

Striders of Croydon

MARCH 2017 MAGAZINE



Peter Mills winning the Pirie 10 (photo by Steve O'Sullivan)

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sun 2 Apr – Croydon Half-Marathon (Striders marshalling)
Sun 9 Apr – Brighton Marathon
Sun 23 Apr – London Marathon (Striders marshalling)
Sun 30 Apr – Ranelagh Half-Marathon – Richmond (Surrey championship)
Sun 7 May – Sutton 10K – Nonsuch Park (Surrey Road League)
Mon 8 May – Southern Veterans League – Kingsmeadow
Sat 13 May – Surrey 5000m Championship – Kingsmeadow
Mon 22 May – Southern Veterans League – Ewell
Sun 4 June – Surrey Masters Championships – Ewell
Sun 4 June – Dorking 10 miles – Dorking (Surrey championship)
Mon 12 June – Southern Veterans League – Kingsmeadow
Sun 18 June – Richmond 10K – Richmond (Surrey championship)
Sun 25 June – British Masters 5000m Championship – Birmingham
Mon 10 July – Southern Veterans League – Croydon Arena (Striders co-hosting)
Sat 15 July – Elmore 7 miles – Chipstead (Surrey Road League)
Sun 23 July – Elmbridge 10K – Walton (Surrey Road League)
Sun 13 Aug – Wimbledon 5K – Wimbledon (Surrey championship)

MARATHON TRAINING RUNS 2017

	Planned Run	Start	Finish	Route
Sun 12 Mar	Regents Canal 18	Victoria	Victoria	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5833749
Sun 19 Mar	Coulsdon 21	Coulsdon South	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=6456581
Sun 26 Mar	Botley Hill 19	Sandilands	Sandilands	www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=5856502

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER MARCH 2017

This time you have a guide to our usual Sunday Route and the story of the big houses and land on the route from JG. Seems we have the Lloyd Family and the Archbishop of Canterbury to thank for much of it. There is an article spotted in the New Scientist on why and how we evolved to be the best long distance runner on the planet. Also why all you need to get yourself running is to put your kit on. Descriptions of the mud at Farthing Down and running 13-lap marathons from Debra, and the benefits of massage from Juan. As always thanks to Alan for putting it all together.

Looking back at my contribution to the Club Magazine this time last year, I was commiserating on the excessive amount of mud at the final of the Surrey League Men's XC at Lloyd Park and on our relegation to the 3rd division. This year I think the mud was about the same, but this time congratulations to everyone getting us promoted back to the 2nd Division, especially Krzysztof for encouraging you all to get to the events on Saturdays and to Peter Mills who led Striders at all of them and I think won two of them outright. Also well done to everyone who ran in the Women's teams, for making a good show for Striders. We finished the season with our A team in 8th place out of 42 teams. Thank you to Andy Elliot for organising you all.

You will be well aware by now that the bar has been ripped out and is well on the way to being transformed. If nothing else it will be a lot warmer: the walls and floor have been lined with several inches of insulation. You can't see much in the dark on a Wednesday but it is amazing how much more spacious it seems. Darren, the builder and your future pub landlord, is still on schedule to complete the work before the first match in the Cricket Season on April 15th, though I think there will still be a lot of the finishing touches to be completed: there has been a delay in delivering the nice comfy sofas he was looking for. Our first major event in the new bar should be post-Marathon Drinks on Sunday 23rd. In the meantime the Striders' Bar on Wednesday evenings is working OK. The Striders' chef will be there next week to serve up chicken Curry, so come along. I bet it's the only place you can get curry and a pint for £5. Take advantage of the fact you are getting your drinks at wholesale prices; I am afraid it won't last.

Planning for the Croydon Half is progressing well. If you haven't already, please either enter or let John Gannon know you can help. Although it is one of the South East's smaller Half Marathons it is our flagship event along with the Switchback and we get lots of good feedback on how well marshalled it is.

This time last year I was also commenting on the recent introduction of yoga. A year on it is as popular as ever. Congratulations and thank you to Corrine for organising it and Hannah for providing such good instruction.

Swimming continues every week on Thursdays and now in its 10th year. However we don't seem to be too successful in encouraging you more recent members of the club to have a go. Come along and try it out. I did nearly 10 years ago and have improved from managing a few lengths of breast stroke to an hour of steady crawl. I bet most of you could do much better than me. 😊

Good luck to everyone running one of the Marathons during April. I hope the usual series of training runs plus the 18:30 club on Wednesdays has helped you to achieve your goals. Thank you to Greg, James and Stuart who have managed to keep you roughly on track for most of the runs. Personally, after the first few runs I was optimistic I could achieve my aim of finishing a marathon later this year in a reasonable time. I am not so sure now; I seem to hit the wall at 13 miles rather than 20 miles 😞. Maybe I will just have to walk it.

May all your runs be through sunlit forests.

Robin Jamieson

CROYDON: THIS GREEN AND PLEASANT LAND (by John Gannon)

Yes I know, not what you usually associate Croydon with is it? Usually 1960/70's office blocks, Lunatic House, riots and the view from East Croydon railway station as people pass through. (I understand that view is likely to change but as I've been hearing this for the last 25 years, seeing will be believing.) However we, as runners, are blessed with many green and open spaces that we can run through, which although they might not be Richmond Park or Wimbledon Common, are less well-known (even to people living in Croydon) so are less populated with dogs, cyclists, golfers etc. so we have more of a free range over these parks and woods.

But have you ever asked yourself how did we get so lucky to have these areas on which to run over? Well even if you haven't thought it about I think it's about time you did, so I have brought it upon myself to enlighten you all – plus it gave me something to do while I recuperated! (At the time of writing I was recovering from an operation.) So join me as I take you on an imaginary run, over a route that is sometimes known as The Traditional Sunday Club Run.

Lloyd Park



As we go through the gate on the other side of the Cricket pitch opposite the club house we step into Lloyd Park, which is named after Frank Lloyd, a newspaper magnate, who lived in the nearby Coombe House for over 35 years until his death in 1927, when he bequeathed most of the farm land which came with the estate to the local corporation for recreation purposes. As we run up the hill, we pass through a gap into open fields that show a vast difference to the playing pitches on the other side of the hill. Ever wonder why we get wet feet as we run over this field even when it's on top of a hill so you would expect any water to drain away? Well it's because there are a number of springs located in this field that emerge between the Thanet sand and the underlying chalk that is beneath our feet.

We continue around the northern boundary of the park until we leave Lloyd Park by the Oaks Lane exit. The track to the right is the continuation of Oaks Lane that passes Coombe Farm, which was owned by Frank Lloyd's brother Herbert, before finally reaching Frank's old gaff, Coombe House. In fact there has been a house on this site since 1221 and in the grounds there is an ancient well that was once used by pilgrims en route to join the Pilgrims' Way to Canterbury. Returning to the exit, we go up the drive that leads to Oaks Farm, which is popular for weddings if you're into those sorts of things, but then head away from the farm until we reach Oaks Road.

Addington/Shirley Hills



We cross over this road (carefully) and enter the lower woods of Addington Hills, although some of us also refer to this area as Shirley Hills, which might be confusing to new members but it's one and the same. Part of these hills was acquired in 1874 by the then Croydon Board of Health and was in the late 19th Century very popular with people not only from Croydon but from London as well, who at weekends would arrange trips to the area to escape the city. In fact so popular that a local Pub, The Sandrocks, lost its licence due to rowdy behaviour! Something that you would find surprising if you were to visit the existing version today; however, it does a very nice Sunday lunch!

We continue upwards through the woods until we take a path to the left and continue in a clockwise direction around the hills until we finally climb to the summit that stands at 460 feet above sea level. We then continue towards the car park and Chinese restaurant but of course no Sunday club run is complete without a visit to the Viewpoint so we bear right and head to the said Viewpoint from where, if Upper Norwood was not in the way, it would give us a great view into London! However even with this obstacle the views aren't half bad as not only can we see the office blocks and flats that tower above Croydon, but we can also

see such sights as the 02 and Canary Wharf to the north east, Tower 42, The Shard and BT Tower to the north, with Wembley to the north west, and on a very clear day if you pick out the Croydon Town Hall Clock Tower then look slightly up you should be able to just make out Windsor Castle in the west. However I think it has to be a very clear day and you have to have the eyes of an Eagle (no, not a Palace fan) to see it clearly.

Once we have admired the view, we retrace our steps onwards past the restaurant picking up the path that is part of the London Loop on our right to head through the woods, from where we exit by the Coombe Lane tram stop. In front of us is the entrance to Royal Russell School, which until the 1920's was a private estate called Ballards Estate, dating back to before the Reformation period. Turning left onto the path that runs alongside Coombe Lane, we cross over at the end of this path and turn right into Ballards Way before taking the first turning on the left, Riesco Drive. This small road is named after a Raymond Riesco, who owned Heathfield House and Gardens that we can see on our left hand side and have quite often run around, as the grounds are open to the public. We have to thank Mr Riesco for not only the lovely gardens that he had built but also on his death in 1964 selling the estate to Croydon Council. He had already sold off part of the estate in 1945 to the council and the Monks Hill housing estate was built on the land he sold, but hey no one is perfect are they?

Bramley Bank & Littleheath



As we run down Riesco Drive there is an entrance to a small woodland area that is managed by London Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve; again we have to thank Mr Riesco for this. There are two paths that run through this wood and both take only a few minutes to complete to exit at a path that links Monks Hill with its better-off neighbour Croham Valley; we cross this path and enter into Littleheath Woods. These woods are completely surrounded by houses with Monks Hill to the east, Croham Valley to the north and Selsdon to the south. Most of this housing was built in the 1920s and 1930s and in fact there were plans to build on the woods, so we are forever in the debt of a local conservationist, Malcolm Sharpe, who rallied the locals and Council into saving the woods by raising the princely sum of £6,000. The woods were purchased in 1932 and declared an open space, therefore turning back the tide of housing.

The Sunday run normally splits just after we enter Littleheath, with the hour group heading west across the woods towards Littleheath Road while the 90 minute group heads south along the narrow strip of woodland towards Selsdon Park Road. Both routes will merge later so we will take the 90 minute option as we still follow the London Loop path that is joined by another long-distance path, the Vanguard Way, as it crosses Selsdon Park Road to head down a path that divides two housing estates, Forestdale to our left and Selsdon Vale to the right. This path dips down and up before finally delivering us at the back entrance to Selsdon Woods.

Selsdon Woods



These woods have been around since God was a boy and were always linked to Selsdon Farm, which in turn became Selsdon Park Hotel in the 1920s. Before that it might well have been laid out as land for a Country Shoot, much like its neighbour Kingswood. When the estate was broken up during the 1920s, a lot of the woods were sold off for housing, areas such as Ashen Vale and Selsdon Vale. Interestingly, this part of the land was originally intended to be sold to returning soldiers from the First World War. Much like Littleheath, there was a public movement to save the woods and they were offered to the National Trust, who declined due to the running costs. However, the forerunners of the Croydon Council agreed to take ownership and the woods were saved so we could run around them.

As we enter the woods there is again another option to take a shorter route, turn right and take the lower path (Vale Border) avoiding the hills, or carrying on upwards and then take a clockwise trip around the woods before running down to the main entrance at Farleigh Road where both options meet up before taking the long climb up Farleigh Road to the Selsdon lights. This next section is the longest we spend on road, as once we have the climb up to the lights out of the way, we take a left crossing over Addington Road before turning right to

run down Upper Selsdon Road, where we pass Queenhill Road which is where we pick up the hour route we left some miles ago. Carrying on downhill we finally pick up a path on the right hand side of the road, just by a bus stop that leads us onto a track that divides Croham Hurst Golf Course and leads onto Croham Hurst itself.

Croham Hurst



There have been runners going up and down the hills of Croham Hurst going back thousands of years. Evidence has been found dating back to the Mesolithic era 5,000 to 3,000 years BC. The top of Croham Hurst was also populated during the Bronze Age; if you stop and look at the view here you can see why it would prove popular. There is also a Bronze Age round barrow, which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, although the only visible evidence is a plaque marking the site.

In the Medieval Period, Croham was one of the four manors in the parish of Sanderstead. In the late sixteenth century the area was sold to John Whitgift, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Croham Hurst then became part of his Whitgift Foundation, an educational and nursing charity which is still operating today. In fact this charity is responsible for all the private schools in Croydon. In the late nineteenth century, Croham Hurst became a popular spot for visitors, few of whom knew that it was not public property. They were shocked when it became known in 1898 that the Foundation wanted to sell the site, with the lower slopes being developed for housing. Croydon people launched a vigorous campaign to save the site, which resulted in the whole of it being acquired by Croydon Corporation on 8 February 1901, so again we have to thank our previous residents of Croydon for saving these sites for our enjoyment!

As we enter the woods we have a choice of paths, straight on down the Bridle Path alongside the golf course, take a sharp left following the railings that separate us from the other side of the golf course that then also takes us down a path (but be careful there is a sting in the tail for this one), or take the middle option and take the path that climbs to the summit of Croham Hurst some 477 feet above sea level. All three paths will eventually lead us to the other side of the woods, where we could exit into Croham Manor Road which could take us back to the club house, but that option would rid us of one last hill to climb and we wouldn't want to miss out on that now would we? So if we have followed the Bridle Path that runs alongside the golf course, we will eventually come to a path on our right hand side, again that will follow the golf course and lead us out into the car park of the golf club from where we cross Croham Road and picking up our old friend the Vanguard Way we can climb up Conduit Lane.

Conduit Lane/Coombe Wood Gardens



As we climb the short but steep hill we can be comforted by the fact that we have nearly finished our run, as Conduit Lane got its name from the three steams that use to run along this path and that supplied the water for the Coombe Estate that not only included Coombe House, home of Frank Lloyd, he of Lloyd Park fame, as well as Coombe Wood House that was built for yet another of Frank's brothers, Arthur. Those Lloyd boys really had this area sewn up didn't they? As we run along Conduit Lane we will encounter a very ripe smell; don't worry it's not from one of the runners in front of you but from the compost that is stored in the Central Nursery of Croydon Council, which we pass en route. As we come to the end of Conduit Lane we come to the entrance of Coombe Wood Gardens, which was part of the garden belonging to Coombe Wood House. The gardens are well worth a visit as is the Café that is situated in what used to be the stable block of the house. The house and grounds were purchased by Croydon Council and while the grounds are still maintained by the council, the house was turned into a restaurant, the Château Napoleon or Château as I think it is now called.



As we cross over Coombe Road, we turn left and thankfully run down this road passing Coombe House on our right with Coombe Lodge to our left. Built in the 1760s, it is now a Beefeater restaurant but don't let that put you off going there as it does have a very nice bar area. There has also been added a Premier Inn hotel where Lenny Henry is waiting to offer you a warm welcome. After a short distance we can cross the Tram Line that links Addington to Croydon, to return to Lloyd Park from where we can return to the clubhouse tired but happy!

(This article originally appeared in the December 2014 club magazine, but is republished here for the benefit of newer Striders)

HAPPY VALLEY – SURREY WOMEN'S CROSS COUNTRY LEAGUE, RACE 4 (by Debra Bourne)

The final race of the Surrey Women's Cross Country League for winter 2016-2017 decided to remind us that cross-country was a winter pursuit: it was snowing. Following Andy's car to Coulsdon, as he knew where we were going and I didn't, the car had reported external temperatures of 1-2°C and although the snowflakes were not huge, where they landed on the grass they were sticking, leading a young runner to comment afterwards that all she could see of the white plastic course marker flags were the letters "SLH", apparently written on the snow – the yellow ones at least remained visible.

Another sign that it was cold was that the long walk from car to start, wearing several layers over running clothes, didn't make me too hot. Most of us were rather reluctant to shed those outer layers, but as it grew closer to the start time one by one coats and outer trousers were peeled off, the tent being very useful for taking off trousers and changing shoes without hopping around in the snow, grass and mud. Linda was the only one on our women's team brave enough to wear shorts (although young Lucy Finch was also clad in shorts for her race). I did notice that even the most hardened shorts-and-vest runners were wearing gloves today.

As usual there was too much noise in the pre-start huddle of runners to hear much of what the starter was saying, although I did gather that there were two laps, and my warm-up jog, while not very effective at warming me up, had shown what looked like an extra small loop to bring us round to the finish. Then we were off!

The course today was less hilly than some we've run, and thankfully lacked deep mud. However, the ground was very varied, with grass, mud, gravel tracks overlaid with decaying leaves and other woodland debris, sections studded with flints, and a few hundred yards of road. There were also a few tree roots – it wouldn't be cross-country without some tree roots! What the mud lacked in depth it made up for in consistency, with two main types: slippery, particularly when we were running along the side of slopes, and the sticky-suction type that tries to steal your running shoes. I considered letting it grab my left shoe at one point on the second lap, but remembered that I still had a flinty section to navigate, so curled my toes and held onto it.

The marshals were very cheerful and encouraging. As we rounded the start area at the end of the first lap, Andy also shouted encouragement, as did the Moore family (regular Lloyd parkrunners, who train with Croydon Harriers), waiting for Jessica and Leanne's junior races, and the Finch family a little further on, waiting for Lucy's race. Then we were onto the second lap, which was slightly easier in some ways because we were less densely packed, making it less difficult to find and stick to the best line to run.

Most useful and encouraging were the words as we flew down the last slope towards the finish area: "400 metres to go!" – although some runners who hadn't realised that final section had to be negotiated, and thought they were practically at the finish, found that information rather less heartening. Round the turn and back up the starting section, for a last effort, thankfully on flattish ground and more grass than mud, curving left and then, finally, full-tilt towards the finish funnel, where I managed to nip ahead of another runner practically at the entrance (her club was in Division 1, so no effect on placings, but still satisfying!).

Steph Upton, despite a recently-turned ankle, was first of our team to finish, in 36:29, with Katie Chadd about a minute behind her and me about a minute after Katie, while Joanne Campbell finished less than a minute after me, with Becky Laurence not far behind her to

complete the 'A' team. The 'B' team was led in by Selena Wong, followed by Linda Daniel, Michelle Klein and Victoria Legge. Sadly we didn't have a tenth runner to round out the second team on this occasion.

After, there were layers of coats to put back on, plus hot tea to drink and flapjacks and energy balls and so on, and encouraging in the rest of the runners. Our little tent was put to good use again for changing into dry footwear, and for Lucy to change ready for her race.

Then the flag was lowered, the tent stowed and the fun was over – until the next cross-country season.

Many thanks to Andy for all his efforts as Team Manager, and to Andy and Steph for the tea and cakes, flapjacks etc. after each race.



Back row (from left): Andy Elliott, Victoria Legge, Michelle Klein, Steph Upton, Selena Wong, Debra Bourne, Becky Laurence.
Front row: Linda Daniel, Katie Chadd, Joanne Campbell.

SVN MARATHON DAY MARATHON (by Debra Bourne)

The Heartbreaker Marathon is an undulating three-lap course held on gravel forestry trails through the beautiful woodlands of the New Forest. Runners can expect to see cattle, probably ponies and possibly even deer. I was looking forward to it.

That is not the marathon that I ran on 26th February. On the preceding Thursday I discovered that my name was not on the list of runners, I failed to find any email confirming my entry, and the organisers had no record of my having entered. I distinctly recall entering, so I can only conclude that the website entry system glitched – it happens. Since I needed to run this to qualify for Comrades, and wouldn't have another opportunity to run a marathon until uncomfortably close to the qualification deadline, this was a problem. Thankfully, it proved possible to get a late entry to the Marathon Day (26th February – 26.2) marathon organised by Saxons, Vikings and Normans. This event involved 13 laps of a two-mile tarmac cycle path set in Betteshanger (formerly Fowlmead) Country Park, north of Deal in south-east Kent. At registration each runner was given their number – on which their name had been written – plus a laminated card with the numbers 1-12 printed around the edge. At the end of each lap, one of several volunteers would punch a hole into your card on the number corresponding to the number of laps run, and on your final lap you were given a flag to carry: for extra support from other runners still on the course, and so the organisers knew who needed to be timed as they crossed the finish line. The system worked pretty well.

Saxons, Vikings and Normans events are wonderfully low-key, with a small field of runners (about 130 for this one) and a very friendly atmosphere. As at their Dymchurch Marathon last year, I queued behind one other person to pick up my race number, and even in the ladies' toilets down in the visitor centre the queue was short. Bags can be left close to the start/finish area, which means that runners can grab or remove jackets, hats or gloves very easily as they finish each lap. On the other side of the track, the aid station offered water, orange squash and a red fruits squash, plus a variety of nibbles – jelly babies, cake, biscuits, including crisps, nuts and Oreo cookies clearly labelled as being suitable for vegan runners. Next to this was a table where runners could leave their own drinks and food choices.

The event organiser, Traviss Wilcox, is also Chairman of the 100 Marathon Club and made announcements at the pre-run briefing regarding people reaching that club – highly reminiscent of the announcements we make at parkruns for people reaching their 50-, 100- or 250-parkruns milestones. On this occasion one runner was wearing his 100 Marathon Club vest for the first time, on his 101st marathon – while shepherding round a first-time marathoner – and another runner was running her 100th marathon and was presented with her vest after finishing.

The cycle track provided a smooth surface underfoot while the park provided some pleasant scenery, including areas with birch woodland to either side, as well as more open areas – no deer, but I did see horses (in fields, outside the park). It was not quite flat; there was a distinct rise following the start and on the lead-in to the finish, giving about 50 feet of elevation per lap (or about 650 ft overall). The section after the start had the advantage of being nicely sheltered from the wind. The corresponding downhill section was less useful than expected for saving time, because it coincided with the windswept section of the course, and, naturally, it was a headwind. In the first few laps the wind was not too bad, but it gradually strengthened over time. The sky was grey, but thankfully never released more than a fine drizzle while we were running.

My aim was to run sub-4:20, qualifying for 'F' pen at Comrades but without pushing myself too much, so I would be able to continue with my Comrades training schedule. After 13.1

miles my time was about 2:03 and I started getting tempted to try for the sub-4-hours and 'D' pen ('E' pen is reserved for Green Number runners, who have already completed Comrades at least 10 times).

It will surprise nobody reading this that I gave in to this temptation. My first rough calculation suggested I needed to be no slower than 9 mins/mile for the remainder of the race, but I soon revised that time per mile downwards: I was definitely covering a little over two miles each lap (the track is not a plain oval but meanders rather, so there is plenty of opportunity not to take the shortest distance). Given my time for the first half I would need to be somewhat faster than 9 mins/mile for the second half. I started to push harder, aiming for 8:30-8:45 per mile. With three laps – six miles and change – to go, I was pretty sure I would do it – just – but then I started working out the effect of that extra distance and I was less sure. I pushed myself to run faster.

End of the 12th lap and last hole punched, but they had run out of 'last lap' flags, so someone noted down my name and number ready for timing me in as I approached the finish at the end of my last lap. By this time I knew that I would pass 26.2 miles in under four hours but was very unsure whether I would reach the finish line in that time. Another runner ran with me for a while, also on her last lap and also flagless. Turned out she had run Comrades last year, so she wished me best of luck for that sub-4-hour finish. She was running a little faster than I was and gradually pulled away from me in the final half lap.

At 26.2 miles on my Garmin I was at 3:55 and I called on my last reserves, trying to speed up a bit more despite that headwind. The last few hundred yards and someone shouted at me from the finish line that I had less than 30 seconds to make it... I sprinted, finished and the lady who had finished just before me met me with a big grin and a high five, while everyone around congratulated me. According to my Garmin I ran the last .68 miles at 8:00 mins/mile, and the results list gives my time as 3:59:35 – Comrades 'D' pen here I come! One of the finish line crew hung the medal around my neck – a fair size, and incorporating a bottle opener in the design, to go with part of the contents of the goodie bag. These are described as 'containing nothing healthy' and mine included fig rolls, a large bar of Bourneville Chocolate, a pack of crisps and a couple of other edibles – besides the bottle of beer (alternative choices being lager, cider or a can of Coke).

I would definitely recommend the SVN events to anyone who likes large, nicely-designed medals; goodie bags full of tasty edibles, not leaflets; and low-key, friendly events with minimal queueing for toilets or registration. If you prefer large events with thousands of other runners and lots of supporters, they are not for you. I'm aiming to return to Betteshanger at the end of March to spend six hours running on the packed-gravel path around the outside of the Country Park in one of the SVN Challenge events. Anyone care to join me?



FROM THE NEW SCIENTIST

The Greatest Runner On Earth (by Catherine De Lange: edited by Robin Jamieson)



Other species might be better at speed or distance, but no species can run faster, further under all conditions than humans can. And yes, that's you too

A couple of months ago, Daniel Lieberman set out on the race of a lifetime. A 25-mile slog in the Arizona heat, climbing a mountain more than 2000 metres tall. To top it all, 53 of his competitors had four legs. This was the [33rd annual Man Against Horse Race](#).

Lieberman, [by his own admission not a great runner](#), outran all but 13 horses – and so could you.

Lieberman [studies human evolutionary biology at Harvard University](#), and part of his work over the past 15 years has focused on a unique set of adaptations that suggest modern humans evolved [not just to walk, but to run long distances](#).

One is our cooling equipment. “The fact we have sweat glands all over our body and we’ve lost our fur enables us to dump heat extremely effectively,” says Lieberman. This is crucial when running for long periods. It helps to explain why animals struggle to beat us in the heat, even though sled dogs can run more than 100 kilometres a day pulling humans in cold climates. Hence also Lieberman’s success in Arizona. “The hotter it is, the better humans are able to run compared with horses,” he says.

Then there are adaptations that offset our clumsy, inefficient bipedal frames. Short toes and large gluteal muscles assist with balance and stability. The Achilles tendon and other springs in the feet and legs help us to store and release energy. We tend to have a high proportion of slow-twitch muscle fibres, which [produce less power but take longer to tire than the short burst](#), fast-twitch fibres needed for sprinting.

Born to run

Human long distance running speeds compare favourably with **animals** over a similar distance



SOURCE: DOI:10.1038/nature03052

The nuchal ligament at the base of the skull also helps to keep our heads, and therefore our gaze, steady when we run. Other decent runners such as dogs and horses have one, but they're not found in poor runners such as pigs and non-human primates or early hominids like *Australopithecus*. Many of these adaptations are specific to running, suggesting we're not just good at it because we are good walkers.

One theory is that we began running as scavengers, where an ability to outrun other carnivores to reach fresh meat was to our advantage. As we improved, we became better hunters, able to track and outrun our prey over large distances [before we had spears and arrows](#). This all helped to provide us with the extra protein we needed to acquire our greatest advantage: a bigger brain. "The features that we see in the fossil record that are involved in running appear about when we start to see evidence for hunting. And soon thereafter their brains start to get bigger," says Lieberman.

So can you unleash your inner marathon runner? In a word, yes. Genetics is important but training is key, says sports scientist [Chris Easton at the University of the West of Scotland in Hamilton, UK](#). You'll need stronger leg and bum muscles, to be sure, but you can get these simply by starting to run. You will find it hard to increase the [proportion of slow-twitch muscle fibres](#) you have, but if you find yourself flagging, take your time and take comfort in the fact we evolved to jog, rather than sprint, over the finish line. "Millions of people run marathons and people tell us we are crazy," says Lieberman. "Actually, it's part of who we are."

How To Alter Your Behaviour (by Val Curtis: edited by Robin Jamieson)

"Identifying your unconscious workings provides you with ways to fine-tune your behaviour. For a start, if you want to change bad habits, have a look at where and how you enact them, and then try to disrupt that pattern. If you want to stop smoking, avoid the places where you are likely to spark up, or move your cigarettes out of sight. If you want to start eating more healthily, stop meeting friends for lunch at a burger restaurant. Yes, you think now that you'll order the salad, but when you get there, the cues and smells will be hard to resist."

Val Curtis has used such insights to develop ways to encourage handwashing with soap in India and to modify the tendency for mothers in Indonesia to feed their children unhealthy snacks. She suggests we can all prime ourselves in similar ways. If you think you ought to do some exercise but don't really feel like it, just put your running gear on anyway, and wait and see what happens, she says. "The kit takes you for a run. You let it control your behaviour."

THE BENEFITS OF SPORTS MASSAGE (by Juan Galvan)

As sporting standards continue to improve, the intensity of training methods increases accordingly. Nowadays the amateur athlete may train as much as the top professionals did a decade ago, but there is a price to be paid for such a high level of effort.

The body needs to rest to enable it to recover from the fatigue which results from hard training, and to enable it to develop the resilience necessary to achieve increased performance. As training builds up progressively, a point is reached where the body is no longer able to fully recover between sessions, and performance may level off and eventually start to decline. The symptoms of incomplete recovery are muscle pain, joint pain and tendon inflammation, which all point to the onset of injury through overtraining. Other tell-tale signs are restlessness and difficulty in sleeping caused by physical tension and general aches and pains.

When the musculoskeletal system is being over-trained in this way it becomes vulnerable to trauma; this is why you hear of young athletes breaking down when following seemingly normal training schedules, suffering from acute conditions like severe muscle strain, joint sprain and even stress fractures. All of these seldom happen by accident and could have been avoided with a more comprehensive approach to recovery.

With only 24 hours in the day, and the increasing pressure that the everyday keen sportsman has to contend with, full recovery may not be possible unless the effectiveness of the rest periods is improved.

We all know the importance of a good warm-up/warm-down and stretching, and these should be an integral part of a training programme. However, in spite of doing these exercises properly there may still be muscle tension that will stop you recovering fully.

Stretching tends to work the muscle group (quadriceps, hamstrings, etc.) as a whole. But muscle does not work as a single unit in this way. It is divided into many sub-compartments, each of which work with different effort to produce the complexity of movement required.

Runners, due to the demands of their sport, put their bodies through stresses that render them prone to injury including shin splints, tight quadriceps, pulled hamstrings and knee problems.

Massage is therefore used for the general relaxation of the musculoskeletal system as well as being directed into local pressure areas, thereby improving recovery and ensuring that injuries are treated thoroughly.

The athlete should be aware of the uses and benefits of massage. All sporting activities involve muscle activity as the primary motive force, and many sports injuries are directly muscle injuries or originate from muscle dysfunction. Massage is the best form of treatment for muscle tension, and has a distinct advantage over most therapies in that it can be used on a regular basis to help prevent overuse injuries as well as being used as a diagnostic approach for the treatment of specific injuries. With massage the therapist can remove the accumulation of general aches and pains that some athletes either seem to accept as normal due to their gradual build-up, or even try to suppress with drugs. These aches and pains can lead to more serious problems if left untreated. So the benefits of massage for injury prevention are great.

Through massage the therapist is acutely aware of any changes through the feeling in the hands and so can adapt the treatment accordingly to the individual.

Massage provides other physiological processes which are important to the competitive runner at any level:

- Aids the removal of waste toxins from swollen muscles, e.g. lactic acid that is built up from going to oxygen debt.
- Boosts the immune system by promoting better circulation of the lymph our body has in order to fight infections.
- Improves the circulation from the heart to the muscles, which means blood can be pumped more effectively to the working muscles on demand.
- Extends muscular range of motion, increasing flexibility, which ensures a more effective working muscle that is less likely to get injured.
- Reduces pain: with intensive training one tends to get excessive muscle tension which restricts circulation and shortens muscles, which all lead to pain. Massage stimulates the production of endorphins – the body's own pain-killers.
- Balances the autonomic nervous system, reducing muscle tension and abolishing pain due to musculoskeletal disorders, especially in the neck. This has been shown to decrease the recurrence of migraine attacks and lower high blood pressure; it also helps in better relaxation and improves sleep, releasing stress.
- Improves muscle tone, by combining the improvement in circulation with the physical manipulation of the muscle, by breaking down scar tissue as well as by removing any adhesions that would otherwise hinder the full function of the muscle, giving it a better shape in the process.

Massage is very important for athletes that are recovering from accidents or injuries that have rendered a particular muscle inactive for a long time. Massage work carried out during this recovery stage will allow the muscle to regain full strength, flexibility and function.

(This article originally appeared in the June 1996 club magazine. Juan was one of Striders' leading runners in the early 1990s, and was the first Strider to train at the London School of Sports Massage)



SURREY CROSS-COUNTRY LEAGUES: FINAL TABLES

MEN (DIVISION 3)

Striders 737

Fulham 1050
Stragglers 1478
West4 Harriers 1601
262 RRC 1841
Tadworth 2178
Sutton 2221
Collingwood 2409
Runnymede 2865

WOMEN (DIVISION 2)

Woking 222

Stragglers 411

Fulham 438

Advent 577

Windle Valley 717

Woking B 1011

Stragglers B 1041

Striders 1099

Epsom Allsorts 1351

Guildford 1423

Advent B 1444

Collingwood 1496

Sutton Runners 1528

Fulham B 1541

Tadworth 1726

262 RRC 1789

Runnymede 1886

Kingston 1891

Elmbridge 2020

Epsom Oddballs 2023

Lingfield 2208

Windle Valley B 2271

Dulwich Park 2467

Walton 2471

Epsom Allsorts B 2582

Barnes 2688

British Airways 2897

Croydon Harriers 2965

262 RRC B 3056

Holland Sports 3062

Striders B 3078

Lingfield B 3416

Dulwich Park B 3513

Sutton Runners B 3517

Sutton & District 3573

Epsom Oddballs B 3584

Collingwood B 3605

COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: DECEMBER 2016 – FEBRUARY 2017

On 3 December, Striders' women finished eighth in their Surrey Women's Cross-Country League Division Two match at Mitcham. They were led by Steph Upton who was 26th, covering the six-kilometre course in 26 minutes 09 seconds. Becky Laurence was 44th (27.24), Joanne Campbell 52nd (27.52), Charlotte Letchford 56th (28.05) and Ally Whitlock 67th (29.13). On the following day Peter Mills won the annual Pirie 10-mile cross-country race, organised by South London Harriers, at Coulsdon. He finished almost three minutes ahead of the runner-up. Krzysztof Klidzia was third overall, and first in the over-50 category.

Striders placed fourth in the East Surrey League cross-country race at Wimbledon on 10 December. They were led by Peter Mills, who placed seventh of the 147 finishers.

In the Surrey Cross-Country Championships at Lloyd Park on 7 January, Peter Mills placed 23rd in the senior men's race, covering the muddy 12-kilometre course in 43 minutes 13. Krzysztof Klidzia was 75th (47.37), Phil Coales 77th (47.39), Lee Flanagan 80th (47.47), Alistair Falconer 92nd (49.20) and Matt Stone 95th (49.28). The team finished ninth. For Striders' women, Steph Upton placed 58th, covering the eight-kilometre course in 37 minutes 47; Becky Laurence was 73rd (39.24) with Joanne Campbell 77th (39.53).

Peter Mills produced an excellent run to win the Surrey Cross-Country League Division Three race at Cranford on 14 January, covering the five-mile course in 26 minutes 49 seconds. James Bennett also ran very well to finish second in 26 minutes 54. Simone Luciani was ninth (28.10) with Phil Coales 15th (28.38), Lee Flanagan 21st (29.16), Rob Lines 25th (29.23) and Justin Macenhill 31st (30.01). Matt Stone was first in the over-50 category and 39th overall (30.28), while Mike Stewart was 51st (31.00) and Simon Pannell 77th (32.54). The team placed second in the match. Meanwhile Striders' women placed sixth in their Division Two match at Lloyd Park. Steph Upton placed 26th, covering the five-mile course in 37 minutes 16. Joanne Campbell also ran well to place 31st (37.50), while Becky Laurence was 41st (38.42), Charlotte Letchford 44th (38.47) and Debra Bourne 57th (40.21).

Striders produced an excellent team performance to win their final Surrey Cross-Country League Division Three match of the season, at Lloyd Park on 11 February. They also won the Division Three championship and gained promotion back to Division Two. Striders were again led by Peter Mills who gained his second successive Division Three win, completing the muddy five-mile course in 28 minutes 46 seconds. Peter also won the individual Division Three championship. There were also very good runs from Phil Coales who placed third (29.36) and Simone Luciani who was fifth (30.14). Team manager Krzysztof Klidzia was first in the over-50 category and 11th overall (30.50). Lee Flanagan was 13th (30.54) with Robert Lines 16th (31.05), Justin Macenhill 26th (32.09), Simon Ambrosi 28th (32.20), Damian Macenhill 39th (32.55) and Matt Stone completed the scoring team in 42nd (33.03). Meanwhile Striders' women placed ninth in their Division Two match at Coulsdon, and finished eighth in the final Division Two table. They were led by Steph Upton who placed 26th, covering the five-mile course in 36 minutes 29. Katie Chadd was 35th (37.24), Debra Bourne 44th (38.27), Joanne Campbell 55th (39.17) and Becky Laurence 57th (39.32).

In the British Masters Indoor Pentathlon Championships at Lee Valley on 12 February, Paul Cripps placed second in the M50 event, becoming the first Strider to win a medal in a national championship. His performances included a club high jump record of 1 metre 56. At Lloyd parkrun on 18 February, Phil Coales led Striders to victory in the fourth annual mobmatch against Croydon Harriers. Striders had a total of 49 finishers. A day later, James Bennett finished fourth in the Bramley 10-mile road race in a new club record of 53 minutes 48.



**Paul Cripps is the first Strider ever to win a medal in a national championship
(photo by Linda Oxlade)**

30 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SPRING 1987

The East Surrey League held its annual road relay over the traditional course at Box Hill on 14 March. Hercules-Wimbledon gained a clear win, with national cross-country champion Dave Clarke setting a new course record of 9 minutes 19 seconds. Croydon Harriers placed second with a team which included two future Striders. Their runners were Gary Bishop (10.11), Graham Hansen (10.12), Alan Dolton (10.18) and Barry Cooke (10.30). Box Hill Racers placed third, 29 seconds behind. Surrey Beagles finished fifth: their team included future Strider John McGilvray, who ran 11 minutes 08.

The Hastings Half-Marathon took place on 15 March. Twelve Striders finished. Simon Morris had an excellent run to finish tenth in 73 minutes 10, only thirteen seconds outside the club record he had set the previous year (which has subsequently been beaten by James Bennett). Dave Langley also ran well to place 76th in 79 minutes 34.

The final East Surrey League event of the season was the annual road race at Ewell on 7 April. The winner was Arthur Reilly of Box Hill Racers. Box Hill won the team event with Hercules-Wimbledon second and Croydon third. Croydon's team included future Strider Peter Yarlett, who placed 16th. Boxhill also won the league title for the second successive year. Croydon were second and Hercules-Wimbledon third.

The Surrey 10000 metres championship was held at Tooting on 26 April. The winner was Barry Attwell of Hercules-Wimbledon, who ran 31 minutes 01.7 seconds, outsprinting future Strider Alan Dolton who placed second in a lifetime best 31 minutes 01.9.

The seventh London Marathon was held on 10 May. The winner was Taniguchi of Japan, in 2 hours 9 minutes 50 seconds. The first British finisher was the 1982 champion Hugh Jones of Ranelagh Harriers, who ran very well to place third, just 21 seconds behind the winner. The first woman to finish was Norwegian Ingrid Kristiansen in 2 hours 22 minutes 48. In second place, 42-year-old Priscilla Welch set a British over-40 record of 2 hours 26 minutes 51, breaking the previous record set by Joyce Smith in 1982. Priscilla was born in England and was a member of Ranelagh Harriers, but lived in the United States. The first local runner was Dave Glassborow, who lived in Thornton Heath but ran for Herne Hill Harriers. Running his second marathon, he placed 45th and set a new Herne Hill club record of 2 hours 19 minutes 21 seconds. Dave was originally from Coventry, where he had been an English Schools' 1500 metre champion. The next local runner was Andy Evans (South London Harriers) who ran 2 hours 21 minutes 08, three minutes outside the SLH club record which he had set the previous year.

Striders had 17 finishers, led by Steve Harman who ran 3 hours 08 minutes 04. Tony Smith ran a personal best 3 hours 09 minutes 55, while founder-member Colin Golding improved his personal best to 3 hours 15 minutes 51 (and improved again the following year when he ran 3.05.52). The first female Strider was Michele Lawrence, who ran 4 hours 04 minutes 58. Other Striders included Allan Day (3.23.04), Len Picott (3.24.02), Alan Purchase (3.28.59), Ken Bridge (3.29.15) and Dave Hoben (3.34.36).

The Surrey Track & Field Championships were held at Tooting on 17 May. The 5000 metres saw an outstanding performance by 16-year-old Jonathan Dennis of Camberley, who was the youngest competitor but beat all his senior rivals to win the title in the very impressive time of 14 minutes 17.4 seconds, which was a UK under-17 record. Phil Ledger of Aldershot finished a close second in 14 minutes 17.7, with Tom Conlon of Herne Hill third (14.28.5). Sadly, Jonathan Dennis never fulfilled his full potential: in 1989 he placed third in the European under-20 championships, but he subsequently drifted out of the sport.

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SPRING 2007

March 2007 was particularly memorable for two of Striders' leading members, as club membership secretary Karen McDermott married Justin Macenhill. On 6 April Justin produced an excellent run to finish eleventh in the Maidenhead 10-mile road race in a personal best of exactly 56 minutes.

The East Surrey League's annual road race took place at Ewell on 10 April. Striders were led by Scott Antony who finished fourth of the 100 finishers, covering the 4.2 mile course in 23 minutes 28 seconds. Striders' next man home was Matt Morgan who placed 18th (25.04). Paul Finch was 28th (26.30) and Chris Morton completed the scoring team in 31st (26.52). Striders were fourth in the team event and finished fifth in the overall league table.

The 27th London Marathon took place on 22 April, in unusually warm conditions. Striders did very well to have 33 finishers. Our best performance came from Scott Antony. Already the holder of several of the club's track records, he set a new club marathon record of 2 hours 41 minutes 17 seconds, finishing 149th in the race. (Scott's record was subsequently beaten by Bill Makuwa in 2010, and the record is now held by James Bennett.) Andy Allison also had an excellent run to finish in the top 1000, placing 992nd in 3 hours 03 minutes 16. Damian Macenhill was not far behind in 3 hours 04 minutes 52, while Paul Finch ran 3 hours 19 minutes 03 and veteran Dave Shaw ran 3 hours 24 minutes 07. Striders' first woman finisher was Kerry Backshell, who ran 3 hours 27 minutes 24.

On 30 April, Striders began the track season by placing fifth in their Southern Veterans League match at Kingsmeadow. Our only winner was Bob Ewen in the over-50 1500 metres (5.15.6). Two days later Striders did very well to finish first of 29 teams in the annual Beckenham Road Relay. Justin Macenhill gave the team an excellent start, winning the first leg and covering the 2.6 mile course in 13 minutes 34 seconds. Scott Antony extended the lead by running 14 minutes 05, and club secretary Chris Morton held on to first spot with 16 minutes 16.

The Ranelagh Half-Marathon, which incorporated the Surrey Championships, took place on 13 May. Justin Macenhill ran well to place eighth in 75 minutes 42 seconds, less than half a minute outside his personal best. His brother Damian placed 67th in 85 minutes 08.

On 21 May, Striders' men placed third of seven clubs in a Southern Veterans League match at Croydon Arena, while our women were fifth. David Batten won the over-50 800 metres (2.28.6) and placed second in the 200 metres (28.9).

The second Rosenheim League match of the season took place on 23 May at Croydon Arena. Justin Macenhill won the 3000 metres in a new club record of 9 minutes 28.7 seconds, outsprinting Surrey over-40 champion Vic Maughn of Herne Hill. Paul Finch won the high jump (1 metre 45), while Matt O'Hare was second in the hammer (19.45). Striders' men placed fourth of the six competing clubs, just one point behind local rivals Croydon Harriers. Our women went one better by placing third in their match. Their leading scorer was Yasmin Ramsay who placed second in the 100 metres and third in the javelin.

Four Striders gained medals at the Surrey Veterans Championships at Kingsmeadow on 26 May. Pride of place went to Kevin Burnett, who won the over-65 200 metres (37.1) and placed second in the 100 metres (17.5), 400 metres (91.7), shot (6.46), discus (20.86), hammer (18.56) and javelin (18.00). For the over-50s, Dave Hoben won gold in the 3000 metre walk (20.01.7). David Batten gained silver in the 400 metres (64.5) and bronze in the 800 metres (2.21.2), while Alan Dolton took bronze in the 1500 metres (5.15.7).



Scott Antony leading from Justin Macenhill in the London Marathon

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