

Striders of Croydon

JUNE 2020 MAGAZINE



**Rachel Lindley, the first woman to finish the 2020 Croydon Half-Marathon
(photo by James Rhodes)**

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sun 6 September – Race For Life – Lloyd Park (Striders marshalling)
Sun 4 October – London Marathon – London (Striders marshalling)
Sat 10 October – Surrey Cross-Country League Division Two – venue tbc
Sat 10 October – Surrey Women's Cross-Country League Division Two – Richmond Park
Sat 7 November – Surrey Cross-Country League Division Two – venue tbc
Sat 7 November – Surrey Women's Cross-Country League Division Two – Wimbledon

2021

Sat 9 Jan – Surrey Cross-Country Championships – Lloyd Park
Sat 16 Jan – Surrey Cross-Country League Division Two – venue tbc
Sat 16 Jan – Surrey Women's Cross-Country League Division Two – venue tbc
Sat 13 Feb – Surrey Cross-Country League Division Two – Lloyd Park
Sat 13 Feb – Surrey Women's Cross-Country League Division Two – Mitcham



Our winning team in our annual mob match against Croydon Harriers

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER JUNE 2020

Welcome to the summer edition of our magazine.

Congratulations again to our cover runner Rachel Lindley, who was first lady home at the Croydon half marathon. Once again and with thanks as ever to all of our volunteers; this was a very successful event despite some of the last-minute adjustments needed.

Events of course then moved quickly and I doubt many of us at the time would have thought this would have been our last organised run and event before the changes in government guidelines.

Lockdown restrictions are now beginning to ease and we will of course continue to monitor the guidelines and return to group running as and when appropriate. We continue to be active as a club but in different ways, and at the last count around 70 of you have signed up for the Virtual Dino Relay. Virtual Yoga, Socials with Quiz, Strength and Conditioning and Cycling have all been in place for some time now, and thanks to all involved in setting up and keeping these events going.

In this issue, Debra Bourne manages to get in some decent pre-lockdown mileage at the CTS Sussex Ultra but with a bring your own carbs rule and socially distanced medal awarding.

Also pre-lockdown, Jodie Gray earns a well-timed pb in one of our toughest UK parkruns at Whinlatter Forest.

Peter Attewell provides us with some advice on completing the parkrun Alphabeteer while his planned trip to complete the set at Zielona in Poland remains on hold.

Ally Whitlock runs a remarkable solo and socially distanced marathon pb, starting and finishing in South Norwood Country Park.

Alan Dolton gives us a Beginner's Guide to UK Athletics, including a handy guide to the several leagues that Striders take part in, and as usual provides us with the competitive highlights from the last quarter.

Alan also takes his usual look back over local athletics in years gone by – read on if you want to know why we are called Striders of Croydon and not Croydon Striders!

Stay safe and stay in touch everyone. I've said it before and I'll say it again; Striders of Croydon is much more than just a running club.

Tony



RACING AHEAD OF THE LOCKDOWN: CTS SUSSEX ULTRA

(by Debra Bourne)

The Coastal Trail Series (CTS) events are set in a variety of scenic coastal locations. Each includes several distance options: 10K, half marathon, marathon and ultramarathon. The CTS Sussex Ultra was taking place on 14th April 2020, the day before the Croydon half marathon. This was good because it meant I would be quite happy marshalling at the Croydon HM without really wanting to be running it – or at least not too much!

Starting and finishing at Birling Gap, the CTS Sussex course is partially on the South Downs Way and includes sections familiar to me from both the SDW50/SDW100 and the Beachy Head Marathon – although mostly running those sections in the opposite direction to those other races.

I had run the CTS Sussex ultra once before, in 2016, but at the time I had been suffering from a recurring pain in the groin area (the developing pelvic stress fracture that turned my last 10 miles of the London Marathon into a painful, leg-dragging, hobbling walk a few weeks later). I was looking forward to running this time without being injured.

At this point we were not yet in COVID-19 lockdown, but races were still being cancelled and we were warned to check the website before setting off for the race (I hoped they wouldn't cancel between my leaving home in the morning and arriving). We had also been informed just days before that aid stations would be water-only for the marathon and ultra, no food – and the 10K and half-marathon people wouldn't even get water.

Ultramarathon runners were to set off first, with car parking 0630–0700, race briefing at 8am and the start at 8.30. I reluctantly decided that I would need to leave home by 0515. Feeling slightly guilty about driving, I was pleased to give another runner a lift down and back – with the bonus of gaining a navigator (particularly useful when a road on my planned route turned out to be closed).

On arrival, after a short detour from the car park to the nearby toilets, it was about a half mile walk to the registration marquee and start area (with Portaloos and drop bag facilities). Here I bumped into several people I knew from other races, including one woman I'd last seen in Durban for the 2018 Comrades.

The weather could have been a lot worse, and was forecast to warm up during the morning, but it was still decidedly chilly and a bit drizzly at this time, and I was not at all sure what to wear. I decided on shorts rather than full-length Skins – then changed my mind but couldn't find the Skins (black) in the bottom of my drop bag, so compromised by keeping the shorts on but adding an old pair of running tights, that I was carrying as emergency gear, over the top – I could take those off if it warmed up. As the drizzle progressed to light rain during the pre-race briefing, I put my Montane Minimus jacket on as well. The briefing was mainly showing us what the course markers looked like and reminding us that where signs pointed in two directions, on the first circuit we should follow the main markers, but on the second circuit we must remember to follow the 10K signs. We were also told that anyone bringing back a pocket or bag filled with rubbish collected on the course would get a spot prize.

A few minutes for final prep, then we gathered at the starting line. I started slowly, with a little side trip to the toilets as we passed them, so ended up having to wait some time to get through the first stile – note if you're running this, run reasonably fast for the first ¾ mile to minimise time in that queue.

The ultra course is the marathon course followed by the 10K, course, and is supposed to be 34.1 miles – making a long marathon, a long 10K or both! (The website gives the 10K as 7.7 miles, the marathon as 26.3 – I feel particularly sorry for any 10K runners who didn't realise beforehand that they would be running nearer 14K than 10).

The route sets out westwards over the Seven Sisters westwards – in the 'wrong' direction for those of us used to the Beachy Head Marathon route, then north, to Exceat and Littlington, before veering away from the South Downs Way, heading nearly directly north towards Alfriston, where it turns east, rejoins the South Downs Way for a short while around Wendover Hill, then turns off again, back towards Exceat, then Friston, East Dean, back through Birling Gap and continuing further east towards Beachy Head, before turning west again and – with a wiggle – back to Birling Gap. For ultramarathon runners, first the finish become visible looking quite close, only for you to be sent on a detour round the edges of some fields, providing a couple more miles of path to reach marathon distance. Then you go straight THROUGH the finish area and out again on the 10K course – back halfway over the Seven Sisters in one direction, then to Beachy Head and back in the other direction.



View of the Seven Sisters looking back, taken during the Beachy Head Marathon – it was strange to be running towards this view for a change during the CTS Sussex ultra

This was not an “A” race for me – my main goal races were later in the year – rather I was running this as a useful training race. I certainly hoped to improve on my time from 2016, but my main aim was to practice running the hills. (In ultras, you commonly walk much of the uphill sections to save energy for later, and it is easy to get into the habit of doing that, and never running them.) I hoped that the strength training and speed work I had been doing since November would make running the hills easier.

With a lot of recent rain, ground conditions were some of the worst I'd had for a race in this area (probably not as bad as SDW50 in 2013, but with the strong winds and heavy rain on that occasion conditions underfoot were the least of my problems). The first trip over the

Seven Sisters was quite slippery underfoot, and seeing the skid marks left by the shoes of runners ahead of me, I was more cautious than usual on the downhill. However, I trotted up the first slope, and the next, continuing up each of the Sisters in turn, finding it easier than I had expected to keep running up the slopes, and gradually overtaking other runners as I did so. Over the last of the Sisters and we dropped down to near the river, on a low path that disappeared into a wide puddle where neither going round nor jumping over was an option. Oh well, damp feet it would be! I splashed through. Onward.

It wasn't that long (somewhere on the Seven Sisters) before I warmed up enough to remove first the running tights and then the jacket. After that I mostly regulated temperature by gloves on/off and arm warmers pulled up or pushed down.

The weather was quite variable – rain early on, with light rain periodically for about the first 4 hours, as well as hill fog/low cloud on the tops. However, it did clear up later and we even got a bit of sunshine. The fog was not too thick, but nevertheless a little worrying because the course markers had been set at distances that assumed you would be able to see a decent way ahead of you to the next marker – but that certainly was not the case. At a point where the fog was at its worst my Garmin decided to suddenly tell me I was off course. Even though I was pretty sure there was no way I could have gone wrong, it was reassuring to reach the next course marker – just as my watch changed its mind and agreed I was indeed on the correct path!

The aid stations consisted of a couple of people with large watering cans with long spouts. You opened up your water bottle, they poured water in, never touching the bottle, then bottle cap back on, soft flask back into its pocket and onwards. It worked quite well. Additionally, at each water stop the volunteers were able to tell us how far to the next one, so half the time I didn't need to stop at all, knowing I had plenty of water left to get me to the next station. At the first water point one of the volunteers gave the distance then added 'and plenty of water where you're going' – indeed, a couple of minutes later it was time for wet feet again, through the edge of a large pool of water.

Since no food would be provided, I had thought about what I usually took from the aid stations on ultras – orange quarters, crisps, pretzels and sandwiches – so was carrying, in addition to my usual Kendal Mint Cake, some home-made energy balls (ground almonds, dates and other dried fruit, whizzed together and coated with cinnamon powder), snack pretzels (which had been surprisingly hard to find) and four peeled satsumas. I had also carefully prepared a peanut-butter-and-jam sandwich and cut it into quarters, but somehow that failed to make the transfer from my car boot to the backpack. I made sure I started taking in some food quite early and snacked little and often, alternating the sugar hit of the mint cake with the other foods, and spacing out the satsumas.

There were sections of the course that I remembered from 2016, as well as sections that I knew well from running Beachy Head Marathon, SDW 50/100 and the Devil's Challenge (SDW over 3 days), although it did feel a little strange running most of the sections that I know best in the 'wrong' direction – including heading down the long flight of steps that is notorious for people groaning as they have to climb up it during the Beachy Head Marathon (tip if you're doing Beachy: take a left glove, so you can make good use of the hand rail without worrying about splinters). There was one nice out-and-back section down to a water station where it was possible to encourage one another while going in opposite directions. I always like that in a race.

The marathon runners had set off 30 minutes after us, with the half-marathon after them and the 10K runners last. I was running all but the steepest and most slippery uphill sections, and was steadily moving up through the field, therefore I was pretty sure when I heard someone overtaking me that it was the front runner of the marathon, which it was – quite far ahead of

the second and third runners (Ed Knudsen – and he finished in 3:18, with the 2nd runner in 3:44 and 3rd in 4:10).

Descending to Birling Gap, I passed the tail-enders of the 10K runners, walking up their first incline onto the Seven Sisters. Onwards, up again towards the Belle Tout lighthouse on the top of the cliffs – really pleased to find I could continue running all the way up that long hill – then down again. There was a steep downhill that I remembered from 2016 and had been dreading, but although I took the descent a bit cautiously (if you fell over and started rolling you might not stop until the splash into the sea) it was, not surprisingly, somewhat easier then when I had been running injured.

By now I was passing the slower half marathon people (the race numbers of the four groups were different colours, making it easy to see at a glance which group someone was in), and called out encouraging “well done”s as I went, often getting a similar response. Some looked really tired, particularly in the section after they had come within sight of the finish arch only to have the path turn away again. Not everyone was wearing a sports watch and some runners seemed very relieved when, dredging up my memories of 2016, and confirming with a quick check of my mileage so far, I was able to reassure them that they were on the last couple of miles.

Even though I knew it would happen it felt a bit strange running through the bit of woodland down to the finish, and seeing other runners going through the finish ahead of me, while I ran straight past and headed back out on the 10K (so-called!) course. Runners who had finished, and their families, called out encouragingly as I passed while they were walking towards their cars.

Past the car park and onto the path heading up onto the Seven Sisters again, where I had seen the 10K stragglers. Now a couple of ultrarunners who were finishing that short loop already – so about 5K or so ahead of me – made encouraging comments as I passed them – and when I was heading back down that section a few miles later it was my turn to do the same for those ultrarunners behind me who were just heading out on the first loop of the 10K route.

Up towards Beachy Head again and, for the second time that day, I trotted all the way up the hill to the Belle Tout lighthouse (which has an interesting history and is now a guest house). Down again, and I really felt I was on the homeward stretch.

Thankfully on the 10K course the route to the finish was a bit more direct, without the detour round the rectangle of fields. I ran past one of the marathoners and pushed myself as I entered the final bit of woodland, knowing I was really coming into the finish this time.

The usual on-shoe chip timing wasn't being used, and times were being determined by video camera or something – it was a bit confusing trying to work out exactly where the finish line was to stop my watch, or indeed when to stop moving forwards, and I think I stopped before the official finish, as my watch time was some 10 or 20 seconds faster than my official time – never mind.

I was given my medal (carefully, with no touching) and a Kind bar, then sent round to choose a race T-shirt. The CTS medals are the same whatever the distance you run, but this year, unlike in 2016, they had at least put on different ribbons indicating the distance. The T-shirts (technical, not cotton) are ‘EnduranceLife – Never Give Up’ shirts – they don't indicate the specific race.

I normally pick up rubbish that I pass during ultras, particularly obvious runner-related stuff such as gel packets, and I had done so on this day, although there really wasn't that much.

Remembering what we'd been told at the briefing, I pulled out the various bits and pieces I had collected, and I was given a box of Kind bars! I saw one other runner with a box, given for the same reason, but apparently there were only two or three of us who had collected rubbish and brought it back.



Overall I was happy with my run. I tired and slowed down a bit towards the end, but although I was running rather than racing I finished in 6:23, 29 minutes faster than in 2016. I was particularly happy with the fact that I had run nearly all of the uphill. In all my previous races over the Seven Sisters and Beachy Head I had walked the uphill and been amazed at the people running them. Now, I had a couple of runners telling me that they had been really impressed watching me running those same hills – and I had surprised myself as well, and learned an important lesson in how much I could run the hills.

As you all know, that weekend was the last before all the races were cancelled, and I am very, very pleased that I managed to run it. It was great to be able to experience the course when I wasn't in pain, and even better to find I could run the hills. Now for more strength training, more speed work. Thankfully we can still run, including on the trails, during the COVID-19 lockdown (even if only locally). Eventually athletic events will be allowed to resume and I will get to see how my training translates into performances at my goal races. Meanwhile, let's all keep running – and stay safe.

THE WHINLATTER FOREST PARKRUN, CUMBRIA (by Jodie Gray)

In just 107 events, Whinlatter Forest in the Lake District has already earned itself a spot in the top three toughest UK parkruns. With around 200m of total ascent, it's guaranteed to be a lung-busting challenge for most (unless you're visiting from the Alps...), but the atmospheric forest, views of the fells and super-friendly team of volunteers – led by run director Sonia – make it unmissable, whatever your mountain running credentials.

Thanks to its growing reputation, more and more parkrun tourists are now visiting to tick it off their “must do” lists, but, with an average field of 97 runners, it's not busy at all compared to the London-area parkruns most of us are used to.

So, to the run! My family lives a stone's throw from Whinlatter, so my visits over the past couple of years have often begun with this parkrun. One of my most recent runs here was back in October last year when I was celebrating both my birthday and my 100th parkrun. I'd baked cookies and carted them up on the train from Euston, my family had organised a suitably embarrassing cake (see photo!), and I was really looking forward to it.

The morning came, rainy and grey, but the Lake District is beautiful in all weathers and the cooler temperatures would be a welcome relief later. The run starts from Whinlatter Forest visitor centre, a ten-minute drive from Keswick. It's a Forestry Commission site so everything is very well maintained and, in normal times, there's a car park, loos, and Siskins cafe (more on that later). The course is one big lap with a smaller loop within it; the big lap is all on wide forest tracks and the smaller lap takes you steeply down through tall fir trees and back up on a more technical trail to meet the main track again and head to the finish.

After a quick loo stop and warm-up, we gather to listen to Sonia's briefing. She cheerfully reminds us what to expect, which includes the key points that: 1) there's more up than down, as the finish is higher than the start (cue groans and wry smiles); and 2) we must follow the instructions emblazoned on super-volunteer John's t-shirt (first lap runners turn left, second lap straight ahead to the finish). John is responsible for my two favourite moments of every Whinlatter parkrun, which will soon become clear.

Formalities complete, we make our way the 50 metres or so down to the start. This is on quite a thin section of track, so get near the front if you're trying to give it your best shot (though it's unlikely you're going to get a PB unless this is your first parkrun). I always feel a bit nervous as we're all amicably jostling around deciding where to start. On a few occasions I've recognised some of the local fell running heroes, which makes it easier to work out where to position myself – far, far behind them...

The klaxon goes, and we all barrel downhill. I make the most of this as it doesn't last long before the long slog begins and the track winds its way upwards and around the side of the fell. As we climb, Derwentwater and the fells beyond emerge off to the right, and the enjoyment of seeing this view gives a brief moment of respite from the developing pain.

Back to it, the climb continues until roughly the half-way point (marked by another friendly marshal). From here, another little kicker before it's downhill towards John and my first favourite moment of the run: I follow John's t-shirt (and his supportive wave) and turn left onto the little trail downwards through the trees. Then it's back uphill to meet the main lap again, where I start to meet other runners. I'm grateful for their encouragement, which I try my best to breathlessly return.

This section is now familiar and then, finally, it's all downhill and I run as fast as I can towards John for the second time, whose t-shirt is now thankfully pointing me straight ahead

to the finish. The faster runners are already trotting back up the track and clapping for me as I make it to the finish funnel, third female and 14th overall in 24.03 – a PB for me on this course and a nice extra birthday present. I dish out the cake and cookies before heading back to Siskins cafe to dry off and warm up with a post-run bacon sarnie and cuppa.

Like all of us I'm sure, I can't wait until we can start our Saturday mornings at parkrun again – even if they end up taking a slightly different form than they did before – and we can get back to running together and cheering each other on all around the country. In the meantime, I'll be practising my hill running...



NOTES ON PARKRUN ALPHABETEER (by Peter Attewell)

In the distant memory when there were parkruns and public transport available, many would aspire to the Alphabeteer (complete a parkrun beginning with each letter of the Alphabet). Here is one light-hearted take on the possibilities of doing it.

Saturday mornings begin with a pleasant Oyster card trip to an interesting and perhaps previously unvisited part of our Capital City. Exotic locations beckon... Gladstone, Valentines, Pymmes, Wormwood Scrubs, Mile End....

In total it seems 18 letters can be completed with the Greater London area.

However, as of end-2019, parkruns beginning with letters E, I, J, Q, U, Y and Z (there is no "X") could only be completed by venturing outside the M25 boundary. With the notable objective to use only public transport when possible – meaning train plus a (short) bike ride from station to start line the following are possible:

- E East Grinstead (train and bike)
- I Ipswich (07:00 train from Liverpool street, then bike)
- J Jersey Farm Park (Thameslink to St Albans then bike)
- Q Queens Elizabeth Country Park, Horndean, Hants (no alternative to the car I'm afraid)
- U Uckfield (train and bike)
- Y York (Race Course) (6.15 am train from Kings Cross, then taxi share with the several other parkrun tourists that appear off the train)

Z Well, what about Z? Until Zennor in Cornwall get their act together, the only parkruns beginning with Z are Zandvlei in Cape Town, Zielona Góra in Poland, or Zillmere in Brisbane, Australia.

Beware of Żary (Poland). According to running-challenges.co.uk, there was panic in parkrun circles when, at the start of May 2019, parkrun HQ corrected the spelling of Żary in the results table. It now accurately starts with a [Ż](#), and not a [Z](#), and thus it's not officially an English language 'Z'.

I know quite a few Striders have the parkrun Alphabet done and dusted or nearly so... For myself I had planned to visit Zielona this spring to complete my set. Now alas, with the current situation, a distant dream... Come on, Zennor!



The Zielona Góra parkrun (photo by Slawomir Dron)

[Lockdown note from Debra: an alternative some people have been doing is running down streets in their local area with names beginning with each letter in the alphabet]

THE INAUGURAL SOUTH NORWOOD MARATHON

(by Ally Whitlock)

It was never about the race, the city, the medal or the other runners.

It was just about me.

A challenge. Was I capable? Could I do it?

Most people will know me as a trail loving ultra runner at home covered in mud and eating snacks on a hill somewhere on the North or South Downs. The girl who pops out for 20-miles on a random Friday morning simply because she can, and calls an overnight run a good night out. Someone who will run 10 trail miles to avoid two on the road.

So what exactly was I doing entering Peterborough Marathon? I mean, it's not a particularly glamorous place to go and run a flat, mainly road 26.2.

I fell in love with trails and ultra running sometime in the middle of 2017. I discovered the joy of running for the pure enjoyment of it, not simply to chase arbitrary times. I abandoned roads, trails became my thing. Long trails: 50km, 50 miles, 100km and then in 2019, 100 miles along the South Downs Way. I revelled in the challenge of the increasing distances. In pushing myself and seeing what I was capable of. I achieved more than I ever thought possible in two-and-a-bit short years of ultra running.

I'm a goal-driven individual. I like having something to work towards. I don't do aimless. I like a challenge, a plan, something to push me. In life, in running. As I built up the distances, ultras did that. Challenging myself to go further, higher, longer. To see what this body of mine could do.

But in amongst all these challenges, there was one thing that was always bugging me. My marathon PB. Don't get me wrong, I was super proud of my 3:53, but looking at my ultra times, I knew I was capable of more. I was kicking myself that I had essentially given up on the distance and not run the race that I knew I could. Running fast over 26 miles just felt too hard. I'd become far too comfortable with the gentle jogging of ultras.

2020 rolls around. A significant birthday.

As a little birthday treat to myself I enter my second 100 miler. This time on the North Downs in August. But I need something to focus on until training kicks in for that towards the end of April. I'm not good without something to work towards, in running, in work, in life. I decide it's now or never, time to give the marathon distance one last bash.

January kicks in and I buy some new road shoes, abandon my trail shoes and gain a marathon training plan. Although I've run seven or eight in the interim, I haven't specifically *trained* for a marathon since 2014, when I first dipped under four hours in Toronto. Perhaps a reflection of my confidence over this distance, I start training for a marathon but don't actually enter a race. I decide to wait before I commit.

I swap the trails for road.

Training sees a complete change of mindset.



I do consistent speed work for the first time in six years. My first session is a solo 400 metre reps around Dulwich Park. I feel as if I am dying, pushing a pace I haven't run at for a long time. I don't even manage to finish the session.

Perseverance.

Within eight weeks I am running mile reps at the same pace as those 400s.

It's not that I haven't done any training since 2014, but rather my training changed focus and direction. I was injured for all of 2015; I barely ran. In 2016 I returned as a very nervous runner; scared of injuring myself again I plodded around Brighton and London marathons at a very easy and comfortable pace. After thinking I might not, I was just happy to be running again.

Then I discovered trails and ultras, and road marathons lost their allure. I trained for endurance. To go far and long. Speed was irrelevant.

Until now.

Now I needed to beat the distance. I needed to prove to myself that I could, that I was capable. I wanted that PB, that sub-3:45, sub-3:40 and dare I even dream of 3:30?

I put everything I could into training. I ran those mile reps, kilometer reps, hills reps and many other reps. I did lung-burning tempo runs, threshold runs and marathon paced runs. Mid-January my long run included 2X two miles at goal marathon pace. I wonder how the f**k I was going to run that pace for 26.2 miles. The next week it was 3X two miles at marathon pace. The following one I managed six miles at pace. Only another 20 to go.

I missed my trails. I longed for the slow, easy, comfortable pace of the South Downs, the North Downs, the paths where my feet felt at home. But I kept going.

February arrived and with it storms Ciara and Dennis. They threw everything they had at me, trying to stop me; torrential rain, 40mph winds and still I trained. 18 miles with four lots of two miles at marathon pace. I tried out Group One on the Wednesday night club run for the first time and wasn't left behind. I ran those mile reps faster than I had ever run them before. I ran a parkrun. I thought I might PB. I failed miserably.

My longest road run since Toronto Waterfront Marathon in October 2018 ended in dehydration and feeling quite unwell. I doubted. Thought about giving up. This was hard. Cutback week arrived and much needed easier miles, rest and recovery.

Four weeks to go. The big one. The plan said ten miles easy, ten miles at marathon pace. Needing a change from the roads of Croydon I headed over to South West London. A loop of Richmond Park, down to the Thames Path, along to Bushy Park, ten miles. Pick up the pace. check my heart rate. 12 miles. I was struggling. Relax, breathe, keep going. Rhythm found. 14 miles. 15 miles. Back to the Thames Path. Across the river. Kingston, Ham, Petersham. 18 miles, 19 miles. Outskirts of Richmond. 20 miles. My final mile was run 20 seconds quicker than goal marathon pace.

Hold that thought. My 20th mile was run 20 seconds quicker than goal marathon pace. Quicker than my half-marathon pace and not far off my 10km pace. How the f**k did that happen?

Was I going to do it? Could I do it?

Confidence boosted, I entered that marathon. Peterborough. Chosen because i) it was flat, ii) it was a small field (big city races are literally my worst nightmare), iii) the route was predominantly through parkland and on small residential roads (remember, I hate road running) and iv) my parents lived in Peterborough, so I had a ready-made cheer-squad!

Four weeks to go. Operation marathon PB was ON!

Then came my final big week of training. Six tempo miles. My tempo pace was now my 10km pace. Six months ago my tempo pace had been SLOWER than I was aiming to run the marathon at.

The BIG birthday and with it an off-plan birthday treat of 16 miles on my favourite South Downs Way Trails. ❤️ Another six easy. Then 10 easy on Saturday morning before my final long run.

Seven easy, 13.1 at goal marathon effort at the Croydon half-marathon, two cool down. Ironically I was less than a minute off my half-marathon PB without racing. The PB that had been run on a super flat course with a pacer. Croydon was not flat.



© Stephen Siu

I was ready. Three weeks to go. Taper time.

The next day, Monday 16th March. All races in the UK are cancelled due to the coronavirus. I was ready, my race was not.

Devastated is too strong a word with everything that is going on in the world, it is only running after all. But having put 12 weeks of hard work in to training for this marathon I was disappointed that I wasn't going to be able to prove that I could.

But it was never about the race. The medal. Or the other runners.

Somewhat selfishly it was always about me.

A challenge. I was ready. But was I capable? Could I do it?

So with no race to run, I ran my own marathon. Alone, solo, by myself. To prove to myself and no one else that I could. That I was capable.

I didn't taper. I wasn't rested. I didn't carb load. I decided the day before that this was what I was going to do. I told three people of my plans. I barely slept that night. A bit like a real race to be honest.

Early Friday morning before the sun was up I set off alone from South Norwood Country Park along the Waterlink Way. I'd plotted a route: 6.5 miles out, 6.5 miles back. Repeat plus a little bit more. Striders will know this as the Ladywell marathon training run, extended up to Lewisham. I carried water, fuel and determination.

I saw the sun rise. A giant red ball in the sky. Normally I would pause to photograph it but I was on a mission. The paths were quiet. I had the route to myself. I got into a rhythm, I

struggled to slow my feet they were so keen to move. Soon I was at my first turn. The rest of the world began to rise.

I zoned out listening to podcasts, glancing at my watch every few minutes to check pace and heart rate. Fearne Cotton, Elizabeth Day and Russell Brand kept me company with conversation, chat and thought-provoking discussions.

Half-way and back in South Norwood Country Park. My fastest ever 13.1. I was on track. We go again. Lap two. My pace started to slow. I knew I'd started too fast, got carried away, cocky and over-confident. I always do.

The paths are busier on lap two with people who woke up at a normal time. I had chosen this route as I knew the paths were wide and that there was plenty of space to keep to the physical (social) distancing guidelines. It wasn't an issue.

The final turn in Lewisham. 20 miles. Six to go. Mile 20 I somehow run in 7:41. By mile 21 I am a minute slower and mile 25 two minutes slower. I have ALL the energy still but my legs just don't want to move anymore. Come on legs!

Just one more mile.

I arrive back at South Norwood Country Park as my Garmin clicks over 26 miles. Point two to go. I try as hard as I can to pick up the pace for a sprint finish, but my legs just won't do it. The park is now busy. Runners, walkers, dogs and kids on bicycles.

And then I am done.

But it was never about the race. The medal. Or the other runners.

It was always about me. A challenge. To prove to myself that I can.

And yes, I can.

26.2 miles in 3:36:59.

A 15 minute PB. A London GFA. A BQ.



It wasn't run under race conditions, it's not official. If I wanted them, it wouldn't get me that London GFA or that Boston BQ. But it was never about the race, the GFA or the BQ.

I can hold my head up high and say that I ran my best and I will proudly say that my marathon PB is 3:36:59. It's MY personal best and the only person that it is important to is ME.

I won't lie. Running a marathon at pace by yourself is hard and I was hanging on at the end. As with ultra running it became a pure mental game. A quick glance every now and again at the tattoos on my wrists, a little reminder that your body achieves what your mind believes. And now?

My focus, after a few weeks' recovery, turns to the North Downs Way 100. To my beloved trails. Peterborough Marathon has been rearranged for September, four weeks after the NDW100. I'm not going to run it as i) I won't be recovered from the NDW and ii) I can't hold onto this pace for six months whilst ultra training, and the whole reason I signed up to run a marathon was to PB. If I'm not going to PB I have no wish to plod around a flat road marathon.

So that's me done. I've proved to myself that I can. Will I run a road marathon again? I don't know, there are so many other things I want to do.

Onto the next challenge!

A word to end

This is a paragraph I didn't really want to write but I now feel as if I have to. After uploading my marathon to Strava I got an abundance of congratulatory comments, positivity and support. I also received some abuse from people who felt I'd been irresponsible (they weren't quite that polite in their choice of phrase).

The government guidelines during the coronavirus are that we are allowed outside to exercise once a day. There is no mention of a time limit or a distance limit, only that we should practice physical distancing and keep two metres away from other people whilst exercising. I did think long and hard as to whether running a solo marathon during this crisis was a sensible idea.

I planned a route that I knew well along quiet, wide paths, avoiding main roads so that I could respect physical distancing as I ran. As much as I dislike out-and-backs and laps, this is what I ran. Two laps, I was never more than seven miles from home and I started before 6am when I knew there would be few people around. I also knew, having run numerous 26.2+ miles, that I was fit enough to cover the distance without causing myself harm. With these precautions, I felt the risk was low and decided to run.

I knew there would be some people who disagreed with what I did but I wasn't expecting the level of online abuse I received and it saddens me. For a while, it put a cloud over what I had achieved. It took the supportive comments of both friends and strangers who told me I'd done nothing wrong. I'd run the distance responsibly, within the recommended guidelines and that I should be proud of what I'd achieved to lift that cloud.

And I am proud.

I mean, I just bloody ran a 3:36 marathon!

A BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO UK ATHLETICS (by Alan Dolton)

When I was club secretary (many years ago), a new Strider who had previously been a footballer expressed some bemusement at the variety of competitions which Striders competed in, and asked if I could write a brief summary and explanation of them for the club magazine. I duly complied, and a version of the article stayed on our website for several years. Needless to say, there have been many changes in the years since I wrote the original article, and I thought that an updated version might be useful for newer Striders.

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

'ENGLAND ATHLETICS'

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

SURREY COUNTY ATHLETICS ASSOCIATION

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

OTHER ASSOCIATIONS

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

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

One other association which several Surrey clubs (including Striders) are affiliated to is the South of the Thames Cross-Country Association, which was formed in the late 19th century. It organises two annual races. Its main (or senior) championships are normally held in December, and it also hosts a five-mile inter-club race in November. Originally, this was

described as a 'junior' championship, but the title was highly misleading because the word 'junior' normally means an athlete aged under 20, whereas the STCCA 'junior' championships were restricted to athletes who had not previously placed in the first 50 in the STCCA senior championship, or in the first 100 in the Southern or National Championships, or been part of a winning team in the STCCA senior championship. Most of these restrictions have subsequently been dropped, and the race is officially now called an 'inter-club' race, but some older runners still refer to it as a 'junior' race. Until the 1960s, the STCCA championship was regarded as quite a prestigious event, but the emergence of the county leagues (see below) has seen it decline in status, and many eligible clubs don't bother to compete.

LEAGUES

Surrey clubs compete in several leagues. The Surrey Cross-Country League was formed in 1962. It now comprises four divisions of nine clubs, and has four races each winter (for men only). Striders joined in 1986; until 2002 we spent most of our time in Division Three, but in 2002 we won the Division Three championship for the first time, and have spent all except three of the subsequent years in Division Two. In 2018 we achieved our best ever position of second in Division Two, and were duly promoted to Division One for the first time: but we only managed to remain there for one season, and are now back in Division Two. There is an equivalent league for women, the Surrey Ladies Cross-Country League, which was formed in the late 1970s. It also has four races each winter, but has just two divisions, and unlike the men, both divisions race at the same venue. We have won promotion to Division One on four occasions (the first being in 2001 and the most recent being in 2010), but each time we were quickly relegated again, and we are currently in Division Two.

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

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

On the track, the most prestigious league is the National Athletics League, which was formed in 2020 and replaced the British Athletics League (which had been formed in 1969 but catered for men only) and the UK Women's Athletics League (which had been formed in 1975). The National Athletics League has 38 teams, arranged in three divisions. Four of our local clubs are included in the league (Belgrave, Blackheath & Bromley, Herne Hill and Kingston). For younger athletes, there is a UK Youth Development League (for both sexes, aged 11-19).

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

For athletes aged 35 and over, there is a separate league called the Southern Veterans League, which comprises several regional divisions. Striders joined in 1996, and compete in a division of eight clubs: the others are Croydon Harriers, Dorking, Epsom, Hercules-

Wimbledon, Kingston, Reigate and Walton. There are four matches each summer, usually on Monday evenings.



**Michelle Campbell and Linda Daniel competing in the Southern Veterans League
(photo by Hannah Musk)**

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



**Yasmin Anderson leading from Sarah Guest in a Rosenheim League 800 metres
(photo by Robin Jamieson)**

COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: MARCH – MAY 2020

Sandra Francis did very well to win two bronze medals in the British Masters Indoor Championships at Lee Valley on 7 March. She was third in both the W60 long jump (2.98) and the W60 60 metres (10.72). Lorraine Hunte was fifth in the W65 60 metres (10.77).

On the same day Striders finished second in the team event at the East Surrey League cross-country race in Lloyd Park. Tatsuya Okamoto was fifth, completing the five-mile course in 31 minutes 36 seconds, while Krzysztof Klidzia was first in the over-50 category and seventh overall (32:16). Lee Flanagan was 10th (32:31) and Simon Ambrosi 12th (33:32). Matt Stone was the first over-55 to finish, placing 13th overall (33:42). Striders' women were led by Cress Davidson, who was 59th overall (52:46), while Karen Speed was 62nd (55:09).

In the Surrey Half-Marathon at Woking on 8 March, Alastair Falconer was 15th in 73 minutes 39 seconds, one place ahead of club colleague Simone Luciani who ran 73 minutes 43. These performances lifted them to fourth and fifth place in Striders' all-time club rankings. In the Ashby Mile organised by Croydon Harriers on 12 March at Croydon Arena, Lorraine Hunte set a Striders W65 record of 7 minutes 38.3 seconds.

The seventh annual 'mob match' between Striders and Croydon Harriers took place on 14 March, in conjunction with the weekly South Norwood parkrun. The first finisher was Phil Coales who ran 16 minutes 50 seconds, while James Rhodes was ninth (18:25) and Andrew Aitken was 12th (19:00), just one place and one second of club colleague Matthew Stone, who was the first over-55 to finish and who achieved the highest age-grading with 82.21 per cent. Jon Dean was the first over-60 to finish, placing 25th overall (20:38). Niamh Vincent was the first woman to finish, placing 27th overall (20:46). Nikki Javan was the third woman to finish, placing 47th overall and first in the W40 age-group (22:26), while Kara Boaks was the fourth woman to finish, placing 49th overall (22:30). Bob Ewen was the first over-65 to finish, placing 69th overall (23:43), while Michael Bassett was the first over-70 to finish, placing 89th overall (25:24). Sandra Francis was first in the W60 age-group, placing 154th overall (33:20). In total Striders had 38 finishers, of whom 11 finished in under 21 minutes and 21 finished in under 25 minutes, while Harriers had 25 finishers, of whom seven finished in under 21 minutes and 16 finished in under 25 minutes. Striders won the team event by 1186 points to 830. Using the 'Thornbury' method whereby all 63 finishers score, Striders won by 1186 points to 830. Scoring 25-a side, Striders won by 734 points to 541.

The tenth Croydon Half-Marathon took place on the following day. The race was won by Daniel Gaffney of South London Harriers in a new course record of 70 minutes 47 seconds, which was 41 seconds faster than the previous record set by Abdi Madar of Newham in 2012. The first Strider to finish was Alastair Falconer who ran well to place fourth in 76 minutes 57. Krzysztof Klidzia also ran well to be the first over-50 to finish, placing ninth overall in 80 minutes 53. Rachel Lindley had an excellent run to be the first woman to finish, recording 85 minutes 54, which was just one second faster than club colleague Matthew Stone who was the first over-55 to finish. He was followed by Steve Corfield (87:22), Martin Filer (89:42), Michael Davis (91:15) and Mark Kelly (92:24). Niamh Vincent ran very well to be the fourth woman to finish, recording 92 minutes 40. Ally Whitlock was the eleventh woman to finish (1:44:55) and was followed by Molly Haviland (1:50:20), Selena Wong (1:50:29), Marianne Chua (1:51:18) and Maria Gabriel (1:51:53). There were a total of 260 finishers.

On 17 March, UK Athletics and England Athletics decided to suspend all athletics activity, in response to the outbreak of coronavirus.

25 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SUMMER 1995

In the July 1994 Striders club newsletter, editor Stuart Driver had published an article contending that the club's original name of 'Philips City Striders' was no longer appropriate. Not only was the club no longer restricted to employees of Philips, but it was not receiving any sponsorship from Philips, although it was effectively giving Philips a lot of free advertising by continuing to use the company's name. Philips had closed its main Croydon factory at the end of 1988, and when the club had requested further financial support from Philips in 1992, it had been firmly rejected. By July 1994 none of the club's paid-up members were employed by Philips (the last remaining Philips employee to run for Striders, Colin Golding, had resigned from the club earlier in 1994, although he rejoined in the autumn of 1995 and is now a Life Member). On 14 June 1995 the club held an extraordinary general meeting, attended by 25 of the club's 40 members, which made the long overdue decision to change the name. The members were given several options, including two which would have maintained the club's long-standing acronym of 'PCS': John McGilvray proposed 'Purley & Croydon Striders' while club treasurer Gresham Williams proposed 'Parkhill Croydon Striders'. None of the suggestions gained an outright majority on the first ballot: the two most popular options were Elene Kayum's proposal of 'Croydon Striders' and John Gannon's proposal of 'Croydon Running Club'. On a choice between these options, 'Croydon Striders' gained a clear majority, with 16 of the 24 votes cast.

However, the club subsequently ran into unexpected difficulties when it attempted to register the new name with the Surrey AAA. The Surrey AAA committee included a couple of influential members of Croydon Harriers. Supported by a majority (although not a unanimous majority) of the Harriers committee, they lodged objections to the proposed change, and the Surrey AAA committee voted by a majority to refuse to ratify Striders' proposed new name. To most people outside the Surrey AAA committee, this seemed to be a very harsh decision. There seems to be no logical reason why there should not be two clubs with Croydon in their name. For example, our neighbouring borough of Sutton had a long-established Sutton Athletic Club and a newer club named Sutton Runners. Not surprisingly, Striders appealed to the Southern Counties AAA against the Surrey AA's decision.

On 18 June Striders took part in an inter-club track and field match at Kingsmeadow, organised by 26.2 Road Runners Club. Striders won four of the events: Lee Morgan won the 3000 metres (9:44), Phil Sluce won the shot (8.82), Nigel Davidson won the steeplechase and Linda Daniel won the women's 800 metres (2:48).

The English Schools Championships were held at Nottingham on 8 July. Croydon's Natasha Danvers won the senior girls' 100 metre hurdles in 13.6 seconds. Club colleague Yacin Yusuf placed second in the senior boys' 1500 metres in a personal best 3 minutes 53.82. Later in the month Natasha placed second in the 100 metre hurdles in the European Junior Championships in Hungary, running 13.46 seconds.

The WAAA Championships took place in Birmingham. Future Strider Michelle Campbell, competing for Haringey, did very well to place second in the 100 metre hurdles in 13.36 seconds. She narrowly failed to qualify for the World Championships, which took place in Gothenburg in August. Two of Croydon Harriers' athletes competed in Gothenburg: Judy Oakes in the shot and Lea Haggett in the high jump. Sadly, neither of them managed to qualify for the final of their event.

On 26 August Barbara Cole was the third woman to finish the Two Bridges 36-mile road race, from Kincardine to Forth in Scotland, recording 5 hours 24 minutes.

20 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SUMMER 2000

On 3 June Jane Lansdown became one of the very few Striders to compete in the annual 22-mile 'Man versus Horse' event, at Llanwrtyd Wells. She completed the course in 3 hours 10 minutes.

The third Southern Veterans League match of the season was at Kingsmeadow on 5 June. Our men were fourth while our women were fifth. Our best event was the 5000 metres where Alan Dolton placed second in the over-40 race (18:26.4) while John McGilvray was second in the over-50 race. Another second place was achieved by Tony Sheppard in the 1500 metres. Kate Custis competed in four events, and set a club women's over-35 javelin record of 12 metres 76.

The final Southern Veterans League match of the season was at Croydon Arena on 3 July. Our women did very well to place second in the match and third in the final league table, just one place ahead of fourth-placed Sutton. Their leading performer was again Kate Custis who competed in four different events. She was the only woman to compete in all four matches, and competed in a highly impressive total of 16 individual events during the season. Our men placed fourth in the match and also in the final league table. Kevin Burnett set a club over-60 javelin record of 22 metres 48. Kevin was one of only three Striders' men to compete in all four matches, the others being John McGilvray and Alan Dolton. Kevin and John shared the honour of competing in most individual events, each managing a total of eleven.

In the Forbanks 5 mile road race at Beckenham on 12 July, Eric Parker ran well to place fifth in 29 minutes 36. Nigel Davidson was ninth (30:28) and John McGilvray 11th (34:18). Striders had ten of the 54 finishers, our numbers being boosted by the relative novelty of being able to travel to the race on the newly-opened Tramlink system.

South London Harriers held the Coulsdon 10-mile road race on 27 August. The race was won by David Lear of Crowborough in 57 minutes 33, while the first over-40 was Barry Attwell of South London Harriers, who placed fourth in 58 minutes 14. The first woman to finish was Sue Spencer-Cusick of SLH, who placed 24th overall in 65 minutes 03, just one place ahead of her club colleague Anne Roden who finished in 65 minute 40. Striders placed second to SLH in the team event, led by Dave Shaw who ran well to place 22nd in 64 minutes 52. Alan Dolton was our second man home, placing 31st in 67 minutes 40, with Colin Cotton 38th in 70 minutes 25. New member Chris Morton completed the scoring quartet, placing 53rd in 74 minutes 11.

Competing at Portsmouth on 26 August, Kevin Burnett set club M60 records of 15.54 seconds for the 100 metres and 19.42 metres for the hammer. Twenty years later, both these records still stand.

The Surrey and Sussex Multi-Events Championships were held at Crawley on 9 and 10 September. Kevin Burnett set a club M60 pentathlon record of 2086 points, including performances of 32.4 seconds in the 200 metres, 6 minutes 29.7 in the 1500 metres, and 3.33 metres in the long jump.

The Olympic Games took place in Sydney in late September. Croydon Harriers' leading athlete Donna Fraser had an outstanding run to finish fourth in the 400 metres in a lifetime best of 49.79 seconds. She also competed in the 4 x 400 metre relay, where Britain placed sixth. Croydon's Judy Oakes competed in the shot putt but was unable to qualify for the final.



Olympic finalist Donna Fraser racing in the UK Women's League



**Action from our Veterans League match at Croydon Arena on 24 May 2010.
Steph Upton (lane 5) prepares to race against Donna Fraser (lane 4).**

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SUMMER 2010

On 23 May Striders' women did well to finish third in the Dorking 10-mile road race, which incorporated the Surrey Championships. They were led by Helen Furze who was fifth in the women's race, recording 68 minutes 15. Josephine Thompson was 29th in the women's race (78:48), with Steph Upton 30th (79:11) and Lesley Bourke 40th (83:17). Our women had a good season, finishing fifth in the Surrey Road League, while our men were 13th.

The first Southern Veterans League match of the season took place at Croydon Arena on 24 May. Both our men and women placed fourth. Steve Starvis won the M35 1500 metres (4:38.2). In the 2000 metre walk, Bob Ewen was second in a club M55 record of 11:55.7 while Steph Upton set a club women's club record of 13:12.1, placing third.

On 26 May Striders' women produced an excellent team performance to win their Rosenheim League match at Croydon Arena. Their total of 21 points placed them ahead of Serpentine (19), Belgrave (17), Croydon Harriers (16), Hercules-Wimbledon (8) and Herne Hill (6). This was the first time that any Striders team had won a league track & field match in 15 years of track competition. With just the 4 x 200 metre relay remaining, Striders were in third place. The team of Josephine Thompson, Alice Ewen, Steph Upton and Natalie Osher stormed to victory in 2 minutes 16.4, well clear of their rivals from Serpentine. Striders' best individual performance came from the youngest member of the team, Victoria Ewen, who placed second in the javelin with a club women's record of 18 metres 21. Josephine Thompson was third in the 3000 metres (12:44.5) and second in the B 100 metres (15.9), while Natalie Osher was third in the A 100 metres (16.2). Sadly, our women could not build on this success, and poor turnouts in the away matches saw them slip to fifth in the final league table. Our men had a very disappointing season, finishing last in every match.

On 29 May two Striders won gold medals in the annual Surrey Masters Championships, held in wet and windy conditions at Ewell. Kevin Burnett had an excellent day, winning five gold medals and two silvers. He won the M70 100 metres (20.1), 200 metres (41.5), shot (6.72), discus (19.08) and heavy hammer (7.68). He also placed second in the hammer (18.83) and javelin (17.33). Five of his performances were club M70 records. Alan Dolton won gold in the M50 800 metres (2:44.4) and 1500 metres (5:41.1).

In the second Southern Veterans League match of the season, at Ewell on 14 June, Striders' men placed third, while our women were fifth. Our only winner was Steve Starvis who gained a clear victory in the M35 3000 metres in 10 minutes 15.0, having previously taken second place in the 800 metres (2:19.8). Paul Stanford took a hat-trick of second places in the M40 200 metres (27.6), 3000 metres (11:12.8) and javelin (24.22).

The penultimate Southern Veterans League match of the season was at Croydon Arena on 28 June. Our men placed third, while our women were fourth. Good points came from the 5000 metres where Steve Starvis won the M35 race in 17 minutes 23.5 seconds, while John Foster won the M50 race in a club age-group record of 17 minutes 49.8 and Nigel Davidson was second in the M40 race (19:15.4). Earlier, John Foster had won the M50 1500 meters in 5 minutes 00.6 seconds, with Steve Starvis second in the M35 race (4:44.6) and Steve Massey second in the M40 race (5:14.2).

The final Southern Veterans League match of the season was at Kingsmeadow on 12 July. Our men placed third in the match and in the final league table, while our women finished fourth. Richard Lee-Smith won the M35 800 metres (2:13.4) and placed second in the 200 metres (28.0). Steve Starvis won the M35 5000 metres (17:05.6). Margaret Faherty was second in the W60 200 metres (45.5), 800 metres (3:50.4) and 5000 metres (26:22.5).

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