

# Striders of Croydon

JUNE 2026 MAGAZINE



**Striders' team in the East Surrey League race at Ewell on 16 April  
Left to right: Cindy Siu, Stephen Siu, Consuelo Kennefick, Mick Turner, Stephen Kennefick**

## **CONTENTS:**

**Dates for Your Diary**

**Editorial (by Alan Dolton)**

**The Lakes Traverse: Community Traverse Edition (by Debra Bourne)**

**The Brighton Marathon 2026: a First Timer's Guide (by David Foster)**

**Much Ado About Marathon Running (by William J Furney)**

**Superhalves: The End aka The Madness of a Weekend Double (by Pandie Bronsdon)**

**Competitive Highlights: March-May 2026**

**30 Years Ago – Local Athletics in April-August 1996**

**20 Years Ago – Local Athletics in Summer 2006**

**10 Years Ago – Local Athletics in Summer 2016**

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Sunday 7 June – Dorking 10 miles (Surrey Championship & Road League)

Sunday 21 June – Ranelagh 10K – Petersham (Surrey Championship & Road League)

Monday 22 June – Southern Veterans League – Ewell

Wednesday 24 June – Rosenheim League – Tooting

Saturday 27 June – Striders v Harriers parkrun mob match – Lloyd Park

Friday 3 July – Ranelagh Sunset Sprint 3K – Petersham (Surrey Road League)

Monday 6 July – Southern Veterans League – Sutton Arena

Wednesday 8 July – Rosenheim League – Tooting

Sunday 19 July – Elmbridge 10K (Surrey Road League)

Monday 27 July – Southern Veterans League – Wimbledon

Sunday 4 October – Switchback 5 miles – Lloyd Park (Striders organising)

Saturday 10 October – Surrey Cross-Country League – venue tbc



**Family rivalry between Stephen and Cindy Siu in the East Surrey League race at Ewell**

## EDITORIAL: JUNE 2026

Welcome to the June issue of our club magazine.

In March, Debra Bourne completed the Lakes Traverse 100-kilometre run, starting at St Bees on the west coast of Cumbria and crossing the Lake District National Park to finish at Shap, about 10 miles south of Penrith. We begin this issue with her account of this run.

In April, fourteen Striders completed the annual Brighton Marathon. One of them, David Foster, gives us his account of the race. Two weeks later, while several Striders were running in the London Marathon (and many more were marshalling), four Striders took part in the Shakespeare Marathon, starting and finishing in Stratford-upon-Avon, where the playwright was born. One of the four, William Furney, gives us his account of the race.

The December issue of this magazine included an article from Pandie Bronsdon, describing the half-marathons she had run in Lisbon, Copenhagen, Cardiff and Valencia. Earlier this year, Pandie followed these by running the Prague and Berlin half-marathons on successive days, and she gives us her account of these races.

We follow this with our usual “competitive highlights” and history articles. The ‘30 years ago’ article is a reminder that it was in April 1996 that Striders first competed in the Southern Veterans League. We are competing in that league again this year, although our continued participation is in some doubt because we are finding it difficult to provide the required quota of track and field officials. Anyone who is interested in track and field athletics, and who would be willing to consider training as an official, would be warmly welcomed. There are details of available courses on <https://www.englandathletics.org/coaches-and-officials/officials-qualifications/assistant-track-and-field-official/>.

Some of our older members did very well in the Surrey Masters Championships at Kingsmeadow in May, with six of our team (all aged over 50) winning gold medals and two more winning silver.

The Surrey Road League is now well under way, with four of the eight races having taken place. Our men have made a good start and are currently placed eighth of the 37 clubs in the league. Our women have suffered from a lack of numbers and are currently only 26th, which is disappointing after having finished eighth last year. It would be good to see more of our women competing in the remaining league races.

I hope that all Striders continue to enjoy their running.

*Alon*



# THE LAKES TRAVERSE: COMMUNITY TRAVERSE EDITION (by Debra Bourne)

## Before

It all starts on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026. No, that's not true. For me, it all REALLY started on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2025, when a freak accident, a foot slipping off a stone, led to me dislocating my shoulder about 32 miles into the Ourea Lakes Traverse 100 km. That was my first (and to date still the only) DNF in about 140 ultras. This had been bugging me all year. I had a strong need to get back out and finish this race and had signed up for the 2026 edition pretty much as soon as entries opened.

Back to Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2026... I'm eagerly – and slightly nervously – waiting for the weekend of 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>, when I will finally have the chance to run the Lakes Traverse and put last year's dislocated shoulder and DNF behind me. We've already had one email: "In just over 4 weeks' time you'll be toeing the start line at St Bees ready to traverse 100km across the spectacular Lake District National Park, as part of the SOLD OUT 2026 edition of the Lakes Traverse®!" and I was getting excited. Now, with just over two weeks to go, there is another email. I clicked on it eagerly just as my eyes take in the full email heading: "Lakes Traverse 2026 – Event Cancelled". What? Why??!! It can't be cancelled – I have a race to finish, a demon to dismiss. I read it three times: "It is with deep regret that I must announce that Ourea Events has ceased trading..." There's more – something about a reorganisation, but for me the immediate, basic fact is that the Traverse races, including my Lakes Traverse plus the 300 km Northern Traverse and the shorter Dales and Moors Traverses, won't be happening. It's a shock. A deep disappointment. How could this happen, when the races were sold out?

Now what? I go online, into the Facebook running groups, searching for other people in the same boat. Lots of disappointed runners. Pundits talking about how devastating the collapse of Ourea is to the running community but scarcely mentioning the affected runners. Runners talking about doing the events themselves – either on the intended race weekend or at another time. I started wondering whether I could do that – my husband, Aidan, would support me, and I could ask my friend who did it last year and was going to volunteer at the Traverse races anyway... I contact Lorna: 'would you?' She would. Aidan and Lorna decide they could alternate providing support (food, water) at or near the usual race aid station points. I'm not looking forward to some of the trickier bits of night-time navigation by myself, and I'd prefer a tracker safety line, but I can do it! Yes!

Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> March: I have IM messages from someone I don't know, Matthew Hampson, who tells me he was one of the runners who passed me while I huddled with my dislocated shoulder last year. He says: "I saw that you were thinking of running it anyway. I know you're not the only one, and I know I'd be considering the same. How do we as an NT [Northern Traverse] community come together to assist that?" I'm deeply moved by this support from a runner I've never even met properly. Later the same day he adds that there's a WhatsApp group where people are discussing the situation and sharing ideas on what they might do. I join the group and we start swapping information, including about where to get individual tracker hire – about £50 for 1-3 days, £70 for up to 7 days.

Same day, an IM from a friend, telling me to go look at the Centurion Running website, where a new event has appeared: Sea to Sea 300 km from St Bees to Robin Hood's Bay, starting 28<sup>th</sup> April – a special edition registered race limited to maximum 35 people, with insurance and trackers, but otherwise self-sufficient (crews permitted), open only to people who had been entered for a certain 300 km race from St Bees to Robin Hood's Bay, starting 28<sup>th</sup> April... "This is not a standard Centurion Event. There are no check points, markings or route marshals. The entry fee is nominal and designed to cover the cost of the insurance, permit and tracker only." Well done to James Elson, I think, pulling that together in such a short time – but no use to me as I was booked for and want to do the Lakes Traverse this year, not the full Northern Traverse. That's on my to-do list for next year; this year's long (substantially over 100 miles) race is the King Offa's Dyke Race, south to north through Wales.

Then I get news of another WhatsApp group – Community Traverse – and I join that. Here I discover that there are people thinking on a larger scale than getting one or two people to support them – a LOT larger. I start to get excited rather than nervous.

Over the following week I avidly follow and take part in the development of the Community Traverse, both on the WhatsApp for runners and the separate group for volunteers – which my husband and my friend both join. Gradually it takes shape: Aid stations pretty much where the Northern Traverse aid stations would have been. Drop bags to be available at Shap, Richmond and Robin Hood's Bay. Sleeping facilities at Shap and at most other aid stations thereafter. Discussion of food and drink, first aid and foot kits. Mountain Rescue Teams informed. Trackers – we have trackers, which is a great back-up in case of any problems, and everyone will be able to follow our progress. The Ourea Northern Traverse route scrutinised, compared with the newly official Coast-to-Coast National Trail, and amended as needed to allow for path closures and unhelpful landowners. Not one but two GPX courses – a normal high-level route and a lower-level bad weather route. Shorter versions of the GPX for those of us doing the Lakes Traverse.

We all pitch in: the Community Traverse team have decided not to put on an Ennerdale Bridge water stop, but I was going to have one there and at least one other runner had said they would appreciate that, so my wonderful husband says he'll provide one anyway, then volunteer at two of the aid stations – Rosthwaite and Shap. My friend Lorna, who was to be my other helper, will volunteer at Patterdale – where we've kindly been allowed to set up in the car park of the Mountain Rescue Team's HQ – and at Shap. I offer my small tea urn and my three large pump-action flasks, in case those can be useful anywhere. Volunteering offers start coming in – not only for during the weekend but into the following week for those on the full Traverse, with people offering to do early mornings, or evenings, or parts of the nights, around their jobs and other commitments. The number of people willing to help total strangers to have their cancelled race is astonishing. Offers of food and drinks for the aid stations. A note that the intended peanut butter and jam sandwiches will be off the menu as one of the runners has a severe peanut allergy – that important information is passed not only in the volunteers' group but also the main runners' group, letting everyone know not to bring nuts.

By Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March my disappointment has been transmuted into pure excitement. This is going to happen! Okay, it's not an official race; there will be no medal for finishing, it won't add to my official tally of ultras (currently 146). That doesn't matter: it's happening. I will be part of a community out on the fells that weekend. I'll have a tracker in the unlikely event of something going wrong. Chances are high that I will have company when navigating through the night from Patterdale towards Shap over Kidsey Pike, on the section alongside Haweswater (although I've done that multiple times on Lakeland 50/100 races and reces, and I know what to expect) and on the final fields which I've been warned are confusing. Whatever happens, I will have support from the most amazing, generous group of people. I finish packing, make sure I have all the essentials with me, plus some extras.

## **Traverse weekend**

Thursday evening: we load everything into the car and set off up to Manchester, where my stepmother lives, arriving in the early hours but managing 6 hours or so of sleep. After a leisurely start on Friday morning, and a trip to Sainsbury's for extra food supplies, we set off for St Bees. We have the pleasant advantage of the loan of a stationary caravan only about 200 meters from the start of the Coast-to-Coast trail.

First, we go to the Seacote Hotel to register. I get to meet David, Kitty and Kieran in person for the first time – hugs all round. We deposited the teas we brought for the aid stations - lemon and ginger, rooibos, and peppermint, in case anyone doesn't want ordinary tea or coffee (a few people on the volunteers group have already said they will use those), the tea urn and the flasks, and Aidan discusses with David his plans for the Ennerdale Bridge water stop. Then the formal part: number pick-up, confirmation whether or not I need a drop bag (no, as Aidan would be volunteering at Shap when I come in); liability waiver form, including all the usual details to give: name and phone number, next-of-kin contact details and medical information.

At the caravan, I do a bit of last-minute kit checking and faffing, as always, cut the bits of kinesiology tape for the spots on my feet and toes that I knew will need protection. We microwave the ready meals we brought, eat, and head for bed as soon as possible: it's going to be an early start.

My alarm goes off at 4.15. I sneak out of the bedroom leaving Aidan to snooze. This year, unlike last year, we have worked out how to turn the heating on, so I don't get too chilled while I apply the tape, dress, and eat my muesli. At 5 am, I headed over, with my pack, to the hotel to get my tracker. It's cold and windy but

thankfully there's no sign of the forecast sleet. On the way I pass a car with the tail open, a table full of trackers laid out behind it, and a gentleman well layered up. I cleverly work out that this is where I pick up my tracker. I give my name and race number, I'm photographed and the tracker is firmly attached to my pack. "Thank you!" I continue to the hotel, where David confirms there was nothing else I needed to do except be back there by 5.50.



**Collecting my tracker – it was a bit windy**

Back at the caravan I start the packing (Aidan would finish it once the event had started), make sure I've applied lubricant in all the correct places, and place the cloths that will protect my collar bones from the shoulder straps of the pack. Then we return to the hotel in the car, as Aidan will be picking up jerry cans of water for the unofficial Ennerdale Bridge water stop. I and several other women nip into the toilets one last time, then back into the foyer for a quick briefing before we pile outside. I point out our dirty-red car to everyone and tell them to watch for it in Ennerdale Bridge. Waiting for the countdown, I suddenly realise I haven't got my watch ready! Frantic stabbing of buttons, it finishes loading the route just in time – and we're off!

### **St Bees to Ennerdale Bridge**

I follow other runners across the car park, across the bridge – a lot less crowded than with the full number of runners last year. Last year we headed left onto the path skirting the cliffs; this time, with the path closed by a land slip, we turn right and run down a lane, northwards to Sandwith, before turning east. I try to settle into my stride, worrying that I'm going too fast and will regret it later when my legs feel trashed with miles still to go, but also that I'm going too slowly and will regret it later for other reasons! This section of lanes and tracks is runnable, and I try to run as much as possible, while still slowing for the inclines – 100 km (or slightly less with the cliff path section removed) isn't 100 miles, but it's still a respectable distance.



**The start line at the Seacote Hotel – everyone with fingers on buttons**

I spend parts of this section with various other runners. Kitty comes and runs with us for a bit – she was trying to have a few minutes with every runner, I think, then goes off ahead of us to catch the next person. I run for a few miles with Naomi, long enough for us to wonder whether we'll stay together all the way to Shap, and we come into Ennerdale Bridge together. We spotted a 12-pack of water bottles on a wall as we pass – nice of someone – but I know that Aidan will have water for us, so I don't take any. Around a corner and there is the car, the table with the water, and Aidan. Naomi fills her bottles and leaves. I linger for a couple of minutes, saying hi to Aidan... and I don't see Naomi again throughout the event! Never mind, that's how it happens sometimes.



**Ennerdale Bridge Water stop, outside The Gather café**

### **Ennerdale Bridge to Rosthwaite**

It would be 15 miles to Rosthwaite, and the first proper climb. Before that, the shore of Ennerdale Water. Lots of rocks and roots as I recall, and a bit of scrambling. First, I pass a car park. There's a small clump of trees ahead and suddenly, to my delight, I spot a red squirrel! It runs up a tree but stopped within my sight, so I take the phone out and try to capture a shot of it (I failed). Then onwards. The shore is soon just as rocky and rooty as I remembered it to be. There's a couple just ahead of me and I do my best to keep them in sight, in case there are any better routes to follow.



Over the little scramble, then onwards. At the far end, the track crosses over a bridge and enters a forestry section. I remember this from last year – I found it a bit boring, but Lorna kept me going. I stop a moment to adjust gear – which is probably where I also lose a glove, one of my favourite pair, but by the time I realise I've dropped it, I also decide it's too far to go back to look for it when I really am not sure when it disappeared. I have another pair in my pack – plus a pair of warm mitts in case of another immobilising incident – but I don't want to stop and dig them out, so I go on, wearing my remaining, right, glove on my left hand, as that's the hand that tends to get cold. On and on, undulating track, occasionally passing or being passed by other runners. Bits done in company. There's a sudden shower. There have already been

a few, although much fewer than I expected from the forecast, but those were light hail and not really wetting. This one is more rain than hail, and it goes on long enough that I dig out my waterproof jacket and put it on before my winter-weight windproof gets wet. I'm often a short way behind or in front of Nick and Sophie, who are doing the full 300 km but will only be going as far as Patterdale today, as they had booked rooms along the route before they found out about the Community Traverse. I stop briefly and send a text to my husband, asking him to bring me my extra pair of gloves from the kit. I see later that it's not moved, just sat there with a 'failed' message. Ah well, he'll be volunteering in Rosthwaite and I can grab them from the car.



**One of the gorgeous views**

Finally back out of the trees, off the wide track and I head upwards on a narrow footpath towards Black Sail Hut. There's a tap here, and a toilet, so I make use of both. I'm too hot, so the waterproof goes back into the pack's bungee straps. From there is a definite climb, so I get my poles out – with a bit of reluctance considering the role they had played in last year's accident.



**Black Sail hut**

Up and up, a steady pull. I hear someone behind me. It's a woman with a dog straining at its lead. I offer to let her pass, but she says it's fine and we continue together. She's a runner herself, but today she's having an easy walk-jog with the dog while her husband does a longer, hillier run. We chat as we ascend, and it's nice to have the company. She's local and I know she could go faster. The hill flattens out and she wishes me well and runs on. I follow more slowly, then get moving a bit faster, although never very fast on this sort of ground with a pack affecting my balance – I'm always too worried I'll trip and fall.



Honister Pass and the Bait Cabin café and shop are spread out below me, and I go down and down, finally passing the car park and the café. As I run through, I meet another runner heading back UP the hill from beyond the café, looking frustrated. “Where’s the aid station?” he wants to know. “It’s not here – it’s a few more miles, in Rosthwaite.” He turns around and heads rapidly down the hill ahead of me, not saying a word. Ah well; not everyone is going to be friendly!



Down the road, then onto the paralleling path. I remembered last year stripping off my leggings here and continuing in shorts. This year I hadn’t even bothered to wear the shorts, as the forecast wasn’t inviting, and I have thicker running leggings on. Onwards, with the path veering further from the road. Getting flatter and it can’t be long now until Rosthwaite. I felt a rub starting on the back of my left heel – not something I usually get – and I tell myself to sort this NOW, so I sit on a stone and put a plaster over it before continuing. Soon I enter Rosthwaite. I worry that I will miss the aid station, but there’s a cheerful volunteer, Julia, sitting in a chair and pointing runners to the hall.

Inside, chairs round the sides, some occupied by other runners; tables in the middle laden with food, water, coke and one of my large flasks; volunteers... but no Aidan. I sit down, get my water bottles refilled, get some food to go as well as eating a bit here, re-dress the back of my heel. I decide it was probably due to having the leggings on the inside of the waterproof socks (although outside the liner Injinji socks) so I pull the trouser legs out from the socks on both ankles. Still no Aidan. I ask one of the volunteers and she says he’s sent a WhatsApp message that he’s on his way, having waited until the very last not only of the Community Traverse runners but also of the later-starting Centurion Sea-to-Sea 300 km runners was past, but looking at the time-stamp on his message he won’t be reaching Rosthwaite for a while yet. It’s a blow, not only – or even mainly – the fact that I can’t get my spare gloves from him, or change my liner socks and

still have a spare pair to change at Patterdale, but that next is the section where I dislocated my shoulder last year and I'm feeling nervous – I really want a hug from him before I set off.

I decide I have to go. Pack back on. Over the road, over a bridge. I see a runner coming the other way and jokingly say (given not every runner out here will be doing the event) 'you're going the wrong way!'. 'I know,' he replies, 'I missed the checkpoint – I don't know how!'

"Oh no! It's just back across the bridge and left." I give him a sympathetic smile and head off up the trail. This is it. I'm crazily nervous. This is not a technical ascent, it's a perfectly good path, mostly, and my running poles are stowed, so there's absolutely no chance that I can repeat last year's accident. Nevertheless, the memory of pain lingers, and my mouth is dry while my heart thuds. I can see Nick and Sophie ahead, so I decide to concentrate on catching up with them – it's something else to think about. Up, up.



**Heading up to where last year's accident happened**

The sun is out and I enter a section overshadowed by the hill to my right, then I come back out into sunshine. I sat in that shadow with my dislocated shoulder last year, huddled into my bivvy bag, aware of sunshine less than 200 yards in either direction but immobilised. If I'm back out into sunshine that means I've passed the point where the accident happened. The hollow feeling inside me dies down a bit. Now my heart is thudding because of the ascent instead. The path peters out and I follow Nick and Sophie up a scramble section. "Sorry!" says Nick, pausing, "I've taken us wrong – I can see the path over there." He gestures left and we all head in that direction, soon on slightly easier footing. Eventually at the top and then we descend – down what I later realise is the Far Easdale path, which I've taken before, many years ago on a hill walk, before I was a runner, but it doesn't look familiar.

It's somewhere along here that James Elson of Centurion Running passes, greeting me as he goes, then a runner I don't recognise, then one I know by repute, although I've not met her – Sabrina Verjee. They had set off at 9 am to our 6 am, which highlights how slowly I'm moving. Not that I was ever nearly that fast, but my bout of COVID-19 in 2022 really reduced my heart-lung capacity and I've never fully recovered. I'm grateful, however, that I still have my endurance.

Descending, and I suddenly realise that the GPX diverges from the flagged path we're following. I call to Nick and Sophie, who are in front of me. We all agree that the GPX does NOT follow the path, and we start to head off on unmarked ground, hoping to join a path. Then Nick comments that the flagged path is no doubt part of the Coast-to-Coast route and swings round back to our route shortly anyway, and setting off over the unmarked ground instead doesn't make sense, so we might as well take the path. We do that and after a while we rejoin the GPX route.

Onto a small lane, and then the crossing point of the A591 north of Grasmere – cross with care! Sabrina has stopped here at, presumably, her crew support car. Nick and Sophie and I continue onto the next long climb up towards Grisdale Tarn. This is going to be a long pull up and I get my poles out, reminding myself

that the accident last year was a freak event and is unlikely to recur. I can see James's large white backpack high ahead, then another runner. Sabrina passes again and is soon way ahead. Up, up, following the three runners in front until they go out of sight.



Finally, I reach the tarn, which is looking very restful. I can see two other runners not far ahead and Nick and Sophie are not so far behind – I had passed them when they stopped briefly for something. I take my phone out to photograph the tarn, but the phone crashes. I put it away, telling myself that I MUST get a new phone. I'm thinking about that when I glance at my watch and realise I've made a navigation error – the route is the path below to my left, alongside the tarn. I'm some distance above and veering further off up the hill with every stride. I really, really don't want to go back on myself. The hillside is quite steep, but maybe... I set off down it, cautiously and using my poles, finding that it's better footing than I expected, and reach the path safely. Nick and Sophie are now ahead of me, but other than losing a minute or two, no harm done. Descending now, initially quite steep before flattening out into what should be runnable path, but whether the effects of pushing on the uphill followed by the quad strain of the descents, or the extra strain of my memories from last year, or whatever, my legs feel strange and I can't run. I wish Nick and Sophie well and tell them I'll be tracking them as they continue, then watch them running ahead of me and out of sight.

After a while my legs feel better and I manage to jog more. I'm completely alone now, running quite well down a quiet road – when I spot one of the new 'Coast-to-Coast' fingerposts pointing to the right: "Patterdale 1 mile". The GPX, meanwhile, clearly shows that I should continue down the road. Which is correct?? I'm not thinking clearly so I decide to stop and call HQ. This is when I discover that it wasn't just the phone camera crashing but the whole phone. While I wait for it to get the operating system up again, I have a couple of sweets and some water. Then it comes to me: I remember looking at this on the map – the Coast-to-Coast trail cuts across, but we go down the road because otherwise we'll miss the aid station, which is in the car park of Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team HQ.

Relieved, I continue down the road and soon spot the marquee on my left – and have to climb a fence to reach them (or go down the bottom of the car park and back up, which seems like too long a detour). The marquee isn't that warm, but as soon as I sit down a blanket is draped over my shoulders, and I quickly get my warm jacket out and put that on as well. My friend Lorna is there, and I have an emotional moment – it's taken me an extra year to reach this aid station with her! She makes me a vegan cheese sandwich and a large cup of lemon and ginger tea. Our other two flasks are there as well: "incredibly useful," Lorna tells me. I start to eat and drink while taking off my wet waterproof socks and my sweat-dampened liner socks. Other runners come past – fellow Community runners, Comrades runners – whoever. It doesn't matter; all are encouraged to come join us, get some food and drink, prepare for the darkness.

Lorna has a full foot care kit, so I remove the damp remains of the dressing that I had put on at Rosthwaite, and stick a better one on over the rubbed area – now somewhat larger than it was before, alas – with a padding layer for protection then a strip of kinesiology tape to hold everything in place. I dry the soles of my

feet a bit by applying hand sanitiser gel, letting it sit for a little then wiping it off, before donning liner socks and waterproof socks – bliss.

Just 15 miles to go. Lorna had told me about her water bottles starting to freeze on Kidsey Pike last year, and I know that the descent isn't easy – to be followed by the path along Haweswater, which I've done several times on the Lakeland 50 and 100, and recce runs for those, in the other direction. I don't suppose it feels any shorter this way round. However, I won't be finding out this night: due to the earlier high winds and hail, David and Kitty have made the decision to funnel us all onto the lower level 'bad weather' route. "A mile longer and more road, but easier" says Lorna, "– but there's still some uphill, and a gully to descend." I manage to stop the course on my watch and start the low-level one instead. Some of the other runners are finding it harder. I'm not about to try to help with the COROS watch – I found those 100% counterintuitive to use when I had one.

Fed, feet sorted, course locked in. Time to go. I wrap the second half of the sandwich in a piece of paper towel, arrange a buff as a hat and put my main head torch on – first opening up the battery compartment and removing the folded over piece of Sellotape I've had in these as a barrier between the battery and the contact, to make sure it couldn't turn itself on in my bag. Spare gloves out, waterproof jacket on over my windproof, everything else back into the pack – the warm jacket as well. Back onto my feet and onwards to Shap!

There's another runner close by as I leave the road and head uphill, and we chat for a bit. Then he says: 'you're taking the low route aren't you – so here's where we diverge'. He's one of the Centurion runners; they had the option to choose individually which route to take depending on the weather at the time, and he's going southeast and up onto Kidsey Pike. I wish him well and follow my GPX northeast. Fine initially, then I come to a fork in the path – a clear path going about 10 o'clock left, another going about 2 o'clock right... and the GPX seems to be indicating the barely-visible sheep track straight on. I try the left path – nope, definitely wrong. The right one. No, the GPX doesn't like that either. Another runner approaches and we discuss it, agreeing that it does say to take the one in the middle, so we set off. After a bit it starts to descend – very narrow and rocky – and eventually meets a larger gully of a path from the right – possibly where we'd have come from if we'd taken the right path. Ah well, we've navigated it okay and we're definitely on the correct track now. It's really nice having company for this section, sharing the navigation, talking it through, spotting turns.

Down, down, then onto a wider track and after about two miles onto a lane. Along there, short runs of a minute or so at a time on the flat or downhill, walking all the inclines. We're heading towards Howtown, which sets off Lakeland 50/100 memories for me. After some while we turn offroad, heading uphill for a couple of miles or so before starting to descend again. We rejoin the 'high' route somewhere around Rosgill. Signs for Shap Abbey say 1.5 miles, but Stephen's watch is giving a 'miles still remaining' countdown and we have about 3 miles to go. Lorna had mentioned that this section across the fields was confusing – and it is. The Coast-to-Coast signpost points down a lane, but we follow the GPX along a series of barely-there or sometimes not-visible paths, across the fields, over stiles. I reckon that while we were still reaching stiles, and occasionally more visible paths, we are probably still on the route. Finally, we turn right and are on the main road leading through Shap. Along the road, keeping to a run now, and then I can see two people – one of them is Aidan. Last few steps... Done!



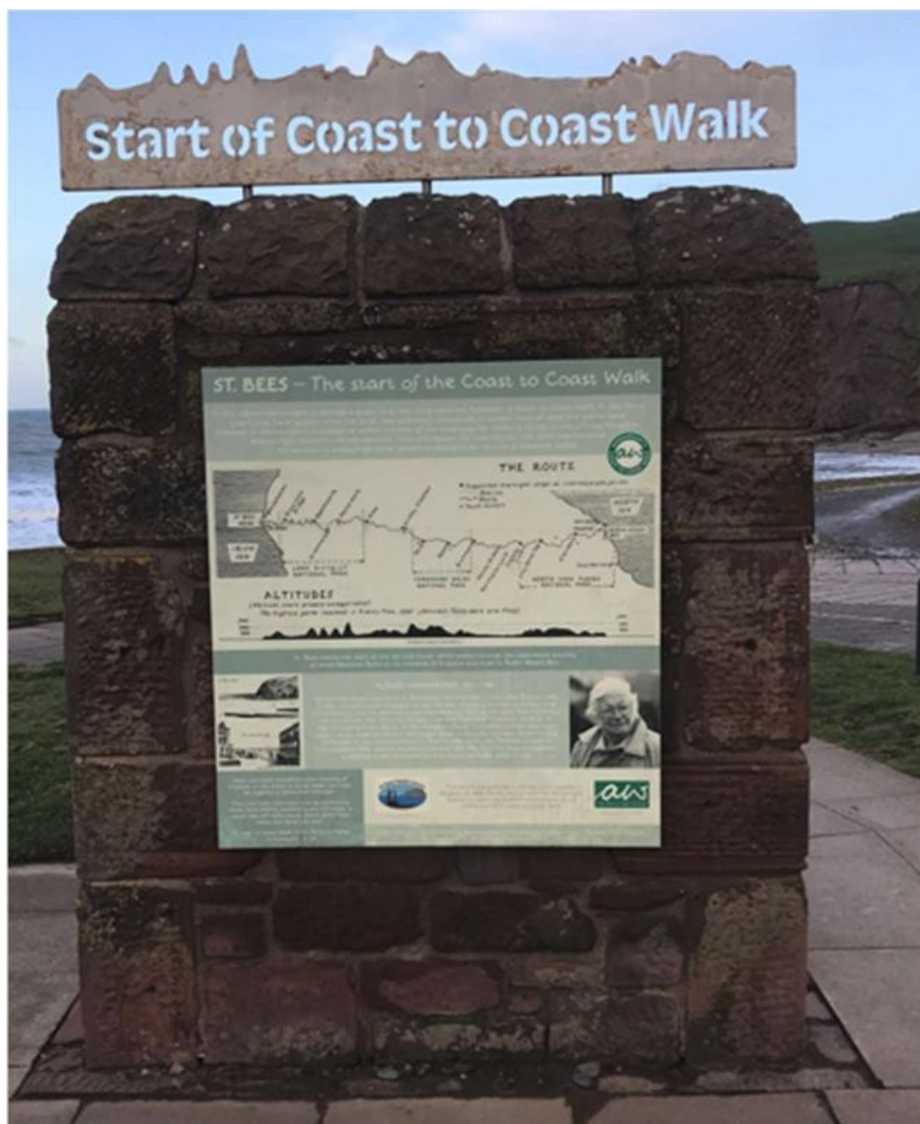
**We finish!**

Into the hall, and I am happy to sit down, take my pack off. Shoes and socks also come off. Dry socks feel nice. Other than the one rub on the heel my feet are okay. I am offered two different types of pasta. I can't decide between them, so have half a bowl of each. They both taste wonderful. Then another runner has opted for the vegan pizza but only wants half, so Aidan persuades me to eat the other half, just to be tidy. Stephen and I thank each other for the company. Stephen's wife, Kate is there – turns out that she has been volunteering alongside Aidan at Rosthwaite and at Shap – it really is a small and friendly community. It's only Stephen's fourth ultra and he'd been ready to quit at Patterdale, until the volunteers poured coffee into him and got some food into him. I'm so glad he continued.

## After

Shower, sleep and breakfast at Lorna's house, back to Shap to collect our tea urn (the flasks had reached our car the previous evening), then back to Manchester. By now I'm dot-watching and checking the WhatsApp groups frequently, following the progress of the runners still out on the route. I'm following everyone as we drive back down south (not while I'm the one driving!) and until we go to bed, then periodically in the days after until the last runner arrives in Robin Hood's Bay. Nick and Sophie are clocking out each evening as they reach their lodgings, then letting the team know once they are moving again the following morning. It's an absolute joy being able to follow people so closely, with multiple WhatsApp messages and photos from both the runners and the volunteers. It's sad when people say they are pulling out, but it's incredibly clear that it's not from lack of support.

I've been in some great races with wonderful atmosphere – Lakeland 50 and 100, Comrades, my 10-marathons-in-10-days, Race Across Scotland and others. This non-race rivalled any of them. The way the community rallied round to help us all to reach our goals is truly amazing. Watching the support develop before the weekend, and being able to contribute to that development, was fantastic. Memories to treasure.



## THE BRIGHTON MARATHON 2026 - A FIRST TIMER'S GUIDE (by David Foster)

There's only so many times you can say I'm going to run a marathon and not get round to it. It was now or never. When I joined the Striders in January 2025, my motivation was to push my running up a level, with longer runs already there in the back of my mind.

As most Striders know, balancing runs with busy home life is an unpredictable challenge, so in the first year at Striders it feels like I have worked my way round Wednesday, Friday and Sunday runs as well as Tuesday track sessions without ever being able to quite settle into a routine. It never fails to impress me that you lot find the time to get out there so much. Kudos!

It also didn't help that I managed to sprain my ankle so badly, stepping out of my own house, that I wasn't able to run for three months. But enough moaning about injuries (for the moment). Again, I think most Striders can do competitive story swaps of injuries to ankles, knees and hips. I just need a place a 'SLOW DOWN' sign on my own front door and have another one to carry with me throughout the day.

The early train from London to Brighton is a 'Tube at rush hour' affair. We manage to bag the last couple of seats at Croydon and watch in dismay as runners and spectators at later stations expend vital energy running up and down the platform looking to squeeze on, in the last pockets of space. Particular credit is due to members of the Rock Choir who I see desperately squeezing into the train and later hear blasting out numbers twice on the course.

The train might be packed but the company is good with much sharing of Brighton marathon stories and safety pins. A young family next to us get down to the serious business of bagel carb loading making me worry that I should have been adding a few more grams while I could.

There is no question that Brighton feels marathon day ready when we get off the train. Full of purposeful walkers with transparent plastic bags, reduced traffic, and big toilet queues at the station. And the odd few party people heading home added to the mix (perhaps they were running like that? Who knows. It would certainly win them space on the road.)

I say goodbye to my support team, Amy, as she jumps on a Beryl bike to get straight to Hove Lawns. She is multitasking, as always, doing the associated 10k run, knocking out a few lengths at Sea Lanes then picking up on support in the second half of the race :-)

Here comes my first predictable mistake. I knew it was coming. Out of the starting gates it immediately becomes clear that my watch, a slightly old Samsung, is not playing ball. Now I had been aware that its advanced age was a cause for concern in the run up to the race. But as soon as I am off, its touch screen decides to freeze, and I am not initially sure if it has even started. If you were running near me, can I apologise for being the person mucking around with my tech and my sunglasses as we turned the first corner of the race. The damn watch does get going eventually but leaves me about 500m out of sync with the signage right from the off. I have it on audio, but perhaps unsurprisingly for the first 10k I struggle to hear the km pacing updates. This means that effectively I have no idea of the speed I am running at for the first hour of the race. I eventually ask a fellow runner for our running time. Crumbs, never did I think I would pace my marathon by asking the time from strangers on the course (insert hand on face emoji here.) Yet in another sense none of this is actually surprising. It could be worse. I run past one fella with a large set of keys jangling away in his rucksack. At least I didn't make that oversight. Anyways, seasoned marathon runner, I hope I have amused you.

Yes, the hill out of Brighton. It's widely known that Brighton is a 'hilly' marathon. The 204m of climbing is mainly achieved in rolling accent onto the South Downs to the east of Brighton. It's this part of the race that defines the run as a coastal marathon. On the way up the hulking mass of the Roedean school and the valley of Ovendean hold your attention. However, turning before the lip of the Rottingdean valley, suddenly the whole of Brighton and this stretch of the south coast opens up before you. It is a gusty day, and a westerly wind is chopping the surf for miles along the coast. Tumbles of cumulus strafe a blue sky, and Brighton sits in the foreground resplendent with piers, towers and promenade. It is a mighty fine scene. I'll

take the climb, especially as any other day this view would be accompanied by dual carriageway traffic roar.

It's somewhere on this descent, which I am probably running too fast, that a knee ache starts to make itself known. This is the main narrative that will define the rest of the race. Apologies again to Striders who have suffered long-term serious injuries with their knees. I am talking about a discomfort that is familiar from my training runs when I added too many km too quickly. The marathon gives you plenty of time to think through these things and my thought process goes something like this. Firstly, slow down, focus on form, head up. Maybe that helps a little bit. Secondly, time to accept that this discomfort could easily blow up into an endgame situation if ignored. It's time to accept that I am going to have to let the rest of the run be dictated by the speed my knee will allow me to run at.

And certainly, looking at the splits for the rest of the marathon that is pretty much what happens. The crowds and the house music and the drag queens and the perfume spritz provide enough entertainment to get me through central Brighton and suddenly I am at mile 20, the long slow road out of Hove which I have already been told is the grind and the crux of the run. It's the opposite of the big horizons back at mile 10. This is the long straight suburban drag. I could moan, but let's play it out for comedy. Certainly, the Saint John Ambulance guy gave me a cheery 'unlucky mate!' when I opened a High Five gel with such vigor that the side split, releasing a gush of Energy gel down my leg. Kids giving out lemonade to runners leads to a humorous conversation with fellow runners about accepting fizzy drinks from young strangers. Finally, the supporters who had put out marmite sandwiches and sausage rolls at about mile 22. I salute you, but shudder to think of how my stomach would have dealt with a marmite sandwich at that point.

'It's only a parkrun left' is the shout from the crowd as I head towards, then away from the finish line at Hove Lawns for a grinding second time. I am happy to confess that at this point my mind is narrating the pros and cons of stopping to walk. Other people around me, slightly to my annoyance, are indeed stopping to walk, then running and catching me a couple of hundred metres later. A couple of four-hour pacers have gone past me, and my knee and the rest of my body has only briefly been able to entertain the thought of keeping up with them. Funnily enough my Samsung watch is still merrily churning out pace times that would have me breaking the four hours.

One final stretch where runners are cheered on by merry beach hut residents and that's my marathon, 4 hours 15 minutes worth of it. Well done to all the Striders who took part. There were plenty of cries of 'Well done Striders' as yellow shirts crossed paths on route. Thanks also to Mike who nipped down to support us all. And the next one? Well, I think I need to buy a new watch before I worry about that question.



## MUCH ADO ABOUT MARATHON RUNNING (by William J Furney)

While over 59,000 people were running around the dusty streets of London during the capital's marathon, almost 1,700 others were enjoying the spectacular spring countryside in Warwickshire.

The weather was perfect for the Shakespeare Marathon – mild and sunny, with high clouds offering a degree of protection, and a gentle breeze at times.

Mixed with nearly 3,000 half marathoners, we started in Stratford and headed out into the countryside for what, for me at least, was a real breath of fresh air. I, along with several other members of Striders of Croydon, had arrived from the capital the evening before.

Battling a cascade of injuries — a stubbornly sore foot triggered by a knee injury, plus wounds on hand and the other knee from two falls on training runs, which had also left me with three black toenails, one of which fell out a few days ago – my months of marathon training had come to an abrupt end many weeks earlier. I wasn't sure I could do this, my first marathon; but, reassuringly, my physio had more confidence.

My strategy for this 42K race, if I could do it, was to divide it into quarters, checking in at each 10K to see if all systems were still go. I was not focused on the runners' obsession with time but of crossing the finish line.

The Shakespeare Marathon, which benefits the Shakespeare Hospice in Stratford, had a battle of its own – raising £3 million to cover a funding shortfall and keep the vital hospice going.



The 4,700 runners on this balmy Sunday were contributing a chunk through entry fees and sponsorship. “Fundraising events like The Shakespeare Marathon, which we are hoping will bring in £20,000 for the hospice, help keep our nurses on the road supporting people and their families across south Warwickshire,” spokesman Sam Conway told me.

“Like many hospices across the country, we are facing significant financial pressures. Demand for our services continues to rise, while costs — particularly staffing, utilities and clinical delivery — have increased sharply.”

Government funding, said Conway, was insufficient to meet the hospice's financial needs. "We need to raise £3 million every year and only 12% of our funding comes from the NHS, meaning we rely on charitable income to raise the remaining 88%," he said.

One person who was running and raising funds for the hospice was Poppy Ward, a 27-year-old tattoo artist from Evesham in Worcestershire, whose grandmother had offered her skin as she honed her craft, and whom she was running in honour of. Her grandmother, stricken with cancer, was cared for by the hospice and passed away in April last year.

"My Nan was my absolute world and I'm still lost without her now," Ward, who has two small children with her husband, Max, told me.

"She was with me during my tattoo journey," she said, "letting me practice on her as well as having my wedding dress made. She made some little embroidery patches to go on it.

"I wanted to do something that was challenging and that I've never done or would ever do as I've never ran in my life.

"She went through so, so much and never once complained, and still put everyone else first. So it's even more reason to do something for her. What's a little run compared to nine months of her illness?"

Ward met her fundraising target of £600, via a JustGiving page, and said the race was "in ways easier than expected" but that in the "last couple of miles I was really struggling, like my legs just kept cramping and it was just getting harder and harder ... I was finding it quite emotional towards the end with the pain and remembering why we were doing it."

Many people, I saw, found the event challenging. Clubmates started too fast and paid the price later; foot and leg injuries (mine aside) were evident in people stopping and massaging them; and lots walked towards the end.



On a long stretch of rural path, a young woman was doubled over, people surrounding her. I slowed down, and shouted over if they had called someone. “Yes!” a man shouted back, and I kept going, but wondered how an ambulance would get through, not with the people but the narrow dirt path.

Surprisingly, I thought, several people were on phone calls during the race. A man was blaring into his device as I passed and I accelerated to escape the racket. (Later, over post-race drinks at a Stratford pub, I remarked on the phone use, and fellow runner Jacob said he had called his young daughter, “to take my mind off it” as he grappled with a tough part of the race.)

I don’t know if anyone had those new Adidas shoes that allegedly helped propel the London Marathon winner, Sebastian Sawe, to a record time of 1:59. Probably not, given the Shakespeare Marathon was won in an additional 31 minutes, by Matthew Lock of Witney Roadrunners, in 2:30. Chris Kilburn of Mansfield Harriers came first in the half marathon, in 1:10.

As for me, I sprinted to a 3:41 conclusion of the marathon — racing through the finish line and unable to immediately stop. That prompted a woman bearing medals to come running after me and asking if I wanted one. It was a thrilling end to a fantastic event in the glorious English countryside.



Left to right: Josef Freedman, William Furney, Kechong Nguyen, Deborah Zeffman

# SUPERHALFS: THE END aka THE MADNESS OF A WEEKEND DOUBLE

(by Pandie Bronsdon)

After running in Lisbon, Cardiff, Copenhagen and Valencia in 2025, it was just the Prague and Berlin Half Marathons I had left to complete the Superhalf series. Easy, I hear you say. What's the problem, you ask?

Well, the main one was the are both the same weekend, with Prague Half on Saturday and Berlin on Sunday. So not only would I have to run another marathon, admittedly over two days, but I'd also have to work out travel logistics, bib collection, eating, rehydrating and... and... and..... The deciding factor was, it's so hard to get into the Superhalf races now that I didn't want to risk missing out, plus there was the personal achievement of completing all the series within a year (well, March '25 - March '26 so 13 months really but what's 4 weeks between t-shirts?). Decision made.

## Prague (5 of 6)

I'd never been to Prague but had heard good things about its architecture, its atmosphere, its beer (sadly I didn't get to sample too much of that) and 'Trdelník', a sweet pastry cooked into a cone shape and filled with ice cream. I did sample one of those (carb loading), it was good!

If anyone is planning Prague Half, I strongly recommend taking the extra leave if you can and arriving on Thursday, as we did. We had easy transit through passport control and at the Expo but there were LOTS of complaints about two hour (plus) queues and poor organisation on the Friday and as a result we never did manage to meet up with Keith and Donna (our Number One Fan) Murkin on Friday evening, although we did grab a (small) beer with Erik Schrijnemaekers, also doing the double with us.



With only 17,000 entries, Prague is the smallest of the series, and I thought one of the better organised. To be fair to the organisers, other than Lisbon which sounds as though it was better this year, they've all been OK. There were even plenty (obviously not enough but that's always the case) of toilets, especially away from the initial entry into the competitors' village.

In my race strategy planning (ha ha ha) I'd been torn between taking it easy to save something for Berlin or just running my usual race and dealing with tomorrow, tomorrow. In the end I did a bit of both, figuring that as long as I met the 3hr 15min time limit in Berlin, I was going to finish whatever happened.

The course itself is good, flat and interesting, along the river Vltava in places and passing some well-known attractions on the way. You start with the river on your left, then zig zag across it a total of four times before the finish. It's a twisty course, apart from a couple of out and back stretches in the first half, all on big wide roads with lots of tram lines and lots of cobbles\*. Too. Many. Cobbles. No one told me about the cobbles, or if they did, I wasn't listening. I had a complete sense of humour failure at one point ("*Enough of the \*\*\*\*ing cobbles*") and it was all I could do not to stop and scream at them.

Bearing in mind that it was a cold and greyish day, the spectators were brilliant and there weren't any really quiet places. There was also something quite bizarre about running through the Old Town Square, past the tour groups waiting for the Astronomical Clock, and through the Easter market, just feet away from people sitting down with their breakfast coffees. Running through the Powder Gate Tower was also pretty amazing and while I'm usually rubbish at looking around me while I run, I made a point here (and in Berlin).

Finishing in a personally disappointing 2hrs 22mins (see \*cobbles) it was good to see – and say goodbye to – Donna and Keith at the end before heading back to the hotel (further away than planned as I thought the start was in a different place when I booked it) for a quick turnaround, a shower, change of clothes and a meatball sandwich before heading to the station to catch the train to Berlin. Erik had obviously finished hours ago and was already on his train by this point.

## **Interrail**

I'd read somewhere that booking first class seats on the Prague–Berlin train was the best way to travel, that the seats were comfortable, ticket prices were reasonable, snacks were available and the trains reliable. One of those was true and the seats were comfortable. Engineering works put paid to the last one, the snacks weren't great and I'll never know whether the ticket prices were good as (a) my Czech is not great (non-existent) so I've no idea what the options were and (b) John booked them. Lots of other people had obviously had the same idea though, as the train was full of runners in varying degrees of elation or exhaustion.

## **Berlin (6 of 6)**

We arrived in Berlin at 21:00 and finally fell into bed at about 23:00. Sadly, we'd missed any opportunity for anything sensible to eat so it was fruit from the room and some emergency flapjacks. Not ideal.

Next morning, bright and (too) early, it was time for the last race in the series. That in itself was quite emotional for me, 18 months or so of training, plus some great – and yes, fun – weekends in some fantastic cities was about to end, and I couldn't decide if I was happy or sad – probably both. The first task was to negotiate the 'emergency' bib pick-up the organisers had confirmed was possible a week or so before the race (so yes, for anyone else considering the double, it can be done); with true German efficiency it turned out to be remarkably easy with a copy of your passport and a QR code needed. We also bumped into some people from the train in the (short) queue. I do enjoy the camaraderie of doing something ever so slightly extreme!

I personally found this event too big. There were 42,500 runners – almost as many as some major marathons – and while it was really well organised, the number of people in the Event Village was starting to annoy me. If you don't like crowds, get there early, find your own space and leave plenty of time to walk to your start pen as they are a good 10 minutes away. Once that grump was out of my system, I really enjoyed the atmosphere. I didn't feel anywhere near as tired or stiff as I expected and while I knew it would be a struggle, I also knew all those cold, wet mornings with James Harrison and the Sunday morning Marathon Gang weren't going to be wasted – thank you all, you know who you are. It was also good to meet up with Maili Singh, also finishing her Superhalf journey, and Erik.

The start was massive, with the DJ keeping the atmosphere going with some good old German techno as we crossed the line through the Tiergarten. After a bit of “*left round the roundabout or right*” it was a fairly straight, wide course with hardly any inclines and NO COBBLES. It’s easy to see how people get PBs here – although possibly not 25 years later and probably not after running the same distance the day before.

By about the 13k mark, my legs were feeling it and I was grateful for the enthusiastic crowds and Cheer Points and they make such a difference to us ‘steadier’ runners. As is usual, I had a mental block at 15k, convinced there was only 5k to go (counting obviously not a strong point) and then a real loss of energy at 17k. After stealing some sweets from sweaty handed children, I felt a bit better but had had enough by that point. I knew the finish was not long on the other side of the Brandenburg Gate, however, and coming round the corner to see that was the most amazing feeling and gives a great boost. It is such an iconic site anyway, but to run through the middle really felt special. I was completely dead by this point but finally, the finish arch was in sight, and then behind me. I’d done it, with a remarkably consistent time of 2hrs 22 mins.

Once I’d collected the requisite banana, medal, warm tea (nicer than it sounds) and a recycled plastic blanket, I made my way to the Superhalves tent, where John was waiting for me. He’d finished ages earlier so must have been freezing. You have a little “Last Superhalf” note on your bib, they tick your name off the list and there you go. You have the medal. Job Done. Not only had I just run two half marathons, in different countries, on consecutive days, but I’d finished the series I started as a bit of a laugh after one too many beers at the 2024 Striders Christmas Party. Thanks Keith, it was definitely worth it.

It’s a bit weird not to have the series to focus on, although I’m running again in Valencia later this year, and I do have another half or two up my sleeve, so I won’t be down for long. I may not do them on consecutive days though (never say never).

I would like to say a big thank you to everyone at SoC who’s pushed and pulled me through the training over the last 18 months or so. I wouldn’t and probably couldn’t have done it without any of you.



## COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: MARCH-MAY 2026

In the England Masters Inter-Area Challenge, at Lee Valley on 14 March, Steve Corfield ran very well to win the M60 800 metres (2:24.00) and place second in his heat of the 400 metres (62.27).

On the same day, in the Centurion 'Hundred Hills' 50K race, starting and finishing at Stonor in Oxfordshire, Ally Whitlock set a club W45 record of 4:55:30, while Keith Simpson set a club M75 record of 8:59:25. On 15 March, Paul Thomas ran a personal best 2:51:46 in the Barcelona Marathon.

The Kew 10K, on 28 March, was the second race in this year's Surrey Road League. Phil Coales ran very well to finish seventh out of 2739 finishers (34:10), while Steve Corfield was first in the M60 age-group, placing 51st overall (37:59). Craig Smith was 179th (42:10), Steve Massey 202nd (43:10) and Damian Macenhill 211th (43:22). Striders' men placed ninth in the team event. In the women's race, Eve Phillips was 652nd out of 1583 finishers (62:38).

In the East Surrey League's annual road races, at Ewell on 16 April, Thomas Finch placed 30th out of 84 finishers in the under-18 race. In the senior race, Stephen Kennefick was 33rd out of 73 finishers, while Consuelo Kennefick was 47th, Cindy Siu 56th, Stephen Siu 57th and Mick Turner 64th.

The Sutton 10K, at Nonsuch Park on 19 April, was the third race in this year's Surrey Road League. Steve Corfield placed 67th out of 385 finishers (38:36). Erik Schrijnemaekers was 84th (39:28), Tom Gillespie 94th (40:16), Josef Freedman 109th (41:24) and Tim Lawlor 144th (42:52). Striders' men placed 13th in the team event. Natalie Ballarin was the 71st woman to finish, placing 301st overall (55:09).

Striders had 16 competitors in the London Marathon on 26 April. They were led by Simone Luciani, who ran 3:14:47. He was closely followed by Niamh Vincent, who ran 3:15:04. Charlotte Nusca ran a personal best 3:21:34, lifting her to twelfth place in Striders' all-time women's rankings. She was followed by Graeme Drysdale (3:21:47), Max Veglio (3:25:55), Vicki Ledgard (3:29:10), Grace Champion (3:38:48), Anna O'Sullivan (3:43:32), Nikki Javan (3:51:31), Paul Cripps (4:26:42), Simon Powell (4:31:32), John O'Neill (4:48:00), Brenhan Heath (4:51:14), Eraclis Adamides (4:54:30), Kate Gray (5:28:26) and Ganesh Swaminathan (5:29:34).

The Ranelagh Half-Marathon, at Richmond on 10 May, incorporated the Surrey Championships and was the fourth race in this year's Surrey Road League. Marc Burrows placed 54th out of 388 finishers (1:22:34), while Erik Schrijnemaekers placed 70th (1:25:51). Striders' next two finishers both won Surrey Championship medals in the M55 age-group. Tom Gillespie won the silver medal, placing 76th overall (1:26:48), while Steve Corfield won the bronze medal, placing 79th overall (1:27:23). Striders' men placed ninth in the team event.

The first Southern Veterans League match of the season was at Kingsmeadow on 18 May. Steve Corfield ran very well to win both the M60 400 metres (63.60) and the M60 mile (5:35.56). Jon Dean was third in the M60 triple jump (7.17) and fourth in the 100 metres (16.35). In the M50 age-group, Steve Massey was third in the 400 metres (67.02), fourth in the 100 metres (15.92) and seventh in the mile (5:58.69). In the M35 age-group, Josef Freedman was third in the B 400 metres (62.01) while Erik Schrijnemaekers was seventh in the A race (69.27). There were fourth places for Vanessa Wheeler in the W60 mile (8:14.35) and Sandra Francis was in the W60 discus (8.14). Lorraine Hunte was fifth in the W60 100 metres (18.24), while Sarah Allport was sixth in the W50 mile (9:43.17) and Ruth Pearson was seventh in the W50 hammer (12.77). Striders' men placed seventh of the nine clubs in the match, while their women were eighth.

Eight Striders won medals in the Surrey Masters Championships, held at Kingsmeadow on 30 May. Sandra Francis won gold in both the W65 100 metres (18.86) and the long jump (2.68). Natalie Ballarin won gold in the W50 1500 metres (7:14.34) and silver in both the shot (6.69) and the discus (15.70). There were also gold medals for Consuelo Kennefick in the W50 5000 metres (20:50.54), Vanessa Wheeler in the W60 800 metres (3:40.52), Lorraine Hunte in the W70 100 metres (18.05) and Alan Dolton in the M65 800 metres (4:18.36). There were silver medals for Sarah Allport in the W50 1500 metres (9:04.85) and Stephen Kennefick in the M50 5000 metres (20:50.71).

## 30 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN APRIL-AUGUST 1996

The East Surrey League held its annual road race at Ewell on 9 April. The race was won by Paul Haywood of Box Hill Racers. The first Strider was Lee Morgan, who placed ninth in 23:17. Box Hill won the team race with Dorking second. Striders finished fifth, one place ahead of local rivals Croydon Harriers. Dorking won the league championship.

The tenth Croydon 10K, which had been postponed at short notice in October 1995, was held on 14 April. Increased traffic following the introduction of Sunday trading meant that the course had had to be revised. The section to the west of Park Hill Road, running past the Law Courts, was omitted, and the eastern part of the course was lengthened. Instead of turning left from Addiscombe Road into Mapledale Avenue, the runners continued along Addiscombe Road until the junction with Sandilands, then turned left up Sandilands and left again into Fitzjames Avenue, before turning right into Upfield and rejoining the previous route at the junction of Upfield and Mapledale. The first man home was Stuart Major of South London Harriers (31:39). Former Strider Simon Morris was the first M50, recording 36:02, which would have been a club M50 record if he had remained a club member.

1996 saw Striders enter a track and field league for the first time, competing in the Southwest London division of the Southern Veterans League. Striders' first match was at Kingsmeadow on 29 April. Striders' men made an excellent start, having the satisfaction of beating local rivals Croydon Harriers (who were of course an established track and field club) by just one point. Home club Kingston won the match with 228 points, with Epsom second (227) and Dorking third (173). Striders' total of 125 saw them ahead of Harriers' 124. Sutton were sixth (101) with Redhill seventh and Crawley eighth. Striders' victory over Harriers was largely due to having better team spirit: spurred on by team manager John McGilvray, the club fielded athletes in most of the events whereas Harriers had several gaps. Striders' women had a smaller team but still placed fifth: none of Croydon Harriers' women managed to make the journey to Kingsmeadow.

The Surrey Championships took place at Croydon Arena on 11 May. Future Strider David McKenzie placed third in the senior men's 200 metres (21.6).

The second Southern Veterans League match of the season was at Croydon Arena on 13 May. Both Striders' men and women again had the satisfaction of beating local rivals Croydon Harriers. Striders' men placed fourth with 150 points, only 10 points behind third-placed Dorking.

The Surrey Veterans Championships were held at Tooting on 1 June. For Striders, John McGilvray gained a double victory in the M50 800 metres (2:27.4) and 1500 metres (4:57.4). Kevin Burnett gained six medals in the M55 age-group, winning the shot (6.03) and javelin (21.68), and taking second place in the 100 metres (15.1), 200 metres (31.4), discus (21.07) and hammer (15.52).

The third Southern Veterans League match of the season took place at Kingsmeadow in June. Striders fielded their weakest team of the season, with just four men competing for the club: team manager John McGilvray was supported by Kevin Burnett, Colin Cotton and Mick George. However, with John and Kevin competing in several different events, they still managed to finish fifth of the eight competing clubs. Elene Kayum was Striders' only female competitor.

The final Southern Veterans League match of the season took place at Sutton Arena on 7 August. For Striders, Mick Gambrell set a club M40 pole vault record of 1 metre 90. Striders' men finished the season in fourth place of the eight competing clubs, while their women were sixth. Both Striders' men and women, in their first season of track competition, finished ahead of local rivals Croydon Harriers.

Three members of Croydon Harriers competed in the Olympic Games in Atlanta in early August. Judy Oakes was eleventh in the shot (18.34). Donna Fraser ran a personal best 51.58 in the 400 metres, while Lea Haggett cleared 1 metre 90 in the high jump. At club level, Croydon Harriers finished seventh in Division Two of the UK Women's League: they were relegated to Division Three. Their men finished eighth in Division One of the Southern League. Holland Sports (whose team included several Striders) finished 22nd in Division Seven.

On 18 August, Eric Parker ran well to place seventh in the hilly Jog Shop 20-mile race over the South Downs, starting and finishing in Brighton (2:23:07).

## 20 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SUMMER 2006

The Dorking 10-mile road race, which incorporated the Surrey Championships, took place on 4 June. Striders' women placed eighth in the team event. They were led by Serena Stracey who ran well to be the 14th woman to finish, recording 71:37. Club colleague Kerry Backshell also ran well for 21st (74:00). Kate Custis was 82nd (85:24) and Karen Peake was 94th (87:13).

Striders' men placed 12th in the team event. Justin Macenhill ran well to place 15th (59:30), while Damian Macenhill was 40th (62:55) and Pawel Bal 67th (65:45). David Batten was ninth in the M50 category and 100th overall (68:31), while club secretary Chris Morton placed 118th (69:47).

On 19 June, Striders' men placed fifth in their Southern Veterans League match at Kingsmeadow. David Batten was second in the M50 1500 metres (5:11.6) and fourth in the M50 400 metres (66.3). Graham Pullen was fourth in the M50 shot (4.63), hammer (9.99) and long jump (2.98). In the M40 age-group, Dave Lovell was third in both the 400 metres (63.3) and the shot (6.81). Steve Smith was fourth in the long jump (3.97). Chris Morton was fourth in the A 5000 metres (19:52.8) with Alan Dolton fourth in the B race (19:58.4).

The Dysart 10-kilometre road race, which incorporated the Surrey Championships, took place on 25 June. Striders were led home by Pawel Bal, who placed 29th (36:20). John Foster was 74th (39:21), Darren Piper 83rd (39:45), Chris Morton 108th (41:04), Mike Willans 133rd (42:03) and Dominic Hawkins 164th (43:39).

Striders' first woman was Kerry Backshell, who placed 180th overall in 44:20. Serena Stracey, despite suffering from a bad cough, was not far behind in 191st (44:59). Karen Peake was 371st (57:05) and Louise Mayne 381st (58:18).

The annual Elmore 7-mile road race took place in very hot conditions on 15 July. Striders had an impressive total of 25 finishers. They were led by Justin Macenhill, who ran very well to come third of the 342 finishers, recording 40:54. Pawel Bal also ran well to place sixth (42:08), while Damian Macenhill was 16th (44:47). David Batten was fourth in the M50 category and 26th overall (46:14). Darren Piper was 29th (46:32) and Dominic Hawkins 37th (47:43).

Striders' women were led by Serena Stracey who ran very well to be the sixth woman to finish, placing 65th overall (50:10). Steph Upton was 113th (53:53), Kerry Backshell 128th (54:57), Karen McDermott 249th (65:48) and Michele Meech 275th (68:39).

The Elmbridge 10-kilometre road race took place on 23 July. Striders' men placed ninth in the team event. They were led by Pawel Bal who placed 22nd (35:52). David Batten again ran well to place 56th (38:50), while Dominic Hawkins was 77th (39:52). Barry Finch was 137th (42:44), Steve Smith 142nd (42:53) and club chairman John Gannon 157th (43:38).

Striders' women placed 14th in their team event. Kerry Backshell placed 34th in the women's race (44:18) with Karen Peake 103rd (52:57), Carol Hollingworth 114th (54:44) and Jacqui Mazur 163rd (61:35).

The Surrey 5K road running championships took place at Wimbledon on 13 August. Striders' first finisher was Pawel Bal, who placed 28th (17:11). Damian Macenhill was 60th (18:21), while David Batten had an excellent run to place second in the M50 category and 63rd overall (18:26). John Foster was 71st (18:46), Darren Piper 86th (19:22), Chris Morton 87th (19:24) and Nigel Finch 99th (19:55). Barry Finch was sixth in the M50 category and 118th overall (20:17). Karen Peake placed 34th in the women's race and 191st overall (24:29).

2006 was Striders' second season of track and field competition in the Rosenheim League. Striders' men finished fifth, ahead of South London Harriers, while their women were short of numbers and finished sixth. Two Striders (Matt Morgan and Matt O'Hare) competed in all six fixtures. In the Southern Veterans League Striders' men finished fifth, while their women were seventh.

On 17 August, at the World Junior Championships in Beijing, Croydon Harriers' outstanding teenager Martyn Rooney placed third in the 400 metres (45.87). Three days later, he won another bronze medal in the 4 x 400 metre relay.

## 10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SUMMER 2016

Sandra Francis had an excellent day at the Surrey Masters Championships, at Ewell on 5 June. She won gold medals in the W55 100 metres (17.42), 200 metres (37.65) and 80 metre hurdles (22.58), and took silver in the long jump (3.34). Alan Dolton won gold in the M55 1500 metres (5:36.45), while Kevin Burnett won gold in the M75 shot (5.94) and took silver in the discus (17.08), hammer (15.77) and heavy hammer (6.43). Lorraine Hunte won silver in the W60 100 metres in a new club age-group record of 16.71 seconds.

On the same day, Rachel Lindley was the fifth woman to finish the Dorking 10-mile road race, which incorporated the Surrey Championships. She recorded a personal best 64:54. She was followed by Carolyn Storey (80:45) and Charlotte Letchford (80:52). Striders' women were ninth in the team event. For Striders' men, Simone Luciani was 20th (60:19) and was followed by Lee Flanagan (63:58) and Peter Laurence (72:32). They were 16th in the team event.

In the penultimate Southern Veterans League of the season, at Wimbledon Park on 13 June, Lee Flanagan won the 800 metres in a new club M40 record of 2:11.7. He also placed second in the M40 5000 metres (16:59.1). Paul Cripps won the M50 triple jump with a new club age-group record of 10.30 metres. He also won the M50 high jump (1.53) and placed third in the M50 discus (22.52). Maggie Statham won the W50 5000 metres (21:23.2), while Graham Hansen was second in the M50 race (18:01.9). In the 200 metres, Sam O'Dongo was second in the M40 race in a club age-group record of 25.8 seconds, while Julian Spencer-Wood was third in the M60 race (32.9).

On 19 June, Striders had 16 finishers in the Richmond 10K road race, which incorporated the Surrey Championships. Phil Coales ran very well to finish 13th (34:47) with Lee Flanagan 48th (36:17) and Peter Johnson completing the scoring trio in 223rd (43:22). Striders' men were 15th in the team event, while their women were 12th. Carolyn Storey placed 292nd overall (46:18) with Charlotte Letchford 311th (46:56) and Selena Wong 374th (49:33).

In the Blackheath & Bromley 10000 metre championship, at Norman Park on 6 July, Krzysztof Klidzia set a Striders M50 record of 37:15.1.

In the final Southern Veterans League match of the season, at Croydon Arena on 11 July, Striders' men did well to place third of the seven competing clubs. Sam O'Dongo had an excellent run to win the 400 metres in 56.9 seconds. He also set a new club M40 record of 4 metres 81 in the long jump. Paul Cripps also did well to win both the M50 high jump (1.50) and the long jump (4.59). Striders' women were fifth. Nadine Pryce made a successful debut by placing second in both the A 100 metres (16.3) and the javelin (9.53), while Rosie Gibbons was second in the A 1500 metres (5:50.0) and Lorraine Hunte was second in the W60 100 metres (17.8).

Both Striders' men and women finished fifth in the final league table. At the end of the season, David Batten retired as team manager after several successful years in that role. Andy Elliott subsequently volunteered to succeed him for the 2017 season.

In the Elmore seven-mile road race on 16 July, Krzysztof Klidzia ran well to win the M50 age-group, placing 20th overall (42:56). Graeme Drysdale was 46th (46:49) and Steve Massey 64th (48:37). Striders' men were eleventh in the team event, while their women did well to place fifth. Selena Wong was 175th (58:44) with Linda Daniel 215th (63:10) and Jo Penny 277th (74:57).

In the Elmbridge 10-kilometre road race on 24 July, Striders were led by Lee Flanagan who placed 48th in 36:59. Graeme Drysdale was 90th (39:06) with Steve Massey 123rd (40:46). Striders' men were 16th in the team event, while their women were 12th. Carolyn Storey placed 263rd overall (46:46), with Charlotte Letchford 307th (48:44) and Rachel Tanner 379th (51:54).

The final Surrey Road League race of the season was the Wimbledon 5K on 14 August. Striders' men placed 13th in the team event. Phil Coales finished 21st in 17:27. He was followed by Steve Massey (20:11), Darren Woods (21:05), John O'Mahony (21:35), Peter Johnson (21:44) and James Burree (22:00). Striders' women did well to place seventh. They were again led by Carolyn Storey who was 137th overall (22:09). She was followed by Charlotte Letchford (22:52), Michelle Clarke (23:00) and Selena Wong (24:07). In the final league tables, Striders' women were eleventh while their men were 15th.



**Paul Cripps winning the M50 high jump in our Veterans League match at Croydon Arena**



**Sam O'Dongo winning the men's 400 metres in the same match**

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