

Striders of Croydon

JUNE 2021 MAGAZINE



Ally Whitlock on her way to finishing as fourth woman in the South Downs Way 50-mile race on 17 April (photo by Stuart March)

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Competitive Highlights: March-May 2021
20 Years Ago – Local Athletics in Summer 2001
10 Years Ago – Local Athletics in Summer 2011

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Mon 14 Jun – Southern Veterans League – Kingsmeadow
Mon 5 Jul – Southern Veterans League – Sutton Arena
Sun 18 Jul – Surrey Masters Championships – Kingsmeadow
Sun 1 Aug – Surrey 5000m Championship – Kingsmeadow (tbc)
Sat 21 Aug – British Masters Championships – Derby (ages 55+)
Sun 22 Aug – British Masters Championships – Derby (ages 35-54)
Sun 12 Sep – Surrey Walking Championships – Sutton Arena (tbc)
Sun 3 October – London Marathon (Striders marshalling)

2022

Sun 9 Jan – Surrey Cross-Country Championships – Dorking (tbc)



Nikki Javan on her way to a personal best for 3000 metres in the Blackheath & Bromley Open Meeting at Norman Park on 11 April

SECRETARY'S CORNER JUNE 2021 (by Michael Smaldon)

Those of you who read the magazine regularly may notice that this is a bit of a departure from the usual Chair's Corner. You probably saw a few months ago that our long-running club secretary, Mick Turner, decided to step down. The committee and greater club are very grateful for the hard work that he has put in over the years, and I for one wish him a happy retirement from club duties. With my hurdling into the role, however, Tony had the amazing idea of me making my club introduction in my first (and hopefully only) Secretary's Corner.

We've now resumed almost all regular club activities, including the Tuesday and Thursday REPS and track sessions, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday club runs, with swimming sessions and Striders Strolls recently restarting as well. You can take part in Zwift virtual cycling and yoga, and for those of you looking to run marathons this autumn, the yearly marathon training sessions have also returned. Details of all these activities can be found on the amazing weekly newsletter. Keep an eye out for it sprinting into your inbox every Monday. Finally, members of the club have been working very hard putting together a C25K programme with the view to launching it soon. News will be coming out shortly, but if you want to register interest, please speak to Peter Johnson.

Speaking of the REPS sessions, I want to take a moment to thank Chris Morton for running the old speed sessions for as many years as I can remember. I know that personally they helped me improve greatly. He passed the baton to the new REPS team, and I think they have done a superb job stepping into his trainers.

You should recently have seen an email from Hannah Luffman with dates for upcoming social events. Don't forget to put the dates in your diary and keep an eye out for further details as round the bend.

It was nice to read about Chris Green's experience running his first track race for many years. I was in a very similar situation to him, having not set foot on a track since my school days at Croydon Sports Arena. Unlike him though, I was very much under-prepared. Having had my COVID jab just an hour before, I arrived in time to put on my running gear and get to the start line minutes before the race started (many of you will know that this isn't an unusual situation as I have a reputation of being late to the blocks). Despite this I thought it was a great event and everyone who took part enjoyed the experience. I wouldn't be alone in recommending it to other Striders. Thanks to James Rhodes for making it possible.

John Gannon has written an interesting article about the club's history volunteering at the London Marathon. I know from first-hand experience how much fun we have. It really is one of the highlights of the year for me. When that expected call for volunteers dashes into our inboxes, I hope that you all sign-up straight away. I can't volunteer myself as I'm finally running the marathon, but I plan to come along to lend a hand as soon as I finish.

Gold medal goes to Debra for a marathon effort in completing the Thames Path 100. It's something I never imagine I would be able to do and hearing the highs and lows really does show how special such an event is, and the memories that Debra will take away from it.

Keep on reading and you will see an article about the benefits of sports massage by ex-club member Juan Galvan, Alan Dolton's review of Born to Run by Christopher McDougall, some impressive highlights of club members' running activities, as well as interesting action replays of local athletics in summer 2001 and summer 2011.

Stay safe and I will hopefully see you at the finish line soon.

MY FIRST TRACK RACE SINCE 1980 (by Chris Green)

I woke up early on the morning of 22 May 2021. This was annoying, as I'd hoped to get a good night's sleep before the special Striders 3000m track race. The race had been arranged by Mark and Sam Purser, encouraged by James Rhodes, as part of a Blackheath & Bromley Harriers AC open meeting.

The race wasn't taking place until 5.10pm, but I was pretty nervous all day. I'm not sure why, as I had nothing to prove to anyone – other than just wanting to get around 7½ laps of the track without making a complete fool of myself. However, I spent the morning worrying about the weather, what to wear, what I needed to take with me, and fiddling around with my watch to make sure it would give me all the information that I'd need during the race.

The last time I'd raced on a track was in a school sports day in, I think, 1980. On that occasion, Rob Leetcher (from the year below me) and I were awarded joint first in the 800m. That was a long time ago!

I arrived at Norman Park early in the afternoon. The first challenge was finding a free parking space, but after driving around in circles for a while I eventually found one – a good tip is to arrive at unfamiliar race venues early for this reason! After running around the park for a couple of miles to warm up and doing some activation exercises, I went into the athletics track area to register. This just made me more nervous, particularly as they were describing me as an athlete!

As I watched the earlier races, two things struck me. First, most of the other competitors were children who'd been brought to the track but their parents. I had a suspicion that I might be the oldest competitor of the day. Secondly, there were rather more spectators than I was expecting so I realised that this could be quite embarrassing if I ended up getting lapped by the whole field and had to run the last lap alone. Oh well, I was committed to it now, so I was going to go through with it. I started to feel a bit better when some familiar faces turned up from Striders and we started chatting.

The whole event was incredibly well-organised with lots of officials, electronic timing and a big scoreboard just like they have in Diamond League events. When we got over to the start line, we were even asked about our shoes to make sure they were legal – although I'm not sure whether this was a joke as I certainly wasn't intending to break any world records! There were six of us in the race and I had already carefully assessed my competition on the Power of 10 website, so I was certain that I was going to come last. My only hope was that I might be able to keep up with Mike Smaldon. I was encouraged to hear that he had rushed to the track at the last minute after getting a Covid jab, so I wished him well but was secretly hoping he wasn't feeling 100%!

The gun went off and all of a sudden I was running around the track behind the other five. I deliberately went to the back because I knew the others were faster than me and I didn't want to get swept up in their pace. I was determined to stick to my own pace and aim for around 13 minutes (1:44 per lap). Having screens up with the time on was a great help so, in fact, I didn't look at my watch once during the race.

I went through the first lap in 1:30 something and, although I felt OK, I knew this was too fast for me to sustain so I deliberately slowed down a bit and tried to settle into a more comfortable pace.

It was good to get some encouragement from the spectators and, in between taking some great photos, James Rhodes was shouting my name. It's surprising how much this helps. Maybe that's a small insight into why elite athletes prefer big crowds to help them get their best performance.

13 minutes for 3000m is 6:58 minutes a mile pace. I went through the first mile in 6:50. I knew I was ahead of schedule but I needed to keep it together for the last 3½ laps. This is when it started to get really tough. My legs were aching, my lungs were burning as I was gasping for air, and I could feel my form getting worse as I was leaning forward. I could also see Mike pulling away from me, so I gave up all hope of catching him.

When I saw the lap counter for 2 laps to go, mentally I was thinking that I should start winding up the pace but my body wasn't having any of it! I just couldn't make any adjustments. All I could do was keep going at the pace I was on.

As I came into the home straight with one lap to go, I heard someone shouting "Steve". This confused me, until I realised that Steve Massey was coming up behind me on his final sprint to win the race. I did everything I could to pick up the pace and I just managed to avoid him lapping me.

With 200m to go, I was vaguely aware of passing a big group of athletes waiting for the next 3000m race to start. At this point I was giving it everything. As I came into the home straight I could see the other Striders at the finish line and I could sense the spectators clapping for me – presumably out of sympathy for coming last.

My legs nearly gave way in the final few metres and I collapsed over the finish line onto the grass on the infield. I don't think I've ever had to breathe so heavily. I could vaguely hear people asking if I was OK and I managed to get up to my knees, but it was a few minutes before I was able to talk.

So, after a huge effort and a last place, would I do it again? Yes, absolutely! It was a great experience and good to test myself against some much faster runners. It would be even better if more Striders were to enter these sorts of track events. They are open for everyone and so it's a bit of a shame that it's only the faster runners who tend to enter.

My thanks go to everybody who organised the meeting. I was really impressed with how well-organised the whole event was and all the work that the officials were doing. It must take a long time to set up events like this, and it's a big time-commitment for people on the day to make sure that all of the electronic timing works and everything goes to plan. As well as thanking Mark and Sam Purser, it was very kind of James Rhodes to come and take photos of us and shout encouragement. I was pleased with my final time of 12:52. Having never run a 3000m race before, I'm taking that as a PB!



THE VIRGIN MONEY LONDON MARATHON 2021 (by John Gannon)

Way back in 2005 the club, having previously approached the organisers of the London Marathon to offer the club's services in assisting at this event, were invited to attend on marathon day, with a view to take over the duties carried out by an existing group of volunteers (older readers might remember a now defunct running club called the Bow Street Runners) who, due to falling membership, could no longer provide sufficient numbers of volunteers. The Striders' club secretary and chairperson at that time, Alan Dolton and I respectively, travelled up to Victoria Embankment to see what duties the club would have to provide on the day of the marathon. If I recall correctly, I think it was the Flora London Marathon back then.

The main reason that we had approached the organisers was that we were aware that the club would be offered guaranteed places in the following year's event that in turn we could offer to the club members, via our own club ballot, wishing to take part in the marathon. As we all know getting a place at London was difficult to say the least, so it was thought that if we added these places, two at that time, to the places we were granted as a UKA affiliated running club, also two, it might help attract more runners to the club membership, which at that time was less than 100, about 75 if I recall correctly.

Well, the reasoning at that time seemed to be correct because as we know the current club membership is now over 200 and while being given places in the marathon was not the only factor in this increase in membership, I think you can safely say it played its part. Not only has the club membership increased but so have the duties we perform on the day. The original request was to provide 12 volunteers to marshal the Hungerford Bridge stairs as well as both exits of the Embankment Underground station. However, because of the hard work the club has done over the years the organisers have increased our duties so that we now have over 40 marshals on the day that marshal not only on the bridge but also on a section of the course and more recently a section away from the course itself at the end of Whitehall, showing the respect that the club is held in by the organisers. Because of this we have increased to four the number of guaranteed places we are granted because we help. This has also led to the club to be invited to provide volunteers to be Games Makers at the London Olympics in 2012 (an unforgettable experience) as well as involvement in the Ride London cycling event, although I am not sure whether the latter, although unforgettable, was a good experience or not!

This year of course, because of the Covid-19 virus, the London marathon is taking place not in its usual slot of April but has been pushed back to October, when again the club will be asked to provide its usual group of volunteers. I therefore thought it might be helpful to provide an article in the club newsletter detailing what our duties consist of, which might help give an understanding to new members or anyone that has not volunteered. If I get the timing right the newsletter will hopefully go out before the usual call for volunteers goes out prior to the marathon. Regular volunteers might recognise the info below! I will look forward to meeting volunteers, old and new, on Sunday 3rd October outside Embankment tube station.

Virgin Money London Marathon SOC Marshals

Just thought it would be a good idea to put some notes together that will help you understanding what you will be doing on the day and how you will be going about it. As you will recall we are split into two shifts with each shift having two teams of marshals, one team of six on the course itself on Victoria Embankment while another team of twelve will be

positioned on several points on Hungerford Bridge, the stairs leading from the Embankment up to the bridge as well as outside entrances to Embankment Underground Station.

The times of each shift are as follows:

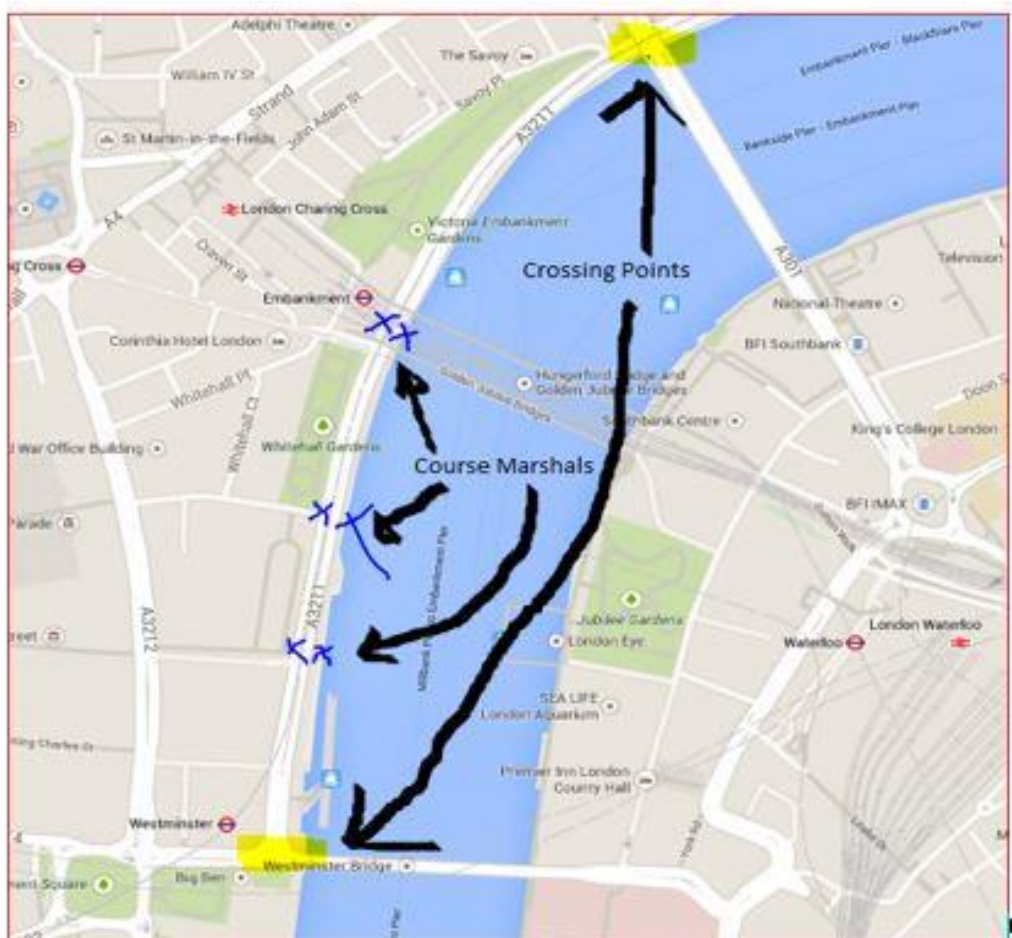
- Shift 1 – 10AM to 1.30PM
- Shift 2 – 1.30PM to 5PM

Meeting Point

It would be appreciated if people could meet outside Embankment Underground Station (Riverside) 15 minutes prior to the shift starting so that we can carry out a quick briefing session as well as handing out any kit required. As for travel arrangements I would suggest if you are travelling up for Croydon then train from East Croydon to London Bridge changing to trains to Charing Cross from where you can walk down Villiers St to Embankment. Otherwise train to Victoria then District/Circle Line to Embankment. Please remember that the course passes that you will have picked up from prior to the event entitle you to free transport only on TfL buses/trams/tube.

Course Marshals

This team of six, plus a team leader, will be situated on the course from Hungerford Bridge and up to Richmond Terrace as shown on the map below:

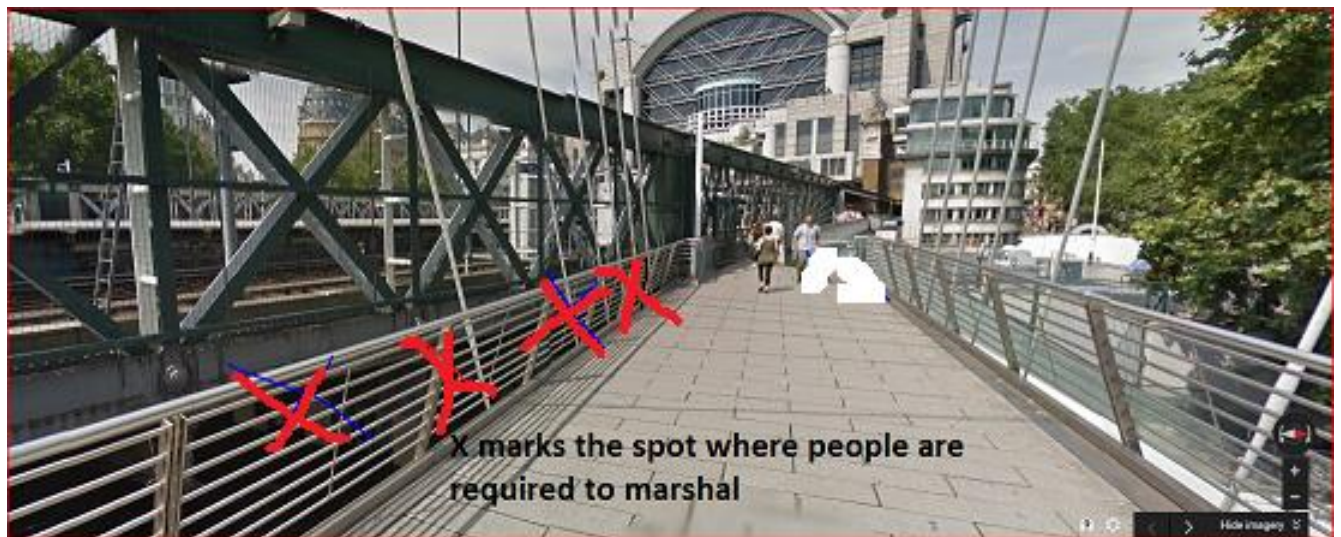


You will be working in pairs so you will have not only the back-up of your team leader but also your colleague should you need it. Duties on the day will include:

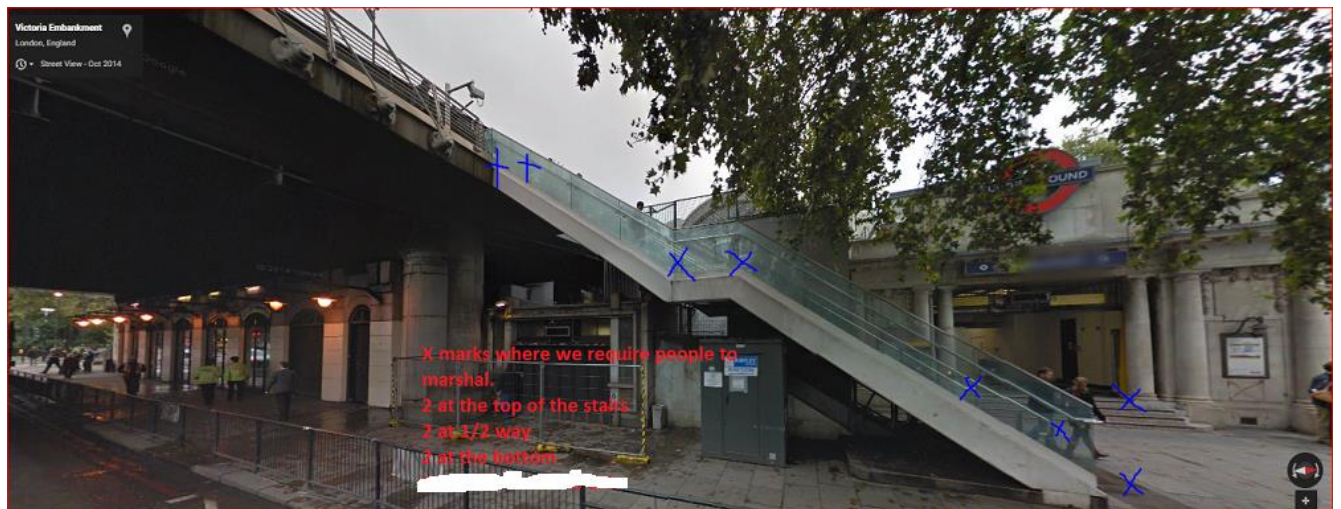
- Ensuring that the course, or as it is sometimes referred to, Field of Play (FOP) of all spectators and no one tries to cross the course.
- Directing spectators to nearest crossing points (as shown on map) also nearest public toilets, Westminster and Victoria Gardens
- Assisting spectators of when runners they are supporting might be coming past passed on marathon pace times (if known!)
- Being the eyes and ears of the race, watching out for any suspicious behaviour and reporting it to your team leader If your team leader is not contactable, please call the appropriate mobile, which in this case will be mine on **07880 506 305**.
- Encouraging runners as they have less than a mile to go! This would be more relevant to those doing the PM shift. For runners suffering with injury there is usually St John Ambulance teams situated on the course by the tube station and at Horse Guards Parade.

Bridge Marshals

The walkway on Hungerford Bridge (or Jubilee Bridge as it is now officially called) can at busy times get packed with people standing on both sides of the walkway trying to watch the race and therefore making it difficult for people to get past in either direction. So, our job here will be to clear the bridge of people who want to stand on the left-hand side of the walkway as per the photo below to ensure that this does not get too crowded and people can access the walkway. To cope with this, we will have four people on the bridge at any one time again as per below.



The rest of the team will be situated either on the stairs on Hungerford Bridge (top, middle and bottom) or outside the non-riverside entrance to the tube station as shown in the photos below. Pairs will be rotated every 20/30 minutes to ensure everyone gets a chance to see part of the marathon.



X marks the spot where we need 2 marshals to look out for runners who have dropped out of the marathon and need guiding back to the meeting point in Horse Guards. Also need to remove chip from shoe if not already done. Finally answer questions from General Public.

Duties will include:

- Ensuring one side of the bridge is kept free of spectators standing and watching the race (Top Photo)
- Ensuring the stairs are free of spectators standing and watching the race (Middle Photo) at busy time we will operate a one-way system up and down the stairs with people going up the side of the stairs nearest the road and going down on the side nearest the station.
- Outside tube station in Villers St - as described in bottom photo
- Directing spectators to nearest crossing points (as shown on map) also nearest public toilets, Westminster, and Victoria Gardens
- Assisting spectators of when runners they are supporting might be coming past passed on marathon pace times (if known!) Please refer to Marathon Info Guidebook
- Being the eyes and ears of the race, watching out for any suspicious behaviour and reporting it to your team leader. If your team leader is not contactable, please call the appropriate mobile, which in this case will be mine on **07880 506 305**.

Marathon Kit and Equipment

Those of you that are regular VLM Marshals will know that we are given free T-Shirts and caps for taking part on the day as well as the standard High Vis marshal bibs. We will also be issued with Course Passes that gives us free travel on the day for any TfL transport. (Bus/Trams/Underground) Unfortunately this does not extend to National Rail so we cannot use it on the train up to London on the day, but something free is better than nothing! You would of course have to show your badge to TfL staff members when required to.

Your kit and equipment will be delivered to the club prior to the marathon so it would be great if you could arrange to collect your kit from clubhouse on a Wednesday night club run the two weeks prior to the marathon. This would really help reduce the amount of equipment we have to transport up to the marathon on the day itself. If you cannot manage that, please let whoever is in charge of the kit distribution (TBA) know that this is the case and that you will collect your kit on marathon day.

Early Birds

We will need a small team of marshals, three or four, to not only transport what is left of the equipment up to the marathon but to also arrive a bit earlier to help get the bridge and stairs set up, barrier tape around the stairs and the like, as well as put up the club banner on the bridge and flag at the bottom of the stairs. It would make sense for those helping out in the morning to come forward and help; it would mean meeting at East Croydon at 8AM to get up to town by about 8.45. If you can assist here, please let the marathon club contact person know.



THE THAMES PATH 100 – CENTURION GRAND SLAM RACE 1

(by Debra Bourne)

The Centurion Running 'Grand Slam' of 100-mile races is made up of the Thames Path 100, South Downs Way 100, North Downs Way 100 and Autumn 100 – or TP100, SDW100, NDW100 and A100 for short. With TP100 in May and A100 in October, they are held over a period of 5 months, with between-race intervals of 5, 7 and 9 weeks.

The SDW100 is held the same weekend as Comrades Marathon (56 miles) in South Africa. I was planning on running Comrades in 2020 and 2021, so although I had thought about the Slam, I was not expecting to do it anytime soon – and I wasn't sure I wanted to do TP100, as it's very flat and I was not at all sure how I would cope with that (no simple walking break strategy of 'walk the hills'). In 2020 I volunteered at the TP100 and got a free race place for 2021. I was also pretty sure that Comrades would not happen so, although I had a place for Comrades, rolled over from 2020, I entered SDW100. At which point I decided I might as well enter the other two, which I'd run in 2020, as well, and give the Slam a try.

I didn't want it to be all about me, so I decided to use the Slam for some fundraising, running the races for the benefit of two charities: Wildlife Vets International, and Five Talents.

The TP100 starts in Richmond-on-Thames in London and heads upstream to Oxford, following the Thames Path the whole way. This does not, however, mean that it always stays alongside the Thames River; there are a number of places where it moves away from the river for shorter and longer distances. It also crosses over the water repeatedly. Due to COVID restrictions, the start time was spread out over 0530 to 0830. Runners expecting to finish in 22-24 hours were asked to start between 7.40 and 8.20. I aimed to be there and ready for 7.40, hoping that would mean I wouldn't actually start later than 8am. My plans to go down by train were scuppered when I discovered that it was a bus replacement service, so my wonderful husband drove me there. By the time I had done last minute prep in the car, dropped off my drop bags, attached my tracker and visited the toilet, it was about 7.55. It was raining, although not too heavily, as I said hi to James Elson, the RD, made sure the course was set and my new watch had found the satellites, pulled my gloves on, and set off.



At the start in Richmond

The rain was irritating, but not worse, not nearly as heavy as the forecast had suggested. One runner was wearing a plastic single-use mac on the basis that it would definitely keep him dry even if it really poured down, so he wouldn't be wet for later. I was reasonably comfortable inside my Montane Minimus, not getting overheated, while the armwarmers I

wore with my short-sleeved T-shirt ensured an air gap between skin and coat, which enables evaporation.

The route was pleasant enough, alongside the Thames much of the time. Early on I passed a variety of waterfowl including a couple of pairs of Egyptian geese with young goslings (later I saw a pair with goslings that were very well grown – evidently a really early clutch) two Mandarin drakes, and of course all the way along, mute swans. The path underfoot was variable, sometimes tarmac, sometimes packed fine gravel, sometimes earth or grass or mud.



Egyptian geese with goslings; a typical section of fine packed gravel path

There were a number of people out walking or ambling along the path. We were only five or six miles in when one man of an elderly couple called out ‘keep going – not far now.’ To which I replied “yes it is – we’re heading for Oxford!”. I do wish people wouldn’t ever call out ‘not far now’ unless they know the race and that the finish is indeed very soon.

At the first aid station, Walton, it was good to briefly see Rel Lindley, who would be pacing for me later. In and out quickly, just refilling a water bottle and grabbing some food. I was carrying my own Kendal Mint Cake, and some roasted salted potatoes in little bags. At each aid station I planned to supplement this with a satsuma or similar, a couple of quarters of jam sandwich, a bag of crisps unless I really didn’t feel like it, and a bag of nuts and raisins.

At the second aid station I decided to make use of the toilets while they were available: the Thames Path does not provide much in the way of secluded trees and bushes for impromptu toilet stops. That was when I realised that the inner legs of the shorts were covered in blood and I discovered that my right inner thigh had been sandpapered - the rain-wetted material must have been dragging a seam across it as it blew in the wind. Gory, but thankfully not as painful as it looked. Not a lot I could do at this point, except tuck the leg of the shorts up into the inner liner to stop it from dragging across the rubbed area for a bit. Once it dried up I used glide stick on it to prevent further rubbing. I also sent a message to Rel, asking if she could pick up a tube of antiseptic cream on the way to Henley, if possible.

I based my pacing on trying to maintain a similar early pace to that I'd done on the A100. I had printed out the mile times and cumulative times, and had them with me on a bit of paper (laminated against the rain) so I could compare and check I wasn’t falling behind. I had another piece of paper with the checkpoints and bridges marked, with distances and whether the river should be to my left or my right after each bridge crossing and checkpoint. This had been put on Facebook by another runner, and it was extremely useful: if I saw a bridge, I could check whether, based on distance, it was one I would be crossing, so I needed to look out for the markers, or one I could ignore.

I was going through a low point and plodding a bit when another runner came up beside me and we got chatting and I managed to get running better again while he encouraged me to enter a desert race in Tunisia. We shared several miles of running and chatting and walking breaks, and it really helped. Alas he was met at a crew point and stopped, while I carried on. It was lovely, the following day, to discover that he had made donations to both of my chosen charities.

By now the rain had stopped, which was great. I tried to keep up the pace a bit – I was still keeping just slightly ahead of my times from the A100, which was good. The route was pleasant enough, mostly by the river, but without any particularly good views. The most enjoyable aspect for me was watching the wildlife – swans and other waterbirds on the river, red kites in the sky. At one point I stopped to watch one kite that was quite low and flying back and forth in loops. I tried to get a couple of photos on my phone. Seconds after I had put the phone away, the kite stooped and rose again with a rat in its claws.



Red kite just before catching a rat, and a pleasant line of trees across the river

Into Windsor and I was suddenly on semi-familiar territory, as I had been second marker on the section from there to Henley last year. Alas that didn't stop me briefly going wrong at a point where we needed to go through a gate and across a field, rather than continuing along the path. There was a bit of red-and-white tape on the gate, but also a yellow arrow from another organisation and I was carefully ignoring the arrow, as James had told us to do. Thankfully I'd only gone a very short way and was just beginning to feel uneasy when other runners called me back – at which point I suddenly recognised where I was from last year and remembered crossing the field. Onwards alongside locks and gardens, all looking familiar. Just before Cookham aid station I noticed another runner rejoining the road from the side and realised we were passing some toilets, which I was very glad to see!



Into Windsor, and the path on the other side – river now to my left

Into and out of Cookham as fast as possible, then onwards, mostly close to the river and crossing over a couple of times. Then away from the water, across fields and through Culham Park, where the herd of white fallow deer were visible in the distance. It looked very familiar, given that I had only run through there once before. I realised although I -had- seen it before, as I had run through as second-marker for the TP100 in 2020, my brain was also trying to match it to the grander Stornor Park, which I'd run through both on my recce for and the race of Chiltern Wonderland 50 in 2020.



Through Culham Park, and another bit of path alongside the river

Two or three miles out of Henley the wind picked up – as a head wind, which was somewhat unwelcome. However, another runner let me fall in behind him for a bit, which was nice, and we chatted as we ran. It was particularly nice to run this bit with someone because I remembered from marking it that it had seemed ages from when I could see Henley to when I actually got there. “How much further to the Henley aid station?” he asked, and I was able to reassure him, and another guy who was running with us, that it really wasn’t far. Finally round the curve, over the bridge and into Henley, which was a lot less crowded than when I had come through last year on a very warm and sunny day. A few hundred yards from the aid station my mobile windbreak met up with crew, and someone else called out that we were about to pass the toilets, so I veered off to use those before trotting the last bit to the aid station.

Rel met me just before I came into the aid station, and there were familiar faces in the aid station crew, including Louise Ayling, who asked me how I was doing. “Okay except for this...” – I showed her the scraped area of skin. One of the volunteers brought me my drop bag. The first thing I did was pull my new insulated jacket on so I wouldn’t get chilled while stationary. Rel had managed to pick up a tube of Savlon, so I was able to put cream on the scrapes, which felt good. I had the option of a hot drink and hot food here, and I had brought my own flavoured tea bags and a mug, and instant noodles in a container, but I didn’t feel that I needed anything hot, so I quickly grabbed the essentials – head torches and more Kendal mint cake and roast potatoes to supplement the aid station food. Then I stuffed the jacket back into its stuff sack and into my backpack, evicting the waterproof trousers I’d been carrying, as I didn’t think we would get any more real rain. That was the last time I made use of the jacket until after I finished, although as it only weighs 200 grams, carrying it wasn’t a problem.

Soon Rel and I were heading out, along the path, with a brief stop as I warmed up and took my windproof jacket off, then across another bridge. We walked on the bridge, as I didn’t want to risk getting a toe caught in the gaps between the planks and falling flat on my face – my imagination is too vivid sometimes. Suddenly we both noticed what looked like a bank or credit card lying on the bridge. Rel bent and picked it up. As we paused and looked around, a woman who had passed us walking the other way stopped, patted a pocket, turned: and

Rel waved the card at her. She was very happy, particularly as it could so easily have dropped between the planks and into the river.

It was great to have Rel accompanying me on this section, particularly as I'd been feeling a bit low. We ran and chatted and walked and chatted while I ate and drank, and ran and chatted again. We both managed to miss the marking signalling the turn that James had warned about in the briefing video, but thankfully re-joined the route just after we'd realised we had lost the markings, and we hadn't detoured too far. Rel was carrying a much bigger pack than I was – a 25-liter bag pretty full, as she had come to Henley directly from her Walton-on-Thames volunteering duties.



A bridge that we didn't go over, and the same bridge seen at night on the A100

Onwards. Into Reading and through. Once past the Reading check point, I remembered the path from the final leg of the Autumn 100. The light was just starting to fade, but it was nice to see some of the route that I'd previously only gone through at night. Finally, as we entered a tree-lined bit of path, it was time to switch the head torches on rather than risking tripping over a root in the dusk. Up the steps, along the road and back down, passing the hotel and grounds that I remembered from the A100, then popping out into the housing estate. This looked familiar as well, and (unlike on the outward section of the A100) I didn't take any detours. Back down to the river and the meadows. We did pass a couple of little parties of people in the meadows, and I was extra glad to have someone with me at that point. We reached Pangbourne in okay time for Rel to get the last train home – she wouldn't have long to wait, but wasn't in danger of missing the train either.

Out of Pangbourne aid station, through the church yard and onwards. I knew that I was about to reach the hilliest section of the whole route, but on any other course it would be considered extremely minor elevation, and indeed the uphill road felt somewhat less steep than it had when tackled during the final section of the A100. I'd been rather looking forwards to the section through the woods, and generally enjoyed it, although there was one section where I couldn't see ANYTHING off to my left and my imagination painted in a steep drop-off that I would fall down if I slipped and not stop until I splashed into the river. Looking at the map, that impression might actually be correct! Also, there were a couple of places where the path seemed to split and there were no markings, but although I slowed somewhat – because pushing on when you're not sure you're going the right way is difficult – my vague recollections from the A100 were sufficient that I managed not to go on any diversions. I was very glad to see a bit of tape a little further on. Down the steps and up. Finally dropping down into Goring and running along and into the aid station.

Here I had another chance for a hot drink and hot food, but again decided I didn't need anything warm – it really was very mild. Also, my feet were feeling fine so for the first time

ever on a 100 I didn't change my shoes or even my socks along the way. A visit to the toilet, a reload of roasted potatoes and mint cake, refilled water bottles, a few bits of food from the tables and I was off again, pausing briefly outside for one of the volunteers to point me in the right direction heading out of Goring. I was irrationally worried I was going on the wrong path, despite the markings, and had to remind myself that as this was the TP100 not the A100, the markings were all going in one direction, so if I was following them I couldn't be going the wrong way.

It was unexpectedly warm during the whole night - I had my lightest windproof on for a while, then took that off and later even stuffed the armwarmers in the bag and was fine in a short-sleeved T-shirt and shorts. I took a caffeine tablet at about 11 pm and another about 2am.

I lost the route again at Shillingford, missing a left turn, as did the runner a short distance ahead of me – we both at the same time started realising we had gone wrong. Thankfully, she was able to bring up the map on her phone and work out not only where we were and where we should have been, but that we could continue down the road and turn left and rejoin and it would be about the same distance as if we had taken the correct path. We ran together for a bit, chatting, then she said she needed to slow down and told me to go on ahead.

Crossing loads of fields on grassy paths, constantly looking for and mostly failing to find tape confirming the course, other than by the arrows on gates. I was running by myself and finding it hard to keep my pace up. I saw a pair of gleaming eyes, probably a fox, at one point. Shortly after that, I saw three or four runners coming towards me from in front and to the left – they had taken the wrong path across one of the fields and were returning to the route. Only a short while later I made the same mistake myself – the Thames Path must have turned right to follow the river while I continued on the path straight ahead across the field. However, after a few minutes I noticed that I was getting rather far from the river, and looking back I could see other headtorches were off to the right, so I cut across the field and got back on course. The headtorches turned out to belong to the same group of women who I'd seen coming back onto the path after their own detour. On the map, this section, which must be between Little Wittenham and Clifton Hampden, is not so far, only a couple of miles or so, but in the dark, by myself, worrying about the route and slowing down, it seemed a lot further.

I got into Clifton Hampden and mentioned the navigation problems. One of the volunteers said that lots of people had mentioned fewer than normal markings and going wrong in that section. I'm not sure if someone had been removing tape, or if the person marking had been running out of tape, or if it had looked okay in daylight, but at night and when down to 15-20+ minutes per mile pace you could easily go 10 minutes or more without seeing any markers – which meant a lot of time being unsure if you were on course or not, and a long time before you were sure you were off course if you had strayed. I really regretted not having recced that section, as people who had done so, or had run the TP100 previously, didn't have any problems navigating it.

Leaving the aid station I was feeling really low. I'd slowed down a lot and I was feeling that I was not going to finish in under 24 hours, which would be really, really disappointing on such a flat course. The path was muddy and slippery, with some puddles so wide that there was only a small sliver of path on one side (next to the Thames – so a slip risked my falling into the river) and an even smaller sliver on the other side, which I navigated holding onto spiky vegetation for support. Out on a normal run I would simply have run through and got my feet wet, but I really didn't want to do that when I might still be out on the path for several hours. There were also tree roots on some sections, with the mud and roots providing a mixed obstacle course.

Sadly, at one point during the night I spotted a recently-dead toad on the path, that had evidently been stood on and half squashed. Soon after, I saw a frog on a narrow bit of path. I managed to scoop it up and put it to one side where it was less likely to suffer the same fate as the toad. And I similarly moved a second frog a while later. Soon after that I spotted a muntjac deer off the side of the path. Otherwise I slid in the mud and tried to lift my feet up to avoid tripping over roots, and tried to keep running more than walking – this last without much success.

There was a point where I was ready to give up, stop trying to push myself, let the sub-24 goal go. But I reminded myself of the second part of the words Scott Jurek had written when he'd signed a copy of his book 'Eat and Run', and that I had on my ID bracelet: "Always dig deep". So I kept going. At one point three runners went past me and I slotted in behind them, using that to help me keep moving a bit faster. When they slowed to a walk, I managed to keep on running. Also, at about 6am in the early light, I took another caffeine tablet, and a bit after that I found myself running faster again.

Into Abingdon aid station, filling water bottles and quickly out again – or as fast as I could on the muddy, slippery path. I was still unsure that I would make it under 24 hours, particularly as I really wasn't sure how far I had left to go, but I was going to try!

I reached Lower Radley with more than 500 ml of water left, so I didn't pause, just waved at and thanked the volunteers as I ran by. I was moving much better now – helped by the return of daylight as well as the caffeine – and I wanted to finish sub-24 if I could. Through a gate and across a field, with an unexpected familiar face and voice wishing me well – what John Diamante was doing in Oxford I didn't know, but it was nice to see him. I still wasn't sure how far I had to go, but I thought two or three miles, perhaps a bit more. I said as much as I passed another runner, and he told me 'it's just round the bend – less than half a mile'. I couldn't quite believe it, but I did my best to speed up. Sure enough, round the bend in the path and there was a left turn into the sports ground. A last burst (best I could manage, anyway), through the finish arch and stop. I looked at my watch and it said 23:29 and some seconds.

Medal, photos, T-shirt. Then I drifted over to the chairs, carefully placed at least 2 metres apart, and gratefully sank into one.



Couple of miles from the end (thanks, John!) and finished (thanks, Stuart)

In the open air, we were able to linger for a while, so I put on several layers of warm clothing – my new jacket was donned for the second time in the race – and got a mug of tea and a vegan hot dog with fried onions and tomato ketchup, and chatted with the other runners.

Not long after I had finished I was delighted to see Ken Fancett finish (first in the VM70 category, as usual), and to see Elaine Battson come in – the lady I'd shared the detour with earlier.



100 miles – one day buckle



Socially distanced chatting

Post-race musings:

Mixed feelings about this one. Pleased that I finished in under 24 hours. Happy that the ranitidine I'd taken on Friday evening and again during the race seemed to help my stomach. Disappointed that I'd lost the course so often, that I'd slowed so much overnight, and that I hadn't finished under 23 hours, which I really should have been able to do.

THE BENEFITS OF SPORTS MASSAGE (by Juan Galvan)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



BOOK REVIEW: BORN TO RUN

(by Christopher McDougall: reviewed by Alan Dolton)

It might seem strange to be writing a review, in 2021, of a book which first appeared twelve years ago, in 2009. Indeed, my excuse for not having published such a review earlier in my time as editor of this magazine was precisely that I assumed that most people interested in long-distance running would already have read it. But when Ally Whitlock recommended this book as lockdown reading in the club's Facebook group last year, it became clear that many Striders had not in fact read it: and the fact that it is still available on the shelves of Smiths and Waterstones, long after most books published twelve years ago have been 'remaindered', is a testament to its continuing popularity.

The book is non-linear in its arrangement (and was criticised for this in a review in the 'Washington Post'). It begins with McDougall looking for a legendary long-distance runner nicknamed 'Caballo Blanco' (which is Spanish for 'White Horse'), who had been living with the Tarahumara, a tribe from the Chihuahua area of Mexico who themselves had a legendary reputation as long-distance runners. Tarahumara runners had represented Mexico in the Olympic marathons of 1928 and 1968, but had finished outside the medals on each occasion, and it had subsequently been accepted that a mere 26 miles was much too short a distance for them.

In the second chapter, McDougall explains that in 2001, he began suffering from foot pain which severely restricted his running. At the time, McDougall weighed more than 16 stone, so he was rather heavier than most Striders. Two years later, he read a magazine article about the Tarahumara, and was intrigued that they appeared to be able to run long distances without injury and while wearing minimalist sandals on their feet. He commented that "it's as if a clerical error entered the stats in the wrong columns: shouldn't we – the ones with state of the art running shoes and custom-made orthotics – have the zero casualty rate, and the Tarahumara – who run way more, on way rockier terrain, in shoes that barely qualify as shoes – be constantly banged up?"



The Tarahumara wear minimalist sandals on their feet

McDougall persuaded 'Runner's World' magazine to commission him to trek into the northern Mexican barrancas in search of the Tarahumara. He duly meets 'Caballo Blanco', who tells him about Rick Fisher, a photographer from Arizona who had taken an interest in the Tarahumara in the early 1990s. Fisher had persuaded some of the Tarahumara to compete in the Leadville 100-mile trail race, a notoriously difficult race at high altitude in Colorado. In 1993 Tarahumara runners finished first and second in this race. The 1994 race saw the Californian runner Ann Trason, well-known for finishing as the first woman in the Western States 100-mile trail race for ten successive years (1989 to 1998), run at Leadville. She took an early lead, bidding to become the first woman to win the race outright. In a classic duel, which McDougall describes at length, she was overtaken by the Tarahumara runner Juan Herrera, who went on to win the race, beating the previous course record by 25 minutes. Trason was second, 36 minutes behind him: her time still stands as the women's course record.



Ann Trason, the leading female American ultra-distance runner of the 1990s

Caballo explains that he had befriended Herrera's team-mate Martimano Cervantes in Leadville shortly before the race, in which Cervantes finished third. After the race, he had followed the Tarahumara into northern Mexico. After several years of living there, he had decided that he would like to promote a long-distance race which would enable the best Tarahumara runners to compete against leading North American runners such as Scott Jurek, who had won the Western States 100-mile trail race for seven consecutive years from 1999 to 2005.

The central part of the book describes the build-up to the race, known as the Copper Canyon Ultra-Marathon, which took place in March 2006. One slight criticism of McDougall's book is that he does not indicate that this was actually the fourth time Caballo had organised this race, but that for the first three races, from 2003 to 2005, only Tarahumara runners had taken part: the 2006 race was the first time that runners from the USA had been invited to take part.

Scott Jurek was easily the best-known and most successful competitor among the group of North American runners. However, the group also included Ted McDonald, who is referred to by his nickname of 'Barefoot Ted' and was the first runner to be sponsored by Vibram Five Fingers (a well-known manufacturer of minimalist shoes). McDougall quotes the Stanford University coach Vin Lananna as telling Nike executives that "when my runners train barefoot, they run faster and suffer fewer injuries ... people went thousands of years without shoes. I think you try to do all these corrective things with shoes and you overcompensate.

You fix things that don't need fixing. If you strengthen the foot by going barefoot, I think you reduce the risk of Achilles and knee and plantar fascia injuries."

The group was mostly male, but included one talented female runner, Jenn Shelton. McDougall observes that "Jenn could run a sub-three-hour marathon while wearing a string bikini and chugging a beer at mile 23": this is a reference to the 2007 Frederick Marathon in Maryland, when she forgot to pack her racing kit, but still finished as the first woman, racing in her bikini and setting a women's course record of 2 hours 53.



Jenn Shelton, pictured after setting a course record in the Frederick Marathon

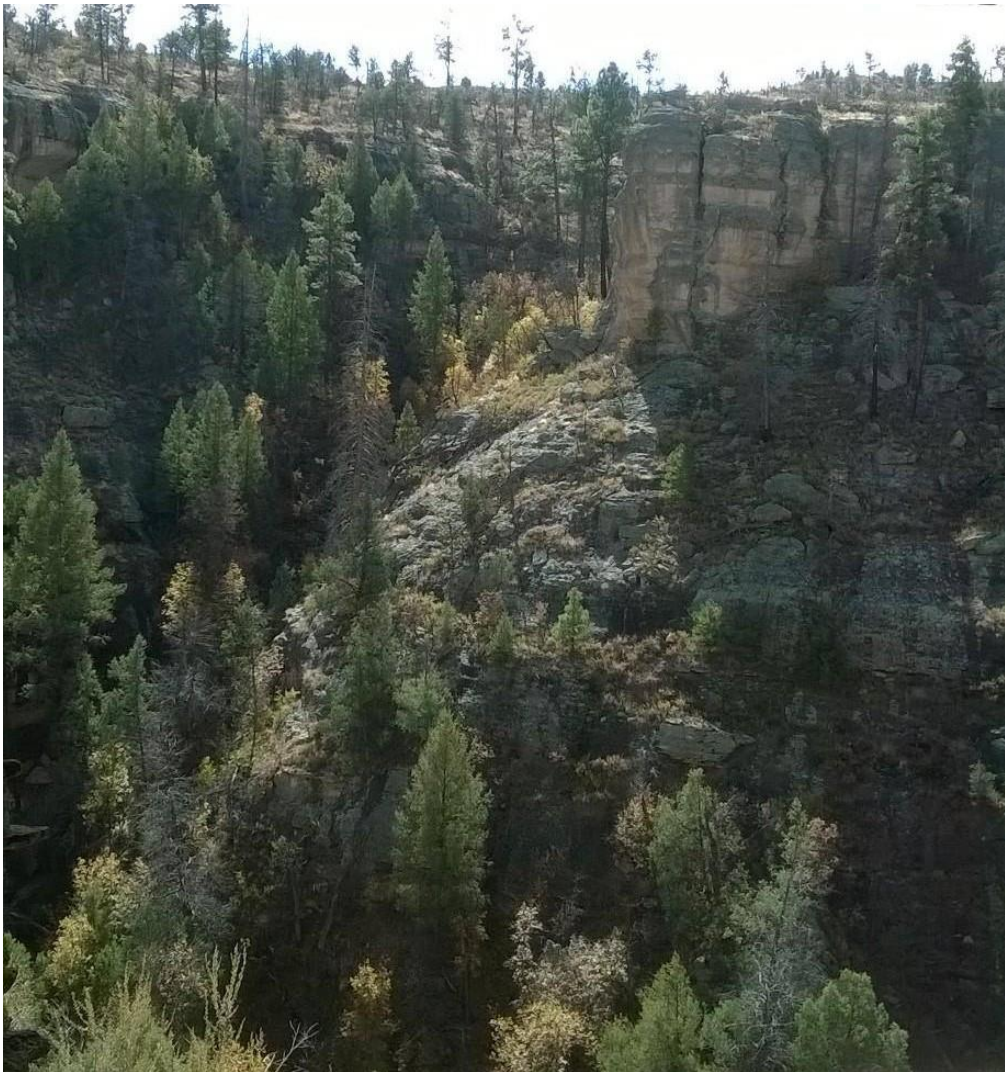
Chapter 31 of the book contains a brilliantly written description of the 2006 Copper Canyon Ultra-Marathon. For the benefit of those Striders who haven't yet read the book, I won't reveal who wins the race, or how the various North American runners (including McDougall himself) fare. In the following chapter, Caballo finally reveals his background to McDougall: he was born as Michael Hickman, and had been a boxer before discovering running. At the time McDougall met him, he was spending two or three months each year in Colorado, making some money through furniture removals, and spending the rest of the year in northern Mexico.

Although the race described in the book took place in 2006, the book was not published until 2009. Both Jurek and Shelton continued to run at a high standard: in 2010, Jurek set a United States 24-hour record of 165.7 miles, which remained a US record until 2012. Shelton competed in the 2012 US Olympic Marathon Trials, but suffered a hamstring injury and failed to finish. Shelton was critical of McDougall, considering that his book had romanticised the Tarahumara lifestyle and had not adequately described their poverty. On a sadder note, 2012 was also the year in which Hickman was found dead after going missing on a training run in the Gila National Forest in New Mexico.

This book did not convert me into an ultra-distance runner: I have never run a race which took more than four hours and still have no desire to do so. But I thoroughly enjoyed reading the book, and it definitely made me to want to continue being a runner. I have no hesitation in thoroughly recommending it to those Striders who have not yet read it.



The Tarahumara runner Maria Lorena Ramirez, racing in 2018



The Gila National Forest, where Michael Hickman was found dead in 2012

COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: MARCH – MAY 2021

Keith Simpson had an excellent run in the Dorney Lake Marathon on 3 April. He placed third in the over-70 category in a new club age-group record of 4 hours 06 minutes 35 seconds. Eight days later he was the first over-70 to finish the PodPlus Kent Spring Marathon at Charing, covering the undulating course in 4 hours 25 minutes 19 and placing 76th overall out of 111 finishers.

In the Blackheath & Bromley Open Meeting at Norman Park on 11 April, Nikki Javan ran very well to place eleventh in her heat of the 3000 metres, recording a personal best of 12 minutes 17.06 seconds.

At the RunThrough 10-kilometre road race at the Olympic Park in Stratford on 14 April, Matthew Stone had an excellent run to be the first over-50 to finish, placing 25th overall in a new club age-group record of 35 minutes 53 seconds, and becoming the oldest Strider ever to run 10 kilometres in under 36 minutes. Club colleague Simone Luciani was seventh overall in a personal best of 33 minutes 03 seconds, which lifted him to fourth place in Striders' all-time club rankings.

On 17 April, Ally Whitlock ran very well to be the fourth woman to finish the South Downs Way 50-mile trail race, starting in Worthing and finishing in Eastbourne. She placed 80th overall out of 332 finishers, recording 9 hours 09 minutes 05 seconds. Club colleague Debra Bourne, completing her 100th ultra-marathon, was the 17th woman to finish (10:02:53).

Matthew Stone produced an excellent run in the RunThrough Half-Marathon at Newbury Racecourse on 1 May. He placed eighth out of 208 finishers, and his time of 80 minutes 53 seconds was a new club over-55 record.

Debra Bourne ran very well to be the eighth woman to finish the Thames Path 100-mile race from Richmond to Oxford on 8 May. She was second in the over-50 category, and placed 91st overall out of 272 runners, finishing in 23 hours 29 minutes 21 seconds.

In the Ardingly five-kilometre road race on 12 May, Andrew Aitken ran very well to set a new club over-40 record of 16 minutes 50 seconds, finishing 88th in a high-quality field. In the Birmingham University Open Meeting on the same day, James Rhodes placed third in his heat of the 800 metres in a new personal best of 2 minutes 07.98 seconds.

In the Reunion five-kilometre road race at Kempton Park on 15 May, Matthew Stone ran very well to be the first over-55 to finish, setting a new club age-group record of 18 minutes 03 seconds. At Wimbledon Park on 19 May, James Rhodes placed fourth in his heat of the 3000 metres, recording a new personal best of 9 minutes 28.21 seconds.

On 22 May Matthew Stone had an excellent run in the Blackheath & Bromley Open Meeting, at Norman Park. In his first track race, he placed third in his heat of the 5000 metres, setting a club over-55 record of 17 minutes 58.47 seconds. James Rhodes was fourth in the previous heat, recording a personal best of 16 minutes 35.98 seconds.

On the same day, Nikki Javan was the eighth woman to finish the North Downs Way 50-mile race from Farnham to Knockholt Pound, placing 66th overall out of 292 runners, recording 9 hours 34 minutes 04. In the Devil's Lite 50-kilometre race, starting and finishing at Steyning on 29 May, Ally Whitlock was the fourth woman to finish, placing first in the W40 age-group and 26th overall. She completed the undulating course in 5 hours 41 minutes 50 seconds.

20 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SUMMER 2001

The third Southern Veterans League match of the season took place at Kingsmeadow on 4 June. Both our men and women were fourth, with our men gaining what was then a rare victory over local rivals Croydon Harriers. Nigel Davidson was second in the A 1500 metres (4:37.1) with Bob Ewen winning the B race. Alan Dolton was third in the A 5000 metres (18:09.1) with John Kirby second in the B race. Kate Custis was the backbone of the women's team. She showed her versatility by competing in five events, placing second in the 100 metres with a club W35 record of 15.3 seconds and second in the hammer with a club women's record of 14.19 metres.

The final Southern Veterans League match of the season was at Croydon on 30 July. Our women did well to place third. Kate Custis did very well to compete in five events, winning the discus with a club women's record of 18.72 metres, winning the 800 metres and placing second in the shot with a club W35 record of 6.25 metres. Paula Bongers was second in the 5000 metres in 22 minutes 42.8 seconds. Our men placed fifth. Team captain John McGilvray was second in the over-50 steeplechase with a club over-55 record of 13 minutes 17.4 seconds. Our oldest member, George Duncton, was second in the over-50 2000 metre walk (15:52.5). Striders' men finished the season in fifth place out of the eight clubs in the league, while our women finished third. Four Striders competed in all four matches during the season: Kevin Bannister, Nigel Davidson, Alan Dolton and John McGilvray.

Croydon's Donna Fraser competed in the World Championships in Edmonton in early August. She placed fifth in her semi-final of the 400 metres, recording 51.77 seconds.

The Southern League completed its 33rd season with matches on 4 August. Of our local clubs, Croydon Harriers finished 23rd in Division One, and were relegated to Division Two for the first time in their history. Sutton AC finished bottom of Division Three, while South London Harriers were seventh in Division Four West and Holland Sports were fourth in Division Five West. The Rosenheim League Final was held at Tooting on 22 August, and was won by Herne Hill. Serpentine had joined the league for the first time and placed third in the Eastern Division, taking seventh place in the final. As a large mixed-ability club with a high percentage of women members, Serpentine's entry into the league made the distance events less intimidating for slower runners, and paved the way for Striders to join the league four years later.

On 9 September Striders' Kevin Burnett won the Surrey Over-60 pentathlon championship at Crawley, recording 1813 points. His performances included 23.24 metres for the discus, 20.55 metres for the javelin and 34.1 seconds for the 200 metres.

The summer of 2001 saw long-serving committee members Barbara and Mick Gambrill move from Croydon to Birchington, on the Isle of Thanet. Mick had organised several of the club's social events, while Barbara had been the club's newsletter editor for the previous three years. The club also said farewell to Jane Lansdown, who had resigned from her teaching job to do VSO in Guyana. She had been our leading female runner in her four years with the club. Consequently, Striders' AGM on 26 September saw several changes to the club committee. Michele Lawrence retired from her post as club secretary and was succeeded by Alan Dolton, while Chris Morton replaced Barbara Gambrill as newsletter editor. Michele had not used email and Barbara's newsletters had only been available in hard copy, so these changes allowed Striders to enter the age of electronic communication. On the negative side, the departure of Michele, Barbara and Jane meant that the committee suddenly became very male-dominated, which was not rectified until relatively recently.



Donna Fraser of Croydon Harriers, who competed in the 2001 World Championships



Jane Lansdown, who emigrated to Guyana in the summer of 2001

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SUMMER 2011

71-year-old Kevin Burnett had a successful day in the Surrey Masters Championships at Ewell on 28 May, winning three gold medals and four silver medals. He won the over-70 shot (6.76), discus (18.30) and heavy hammer (7.09), and took silver in the 100 metres (19.5), 3000 metre walk (21:28.4), hammer (19.96) and javelin (18.24). Two Striders won medals in the over-50 age group. Alan Dolton took silver in both the 800 metres (2:46.8) and 1500 metres (5:29.9), while Steve Smith took silver in the long jump (3.65), and bronze in both the 400 metres (70.5) and 800 metres (2:50.3).

On 5 June, Helen Furze produced an excellent run in the Dorking 10-mile road race, which incorporated the Surrey Championships. She was the sixth woman to finish and first in the W40 category, covering the undulating course in 67 minutes 35 seconds.

The third Southern Veterans League match of the season was at Croydon Arena on 13 June. Steve Starvis had an excellent run to win the 5000 metres, recording 17 minutes 20.8 seconds. Both Striders' men and women placed fourth in the match.

The final Southern Veterans League match of the season took place at Kingsmeadow Stadium on 20 June. Sandra Francis placed second in the over-50 triple jump in a club age-group record of 6 metres 24, and took third in the discus (10.75). Margaret Faherty placed second in the over-60 800 metres (3:42.1), while Serena Stracey placed third in the over-35 800 metres in a club age-group record of 2 minutes 43.4. For Striders' men, Taylor Huggins produced an excellent run to win the over-35 5000 metres in 18 minutes 20.8. Striders' women finished fourth in the overall league table, while our men finished fifth.

In the Richmond 10-kilometre road race on 19 June, which incorporated the Surrey Championships, Cara Kayum was the 18th woman to finish, recording 41 minutes 13.

Striders' women produced their best performance of the season to win our home Rosenheim League match at Croydon Arena on 6 July, finishing nine points ahead of second-placed Croydon Harriers. Striders dominated the women's 3000 metres with Steph Upton winning (12:44.3) and Linda Daniel placing second (14:06.3). Sandra Francis was second in both the 100 metres (16.5) and the triple jump (5.99), while Natalie Osher was second in the 200 metres (33.1). Steph, Linda, Sandra and Natalie finished the evening by sprinting to victory in the 4 x 200 metre relay (2:25.6). This win lifted Striders to fourth in the division with one match remaining. Striders' men were unable to match our women, and had to settle for fifth place of the six clubs in the match, just four points ahead of Serpentine. Both our men and women fielded very depleted teams in the final Rosenheim League match of the season, which took place at Tooting two weeks later. In the final league table Striders' women held onto fourth place, while our men were sixth.

In the Elmbridge 10-kilometre road race, held in warm conditions on 24 July, Cara Kayum was the 14th woman to finish, recording 42 minutes 09. In the final Surrey Road League tables Striders' women finished in 15th position, while our men were a disappointing 22nd of the 29 clubs in the league.

On the track, the summer of 2011 was the first season of the Southern Athletic League, which provided mixed-sex competition, thus enabling clubs to reduce their travel costs (before this, men and women had had to compete in separate leagues). Croydon Harriers were 11th in Division Two. In the World Championships in Korea in August, Croydon's Martyn Rooney was seventh in his semi-final of the 400 metres.



Kevin Burnett, who won seven medals in the 2011 Surrey Masters Championships



Cara Kayum, who was one of the leading members of our women's Surrey Road League team in 2011

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