

# Striders of Croydon

Late Summer Newsletter

August 2009



## Striders: The Next Generation

Daniel Shew Competing in the Crystal Palace Tri

## Chairman's Corner

A lot has happened since the last Newsletter....

The last Flora London Marathon has been run we will all have to get used to being Virgins for next year. Well done to everyone who ran this April and thank you to everyone who helped at Hungerford Bridge.

This was quickly followed by the Race For Life, my first time as Course Director taking over from JG. Thanks again to everyone who helped this year the main challenge for next year is to get the course laid out quicker using less stuff.

We completed the three rounds of the club handicaps. Well done to Phillippa Lalor who won the 2<sup>nd</sup> race and Claire Godley who succeeded in winning the first event and the final. These are our best attended events of the year and also one of the few we can get you to stay for a drink afterwards obviously due to the promise of food. We have thought of providing food after regular Wednesday runs, at a small price. Anyone interested?

Six out of Eight of the Owen trophy races have been run. At this stage Peter Shew is in the lead with Justin Macenhill and Richard Lee-Smith neck and neck behind him. Only Wimbledon and the Croydon 10K to go, although the final result isn't known until the end of November to include Marathon and Half Marathon times.

The track and field season is nearly over. Not one of our strengths, after all we are primarily a running club and some of the events are not in the most accessible places but remember they are pretty informal events and a good opportunity to try your hand at something different. Come along next year you never know you might have a talent for throwing the javelin you never knew you had.

Well done to Elliot Osher, Matt Morgan Stuart Hills David Hoben Colin Cotton Andy Elliot Kevin Burnett, Karen Knight, Andrea Jeffries, Kim Ford and Linda Daniel who have all claimed new club records in track and field this year. For more details see the web site.

On the road many of you have done very well. Congratulations to Steve Starvis, Richard Lee-Smith, Damian Macenhill, John Foster, Duncan Lancashire, Lee Wadsworth, Josephine Thompson, Suzy Yates and Steph Upton. Who have all found a place in the all time club records at various distances and to Kerry Backshell who claimed the W40 records for both the Marathon and Half Marathon

And finally, Richard Lee Smith, Susan Haynes, Martin Gourlay, Steve Starvis, Alistair Price, Stuart Hills, Carmen Somerset, Josephine Thompson, Mick Turner, Steph Upton, Suzy Yates, Steve Massey, Nick Eaves, Yasmin Anderson, Damian Macenhill, Matt Anderson, John Foster, Tina Macenhill, Ian Yates, Steve Harrison, Duncan Lancashire, JP Lamarque, Alice Ewen, Karen Connor, Sarah Hansbury, Victoria Legge, Andy Elliot, Andy Thatcher, Kim Ford, Susannah Oliver Terry McDonald, Matt Morgan, Paul Weir, Brian Hicken, Steve Smith and Isabella Kita Have achieved at least one personal best somewhere, sometime this year.

The monthly one mile time trial continues to get a regular attendance, well done to Carmen Somerset and William Ward who won the awards for most improved for the first half of the



year. William also leads for the second half though that is only after one event. Come along for 7:45 on the first Friday of the month and have a go.

Personally the most surprising event of the year so far has been the launch of the 5K Parkrun at Roundshaw Downs which I had never even heard of at the beginning of this year, but that's the subject of a separate item.

Well done everyone and see if you can do even better in the rest of this year.

**Robin**

## Parkrun

For those of you who have managed to miss the publicity about this. Parkrun is a whole series of events around the country, all 5K all free all starting at 9am every Saturday. Once you have registered with Parkrun you just turn up and run. The results service is brilliant, they are usually published by early Saturday afternoon. In the London area there are 6 events in easy reach. Banstead Woods, Wimbledon Common, Richmond Park, Bushy Park, Bedfont Lakes and of course Roundshaw Downs. All the info is at [www.parkrun.com](http://www.parkrun.com) come along and have a go.



### Roundshaw Downs

*The launch of Parkrun at Roundshaw Downs two weeks ago came about almost by chance. I have just been looking back at the emails that led up to it and here is a brief diary of events.*

**December 12<sup>th</sup> 2008** - Bill Rixon of L&G Kingswood, across the fields from Banstead Woods, emails Paul Sinton-Hewit the founder of Parkrun to suggest they reschedule the Saturday morning Banstead 5K Time Trial from 9:00am to 10:00 am as he lives in Croydon and can't get out of bed in time! Paul's reply is a polite no with a copy to Chris Phelan, Director of the Banstead event. Chris suggests the solution would be an event at Lloyd Park run by Striders.

**December 17<sup>th</sup>** - Bill forwards mails to Simon Ambrosi who forwards to Chris Morton. He replies, copy to me, nice idea but would require huge commitment from Striders and our experience with Croydon Council was that we would only get permission at a price. Quite true, however as I am writing my piece for the Xmas newsletter I mention it and get a couple of positive responses from Alan Dolton and Yasmin Anderson so think I will pursue it and see what happens.

**December 23<sup>rd</sup>** - I mail Chris Phelan for more info, he replies he would get back to me after Christmas.

Silence

**February 22<sup>nd</sup>** Chris finally replies with more info which suggests to me it might be easier than we think to get it off the ground.

**February 28<sup>th</sup>** I have never run Banstead as for the last forty years I have been committed to taking Mrs Jamieson shopping on a Saturday morning, however with perfect timing she is asked to work on a Saturday ( a very rare event) so I register with Parkrun and go along to Banstead. The very first person I meet in the car park turns out to be Chris Phelan!

I Did the run (pretty average 22:51) and meet up with Chris Phelan and Chris Wright (at the time the only paid member of Parkrun). They are under pressure to reduce numbers as the woods are an SSI and I conclude it is definitely worth giving it a go provided I can find an accurate 5k course and get permission from Croydon Council.

I spend Saturday afternoon with Google Earth. Conveniently one lap round the top of Lloyd Park avoiding football pitches and Frisbee Golf is 2.5K at the time a bit boggy but not impossible

**March 4<sup>th</sup>** - I email Victoria Pitt our contact at the time at the Council to see if there was any chance we would get permission.

**March 6<sup>th</sup>** She replies fine go ahead!!!!

**During March** Lloyd Park gets progressively more and more boggy; I ask the council if they have any plans to improve the drainage? No; Could we use the lower field ( our one mile circuit) No it's a conservation area; I ask Parkrun if they were interested in a seasonal event. No. it has to be year round; I look at South Norwood Park.. It is just as wet and difficult to fit the distance in.



**Mid March** I give up.

**Marc h 23<sup>rd</sup>** - I attend a Croydon Athletics Network meeting organised by England Athletics with SLH, Croydon Harriers and other sport representatives at Taberner House. Nothing to do with Parkrun but under AOB I mention I had been investigating a possible event but was giving up on Lloyd Park. Mike Fleet of Croydon Harriers suggests Roundshaw Downs as a possibility they used to run XCs there. As a relative newcomer (1996) to Croydon I have never heard of the place!

**During April** the focus is on Race For Life and holidays but sometime during the month I find Roundshaw i.e. Croydon Airport on Google Earth and see that you might be able to fit a 2.5K route into it I drive up to have a look and struggle to find a way on to it! Since it was nothing like as practical as a purely Striders event I put the whole thing on hold.

**Mid April** Anita Afonso joins the Parkrun team – she mailed me for an update on progress with Lloyd Park as Banstead were having more problems with Nature Conservancy.

**April 28<sup>th</sup>** - We agree Lloyd Park is a no go and I suggest they might like to look at Roundshaw.and offer to do a recce for them.

**May 7<sup>th</sup>** - I finally go for a walk round Roundshaw following a route I worked out on gmap which almost exactly followed the perimeter.



Lovely open grass land with reasonably wide paths but some complicated paths round trees in the far corner and a boggy section used as a bike dirt track so badly rutted people had laid planks across it. On the ground I can see no obvious alternative. Back home I have another look at Google Earth and see there was another path through the woods. I re drew the route which cuts out the bogs and the complicated bit and it still made a 2.5K route.

**May 11<sup>th</sup>** – go for a jog round my revised route – not bad at all – and I realise loads of parking space on airport way.

**May 14<sup>th</sup>** – Afternoon I meet up with Anita and Chris Wright and walk round with them. Glorious weather amazing views over Croydon and London and they think it is excellent. Thursday evening I meet up with Chris Phelan who is cycling home from Reigate and ran round with him. He thinks its excellent. We call in at Dragons Gym on the off chance it could be race HQ. The Manager welcomes us with open arms and offered use of there facilities for post event run drinks etc.

**May 16<sup>th</sup>** - Roundshaw Downs is half Croydon half Sutton. Croydon give me OK for their half and provided contact names in Sutton. Sutton a bit concerned as it is a nature reserve.

**May 18<sup>th</sup>** – Speak to Bill Wyatt of Sutton and got provisional approval but he wanted a meeting on Site.

**June 4<sup>th</sup>** – Meet with Bill Wyatt, and all the Park Run team for another walk round the route. Another glorious day. I have yet to see Roundshaw in the rain. Everyone agrees it should go ahead. Launch date proposed for 18<sup>th</sup> July.

Other than passing on Croydon's crazy permissions documents and providing some input to the New Roundshaw website things then went quiet for me.

By Early July we have a dozen volunteers from Striders and about the same from the Banstead team

**July 13<sup>th</sup>** A group of us meet Paul S-H to do a pilot run and learn about the technology. I finally meet Bill Rixon who started it all.

**July 14<sup>th</sup>** I measure the route with a wheel. The route I had plotted on Gmap is only 2 metres short.



**July 18<sup>th</sup>** – The inaugural event in glorious sunshine.

**July 25<sup>th</sup>** - Good weather again 49 ran - Alice Ewen was the fastest lady with a time of 22.32

**August 1<sup>st</sup>** Good weather yet again – 53 ran

**August 8<sup>th</sup>** Good weather for the 4<sup>th</sup> week in a row! 70 ran!. Richard Lee-Smith and Tony Sheppard are 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> with 18.34 & 18.56 respectively. Garra n Some rset was 2<sup>nd</sup> lady beaten only by Anita Afonso (who as a Parkrun employee so shouldn't count **J**).

So far 15 registered Striders have run plus a few more I think who are still on the Parkrun database as independent.

Well done to everyone who has run so far.

Grateful thanks to all Striders who have helped so far. Especially Mick Turner who has taken on the role of one of the event Directors

**Robin**

### A Note from the Editor

I must apologise for the late arrival of this edition of your Newsletter. Family commitments have meant I've been spending more time on the M1 than I would like. Apologies to anyone whose pieces may now be a little out of date, in future I promise to do what my school reports always told me: must try harder.

### Ask Gordon...

A new feature for the Newsletter, introduced by John Ralph:

Dear Gordon

Or as we are members of the same club could I call you Gordy? But that is neither here nor there. I am seeking your advice on a personal problem and as a former runner.

You see I like ladies, being with them, working with them and watching them close up and from afar! I especially like seeing them in their running clothes and glowing. The problem is that I am not satisfied with the current number that I can be with especially my closer lady friends in the winter months when the weather turns cooler and it becomes hard, underfoot.

What I would appreciate your guidance on how I can attract (WLTM) and motivate the ladies (any age group...Seniors, Vets etc.....Vets now there is a word to conjure with) to be around me and satisfy my need for success. I don't ask for much, it is usually to meet me once a month in October, November, December and February in open parkland for about 2 hours – that I find is time enough for all the ladies to perform. I am looking to increase the size of my member-ship for this time. I am willing to support them as I appear from the bushes to help spur them on, motivate them, be their inspiration to better performance whilst with me by whatever methods they would like. I need to feed my desire to be on top again, I don't like being a 2<sup>nd</sup> division viewer....I need then to be able to last longer at a faster pace. Do you think you can provide advice and guidance on how I can publicise my need? Oh! the dates of the meetings are; 10<sup>th</sup> October, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 12<sup>th</sup> December and 6<sup>th</sup> February where I would expect them to race against the other ladies around local parkland on a marked out course for a maximum of about 4k!

I await your expert reply.

John

Ladies cross country team 'manager'

Dear John,

I am afraid that my expertise lies in other areas of running – 500 yard sprint anyone? – and thankfully, I have never had any problems attracting the ladies, glowing or otherwise. I therefore refer you to my Housekeeper, Miss Haynes, who has this snippet that you may wish to share with the ladies of the club.

Yours

Gordon, Club Mascot

## The Ghost of XC Past by The Housekeeper

I should say at the outset that I went to school in north Derbyshire. This means that my experience of Cross Country racing to date involves being chased up the ridiculously steep Dark Peak and Pennines by irate and frankly sadistic PE teachers.

This particular form of child brutality took place in the middle of a northern winter, in front of my less than sympathetic classmates and while dressed in ill-fitting school regulation nylon kit, complete with dodgy Dunlop pumps.

And people wonder why my view of this sport is clouded.

It was in a state of some confusion then, that I left the gym, having just promised Kerry Backshell to “give XC a go this season”. What was I thinking? Had Kerry’s badgering over several months worn me down? Was I finally losing what was left of my meagre ration of sense? Or was it that I was getting on a bit and my memory of those dark days of terror fading? Or was it merely the promise of shopping? New sport = new kit (and not made of nylon either).

Whatever the reason, I found myself on the start line at Cranford, home of British Airways AC in a shiny new pair of waffles, on a surprisingly warm November Saturday. Well, it beats Christmas shopping, I suppose.

Standing among my fellow club runners, of all shapes, sizes and ages my first thought was “I’m going to get mullered”, which is, of course, the technical term for being last. Then I thought, just treat this as a Sunday morning club run. Take it steady, you’ll be fine.

So I went off far too fast and nearly died in the first mile. Then I settled down to an I-can-just-about-breathe pace and was surprised to find that there were people around me and not only that, I was passing people (OK, not that many but still...). It was obvious that XC is not just for the skinny fast people from Mars, everyone can have a go and (sharp intake of breath) *enjoy it*.

There was mud, there were inclines but thankfully no Pennine foothills and best of all, no irate sadists. However there was the Zebedee like John Ralf, ladies team manager, popping

up all over the course to give us all terrific support and encouragement. I even ran through a stream for goodness sake. Twice.

Fair enough, there wasn't much in my performance to trouble the scorers but I was cheered home by the rest of the team (including a very worried Kerry, who was convinced I might kill her). Running can be a solitary sport, so it was good to feel part of a team for a change and know that your contribution (in my case a very slow contribution) was valued. Best of all, there was plenty of cake to go round at the end.

There's great team spirit and the ladies and John make everyone welcome, so why not come along next season (first race 10 October) and give it a go? You might surprise yourself.

## 20 Years Ago: Local Athletics in 1989

The Surrey Cross-Country League completed its 27th season in March 1989. Aldershot won Division One for the third successive year, and for the 17th time in 18 years, their sequence of victories only having been broken by Herne Hill's win in 1985/86. Boxhill Racers were second with Herne Hill third. Thames Hare & Hounds (4th), Ranelagh (5th) and Woking (6th) also retained their Division One status. South London Harriers and Guildford were relegated to Division Two. They were replaced by Hercules-Wimbledon and Belgrave, both regaining Division One status after being relegated the previous year. Metropolitan Police won Division Three, with Epsom second and Wimbledon Windmilers third. Striders finished sixth, two places lower than the previous year. Nigel Davidson retained the club cross-country trophy from John McGilvray and Steve Harman.

The Surrey Womens Cross-Country League completed its tenth season, with a record entry of 25 clubs all combined into one division. Thames Hare & Hounds won the league by just one point from Woking, with Ranelagh third and South London Harriers fifth. Striders completed their first season in the league and did very well to finish eighth, seven places ahead of local rivals Croydon Harriers who had won the league only four years earlier but were now in a steep decline. Striders' leading women were Debbie Picott, Caroline Cahill and Alison Stewart. Croydon Harriers still had one outstanding female runner in 18-year-old Karen Sutton, who ran for Britain's under-20 team in the World Cross-Country Championships in Norway.

The old cinder track at Croydon Arena was used for the final time with a pre-season meeting, organised by Croydon Harriers, on Sunday 5 March. During the summer a new synthetic surface was laid: the work was completed in September but the track was not reopened until December, after a dispute between Croydon Council and the contractors. Croydon Football Club suffered financially from the delay, and were also annoyed by the Council's surprising decision to move the pole vault to a new location in front of the main stand, thus needlessly increasing the distance between the stand and the pitch.

The ninth London Marathon took place on 23 April. The race was won by Douglas Wakiihuri of Kenya in 2 hours 09 minutes 09, while the first woman was Veronique Marot of Leeds (2.25.56). The leading local runner was Geoff Jerwood of Herne Hill, who placed 33rd in 2.17.04. For Striders, Nigel Davidson ran a lifetime best 2.51.50, while Dave Hoben ran a lifetime best 3.11.31 and Debbie Picott ran a lifetime best 3.24.26. It should be borne in mind

that there was no 'chip' timing at this time, so that it could take runners some time to reach the start line; for example, Dave Hoben's actual time was about two minutes faster than his official time.

On 15 July Striders' Dave Langley did very well to place 24th in the Southern 20-mile championship on a hilly course at Wimbledon, recording 2 hours 14 minutes 15 seconds.

Although Croydon Harriers' women were doing poorly at cross-country, they were still prospering on the track, winning Division Two of the UK Women's League to gain promotion to Division One for the first (and only) time in their history. They did this despite a shortage of middle-distance runners, so that Amanda Bridge had to compete in the 800, 1500 and 3000 metres in the same afternoon. Older Striders will remember Amanda's father Ken, who had been one of our leading veterans in the mid-1980s, and ran 84 minutes 03 in the 1987 Welwyn Half-Marathon.

The fourth Croydon 10K took place on 15 October, and attracted an unusually strong field, with seven runners under 32 minutes. Johan Engholm of Sweden won in a course record 30 minutes 06. The first local runner was Andy Evans of South London Harriers, who placed third in 30 minutes 37. The first Croydon Harrier was future Strider Alan Dolton, who placed seventh in 31 minutes 59. The first Strider was Simon Morris who placed 16th (and second over-40) in a club veterans' record of 33 minutes 09. The first woman was Caroline Letchford of South London Harriers, in 36 minutes 46. Viv Hill of



Redhill & Surrey Beagles was second in exactly 38 minutes. Viv now competes for SLH under her married name of Mitchell. Debbie Picott placed third in a Striders' women's record of 38 minutes 29.

## 15 Years Ago: Local Athletics in 1994

The Surrey Cross-Country League completed its 32nd season with matches on 12 February. Boxhill Racers won Division One for the fifth successive year, with Herne Hill second. South London Harriers placed seventh, avoiding relegation by one place. Belgrave won Division Two with Croydon Harriers second. In 1991/92 and 1992/93 there had been eleven clubs in Division Two, but for 1993/94 it had been reduced back to nine clubs (four clubs having been relegated in 1992/93). Striders finished bottom of the table, and were relegated back to Division Three.

The Surrey Womens Cross-Country League completed its 15th season with a match at Reigate on 19 February. Belgrave won Division One with Herne Hill second, Thames Hare & Hounds third and South London Harriers fourth. Croydon Harriers finished bottom of the table. Tadworth won Division Two with British Airways second.

The 14th London Marathon took place on 17 April. The winner was Dionicio Ceron of Mexico in 2 hours 08 minutes 53 seconds. The leading local runner was Geoff Jerwood of Herne Hill, who placed 56th in 2 hours 23 minutes 40 seconds. Katrin Dorre of Germany won the women's race for the second successive year, recording 2 hours 32 minutes 33 seconds.

The Surrey Championships took place at Croydon on 14 and 15 May. Croydon's Donna Fraser won the 400 metres in 55.4 seconds, with club colleague Michelle Pierre third in 56.4



1 Donna Fraser

seconds. (Michelle recently made her Striders debut at one of our club handicaps.) The AAA Under-20 Championships were held at Bedford on 3 July. Croydon's Jeina Mitchell won the 800 metres in a personal best 2 minutes 05.85. The English Schools Championships were held at Telford on 9 July. Croydon's future Olympian Natasha Danvers won the under-17 300 metre hurdles for the second successive year, recording 43.15 seconds.

The Croydon Running Sisters held a women's only 10 kilometre race in Lloyd Park on 10 July. The winner was Viv Mitchell of Redhill in 39 minutes 22, while Juliet Cleghorn (Croydon Harriers) was second in 41 minutes 40. Juliet has subsequently changed clubs and now runs for Stragglers.

The British Athletic League completed its 26th season with matches on 6 August. Thames Valley Harriers won Division One with Belgrave second. Croydon Harriers finished bottom of Division Five and were duly relegated back to the Southern League after nine years. Their women had a better season, finishing third in Division Three of the UK Womens League. In the Southern League, Herne Hill finished third in Division One while South London Harriers were ninth in Division Three and Holland Sports were 21st in Division Six.

The Great North Run took place on 15 September. For Striders, Colin Cotton ran very well to record a lifetime best of 82 minutes 12 seconds. The ninth annual Croydon 10K took place on 16 October. Gary Bishop of Boxhill Racers gained a clear win in 31 minutes 43. Eric Thomas (Metropolitan Police) placed second in 33 minutes 49, while Striders' Juan Galvan was third (33.51). This equalled Striders' best ever placing in the Croydon 10K, achieved by Juan's elder brother Henry in 1988. The first woman to finish was Viv Mitchell of Redhill, who ran 38 minutes 16, finishing 35th overall. Incidentally this was the final time that the Croydon 10K was held on its original course, as introduced in 1986. The route had involved two crossings of Park Hill Road (at the junctions with Fairfield Road and Coombe Road). Croydon Council subsequently decided that increasing traffic meant that this had become too dangerous. At the Council's insistence, the race scheduled for October 1995 was cancelled at short notice. The race was subsequently revived on its current course in April 1996.

The Surrey Cross-Country Championships were held at Happy Valley in Old Coulsdon on 10 December. The men's race was won by Tony Bignell of Boxhill Racers. The first Strider was Nigel Davidson who placed 64th, with Gary Wales not far behind in 74th. Boxhill Racers won the team event for the seventh successive year, with Herne Hill second

and South London Harriers third. The women's race was won by Zara Hyde of Woking, for the fourth successive year. Herne Hill won the team event.

## 10 Years Ago: Local Athletics in 1999

Striders' veterans did very well in the third Southern Veterans League match of the season, at Kingsmeadow on 7 June. We finished third, behind Epsom and Kingston but six points ahead of local rivals Croydon Harriers. Our oldest competitor, Cecil Chisholm, set a club over-65 long jump record of 2 metres 71. Our women finished fifth.

The final match of the season was at Sutton on 5 July. Striders' men started the match equal fourth in the table, level on points with Dorking. We finished ahead of Dorking in the match to ensure fourth place in the final league table. Our women also finished fourth, with second-claim member Maggie Statham setting a club women's 5000 metre record of 19 minutes 52.8 seconds. In the same race Paula Bongers set a club over-45 record of 20 minutes 32.1 seconds. In the final league table our women finished fifth.

Striders' annual club handicap took place on 9 June, on the original course (which was significantly flatter than the one we now use, but was replaced by the current course in 2002 to avoid having to cross the tramlines in Oaks Road and Addiscombe Road). 67-year-old Cecil Chisholm took advantage of a generous handicap to be the first runner home in 48 minutes 16. The fastest actual time was achieved by Tony Sheppard, who ran 27 minutes 41.

On 19 June Croydon's middle-distance runner Jon McCallum did well to win the South of England 1500 metre championship at Watford in 3 minutes 45.34 seconds. Jon had placed second in this event in both 1997 and 1998. On 25 July he placed third in the AAA 1500



metre championship at Birmingham, running 3 minutes 41.92. Club colleague Donna Fraser was fourth in the women's 400 metres (53.22). Her former club colleague Michelle Pierre, running for Shaftesbury-Barnet, was sixth in the same race (53.92).

Two Croydon athletes competed in the European Under-23 Championships at Gothenburg in July. Natasha Danvers produced an excellent run to win the 400 metre hurdles in 56.00 seconds, while Yacin

Yusuf placed eighth in the 1500 metres in 3 minutes 46.87. Croydon's Donna Fraser competed in the 400 metres at the World Championships at Seville in August. However, despite running a creditable 52.01 seconds, she failed to qualify for the semi-finals.

Jon McCallum and Yacin Yusuf helped Croydon Harriers to finish second in Division One of the Southern League, their best placing since being relegated from the British League five years later. However they failed to gain promotion, being beaten by Bedford and Rugby in the British League Qualifying Match at Watford on 11 September.

Of our other local clubs, Hercules Wimbledon placed 24th in Southern League Division Two and were duly relegated, while South London Harriers were 18th in Division Five. Holland

Sports did well to place second in Division Seven. Their team included several Striders, with Eric Parker proving particularly versatile as he tackled such unpopular events as hurdles, steeplechase and pole vault. On 1 June at Southampton he set a club 400 metre hurdles record of 66.3 seconds. On 10 July at Guildford he set a club 110 metre hurdles record of 22.6 seconds, while in the same match Tony Sheppard won the 5000 metres in 16 minutes 30.7. In the final match, at Wycombe on 31 July, Eric completed an unusual double. He won the pole vault with a Striders club record of 2 metres 40, and also won the 5000 metres in 18 minutes 22.0.

The Rosenheim League Final was held at Tooting on 18 August. Belgrave won for the sixth successive year, with Herne Hill second and Kingston third. At the end of the season, Belgrave decided to withdraw from the league because of the lack of competition. After seven years' absence, they subsequently re-entered the league in 2007.

During the spring and summer of 1999, a few of Striders' faster runners who all worked in Croydon had been doing regular track sessions at 6pm on Tuesday evenings. Having such an early start time made it impossible for many Striders to join in, and from September it was agreed to delay the meeting time until 7pm. The change proved an immediate success, with 19 Striders attending the first session on 7 September.

## Five Years Ago: Local Athletics in 2004

On 6 June Striders' women produced a good team performance in the Dorking 10-mile road race, which incorporated the Surrey Championships and the Surrey Road League. They finished fifth in the team event, and climbed to equal second in the league. Emma Haillay placed 25th (78.49), Kerry Backshell 35th (80.24), Steph Upton 44th (82.08) and Patricia Carr 93rd (93.35). Striders' men placed tenth in the team event. Justin Macenhill placed 34th in 62 minutes 31, with Damian Macenhill 46th (64.14) and Gerry Crispie 69th (66.45). New member John Foster made a good debut to finish 75th (67.22).

On 27 June Striders had 22 of the 426 finishers at the Dysart 10 kilometre road race, which incorporated the Surrey Championships. Our men's team finished sixth, and our women were eighth. We were again led home by Justin Macenhill, who finished 27th in 36 minutes 38 seconds. Our next two finishers were both veterans, with Don Kayum placing 31st in 36 minutes 53, and Bob Ewen 32nd in 37 minutes 18. Our women were led home by Kerry Backshell, who ran 45 minutes 07 to finish 195th overall. Steph Upton was 230th in 47 minutes 06, with Elene Kayum 232nd in 47 minutes 12.

On 5 July Striders' track and field team produced their best performance of the season in their final Southern Veterans League match, held at Croydon Arena. We placed third of the eight competing clubs. Nigel Davidson ran well to win the steeplechase in a new club over-40 record of 11 minutes 34.4 seconds. Dave Batten also ran well to win the over-50 800 metres in 2 minutes 25.9 seconds, with club colleague Colin Cotton completing a double by winning the B race (2.34.3). Striders' women also had their best performance of the season, with club stalwart Michele Lawrence setting three new club records in the over-55 category. In the overall league table both our men and women finished sixth. Special mention should go to Dave Lovell and Kevin Burnett, who were the only Striders to compete in all four fixtures.

Striders were still not providing track competition for athletes aged under 35, so our talented teenager Daisy Collingridge joined Croydon Harriers as a second-claim member (just as some of our younger men had run for Holland Sports). Daisy set Striders' records of 2 minutes 25.2 for 800 metres and 5 minutes 34.3 for 1500 metres. Understandably, she resigned from Striders at the end of the season and became a first-claim member of the Harriers.

On 17 July Striders had 16 of the 245 finishers at the Elmore 7-mile road race. Our leading runner was again Justin Macenhill who placed eighth in 40 minutes 40 seconds. His brother Damian placed 32nd (44.34) while John Foster placed 37th (45.27). Striders' women were again led by Kerry Backshell, who finished 103rd overall in 52 minutes 04. Steph Upton also ran well for 114th (53.08) with Clare McFadzean 117th (53.40) and Emma Hailay 151st (57.46). Sadly this was Emma's last race for Striders, as she subsequently moved to Dorset.

On 25 July Striders had 20 of the 580 finishers at the Elmbridge 10 kilometre road race. The men's team placed eighth while the women's team was tenth. Our leading runner was again Justin Macenhill, who continued his return to form by taking 19th place in 35 minutes 24 seconds. Veteran Don Kayum was 50th (38.06), with Damian Macenhill 53rd (38.17).

The Olympic Games took place in Athens in August. Croydon's Donna Fraser helped Britain to fourth place in the women's 4 x 400 metre relay, having placed seventh in her semi-final of the individual 400 metres in 51.84 seconds.

The Wimbledon five-kilometre road race, which was the final match of the Surrey Road League season, took place on 22 August. Striders' men placed seventh in the match, finishing the season in a very creditable sixth place of the 28 clubs in the league. Of the other local clubs, South London Harriers were eleventh while Croydon Harriers were sixteenth. Striders' women fielded a below-strength team because of holidays and placed tenth in the match, but finished the season in seventh place. Our leading runner was again Justin Macenhill, who placed 18th in 16 minutes 40 seconds. Don Kayum was 36th in 17 minutes 46, while Damian Macenhill placed 50th (18.25) and John Foster 53rd (18.27).

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# Readers Recipes

Fed up of boring old bananas as your post-race refuel? Try this alternative.

Recipe provided by Karen "The Cake" Connor. Results tested by a happy selection of Striders and supporters after the recent Elmbridge 10K

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## BANANA & CHOCOLATE CHIP MUFFINS

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10oz plain flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

½ teaspoon salt

3 ripe bananas or a 1lb in total when peeled and mashed

4oz white granulated sugar

1 egg, beaten

2-3 fl oz milk

3 fl oz vegetable oil

2-3 oz chocolate chips

- Prepare muffin tins, and preheat oven to 190-200 or gas mark 5-6
- Mix all dry ingredients, flour, baking powder, bicarb of soda, salt and chocolate chips in a large mixing bowl.
- In another bowl mash the bananas, then add the sugar, beaten egg, milk and oil, and mix well.
- Pour the wet ingredients into the dry, and stir until the batter is mixed and no dry flour is showing. Mixture should be lumpy.
- Spoon into tins, and bake for 25-30 minutes, until tops are lightly browned and spring back when pressed gently.

*Will make 10-12 standard size muffins.*

## Switchback 5

Don't forget to put the Switchback into your event diaries. Sunday 27th September at 10.30am. 5 miles around lovely Lloyd Park and Shirley Hills. Open to all but just £4 for club members - including a free T shirt. We always needs lots of marshals for this event too so if you don't fancy running please drop Mick Turner a line to volunteer [mickeyturn@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mickeyturn@yahoo.co.uk).

What next? A sister event to the Central Park Underwear Run that's just taken place in New York perhaps?

[http://www.nyctri.com/Central\\_Park\\_Underwear\\_Run.htm](http://www.nyctri.com/Central_Park_Underwear_Run.htm)

[http://photos2.meetupstatic.com/photos/event/b/8/5/5/highres\\_8927189.jpeg](http://photos2.meetupstatic.com/photos/event/b/8/5/5/highres_8927189.jpeg)

## Marathon News

The Spring Marathon Season is over and thoughts are now turning to the Autumn season, or we're waiting with bated breath to see if we make it into the cut to be one of Richard Branson's Virgins in London 2010. If you're thinking of taking on the 26.2, you might want to have a read of some Striders' experiences at the distance before you finally decide to cash in your sense chips.

### Paris Marathon, 5<sup>th</sup> April 2009

by Sue Stevens (AKA Mrs Steve Smith)

The Croydon Running Sisters decided to take a leaf out of the Striders book and start invading European races. FLM has proved to be too difficult to enter, despite it being our 'local' and the hot experience of the 2007 course prompted some of us to find an earlier marathon where the warm weather couldn't be blamed for the poor performances. So why are Running Sisters writing in the Striders newsletter? Out of the 5 of us running the Paris Marathon, 4 of us are members of Striders, and Lyn Simmons always insists on wearing her Striders vest anyway!

The best thing about entering the race is that it takes 2 minutes to sign up on-line in September, then months to regret the moment of madness. French regulations also require a signed Doctor's certificate with very specific wording to allow an entrant to take part, and can be a cause of stress and expense depending on your GP (Forum quotes - up to £110). Two trains from East Croydon is all it takes to arrive in Paris, and great research from our resident detail woman, Jo Penny, resulted in a hotel four minutes slow walk to the start. Another source of pre-race stress was the great Porridge Paranoia – but the great hotel even resolved that for us. Being slower runners meant that the hotel was even closer to our start at the top of the Champs Elysee, which contained 31,000 runners before the gun went off.



2The Ladies a Paris

The course itself is fairly flat with the only slopes being the exits from a few tunnels. The route is fabulous, the start in the early morning, down the Avenue to Place de la Concorde, the Louvre and on to Place de la Bastille. Lyn and I were giving a guided running tour to Tracey and other English speakers running near us. Then we continued to head east as far as the Bois de Vincennes, past the Chateau and the Horse Racecourse, then back into the city again - this time running directly

next to the Seine, past Trocadero and into the Bois de Boulogne, and finally

back up Avenue Foch and the finish. The crowds were sparser than London and less noisy, but still very encouraging, with some great bands on route. Water stations were bizarre and impossible to run through, being accompanied by orange quarters, halves of bananas, sultanas and sugar lumps!

And how did we do? Jo and Tara started together, lost each other a couple of times then managed to finish together in 4 hours 27 mins. Tracey, Lyn and myself started together, then gradually split off until I caught up with them in the final kilometre to finish in 5 hours 16 mins (a PB for me too). And the weather? Despite winter training in sub zero temperatures, on the day the sun came out to a balmy 16 degrees giving us all a rosy glow!

## London Marathon – 26<sup>th</sup> April

### Victoria's Marathon – Victoria Legge

Marathon day dawns early I got up at about 4:30am and had a shower, and got myself ready as per the Referee's instructions. Vaseline was put everywhere I could think of and a few places where I did not think of. I had my clothes laid out the night before. I was feeling surprisingly calm and relaxed, I think I had my wobble earlier on in the week, but once I went to pick up my number with my mum and walked under the balloons listening to the marathon music and had had a wander round, it dawned on me that I was going to do the marathon. My mum and I even meet Ewan Thomas at the Expo and he was lovely.

Then I got the bus to East Croydon Station and went and got the train to Greenwich. As I was waiting at London Bridge I saw Tony Chambers on the platform and was able to travel to Greenwich with him. Then we walk up the hill by the Royal Observatory. Then it was time to get our pictures taken and I went to the loo. Tony then said goodbye because he was going to get some pictures of Celebrities. I was then chatting to a man, who turned out to be that guy who took two weeks to walk the marathon. Then I went into the pen. As I was going in the security guard turned around and said he loved his job because all the girls were flashing their tops at him. I'd never done a marathon before so when I got into the pen it was funny, I think I was pinching myself to make sure I was there. I went to loo and

grabbed some tea, then Karen Connor came from nowhere and we queued up for the loos again, then we gave up our kit bags and went on to the starting pens. Susan Hayes was there outside the pens and wished us both good luck, we then chatted to some other women and both wished each other good luck. They told us to wave as the BBC were going over and then we were off.

Before I even left the starting pen I needed to go to the loo. I got to a mile marker and queued for the loo, I did not even realise I got to a mile, the first couple of miles were good and were not too hot. I think the streets around Greenwich were tree lined. Before I knew it I was at 6 miles and by the Cutty Sark. The next bit I remember is getting to mile 10 I do not recall getting to Mile 10 I remember hitting Mile 11 because someone was calling my name, it was my Aunt and her family so I wave like mad to them and continued. I got to Tower Bridge and that was fantastic because just a bit beyond that was the  $\frac{1}{2}$  way point where I would see my family. Coming along the High Way I could see others in the opposite directions but by the half way point I was on time. Then I saw my parents, waving and cheering me on my dad was trying to get a photo of me. My mum told me later that she recognised me by my laces. The next person I saw was Michelle just before I went into the Docklands. I can see why people do not like the docklands area it is very warm around there, but people were cheering and clapping I managed to get passed by a dalek and I pass Katie Price and Peter, which I was glad of because I do not think I would have lived it down if I had not. Then it was back on the High Way where they had run out of water at mile 20. I saw my parents at mile 21 and ran past them. They were surprised that I was still looking so fresh. Mile 22 they had water. At about mile 24, I saw the Referee, and at mile 25 I was waving like hell to you guys on the bridge. I know people waved back. Then it was on to the finish line. I managed to miss Mile 26 how I do not know. As I turn in to the mall, they were playing the Eye of the Tiger and I sprint for the line and I cross the line in 6 hours and 4 mins. I think I must have wiped away a tear when I finished because my finisher photo shows me wiping away the tears, I think I was in a state of shock as I walk back I had my photo taken and hug someone, then went and pick up my kit bag and made my way to the Mall. I found my parents and gave them a big cuddle and as we were walking back to Charing Cross station we met Suzy, Ian and Kerry so it was hugs all round. My mum had done a packed lunch consisting of a tuna sandwich, packet of Crisps and orange juice. Never has a tuna sandwich tasted so good. I went to my parent's house and had shower and some dinner and they gave me a lift to pub.

The next day I was bit sore but not as bad as I thought I would have been.

In fact now I still cannot believe I did it.

I would like to thank all of you guys for all your help and advice, on doing the marathon, your comments have been very helpful. I know at times I may not have looked as if I was listening but I was and took everything in. There are some people that do need special thanks. Chris Morton with his advice and techniques on running and the speed sessions were brilliant. Although I still cannot do burpees. In early days how he managed to say "well done Victoria good arm control" when I was struggling for breath remains a mystery. Robin for organizing the training runs and for providing bike support. If not he always made sure I had a map or alternative route. I learned of some good runs just outside my front door thanks to Robin. I would like to thank Natalie and Big Chris who in the early training runs came with us to keep Robin company. Suzy, Ian and Kerry for their support and for saying

well done Victoria when they passed me on the training runs. I would also like to thank John Gannon for finally curing me of my talking, sorry you cannot have everything.

Would I do another one? The answer is yes, I enjoyed every part of the marathon, the training, speed work, the mental work talking to myself, nutrition. I have applied to do London again, but if I do not get in I will apply for another Spring Marathon, maybe Edinburgh as its downhill.

## Marathon No2 – Andrew Thatcher

*You have to forget your last marathon before you try another. Your mind can't know what's coming.*  
Frank Shorter

I failed to follow Mr Shorter's advice. I had remembered last year's Marathon. It was cold, wet, miserable, I had been forced to borrow (*steal!* – Ed) a t-shirt from Lucozade on route as I had early onset hypothermia. Boringly and predictably I said never again. Everyone seems to say that. I knew actually I wanted to give it another go mainly because I hated it so much. I had so much wanted to enjoy the day. Last year I was encouraged round by friends and family almost the whole way, and actually thought I had let them down badly.

I applied for the 2009 but predictably got the No Chance magazine. I didn't think much more of it. I was lucky enough to go to Australia and New Zealand last Autumn. I had done some running there, two five mile runs which involved running up the Rocky steps at the Opera House, and one in Broken Hill where I failed to follow Ray Mears advice, got a bit dehydrated and started to get lost. Had I known I could have got £50000 for getting lost...but that is another story. One morning I got a text. I kept that text, and would have told you what it said but I lost the phone, another story. It said something like you've got a place on the marathon through the club ballot and so did Karen Connor. We have a team! I was in Melbourne thinking well get another go!!

Over Christmas I got something far more virulent than pig sniffles, man flu. It was touch and go for a while, but thanks to Mr Beechams finest lemsip (2 or 3 pints a day) I pulled through. It did mean that the first probably 4 weeks of training were rubbish. The Greenwich run was for me particularly hideous, the man flu still affecting every sinew. I could easily have given it up at that point but Coach Haynes told me that I had to support Rocket and from that point training improved.

I have to say that I don't remember every step this year mainly as was laughing too much. I am still bemused that Jennifer Aniston is appearing in a film called the Baster. How on earth did she hear about our training? How did we finish running into Kingston doing Amarillo? What is the significance of Long John Silver? These are universal questions that I don't have an answer to.

The day of the marathon was incredible. Running past Peter Andre as he was coaxing Katie Price's breasts forward while he was running backwards was a rare treat. The crazy man on the bike being wrestled to the floor by the police, that was good too. The special chant in Woolwich of Andrew, Andrew...He's fat he's round, he's raised a £100...It was hot and a bit of a trudge in places, but I loved it, I loved the blisters, the medal (obviously), the crowds, and so much more. So I was only 4 minutes faster than last year, it was fun and I loved it.

I couldn't have done it without Coach Haynes or Rocket (*Karen Connor – Ed*) and I will always be grateful to both of them!

Mr Shorter also said that “hill work was speed work in disguise”. I won’t listen to him again as clearly he is an idiot.

## Edinburgh Marathon

### Auld Reekie 2009 – by Steve Tyler

Thank the Lord that that’s out of the way. Those who ran Dorking will know that it was a tad warm. It was the same at Edinburgh where the peak (of relative) fitness present five weeks previously had dissipated somewhat. I did do some altitude training on the Saturday afternoon, I visited the castle. Does that count?

The course was much the same as two years ago save for the fact that they are having McTramlink installed laid at the old starting point and the organisers appeared not to have made as much provision water wise as they might have done. Read the feedback on the Runners World site to get a flavour of it!!

From the start it was a case of getting round – the sun was warm at 0900 hrs and it got warmer throughout. The Firth of Forth was as smooth as a baby’s bum, there was no cooling sea breeze to speak of but it was that lack of water that did many, apparently runners dropping as regularly as Brian Rix’s trousers (youngsters should look that up on the internet!).

Got round, got the medal and the tee shirt from which the print appears to be coming off already.

The penultimate Tanners is next on the agenda – first Sunday in July and is a much harder event than a road marathon believe me – and then Amsterdam.

And if 26.2 isn’t enough for you...

## News from Striders’ Psychiatric Ward

Non-runners tend to think that runners are the lunatic fringe of society. If this is true, what does that make Ultra Runners? The lunatic fringe of the lunatic fringe? Or have they gone so mad, they have come full circle and are close to sanity once more? To help you decide, here’s a selection of stories from Striders who have taken on the ultra challenge and lived to tell the tale.

### Catching the Last Bus Home – by Susan Haynes

### Two Oceans, Cape Town, South Africa – 11<sup>th</sup> April 2009

I blame Sale Harriers. More specifically, I blame Sale Harrier, Tim Rainey. It is he who told me about the Two Oceans marathon and convinced me that running 35 miles was not only achievable but also a *very good idea*.

Even though as an international runner I didn't have to qualify, I knew that to have a chance of making the 7 hour cut off I had to be able to run a sub-5 marathon. It took me three attempts but eventually in London in 2008 I managed it. The time had come to put my money where my mouth was.

We arrived in Cape Town on Thursday morning with enough time for a quick trip up Table Mountain and to collect my number. On Friday, the long suffering Roy drove me over the bits of the course open to traffic (Chapman's Peak is closed to vehicles). I'd been studying the course profile for months. In fact it was stuck on my fridge door. So during the drive there weren't too many surprises. Until we hit Constantia Nek.

A "nek" is the saddle between two mountains, remember that; two *mountains*. As we hit the climb from Hout Bay silence filled the car. Anyone who has spent more than a few seconds in my company knows I can readily make use of most of the 500,000 words the English language has to offer. As we climb Constantia the only three I can muster are "Oh my God".

Putting this firmly to the back of my mind the following morning I head for the start, which is in a residential suburb south of the city centre. The PA system is belting out the loudest, most aggressive rock music I have ever heard. Try that in South Croydon at 4.30am on a Saturday.

I had decided to join a "Pace Bus" on race day, a pacing group led by one or two "drivers" who have experience over the course and the distance. I hadn't made my mind up whether to go with the sub-6:30 bus or play safe and go with the sub-7 or "Cut Off Bus". Common sense prevailed and I decided to just enjoy the day and take the last bus in. I learned from my fellow runners that the Bus Drivers were two pacing legends – Clem & Vlam - and they assured me that they wouldn't let me down.

With very little ceremony, the race starts and before I know it I'm over the line. Vlam is setting himself up as the joker of the day. Greeting any canines on the road with "Who let the dogs out?" to which my fellow runners replied: "Who? Who? Who?" K markers were greeted with a suitably disparaging "Another One Bites The Dust" and if he thought we were getting a bit too quick; "Slow down! Remember: Speed Kills!!"

The first stages of the run pass relatively easily and we are at the coast in Kalk Bay in early morning sunlight. I am enjoying every second, even managing a bit of a boogie with the crowds at water stations. Vlam decides to take this opportunity to get serious and advises that the day is promising to be a scorcher. He wasn't wrong. I adopt a strategy of one water pouch for me, one for my cap to keep my temperature down.

We hit half way and I am feeling fine. Up to now we have followed a strict run/walk schedule. The running was faster than I was used too over the distance – sub-9:30 miles at one point – but the walk breaks gave time to recover. The climb up Chapman's Peak is done at a brisk walk. As we crest the hill, I see a spectacular view of the coast, which clearly wipes the course profile from my memory, as I think "that wasn't so bad". Then I see the winding road in front of me and realise this was "Little Chapman's Peak" not the main event. There are three more climbs before the final descent. Then of course, there's the reason Chappies is closed to traffic – rock falls. I decide to be very British in the face of this danger and dance through the water station at 38K to Status Quo.

The perils of Chappies over, we are through the marathon mark and straight into the “Nek”. The climb to the top of Constantia starts gently enough but there’s more to this 5K climb. Think of how you feel after 26 miles. Then think of going up Upper Shirley Road, then Sanderstead Hill, the top bit of Gravel Hill and finally Water Tower Hill.

Vlam has done his best to keep the bus together but is having to run further from the back markers to Clem at the front. I sense some disquiet between the drivers and I check my watch. We are VERY close to the time limit. At the top of Constantia is the last of three cut off points – if you don’t reach it in time, the gate closes and your race is over. Clem has set the pace from the outset, so I keep him in my sights, with Vlam’s voice getting fainter behind me. Clem encourages us to “be firm and strong to get to the top of the mountain”. “Stop calling it a mountain!” I think through mentally gritted teeth.

There’s cheering in the distance. I look up. No sign of Clem. PANIC! I can hear people saying that the cut off is close. I decide to break into the fastest run my legs can manage to cover the last few hundred metres of the hill. As I reach the top, I don’t see the crowds, or the big TV screen clearly. The only thing in focus is the open gate in front of me. I run through it and almost run past Clem who is on a walk break. It is only then that he confesses that in 9 Oceans, that is the closest he has ever been to the cut off. The bus is on target but we can’t afford to lose any time.

My initial plan had been to stay with the bus until the top of Constantia and then try and pull away for the final 10K. After the near miss, I change my mind and decide to stay with Clem. His experience over the course was showing.

The race at this point runs through Kirstenbosch, a lovely wooded area at the foot of Table Mountain. The sunlight is dappled, the people are cheering, all is lovely. Except I am at 32 miles and all I want is for this to be over. Now.

There are only a few left in the bus and I consider letting Clem go and so what if I don’t make the cut off? After mentally kicking myself several times, I draw level with Clem and stay there. Until we are about a mile from home and Clem starts a final walk break. I know I have what it takes to run the last mile, so I keep going. And start to enjoy it again.

As I turn on to the sports field and the finish area, the crowds are deafening. With about 200 metres to go, Roy makes himself heard over the din. “I’ve only gone and done it!” I yell as my eyes start to get a bit misty. I cross the line, euphoria hits and I burst into tears.

6:52:56 and poor Roy gets embraced by a sweaty mass of emotional female who isn’t making any sense. No change there then.

If you can, do this race. Tim Rainey is right, it’s achievable and a very good idea indeed.

# Pushing the boundaries...the tale of a double marathon

## Kent 50 Mile Challenge - 11th July

By Steve Smith



Inspiring or just insane? Contributors to my Justgiving page clearly favour insane with inspiring a poor second after my 52.4 miles run. The journey began some months ago when I decided that turning 50 should be marked by something special. Naturally the 50 Mile Challenge became my prime running target for the year.

With 1,200 miles completed by the end of June and personal bests at 20 miles and 30 miles I felt in good shape. Solo training runs of over 25 miles became commonplace - June's mileage totalled 245 miles, including 98 miles over 7 days. Taper induced the usual frustrations and niggles that come to the fore. My hamstrings and calves were a problem right up until race day.

On race day I was up at 4am to register and sign the indemnity. The sun was still rising as the organiser gave his final words of advice before the 6am gun.

This is a lapped course mainly on rough farm tracks. Each lap is 6.55 miles, which means completing 8 laps to finish the Challenge. Competitors can drop out at any stage and have their time and distance recorded. Early on I followed runners to make sure I didn't take a detour. The sun was strengthening and I took on fluid regularly. At each change over point I grabbed an energy bar and gel and took off for the next lap.



The laps up to the marathon distance went quite smoothly, a bit of tightness here and there and a sore knee. I knew that soon I would be in uncharted territory. Time ebbed away as I listened to my MP3, scanned the scenery and chatted to other runners. During lap 5 there was a short downpour. But the sun came out and I was dry in no time. The wind grew steadily in strength and became very strong in the latter stages. Three small hills seemed to grow steeper and longer with each lap. The field was spreading out. I was lapped by the leaders but was in turn lapping those slower runners. There is a 15 hour cut off. The rough terrain was testing my legs to the limit.

Just a few yards left!

I had set myself several targets. The first was to complete the

Challenge, the other was to run it in under 10 hours. At the start of lap 7 I calculated that I had over 3 hours to run a half marathon. Normally no problem, but this was not normal. I entered the village for the penultimate time and a cheer went up as supporting Striders



unfurled the club banner. Uplifted, I knew that I had 2 hours to run the last lap. I could walk and still beat my target. But I wanted to push on and finish quickly. I

made my way around the last lap thanking the marshalls and encouraging runners that I passed. With a hundred yards to go I could see Chloe, my daughter who ran to finish line with me. I had completed the Challenge in 9 hours and 12 minutes. Later I learned that I finished in 19<sup>th</sup> place out of 118 starters. Thanks to all those who have supported me so far. You can view this and some other short You Tube films via a link to my Geoff Thomas Foundation page <http://www.justgiving.com/steveatkent50/>

## The Downlands 30 - July 26th

### By Ian Campbell

It was a quiet afternoon in the office and for once I was surfing the Runners World website. I had just heard how Steve Smith had conquered the 52 miler (well done Steve - a well deserved and brave effort) and I had ended up in the Ultra section of the Events menu. Somehow I ended up printing off an entry form for the Downlands 30 and wrote out a cheque and sent it off there and then. I now had 10 days before the race. My last long run of any note was the Edinburgh marathon (end May) but I had done a couple of 2 hour runs so thought that I had the endurance to last out a 30 miler. btw - this was my first ultra. I had no choice now but to do a few runs and then take it easy in the week preceding the race.

Then race Sunday arrived.... I was up early to do those things that only runners do before a race, you know what it is, and if you don't and you saw James Cracknell on BBC 'On Thin Ice' - he did it three times before the start of their epic trek to the South Pole - if it was good enough for him it would be good for me - so three times it was! I set off in the car and got to the start (Clayton Playing Fields) with about an hour to spare before the off, registered and then got my stuff together. It was a quite low key affair, a bit like the start to a cross country race, except there were people with Camelbak water pouches and rucksacks.

The start soon came, with a once round the field and then a brisk charge up to the Jack & Jill windmills. Somehow even though I had intended to go off slowly and take it easy, and in fact it felt exactly like that, I was in 3rd place. Off we trotted even further, up and down to Ditchling Beacon. Somehow the lead guy and myself ended up taking a wrong turn (not sure how the 2nd guy got out of our sight) and after several minutes we were tracking back our steps and across the hills to where the main field were. We were now back with the main pack and the ex-lead man charged off at an incredible pace to catch up and get his place back - I was just not prepared to do that so kept at the same pace. After all this was a training run for me and we weren't even half way. The worst part of this race is that as you are knocking off the hills and taking the downhills you then realise that being an out and back race you have got to go back up those downhills. Just before the halfway point the lead runner came towards me (it was the same guy who had taken the wrong turn with me) now with a lead of about 500 metres. Just shortly after, the halfway point came at Itford

Farm and my bottle of water, banana and gel (ready numbered and waiting in a box) were collected and stuffed down as quickly as possible. And then off we went back the same way passing many runners heading in our direction.

And yes then came the tough part ..... hills and fatigue. I was OK until about 19 miles and then it happened - the legs died - I then walked and stuttered up a hill, trotted on for a mile or so, walked up another hill, trotted on and knocked off some more miles. Eventually it was 5 miles to go, or so my GPS told me. What I had not realised was how much my little earlier detour had added. I came up within sight of the Jack & Jill windmills and knew that the end was within reach. I did not stop now, as most of the route was either undulating or downhill. Only my quads were telling me that on that final downhill section that was not what they had in mind, nevertheless I picked up the pace and eventually reached the playing field and of course you've guessed it - once around the field to the finish line. My final time 4hr 45. No final results issued as of writing. Distance covered 31.5miles.

Would I do it again? - in a strange way - yes. Once you know the route - it is straight forward. Well organised with a halfway checkpoint to leave drinks, food etc. Drinks stops at 8, 15 and 23 miles and only 7 quid to enter. Goody bag - teeshirt or a canvass bag. Here's to the next one.

Would I recommend it? - yes - but only if you like a nice up and down undulating course, a bit like the Beachy Head Marathon with a little bit extra to do and make sure you read and memorise the route. See you at the BHM if you are doing it.

**And for those of you who like shorter but just as adventurous races:**

## **Tales from the Track by Matt Morgan**

A few of you will know that I have been competing for Belgrave on the track this summer (stop booing those of you at the back). I've been doing the steeplechase, as they seem to be a bit weak on that front for some reason. The last fixture was at Derby, which is handy for me as one of my sisters lives in Nottingham, so I was able to make a weekend of it. Me and my wife, Nirma, stayed with my sister and her husband. I had planned on driving myself to Derby from their house as I wanted to get there 2 hours before the race. Even though I said they could come separately just in time for the race, they still insisted on taking me, which was very kind of them. They had planned on popping to his parents house in Derby whilst I was hanging around and warming up at the track.

Shortly after setting off from Nottingham, they pulled the car over as the boot was not shut properly. Just after we set off again, this set me off thinking..."Did I really pack my spikes?", since my bag was in the boot. Now I'm a pretty paranoid person when it comes to double checking things...you know, the type who will dash back home to make sure they really did turn off the cooker, even though it's never on! Because we'd stopped once already, and I know how paranoid I can be, I decided to keep quiet as I couldn't possibly have forgotten the

only thing I actually needed to bring (Belgrave normally have lots of spare kit). Of course when we arrived in Derby the first thing I did was check my bag, and surprise surprise I was right to be paranoid for a change. I had indeed forgotten my spikes. I could not believe how stupid I had managed to be (it's not a first, I've turned up at races without any shorts before!!!).

Those of you that are familiar with the steeplechase will appreciate that you don't really want to tackle the water jump with any footwear that will weigh you down whilst proving no grip on a slippery barrier. I was desperate not to race in trainers, so my sister, her husband and my wife very kindly offered to return to the house in Nottingham, get my spikes and come back. What they all must have thought of me I'm not too sure, but if they were annoyed they hid it very well! So whilst I hung around the track, they got back to Nottingham in double quick time and found my spikes straight away before turning round for the third leg of their many drives between the two cities that day. Sadly, sods law was at hand to ensure a road closure severely delayed their return to the track. As the race drew ever nearer, and after many phone calls, I resigned myself to having to compete in trainers.

It was a joint fixture with another division and I was told our division were up first in the steeplechase, starting at 1:30. It came to 1:15 and I thought I had been saved. They called up runners from the other fixture to race first, meaning we were not due to race until 1:45. It looked like I had got lucky. I quickly phoned my sister to pass on the good news about the 15 extra minutes they had. My elation did not last long though, they were still stuck in traffic and told me they didn't think they would make 1:45 either. It got to 1:40 and again I got ready to race in trainers. I signed in with the race starters and made one last phone call...to my amazement they had just arrived at the track!!! The only difficulty now was where had they gone to??? They couldn't see me and I was too flustered to explain exactly where to come to (telling someone who is not into athletics to come to the back straight is not a good idea!). After some frantic waving, we spotted each other and I finally got my spikes...just in time for the start of the race.

After my mini-crisis, I somehow managed to run a seasons best time. So, the moral of the story is, don't bother planning ahead and thinking what you need to bring to a race. If you get into a jam, someone else will sort it out and I guarantee you'll definitely run well.

## Dates for Your Diary

Sandilands to Brighton Bike Ride – Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> September  
(details from Robin)

Striders AGM – Wednesday 23 September, Sandilands  
Clubhouse, 8.30pm

Switchback 5 – Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September, 10:30am, Sandilands

Croydon 10K (last Owen Race of the Season) – 18 October

And don't forget to vote for your club Man and Woman of the year. Details from Susan Haynes & Chris Morton.

## Sarah & William Milne – an update

Found by Steph Upton in the Croydon Advertiser

40 Advertiser Friday, August 14, 2009



**GOOD SPORT:** Youngest competitor William Milne in the ball-throw event at the British Transplant Games. Photo by Sarah Milne

## Medal awarded to transplant patient at national games

TRANSPLANT success story William Milne shone at a national sports competition less than a year after his gruelling operation.

Five-year-old William, who lives in Addiscombe with mum Sarah and sisters Hope, 13, and Ellie, 10, had a "whale of a time" at the British Transplant Games, last week.

The young St Giles School pupil, who suffers from mild cerebral palsy, underwent a bowel transplant at Birmingham Children's Hospital in November 2008.

Less than 10 months after the operation, he was in Canterbury helping his team from the Midlands hospital secure their 14th annual championship in a row.

William, the youngest participant in this year's games, was personally awarded a medal for his performance on the obstacle course and came fourth in the ball-throw event.

Mum, Dr Milne, 38, who looked on proudly as her son

enjoyed his first sporting event, said: "William turned five on the first day of the games, which made it even more special."

"Seeing him having so much fun and enjoying taking part was really emotional, because if not for that transplant he wouldn't be alive."

"He also made friends with other children who had transplants, which was a great comfort to him."

"William took to one other boy, Aaron, in particular, whom he calls his 'transplant brother'."

"Now that he's had a taste of the games, he'll be back every year."

Dr Milne runs a photographic project Gifts Of Life, in partnership with the organ donation awareness charity Live Life Then Give Life.

To see her pictures visit [www.giftsoflife.co.uk](http://www.giftsoflife.co.uk) and to find out more about organ donations visit the website [www.lftgl.org.uk](http://www.lftgl.org.uk)

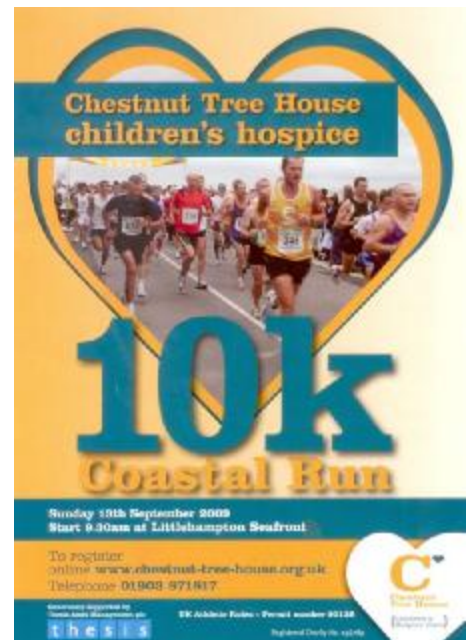
And Finally...

Spot the Strider



The Lesser-Spotted Racing Gannon (seen by Mick T at Elmbridge 10K)

Steve Massey and Alan Purchase (just) help to advertise the 10K Coastal Run



And is this really John Humphries providing security for a recent Blur gig? (spotted in the Metro by Pete Shew)

