She was a totally reliable client and appeared to have an unusually high pain threshold: she certainly tolerated some quite deep treatment without any hint of complaint.

Alan Dolton

Helen was one of those Striders who made Sunday morning runs so enjoyable for me 10 years ago. When I could keep up with her (even when pregnant with Oliver), she was great to talk to, warm, interesting, unassuming and keen to listen. A lovely lady!

Tim Bett

SANDIE AND GARY (by Corinne Carr)



BALTIC BEERS AND THE KGB IN TALLINN (by Mick Turner)

Tallinn, a favourite cruise stop-off on the Baltic coast, is home to a festival of running in mid-September featuring a full Marathon, Half Marathon and 10K. Both the marathon and half attract a few high quality Kenyans and a number of Brits. We bumped into a number on our flight including a couple from Collingwood AC, based on the Croydon/Sutton border. I had originally planned to do the Half but a minor injury led to me entering the 10K this year. We booked Easyjet flights from Gatwick and the local bus from the airport to the city centre was very straightforward. Flights and five nights' accommodation in a central hotel cost about £600.00 for the two of us. I'm sure if you book early there are cheaper ways to do it, especially if you're prepared to stay further out of town. We stayed within walking distance of the Old Town Square.

Number pick up was straightforward in Freedom Square. The course itself was flat and fairly uninspiring but has definite PB potential. 10K runners don't get a medal so be aware of that. My other half, Lorraine, entered the 10K walk alongside thousands of locals, including a large number of Nordic walkers. She had to take her own time, but thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of power walking. As you can see below entering early makes sense.

	42,2 km marathon	21,1 km half marathon	10 km run and walking with timing	10 km run, walk, Nordic Walking without timing
Until end of December 2013	25 euros	20	15	12
January-May	35	25	20	15
June-August	45	30	25	20
September	60	35	30	25

The city has one of the best-preserved medieval Old Towns going so there are many possibilities for pre- and post-race eating, drinking and sightseeing. I've only been abroad to race a few times but usually stay on to enjoy the city for a few days. We were very fortunate with the weather and included a day-trip to Helsinki. Tallinn's not that cheap, however, so be prepared – pretty similar to London prices.

Best meal: Von Krahli Aed

Best tourist attraction: KGB Museum in the Viru Hotel

Best pub: Not the Depeche Mode bar, though there are two and they are good. Probably the Hell Hunt that brews its own beer. <http://www.hellhunt.ee/eng/>

Enter the marathon, Half marathon or 10K at <http://www.tallinnmarathon.ee/>; next event 14th September 2014.

If you're thinking of going let me know and I can recommend some great restaurants and bars. Also, if you'd told me that Tallinn was the home of one of the 300 beers to try before you die I might have visited sooner than September. <http://www.alecoq.ee/eng/drinks/beer/porter>



THE LEIDEN MARATHON: 18 May 2014 (by Tim Bett)

This is a gem of a Spring marathon www.marathon.nl. An easy train connection and only 20 minutes from the airport - this is a very Dutch experience. Leiden is a very old and beautiful university town/city surrounded by canals. It was home to the Pilgrim Fathers before they left for America and Rembrandt is buried at the race HQ, the imposing Pieterskerk. That's right: the race expo and changing facilities are in the main church. Several hotels have special marathon deals (about €100 for a double room + breakfast) and all the shops are open, for spectators.

Apart from the marathon, there are several other runs taking place the same day including a half-marathon and a 10km. The route takes you through Leiden and then out into the countryside, along canals and through a dozen villages. This is a big event for the residents of Koudekerk, Roelofarendsveen and Rijpwetering, who all turn out and line the route, calling out your name and encouraging you to "hup hup." The local oompah bands will be playing and the church choir singing! As you might imagine, the course is entirely flat, in fact it is below sea-level.

Finally, this might be a very Dutch event but it is extremely welcoming of visitors. It is humbling that everybody is willing and able to speak English. Central Amsterdam is only 30 minutes away by train, or you could be wandering round the historic Delft in less than 20. It is so friendly that every year, all the runners receive a birthday card – now you don't get that at London!

STRIDERS ON TOUR (by Victoria Legge)

In February or March 2013, I answered an email from Nigel to say who want to go to La Santa, I said yes. On 29 October 2013, the eight people met to have a meal (Spanish of course) so the oldies could explain the Newbies what La Santa was about. The eight were me, Andrew, Barry Finch, Nigel Davidson, Tom Littlewood, Mick George, Margaret and Alice; Margaret, Andrew and I were the newbies. We got the information about what was on and on 14 November Alice, Margaret, Andrew and I meet at East Croydon station for our journey to Gatwick airport. I had a bit of emergency in that I could not print out my ticket details but Thomson had assured me that I was going to get on the plane and sure enough I was on the plane. The other four had come to the airport by cab and had turned up just after the four of us had checked in, so they checked in and we all made our way past security and onto the plane. I will not bore you with the flight, needless to say when we landed it was lovely and warm; Alice, Margaret and I had our scarves on while Andrew was wearing shorts. We made our way to La Santa and check into our large apartment. Nigel had organised the rooms; the men had one side of apartment and us ladies the other. Tom and Andrew shared, Barry and Mick, Margaret and I, while Alice had her own room and Nigel slept in the lounge area.

First we made our way to sport booking where we booked activities for the week. This is where you book for the 5km race, Aquathon, Tri etc., plus one member of the party hands over their passport and you get a token which can be use to hire bikes and sport equipment: you must not lose it. Then I am afraid it was the practical bit which involves supermarket shopping for water, milk and the basics. The La Santa supermarket is well stocked and also carries a range of gluten free products and soy milk for those among us who need those things. Then it was back to the apartment for unpacking and getting ready for going out. We walked to the village in La Santa about a mile away and went to a restaurant for dinner. I would like to tell you that the meal was lovely but it was very poor quality. Then it was back to apartment for bed.

The next day we were up early and went on the morning run. There are four versions: 5 km run, 3km run, 2km run and 3km walk. The morning run goes out of the La Santa down the hill and round the bay and up back to La Santa; the first day I got talking to a lady who was wearing an Iron man Shirt, did not realise she was one of the Green team (staff). I started off with the 5km lots and end up with the 3 km; it is ok if you are slower than the group because it just follows a very simple route. I met up with Margaret and Andrew and we waited for Barry, Tom and Alice (Nigel and Mick were doing other things) and we went back to the apartment for breakfast.

Tom, Alice, Barry and I decided to join the wellness centre; this is extra but gives you access to a sauna, ice plunge hole, jacuzzi and steam room, this was lovely and there were big giant taps things where you could go and massage all your cares away. Lovely. We then returned to the apartment and decide to do "stretch and relax". So Tom, Alice Margaret, Andrew and I went The Lawn and to do the class. Someone found it really relaxing and went to sleep someone next to Tom. Then we went back to the apartment and had lunch. The others had decided to go on a bike ride, but I am not confident on a bike so I did not go with them. So I made my way to the gym and had a work out there.

After all that exercise we returned to the village, to a different restaurant, and had a lovely meal. For me, a veggie, there were plenty of choices on the menu. This restaurant was run by an English lady and the food was of a very high standard. Two of our party had slow cooked lamb and Andrew could not eat any more.

The next day I decide to do the 3km walk and I met a Danish woman who husband had helped to build La Santa; we met her family who were on the 3 km run. I also had swimming training which means I turned up at the swimming to practise push off. This was good and it was very small class of 8 people all abilities and the instructor was good and gave us good advice; after the class finished I swam in the Olympic sized swimming pool and put what I have learnt into practise. The next class was yoga which was lovely; we did that class twice. Body combat was good and body bike. Mick and I did the beginners class but the others did the immediate class and Margaret did the advanced class.

Through out the week La Santa organised various events and one was a 5km or 10 km run. We chose to do the 5km and when we all got our timing chips I explained to the Green team that I was slow due to injury and colds so if I was late back that I understood where I was to go. And then we were off. Basically the route was down the hill to the village of La Santa and back up the hill to the complex and finish on the running track. Whilst on my way about the hill I start to feel a bit funny - my tummy was playing up - but I carried on and entered the stadium; Mick came to join me to finish of the course and I speeded up to the end. It was ok because people had gone through to do the 10km. Despite my worries I ended with a PB for this year: 37 minutes. Alice had got First woman home.

I tried out many things and even rediscovered some old loves, such as yoga. One of the things I tried was the Pilates reformer, Pilates with a machine, very good and not as easy as it sound. That class is small so the lovely teacher can keep on eye on everybody. This lady was the best Green teamer there; she was kind and patient especially when I did her step class (I was still at one end of the step when everybody else was at the other).

I also did the aquaton but unfortunately I went wrong and my legs seized up and I ended up doing breast stroke; I was a bit annoyed with myself as I know I can do front crawl however Barry waited for me as I continued to do the event, however my time was not recorded: probable for the best. I had also booked a private tuition for cycling however something went wrong with the booking and it ended up being cancelled, however they rung the apartment and said I had not turned up: I have got no idea what happen there, but I did get my money back.

We also ate at the Club La Santa; they had a pasta night and a Spanish night Buffet style so you could take what you wanted. We also got to see the Green team variety show, which was good fun. One night we looked after ourselves luxury style. Mick cooked for us: French onion soup, spag bol (veggie version for me) and fruit salad. Very nice, Mick, we'll all be around yours for Christmas dinner. There is also the Green room restaurant which serves snacks and meals through out the day. There is also a diving centre tuck away. In the main square La Santa has a sport shop and bars, photo shop and the stage. In one of the bars there are photo of all the stars that have stayed there. Whilst we were there the Belgium Olympic team were there and we watch both the track and the swimming teams practising.

Also while I was there I had a go at kayak; the least said about that the better. I also had a go at tennis which was fun; the last time I played I was taught differently but the tennis coach was very good and took his time.

Then before we knew it, it was the last day and we were packing up to go home. On the last day we went for the morning run I chose to do the 2km run, which was 5 times round the track. Run for one minute and walk for 1 minute. Then back and pack and put everything away, and to reception to put our luggage in the holding room.

Nigel had book a padel court and we went to collect the rackets and made our way to the courts.

The only way to describe padel is a cross between Tennis and squash. Once you get the hang of it, it is a good game. Then we made our way back to the square to look at the photo shop. There were sadly no photos of me (you were right Alice) but there were good photos of Alice and Margaret then we handed back the rackets and made our way to wellness centre. It was really to use the showers and that sort of thing and to get changed to what we were wearing to travel home. Then we met Margaret and Andrew and had a meal before the taxis picked us up to get to the airport. Once we landed at Gatwick Airport it was cold and I got on the train to East Croydon. Alice's mum had offere to come and get Alice and also offered to give all of us a lift, which I declined because the bus stopped right outside. Got back to my little flat and my dad had been in there and re-started the heating – bliss!

I think La Santa helped to motive me, and to realise that I can do things. I would recommend La Santa to everyone, whatever your fitness levels; lots of sports and a few new things to try.

When's the next one Nigel?

SWIMMING (by Victoria Legge)

A couple of years ago I decided I'd quite like to have a go at swimming because I wanted to do a triathlon. I knew Striders had a swimming section so I contacted Karen and asked if I could join. The answer was that as long as I could swim a length in any stroke I was welcome. So in 2010 I duly rolled up at Trinity School pool and began. I have swum in the past but not well; I could do a couple of lengths of breaststroke and took my nephew swimming but that was it.

I turn up to the swimming with no goggles and no hat; I borrowed a pair of goggles from Neil and duly got in the water. As I have said, I could do the breaststroke, badly, mainly because I could not do the whole lot together. Neil was very patient and showed me how to do the breaststroke correctly with both arms and legs working together and by the end of the session I was doing ok. The next week I had my hat and goggles and Neil had realised that I was nervous about putting my head under water so he arranged for me to have some toys so I could practise diving down and retrieving the toys: great fun.

I did struggle for some time with front crawl - it was the breathing - but Neil was very patient with me and some 2 ½ years after starting I realise that I had just done a length correctly. Unfortunately Neil was not there to witness it. So I secretly hugged myself and told Karen Macenhill and Connor; one of them had seen it. The next week Neil was back and I think was shocked to see me do a length and he then gave me tips to help me get even better.

The swimming is set so fast swimmers go in the first lane and slightly slower swimmers in the next lane and so on and so forth and the slowest swimmers go in the last lane. We had Lucinda Bayliss who took the swimming for a while and she gave us tips and hints to help make us better swimmers. When Lucinda left to have her baby we were without a coach so we took it in turns to watch. I called it a relay: fast swimmers first hand over to the medium then to slowest and you are out the pool for about 15 minutes no more.

In October 2013, Cara came to take over. I find Cara's sessions much harder than the ones previously but I have enjoyed them. Every session is different, for instance last night (Thursday 5th December 2013), we did 400 metres warm up (that's 16 times up and down), then one length one arm only and then back with the other arm, then catch up which is both arms the arms meet each other before you move your other arm. Then swim normally and repeat 3 times which makes 300 metres. Then 200 metres of 100 metres side kick then back kick. Swimming is really good for runners as it helps to work out the niggles that us runners get. It's also good for injuries. I found that when I was unable to run due to my injury, the swimming helped me maintain some level of fitness. There are several members of the group who cannot run at the moment and use the swimming as an alternative option. I could not swim very well about 3 years ago, but now I can do 22 lengths in 20 minutes. If I have whetted your appetite and you fancy giving the swimming a go, why not come along on Thursday nights, 8:45 to 9:45 Trinity pool?

THE JOG SHOP JOG 20 (by Corinne Carr)

Sunday 13th October – Asda car park – Brighton Marina

You would be forgiven for believing that I am about to narrate a dodgy tale or talk about my weekly food shopping, but no, this is the start of the infamous Jog Shop Jog 20 (a shade over 20 miles), created by Sam Lambourne of The Jog Shop (Brighton) along with Olympic champion Steve Ovett and which I have now completed three times. This year, only a small field of 80 of us are about to embark on this challenging trail race across the stunning countryside of the South Downs. The wind is bitterly cold and the horizontal rain hits my face like icicles, which explains why some runners preferred to stay in bed...

From the cliff tops of Brighton Marina to Saltdean with its great views of the Channel, we head onto the South Downs National Park. Here we climb up and down The North Face, The Yellow Brick Road, The Big W (double steep climb which only the fittest run), Death Valley and The Snake, a slow never ending climb. Each poses its own challenge. Then it's along the cliff tops again for the run home.

Not for the faint-hearted, it is great training for the Beachy Head marathon which takes place two weeks later. There is a cut-off time to reach the Big W so please check before you register. The terrain is uneven and chalky and you are likely to run this race in a similar time to a full road marathon. If you are really determined, there is a cash prize for anyone getting back under 2 hours (I'm not sure anyone has ever won it).

Signage is sparse but enough not to get lost, drinking stations are set every 5 miles and supportive marshals cheer you on when braving the elements. You encounter cows and horses in the fields, climb over stiles and it's all part of the fun.

By the time I reach the finish line, the bad weather has disappeared and I am rewarded with a nice medal, a useful goody bag and rich fruit cake.

If you want to feel your heart pumping hard and your quads ache, make your way to the Asda car park next year! ☺

LADYBOWER 50 (by Debra Bourne)

Ladybower, on 22nd September, was the final race in my “5 x 50-milers at 45” challenge. I’d chosen this race as a deliberately “easy” run: almost no-navigation (keep the reservoirs on your left and you can’t really go wrong) and only undulating rather than hilly terrain.

The lead up to the race was not ideal, as I was at a three-day meeting away from home Wednesday to Friday and we had a six-and-a-half-hour drive to a wedding in Lancashire on the Saturday, but I crawled out of bed in my stepmother’s house in north Manchester at 5.15 on the Sunday morning and drove over Snake Pass, arriving at the start/finish lay-by just after 7 am and bagging one of the last three car parking spaces there, which meant I could leave all my gear in the boot of the car and collect anything I wanted as I came past – only water, bananas and flapjacks were being provided by the race organisers, as they had warned beforehand.

The weather was unexpectedly good – clear, sunny and warm, reaching about 21 °C – quite hot enough for a long run, with little wind. Given the excellent weather forecast, the looped nature of the race and the plethora of other people about (after the first lap, anyway), I carried little other than food, water, ‘phone and car key, which made quite a difference to the other races this year when packing warm layers and waterproofs was essential (and compulsory). Not sure why I bothered carrying the ‘phone, given the lack of signal, but I did use it to take a few pictures. The views over the reservoirs were pleasant, and the paths were mostly wooded (giving pleasant shade from the hot sun), if also mainly hard-surfaced.



We started with a short lap around Ladybower reservoir, taking the left path (marked and marshalled) cutting across below the Derwent Dam to return to the start in 5.5 miles, before heading back out on the trail through the woods. This time at the four-mile mark we took the right hand path, continuing round Derwent and Howden reservoirs to make a lap of just over 15 miles; we then repeated that twice more (my Garmin made the whole course 51.34 miles). There were also 20-mile and 30-mile options (the short lap plus one and two long laps respectively).

On the first long lap I ran for a while with Rob, a Runners World Pirate. Good company, but despite digestive system problems he was aiming for a sub-9 hours finish and I decided he was going too fast for me, so told him to go on while I slowed to a more manageable pace for my aim of sub-10 hours. Later I passed him, walking and trying to eat but apparently having a bad time.

Came back to the car, stocked up on Kendal Mint Cake, sorted out one of my socks which had become uncomfortably folded up under my toes, went to the race tent, got checked in, got my water bladder filled

(many thanks to the lady who had finished the 20 and helped by holding the bladder while I got the Elete electrolytes out) and set off again. Going through the first wooded section I nearly got cut off at the knees by the extensible lead on a dog – it would be nice if people using those took care not to get them stretched out across the path. It did seem to be my race for dogs trying to trip me up, with five or six in all who tried to do this by running across or stopping directly in front of me!



From early in the lap I was shadowed by a runner called Jane, and from about half way round we ran together. It was nice to have company, particularly over the upper section with lots of long climbs, uncomfortably stony paths and then long stretches of tarmac; when possible I got off the tarmac onto the worn path in the grass alongside the road. Towards the end of this lap Jane's husband arrived on a bicycle and she sent him back to the car to get another pack ready with all her drinks in it. Lucky Jane! She was off on the final lap several minutes ahead of me as I had to get my drinks bladder filled with water and add some Elete (and the taps on the water containers only gave a trickle of water, so it was slow).

Really tired starting out on the third lap and was passed very early by a group of three runners, with another runner passing me a mile or so later. This was definitely the mental/emotional low point of the race for me, with my mile splits creeping upwards. However, I chatted a bit with a runner (not in the race) who was doing some heart-rate based training, ate some Kendal Mint Cake and started feeling stronger again, managing to keep going and even pick up the pace on the flat/downhill sections, while walking all the uphill sections as briskly as possible. I now ate a piece of mint cake about every three miles, and was definitely feeling stronger. Overtook a couple more runners and then I was at 46 miles – just a couple of parkruns to go! From here I pushed myself to go faster. Saw some other runners ahead and was determined to pass them, particularly the West Bromwich Harriers who had passed me at the start of the lap!

I did that, kept pushing and gritted my teeth to run the final slope up to the finish, clocking in at 9.50.40. Jane was sitting in the finish tent, having come in only about 10 minutes in front of me. One of the helpers gave me water, and there were some cold chips which tasted delicious – this was the first time I'd done a 50-miler without some savoury food and I'm not intending to do that again. Collected my bright yellow "Labybower 50-miler" T-shirt, ate some more chips and cheered in the next few runners, including the Harriers. It's always great to cheer in other runners, although I thought the guy who did a big sideways and upwards leap as he finished had way too much energy after that distance! Hobbled down to the car to put on some warm clothes, and a very nice lady who was there supporting one of the other runners, and had been cheering each of us as we passed the finish and as we passed the four-mile point, kindly took some photos of me.



I made a slow, painful trek down to the main car park where the toilets were, and discovered that the food kiosk was still open; the cheese-and-onion toasted Panini vanished before I'd finished shuffling back up the hill to the lay-by!

The last runner I saw finish was Rob-the-Pirate. Unfortunately I was just too tired to get out of my car and walk back up the length of the lay-by to congratulate him properly, but I did pause as I passed the finish tent, wind down my window and call my congratulations; it takes real guts to keep going like that when it's all gone wrong.

THE BEAST – 1 September (by Linda Daniel)

Having exorcised the demons of doubt about whether I could survive the infamous Jurassic coast multi-terrain event, the omens were good as the day started brightly as 425 runners descended upon Corfe Common for the start of the 20th running of The Beast.

The Beast runs from Corfe Castle over the Purbeck Hills. Chillingly, not long after the start the skies had grown darker and more menacing, although more frightening was the pace of the front runners as they disappeared into the distance and into the unknown. The race more than lived up to its name, the fiendish stairway to hell set of 200-plus steps in a V shape just after halfway having lost none of its bite. The course varies each year between 13 and 14 country miles, but feels longer thanks to the climbs and stiles that punctuate the steep stony tracks and paths. Turning onto the cliff top path the views along the Jurassic Coast are spectacular with the multi-tiered limestone cliffs falling away into the sea miles below; I slowed down to take in the views and only just avoided not falling over the edge.

Finally Corfe Castle and the finish, and the loveliest sight of all, a monster selection of devilishly delicious cakes awaited the indulgence of all finishers.

THE WORLD MASTERS CHAMPIONSHIPS

While Striders were competing in the opening matches of the Surrey Cross-Country Leagues, and in the annual Croydon 10K, the World Masters Championships were taking place at Porto Alegre in Brazil. The reports of the event in Athletics Weekly tended to concentrate on the younger age-groups and the British medallists, but personally I think that the most interesting and noteworthy aspects of the championships were in the older age-groups, where some athletes continue competing long after most of their contemporaries have abandoned competitive running.

In the shortest track event, the 100 metres, there were six competitors in the over-90 category and a further three in the over-95 category. Lucas Nel of South Africa won the over-90 event in 17.76 seconds while Frederico Fischer of Brazil won the over-95 event in 21.12 seconds. They both gained further gold medals in the 200 metres and 400 metres, where Nel recorded 38.04 seconds for 200 metres and 95.64 seconds for 400 metres, while Fischer recorded 49.79 seconds for 200 metres but was rather slower in the 400 metres, recording 3 minutes 00.63 seconds.

Nel gained a fourth gold medal in the 800 metres, recording 4 minutes 20.97 seconds. Fischer did not tackle this distance, and the over-95 race was won by a 99-year-old Argentinian, Jose Escobar, who covered his two laps of the track in 9 minutes 01.01 seconds.

Nel won his fifth gold medal in the over-90 1500 metres, where he recorded 8 minutes 51.27 seconds. There was one competitor in the over-95 1500 metres, where Argentinian Efrain Wachs completed the distance in 23 minutes 23 seconds to claim a gold medal.

In the 5000 metres the oldest competitor was a 91-year-old Argentinian, Lorenzo Perez, who claimed a gold medal by completing the distance in 43 minutes 07 seconds. There were four competitors in the over-85 race, which was won by Francisco Oliveira of Brazil in 25 minutes 45.09 seconds.

The longest track event was the 10000 metres, where Perez claimed a second gold medal by completing the distance in 93 minutes 12 seconds, while there were three competitors in the over-85 race, which was won by Seijun Maedo of Brazil in 71 minutes 40 seconds.

The half-marathon saw just one competitor aged over 80, Bert Janes of Australia, who duly claimed a gold medal in 2 hours 44 minutes. There were seven competitors in the over-75 category, which was won by 77-year-old Bernardino Pereira of Portugal in a very impressive time of 99 minutes 13 seconds.

The full marathon saw the oldest competitor, Jan Morawiec of Poland, win a gold medal in the over-80 category in a very impressive time of 4 hours 4 minutes 37 seconds. In the field events, an 81-year-old Mexican, Maximi Wong Moran, did well to clear 2 metres 20 in the pole vault, winning the over-80 category.

The women's events also saw some impressive performances by the oldest competitors. There were three entrants in the over-85 100 metres, where 88-year-old Garcia de Fontan of Colombia claimed the gold medal in 23.95 metres. The oldest female sprinter was 94-year-old Canadian Olga Kotenko, who won the over-90 100 metres with 33.71 seconds. She also won gold in the 200 metres in 83.33 seconds. Garcia de Fontan did not compete in the 200 metres, but won her second gold medal in the over-85 400 metres, recording 2 minutes 39 seconds.

The women's 800 metres saw four competitors in the over-80 category and three in the over-85 category, Claudine Crippa of France won the over-80 race in 4 minutes 11 seconds, while Vera Lima of Brazil won the over-85 race in 7 minutes 10 seconds. She also won the over-85 1500 metres in 13 minutes 47, while Thelma Wilson of the USA won the over-80 1500 metres in 8 minutes 46.

In the women's 5000 metres, Denise Leclerc of Switzerland won the over-80 race in 28 minutes 17, while Ruth Angelis of Germany won the over-85 race in 49 minutes 31. They both won further gold medals in the 10000 metres, where Leclerc ran 55 minutes 26 seconds (a world record for an 80-year-old woman and faster than her 5000 metres), while Angelis recorded 1 hour 46 minutes.

In the half-marathon the oldest female competitor was Erika Kruger of Germany, who won the over-75 category in 2 hours 31 minutes. There were four competitors in the over-70 category, which was won by Marisa Cruz of Brazil in an impressive time of 1 hour 49 minutes 19 seconds.

The full marathon also saw four competitors in the over-70 category, the winner being 72-year-old Marta Sarco of Argentina, who recorded 4 hours 53 minutes.

It was also impressive to see that two women aged over 75 competed in the steeplechase, where 76-year-old Ikuko Suzuki of Japan beat 79-year-old Gali Kovalenskaya of Russia. And 71-year-old Kirsti Viitanen of Finland cleared 1 metre 90 in the pole vault.

The World Masters Championships have usually been held every two years. The next edition of the championships will be held in Lyon in August 2015, and a further edition is scheduled for Australia in November 2016.



Competitors awaiting the start of the marathon

THE PURBECK MARATHON

Each year, Runners' World publishes a list of the top ten UK marathons, as rated by the magazine's readers. For 2012, the Chester Marathon ranked first and the Snowdonia Marathon was ranked second. In third place came the Purbeck Marathon – which was a remarkable achievement since 2012 was the first year in this race was held. Some Striders have competed in the Chester and the Snowdonia Marathons, but no Strider competed in the 2012 Purbeck Marathon, so I decided that I should travel to Dorset for the second running of the race, in September 2013.

The Purbeck Marathon starts and finishes at Swanage in Dorset, and is organised by the local club Purbeck Runners. It has replaced the Swanage Half-Marathon, which Barbara Gambrill reviewed for this magazine several years ago, but which has been discontinued because of traffic problems. The Purbeck Marathon is almost entirely off-road and is also rather hilly. It should appeal to people who enjoy the Beachy Head Marathon, the Vanguard Way Marathon and the southern loop of the Croydon Ultra. It is not a race for people who prefer flat road courses.

Starting from Swanage, the course begins with a short uphill section before following the South West Coast Path, which gives some excellent views of the English Channel, although one does have to be careful on some stretches of the path. Just after the four-mile point, the course leaves the coastal path and heads inland – and uphill – towards the village of Worth Matravers.



Between four miles and six miles (Worth Matravers), the course rises from 16 metres above sea level to 124 metres above sea level. There is a downhill section after Worth Matravers, but between 8 and 9 miles, the course rises from 66 metres above sea level to 140 metres above sea level (at the village of Kingston). The course continues to climb more gradually towards one of the highest points on the course, at Swyre Head, which is 180 metres above sea level and is at about 11 miles on the course. Here there are some good views of the Channel before another downhill section to the village of Kimmeridge, at about 12 miles. Not long after this the course enters an area which is normally used by the Army for training and is only opened to the public at certain weekends. The course heads up a hill called Tyneham Cap and continues along the Army's firing ranges, just inland from the top of the cliffs. At about 14 miles the course leaves the coast and heads north, dropping downhill into the historic village of Tyneham.

Tyneham was a small and rather remote Dorset village, but became famous after its 40 inhabitants were evacuated in 1943, during the Second World War, to enable the Army to use the surrounding area as part of the preparations for D-Day. The inhabitants were told that they would be able to return to their homes after the war. However, the British Government subsequently reneged on this promise, and in 1948 the Army issued a compulsory purchase order, so that it could continue to use the land as a firing range. Most of the village buildings have been badly damaged by shelling and no longer have roofs, although the church and part of Tyneham Farm have been restored as museums.

The 15-mile point of the Purbeck Marathon is at Tyneham, and is 75 metres above sea level. It is also the site of a drinks station. In the next two kilometres the course climbs out of the village onto the Ridgeway, where it reaches 163 metres above sea level. It then drops slightly before a short sharp climb and reaches 198 metres above sea level before beginning a descent as it approaches Corfe Castle. Initially this is a gradual descent, but that is followed by a short steep section. Many runners find it safer to walk for part of this. The course passes below the ruins of Corfe Castle, which was a Royalist fortress in the English Civil War and was largely destroyed when it was bombarded by Cromwell's army. The course passes through the back streets of Corfe, including a narrow alleyway, before crossing the main A351 road to Swanage. The crossing is at a zebra crossing which is manned by marshals, but runners need to take care here – just as they do when crossing Oaks Road in our annual Switchback race. Fortunately the fact that the race is now held on a Sunday in mid-September means that there is not too much traffic: this would be a much more difficult crossing if the race were held in the summer holiday season, as the old Swanage Half-Marathon was. Shortly after crossing the A351, the course also crosses the Swanage Railway, just south of Corfe Castle Station: this is a preserved line which is popular with tourists, but there are only a few trains each day, and a runner would be unlucky to be held up by one of them – there is more chance of being delayed by a tram during the Croydon 10K. The 21-mile point, at Corfe, is 35 metres above sea level. The next two miles include a significant climb onto Nine Barrow Down, and the 23-mile point is 170 metres above sea level.



Having climbed onto Nine Barrow Down, with the English Channel now in sight again, the course begins to descend just before the 24-mile point. The last two miles from Ulwell to Swanage are consistently downhill, and the last mile and a half is the only part of the course which is on pavement, as the race finishes by the sea, in Shore Road. (The race is actually about 400 metres longer than the normal marathon distance.) Many tired runners take the opportunity to immerse their legs in the sea after finishing.

Both the 2012 and 2013 races were won by Steve Way of Bournemouth: in 2012 he ran 2 hours 56 minutes 52, while in 2013 he ran 3 hours 06. (He has run the London Marathon in 2 hours 19, more than a minute a mile faster, which gives a good indication of the severity of the Purbeck course.) And on such a demanding course, it is important not to start too fast. In the 2013 race Pat Canavan of SLH was sixth at the 15-mile point at Tyneham: he had dropped to 12th place by the 24-mile point at Ulwell, and eventually finished 15th. Conversely the first woman, Rhiannon Shepherd of Southampton, was 21st at Tyneham, but had improved to 14th at Ulwell and eventually finished 12th overall. (She recorded 3 hours 46, whereas she had run 3 hours 05 in this year's London Marathon.)

This is a race which I would recommend to those Striders who are comfortable with running over uneven terrain, and who would like to do a long-distance race in beautiful scenery without being deterred by the inevitability of running much slower than would be the case in a road marathon such as London or Brighton. The race would almost certainly require an overnight stay in bed and breakfast accommodation – but such accommodation is not difficult to find in mid-September, after the main holiday season has finished. The organisers impose an entry limit of 350 runners, but the 2013 race had only 223 finishers, with the last finisher recording 6 hours 50. (She had run 5 hours 30 for a road marathon earlier in the year.)

SURREY CROSS-COUNTRY LEAGUES: MID-SEASON TABLES

MEN'S LEAGUE DIVISION TWO

Croydon Harriers 637
Wimbledon 695
Epsom 815
Reigate 830
Dulwich 953
Kingston 1004
STRIDERS 1040
Stragglers 1093
Dorking 1123

WOMEN'S LEAGUE DIVISION TWO

Guildford 67
Ranelagh 138
26.2RRC 217
Elmbridge 333
Kingston 394
Walton 428
Lingfield 444
Epsom Oddballs 531
Collingwood 576
Sutton Runners 578
Tadworth 607
Holland Sports 666
British Airways 683
STRIDERS 762
Dulwich Park 855
Epsom Allsorts 1021

(There are 19 clubs in Division Two of the Women's League. However, Runnymede only competed in the first of the two matches; Croydon Harriers only competed in the second match, and Sutton AC had no finishers in either match.)

BOOK REVIEW – BRITISH MARATHON RUNNING LEGENDS OF THE 1980s

(by Gabrielle Collison: reviewed by Alan Dolton)

Gabrielle Collison used to run for Belgrave: she placed second in the 1993 Surrey Womens Cross-Country Championships, and the following summer she placed second in the Surrey Championships at both 1500 metres (4.36.1) and 3000 metres (9.42.6). She subsequently obtained an MSc in sports science. This book contains interviews with 18 of Britain's leading male and female marathon runners of the 1980s, including Hugh Jones and Mike Gratton who won the 1982 and 1983 London Marathons respectively, Charlie Spedding who placed third in the 1984 Olympic Marathon, and Joyce Smith who won the women's race in the 1981 and 1982 London Marathons. (The most notable omission is Steve Jones, who set the British marathon record: Gabrielle has explained that he twice failed to attend scheduled interviews with her.)

These 18 interviews are followed by a section entitled 'pilot study interviews', which features interviews with Jim Alder and Bill Adcocks (first and second in the 1966 Commonwealth Games Marathon) and with Croydon's own Don Faircloth, who placed third in the 1970 Commonwealth Games Marathon. Personally I would have thought that it would be more logical to have these three interviews as a prologue rather than as an epilogue, but they still make very interesting reading.

In her introduction to the book, Gabrielle observes that the standards of British marathon running in the 1980s were significantly higher than they are now. In 1983, 100 British men ran the marathon in under 2 hours 20 minutes: the 100th fastest British marathon runner that year recorded 2 hours 19 minutes 52. Twenty-six years later, in 2009, the 100th fastest British marathon runner recorded 2 hours 33 minutes 59. In the 1980s, eight British men ran a marathon faster than 2 hours 10 minutes; from 2000 to 2009, only two did so.

For anyone living in Croydon, Gabrielle's interview with Don Faircloth makes fascinating reading. In 1968 and 1969, Don set Croydon Harriers club records at 5000 and 10000 metres: they are still the fastest times ever run by an English member of Croydon Harriers, only having been bettered by runners born in the Southern Hemisphere. And in the 1970 Commonwealth Games, Don set a Croydon Harriers club record of 2 hours 12 minutes 19: this still places him second in the Harriers' all-time rankings, only having been beaten by Dave Chettle, who was born in Tasmania. Don's best time is still more than 12 minutes faster than the next best Croydon Harrier (John Lee), is 22 minutes faster than the best Croydon Harrier of the last 15 years (Steve Bayliss), and is more than 28 minutes faster than Striders' club record (held by Bill Makuwa). So what training was Don doing, to enable him to run so much faster than Croydon's subsequent distance runners?

Don observes that he started training with Croydon's senior runners at the age of 15, doing part of their track sessions. At that time (1964) Croydon's senior runners usually did a club run of up to 15 miles on Sundays, and Don also began doing this, commenting that "it was better than running on my own". As a teenager he had more success at cross-country than on the track, where he recorded personal bests of 3 minutes 56.7 for 1500 metres (at the age of 19) and 4 minutes 14 for the mile. In 1969, at the age of 20, he set what was then a Croydon club record of 29 minutes 01.0 for 10000 metres. That autumn he suffered a stress fracture and had to temporarily stop speedwork, but continued doing long runs. In April 1970 he won the Kent 20-mile road race in 1 hour 44 minutes, and two months later he won his first ever marathon (the Polytechnic Marathon from Windsor to Chiswick, which was then the AAA championship), recording 2 hours 18 minutes on a very hot day. This won him selection for the Commonwealth Games later that year, where he ran his lifetime best.

At this time Don had a physical job, working as a horticulturist which involved spending a lot of time pushing wheelbarrows. He trained twice a day, doing a fartlek session in Lloyd Park at lunchtimes and another session in the evening. Looking back at his failure to improve his marathon time after setting a lifetime best at the age of 21, Don comments "I should have gone back to concentrating on the track because track speed is really the answer to getting faster at the marathon. Most good marathoners are also good track men."



The start of the 1970 Commonwealth Games Marathon. The eventual winner Ron Hill is on the left, wearing number 108: Don Faircloth is immediately behind him.



**The medallists in the 1970 Commonwealth Games Marathon:
(left to right) Jim Alder, Ron Hill and Don Faircloth.**

Don's mileage averaged 70-80 per week, which he increased to 90-100 while building up for a marathon. He did a ten-week build-up "which consisted of 8 weeks of very hard work and a couple of weeks of easing down". He did a long run of between 16 and 23 miles on a Sunday on hilly roads, which was the only time he did a hard session on the roads: his lunchtime sessions were done in Lloyd Park and Addington Hills. His track sessions were on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. One of his track sessions, which was initially set by Croydon's long-distance coach Brian Proctor, was 52 x 200m with a 100m jog between each rep, followed by a flat-out 400 metres. Including the jog recoveries, this session totalled exactly 16000 metres, which is almost ten miles (and it is worth noting that Don's jog 'recoveries' were at quite a brisk pace). Don comments that this type of session "toughens you up mentally, especially for when you get into a difficult situation in a race". Both Don's long runs and his track sessions were always done with a group. He comments that "if you did the long run and thought that you hadn't worked hard enough, then there was always the option of going out for another session in the evening". For the track sessions, there was a hardcore group of three or four Harriers who trained together, so that Don usually had other runners with him for about two-thirds of most sessions, but he observes that although some of them may have had better basic speed than him, they did not have the same pace judgment and would tire in the second half of the session.

Don also comments that he benefited from regular physiotherapy and sports massage (from a GB team physio who lived in Worcester Park), and that there was "always a fine line between being fit and getting ill". He notes that, when he was at school, his parents didn't have a car, so that he "used to walk everywhere. I'd even save money on the bus fare by jogging to the cinema and back. Another 10 or 20 years on, and things are getting worse and worse with kids having very sedentary lifestyles." He had "a balanced diet" and, at his peak, he only weighed 8 stone 4 (Don is 5 foot 8 tall, and other Harriers can testify that, despite being so slim, he was well-known for having a healthy appetite).

Many of the other interviews in the book make similar points: a background of playing out of doors in childhood, and a reasonably high mileage including high-quality fast sessions with other athletes as well as long runs, seem to be regarded as the basic ingredients of success at the marathon. Hugh Jones – still the only Surrey runner ever to win the London Marathon – notes that he did regular runs of 23 miles and considers that "20 miles isn't long enough if you are building up for a marathon". He ran about 90 miles per week when training for a marathon. Like Don, he used to do much of his training in local parks, rather than on the road.

Joyce Smith, who won the women's race in the 1981 and 1982 London Marathons, began her career as a track runner and ran 4 minutes 09 for the 1500 metres (which is faster than any male Strider has run for more than 20 years). In her marathon preparation, she ran some long runs of 25 miles and also did a weekly track session such as 5 x 1 mile (in about five minutes) and 6 x 800m (in about 2 minutes 23). She averaged between 70 and 90 miles per week when training for a marathon.

Charlie Spedding, the only British runner to win an Olympic medal at the marathon in the last 60 years, also had a background of track running (running 3 minutes 45 for the 1500m and 4 minutes 03 for the mile). In his marathon build-up, he did one long run of about 28 miles, about four weeks before the marathon, but apart from this he did not run more than 20 miles (an interesting contrast to Don Faircloth and Hugh Jones). He averaged about 90 miles per week. He too did a regular Tuesday track session. One of his hardest regular track sessions was 5 x 1 mile in 4 minutes 40, jogging a lap in 90 seconds as recovery. This session totals 10000 metres and Charlie used to run the session, including the recovery jogs, in just under 31 minutes. His personal best for the 10000 metres was 28 minutes 08 seconds, so that his total time for these sessions was about two and a half minutes slower than his personal best. 28 minutes 08 seconds for 10000 metres requires an average of between 67 and 68 seconds per lap, so that Charlie's mile reps were two or three seconds per lap slower than his 10000 metre race pace. He also did a high-tempo run most weeks, where he ran for 15 miles at about 5 minutes 40 seconds per mile. (It should be borne in mind that Charlie's marathon race pace was under 5 minutes per mile, and that most of his other training runs were between 6 minutes and 6 minutes 30 per mile.)

This is a very interesting book which I would definitely recommend to any Striders with ambitions to run a fast marathon, or to anyone with an interest in learning more about how British distance runners used to train in the 1980s, when British distance running had significantly more strength in depth than it does today.



Gabrielle Collison in the 1993 Surrey Cross-Country Championship at Frimley

30 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN WINTER 1983/84

The Surrey Women's Cross-Country Championships were held at Morden on 10 December. The senior champion was Jo White of local club Mitcham AC (who have subsequently been absorbed into Sutton & District). Rachel Disley of Hounslow placed second. Mitcham won the team prize with Downland Harriers (who no longer exist) second and Croydon Harriers third. Jo White subsequently emigrated to the USA, where she still competes as a veteran under her married name of Jo Menk. Croydon Harriers had two winners in the younger age groups: Niobe Menendez won the Under-17 race while Karen Sutton won the Under-13 race. Croydon Harriers won the Under-13 team event with Nicola Cook finishing fourth and Rona Smith fifth.

The men's championships were held on 7 January, on a hilly course at Frimley. The senior race was won by Bob Treadwell, who lived in Warlingham and ran for Surrey Beagles. The team event was won by Epsom & Ewell, with Aldershot second and Herne Hill third. Of our local clubs, South London Harriers finished fifth, while Croydon Harriers were a disappointing ninth. Croydon's first finisher was Ken Penney, who placed 17th; their second finisher was future Strider Alan Dolton (36th). The junior race was won by Paul Richley of Belgrave, while South London Harriers won the team event.

In January, Croydon's shot putter Judy Oakes won the AAA Indoor Championship at Cosford, with a putt of 17.67 metres. She was selected for the European Indoor Championships, but withdrew because of injury.

The Road Runners Club was well-known as the organiser of an annual London to Brighton road race which lasted from 1952 until 2005. On 4 February they held a 24-hour indoor race in a shopping centre in Milton Keynes. Each lap measured just over 900 yards. The winner was Mike Newton of South London Harriers, who ran 144 miles 1178 yards. This was his first win in a 24-hour race, having placed second in four previous races.

The Surrey Women's Cross-Country League completed its fifth season with a match at Brockwell Park on 11 February. Croydon Harriers won the league for the second successive year. They won three of the four matches and also had the individual winners in three of the four: their outstanding teenager Niobe Menendez won two of the races, while Karen Ellis, a talented 800 metre runner, won the final race. Woking placed second with Ranelagh third and South London Harriers fourth. Croydon Harriers' success was based on a small group of talented track runners, and they were helped by the fact that only the top four runners from each club scored. However they did not seem to cater for runners of lesser ability. For example, future Striders secretary Michele Lawrence was not made to feel particularly welcome when she enquired about membership, and decided to join Striders instead. Harriers were to pay the price for neglecting slower runners when their women's team disintegrated in the 1990s.

The Surrey Cross-Country League completed its 22nd season with matches on 17 February. Aldershot won Division One for the twelfth successive year, but only after an unusually close battle with Herne Hill, with each club winning two of the four matches. Belgrave placed third, with Epsom (4th) and South London Harriers (5th) also retaining their Division One status. Metropolitan Police (6th) and Hercules-Wimbledon (7th) were relegated to Division Two.

Division Two saw a three-way battle involving Croydon Harriers and Ranelagh, both of whom had been relegated from Division One the previous year, and Division Three champions Omega, a short-lived club who had been formed as a breakaway from Walton AC. Omega won two of the first three matches with Croydon Harriers winning the second match. However Ranelagh turned out their strongest team of the season for the final match at Lightwater. They won the match by a sufficiently large margin to take the second promotion spot behind Omega. Croydon's team included two future Striders: in the decisive match at Lightwater, Alan Dolton placed 20th with Peter Yarlett 84th.

Striders were not yet competing at cross-country (our men did not enter the Surrey League until 1986, and our women did not do so until 1988). However, several of the club's pioneers were busy training for the 1984 London Marathon (which will be covered in the next issue).

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN WINTER 2003/04

On 13 December Striders' men and women competed in Division Two of the Surrey Cross-Country Leagues at Lightwater. The men's race was won by Jonathan McCallum of Croydon Harriers. Striders' men finished in a disappointing ninth place: Justin Macenhill led us home in 34th place, covering the five-mile course in 30 minutes 56. Don Kayum was 49th (31.36) with Damian Macenhill 58th (31.55), Gerry Crispie 68th (32.31), Dave Shaw 83rd (33.14) and Chris Morton 85th (33.19). For only the third time in 15 years, Striders' women were unable to field a complete team of five runners. Our first woman home was veteran Elene Kayum, who placed 26th, recording 29 minutes 43 for the four-mile course. Emma Haillay ran bravely to place 40th (31.23), despite not having fully recovered from a bout of flu. Linda Daniel was 52nd (32.17) and Sarah Lloyd-Jones was 85th (35.25).

The Surrey Cross-Country Championships took place at Lloyd Park on 3 January. Striders' men's and women's teams both placed ninth. For our women, Serena Stracey placed 29th, covering the five-mile course in 37 minutes 14 seconds, Emma Haillay was 54th (41.22), Elene Kayum 57th (41.33) and Cress Davidson 70th (44.58). The men's race was won by Dave Taylor of Herne Hill, who also won the team event. Striders' first man home was Justin Macenhill who placed 41st, covering the seven and a half mile course in 47 minutes 14 seconds, Dave Shaw was 73rd (50.39), and the scoring team was completed by Damian Macenhill (80th, 51.30), Bob Ewen (86th, 52.06), Chris Morton (95th, 52.51) and Peter Yarlett (102nd, 53.24).

The third Surrey Cross-Country League Division Two match of the season was held on 10 January at Merrow. Striders placed fifth, led by Justin Macenhill who had an excellent run to place 15th, covering the five-mile course in 28 minutes 38 seconds. Our next two runners were both veterans, with Don Kayum placing 31st (30.07) and Bob Ewen 32nd (30.08). Simon Alexander placed 40th (30.24), while Tom Thrower, in his first appearance for the club, made a very promising debut with 48th place (30.38). Damian Macenhill was 69th (31.45) and the scoring team was completed by Gerry Crispie 74th (31.57), Chris Morton 83rd (32.34), Peter Yarlett 87th (32.57) and Colin Cotton 94th (33.22). On the same day Striders' women competed at Petersham and placed eighth in their Division Two match. Our first woman home was Serena Stracey who produced an excellent run to finish ninth, covering the four-mile course in 24 minutes 20 seconds. Diane Ballard also ran well for 18th place (24.58), while Elene Kayum was 41st (26.44), Kerry Backshell 72nd (28.55), Patricia Carr 95th (30.55) and Michele Lawrence 98th (31.10).

The final Surrey Cross-Country League matches of the season were held on 7 February at Lloyd Park. Striders' women produced their best performance of the season to place fifth in their Division Two match, lifting us to seventh place in the final table. (With Division One being increased to 15 clubs for the following season, we only missed promotion by one place.) Serena Stracey led the team home in 15th place, recording 25 minutes 58. Diane Ballard placed 19th (26.48), with Emma Haillay 27th (27.52), Kerry Backshell 47th (29.25), and Elene Kayum 55th (30.04). Striders' men faced strong opposition in their Division Two match. Justin Macenhill had an excellent run to place ninth, covering the five-mile course in 30 minutes 33 seconds. Our next three runners were all veterans. Long-distance specialist Dave Shaw ran well to place 33rd (32.20), with Bob Ewen 47th (32.59) and Gerry Crispie 66th (33.23). Striders showed good team spirit with 24 finishers, but with only four of these in the top 70, we had to settle for ninth place in the match, and were relegated to Division Three.

On 28 February Striders produced a good team performance to win an inter-club match in Lloyd Park, promoted by our local rivals Croydon Harriers. Striders were led by second-claim member Lee Morgan, who made a rare appearance in our colours and ran strongly to finish second, covering the muddy 10 kilometre course in 37 minutes 50 seconds. Justin Macenhill ran steadily to place seventh (41.12) and there were good runs from two of Striders' over-50s, with David Batten placing 15th (43.30) and Peter Yarlett 18th (43.43). The meeting also included an under-17 race, which incorporated the trials for the Croydon Borough team for the London Mini-Marathon. Striders' Sophie Shaw had an excellent run to win the under-13 girls' category, finishing ahead of all the under-15 girls and covering the two-mile course in 16 minutes 27.

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