

Striders of Croydon

SEPTEMBER 2014 MAGAZINE



**Lorraine Hunte competing in the Southern Veterans League
(photo by Kevin Hann)**

During 2014 Lorraine set Striders over-60 records at 100, 200 and 400 metres

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2014

Sat 20 Sep – Mobmatch v Blackheath & Bromley – Norman Park
Wed 24 Sep – Club Annual General Meeting
Sun 28 Sep – Switchback 5 miles (Striders hosting) – Lloyd Park
Sat 11 Oct – Surrey Womens Cross-Country League Div 2 – Richmond Park
Sat 11 Oct – Surrey Cross-Country League Division 2 (men) – Newlands Corner
Sat 18 Oct – Surrey Veterans Cross-Country Championships – Richmond Park
Sun 19 Oct – Croydon 10K – Lloyd Park Avenue
Sat 25 Oct – East Surrey League Cross-Country – Lloyd Park
Sat 1 Nov – Priory Relays – Reigate
Sat 8 Nov – Surrey Cross-Country League Division 2 (men) – Ham
Sat 22 Nov – South of Thames 5 mile Cross-Country Championship – Coulsdon
Sat 29 Nov – Helen Furze Memorial Mobmatch – Nonsuch Park
Sat 6 Dec – Surrey Womens Cross-Country League Div 2 – Nonsuch Park
Sat 13 Dec – Mobmatch v Croydon Harriers – Lloyd Park
Sat 20 Dec – South of Thames 7.5 mile Cross-Country Championship – Coulsdon

2015

Sat 3 Jan – Surrey Cross-Country Championships – Lloyd Park
Sat 10 Jan – Surrey Womens Cross-Country League Div 2 – Wimbledon Common
Sat 10 Jan – Surrey Cross-Country League Division 2 (men) – Wimbledon Common
Sat 24 Jan – Southern Cross-Country Championships – Stanmer Park, Brighton
Sat 7 Feb – Surrey Womens Cross-Country League Div 2 – Coulsdon
Sat 7 Feb – Surrey Cross-Country League Division 2 (men) – Lloyd Park
Sat 21 Feb – National Cross-Country Championships – Parliament Hill Fields
Sat 7 & Sun 8 Mar – British Masters Indoor Championships – Lee Valley
Sun 29 Mar – Croydon Half-Marathon (Striders hosting)
Sun 12 Apr – Brighton Marathon
Sun 26 Apr – London Marathon (Striders marshalling)
Sun 3 May – Ranelagh Half-Marathon (Surrey Championship) – Petersham

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER SEPTEMBER 2014

Krzysztof's description of the Isle of Mull Half marathon (see page 5 of this newsletter) prompts me to think there is an easy way out of organising running events. Since everyone wears a stop watch we just say, "off you go" then ask the runners to report their times at the finish. It would save a lot of hassle and cost setting up chip timing and paying for race clocks. Funnily enough that's pretty well what the Selsdon Half did for their first event four years ago. However it wouldn't be the same somehow would it?

Another thought was to hire a bus for an away run in a different location, especially in the Surrey Hills. I did enquire about this a few years ago but the cost seemed excessive unless we could guarantee a really full coach. If anyone knows a friendly coach company which would do us a cheap deal I will look again.

Well done to Lisa and Victoria for running the Thames Meander marathon, both of you seem to be able to keep going for ever at a steady pace.

Alan reports on the Surrey Road League which emphasises the fact that although we now have more than 300 members, surprisingly few of you compete in races. Out of 117 ladies on our membership list, only one or two of you have been running in road league races this year. Partly, I guess because there are so many other events to choose from and also because it is so easy to go out and run a parkrun on a Saturday morning but as Alan says you don't have to be quick to make a difference to Striders' ranking in the overall league tables so next year have a go. If anyone would like to act as team captain(s) for next year's events please speak to Chris or Alan.

Also the Southern Vets league – as a break from running on the roads and trails round Croydon, a bit of racing on the track or having a go at throwing the javelin is always worth it, and it really doesn't matter if you haven't done it before: the competition is most definitely not Olympic standard.

Alan has reviewed a book on altitude training, sounds like we should all go to Flagstaff in northern Arizona. Sadly the top of Shirley Hills now seems to be about the highest point I ever achieve in my runs.

Don't forget our AGM next Wednesday, 24th September. A good opportunity to celebrate the achievements of our members, an opportunity to discuss the challenge of leading large groups of you, of widely differing pace, round the streets of Croydon on a Wednesday evening and there will be free nibbles afterwards.

The Switchback is coming up at the end of the month. If you haven't done so already please reply to Debra and offer to help. This race has been Striders' distinctive cross country race, having started in 1992, it is popular with local clubs and always gets a good turn out from Dulwich runners as it's in their XC league. It does have a road crossing to manage and the route round Shirley Hills is quite complex so the more marshals we can muster the more enjoyable it is for the runners.

And finally don't forget the Helen Furze memorial mob match at Nonsuch Park on November 29th.

May all your runs be through sunlit forests.

Robin Jamieson

Striders of Croydon

The Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday 24 September 2014 at the Sandilands clubhouse, starting at 8.40 p.m. and finishing at 9.30 p.m. (The club run will start at 7.30 p.m. and will last for about 40 minutes.)

AGENDA

- 1) Minutes of the 2013 Annual General Meeting.
- 2) Matters arising from the minutes.
- 3) To receive the Chairman's annual report.
 - Sandilands
 - Croydon Half Marathon
- 4) To receive the Secretary's annual report.
- 5) To receive the statement of accounts and Treasurer's report.
- 6) To set the membership fee for the 2014/15 club year.
 - Proposal to keep fees as currently, but penalties for late renewals.
- 7) Proposal to change format of Club Handicap (Goodall Trophy)
- 8) To elect the Committee for 2014/15:

Nominations for Club Officers should be submitted to the Secretary at least 5 days before the date of the AGM. All nominations should be proposed by a Club member and should have the prior approval of the nominee. Nominations will not be accepted on the night.

All existing committee members wish to stay on the committee.

Proposed positions:

- Chairman - Robin Jamieson
- Secretary – Chris Morton
- Treasurer – John Humphries
- Socials – Hannah Musk
- other Committee members – John Ralf (women's xc team), Mick Turner (Club Handicap), Steph Upton (faster women's rep), Tony Flowers (4th group rep and Friday runs)

The committee would like to propose that Ivanka Brown – as Membership Secretary – and Krzysztof Klidzia – as representative for faster runners - joins the committee.

Kit will be organised by a combination of Mick Turner (men's kit) and Victoria Legge (women's kit) – with Steph to advise when necessary.

- 10) Presentation of Club Awards.

- 11) Items for discussion:

- Club Runs

A.O.B.

THE ISLE OF MULL HALF-MARATHON (by Krzysztof Klidzia)

With the South of England kindly passing Hurricane Bertha to Scotland, my journey from Oban on the Scottish mainland to the Isle of Mull was interrupted by torrential rain but luckily calming waters on the ferry crossing. The rain continued as we crammed into the small village hall to collect our numbers for either the half-marathon or 10k.

There was to be a marching band to the start some 1.5 miles away which to my horror one of the organisers prompted me to join with others to walk behind! In that rain - forget it!

Two buses were made available to take the half-marathon runners to the start and then drop the 10k runners further up and store their luggage until the finish point. The first bus went off and my bus followed, some minutes behind the marching band. Already we were well behind the 12 noon start!

Our bus driver pottered along and we went past the half-marathon start! "STOP, STOP" those sardined at the front of the bus shouted but the driver drove on ... and on, very slowly, until the 10k start further up. He dropped the 10k runners off and then turned around and at last dropped us off at the start.

There was no one at the start! It was just the long open road and the incessant rain to keep us company! The half-marathon runners were long gone and no marshals were evident! By now, being desperate for the loo, all the guys dashed to the bushes on the side of the road and the women dashed further up. Once everyone was ready we set our watches and begun our very own half-marathon race.

There was a loop some two miles down the road so we could see all those who had started the 'real' run coming past us in the opposite direction!

The torrential rain followed us all to the finish as we ran, avoiding both large puddles and the cars on the unpaved road.

Times were adjusted and we could all claim to have experienced a memorable run, some for the awful weather, and some of us for the added bonus of an unrequested time allowance! They promised it wouldn't happen again and I will try it again! On a glorious sunny day and with no mishaps it would be a scenic, fast route.

This race will surely never fade, if not for the heavy rain but for the endearing affection we all hold for our out of this world bus driver.



THE THAMES MEANDER MARATHON (by Victoria Legge)

My alarm went off at 4:45am so I was up early in order to get to Croydon to meet Lisa to catch the Express 26 to get to Kingston. I did feel a bit mad as I had done no training whatsoever for this marathon. Lisa had asked the organisers if she and I could go early, the answer was of course yes. But we were going out at 8:45; this was because the parkrun goes out from the same place and they did not want to confuse the parkrunners. There was enough time to pin our numbers on, go to the loo and put bags away and then have the briefing, basically it was an out-and-back course up to Putney Bridge and then back and out to Kingston Bridge; we were based a short distance from Kingston Bridge. If you have ever done Robin's last long run before the marathon it is that route.

I recognise one of the 100 club, Robbie Red Hat, and I told Lisa that he was a legend. They gave us a countdown and we were off. Lisa and I teamed up with two very nice people, Julie and Robbie; Lisa ran with Robbie and I ran with Julie, it was a nice steady pace and we develop a nice chat, Julie was on her 299th marathon hoping to make her 300th in 2 weeks time. She filled me in on all the best marathons and a few not so good ones. Turned out we had run together before, the Pilgrim Way 10 Miles. We were plodding along and all of a sudden I heard 'Robbie!' - Robbie had had a fall. Julie and I carried on and then realise how quiet it had gone and looked behind us and found Lisa and Robbie were not there. We got to the half-way point and had a stretch and drink and a gel - there were flapjacks, banana cake, pretzels, crisps, squash and water - then it was back the other way. By that time most of field were on the way out and as Julie was a member of the 100th many of the field knew her and were cheering her on. Julie was having a bit of problem and slowed down, I was ok and kept going; we kept meeting up at the fuel stations. As I was running along I realise how lovely the route was: the sky was very blue and perfect, the River Thames was well used by rowing clubs, which, especially if someone was shouting at them, made me go faster. (Well I am aware that I go a bit faster when shouted at, please keep doing this folks).

Before I knew it we were at the Richmond Rivera and it was not long before the finish. We had to go past the finish to go up to Kingston Bridge to turn around and came back, but this part of the race was scenic and most important shady, we ran back to the finish and then it was over. I stretched out and then wait for Lisa and Robbie; they were just going up the home stretch. I then decide to go and get changed and wait for Lisa. I was chatting to Peter who had done this year's Comrades and I heard them coming, Lisa and Robbie had crossed the line. Lisa and I had a sit down and something to eat and then we walked back to Kingston. We meet a couple at the bus stop and they said, 'Did you enjoy the race?' It turned out the man had been in it and had recognised Lisa by her hat - she was wearing her bright pink hat. We then hobbled to the bus stop and it was on the bus home. Considering I had done no training for this I felt remarkable well, no pain. I did sit in a bath of cold water on the Saturday night so whether this helped me or not I am not sure, if it is good enough for Mo Farah it is good enough for me! I would recommend the Thames Meander marathon as it is very scenic and goes past some lovely parts of London, the water stations are well placed. There are 5 fuel stations, which were well stocked with gels, cakes, flapjacks, bananas etc. and water and fruit squash was available as well. It is flat but is multi-terrain; the loose chippings do play havoc with your feet. However you could move to the side and run on grass. It is low-key some of the marshals said it was a steady trickle of people rather than one mass huddle. From my point of view it was well organised and the marshals and the organisers were very friendly. The race headquarters was a sport centre and the staff were friendly and helpful. So a good one to try.

(Editor's Note. The half-marathon, which was held in conjunction with this race, was won by James Bennett of Striders.)

SURREY ROAD LEAGUE 2014: PART 2

At the halfway point of the season, after the Dorking 10-mile road race on 1 June, our men were equal 16th of the 31 clubs in the league, while our women occupied 18th place.

The fourth race was the Richmond 10K on Sunday 22 June. This is on a flat course and a relatively scenic route, part of which runs alongside the River Thames. It was also a very hot morning. Rachel Lindley had another excellent run to be the eighth woman to finish, recording a personal best of 39 minutes 18 seconds, which lifted her to third place in our all-time women's rankings. Our men were led by James Bennett who placed 19th of the 487 finishers, recording 35 minutes 12. Bill Makuwa was close behind in 25th place, recording 35 minutes 27, and Krzysztof Klidzia completed the scoring trio, finishing 47th in 36 minutes 52. This placed us seventh in the team event, which was our best performance of the season. Simon Pannell was 126th (39.56) and we had nine other male finishers: Damian Macenhill, Chris Morton, Darren Woods, Alan Dolton, Colin Hann, Ernie Hann, Alan Purchase, Martin Gourlay and Sunjay Bhogal. Serena Stracey, returning to competition after injury, was our second woman to finish but sadly, for the second successive league race, we could not find a third woman to complete the team. Only 15 of the clubs in the league fielded complete teams of three women, and we were the second best of the incomplete teams, placing us 17th in the team event. In the overall league tables our men climbed to 13th place, while our women also climbed slightly, to equal 16th.

The fifth Surrey League race was the Elmbridge 10K on Sunday 20 July. Unfortunately the organisers of the Elmore 7-mile road race, which is always a popular race with Striders, changed the date of their race from the second weekend in July to the third weekend, so that it took place on the previous day. Of the Surrey Road League races, Elmbridge is the longest journey from Croydon. Nevertheless we had a total of twelve runners, led by Krzysztof Klidzia who placed 39th of the 556 finishers, recording 36 minutes 42. Tyler O'Callaghan made a welcome return to Striders colours and placed 53rd in 37 minutes 42. The scoring trio was completed by Colin Hann who placed 156th in 41 minutes 45. Our first woman was Becky Laurence who placed 316th overall in 48 minutes 23, while Karen Peake also ran well to place 451st in 56 minutes 31. Unfortunately, again we could not find a third woman to complete the team. Our other male finishers were Darren Woods, Steve Massey, Sunjay Bhogal, Peter Laurence (who outsprinted his wife after being behind her for most of the race), Ernie Hann (who had aggravated a leg injury in the previous day's parkrun), Christopher Tanner and club treasurer John Humphries. Our men placed 15th out of the Surrey Road League clubs, although we slipped to 17th in the overall league table. Our women placed 18th in the match, and retained 16th place in the overall league table.

The season finished with the Wimbledon five-kilometre road race, which was held on Sunday 17 August. Unfortunately this race was delayed by a week from last year's date, which meant that it clashed with the Croydon Duathlon. Additionally, the availability of so many free local parkruns seems to have had the result that many of our runners are not keen on travelling to compete in a road race which is only five kilometres. However, we had a total of eight runners in this event. Our team was led by Justin Macenhill who ran well to place 53rd of the 244 finishers, covering the hilly course in 18 minutes 31 seconds. Colin Hann was 68th in 18 minutes 52, while Matt Stone, in his first race for Striders, also ran well to complete the scoring trio, placing 80th in 19 minutes 09. Our non-scorers were Andy Perks, Steve Massey, Darren Woods and Alan Dolton. For our women, Becky Laurence again ran well to finish 180th overall in 22 minutes 47 seconds. Our men placed 14th of the 31 clubs in the league, which was our second best performance of the season and kept us in 17th place in the final league table. Only 17 of the clubs in the league managed to field two

or more women, and Becky placed second of the one-woman teams, so that our women finished 19th in the match and 18th in the final league table.

One feature of the Road League's scoring system is that any complete team of three runners, no matter how slow they are, will always beat any incomplete team. (This differs from the system used in the Surrey Cross-Country Leagues.) Thus, for example, in the Richmond 10K, Redhill Royal Mail's three runners all finished outside the first 200, while Thames Hare & Hounds had two runners in the first seven finishers. But because Thames Hare & Hounds did not have a third runner, Redhill Royal Mail finished above them in the team event. Our women only managed to field a complete team of three runners for one of the six races: in three of the races we had two women and in the final race we had only one woman. If we had been able to field a third woman, of any level of ability, in some of the races where we only had two, we would have finished higher in the league table.

As these magazine reports have indicated, this has been a slightly disappointing season, although we have had the consolation that both our men and women finished ahead of our local rivals Croydon Harriers. We would probably benefit from finding an enthusiastic team captain (and possibly one for each gender) who would be willing to take responsibility for encouraging more of our club members to compete in these events. I would be delighted to hear from anyone who might be interested in taking on such a role.



Emily Wicks (of Aldershot) on her way to being first woman at the 2014 Elmbridge 10K

SURREY ROAD LEAGUE: FINAL TABLES

MEN

Clapham Chasers	121
South London Harriers	114
Stragglers	114
Ranelagh	113
Hercules-Wimbledon	110
Tadworth	107
West Four Harriers	106
Herne Hill	101
Guildford & Godalming	97
Reigate	93
Elmbridge	92
Wimbledon Windmilers	91
Sutton Runners	88
Collingwood	84
Camberley	84
Dorking	83
Striders of Croydon	77
Woking	66
London City	60
Epsom Oddballs	58
26.2 RRC	58
Epsom & Ewell	55
Croydon Harriers	50
Belgrave	43
Lingfield	43
Redhill Royal Mail	33
Thames Hare & Hounds	26
Windle Valley	20
Waverley	6
Kingston	4
Dulwich	0



Colin Cotton, the longest-serving Strider to run in this year's Surrey Road League

WOMEN

Guildford & Godalming 121
Clapham Chasers 119
Ranelagh 119
South London Harriers 111
Woking 107
London City 104
Stragglers 104
Elmbridge 102
Herne Hill 102
Wimbledon Windmilers 101
West Four Harriers 93
Collingwood 92
Sutton Runners 92
Thames Hare & Hounds 76
Tadworth 73
Epsom Oddballs 70
Reigate 67
Striders of Croydon 65
Epsom Allsorts 60
Epsom & Ewell 59
Croydon Harriers 55
Camberley 50
Hercules-Wimbledon 50
26.2 RRC 44
Kingston 38
Dorking 24
Belgrave 20
Lingfield 16

Three clubs (Dulwich, Waverley and Windle Valley) entered the league but had no female finishers in any of the six races.



Becky Laurence ran for us in four of the six Surrey Road League races

SOUTHERN VETERANS LEAGUE: SOUTH LONDON DIVISION

Our first Southern Veterans League match of the season took place at Kingsmeadow on 28 April. Both our men and women placed fourth of the seven competing clubs, with our men finishing just one point ahead of local rivals Croydon Harriers. For our men, Justin Macenhill ran well to place second in the over-35 1500 metres in 4 minutes 45.9 and third in the 5000 metres in 18 minutes 10.9, while David Gunaratnam was second in the over-50 long jump with a leap of 3 metres 79. For our women, Steph Upton was third in the over-35 1500 metres in 5 minutes 59.5, and was fourth in both the 100 metres and 400 metres.

Our second match of the season took place at Croydon Arena on Monday 19 May. Our men did very well to place second of the seven competing clubs, only six points behind Epsom, while our women were fourth. Maggie Statham made a welcome return to Striders' colours to set a new club over-60 1500 metre record of 5 minutes 55.0, winning her age-group. Steph Upton won the over-35 women's 2000 metre walk (13.28.2). Lorraine Hunte was second in the over-60 100 metres (18.2) and third in the 400 metres (98.4), both these times being club age-group records. For our men, Daniel Hassett set a club over-35 record of exactly five metres to place second in the long jump, and also placed second in the over-35 400 metres (56.5). There were also second places for Sam O'Dongo in the over-35 100 metres (13.0), Justin Macenhill in the over-40 1500 metres (4.46.2), Julian Spencer-Wood in the over-60 1500 metres, Dave Hoben in the over-50 2000 metre walk (13.13.5), Damian Macenhill in the over-35 2000 metre walk (13.19.8) and the 4 x 100 metre relay team (51.3).

The third (and penultimate) match of the season took place at Ewell on 16 June. Our women did well to place third, while our men were fourth of the seven competing clubs. Three of our oldest competitors set new club age-group records. Julian Spencer-Wood won the M60 3000 metres in 11 minutes 38.3 seconds, while Maggie Statham won the B 3000 metres in a club W60 record of 12 minutes 18.8 seconds, and Lorraine Hunte was third in her 200 metre race in a club W60 record of 38.4 seconds. Striders' 4 x 400 metre relay team of Daniel Hassett, Justin Macenhill, Paul Stanford and Sam O'Dongo ended the meeting on a high note with an impressive second place in a club record of 3 minutes 59.0 seconds. Earlier, Daniel had placed second in the triple jump with a club over-35 record of 10.54 metres.

Our final match of the season took place at Wimbledon on 14 July. For the second successive match, our women placed third while our men placed fourth. Paul Cripps had a successful evening, showing his versatility by winning both the M35 2000 metre walk (12.41.0) and the discus (18.50), and also placing second in the triple jump (9.60) and third in the javelin (22.99). Maggie Statham ran very well to win the W60 800 metres (3.00.4) and to place second in the A 5000 metres (20.44.7), both of these being new club age-group records. Julian Spencer-Wood won the M60 800 metres (2.33.4). Sandra Francis placed second in the W50 2000 metre walk in a club age-group record of 14 minutes 03.8, while Linda Daniel placed second in both the W50 800 metres (3.12.4) and 5000 metres (24.04.4).

Both our men and women were also fourth in the final league tables (see below for the full tables). Considering that we are primarily a cross-country and road running club, whereas five of our six opponents are primarily track and field athletic clubs with their headquarters located at a synthetic track (the exception being Dorking), this is a creditable achievement. Our men have now finished ahead of our local rivals Croydon Harriers for six successive matches, and our women did the same in the two most recent matches. I hope that we can continue this run next season. Competing in a track and field league requires us to take responsibility for organising some of the field events (usually one at each match). Many thanks go to David Batten, who is now our only fully-qualified field judge and who took responsibility for organising this, and to all those Striders who helped him.

SOUTHERN VETERANS LEAGUE 2014: FINAL TABLES

MEN

Epsom & Ewell 30
Hercules-Wimbledon 28
Kingston 24
Striders of Croydon 22
Croydon Harriers 16
Walton 11
Dorking 9

WOMEN

Epsom & Ewell 32
Kingston 27
Croydon Harriers 23
Striders of Croydon 22
Hercules-Wimbledon 15
Walton 13
Dorking 2



Damian Macenhill and Steph Upton, led by Dave Orchard of Hercules-Wimbledon, competing in the 2000 metre walk (photo by Kevin Hann)

BOOK REVIEW – NOTES FROM HIGHER GROUNDS

(by Elizabeth Egan: reviewed by Alan Dolton)

In the last edition of this magazine, I reviewed a coaching book by Jack Daniels which included a chapter on altitude training; and I commented that it was a subject “of considerable importance for elite athletes, although it is probably has less practical application for most Striders.” Slightly to my surprise, a couple of Striders subsequently commented to me that a training holiday at altitude might make an interesting change from the sea-level holidays at Club La Santa in Lanzarote, which several of our members have become accustomed to.

Elizabeth Egan is a former Irish cross-country runner who now works as a freelance advisor to elite athletes, and has recently formed a company to promote training holidays at altitude. This book is a fairly detailed guide (16 chapters and 342 pages) to altitude training. It begins with an introductory chapter explaining the benefits of training at altitude, and proceeds with 15 further chapters each dealing with a particular venue. Four of these are in the USA; two are in Mexico; five are in Africa; one is in Australia; and three are in Western Europe.

In her preface, Egan comments that she has no doubt “that altitude training works, but I care less about the effect of hypoxic conditions on my red blood cells than I do about the effects that running on soft trails in the fresh mountain air have on my mind and my soul.” She comments that her book is designed to answer questions such as:

“Where do you find information on the best places to train? ...How do you arrange access to the local track? Where is the best place to stay? Do you need a car to get around? Is it safe? Is it suitable for solo travellers? And most importantly, as someone who generally dislikes running on the roads, what are the trails like?”

The first two venues which she reviews are both in Mexico, and she comments that both these are better for middle-distance athletes aiming to do a block of ‘quality’ training than they are for long-distance runners. She then reviews four different venues in the western USA. The best-known of these are Albuquerque in New Mexico (which was a regular training venue of Paula Radcliffe) and Boulder in Colorado (where Frank Shorter trained prior to his win in the 1972 Olympic Marathon, and where Chrissie Wellington trained for part of her triathlon career). However, the American venue which she recommends most strongly is the arguably lesser-known town of Flagstaff, in northern Arizona. She comments that Flagstaff is “big enough to have supermarkets, restaurants, shops and things to do, but small enough to be able to get around on foot, and to be close to the trails, no matter where you’re staying. There is a great running scene and I found the local runners incredibly and helpful. The town was full of my type of trails (anything through pine forests usually does the job)...” From a tourist perspective, the town has the advantage of being close to the Grand Canyon. Winters are cold, with significant snowfalls from November to March, so this is only suitable as a training venue from April to October.

Moving to the Eastern Hemisphere, Egan reviews three different venues in Europe. Font Romeu, in the Pyrenees, was another regular training-venue of Paula Radcliffe. Egan comments that she “liked Font Romeu, but struggled communicating without adequate French. ... The weather can be slightly temperamental, and considerable snowfall is possible as late as April.” Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Egan’s favourite European venue is St Moritz in Switzerland, although she notes that “snow can fall in any month of the year” and the town is only suitable as a training venue from June to September. She also concedes that “the high cost of living is the only downside of an otherwise wonderful destination.”

The other European venue which Egan reviews is Pradollano, in the Sierra Nevada in Spain. This is popular with some young British middle-distance runners (including some of the successful Aldershot squad coached by Mick Woods), but Egan was not keen on this venue, apparently because it is most suitable for middle-distance runners who are happy to do their main sessions on a track, and is less suitable for long-distance runners who are looking for a variety of trails to train on. She comments that "Spanish endurance runners and race walkers train here, but for those with a low boredom threshold, the lack of variety can be a major drawback. ... Sierra Nevada has a longer and warmer summer than any of the European altitude training alternatives, and at 2430m is also one of the highest options on the continent."

Of the five African venues which Egan reviews, the two which she particularly recommends are Iten in Kenya and Addis Ababa in Ethiopia. Iten is now used as a winter training venue by several British internationals, and Egan comments that "Kenya is my number one destination and always the first place I suggest to people when they ask for advice." Iten features a well-known training centre run by the former world cross-country champion Lornah Kiplagat and her husband. Egan observes that Kenyans are generally exceptionally friendly, but concedes that there is "some risk of civil unrest" (as happened in 2007, when there was significant rioting after a close and disputed Presidential election).

Egan was clearly also impressed by Addis Ababa, commenting that "the city was more beautiful and a lot safer than I expected and I was delighted to find that English is widely spoken". There are two specialist training centres, at Yaya Village and Sululta, both of which are a few miles north of Addis Ababa itself. Sululta features a hotel and track owned by the former Olympic 10000m champion Kenenisa Bekele. There are also opportunities to visit Bekoji, which is the home town not only of Bekele but also of Olympic champions Tirunesh Dibaba and Derartu Tulu, and is located about 140 miles south of Addis Ababa. Egan observes that the cost of living is low, and that the Ethiopian diet seems to consist almost entirely of complex carbohydrates, with remarkably little protein.

Egan is less enthusiastic about Potchefstroom in South Africa, which was used by double Olympic champion Kelly Holmes and has been a popular venue with some of Britain's leading middle-distance runners. She comments that it "is popular among middle-distance track athletes but its lack of trails make it less attractive for long-distance runners." She also notes that the surrounding area has the reputation of not being entirely safe for white visitors. The other African venues which Egan reviews are Dullstroom (which is also in South Africa and is at a higher altitude than Potchefstroom, although it is less well-known outside South Africa) and Ifrane in Morocco.

Egan also reviews the Australian venue of Falls Creek, which was frequently used by Irish international Sonia O'Sullivan in the latter part of her career, although this is probably too far away for most British runners to consider it for a training holiday.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and found it quite inspirational. I do not entirely share Egan's perspectives: being primarily a track runner rather than an ultra-distance runner, I would attach more importance to the availability of a track and less importance to having a wide variety of long-distance trails. Therefore I suspect that I would give a higher rating to Pradollano than Egan does. And bearing in mind that many athletes who are sufficiently keen to consider altitude training are unlikely to be earning high incomes, I was somewhat surprised by the high rating which she gives to St Moritz. However I would definitely recommend this book to anyone who is looking for a training holiday in a location which is rather different to Striders' traditional venue in Lanzarote.



Carly Varner of the USA competing at altitude, near Flagstaff in Arizona

30 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SUMMER/AUTUMN 1984

The highlight of the 1984 athletics season was the Olympic Games, held in Los Angeles in August. Two members of Croydon Harriers competed. Judy Oakes did well to place fourth in the women's shot with a putt of 18.14 metres. Her club colleague Helen Barnett reached the semi-finals of the 400 metres, running 52.26 seconds. At club level, Blackheath finished fifth in Division One of the British League. Croydon Harriers finished 11th in Division One of the Southern League, while South London Harriers were 23rd, and were relegated to Division Two.

On 20 October, Striders' founder and club chairman, Steve Owen, ran a personal best of 58 minutes 42 seconds for 10 miles at Battersea Park (achieved on a training mileage of 33 miles per week). Club colleague Rob Pinfield ran 60 minutes 42 seconds.

The fourth annual Croydon 10-mile road race took place on the following day. It was held on the same course as the two previous years: a relatively fast two-lap course starting in Oaks Road and finishing in the grounds of John Ruskin School (which has subsequently been demolished). Surrey Beagles' international Bob Treadwell repeated his victory of 1981, finishing almost two minutes clear in an impressive time of 49 minutes 22 seconds. Richard Higgins of Portsmouth AC was second in 51 minutes 13, ahead of two South London Harriers: teenager Adrian Iszatt placed third (51.23) with Ray Marriott fourth (51.32). Roger Maxwell of Forbanks AC was fifth (51.50) with Francis Upcott of SLH sixth (52.07) and Alan Dolton seventh for host club Croydon Harriers (52.25). Mick Firth of South London Harriers ran 58 minutes 05 to place 34th overall and second in the over-50 category. South London Harriers also had the first woman finisher in Caroline Letchford, who placed 110th overall in 63 minutes 04 seconds (and beat all Striders' male runners). Striders distributed recruitment leaflets after the race to demonstrate that, despite the club's name (which was still Philips City Striders), membership was no longer restricted to people who worked for Philips. The most prominent recruit was Alan Purchase, who had placed 88th in a personal best of 61 minutes 46 seconds. Another future Strider, Mike Jaras, placed 123rd in 63 minutes 49.

The Surrey Cross-Country League began its 23rd season with matches on 13 October. The first three Division One matches were all won by defending champions Aldershot, with Herne Hill taking second place on each occasion. SLH placed third in the opening match, with Ranelagh third in the next two. Woking won the first three Division Two matches, with Thames Hare & Hounds second in the first two, and Croydon taking second in the third match. In the overall table with one match remaining, Croydon held second place, just eleven points ahead of Thames. In Division Three, Mitcham won the opening match with Guildford second, while Guildford won the next two with Mitcham second. The Surrey Women's Cross-Country League began its sixth season. Croydon Harriers won the team event in the first two races. One of their scoring team still competes locally: Juliet Waters now runs for Stragglers under her married name of Cleghorn. The first race was won by Croydon's outstanding 17-year-old Niobe Menendez, who subsequently moved to Sussex and competed as a race walker in the 2002 Commonwealth Games.

The East Surrey League held its annual cross-country race on a five-mile course at Lloyd Park on 27 October. The winner was Jonathan Lamont of Epsom in 28 minutes 23 seconds, while Alan Dolton placed second in 28 minutes 57. Another future Strider, Peter Yarlett, placed 24th in 31 minutes 10. Hercules-Wimbledon won the team event with Epsom second. Striders made their cross-country debut in the London Championships at Parliament Hill on 24 November. Eight Striders finished on a very muddy course, although none of them still compete for us. Steve Owen led the team home, followed by Rob Pinfield and Simon Smith (who is a life member of Striders and who still sometimes contributes to our Facebook page).



Juliet Cleghorn (on the right of this picture) was one of Croydon Harriers' leading women 30 years ago (when she was a teenager), and now competes for Stragglers.

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN AUTUMN 2004

The Surrey Road Relays were held at Wimbledon on 11 September. Striders' men finished ninth. New member Duncan Lancashire ran an excellent first leg to place fifth in 15 minutes 15. The other team members were Paul Finch (17.51), Don Kayum (16.47), Tom Thrower (16.07), Justin Macenhill (16.01) and Damian Macenhill (18.34). Striders' women were also ninth, with very good runs from Kerry Backshell (20.25) and Faye Stammers (20.26).

From 1996 to 2004, Striders had provided track and field competition for the club's older members in the Southern Veterans League, but had not catered for the club's younger members. The 2004 AGM agreed to apply to enter the Rosenheim League for 2005 (which we subsequently competed in for nine years, before withdrawing at the end of 2013). The AGM also saw Alan Dolton retire as club secretary to concentrate on his sports massage business. Chris Morton took over as club secretary, while Karen McDermott (now Karen Macenhill) joined the committee in the new post of membership secretary. The club's membership had grown from 77 in September 2002 to 130 in August 2004.

The Wimbledon 10-mile road race took place on 3 October. Justin Macenhill placed 11th in 59 minutes 16. Veteran Don Kayum recorded a personal best of 60 minutes 17 for 14th place. Kerry Backshell was the sixth woman to finish, in a personal best 71 minutes 59.

The Surrey Women's Cross-Country League began its 26th season with a match at Wimbledon Common on 9 October. Division One had been expanded to 15 clubs for the first time, thus increasing the chances of promotion from Division Two. Striders' women did well to place third of 14 clubs in the first Division Two match. They were led by Serena Stracey, in her first race for eight months after a knee operation. She ran very well to finish sixth of the 83 finishers, covering the undulating six-kilometre course in 26 minutes 07 seconds. Striders' next three runners had their own private battle, packing well to finish within 13 seconds of each other. Clare McFadzean, making her league debut, ran strongly to place 19th in 27 minutes 59, and was closely followed by Kerry Backshell (20th, 28.01) and Faye Stammers (21st, 28.12). Elene Kayum completed the scoring team in 28th place (28.55).

Meanwhile Striders' men competed in the Division Three match at Epsom. Having been relegated from Division Two the previous season, we were slightly disappointed to finish fourth of the nine competing clubs. Our first man home was Justin Macenhill who finished tenth in 31 minutes 33 seconds. He was followed by Tom Thrower (16th, 32.21); Don Kayum (26th, 33.28); Nigel Davidson (30th, 34.16) and Tony Sheppard (32nd, 34.20).

The 27th Croydon 10K took place on 17 October. The winner was Dereje Kebede of Hercules-Wimbledon in 31 minutes 02 seconds. Jonathan McCallum of Croydon Harriers was second in 32 minutes 36. The first Strider was Justin Macenhill who placed 12th in 35 minutes 28. Club colleague Duncan Lancashire was 18th in 36 minutes 27.

The second Surrey Cross-Country League races of the season were on 27 November. Striders' women finished third in their match at Richmond Park, and remained third in the overall league table. Jo Corrigan, in her league debut, ran very well to place 12th in 30 minutes 12. Serena Stracey was not far behind in 15th place (30.36), and our other three scorers again packed well with Faye Stammers placing 21st (31.19), Clare McFadzean 22nd (31.26) and Kerry Backshell 23rd (31.32). Striders' men placed fourth in their Division Three match at Lightwater. Duncan Lancashire, on his league debut, ran very well to place fourth in 29 minutes 30. Justin Macenhill was 13th (31.20) with his brother Damian 27th (32.36). Iain Harrison was 28th (32.45), with Tony Sheppard 31st (33.08), John Foster 32nd (33.13) and Chris Morton 40th (33.26). Striders climbed to third in the Division Three table.



Duncan Lancashire joined us in 2004 and became one of our leading runners

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