

Striders of Croydon

DECEMBER 2017 MAGAZINE



**Peter Mills leading our team at the Surrey League race on Wimbledon Common
(photo by John O'Mahony)**

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat 16 Dec – South of Thames Cross-Country Championships – Aldershot
Sun 7 Jan – Surrey Cross-Country Championships – Dorking
Sat 13 Jan – Surrey Cross-Country League Division 2 – Beckenham
Sat 13 Jan – Surrey Womens Cross-Country League Division 2 – Richmond Park
Sat 3 Feb – Mobmatch v Croydon Harriers – Lloyd Park
Sat 10 Feb – Surrey Cross-Country League Division 2 – Lloyd Park
Sat 10 Feb – Surrey Womens Cross-Country League Division 2 – Wimbledon
Sun 8 Apr – Croydon Half-Marathon (Striders organising)
Sun 22 Apr – London Marathon (Striders marshalling)

MARATHON TRAINING RUNS 2017/18

	Planned Run	Start	Finish	Route
Sun 10 Dec	Nine Parks 12	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=6728298
Sun 17 Dec	Wandle 14	Clapham Junction	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=2366613
Sun 31 Dec	Keston Ponds 14	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=2558460
Sun 7 Jan	Greenwich 13	London Bridge	London Bridge	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=2170782
Sun 21 Jan	Riddlesdown 14	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5240872
Sun 28 Jan	Nine Parks 15	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=6762626
Sun 4 Feb	Merstham 15	Merstham	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=1550627
Sun 11 Feb	Ladywell 17	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=6203882
Sun 18 Feb	Warlingham 17	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=6191674
Sun 25 Feb	Greenwich 17	London Bridge	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=6203868
Sun 4 Mar	High Elms 17	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5317891
Sun 11 Mar	Regents Canal 18	Victoria	Victoria	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5833749
Sun 18 Mar	Coulsdon 21	Coulsdon South	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=6456581
Sun 25 Mar	Kingston 21	Kingston	Clapham	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5846244
Sun 1 Apr	Botley Hill 19	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5856502

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER DECEMBER 2017

A full newsletter again with some excellent descriptions of your fellow club members' adventures over the past few months. Starting with Ian Campbell's 100 mile run across the Oman desert in memory of his mum. Peter Attewell, who is even older than I am, describes the kind of marathon I should be running: a tour of the vineyards of Medoc, which gives you an excuse for frequent rest stood. Liam Redmond ran what is claimed to be the oldest Marathon in Europe, in Croatia. I thought it was the run from Marathon back in Ancient Greece though I guess Europe didn't exist then! Mick Turner describes his running holiday in Romania, which seems far more interesting than my rather strange skiing holiday there many, many years ago. Greg Williams survives an impressive Ironman in Wales. Much closer to home, John Gannon describes his success in getting our regular run routes properly way-marked and turned into Croydon's very own run routes. Well done John. In fact by the time you read this you may well already have run the Lloyd Park and Shirley Hills ones. Alan Dolton gives you lots of information on the multitude of different leagues we compete in, which acts as a reminder that more of us should compete in the Surrey Masters (including me); an alternative holiday destination altitude training in Mexico; and finally his usual summary of recent events plus those 10 and 25 years ago.

Meanwhile... As I write this many of you will be listening to the England Athletics coach Urban on the subject of Marathon Training. I am sure it was informative. Thank you to Krzysztof for organising this. Subject to discussion with Urban he will be fixing two dates in January and February for a fast group and then a steady group training session. These will probably be based round one of our Sunday Marathon training runs so we may have to do a bit of rescheduling to make sure we use a suitable route.

Also by the time you read this I guess our Christmas Dinner will be over. The first time in the club house for a few years with our new hosts. I am sure it went well. Thank you to Darren and Bea for organising it.

And finally... I am writing this from the place in the Lake District we have been coming to every year for the last 30 years. We are staying just round the corner from the Britannia Inn in Elterwater, which wins regular prizes as the best pub in the lakes. As a result I contemplated moving our club house up here. The scenery is lovely, lots of opportunities for fell running, a few opportunities for road running. The Langdale 10k came past here last Sunday; they also run the Langdale half and full Marathon. However, thinking about it there are absolutely no street lights round here, which would scupper our winter evening runs. Sunday runs would be OK for a few weeks but you rapidly run out of routes that aren't too steep too rough or too narrow for a club run.

So on balance I think we will keep the clubhouse where it is, with lots of well-lit road routes, lots of runnable off road routes, reasonable but not killer hills, and on average a lot less rain than the Lakes.

Shirley Hills may not be the place to go for a holiday compared with the Lakes but it has a lot going for it as a running training area.

May all your runs be through sunlit forests,

Robin Jamieson

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE OMAN DESERT (by Ian Campbell)

The Oman Desert Marathon is a race starting from a desert camp 100 kilometres from the capital Muscat, and follows the Silk Route through the Oman Desert, finishing on the beach at the Arabian Sea. The six stages of this race cover a total of 165 kilometres and runners are completely self-sufficient (other than water and basic tents), carrying their own food, sleeping bag and kit. It has a reputation of being tough because virtually the entire route is on sand. It seemed absolutely perfect for what I wanted to do!

Earlier in the year, my mother, at 88 years old, had suffered a stroke and was then hospitalised for several weeks. She eventually passed away in April. I wanted to honour her by doing something in my own special way. When I came across the Oman Desert Marathon it seemed a perfect way to represent her journey in life and for me to show respect to someone who I loved. My Mum had travelled to the UK on her own back in the fifties from Karachi and settled in the UK. She found 'digs' and work and she met my Dad. Life wasn't easy in those days, they lived in a caravan for many years, eventually renting and then buying a house. I am the eldest of three boys who must have been a handful to manage – I know I was – but we were given unconditional love and enough discipline to behave properly and know right from wrong – certainly all it needed was a good whack from Mum and you didn't do it again!

I have never run over a 100 miles in a week, in fact the most has been 85 miles, so the Oman Desert Marathon was big enough and scary enough to be something that I could be slightly frightened of, big enough to raise sponsorship for (supporting The Stroke Association – <https://www.stroke.org.uk/>) and something that I would clearly have a strong purpose and will to complete no matter what.

Now, I am a very practical person, and I love a good spreadsheet, and this project gave me the perfect opportunity: I set up my training plan, I set up my kit-list and I set up my nutrition plan.

I gave myself a fifteen-week training plan with my first focus being marathon training leading up to the Chicago Marathon in early October. I included twice-weekly interval sessions at The Altitude Centre in London that simulates 2,700 metres, and found these invaluable for getting my base speed and running efficiency up to scratch.

The balance of my training was then focused on back-to-back runs; increasing the weight in my pack; and getting some sand dune runs in to test out kit. I also managed to fit in the Beachy Head Marathon for a nice off-road hilly bit of training as part of a three-day back-to-back block. It was great to run the last few miles of Beachy Head with Nick Kyritsis as he completed his 299th marathon – awe-inspiring, Nick!

I'm lucky in that I run commute most days, so running with a backpack is standard operating procedure for me; I just added a little bit extra in my pack each week. I also spent some days eating and testing out various dehydrated food brands and options. This was time well spent as I found certain brands and meals I didn't like, plus how many calories I needed while training. A plan was forming – and time was getting closer to the event.

As with all of these types of events runners become obsessed with backpack weight, and I was no exception. Every piece of kit was weighed, evaluated and either retained or discarded, apart from the mandatory items. Even those were trimmed down in whatever way manageable to reduce a few grams. My food for the six stages was planned out in detail: breakfast, lunch, snacks, dinners and race fuel. I eventually reduced my pack weight to 6.9kg excluding water and phone (which I was using as my camera). The only thing the race

organisation supplied was water every 10km and in camp – for everything else you must be totally self-sufficient. I opted to not take a stove and had all my meals cold. The pack contents breakdown was as follows: food 4.1 kg, kit 2.8 kg, total 6.9 kg.

Here is an example of my nutrition for one day:

	Calories	Protein (g)	Carbs (g)	Fat (g)	Weight (g)
Breakfast	500	15	54	26	103
Race Fuel	384	0	96	0	120
Recovery drink	180	20	22	1	50
Lunch	500	17	58	23	103
Snacks	845	34	71	46	196
Dinner	500	17	58	23	103
Pudding	500	15	69	18	105
Total	3,409	119	429	137	780

As you can see I was taking an average of 3,400 calories a day. The absolute minimum you were allowed to carry was 2,000 calories per day. However, I calculated that I would require 23,550 calories for running the six stages and the total calories I was taking was 17,952, giving me a calorie deficit of 5,598. I never really went hungry all week and in fact had food and gel blocks left over. Many people had much less and were constantly hungry after a couple of days – in fact one guy survived on Pot Noodles and energy bars – it's a choice!

The last piece of the jigsaw was getting in some heat training over the final ten days before I flew out. For that I went to Kingston University, where they have a heat chamber and they can monitor your adaptation, sweat loss and fluid intake. I was running at an average of 35°C in these sessions. The knowledge and adaptation I gained came in very useful when I was in Oman, as I didn't feel the heat at all when I was running; I was able to ensure my fluid intake was on the button; and I never suffered from dehydration or a sapping of energy.

Final preparations made, it was time to fly out to Oman. I flew out a couple of days before the race and was able to acclimatise and take a couple of easy paced runs to stretch the legs out and get ready.

The race is over six stages – 25km – 20km – 27km – 28km – 42km and 23km. There were a few alterations to distances and a couple of route changes but it was more or less as advertised. There were several highlights: stage 2 – running across a classic-looking dune section; stage 5 – the night time marathon with an absolutely magical starry night, switch the head-torch off and just look up; and the last stage that had some of the highest dunes to encounter and a tantalising sighting of the Arabian sea early on in the stage before finally finishing on the beach and within a few steps able to soak in the cooling sea.

It's important to get into a routine in these events and here is a typical day's routine:

05:00 – Wake, rehydrate breakfast, get into race kit, pack kit, race briefing etc.

06:30 – Race start

11:00 – Typical stage end

11:30 – Recovery drink, take care of feet

12:00 – Snack

12:30 – Rehydrate lunch

13:00 – Camp chores, rest, stretch, chat, take photos

17:00 – Rehydrate dinner

18:30 – Bed down and hopefully get an undisturbed night's sleep – most nights you woke up several times: camp was in open Bedouin tents with a carpet over the sand; night time temperature on day one was around 10°C but climbed to about 14°C by the end of the week.

This might not seem cold but when day time temperatures were circa. 30-32°C that's a large drop in temperature
05:00 – Back on the routine



The dunes on stage 2



Sunset on stage 4

This was my first desert marathon and stage race. If I was to do this again, and I would, there were several things I would change: no sleeping mat, compromise on night time clothing, less in the medical and personal care kits, no mug, less race fuel and food. I'm sure I could knock around a 1kg off. All of that would make you just that bit more competitive.

Nevertheless, I had a thoroughly brilliant time, raised a lot of money for The Stroke Association, and had a wonderful set of tent mates. Being out of phone, email and social media contact for six days was also healthily invigorating!

Oman is an absolutely beautiful country, the people extremely friendly and this event would be a great entry-level desert stage race. The event was in its fifth year and the organisation was not really tip-top; it had a couple of teething issues – it's not easy transporting equipment across the desert – but by all accounts it's improving every year. I will let the images speak for themselves. If anybody would like further information then they can of course contact me.



Bedouin tent life

Resources

Oman Desert Marathon <http://www.marathonoman.com/>

Kingston University <http://sec.kingston.ac.uk/>

The Altitude Centre <https://www.altitudecentre.com/buy/consumer/community/new-news/>



TRAIN HARD TO RUN SLOW – MARATHON DU MÉDOC 2017

(by Peter Attewell)

On September 9th 2017 I embarked on my 'definitely last marathon'. Having just turned 70, the Marathon Du Médoc (the "Médoc") seemed a perfect candidate, involving summer training using some of Robin's marathon training routes, and the prospect of some elegant French hospitality.

This marathon is based in the quaint town of Pauillac, 50 km north of Bordeaux on the left bank of the Garonne. The route winds through the vineyards of Pauillac, Saint-Julien, Beychevelle, Saint-Estèphe and back to Pauillac. This gives a unique chance to run alongside some famous grapes. And to visit the chateaus – Lafite, Latour, Mouton...

Normally gaining an invitation to visit these chateaus can be difficult; the Médoc offers the opportunity to pass through around 23 of them in one day! And to enjoy not only the wines but also the 23 orchestras, and tasting points celebrating the local gastronomy with delicacies including oysters, steak, cheeses and ice cream (as well as copious amounts of water, fruits, juice etc.).

The course comprises mainly tarmac roads plus narrower farm roads/tracks approaching each chateau. The weather this year was cool, probably low 60s Fahrenheit, accompanied by a couple of heavy rain showers leaving short sections of some tracks quite muddy.



I started near the back of the field (of around 8000) which posed early problems due to a 'pinch point' transiting from wide road onto the farm tracks. In fact a 10 minute stoppage

while everyone filtered through meant that the first 3 km took around 37 minutes for the back markers. So a start further up the field is advisable.

The motto of Médoc is 'le marathon le plus long du monde' – 'the longest marathon in the world': this year 84% of the field finished in over 5 hours, and more than half took over 6 hours (including myself, 6:39:29 to be precise). So basically, the faster you can run, the longer you can linger at and enjoy the conviviality, hospitably and photo opportunities at the chateaus. One proviso – it is essential to keep ahead of the highly decorated 'broom wagon' which rolls in around 7 hours after the starting gun.



Médoc is of course also a real Marathon, 42.195 km measured officially. And for the front runners serious business : this year's winning times were 2:27 (men), 2:55 (women). But as a reward for their effort both the men and women's winner receive their weight in Médoc wine.

The Marathon Du Médoc is run annually in September. It attracts visitors from all over the world, and demand for places is very high. The website is <http://www.marathondumedoc.com/>. As for all marathons in France, a medical certificate has to be submitted along with the application. Each year the Médoc has a theme, and participants can choose their running attire accordingly. Accommodation for overseas visitors is mostly confined to Bordeaux city. This entails a (bearable) bus journey of up to 1.25 hours to and from the marathon Registration Expo on the Friday, and to the marathon itself on Saturday.

THE KOSICE MARATHON (by Liam Redmond)

On Sunday 30 September 2017 I ran the Kosice International Peace Marathon in Slovakia. It's the oldest marathon in Europe. Flat, with cool but sunny conditions – great for a Personal Best. I finally got a sub 3-hour time on my third attempt this year (gun time 2:59:37). The course is basically 4 loops through the city. This is a great race for Striders; cheap to enter and stay there, but book accommodation early as it's a small city and gets full up quickly. A quaint city that is a nice visit for a few days.



RUNNING IN ROMANIA (by Mick Turner)

How do you choose where to go on holiday? Choose from the best sandy beaches, must-see destinations or iconic cities of the world? Runners, I'm sure you'll agree, are a bit different. Stick a pin in a map and find a race nearby. It wasn't quite that method that led Lorraine and me to Brasov in Romania, but almost.

One damp Sunday afternoon in January I was trawling cheap flight sites getting frustrated. Our starting point is picking places neither of us have been to before. We were limited as we'd decided to stay in Europe this year.

Then I thought back. In 2013 we'd been to Tallinn in Estonia where we'd run their 10K. As is common, full and half marathon options were also available. After some googling I found the Road Running Calendar <https://marathons.ahotu.com/calendar/europe/road-running>. It isn't the easiest site to navigate and is heavily focused on France and Germany – good for me as I love those countries – but you can limit your search by country and month. We had already chosen the week we wanted to be off in May, so we could also narrow our search by date.

Then I came across the Brasov International Marathon in Romania. It fitted the bill. The weekend we wanted – at the start of our week away – and offered a choice of race distances. Now – was it accessible – and did it look like somewhere you would want to spend some time afterwards?

It soon became apparent that Brasov was a beautiful city, nestled in the Transylvanian mountains. It was perfect.



Brasov

The Race

The city embraces the running weekend. Registration on Saturday was straightforward. There were kids' races on the Saturday – chased by the ever-present Vlad Dracul. Baggage on Sunday morning was amateurish and comical – they were using sticky labels to mark the bags. With more runners I could envisage issues.

The half-marathon course was predominantly flat until you hit a hill at the 15.5km mark which went on for a couple of kilometres. Not as cruel as for the marathon, which carries on climbing to the ski resort of Poiana Brasov for over 10km before descending to the finish. For this reason they are not PB courses but definitely a challenge. Lorraine's race was 10.7km!

Goody bag was good. A T-shirt and shoe bag were included. They also had a photo postcard booth – which had to be done.

What to see and do

Brasov itself is charming. I have a Romanian work colleague who winced when I said I went there. Very expensive – certainly for Romanians. There are some high-end shops if you like that sort of thing.

In Brasov itself we visited The Black Church and saw a full sung mass – it was chilly in there, with a fine collection of rugs and carpets. We also picked up the last tickets for the Brasov Philharmonic's Gershwin evening – £4.00 each.

If you're outdoorsy you would be spoiled for choice. There is a short funicular ride up the mountain, or you can walk via marked trails to the Hollywood-inspired Brasov sign. After the race on the Sunday we also found runners who had done an ultra the day before... Transylvania is quite a destination for trail runners and Brasov also hosts an off-road marathon.

Further afield

We had a couple of days out. First to Bran to see Dracula's castle, via Rasnov. Both definitely worth a visit for different reasons. Bran is over-touristy but still has to be done. Rasnov, deserted in comparison, but with another short funicular ride to an old fortress.



Rasnov

A few hours away is Sighisoara – not to be missed – one of the best preserved medieval cities in Europe. As well as admiring the architecture we also caught a free concert in the

town hall. A pianist accompanied by an incredible, experimental glockenspieler bringing in an occasional bird whistle. You had to be there.



Sighisoara

In our time in Romania we were struck by the accessibility of culture – music and theatre – on show.

Getting there

There are several options. You can fly to Bucharest and hire a car as we did. You can also get the train from Bucharest or arrange a coach transfer. There is also an airport at Sibiu which is closer. The drive takes you through ski resorts. The roads are mainly poor and single lane – so not quick. It took us around three hours from the airport to Brasov.

Accommodation

Accommodation in Brasov can be very cheap. We chose a mid-range hotel, Drachenhaus, with breakfast, for around £60-70.00 per night, but there were far cheaper pension options available. After booking I discovered that John & Wendy Gannon had been out to Brasov about ten years before. The guide books they gave us were still relevant for the main tourist sites.

Eating & drinking

Lots of options. Pasta/Pizza to higher-end fare. It's mainly cheap – cheapest half litre beers are under a couple of pounds. The best bars are off the main thoroughfare. We enjoyed Biblioteque for late night cocktails.

Language

Is slightly impenetrable. You don't really need to learn any but we did attempt some – mooltoomesc – thank you is always useful. Lorraine tried a bit more – asked for a tea without milk and ended up with a tea and a separate large hot milk!

Bucharest

We tacked on a short city break at the end with two nights in Bucharest. We stayed in a lovely place called the Grand Boutique Hotel. We were struck by the graffiti – everywhere. Bucharest is not as immediately charming as Brasov, but there is much to see and do. In the main old town it's quite staggy but I discovered the Room of a Hundred Beers and some Romanian crafts.

We took in another concert, this time at the beautiful Athenaeum, with tickets at £8.00 each. A piano duet – a first for me. Highlight was whether the page turner's flapping cardigan would annoy the pianist. A poor dress choice.

In both Brasov and Bucharest we took advantage of free guided walking tours – always a great introduction to somewhere new. We walked to Ceausescu's Peoples Palace – didn't get inside it but photos do not convey how huge it is.

We would heartily recommend Romania. The people were welcoming and it is great value for money.

2018 has already been booked – we're Latvia bound for the Riga marathon weekend of the 19th/20th May 2018: <http://www.lattelecomrigasmaratons.lv/en>. The Brasov International Marathon 2018 is the same weekend: <http://maratonulbrasov.ro/en>

IRONMAN WALES: SEPTEMBER 2017 (by Greg Williams)

Most people have heard of IRONMAN, but for those who haven't, it's a long-distance triathlon: a 3.8km swim, 180km bike ride, 42.2km run. In many ways it is to triathlon what marathon is to running. In the same way that if you tell someone (generally a non-runner) you're a runner, you often get asked "have you done a marathon?", if you tell someone you're a triathlete, you often get asked "have you done an IRONMAN?" I find if you answer "no", you then get a look as if to say "well, you're not a proper runner/triathlete then, are you?" For what it's worth, I (and I suspect most athletes) whole-heartedly disagree with this school of thought, but it doesn't take away from the wish of being able to answer "yes, I have actually!"

I have been doing triathlon for 10 years now, and I always assumed an IRONMAN would be well beyond my reach. However after my third half-IRONMAN, I started to feel like I had the half distance "tamed" (not that I found it easy, just that I didn't feel intimidated by it anymore). This was in the autumn of 2016. Furthermore, I found myself beating various people I know in the halves, who had done a full IRONMAN. Couple that with my sense that I wasn't getting any younger, and the situation in my personal/family life (the arrival of our son), I concluded I had a narrow window of opportunity to go for the full IRONMAN.

IRONMAN is both a distance and a brand. Other (non-IRONMAN branded) events exist (e.g. "Challenge" events, the "Outlaw", the "Bastion" at Hever Castle, etc.), but I decided if I was going to do one I wanted to do an IRONMAN-branded event, just because they put on a very good, organised, show. Those who favour value-for-money over fanfare should probably look elsewhere! IRONMAN hold events all around the world, many are in exotic locations (the World Champs are in Hawaii every year!). This year there were two events in the UK: IRONMAN UK (in Bolton), and IRONMAN Wales (in Pembrokeshire). If you're willing to travel into the continent, there are many more events to choose from, but I didn't like the idea of making a long trip with our 1-year-old just before undertaking an IRONMAN.

Anyone who's done much long-distance cycling will be familiar with the procedure of checking the elevation profile before signing up! Total metres climbed is the most useful metric, and Strava conveniently stamps it on all rides. I soon determined that IRONMAN UK had less climbing on the bike, so would be the more sensible option. Unfortunately my sister had already sent a "save-the-date" for her wedding that weekend. That left me with IRONMAN Wales - which generally features on most the "toughest 10 IRONMAN races in the world" lists. I worried a bit about the bike profile, but also concluded that the amount of climbing involved (2.5km) was fairly standard for rides over that distance in the North Downs (where I tend to do my training rides). I pulled the trigger and entered the event!

I didn't follow a prescribed training plan. I much prefer doing my training through club(s), and if I'd tried to follow an official plan I would have only got stressed when it inevitably didn't align with the club sessions. I decided from the outset that my goal was to finish; I didn't care what time I did. IRONMAN has a strict cut-off of 18 hours, and Wales in particular has a high drop-out rate (as high as 25% one year).

I'm in the fortunate position of being a reasonably competent swimmer, and the distance (3.8km) in the IRONMAN is, in my opinion, far easier than the cycling or running distances. I often cover that distance on a Thursday night Striders' swimming session, so I knew I wouldn't have to do any extra swimming training, and instead should focus my energies on the bike and run training.

For my cycle training I tried to 6 x 100 milers over the summer, having previously received that advice from another IRONMAN. I found the easiest way to do this was to enter "sportives", which are organised/sign-posted group bike rides.

For my run training, I decided to do the Striders' Marathon training program through the winter and into the spring (culminating in a 22-miler back from Coulsdon), and then just "keep it going" through the summer. The easiest way to do this, for me, was to get up earlier on a Sunday, and do an extra hour before the 90 minute Striders' Sunday run. My long runs were going reasonably well through the summer, so I decided to do the Vanguard Way Marathon in August – see previous edition of Newsletter for details. I came out of that with added confidence that I can slog my way through a tough marathon, with little in the way of support, and it made the IRONMAN seem just a little bit less daunting.

I'm naturally quite a nervous competitor. For me, the best way to calm my nerves is through training. Come the end of August, I was mentally in quite a good place. I knew I'd hit all my key milestones/training volume, without getting injured. All I needed to do now was taper.

When it came to race weekend, I was extremely thankful I had done all that training. The nerves crept back in in the final few days. The weather forecast was inclement (to put it mildly), and, worse still, 24 hours before the race I seemed to pick up one of those 24-hour sickness bugs. I'm pretty sure it wasn't just nerves, because my wife and son both had it earlier in the week too. Had the race been on the Saturday, I wouldn't have made the start-line, let alone the finish-line. Fortunately, my wife's experience earlier in the week led to me believe that it would pass within 24 hours, so I still set my bike up in transition on Saturday lunchtime, knowing that Sunday would be another day, and hopefully I would feel better. Meanwhile I forced myself to keep eating, which wasn't easy when I was struggling to hold anything down and had no appetite!

On race morning itself, we lined up on Tenby Beach. Dawn was breaking. It was overcast, but the sea wasn't as choppy as forecast, and the rain hadn't started yet. The Welsh National Anthem rung out, bouncing off the cliffs and sea-front. I suspect I'll always have flashbacks to that moment now when hearing it in the Six Nations!

The swim was somewhat non-eventful. Fortunately, it was a rolling-start which means athletes line up in estimated speed-order (fastest swimmers at the front), and then enter the water one-by-one. I knew I would come in at around the hour, which put me towards the front of the field. The rolling-start meant we avoided some of the "washing machine" effect (and argy-bargy) associated with mass starts. There was an "Australian Exit" which means you do two laps, coming out the water at the end of the first lap, going over a timing mat, high-fiving some spectators, before going back in and doing another lap. It may sound fun, but it somewhat upsets your rhythm. When running out the sea after swimming you tend to feel light-headed, with all the blood rushing out your head, which can you make a bit giddy and look like you've been drinking something a little heavier than just Gatorade. Just as you adapt to being back on land, you then have to run back into the sea and do it all again!

I finished the second swim lap, and came in on the hour as I expected. The next challenge was to scale the "cliff" (it has a zig-zag pathway up it) to go from beach-level to street-level in Tenby. Half-way up the cliff we had all been allowed to leave a pair of running shoes. This transition (from swim to bike, a.k.a. "T1") is one of the things that makes IRONMAN Wales notorious. The reason they let you keep a pair of running shoes on the cliff, is because you then have to run about a mile to the other side of Tenby, because that's the nearest place big enough to host Transition and all its paraphernalia – like everyone's bikes. That mile run doesn't count towards the overall distance by the way – you still have to run a full marathon later in the day!

Going out on the bike I was reasonably contented to start with. I was holding a good pace and felt comfortable, and so far the weather was holding up. It's on the bike that you really have to start thinking about your nutrition and hydration strategy. If you don't eat and drink sufficiently, you simply won't finish. And if you leave it too late before you start, you will "hit the wall" and likely won't recover either. I tried to eat something every 40 minutes. I alternated between gels and other things (savory snacks, bananas, chocolate brioche) – all things I'd practiced on my long rides. When we got to the west coast of Wales, we experienced the full-effect of the westerly wind coming in off the Atlantic. Everyone had to slow down on the descents there, since we were all wobbling around in the wind. About 2 hours into the bike the rain started. It was gentle at first but got harder. We rode on. About 4 hours into the bike I started struggling a little. This was really the first time in the race where I started to think the sickness the day before had affected me. In my final 6 hour training ride, without a taper, I felt strong the whole way round, so it was frustrating to experience that feeling 4 hours in, but that's life. I think it was a series of hills at that stage which started to find me out. I realised I wasn't going to hold the pace I'd ridden so far for the final third, so backed off a little bit to try and focus on getting my legs (and mojo!) back. I started to feel a bit better after a flatter section, but still felt weak on the hills. Hills are harder in the wet (you weigh more, the bike weighs more, it feels like there's more friction in the drive-chain), and I just found myself having to spin up them in bottom gear, and watching the odometer very slowly clock up the kms towards the 180km mark!



It was a real relief to scale the final hills, and the support from the locals was amazing. On some of the steeper sections the supporters were many levels deep. There was fancy dress, placards, and lots of noise – all of this in very grim weather, when sanity would have told them to stay inside. As we rode back into Tenby (after 7 hours on the bike), we saw the race leaders already on the run. Seeing the professionals pushing on lifted my spirits a bit, and it was reassuring to see they weren't particularly enjoying the conditions either!

Switching from bike to run is always "interesting" in triathlon, especially in the longer distances. Your body has been locked in the cycling position for many hours, and it feels (to me at least) like it's somewhat stuck in that position. My hip-flexors are shortened and tightened up, as are my back extensors. The best thing for me is to just start running very slowly, and gradually the body should ease-up/adjust to running-mode again.

Psychologically, the marathon in an IRONMAN is different to a marathon on its own. In IRONMAN, you're already most of the way through the race when you start the marathon. People generally aren't that concerned about what time they're going to run it in. It seems far more acceptable to walk for a bit every now and again. There are more aid stations with a greater variety of food and beverages. I'd read before the race that Coke would be served at the aid stations, and I remember having a chuckle thinking "that's absurd, who'd want Coke during a race?" Oddly enough I couldn't get enough of it. Your body is just crying out for liquid and sugar, and Coke hits the spot. They even had Red Bull at some of the stations, but I drew the line there!

I found myself feeling pretty tired, so made full use of the aid stations (roughly every mile). I'd use them as an opportunity to walk for 30s or so. I ended up settling on walking for around one minute in ten from the start. I was conscious that was a much more sensible way to do things than to try and run the whole thing, and end up walking the whole of the second half. As on the bike, the support around Tenby was amazing. I wore my Striders vest with my name on, which I'd highly recommend to anyone doing a marathon. Having people shout your name makes the support feel even better, which can really help if you're struggling. The rain was still there on and off, but the supporters seemed to be well fuelled by the many pubs. I'm used to having things shouted at me in my training runs and rides by the Surrey locals; the Welsh were a far friendlier bunch and I will not forget their enthusiasm and help they gave us all.

The sun went down and the miles ticked by. About half way round the run you get a feeling that you are going to finish no matter what (even if you have to walk the remainder). I approached the finish chute after around 4h30. Since my focus was on finishing, not the time, I decided to lap up support one more time, and high-fived all the crowds lining the red-carpet until I reached the finish-line and heard the magical phrase "Greg Williams: you are an IRONMAN!".



It had all been worth it: the training, the hard work on the day, etc. I'll forever be an IRONMAN now, and that was what I wanted. Like a fellow Strider told me a few years ago: I'll regret it once I'm old and look back if I haven't done one. He was right; I just didn't immediately have the courage to admit it. I'd recommend it to others, but there's no way I'm doing another one. :-)

COMING TO A PARK NEAR YOU:- NEVER GET LOST ON A CLUB RUN AGAIN! (by John Gannon)

Over the next few months, in fact in one park, by the time you have read this article hopefully, you will notice when out either running over Lloyd Park, Addington Hills, Littleheath and Croham Hurst on a club run or taking part in the parkrun over Lloyd Park some wooden posts with directional arrows. These post will mark out 3 different routes over the above areas that people can follow, running or walking and will offer distances of approx. 2.5 miles covering a lap of Lloyd Park, 5 miles following a route not too dissimilar to our Switchback course over Addington Hills/Lloyd Park and a 8 mile route that would take you out from Addington Hills over Littleheath and Croham Hurst before finally taking you back to Lloyd Park via Conduit Lane and Oaks Lane.

It is hoped that all 3 routes will be up and running, no pun intended, by the spring of next year. The idea and drive behind this is that earlier this year I noticed that Croydon council were looking to invest money, up to £4,000, in ideas from organisations that would not only improve parks in the borough but also help get more of its local residents to get out and enjoy the parks as well as increase their wellbeing/fitness. As I have always had an idea that we should have some running routes that could be marked out on a permanent basis I thought I, on behalf of the club once I had Robin's approval of course, would apply. To my surprise Croydon Council agreed with me that it was a good idea, have therefore agreed to give Striders the money so work can commence over the winter.

The people that will be carrying out this work on our behalf are a local organisation called the Downlands Trust, who I have had several field trips/meetings with over the last few months to confirm the routes and where the wooden way markers will be placed. Work on the Lloyd Park loop takes place the first week in December so should be in place for the parkrun on 9th of the month. Although it does not fully cover the route of the parkrun it should help in the marking of the course as it will for any XC race held over the park as will the other 2 routes for our very own Switchback race in September and of course we can use the routes for our club runs and not have to need group leaders!

Each route will have a different coloured direction arrow to follow, yellow, green and red as shown in the photos below:



I'm hoping to have an official opening of the Lloyd Park route the following weekend to which of course it would be great if Striders could attend to be included in any publicity covering the event so please look out for any emails/Facebook posts from me.

THE SURREY MASTERS CROSS-COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

(by Alan Dolton)

According to the Surrey AA website, the Surrey Veterans Cross-Country Championships (as they were originally known) were first held at Wimbledon Common in November 1982. This was just two months after Striders were formed; at this time, Striders were solely a road running club, and no Striders competed. There were a total of 124 finishers (all of them male: there was no women's race). The winner was Steve Warzee of Guildford, who covered the five-mile course in 30 minutes 10. The runner-up was Barry O'Gorman of Croydon Harriers in 31 minutes 52. Herne Hill won the team event. The event was moved to Richmond Park for the November 1983 race, where Croydon Harriers won the team event, led by the late Robin Dickson, who finished third. Croydon also had the over-60 winner in the late Bob Penney. The event has stayed at Richmond Park ever since.

A separate women's race was held for the first time in October 1991. The minimum age for women was fixed at 35 (whereas it was 40 for men). The winner was Anne Roden of South London Harriers, who completed the three-mile course in 16 minutes 48 seconds; 27 women finished. The second women's race, on 17 October 1992, was won by future Strider Maggie Statham, running for Holland Sports. 1992 also saw Striders' first appearance at these championships: our sole competitor was Kevin Burnett, who finished 42nd in the over-50 race.

Maggie Statham retained the women's title in October 1993, finishing eleven seconds ahead of Anne Roden. Kevin Burnett was again the sole Strider, placing 45th in the over-50 race. Future Strider Peter Yarlett, in his first year in the M40 age-group, ran for Croydon Harriers, finishing 33rd.

Striders' representation increased significantly in the October 1995 race, with three of our women competing. A separate W45 category had been introduced in 1994, and this gave us our best placing in the championships, as Michele Lawrence was ninth in the W45 race, while Elene Kayum was 14th in the W35 race, with Barbara Cole 18th. Striders also had two competitors in the M40 race, where John McGilvray was 21st with Colin Cotton 38th. The race was won by Barry Attwell of South London Harriers.

In the early years of the championships, the results had only been published, and medals were only awarded, in ten-year age-groups. From October 2000, medals were awarded in five-year age-groups. The October 2003 championships saw Colin Cotton enter the M55 age-group, covering the ten-kilometre course in 43 minutes 09 seconds and finishing a creditable 13th in the M55 age-group. Striders' only other finisher was Kevin Burnett, who placed 19th in the M60 age-group in 64 minutes 50.

The race in October 2004 saw Kevin Burnett enter the M65 category, in which he finished eighth. He showed admirable consistency by repeating this placing in both October 2005 and October 2006. The October 2007 event saw David Batten place sixth in the M50 race, covering the ten-kilometre course in 39 minutes 49.

By October 2008, David Batten had entered the M55 age-group. He ran very well to take second place in 40 minutes 48, becoming the first Strider to win a medal at these championships. In October 2009 Bob Ewen placed sixth in the M50 age-group in 39 minutes 48, while David Batten was seventh in the M55 age-group (42.43).

October 2010 saw Striders win only our second ever medal in these championships, when Kevin Burnett gained some reward for many years' perseverance by placing second in the M70 race, in 67 minutes 56 seconds.

For October 2011, the event was renamed as the Surrey Masters Championships. Kevin Burnett was again Striders' only medallist, placing third in the M70 race in 71 minutes 06. For October 2012, the distance for the older male competitors (M60 and over) was reduced from ten kilometres to six kilometres. Kevin Burnett won his third successive medal, placing second in the M70 age-group in 42 minutes 22. The October 2013 race saw Colin Cotton place eighth in the M65 age-group in 30 minutes 15, while the M70 age-group was stronger than previously and Kevin Burnett had to settle for eighth place (44.03).

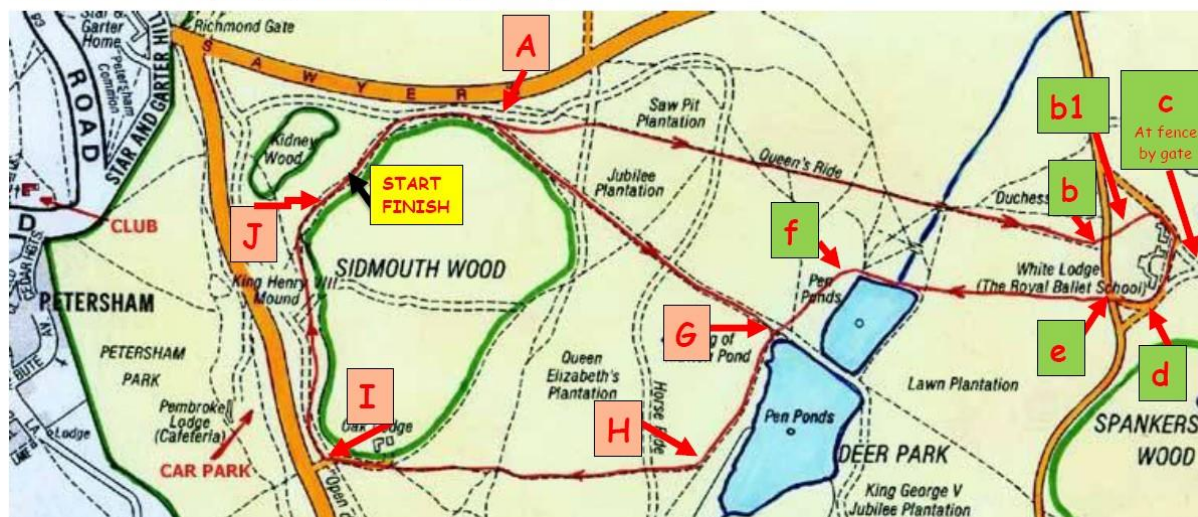
The October 2014 race saw Kevin Burnett enter the M75 age-group, where he placed second. Simon Pannell ran well to place fifth in the M50 race, covering the 10-kilometre course in 41 minutes 29 seconds. The fact that the race was held on the day before the Croydon 10k road race may have deterred other Striders from competing. The events clashed again in October 2015, when for the first time for many years, Striders had no competitors at the championships. However there was no such clash in October 2016, although Striders only had one competitor, with David Hoben placing 22nd in the M60 race.

Having entered the M60 age-group at the end of 2016, I found the idea of racing six kilometres more appealing than the idea of racing ten kilometres. Inspired by Krzysztof's article about cross-country in the previous issue of this magazine, I tried to persuade some of Striders' other over-60s to join me at Richmond Park for the October 2017 race. However, I met with very little success, and David Hoben and I were the two only Striders to take part. We even suffered the indignity of being outnumbered by our rivals from Croydon Harriers, who had a total of five finishers across the various age-groups.

SURREY MASTERS CROSS-COUNTRY 2017: COURSE MAP & MARSHAL POINTS

Women+ MV60 - 2 Small Laps (A-G-H-I-J) (3.82 miles) starting at 3.30pm

All other Men - 2 Large Laps (A-G-H-I-J) (6.19 miles) starting at 4.15pm



Public parking (subject to availability) in Pembroke Lodge Car Park

A PINK/UPPER CASE = Marshal points on courses for both races

f Green/Lower Case = Men's M40/50 race only.

Very few Striders have competed in this event in recent years, which I find somewhat surprising, because it is a competitive mixed-ability race on a good course in Richmond Park. We currently have some very good over-50s in the club, and I think that we could be capable of challenging for medals in the team event at M50/M55. There is also the chance

for some of our oldest members to win a Surrey medal: Kevin Burnett has won four medals in recent years, and the results from the October 2017 indicate that our chairman would have been capable of third place in the M70 age-group (it might be harder next year, when he will face possible opposition from Colin Cotton). I realise that the club's main priority at cross-country is the four Surrey League races, but I hope that 2018 might see more Striders competing at these championships.



**The start of the six-kilometre race, for women plus men over 60.
No Striders are visible, as we started towards the back of the field!**



Susan McDonald of SLH winning the women's over-50 age-group

ALTITUDE TRAINING IN NEW MEXICO (by Alan Dolton)

In the September 2014 issue of this magazine, I reviewed a book called 'Notes From Higher Grounds' by the Irish runner Elizabeth Egan, which was a guide to various venues for altitude training. Like most Striders, I had instinctively associated altitude training with elite athletes rather than club runners. However, some time ago my brother took a job in the USA, and he and his wife subsequently moved to a place called Indian Hills, just north of Silver City in southwestern New Mexico, at the southern end of the Rocky Mountains. It is on the Continental Divide Trail, which follows the geographical division between rivers to the west of the Continental Divide, which flow towards the Pacific Ocean, and rivers to the east of the Divide, which flow towards the Atlantic Ocean. Silver City is located about 1800 metres (just under 6000 feet) above sea level, while my brother's house in Indian Hills is just over 6300 feet above sea level. Thus I was able to combine a family reunion with a short taste of altitude training.

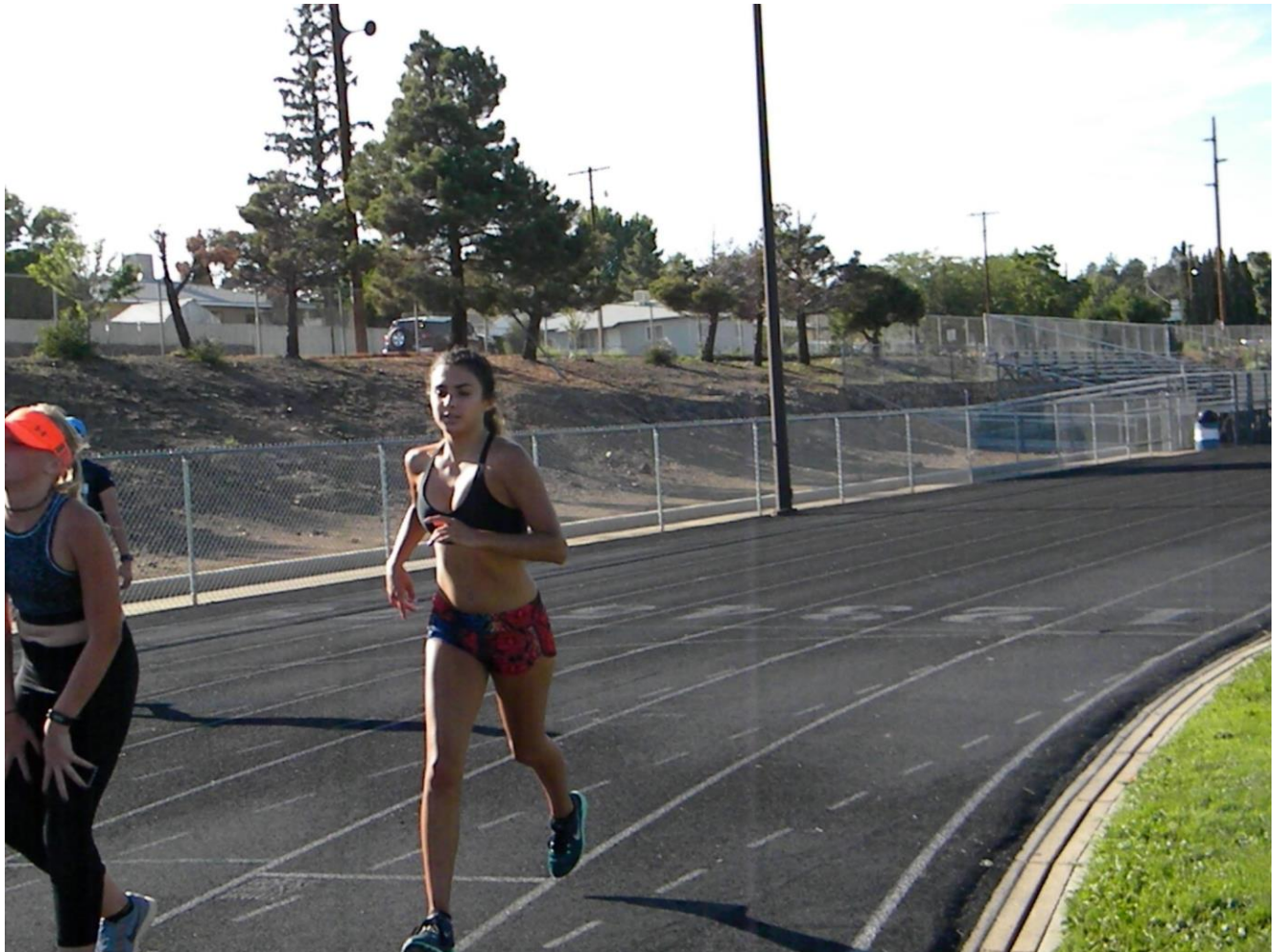
Although Silver City is a city and Croydon is not, Silver City is much smaller than Croydon. It covers less than 11 square miles (the borough of Croydon covers more than 33 square miles) and the 2010 census showed it as having a population of just 10,315 people (whereas Croydon has a population of more than 380,000). Silver City has not had a railway station since 1954: it is only 18 miles from an airport, but the airport in question (Grant County) only has four incoming flights each day and can only be reached from Albuquerque or Phoenix. I flew from Heathrow to Phoenix and spent one night in Phoenix (which is not at significant altitude) before flying on to Grant County on the following day. The flight was delayed for six and a half hours, meaning that I spent rather more time in Phoenix Airport than I would have liked and did not arrive at my brother's house until after sunset.

On my first full day in Indian Hills I decided not to run but instead to go for a longish walk exploring the local roads where I intended to run on the subsequent days. My brother's house is at the end of an unmade dirt road and, as the name 'Indian Hills' suggests, the surrounding area is definitely not flat. However walking at altitude did not seem too demanding. The following morning I set out for my first run at altitude. I decided only to aim for 40 minutes, running for 20 minutes away from the house before turning back. Running on the flat did not seem too difficult but I quickly noticed that any uphill section was significantly harder than it would have been at sea level. About 1200 metres from the end of the run I faced the most significant climb, up a hill called Whispering Hills Road. The gradient was similar to running up Sandilands, but the effort left me very short of breath and it was a struggle to run all the way to the top. I felt slightly sick at the top and was unable to regain my normal running pace, with the result that the second half of the route took me about 90 seconds more than the first half had done.

I repeated the route on the following day and managed to run about 200 metres further in the first 20 minutes. However, I was wary of the hill and decided not to increase the distance any more than that. This was probably a sensible decision because I found Whispering Hills just as difficult as I had done on my first run – and indeed I never managed to run up that road without feeling sick at the top. Maybe if I had stayed at altitude for two or three weeks, my body might have adjusted to it – but that is something I will never find out.

Despite its small population, Silver City does have an athletics track, and on the penultimate day of my trip I decided to do a light track session there. I decided to set myself a session of 6 x 300 metres, with a slow 100-metre jog as recovery. In Croydon I would aim to do this session at my race pace for 1500 metres (which for me is now about 67 seconds per 300 metres). Since this was my first track session at altitude, I decided to start cautiously and aim to run the first one at my 5000 metre pace, and then try to increase the speed with each succeeding rep. My best 5000 metres this year had been 21 minutes 44, which equates to

about 78 seconds per 300 metres. I ran my first rep in 79 seconds, which was almost exactly on target. However, I found it very difficult to increase the pace of the subsequent reps as I had intended. My six reps averaged just under 77 seconds, and my last rep, which was my fastest, was only 74 seconds – which was significantly slower than I had expected, and much slower than I would have run at Croydon Arena. In Croydon a slow 100 metre jog would have been adequate to let me get my breath back after each rep: at an altitude of almost 6000 feet, that was simply not the case.



The athletics track in Silver City

Training at altitude obviously works for elite athletes who have a very high maximum oxygen uptake (VO2 max). However, going to altitude for a relatively short time certainly did not work for me: I was unable to cope with running up hills and unable to do the type of track session which would have been relatively easy at sea level. Of course it is possible that, if I had stayed at altitude for a month, my body would have adjusted sufficiently for me to do my usual longer runs and track sessions without too much difficulty. That would be quite an expensive experiment, and I do not have either sufficient free time or sufficient money to contemplate trying it! I was left with the impression that altitude training is probably only likely to be worthwhile for athletes who have a relatively high VO2 max (e.g. athletes who can run 5000 metres in less than 17 minutes). It would be interesting to know how I would have coped with altitude training 30 to 35 years ago, when I was running significantly quicker than I am now. But I doubt whether the majority of Striders would gain significant benefit from training at altitude.

A GUIDE TO THE ORGANISATION OF UK (AND SURREY) ATHLETICS (by Alan Dolton)

About 15 years ago, when I was Striders' secretary, a new Strider who had previously been a footballer expressed bewilderment at the variety of competitions in which Striders participated, and suggested that I should write an article trying to explain the various competitions. I did so, and the article subsequently sat on our website for several years. However various developments in the past 15 years meant that some parts of the article were in need of updating, and I have therefore attempted to rewrite it.

Athletics in the UK is organised on a 'federal' basis. At the top of the tree is UK Athletics (which was set up in 1999, after the previous British Athletics Federation had become insolvent). It organises annual track & field championships, and selects UK teams for the World Championships, etc. It also writes the UK athletics rulebook. It has four constituent organisations, covering England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

'ENGLAND ATHLETICS'

'England Athletics' succeeded the Amateur Athletic Association as the body responsible for athletics in England. It selects England teams for the Commonwealth Games and other international matches, and organises annual championships for Under-23s, Under-20s and Under-17s. 'England Athletics' has a registration scheme, partly to raise funds, and partly to prevent athletes from changing clubs without official sanction. Under UKA rules, all athletes wishing to change clubs must register their change of clubs with their area association. In an attempt to deter 'poaching' of athletes by rich clubs, athletes whose change of club is not caused by a change of residence are often not allowed to represent their new club in team competition until six months after leaving their previous club.

SURREY COUNTY ATHLETICS ASSOCIATION

Under UKA rules, clubs are also required to affiliate to their county association. For this purpose, athletics does not recognise the boundary changes that politicians have imposed in the last 150 years: there is no such county association as 'London', and Croydon is deemed to be part of Surrey. The Surrey County Athletics Association organise annual track & field and cross-country championships, and also recognise certain road races as county championships (e.g. the Dorking 10 miles and the Wimbledon 5K are the Surrey championships). It also organises the annual Surrey Road League.

OTHER ASSOCIATIONS

The English Cross-Country Association organises the English National Cross-Country Championships. The South of England Athletic Association organises the Southern Cross-Country Championships, and also organise annual road relays and track & field championships.

For specific age-groups, there is also the English Schools Athletics Association (which organises annual track & field and cross-country championships) and the British Masters Athletics Federation, which organises various championship events in five-year age bands for men and women aged 35 and over.

One other association which several Surrey clubs (including Striders) are affiliated to is the South of the Thames Cross-Country Association, which was formed in the late 19th century. It organises two annual races. Its main (or senior) championships are normally held in December, and it also hosts a five-mile inter-club race in November. Originally, this was described as a 'junior' championship, but the title was highly misleading because the word 'junior' normally means an athlete aged under 20, whereas the STCCA 'junior' championships were restricted to athletes who had not previously placed in the first 50 in the STCCA senior championship, or in the first 100 in the Southern or National Championships, or been part of a winning team in the STCCA senior championship. Most of these restrictions have recently been dropped, and the race is officially now called an 'inter-club' race, but some older runners still refer to it as a 'junior' race. Until the 1960s, the STCCA championship was regarded as quite a prestigious event, but the emergence of the county leagues (see below) has seen it decline in status, and many eligible clubs don't bother to compete.

LEAGUES

Surrey clubs compete in several leagues. The Surrey Cross-Country League was formed in 1962. It now comprises four divisions of nine clubs, and has four races each winter (for men only). Striders joined in 1986; until 2002 we spent most of our time in Division Three, but in 2002 we won the Division Three championship for the first time, and have spent all except two of the subsequent years in Division Two. Our best ever position is third in Division Two, which we achieved in both 2003 and 2010. There is an equivalent league for women, the Surrey Ladies Cross-Country League, which was formed in the late 1970s. It also has four races each winter, but has only two divisions, and unlike the men, both divisions race at the same venue. We have won promotion to Division One on four occasions (the first being in 2001 and the most recent being in 2010), but each time we were quickly relegated again, and we are currently in Division Two.

The East Surrey League was formed in the 1930s. It currently organises three events each year: two cross-country races and a road race, and it currently has nine affiliated clubs. Striders won this League for the first time in 2003 and for the second time in 2017.

The Surrey Road League was formed in about 1990. It is organised by the Surrey County Athletic Association, and consists of seven races each summer, ranging from 5K to half-marathon. Striders' men placed fourth in 2003, which is our highest placing in this league.

On the track, the most prestigious league is the British Athletics League, which was formed in 1969 and caters for men only: it has 38 teams, arranged in five divisions. Of our local clubs, Blackheath & Bromley have been members since 1980. Croydon Harriers were members from 1985 until 1994, and have regained their status for 2018 after an absence of 23 years. There is an equivalent league for women, called the UK Women's Athletics League. For younger athletes, there is a UK Youth Development League (for both sexes, aged 11-19).

Below the British League is the Southern Athletics League, which was formed in 2011 to provide competition for both sexes and has replaced the separate Southern Men's and Women's Leagues which had been formed in 1969 and 1975 respectively. The Southern Athletics League currently has three divisions, with both Divisions Two and Three being regionalised. Striders have never entered this league, but some Striders have competed as second-claim members for either Croydon Harriers (who are currently in Division Two) or Holland Sports, who are based in Oxted and are currently in Division Three.

For athletes aged 35 and over, there is a separate league called the Southern Counties Veterans League, which comprises several regional divisions. Striders joined in 1996, and compete in a division of seven clubs: the others are Croydon Harriers, Dorking, Epsom, Hercules-Wimbledon, Kingston and Walton. There are four matches each summer, usually on Monday evenings.



**Nadine Pryce competing for Striders in a Veterans League match
(photo by Marianne Chua)**

Also on the track is a local league called the Rosenheim League, which was formed in 1964 and has six matches each year on Wednesday evenings. It has two divisions: Striders entered the 'eastern' division in 2005 but withdrew at the end of 2013 because of a lack of support. Striders aged under 35 who want to compete on the track can do so by entering open meetings such as those organised by Blackheath & Bromley (usually on Monday evenings) or Herne Hill (usually on Saturday afternoons).

COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2017

Phil Coales had an excellent run in the Ladywell 10,000 metres, organised by Kent Athletics Club on 3 September. He finished third in his heat in 32 minutes 45.54, which was a new Striders' club record for this distance on the track.

In the Berlin Marathon on 24 September, James Bennett broke his own club record with a time of 2 hours 32 minutes 50 seconds. Meanwhile, Striders were hosting the 26th annual Switchback cross-country race, and had nine of the first ten finishers. Phil Coales gained a comfortable victory in 28 minutes 33, with Bill Makuwa second (29.40) and Alastair Falconer third (30.22). The first woman to finish was Debbie Jackson of Collingwood, who placed eleventh overall in 33 minutes 40. Striders won the women's team prize with Becky Laurence third (37.44), Ally Whitlock fourth (38.18) and Joanne Campbell fifth (38.48).

Both Striders' men and women placed third out of nine clubs in the East Surrey League cross-country races at Lloyd Park on 30 September. Striders' men were led home by Bill Makuwa, who ran well to finish sixth, covering the five-mile course in 29 minutes 45 seconds. Rob Lines was 13th (30.53), with Lee Flanagan 15th (31.12) and Matt Stone 19th (32.01). Striders' women were led in by Steph Upton, who was the 12th woman to finish (38.14). Selena Wong was 15th (40.29), Nikki Javan 16th (41.27) and Jessica Polya 19th (42.16).

In the Chester Marathon on 8 October, Dave Shaw set a new club over-55 marathon record of 3 hours 08 minutes 01, finishing 223rd overall in a field of more than 2,500 runners.

Striders' men produced an excellent team performance to place second out of nine clubs in the opening Surrey Cross-Country League Division Two match of the season, at Wimbledon Common on 14 October. They were led by Peter Mills who ran very well to place eighth of the 207 finishers, covering the five-mile course in 26 minutes 29 seconds. Phil Coales also ran well to place 13th (27.16), while Tatsuya Okamoto, making his league debut, was 19th (27.33). Bill Makuwa was 23rd (27.58), with Alastair Falconer 33rd (28.20), Lee Flanagan 48th (29.21), Rob Lines 54th (29.36) and Simon Ambrosi 61st (29.51). Matt Stone was second in the over-55 category and 71st overall (30.24), while Krzysztof Klidzia completed the scoring team in 77th (30.43). Meanwhile, Striders' women placed seventh in their Division Two match at Reigate. They were led by Joanne Campbell who placed 32nd of the 218 finishers, covering the four-mile course in 29 minutes 50. Steph Upton was 36th (29.58) with Becky Laurence 39th (30.04), Nikki Javan 73rd (32.11) and Selena Wong 84th (32.35).

At Walton-on-Thames on 29 October, Matthew Stone improved his club over-55 half-marathon record by more than a minute, with a time of 83 minutes 14 seconds.

Striders did very well to place second in their Surrey Cross-Country League match at Richmond Park on 11 November, consolidating their second place in the Division Two table. They were led by Peter Mills who placed sixth out of the 217 finishers, covering the five-mile course in 28 minutes 26. Phil Coales was eleventh (28.51), while Bill Makuwa was 24th (29.59), James Bennett 27th (30.03), Alastair Falconer 32nd (30.15), Tatsuya Okamoto 37th (30.29) and Lee Flanagan 50th (31.03). Rob Lines was third in the over-45 age-group and 62nd overall (31.53), while Liam Redmond was 84th (32.48) and Simon Ambrosi completed the scoring team in 88th (32.56). Striders also had an impressive total of 17 non-scorers, including Matt Stone who won the over-55 age-group in 33 minutes 32. On the same day, Striders fielded 16 women in their Division Two match at Nonsuch Park. Their A team placed eleventh, led by Becky Laurence who ran well to place 34th of the 269 finishers, covering the six-kilometre course in 26 minutes 37. Steph Upton was 56th (27.54), Nikki Javan 68th (28.29), Debra Bourne 80th (29.02) and Carolyn Storey 83rd (29.08).

25 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN WINTER 1992/93

The Surrey Cross-Country Championships were held at Happy Valley in Old Coulsdon on 12 December. The men's race was won by Bob Treadwell of Surrey Beagles. This was his seventh victory in the event, and he became the oldest runner ever to win it. Box Hill Racers won the team event for the fifth successive year, with South London Harriers second and Thames Hare & Hounds third. Croydon Harriers placed sixth, with Stuart Nash finishing fourth and Richard Knight sixth. Their other scorers were Barry Cooke (29th), Julian Dillow (50th), Gary Shapland (88th) and Alan Dolton (93rd). Striders were without a couple of their leading runners and placed 15th out of 18 complete teams. The team was led by Gary Wales, who finished 86th. Their other scorers were 122 Simon Smith; 124 Lee Morgan; 130 John Hanley; 191 Dave Hoben and 220 Kevin Burnett.

For the second successive year the women's race was won by Zara Hyde of Woking. Sally Young of Mole Valley was second, and Maggie Statham of Holland Sports ran well to place third. Herne Hill won the team event with Woking second and Croydon Harriers third. Croydon were led by Karen Sutton who placed fourth, while Jeina Mitchell was sixth. None of Striders' women competed.

The Tadworth 10-mile road race took place on 3 January. For Striders, club secretary Nigel Davidson placed 18th in a lifetime best of 54 minutes 57, which was only six seconds outside the club record set by Simon Morris in 1985. Juan Galvan was 25th (55.48), John McGilvray 66th (59.15) and Lee Morgan 88th in the slightly frustrating time of exactly 60 minutes. Former Strider Henrique Galvan (Juan's elder brother) finished 11th in 52 minutes 37, which would have been a club record if he had remained a first-claim club member.

The Southern Cross-Country Championships took place at Maidstone on 16 January. For Striders, Nigel Davidson was 250th with John McGilvray 436th.

The Surrey Cross-Country League completed its 31st season with matches on 13 February. Box Hill Racers won Division One for the fourth successive year. Aldershot placed second with Thames Hare & Hounds third. South London Harriers were fifth, while Croydon Harriers placed eighth and were relegated to Division Two, along with Belgrave.

Striders had their best season so far, winning the final Division Three match at Esher. Nigel Davidson led the team home in seventh place, with Juan Galvan 15th, Gary Wales 27th and John McGilvray 28th. Simon Smith was 51st with Steve Owen 52nd, Lee Morgan 56th, John Gerken 69th, Colin Golding 74th and Colin Cotton completing the scoring team in 98th. This was the first time that Striders had won a Surrey League match, and made sure of promotion for the second time in three years, finishing in the top two for the first time. (Two years earlier Striders had placed third in Division Three, but gained promotion because Division Two had temporarily been enlarged to eleven clubs.) The final Division Three table saw Epsom win with 1585 points, but Striders' total of 2051 saw them finish well clear of Stragglers (2759), Dorking (3021), Reigate (3049) and 13 other clubs in the 18-team division.

The Surrey Womens Cross-Country League completed its 14th season with a match at Lloyd Park on 13 March. Woking won Division One with Herne Hill second, Croydon Harriers third and South London Harriers fourth. Croydon were heavily reliant on their individual stars Karen Sutton and Jeina Mitchell, who each won one of the four league races. Jeina also won the English Schools Cross-Country Championship at Newark on 6 March. Belgrave won Division Two with Stragglers second. Striders finished ninth. Barbara Cole and Linda Daniel shared the club women's cross-country trophy, each of them having been the first Strider in two of the four matches. Elene Kayum placed third.

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN WINTER 2008

The Surrey Cross-Country Championships took place at Lloyd Park on 5 January. Striders' women finished seventh, while our men's team were tenth. Striders' women were led by Faye Stammers who placed 47th, covering the undulating five-mile course in 42 minutes 07. She was closely followed by Suzy Yates who placed 49th in 42 minutes 30. Susannah Oliver was 57th (45.18) with Emily Campbell 64th (46.55), Natalie Osher 72nd (51.25) and Isabelle Kita 73rd (53.01). Striders' men were led by James Buchanan who placed 24th of the 151 finishers, covering the 12-kilometre course in exactly 48 minutes. Darren Piper placed 75th in 55 minutes 16, closely followed by veteran John Foster who was 77th (55.34). Damian Macenhill was 80th (55.54) with Abdul Abidi 84th (56.26) and Simon Ambrosi 92nd (57.16).

The senior men's race was won by Phil Wicks of Belgrave, while Herne Hill won the team event. The women's race was won by Emily Adams of Aldershot, while South London Harriers won the team event.

The third Surrey Cross-Country League matches of the season took place on 12 January. Striders' women placed third in their Division Two match at Reigate, giving them an excellent chance of promotion back to Division One. Serena Stracey placed 13th of the 130 finishers, covering the undulating four-mile course in 27 minutes 27 seconds. Faye Stammers was 21st in 28 minutes 29, with Suzy Yates just behind in 22nd (28.37). Kerry Backshell was 34th (29.25) and Steph Upton completed the scoring team in 42nd (30.16).

Meanwhile Striders' men finished fifth in their Division Two match at Richmond Park. James Buchanan placed eighth of the 150 finishers, covering the five-mile course in 28 minutes 40 seconds. Justin Macenhill continued his return to form by placing 16th in 29 minutes 40, with Duncan Lancashire 27th in 30 minutes 24 and Damian Macenhill 42nd in 31 minutes 45.

The Southern Cross-Country Championships took place at Parliament Hill Fields on 26 January. James Buchanan placed 89th of the 832 finishers, covering the muddy 14-kilometre course in 54 minutes 18 seconds. Duncan Lancashire was 203rd (58.07). In the women's race, over five miles, Suzy Yates was 195th of the 326 finishers in 45 minutes 05.

The final Surrey Cross-Country League matches of the season took place on 9 February. Striders' women produced an excellent performance in their Division Two match at Richmond Park. They fielded 15 runners and finished third of the 35 teams, to clinch third place in the overall table and gain promotion back to Division One for only the third time in the club's history. The team was again led by Serena Stracey, who had an excellent run to place ninth of the 137 finishers, covering the undulating 5800 metre course in 24 minutes 01 seconds. Our next woman to finish was Faye Stammers in 21st, just ahead of club colleague Suzy Yates, with both runners recording 25 minutes 19. Kerry Backshell also ran well to finish 30th in 25 minutes 57, and new member Josephine Thompson made an excellent debut to place 35th in 26 minutes 14.

Meanwhile Striders' men were competing in their Division Two match in Lloyd Park. 16-year-old Nicholas Batten ran well to gain his second successive victory in the under-17 race, covering the muddy four-kilometre course in 17 minutes 25 seconds. This led Striders to our best-ever position of second place in the final Division Two table. Epsom won with 248.5 points, but our total of 312 saw us finish ahead of Dorking (335), Kingston (335) and Dulwich (354.5). Our senior men also did well to finish fourth of the nine competing clubs. James Buchanan placed sixth of the 151 finishers, recording 30 minutes 47 seconds for the five-mile course. Justin Macenhill placed eighth in 31 minutes 21, one place and six seconds ahead of Duncan Lancashire. Matt Morgan was 36th (33.55).



Faye Stammers (1211) followed by Suzy Yates (1214) at Richmond Park



Our women's team celebrate promotion

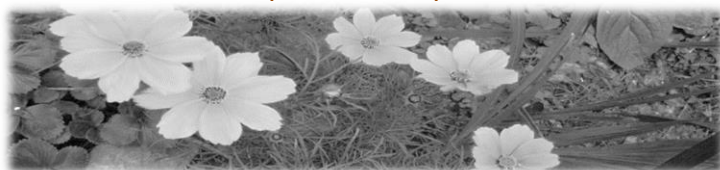
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