

BEDFORD HARRIERS



Awards Edition

On the Run

January 2018



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A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR.

Happy New Year to Harriers all; I'd like to thank all of you who have contributed to this edition of 'On the Run' and so eloquently shared your triumphs, disappointments and observations of the year just passed. I hope you all enjoy reading the articles and are inspired to try something new (read Kate Barnard and Adam Hills) or become a member of the various support teams (read Zoe, Jutta and Claire's commentary on the subject). For further inspiration, the techies amongst you should read James Shea's article and for the mature (in years, not mind), read about the strategy Bob Wells uses to continue to be motivated. On the same topic, be encouraged by Charlie's Hempstead's observations of the advantages of going up a notch on the WAVA age group. If your interest lies in taking on endurance challenges then don't miss the contributions by Caroline Diggle, Ian Hammett, Kevin Shelton-Smith and Oliver Jones. Then, when you are about to give up on that new challenge, read Juliet Smith and Sasha Trude. For some inside information on a couple of new/novel events, Mark Tinkler and Angie have the low down.

Whatever you decide to do in 2018, I hope you achieve everything you have set your sights on and please, don't forget to tell us all about it.

MY PERSONAL CHALLENGE: LADYBOWER 50

by Caroline Diggle

I had dreamt about completing a 50 mile race for three years and, by way of preparation, I threw myself into running lots of marathons and my first ultra of 30 miles in 2014 but, in 2015, a knee injury got the better of me so I cut back on the mileage, got lots of physio and, incidentally, put on almost 2 stone in weight! So, January 2017 arrived and I had excitedly planned a marathon and a couple of shorter distance ultras; the Harriers ultra 'Chiltern Challenge' and 'Spires and Shires' where I was lucky enough to run with David Prior and Rebecca Pinney; we laughed a lot. I trained all through the summer with 'The Lazy Gang' and ran another marathon and lots of miles on my own too. The hardest of which was 30 miles on one Friday afternoon followed by the Parkrun the next morning. Those double training runs were hard work so I wondered if could I manage 50 miles. Well, I thought, I'll run/walk/crawl as far as I can until the cut off time of 13 hours. To give myself more of a chance, I joined Slimmining World and lost 2 stone; I am certain that helped.

So spring and summer came and went and finally it was time for the big one. My husband was joining me as 'crew' i.e. making pot noodles and feeding me cake whenever I saw him, which should have been three times but actually turned out to be two as he fell asleep in the car. Lucky him! So off we went up to the Peak District where we spent the night at a lovely little cottage in the middle of nowhere. I hardly slept on the Saturday night, partly due to excitement and, partly due to the fact that I had trapped my finger that evening (ouch!). Sunday morning came and there I was loitering at the start feeling rather nervous. The 50 milers started at 8am with the 20 milers starting later. I began as I meant to go on, very very slowly. I knew I could do 15 mins per mile and still finish within the cut off time. The course was simple and, once round the Ladybower (5 miles) and then three times around the Ladybower and Derwent reservoirs (15 miles). The scenery was spectacular and



other runners, dog walkers, cyclists and tourists were extremely friendly. I found out just how helpful when, at around 45 miles, I lost all cognitive ability and, however hard I tried, could not operate the tap on the water butt left for us to fill our hydration packs. Two cyclists kindly did it for me. I started feeling quite sick about half way round; perhaps I had drunk too much water or eaten too much cake!

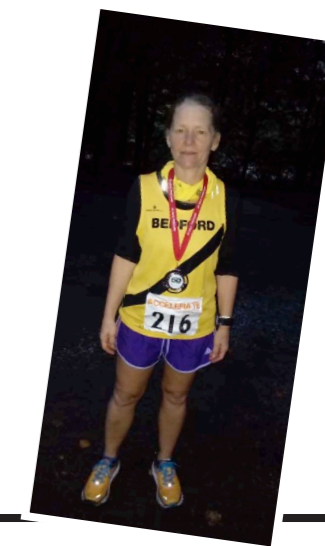


Although the route was easy to navigate, there was only one marshal point so the people I met along the way really lifted (or lowered) my spirits. Seeing my husband along the way was invaluable and I can't thank him enough for his support; he made me laugh, he checked I was OK and he made sure I was eating. I ran with a chap and another lady for a while, each of us doing our first 50. We left the lady at about 10 miles and carried on talking about anything just to keep going but, unfortunately, he decided to call it a day at 35 miles. I didn't want to give up just yet; I felt happy and was in my comfort zone. I met my husband for the last time before the end, ate more cake and changed my trainers and socks! My husband is not a runner but can walk fast and he walked the next couple of miles with me before turning back to the car to meet me later at the finish. At about 40 miles I caught up with two girls from Biggleswade, of all places! It was great to run with people that were talking about familiar things and places and we had lots of laughs and they told me about 100 mile races they had done. However, after a few miles one of them started getting quite negative about the race organisation, complaining that there weren't any marshals or enough feeding stations (there was only one per 15 miles). I thought the organisation was very good, after all, this was not 'The Great North Run'. So I wasn't too unhappy when the Biggleswade girls started walking and I carried on jogging slowly on my own.

As my Garmin only lasted 9 hours and gave up before I did at around 40 miles, I estimated there were only about 3 miles to go. I had no idea how I was doing for time. I knew I was nearly last but I didn't care because I knew I had almost finished. I finally passed the last dam and then the café where we had had tea the day before. The last mile finished with a hill and I did the same thing as I had done at every hill along the way; I walked. Then in the distance I saw a lonely figure coming towards me, waving. It was my lovely husband 'running' wearing his green shooting jacket, jeans and heavy walking boots. When I saw him I screeched with joy and I said "I am gonna beat you up that hill." We both ran the last half mile together and it felt wonderful. I crossed the finish line, I wasn't last and I had completed 50 miles in 11 hours and 28 mins. I collected my medal and T-Shirt and went to the car where I changed into my onesie. I thought I would fall asleep straight away on the trip home but instead I was so wound up, I couldn't stop talking; I was on a real high.



In the days and weeks after the race, I felt physically good but one thing I was not prepared for was the way I felt emotionally. It took me a long time to mentally recover; the best way I can describe how I felt is that it was like the anticlimax of Boxing Day or the last day of your holiday or something similar. Maybe I need to book next year's challenge; maybe 100k or 100 miles?



SWIM/WETSUIT WRESTLING/RUN: A BEGINNER'S AQUATHLON

Kate Barnard finds a new passion

Having fallen in love with open water swimming, under the care of Sylvia Jones, and being a wimp-and-a-half when it comes to cycling, I decided to give aquathlon a chance. I was directed to Box End Thursday evening summer Tri/Aquathlon series and found myself contemplating my first go in familiar surroundings.

Arriving at Box End, I think I caused confusion and some amusement as I tried to work out how I'd pin my number on in transition. Reception staff gently pointed out that I could pin it on before the swim and wear it under my wetsuit (doh!). Next time I would remember my tri-belt.



Transition was quite busy as the triathletes racked their bikes. I lined up my trainers and socks, chatted to a few Bedford Harriers and jogged back to the clubhouse for another loo visit...just in case!

The briefing was soon upon us, and I was so pleased to hear the swim would be starting in the water, not running in. The thought of the latter made me really nervous; I wanted time to acclimatise (ha! in August!) and calm my heart down a bit and I got that chance.



The Swim:

My main worry was that I would panic, but I didn't! We got in and swam over to the jetty. This gave me a couple of minutes to nervously check my goggles; were they leaking? Were they too fogged for me to see the buoy? Then the airhorn went and we were off. I had positioned myself right at the back and the weird bit was all the bubbles generated by everyone ahead, flowed towards me like a massive engine. They soon faded! After a couple of minutes of swimming nice and calmly, I passed a couple of people and thought I was gaining on a third but he stayed ahead of me for the rest of the swim. I was in my own space and it was very calm. I tried to push the pace a little but mainly focused on calm/slow breathing and doing a decent stroke; not rushing. I could nearly always see a safety kayak on the periphery, so I never felt alone. Once I got over to the other side of the lake I could see my husband, Sylvia and Noel on the bank. That was very reassuring too.

Getting out of the water was funny; a marshal hauled me out and it was a short run across the grass to transition. The little trot I did towards transition (caught on video by my husband) was very mincing! I started to take off my wetsuit but gah! I had forgotten to take my garmin off and had to back track with my wetsuit removal. I fumbled with my socks and shoes but otherwise, it was ok. I took a massive slug of water from my water bottle and, having survived the swim, I nearly choked. "Don't drown now" was my husband's sympathetic advice.



The run:

This was lovely. All off road and a bit uneven underfoot but not as bad as I'd imagined. I wasn't sure how I'd feel with running after the swim but, in fact, it was so much easier than getting off a bike and running. I started very easy so as to get my breathing under control and then ramped up the effort through the first km. 2km to 4km were little wiggly ups and downs; very interesting, and lots of bikes coming past (we were asked to keep left for the bikes to pass on the right). 4km is just at the end of the wiggly ups and downs, and it's just a nice blast to the finish along the side of the lake.

I think I finished in just under 52 mins for 800m swim and 5k run. I loved it! Big smile to finish and a distinct feeling that I'd found a little niche for myself.

A month later, in September, Sylvia and I lined up to do the final Twilight Aquathlon of the year at Box End; a much smaller field. As the name suggests, the swim and run take place at dusk. It was a very special event; a beautiful sunset and one that I was lucky enough to share with the person who introduced me to open water swimming; Sylvia.



ONE THOUSAND MILES IN ONE YEAR

By Kevin Shelton-Smith



This is a tale of 32 races and 1000 race miles where a significant write-up would lead to a tome of tragic proportions. Much as I'm tempted to write such, I've taken pity on you, dear reader, and written this short summary.

I don't know why I started the year with a 100km race in Essex that I'd done no training for. Perhaps it was because it was a qualifier for the Spartathlon, an illustrious epic Ian Hammett had tempted me to enter. It was a fast race run in 9.04 hours and I soon followed it with the Stamford 30k and a wonderful 50 miler in the rolling inland hills and coast of Norfolk. I followed this with the stupendous Devon Grizzly, the Oakley 20, the Sandy 10 in 1hr 04 and the Flitwick 10k. It was an odd way to train for London and was perhaps why I finished the marathon 7 minutes down on my 2016 time, though still under 3 hours.

It was during this period that I thought about running the Grand Union Canal Run (GUCR) – 145 miles non-stop from Birmingham to London at the end of May. When I submitted my entry, I saw two other canal races on offer to form the Canal Slam. "You'd have to be crazy to do that", I thought, but you'd have to be crazy just to run the GUCR at all, so my name duly went into the hat for the Bristol to London 145 miles Kennet and Avon Canal Run (KACR) in July and the 130 miles Liverpool to Leeds Canal Run (LLCR) in August. Training straight after London would involve back-to-back days of 40 miles each, or perhaps a trail 'half', like the Greenway Challenge, repeated immediately afterwards, with a 40 miler the next day to recce another length of canal tow path. I interspersed this with max efforts on the East Midlands Grand Prix league for speed-work, running hard on tired legs e.g 38.31 at the Silverstone 10k.



I'd previously run the GUCR in 2009 but passing through MK, 70 miles from the finish, nagging plantar fasciitis and pulled hip flexors had slowed me down a bit. I was determined to redeem myself. As it was, we had to contend with heat and effort over such a long period that it was optimistic in the extreme to expect no issues at all. Leaving Brum behind at 6 AM, early rain turned



into glorious summer fields welcoming me through the counties heading east towards Weedon by mid-afternoon, then south-east towards London. I had a nationwide collection of Shelton-Smiths with wife, brothers, sisters, daughters, nephews and nieces in support, meeting me every 40 minutes or so at well recce'd points along the tow path with food drink, clothing, shoes, runner's medical supplies and more. They were so well equipped that I carried almost nothing myself. Each support team did an 8-10 hours stint before handing over. Success was as much about logistics as training. I positively skipped along through Stoke Bruerne, welcomed by Ian H as he crewed for a friend. All the way along I'd formed a bond with other runners and their crews. Of the 90+ starters, 30 runners relied solely on the 10 ever-caring checkpoints along the route for supplies and, in between, had to carry everything else they needed with them. Canal running sounds easy, being flat, but the downside is the lack of variation for the muscles and by Blisworth (recce'd the night of the 5 miler) my calves were in need of the foam roller.

It turned dark just as I entered MK and I was beginning to get quite tired mentally. After sorting out some chafing and changing my shoes, I sped off through the night towards the 99 mile checkpoint at Tring. The main thing slowing me down after the sun came up, apart from absolute exhaustion, was the need for some Imodium. Some kind of tummy trouble was proving quite painful and deterred me from wanting to eat at all – not helpful! Messages were flying around the family and Facebook all weekend updating my position and making sure I had what was needed and my crew soon had me sorted. After an involuntary 20 minutes rest at Hemel Hempstead, I was back on the path south through Watford and Uxbridge to the final leg going east to Little Venice, near Paddington. Ultimately, it was a tough run and not too gazelle-like at times but, I knocked 6 hours off my PB, finishing in 38 hours 38 minutes.

With two months till the Bristol run it was time to get some hills in. I organised a running camp at Grasmere in the Lake District for some old friends from New York followed by the Ultimate Trails 110km race from Ambleside. I added more EMGP races to keep me sharp. Then it was the Sealskinz prize-winning Chiltern Challenge 50k race, followed a week later by the Thunder Run. So, I was all set for the Kennet and Avon Canal Run. It followed the same plot as before, with support master-minded by daughter Vicky. The scenery through Bath, Devizes, Wiltshire, Hungerford

and later along the Thames in places like Henley and Windsor was amazing. Getting lost in the Microsoft complex at Reading didn't help though and, once again, sleep deprivation played a major role in making it as hard as possible. Over the last 40 miles the heavens opened, which meant a lot of slippery puddle-jumping before the finish at Little Venice in 40 hours 25 minutes.



Making sure I got a bit more sleep before the Liverpool to Leeds run and not racing the week before, made a big difference. It was another hot one but the Pennine scenery as we climbed from Wigan Pier and on towards Skipton was reward enough. My support crew consisted only of my long-suffering wife Trina and daughter Zoe, who behaved impeccably and survived the entire sleepless weekend intact. After some dodgy, rutted, overnight paths, which became wet as the chilly late night fog settled, I reached 100 miles at dawn. After a 'Full English' at the checkpoint, I set off for the final effort. With the temperature soaring to new heights, my walk breaks were getting noticeably longer. Knowing that overall places in the Canal Slam would be decided that day, I adopted the same urgency of purpose I'd previously needed on Spartathlon and forged ahead. The final miles turned into a full-on race against unseen runners as I learnt from a passing canoeist, with no sense of time and distance, that I was only a few minutes behind the leaders. I certainly knocked some time off and I sprinted over the line in a mere 31 hours 28 mins to finish 9th overall in the Canal Slam and a record for my age category.

As the year progressed, I thought why not add a few more events to achieve 1000 miles total racing for the year. So just one week after the LLCR, I was hard at it in the Club Championship Northampton Half, followed one week later, with 3rd MV55 placing in the Great North Run. A week after that it was time for the Round Norfolk Relay just days before jetting off to the Berlin Marathon on Sep 24th. More surprising, was running 65.36 at the Henlow 10M on the 28th. The Round Rotherham 50M (actually in nice countryside) and the White Rose 60M in the Pennines, both worthy of their own write-ups, took me over the 1000 miles mark, but I added the 3CXC series and the Shillington Shuffle 26M in Barton-Le-Clay for good measure. Job done! A completely worthwhile experience, even if some race results suffered due to a lack of recovery. In the end, I discovered the old maxim is actually true; it is the taking part that counts most.

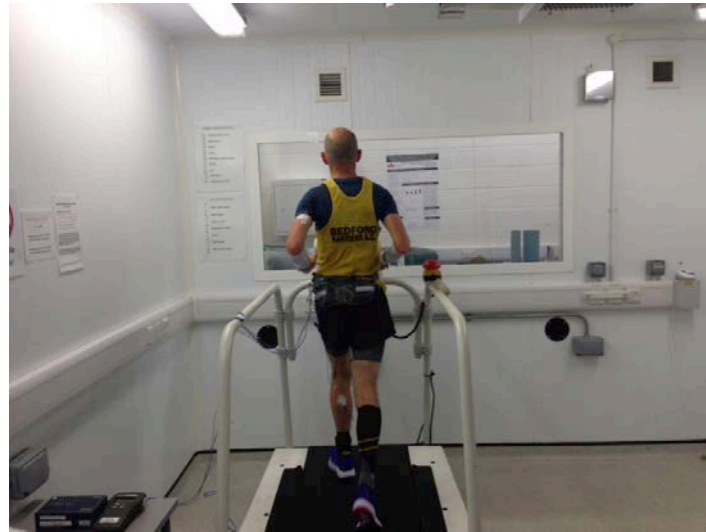
And for 2018? Lots more racing but maybe I will focus on shorter distances.

Editor's note:

For more on the 'Spartathlon' Kevin mentions, please read Ian Hammett's article and, if you think crewing for such races is an easy option, read Claire's article too.

THE SPARTATHLON - FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PHIEDIPPIDES

by Ian Hammet



Spartathlon.... The ultimate test of endurance billed as one of the toughest non-stop footraces in Europe, challenges its participants to follow in the footsteps of Phiedippides and run 153 miles from The Acropolis in Athens to the statue of King Leonidas in Sparta within 36 hours. I was one of the lucky few, privileged ones, to take part in 2017 having secured an automatic qualifying spot to represent the British team in an event that would push me to my physical, psychological and emotional limits.

Whilst The Spartathlon is not the longest ultramarathon in the world, nor the hottest, or even the one with the most elevation, it is the cut off times and the threat of the 'death bus' that contribute to the startlingly high attrition rate of the participants. Each of the 75 aid stations has its own cut off time which runners are required to meet including reaching 26.2 miles in 4hrs 45mins, 50 miles in 9hrs 30mins and 100 miles in 22hrs 30mins. All of these are a challenge in their own right let alone when running in a 153 mile race.

I had trained harder than ever, utilising the environmental chamber at the University of Bedfordshire's Human Performance Centre to acclimate to the heat and completing 100+ miles over weeks of training in an effort to be in peak condition for the challenges that I would face.

Now, here I was at 0655 standing at the base of the Acropolis alongside my fellow British team members, and some of the best ultra-running talent in the world, about to face my biggest challenge. I had never run more than 100 miles before, had never run for more than 19.5 hours, and had never run a foreign ultra-marathon. I really was stepping into the unknown and the tension was palpable.

Then we were off and running through the streets of Athens as the Greek capital was brought to a standstill by the police, who watchfully, sent all 369 runners on their way. The early miles passed quickly for me as I ran with my teammate Nathan Flear. Relieved to finally be running, we were making good progress and enjoying the stunning scenery along the coastal road towards Corinth having left the industry of Athens behind. I was fuelling and hydrating well with the words of the Sports Science team ringing in my ears.

My fantastic crew, led by Claire, were supporting me brilliantly; seeing me at regular intervals after 50 miles and applying regular leg rubs to reduce muscle soreness. These allowed me to maintain a good, steady pace, going through 100km in 8hrs 44mins, which was well ahead of schedule. In fact I had somehow managed to run new 50 mile and 100km PB's which many would consider ludicrous for such a long event and, looking back, I wouldn't recommend adopting this strategy but I felt so strong.

The euphoria of finally running the event had taken hold and I experienced many highs during that first 100km such as, signing autographs for children in a village, high fiving school children who were lined up outside their schools as they cheered us on to Sparta, people waving and shouting "Bravo", seeing beautiful places such as Ancient Corinth and having all the British crews shout encouragement as they drove past. It really was proving to be an iconic race.



The hardest part was yet to come though, with Mount Parthenion waiting at 100 miles. The weather was closing in and it started raining heavily as I approached the mountain base checkpoint. It had been a long, relentless climb out of Lirkia and I still had the steep mountain path to contend with in difficult conditions. Climbing over 1050m, having already traversed such a distance, is hugely demanding physiologically and, although I negotiated it with little trouble, the changes in altitude and temperature may well have contributed to the difficulties I was about to experience.

They say that once you have successfully negotiated Mt Parthenion your chances of completing The Spartathlon are greatly increased so, despite being tired, I was still running well as I left Nestani and was feeling positive. Then, with no warning at 184km, I 'hit the wall'. Well, it would probably be more accurate to say someone dropped it on my head and I really struggled to reach the next checkpoint. Fighting to breathe, feeling sick and unable to stand, my crew worked tirelessly in an attempt to keep me going but nothing was working. I was in a bad place physically and mentally; I was too weak to move but strong enough to know I didn't want to quit. After about an hour, I somehow stood and began to stumble on towards Sparta. The next 15 miles were some of the toughest I have ever faced but something drove me on. I just kept putting one foot in front of the other, walking mostly, shuffling when I could and trying to jog/run when my body would let me. With about 30km to go I knew I had a choice; stop and let everybody down or, run as hard as I could until I couldn't run anymore.

I chose the latter and, when all hope of reaching my pre-race targets seemed lost, I somehow managed to summon the strength for one last push to the finish. Remarkably, I managed to overtake several runners whilst running at speeds I could have only dreamt of earlier. Driven on by sheer grit and determination I finally reached Sparta and that famous statue in a time of 28:36:58 finishing 28th overall and the 3rd British runner.

Running along the street towards the statue of King Leonidas accompanied by children on bikes and a police escort is a feeling that I am unable to put into words and, knowing that Claire would be there to see me finish, made it even more special. There had been tears and tantrums but I had made it to Sparta. It was a truly remarkable turnaround, I had been teetering on the precipice of failure but had somehow hauled myself back from the brink into the hands of success.



I was whisked into the medical tent where I was looked after expertly by Dr Dora Papadopoulou and her team. My blood pressure had dropped to 70/40 and they put me on a drip to ensure I recovered before heading for my hotel.

It had been an unforgettable journey through Greece that took everything I had to complete. It had simultaneously been the best and worst day of my life and I experienced ultra-running like never before. However, it was all worth it to wear that British shirt and to see the joy of the Greek people whose support throughout the event was second to none. Thank you Greece, I will be back.....

If you would like to read the full story of the race then please visit my blog:

<https://runhammyrun.wordpress.com/2017/10/09/spartathlon-2017/>



SPARTATHLON 2017,

I'M SO PROUD OF YOU IAN, BUT PLEASE DON'T PUT ME THROUGH THIS AGAIN!

A view from the Crew by Claire Adams

Crewing is stressful. I keep telling Ian how tiring it is but he never seems to believe me. So when he decided that he wanted to tackle the epic 153 mile ultramarathon that is 'The Spartathlon', I knew that it was going to be an event that none of us would ever forget. Let me explain.

After the start of the race, we were on our way to the first checkpoint in Meagra which we had to get to by 10 am. Very soon we found ourselves stuck in traffic on a Greek motorway, with no idea where we were; the tension had already started to build. Luckily, we looked to our left and spotted another car displaying a Spartathlon badge like ours. Winding down our window, we shouted "Can we follow you?" hoping they spoke English. We assumed that they would be heading in the same direction.

The traffic had been held up by the police as the runners left Athens and now, here they were, making their way along the hard shoulder. We scanned the field looking for Ian but we should have known he wouldn't be in the pack. Sure enough, there were more runners further up the road and unsurprisingly, Ian was with them. We gave him a big cheer and a wave as we drove past.

Megara (42.2km) was packed with every single runner's crew. Ian arrived and we performed like a slick F1 pit crew, giving him a new bottle of drink and some food before waving him off with, "See you at 50 miles". We stayed for a short while to cheer the other runners through before making our way along the beautiful coastal road to Corinth. Ian had been on at us for days to make sure we ate so, we stopped at a burger restaurant (not my first choice) and grabbed something to keep us going. We were then pointed in the direction of the bridge over the Corinth Canal. An official race photographer snapped us just as the first runner was about to come through. To our disbelief, it was Ian! He looked fast and strong and just like he was just out for a normal 10km run. An amazing sight.



We quickly made our way to Hellas Can where once again Ian was in and out super quickly, so quickly in fact that he forgot to get his first leg massage. As we drove past him shortly afterwards he shouted "Leg massage at the next check point." We realised Ian was running quicker than he had planned and we hoped this wouldn't come back and bite him later on.

Ancient Corinth was the next stop and it was one of the prettiest places on the race route. There was a square with coffee shops where we set out all the things we thought Ian might require. Other British crews joined us and



we exchanged notes about how our runners were doing whilst updating friends, family and, of course, Facebook so everyone knew what was happening. Ian ran in, and whilst Mark swapped his water bottle, I gave Ian his first minty leg rub. It turned out that this would now be my main job for the next 20hrs or so! Ah the joys of crewing.

Next up was Halkion village where we managed to get our hands on some watermelon for Ian. As he arrived, we asked how he was feeling. "Like I've run 100km way too fast" was his response. He had run a 50 mile PB and a 100 km PB in his longest race ever and still had 146km to go.... "Is he crazy?" I asked myself. The answer to which we all know is "Yes, absolutely".

He also asked if we had any chocolate as he fancied some. "Great", I thought, "Where are we going to find a Tesco in the middle of this Greek village? Does he think we can just magic it out of thin air?" Nevertheless, we assured him we'd do our best. He also asked for chewing gum. Typical! he had to ask for the one thing we had left in the car so, I dashed up the road to get it and was then shouted at by a finger-wagging marshal as I tried to pass it to him outside of the designated area. Thankfully, it didn't get him disqualified which would not have made him happy!!!

The day was going quickly now and the checkpoints came thick and fast. At Malandrenii I had fun trying to find a loo but, eventually, a local showed me to a dodgy one in a garage. It was a case of 'needs must' as the local amenities seemed non-existent and I was desperate.

Luckily, we had found some chocolate for Ian although, by then, he seemed more interested in the chicken noodle soup that Mark had acquired. He took a couple of mouthfuls and then proceeded to try and give me a kiss goodbye before he'd finished the noodles. I don't think he even realised they were hanging out of his mouth and let me tell you noodle juice on your chin is pretty gross!

At Lirkia it was getting cold and dark and I didn't have enough layers with me. I was freezing! The checkpoint had a random hog roast so, Mark and Claire bought some while we waited. When Ian came in we were all shocked when he asked for some of the pork... not his usual fuel choice! As he left heading for the mountain, Mark repeated for about the 100th time "He's not fuelling well or drinking enough". I replied "He's eating and drinking far more than normal". Mark then proceeded to tell me "Ian's body is dying with every step....". I remember thinking that that was not what I want to hear but, I had to stay positive.

At Mountain Base (100 miles) we took shelter from the weather in a little hut with the marshals. Their English was amazing and we had a joke with one of the ladies as apparently, she was up there every year looking for a husband. I wonder if she had any luck this year? Ian arrived and I put his waterproof on for him as well as changing his buff to try and keep him warm. As he left, he seemed excited to be tackling the mountain. I shouted after him "Try and pick up all your food at the top". I knew he had left a drop bag at the aid station and we were running out of supplies. He shouted back "You silly cow. I'm not going to carry a bag with me!" I suppose he had a point!

With the mountain out of the way we waited at Nestani. Ian looked very tired when he arrived. I celebrated saying "This is the furthest you've ever run". Ian however, was more interested in the potatoes being offered by a marshal. He gave her a cheerful hug before disappearing off into the darkness. As we left this checkpoint I became very tired and a bit irritable after all, it was now about 1am, which is well past my bedtime. So when we reached the next checkpoint at Zevgolatoio, I had a little nap. I awoke asking how long until Ian was expected and Mark assured me it would be very soon. We waited and waited and he just didn't appear. After what seemed like an age, he arrived. He was staggering all over the path and in a bad state and gasped "You said it was 10/12 km it's been 10 miles..... I needed you!! I needed you back there!! I can't breathe!!"

We tried to do our usual routine but Ian stumbled off refusing to take anything from us. Another British crew was just leaving the checkpoint and followed him slowly up the road. I then got a text saying he'd stopped to be sick and was coming back to us. It felt like a lifetime before he arrived and just collapsed in a chair. We tried to convince him he could keep going; "Come on Ian you can do this! You can walk and still make it! Come on you've got this!" His response made me feel helpless "No I haven't" and then he burst into tears.

I felt frustrated with myself for not being able to motivate him and frustrated with Ian for not listening to me. I threw a bottle of water on the floor in anger and stormed off to have a rethink. Ian had never been like this; he is usually so headstrong, so motivated, and such a rock at these events. I didn't know what to do; I felt helpless and useless. I knew Ian wouldn't want to DNF this epic race but I also knew that I couldn't just let him sit on that chair for 8 hours waiting for the 'death bus'.

Everyone was doing their best to try and get him going again but nothing was working. I fed him bits of bread with honey, shoving them into his mouth and he accidentally bit my finger. I gave him a bottle of hot water, which he just hugged against his chest. Mark crouched down in front of him repeating the words 'relax', 'refresh', over and over again. I knew this was one thing Ian said he didn't want but, I couldn't get him to stop. A guy called Paul picked Ian up and tried to get him moving, but as he let him go, he just collapsed onto the floor. Quickly we put him back in the chair and covered him with coats and blankets. It was suggested that we step away and give him some time alone in the chair. We could do little else but make small talk for what seemed like ages. Then we heard a sound.

Remarkably, Ian was now standing and had started making his way slowly out of the checkpoint. Mark followed him and then, all of a sudden, he came running back and yelled "He's forgotten his head torch". Unbelievably, he was moving again! We decided to wait half an hour to give Ian time to get in the zone before driving past him again knowing there was a possibility that we might find him in a ditch by the side of the road. That thought made me feel sick.

We stumbled across a little bakery at the next stop in Tegea which appeared to be open at 4am. I managed to buy a small biscuit which I hoped would help Ian with the sick feeling. I was so worried about him that I couldn't stop shaking and I was anxious to see him again. Ian finally shuffled in, not able to speak and just pointing to what he wanted. He didn't stop for long; he just kept walking. I think he knew if he stopped he would never get going again.

We were now getting closer to Sparta and with 22 miles still to go, Ian came into the next checkpoint and collapsed on a bench; he was welling up again. This time though we managed to get some Sprite and a little bit of chocolate into him before encouraging him to carry on. He slowly trudged up the road barely acknowledging us as we drove past and beeped our horn.



We waited at the next checkpoint expecting to be there for a while. Ian had been walking very slowly and he had 11km to cover before reaching us. Thankfully, it was starting to get light and we were able to admire the stunning view across the valley. Thinking we had ages we had nothing prepared and were in no hurry to get organised, then, all of a sudden, we could see someone running in the distance. Mark shouted, "That's Ian". I thought he must be mistaken but, as the runner came closer, I could clearly see it was him. "He's running, OMG he's running", I couldn't believe it. This felt like a massive victory; Ian was suddenly Ian again. He threw his waterproof and gloves at us as he flew by, obviously not wanting to break his flow. Somehow he had won the battle with tiredness and had overcome his profound low; you could see he was now determined to get to the end; he went past us as if he was doing a Parkrun.

With 10km to go we were feeling positive that he would finish the race. We were also amazed that he would still finish in roughly the time he wanted; just under 30hours. He walked/ran into the last checkpoint, had a quick leg massage, changed his bottle, and I had time to shout a last "You've got this" before he left.

We made our way to Sparta and it wasn't long before Ian ran down the finishing straight, surrounded by little children. I pushed through the crowds to be as close to the statue as possible. Watching Ian run to the finish after such a dark patch was amazing and unbelievable. Ian ran up and kissed the statue before being presented with a goblet of water, an olive crown and a trophy. Then I was finally allowed to give him the massive hug that I'd been waiting so long to do. I squeezed him as tightly as I could. "We've done it", he sobbed into my shoulder.

It was an unforgettably emotional moment for both of us. The race had been a rollercoaster of extreme highs and lows but we had reached our goal and now here we were in Sparta.

It's true what they say, 'The Spartathlon makes you cry.'

Ian... I am so proud of you. You set out with 3 goals. 1: To Finish 2: To finish under 30hrs 3: To achieve an automatic qualifying time (28:48). Even sitting on a chair for over hour, you did it! You achieved everything you wished for and I am so happy for you but, please, don't ever put me through it again!!



BECOMING A FJORD VIKING



Mark Tinkler takes on the Norway challenge.



Ever fancied yourself as a “Fjord Viking”? Well, that was the prize on offer at ‘Knarvikmila - The Great Fjord Run’ over the first weekend of September in Norway, just north of Bergen. It just entailed running round a few fjords in Norway... easy, surely!

My sister Diane and I, travelled by Norwegian Air (from Gatwick to Bergen), which was quite cheap, and got a hotel in Bergen. We then got the bus up to Knarvikmila to take part in the run. All we had to do was complete 3 races in 3 days; essentially the marathon distance over a weekend ... bit like the Scandinavian version of the Colworth Marathon Challenge really.

We arrived on the Friday in Knarvikmila in time for their first race - an 11.1km trail race called ‘Knarvik Xtrem’. Well I say ‘we’ when I really mean ‘I’ as Diane said she didn’t do ‘NUTCASE RACES’ and promptly retreated to the pizza van. Annoyingly, her description of this first event proved to be very accurate. I think it can best be described as the “The Grizzly-on-Steroids”; my arms were aching from having to use the ropes to get up some of the ascents and then my toes went through the front of my trail shoes as they disintegrated on the equally steep descents!! I quickly learnt to follow the local participants as any obvious short cut usually involved negotiating a quagmire up past your knees. Eventually I got back to the finish at the stadium and crossed the line just before nightfall - twas well ‘Mullard’.

The following day we turned out for an undulating 10km around the Knarvik village (they didn’t appear to do flat anywhere). This was quite testing after the previous night’s amble but at about one km into the race, my legs started to recover enough to feel like I owned them again. It was a testing 10K race but felt I’d done it justice - although I was overtaken going uphill by someone pushing a child round in a buggy in the last km! I did decline the offer to jump in, which in retrospect, was probably a mistake.

We stayed in a Bergen hotel next to the picture- es-skew castle where another big event was running over the weekend - not being able to read/speak Norwegian made it a bit of a mystery as to what was going on but, the participants seemed very happy and, by the evening, not really able to hold a straight line when walking. This, it turned out, was the biggest beer festival in Scandinavia or, if you prefer, ‘a serious drinking marathon over a weekend’. Worryingly, the end result, whichever event you were involved in, appeared to be the same, based on how we all staggered home.



On the Sunday, the organisers put on a friendly, family day with kids races and trail hikes. There were masses of people and literally something for everyone, including a free breakfast. We did the picturesque Half Marathon which went over the fjord bridges. This was more undulating than the 10km but very scenic . If you’ve ever found yourself pining for fjords - this is an event you need to do. However, by the last 5km you really feel like you’re at the end of a marathon with the legs sending the message ‘lets stop this now !!’ but, it does have its compensations. Finishing in the stadium in front of a full grandstand you feel like you’ve earned your award “Fjord Viking” for going the whole marathon-like distance over a weekend.

Thanks to the Knarvik race management for their hospitality and running a very well-organised, friendly event which will run again from Fri 31 Aug -Sun 2 Sept 2018 - so, if anyone is interested, let me know.



BEHIND THE SCENES



Jutta Crane’s observations of the Harriers support crews

Another year draws to a close and looking at the photos taken over the last twelve months makes me realise just how busy it has been.

Putting on the races helps to raise funds for the Harriers and pays for many things such as the Friday circuit sessions, the coach to the London Marathon and, of course, the awards night celebrations including the trophies. Not surprisingly, they take up a great deal of time and a large team of volunteers. Hopefully some of the members who have recently joined will become part of the team and get involved.

My role as compère is always good fun. I had to put a call out to see if someone had a spare pair of running shoes as one runner had turned up for the half marathon without his running shoes; oops. Amazingly, somebody did have a spare pair in the right size. I have a “script” that I am meant to follow but I can’t help ad-libbing. “The call to assemble at the start line went out ten minutes ago. So I should be looking at an empty hall now, rather than the three runners I can see before me”. According to one Harrier I am a cross between a polite air stewardess and a drill sergeant.

Another of my jobs is to clean the timing chips after races and put them back in number order. So I put on a Netflix box set and get to work with baby wipes and cotton buds (you can’t immerse the chips in a bucket of water to wash them).

The marshals’ bibs also need wiping down. Some of them can be washed in the machine so once they have been washed they get draped over several clothes horses and you need sunglasses to withstand their collective yellow glare. Of course, they need to be folded neatly as Steve demonstrates. As you can imagine, these lessons go down really well with me

In the summer, I found time to put on a 5k race at my place of work (Millbrook Proving Ground) and some Harriers kindly came along and took part in the race. We raised some money for Keech Hospice and I was chuffed to be able to support a local charity with an amount that makes a difference to them. The race will be held in September 2018 if anyone wants to see if they can beat the course record on a course that includes sand dunes, a 21% incline and wading through a pond to finish.

Even our visitors get roped in to race preparation. We had a German visitor for a few weeks and he was charged with putting number stickers on baggage tags. No such thing as a free dinner in our house. And Steve made sure he did it “neatly”.

The amount of items left behind after a race never fails to amaze me. It all gets collected and we usually end up with about three black bin liners full of lost property. I don my rubber gloves and sort through it before it all goes for a spin in the washing machine. Some of it does not get claimed for a few weeks so you would not want to store it wet. We have found Garmins, an engagement ring, money belts and car keys. These tend to get claimed quite swiftly. Not claimed were seven single gloves, golf underpants (18 holes) and a London marathon rejection fleece. The usable items get donated to charity if they are not claimed.

In September we supported those Harriers that took part in the Vitruvian. Pictured are some other Harriers also enjoying the sunshine and donning their Harriers supporters caps. Later that month we were timekeepers at the Round Norfolk Relay race (picture shows Steve with the all-important stop watches). Trying to work out who runs the stages, who offers bike support and car support and deciding who swaps over and when is a phenomenal task. Thanks to Richard Watson et al for taking on this monumental task. At one of the handover points the lovely ladies of the WI supply us with homemade cakes; not suprisingly, it’s always a favourite stop. A big shout out to Keith Lakin for taking over our duties and for doing the night shift.

Steve was health & safety officer at the last race. Hmm! When he went to cut down some signs after the half marathon he used a craft knife instead of the clippers that he advises everyone else to use. The knife slipped and he needed some attention in A&E. He does not like hospitals, needles or blood. Ideal! Six stitches, two hours and a tetanus injection later we went home. Next day he used the guillotine to cut up some tickets...we live and learn.

So let’s see what 2018 brings. Best have my camera ready to capture the moments.



'EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING'...

By Juliet Smith

...and my **SPECIAL 50TH BIRTHDAY YEAR** was one that certainly proved this to be true. I would like to share with you how sometimes sporting events and goals don't always work out how you want them to but become enjoyable and memorable for other, unexpected reasons.

My main aim on turning 50 in April was to complete, what is classed as, one of the hardest events; Ironman Lanzarote. I entered a year in advance in addition to another full distance triathlon; Ironman Italy, for the September.

'You are only 50 once' I thought so, feeling ambitious, I decided to celebrate the year with an ultra-marathon and also entered the Colworth marathon weekend for the first time. For good measure, I entered the Grizzly Cub, London Marathon and Dublin Marathon too. So, feeling strong and motivated, in January 2017, I decided it was going to be an action-packed year for me.

The year got off to a bad start; I was plagued by 4 months of toothache which needed 3 courses of antibiotics and constant pleading with the dentist just to take the tooth out! He wouldn't and so the root canal treatment that followed was a long, drawn out process.

I always enter events to enjoy them. Anyone who knows me well knows I love smiling for the cameras in races but that doesn't detract from my competitiveness which drives me to do my best in getting to the finish line. Training was very hard leading up to The Grizzly Cub as I was constantly in pain and feeling despondent but, for the third time, I managed to get to Devon and share this wonderful experience.

By the time the London Marathon came round, I was at last pain free and happy to be back on track and, of course, smiling for the cameras all the way round!!



Now for the 'BIG' one in May. Lanzarote Ironman brings back so many emotions for me. Frustration, upset, pain, tears, pride and happiness! It didn't start well as the tooth I had recently had repaired, cracked in half on the first morning of my arrival! I was so disappointed and felt rather negative in the lead-up to a big event like this. Always the optimist, I gave myself a talking to and, with the support of my fellow Bedford Harriers, I got to the start line ready for the great challenge ahead. Swim was good, bike was good and then....a searing pain in my calf which struck at 3 miles into the run!! Not being able to place one heel down, I hobbled around the remaining 23 miles determined to get to the finish line and hoped that Ian, at least, would still be waiting there for me. I came in last; 20 minutes over the cut-off time but, to my surprise, I was greeted with a bouquet of flowers presented by the race director and the 1st and 2nd male pro winners. Feeling absolutely humbled that they had waited for me and formed a welcoming committee, tears of relief, joy and pain in equal measure, engulfed me.

After this injury it took 10 weeks of recovery with no running or cycling and, I'm glad to report, that wretched tooth was finally pulled out!! The hardest part for me was not being part of any training group and sharing chit-chat and tea and cakes on a Saturday with 'The Lazy Gang'. The Chiltern Challenge and Colworth marathon challenge weekend were all off now.



A last minute decision at the end of June to support friends competing in their triathlons in Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain proved to be just the pick-me-up I needed. I have learnt from my own experiences that being cheered and supported by fellow club members brings such encouragement and is so important when you are out there



digging deep. It was so rewarding and such fun; I felt proud of them all and came home feeling motivated and ready to start back in training even though I was still rather slow and unfit.

With only 8 weeks to Ironman Italy, it was not on my agenda to pull out but, doubts set in that I could fail on the run as at this point I was still only able to cycle. I started back at the Harriers' evening groups, taking it steady, just pleased to be part of a social group again.

In September Eva Kovacs suggested getting a relay team together for 'The Vitruvian'. Having never taken part in this event, I put my name forward as the swimmer, Eva was to do the bike and Paula Stuart the run. What a great team we were and we all had so much fun taking part.



Ironman Italy came round all too fast and, before I knew it, I was standing on the start line doubtful of achieving any great time and willing that I could finish without any knee pain and hopefully, not come in last this time. Things went well for me and I was so happy that my run was steady and consistent. The crowds and atmosphere were just brilliant and, to top it all, I met the 1st lady Pro, Lucy Gossage; another one to add to my growing list.



The final challenge was the Dublin Marathon with Caroline Devine. It was my first visit to this city and, even if I was apprehensive, I was looking forward to the race. This was just a month after Italy and, with having had 2 weeks off for recovery, I just had to hope that by starting steadily and with no time pressure, I would enjoy it and complete it. I did and had a great, fun weekend shared with Caroline, Kirsty and Oliver Jones. Mission accomplished!

MY CONCLUSION

Sometimes plans do not come together, goals and times are not always achieved and things happen that are beyond our control. But sometimes the best plans can be those that happen at short notice and, shared experiences, whether as part of a team or supporting others, can be so rewarding. I have discovered that it does not matter if you come last in an event; what matters is the achievement of finishing, taking part and staying positive at all times. For me, it's also important to keep smiling to the end. So, thank you Bedford Harriers for making such a big contribution to one happy year I will always remember. ☺

Footnote:

I have enjoyed writing this for the magazine this year – a first for me (along with singing live on a stage!!). My special thanks go to anyone that has shared in making my 50th birthday year such an enjoyable year whether it has been in Bedford, Devon, London, Lanzarote, Spain, Italy and Dublin.

NOT JUST A WALK IN THE PARK..

by Adam Hills

So, here I am in 2018, looking back over the last twelve months, which have proved to have given me interesting and valuable experience in terms of the sport of race walking. I went ahead with my plans to compete in the British Masters Athletic Federation and achieved an enjoyable 35 minute Bedford parkrun walk challenge in preparation for what was to come.



Falling for Lee Valley - literally

I decided to compete in my first ever regional race walk at the Lee Valley Athletics Centre in Enfield last year. This was part of the British Masters Athletic Federation and, for those of you who read my race walking article in last year's magazine, you may remember that I set my sights on this. I competed in three events last year which comprised a 1 mile walk with the Eastern Counties Athletic Association, a 3K walk with the Southern Counties Veterans Athletic Club and 2K walk with the England Athletics Masters Association. Out of curiosity, I had had a quick look at the previous year's results to see who I could be competing against and to gain an idea of the level of competition I would be facing. This allowed me to set some realistic targets and to feel pleased with the outcomes of my sporting achievements. I must thank David Sutcliffe, a long-time member of Bedford Harriers, for his expertise and guidance over the year and for keeping me abreast of events in the world of race walking and for sending me copies of race walking magazines.



I remember turning up for my first indoor competition in February, which was the 1 mile race walk. It was an amazing experience to be competing with other talented race walkers. It was quite intimidating to walk into the venue and see serious competitions taking place but I managed to spend some time performing some stretching, drills and rehearse my walking techniques on the upstairs practice track. I was really nervous especially when an official queried the number of safety pins I had attached to my race number; apparently she needed to check with another official because I didn't have the required four. I was relieved that she let this one go and allowed me to proceed. I remember lining up for this first race and blasting away to the finish line where I flopped out in lane one and was then promptly told by an official to roll off the track as others were still competing! Later, I felt a great sense of achievement standing on that podium knowing I had won a regional race. I was described as the 'proverbial dark horse' in the February edition of the Race Walking Record.

Staying legal until the finish line

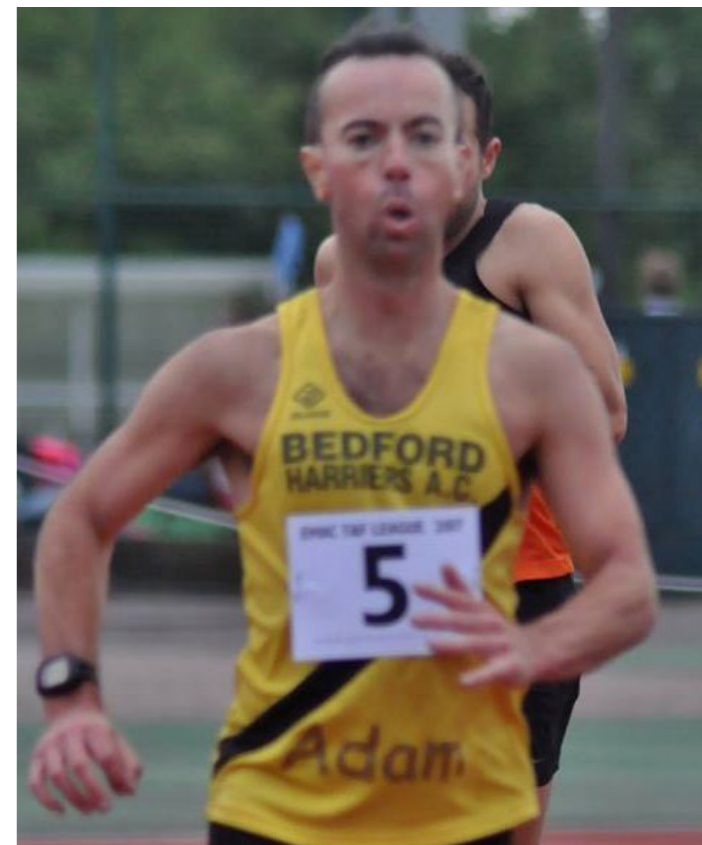
The Eastern Masters Athletic Club race walk in Milton Keynes last summer was a rather unique experience not only for me, but for the Bedford Harriers team and for the race organisers because I managed to win this race by crossing the finishing line behind the apparent winner. How was that possible, you may ask? Well...a guy from a Milton Keynes athletic club, who I had not seen before, decided to race walk; perhaps this was his first attempt. I was taken aback when, despite my usual best efforts, he overtook me at high speed, which was not what I was expecting. I felt something wasn't quite right but just made sure I remained legal in terms of keeping contact with the ground and avoiding a bent knee violation. I somehow managed to remain focused and was prepared to settle for second position and, frustratingly, collect fewer league points for our team.

Something didn't feel right but I could not articulate this. I certainly felt a little disappointed that I had been beaten in a walk for the first time in an EMAC event; one that we take part in every summer. On consulting my dear Bedford Harrier friends, there was a clear consensus that the Milton Keynes guy appeared to be running and that he should not have been awarded first place. After some intense deliberation, I decided to challenge the result with the top race judge. To my surprise and relief, he also questioned the validity of the decision and I was given to understand that he could be disqualified. I felt uncertain and anxious waiting to hear if the result would be overturned. As soon as he declared the verdict I was hoping for i.e. my being awarded first place, I ran to my fellow Harriers, put my arms up high in the air and celebrated with hugs and shared that feeling of victory!

Walking and racing ahead

I now have my sights on winning race walking in a new age category at the Lee Valley Athletics Centre and indeed any other competitions that might appeal to me. While I may not be as quick or young as British record holder Tom Bosworth, I can certainly feel proud to hold two Eastern Masters Athletic Club records. These are the Track and Field League MV35 1,500m race walk in 7:56.3, which took place in Cambridge last summer, and the Outdoor Track and Field Championships MV35 2K race walk in 10:37.61m, which took place at the Sandy athletic track in 2016.

Despite my advancing age, I somehow managed to achieve some new personal best times in running and won some nice Club Championship awards. Undoubtedly, my race walking contributed to this success. These included a new 5 mile personal best time in Blisworth, after waiting patiently for nine years to do so, finishing as the 1st MV40 at the Love Luton 10K where I achieved a sub 38 minute time for the first time ever; and winning the 3rd MV40 bronze



medal at the British Masters Athletic Federation Half Marathon Championships with a new personal best time in Northampton. I note that my marathon personal best time from ten years ago has proved to be rather difficult to beat but it was extremely satisfying to be simultaneously the first finisher and achieving a new parkrun personal best time at Bedford Park in August last year.

Somewhat surprisingly, I have found that it is possible to combine running with competitive race walking; the two seem to be mutually beneficial. Race walking is a fairly simple activity where you just need to ensure you have contact with the ground at all times and avoid bending at the knee. I would urge any one of you who have not tried race walking or are perhaps curious about this sport, to just give it a go along with other events at our Eastern Masters Athletic Club league this summer. I have yet to be beaten by any one of you reading this and so I would more than be happy to be challenged!



IF FOUND COLLAPSED, PLEASE PAUSE MY GARMIN

by James Shea

The truth is I took up running so late in life that I have tracked, through technology, every single run I have ever done since that inaugural date back in 2012. I'm sure that sounds terrible to you Luddite 'naked' runners, but I knew several runners before I started running and they all had some kind of technology strapped to their wrist at the time. For me, it was another opportunity to invest in and enjoy my technological geekery.

I wanted an opportunity to write about running and technology for the technologically- assisted Harrier in the hope that it might enlighten some as to why runners can be found wearing t-shirts which say 'If I am found collapsed, please pause my Garmin'.

In the first instance, Harriers will have already chosen their choice of physical technology from Garmin to TomTom or, even as I choose to do, use a smartwatch which pulls the technology from a smartphone. They all do the same thing – they capture statistics and GPS data about the run: how fast, how far, how many steps, how high your step is, what the gradient of the hill is, what your heart rate is at the very top of the hill and lots of other data. The debate over 'which device?' is quite incidental – go with the price point and technology you like because what happens next is where it gets interesting.

All the data from all the devices is linked together. So my data is pushed from Garmin to Runkeeper to Strava to Veloviewer to Fetcheveryone and so forth. My data exists on all the platforms through syncing. Some apps synch to each other happily, others need tappirik.com to push the data between them. So I capture it once and I can review it on them all – they all display it in different clever statistical ways. Some clever sites like Relive, take your data and turn it into a nice 3D flyby video. Strava Flyby lets you watch a race in real time with little micro icons running speedily past your flagging icon.

Being on all the platforms means I can then exist in a range of online communities. There is a Harriers AC Strava group but, you don't need a Garmin to be in the group – you can push the data from

any device. However, this brings a new dimension because Strava lets us create segments and this is interesting for a Harrier. For example, every time my coach, Steve Gaunt takes our group out to some place for a workout, I'll create a GPS based segment of the workout part of the session. Two years of this and I've managed to segment most of his workouts. Consequently, every time we do the session my Strava lets me know if that was my best ever effort on that workout or if it was a poor night for me. I was very pleased to recently score a Strava PR on 'Mendip Madness' – the popular figure of 8 workout next to Goldington Academy. Other Harriers have segmented many of the best workouts from their groups and I would encourage others to do so after a training run – it is helpful to us all if a segment has already been created.

So not only is there a Harrier AC Group on Strava, but they will 'like' Facebook style, each other's runs, and also offer encouragement when someone is working hard or coming back from injury. These groups exist in social media such as Facebook and on running websites such as Fetcheveryone.com which is run by one of the Bedford Parkrun Directors. All of this technology is incidental to the run, but at the same time it is the currency of the community. So the next time you see a collapsed Harrier – pause their Garmin...



IF YOU THINK RUNNING IS HARD, TRY CATERING ...

by Zoe Willett

It all started in the 90's when race management considered options for catering at Harriers' races. The simple option would have been to hire a burger van but it was soon realised that this would be far too expensive. Consequently, the catering team was established and I seemed to have been 'volunteered' as the organiser. I think this must have been because of the job I'd done in the past, albeit on a smaller scale, helping at Cranfield 5k and Doug Anderson,

Surely catering for up to 2000 runners, not to mention all the marshals, at both Wootton Half and Oakley 20, would be easy and have the advantage of always being in the warm. Or so I thought. 'Easy' it wasn't, 'challenging' would be far more apt.

From the start, I had the problem of guessing what people would want and estimating how much we should buy? Considering both races are held at potentially cold times of the year, I thought hot food would be welcome. So, how much should we charge? With all these considerations, I soon realised I couldn't do it on my own so help would be needed. But, who could I ask?

To give you some insight into the work of catering at a race, let me describe an average race day. It all starts the week before when an order for rolls is placed with the supplier. In the early days it was a trip on the Saturday before the race to Sainsbury's and McKenzies to stock up on rolls, bacon etc. Inevitably the comment would be "Having a party?" Now, Costco is the preferred option; it's much easier with everything being under one roof and they have only ever let me down once. On that occasion, I had to clear the shelves of rolls in three supermarkets adding even more stress to the weekend. Once we have all the provisions, we have to then take them to the race venue and decant everything into their kitchen / catering area.

Back home, the egg mayonnaise, tuna mayonnaise and cheese rolls have to be made up whilst fighting with cling film and keeping the cat out of the kitchen, especially when tuna is around. This is very time-consuming for one person but with my trusty colleagues to help, we have it down to a tee.

Bread pudding (made to my own closely-guarded secret recipe) is popular at races but, again, apart from knowing I have to save a piece for Mr Fadden, I'm never sure how much to make.

Then, of course, we had to work out what we were going to charge. We decided to keep it simple by rounding up the figures. Something that never ceases to amaze me is that when people have patiently stood in the queue, when they get to the front, they can't make their mind up whether to have tea or coffee and then demand such things as 'not too much milk', or ask what rolls we have when all are clearly labelled. Others are put out when we don't have burgers (I'm tempted to tell them we are not McDonalds!) and then they compound the irritation by only have a note to pay with. Rarely do runners have coins, just notes in various states; wet, crumpled or neatly folded in a plastic bag or their phone. Some have even asked if we take cards!!! What do they think we are? A professional catering corps? However, I suppose they all can be excused because after having completed a race; it does make you a little disorientated. So, having ample supplies of spare change is essential and that's the treasurer's 'favourite' job; a visit to the bank the week before to collect a rucksack full of coins.

Sunday morning, and race day. Living with a race director means the alarm goes off long before dawn and, in the dark, the day starts. We arrive at the venue at 7.30 to organise the work station at HQ with my



fingers firmly crossed that nothing has been forgotten. Even at this hour people are looking for a hot drink. So, urns on the boil, frying pan at the ready, uniforms donned (courtesy of Mr Crane). Let the day commence!

The day flies past with us hardly looking up from the teapot. Everyone has their own role within the team and all contribute to making it a successful day. We rarely get the chance to see the start or finish as the steady flow of customers never lets up. A well-organised team of helpers keeps the conveyor belt in motion; the urns and tea pots are constantly refilled whilst bacon and sausages continually sizzle in the pan, rolls are filled and another volunteer takes the money. New recruits are always told to make sure the teapot is always full, if not, beware; the teapot will be slammed on the side and, allegedly, I'm known to give them 'the look!' The sight of the queue snaking around the hall and the satisfaction of happy customers adds to the success of the day.

I'm not sure why, but we seem to have managed to get through several cooks over the years. Perhaps it's that the cooking has to be done outside that may be the turn-off. It can also be eventful. On one windy race day, the gazebo took off across the playing field and on another occasion Alastair failed to keep a close watch when a four legged friend visiting from the farm nearby, ran off with his wooden spoon and oven glove. Nevertheless, the supply of bacon keeps coming.

I don't think we have ever run out of food and we have always had something left for the last runners and the marshals who, after all, have had to stand outside in wind, rain, and freezing conditions. The urns are only switched off when everyone has left the building, well almost everyone, and then the clearing up begins. We always leave all the facilities clean & tidy just as we found them.

Bedford Harriers races would not be as successful as they are without the membership and trusty volunteers who work flat out in the catering team. It really couldn't be done without them.

So, a big 'Thank You' to all the catering helpers over the years. It's been challenging at times but has provided many unforgettable memories.

So, the critical question, do we make a profit? Yes, always.

TRIATHLON FIRST TIMER

Sacha Trude describes the incredible barriers she has had to surmount on her journey to becoming a triathlete.



For those thinking of doing your first triathlon but scared witless, please read my story.

Where do I start?... it's been an incredible journey for me, with many highs and lows. Let me start at the beginning.

I hadn't been able to run for 4 years, not because I didn't want to, but due to a knee injury from riding. Then, I met a lady, Rachel Armstrong who was training my daughter to row at the time. I asked if she could help me get on my feet and able to run again. After hours of assessments and discussions, Rachel set about making some plans for strengthening, conditioning, biomechanics; you name it, we did it. It took 8 months, yes 8 months but, I could run. Rachel asked if I had any goals. The answer was easy; I wanted to do an Ironman, yippee!!!!



This desire came from running in Angie Finch's group, where I heard of all her Ironman adventures and I wanted to do the same. So, to this end, I decided to do my first sprint triathlon. I felt sick having entered the Leicester sprint; I couldn't swim, I had only been on my bike to do a charity ride once, and I had had a long time when I wasn't able to run. I definitely had my work cut out.



So my journey began; I started swimming at the local pool to try and get from one end to the other in front crawl without dying. Once I could, I joined the Harriers swim on a Saturday morning. They were amazing and a great place to gain information and tips from other athletes. I also biked more than 10 miles on my first aluminium road bike; I didn't really know about all this carbon stuff at the time.

So the day of the Leicester sprint came round very quickly and I can't describe how nervous I was. I got through the swim..... just, and the bike course was very hilly. Stodge hadn't warned me about that and as for the run..... well, my legs wouldn't work for the first mile. Now I understand when people say their legs are like lead. Wow, but running over that finish line all I could think of was my next race!!! I was hooked!!!

I entered a couple more sprints and then Pitsford Standard; my first open water swim in the reservoir. The swim was amazing; loved every minute, and the bike course again was very hilly (must be that part of the country). The run was round the lake and on the last 3k I seemed to have nothing left in the tank. I had two ladies pass me which dropped me down to 3rd place but I was really pleased with my effort. Lesson learnt; my fourth discipline - nutrition.

During my runs after this race, I started to experiment carrying and trying different drinks, gels and energy bars. I can't tell you how important this is and to do it before race day. It took a while to find things that my stomach would tolerate.

My training was going well and then, at the end of the season, disaster struck whilst I was swimming at Box End. I was taken to the Acute Assessment ward having had a suspected stroke. This, however, was not going to put me off.

The 2017 season soon came round and I started with a few more sprints but had my sights on completing my first Half Distance. Training was going well but I was fearful of getting in the open water; it was overwhelming. Luckily, I had Angie's support and this was invaluable.

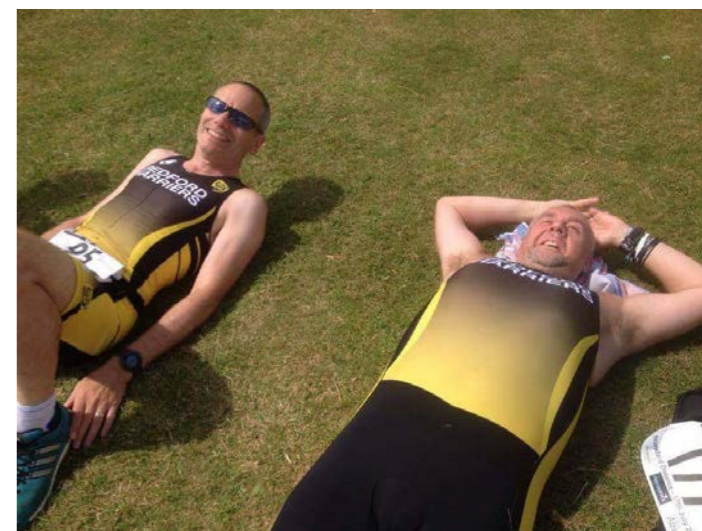
As if the paralysis I'd suffered wasn't enough, three months before Swashbuckler Half Distance I got plantar fasciitis so, no running at all. I hit the gym trying to strengthen my foot to give me some chance of completing this race.

On the day of Swashbuckler, I felt utterly sick at the thought of getting in the water. What if I got ill again; the pain I had experienced was nothing like I had ever had before. Again, Angie came to the rescue by starting at the back and jeopardising her own placing to look out for me. Despite the funny feeling of the jelly fish, I completed the swim. The bike through the New Forest was amazing especially passing wild horses. I was worried about the run as I hadn't been able to train and I also found out it was 14 miles and not 13.1. Nevertheless, I managed to complete my first Half Distance. I thought it was a lovely race and I would recommend it.

This was my warm up as I was working towards Vitoria Half Distance in Spain. Very soon the date came round so off I went; my first competition abroad with my fellow athletes and spectators.

On race day the nerves were kicking in. Sam Bayliss and I actually held hands walking down to the water's edge! The swim was carnage as they let all the swimmers into the water at once but, it was the the best bike leg I had ever done. And then the run. The route was through the streets of beautiful Vitoria and it was lovely to see Justin Burrell popping up on his bike and Lynne and Elaine cheer leading with their pom poms. Unfortunately, the other spectathletes were stranded at the lake for a while as, without warning, the last bus left without them. What a great race and venue and, to top it all, I managed to get on the podium! This will always be a special race for me.

Thank you to Rachel Armstrong for lending me her TT bike, fellow athletes and supporters; you have all been amazing and I have made the bestest friends for life in my first year of triathlons.



IRONMAN 70.3

PORTUGAL - 3RD SEPTEMBER

Angie Finch describes the delights and challenges of Cascais



Four of us landed at Lisbon airport into the heat and under sunny skies. Mark Lowe, Gary and I were competing and Sacha came along to offer invaluable support. Our transport was waiting but, not the size ordered! So 4 bike boxes, 3 suitcases and 4 back packs were very carefully balanced and gently squeezed into the small mini bus! Off we went to Cascais; a beautiful seaside town which was hosting the inaugural IronMan Portugal 70.3.

Our AirBnB apartment was ready for us and was to be our home for the weekend. A quick freshen up and a change into shorts and off we went to explore. We took a short walk down the hill into the centre where we could see the race being set up; barriers, banners, flags and the finish funnel and seating was underway. We registered and had the obligatory pre-race athlete's photo. Back packs and numbers collected we were off to the merchandise shop. Gary and Mark could not resist buying and, several t-shirts later, we were good to go for some lunch.

A nearby restaurant had sardines on the menu and these were perfect with some local wine. Cascais is a beautiful town; cobbled streets and pretty coloured, stonewashed houses with flowers cascading from window boxes. Lots of the little restaurants are up on the terraces and in the busy square. There is a small beach on the front and a massive beach further along; great for surfing. Off to the pasta party; the wind, by this time, beginning to blow quite hard and the temperature turning decidedly chilly. Sacha and I only had dresses on and were feeling the cold so, a quick exit from the pasta party and back to the apartment.



The next day, sunshine. We built our bikes and decided to have a little recce of the bike course. Although we did not quite find the exact route, we did get a pretty good idea of the hills we would be facing the next day. After lunch we had the race briefing where we were informed of the expected overnight high winds making it impossible to check the bikes into transition. That meant we would have to get up earlier so that we could rack them in the morning. Oh well, it was the same for every triathlete. We had arranged to meet Sacha on the beach afterwards for a swim in the cool, blue, Atlantic. Gary and Mark went in soon followed by Sacha and I and, yes, it was as cold as expected but we found it very refreshing and calming. Race preparations were done so off for a good dinner and then an early night.



The alarm went off all too soon. It was still dark outside and off we went expecting it to be windy but, to our surprise, not a hint of a breeze. So, bikes were racked, wet suits on and then the 1 hour wait.....then we made our way to the beach, chatted to others on the way and generally got into the spirit of racing. The male pros were on the start line and the cannon went off and made us jump. We were ready for the start of the ladies and then, the race gantry collapsed!! The race had to continue starting only 5 athletes at a time which actually made it a brilliant rolling start. Mark had gone ahead to prepare himself for his race and Gary and I waited together and then, we were off. A run into the sea and swim to the next beach, out for an Australian exit (get out the sea and run along the beach and then re-enter the sea) and then swim out to the harbour slipway. There were a few waves and the exit was very slippery but there were plenty of marshals to help us out. Into bike transition, which was huge. I managed to run the wrong way but found my bike and was off out on the bike course. It was still a bit cool but I knew it would warm up – we were warned not to work our legs too hard on the flat part out to Lisbon and back. Flat? It certainly wasn't that and then, eyeing the signage, I realised the run would be on this terrain as well. Oh well, head down and get on with it!

The bike course was very interesting and after returning from Lisbon we started the climbs; nothing too scary then a whizz round the race track. The last climbs were beginning to tell on the legs but, a big cheer from some cyclists as we reached the top spurred us on to the descent along the sea road with rolling waves to the right. We had to pay attention in order to stay on the bike because of the wind but somehow it added to the marvellous descent. Back into transition, bike parked and running shoes on. 13.1 miles here we come.

Sacha was out there shouting and cheering us on; it's always great to see someone you know. 2 laps on a hilly course where we had to run past the finish 3 times!! By then it was hot and I saw both Gary and Mark out there and it was great to cheer each other on. Gary had told me to pick up the pace with 5 miles to go and so I did; it was amazing how many people I started to overtake. The run course went down onto a promenade and as I was passing some runners I said 'are we nearly there yet?' They laughed and off I went. I kept the pace up and running into the finish with Sacha cheering was amazing. To add to my joy, I finished 2nd in my age group! I met up with Mark and Gary who had both finished before me and off we all went for a well-deserved pizza and beer.



We attended the awards ceremony the next day as I had a podium place and, maybe, a place in the Worlds 70.3 in South Africa but, alas, the lady in first place took this so I had to work out the % for the Europeans in Ibiza next year and, as it turned out, my % is good enough.



This is a brilliant event in a beautiful town and, who knows, they may increase it to a full IronMan. Well done Cascais on a fantastic inaugural race; we will definitely be back to race there again.

BEAUTIFUL, CHALLENGING AND REWARDING IN EQUAL MEASURE!

Oliver Jones' exhilarating experience of 'Lakes in a Day'

It was a dark November evening in 2016 and I was stuck on a stationary Thameslink train less than half a mile outside Bedford station which hadn't moved for 2 hours. I checked my email... called home... I caught up on Facebook... I got annoyed... annoyance faded to comic despair as my fellow commuters and I waited out our imprisonment. What would you do to pass the time with phone battery running low? Well, I decided to enter one of the hardest UK mountain trail races I could find that didn't require passing a vetting process - "Lakes in a Day 50".

It's a 50 mile foot race on a route that runs from Caldbeck in the north of the Lake District down to Cartmel in the South, including a full 4,000m of vertical ascent over some of the highest peaks in the country. Had I run the distance before? No. Did I think I could complete it? Maybe.

I knew I wanted to up my race distance, set myself a big challenge, and there's just something about the sport of mountain running that I love. I figured I had the best part of a year to train and prepare so it was all to play for.

Fast forward to October 6th 2017 and the alarm goes off at 4:50am. I'm in a hotel in Cartmel. I quietly get changed into the kit I'd laid out the night before. Make a coffee. Wake Kirsty. Eat some melon. Check my race kit (again). I know its ready - I've already checked it several times but it's best to be sure. Time for a quick photo outside and then Kirsty walks with me the short distance through the village to the school acting as Race HQ and finish for the event. I eat my pot of porridge while we walk.



It's **5:45am** people are loading up on to busses to take us to Caldbeck. Race start is not until 8:00am. The atmosphere is full of nervous anticipation and excitement. I have mixed feelings; wanting to be still asleep, wanting to be in my own zone - focused on the challenge ahead but, at the same time, wanting to connect with other participants. What kit have they chosen? Have they run it before? How well have they trained?

I find an empty seat on the bus next to a guy on his own and strike up polite conversation. No, he hasn't run this before but proceeds to list off his recent significant conquests including the "MDS", "Welsh 3,000s", and the "Dragon's Back"! I quickly decide that sleep is the better option and so try and doze off amid subdued chatter on the bus.

7:20am - we pull up outside the Oddfellows Arms in Caldbeck. The pub is open and bustling, doing a busy trade in coffee and bacon rolls. Thankfully, I'm on the bus that arrives first and quickly join the toilet queue. Weather here in the village is OK but, we know from the forecast and can see in the distance that it definitely won't be OK for long. So, time for a quick re-arrangement of kit - one layer off, waterproof jacket on, secure my pack and join the crowd by the starting line with 10 minutes to go - I'm ready! I pass a final few minutes chatting to a Colworth Strider whom we happened to meet in the pub the previous evening - he says he's impressed with my minimal kit packing and so now I start to worry I don't have enough kit! But there's no more time for worrying as the race director takes to the mic to give the briefing: "it's gong to be wet... really wet... there's a temporary bridge erected due to high water... expect severe weather... good luck!", and then we're off!

8:00am - It's uphill from the start but, the short stretch up road leading to farm track, is quickly covered with adrenaline high. A few locals, friends and family clap us on our way - runners are in good spirits - it eases us in to the journey ahead.



Stage 1 of the race; Caldbeck to Thelkeld aid station is clear in my mind. When I'd done my first recce in late summer there had been a series of revelations; power-hike up to High Pike where, quite suddenly, the entirety of the Lake District was revealed in an amazing, cloudless panorama. Next section; a very fun, runnable track up to Coomb Height before flying down a springy heather fell-side toward the River Caldew. Ford the river and then slog again, slow and hard up open fell toward Blencathra summit. From the top, it was the precarious Halls Fell ridgeline descent to the village. At the top, in the summer, it was like standing on top of the world and the descent was fast and fun with no one else around.



Race day and all is very different. We leave the farm track, on to footpath and then fell side. As soon as we reach 400m the cloud starts to envelop us. Drizzle dampens the high spirits a little. A bit higher still and the wind picks up. As we summit High Pike, visibility is down to a few feet and we're getting soaked! I need to be careful not to race too hard early on but I'm keen not to be held up in a queue for the temporary bridge crossing so I push on to stay with the front-runners for the first big descent.

The shiny metal construction looks out of place in this landscape, but very welcome. River crossed, it's poles out and power on up to Blencathra. A marshal in high-vis appears though the cloud as we approach the start of Halls Fell. What had been an exhilarating down climb a couple of months previously, is now slippery and treacherous. Wet rock and studded fell shoes are a dangerous combination - hands, feet and backside are all used for stability in the steep upper sections. The mid-section is really exposed and gale-force gusts nearly take me off at one point. Finally, the lower section, while still steep, becomes manageable and I run into the first aid station at Thelkeld where my support team (wife, parents and in-laws) are there to cheer me on. I'm ahead of schedule at 3hrs on the dot.

11.00am - I re-fill my water bottles and nip in to the aid station to refuel. The next stage to Ambleside is long, with a lot more climbing - I'm not carrying a large amount of my own food so I know I'll need to eat here. The choice of goodies on offer is large - it's tempting to spend time browsing but I just grab a couple of sandwiches, some coke, watermelon slices and head back out to have a quick chat with my folks - let them know I'm feeling good - then head out toward the other side of the valley and the climb up to Clough Head.



It goes on, and on, and on. Steep, hard going, quickly losing any shelter from the elements we'd had in the village. Wind and rain batter us worse than before; there's no let-up. The string of 'runners' (there's very little running to be done here) press on up into the cloud and I follow as fast as possible. Then panic! I feel sudden pain in one leg, and then the other... cramp hits me but, I've never had my quads cramp up on me before so at first I don't recognise the pain. Is it serious? Have I injured myself? I'm not even halfway through. Can I go on? I stop, compose myself, turn around and face back down the fell and take the strain off

the legs for a few minutes. I rub the offending muscles, take on some electrolytes and push on once more. It's done the trick - the cramp eases and although it would return at regular intervals over the next few hours, it is at least manageable.

For me it's 5hr 30m, virtually non-stop, from Thelkeld to Ambleside. Once I reach the summit of Clough Head, it's a roller-coaster of peaks including Calflow Pike, the Dodds, Raise and Whiteside before the mass of Helvellyn looms. If I was writing up my recce of the section in June, or indeed if I'd run it any of the three previous years, I could have described at length the glorious views; picture book Lakeland panoramas spread out east and west. Not so today. No temptation to stop - no photos to take and its far too cold anyway. Just keep pushing on as hard as possible up the zigzag, rock-strewn path to the highest summit of the day. No hanging around on Helvellyn - it feels good to know that a lot of the climbing is now behind me but I'm getting hungry and running low on water. Dollywagon isn't far off and I know that from there the solid staircase descent to Grisedale will give me respite from the weather and an opportunity to refuel on the way. I'll need plenty of energy for the final, killer climb of this section up Fairfield.

2:25pm - Still feeling OK at Grisedale Tarn but the hard climbing, bad weather and steep steps down have definitely taken their toll. It feels good to have caught up with more people here and it's a rare chance to exchange a few friendly words with fellow runners. Everyone seems more unified in adversity against the conditions than focused on competition. I demolish an energy bar and suck down another gel. All the hundreds of metres of height just lost has to be regained almost immediately as we tackle Fairfield; it's slow going for me but eventually the terrain levels off, once again in cloud, and this is where I almost make my only navigation error of the day. Excited just to be back on runnable ground, and knowing that it's now basically all down from here to Ambleside, I follow what look to be other runners, I'm tempted down the wide, downhill path ahead of me. Luckily my Garmin warns me that I've gone off course before too much damage is done and after a bit of a back-track, I pick up the correct route.

I remember the route down from Hart Crag to Ambleside in June being a long, but fun, technical run with gorgeous views to the town and Windermere beyond. There is also a route choice here - runners either follow the 'official' path or choose to cross over a wall and descend a little further away on the right-hand side of that. I choose to stick to the official route as I'd recce'd it, rather than risking an untested alternative. With the benefit of hindsight, this was a bit of a mistake. What should have been a high point in the race for me, quickly turned in to the toughest both mentally and physically. The volume of rain in recent weeks had turned soft, springy peat ground into deep quagmire with more slippery rock sections. Already low on energy (more so than I realised), running across bog and sliding down the rock, took full concentration on tired legs and, despite trying to run in parts, it seemed to be taking far too long. After going knee-deep in stinking mud for the third time, I started to lose my cheerful outlook on the race. When I then took a full face-plant into the stuff about three quarters of the way down, with one or two runners passing who I'd previously overtaken, I really struggled mentally!

3:53pm - Picking myself out of the mud, I have a strong word with myself and assess the situation: I've made good time to this point. I've been going non-stop 5hrs over extreme terrain with little food since the last aid station. This section is harder than expected - fine. So it'll be hard for everyone. Eat something. Don't push too hard. Slow down a bit, get to Ambleside in one piece and re-group.

Taking the pressure off, topping up the energy levels again and then the sun breaking through and illuminating Ambleside below, all help turn things around for me and I'm back in the game. As I pick up the pace a little I suddenly see my sister and her partner coming up the trail towards me. It's been a long, tough section and seeing some friendly faces couldn't have come at a better time. I catch up to them and have a quick chat. I must look a right

state, covered in peat bog but at least I'm on my feet and running. The chat, and knowing that I'm nearly on solid track that leads to the road that takes me in to town, spurs me on.

4:35pm - Ambleside Aid Station (8hr 35min). I've picked up with some other competitors on the road in. Running well again. We're all in high spirits because conditions down off the fells are lovely and just around the corner there will be a huge spread of hot food and high-calorie snacks waiting, not to mention family to greet and a much needed change of footwear!



There are a lot of supporters lining the street outside the aid station and the cheer from them is a welcome boost. The hall that is serving as aid station is frenetic. There's a projector showing a live map of all the runners GPS trackers and some guys are filming and interviewing competitors. Muddy red-faced people are coming in and out. It's difficult to know what to do first - I want to eat, find my fresh shoes, talk to the family, rush off, talk to other runners and look at the leaderboard, all at the same time. I get a bowl of pasta and sauce and eat it while looking at the map. As soon as that's done I grab a coffee, load up with a couple of slices of pizza, head outside to change shoes while catching up with crew. I think everyone's relieved that I'm doing as well as I'd hoped and that I'm ready for the next stage.

This really is a race of two halves. The majority of the high fells now behind me and tracking the western side of Lake Windermere, the rest of the race from Ambleside to Cartmel looks much flatter by comparison - but don't be fooled - there's plenty of sting left in the tail. The change in terrain calls for a change of footwear so, for the shoe geeks out there, I swapped my studded Inov-8 X-Talons for my RocLite 305s with flatter lugs and more cushioning in the sole. With the prospect of a three hour run to the southern end of the lake and maybe two hours of daylight left, the challenge from here is to cover as much ground as possible before the head torch comes out.

5:08pm - The route out of Ambleside is good, easy trail and very enjoyable running in the late afternoon sun. I make good time up to High Wray and through the woodland trails of Claife Heights, catching a few people along the way. I actually need to strip off a layer before getting out of the forest section. By Moss Eccles Tarn I was flagging again so broke out a 'Double Espresso Cliff Shot' to pick me up. These thick gels are like rocket fuel when you're tired - they taste like a sticky toffee pudding sauce and pack a 100mg caffeine punch! Flying along to High Cunsey feeling a lot more alert, this is where the path starts to track along the lakeshore and progress becomes slower and more difficult. Daylight is running out now and I'm resigned to the fact that I'll be running with wet feet again for the rest of the day with ankle-deep stretches of lake water to negotiate because of flooding.

7:10pm - Donning my head torch I push on with as much speed as possible. It was difficult going in the daylight but now, with the extra standing water and darkness, I'm taking a lot longer than I'd hoped on this section. Running, for me at least, not really possible here. The rest of the way to Finsthwaite is dark and quiet with nobody else in sight for long stretches; slow progress with just the sound of the lake and my own breath, which clouds my

torch beam. After one final very steep climb up to High Dam, I'm relieved to see another couple of guys in the race and we chat for a bit as I catch up with them. They appear more tired than I and very keen to know if we're close to Finsthwaite - we are, and after checking they're ok, I run on and drop down towards the village hall leaving them behind.

8:26pm - Finsthwaite Aid Station (12hr 26min). The glow of lights and buzz of activity in the hall behind the church in an otherwise quiet village, is a very welcome sight. The amazing volunteers crewing the station take my flasks and offer to re-fill them for me while I go in and get hot coffee and warm snacks. Having fuelled on sugary gels and sweet energy bars most of the day, I'm craving anything savoury and salty. I force down some crisps, cheese slices, and a mini sausage roll. Drink some coke for a quick energy boost, another drop of coffee for warmth, re-pack my flasks and I'm keen to press on again. The end is within touching distance with Cartmel only another 7 miles away but, just across the next field and through the wood, I'm hoping to see my own crew again at Newby Bridge.

Sure enough, as I approach the hotel by the bridge, Kirsty is waiting for me with Ian and Lynn, her mum and dad, whilst chatting to lady with a dog. It's great to see them but I want to get finished now and don't want to stop for more than a minute or two. Kirsty and Lynn give me plenty of encouragement and hurry me on. Ian on the other hand tries to introduce me to the lady's dog - I think the dog was also called Oliver - but I've been up since 4.30am, racing for nearly thirteen hours and my brain can't really take it in. I leave them quite confused! Anyway - last push. Focus on the task in hand. Last 10km. Get to the finish...

9:11pm - The route to the finish crosses farmland and farm tracks, much of it waterlogged and extremely muddy making it hard work right to the very end. I'm tired but I know that nothing will stop me finishing now. With nobody in sight ahead of me to chase I needed something to keep me pushing so, I determine that nobody will pass me on the last section to Cartmel. It does the trick. Small noises in the darkness have me thinking I'm being caught and I keep up as much speed as I can muster. I finally make it on to tarmac road and the last couple of miles into the village and, with nobody in sight ahead or closing on me, I relax into a comfortable run and prepare for a strong finish.

In my journey to make it to the start of this event I've leaned the importance of having A, B & C goals. There are so many variables in a long event, things that can go well or badly. For 'Lakes in a Day' my goals were: A - finish in under 14 hours, B - finish before last orders in the nearest pub, C - just finish safely! I'm happy to say that I met my 'B' goal, crossing the line in 14hrs 41min, tired and emotional, reflecting back on what was a truly epic day out on the hills. After a finish line photo and a welcome bit of hot food, Kirsty and my in-laws helped me over to the road to claim that last-orders beer. I was completely done in. If you love the British countryside and lust after a challenge, I highly recommend you look at this event.



UPS AND DOWNS...

by Charlie Hempstead

As anyone of a certain vintage will testify, the age-graded scoring system is a godsend. It gives us a justification for our inexorable decline from half-decent to not-too-bad, to not-much-cop, to plain old-and-slow. It allows us to offset our increasing race times against our advancing years, and present our declining performance as being a genuine improvement in real terms.

Instead of shaking our heads sadly that we can no longer break 22 minutes for 5K, we proudly boast that we are still hitting a 65% WAVA score and are not really as slow as we look. Or, to put it another way, not bad for an old git.

The problem with using the 'Age Defence' as a reason for slowing down is that you get irritating people like Jerry Pullinger and Neil Lovesey blowing your argument out of the water by running the sorts of times in their 50s and 60s that the rest of us could only dream of even when we were 25. This is an issue that is not confined to the Harriers, as I have discovered over the last couple of years.

In early 2016, my work took me to Sussex, where I have been living during the week since then. Keen to keep my running going, I became a second-claim member of Arena 80, based at the Withdean sports complex in Brighton. Much like the Harriers, it is a brilliant club with excellent facilities and outstanding coaching... as well as a load of really quick old blokes who prevent me from using the 'Age Defence'.

Harriers who have tied the knot this year.

Our warmest congratulations to the following couples:



Stuart and Sally Knight who got married on 22nd July 2017. They joined the Harriers on the same day in August 2012 and both were allocated to Steve Crane and Viv Holt's group and, as they say, the rest is history.

So, I soon realised I would have to have a new excuse to roll out whenever I get tailed off at the end of a long run. When you join a running club that has the South Downs National Park on the doorstep, you pretty much can't avoid running up hills..... lots of them..... really steep ones and you quickly find that all the locals who have grown up in these parts have the genes of mountain goats and can sprint up a Down without batting an eyelid or raising their heartbeat. This is where I play my trump card - the 'Bedford Defence'.

"We don't have hills like this where I come from", I gasp, as I finally catch up with the others, who have been waiting rather a long time for me to join them and are trying not to look too bored/cold/pitying.

"Where are you from then, Charlie?" (no-one here ever forgets my name - 'Tail-End Charlie' is always at the back).

"Bedford", say I, proudly.

"Where's that?", say they, as pretty much everyone does when you mention our town.

"The flat bit to the north of London."

(More pitying looks).

"We do have Cemetery Hill, though. It's a real stinger."

"How long is it?"

"Oh, about 200 metres, maybe 250."

Cue unbridled hilarity and a chorus of "Call that a hill?"

That said, I wouldn't want to give the impression that I have not been made welcome. Far from it. A fish out of water I may be as I do battle with one 15% gradient after another, but the Arenees (as they like to call themselves) are lovely people - and more than happy to make allowances for someone from the flatlands. Why, sometimes they even give me a full 15 seconds recovery time before disappearing off towards the next peak.

No doubt all this hill running will stand me in good stead when I return to Bedford at some point in the future and my erstwhile Harriers colleagues will watch in amazement as I glide effortlessly up Cemetery Hill.

But, if two years on, I turn out to be just as slow as ever, there's always the WAVA % and the 'Age Defence' to fall back on.



Gary and Angie Finch who got married on 7th October 2017.

We wish them every happiness for the future

THE SECRET

Bob Wells divulges the secret of his success and longevity in running

I have been reflecting on a successful season, which has seen me leap up the Run Britain rankings to be within a mere 20000 places of Sir Mo, and seeking "the secret" about which I have received several enquiries.

I am certain that avoiding injury is by far the most important factor to enable enjoyable and successful running. However, in my case, there is no trick or method in this. Running shoe manufacturers would go out of business if they depended on tight-fisted, worn-shoe customers like me. I do not stretch. I have never been a member of a gym. Warm-up for me means at most a gentle-jog. Before a race, I have often thought that a warm-down afterwards would be a sensible precaution but, without fail, have forgotten all about it once I get to the finish. I know that I have been very lucky indeed to avoid injury and hope that I still have some Harriers' coaches amongst my friends.

However, even a fully-functional body will not run without motivation. As the (unrecorded) miles on the clock increase I have found it ever more difficult to get out of the door and, for me, this is now the hardest part of running. Although WAVA percentages help with setting targets and measuring performance in road races, the enticing challenge of running a true PB has long been unrealistic. I try to deal with the grumpy old man's 'been there, done that' syndrome by entering my favourite annual events which also have an enjoyable social aspect - The Round Norfolk Relay and the Colworth weekend in particular. But there are not enough of these events to keep me going all year.

My salvation was ParkRun. In October 2014 one was set up at Fell Foot, within range of our mint-cake town home and I decided to see what it was like. My only previous encounter with the Saturday morning 5Ks was when a bunch of hard Harriers left me at the Thunder Run camp site while they went off to do the local run a couple of hours before their 24-hour race started. Although I knew the events were free (see my comments on shoes), at the time I did not understand their enthusiasm. Now I do.

Fell Foot, Newby Bridge, is a delightful place to run and must be a contender for the most beautifully-situated ParkRun course. The spectacular views along Lake Windermere to the Langdales alter subtly with every change in the cloud and sun angle and provide a pleasant distraction from any exercise-induced discomfort. I quickly became a ParkRun addict (108 runs in 3 years). I note that so far only 6 other Harriers have run here which is a little surprising as we get a lot of visitors to the Lake District every week throughout the year. Regard this as an invitation to give Fell Foot a(nother) try.

For me the most enjoyable aspect of ParkRun is the pleasant, relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. I like the inclusiveness where infants in pushchairs are alongside some more than 80 years their senior, complete novices run with hardened mountain racers, young boys with old ladies (and vice versa) and a few dogs thrown in for the barks. I smile when I note that I set my Fell Foot PB when I got involved in a race-long scrap with a lad 60 years my junior. He did a PB too.

Also, the emphasis is definitely on the run rather than the race. Nobody cares if you stop to admire the view or exchange banter with a volunteer. Brexit negotiators might derive inspiration from ParkRun's approach to French Law 99-233 which demands a medical certificate before participation in any competitive sport. Not wishing to exclude the uncertified, French ParkRuns publish their results ordered alphabetically with no associated finishing position and are thus non-competitive events to judicial eyes. Runners can, of course, use the button provided on the web page to sort the results into time order!

As an ex-professional geek who has never kept a training diary or used Strava, I find the extensive ParkRun statistics both interesting and valuable. Unsurprisingly, I am an ardent follower of Age Grades (although I claim that the quoted two decimal places are meaningless when age is recorded in full years and run times, at best, to the nearest second). Never before have I been able to track my performance week by week over the same course and against other regulars. I can now find some evidence that my slower times might be blamed on adverse weather or underfoot conditions, a long run the previous day, or a late night instead of simple terminal decline.

I have also got into ParkRun tourism (18 different courses so far, including one on my former lunchtime stamping-ground in Toulouse). But I realise my involvement is insignificant when compared with the likes of Angela Oldham from East Cheshire Harriers. (Fell Foot was her 65th ParkRun and her 65th different park) or the lads who ran 50 park courses in the North West in 5 days to raise money for the Alzheimer's Society.

The publication of the ParkRun elevation profiles (jegmar.com/stats-hq/fastest-races/parkrun/) has added a whole new field of data for analysis by tourists. Most expect courses in the Lake District to be hilly but Fell Foot is ranked only 28 feet above Bedford. The hilliest course I have run is Lyme Park but I will leave it to the adventurous to find out why this is still considerably faster than the flat course at Millom.

So, I really have no secret to divulge but can sincerely thank ParkRun in general, and Ron and his team at Fell Foot in particular, for giving me a lot of motivation. If anybody can find the secret so that I continue to avoid injury then I would like to know it!

