

Striders of Croydon

DECEMBER 2016 MAGAZINE



**James Bennett in our Surrey League race at Wimbledon Common
(photo by Karim Akhtar)**

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat 17 Dec – South of Thames Cross-Country Championships – Beckenham
Sat 7 Jan – Surrey Cross-Country Championships – Lloyd Park
Sat 14 Jan – Surrey Womens Cross-Country Lge – Lloyd Park (Striders hosting)
Sat 14 Jan – Surrey Cross-Country League Div 3 – Cranford
Sat 28 Jan – Southern Cross-Country Championships – Parliament Hill
Sat 11 Feb – Surrey Cross-Country Lge Div 3 – Lloyd Park (Striders co-hosting)
Sat 11 Feb – Surrey Womens Cross-Country League Div 2 – Coulsdon
Sat 25 Feb – National Cross-Country Championships – Nottingham
Sun 9 Apr – Brighton Marathon
Sun 23 Apr – London Marathon (Striders marshalling)

MARATHON TRAINING RUNS 2016/17

Planned Run	Start	Finish	Route
Sun 18 Dec	Wandle 14	Clapham Junction	Sandilands
Mon 2 Jan	Keston Ponds 14	Sandilands	Sandilands
Sun 8 Jan	Greenwich 13	London Bridge	London Bridge
Sun 22 Jan	Riddlesdown 14	Sandilands	Sandilands
Sun 29 Jan	Nine Parks 15	Sandilands	Sandilands
Sun 5 Feb	Merstham 15	Merstham	Sandilands
Sun 12 Feb	Ladywell 17	Sandilands	Sandilands
Sun 19 Feb	Warlingham 16	Sandilands	Sandilands
Sun 26 Feb	Greenwich 17	London Bridge	Sandilands
Sun 5 Mar	High Elms 17	Sandilands	Sandilands
Sun 12 Mar	Regents Canal 18	Victoria	Victoria
Sun 19 Mar	Coulsdon 21	Coulsdon South	Sandilands
Sun 26 Mar	Botley Hill 19	Sandilands	Sandilands

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER DECEMBER 2016

Another collection of experiences from your fellow club members.

First a wonderful description from Natalie Osher of her trip to Sierra Leone to run a marathon: impressive both because of her description of the country but also for doing it when clearly not at her fittest. Puts me to shame that the furthest I have ever travelled to run a marathon is to Eastbourne. Phil Coales describes travelling all the way to Belgium to run La Redoubtable. I always thought Belgium was pretty flat but evidently not. However Alan Dolton gets the prize for long-distance travelling, going all the way to Perth, Australia, for the World Masters Cross-Country Championships. Sounds that one was pretty hot as well but perhaps not up to Sierra Leone standards. While there he also ran the Claisebrook Cove parkrun in Perth: almost the furthest a club member has travelled for a parkrun (Steve Smith also did one in Australia earlier this year).

Well done to all in the men's Cross-Country League; we are well ahead of the rest of the field. I guess the challenge for next year, once we are back in the 2nd division, is to get well up the field and avoid any risk of relegation again. Our women are also doing very well in the women's league.

Alan has also published competitive highlights from now, 25 years ago, and 10 years ago. Most of the Striders names from 25 years ago have now left us, a few are now life members, and Nigel Davidson still runs regularly with the club.

Back to the present... The marathon training season is now well under way; we had the run out to Crystal Palace this Sunday, will have the run back from Clapham Junction along the Wandle way next Sunday, then a break for Christmas with a normal Sunday run on Boxing Day Monday and the Keston Ponds run on New Year Bank Holiday Monday.

Don't forget the Addington 4 on New Year's Day and various parkruns on Christmas Day and New Year's Day: Lloyd parkrun, Roundshaw and Riddlesdown are all on, both days (Lloyd junior parkrun will NOT take place on 25th December or 1st January). On Christmas Day all three are at 9am; on New Years Day Lloyd parkrun and Riddlesdown are 9 am while Roundshaw is 10.10am, so a double would be possible - or triple including the Addington 4.

Your chairman is now a director of The Addiscombe Sports Field Trust Company (No 1) Ltd and The Addiscombe Sports Field Trust Company (No 2) Ltd. I wasn't present at the inaugural meeting so I'm not quite sure why two companies - no doubt I will find out at the first full meeting in March when all the paperwork has been processed. The primary aim for this is to make it easier to get grants as one of these companies owns the freehold of the clubhouse and land. The chairman's dream is to be able to raise the money to build a sports hall on the land although this has already fallen foul of the problem of agreeing exactly where as neither cricket or tennis want to give up any of their land. One suggestion is to build it on the car park and move the car park on to "that scrubland the other side of the fence"!!!!!! Which just shows you that reasonably local people and regular visitors to Sandilands never go into Lloyd Park.

Happy Christmas and a successful and speedy new year to you all.

Robin Jamieson

THE SIERRA LEONE MARATHON (by Natalie Osher)

The lead up to the marathon

About a year ago as the days were getting shorter, the weather colder and the winter blues starting to set in, I decided I needed a challenge and so signed up for my first ever marathon. Most 'normal' people pick London or Brighton, or maybe somewhere a little further afield like Paris, I however decided my first marathon experience would be in one of the hottest and poorest countries in the world.

Combining my love of exercise and travel, running a marathon in sub-Saharan Africa seemed like a great adventure.

It all started when one of my friends informed me she was signing up to run a charity marathon in Sierra Leone; her sister worked for Street Child, the charity behind the marathon and she wanted as many people to join her out there as possible.

Until that point most talk of Sierra Leone was that of the terrible Ebola crisis, the toll that the awful disease had taken on an already stricken country, and the high profile cases of British nurses contracting the virus.

November 2015 saw the country declared Ebola-free by the World Health Organization, so my journey to running the Sierra Leone marathon begun.

My training started in late January after I got back from a trip to India, although I do like to think my early morning barefoot 5k beach runs in Goa counted as warm weather training! I use the word 'training' quite loosely as for those of you in the club that have run with me will know I am by no stretch of the imagination a long distance runner. I like to sprint, and at a push would call myself a middle distance runner, basically I am at my happiest powering 400m around an athletics track and then stopping for a well-earned rest at the end.

I have always been in awe of the club members who regularly complete marathons and it had for a long time been a goal of mine to get 26.2 miles under my belt. Running a marathon for me therefore was less about obtaining a 'time', but more about getting around the distance and finishing so that I could tick it off my bucket list! I also needed to factor in the soaring heat and humidity that I would encounter running in Sierra Leone. My hospital stint, which saw me on an intravenous drip during my last trip to Sub-Saharan Africa, and getting heat stroke from running in Spain the previous year didn't bode well for my cause!

Working long hours, having a very active dog and trying to juggle a social life meant that marathon training couldn't rule my life, so I planned to fit long runs in when I could. I aimed to do some of the long Sunday training runs, and the rest of my training consisted of me going for runs with dog in tow around the Surrey countryside.

March saw me out of action with a chest infection for 3 weeks and unfortunately my first run back after this ended in disaster: I sustained a very nasty ligament injury to my ankle which ideally meant no running for at least 6 weeks. Not being one to sit back and allow my body to heal properly though I decided after a few weeks to start running again (I was at this point still determined to run the marathon); however due to my injury playing havoc with my gait, I acquired two further injuries: tendonitis and sesamoiditis in my opposite ankle and foot. Within the space of 3 weeks I had got through 2 pairs of crutches, had an MRI scan and had been radiographed twice.

I was pretty down in the dumps now, and my hopes of running the marathon seemed pretty slim.

However, fundraising was going really well and everyone's generosity and kind words made me even more determined to run.

The race itself had a 5k, 10k and half marathon option as well as the full marathon, and having consulted with the charity I was told I could decide as late as the morning of race day which distance I felt up to doing. With this in mind I knew I could hobble around one of the distances, so for the next few weeks worked on getting myself injury free. This meant absolutely no running, and lots of rehabilitation exercises and supplements.

Three weeks before race day I felt ready to attempt to run again and was ecstatic when I managed a whole hour, albeit very slowly without acquiring any more niggles. I managed a further two runs, the longest being 19 miles and with that I decided I could cope with the full marathon. I then wrapped myself in cotton wool to remain injury free before setting off for Sierra Leone.

Kit for running in Sierra Leone consisted of a Camelbak (which I had done most of my training runs wearing), a lot of bug spray, electrolyte tablets, running attire with UV protection and a very fashionable running hat - with a protective neck flap to protect me from the strong African sun.

Sierra Leone

Having flown overnight with a stop over at Casablanca, I arrived in Freetown, Sierra Leone, early morning to be greeted by overwhelming humidity. Shortly after arrival a tropical rainstorm cooled the air, which was a nice relief. The runners were met by Street Child employees and taken via mini-buses to Makeni where the charity centre is based. We checked into our accommodation and prepared for a few days of charity project visits and spending time with the locals before marathon day.

Learning about the Street Child projects and meeting the locals was an incredible experience. We learnt about Street Child's family business scheme, which helps struggling families set up their own market stalls and create their own income, allowing them to feed their families, and send their children to school. It was shocking to learn that the average life expectancy in Sierra Leone is just 50 years, which is the lowest in the world, and many families survive on less than a dollar a day.

Thanks to donations, Street Child have built schools and trained locals to be teachers and social workers, thus improving quality of life for so many. We visited several schools and rural communities and always received the warmest greetings. This would consist of children running to greet us with 'high fives' and shouts of 'Apporto', which literally translates to white person! Women bursting into song and dance and men forming bands with drums and bells.

We played football and spent time drawing with the younger children. A moment that really stood out for me was when we took some pencils and paper into a playground. The faces of these children lit up like we were giving them the best present in the world. This for me put it into perspective how very little these people have, and hits home how we in the developed world take so much for granted.

We covered many miles in the minibuses whilst out visiting rural communities and got to see a lot of the countryside, including crossing a river via a 'man-powered' ferry which was a

unique experience. The country is incredibly beautiful, lush green vegetation with rich red soils, and despite the striking poverty the Sierra Leoneans are upbeat, happy people.



The night before the marathon all the runners and Street Child team got together for dinner at the charity clubhouse and we had a rather scary pep talk about the race and racing conditions. Hating hills at the best of times, I sat cringing when the course was described as moderately undulating. I knew at this point to expect horrible hills, and lots of them!

A team of British medics had joined us out in Sierra Leone as volunteers to support the runners and deal with any medical issues. We were told that in the whole country of Sierra Leone there was not a single defibrillator or intensive care unit. The British medical team had bought a defibrillator from the UK with them and there was a plane organised by Street Child to be on standby to fly any seriously ill runners to the bordering countries for a better standard of treatment. We were all warned to be very aware of the heat, and were told not to push too hard and not to chase PBs as the risk of suffering from heat stroke was high.

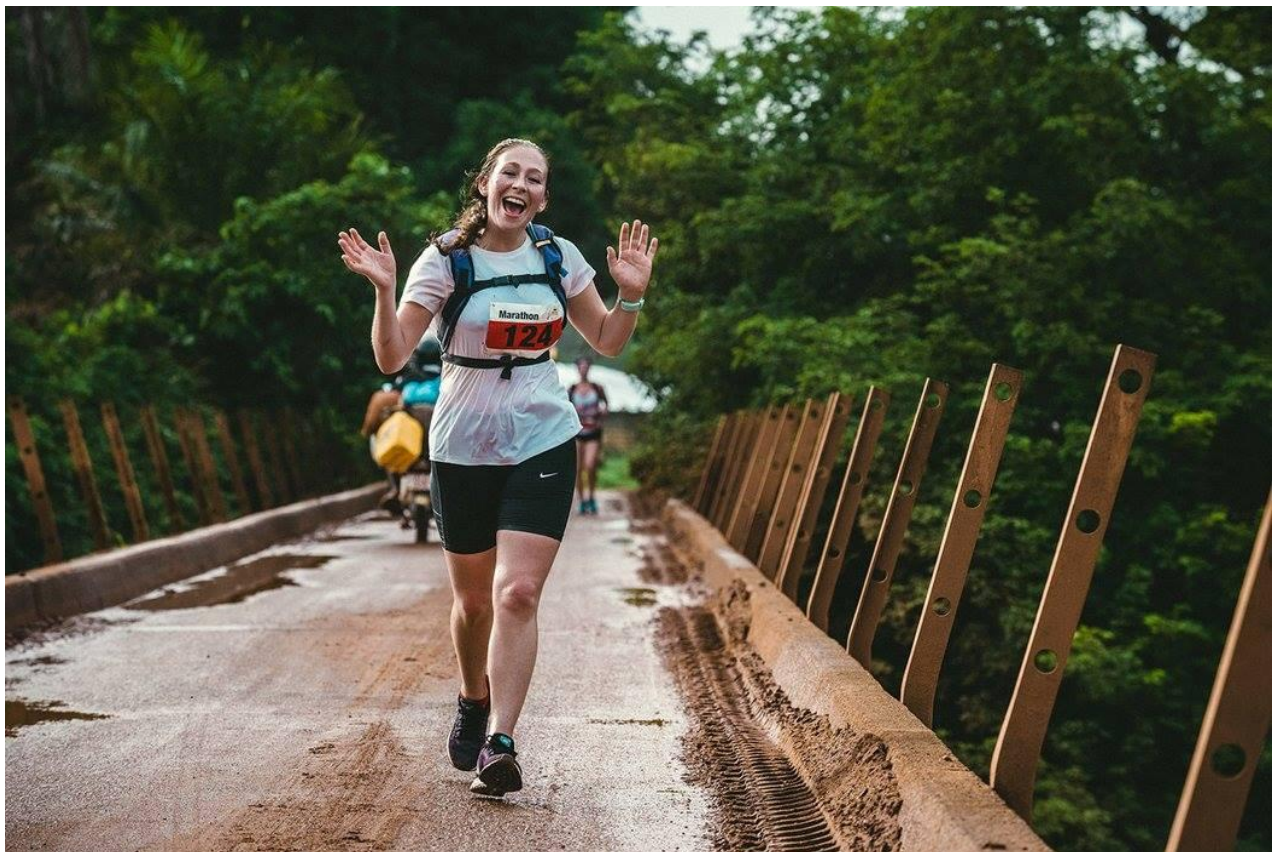
Race day

The race started before sunrise in an attempt to avoid running in the heat of the day, when temperatures were reaching highs of 39 °C and 80% humidity. This meant a 4am wake up.

Despite the ungodly hour everyone was buzzing with excitement whilst we had breakfast, loaded our Camelbaks with electrolytes and energy gels, and covered ourselves in SPF50 and insect repellent.

The start line was located at a football stadium and as we arrived there was a distinct party feel to the place. Floodlights illuminated the pitch, loud music was blaring and runners were busy preparing for the race. Teams of local runners were warming up ready to tackle the 5k and 10k races; a few did the longer distances, but the shorter distances proved the most popular for them. We later found out that there was fierce competition for winning these races as the prize money (albeit not much by UK standards) was a huge amount for a Sierra Leonean. I was saddened to see some extremely talented local runners wearing footwear that ranged from ill-fitting plimsolls to stiff leather loafers. Many international marathon runners donated their running shoes post-marathon to the locals for this very reason.

We set off running at the first glimmer of light and enjoyed the relative coolness at this hour. The course took us through local villages where children were already lining the streets ready to cheer us on, waving and getting 'high fived' as we ran past. Many children ran next to us holding our hands.



Instantly my thoughts diverted from the long run that loomed ahead, instead I was taking in all the sites of the villages we passed. Women busily going about their daily chores, carrying water on their heads, washing clothes, feeding children; chicken and goats roaming freely at the roadside looking for scraps to eat. The most amazing scenes to run past.

The course then took us out of the villages and onto an incredibly long, straight open tarmac road until we hit 13 miles and the half-way point. Here, after a quick water stop and some entertainment from dancing locals, we turned back on ourselves and started the long painful road back towards the villages the way we had just come. At this point I was feeling good,

was running in a group and the welcome distractions of village activity were keeping me mentally busy.

At about mile 16, however, I found myself running alone as runners were thinning out along the course. I had managed to get through all the fluid I was carrying on my back, there was no shade and the sun was beginning to beat down hard. There were no water stations in sight, and at one point I could literally not see a single person, just a long straight lonely road ahead. The thought crossed my mind that I may have taken a wrong turn; I was really starting to hurt mentally and physically.

I felt the most overwhelming sense of relief however when I came across a drinks station at mile 20. Here were cheerful Street Child workers full of encouragement, and medics on hand to check us over. By now I had started to feel quite nauseous, potentially one of the first signs of heat exhaustion so was ordered to sit down for a few minutes while my Camelbak was refilled with electrolyte solution by the medics, and I was given the most amazingly refreshing coconut to drink!

After this brief stop my legs seized up and felt like jelly, collapsing beneath me as I tried to stand again. Luckily though more runners had arrived, and so I had company once again. Feeling much better mentally, I set off. The course became very difficult underfoot, lots of rocks and unmade roads; with tired legs I tried very hard not to turn an ankle. We crossed over some railway tracks and then headed back into villages.

By this point every part of my body was aching, I used most of the water that was handed to me at water stations to pour over my head to cool down, it was hot, very very hot by now.

In true Natalie style I found something in me to up the pace and sprint for the last few hundred metres of the race. One of the children raced with me, holding my hand all the way to the finish line, which was such a welcome boost.

As I crossed the finish line and crumbled into a heap on the floor I promised I would never run a marathon again.

Once finished, an overwhelming feeling of dizziness and nausea hit me. I couldn't stand up for a good few hours after the race without feeling like I was going to topple over and faint. The Red Cross spent time fanning me and cooling me down, I had cold drinks cans placed under my arms, and spent the rest of the afternoon laying like a starfish in my air conditioned room trying to recover!

Once I started to feel better, the overwhelming sense of achievement hit me; it felt wonderful knowing I had raised £2000 for such an amazing cause, and completed such a unique marathon, I then made up my mind I would indeed run a marathon again!

The next day I was unsurprisingly pretty stiff, sitting in the worlds most uncomfortable mini-bus whilst travelling to the coast along very bumpy roads did not help the situation at all! All was made a lot better though when we arrived at our destination for our day of rest and relaxation. Few people realise that Sierra Leone has such a stunning coastline, and it was all ours to enjoy for the day, until the evening when we headed to the airport to fly home.

This was definitely one of the best things I have ever done and I would highly recommend it to everyone. I met a real mix of runners out there, ranging from ultra-runners and experienced marathoners to many first timers like myself.

Next on my list, well who knows, but the Petra Desert and Polar Circle Marathon have crossed my mind...!

LA REDOUBTABLE (by Phil Coales)

Being one of those rare Striders who has yet to get round to running a marathon, I know that I know nothing of true running exhaustion. I have limped 2.5 miles of Reigate Priory Park's XC course with a calf injury, and that felt agonising at the time; and I did suffer a bit when I lost sight of the runner who'd just told me: 'Come on, you can't let a 50 year old beat you!' at the Orion 15 race in Epping Forest. But I am aware that, with only two and a bit years of running experience, I don't properly know what it means to have hit the wall. I do, however, know what it's like to catch an overnight Megabus to Belgium, then run a 19 km trail race in 30°C.

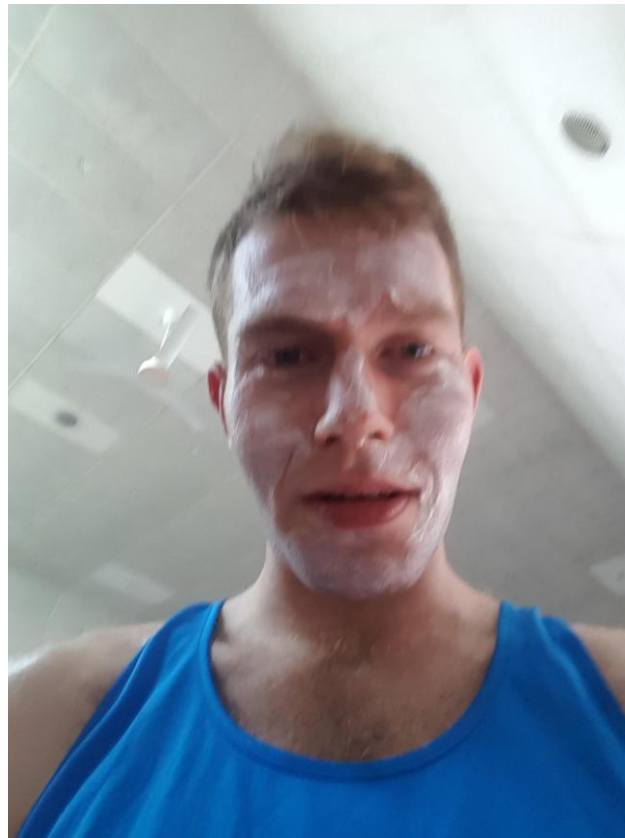
That race was the 'classic' version of La Redoutable, which my friends at Google translate for me as 'the dreaded'. It's a race I found online whilst looking for events vaguely near Brussels over the same long weekend that I was visiting a friend. When I turned up at their apartment on a beautifully sunny Saturday morning, it seemed unlikely that I'd actually end up doing this one. There was something the next day far nearer, and I was exhausted from the constant interruptions of my booked-last-minute coach/ferry/coach odyssey, but my friend was keen on showing me a new part of the country, and the ideas merged all too easily.

Sprimont is a rural village in between Liege and Remouchamps, with a bus driving out there from Liege train station. Everyone we met was friendly, although this is largely based on second hand anecdotal evidence, because I was too tired before and after the race to try any of my year-seven French. I did, though, definitely appreciate the free spaghetti served to all finishers, and the use of the town hall (complete with bar) for race HQ. The bar served a local beer called 'La Redoutable', which proffered the slogan 'La bière des Grimpeurs' - grimpeurs being climbers.



There's a squiggly bit on the course map that is replicated on the beer's sticker, and that is La Redoute. On the course elevation profile, it's the red section. I had done the aforementioned online research (figuring out how much it cost, when it was, and how to get there), but reasoned that the website's decidedly 90s design probably meant it couldn't be too tough. Seeing a road sign on the beer's label, warning of a 9% gradient, made me gulp. There were other intimidating bottles on display, too - plastic ones, yoked to the vests of almost every other runner. I made do with passing an Evian bottle from hand to hand as I ran, emptying it after a third of the race, then carrying it for another hour, until vaguely ethically disposing of it.

You encounter the squiggly bit after 13 kilometres of undulating terrain. It's mainly routed along country trails, with a few tree roots and the occasional bit of tarmac, such that I reckon rubber soles are your best bet. The constant small climbs were less of a problem for me than the blinding combination of sweat and sun cream that was pouring into my eyes from about 5 minutes in, aided and abetted by the hosepipes being touted along the way by the children of local farmers. It can be hard to tell where you are in the race, seeing as runners competing over 3 different distances set off together (and also seeing as I was furiously blinking for a lot of it), but after 8 km I reckoned I might have been second of the red-numbered 19 km racers. After 9 km, third, but not slowing down too much.



I used my phone's camera to help me rub in half a bottle of sun cream

There's a steep and winding downhill just before La Redoute. It could be quite technical, especially if it had been raining. As it hadn't, I didn't pay it much attention, and was just very happy to be able to fly down rather than struggle up for a bit. After a moment running near a main road for the first and only time, you encounter a stone by the side of the road, alerting you that the main event is about to commence. It took me 9:17 to cover the next 1,100 metres, and for the first, second and third times ever in a race, I found myself walking. This climb is the most famous part of the Liege-Bastogne-Liege one-day cycle classic, in which it is usually the final of the climbs; in La Redoutable, it transformed the occasion from a run to

a walk for pretty much everybody. I remembered Richard Askwith's description of the necessity of walking with your hands on your knees at certain points during fell races. I remembered it, felt a bit ridiculous, jogged for another 200 metres, and then stopped again.

The only good thing about encountering the 128 metres of ascent so far into the race was that I knew, or at least my watch suggested, that there couldn't be much else after. Each subsequent incline was tougher than it should've been, but not insurmountable: which I guess means I hadn't truly come up against the nemesis other Striders refer to as The Wall: I'd just tried to run up something that was slightly too steep for running.

After enduring and slightly resenting the final 4-and-a-bit kilometres, I wound my way back into the town, and attempted to drown myself in water. The spaghetti and beer were welcome too, although after a little while spent waiting around, the presentation of prizes revealed that I was in fact fourth, not third as I'd reckoned. I'm glad I didn't realise that at the time, as I might have taken the main climb a bit easier (read: walked all of it). I consoled myself that I'd been first Brit. First, and probably only.

The 2017 Redoutable is scheduled for Saturday 27th August, and it will once again be a perfect tune-up race ahead of the cross-country season. I would recommend travelling out by some means other than an overnight coach, or at the very least avoiding the temptation of the ferry's cooked breakfast, which they start serving at 2:30am.



Liege train station is probably the second most beautiful I have ever travelled through, after Waddon

THE WORLD MASTERS CROSS-COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS: PERTH, AUSTRALIA (by Alan Dolton)

I wrote an article about the World Masters Championships in the September 2015 issue of this magazine, following the 2015 championships which had taken place in Lyon (France). Until 2015 the World Masters Championships had taken place every two years, in odd-numbered years, but the WMA decided to switch to even-numbered years with effect from 2016, and the latest edition of the championships was held in the Western Australian city of Perth.

Understandably, the cost of travelling to Australia meant that Britain sent a smaller team than had been the case in 2015, but we still had a total of 282 entrants. While many of our entrants will have been hoping for a medal, quite a few were not, but simply wanted to enjoy the experience of competing in a world championship. I was one of these: I was clearly too slow for the track events, and decided that I had not done enough mileage to justify entering the half-marathon, so I decided to enter the cross-country race, which was on the opening day of the championships. There were seven British runners in my age-group (M55), five of whom were definitely quicker than me. There was a team event, but as this was three to score, there was little prospect of my making our scoring team unless half of our runners dropped out. However I was surprised to see that there were only 53 entries in total in the M55 age-group. 23 of these were Australians, and the only country apart from Australia and Britain to enter a complete three-man team was Argentina. We were scheduled to race with the M50 runners, but there were only 55 entries in that age-group, so that there would only be a maximum of 108 runners in my race, making the field significantly smaller than a Surrey League race or a Lloyd parkrun.

I flew from Gatwick to Dubai on Saturday 22 October, and after a short stop in Dubai I flew to Perth on the following morning. Perth was seven hours ahead of London, and we landed just before 5.30pm on Sunday evening (which would have been 10.30 in the morning if I had still been in Croydon). We had been told that the temperature in Perth that day had been 25 degrees. However it took some time to collect our luggage and get through immigration, so that it was after 6.30pm before I emerged into the open air. By this time the temperature had already begun to drop as the sun sank, and was probably about 17 degrees – neither too hot nor too cold.

Perth has quite a good railway system, except that it does not serve the airport. The international terminal is about 11 miles from the city centre, and is served by a bus which runs every 30 minutes. Quite a large number of athletes had arrived on the same flight as me, so it took a while for everyone to get their luggage onto the bus. The sun had set by the time the bus crossed the Swan River and reached the nearest stop to my hotel, which was just east of the city centre.

The following two days were mainly cloudy, with some light rain on the Tuesday afternoon, and the temperature hovered at about 18 degrees, which would have been ideal for the cross-country races, which were scheduled for Wednesday 26 October. However when the sun emerged from behind the clouds, it was quite strong. On the Monday morning I visited the main stadium, which was about five miles west of central Perth, to collect my numbers. The cross-country races were due to be held less than a mile north of the stadium, in the Perry Lakes Reserve, so I then went there to have a look at the terrain. It was clear that the ground was dry heathland (rather similar to the plateau at the top of Addington Hills) and that there were no hills. It looked to be an ideal course for track runners, provided of course that it was not too hot. Incidentally the course was located just to the west of the old Perry Lakes Stadium which had been built for the 1962 Empire Games, where Mike Fleet of Croydon

Harriers had finished fifth in the final of the 880 yards. That stadium had subsequently been demolished, and a small housing estate had been built on the site.

On Wednesday morning there were fewer clouds in the sky. There were a total of seven cross-country races, beginning with the oldest competitors and ending with the youngest. The M50 and M55 runners were to take part in the fifth race, which would start at 1pm, which was likely to be the hottest part of the day. I arrived at the course in time to see the finish of the first race, and to walk most of the course, which consisted of four laps of a two-kilometre circuit. The lap started in a small park named Bold Park, with about 400 metres of grass which was very well tended and resembled a cricket pitch. It then headed into the more wooded Perry Lakes Reserve for a lap of the 'West Lake'. Over the last 20 years this lake has largely dried up because of reduced rainfall, aggravated by "the high level of bore water usage in the nearby suburbs". Having walked the course, I sat in the shade of a tree within sight of the finish, to watch some of the other races.

Conditions did not seem to be too hot for the three morning races, but by midday most of the clouds had disappeared and the sun was very strong. It was clear that this was going to be a much hotter day than the two previous ones, and I chose to do a shorter warm-up than some of my British team-mates. Among the entrants were an outstanding Australian M55 runner, David Sweeney, who had recently run a 10k in 33 minutes 33 seconds, and some good M50 runners of similar speed. So it seemed clear that there would be a fast start, and I anticipated that several of the runners were likely to run the first lap too fast in an attempt to stay close to the leaders. With a relatively small field, I decided to run cautiously, starting at the back and trying to gradually improve my position.

For the first 150 metres or so I duly took up a position just behind two Australian runners, but they soon slowed down and I overtook them. After about 400 metres, just before the end of the first circuit of Bold Park, I overtook a third Australian and a runner from Costa Rica. During the rest of the first lap I overtook an Argentinian and another Australian, and during the second lap I overtook a Spanish runner and four more Australians. I went through halfway in just over 18 minutes, which was slightly slower than I had expected, but I was pleased that I had eleven of the M55 runners behind me. Not far in front of me I could see another Australian and the two slowest British M50 runners.

However in the early stages of the third lap I began to suffer in the heat of the Australian sun. I had to abandon any hope of improving my position, and in the second half of the lap I was overtaken by two of the Australians. Just before the end of the lap I was lapped by David Sweeney and the first three M50 athletes, all of whom were running close together in an extended sprint for the finish. David Sweeney won the M55 race in the impressive time of 27 minutes 18, almost two minutes ahead of the M55 silver medallist. Meanwhile I still had a lap to go. About 400 metres after the start of my final lap I was overtaken by another Australian, so that I now only had eight runners behind me. As the Australian gradually pulled away from me, I saw that he was closing the gap on his two team-mates who had overtaken me towards the end of the previous lap. He overtook them about halfway round the lap, and one of them looked to be struggling even more than I was. With 800 metres left I managed to catch this runner, and went straight past him. He tried to stay with me and I realised that we might be locked together in a sprint finish. I definitely did not want to be outsprinted by an Australian runner in front of an Australian crowd. So I pushed on as hard as I could, and as I turned the final corner into the finishing straight he seemed to be dropping back. I tried to lengthen my stride and was relieved to reach the finishing line in 38 minutes 02, four seconds ahead of my Australian pursuer.

The results were posted on a noticeboard quite quickly after the race, and I discovered that I had actually placed 33rd: there were only 42 finishers. I was the slowest of the seven British runners, but I had beaten six Australians, a Spaniard, an Argentinian and a Costa Rican.



The finishing straight (photo by Linda Oxlade)



Some of our over-50 runners (photo by Jenny Ashworth)

The next World Masters Championships will be held in Malaga in September 2018. If any other Striders are interested in taking part in international athletics, the first step is to join one of the regional clubs that are affiliated to the British Masters Athletics Federation: for most of us, this will be the Southern Counties Veterans AC (<http://www.scvac.org.uk/index.htm>), who organise the track and field league which Striders compete in on Monday evenings.

THE CLAISEBROOK COVE PARKRUN (by Alan Dolton)

I had managed to run 308 parkruns without venturing outside South London, so I decided that it was about time that I ventured further afield. Three days after my cross-country race in the World Masters Championships, I ran in the parkrun at Claisebrook Cove, which was less than two miles from the hotel where I was staying. This is the oldest parkrun in the Perth area, and takes place along the northwest bank of the Swan River, a couple of miles east of the centre of Perth. Like most Australian parkruns it is an 'out and back' course, starting off upstream before turning round and coming back downstream towards the finish.

The Swan River rises northeast of Perth, and heads southwest, passing through Perth before reaching the sea at Fremantle. In the Perth area there are cycle paths, which are also open for use by runners and walkers, along both banks of the river. These are very popular with runners in the early morning, and I made good use of some of them for my training runs while I was in Perth. However they are somewhat narrow for a parkrun, so the organisers made the sensible decision to start the Claisebrook parkrun in a park close to the river, allowing a wider start and giving runners about 250 metres to establish their positions before the course takes a sharp left-hand turn to join the riverside path heading away from Perth. The park in which the parkrun starts is named Mardalup Park, Mardalup being the Aboriginal name for this area. The name 'Claisebrook' is a corruption of 'Claude's brook', Claude having been the name of the first white man to discover the small brook to the west of the river. Mardalup Park is just to the north of Claisebrook: the turnaround point for the course takes place after 2100 metres, and the finish is on the south side of Claisebrook Cove, about half a mile south of the start.

The parkrun website advises readers that "the course can roughly be described as an out and back course, with an extension to the back section around a beautiful man-made inlet. The course takes in grass, boardwalk, concrete and asphalt sections. The course starts on the grass at the far end of Mardalup Park from the Brown Street car park. The first section is on the grass running towards the car park before turning left and left again on to the bike path along the Swan River. Continue on the bike path for about 2.1km through Banks Reserve, past the disused and listed old East Perth power station, until you reach the turnaround point in Bardon Park. At this point you proceed back towards the start. Once you reach Mardalup Park, turn left to stay by the river and continue across the boardwalk and cycle paths around the perimeter of Claisebrook Cove. At the far side of Claisebrook Cove proceed up 'heartbreak hill' to the finish line in Victoria Gardens. Whilst you're running look out for the dolphins, black swans and cormorants which can frequently be seen along the Swan River and in Claisebrook Cove."

Like most Australian parkruns, the Claisebrook parkrun starts at 8.00 rather than 9.00, in an attempt to ensure that the summer parkruns are not too hot. It is worth bearing mind that in Western Australia, 12 noon really is the middle of the day, unlike most European countries including Britain, where the effect of British Summer Time is that the midway point between sunrise and sunset is usually at around 1pm.

The three days before the parkrun in which I participated had seen a great deal of hot sunshine, but the Saturday of the parkrun began with almost total cloud cover. I wished that we had that amount of cloud for my cross-country race three days earlier! We assembled in Mardalup Park for the briefing from the event director, Suzanne McMahon, who is an exiled Scot and was keen to welcome the British runners. Among the British runners I recognised Claire Thompson from Glasgow, who had placed fourth in the W40 cross-country race three days earlier, and subsequently won gold in the W40 steeplechase. There were also several 'tourists' from other parts of Australia who were in Perth for the World Masters

Championships, so it seemed clear that there would be some quick runners in the field. Knowing that the course narrowed quite soon after the start, I positioned myself in the second row, behind a couple of runners who looked as if they would run fast times. I had judged correctly because they shot off at a good pace, as did a female runner who looked to be in very good shape. I subsequently discovered that this was Kate Seibold, who was from Melbourne and had placed third in the W40 cross-country.



Kate Seibold (no 40372) in the W40 cross-country, with Claire Thompson in the GB vest behind her (photo by Jon Storey)

I reached the sharp left-hand turn in about 20th place. Shortly after we had turned onto the path alongside the river, I was overtaken by Claire Thompson and a pack of nine or ten runners who were following her. Soon after this I overtook a runner with a buggy who had started very quickly and had already slowed down quite a bit, and as we proceeded up the river I overtook a further four runners who also appeared to have started too fast.



The Claisebrook course is quite narrow in places (photo by Jon Binet)

One advantage of the 'out and back' course was that as I approached the turnaround point, I could count the runners heading back downriver as they passed me in the opposite direction, and discovered that I was in 25th position at the turn. I maintained my rhythm until about the three kilometre point, when I began to tire slightly and was overtaken by two runners in British vests. With about half a mile to go, just before we reached Claisebrook Cove, I was overtaken by two more runners, and was passed by another runner as we rounded the cove, leaving me in 30th place.



The south side of Claisebrook Cove, about 400 metres before the finish

The parkrun website had mentioned "heartbreak hill" just before the finish, but that turned out to be rather an exaggeration, as the 'hill' turned out to be a very short incline which bore no comparison to some of the hills which Striders are used to tackling on our club runs, or to Hammond Hill which forms part of the Lloyd parkrun course. Additionally, the parkrun ended almost immediately after the top of the 'hill'. Having finished in 30th position, I was pleased to discover that I had completed the course in 21 minutes 34, which was almost 90 seconds quicker than I had run at Lloyd Park in my previous parkrun two weeks earlier. It was my fastest parkrun for more than two years, and my age-grading of 73.72% was my best in a parkrun since 2010 (although I have regularly achieved better percentages in track races). The first runner home was an Irishman, Joe Cawley, who ran 17 minutes 18. The first woman to finish was Kate Seibold, who finished fourth overall in 18 minutes 26, and achieved the best age-grading of 83.45%.

I enjoyed the parkrun, and running on a very easy course made a pleasant change from Lloyd Park. The only disappointment was subsequently discovering that Claisebrook, unlike Lloyd Park, does not have a photographer at each parkrun, so that I do not have any photos to remind me of my run. (The two photographs of Claisebrook which accompany this article are from earlier parkruns.)

SURREY CROSS-COUNTRY LEAGUES: MID-SEASON TABLES

MEN (DIVISION 3)

Striders 291

Fulham 632

Stragglers 741

West 4 Harriers 810

262 Road Runners 819

Tadworth 1056

Collingwood 1218

Sutton Runners 1231

Runnymede 1392

WOMEN (DIVISION 2)

Woking 99

Stragglers 259

Fulham 314

Advent Runners 359

Windle Valley 417

Woking B 421

Guildford 535

Sutton Runners 620

Striders 648

Stragglers B 677

Epsom Allsorts 695

Epsom Oddballs 729

Collingwood 749

Advent Runners B 806

Elmbridge 834

Tadworth 863

262 Road Runners 923

Holland Sports 979

Runnymede 1010

Kingston 1085

Fulham B 1129

Lingfield 1152

British Airways 1202

Windle Valley B 1281

Epsom Allsorts B 1292

Barnes 1330

Dulwich Park 1336

Walton 1452

262 Road Runners B 1543

Sutton & District AC 1562

Croydon Harriers 1582

Epsom Oddballs B 1584

Striders B 1597

Sutton Runners B 1650

Lingfield B 1817



Striders' victorious men's team at Epsom Downs



Striders' women's team at Mitcham Common (photo by Karim Akhtar)

COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2016

Striders placed 15th in the Surrey Road Relays at Wimbledon on 3 September. Our fastest runners were James Bennett (15.02) and Peter Mills (15.39). On 25 September Striders promoted the 25th annual Switchback race. The winner was Ollie Garrod of Epsom, who recorded 27 minutes 49. For Striders, Phil Coales ran very well to place second in 28 minutes 17. Peter Mills was fourth (28.51), Bill Makuwa fifth (29.01), Lee Flanagan eighth (30.33) and Krzysztof Klidzia ninth (30.33). Striders comfortably won the team event. The first woman to finish was Deirdre McDermot of Ireland who ran very well to place 11th overall (31.34). Striders' women were led by Selena Wong who was the tenth woman to finish (40.18). Yasmin Anderson was 11th (40.39) and Ally Whitlock 13th (41.34).

Striders produced a good team performance to finish second in the East Surrey League's annual cross-country race at Lloyd Park on 1 October, only beaten by Herne Hill. They were led by Phil Coales who finished fourth, covering the undulating five-mile course in 28 minutes 07, while Bill Makuwa also ran well to place fifth (28.27). Striders had the first three finishers in the over-40 category. Steve Starvis was eighth overall (29.58) with new signing Rob Lines making an impressive debut in 12th place (30.24) and Lee Flanagan 14th (30.54).

On 9 October James Bennett had an excellent run to finish seventh in the Cardiff Half-Marathon, in a new club record of 71 minutes 35 seconds. On the same day Phil Coales placed third in the Croydon 10K (34.27) with Simone Luciani was fourth (34.50).

Striders produced an excellent team performance to gain a convincing win in their first Surrey Division Three match of the season, at Wimbledon Common on 15 October. The team was led by James Bennett who ran very well to place second, covering the six-mile course in 36 minutes 08 seconds. Phil Coales was fourth (36.50) with Peter Mills fifth (37.04), Simone Luciani sixth (37.07) and Bill Makuwa seventh (37.18). Team manager Krzysztof Klidzia was the first over-50 to finish, placing 15th overall (38.11). Lee Flanagan was 17th (38.38) with Rob Lines 19th (39.12), Steve Starvis 22nd (39.24) and Simon Ambrosi completing the scoring team in 34th (40.35). Striders won the team event with 131 points, well clear of second-placed Fulham who scored 289.

Meanwhile Striders' women were competing in their Division Two match at Nonsuch Park. Their A team placed 16th. Katie Chadd was 33rd (27.53), Charlotte Letchford 73rd (30.12), Yasmin Anderson 77th (30.20), Selena Wong 93rd (31.50) and Linda Daniel 123rd (32.47).

Striders produced an excellent team performance to win their second successive Surrey Cross-Country League Division Three match at Epsom on 12 November, and extend their lead at the top of the Division Three table. Striders had the first three finishers with James Bennett winning the race, completing the five-mile course in 27 minutes 26. Peter Mills also ran well to place second (27.43) with Simone Luciani third (28.31). Steve Starvis placed ninth (29.34), one place ahead of team manager Krzysztof Klidzia who recorded the same time and was the first over-50 to finish. Phil Coales was 16th (29.50) with Rob Lines 18th (30.03), Lee Flanagan 22nd (30.24), Simon Ambrosi 27th (30.40) and Matt Stone completing the scoring team in 52nd (32.15).

In the London Cross-Country Championships at Parliament Hill Fields on 19 November, Striders' women did well to finish 19th. They were led by Steph Upton who finished 129th, covering the six-kilometre course in 28 minutes 03. Charlotte Letchford was not far behind her in 140th (28.25) with Joanne Campbell 157th (29.02) and Selena Wong 170th (29.38). Striders' men placed 26th, led by veteran Krzysztof Klidzia who was 94th, covering the ten-kilometre course in 37 minutes 06 seconds.

25 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN WINTER 1991/92

The Surrey Cross-Country Championships were held at Frimley on 14 December. In the men's race, Box Hill Racers had the first three finishers with Dave Cowan first, Ken Penney second and Simon Fairbrother third. Not surprisingly, they won the team event for the fourth successive year. South London Harriers were second, with their first man home being Robin Firth who finished eleventh. Herne Hill were third. Croydon Harriers were sixth, led by Stuart Nash who finished fifth. Their other scorers were Richard Knight (14th), Barry Cooke (23rd), Eddie Knox (46th), Alan Dolton (98th) and Kevin Booker (113th).

For the first time, Striders fielded a complete team of six. They finished eleventh in the team event, led by Nigel Davidson, who placed 63rd after a very fast start (he was in the first six after half a mile). John McGilvray was next home in 89th and the club's other scorers were Gary Wales (96th), Simon Smith (130th), Mark Thornton (150th) and Lee Morgan (169th).

The women's race was won by Zara Hyde of Woking, with Sally Young of Mole Valley placing second. Woking also won the team event with Herne Hill second, Thames Hare & Hounds third, Mole Valley fourth and Croydon Harriers fifth. Croydon's first woman home was Karen Sutton, who placed fourth. None of Striders' women competed.

The Tadworth ten-mile road race took place on 29 December. Bob Treadwell of Surrey Beagles won in 50 minutes 55 seconds. For Croydon Harriers, Alan Dolton was 19th (55.00) with Stan Collie 20th (55.06). Striders were led by Nigel Davidson who was 31st in 56 minutes 39. The first woman was Anne Roden of South London Harriers in 58 minutes 29.

The Surrey Cross-Country League completed its 30th season with matches on 15 February. Box Hill Racers won Division One for the third successive year. Aldershot placed second with Thames Hare & Hounds third and South London Harriers fourth. Hounslow won Division Two, while Croydon Harriers placed second, regaining their Division One status after six seasons in Division Two. Striders went into the final match, at Lloyd Park, in tenth place of the eleven clubs with virtually no hope of avoiding relegation. Despite good runs from Nigel Davidson (36th) and the improving Gary Wales (40th), Striders finished tenth in the match, and were duly relegated back to Division Three.

The Surrey Womens Cross-Country League completed its 13th season with a match at Coulsdon on 22 February. Thames Hare & Hounds won Division One with Ranelagh second and Woking third. Dulwich won Division Two with Croydon Harriers also gaining promotion in second place. Striders finished seventh of the 17 clubs.

The National Cross-Country Championships were held at Newark on 29 February. Striders showed good club spirit to field nine runners, placing 175th of the 246 clubs that completed a six-man team. Club secretary Nigel Davidson was again the first man home in 762nd place (49.17). He was followed by Gary Wales (1112th, 51.13); John McGilvray (1204th, 51.59); Simon Smith (1299th, 52.41), and Mark Thornton (1606th, 54.42). Founder-member Steve Owen completed the scoring team in 1637th (54.58). Striders also had three non-scorers: Lee Morgan (1808th, 56.22); Dave Hoben (2030th, 59.24) and Ron Carver (2096th, 61.07). There were 2197 finishers. Despite having gained promotion in the Surrey League, local rivals Croydon Harriers were unable to finish a complete six-man team, managing just three finishers. Thus the race marked a little bit of club history as being the first time that Striders had beaten the Harriers in a major championship.

The English Schools Cross-Country Championships were held at Bristol on 7 March. The senior girls' race was won by Paula Radcliffe of Bedford, with Croydon's Jeina Mitchell third.

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN WINTER 2007

The Surrey Cross-Country Championships took place at Lloyd Park on 6 January. Striders' men did very well to place sixth of the 18 clubs who fielded complete teams, while our women's team placed eighth. Striders' best performance came from Justin Macenhill, who placed 22nd of the 186 finishers, covering the muddy twelve-kilometre course in 47 minutes 57 seconds. Scott Antony also ran well for 31st place (49.57), while Matt Morgan was 52nd (52.45) and Damien Macenhill 58th (53.08). Duncan Lancashire placed 62nd (53.43) and Andy Allison completed the scoring team in 80th (55.14). Striders' leading woman was Kerry Backshell, who placed 40th of the 98 finishers, covering the eight kilometres in 41 minutes 03 seconds. Faye Stammers placed 53rd (42.19) with Steph Gilmour 76th (45.50) and Amalia Da Silva Lima 94th (53.25).

The third round of the Surrey Cross-Country League took place on 13 January. Striders' women placed third in their Division Two match at Wimbledon, and climbed to third place in the table with one match remaining. They were led home by Faye Stammers who placed 12th of the 94 finishers, covering the four-mile course in 28 minutes 23 seconds. Kerry Backshell also ran well to finish 20th in 29 minutes 14, with Steph Upton 23rd (29.41), Steph Gilmour 37th (31.45) and Amalia Da Silva Lima 47th (32.58).

Meanwhile Striders' men placed third in their Division Two match at Esher. Striders did very well to place four runners in the first 16 of the 146 finishers. Justin Macenhill led us home in sixth place, covering the undulating five-mile course in 28 minutes 19 seconds. Scott Antony was eighth (28.50) with Duncan Lancashire 10th (29.15) and Matt Morgan 16th (30.09).

The final Surrey Cross-Country League matches took place on 10 February. Striders' women were competing in Division Two at Richmond Park. Before the match they were third in the league table and looked set for promotion. Sadly, they missed their chance when they failed to field a complete team of five runners. The four women who did turn out all did their best. They were led by Kerry Backshell, who ran very well to place 12th, covering the 5800 metre course in 25 minutes 09 seconds. Faye Stammers was next home in 20th (25.34), with Steph Gilmour 31st (27.37) and Amalia Da Silva Lima 50th (29.49).

Meanwhile Striders' men were competing in Division Two at Epsom Downs, and finished fifth in their match. The team was led home by Justin Macenhill, who had an excellent run to place fifth. He covered the undulating five-mile course in 29 minutes 28 seconds. Duncan Lancashire also ran well to finish tenth in 30 minutes 33, followed by Matt Morgan in 24th (31.25), Damian Macenhill 44th (32.59), and Andy Allison 45th (33.02). Hercules-Wimbledon won the Division Two title with 1478 points, ahead of Wimbledon Windmilers (1530), Dorking (1531), Striders (1727), Epsom (1768), Kingston (1806), Sutton (1946), Walton (2171) and Croydon Harriers (2423).

On 18 February Striders did well to place second in the team event in the Sussex Beacon Half-Marathon at Brighton. The team was led by Justin Macenhill, who produced an excellent performance to finish ninth in a field of more than 3000 runners, recording a new personal best of 1 hour 15 minutes 13 seconds, which lifted him to second place in the club's all-time rankings. Club colleague Scott Antony also ran well to finish 11th (1.16.01), while Ian Campbell ran a personal best 1.20.48 to place 33rd overall and fifth in the over-40 category.

On 25 February Striders did well to place third in the team event in the annual Reading Roadrunners 20-mile road race. Scott Antony and Justin Macenhill finished just one second apart, with Scott placing 19th in 2 hours 02 minutes 27 and Justin 20th (2.02.28). Damian Macenhill completed the scoring trio in 59th place (2.11.10).



Justin Macenhill en route to fifth place in our Surrey League race at Epsom Downs in February 2007



Duncan Lancashire en route to tenth place in the same race

NEVER TOO OLD



In the September issue of this magazine, I noted that the outstanding Canadian runner Ed Whitlock (born in March 1931) had set an over-85 record of 24 minutes 03.99 seconds for the 5000 metres. Ed has continued to run well, and on 16 October he completed the Toronto Marathon in 3 hours 56 minutes 33 seconds. This is a new world record for the over-85 age-group, beating the previous record by the astonishing margin of 38 minutes. Perhaps this may be an extra incentive for some Striders who are hoping to run a marathon next Spring: can you run faster than an 85-year-old?

An even older runner who is continuing to compete is the 97-year-old John Gilmour. He was born in Scotland in 1919 and emigrated to Western Australia as a child. His athletics career was interrupted by the Second World War, but at the age of 59 he ran a marathon in 2 hours 38 minutes. He came out of retirement for the World Masters Championships this year, and won gold medals in the over-95 800 metres and 1500 metres.



**John Gilmour winning the M95 1500 metres in the World Masters Championships
(photo by John Oldfield)**

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