

ON THE RUN



**BEDFORD
HARRIERS A.C.**



RUNNING TRIATHLON RACE REPORTS



**BEDFORD
HARRIERS A.C.**

January 2023

Highlights

Hear inspirational stories of Harriers taking on the World Marathon Majors in London, Boston & Chicago.

Experience attempts on the Ironman 70.3 World Championships and full distance Ironman events.

Marvel at tales of ultra distance running events from Ultra Trail Mont Blanc to Greensands Ridge.

Relive stories of long distance swimming events from Harriers teams.

Learn tips and advice from coaches and Harriers on marathon running, vegan living and more.

From the editor

Welcome to On the Run, January 2023 Edition. This one is an exciting edition for me as it's my first one as Editor, but also 2022 was our first proper year of racing since Covid. It's also the first time that John Elworthy has been graphic designer: I thank him for volunteering to take on this mammoth task and for his brilliant ideas of how we could present it.

This year we wanted it to be more than just a collection of race reports, so we've tried to get articles on a range of other topics, such as kit, volunteering and strength and conditioning. We hope that you enjoy the articles we have persuaded people to write and the different look to the magazine.

I ask for some forgiveness from some contributors, as I have had to use some editorial licence and made some articles a tad more concise to make room for other articles!

I would like to thank everyone who contributed articles, they have been fun to read and edit. I would also like to thank Jenny King and Alastair Fadden for their work on previous editions of On the Run. I've always looked forward to receiving a copy, especially during the Covid years.

Finally, I'd like to thank Richard Lawson, my proof-reader – if any typos get through, they are entirely intentional to see how many of them Jenny can spot!

Going forward, if you have an article you wish to share, please send it to hello@bedfordharriers.co.uk. I may include it in Up and Running or I may keep it for next year's On the Run. It's never too early to write about an event and share it with us!

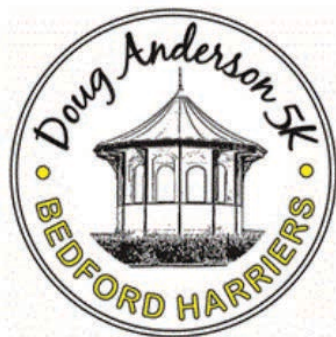
Best wishes, have a fantastic year of running, multi-sports, volunteering and spectating,

Elaine Massie

Harriers Races in 2023

Sign up now for our 2023 marquee races:

- 26th March 2023 – **Oakley 20** – The iconic, challenging marathon tune up race.
- 19th July 2023 – **Doug Anderson 5k** – Fast, flat 5k guaranteed for PB Potential!
- 13th August 2023 - **Bedford Triathlon** - Fast, flat Olympic Distance Triathlon



If you're not racing, please consider volunteering, it's fun and we can't do it without you!



In 2023 the Club Championship races are as follows:

- 2nd April 2023 - **Sandy 10** miles
- 9th July 2023 - **Wellingborough 5** miles
- 19th July 2023 – **Doug Anderson 5K**
- 24th September 2023 - **Standalone 10K**
- 19th November 2023 - **St Neots Half Marathon**
- Date TBC – Second race of **3 Counties XC Series**



For the Triathlon and Multisport athletes, we have the following races:

- 16th April 2023 – **The Stampede** – Sprint Distance Duathlon
- 2nd July 2023 - **Box End Sprint Triathlon**
- 10th September 2023 - **Vitruvian Middle Distance Triathlon**



About the Club Championship races

The Club Championship races are a great way to meet other Harriers: they are generally fun, social events, with lots of other Harriers lining the routes, cheering you on and taking some fantastic photos (and maybe some that are not-so-flattering)! It's also a great way to help promote the Club.

The races are also a way to win an award or two at Awards Night, with awards for the first 3 males and females as well as age-group awards from 35 years and upwards, again for males and females.

There are a few rules in order to win an award though:

- You must be a paid-up member of the Club;
- You must run in Club kit;
- You must enter the race, and be shown on the results list, as a Harrier.

A Word From The Chair

Chris Capps gives an overview of 2022

It has been great to finally get Bedford Harriers AC back to what we are good at - running, cycling and swimming - and not worry about lockdowns and other restrictions! For many, however, it has been a challenging time and many of us will have lost loved ones to Covid, so let's spare a thought for anyone affected by Covid.

The Club has slowly re-opened and we are now virtually back to normal. This has been thanks to the hard work of our coaches, committee, race directors, and many Harriers. As Club Chair I want to thank all who have volunteered, far too many people to name.

In 2022 we were able to stage our three Bedford Harriers races, the Doug Anderson 5k, the Bedford Triathlon and Oakley 20, all were successful and made profits for us to invest back into our events and services. Thank you to Bev Gous, Simon King and Steve Crane, the respective Race Directors. We were short of volunteers at the Oakley 20 and that is a concern, without sufficient volunteers we would not have been able to stage the race safely.

Our profit-making races help fund all the extras we currently provide to you, our Members, including Friday night track and circuits, the entry fees for the cross-country races and food and drink for our various social events, including the return of our very popular Awards Night! So, please please make a note in your diaries of when our races will be staged in 2023 and try to volunteer for at least one.

- Oakley 20 – 26th March 2023
- Doug Anderson 5k – 19th July 2023
- Bedford Triathlon – 13th August 2023

We need volunteers prior to the events, on the day and after the events.

Additionally, the Three Counties Cross-Country series is in full swing, with the last race being organised by the Club at Sharnbrook on 5th February 2023. We need volunteers to make up filled bread rolls, as well as to marshal on the day.

We had a successful Ukraine evening in May whereby there was an all-Club run followed by food, raffle and social at the Stadium. As a result, we were able to donate to this worthy cause.

On 14th December, despite the snow and ice, we had a great treasure hunt run and social with festive treats to finish the year off and start the Christmas celebrations, it was a great evening.

Many of us have been entering races, and while overall numbers have been down, it's good to be back out competing. It's also great to see that five Harriers achieved a total of 16 Club Best times in their respective age categories. A special mention for Larry Corkery, who turned 85 in May 2022 and now has almost a full suite of Club Best times at age 85, well done Larry! Well done also to Nora Haggart and Dea Ditchfield who travelled to Utah (USA) to compete in the Ironman 70.3 World Triathlon Championships.

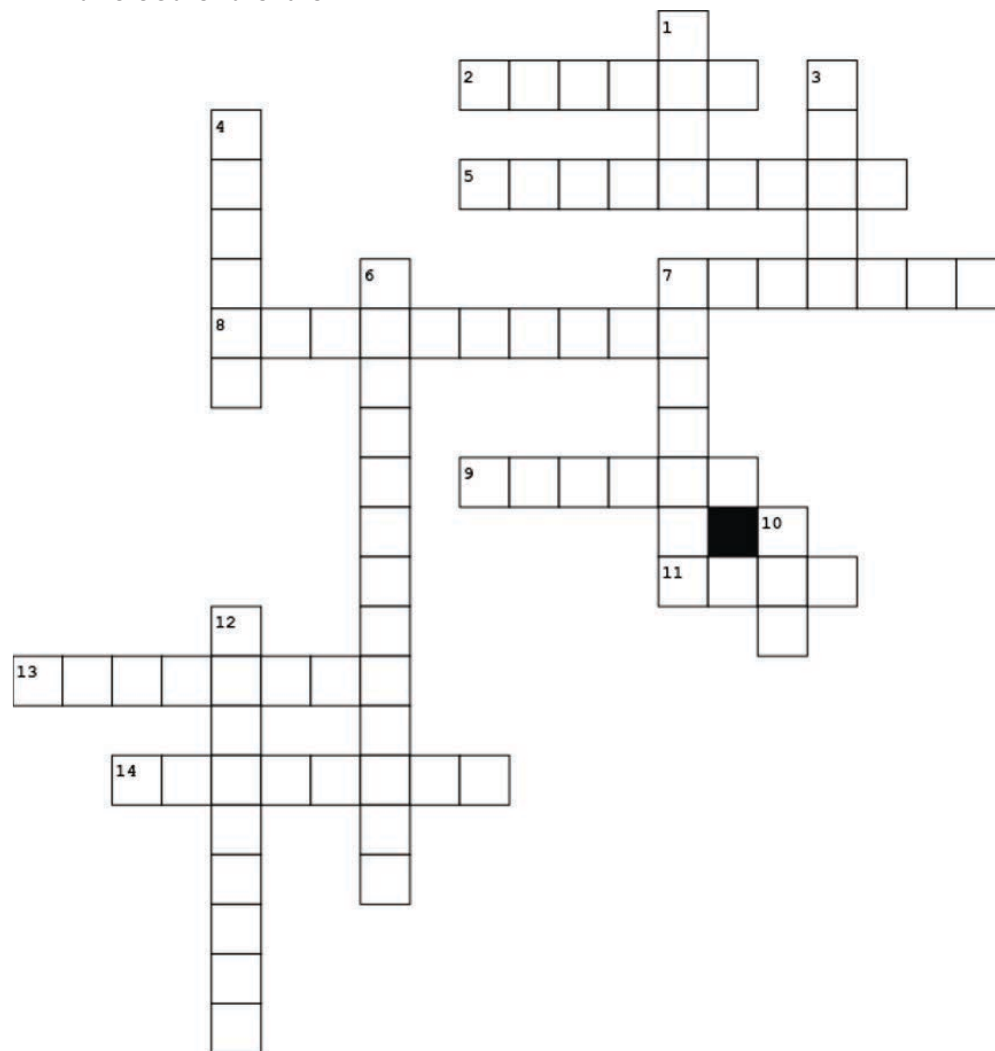
The Greensands Ridge Relay, Round Norfolk Relay and Squeaky Bone Relay were also up and running and we had teams in all three. We are now looking forward to entries in 2023. If you are interested, keep an eye open for communications on these.

Open water swimming has also been popular with six Harriers completing the long-distance swim of Ullswater end-to-end (7.5 miles). Additionally, some Harriers are electing to continue swimming (some even without wet suits!) right through the winter!

Finally, let's make 2023 a great year for Bedford Harriers through representing the Club at local, national and international races and volunteering within the Club whenever we can.

Crossword

With thanks to Claire Marie Rulton



Across

2. Day of the week whose abbreviation can be texted using only the letters on the 6 button
5. Addams family spin off
7. Yappers
8. The year BH was formed (6,4)
9. Our colour
11. What do you call a man with a shovel on his head
13. 42,195m
14. Where our club kit is from (2,6)

Down

1. Why we run
3. Railway
4. Ely Oak (anagram)
6. The XC league (5,8)
7. Our town
10. What we all do
12. Track & field sports

Answers on inside back page



London Marathon

Josh Evans ran a sub 3 Marathon to come home 1st Harrier at London

Marathon, after all - and I probably ran the first 5-6 miles a minute or so quicker than I had planned to. However, I felt pretty good going into the iconic Cutty Sark stretch with the crowds lining the streets, there was such a buzz. Around mile 9-10, I began to feel pain in my hip and glute. It wasn't something I had experienced before in training and came completely out of the blue. I went through the halfway mark in just under 1:26 - the crowds at that point on Tower Bridge were something else, j u s t incredible **I had to dig very deep and the last 3-4 miles were very tough** - though by now the hip was really starting to trouble me and I knew I was in for a tough second half of the race. I had to dig very deep and the last 3-4 miles were very tough, but I was determined to finish in under 3 hours.

After what felt like the longest 3-4 miles I've ever run, I crossed the line in 2 hours 58 mins 17 secs. At first, I have to admit to feeling a bit down - the injury had really hampered me, and I felt disappointed that I hadn't managed to run a PB. However, I soon realised that I had just ticked off a big bucket list race, a race I had dreamt of running for a long time, all while running it in a respectable sub-3 hours. **I soon realised that I had just ticked off a big bucket list race**

I'll hopefully be back for another crack at London Marathon 2024. I've since managed to fix my hip/glute and for 2023 my aim is to run a marathon PB at Manchester in April and, all being well, I'll also be running Chicago Marathon in the autumn.

Running the London Marathon is something I had dreamt of, quite literally, since I was very young. I had been to watch the race in person a few times in the past, but I was never lucky enough to secure a place in the ballot even after a decade or more of trying. That changed this year when I was absolutely over the moon to secure a last-minute charity place for the London Marathon 2022 just ten weeks before race day. The charity I ran for was The Griffin Institute, a surgical training and medical research charity who work to improve outcomes for patients of all ages who are living with acute and chronic diseases and disability.

Ten weeks isn't an ideal amount of time to build for a marathon - I normally prefer an eighteen-week block - although I had plenty of miles in my legs having run a 2:56 PB at Manchester Marathon in the spring. The fast-track training block went really well and I felt in great shape come race day.

The Friday before the race involved a trip to the ExCeL in London to pick up my race number and I stayed on the Isle of Dogs the night before race day, just a stone's throw from the start at Greenwich/Blackheath. That walk on the morning of the race, from Greenwich to the start, was quite something - you could really feel the tension mixed with excitement in the air, with the herds of runners all heading towards their start pens, nervous, not knowing what might unfold over the next 26.2 miles. After one last toilet stop, some dynamic warmup exercises and one final gulp of Lucozade, I felt ready to go.

you could really feel the tension mixed with excitement in the air, with the herds of runners all heading towards their start pens

Being in the yellow start pen, I was lucky enough to cross the start line a few seconds after the gun went off. It is difficult not to get caught up in the excitement for the first few miles - it is London

I probably ran the first 5-6 miles a minute or so quicker than I had planned to

Want to get into London Marathon?

London is notoriously hard to get into but there is always a way if you want it bad enough. Here are our tips to get yourself on the start line:

- Get a ballot place, although statistically hard, it is possible!
- (If you can) run a good for age time elsewhere. (see London Marathon website for times).
- Volunteer at one of our races - if you're an EA member you can then enter the draw for our Club place (you also need to have entered the main ballot)
- Run for one of the amazing charities supported by this event, either via the charity direct or via the small charities clearing house (see crunch.org.uk).





Boston Marathon

Nora Haggart describes her experience of running the Boston Marathon – the US one!

I qualified for the 2022 Boston Marathon after completing the Blackpool Marathon in 2021. Boston is an incredible location to visit with lots to see and do - Boston Tea Party, Fenway Park (home to the Red Sox Baseball team), Museums, the Freedom Trail, Parks, beach visits, shopping and of course the Boston Marathon. Their rail service is great for getting around the area and very efficient. The atmosphere in Boston leading up to the race was incredible - you can feel the excitement and you see lots of runners wearing the iconic Boston Marathon jackets.

On race day we boarded one of the many yellow school buses at 5am at Franklin Park not far from the finish. The buses transported us to the start in Hopkinton. The journey was pleasurable, friendly with lots of chatter. On arrival in Hopkinton I can remember thinking that I now had to run all the way back to Boston! The weather was very hot and awash with runners, there was lots of activity, stretching, hydrating and discarding warm layers of clothing which would be collected and given to the homeless.

I can remember thinking that I now had to run all the way back to Boston!

Runners were allocated wave start times which were announced over a loudspeaker for us to make our way to the start. The system was very well organised and we didn't have to hang about for long.

While every marathon is a gruelling test of endurance, the Boston marathon is a special kind of endurance with its rolling hills. The first few miles from Hopkinton are downhill then the punishing tough miles of hills begin with Heartbreak Hill at mile



runners talk about how tough Heartbreak Hill is

20 - a steep half mile in exhausting heat. Although runners talk about how tough Heartbreak Hill is, for me it was the four Newton Hills about one mile from the finish that seemed to go on forever!

The race is on Patriots' Day and children are given the day off school and are out supporting. There was support all along the route, the love and support were totally unforgettable and great to experience. After all those mind and body draining miles and 3 hours 49 minutes and 32 seconds, it was so emotional and beyond words to do the final simple left turn onto

Boylston to the finish. Boston Marathon was an out of this world experience. The

marathon was held on 18 April 2022 and is one of the 6 World Marathon Majors. I had already completed two, London and New York - and have now qualified for Chicago and Berlin in 2023. That would just leave Tokyo ...!

it was so emotional and beyond words to do the final simple left turn onto Boylston to the finish





Chicago Marathon

Travel challenges didn't slow down John Elworthy & Andy Palombella as they went PB hunting in the USA!

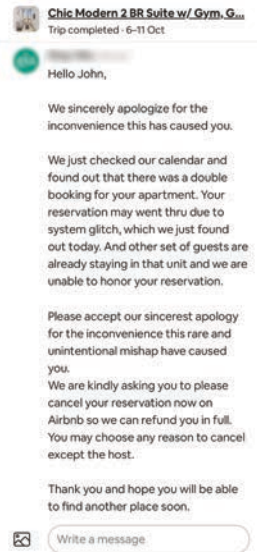
We had always heard that Chicago was fast, flat & fun and it didn't disappoint. With both of us having already run London a few times and Andy already having Berlin under his belt, when the topic of an assault on all 6 majors came up over a pint it didn't take long for us to start planning. John already had a ballot place for Chicago that had been rolling over since pre-Covid and Andy was lucky enough to still have a good for age that would work, plus we both liked the idea of a Stateside holiday, so the plan was on and travel was booked!



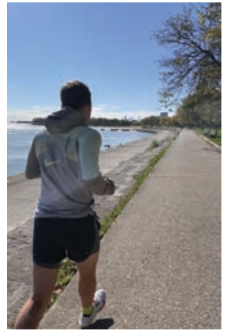
Training wasn't ideal for either of us. John raced his first Half Ironman two weeks beforehand and Andy was coming off a disappointing Oakley 20 tune up race. The trip started off pretty well (thanks to John's status) with a trip to the BA first lounge (annoyingly we couldn't really enjoy the free booze) and a nice flight upgrade, our spirits were high as we landed and made our way downtown to find our AirBnB, that's where the chaos began!

We arrived at our apartment at 9pm local time feeling tired and ready for bed. It was freezing cold and raining and we became increasingly frustrated entering the door code we had been sent that didn't work. We managed to tailgate someone into the building to get out of the cold while we investigated the situation via the AirBnB app. Things quickly turned sour however as we read the words we won't forget "There was a double booking. ... Another set of guests are already staying in that unit. ... Please cancel your reservation ... hope you will be able to find another place soon."

Red rag met bull and John got on the phone, it was now something like 3 am for us and we had been travelling all day. Our chances of finding somewhere to stay for a week in Chicago, on marathon week, at short notice, were not high and we were ready to sleep in the lobby if we had to! A number of tense negotiations (and another hour of back and forth) we heard the news we were desperate to hear. "Sir, we have identified another empty apartment in the building that we can allocate to you, I'm sending you the unlock code now." We headed for the lift in an upbeat mood and found our place ready for bed, however this was not to be the end of our trial! As Andy was opening the key safe the door of our apartment opened, and we found ourselves face-to-face with another family!



Ten minutes later we discovered exactly the same thing had happened to our new friends from the Dominican Republic, who were also in town to run the marathon. However, there were six of them and they needed a bigger place; the building janitor had let them into our new place to sort out something not realising it would be rented. We agreed to share for a while and after 2 more hours of back and forth for them to find a place elsewhere (and a few selfies/run numbers exchanged) we were in and hit the sack after 24 hours of being awake.



After this 'less than perfect' start our fortunes changed. Within 24 hours the freezing cold rain had disappeared to be replaced with sunshine and the apartment turned out to be awesome, we had decided to stay up the coast from the city right on the lake which meant we had some amazing shake out runs in the few days we had given ourselves to acclimatise before the race.

Finally, the day came, and it was time to show what we could do. We had to be at the start line at 7:30 am which meant a very early start, which involved watching the sun come up from our start corrals! The jet lag really worked in our favour for this though, as we got to bed at 8pm the night before and woke up early after a solid night's sleep.

John's Race



My Marathon PB was 3:45 (from London 2019) and I was desperate to get a 3:30 in Chicago. I had a bit of a nightmare to start with at Chicago having arrived late (thanks Andy) to meet a huge queue for bag drop that meant I was sprinting to get into my start corral before it closed. The atmosphere at this point was electric and really got me in the mood to go. As I waited for the gun I pondered Andy's advice over a plate of pasta the previous night, which went something like "You're not a professional athlete, you're going to hit the wall at 20 miles whatever you do. Why not push yourself and get there with plenty of time to spare as you die the last few miles?" I hadn't consciously committed to this strategy until I realised I was on it but somehow it became my mantra: 'go out hard and hang on!' Once

off and running the first few miles were amazing, running through the downtown skyscrapers, where my watch's GPS wasn't working, so I just ran to feel (read: too fast!) and held on to that pace up the lake through the first 10k.

I chatted to another runner at this point who was going for 3:30 and had started with the pace group but was well ahead. I remember thinking 'that might not be good' at this point but I still felt well within my comfort zone. My watch was working by this point and my mile splits kept coming up in the 7:40s so I thought, 'keep going and reassess at halfway.'

The halfway point came and went, the support was incredible, there were no dead zones and every neighbourhood we went through was wall-to-wall supporters shouting, "Go Runners" and the occasional "Go Bedford!" I kept on pace and at 18 miles I started following the other bit of advice that Andy had given me: "Check in with your body, go from top to bottom and ask yourself if you're good or not, react accordingly, don't let your head trick you into thinking the worst." I still felt remarkably fine so pushed on and went through 20 miles still feeling like I was floating on air.

The eventual wall came at mile 22. I remember suddenly feeling like I was running through treacle, it was time for mind over matter. I chugged down the caffeine gel I had been saving for the wall and just told myself "You've done all the hard work, you've trained (a bit) and run 22 miles at a pace you never thought possible, don't mess it up now!" I started looking at the finish time predictor on my watch and saw that not only was the 3:30 still on, but it was also looking like sub 3:25 was possible. With this new focus dominating the pain I somehow held on, dropping back to 8-minute miles for the last few to come across the line in 3:24:29 for a 21-minute PB!

To say I was happy is an understatement, I think there were tears at the line and a manly hug when I finally caught up with Andy to celebrate! This was so much more than I thought was possible, the only challenge now though is it means I have to go out and run faster times for a half now!

Andy's Race



Like most people, I don't normally sleep that well the night before a marathon. Add in jet lag and you have a recipe for a very restless night. The alarm inevitably went off 5 mins after I had already awoken, I shuffled into the main area of our apartment to be greeted cheerily by John holding a mug of tea. I'm not a tea drinker and we had run out of coffee! My intention was to go to the 7-11 over the road to buy some, so threw on my Oakley 20 hoodie which instantly reminded me of my dismal 20-mile tune-up race.

Disaster struck, they had no coffee pods that would fit the machine in our apartment, and I wasn't changing the pumpkin spice coffee a few hours before the big race (nothing new on race

day!). Luckily there was a 24-hour Dunkin Donuts around the corner: only one drawback, it was a drive thru. Oddly enough the staff didn't look too confused by me standing in line behind a Ford Lincoln, and an Americano was secured and a great accompaniment to the ritual of a pre-race toasted bagel (nothing new on race day!).

This rule was instantly forgotten when John provided me with an electrolyte drink to gulp down on route to the start followed by one of the free nutrition bars provided at the Expo.

John had provided two plans (spreadsheets obviously!!) based on the train times to get the start but given the coffee incident, the second seemed the most likely. We picked up our pre-packed bags and headed to the train station. The platform was lit by the most piercing of moons, we were in good spirits as other runners ventured onto the platform. John even entertained my joke as I took a picture of his head next to the moon.

We got off at the station and headed to the bag drop. There was the inevitable portaloos stop (no detail here but 3 is the magic number). John and I were in different corrals: I had somehow bagged one nearer the front and my bag drop was first. I said I would wait for John by the fountain, the announcer was counting down the time for the closure of the corrals and some 20 minutes went by with no sign of John. I asked a marshal how far away the corrals were, and she advised about 10 minutes so I made the decision to ditch him (sorry John - but he confirmed afterwards he would have done the same) as I didn't fancy joining at the back, the consequence of missing the corral closing time.

As I entered the corral there was an electric atmosphere as the Star-Spangled Banner was being blasted out by a live singer. It is here I started looking around and saw two 3:15 pacers. My far from ideal build up had told me that this seemed a fair enough pace on a good day so I stood there trying to work out who around me I could run with – it always strikes me as odd that I judge people's pace at a start line just by looking at them and usually get it very wrong.

I had bought Maurten gels from the Expo as the SIS ones I had trained with had gone out of date. I'd never tried these before, however they sold them as a marathon bundle together with an instruction of the order to take them. The first was a caffeine gel 5 mins before the start, the rest I had ordered correctly in my gel belt.

The gun went off and I passed the start line a few minutes after. I remembered reading that the first few miles of Chicago are completely blind as the tall buildings interfere with the GPS on your watch, so I tucked in behind a couple of people I had eyed up as about my speed in the start corral and put my watch on HR, my goal was to stay at <150 BPM for as long as possible – I'm not sure why, I had zero scientific reason and it was just a number I picked as I completed the first few hundred meters.

The first 5 miles were pretty uneventful apart from I opened the wrong gel (a second caffeine); when I realised I put it in my pocket and then made the same mistake again with the next gel and found myself now running with two opened gels in my pockets. The wide highways on the course allowed you to get into your own pace quite quickly and I never once felt crowded like most major city races. The crowds were out in the thousands shouting usual Americanisms like "You got this", "Show this

marathon who's boss" and the best sign I saw was 'Find a cute ass and follow it home' right whilst I was running behind a hairy fella in some sort of mankini!

Every mile I was pressing lap to ensure I was accurately tracking the mile I was in. I thought I was running about 3:10 pace but every so often I would hear someone from the crowd saying "there's the 3:15 pacer" so wasn't really sure what pace I was running. I got to ten miles and felt quite good, HR still below 150. I smiled to myself as I remembered my joking advice to John, "Go out hard and hang on" hoping he hadn't taken it too literally. My historical marathon performances have shown it to be a high-risk strategy and inevitably a slow and painful finish.

I sailed through halfway in 1:33 and felt like I could go quicker but didn't want to be too greedy as I've seen and experienced it all go wrong from a sudden boost in confidence at this point. I checked in with myself and everything felt good, HR was slightly above 150 and my confidence was building. I seemed to be passing a lot of people and not just the walkers who had blown up way too early. The miles were flying by, I even managed to run below sub-3-hour pace at times which was encouraging. I passed 20 miles in around 2:20 and at this point I was doing the usual maths in my head to predict the finish time and calculated around 3:08, still expecting a drop off at some stage. I sunk my final caffeine gel and set-off ready for the final 10k.

35km is where I normally experience a dramatic dip off; I laughed to myself as I envisaged the Group 1 WhatsApp chat on fire awaiting my usual crash and burn. Luckily mile 22 came and then 23 and still no drop off, weirdly getting quicker; at this point there was a switchback and you can see mile 24 through some buildings as you are running away from it. At the turnaround a 6-foot+ guy under a flyover was screaming at people to not give up now and to "Chew the tarmac up", this made me smile and I knew it was going to be a good day.

Inevitably, after 3 hours of running my math calculations were getting a little bit fuzzy, however I saw the 800m mark and worked out I had just over 3 mins to get under 3:05, a GFA time for London, not a goal I set out to achieve nor had it crossed my mind until this point. Two laps of the track I thought and never normally in a position to do so at this stage of a marathon I sped up.



I cursed this a decision a few times, firstly I questioned 'why does this even matter?', secondly when the 600m to go sign took ages to appear and thirdly at the 300m point where there is an elevation up and over a bridge. I told myself to suck it up and proceeded to sprint finish to the amazement of the tannoy announcer and crossed the line in 3:04:57 with a negative split.

Not my fastest time but weirdly one of my best ever performances in a marathon. Greeted at the finish line with a fully alcoholic finisher beer (what's not to like about the Chicago marathon?) which I quippy chugged, eagerly awaiting to meet back up with John to find out about his race.

We celebrated in style (for 48 hours before heading home!) and the Harriers colours were seen in many Chicago bars before we finally headed back to change (and go out again). We made a number of new friends along the way, including meeting up the next day with Mark Raddan who had also run the marathon; his stories of his assault on the World Marathon Majors were inspiring and made us even more determined to tick off the others!



Fancy a go in Chicago?
<https://www.chicagomarathon.com>

Long Run Training

Chris Fadden talks about the highs and lows of finally getting a London Marathon ballot place and the training it involved

In 2006 I joined the Harriers beginners' group. At the time I had no thoughts of running any kind of race let alone a marathon. When I ran the Bedford Half at Wootton that December, I had exceeded all expectations and for a while I was happy with that. It was therefore a couple of years before first I entered the London Marathon ballot. Even then the odds of success were around 5 to 1 and inevitably I didn't get in. After several more years of rejection, I lost patience and in 2010 I ran my first marathon, at Abingdon



When I told non-runners of my achievement in that race, they were distinctly underwhelmed. After all, it wasn't 'The Marathon'. So, each year I persisted with my ballot entries, half hoping that I would get in and half hoping that I wouldn't. As the years went by the odds lengthened and I began to accept that the London Marathon wasn't something I'd ever do.

In 2019 the usual magazine arrived: I barely ever read it. Once you've been rejected, a magazine about the London Marathon has little interest! This year was different: "You're in" said the cover. Having read and re-read the headline several times, it finally sunk in! "How fantastic!" "Oh no!"

So, in January of 2020, I began my marathon journey in time honoured fashion. Thankfully I had the support of the wonderful Lazy Gang and we built up the mileage patiently each week. After several weeks, I ran 18 miles and was beginning to feel positive about the race.

each year I persisted with my ballot entries, half hoping that I would get in and half hoping that I wouldn't

As well as being successful in the London Ballot, I'd got a place in the Grizzly, a 20-mile trail race in South Devon. If London is the "must do" Marathon then Grizzly is the "must do" trail race. I decided to do Grizzly as part of my London training not to race but to get miles in my legs.

Standing on the start line in Seaton the talk was not of the bog, the beach run or the climb up the Stairway to Heaven but of the coming storm that was COVID 19. In the days following Grizzly it became increasingly obvious that there would be no more racing for some time and that London surely wouldn't/shouldn't happen until the storm had passed.

The London Marathon organisers were more optimistic than most of us and several announcements were anticipated about a postponed "COVID safe" race. Inevitably though the race was cancelled, and my entry was postponed. I continued to train but I dropped the distances I covered, just ticking over. Eventually the organisers came up with two new dates and I was given the option of October 2021 or April 2022. I plumped for April 2022, not fancying training in the hot weather, but it was decided to postpone the 2022 event to October!

I had unfinished business and that precious ballot place.

I was not running well in the early summer of 2022. Several attempts at increasing my mileage ended in a niggle. I decided instead to join the Couch-to-Sprint group, keeping my running mileage down and enjoying the comradeship of the Triathlon group. Frankly I would have been happy to stick with Triathlon all summer but there was still the nagging feeling in the back of my mind - I had unfinished business and that precious ballot place.

So belatedly I tried again. Time was running out and I wasn't running anywhere near far enough. Thankfully the Lazy Gang returned to the rescue, and I re-joined Cint, Nette, Tony and Juliet for my distance training. Early starts were essential in the exceptionally hot 2022 summer. Somehow, I managed to get my mileage back up to somewhere near acceptable distances. Oakley 20 was a struggle, but I finished it. London here we come!

"I can't believe I am doing this!"

Nothing quite prepares you for the atmosphere at London. I remember running down some rather unremarkable streets near the start all lined with people thinking "I can't believe I am doing this!"

My family had come to support me and I first saw them in Greenwich. It gave me such a boost! As I ran, I saw many other families cheering on their loved ones too and you feed off that as well! Total strangers, but it is so inspiring.

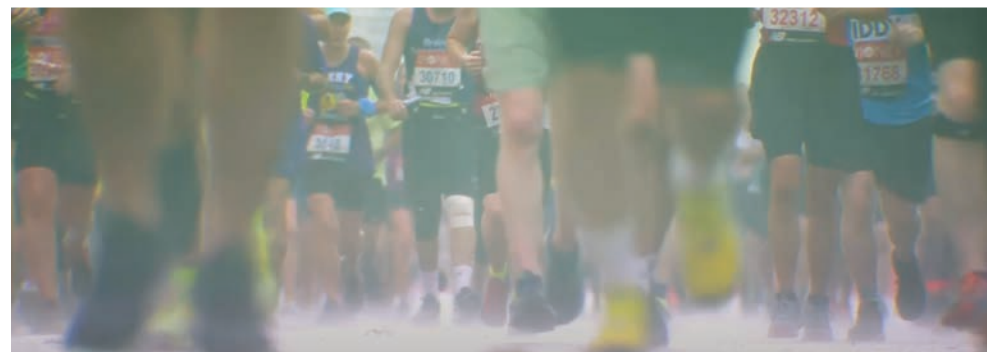
Tower Bridge comes about halfway, along with another "I can't believe I am doing this" moment! At 17 miles I got another now much needed family boost! "It's starting to get tough now. I should have trained more."

They say the race starts at 20 miles, for me it was around mile 22. Cramp set in. "Still," I thought "I'll walk a bit and it should clear" but it didn't. The last few miles seemed to last forever. Cries of "Only a parkrun to go" gave little comfort. The final section of the race takes you past some of the iconic London Landmarks. I wished I had been able to enjoy them more.

They say the race starts at 20 miles, for me it was around mile 22

Finally, The Mall and the finish! I punched the air as I ran across the line. I wasn't walking that section. I'd done it!

A few weeks after the race the Lazy Gang met for a social at the Three Cups. There was an excellent live band and as I walked in they were playing the Doobie Brothers classic 'Long Train Running.' it seemed kind of appropriate ...



The Other Side Of Oakley 20

Richard Lawson gives an insight into the different volunteering opportunities at a Bedford Harriers race

One comment I've heard recently is that people may be put off volunteering at our races because they're not aware of what's involved (other than marshalling, which most people understand!). So, I thought I'd help put that right, by outlining my experience of volunteering at Oakley in September 2022.

As our normal race timers weren't available, I was asked if I would take on the role and, reluctantly, I agreed. It was pretty stressful; whilst I'm quite good with computers, I'm not so good with hardware and the race software is not the most user friendly! However, I had plenty of time to practice at home and by the Thursday before the race I'd managed a successful race simulation (I won! - covering the 20 miles in under 10 minutes!!!). It was still nerve-wracking on the day, particularly when the reader completely refused to connect to my laptop an hour before the start (yes I did turn it off and back on again!). So, I gave up for a bit, walked back to Race HQ to use the facilities, and then it worked first time when I got back! I was nonetheless very relieved when the start was accompanied by a cacophony of beeps and the screen filled up with lines of data!

But timing wasn't my only role that weekend. It started on the Thursday, when Elaine and I went to BIAS to start sorting the lock-up - selecting which signs we needed, putting them into a logical order (which of course went wrong during set-up when someone who shall remain nameless ignored the labels, mixed up the signs and took a load from the wrong pile ...) and putting together the kits for the water stations. We didn't quite get time to finish it, so we were back on the Friday to finish off.

No special skills required, just the ability to move water bottles and other (mostly) not particularly heavy items.

early ...). After a quick refuelling stop at the cafe, we were back at BIAS helping to load the vans. No special skills required, just the ability to move water bottles and other (mostly) not particularly heavy items. Then it was off to Oakley to reverse the process and start helping to set up Race HQ. Then possibly the most fun job of the weekend: walking along the verge of the A6 putting up car park signage. The only skill required was a little initiative, working out which signposts would be useful - but luckily there weren't that many to choose from, although that didn't stop me nearly knocking myself out on one of them! Then back to Race HQ for more set-up work. Finally, home for dinner.

Sunday again started quite early, although not as early as the previous day. We were at the start by 8 am so I could set up the timing equipment (whilst Elaine went off in the big van to deliver supplies to the water stations). After the start, I had to pack everything back up (except the gazebo) and wait for a van to transport the equipment to the finish line. When I arrived back at Race HQ I was a little



disturbed to find that we still needed to set up a gazebo and the finish gantry before I could set up the timing equipment for the finish; unfortunately there wasn't anyone around with recent experience of setting up the gantry so it took somewhat longer than it probably should have. I was getting a little nervous, but I needn't have worried - I still had plenty of time and the timing equipment was in place well before the first runner appeared. Things then went smoothly for the next couple of hours - plenty of time for me to get a drink and a roll and print out results sheets every so often (including the list of winners for Jutta to hand out trophies). I was a little worried when both readers started emitting a "low battery" warning, but Steve Crane assured me they'd be fine - and they were.

Once we'd gone comfortably past the 4-hour cut-off, it was time to start dismantling everything. I left the timing equipment in place as long as possible whilst we dismantled around it, but eventually I had to turn it off and pack it away. Finally, everything was loaded into the vans and we could head off back to BIAS to unload; we knew we were under time pressure as BIAS closed at 5:30 pm. We finished with seconds to spare. Then it was time to go home - but I wasn't quite finished, I still had to upload the results data into a spreadsheet to send to Steve for uploading to the website, then into a different spreadsheet for sending text messages out. Ideally this would have been done earlier, but this wasn't feasible due to the lack of internet connection at Race HQ and the time pressure to get packed up. By about 7pm I had finally finished and we could settle down with a beer (or two)!



Marathons

As you may be aware, Chris Leigh is a rather seasoned marathon runner, having run 52 marathons in 2022. We asked him what advice he had for marathon training, and also, we wondered how much did 52 marathons actually cost? In this first article, Chris Leigh explains how he has used Yasso sessions in his training. He also shares some advice on how to keep costs low.

Yasso 800s

Much of marathon training is focussed on building endurance and aerobic capacity through longer, slower paced runs. The need for running these long runs at a slower pace is well documented; it develops the biological changes needed to ensure that you as a runner have the capacity to run for 26.2 miles.

But how do you know what your target marathon pace is? Getting it wrong at the start of a marathon can be disastrous. For every second per mile too fast you run at the start of the race, you are likely to be running at least 8-10 seconds per mile slower in the final few miles. If staying at or just below your target



Running Marathons on a budget

Chris Leigh gives us some tips on how to keep the costs of running marathons down, advice that we can use for other distances too!

marathon pace in the first 5-6 miles is so critical to a successful marathon, how do you know what that target pace is? You can't exactly run a practice marathon to find out! You will be completing progressively longer training runs and some of those can incorporate segments run closer to your target pace. But what is that target pace? Running a shorter race can be used to predict your marathon finish time but running any race adds to the risk of injury and also extended recovery time. The latter can be a real issue when you are following a marathon training schedule. Predicting a marathon time from a half marathon, for example, is possible but fraught with errors.

This is where the Yasso 800s training session can feature. Developed by Bart Yasso, a renowned runner from the US and Chief Running Officer for Runners World, the session progressively builds up a series of 800m efforts that can be used to predict a marathon finish time.

How do you run Yasso 800s?

Ideally you run each 800m effort on a running track, but you can equally do them on a section of tarmac/pathway that you have measured. You run the 800m and then jog out a recovery equal to the same length of time it took you to run the 800m. So, if you took 3 mins 48 secs to run the 800m, take a slow recovery run for 3 mins 48 secs. You then repeat this for your second, third etc 800m effort. For your first session, aim to complete 6 x 800m efforts. About 2-3 weeks later, repeat the session but run 8 x 800m with recoveries of a similar length of time as the efforts. Finally, 2-3 weeks later, complete a set of 10 x 800m with slow run recoveries of a similar length of time to the efforts. In this final session you are likely to cover a total distance of approximately 7-8 miles. For each of these sessions you are trying to run each 800m consistently i.e., fluctuations of no more than a few seconds per 800m.

Now the magic! Calculate the average time for each of your 800m efforts in minutes and seconds. This will be your target marathon in hours and minutes. From this you can calculate your target marathon pace.

Here's an example. I ran the Abingdon marathon on 23/10/2022. I built in the following 800m sessions into my training schedule:

- 6 x 800m on 3/8/2022 - I ran 4:24, 4:21, 4:27, 4:27, 4:25, 4:23 on 3/8/2022. Average of 4:25 per 800m.
- 8 x 800m on 31/8/2022 - I ran 4:22, 4:23, 4:21, 4:19, 4:19, 4:21, 4:17, 4:23 on 31/8/2022. Average of 4:21 per 800m.
- 10 x 800m on 28/9/2022 - I ran 4:23, 4:25, 4:18, 4:19, 4:18, 4:21, 4:22, 4:21, 4:22, 4:18 on 28/9/2022. Average of 4:21 per 800m.

So, a 4 mins 21 seconds 800m effort indicates a target marathon of 4 hours 21 mins or an average pace of 9:58 mins/mile. What did I run the Abingdon marathon in? 4 hours 19 mins 1 second.

There is one very big proviso to this and that is the Yasso sessions are just a part of your training programme

been able to get within 2-3% of in the actual race. There is one very big proviso to this and that is the Yasso sessions are just a part of your training programme and can't possibly replace doing the long, slower runs. A very helpful byproduct of the earlier Yasso sessions (6x and 8x 800m) is that they give you an early indicator of your likely marathon pace and that can be woven into your longer training runs as you get nearer to race day. Add segments at marathon pace, for example, a 17-mile training run 6 weeks before race day can be run as 5 miles at your slow training pace, followed by 8 miles at target marathon pace and the remainder at your slow training pace. Alternatively run it as 9 miles at your slow training pace with the final 8 miles at your target marathon pace based on the results of your Yasso 800s. A few training sessions like this with increasing portions at target marathon pace will help you develop a better sense of what your pace should be and what it should feel like on race day. The key input is the results coming out of your Yasso 800m sessions.

Enjoy the sessions and good luck smashing your next marathon!

I have used the Yasso 800m training sessions in all my road marathon training since 2006 and they have consistently produced an indicative marathon time that I have

On 15 October 2022 I completed my 100th marathon, and on 1 December 2022 I completed my 52nd marathon of 2022. What I know for sure is that the first 50 marathons cost me considerably less than the second 50 and that wasn't just about entry fee price inflation!

Why was that?

Well, of my first 50 marathons, 36 were self-navigation trail marathons hosted by the Long Distance Walkers Association (LDWA). But you are a runner not a walker! Yes! But the LDWA have developed a large programme of Challenge Events that cover routes between 13 miles and 50k. Many of them are based around a 26.2- or 27-mile route and cater for an increasing number of runners. When I ran my first LDWA event in 2005 I was surrounded by 3-4 times more walkers. Now, these events see more runners than walkers. Becoming a member of the LDWA costs £18 for the year and their Challenge Events cost only £8-£12 for their members. With this you get food and drink during the event and a meal and finishers certificate at the end. Ok, so there is no shiny medal but that is one way in which costs are kept down. The routes are off road and absolutely beautiful. It's a fantastic way to explore the UK countryside.



you get food and drink during the event and a meal and finishers certificate at the end. Ok, so there is no shiny medal

But if self-navigation trail marathons are not your thing, what other ways are there to keep the cost of your marathon journey down?

- Commonly, entry prices for road marathon events are between £40 and £50. Trail marathon events are usually a little cheaper, between £33 and £45.
- The actual entry prices are often dictated by what finishers receive – medal only, medal plus t-shirt, t-shirt only – so if cost is an issue, look for ones with minimal “bling” or that give you a choice of a reduced entry fee if you don't want the bling.
- If you can be flexible about when you run, some organisations have cheaper events during the week or on Fridays – a lot of the races I did this year were on Thursdays or Fridays.
- You can often save a couple of pounds by being a UKA affiliated member so if you're entering enough races to cover the EA fee you can save money overall.
- Many of the marathons I ran in 2022 were with organisations that offered discounts, for example a free race entry for every 5 or 10 races you complete with them.
- “Lap” races (e.g. 8x5.3km laps) may be cheaper as the organisers' costs are lower.

The Chateaux du Medoc Marathon

Caroline Devine describes her birthday treat of drinking wine on the run



This marathon had always been on my bucket list, so what better opportunity than to throw it out there just in case (or in the hope that ...) anyone else would be mad enough to join me. As if by fate, the date of the marathon was on my birthday - so that had to be an omen! When the subject of the big 60 came up in conversation at Holkham 2021, I was humbled when Rebecca Baxter, Mourad Ben Taieb, Stuart Snelson, Helen Woolley and Shane Fereday agreed immediately (I wasn't twisting their arms behind their backs - honestly). Little did we know of the obstacles we would encounter prior to the actual event, which seemed more daunting than the actual marathon!

Task 1 - choice of fancy dress

At the end of a night out having a final nightcap - the hour was late so rash decisions were made! Stuart became preoccupied with our running attire and the fact that it had to represent something typically British. He announced, after a few suggestions (Robin Hood!) that we were going to be the Spice Girls - we all think he has a penchant for high-heels! Stuart was given the job of sourcing costumes, which resulted in 6 ginger splices!

Task 2 - accommodation

We were going to go to France to celebrate my birthday and that was that; we could worry about the marathon at a later date. Andy where are you? (He's brilliant at navigating booking.com!). We needed to be on the correct side of the estuary for the quickest route to Pauillac, phew Le Manoir Lacustre - perfect. What we didn't realise at this stage was that Helen and Stuart were a couple, so we needn't have worried about the single room criteria!

Task 3- registration

My job was to enter us for the marathon - sounds simple, but I hate to say it - the date was vague (registration will open in March!) so I had to keep checking the website Yippee - registration was finally open - of course, standard entries were sold out. The only package available was one which included a 10km walk around the vineyards the day after the marathon - a reward for our long-suffering support team?

Task 4 - group name

This was a no brainer - SPICE!

Task 5 - completion of a medical form

This is a compulsory requirement for entering races in France. What a saga this became, with the majority of us being refused by our respective GPs. My GP announced that I had a heart murmur so wouldn't sign - understandably. Upon further investigation it turned out that my heart was perfectly healthy - thank you to the cardiologist for reassurance and of course for signing my form.

Task 6 - of course, training!

Well, the usual happened, an injury at the start of training. The dreaded words - take time off from running - lingered in the air. Whilst the group were increasing their mileage, I was adhering to the run/walk mantra in the hope that I would eventually be able to run with the group. It's called patience, and it paid off!

Eventually we were marathon ready when Shane discovered that there were going to be 23 wine stops along the route. At that point our plan of action started to crack. Were we going for a time? Were we going to miss out some of the stops? Hell no - we were going to stop at every one, sample the wine and nutrition available (not a gel in sight - oysters, croissants, chips, steak, to name but a few) and make sure it was an event to remember! The big question was 'would we ever reach the finish line?'; however, once we found out that the cut off time was six and half hours we felt hopeful.

Task 7 - travel to France (disaster strikes!)

Mark and I set off in our camper van on 29th August, so we could have a relaxing drive and a pre-marathon holiday. Mission accomplished. 8th September we met up with Rebecca and Andy for a leisurely lunch, followed by a food shop. At this point disaster struck - the easyjet flight from Gatwick to Bordeaux had been cancelled! My marathon mates were told the news on arrival at the airport - I started panicking on their behalf! Not Helen - with her travelling expertise, she took charge of the situation and soon after we received a photograph of the gang in a taxi, drinking wine, going to Bristol for the night to catch the flight the next day.

After arriving at Le Manoir Lacustre we found out that Queen Elizabeth had died. We would receive commiserations throughout the marathon from runners from around the world, and of course our outfits were very apt!



Marathon day - 10th September 2022

It wasn't long before I realised that I could not keep my significant age a secret. Rebecca had grabbed a bagpiper and persuaded him to play happy birthday - the other giveaway was that I was wearing the compulsory birthday badge! At last, we were on the start line, along with 8,000 other runners. The atmosphere was electrifying - aeroplanes signalled the start was approaching with a breath-taking display. Acrobats hung from hoops, Spider-Man attempted to escape from a window ... so many people all in fancy dress and full of anticipation for what lay ahead.



If I can describe the event, it was one of camaraderie, running from vineyard to vineyard, with beautiful chateaux and exceptional entertainment. Of course, I must mention le vin, which in my opinion, seemed to improve the more we sampled! My funniest memories are losing Mourad, who was waiting for and then eating freshly cooked chips, running past a 50th birthday balloon and waving my birthday badge with gusto at the poor man, running behind a couple of borats in their mankinis (for quite a while ... they were very good pacers!) and forcing Rebecca to eat oysters. NB - size 2 oysters are highly recommended!

So as the kilometres passed the temperature continued to rise and as you can imagine, wearing a wig wasn't the ideal chapeau. Mine had morphed into a guinea pig in between photo shoots and I was getting quite bolshy about putting the b.... thing back on! (Wigs went in the bin at the end).

Now isn't it amazing how an ice cream can put a spring in your step - just what we needed as we were desperate for the finish line. It tasted like nectar, and I would thoroughly recommend having them at all marathons around mile 24!



Finish line - a rose for the ladies and a superb goodie bag containing a bottle of wine (if we hadn't had enough already!). No tee-shirt you may ask? So, due to a technical hitch they had to be posted out. They arrived just after Christmas!!!

To end my report, I would like to thank Rebecca, Helen, Stuart, Shane and Mourad for their enthusiasm in wanting to celebrate with me - it was tough, but in a perverse way, we had so much fun and some great memories. I mustn't forget our support team who probably completed a marathon themselves when trying to find opportunities to see us enroute. Unfortunately, there were no refreshments for them, they too had to endure the ever-increasing heat in order to meet us, and of course drive us back! I don't know who got the better deal - do you?!



Swimming and circuits coach Simon Fisher gives his personal insight into the importance of strength and conditioning training

Strength & Conditioning

I'm a runner so I must be fit, right? Well, yes, to a degree - but would you like to improve your running and simply improve the enjoyment of day-to-day life? In that case, introducing strength and conditioning (S&C) into your routine could make a real difference over time. The swimming Harriers will have heard me encouraging them to add it into their training schedules and no doubt many of you are already squatting, pressing, pulling, lunging etc. Maybe even doing some mobility work.

I am an enthusiast and advocate for this type of supplementary training and although not a qualified S & C coach thought that the following might be of interest to some Harriers.

How does S&C benefit my running?

- Improving form and economy can make running sessions or races easier. or a least better.
- Stronger and better conditioned muscles enable more running power and balance.
- Strengthening connective tissue (ligaments and tendons) can reduce injury risk. Strength = resilience = reduced injury risk.

Just as important for those of us past the halcyon days of our youth (i.e., over 30) is muscular atrophy or, more simply, the loss of muscle mass as we age. Resistance or weight training can offset this, so if you want to continue lifting (grand)children, carrying luggage, putting heavy stuff in higher cupboards etc. then improve those muscles!

There are a number of options for S&C training, too big a subject to cover in detail here. So here are a few pointers and, of course, there is a wealth of stuff on the internet to explore and maybe try out.

How much should I do? My preference is to keep it easy, so little and often at home rather than big gym sessions. Weekly options could include 2 x 30 minute sessions or 6 x 10 minute efforts. One or two of these could be before runs to activate muscles, or afterwards when you're nicely warmed up. I have a set of 1 exercises for mobility and conditioning - just the job for after some runs. I'm a fan of micro workouts - super time efficient. How about a wall sit while waiting for the kettle to boil, standing on one leg while brushing your teeth, or keep standing when putting socks and shoes on? Be creative!

The key for progress is consistency over time; while winter is a great time for S&C, it's worth keeping it ticking over year-round.

What should I do? S&C has a wide range of benefits, but as runners, a focus on calves, hamstrings, glutes and core makes sense. The posterior chain! Upper back strength can help maintain great posture.

As a runner, suitable starting exercises would include: squats; lunges - forwards, backwards and to each side; glute bridges - move feet further away to work the hamstrings; single leg (Romanian) deadlifts; planking including both sides; and superman.

How difficult? As with most new skills, it's better to keep it simple to start with and do a few things well before progressing further. Good technique is super important and worth checking out before getting going. If you're willing to pay, there are plenty of S&C coaches around, but Harriers circuits

coaches should be able to offer some pointers and there is a load of information on the internet. Have a look at a few sites to get a feel for which might provide more reliable and higher quality information.

As you progress, add reps, weight or alter exercises to make them more challenging e.g., elbow plank to high plank or two legged to single legged glute bridges.

Anything else? A bit of equipment can give variation and interest to home workouts but need not be complicated. Options include: resistance bands (great for taking anywhere); dumbbells and kettlebells (different weights can be helpful). However, there are many bodyweight exercises that can be explored first. A good mat is worthwhile as well.

Make sure to maintain good posture when doing S&C work and keep breathing strong and positive. Finally, don't forget to warm up as needed and keep going with some simple stretches and / or mobility work. The latter is worth a piece on its own - maybe one for a future edition!

We Need You

Help with the
welcome committee

How was your first night with Bedford Harriers? Do you remember?

There was a time when, after a lengthy warm up, we would all just wander round the sports hall asking, "What are you doing tonight?" Eventually we would all find someone to run with and then head off. Great for those of us who had been around a while, but daunting for anyone on their first outing with us.

Fast forward to now and I would hope that newbies have a different experience. This is down to a great group of people on the "Welcome Committee". Over the years we have had some wonderful volunteers on "front of house" and I thank them.

I personally think that the more professional front we show to a new runner, the more confident and happier they will be. Many new runners arrive already knowing who they will run with, others need some help but already race and understand the principles of group running. Some have only ever run alone and never raced, so need a bit of help deciding.

About the job

You need to ask the new runner what they have done before - this is the most important question if they are new to group running and do not know who to go with. Ask them how long they can run for without stopping, this is a great way to determine which group they can join in with. Next, look at the schedules on teamup and see who is doing a session that seems suitable from the information you have just gained from the newbie.

Always start them off erring on the side of caution, unless they know exactly which group they are hoping for. Explain how easy it is to move through the groups. Let them know they will be looked after and not left behind.

Next, find one of the coaches in the group they want to go with and introduce them to one another. Yes, there is some paperwork, but you can be trained in that in just 10 minutes and shadow someone already in the job.

Ready? Just email hello@bedfordharriers.co.uk to say that you would love to join the Welcome Committee team. We try to keep it to just one session per month "on duty", so the more helpers the merrier.

Jacinta Horne

Ullswater Chillswim

Elaine Massie braved the dark lake to swim 7.5 miles end-to-end of Ullswater

Ullswater Chillswim 2022 was not the race I had planned! My training went well; we spent a lot of time swimming at Box End Park - A LOT of time and money! In fact, the Cable Café staff knew our order before we got to the front of the queue!

Race day arrived and we couldn't have hoped for better conditions - Ullswater was pancake flat as we drove to Race HQ. I got into my wetsuit, checked that my tow float had all my supplies in and boarded the shuttle bus to the start. I checked in, got my hat, goggles etc on and was ready to go. A final briefing, a little sing song to Toni Basil's Mickey and we were off. I think the first 10 metres went well, I waded in, smiled at the photographer and started to swim.

The first issue was leaky goggles, I got them sorted and launched very briefly into front crawl, a slight problem transpired - I couldn't breathe out under water, there was definitely no bubble-bubble-breath going on! So, for about 10 minutes I did a mix of heads-up breaststroke, heads down breaststroke and front crawl until I got my breathing sorted. I was pretty much on my own - in the distance was my wave - a mass of purple hats swimming away from me, with the odd couple of swimmers between me and the group, I daren't look behind because if I was the last purple hat I may have cried! Once I had sorted my breathing, I got a reasonable rhythm going and overtook one purple hat, then another and then another, but I was never going to catch the main group in my wave, then before the first feed station the green hats started to overtake me. I had hoped to get a little further before being caught by green hats!



I missed the first half-mile marker but wasn't worried as I remembered I had missed a lot of them at Coniston last year, but the 1-mile marker didn't seem to appear, my Garmin had buzzed twice telling me I had swum (the equivalent of) 2 laps of Box End Cable Lake and 1-mile was in the bag, but it was really hard going, I really hadn't got into my stride. The next thing I knew I was swimming up to the first feed station which I thought was at 1.5 miles (and then every mile thereafter) but very disappointingly I was at the 1-mile marker! My Garmin was telling me I had swum a mile-and-a-half and it had taken me 1:09 hours, the time was about right for a mile and a half but extremely slow for a mile. I checked the distance with the lady at the feed station, she confirmed it was definitely the 1-mile marker! Weirdly at that point, Richard swam up next to me, he was a green hat and he confirmed that his Garmin was reading a mile-and-a-half too but sadly he'd already had cramp, which wasn't great news. I had a drink, some jelly babies and started swimming again once I'd eaten the sweets and wished Richard good luck.

Shortly after leaving the feed station, I passed my first light blue hat - someone from the wave before

mine. I'm not going to lie, it was a boost, they had set off either 15 or 30 minutes (either wave 1B or 1A) before me! I was starting to feel better!

I'm not sure my chimp ever really emerged in his usual guise (there was never a voice telling me to quit or that I would fail etc, which I often get when running), but the distance marker really messed with my head. If it was right, I was swimming really slowly and it really was feeling hard, but there was no wind! The conditions were perfect, I knew my training was good, but over an hour for a mile! Really? When you're alone and have all this negativity going round your head, it isn't good!

It didn't get any easier! By the third feed station - mile 3 apparently - my Garmin was reading 3.75 miles, other swimmers were complaining about the mile markers! A dark blue hat (2 waves behind me) said his Garmin was reading 3.85 miles!

I was mentally broken and wasn't feeling great physically!

swimming was really hard work. By the 4-mile marker my Garmin was reading over 5 miles and I was mentally broken and wasn't feeling great physically! I overtook some more light blues and 2 purples and had a green hat in my peripheral vision for a while, but he kept stopping and eventually dropped back. It was a lonely swim, I was alone in this massive lake and just wanted to cry

Somewhere between mile 4 and 5 I was picked up by a safety kayaker, I now had my own safety boat as there were so few swimmers around. I was definitely towards the back, but he reassured me I wasn't last!

My shoulders were so sore by now, every stroke hurt. I asked my kayak escort if he'd paddle behind me and keep me on course so I could do some backstroke, this helped so much. I felt like I was swimming faster, my legs were doing more work and my shoulders weren't hurting as much. So many emotions were going through my head, I had trained so hard, I was physically able to do this, the conditions were great, I was mentally strong and could do it, I've never quit before - now is not the time to start, how good it would feel if I could just have a good cry, there was no way I was going to make the cut-off etc.

I was swimming up to the mile 5 feed station and had decided to quit! I felt pretty miserable about it, but I also felt physically and mentally exhausted! I took my drink and sweets and asked the time, it was 3:10pm - I had been swimming for over 6 hours! What time is the cut-off I asked, thinking it was 4pm (and they'd suggest I stopped there) - 4:30 was the answer! I had 1 hour 20 minutes to swim 2 and a half miles! That was never going to happen even if I miraculously swam the fastest I've ever swum! I was just about to ask if this was a designated 'Get Out Point' when the 3 guys on the feed station and my kayaker told me to get swimming! So I did! I swam away thinking, "Well, it looks like I'm swimming and not quitting!" In hindsight, I would have hated myself for quitting!

So I did! I swam away thinking, "Well, it looks like I'm swimming and not quitting!" In hindsight, I would have hated myself for quitting!

and just kept swimming! Strangely Dory didn't come to mind at any point in my swim, which is a shame as writing this I realise a bit of Finding Nemo may have helped my mental state!

Just before the 6-mile marker my kayaker stopped me. He had had a radio message to tell me I had 2 options, to carry on swimming and see how far I got and get cut-off, or get picked up by a boat, fast-tracked to the 7-mile marker and dropped in to swim the last half mile to the finish! I knew I

Mile 4 was long; I mean really long! I thought I was coming up to the 4-mile marker but there was no feed station and I realised it was the 3.5-mile buoy! My arms and shoulders were hurting and



how good it would feel if I could just have a good cry

I did a combination of backstroke and front crawl and just kept going. I passed the 5-and-a-half-mile marker

wasn't going to finish in the time limit, it was gone 4pm! I went for option 2 - a boat ride was always going to be better than a minibus drive! I waited for the boat who was picking someone else up, I was unceremoniously hauled into the boat and handed a bottle of water and a cereal bar. Another boat

I was unceremoniously hauled into the boat and handed a bottle of water and a cereal bar.

came along side to drop off another swimmer. I realised I was sharing the boat with 2 green hatted men who had found it as hard as I did - another little boost as they had both been picked up behind me and were technically faster than me. Interestingly all 3 of us had swum Coniston in 2021 and found it easier!

The trip to mile 7 was quick but somewhat demoralising, firstly, it was quite a distance before we saw more swimmers (it could be that some had also been picked up), secondly, we started to overtake swimmers, so it felt really bad being dropped off ahead of them! Back in the water I realised my left shoulder had seized up on the boat and swimming was even more painful and slower. I had a welcome break to let the steamer pass and then I was heading for the finish duck! That last half mile took forever!

I got to the end, was helped up and out of the water, tried to smile for the photographer, saw Richard and finally managed to cry! I was so disappointed I hadn't completed it under my own steam! I took the medal: while part of me thinks I earned it, another part of me thinks I definitely didn't! It was without a doubt the hardest and loneliest race to date!

I've often wondered why people write race reports when it doesn't go to plan, now I realise why - it helps to unpick what happened and to try and make sense of it and come to terms with the failure! This report definitely helped!

While the race didn't go to plan, I can look back on the journey from entering it to emerging from the Dark Lake and there are so many positives, I swam the furthest and longest I've ever swum. I don't know many people who can swim that far/long, I had a lot of fun and great sense of achievement training for it Will I ever swim Ullswater? Maybe, but not in 2023 - Wales beckons!



It was without a doubt the hardest and loneliest race to date!

I did learn a few things (in no particular order):

- You shouldn't look at your Garmin on a long swim
- You can't cry whilst swimming
- 7:13:40 is a very long time to swim almost continuously...
- My determination to succeed isn't always enough
- I really don't swim fast enough for endurance swims
- Jelly babies aren't enough to fuel you for 7+ hours...
- You can do backstroke in a lake as long as someone keeps you on course - I probably did close to a mile of backstroke all together
- Ullswater has a weird current!
- I really don't know how to quit when I probably should
- I understand why Ullswater is known as the Dark Lake!



Fancy a go? <https://chillswim.com>

Keep on Running

Suet Lua's journey of overcoming being told not to run any more

For anyone who has been running most their lives, it would come as a big shock if suddenly you cannot run due to a major heart/lung problem. This is an account of my personal experience of having an abnormal heart rhythm which could well have ended my love of sports in particular running. Fortunately, I received the right treatment, which gave me a second chance to run and play sports again.

During the height of the pandemic in 2020, on two occasions I felt a pounding heartbeat after a short run. This became continuous one morning and a subsequent ECG showed an abnormal heart rhythm called atrial flutter - some call it the 'runner's curse'.

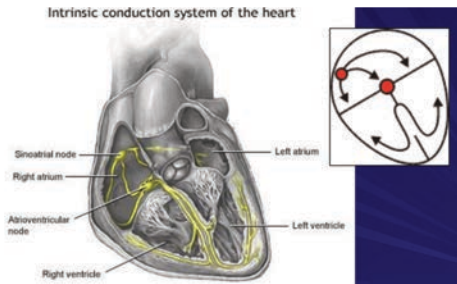
some call it the 'runner's curse'

Normally, electrical impulses travel along a pathway and make the upper chambers (atria) and lower chambers (ventricles) of the heart work together to pump blood around the body. Atrial flutter is when a short circuit occurs in the atria causing the atria to beat much faster, up to 300 beats/min regularly (instead of the usual 60-100). The ventricles are unable to pump as fast as the atria and eventually the atria and the ventricles are working at different speeds. If untreated, heart failure can occur.

Atrial flutter is fast and regular. I also developed atrial fibrillation, which is where the atria beat very fast but irregularly.

With a background of working as a medical doctor for 34 years in the NHS, atrial flutter and atrial fibrillation are conditions that I deal with regularly. But these happen only to my patients, not me, so I thought! I was now on the receiving end of patient care! Up to that point, I had not appreciated how life limiting shortness of breath is, even after light exertion. Unable to run, I found myself walking for miles to remain sane.

Unable to run, I found myself walking for miles to remain sane



I was taken to Papworth Hospital amid the pandemic in 2020. Most procedures were delayed, and this was before vaccination was available. Atrial flutter and atrial fibrillation can be treated with medication (beta blockers to slow the heart rate down and blood thinning tablets to stop blood clot formation, which can lead to strokes), cardiac ablation and in some cases of atrial fibrillation, cardioversion is performed.

Initially, I was prescribed the medication route, but this resulted in me being severely unwell with a heart rate down to 30 beats/min. I was therefore eligible for cardiac ablation, performed only at cardiac specialist centres. Cardiac ablation is performed by either heat (radiofrequency) or by freezing (cryoablation). These procedures block the abnormal electrical pathway in the heart muscle by creating scar tissue in the areas that trigger off the abnormal heart rhythm. I initially had the ablation to my left atrium, but this did not work. The origin of the short circuit makes a difference to the ablation treatment. For atrial flutter, this is usually the right atrium whilst in atrial fibrillation this is in the left atrium.

As I was not prepared to accept the outcome of my first treatment, I persisted with the NHS and after 3 months, I had a second ablation, this time to my right atrium. The origin of my problem was in the right atrium with atrial flutter. Two weeks after my second ablation, I was able to run again without having to take any medication. I have never been a fast runner and never will be. However, just being able to run is priceless.

I hope this article will be of interest to others who have been through a similar experience. Having the knowledge and persistence to ask for the correct treatment in any medical condition is what made the difference between being able to run again or not. We should not take our health and running for granted; **we need to take care of our health and keep on running.**

40 Years Of Motivation

Bob Wells shares his secrets of how to keep running for 4 decades!



The question that comes to me with increasing frequency while running, especially towards the end of long races, is "Why the hell am I doing this?!"

After the recent Florence Marathon (3:44, my PW), I came up with four answers: -

1. The Everest excuse: 'because it is there!'
2. 'It is a privilege to run in such a spectacular and historic city'.
3. 'It is great to be physically active with a group of like-minded friends'
4. The familiar head-banging promise that 'you will feel good when you finish'.

This exercise prompted me to attempt to record how my motivation to run has changed over the years, with the hope that others are encouraged to overcome the doldrums in their running careers.

In my early years I was a fanatical cyclist (track to 24-hour TT, crits to stage races) but the top performances by British middle-distance runners, Bedford (the man), Coe, Ovett, Cram etc, were inspirational to most of us who participated in competitive sports.

It was Chris Brasher's writing in the Observer about running, in particular, an article about the great(est) Lakeland Fell Runner Joss Naylor that really drew my interest in the sport. Brasher himself was a world-class runner and his articles were passionate and knowledgeable. He had paced the first two laps of Bannister's sub-4-minute mile on the Oxford University cinder track in Iffley Road and was an Olympic steeplechase champion. In 1981 he organised (what was claimed to be) the first London Marathon and I was excited by the possibility of taking part in such a mass participation event.

I entered the ballot for the 1982 London Marathon, but as was to happen repeatedly until the introduction of "Good for Age", I did not get in. However, I entered a new marathon event in nearby Abingdon and subsequently bought my first pair of running shoes. Even the simple fact that I was the owner of specialist equipment provided inspiration to get involved in the sport. Perhaps this was something I inherited from cycling.

I had a good race (2:54) at Abingdon which gave me a sense of achievement and self-satisfaction,

but I had “done” my marathon and my main interest remained in cycling. Running was largely a peripheral activity during the winter months to maintain some fitness. A group of colleagues from work used to go to the famous Iffley Road venue to run. It would be fair to say that my main inspiration for this was the lively fluid replacement sessions in the pub that followed our exertions.

Inevitably the pub banter provoked a sense of competition, which was satisfied by entry as “unattached” in local events like the appropriately named Motivation Series and the Reading Half. Soon the pub group (these days known as Oxford University Club Harriers [OUCH]) were recording and comparing PBs. Most Harriers will appreciate the pleasure and stimulus that improved performances can bring.

the pleasure and stimulus that improved performances can bring

To mark my 50th birthday I thought it would be interesting to see how age, beer and family had degraded my marathon time and rashly entered my second attempt at the distance, 14 years after my first. I was not surprised to be crippled by cramp after about 20 miles as I had not done any long runs in training, but, in these circumstances, I was delighted with my time (3:11) and this sowed the idea of doing some decent training and getting back under 3 hours. This was the first, and possibly the only, time I trained with a clear target in mind. It worked! (Abingdon Marathon 1998 - 2:53).

When I went to work in Manchester in 2001, I joined a small but enthusiastic group of lunchtime veteran runners who had very impressive palmares (sub 2:20 marathons). Most had spent their early years training with Ron Hill (“don’t cut corners”). Their advice and encouragement were fantastic and I recorded all my current PBs largely thanks to them.

What has motivated me in the two decades since I was able to PB? At Cranfield I met up with Richard Hales, who had been a close friend in our student days, and he introduced me to Bedford Harriers. I received a very warm welcome and really enjoyed the company and banter on training nights. Anno Domini may have inhibited more PBs, but I found the Club’s Best Times and WAVA ratings gave me the incentive I needed. The ever-smiling Iva Barr and the Cheeky Girls showed me that you could disregard the clock and still enjoy running. The Harriers also introduced me to two of my favourite events – the Round Norfolk Relay and the Colworth Marathon – which I try to get to every year.



Some of the prizes I won in France



One that I didn't

After my Cranfield days I had three years working, cycling and running in south-west France. This was a different but very enjoyable experience. Once the problem of proving I was medically certified fit to compete was resolved, I found running in France to be great fun. Although I was awarded a lot of age group prizes (often small tacky trophies), by far the greatest rewards came from the associated gastronomy and socialising. Much wine was involved – it was not unusual for the fastest male and female to win their own body weight in the local grape product which created a lot of fun and perhaps a little cheating with the scales.

In retirement I moved to Northumberland and joined Morpeth Harriers, a long-established club with a distinguished pedigree and excellent facilities (including their own clubhouse). Although the Club boasted three members in London Olympic finals, it clearly did not cater only for elite athletes. However, their emphasis seemed to me to be more on performance than enjoyment. Also, unlike my time in Manchester, I did not notice any benefit from training with faster runners. Then a physio

gently suggested it was time for me to stop running marathons!

By the time we moved to Joss Naylor’s county I was doing very little running. The main athletic interest around Kendal is very definitely fell running. My experience of anything like this is rather limited. I took to fell walking and “did” all the 214 Wainwrights (36 x slower than Joss’s pioneering week). I did almost no running at all.

I read about an attempt to start a parkrun at Fell Foot (at the south end of Lake Windermere) which I thought I would give a try. Parkruns had arrived in Bedford whilst I was in France, and when I was in Morpeth the nearest event involved a trip into Newcastle, so I had never registered or downloaded a bar-code. Eight years and more than 265 x 5km on, I have to credit parkrun for keeping me running. I am motivated by the regular activity in friendly company (just as I did with the Harriers training sessions), feel some obligation to the volunteers to turn out in poor weather (not unknown in the Lakes), and relish the all-inclusive participation which is so different to early cycling days. This is particularly reassuring as

have to credit parkrun for keeping me running

advancing age pushes me over the performance cliff. Thanks again to WAVA and age-related course records for providing further incentives.

The fitness and enthusiasm generated by parkrun has encouraged me to enter many other events and helped me overcome the seemingly inevitable periods of injury by volunteering and chatting to like-minded individuals.

I hope my experiences will help others to find that there are very many sources of inspiration to go running long after PBs have become a thing of the past. Getting out of the door is the hardest part! “Don’t you ever give up!” (as Richard Nixon’s mother is alleged to have said to her son during Watergate).

Nutrition & Fuelling, a Vegan View

Ronnie Singleton-Lawley gives her personal experience of racing and training on a plant-based diet

When Elaine asked me to write this article, I agreed, on condition that it was from my personal experience only, and not a qualified scientific study. So, here goes ...

Background I became a vegan (I didn’t know the term at the time) aged eight when I moved house and saw cows being driven along the lane for milking, and I made the connection between animals and food. Ten years later, a university friend and I took up jogging twice a week, to be able to “keep up with the boys” on exercise in the Officer Training Corps (Territorial Army for students).

We ran our first race together, the 1982 Cardiff Marathon, and after I stopped to go to the loo for a fourth or fifth time, poor Ann said: “I’m sorry Ronnie, if we have to stop again, I don’t think I’ll be able to carry on”. A subsequent read of the label on my Dextrosol tablets revealed ‘excessive consumption may have a laxative effect!’ After that experience, I relied on water alone for my next 15 or so marathons!

Almost 20 years later, a marathon running friend who’d studied sports nutrition, suggested I needed more than water to get me through endurance races. I performed the cardinal sin of experimenting in a race by using gels for the first time in the London Marathon. Luckily, it seemed to work. I don’t like sweet, sickly sweets or drinks, but



forced them down for years afterwards, until I discovered my personal favourite (sadly no longer sold in Europe), which came in flavours like Expresso.

The point of all this is what we eat and drink is a very personal thing. Experiment (preferably in training or a less important race!) until you find what works for you. Above all, make it something you enjoy eating/drinking, rather than something you think you should have. When the going gets tough, it will help if you to have something to look forward to!

For me, what I eat before running is just as important. I know fellow Harriers who do a 15-mile trail run on no breakfast, or straight after a hard swimming session, but I usually get up 21/2 hours before a run to digest my porridge.

Before I rediscovered porridge, my go to pre-race breakfast was beans on toast. Taken to extreme, I forced down a tin of cold baked beans and two dry bread rolls in my hotel room hours before the 1984 Benidorm Marathon. I was First Lady in 3:23, but it put me off beans on toast for good!

But where do you get your protein? A perennial question, fuelled by the belief that plant protein is inferior to meat/dairy. My understanding is that it's just as good, but possibly not as easily absorbed. I'm lucky in that I love nuts (including butters), beans and pulses, so I get plenty of protein. I find being a runner suits a vegan, grazing style of eating, with healthy snacks before or after training. I'm also lucky that my husband, Peter, cooks great food from scratch, so we don't rely on processed products (although, of course, we do use them sometimes!).

What about supplements? For decades, I didn't take any, believing (probably correctly, as it turns out!) that I got everything I needed from my varied diet of fresh fruit and veg and whole foods. Cue another running friend, who suggested I should take a Vitamin C supplement. I then tried a Vegan Society multi-vitamin for a while, but when we were away for a year and I ran out, I didn't bother taking it anymore. Shopping for fresh fruit and veg almost daily was all I needed. Apparently, the vitamin vegans potentially lack is B12, because our bodies can't make it but many modern plant milks and yeast extracts are fortified with it so I definitely don't miss out.

Marathon des Sables I believe I was the first British vegan woman to complete this multi-day endurance race, in 2010. I had to carry all my kit and food for a week. Peter, having a more scientific approach, helped me shop for the highest calorific content per weight foods (macadamia nuts were the best). Instant porridge for breakfast, instant noodles with a miso soup flavouring for supper. A couple of ginger chews for a treat each day. He made me up a pack of food for each day, so I didn't have to tip out my rucksack and wonder what I was going to eat. It was also important to have something hot at the end of each day, rather than survive on cold snacks. Although I was violently sick several times early on in the event (salt tablets, 40 degrees, poor hygiene at the campsite toilet, etc.), I grew stronger as my pack grew lighter, and finished comfortably.

Alcohol I'm not a big drinker, but I do like a nice cider or liqueur. I use Barnivore website to help me check whether or not an alcoholic drink is vegan. I do like a half pint of cider the night before a marathon or other big race, to wash down the pasta & ice cream!

Health I'm fortunate to consider myself very healthy – I rarely have headaches or other minor ailments, I don't generally feel tired and don't seem to run out of energy in long training runs or races (veggie jelly bears seem to help, even though they're sugar free).

Cake Those of you who know me will never fail to be impressed by my appetite! In recent years, that capacity has extended to cake, as most cafes now offer at least one vegan option, and Peter and many of my running friends kindly make them for me. I like crisps and chocolate too, so I don't want to be holier than thou about veganism!

We're currently in The French Pyrenees, and the tried and trusted formula of "calories in, calories out" is going the wrong way – too little running and too many boulangeries full of warm baguettes to tempt me! Still, we're off to Spain tomorrow...oh, no, churros...



Off You Pop!

Kate Barnard's Shepperton 24-hour Swim Relay for Level Water

On Saturday 11th June 2022, we travelled down to a beautiful spot inside the M25 to meet up with some like-minded folk to swim in a 24-hour relay. When I say like-minded, I mean: can converse on subjects like pegging out washing, weeing whilst swimming, female specific cycling issues; can be minded to bring at least 10kgs of cake, slightly less of bananas and will cook cheese toasties to order; will swim at all hours of the day and night and be cheerful about it; will camp out in bivvies, tents and cars and sleep for a few precious seconds at a time; will marvel at the beauty of the place and the exceptional privilege to be part of it all.

The event was not a race, there was no timing and no distance goals but a challenge for teams of up to 8 swimmers to swim for an hour each, for 24 hours. We had 2 teams, most of whom were Bedford Harriers – myself, Jenny and Simon King, Sylvia and Noel Jones, Cathy Johnson, Elaine Massie, Richard Lawson, Alison Butcher, plus my husband Ian, my friend Lindsay and Caroline King (Jenny and Simon's daughter, who was responsible for getting us all involved in the first place).

The event was organised by Level Water, a charity that provide 1-2-1 swimming lessons for children with disabilities across the UK, possibly one of the biggest unmet needs across sport. Water takes your weight and is a true leveller for children with disabilities and the charity gives them the opportunity to learn to swim and fall in love with the water.

After a slight delay to the start and a briefing from Mark (the organiser from Level Water), we sent our first swimmers off into the tunnel. On the entry side was "Off You Pop" and on the exit side was "Well that was Easy". It was that kind of event.

My first swim was at 5pm. Wearing my thinnest wetsuit, I got cold! So ridiculous ... don't know why really. It was a lovely day, water beautiful temp. By the end of the 4th lap (around a mile total) I was definitely ready to finish as I was shivering in the water ... never a good sign. I think I was tired, and after handing over to Lindsay, I got dressed, warm and had some food, and as soon as Ian had done his swim and was safely back at camp, I headed to our bed in the car and gave myself a few hours downtime.

Up and wide awake at 11pm, I had a few hours before my 2am swim, so I spent some time in camp, fetching hot water for drinks and seeing swimmers from our teams down to the water and back out again. I was pretty tired by the time my swim came round and finding my teammate in the dark to switch the pink bracelet (relay baton) over was a challenge. I asked a row of swimmers "Have you seen Jenny?" then one answered, "Are you Katie?" ... and so we were reunited and off I went.



Each team was given a bit of grass to set up base, and here is ours post set up



Time	Swimmer	Time	Swimmer
05:00-06:00	Caroline	Sylvia	
06:00-07:00	Ian	Elaine	
07:00-08:00	Katie	Carly	
08:00-09:00	Richard		
09:00-10:00	Alison	Simon	
10:00-11:00	Caroline	Noel	
11:00-12:00	Jenny	Elaine	
12:00-13:00	Richard	Sylvia	
13:00-14:00	Ian	Carly	
14:00-15:00	Caroline	Simon	
15:00-16:00	Jenny	Noel	
16:00-17:00	Richard	Elaine	
17:00-18:00	Alison	Simon	
18:00-19:00	Caroline	Noel	
19:00-20:00	Jenny	Elaine	
20:00-21:00	Richard	Sylvia	
21:00-22:00	Ian	Carly	
22:00-23:00	Caroline	Simon	
23:00-24:00	Jenny	Noel	



How dark was the water? It was like my eyes were closed.

Gentle chattering of heads-up swimmers, but no other sound I can recall. I swam in a dreamlike state, sometimes getting almost meditative, feeling surreal. At one point I came out of a deep thought and couldn't be sure where I was in the lake, I could see a buoy lit up in the distance but had to work hard to figure out which one. I'd forgotten. Someone had lost their flashing light from their goggle strap and it was eerily flashing from the bottom of the lake by Buoy 2. I couldn't see a swimmer attached to it, which was good (it turned out to be Simon's, it had fallen off when his goggles had broken mid-lap!). After 4 laps and with tiredness gnawing at my limbs, I came upon a safety kayaker who said "You've got 30 seconds to make the cut off to start another lap" and I floated about a bit and said "I'm sorry my dear fellow, what did you say?" and he said "You've got 3 seconds to make the cut off to start another lap" and after a bit more floating I said "I think it's best all round if I go to bed now" OR maybe I just floundered off towards the bank.



"I think it's best all round if I go to bed now" OR maybe I just floundered off towards the bank.

Bracelet passed on and I got dressed at camp, I was very shivery and being as quiet as possible. I wanted to give Ian until 4am for sleeping, so I wandered around a bit and saw our next lot of swimmers off before heading back to the car. Dawn was just about breaking.

I gently woke Ian up by shining 100W bulbs in his eyeballs and once he'd realised that he wasn't being tortured, we snuggled up for about 2 hours kip.

At 7am we got back to the event to see Sylvia preparing for her final swim.



And then it was time for a bacon butty, a coffee and to get back into the final wetsuit, my old and faithful Orca. My last swim was sublime. It all came together, I felt strong, relaxed, at one with the water. I had loads of clear water and it was just stunning. I did 5 laps and finished feeling marvellous. Lots of people cheering us in.



And then a bit later we saw this whiteboard, which made me all a bit emotional. Because honestly... we are so lucky! We have no barriers in our way and can just swim. I absolutely love what this charity is doing.

We have no barriers in our way and can just swim.

The finish was great. The final swimmers were all clapped in, and team names announced and everyone got cheered in ... and then we got an actual swimming badge. A fabric one! So excited.

Packing up and driving home was always going to be hard but honestly with this lovely crew it was still a joy. We all looked after each other

and made sure Lindsay got in the right side of her car to drive home, Cathy took our big bag of rubbish all the way home with her (organiser's request), in fact I was feeling so buoyed up I offered to drive us home. Which I managed without getting into any kind of similar dreamlike state as I had in my night swim but did need quite a few deep breaths and some thigh slapping.

Well that was Easy!

Level Water will be re-running this event on 10-11 June 2023 at Shepperton and are planning a similar event at Box End for September 2023. If you'd be interested in joining in, email hello@bedfordharriers.co.uk and we'll put you in touch!



LEVEL WATER

We Need You



Help with our race events

The Bedford Harrier race dates have been set for 2023 and are as follows:

3 Counties Cross Country – 5th February 2023 – RD – Chris Capps

Oakley 20 – 26th March 2023 – RD – Steve Crane

Doug Anderson 5K – 19th July 2023 – RD - Beverley Gous

Bedford Triathlon – 13th August 2023 – RD – Simon King

In order to run these races, we need volunteers for a variety of different roles for all 3 races, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Van loading and unloading before the race (the day before the race for Oakley & the Triathlon)
- Race set-up
- Number issue and late registration
- Baggage counter
- Marshalling
- Water stations
- Photographer
- Catering (at Oakley 20)
- Race take-down
- Van loading & unloading at the end of the race

Please note that if you cannot commit to the whole race for Oakley 20 and Bedford Triathlon, there are jobs available on the day before and we are happy for volunteers to job share. For example, race set-up and take-down could be different crews of people, 2-3 people could man a water station or marshal point for 2 hours and another crew of 2-3 people could take over for the last few hours etc.

You can sign-up for volunteer roles using the sign-up sheet on the Noticeboard at the Stadium or you can contact the relevant Race Director or email hello@bedfordharriers.co.uk.

IRONMAN[®] 70.3 World Championships

Nora Haggart qualified for St George

In July 2021, I competed in the Ironman 70.3 Staffordshire and qualified for the World Championships in New Zealand. Unfortunately, due to COVID the location was changed to St George, Utah, USA in October 2022.

I was pleased to arrive a few days before the race to acclimatise to the time difference and the changeable weather. I took a direct flight from Heathrow to Las Vegas and was happy to see that both luggage and race bike arrived safely.

My fellow Bedford Harrier, Dea Ditchfield, also qualified for the World Championships and during race week it was good to have each other's company and to calm each other's nerves.



Leading up to the event I had it in my mind that it could be a non-wetsuit swim. St George's weather can change quickly and according to the Ironman website the average air temperature in October is 29oC and water temperature 22oC. Two weeks before the race, the forecast was 31oC for race day – but a week later, the forecast had a low of 3oC with a high of 17oC! So, it was good planning that I arrived with my wetsuit and neoprene hat!

The event was held over two days, with women competing on Friday and men on Saturday.

It was good planning that I arrived with my wetsuit and neoprene hat!

Transitions were in two different locations, with the swim and bike start being at Sand Hollow State Park and the run in Downtown St George.

The swim start and finish were from the main boat ramp at the reservoir in Sand Hollow State Park. On Thursday we racked our bikes and dropped off two transition bags. Due to the windy conditions, athletes were allowed to rack their bikes by the handlebars and use zip ties to secure bikes to the transition bike racking frames for added overnight protection.

No public transport was allowed at Sand Hollow State Park on the morning of the event. Yellow school buses were laid on to transport all athletes from Downtown Utah. Athletes were allocated a specific bus time by age group and mine was at 5am. It took half an hour to the swim start, with my swim start at 8am. On arrival at the swim-bike transition area it was still dark, athletes were busy sorting their bikes. Although time passed by quickly there was a lot of waiting around in the cold with an outside temperature of 4oC.



The swim start was set-up so that 10 competitors started every 15 seconds. The water felt much warmer than the outside air temperature and it was pleasant to swim in, however, with the sun rising, the brightness made it difficult to navigate the course. On leaving the water after my 1.2-mile swim I started getting very cold, which made getting out of my wetsuit difficult. Normally you aim for the shortest transition time possible, but because of the conditions it was worth taking time to dry off and put on extra cycle clothes for the 56-mile cycle.



I really could not believe I was cycling somewhere so magnificent and beautiful with towering red and white sandstone cliffs.

the background. By 22 miles, the weather had improved, the sun was shining and I was much warmer and felt I was in my race rhythm. There was a slow sustained climb with stunning views of Red Cliffs Desert Reserve framed by Pine Valley Mountain then we headed through scenic fairways of Green Spring Golf Course.



The scenery changed again at mile 33, a beautiful stretch of road leading to the Red Mountains. The road was lined with beautiful houses and vegetation nestled between ragged sandstone cliffs and lava fields, similar to the iconic lava fields of Kona, Hawaii. Mile 41 was a gruelling slow five-mile climb through Snow Canyon State Park which features more than 1,000 feet of elevation gain, with incredible scenery all around. I really could not believe I was cycling somewhere so magnificent and beautiful with towering red and white sandstone cliffs. I read that Snow Canyon was the backdrop for Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and several John Wayne films.



I felt so near the finish yet so far away.

After the intense climb it was satisfying to get the chance of the steep decent back to Downtown St George for the running stage. The weather was sweltering as we completed the cycle course. The bikes were handed to the marshals for racking, then we headed out on a two-loop figure of eight 13.1-mile run course. This started with a steady steep uphill through the town, a golf course and a beautiful park. There was an Ironman sculpture on the roundabout which we ran round for the start of the second loop. By the time I got to the second loop, it was exhausting, running in the heat was tough and even though I drank lots of water and took on nutrition gels, unfortunately I experienced bad leg cramp half a mile from the finish which literally brought me to a standstill. It was disheartening to watch several women pass me whilst being unable to move. I felt so near the finish yet so far away. Eventually, I managed to start moving again by walking then gradually increasing my pace and I was determined not to stop again. When I crossed the finish line I felt exhausted but exhilarated.

The following evening, I was so delighted to make the podium and receive a lovely trophy with my 4th place finish in my age group!



IRONMAN® Vitoria-Gasteiz

Eva Kovacs tells us how some unfinished business has now been finished!



Vitoria was the first of my three Ironman distance races for 2022. I had to come back to Vitoria as I was a DNF in 2017, when I pulled out after one lap of the run. I had pulled my left hamstring a month before the race (while triple jumping!), and simply hadn't had sufficient time to fully recover.

Training this year had gone pretty well. Spring training races indicated that I was in a decent shape. Swimming was going well, despite still only swimming once a week on average because of my dodgy shoulder. The bike also seemed to be going well and I had done a few long rides, plus the Gran Fondo at the Tour of Cambridgeshire also indicated that I could push hard against the wind. The run is always tough, as I normally don't run longer than 2 hours at a time, in the attempt to prevent injuries. But I had been consistent in my run training and a decent Colworth Marathon Challenge gave me some hope. So, I thought that I was ready, but the main question was whether I could bring everything together on race day.

After a very stressful trip to Spain (there was so much queuing at the airport I had to sprint from security to the gate to make the flight!), the remaining days before the race were fairly relaxed. I had booked the hotel (perfectly located in the city centre) and some services via Nirvana, which made the pre-race logistics much easier.

On race day, it was a 5:30 breakfast for a 6:30 pick up by the shuttle. The start was at 8:15 for the Pro Men and 8:30 for the Age Groupers.

Swim: 1:33:06

The swim was a 3.8 km anti-clockwise lap in the Reservoir of Ullibarri-Gamboa, starting from Landa Beach in a rolling start format. The water temperature was a nice 20°C and the lake looked calm, at least until the race started. It was a fairly long wait to get everyone in the water, but the DJ kept us entertained with some energising music, and a top 10 of songs from the countries with the highest number of athletes (I am not sure that the French were pleased with the choice of Plastic Bertrand, who is Belgian ...). Shortly after I entered the water, I started having some breathing and coughing problems, similar to what I had experienced at IM Switzerland, though milder. Oh no, here we go again, I thought Luckily, I was able to calm myself down, move away from the buoys and the swimming crowd, and settle in some sort of rhythm. However, I realised already that my race would not be what I hoped for, but at least I was able to carry on, though mostly breathing one-sided, which is not my preference. It wasn't a pleasurable swim, despite having space around me for most of the time, as I kept feeling this oddness in my breathing. I was glad when I finally got out of the water. My swim time wasn't too bad given how rubbish I felt, and my arms/shoulders didn't feel too tired either.



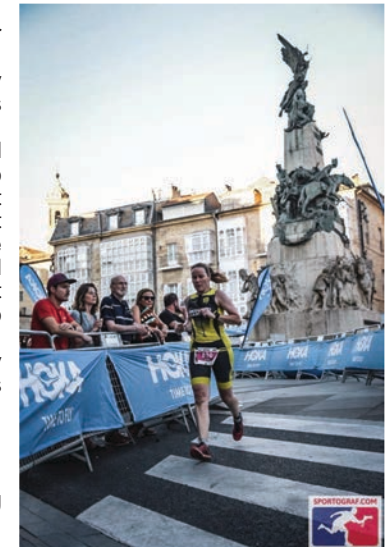
T1: 0:09:06



Transition went ok, with the exception that I found out that I had put the sunscreen in the white (street wear) bag instead of the blue (bike gear) bag. I had put sunscreen on before the start, but a top up would have been useful (I now have a few odd tan lines!).

Bike: 7:11:43

The bike course consisted of two long laps of 74km and a shorter lap of 32km. It is billed as a mostly flat course with some hills, but it was hillier than I remembered. As soon as I got on the bike, it was clear that my legs were powerless and that my lower back was hurting on the left side (likely exacerbated by breathing to one side). Not a good recipe if you want to do well on the bike. So, I settled into a pace that I knew I could keep up for the 180km. The course is quite scenic, with good support at selected points, like in Landa and Vitoria. The wind picked up as the time passed, really making it super hard on the last lap, and it was getting hotter and hotter. Halfway into the ride, my feet started bothering me. I typically don't like wearing socks on the bike, but I started to do so as they seem to help keep my feet in a better shape for the run. But the sock seemed to impair my circulation. So, I stopped and took them off. What a relief! But not for long as I had to stop two more times to let my feet air (note to myself - next time I stop, I should do so in the shade, not where the asphalt is hot!). I saw a few ambulances driving to people lying on the ground presumably due to heat exhaustion. I was able to fuel well at the aid stations (drinks were nice and cool), so I wasn't feeling too bad because of the heat. But I was very happy to finally return to Vitoria where we could drop off our bikes in T2. The bike time was well within the cut off time, but very disappointing for me, about 30 minutes slower than 5 years ago.



T2: 0:11:00

Transition again was ok, maybe a bit slow, but this is nothing new for me.

Run: 6:14:35

The marathon run was 4 laps through and around the city centre of Vitoria. It was packed with spectators, especially Plaza Espana where the finish line was. There were 4 aid stations per lap. In contrast to the red orange flavoured Gatorade that we got on the bike that tasted nice, I absolutely couldn't stand the mandarin flavoured Gatorade on the run course. So, it was mainly cola and/or water for the entire course, plus the occasional orange slice or savoury snack. Needless to say, it wasn't enough energy to keep me going.



From the start, the marathon became a mix of running (sporadically) and walking (frequently). The course was shaded in parts, but it was still very hot until the last lap when the sun finally went down. At its hottest, the temperature was apparently 36oC. Many athletes were walking (after the race, many said that their marathon time was an hour or so longer than usual). As the race progressed, I realised that I was at risk of not meeting the cut off time. My feet were also hurting badly (I was regretting removing the socks), so even walking was painful (the next day, I would find out that I had a blister under my foot). But the support from the crowd and their continuous 'animo', 'venga' and 'campeona' really kept me going (a special thanks to the family from Letchworth that was popping up at each corner cheering me loudly), and after a long day I made it back to Plaza Espana and the finish line, which was still packed with spectators.

Total: 15:19:28



I made the cut off by about 10 minutes, with only a few athletes finishing behind me (though I 'beat' 2 people that were staying at my hotel, so I could still 'brag' a little at next day's breakfast ...).

But a finish is a finish, and finishing unfinished business is even sweeter.

Rumours are that there may have been 400 to 600 DNFs. I don't know if this is true. But it's definitely a fact that it was a very tough race!

Ironman distance race number 36 is in the bag!

What will you be wearing in 2023?

Amanda Friman (with thanks to the various photographers from over the years)

What a teaser Richard! What's coming soon? Is it a new design for our club vests?

My club vests are the original design. Bought in 1986, they have served me well and I wear them still today. Maybe I'm the last runner standing (or running) in an original club vest? I can't be sure. What I can be sure of is that I have two different vests, one cotton based and the other 100% synthetic. Both are nearly 37



years old, and I've worn them for every race as a Bedford Harrier. They have been there at my proudest moments and when I have been bitterly disappointed. They've seen tears of joy along with tears of frustration. All my racing memories are woven, like threads, into the very fabric of my vests.

You will notice that there is no club name on the front of my vests. This means marshals only call out once I've passed! Nevertheless, I'll take "Come on Bedford", shouted to my back anytime. Support is always welcome!



My two club vests: one cotton based, the other made of an open weave synthetic fabric



Wellingborough Three Counties XC October 2022. Look who has no 'Bedford' on the front of their vest!

From this, you might conclude that I'm one of the club's longest serving members. But you'd be wrong and I'm not. I took extended maternity leave from 1992 and did not return to the club until 2005. With no racing for 13 years, my vests have withstood the test of time. However, like my body, they are now starting to fall apart. Held together with a bit of hand sewn thread, I hope they will see many more memories yet.



1st lady Stevington 12K 1988



Wolverton 5 miles November 2007



North Herts XC December 2022

These days I am very selective about the events I run. My body is starting to rebel! So, if you see me in club colours, take a look. The design and fabric will be different to yours. I will be wearing an original vest, first designed in 1985, the year the club was formed.

I don't have any answers for Richard's teaser. I don't know what will be coming soon. But I do know what I will be wearing in 2023!

Bedford Harriers AC Kit Catalogue

Richard Woodward unveils the new kit offering for the Club

We are pleased to launch the new catalogue for Bedford Harriers AC's kit, which offers members an increased range of kit, featuring:

- New racing kit based on our classic design
- A range of branded training tops, beanies, buffs and bags
- Vastly improved quality of materials
- Enhanced eco credentials with vegan friendly items and most items made from recycled and/or sustainable materials
- Men's and ladies ranges with improved fit for ladies' garments



Enjoy 20% off all orders of racing kit (t-shirts and vests) made before 10th February 2023.
Use the discount code "HARRIERS23" when placing your order online.

Kit can be pre ordered in the following way:

- Online: <https://www.nolimitz.co.uk/clubwear/bedford-harriers/>
- Phone: 01234 350 720
- In person: No Limitz, 25 Shuttleworth Road, Bedford MK41 0HS

Don't forget that when representing the Club at races (other than the London Marathon), members will still be required to wear the Club race kit – gold top with black stripe. Additional items in the kit catalogue are intended for training purposes only.

Round Norfolk Relay

Issy Powell shares her experience of the Round Norfolk Relay from a first timer's perspective

On the 16th of September a team of Harriers headed up to Kings Lynn to run around the Norfolk border. It was my first time running or even hearing about this event, so I turned up somewhat clueless!

A group of us went out for dinner on the Friday evening where the conversation was buzzing, discussing the logistics, start points, support bikes and maps. **It went completely over my head and I still sat there oblivious to what I had let myself into.** Despite having a geography degree, map reading is not my forte ... I was starting to realise how much organisation an event like this took!

There were 53 teams all aiming to run around the whole of Norfolk. The start was staggered based on predicted finish times for each team, aiming for all teams to finish close together on the Sunday morning. For David, it was a very early and extremely windy start on the Saturday morning for the first leg from Kings Lynn all the way to Hunstanton.

I was running an easier stage ... Stage 3 from Burnham Overy to Wells-next-to-the-Sea. Kevin passed the baton onto me; it was very windy as I ran over the flats to Holkham Beach. As I have said, map reading is not my greatest skill and it was a self-navigated route - and because my stage was on the coastal path rather than on a road, I didn't have cycle support to help me! I got into the sand dunes and was running up and down, keeping the sea on my left.

My boyfriend, Tom, and my Grandma had come up to support us all. Tom had me on 'Find my Friends' and the rest of the team were sat in the café stalking my location. Luckily, I met **another team's support bike who pointed me in the right direction after almost ending up on the nudist beach!**

Up the hill and I passed the baton on to Juliet, who was running to Cley. After a hot chocolate to rehydrate after my run I was ready for the fun part – to be a support cyclist! Dressed in hi-vis and a lot of layers, I looked like I was doing my cycling proficiency course. Tom and Grandma definitely had the harder job of making sure me and my bike were in the right place at the right time, and then chasing us around the coastline of Norfolk. I supported two amazing runners, Juliet and Stuart, from East Runton up to Mundesley, passing several teams on route. **The atmosphere was great! At every checkpoint, there were lots of people cheering and encouraging and often, there were stalls piled high with cake and coffee made by local groups.**

I then had to rush off to a family party in Lincolnshire (but squeezing in fish and chips by the sea first!), but the drama continued. Every leg has to be supported by either a bike or a car and at night the car has to have a flashing light on the top. Unfortunately, the support car broke down in the middle of the night, in the middle of Norfolk with no one else nearby. However, this did not stop the Bedford Harriers! After many, many WhatsApps they were good to go again, with a different support car and we flew into Kings Lynn to finish on Sunday morning in a very respectable time of 28 hours, 29 minutes and 28 seconds – almost one hour under our predicted time. Not bad for 197 miles!

All in all, a very, very fun and sociable weekend and adding a whole new challenge to running in the form of navigation and logistics. Definitely my favourite running event of 2022! Thank you so much to everyone who organised it, the number of spreadsheets and maps still amazes me. I will be back in September, hopefully doing a longer leg if I am allowed back!



Round Norfolk Relay

David Sheffield shares a behind the scenes tale of this year's Harriers team adventure in Norfolk

The Round Norfolk Relay is a 197-mile race split into 17 stages ranging from 5 to 20 miles. The aim is to finish between 9 and 10 am on Sunday morning and so the start times are staggered. The Bedford Harriers team set off from King's Lynn with a dozen other teams at 5:30am on Saturday and headed clockwise around the beautiful North Norfolk coast. During the daytime, runners have a mandatory support cyclist (who is meant to ride behind the runner, rather than act as a pacer). The night-time stages follow the Norfolk/Suffolk border back to King's Lynn and runners are accompanied by mandatory support cars with flashing orange lights and sometime cyclists. Each team has their own crew of timekeepers who must be at the changeover points to record the time, which is sometimes verified by an official timekeeper.

As you can probably tell, this is a huge logistical challenge to get runners, cyclists, drivers, timekeepers and supporters to the right place at the right time, and it doesn't always go to plan. What follows is a selection of WhatsApp messages sent during the event. The only changes are for clarity.

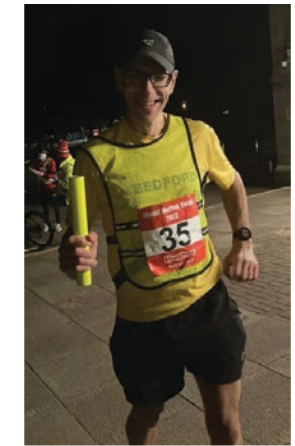
Hi everyone, I finally got around to setting up this group!
5th September 12:25 pm - Elaine

RNR Facebook page says "The RNR WILL go ahead as planned. HRH funeral being Monday 19th. We will proceed in accordance with HMG sporting guidance and protocol!"
10th September 5:08 pm - Chris F

We have plenty of stop watches. Just need lots of people at the start line on Saturday to get them going 😊
13th September 6:18 pm - Jutta

Good luck David and have a fantastic run 🍀
17th September 5:27am - Elaine

It's blowing a gale at Snettisham so looks like a tough run into Hunstanton
6:36 am - Richard W



David ran 16.4 miles in 2:13:08 into a headwind, Kevin is now off & running
7:45 am - Richard W

Just finished leg 2. 10 seconds behind 1st place. Pesky detour added another mile on to the distance
9:50 am - Kevin

Issy smashed it. 5 mins faster than predicted so 10 mins behind schedule.
10:32 am - Richard W

Juliet, you are on in 5 minutes
12:08 pm - Jutta

Andrew had a fantastic run - 18 minutes ahead of predicted 🍀🍀🍀
4:20 pm - Elaine



3 teams ahead of us at the end of stage 8 so great team performance
4:51 pm - Richard W

Great running from Anna alongside all the other great runs - can the other runners please note and get to your start earlier and advise when you're at the start of your leg
5:36 pm - Richard W

Just driven past Clare [Rodseth] - looking good
6:00 pm - Richard L

Great run from Clare. Stuart is off 🙌🏃♂️🏃♂️🏃♂️
7:18 pm - Jutta

Marshal just told Stuart that he needs a headlamp - don't think we have one (Jutta, is there one in the black box?)
7:50 pm - Richard L

I can't see it in the safety rules... Maybe the marshal was just being over zealous!
7:55 pm - Richard L

Runner that just overtook us (🙄) had one - but they did the overtake wrong (car overtook first)
7:18 pm - Jutta

Teams 25 and 33 both had cyclists alongside the runner rather than behind - bit naughty!
8:36 pm - Richard L

We are in a lay by ready to hand the light to Stuart. Suggest you pass headtorch on to next runner with baton at every changeover
8:40 pm - Jutta

Stuart has just passed Crossways of Ellingham
8:58 pm - Richard L

Stuart has just passed Chicken Roundabout. Apparently.
8:58 pm - Richard L

I am in Scole already... sat in my yellow car to right of gate, maybe 5th car along. Ready to take over time keeping duties. Come and say hi when you arrive.
9:37 pm - Dave

Timing official was quibbling over the 2 second difference between her time and mine. Apparently we need a better stopwatch!! (I didn't bother showing her the other 8 stopwatches...)
9:47 pm - Richard L

Thanks for the car support, Elaine & Richard. The hills are nicer round here than at Oakley! Felt good.
9:55 pm - Stuart K



After Clare on Stage 9 we are 37 mins ahead of schedule.
7:20 pm - Mark

I don't have one! Never required before!
7:52 pm - Chris F

We have one, will turn around and find Stuart.
7:55 pm - Jutta

You're welcome! Sally currently doing 8 min miles so gaining another 30 secs/mile 😊 7:39 for the last mile.
10:11 pm – Richard L

30 miles of looking enviously at the Knights' running 😊
11:26 pm – Richard L

Claire [Rulton] has already overtaken team 33 😊 and closing on team 25
11:33 pm – Richard L

Go Claire.
11:33 pm – Bill Tallentire

Mark has given us an update – Claire is currently predicted to be 15-20 minutes ahead of schedule so that's approx a 1:40am arrival in Thetford
11:59 pm – Anna

OMG, you are all running so well. 🍌 I'm resetting my alarm and will be at the start location in time to run.
18th September 1:38 am – Amanda

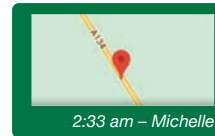
Chris [Fadden] is now on his way
1:45 am – Peter

And teams are going to overtake me I'm afraid but I'm sharpening my elbows and will do what I can.
1:46 am – Amanda



Need help now car broken down
2:28 am – Michelle [in support car]

Where are you?
2:30 am – Anna



On our way!! We are 13 minutes away
2:35 am – Anna

Oh no! Are you guys ok?"
2:46 am – Elaine

Mum is left on her own. Chris is on his way again. Dave and Anna are now the support car.
3:00 am – Peter

We've tried to work out how far Chris has got to run and the pace he is running at. These things considered, we think he may arrive at 4.15am
3:12 am – Anna

Amanda – because David and I (timekeepers) have had to go back to Michelle/Chris/Peter to car support for Chris. Therefore the car support stuff is in use on our car. We will have to take it off and transfer to your car during the change over.
3:14 am – Anna

We need someone to replace Michelle's car support stages (15 and 16)
3:21 am – Anna

Can anyone get a bike to the start of leg 15? The bike that was going to be used is on Michelle's car. I'm happy to ride a bike if so
3:29 am – Anna



We're back in Sandy so can't help. Really sorry
3:30 am – Elaine

Just spoken to Bob and he has his folding bike. Anna can use it and he will bring it with him when he drops me off for stage 15
3:45 am – Chris C

AA will hopefully be with Michelle in 45 minutes or so 🍌
3:46 am – Elaine

Do you need any car support help? Or are you ok?
3:49 am – Sally

Yes, if possible. That way, I can cycle and David can be timekeeper.
3:52 am – Anna



Ok if we head to start of stage 15, can you meet us there Anna so we can get light and number from you (as I don't think you are car support for leg 14?).
3:59 am – Sally

Chris is 2 mins away
4:11 am – Anna

I'm on the Fenland Team bus following their runner. Has anyone got space to pick me up at end of stage 14?
4:57 am – Chris F

Yes, I'm in David's car as I'm getting out
4:57 am – Anna

We are waiting for Amanda by toilets
5:20 am – Sally

Chris Capps is running at 8:20 pace. Should trim some off the projected time."
5:52 am – Stuart K

Is anyone able to meet Bob at Kings Lynn with a bike. We have no bike support at end of 17
7:06 am – Chris F

Do you want Steve to do bike support for Bob? He has no team number though
7:24 am – Jutta

At long stay car park Hardings Way by South Quay. Have pins, need number.
8:00 am – Steve

On my way with number
8:06 am – Stuart B

Bob due in around 9 so will head to finish line at about 8:50 in the meantime I am sat upstairs in the Lynnsport. If I'm late, please come and wake me up!"
8:24 am – Dave

Wakey Wakey Dave. 🏃♂️🏃♂️🏃♂️🏃♂️
8:48 am – Bill Tallentire

Well done 🍌🏃♂️🏃♂️🏃♂️🏃♂️🏆🚩
9:29 am – Jutta

Hi everyone we're safely back. Thanks to everyone for your brilliant help, support and understanding
4:15 pm – Chris F

Glad you're home safe Chris, Michelle and Peter. Congratulations to Clare and Claire who were both 3rd Lady for their respective stages 🍌🍌🍌
4:30 pm – Elaine

Team Results are in with Bedford Harriers finishing 40th overall in 27:36:45. You've All Done Very Well
:34 pm – Mark

When Reggie Went to the Grizzly

Jeanette Cheetham's story of a Harriers' classic

In October 2021, we were back running in our Harrier groups and Grizzly training had started in earnest. By Christmas, we had all our shorter runs behind us and had achieved a great - but totally exhausting - 14-miler the week leading up to Christmas Day. The following weeks saw a 'down' week followed by some post-Christmas long, muddy and hilly runs. Grizzly training was going well!

On 29th January, 5 weeks before race day, we set out to cover 16 miles, using our classic 4 x 4-mile loops of Rowney Warren. I had been quite concerned about this run, as I donated blood only 5 days before, and 16 miles is a long way with less blood than usual (that's a joke of course!), but by the time we approached the end of loop two I was feeling far more settled and confident.

SPLAT! One second I was upright, the next I was face down on the ground, totally winded, with my right fist embedded in my rib-boob! It felt like it had gone through my right breast, into my ribs and out of my back. Of course, it hadn't, but boy did it hurt! After a period of lying there assessing the damage, I got to my feet, and we walked the short distance back to the cars and the end of loop two.

Sensibly, I went straight home at this point ...

Of course, I didn't, I stupidly thought I could carry on! We set off on lap 3, but I had run less than two miles, wincing over the lumps and bumps and running in a weird hunched over position, before I began feeling nauseous and gave up. From this point I walked and jogged delicately back to my car, said goodbye to my fellow runners and drove home; at this point I thought I was experiencing nothing more than a great deal of internal bruising.

I didn't run on Monday evening, but by Wednesday I was feeling too restless and really concerned about whether running - and therefore doing the Grizzly - was going to be possible, so I decided to try a short jog round the block. My rested legs went off like those of a hare, which immediately engendered great discomfort inside my rib cage. (Now why did I not expect that?!) I did just over 2 miles and, although painful, I was relieved that I was able to move forward at all. Later that evening, and the next day, I was surprised to find that my bruised area seemed less painful and less swollen.

the bonus ... two slices of the best Victoria sponge I have ever tasted, courtesy of Jo Smythe!

kicked in and got me through it. My legs still felt quite fresh at the end, so I agreed to accompany Cint on a further 8 miles the next morning. Once again, I felt encouraged by the general improvement I was experiencing. The upside was that the internal bruising was ebbing away; the downside was that I could now pin point my real pain; Reggie the Rib was definitely broken, possibly in two places. The NHS website says that it takes 3 to 6 weeks for ribs to heal. I needed it happen quickly!

With 3 more training runs to go before the Grizzly weekend, I pulled up my big girl pants and continued with my training, hosting a 13-miler on 12th February, which went well, and finally managing the elusive 16-miler a week later, which included hills, mud, freezing rain, hypothermia and ... the bonus ... two slices of the best Victoria sponge I have ever tasted, courtesy of Jo Smythe!



We would usually try to do a 17 and an 18 miler before the Grizzly but I was more than happy to have covered 16 miles. The final weekend we did a gentle, and thankfully uneventful, 10-miler. I had it in mind that, given the circumstances, a time of around 5 hours should be possible. (In 2020, with slippery mud to contend with, but having completed all of the long training runs, I did 5:04:40.)

we soon met up with a gang of Harriers and spontaneously sang Que Sera Sera, as that was how we were all feeling.

Race weekend was week 5 of Reggie the Rib's recovery. He was still causing me pain when poked or stretched, but on the whole, he was feeling better. It was with trepidation, but also an attitude of "Just enjoy it!" that we (John and my two sibles, Jack and Cint and I) set off for Beer, on the Friday of race weekend. We spent Saturday in Lyme Regis and walked to Seaton on race day. We got to the start line with only 5 minutes to spare so we missed out on some of the usual start line banter and singing, but we soon met up with a gang of Harriers and spontaneously sang Que Sera Sera, as that was how we were all feeling.



Luckily, I didn't hit anything hard, so Reggie the rib was not unduly affected.

Having told myself I would walk all of the major hills this year, to compensate for lack of mileage in training and to keep myself fresh for the finish, I ignored my own advice and, apart from the grass at the top of the caravan park, ran all of the hills - albeit no faster than some walkers - until around 13 miles. I entered the bogs still feeling OK. They were easier to negotiate this year, being wetter rather than really thick, shoe swallowing mud, but I still managed to fall headlong into them! Luckily, I didn't hit anything hard, so Reggie the rib was not unduly affected. His only difficulty came just after the bogs, climbing the steep, muddy, slippery hill back up to the road. I was holding on to the rope when someone down below suddenly pulled it tight, ramming it into my rib cage. I winced and held on to Reggie, whereupon a marshal said "Two hands...use two hands" (on the rope). To show I wasn't being a wuss I said, "I broke my rib recently!". Under his breath, to a fellow marshal, he muttered "She's in the wrong race then!" I guess he had a point ...



For the remainder of the race Reggie survived unscathed. The rest of my body died at 3.5 miles to go (demonstrating the lack of those long miles in training), but I battled on along the beach and up the Stairway to Heaven, into Beer and back up the (awful!) steps near the Pecorama, shuffling

Under his breath, to a fellow marshal, he muttered "She's in the wrong race then!" I guess he had a point ...

the final mile and a half with growing anticipation of the finish. As I ran down the hill to Seaton sea front, I was mightily heartened by the cheers of fellow Harriers, and I also spotted John and Jack (among others) who nearly missed me as I flew by. (Sorry that's a lie. I didn't fly, they were looking at a dog. No comments please!) I crossed the line in 4:35:33!! I loved the race as usual, and was really pleased with my time, but it just took a while to feel the love this time as it felt so hard. As for Reggie, he still hurt for a few weeks, but he is so glad he did it!



Fancy a go? <https://www.axevalleyrunners.org.uk/Grizzly/>

The Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

Adam Hills talks about this once in a lifetime opportunity!

One afternoon sitting at home browsing the internet, I ended up on the Commonwealth Games website and noticed they were recruiting volunteers for the 22nd Commonwealth Games, to be held in Birmingham. I applied, having not given any serious thought to the logistics, just knowing that Birmingham is a 'however long' train ride up from Milton Keynes. I never expected to hear back: I thought it would be too good to be true to ever volunteer at something like the Commonwealth Games!

In October 2021, I received a surprise email from the Commonwealth Games inviting me to an interview. Arriving at Birmingham New Street train station for the first time, I had to ask for directions to the venue - but when I saw the Commonwealth Games decor at the main entrance, I realised this was it. There were about thirty or forty other candidates all waiting quietly in the reception area. The interview went well, I explained what I had achieved through the Harriers, volunteering at a parkrun core team, track officiating at athletic meetings and other marshalling experiences gained throughout the years. I was measured for clothing and my photograph was taken, which gave me some optimism, but I didn't expect to be successful, with around 41,000 people applying for a role.



Early in 2022 I received another email advising that my interview had been successful! Around 25,000 were shortlisted for interview and I was one of the 13,000 successful people. What is truly amazing is that they offered me a coveted position in the medal ceremony team!

We had to attend various training days; at the first one I found out that I would be doing medal ceremony volunteering at the Alexander Stadium where all the major international athletics and field events would be taking place - a perfect venue for me. At another training day at the Alexander Stadium on a very hot day we were given a guided tour around the Stadium and were lucky enough to watch the opening ceremony rehearsals, including the nations practising walking around the stadium with their flags. Everything felt so surreal! I was dealing with some personal issues at this time but coming to this stadium and knowing I was going to make a positive difference on an international stage really helped to lift my spirits. The worrying thoughts had gone away. It is true that volunteering and socialising with other people can be a great way to boost your mental health and feel better about yourself. This helps to put things into perspective and makes you feel more positive.

To keep my costs low, I stayed at the University of Wolverhampton, where I met a variety of other volunteers. It felt like being back at university including popping down to the student union bar for a cheap drink! We got to know each other quite well and someone set up a group chat so we could keep in touch (and still do to this day).

We were all excited to have our volunteer medal ceremony shifts confirmed for the week. I was allocated on the late shifts, which meant seeing more of the international sporting action and sunset. Final training taught us what we had to do as an Athlete Escort, Presenter Escort, Medal and Gift Tray Bearer, and all the vital preparation work needed indoors in between each live ceremony. We had to attend a live dress rehearsal before a television broadcast on the Monday to practise our choreography and correct any errors. I was also invited by a UKA official to run a 100-metre race on the international running track with my fellow volunteers as the officials and television crew needed to test



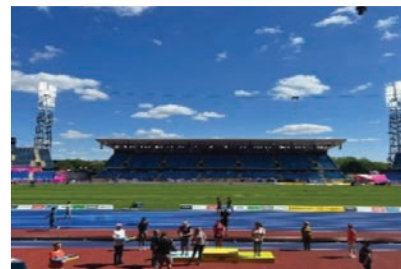
their systems. I won the race and saw myself on the massive screen at the top of the Stadium! Iwan Thomas, our former UK 400m holder was at the finish with his microphone and I wasn't sure if he wanted to interview me. I joined in with the fun with the other medal ceremony volunteers to sit in the BBC commentary box and Royal Box. We had a laugh and took loads of photos everywhere we went during our 'unofficial tour' of the stadium before the public came the next day.

Wednesday 3rd August will be remembered as my first volunteer shift as a Commonwealth Games medal ceremony member. We had done all the rehearsals and learned the choreography, tried on our uniforms and this was it, time to face the international cameras. There was no room for any mistakes. Everything had to be perfect and our instructor soon told us if we weren't behaving! Being a perfectionist myself, I was very conscious of getting everything correct, and asked questions about the tinniest details including how to tie our shoelaces. The medals and each Perry (cuddly toy gift) needed to be laid out in exactly the same fashion on each tray, with each medal ribbon being folded at the same length. We were not allowed to wear sunglasses, all our three polo shirt buttons had to be done up, our gilet jacket zips needed to be done up at the same height and we were advised to have all our polo shirts either tucked in or over our trousers so we all looked the same. We were given choreography lessons on exactly how to walk, when to turn around on our individual landing spots, we were instructed to have our hands behind our backs while standing and were taught how to correctly hold the medal and gift trays, including where the thumb should be accurately positioned. The trays were rather heavy, and we were instructed how to position our arms to make holding them more comfortable.

One of my first live roles was a lead Athlete Escort. This involved ensuring the athletes followed at the correct speed and via the correct route to behind the podium. I ushered the nearest silver medallist to stand in the correct position and to wait for the medal ceremony announcement. It was extremely well choreographed: we all needed to stop at the same time, turn clockwise, using the correct foot gait, to face the medal flags, which were situated at the bend behind the 100-metre start. I did feel quite nervous and found it difficult to break a smile because I was so focused on getting the choreography perfect. I remember being the lead tray bearer and the first person to leave the stadium building and the live television camera was right in my face. I had to really look confident and try to enjoy every moment of the live ceremony.



We met so many different celebrities including Lord Sebastain Coe, Dame Denise Lewis, Dame Louise Martin and so many more distinguished people from around the world! We were so thrilled to have our photographs taken with them that it seemed like we were doing it rather a lot. Our confidence steadily grew as we performed more medal ceremonies and became used to talking with our winning athletes and presenters from the Commonwealth nations. I was so overwhelmed with friends on Facebook tagging me on my wall every time they spotted me on the television and even to this day, people I haven't managed to see since the Commonwealth Games come up to me to say that they saw me on the television. This happened to me at Bedford parkrun on Christmas Day in 2022 when a runner pointed out to his son that it was me that they had seen on the television!



I had heard about the 10,000-metre walk taking place on the late Sunday morning and so I decided to get to work in plenty of time to watch this live event and oh my god, they were so quick on their feet. It makes me look rather slow! The judges were very strict and they disqualified an Australian athlete because he somehow broke the 'loss of contact or bent knee' rule. It was an honour to watch our English athletes, Tom Bosworth and Callum Wilkinson, compete. It wasn't their time to win a medal, with Wilkinson settling for fourth place. I managed to be a gold medal tray bearer for the Canadian walker Evan

Dunfee who won the race in 38 minutes and 36 seconds. It was an honour to walk up to him, standing on the podium, in front of a packed stadium. I managed to have a good chat with him afterwards and we even had a photo. I told him about my walking competitions and he encouraged me to keep practicing: the key is technique first and then work on the speed. All the athletes we met were so amazing to watch and chat with including Laura Muir, Scotland's 1,500 metre gold medallist, her team-mate Eilish McColgan who claimed silver with a gutsy run in the 5,000 metre race and of course our English wheelchair female athletes who stormed the podium.

I will probably never have another opportunity to volunteer at the Commonwealth Games as they only take place here in the home nations every 12 years on average. The Paris Olympics are coming up in 2024 and volunteer applications will open in February. I am tempted to apply and to see what happens, just like I did for Birmingham.

It is great to still be in touch with the friends I met at the Walsall campus, we let each other know about other volunteering opportunities, and I am in regular contact with my medal ceremony friends, telling each other about our latest sporting roles. Volunteering is a great opportunity to make some new friends, have fun learning new skills and to be a valuable part of our community. I would strongly recommend volunteering for something you enjoy because it may open up other opportunities. My time at the Commonwealth Games was undoubtedly a once in a lifetime opportunity that I will never forget.



The Greensand Ridge Relay

Stuart Knight took on 34.5 miles solo

The Greensand Ridge crosses Bedfordshire from Leighton Buzzard to Gamlingay. It includes the picturesque areas of Rushmere Country Park, the grounds of Woburn Abbey, Amphill Park, Maulden Woods, Haynes and Old Warden – covering most of the hilly parts of Mid Beds!

The race is simple: a team of six runs legs of varying lengths with changeover points at convenient road crossings to make up the 34.5-mile race to Northill. Each team decides on a start time, aiming to finish around 4:00 PM. The shortest leg is just under 4 miles and the longest leg is 9 miles, so no big distance efforts are required. Oh, there is one catch, there are no marshals along the way so you have to know the route, or you will get lost. There are plenty of waymarked posts, but they can easily be missed when running!

I decided on the crazier option

I decided on the crazier option, running all six legs as a solo runner. You miss out on the camaraderie of the team, but you've only got yourself to blame if you get lost - I wasn't going to do that: I spent most of my Easter holidays and weekends checking out the route. As I was doing this on my own, I had mapped out circular routes with only a little retracing of my steps to make it more interesting. I was familiar with leg 6, as I had run the 'glory leg' for a team the previous year and have run most of it on a regular basis.

I started my training/recces at Ridgmont in the middle of leg 3. I went down the hill across the footbridge over the M1 only to find the way-marker post lying on the ground. I had a printed map ... but no glasses. I saw a footpath across the field and followed it, but it wasn't actually a footpath as

there was no way out of the field on the other side. I worked it out in the end and recognised my planned route back. Who'd have thought going 90 degrees wrong would make such a difference?

After that the sessions became much easier to navigate with only minor checks on the route. I then tried out a few longer routes combining legs together. This involved my trusty support team, Sally, taking me to the start and meeting me in Amphill Park where she was forced to have a scone and hot chocolate with a friend. I then repeated some of the legs helping other runners with learning the route. I'm sure this involved Sally ending up with a hot chocolate again! I met a scout group, several Duke of Edinburgh groups, a lady running the whole race route a month early because she couldn't do the race date and a few runners doing the same as me.

Race day arrived. I started off alongside Oli Jones, with his support team of Kirsty who had snacks ready to provide for him at every checkpoint. A well-oiled team, more used to 100 miles, so this would just be a stroll for him. We met only one other runner who had already got lost in Rushmere. The first hill arrived; I outstripped Oli who then caught me up on the way down. He explained his plan of going slow up hills and at the next hill I left him again.

A few lonely hours passed; no more runners were seen. There was some activity at the checkpoints but as Sally was running a leg, I had no support team yet. At Millbrook I was greeted with a jam sandwich: my support team had arrived. In Amphill Park I was caught up by one runner and passed several others that were doing the full route. I met a friend at the Stone Jug in Clophill (not for a pint you understand), it was then I started to realise my



I had a printed map ... but no glasses.

legs had lost the love of hills. It was a painfully slow trudge up to Haynes and Deadman's Cross.

Only four miles to go I kept telling myself. The worst part however is that you get passed by many runners only doing 4 miles in total. With a fresh bounce they pass you but do congratulate you on running the whole route. As Northill approached I fully expected to be passed by Oli at any minute, with no energy left to do anything about it. With the church in sight, I mustered what passed for a sprint finish to record a time of five hours 45 minutes, in fourth place.

The walk to the pub was managed in stages, my body was ready to collapse rather than celebrate. I met up with Oli, he looked fresh and was probably going to run back to his car at the start!

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More info? <http://www.smoc.info/GSRR/>

UTMB® Ultra Trail Mont Blanc

Oli Jones on the road to UTMB

In 2016 I was truly bitten by the running bug after completing my first big city marathon in Barcelona. Things quickly escalated from that point as I followed my love for racing and endurance events into ultra-distance trail running. After completing a series of 50-mile trail races in the Lakes and on national trails around the UK, my sense of adventure drew my interest towards events further afield and mountain trail running in particular.

It wasn't long before I read about the UTMB and it immediately captured my interest. The race started in 2003 and built a reputation over the years for being one of the toughest mountain trail races in the world in the most stunning region of the Alps. It is 100 miles, starting and finishing in Chamonix, following the TMB trail through France, Italy and Switzerland, with an incredible 9,963m of ascent!



These days it attracts thousands of runners from around the world and the organisers have expanded it into a full week of races of various distances and difficulties. Part of the attraction of the UTMB, and one of the reasons it has attained such recognition, is that it has a unique entry process. Your right to participate has to be earned by collecting a number of 'UTMB points' from other qualifying races around the world. Points are determined by the difficulty 'index' of the race, so the longer the distance, the more total ascent, the rougher the terrain, the more points you get for completion. Your points have to be gained from a maximum of 2 qualifying events.

Collecting enough points to is only the start, it doesn't guarantee you entry to the main event – just to the ballot. If you don't get drawn in the ballot, your chances double the following year, and the year after, as long as you still have qualifying points of course, so you had better keep running! Finally,

when you do get your place, there is the medical check to pass and the strict kit list to adhere to.

Having set my sights on giving UTMB a go someday, many of the races I have taken part in over the last few years have either been to gain points or to train for this spectacular mountain bucket-list event. These have included 100Km around the Serpents Trail, 100 miles around Wendover Woods, The Snowdon 24hr (completing 6 ascents/descents) and running 215 miles across Scotland.

With my qualifying points I was lucky enough to get my ballot place drawn at the first attempt for CCC (100Km of the full UTMB) at the end of 2019 with a race date being early September 2020 ... and, well, we all know what happened (or rather didn't happen) after that.

Although I had completed many long runs, some of them pretty hilly, I was under no illusion that running in the Alps would be easy. There is nothing comparable in the UK – nowhere you can train for continuous climbs of the height and steepness of the Mont Blanc Massif. I had planned a spring holiday to train on the course and prepare for what was to come but COVID put a stop to that. The 2020 event was cancelled and my place was rolled over to 2021. However, with foreign travel still looking extremely risky and many restrictions still in place, I opted to defer to 2022.



And so it was that I finally found myself on 26th August in the town square of Courmayeur, Italy, packed in with thousands of equally nervous and excited trail runners, waiting to be set off into the mountains to make our way back to Chamonix, via Champex-Lac in Switzerland.

The Race

Everything about the UTMB has a reputation for being 'epic'. Epic scenery, epic climbs, and the start of the race is also nothing short of an epic experience. As Vangelis' rousing theme 'Conquest of Paradise' swelled on a huge sound system and the UTMB Master of Ceremonies said some inspiring words about courage in the face of adversity, it was enough to bring some to tears. Then suddenly it was time and our wave of hundreds of runners sped off, far too fast, through the town and straight out on to the first trail.

Everything about the UTMB has a reputation for being 'epic'.

From the town of Courmayeur it is only 5km to the first water stop/checkpoint at Refuge Bertone – what a shock to the system! In that distance you go straight up to 1,993m and boy was it steep. With so many runners on narrow trail switchbacks you immediately form a 'conga line' up the mountain; some get frustrated and try and push their way past, but they are quickly put in their place by the 'boos' from others in the queue.

Frankly, I was happy to have the excuse not to go any quicker than necessary because even at this early stage I couldn't quite get my head around how hard it really was.

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At the refuge I grabbed a drink of water but didn't need much else as I had a full race pack of supplies. What I did need was a rapid mental adjustment to the task ahead of me! It had just taken 1hr 15min to cover 5km and I had another 95km to go. I shouldn't really have been surprised by this as it wasn't far off my estimated time, but the difference between planning on paper and experiencing it for real was ... well, I admit I was feeling a little out of my depth! I distinctly remember thinking to myself that this could be the race I don't finish!

I didn't stop long to ponder my life choices – with clouds closing in and rain showers starting to hit I had to press on. But in my head, any plans and expectations I may have had before

the start went out the window. **From this point on I was in survival mode:** run on instinct, slow hike the ascents, make good progress wherever possible, don't take risks, minimise stops – get to the finish.

The next 5km to Refuge Bonatti at 2,000m was fairly runnable albeit now wet and slippery from the showers. Another quick water top-up and then a descent down to Arnouvaz at 1,800m, the first 'life-base' on our route. A life-base is an aid station where you can get food and supplies to keep you going along the way, but instead of jelly babies and crisps you get cold meats, cheeses, baguette, noodle soup, as well as fruits, French sweets and lots of other good stuff.

It was 2:30pm so the lunch stop was welcome. The rain didn't last long and fortunately it wouldn't return for the rest of the race. I'd been moving for 5hr 15min covering 16 miles, and the next section, up the Grand Col Ferret (2,500m), would be an absolute soul-destroyer!



It took me nearly an hour and a half to make it from the Arnouvaz to the top of the Col. Super-tough climb, horribly slow going again, but the payoff for that effort was an amazing view back down over the Aosta valley, now in bright, warm afternoon sunshine.

The 10 miles of the course down from Col Ferret at 19 miles to La Peule and then La Fouly at 1,600m was by far the best running of the whole race. Fast runnable single track for miles in gorgeous conditions, but even then, I had to be careful not to destroy my legs on the downhill.

By 6:30pm I was back on the valley floor at the foot of the 450m climb that would take me up to Champex-Lac and the life-base there for hot food, snacks and drinks. I made it by about 7:15pm and stopped in the extremely busy aid station. Thinking back, I'm trying to remember exactly what I did have to eat at this stop. One thing is certain – it definitely wasn't enough and I should have taken more time than I did, but not wanting to 'waste time' and sticking to my rule of making progress at all costs, I pushed on.



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the night, I followed a snake line of headtorch lights slowly making their way up in the distance. In my energy depleted state, not knowing the course, or really how long each new ascent would take, this next climb was nothing short of horrific. I'd been feeling nauseous for the last hour of climbing and 200m or so from the summit I lay down at the edge of the trail and was sick – for the first time ever in a race. Sick from the effort and from simply not eating enough.

I felt a lot better immediately after. I picked myself up and after a few minutes was able to eat something again. It gave me the boost I needed to get me over this penultimate hill and on my way down toward the last significant checkpoint at Vallorcine.

The problem with having gotten into such a low energy state and then being sick was that it was too late to pull it back around. Any energy I got through bits of food was quickly used up and then I'd feel ill again.



I took a long time to re-group at Vallorcine. I was not going to get this far and drop out. I knew the worst climb was just ahead but at least it was the final climb. Nothing for it but to give it a go ...

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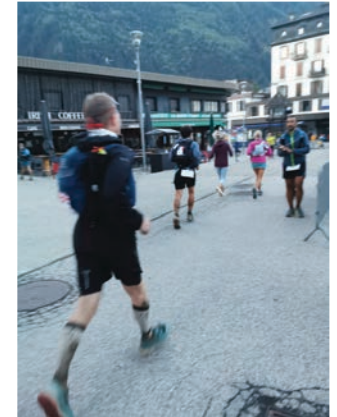
I summited La Tete aux Vents (2,121m) at around 4:30am – the two and a quarter hours it took me to get there I have relegated to the depths of my memory. I had to stop to be sick again at least once before the top, and to change my head-torch battery, which is not easy in pitch dark.

Now all I had to do was get down from the Lift Station at La Flégère down the ski run to the edge of Chamonix town, across the road bridge and then a final run for victory through the streets to the main square and the finish line. Exhausted, but suddenly feeling pretty amazing for finishing, I crossed the line in a time of 21 hours 30 mins.

Over half-way there but now getting cold going into the nighttime. After leaving Champex this is where things start to get a little hazy in my memory of the race. I put layers on and got my head torch ready and started a steady run toward the next mountain. The route description from mile 38 to the end is simple: 3 huge great climbs, 3 technical descents each one worse than the one before, and 3 checkpoints before dropping back down to Chamonix.

The first I made it over in fairly good shape, arriving in the checkpoint at Trient before 11pm. I tried to take time to have enough to eat to fuel me to the end, but it was getting hard – hard to organise myself, to get kit changed, to get food from the stations, hard to eat, and especially to keep warm while sat down and not moving. Two mountains to go! I just wanted this race done now and had to get moving again.

Now in the darkest part of



The Aftermath

After reading my race report you may be wondering why anyone would want to sign up for an event like this. Certainly, if you'd asked me if I had enjoyed it - as my wife Kirsty did minutes after crossing the big UTMB finish-line archway - I struggled to think of a single thing that had been fun about it! Would I go back? Noooo way - never!

... But two days later, after a good amount of rest, plenty of beers with friends both old and new, and lots of fantastic French food my whole perspective started to shift. That's the funny thing about endurance events...

Simply to describe the race itself, the process of progressing from start line to finish, misses so much of the point. Firstly, there's the huge sense of relief for having finished, and survived unscathed, quickly replaced by a massive feeling of achievement and satisfaction. The process of setting yourself a challenging goal, getting to the start line, living through the dark moments as well as the uplifting ones, and ultimately completing it can affect you in many positive ways for weeks and months afterwards.



the race really was only part of the experience

In a more practical sense, the race really was only part of the experience. The UTMB is really a week-long festival of trail running with everything from kit expos, talks and film showings, organised group runs, free yoga sessions, parties, music, food ... and with 6 or 7 different race events there is a constant stream of finishers coming down the main street to the cheers of the tourists and supporters. Kirsty and I had taken a 10-day holiday in Chamonix to soak it all up. Finishing CCC gave me satisfaction, but my enduring memories are from the days before and after.

More info? <https://utmb.world/>



stunning scenery on the way there. The atmosphere at the briefing was great with many tourists doing the run for the first time, mostly people on holiday. The organisers take their time to do a very detailed briefing with a large map on display which was great to see. The weather had been terrible in the days leading up to the event. It had been cold, rainy and windy. So, on the day we went it was nice to see an improvement with the sun out and clear blue skies. The morning was fresh with a temperature of 5 degrees throughout the morning run. The sand was nice and moist and perfect for running. For all the regulars I was told that conditions are very variable, the sand can either be bone dry in the height of summer or quicksand in winter.

In total there were 376 finishers, which is quite a large turnout for an isolated location!

There was a lot of excited chatter at the start line aided by a narrow assembly area. The course was full of parkrunners with few other beach users. The first kilometre was mostly downhill and fast followed by slower second and third kilometres. A much slower fourth kilometre involved going up the "Dune of Doom" hill, this was quite tough and steep. All runners walked up it as it wasn't possible to run. This was followed by a laboured continuous uphill final kilometre.

The course is essentially all on sand and beach with sand dunes in between; it was like a Famous Five adventure scene.

The finish line had a few supporters clapping on as the running field was spaced out. As always at post-run scanning there was a buzz of people milling around talking excitedly about their achievements or disappointments. The volunteers made the event special with all duties performed with a smile.

This is a great run to do for tourists and holidaymakers. You are not going to get a PB doing this run. But in my opinion, this is possibly the most scenic parkrun in the country, coupled with the fact that it is the second toughest in. It is also one of the friendliest I've experienced, making tourists feel very welcome. Put this run down in your bucket list as it will be etched in your memory forever.



A Busman's Holiday

Joe Warren & family's tourist parkrun experience at Woolacombe Parkrun

The Woolacombe parkrun takes place in the beautiful setting of Woolacombe Bay in Devon. My family and I went to this parkrun in April whilst on holiday in Croyde Bay, a truly wonderful part of the country.

Before the run I subjected my family to the YouTube videos available about the run. It all looked pretty daunting and tough. There was some apprehension in the air about doing it. So, I had to do some persuading!

As we were in Croyde Bay the journey was about 10 minutes and we passed some truly



Crossword Answers

Across

- Monday
- Wednesday
- Barkers
- Eighty five
- Yellow
- Doug
- Marathon
- No Limitz

Down

- Cake
- Track
- Oakley
- Three Counties
- Bedford
- Run
- Athletics

