

Striders of Croydon

MARCH 2020 MAGAZINE



Alastair Falconer finishing third in our final Surrey League Division Two match of the season, at Lloyd Park

(photo by Steve Massey)

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat 14 March – Mob Match v Croydon Harriers – South Norwood Country Park
Sun 15 March – Croydon Half-Marathon – Sandilands (Striders marshalling)
Sun 26 April – London Marathon (Striders marshalling)
Mon 4 May – Southern Veterans League – Kingsmeadow
Sun 10 May – Ranelagh Half-Marathon – Richmond (Surrey Championship & Road League)
Sun 17 May – Sutton 10K – Nonsuch Park (Surrey Road League)
Mon 18 May – Southern Veterans League – Walton
Sun 31 May – Surrey Track & Field Championships – Kingsmeadow
Sun 7 June – Dorking 10 miles – Dorking (Surrey Championship & Road League)
Mon 8 June – Southern Veterans League – Ewell
Sun 21 June – Richmond 10K – Richmond (Surrey Championship & Road League)
Mon 6 July – Southern Veterans League – Croydon (Striders co-hosting)
Sat 18 July – Elmore 7 miles – Chipstead (Surrey Road League)
Sun 26 July – Elmbridge 10K – Elmbridge (Surrey Road League)
Sun 9 August – Wimbledon 5K – Wimbledon (Surrey Road League)



Our men's cross-country team after their Surrey League race at Lloyd Park

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER MARCH 2020

Welcome to the Spring edition of our club magazine.

In this edition Ally Whitlock takes us on the Wendover 50m and how five laps of the same course somehow end up being completely different.

Debra Bourne runs the Nottingham marathon over eight somewhat less different laps and compares and contrasts the experience to the Isle of Wight marathon.

Alan Dolton discusses training for a fast 1500 metres and going from his initial race time of 4:35 to 3:56 four years later and the build up to achieving this.

Alan also offers in his article to provide more personalised advice to anybody who is interested in making a serious effort to improve their 1500m or mile time.

We also have two book reviews this month from Alan and Debra.

As I write, today is International Women's Day. Amongst other event's today is the ICC Women's T20 World Cup cricket final in Australia which it is anticipated will break the world record for the highest ever attendance for a stand-alone women's sporting event worldwide.

Changes happen big, small, somewhere in between and quite often I would suggest small enough to not particularly register on anyone's radar. But they all count.

Looking at our current roster of run-leaders there is a 1:3 ratio of ladies to men.

Your Striders committee has an equal representation of ladies and men.

It's only in the last few years that those figures have begun to move towards or obtain parity. I think it's important still to recognise those and other positive changes within our club while remaining conscious of where we still are in terms of gender representation overall.

As we can all clearly see from any club run or event we are very much a completely mixed gender club.

<https://www.internationalwomensday.com/>

Tony



THE WENDOVER WOODS 50 (by Ally Whitlock)

Wendover Woods 50, where do I start?

I wasn't going to write about Wendover Woods 50, in fact, I'm only now sitting down, a few months post-race, with some words to say.

Pre-race I just wasn't really feeling it. Earlier on in the year, my whole focus had been on the two South Downs Way races, I put literally everything I had into them, training harder and smarter than I ever had done before. It paid off and I was delighted to hit both my goals at SDW50 (sub-9 hours and top 10 women) and to finish my first hundred at SDW100.

After SDW100 in June, I was both physically and mentally exhausted. I had a bit of downtime, 10 days of complete rest (I look back now and acknowledge that wasn't long enough) and then I eased back into running with lots of slow bimbles on the trails.

Only I never really quite got going again... I ran fairly constantly over the summer, I mean can you beat sunny summer trails, but it was hard work. I felt slow, sluggish and way off the pace.

I always maintain that pace is not important, especially with trail running, it's more about the experience and the enjoyment, but pace, strength and fitness are all interlinked. When I'm at my fittest and strongest my pace is naturally faster so struggling to hold half-marathon pace for four miles made me feel as if I was losing my hard-fought fitness.

I'm fully aware that this is completely psychological and there's no way that I could maintain the intensity of the first five months of the year for the remaining seven. But it also meant that I never quite got into training for Wendover Woods. Every Monday I would think to myself, right, this week I'll get back into a routine. I'd plan out my week, runs, strength sessions, hills. I'd go through the motions without ever really focusing. I was missing my top gear and just meandered through sessions.

I realise for many runners this would constitute training and it is, but I am a planner. I like a schedule, I like to have a target, a goal and something to work towards. Losing my sense of running direction messed with my mind and I began to doubt myself and wonder if I was really capable.

I wasn't mentally prepared for the race and before I even stood on the start line I saw no reason to hang onto the story. I had no nerves, no anxieties, no worries. I remember the start lines of my South Downs Way races earlier in the year when my stomach had been filled with fluttering butterflies. I had none of that this time. Nothing. I'd written the run off before I'd even started.

But as I have learned time and time again, running has a habit of teaching you more than simply start lines, finish lines and race times. And as with all races, Wendover Woods does have its own story. One, looking back a few months post-race, that I do want to remember. So here goes.

Starting at 9:30am, I decided to drive up the morning of the race to save on accommodation costs. I normally wouldn't even consider this, but I felt so far removed from WW that I had none of my usual worries about getting stuck in traffic and missing the race start. I picked up Rachel, my Striders club mate, her partner Ben and Helen, who was volunteering, en route.

In the early hours of Saturday morning, it took barely any time at all to get from South London to North and before long we were pulling into the muddy trig field at race HQ.

As always I ended up being early, so spent the hour or so after I've registered and passed kit check catching up with friends. I leave it as long as possible to take my warm clothes off, throwing my jacket into my car as we head down to the start line

I deliberately start near the back with Spencer, Con and Nikki. This is not a race, there is no need to go steaming off into the distance in my usual kamikaze manner when the starting gun goes. I still feel removed from the whole event. I might be standing among 250+ other runners but I feel as if I could be standing anywhere. The excited start-line atmosphere does nothing. I don't remember the countdown or the starting gun but pretty soon we're off.



Start line selfie!

I press start on my watch and don't look at it again until I cross the finish line.

I'm going to do my best to describe the route whilst it's still fresh in my mind. Although, as I said to someone the day after the race, I may have just run five laps, I wouldn't have a clue where to go if someone asked me to direct them just a few hours later. Thankfully, as with all Centurion races, the course is excellently marked.

Wendover Woods is no more than five square miles in size but somehow Centurion managed to create a ten-mile loop. I wonder what drugs Drew was taking as he designed it. Imagine Cross Country on steroids and times that by one hundred and you get a little feel for WW. I have never run anything quite so bizarrely bonkers and I'm not sure I ever will (unless I run Barkley). The Night 50km runs it three times, WW50 five times and WW100 TEN times!



The easiest way to describe the course is;

- Up
- Down
- Up
- Gruffalo
- Down
- Jump over tree routes
- Up
- Hang onto tree branch as you slide down the Power Line
- Sprint across the field
- Up
- Down
- Up
- Up some more
- And then some more
- Use your hands to climb the next hill
- Hammer it down a hill (mainly because it's so steep you can't actually stop...)
- Up
- Cross runners coming in the opposite direction
- Up
- I'm sure up some more
- Check point
- Up
- Down the Boulevard of Broken Dreams
- Up



© Stuart March

And I forget...

- ...Gnarking
- Fly down
- Railing against the years
- Up
- Down
- See the trig field
- Speed up in excitement
- Race HQ...
- Check point
- PB and jam sandwiches
- Coke
- Water
- ...and go again!



Dancing down a hill © Stuart March

I had a small idea of what to expect having done one lap a year earlier and then working with Stu March, the photographer, at the race in 2018. For those who hadn't recced the route, you could see the shock on their faces during the first lap!

Lap one I took fairly steady. This was all about getting a feel for the course and the conditions. I ran most of it with Spencer and Con, chatting as we went. With a few weeks of rain pre-race, it was quite muddy in the woods and some of the ups and downs had the potential of becoming treacherous as the day progressed. I'd been debating shoe choice all week; did I go for the grip of the Speedcross or the cushioning of the Hoka? I opted for Hoka and bar a few slippery descents when I longed for more grip it was the right choice. There were too many hard, gravelly tracks for the Speedcross. Whilst I may have flown with more confidence down the muddy descents, my feet would have been shredded in a couple of laps by the rockier paths.



See that smile on my face! © Stuart March

I finished the first lap in a little over two hours, ran into the CP and pretty much ran straight out the other side grabbing a couple of sandwiches on my way past.

Being a lapped course, we ran through race HQ at the end of every lap. Here there was a Check Point with all the usual Centurion food and drink and also access to a drop bag (and even your car if you wanted it!).

Of course, because there was the option of a drop bag, I had one and filled it with all sorts of 'just in case' items. Spare shoes (the Speedcross in case I changed my mind mid-race), a complete change of clothes (why I don't know), hats, gloves, buffs, snacks, a spare 'spare' headtorch. A flask of coffee. A set of poles Spencer lent me (I'd been panicked by Twitter talk during the week that I would need poles; I didn't)...

Yeah, didn't use ANY of it bar the flask of coffee. When will I learn?

With a CP every five miles, you didn't need to carry food and drink and as a result mandatory kit was a lot lighter than for most races. Many of the speedy front runners just had small waist packs with their waterproof, base layer, foil blanket and headtorch. As usual, I still carried the kitchen sink.

I started on lap two, now running solo as I'd moved away from Spencer and Con towards the end of lap one. I knew what to expect and settled into an easy rhythm. Pushing the pace a little, running and walking on feel. It was almost perfect running weather, cool without being cold. My long sleeve t-shirt and shorts were the perfect clothing choice, even on the last nighttime lap. I felt good, I was enjoying it. I began thinking that maybe I'd like to do WW100. Please note this was on lap two. Ask me again after five laps...

Wendover really is a beautiful place and I was relishing running in the rural surroundings alongside the challenge of the course. The ten miles had everything I love about running in

it. Challenging climbs, hills to throw yourself down. Obstacles to jump over. You had to be 100% focused on what you were doing at all times.



Pretty soon lap two was coming to an end. I ran through the HQ CP again, ignoring my drop bag once more and started on lap three.

Lap three was not the one. Just outside the trig field I slightly stumbled (I was focusing more on my peanut butter sandwich than on where I was putting my feet) and tweaked my ankle/foot. It hurt. I'd sprained it. Torn it. Broken it. My race was over.

I hadn't, it wasn't but your mind plays dirty tricks on you in a mid-race stumble. It was sore, I'll give you that and it did make me slightly more cautious during this lap.

Apart from the stumble, I don't know why I didn't enjoy this lap. I think it was my mind playing games with me. Trying to get my head around the fact that I'd already done two laps and I still had three to go. I'd done 20 miles but still had 30 to go. It would soon be getting dark. I fell into a bit of grump. Hating life, hating hills, hating Wendover.

I saw Helen for the last time at the mid-way CP. She would be finishing her volunteering shift before I came past again. I had a bit of a grumble. I was not a happy bunny. I don't remember much of the second half of lap three. I just made myself keep going. One foot in front of the other, up, down, up down...

If lap three wasn't the one, lap four was definitely the one. Lap four I LOVED.



I started my fourth lap still in daylight. I wasn't expecting this, I was expecting it to be dark by lap four. Though I had no idea what time of day it was, the light was rapidly failing. It gave me a boost to still have some light in the sky for this lap. Now he didn't have small children climbing all over him I stopped for a quick selfie with the Gruffalo, knowing that it would definitely be dark the next time I passed him.



I put my headphones in to listen to some podcasts. Interviews with Fearne Cotton, Hillary Clinton, Sebastian Faulks, Lemn Sissay and Elizabeth Day. Interesting conversations in my ears, rather than music, entertained and made me think as I ran. I now knew the course. I knew where I was going. I knew the hills weren't that steep, I knew I could do it. This was now my time and I was revelling in it.

My headtorch went on a couple of miles in. I left it off for as long as possible until I really couldn't see more than a few steps in front of me. I enjoy the solitude of nighttime running in the woods. I find it quite calming and I wasn't at all concerned that I was by myself in the

dark. In fact, I got a little annoyed when I crossed paths with other runners as it they broke the magic spell! I was in my element, trotting along, listening to my podcasts, just me, myself and I. And the wood mice that scurried across my path every now and again.

The lap sped by and pretty soon I was approaching race HQ for the fourth time. A few more sandwiches and another swig of my sugary coffee. I changed my headtorch as the batteries were failing far too quickly on my primary torch and I was soon on my way again. 6:30, 7pm. I wasn't sure. I'd forgotten to even glance at the clock as I ran into HQ.



Con and Spencer earlier on in the day

Lap five. This was simply about getting it done. It started in the same positive vein as lap four. I didn't see another runner for what felt like miles but was not at all concerned. A few miles in I started to feel the familiar waves of ultra nausea. It comes to me in most races, today somewhat later than most, for which I was thankful. I knew I wouldn't be eating again, I also knew I had taken on sufficient fuel during the first 43-odd miles to see me through to the end.

I still haven't completely mastered eating for ultras, although I did do much better at WW than I have on many. I'm fine for the first 20, 30 miles but then I struggle to take on food. I was still eating at the 40-mile mark here, in fact, someone laughed at the pile of sandwiches I inhaled! I basically fuelled the whole run on PB and Jam sandwiches with the odd cheese sandwich thrown in for variety. Helen, Jane and Kerry at the Hale Lane CP even made me special 'margarine-free' sandwiches!

I arrived at the Hale Lane CP for the final time. Jane commented that I wasn't as cheery as I had been on the last lap. I was feeling quite rough. I drank a couple of cups of coke which seemed to settle my stomach and I subsequently had a good few miles coming out of the final CP. The distance was beginning to take its toll and I was willing the miles away. The final few seemed much longer than they had on the first couple of laps, a downside of knowing what was coming!

With the exception of nausea, I was surprised at how much of the final lap I ran. When the terrain allowed it I was still trotting along at a fairly decent pace.

I kept nausea at bay until the final mile when I started feeling quite sick again. It slowed me right down and I had to stop a few times to pull myself together. I saw the race HQ in the distance and knew that I was only a few minutes or so away. Somewhat cruelly you have to run almost around the outer edge of the field before climbing a stile (yes, really) into the field and across to HQ. The final stretch across the field was squelchy with mud. I ran, picking up my pace. My legs still felt pretty good. Damn that stomach. And I crossed the finish line.

12:11 and a few seconds. 10th lady. Loved that.



© Stuart March

What did I love about it?

I loved the nature of the course; it was EXACTLY the kind of running I enjoy. It was challenging. Interesting. There was variety in terrain. There were runnable sections and not so runnable sections. It was like a giant Cross Country.

Most of all I loved having zero pressure. And that was all my doing. Because I wasn't really prepared for this race, I wasn't feeling it and had no plan, no strategy, no agenda. I simply ran on feel. Pushed it when I felt good. Eased off if I needed a rest. Ate a sandwich when I fancied one.

Apart from glancing at my heart rate a couple of times (completely pointless with those hills in all honesty) I didn't look at my watch once. I had no idea of time or pace. I had no concept of where I was in the race. I even forgot to look at the race clock on my final lap so I couldn't even make a rough guess.

Zero pressure. This was a REVELATION.

I'm not knocking running to a plan, running to a pace, of checking with the tech how you're doing. I mean, it worked for me at SDW50. But where I was at WW50, physically and mentally, taking away that pressure worked wonders.

I simply enjoyed my day running in the woods. No more, no less, and I know I finished having done my very best on the day. And you can't ask for more than that.

I hung around for about an hour after the race. Chatting to Stu, waiting for Spencer, Rachel, Ben and a few others to finish. Learning from my mistake at SDW100, I had something to eat and drink before jumping in the car and heading home.

I think I might have a new favourite race!

As always, an excellent show by the Centurion team and all the volunteers. I know from working alongside Stu last year that this is a challenging one for the volunteers; it's November, it gets dark and cold and they are standing around, essentially, in the woods for several hours to help us runners. As always grateful and indebted.

Slight change of focus for me now as I look to have a bash at a spring marathon and see if I can bring down my PB nearer to where I think it should be. I haven't properly trained for a marathon since 2014. Yes, I've run a number since then but they've either been whilst ultra training or off the back of an injury. It will be interesting to see what I can do if I manage to get a proper training block in. Then it's the big one, North Downs Way 100 in August. I know I said never again during SDW100 but you didn't believe me, did you?!



A STUDY IN CONTRASTS: ISLE OF WIGHT MARATHON & NOTTINGHAM CHRISTMAS MARATHON (by Debra Bourne)

Road marathons are not my favourite races: I generally prefer trail marathons to road, and trail ultras are even better. However, in my quest to join the 100 Marathon Club, I had to complete 10 certified-distance road marathons, and since I really don't like big city marathons, that meant searching for smaller, quieter events. Because I don't like road marathons, I hadn't run very many in the previous years, and I found that I needed to do **five** during 2019 if I was to become a member of the 100MC before the end of the year. Additionally, I had to find ones that didn't clash with any of my key ultras during the year. I managed Boston (Lincolnshire) in April and Betteshanger, a Saxons, Vikings and Normans (SVN) event on a lapped course in June, with Ghost of Cyclopark, another SVN event, the day after Beachy Head trail marathon (so the less said of that the better).

Isle of Wight Marathon

I chose the Isle of Wight marathon because it looked relatively small, was held on quiet country roads, and the description of the course as undulating also attracted my interest (flat is boring). Additionally, my husband had been wanting to take me to the Isle of Wight, because he used to spend summer holidays there, so this looked like a good opportunity to combine a marathon and a holiday. As a bonus, one of the sponsors was Isle of Wight Ferries, and they were offering half-price fares for marathon runners, available from Saturday to Tuesday.

Deciding where to stay was simple: look for something close to the race venue – and we found a bed and breakfast only 10 minutes' walk away – very convenient!

Not wanting to miss the opportunity to run Medina IoW parkrun, we set off from home at stupid-o'clock to get down to Portsmouth in time for the 7am ferry. The crossing doesn't take long (about 30 minutes), so it would probably have been okay to go for the 8am ferry, but we didn't want to risk being late. Waiting to board, we chatted with the couple from the car behind ours – who were also heading over to run the parkrun that morning and the marathon the following day.

Medina parkrun was mostly flat, with only one little decline and incline on each lap, and the finish right back next to the start, so leaving gear was not a problem, and I enjoyed running it easy. It was nice to bump into a former Lloyd parkrun regular who had since moved to the island. Chatting with some of the volunteers after the run, one of them told me she would be volunteering at registration for the marathon.

The marathon is organized by Ryde Harriers. The club has been "running since 1886", while the marathon has been held annually since 1957, so I was taking part in the 63rd edition, held on the first Sunday in October. The 64th race will be held on 4th October 2020. The race has some interesting history. In 1964, Scottish runner Dale Grieg ran, setting a women's world record of 3:27:25, and in 1978 the race hosted the inaugural UK Women's Marathon Championship. Previously the course covered the eastern part of the island, but due to increasing traffic the route had been changed in 2013. The present course starts at the Isle of Wight Community Club in Cowes and heads westwards to Yarmouth on quiet country roads, via Gurnard, Rew Street, Porchfield and Shalfleet, with a couple of miles on a gravel cycle track before it turns east and heads back via Afton, Wilmingham, Thorley, Wellow, Shalfleet, Porchfield and Northwood to Cowes.

Waiting around on the sports field at the start I bumped into a few people I knew – the couple I'd met at the parkrun, a couple of 100 Marathon Club members I'd bumped into occasionally at other races, and another SVN regular, Mary.

The first few miles of the IoW marathon are downhill and I was tempted to speed off. However, I reminded myself that such a downhill start could only mean an uphill finish, so I held myself back. The best of the views came in this section. Checking the forecast all week had indicated rain. It had been cloudy on the Saturday (and it rained all of Monday) but unexpectedly Sunday was dry, sunny, and feeling warm for the time of year – I started regretting that although I had brought various jackets to choose from, I hadn't thought to pack a running vest, only a short-sleeved T-shirt.



**Views from near the start, heading west and descending –
you know you'll be climbing on the way back!**

The whole course is undulating, with net downhill in the first half and uphill in the second half. The distance is marked with a board every mile, and all but one were pretty much spot on in agreement with my Garmin. There were eight water stations, and in between those,

seven sponge stations. Based on the weather in the week previous I hadn't expected to need any cooling, but on the day, despite the race being held in early October, it was hot enough that I was very glad to grab a sponge or two each time and squeeze the water out over my head and down my back.

Coming up to halfway, I found myself flagging a bit and was pleased to be caught by another woman runner, as we then kept each other company for several miles, before she slowed while I had got my second wind and continued on quite steadily.

I fueled the run with Kendal Mint Cake, one piece every three miles – plus an apple at some point in the second half, as I passed a crate of them by the side of the road with a sign saying 'help yourself'.

There were several male runners who I passed and was passed by several times during the race, particularly in the first half. In the second half, my decision to run conservatively early on, or my ultramarathon training, or both, paid off and I started overtaking other runners, one or two per hill, who were walking the hills while I was trotting up them quite comfortably, as well as passing by people with cramp and one poor guy whose stomach was unhappy.

I pushed a bit more in the last couple of miles, and had the pleasant surprise that the route out was not quite the same as the route in, so we had got the worst of the climbing done a little earlier than I had expected.

I finished in 4:13:54, which was slower than I would have liked, but reasonable given I'd run conservatively – and it gave me my initial qualification for the 2020 edition of Comrades in South Africa.

Hanging around, I saw my friend Mary come in only a few minutes after me, plus the lady I had been running with, and a few of the others I'd either known before or noticed and exchanged a few words with during the race.



With Mary after the race

Because I'd been waiting for various people to finish, I was still there when the presentations started, and I discovered that I'd come first vw50 and got not only a trophy but some Tesco vouchers! I also ended up picking up the vw45 trophy for Mary, who had left earlier.

I would definitely recommend this race if you like low-key events. It was nicely organized, with not too long a queue at registration, and with toilets, changing rooms and showers available, as well as secure storage and access to the bar after the race. The sponsorship from the ferry company makes this ideal for combining the race with a long weekend on the island.



Newspaper after Dale Grieg ran the IoW marathon in 1964.

Nottingham Christmas Marathon

I entered the Nottingham Christmas Marathon solely because I needed one more road marathon and it didn't clash with any of my other events.

The course could be described as a little uninspiring: it's eight-and-three-quarter 3-mile laps on the path around the 1.4 mile long, 160m wide regatta rowing lake at Holme Pierrepont National Watersports Centre near Nottingham. On the plus side, it's flat, giving the possibility of fast times if there's no significant wind, and you pass the aid station and drop-bag area every three miles. This means you can use your own cup if you want to reduce waste, and drop off or grab hat/jacket/gloves etc. if you decide you're too hot or cold or wet.

The day of the race dawned foggy and cold – just barely above freezing. I had driven most of the way up on the Friday night and stayed in a Travelodge just off the A1, so I only had about 40 minutes to drive on race morning. You need money for the parking, but it's only a few pounds. I had assumed I would simply leave my warm clothes in the car, but it was too cold for that and I definitely needed a warm layer or two as I set off in the direction that, one of the parking attendants said, would take me to the lake.

When I got to the lake, the 10K (held before the marathon) was well underway, with only slower runners still out on the course – and getting lots of cheering and encouragement from the marshals.

The fog was so thick that it was hard to see anything more than about 100 meters away – I couldn't see across the lake at all! There was a lack of signs for where to go for bag drop and for the start, so I asked one of the marshals and they pointed me off round the lake in an anti-clockwise direction. I headed that way, carefully, as some sections of the path (the race course) were icy – which was somewhat worrying! After a while I passed the finish, having to clamber up into the adjoining stands to do so, and a couple of hundred yards later I came to the drop bag/aid station, where I was told the start wasn't far – just along the way.

I placed my bag in a good position for rapidly grabbing Kendal mint cake or dropping off my jacket, and as the start time approached, reluctantly shed warm clothes and wandered with the other cold-looking runners towards the start line. The person I really admired was the man in the wheelchair who had only thin trousers on his legs.

We were each given a Santa hat by a cheerful volunteer (this is the Nottingham CHRISTMAS marathon, even if it was being held on 30th November) – and then we huddled at the start line and chatted while we waited. And waited. Incomprehensible words wafted towards us from a loudspeaker, followed by a message passing through the runners that we were waiting for some runners who had followed an arrow pointing towards ‘the start’ – that had sent them the wrong way around the lake, so they were having to walk or jog more than 2 miles to get to the start.

A group of runners emerged from the mist and joined us... then some more. Finally, 10 or 15 minutes late, we started. I set off faster than I had intended, because I was cold and wanted to warm up, but repeatedly slowed down to take care crossing the icy patches that stretched right across the path. I stayed upright, but could have done without the woman who slipped and grabbed me as she worked to stay on her feet. Oh well, no harm done. We passed several people still heading in the other direction towards the start and I thought that if I had been them and been sent the wrong way I would have been well fed up! At least the race was being chip timed.

I settled into a pace that, while faster than I had intended to run, ought to be maintainable. I chatted to a few other runners as we ran, including one young woman who was running her first marathon and said she was hoping to finish in about 4:30. I warned her that she was going sub-4 pace and might want to slow down, but she continued (and paid for it later, as I saw her walking much of the time). I spoke briefly with a runner, Tim, who turned out to be a marathon veteran, with many more marathons under his belt than me. After a while I settled in behind him and another runner, Helen, wearing a 100 Marathon Club vest; they were chatting about 24-hour races and so on.

I was running reasonably comfortably, other than having to watch out for the icy patches, and looking at my watch I realised that I was running at about 9-minute miles – and if I could keep up the pace I would finish at under 4 hours. The two 100MC runners, Tim and Helen, seemed to be settled in at this pace, so I asked them if they minded me shadowing them and they said that was fine.

It was slightly strange running in the fog, with no real sense of place or distance – it really didn't matter whether we were running laps round a boating lake rather than point-to-point or round in a single large loop. There was a screen set up by the finish, where you could – if you knew where on the screen to look – see your cumulative time as you ran past, but it was hard to spot your name and time quickly enough.

On the second lap we spotted an older runner sitting by the side just after one of the areas where there was ice across the course, wrapped in a silver blanket and with blood on his head, presumably having slipped and fallen on the ice. He was being attended by first-aiders, thankfully. Worryingly, particularly given the temperatures, he was still sitting there when we passed 30 minutes later. Helen was particularly concerned as she knew him and he was in his 80s. Thankfully by the time we came past a lap later he wasn't there any more.

Gradually the ice melted, and after that it was simply running through the fog – sometimes hearing shouts and encouragement, and realizing you were opposite the finish or one of the encouraging marshals, but unable to see them even though they were only about 160 metres away. There was some wind, so I was losing time in one direction and working to gain it back in the other direction. One of the early laps I got lucky and managed to ‘draft’

behind another runner as we headed into the wind (I would have offered to take turns, as I have done on other occasions, but I was so much smaller that I really wouldn't have helped him much). We passed three sets of Portaloos – effectively toilets every mile.

Most of the time I stayed with Tim and Helen, although I tended to drop behind a bit on the sections into the wind, and we broke apart for short periods as we each did our own thing at the aid station/drop bag area. When I fell behind after grabbing more Kendal mint cake I increased my pace slightly to catch up over about the several minutes. We stayed together until there were about three laps to go, then Tim had to stop for something, and I lost sight of Helen after pausing to get some water, so I kept on going and worked at keeping my pace steady at and preferably slightly under the 9 mins/mile mark.

Coming towards the finish with two laps to go, I was passed by the 3-hour pacer 'bus'. My pace had dropped slightly in the two previous laps as my legs were feeling tired; now I started pushing myself to speed up. One lap later and I heard the 3:30 pacer gaining on me. Final lap... I came round the last bend and did my best to sprint towards the finish, seeing the race clock ticking upwards through 3:56 and trying to beat it to 3:57. My final time was 3:57:00 clock time, 3:56:54 chip time.

I got my snowflake-shaped medal, then realised Helen had run in right behind me, and Tim appeared out the mist having finished a couple of minutes earlier.

Having gone up to run this marathon with no expectations other than ticking it off to reach the 100 Marathon Club, it was fantastic to come away knowing that not only had I qualified as a full member of the 100MC, but I had run sub-4 hours – and thereby got my D-pen qualification for Comrades 2020.

Good points: this is a dead flat course with definite PB potential unless there's a strong wind. It would also be ideal for practicing race strategy such as aiming for negative splits, or use of a run/walk strategy. The cheering marshals were fantastically supportive. There's an aid station/drop bag area every 3 miles and you could easily have your own drinks and energy source available for you. Toilets are every mile. Chip timing. **Bad points:** poor signage (a problem mainly due to the fog), and inadequate de-icing of the course.



Me with Tim and Helen – far shore briefly visible!

BOOK REVIEW – RUNNING WITH THE LEGENDS

(by Michael Sandrock: reviewed by Debra Bourne)

This book takes the reader through the careers of 21 top runners renowned for their performances at distances varying from 400m to marathon, including one of my running heroes when I was growing up: Seb Coe. At 568 pages it is quite a substantial read, but well worth dipping into.

Michael Sandrock has chosen 14 male runners (Emil Zatopek, 'Kip' Keino, Bill Rogers, Frank Shorter, Lasse Viren, Alberto Juantorena, Steve Jones, Sebastian Coe, Toshihiko Seko, Robert de Castella, Juma Ikangaa, Said Aouita, Arturo Barrios, Noureddine Morceli) and 7 female (Priscilla Welch, Grete Waitz, Lorraine Moller, Ingrid Kristiansen, Joan Benoit Samuelson, Rosa Mota, Uta Pippig).

Each chapter describes the runner's introduction to running and their discovery that they might be quite good, with their progression to the top, including descriptions of key races and battles with other top runners. Their attitudes to and tactics during races are explained, with some interesting variation between runners, including whether they were motivated by winning top races (particularly the Olympics, but also European/Commonwealth/World Championships, and for the marathoners top marathon such as Boston, New York, Chicago, Fukuoka, Tokyo, London) or running world record times at their chosen distances – although many did both. Their relationship with their coach is described and the importance of that relationship is emphasised for most of the runners.

Additionally, their training is described. The key messages that I got from those descriptions were:

- Top athletes do a huge amount of running, both distance and speed – a key speed session that is mentioned repeatedly is 400m repeats: 12 x 400, 20 x 400m (even 40 x 400 for Emil Zatopek!); also e.g. 8-10 x 1000m. Twice a day running is very common.
- Many (but not all) also do specific weight training.
- Top athletes are dedicated to their running and sacrifice a lot to reach the top. They have to be prepared to put much of their social life and pretty much all the partying on hold in order to be able to train and compete at high level.
- Having the motivation to dedicate yourself to your running is a key factor separating those who reach the top from others who might have similar basic speed but are not willing to put in all the training needed, or to push themselves to go that bit further, that bit faster, not just on race day but throughout their training.
- Being able to do a lot of hard (long and/or fast) training is important, more than 'talent'.
- Consistency in training over a number of years, being willing to take the long view and gradually increase training load (distance/total mileage and speed) is important for long-term success – including to keep running and competing at Masters level.
- Part of that consistency has to include learning what you can do without getting injured and needing long periods to recover from injury (or illness – for Seb Coe apparently overtraining always led to him getting ill, not injured).
- Ensuring enough rest and sleep are essential to allow these levels of training.
- Although the science of running has developed a lot, there is no 'one true way' to train, even at a given distance. Weekly mileage and the length of long runs varies

considerably between top runners, even for those training for the same distance. The best training for an individual runner has to take that particular person into account.

Overall, I found this book fascinating. The notes on Masters running are an bonus for those of us in that category.



Uta Pippig, who won both the Berlin Marathon and the Boston Marathon three times

TRAINING FOR A FAST 1500 METRES (by Alan Dolton)

During the first three months of the year, many Striders are training for a Spring marathon. Once the marathon season is over, a good number of our runners turn their sights to the Surrey Road League, which provides competition from May to August over distances ranging from a half-marathon to five kilometres. However, since 1996 Striders have also been registered as a track club, and have provided track competition in the Southern Veterans League. (This league is only for athletes aged 35 or over, and thus does not cater for younger Striders, but they can find track competition in the Open Meetings promoted by clubs such as Blackheath & Bromley and Herne Hill Harriers.) Most Striders would have little difficulty in competing at 5000 metres on the track, as that involves running at the same pace, or slightly quicker, than they would run for a parkrun. And most Striders would also have little difficulty in competing at 100 metres on the track, since that simply involves running as fast as possible. However the middle-distance events such as 800 metres and 1500 metres offer a bit more of a challenge in judging the appropriate pace, as they are too long to be treated as sprints but should ideally be run at somewhat faster than one's 5000 metre pace. This was the original reason why, many years ago, I began offering middle-distance sessions at Croydon Arena on Thursday evening, as running repetitions at distances such as 250 metres and 300 metres will help a runner prepare for competing at 800 metres or 1500 metres on the track (although I hasten to add that runners who do not racing on the track are also welcome to join in our Thursday sessions and treat them as conditioning sessions). Some runners may develop a particular interest in the 1500 metres or the mile, and may want to see how fast they could run these distances if they did some specific training for them, and the purpose of this article is to give an idea of the type of training which may help someone improve their 1500 metre time.

I ran my first 1500 metre race at Croydon Arena in the summer of 1980, as a 23-year-old novice, and recorded a time of 4 minutes 35.2 seconds. For the next four years my summer training was partly geared to this distance (although I also raced at 5000 metres and 10000 metres), and in 1984 I ran my lifetime best of 3 minutes 56.1. (Sadly, I cannot claim this as a Striders record, since I was not a member of Striders at the time.) Having achieved my ambition of running the distance in less than four minutes, I felt that I did not have the basic speed to improve very much more, and decided to focus on longer distances from 1985 onwards, with the result that my 1500 metre times have gradually deteriorated from 1984 until the present day (and the rate of decline became much more severe after the age of 60). However, I thought that some Striders might be interested to read what training I was doing in the summer of 1984, in the build-up to my fastest-ever 1500 metres. My training in the three weeks leading up to the race was as follows:

28 Jul	Track session: 4 x 300m (300m jog); 2 x 600m (600m jog); 4 x 300m (300m jog)
29 Jul	8 miles easy
30 Jul	8 miles easy
31 Jul	Track session: 4 x 600m (200m jog); short rest then 6 x 100m (walk back recovery)
1 Aug	8 miles slow
2 Aug	AM 4 miles easy. PM Track session: 8 x 200m (200m jog) ; short rest then 6 x 100m (walk back recovery)
3 Aug	4 miles easy
4 Aug	1500 metre race on cinder track (4.05)
5 Aug	8 miles fairly quick
6 Aug	5 miles very easy
7 Aug	AM 4 miles easy. PM Track session: 6 x 200m (200m jog) ; short rest then 6 x 100m (walk back recovery)

8 Aug 5000 metre race (14.59)
 9 Aug Track session: 8 x 200m (200m jog) ; short rest then 6 x 100m (walk back recovery)
 10 Aug 8 miles easy
 11 Aug 8 miles fairly quick
 12 Aug Track session: 8 x 200m (200m jog) ; short rest then 2 x 150m fast (walk back recovery)
 13 Aug 8 miles fairly quick
 14 Aug Track session: 2 x 400m in 63 (200m jog): 3 x 200m in 30-31 (200m jog) ; short rest then 6 x 150m (walk back recovery)
 15 Aug 8 miles slow
 16 Aug AM 4 miles easy. PM Track session: 8 x 200m in 28-29 (400m jog recovery)
 17 Aug 4 miles easy
 18 Aug 1500 metre race (3.56.1)
 19 Aug 5000 metre race (14.53.0)

My track sessions were set by the late Andy Glover, a middle-distance coach at Croydon Harriers who had personal bests of 1 minute 58 for 800 metres and 4 minutes 25 for the mile. (He subsequently helped Striders by acting as starter at several of our early Veterans League matches, and an obituary of him appeared in the December 2009 club magazine.) My other runs were generally done on a fairly flat route (I had done more hilly runs during the winter) and the pace was largely dependent on how I felt that day: if I felt good I would run them fairly quickly, if I felt slightly tired I would run them at an easier pace, and if I felt distinctly tired I would run slowly. However, I did try to run every day, which at the age of 27 I did not find too difficult. Nowadays, more than 35 years later and with too much wear and tear on my ligaments and tendons after more than 80,000 miles of running, I find it much harder to recover from any significant effort: I usually only run on five days each week, and two of those runs are always slow.

I would be very happy to give more personalised advice to anybody who is interested in making a serious effort to improve their 1500 metre time or their mile time.



Age is no barrier: Angela Copson winning the WMA over-70 women's 1500 metres

BOOK REVIEW – DANIELS' RUNNING FORMULA (3rd edition)

(by Jack Daniels: reviewed by Alan Dolton)

To most people, the name 'Jack Daniels' will probably produce an image of a glass (or a bottle) of whisky. However, many runners will know Jack Daniels as a leading American coach. In 1956, when he was 23 years old, he won a silver medal in the modern pentathlon at the Melbourne Olympics. He subsequently turned to coaching and his book 'Daniels' Running Formula' was originally published in 1998 (when he was 65 years old). A second edition appeared in 2005, and a third edition, substantially amended, was published in February 2014 (a couple of months before the author's 81st birthday).

This third edition of Daniels' book comprises 15 chapters (whereas the first edition comprised 14 and the second edition comprised 20). The first chapter is entitled 'ingredients of running success'. It discusses inherent ability, inherent motivation, and the need for consistency in training. The second chapter is entitled 'training principles and running technique'. Daniels recalls that, when he was training for the modern pentathlon, his first coach used to set a session of 10 x 400m five times each week. This is definitely not recommended: a session of 10 x 400m can be useful, but there needs to be more variety and more focus on recovery between hard sessions than this coach prescribed. Daniels also observes that it is important to avoid injury, and to reduce training when a runner is under particular stress in other aspects of his or her life. The third chapter is entitled 'aerobic training and running profiles', and discusses the need to improve one's aerobic capacity, lactate threshold and maximum oxygen consumption (also known as VO₂ max).

In my opinion, the fourth and fifth chapters are the most useful feature of the book. They are entitled 'training runs and intensities' and 'VDOT values'. (Somewhat unconventionally, Daniels uses the term 'VDOT' where most coaches and physiologists use the term 'VO₂ max'.) Daniels discusses easy runs, marathon-pace runs, and tempo runs at about lactate threshold. He comments that the purpose of these runs is 'to allow your body to improve its ability to clear blood lactate and keep it below a fairly manageable level', and recommends that these runs should be limited to about 20 minutes, although they can be preceded and followed by a period of easier running. He also recommends that a runner should do 'interval sessions' at VDOT or VO₂ max. He suggests that runners can only run at their VO₂ max (maximal oxygen consumption) for 11 minutes at most. An elite athlete will be able to cover about 4000 metres in 11 minutes (so that their VO₂max is faster than 5000 metre pace but slower than 3000 metre pace), but many Striders will take more than 11 minutes to run 3000 metres, so for them VO₂ max is faster than 3000 metre race pace. Daniels also advises that five minutes is the longest recommended duration for individual efforts in such an interval session, and that the ideal duration of each individual effort in an interval session is between three and five minutes each. He therefore recommends that only elite-level athletes should do mile repetitions, and that most athletes should not do repetitions exceeding 1200 metres.

The fifth chapter includes a very useful chart enabling a runner to assess his or her current VDOT (similar to VO₂ max) from recent performances over a range of distances from 1500 metres to the marathon. Interestingly, Daniels assesses that a 10km time of 34 minutes 23 gives a VDOT of 62, which should be sufficient for a well-trained runner to complete a marathon in under 2 hours 40 (which only one Strider has ever achieved). At a more modest level, a runner hoping to run a marathon in under three hours will need a VDOT of 54 (equivalent to 38 minutes 42 for 10K), and a runner hoping to run a marathon in under four hours will need a VDOT of 38 (equivalent to 52 minutes 17 for 10K). The chapter also includes a pace chart, giving suggested training intensities for easy runs, marathon-pace runs, threshold runs, and speed sessions for repetitions ranging from 200 metres to a mile, all based on a runner's current VDOT or VO₂ max. The final chapter gives a chart giving

target mile times for runners aged from six to 58 – although personally I was disappointed that this chart does not cater for runners like me who are over 58: several Striders have shown that it is possible to remain fit and competitive well beyond one's 60th birthday.

The sixth chapter is entitled 'season training' and discusses the need to plan a running 'season' which will typically last for up to 24 weeks. For a track runner, this will typically include a gradual 18-week build-up followed by a six-week period in which the most important races take place (so, for example, some Striders may aim for the Surrey Masters Championships). For a marathon runner, a 'season' will normally comprise a gradual build-up before tapering for the selected chosen marathon: a separate chapter on marathon training appears later in the book. Runners aiming for intermediate distances may aim for a particular championship (such as the Richmond 10K, the Dorking 10 miles or the Ranelagh Half-Marathon, all of which incorporate Surrey Championships), or may aim for a personal best time in a race on a fast course.

The seventh chapter is entitled 'fitness training' and is targeted at novice runners, whereas the eighth chapter goes to the other end of the spectrum, and deals with altitude training. This is an interesting discussion of a subject which is of considerable importance for elite athletes, although it is probably of limited practical benefit to most Striders.

The next six chapters give advice on training to race specific distances, beginning with the 800 metres and ending with the marathon. This section of the book has been significantly amended since the previous two editions. Chapter nine deals with training for the 800 metres, which the first edition of the book had almost ignored. Chapter ten deals with training for races from 1500 metres to two miles. Daniels recommends that athletes aiming for these distances should do some fast repetitions of no more than two minutes, which means that for most athletes, these repetitions should be 600 metres or less. He also recommends that the total volume of fast repetitions in such a session should not exceed 5% of a runner's current weekly mileage, so that a runner who runs 40 miles per week should not do more than two miles of fast repetitions, and a runner who runs 25 miles per week should not do more than 2000 metres of fast repetitions. (Sessions for such a runner could be 10 x 200m, 5 x 400m, 3 x 600m or some combination of these distances.)

Chapter 11 deals with training for races from five kilometres to ten kilometres. In my view, this chapter is a significant improvement on the two previous editions, in which the same chapter dealt with races from five kilometres to 15 kilometres, although there are substantial differences between training for a 5km and training for a 15km (and I would question how many runners actually train for a 15km, which is a rather unusual distance). Chapter 12 deals with cross-country training.

However it is the next two chapters which show the greatest improvement from the two previous editions of this book. Both the first and second editions of the book had concluded with a single chapter entitled 'half-marathon to marathon', although there are very substantial differences between the two distances. It would be unusual for a half-marathon runner to show signs of glycogen depletion, whereas many marathon runners have experienced this problem (colloquially known as 'hitting the wall'). For the third edition, the subject in question has, very sensibly, been split into two chapters. Chapter 13 deals with half-marathon training. Daniels recommends that runners who are new to the half-marathon should use his VDOT chart from chapter 5 to predict their likely time and select the appropriate pace. Thus, for example, he predicts that a 47-minute 10k runner should be able to run 1 hour 44 for a half-marathon.

I suspect that most Striders will be particularly interested in chapter 14, dealing with training for the marathon. Daniels includes several different schedules, ranging from a run-walk schedule for novices (in which the longest run is for 2 hours 30 minutes) to a highly

demanding schedule for those who have sufficient time and enthusiasm to run for 120 miles per week.

The final chapter of the book is entitled 'training breaks and supplemental training'. This discusses returning to running after a lay-off, and includes two pages on circuit training (which is rather less than some similar books). The appendices include a very useful pace chart (showing, for example, that someone wishing to run a marathon in under four hours needs to average 5 minutes 40 per kilometre) and a further chart which, rather oddly, gives 'pace conversions' for speeds from 1 mph to 50 mph (albeit only in whole numbers). I can see the value of the speeds from 5 mph to 12 mph, but personally I cannot see much value in including a pace chart for someone running/walking at 1 mile per hour (who would take more than 13 hours to complete a half-marathon, which might frustrate some of the marshals) or for anything faster than 20 miles per hour (which is only slightly slower than the world record for 400 metres): it would have been more sensible to exclude these speeds from the chart and substitute intermediate speeds such as 7.5mph, 8.5 mph, etc.

This book has many similarities with the book 'Faster Road Racing', by Pete Pfitzinger and Philip Latter, which I reviewed in the June 2016 issue of this magazine. Both books are published by the same company (the American company 'Human Kinetics'). Personally I have a slight preference for the book by Pfitzinger and Latter, which gives very clear advice on preparing an appropriate training schedule which includes four different types of training: long runs, lactate threshold sessions, VO2 max sessions, and speed/technique sessions. However, although Daniels' book has some eccentricities, it also has the advantage of including two very useful charts, one to give runners an indication of their current VDOT/VO2 max, and one laying down suggested training paces based on that VDOT/VO2 max.



Even at 80 years old, Jack Daniels was still coaching athletes including Janet Cherobon-Bawcom (above), who placed 12th in the 2012 Olympic 10000 metres

(This article originally appeared in the June 2014 club magazine, but is republished here – in a slightly revised form – for the benefit of newer Striders)

COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: DECEMBER 2019 – FEBRUARY 2020

Rachel Lindley had an excellent run to be the sixth woman to finish the South of the Thames Cross-Country Championships, held on a wet and muddy 12-kilometre course in Lloyd Park on 21 December. She recorded 52 minutes 08 seconds. Steph Upton placed 46th (60:11) with Ally Whitlock 61st (63:38), Nikki Javan 65th (64:19), Debra Bourne 78th (68:03) and Susanna Lutman 88th (70:24). They placed eighth in the team competition. Striders' men did well to place fifth in the 12-to-score competition for the Coleman Cup. They were led by Tatsuya Okamoto who placed 61st (48:24) with Krzysztof Klidzia 65th (48:43), Peter Mills 89th (50:30), Simon Ambrosi 93rd (51:02) and Rob Lines 98th (51:37).

In the Surrey Cross-Country Championships at Dorking on 5 January, Alastair Falconer placed 34th in the senior men's race, completing the 12-kilometre course in 45 minutes 18. Tatsuya Okamoto was 51st (47:30) with Lee Flanagan 68th (49:02), Steve Corfield 116th (52:34), Joseph Ibe 126th (53:40) and Luke Burden 128th (53:43). They placed 12th in the team event. For Striders' women, Jodie Gray placed 38th, covering the eight-kilometre course in 38 minutes 31. Steph Upton was 71st (39:48), Amanda Hewett 101st (44:55), Jadwiga Brzask-Makiela 128th (54:05) and Michelle Klein 129th (54:05). They placed 14th in the team event. In the under-13 boys' race, Christopher Finch ran well to place 23rd.

Striders' women placed sixth in their penultimate Surrey Women's Cross-Country League Division Two match of the season, at Wimbledon on 11 January. Striders were led by Jodie Gray who placed 15th of the 245 finishers, covering the five-mile course in 38 minutes 16 seconds. Steph Upton also ran well for 30th (40:00) with team manager Nikki Javan 45th (41:41), Ally Whitlock 54th (42:40) and Debra Bourne 69th (43:42). Meanwhile Striders' men placed seventh in their Surrey Cross-Country League Division Two match, at Chobham. They were led by Alastair Falconer who placed ninth of the 205 finishers (26:32). Tatsuya Okamoto placed 25th (27:54) while veteran Krzysztof Klidzia was second in the over-50 category and 58th overall (29:02). Peter Mills was 60th (29:06) with Simon Ambrosi 66th (29:27), Matthew Stone 90th (30:30), James Rhodes 92nd (30:35), Joseph Ibe 102nd (30:56), Luke Burden 120th (31:26) and Richard Lee-Smith 125th (31:41).

Alastair Falconer had an excellent run to place third out of 198 finishers in the final Surrey Cross-Country League Division Two match of the season, at Lloyd Park on 8 February. He completed the muddy five-mile course in 29 minutes 40 seconds. Phil Coales also ran well to place 27th, just ahead of veteran Krzysztof Klidzia who was 29th overall and second in the over-50 category, both runners recording 31 minutes 47. Tatsuya Okamoto was 37th (32:05) with Peter Mills 52nd (32:32), Lee Flanagan 54th (32:42), Bill Makuwa 60th (33:09). Matthew Stone was 62nd overall and first in the over-55 age-group (33:18), while Simon Ambrosi was 77th (33:39) and James Rhodes 82nd (33:48). Striders produced their best performance of the season to place third of the nine clubs in the match, and finished the season in seventh place in the Division Two table. Individually, Krzysztof Klidzia won the overall over-50 category with Matthew Stone second, while Robert Zietz won the over-60 age-group.

Earlier in the day, Striders' women placed sixth in their Division Two match at Richmond Park. They finished fourth in the overall Division Two table. Jennifer Gutteridge ran well to place 23rd, completing the five-mile course in 37 minutes 13. Ally Whitlock was 28th (37:45), Steph Upton 36th (38:20), Nikki Javan 45th (38:38) and Debra Bourne 64th (40:30).

In the South of England Masters Indoor Championships at Lee Valley on 23 February, Sandra Francis won gold medals in both the W60 long jump (3.01 metres) and the 60 metres (10.57 seconds). In the Hampton Court Half-Marathon on the same day, Dave Shaw set a new club M55 half-marathon record of 81 minutes 10.

30 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SPRING 1990

The annual Tatsfield five-mile road race took place on 1 April. Striders were led by John McGilvray who placed eleventh in 28 minutes 58, just one place and six seconds ahead of club colleague Nigel Davidson. Colin Golding placed 20th in 30 minutes 56.

In the Morden 10 kilometre road race on 8 April, John McGilvray again ran well to place sixth in 35 minutes 36, just outsprinting former international Paula Fudge. Nigel Davidson was ahead of John in the early stages, but slipped back to place tenth in 36 minutes 15.

The East Surrey League held its annual road race at Ewell two days later. The winner was former Surrey 10000 metre champion Ian Lamplough of Box Hill Racers, in 21 minutes 19. With two more Box Hill runners in the first five finishers, they comfortably won the team event. Croydon Harriers placed second, led by two future Striders: Alan Dolton was sixth in exactly 22 minutes, narrowly outsprinting club colleague Graham Hansen who recorded exactly the same time. Barry Cooke was close behind in ninth place (22:08), while Ron Harris completed Croydon's team in 13th (22:30).

Striders had not yet entered the East Surrey League, although they were to do so for the following season. Striders' two leading runners paved the way by competing as second-claim members of Mitcham: John McGilvray placed 26th in 23 minutes 44, while Nigel Davidson was 30th in 24 minutes 20. Box Hill Racers won the league championship for the fourth time in five years. Hercules-Wimbledon placed second with Epsom third and Croydon Harriers fourth.

The tenth London Marathon was held on 22 April. Striders' first man home was future club chairman John Gannon, who ran a lifetime best 3 hours 15 minutes 08 seconds. Tony Eve set a club over-55 record of 3 hours 18 minutes 40, while George Duncton set a club over-60 record of 4 hours 40 minutes 24. (Both these age-group records have subsequently been beaten: Dave Shaw now holds the over-55 record while Geoff Pennells holds the over-60 record.) Striders' third finisher was Linda Wells (now known as Linda Daniel) in 3 hours 40, followed by veteran Ken Bridge in 3 hours 51.

The Surrey 10000 metre championships took place on the same day at Woking. Woking's Terry Booth won in 32 minutes 14.0 seconds, while Croydon Harriers had the next two finishers with Gary Bishop second in 32 minutes 17.0 and Alan Dolton third in 32 minutes 27.1. At the same meeting, future Strider Paul Cripps placed second in the triple jump with a leap of 12 metres 64.

Striders' women did well to place second, beaten only by the National Westminster Bank, at the Lloyds Bank Road Relays at Beckenham on 2 May. Striders' team comprised Karen Divall, Sandra Johnson, Linda Wells and Elene Kayum. Striders' men found the competition tougher and could only finish 33rd.

The Surrey Championships took place at Croydon Arena on 19 and 20 May. Croydon Harriers had all the first five finishers in the women's 100 metres. 18-year-old Annabel Soper won in 12.1 with 20-year-old Samantha Farquharson second (12.4) and 17-year-old Donna Fraser third (12.4). Croydon also had all three medallists in the women's 200 metres, with Donna Fraser first (24.0), Val Theobalds second (24.5) and Linda Smith third (24.9). Linda had previously won the women's 400 metres (55.5).

In the Holland Sports 10 kilometre road race on 27 May, Striders were led by Nigel Davidson who placed eleventh (34:25). Colin Golding was 22nd (36:28) and John Gerken 34th (37:48).

20 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SPRING 2000

In the Thanet 20-mile road race on 5 March, Jane Lansdown was the third woman to finish, recording 2 hours 21 minutes. With Kate Custis running 2 hours 39 and Linda Daniel running 2 hours 50, Striders' women placed second in the team event. Striders' men were led by Neil Furze who placed 19th in 2 hours 08, while Dave Shaw was 47th in 2 hours 16.

The East Surrey League held its annual road relay at Box Hill on 18 March. Box Hill Racers won with Croydon Harriers second and Sutton & District AC third. Striders finished ninth. On the following day three Striders produced excellent performances in the Cranleigh 21 mile road race. Gerry Crispie placed third in 2 hours 10 minutes 56, while Neil Furze was fifth in 2 hours 15 minutes 02. Jane Lansdown was second in the women's race, running 2 hours 32.

The 18th Croydon 10K took place on 9 April. Jason Simpson of South London Harriers (SLH) gained an easy victory, finishing more than two minutes clear in 31 minutes 24 seconds. Andy Flett of Collingwood was second (33:43) and Eric Thomas of SLH was third (33:47). The first Strider to finish was Neil Furze who placed eighth in a lifetime best of 36 minutes 11. He was followed by Alan Dolton (20th, 37:37); Ken Low (37th, 38:56); Keith Sheppard (38th, 38:58); Dave Shaw (44th, 39:25); Nigel Costiff (48th, 39:40); Eric Parker (49th, 39:40) and Colin Cotton (53rd, 39:54). The first woman to finish was Gill O'Connor of SLH, who placed 18th overall in 37 minutes 23. Her club colleague Carol Evans was 21st overall (37:38) while Phyllis Flynn was 31st (38:22). Striders' Jane Lansdown, who was using the race as a training run for the London Marathon the following week, was seventh woman and 70th overall in 41 minutes 06.

The 20th London Marathon was held on 16 April. For Striders, Gerry Crispie produced an excellent run to set a club record of 2 hours 44 minutes 48 seconds. This remained the club record until 2007. Our second finisher was Oloff Van Zyl who ran 2 hours 58 minutes 25. Jane Lansdown had an excellent run to set a club women's record of 3 hours 02 minutes 36 seconds. Keith Sheppard was next with a lifetime best of 3:04:59. He was followed by Dave Shaw (3:09:19) and Neil Furze (3:16:44). Striders' second woman to finish was Diane Ballard who ran 3:30:35. She was followed by Kate Custis (3:38:10), Linda Daniel (3:48:32) and Barbara Gambrill (3:53:23).

The Southern Veterans League began with a match at Kingsmeadow on 3 May. Both our men and women placed fourth. Our best event was the 1500 metres, where Bob Ewen was second in the A race with Alan Dolton winning the B race and Colin Cotton third in the over-50 race. Our women's leading scorer was Kate Custis, competing in five different events.

The Sutton 10K took place on 14 May (not on the current course but on a two-lap course starting close to St Helier Hospital and finishing at Sutton Arena). Jane Lansdown was the second woman to finish. Our women's team of Jane Lansdown, Diane Ballard and Barbara Gambrill won the team prize, narrowly beating local rivals South London Harriers.

The second Southern Veterans League match of the season was at Croydon on 22 May. Our men placed fourth while our women were third. John McGilvray won the over-50 steeplechase, while Bob Ewen placed third in the 800 metres. For our women, Kate Custis and Linda Daniel both competed in three different events.

The Surrey Veterans Championships were held at Kingsmeadow on 27 May. Bob Ewen won the over-45 1500 metres, setting a club age-group record of 4 minutes 40.0. Dave Hoben won the over-45 3000 metre walk in 20 minutes 42.0, while John McGilvray was second in the over-50 800 metres, recording 2 minutes 30.9.



Jane Lansdown, who set a club women's record in the London Marathon in April 2000

(photo by Mick Gambrill)

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SPRING 2010

Seven members of Striders travelled to Spain and completed the Torrevieja Half-Marathon on 28 February. Their best performance came from Alice Ewen who placed sixth in the women's race in a personal best of 1 hour 37 minutes 50. Margaret Faherty set a new club over-60 women's record of 1 hour 59 minutes 13.

On 13 March Striders produced an excellent team performance to take second place in the East Surrey League's annual road relay at Box Hill. Lee Flanagan finished second on the first leg in 11 minutes 29, and John Foster (12:25), Barry White (12:31) and Matt Morgan (10:47) held that position. This was our best placing in this event since we won it in 2005, and lifted us to fourth place in the league table with one match left. Our B team placed 12th, with their fastest runner being Josephine Thompson, who ran 14 minutes 16.

On 21 March Bill Makuwa placed 47th in a field of more than 12000 finishers, recording 75 minutes 10 seconds in the Reading Half-Marathon. Striders also had several competitors in the Fleet Half-Marathon, led by Justin Macenhill who placed 35th in 79 minutes 6 seconds. John Foster was 79th in 82 minutes 40, while Steve Massey ran 88 minutes 53 and Ian Yates ran 90 minutes 21. Ian's wife Suzy Yates ran a personal best 93 minutes 11.

Steve Starvis produced an excellent run in the Maidenhead 10-mile road race on Good Friday (2 April). He placed 30th of 1055 finishers, recording 56 minutes 55 seconds. Club colleague Justin Macenhill placed 44th in 58 minutes 17, while Striders' women were led by Helen Furze who ran very well to place 16th in the women's race. Her time of 66 minutes 49 was a club over-40 record and lifted her to third place in the club's all-time women's rankings. It still places her fourth, with only Rachel Lindley having subsequently run faster.

Striders had nine finishers in the inaugural Brighton Marathon on Sunday 18 April. Their best performance came from Justin Macenhill who had an excellent run to place 14th out of more than 7000 finishers. His time of 2 hours 47 minutes 47 seconds was only just over a minute outside his personal best. Striders' first woman home was Lesley Bourke who set a club over-50 women's record of 3 hours 50 minutes 55 (which was subsequently beaten by Maria Gabriel in 2019).

The 30th London Marathon took place on Sunday 26 April. For Striders, Bill Makuwa produced an excellent run to place 192nd in a new Striders club record of 2 hours 40 minutes 38 seconds. This was almost 40 seconds quicker than the previous Striders record, set by Australian Scott Antony in 2007, and still places Bill second in our all-time rankings, having only been beaten by James Bennett. Striders' next man home was Matt Chapman who ran an evenly-paced race to finish in 3 hours 20 minutes 48. Paul Eisenhut recorded 3 hours 24 minutes 01, with Ian Campbell close behind in 3 hours 24 minutes 20. They were just in front of Striders' first woman, Suzy Yates, who had a very good run to set a new personal best of 3 hours 24 minutes 34.

The Sutton 10 kilometre road race, which was the first event in the Surrey Road League, took place on Sunday 2 May. Striders placed fourth in the men's event and fifth in the women's. Our men were led by Justin Macenhill who ran well to place eighth of the 302 finishers in 34 minutes 56. Steve Starvis was close behind in eleventh place (35:04). Lee Wadsworth was 31st (37:31) with Barry White 44th (38:34), Rob Sharpe 49th (38:51) and Damian Macenhill 50th (38:59). Our women were led by Helen Furze who ran well to finish fifth in the women's race and 74th overall, recording 40 minutes 51. Serena Stracey was 113th (43:48) while Carmen Somerset was 188th (50:57).

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