

Striders of Croydon

MARCH 2023 MAGAZINE



**Cindy Siu in the Surrey Cross-Country League at Chobham on 14 January
(photo by Malcolm Davies)**

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40 Years Ago – Local Athletics in Spring 1983

10 Years Ago – Local Athletics in Spring 2013

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Wednesday 19 April – Striders Annual General Meeting – Sandilands

Sunday 23 April – London Marathon (Striders marshalling)

Monday 24 April – Southern Veterans League – Kingsmeadow

Sunday 7 May – Ranelagh Half Marathon – Petersham (Surrey Championships & Road League)

Sunday 21 May – Sutton 10K – Nonsuch Park (Surrey Road League)

Monday 22 May – Southern Veterans League – Ewell

Sunday 4 June – Dorking 10 miles – Brockham (Surrey Championships & Road League)

Monday 19 June – Southern Veterans League – Sutton Arena

Sunday 25 June – Ranelagh Richmond 10K – Petersham (Surrey Championships & Road League)

Monday 10 July – Southern Veterans League – Wimbledon (tbc)

Saturday 15 July – Elmore 7 miles – Chipstead (Surrey Road League)

Sunday 23 July – Elmbridge 10K – Elmbridge (Surrey Road League)

Friday 28 July – Wedding Day 7K – Bushy Park (Surrey Road League)

Saturday 2 September – British Masters Track & Field Championships – Derby (tbc)

Sunday 8 October – British Masters Marathon Championships – Chester

Sunday 15 October – Cabbage Patch 10 miles – Twickenham (Surrey Road League)

Sunday 3 December – British Masters 5K Road Championships – Battersea



Striders at our mob match against Croydon Harriers in South Norwood Country Park

EDITORIAL: MARCH 2023

Welcome to the March issue of our club magazine. Our leading article comes from Ally Whitlock, who completed a 50-mile race in Cornwall in January along the very scenic (but very undulating) South West Coast Path. We follow this with a shorter article from John O'Mahony about a scenic half-marathon in Ireland. We also have a brief article covering the London Loop from Coombe Lane to St Giles' Church in Farnborough, as a rather belated follow-up to the article in last June's issue which covered the London Loop to the south of Coombe Lane. This is followed by a couple of book reviews and our usual history articles.

It was good to see us field a club record of 64 Striders for our annual mob match against our local rivals Croydon Harriers in conjunction with the South Norwood parkrun on 4 February. When this match was first held, in December 2013, Harriers only managed to field 30 runners and we gained a comfortable win. However, they have increased their numbers since then, and for the second successive year we suffered a narrow defeat. Looking back at the results from December 2013, it is interesting to see that Colin Cotton was the first runner aged over 60 to finish. Almost ten years later, Colin is still running well, and in last month's race he was the first over-75 to finish.

With the end of the cross-country season, many Striders will be turning their attentions to road racing. Several of our runners have been training for next month's London Marathon, where Striders will again be marshalling. The following month sees the resumption of the Surrey Road League. This league now has a new organiser, with Steve Rowland of Ranelagh having retired after many years' service and being succeeded by Mary James of South London Harriers. Most of the traditional league races remain unchanged, but the Wimbledon 5K (which was never popular with Striders, perhaps because some of our runners considered it to be too short) has been omitted. In its place the Cabbage Patch 10-mile road race, which is held in Twickenham each October, has been included in the league for the first time. This significantly lengthens the league season, and means that there will be a slight overlap between the end of the road league season and the start of the next cross-country season.

On the subject of road races, it might be worth reminding members, especially newer Striders, that there is a form on our website (<http://www.stridersofcroydon.org.uk/races/results/>) which people can use to submit their race results. Submitting results via this form should make it easier for Graeme Drysdale to compile our annual road rankings, and is also helpful for whoever is submitting our weekly press reports to the Croydon Advertiser (although we do have a limit of 300 words for our press reports, so that it is not usually possible for our reports to include all the races which Striders have taken part in).

One of our former editors, Robin Jamieson, habitually used to conclude his introductory remarks with "may all your runs be through sunlit forests". I'm not sure whether that is a realistic ambition for members of a club based in Croydon: most of my runs are on local roads or through local parks, and it seems a long time since I last ran through a forest. But I hope that all Striders continue to enjoy their training runs, wherever they take place.

Alon



ARC 50: DANCING ON THE SOUTH WEST COAST PATH (by Ally Whitlock)

Two and a half years ago in the summer of 2020, I fell in love with the South West Coast Path.

I borrowed a tent and a camping stove. Dug my 20-year-old sleeping bag out of the loft and between lockdowns headed off on a mini-adventure. I pitched the tent in a deserted campsite just outside Weymouth and spent two days exploring the coastal path.

On the first day, I ran under a cloudless blue sky to Lulworth Cove and back. The next day, I ran all the way around the Isle of Portland. The trail was like nothing I had ever experienced before. The coast path was steep, rocky underfoot and at times precariously close to the cliff edge. But the views, oh the views. It was a photographer's dream.

I fell in love.

Fast-forward to the summer of 2022.

I'd bought my own lightweight tent, camping stove, sleeping mat and a new sleeping bag. One day in June I packed everything I needed in my rucksack and spent three wonderful days fastpacking along the SWCP. I ran 70 miles from the start of the trail in Minehead to the surfer's paradise of Croyde Bay.

I ran, walked and hiked during the days. I stopped and paddled in the sea in tiny, secluded bays. I ate ice-creams (so many ice-creams) in the tiny coastal villages I passed through. I took detours off the path to chase the views. I camped in little campsites off the beaten track. I carried everything I needed and was almost entirely independent and self-sufficient. I felt truly at home on the path.

I had every intention of writing about it but could never quite find the right words to describe the experience.



Just outside Croyde Bay, Summer 2022

And then I entered the ARC50.

50 miles on the SWCP.

In January.

“The ARC50 is a point-to-point race from Porthcurno to Porthtowan along 50 miles of the stunning and dramatic Cornish coast path. Passing Land’s End, runners will complete an Arc around the extreme southwest tip of Cornwall. Competitors will need the ability and experience of being self-sufficient for long periods of time in potentially extreme weather conditions.”

The stage was set for a truly epic winter adventure.

PRE-SHOW

It’s around 7:40 on Saturday morning as 250 runners, sleepy from the 5 am race registration in Porthtowan, enter the majestic open-air theatre at Minack. Carved into the granite cliff, the amphitheatre overlooks the spectacular panorama of Porthcurro Bay and forms an impressive backdrop for the ARC50 start line.

In a cloud of animated anticipation, we gather in the dress circle on top of the cliffs before making our way through the auditorium to the stalls. Timed to perfection, the golden sunrise lights the ocean stage in front of us. A pod of dolphins dances through the waves in our honour. I pause in wonder. I cannot think of a more magical race start and its simple beauty makes me even more excited for the day ahead.



Taking the leading role on the stone stage, the race director entertains the crowd. He enthusiastically reminds us every few minutes how long we have until our 8:30 race start. Whilst we wait he interviews some of the pre-race favourites, asking banal questions about their race plans and goals. Wrapped in my own self-indulgent pre-race thoughts their words wash over me like the waves washing over the rocks below.

Our little group huddles in a corner. Quietness descends on us for perhaps the first time that weekend as we all think about the day ahead. As the time gets closer, waterproof jackets – worn to keep warm in the chill of the early morning – are pulled off and stuffed in packs. GPX files are loaded onto watches. A final check of the script and we bid each other nervous farewells, promising to meet again at the finish.



I move slightly further forward to try to avoid getting caught up in the early melee. Music pumping in the background, the RD counts down the final few seconds. Bright yellow flares are lit and held high in the air by volunteers scattered around the arena.

The air horn starting the race blares out across the silent bay. A blanket of smoke from the flares covers the theatre in a hazy yellow glow before rising into the morning air as a stage curtain rises at the start of a performance.

It's showtime!



ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

With the air horn echoing in the stillness of the morning, several hundred runners chaotically scatter through the theatre. Clambering the 100+ steps from the stalls to the dress circle and past the box office. A lung-busting climb in the first few seconds of the race. At the top, I take one final glance at the vista behind

me before turning my focus to the path in front. The path to Porthtowan and the finish line. Some 50 miles away.

I have no expectations of this race. Whilst I am an experienced trail runner and I have numerous 50+ mile race finishes to my name, I have very little experience on technical terrain. I am fully aware that sections of this race will be unlike anything I have run before, and I feel slightly unprepared.

I don't know the route. I don't know the terrain. There was no recce, no dress rehearsal.

None of the blogs, course descriptions and YouTube videos – excellent as they were – that I consumed over the past few days can fully prepare me for what lies ahead.

But in many ways, the anticipation of the unknown and the lack of expectation excites me. All I need to do is do the best I can. I decided to 'race' rather than 'run' because I want to see what I can do in a completely different and new-to-me environment. I know I can run well on the South or North Downs; can I translate that experience into a strong 50-mile performance on the coastal path?

The distinction for me is that when racing, I run hard. I remove distractions and my sole focus is on moving forward as quickly as I can, running the flats and downs. Hiking the big hills, running the small. And I don't stop (other than at checkpoints).

When I 'run', I treat the race as more of an experience. A day out. I may pause, take in the views, stop for a photo and indulge in all the treats at the checkpoints. I may even sit down! I took this approach at Lakeland 50 in the summer and had a fabulous day out in the Lakes.

But today, I want to perform. I want to push myself. I want to see how well I can perform on a new stage.

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO

The first couple of miles wind along a narrow single track. A line of brightly-clad runners stretches out ahead of and behind me. The day is unexpectedly warm for January and soon layers are being shed. A week or so of drier weather following the stormy start to the year has dried the path out. Conditions underfoot are, for the most part, excellent.

After climbing out of the theatre, we drop down towards a tiny hidden cove, before climbing once again. Nearly 300ft in the first mile and a sign of what is to come. The path widens and the field gradually starts to spread out.



The first five miles to Land's End are beautiful and fairly runnable (although this may also be my fresh, bouncy legs talking...). Wild, rugged coastline decorated with small, secluded bays. The turquoise sea to my left glistens in the hazy morning sun. It takes all my willpower not to go off-piste to explore!

Although if you were to ask me now to describe much of the route, I would struggle.

Such was the nature of the terrain, I had to concentrate 110% on the path in front of me. I couldn't afford to be distracted by the views. It would only take a brief lapse in concentration, or a misplaced step, and I would be tumbling down the cliff or tripping over a rock.

As my eyes scan the path in front of me, anticipating what is to come and where to place my feet, I miss much of my surroundings. I hear my Dad's voice in my head reminding me to take in the view.

Not today Dad, not today.

Such was my focus, I took only two photos during the whole race. This is approximately 998 less than I took on the day I fell in love with the coast path.

ACT ONE, SCENE THREE. TO CREW OR NOT TO CREW, THAT IS THE QUESTION.

As the first crew stop, Land's End is crowded with supporters. People line the path leading towards the end of the land, cheering and shouting encouragement to all who pass. Bottles of water and bags of snacks sit on the ground beside them waiting for their runner to pass and grab what they need.

ARC50 has only one checkpoint in the whole race. This is at mile 28 in St Ives. It's recommended that runners have a personal support crew who can meet them at various locations along the route with food, drink and fresh kit.

I don't have a support crew. I'm running unsupported.

Logistically, coming down from London, it just wasn't going to work, but I have to be honest, it doesn't worry me. I regularly run 25-30 miles by myself and am used to running with a pack carrying all the food and drink I need. Whilst a crew would be nice, I know I can get to St Ives and then to the finish without additional support.

Additional to the official checkpoint at mile 28, there are ARC Angels. Angels, aka volunteers who rock up in a car park or road crossing with a car full of water, coke and a few snack items. A kind of mobile Aid Station. They are there as safety checks and for unsupported runners. However, as I don't know exactly where they will be and there is no guarantee that I will cross paths with them when needed, I don't want to rely on them.

As it was, I saw several Angels. I won't go as far as saying they were lifesavers. I wasn't in need of first aid and I hadn't run out of water, but an unexpected cup of coke when I was flagging and in need of a little sugary boost was like a sweet gift from heaven.

As a post-race aside, I do wonder now what percentage of runners had crew vs being unsupported and how that was reflected in finish times.



ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR

From Land's End, we run through Sennen Cove, a small coastal village known for its surfing. The SWCP runs along the concrete seafront. An expanse of wide golden sands to the left, beachfront houses, fish and chips and surf shops to the right.

I push the pace, making the most of the flat tarmac under my feet, relishing the opportunity to stretch my legs out a little. I watch tiny dots climb the hillside in the distance and know that in a few minutes, I too will be slowing to a walk.

Through a car park lined with crew and the coastal path diverts off the road and back onto the glorious trail. It's sandy and soft underfoot as we run through a series of dunes before climbing out of the bay and back onto the clifftop.



© David Miller... That's me in the distance!

The terrain starts to change. It becomes rockier, the boulders across the paths larger. Tiny streams and crystal-clear waterfalls tumbling towards the sea crisscross the path. Some of the streams have makeshift wooden bridges, many don't and the only way across is to jump from one side to the other.

A chicane takes us down a steep descent. A chance to let go and let my feet do the talking. I fly down, feet dancing across the path and skipping over rocks. Left, then right, then left again. Descents are my strength and I'm beginning to enjoy this! The rollercoaster ride continues up to the Cot Valley and down a steep set of steps where we are greeted by two more cheery Angels.

They point us up the road. It's a long, slow drag; I consider walking but after a few steps decide it's perfectly runnable. A sharp left turns into an immediate climb that takes us off the road and back onto the trail towards Cape Cornwall.

The trail doesn't quite reach the peninsula, instead, it turns slightly inland as we're met by another line of crew. I spot many familiar faces and relish their shouts of encouragement. I may not have my own personal support crew today, but every single person out on this path is supporting me. That's the ultra community for you.

ACT ONE SCENE FIVE. WHEREFORE ART THOU?

It's somewhere after Cape Cornwall that my memory fails me.

Where are the tin mines? Are they before or after the fun rocky section?

Where are the bogs?

I see an Angel and have a cup of coke. Where was this?

I am so focused on moving, looking for signs, and following the path on my watch, that the real path starts to merge into one. I remember things but I now have no idea whereabouts in the race they were.



The first photo I took... Just past Pendeen

There was a small section of bogs where my navigation failed me and I couldn't find any discernible path. I had a WTF moment standing in a patch of mud, looking around and seeing nothing that even remotely resembled a path. The line on my watch not matching any line on the ground. Thankfully another runner came along and he seemed to know exactly where he was going so I splashed through the puddles following in his footsteps for a few minutes.

I think this was before the fun bit...

The section I call the fun bit appears to be the section most people hated. Somewhere in and around Zenor or Pendeen.

Wild and rugged rocky paths. There was more scrambling and climbing than running. The short and sharp climbs were hands-on knees moments whilst trying to find the best route through, over or around the boulders. The most worn rock usually indicates the best path to take. The race briefing said to expect to cover two to three miles per hour in this section. As 17, 18, 19-minute miles popped up on my watch screen, they weren't wrong, but I was absolutely LOVING it.

I was running/scrambling/climbing/jumping from rock to rock with a huge smile on my face. Marvelling at the beauty around me. The climbs were sharp but short and when momentum and terrain allowed it I found myself running the ups as well as the downs. It reminded me a little of the joy I had in the Peaks, the area around Kinder Downfall. I loved that too.

I surprised myself with my confidence on terrain I have very little experience on. Although I hesitated on some of the more tricky descents (more so than the ascents), I felt strong and comfortable, relishing the variety and the challenge the path brought. I overtook and pulled away from several other runners in this section which surprised me. I'd love to do more like this.

A few miles before St Ives in amongst the rocks, I crossed paths with Vicky. Vicky and I first met during SDW50 in 2021. Despite both of us falling whilst we were chatting, her on a rock and me in a huge puddle of mud, it was lovely to catch up and share a few miles with her.

THE INTERVAL

On the outskirts of St Ives, we are met by our personal Valet Runner. Aka an ARC volunteer who guides runners through the confusing hustle and bustle of the winding backstreets of St Ives to the Guildhall checkpoint. He cheerily chatters to us throughout the two minutes. I wonder how many times his feet have run these roads today.

Vicky, who is crewed by her wife Emma and dog Poppy, isn't stopping, so we say goodbye at the door as she runs back through town to the next crew stop. All runners, whether stopping or not, must 'check in' to the checkpoint. I don't see her again as she pushes on to finish a very deserved fourth.

The checkpoint has come at the right time for me. I have begun to feel weary, and with it slightly despondent, over the last few miles. Not helped by that fall in the mud... I am literally covered in it, but I reason that falling in soft mud is probably preferable to falling on hard rock.

I am also almost out of fluids, and I wonder how much of my weariness is due to rationing my water over the past five miles or so. I thirstily gulp down several cups of squash whilst an Angel fills my soft flasks for me. I'm carrying three 500ml flasks and alongside the coke I had a few miles ago, the 1.5 litres only just lasted me to St Ives.

I take a cursory glance at the food on offer, but nothing takes my fancy and I decline a bowl of vegan chilli. I'm at the point in a race where my stomach (and perhaps my mind) starts to protest at solid foods.

I've done well until now. Eating something every 45 minutes. I've had four peanut butter and jam wraps, a vegan sausage roll, and several cereal bars, but from this point in I know I'll be relying on gels for my nutrition. Anything else will be an added bonus.

As I pull what feels like a very heavy handful of gels out of my bag to stuff in easily accessible side pockets, I rue not having a support crew. I carried about half a kilo of gels for 28 miles in preparation for the second act. How nice would it have been to have had a crew hand me these when I needed them?



The second photo I took... Somewhere on the way to St Ives...

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE. MOOD.

FFS. I navigated myself over and around rocks and boulders where there was no path. Put me in a town with roads and I take the wrong bloody one!

A Valet Runner guides me from the checkpoint back onto the seafront and sends me on my way.

On the way out of town, I follow the coastal path sign, not the arrow on my watch and somehow I take the wrong path. In my defence, I follow the SWCP whilst the race route appears to take another path so I'm not

exactly wrong, but I am wrong... It adds on perhaps a quarter of a mile and I'm annoyed when I see people who left the checkpoint after me are now in front of me.

The sugar hasn't kicked in and I'm still on the edge of despondency, so this error doesn't help.

Coming into the race, navigation was my biggest concern. There are no race markings and no big yellow arrows telling us where to go. One of the challenges of the race, alongside the terrain and potential wintery weather, is that it is self-navigated.

Although it follows the South West Coast Path, a national trail, there are sections where signage is sparse or a little ambiguous. I have the gpx file on my watch to guide me and the OS map on my phone as a backup.

As it was, I needn't have worried. For the most part, navigation is fine and my trusty old Fenix 3 and its breadcrumb trail does superbly. There were a couple of moments of doubt (standing in a bog...) and ironically my two significant navigational errors were both in towns, on roads...

Many consider the section after St Ives to be one of the easier parts of the race. After a few miles of lumpy trail, the five miles or so through Hayle are relatively flat roads. Many crewed runners change into road shoes here. I don't have that option but I'm not even sure I would have changed even if I had. My Hoka Speedgoats, with just the right combination of grip, cushioning and support, were superb throughout the whole race.

I absolutely hate this road section. The tarmac is hard, the road boring and the traffic suffocating. I won't lie, I am now in a massive GRUMP. Whilst sulking, I lose concentration and lose the path. I am in a town, on pavements... A few more runners pass me which doesn't help my moodiness.

Low periods in races are inevitable. I look back and every single race I've done has had one.

At the Wendover Woods 100, it got the better of me. At the Thames Path 100, it almost won but some very good friends believed in me more than I believed in myself. By Autumn 100, I'd learned how to ride the doubts and came out the other side of them stronger.

Here, I have no option other than to keep going. There are no checkpoints, I have no crew. There is no easy exit. As big as my funk is, as annoyed with myself as I am for the navigational error I made, the only option I have is to keep moving forward.

On the outskirts of town, the path returns to trails. The soft sand underfoot is a refreshing contrast to the hardness of the tarmac. As I leave the depressing roads of Hayle behind me, I also leave my mood with them. I almost instantly feel lighter, brighter, more positive and more focused.

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO

With Hayle in our shadow, we stumble into the Dunes of Doom. Several miles of gently undulating sand dunes heading towards Godrevy. The maze of near identical crisscrossing paths winding through the tall marram grass makes navigation tricky, especially once it gets dark.

I follow the line on my watch. Keep an eye on the granite rock signs and look for the footprints in the sand. By now, several hundred runners from both the 100 and 50-mile races have been through the dunes and amongst the messy tangle of indistinguishable footprints there is a well-worn groove to follow.

Having passed the race sweep and tail runner a few miles ago, I begin to see more and more 100-mile runners.

Whilst the winner of the 100-mile race finished as the 50-mile race was starting at 8:30 this morning, these back-of-the-pack runners have been on the go for nearly 30 hours. They started at midday yesterday in Coverack. With just over ten miles to go and six or so hours until their final cut-off, they are coming up to their second night on the trail.

I am in awe of their strength and tenacity. I say a word or two of encouragement to every single person I pass.

Mid-dunes I cross paths with Rebecca. We've been in close proximity for the past 20 miles or so. Sometimes she's in front of me, sometimes I'm in front of her. We chat briefly as she tells me this is her longest-ever run. She is flying and running so strongly. A Cornish local, she knows the dunes well and occasionally shouts "left ahead" or "turn right" to me. Her local knowledge is invaluable.

As we run, I keep glancing to my left, trying to catch a glimpse of the sea in the gaps between the towering sand dunes. One of my goals is to get through this section before dark and I'm trying to gauge how much more daylight we have left. I see the sun, partly obscured by clouds, slipping quietly down towards the horizon. It's going to be close.

ACT TWO, SCENE THREE

Having successfully navigated the Dunes of Doom I reach Godrevy as the last lingering rays of golden sunlight disappear below the ocean line. I'm greeted by a couple of ARC Angels, who at this moment in time, really ARE angels. Running on sand is draining and 40 miles in, I am flagging.

I have perhaps become a little slack with my nutrition, and on top of a poor night's sleep, waves of tiredness engulf me.

I stop and drink several cups of coke, pausing for a few minutes to get my head torch out of my pack and put on an extra layer. As daytime eases into nighttime the temperature is dropping, and I decide to put a layer on now as I don't want to stop again until the finish.

Coke is rocket fuel.

Within moments of setting off again, I feel the tiredness lift and a new lease of life. Suddenly I have ALL the energy. I start to run not only the flats but some of the gentle inclines too. With ten miles to go, it feels like I have had a subconscious shift in mindset.

Alongside the 100-milers, I also overtake some fellow 50-milers. I'm smiling again. I've had a few low moments where I seriously questioned my life choices. But as I'm running along the coast path covered in the blanket of darkness, I remember that I am doing something I love and that it is a privilege to be here.

FINALE

Miles 41 to 50 tick by without event. (Yes, I did say 50... When has an ultra ever been exactly the distance advertised...!) I'm running strong and despite the darkness, navigation is pretty straightforward now. There's one hairy moment when I swing my head round and realise the cliff edge is mere metres from the path my feet are running along...

Up and down Sally's Bottom, my childish mind giggles at the valley's name as I pull myself, hands on knees, up the hundred-odd steep steps. Several exhausted runners stand static at intervals up the climb. I don't stop. I won't stop.

I've run solo for most of the last five miles or so. At times seeing no one either in front or behind me. I enjoy the silence and the solitude of the nighttime coast path. Nighttime running alone in the wild doesn't faze me. I am happy and content in my own company.

I know I'm nearing the end when I see the glimmering lights of Porthtowan in the distance. In many ways, since emerging strongly from my earlier funk, I don't want this journey to finish. I'm enjoying myself.

My feet hit the tarmac and I run down the steep cliff road into Porthtowan Bay. We're staying in Porthtowan and when I arrived yesterday afternoon I explored a little. I know where I am going from here on in.

A host of Angels greets me at the bottom of the hill with cheers and shouts of encouragement. They direct me away from the South West Coast Path. The coastal path continues around the bay, we run along the main road and through the centre of the village.

The Angels guide me across another road towards a gap in the verge that takes me back onto a trail. Bright neon glow sticks and little yellow flags flapping like wings in the breeze snake up the hillside lining the path towards the finish.

With the finish line sitting on top of a hill overlooking Porthtowan, the final mile is the largest continuous climb in the whole race. After 50+ miles, my legs feel each one of the 300 feet up from Porthtowan. I pity the poor 100-mile runners who have to climb to the same finish line.

But I know the end is near. I might be tired but I power strongly up the hill. All those hill sessions I do in training are worth it for moments like this.

I don't stop. I don't falter.

I reach the top sooner than expected with a huge smile on my face and all of a sudden the finish line is upon me. I hear a shout of "there's Ally" as I sprint the final 10 metres.

And done.

Finished.

- 51.6 miles (Garmin measured)
- 8,400ft elevation gain (Garmin measured)
- 11:25:42
- 7th Female
- 3rd W40
- 41st Overall



Finish line feels...

ENCORE. REFLECTIONS.

It always takes me a while to process a race and ARC50 more so than most.

As I crossed the finish line I was immediately swamped by the gang. They were all there. Spencer had a storming run in the 100 coming in under 30 hours to gain a gold buckle. Paul finished his 100 miles just five minutes before I finished my 50. Stu had spent the previous 30-odd hours crewing and let's just say the rest of the gang didn't quite make it to the finish line but were most definitely enjoying the finish line party...

With my medal in my hand, a kind Angel gathered me in her wings and swept me into the ARC's heavenly realm. AKA a quiet area for finishers to sit, rest and recover. As soon as I sat down, the tiredness that I had been holding at bay took hold.

Kerry came and found me, wrapped me up in a blanket and plonked me next to the wood burner in the middle of the bar to keep me warm. I remember being there. I remember other people being there. I don't know how long I was there, what I said or what anyone else said. It's like the woody smoke from the fire pit covered me in a thick fog that slowed and deadened my thoughts and actions.

I knew I had just put everything I had into that race and the only word I can now use to describe how I felt at the finish is drained. I left everything I had out on the South West Coast Path.

ARC50 was the hardest race that I have completed – harder than any of my 100-mile finishes – and in those hazy post-race moments my body and mind were exhausted.

Whilst it was hard, it was also one of my strongest race performances.

I wanted to try something new and different to push myself outside of my comfort zone. I did just that.

My feet flew over the technical terrain with a skill I didn't know I had.

I climbed boulders and hills with an ease I didn't know I possessed.

I relished the darkness of the nighttime miles.

I (for the most part) navigated my way along paths I didn't know.

I was independent, self-sufficient and felt entirely at home. I appreciated the wild and rugged beauty of my surroundings as my heart fell even more in love with the coastal path.

Taking the traumatic Hayle tarmac out of the equation, I felt strong, I felt confident and I never once doubted my ability to finish. Historically I've struggled over the last ten miles of a race. Today, I got stronger as the race progressed.

Not knowing quite what to expect, it was difficult to set a goal. In the back of my mind, I thought a 12-hour finish should be achievable, but I was basing this entirely on a non-scientific comparison with the previous year's results combined with guesswork.

I ran through Hayle at 4:17 in the afternoon, five minutes ahead of the 12-hour finish guide time. I crossed the finish line in 11 hours and 25 minutes, gaining a massive 30 minutes over the final 15 miles.

Time and time again I have crashed and burned over this distance. Today, in those latter stages, whilst running up small inclines and powerfully climbing the steepest of hills, I felt the strongest I have ever felt.

I gave 100%. I gave everything I had.

And I came alive on those trails.

The feeling as I flew along the rocky terrain lit a fire. I want more.

I want something different.

I want something new.

I want a challenge.

I want adventure.

I want to test myself.

In the last few years, I have asked more and more of my body and each time it rises to, accepts and completes a new challenge I marvel at its strength, its aptitude. And I wonder what else it can do.

I ran today to see what I could do in a self-navigated, technical race.

You know what, I think I did all right.

CURTAIN CALL

This was my first experience of a Mud Crew race and it was superbly organised from start right through to finish.

From seamlessly transporting 200+ runners halfway across Cornwall to Minack Theatre before sunrise, to welcoming us back to the Eco Park after sunset. I cannot fault a single thing (well, apart from Hayle...). Every step of the way you knew that this was a race expertly run by runners, for runners.

And alongside the MudCrew team was the host of heavenly Angels supporting us throughout. Races like this cannot happen without the volunteers and I finish with a huge thank you to all of those who selflessly gave their time so that we could enjoy a joyful January scamper along the coastal path.

(Unless otherwise stated, all images are courtesy of MudCrew and their Media team)

THE GAP OF DUNLOE HALF-MARATHON (by John F O'Mahony)

This half marathon was simply about getting a dose of the famous Kerry scenery while squeezing in a very quick trip home to my native Killarney.

The Hardman Gap Of Dunloe Half Marathon completely satisfied my appetite for wanting to lace up my trainers while in Killarney and spend a morning traversing the hills and valleys of the National Park.

On any other weekend recently I've been heading off on 15 to 20 mile runs, but for this half I simply wanted to enjoy it, build steady endurance on the hills, and most importantly make sure to stop and take in the views I've really missed.

Sometimes the best race plan is to not to have one and instead just be mindful of the sights and sounds all around us feeding both mind and soul.

I won't lie, 1400ft of elevation was still bloody hard work, but the friendliness of everyone and the breathtaking views meeting me as I passed over the top of 'The Gap' into a headwind made every step worth the pain.

Race Director Alan Ryan and his team topped off a superb event with a very decent chunky medal and class-looking t-shirt.

I was really chuffed to cross under the Hardman finish arch in sub 1 hr 45, plus I had just enough time to refuel with a full Irish breakfast in Killarney town before a 15 minute drive back to Kerry Airport to catch my short flight back to London.

As they say, Kerry is only 1 hour from London.

A highly recommended test of grit and determination, and after experiencing the challenges this course can throw I know I've unfinished business on my home turf.....I suspect I'll be back.





THE LONDON LOOP – NORTH FROM COOMBE LANE TRAMSTOP

The June 2022 issue of this magazine included an article covering the London Loop from Coombe Lane tramstop through Hamsey Green and Kenley Common to Coulsdon South station (giving a nine-mile walk or an 18-mile “out and back” training run). This article takes a briefer look at the London Loop to the north of Coombe Lane tramstop, as it makes its way through Addington Hills, Pinewoods, Threepenny Wood and Sparrows Den.

From Coombe Lane tramstop, the Loop is signposted as it goes north into the woods. The path reaches the route of our annual Switchback race just before the point where there is a short steep downhill section (which is followed immediately by a short steep uphill). The Loop takes a sharp right turn, briefly following the Switchback route (and many of our Sunday runs) but in the opposite direction, and heads east towards the Chinese restaurant, from where it takes a sharp left turn to reach the Viewpoint, which is a well-known feature of many of our Sunday runs.

The Loop passes to the right of the Viewpoint. At the spot where the Switchback race route emerges from the woods (having negotiated the series of short hills which give the race its name), the Loop continues on a steep downhill path, which is safer for walkers than runners. It crosses the race route, heading north-east, at a point where a marshal is normally stationed.

The London Loop emerges onto Oaks Road, and crosses Upper Shirley Road by the Sandrock pub, heading into Pinewoods. This road ends by the back of the playing fields of Shirley High School, and the Loop follows a tarmac path which turns left and emerges on the south side of Shirley Church Road, having been joined by a woodland path which Striders sometimes use on our Sunday runs to get from Addington Hills to Shirley Church Road.

The Loop follows Shirley Church Road as it heads southeast. Just after passing Springhurst Close, a cul-de-sac containing some very expensive houses, the Loop heads off to the left, north-east into the woods. Striders’ Sunday runs frequently take the same turning but usually continue to head almost due east, towards some open land which used to be a golf course, whereas the Loop heads to the southwest corner of Shrublands before turning sharply right and heading southeast along a clearly marked path heading for the west end of Bridle Way.

After a while the Loop leaves this path, turning left into Shirley Heath (and rejoining the route of many of our Sunday runs). The Loop continues into Threepenny Wood, crossing the path which links Bridle Way in Shirley with Woodland Way in West Wickham. (This is the point where many of our Sunday runs split, with those doing the one-hour run heading back along Bridle Way towards the clubhouse, whereas those doing a longer run continue in Threepenny Wood and head towards Sparrows Den.)

Threepenny Wood acquired its name just over 200 years ago. In December 1802 the Sanderstead parish clerk, Robert Rutter, disappeared. In 1805 his body was discovered in a pond in the wood, after a period of drought had caused the water level to drop. He had three halfpenny coins in his pockets, and until he was identified, was referred to as the “threehalfpenny corpse”.

After a short downhill section, the Loop turns to the left and heads north-east, passing a large boundary stone which marks what is now the border between the boroughs of Croydon and Bromley, and was historically the border between the counties of Surrey and Kent (before this area became part of Greater London under the 1963 London Government Act).



This path eventually turns to the right and heads down quite a steep hill to emerge on the north side of Sparrows Den Playing Fields. The Loop heads east across the playing fields. At the easternmost corner of the playing fields, the Loop crosses the A2022 Addington Road and turns right to head due south (and uphill) towards St John the Baptist Church, which is a picturesque local landmark.



From the church the Loop turns left, heading east and crossing Layhams Road, from which it turns northeast along a path which crosses Coney Hall Recreation Ground. This path leads into Church Drive, and the Loop follows another path which crosses Gates Green Road and leads into West Wickham Common.

Shortly after entering the Common, the Loop turns right and heads southeast, staying to the south of the main A232 Croydon Road. It emerges by the junction of Baston Manor Road and West Common Road, then follows West Common Road as it heads southeast to reach the junction of Fox Hill and Baston Road in Keston. This roundabout is near to two well-known pubs, the Fox and the Greyhound.

From the roundabout the Loop heads east along Lakes Road, which takes us to Keston Common. The Loop passes to the north of a primary school and gradually veers to the right, heading south and passing to the west of two of the Keston Ponds. After the second pond the Loop bends to pass to the east of a third pond, leading to the A233 (Westerham Road) and to Caesar's Well, a spring which is the source of the River Ravensbourne.

The Loop continues alongside the Westerham Road, heading southwest, until shortly before the junction with Heathfield Road (the B265), where the Loop crosses the A233 and turns left, heading southeast and uphill towards the Wilberforce Oak (which is now a large stump). This was named after Sir William Wilberforce, who led the campaign to abolish the slave trade.

From the Wilberforce Oak, the Loop continues southeast and heads downhill towards Holwood Farm before turning left into Shire Lane. It then takes a right turn into Farthing Lane, followed soon afterwards by a left turn into a path called Bogey Lane. The Loop continues heading east along Bogey Lane until this reaches North End Lane. The Loop turns left into North End Lane and continues to North End Farm, where it leaves the road and turns right along a path into Blacklands Wood. The path continues east, emerges from the wood and crosses a golf course before reaching High Elms Road.

Here the Loop turns left, heading north, until a car park where the Loop turns again to head northeast across High Elms Country Park. At Woodplace Nature Centre the Loop veers to the left, heading north. It crosses Shire Lane and continues north, passing through some woodland, before reaching St Giles Church in Farnborough.

The next part of the Loop is rather urban, so this is probably the point at which most runners will want to turn round and head back towards Croydon, although walkers may want to continue along the Loop to Petts Wood station, from which one can catch a train to Beckenham Junction (and then a tram back to Croydon).

(This article originally appeared in the March 2013 club magazine, but is republished here – in a slightly revised form – for the benefit of newer Striders)

BOOK REVIEW – RUNNING SCIENCE

(edited by Professor John Brewer; reviewed by Alan Dolton)

This 192-page book is edited by John Brewer, who was Professor of Applied Sports Science at St Mary's University in Twickenham (which is well-known as a good base for middle-distance runners) from 2014 to 2019. He himself has written two of the eight chapters in this book, including the opening chapter which is entitled 'The Runner's Body'. It includes good explanations of running economy, the importance of 'maximum oxygen uptake' (commonly known as VO₂ max) and lactic acid (which is not responsible for the muscle soreness runners feel after a very long run, but is responsible for the very different type of muscle soreness which runners feel when they try to run flat-out for 400 metres). It also includes a good explanation of the difference between 'fast-twitch' and 'slow-twitch' muscle fibres, explaining why some runners are more suited to short distances while others are more suited to long distances.

The second chapter, entitled 'Perfect Motion', includes an interesting discussion of the optimum relationship between stride-length and stride-rate. It observes that Usain Bolt had a slower stride-rate than most of his rivals (including Tyson Gay and Asafa Powell) but had a significantly better stride-length, and that 10000-metre world record holder Kenenisa Bekele had a stride-rate of 186 steps per minute, and a stride-length of just under two metres, when running at his race pace. It also observes that many long-distance runners have tight hip flexors and lean forward too much from the waist, whereas more efficient runners have a slight forward lean from the ankles, rather than from the hips.

The third chapter discusses the importance of nutrition, observing that excess body weight 'is extra baggage and runners pay an energy penalty for lugging around extra weight', while the fourth chapter discusses running psychology.

The fifth chapter, entitled 'Training And Racing', includes an interesting discussion of 'high-intensity interval training'. The authors suggest that runners should do two interval sessions each week (something which very few Striders seem to do, despite the fact that the club offers interval sessions on two evenings each week). It also includes a good discussion of marathon pacing, observing that it is better to run negative splits than to start too fast and have to slow down in the second half. The authors observe that women seem to be much better at the art of pace judgment, and at running negative splits, than male runners.

The sixth chapter, written by former British international Paul Larkins (who ran 1500 metres in 3 minutes 35 back in 1987), deals with equipment. It includes a good discussion of how to choose running shoes, advising runners to "get yourself to a specialist running store, have them look at your form, and go from there". It also advises runners to wear vests or T-shirts in breathable fabrics to help perspiration to evaporate, rather than wearing cotton or polyester.

The seventh chapter, entitled 'Running Well', is written by a physiotherapist, Anna Barnsley, and is mainly concerned with avoiding injury. Sadly, I found this to be the only disappointing chapter in the book. A brief discussion of stretching makes the sensible observation that "if you already have a soft-tissue injury related to muscle imbalance, in which a muscle is functionally short and tight, there is good evidence that stretching is helpful as it increases joint range of movement, releasing muscle tightness ...". However, although the chapter includes a brief discussion of knee pain resulting from the patella being pulled out of alignment, it only mentions one cause of this problem, i.e. a weak gluteus medius causing tension in the ilio-tibial band (which runs from the outer hip to the lateral side of the knee). I was very surprised that the author failed to mention another common cause of such pain, namely an imbalance between the quadriceps muscles, where the outer quadriceps muscle (vastus lateralis) becomes much more powerful than the inner quadriceps muscle (vastus medialis). As the well-known physiotherapist Vivian Grisogono has commented in her standard textbook 'Running Fitness and Injuries', "the key muscle for kneecap control is the only one to hold the kneecap from its inner edge: the vastus medialis". This is only exercised and strengthened when the knee is fully extended, so that it is weakened when runners only do slow jogging without fully extending the knee.

My personal experience as a therapist is the same as Vivian Grisogono's, and I am puzzled as to why Barnsley does not discuss this common imbalance. (I suspect that the most likely explanation may be that most of her experience is with treating elite runners who do regular speedwork, and are therefore less likely

to suffer this particular injury than runners who do most or all of their running at a slow pace without fully extending the knee.)

The final chapter in the book, written by John Brewer, is entitled 'The Big Questions'. In a discussion of world records, he observes that across almost all of the distances from the 100 metres to the marathon, the women's world record pace is between 88% and 91% of the men's world record pace. However, at 100 kilometres, the women's world record pace is 95% of the men's world record pace, illustrating that in ultra-distance events, men have less advantage over women than they do at shorter distances. (The women's record was set in 2000 by the Japanese runner Tomoe Abe, who had placed third in the women's marathon at the 1993 World Championships in Stuttgart.) It is interesting to recall that the only distance at which Striders' women's record is superior to Striders' men's record is 100 miles, which Ally Whitlock has run significantly faster than any of Striders' men.

Brewer has good news for both sexes when he observes that runners have a significantly reduced risk of deaths from cardiovascular disorders as well as a reduced risk of death from some cancers, neurological diseases and infections. He also observes that two research studies have shown that the health benefits of running are reduced when a runner exercises for several hours at a time, although the studies disagree as to exactly when a runner begins to reduce life expectancy instead of increasing it.

Despite my disappointment at the rather superficial nature of the chapter on injuries, I enjoyed reading this book and would recommend it to other Striders.



Tomoe Abe, holder of the women's world record for 100 kilometres

(This article originally appeared in the March 2018 club magazine, but is reproduced here – in a slightly revised form – for the benefit of newer Striders)

BOOK REVIEW – FASTER ROAD RACING

(by Pete Pfitzinger and Philip Latter: reviewed by Alan Dolton)

In the March 2013 issue of this magazine, I reviewed a book entitled 'Road Racing For Serious Runners', written by Pete Pfitzinger and Scott Douglas, which covered training for road races from the 5K up to the marathon. Pfitzinger subsequently teamed up with a different co-author, Philip Latter, to produce this new book 'Faster Road Racing'. The most significant difference between 'Faster Road Racing' and its predecessor is that 'Faster Road Racing' only covers distances from 5K to half-marathon, and does not cover training for the marathon. It also does not include a specific chapter on training for cross-country races.

Like its predecessor, the book is divided into two parts. The first part is entitled "Training Components", and contains the following chapters:

- Elements of Training
- Balancing Training and Recovery
- Supplementary Training
- The Well-Fed Runner's Diet
- Considerations for Masters Runners
- Tapering for Peak Performance

The second part is entitled "Training for Peak Performance", and contains the following chapters:

- Following The Schedules
- Base Training
- Training for 5K Races
- Training for 8K and 10K Races
- Training for 15K and 10 Mile Races
- Training for the Half-Marathon
- Training for Multiple Race Distances

The first chapter sets out the authors' basic principles of training, and comments that there are 'four primary types of training', which are:

- Long runs to build endurance
- Tempo runs to improve lactate threshold pace
- Long intervals to improve maximum oxygen uptake (VO2 max)
- Short, fast intervals to improve speed and running technique

These should be supplemented by runs at a moderate effort, and easy recovery runs.

The authors recommend that long runs should start slowly but that the pace should increase in the latter part of the run. So, for example, someone who races 10K in about 50 minutes should start their long runs somewhat slower than 10-minute-mile pace, but should finish their long runs somewhat faster than 10-minute-mile pace. In a contrast to Pfitzinger's previous book, they recommend that 'tempo runs' to improve lactate threshold should also involve varying the pace of the run. They recommend that a VO2 max session should contain no more than 8000 metres of hard running, and that the duration of each hard effort should not normally exceed six minutes.

The chapter on 'balancing training and recovery' recommends that runners should do no more than four hard sessions each week; that runners should not do hard sessions on more than two consecutive days; and that where runners do hard sessions on consecutive days, the first of these should be a shorter faster session (such as a VO2 max session) and the second should be a longer slower session. The chapter also includes a brief discussion of massage, observing that 'the greatest benefit of massage may be in identifying tight or sore muscles and tendons before they become injured, and treating them accordingly'.

The chapter on 'supplementary training' recommends regular stretching. It recommends hatha yoga, but not bikram yoga, which can cause overheating and dehydration. It also recommends strength training,

including core training, and recommends that injured runners should try to maintain their fitness with deep-water running (also known as 'aquajogging').



The chapter on diet includes useful discussions of protein and hydration, although some Striders may be disappointed by the authors' recommendation that 'after racing, it is wise to rehydrate for at least four hours before consuming alcohol'.

I was particularly interested by the fifth chapter, entitled 'considerations for masters runners'. The authors observe that while younger runners may well 'perform a VO2 max workout, tempo run, speed session and long run all in the space of a week', older runners who try to do likewise are quite likely to suffer injury. They also comment that runners who take up the sport after the age of 40 benefit from 'the lack of accumulated wear and tear on their muscles, tendons and joints' and 'often enjoy a five- to eight-year window in which they continue to set lifetime personal bests'. They observe that the biggest problem facing older runners is the decline in VO2 max, and recommend that older runners should do regular VO2 max sessions – i.e. repetitions of up to 6 minutes at close to 5K pace.

The final chapter in the first part is also the shortest, and discusses tapering for peak performance. The book observes that 'although maintaining some fast running is useful during a taper, it is not wise to give a supreme effort' and that anyone tapering should 'be careful when training with a faster runner because when they look so relaxed you can accidentally run way too hard'.

The second part of the book is broadly similar to its predecessor, and includes a variety of training schedules for races from 5km to the half-marathon, with different schedules for low-mileage, medium-mileage, and higher-mileage runners. It also includes 'base training' schedules showing how runners can safely build up their mileage from 16 miles per week to 30 miles per week, and from then to as high as 60 miles per week (which will probably be enough mileage for most Striders who are not training for a marathon). The book finishes with a couple of appendices including a very useful pace chart, which is a definite improvement on its predecessor because it caters for runners who race at 12-minute-mile pace, whereas the pace chart in the earlier book did not cater for anyone running a half-marathon in more than two hours.

Obviously this book, unlike its predecessor, is not intended for any runner whose main interest is the marathon. However, as an ageing runner who has no plans to run another marathon, I found this book to be even more useful than its predecessor, primarily because of the very useful chapter on 'considerations for masters runners'. The book explains why runners should aim to do some training sessions at lactate threshold pace and at their VO2 max, and I would definitely recommend it to other Striders.

(This article originally appeared in the June 2018 club magazine, but is republished here – in a slightly revised form – for the benefit of newer Striders)

COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: DECEMBER 2022 – FEBRUARY 2023

In the British Masters five-kilometre road championships, at Battersea Park on 4 December, Matthew Stone ran well to place fourth in the M60 age-group (18:12), with Steve Corfield close behind in fifth place (18:14).

In the South of the Thames Cross-Country Championships at Aldershot on 18 December, Jadwiga Brzask-Makiela was 42nd in the women's race. Luke Burden was 66th in the men's race with Simon Webster 83rd.

In the Surrey Cross-Country Championships, at Lloyd Park on 7 January, Striders' women placed ninth in the team event. Consuelo Kennefick ran well to place second in the W50 age-group and 53rd overall. Jennifer Gutteridge was 58th with Cindy Siu 76th and Nikki Javan completing the scoring quartet in 84th. Striders' senior men finished 12th. They were led by Lee Flanagan who placed 62nd. Tatsuya Okamoto was 72nd, Martin Filer 79th, Joseph Ibe 95th, Luke Burden 104th and Kerim Suruliz 111th.

Striders' men placed fourth in their penultimate Surrey Cross-Country League Division Three match of the season at Chobham on 14 January. Harry Madgwick-Lawton led them home in 12th place. Peter Mills was 20th, Lee Flanagan 25th, James Rhodes 31st, Phil Coales 36th, Martin Filer 44th, Andrew Aitken 46th and Conor O'Hara-Barrett 54th. Matthew Stone placed first in the over-60 category and 56th overall. Simon Ambrosi completed the A team in 63rd. Striders' women placed 25th in their Division Two match at the same venue. Nikki Javan led the team in 65th place, with Cindy Siu 85th, Debra Bourne 112th, Jadwiga Brzask-Makiela 185th and Michelle Klein 211th.

In the South of England Cross-Country Championships at Beckenham on 28 January, Striders' men placed 34th. Andrew Aitken was 236th, Lee Flanagan 265th, Erik Schrijnemaekers 381st, Andy Perks 419th, Luke Burden 423rd, Kerim Suruliz 481st, Robert Zietz 575th and Simon Webster 580th. Striders' women placed 41st. Kara Boaks was 189th, Nikki Javan 262nd, Selena Wong 302nd, Michelle Vezie-Taylor 360th, Jadwiga Brzask-Makiela 394th and Michelle Klein 414th. On the same day, Ally Whitlock was the seventh woman to finish the Arc 50-mile race from Minack to Porthtowan in Cornwall. She placed 41st overall in 11 hours 25 minutes 42.

The ninth annual 'mob match' between Striders and Croydon Harriers took place on 4 February, at the South Norwood parkrun. Striders had a record number of 64 finishers, and Harriers had 56. The first Strider to finish was Andrew Aitken, who placed first in the M40 age-group and eighth overall (18:16). Lee Flanagan was first in the M45 age-group and ninth overall (18:23). Graeme Drysdale was first in the M55 age-group and eleventh overall (19:25). Simon Ambrosi was 12th (19:31), just one second ahead of club colleague Steve Corfield who was first in the M60 age-group and 13th overall, recording the highest age-grading of 82.08%. Matthew Stone was second in the M60 age-group and 14th overall (19:43). Daniel Finch was the first under-15 to finish, placing 29th overall (20:41). Niamh Vincent was the third female finisher, placing 31st overall (20:56). Jon Dean was first in the M65 age-group, placing 47th overall (21:36). Michael Bassett was first in the M70 age-group, placing 150th overall (27:43). Colin Cotton was first in the M75 age-group, placing 158th overall (28:40). Lesley Bassett was first in the W70 age-group, placing 250th overall (51:21). Striders had 52 runners finishing in under 30 minutes, whereas Harriers had 44. Using the 'Thornbury' method whereby all 120 finishers score, Harriers won by 3673 points to 3587.

Striders' women placed seventh in their final Surrey Cross-Country League Division Two match at Morden, and were ninth in the final Division Two table. Jennifer Gutteridge ran very well to finish twelfth. Consuelo Kennefick was 42nd, Kara Boaks 45th, Ellyw Evans 59th and Nikki Javan completed the A team in 82nd.

Striders' men placed fourth in their Division Three match at the same venue, and were also fourth in the final Division Three table. Peter Mills ran well to place ninth. James Rhodes was 22nd, Lee Flanagan 34th, Phil Coales 37th and Andrew Aitken 41st. Matthew Stone ran very well to be the first over-60 to finish, placing 47th overall. Simon Ambrosi was 58th, Tom Gillespie 59th and Erik Schrijnemaekers 65th. Steve Corfield was second in the M60 age-group and 67th overall, and won the individual over-60 championship.

In the National Cross-Country Championships at Bolesworth on 25 February, Peter Mills was 257th with Andy Perks 947th and Luke Burden 987th. Jadwiga Brzask-Makiela was 720th in the women's race.

40 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SPRING 1983

The East Surrey League completed its 1982/83 programme with the traditional road relay at Box Hill and road race at Ewell. Epsom won the road relay for the second successive year, with Hercules-Wimbledon second and Croydon Harriers third. The road race was won by Croydon Harriers' talented 19-year-old Gary Bishop; the team event was won by Hercules-Wimbledon, with Croydon second and host club Epsom third. Croydon won the league title, with Hercules-Wimbledon second (in their first season in this league) and Epsom third.

The third London Marathon took place on 16 April 1983. For the second successive year, the men's race saw a British winner. Mike Gratton, from the Canterbury-based club Invicta, gained a clear victory over Merseysider Gerry Helme. The women's race was won by the outstanding Norwegian runner, Grete Waitz. The first local runner was again Don Faircloth of Croydon Harriers. Having placed tenth in the 1981 and 1982 London Marathons, he slipped to 66th this time around, despite recording a highly creditable 2 hours 17 minutes 42. British marathon running had much more strength in depth than it does today: 93 runners, most of them British, finished in under 2 hours 20 minutes. Don's club colleague Martin Walmsley ran a personal best 2 hours 26 minutes 22 (and got himself on television when Grete Waitz came past him at 25 miles). Four other members of Croydon Harriers finished in under three hours: John Lee (2:32:30); Bernard Imber (2:50:02); Chris Stebbings (2:55:00) and Peter Lill (2:58:33). The first South London Harrier to finish was Martin Long (2:32:17).

However, both Croydon Harriers and SLH were outnumbered by Striders, who made their debut at the event and mustered an impressive turnout of 16 finishers. The first Strider to finish was club chairman Steve Owen, who ran 3 hours 06. He was followed by David Troth (3:28), Ron Carver (3:29), Steve Marsh (3:30), Myles Mayne (3:35), Hugh Coppin (3:35), Susanne Eyre (3:37), Colin Golding (3:42), Mick Meech (3:43), Pat Byrnes (3:44), Rob Hardy (3:46), Jeff Boyman (3:50), Tony Brown (3:57), Sandra Owen (4:06), Bernard Wright (4:08) and Shashi Dave (5:32). Fourteen of these were employees of Philips: the exceptions were Ron Carver and Hugh Coppin, both of whom had previously run the 1982 London Marathon, and had joined Striders as 'associate members'. The club newsletter only recorded Striders' finishing times in hours and minutes: this policy continued for several years, making life more difficult for Chris Morton when he began compiling the club's all-time rankings almost 20 years later.



Mick Meech, Shashi Dave, Ron Carver, Steve Owen, Colin Golding, Myles Mayne
Suzanne Eyre Sandra Owen
Roger Dale Patrick Byrnes

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SPRING 2013

The third annual Croydon Half-Marathon took place on 7 April. The race was won by Kevin Quinn of Aldershot in 71 minutes 31. Striders were led by Lee Flanagan who placed eleventh, recording 80 minutes 56. Club colleague Lee Wadsworth was 24th (85:05) with Chris Morton 38th (88:50). The first woman to finish was Erica Fogg of New Forest Runners, who set a women's course record of 84 minutes 42. Striders' women were led by Karen Stretch who was the fifth woman to finish (96:16). Zoe Williams was 25th (1:46:27).

Striders had 24 finishers in the London Marathon on 21 April. Iain Harrison had an excellent run to place 218th in a personal best 2 hours 41 minutes 42. Krzysztof Klidzia set a personal best 2 hours 46 minutes 31. Cara Kayum ran a personal best 3 hours 16 minutes 00, placing her third in Striders' all-time women's rankings. Karen Stretch ran 3 hours 35 minutes 49. Sue Atkinson set a club W65 record of 4 hours 43 minutes 32.

The first Southern Veterans' League match of the season was at Kingsmeadow on 29 April. Striders' men placed fifth of the seven competing clubs, while our women were equal fifth. Striders' most successful event was the 2000 metre walk, where Mick Turner won the M35 event (12:52.6) and Kim Ford was second in the W50 event (14:27.6). Julian Spencer-Wood ran very well to win the M60 1500 metres (5:27.2).

In the Richmond Half-Marathon on 5 May, Striders' men did well to finish fourth in the team event, while the women were tenth. Lee Flanagan ran very well to place 16th, recording 79 minutes 19, and finishing just one second and two places ahead of club colleague Krzysztof Klidzia. Damian Macenhill completed the scoring trio in 22nd (82:04). Striders' women were led by Kate Custis who finished 207th in 1 hour 43 minutes 08. Karen Macenhill was 382nd (1:57:10) and Charlotte Chapman 439th (2:02:18).

Lee Flanagan ran very well to place 14th out of 434 finishers in the Sutton 10-kilometre road race on 12 May, recording 36 minutes 03. There were also good runs from Damian Macenhill who placed 28th (37:10) and from Matthew Smith who placed 29th (37:17). Becky Laurence was the 41st woman to finish (48:45). Karen Macenhill was 62nd (52:14) and Sandra Francis was 108th (61:44).

The first Rosenheim League match of the season took place at Battersea Park on 15 May. Daniel Hassett won the 400 metre hurdles in a new club record of 63.52 seconds, but both Striders' men and women placed sixth in the match.

On the same evening, Striders did very well to place second out of 63 teams in the annual Beckenham Road Relay. The team comprised Richard Lee-Smith (15:04), Lee Flanagan (14:21) and Matt Morgan (13:56).

In the second Southern Veterans League match of the season, at Kingsmeadow on 20 May, Striders' women finished fourth, while their men were sixth. Linda Daniel won the W50 1500 metres (6:35.1) and Kevin Bannister won the M60 long jump (3.77). Daniel Hassett placed second in the M35 400 metres with a new club age-group record of 56.1. David Gunaratnam set a club M55 long jump record of 4.05 metres.

Striders' women did well to place second in their Rosenheim League match at Croydon Arena on 29 May, while their men were sixth. Steph Upton placed second in the women's high jump and led Striders to second place in the 4 x 200m relay. For Striders' men, Daniel Hassett was second in the 400m hurdles (64.5), while Sam O'Dongo set a club M35 200 metre record of 25.4.



Striders outnumbered Blackheath & Bromley in our mob match in Lloyd Park on 9 March 2013



Karen Stretch, who was the fifth woman to finish the 2013 Croydon Half-Marathon

SPORTS MASSAGE THERAPY

HELPS REDUCE MUSCULAR SORENESS AFTER TRAINING OR COMPETITION: HELPS RECOVERY FROM
SOFT TISSUE INJURY

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