

STRATFORD UPON AVON ATHLETIC CLUB



NEWSLETTER

Issue No 17 June 2007

There is currently a small working group comprising a mixture of Senior and Junior Committee Members who are reviewing the current Club Development Plan with a view to updating and enhancing it to bring clarity to the objectives of the club. The existing Development Plan is not a widely read document although you will be familiar with many of the aims and objectives within it as they are the reasons why we do so many things for and behalf of the club.

To give you a feel for the Plan (which is work in progress) I thought I would summarise some of the broad headings and the objectives we have drafted under each.

Membership

We will look to provide a safe, friendly, cost effective and happy environment to encourage the active participation of existing and new members irrespective of ability.

Financial

We will look to maintain our income streams - enhancing wherever possible - and reinvest that income to the benefit of the club and its members

Social

To ensure the club has a well organised / publicised programme of events that gives members opportunities to integrate and socialise and have a sense of belonging to the club.

Administration & Relationships

We will meet all the rules and requirements imposed upon us, and maintain / build excellent relationships with all local athletic clubs and associated bodies (e.g. English Athletics / Stratford Sports Club / Stratford Council) including the organising committees of the competitions that we choose to participate in.

Development

We will look to provide the facilities / framework to enable the club as a whole and members as individuals the opportunity to reach their maximum potential

Competition

Develop full participation in all aspects of athletics

Volunteers

To ensure the club has sufficient volunteers to support the clubs activities and obligations

Officials

To ensure the club has sufficient officials to support the clubs activities and obligations

Feedback on how the Club could develop is always appreciated (to Paul H, Dawn or myself) or on the Junior side to Paul B, Sandie Evans or Michael Lane

Thanks to every one who has contributed to this issue. Your continued support via articles or gossip is much appreciated.

Tony Jackson

Editor

Contact the Editor - Articles / Feedback Wanted

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Talk to me*	@ training on Mondays, Wednesdays or on a Sunday Morning

Editors Note - A Word of Explanation

In my never ending quest to get articles for the newsletter I occasionally hear of an 'event' that justifies a wider audience. This usually necessitates me constantly 'badgering' the person or persons concerned to put something down on paper. My success rate is mixed but usually I can rely on one of my regulars to come up with something. This month I have been chasing Keith or Rob to share their experiences of their trip to Sunderland and lo and behold they have BOTH produced excellent articles. I did have the option of selecting one or the other, or combining into one article but recognising the literary merit of both articles I have decided to include both in this edition of the newsletter. At least this avoids any allegation of bias, ensures that both Keith and Rob get to tell their side of the story and helps me fill up the newsletter with some excellent reading

Road Trip (to the National X-Country Championships 2007 – and insanity by Rob)

To enlighten those of you who are unaware or have never run the Nationals before, they are a chance to pit yourself against the very best runners our nation has to offer. You get to rub shoulders with International runners like Frank Tickner and Hugh Loeb (all be it for a couple of minutes at the start before the gun goes off) and admire the determination and ability of Liz and Hayley Yelling (without making them aware that you are stalking them - Keith).

It was without hesitation that I agreed to Paul's question as to whether I would run the Nationals. It was only later on that I found out they were to be held in Sunderland (which would mean travelling up the day before). This would mean leaving Dawn for a whole night. How would we both cope? Without her who would tuck me in at night and read me a bed time story?

The previous year the club managed to field an impressive team of runners in a number of different age groups but due to this year's location only 6 brave runners (and two parents) ventured out on the road trip "up North".

It was decided that we would convoy up in two cars. Paul Hawkins was to take two juniors – Sam and Katie Taylor and their mum Karen in his car, and I was to go with Keith Hawkes. Quite how I was going to entertain myself on the journey up with Keith in the car I was not quite sure, but I made sure my Ipod was fully charged and ready to go just in case the conversation got a little boring.

I didn't need to worry. After a brief game of I spy (Keith might want to improve on his strategy on going with P for Paul who was in the car in front) we then moved onto creating words using the three letters on any given number plate which kept us entertained for a good half hour. But then calamity struck. On the M1 the traffic got reduced to a slow crawl. Paul at that stage was doing an impressive job of weaving from one lane to another while we were trying to work out a possible route via A and B roads. After deciding to stay on the motorway, Keith then had an inspiration. "Let's discuss in detail our favourite slip roads of motorways". This kept us going all the way up to the outskirts of Sunderland (which took about four and a half hours). Oh what fun we had!

Karen was navigating from the passenger seat in Paul's car in front of us, although Keith kept an eye on the directions in our car just in-case we got dropped (and to make sure Karen was going the right way – so Keith said). We eventually arrived at the most impressive hotel, whose reception and restaurant area were made out of two train carriages.

We booked in and then got around to what was worrying a few of us, the sleeping arrangements. Keith all the way up had been describing incidents where he had slept walked, how he would keep everyone up all night and that he should have the single room. When it came to it however, Paul managed to cleverly manoeuvre into the single room, which meant that I was stuck with Keith as my "roomy".

Following a meal at a local Italian (where a mad waiter thought that Paul and Karen were Mum and Dad to Sam and Katie (not sure who he thought Keith and I were) we had a brief walk along the beach promenade before retiring to our rooms. Keith refused to read me a bed time story but instead tried to scare me by recalling further sleep walking incidents. This backfired on him however, as I fell asleep immediately my head touched the pillow and he tossed and turned all night and only had about an hours sleep.

Breakfast the next day was a mixed affair. Sam, although quiet the previous day, noisily ate through a full cooked breakfast. Impressive in itself but outstanding considering he was racing first at 11am. We seniors had a dilemma as our race was not until 3pm, so we stocked up on weetabix, porridge and the largest plate of scrambled egg in the world.

The race itself is not necessarily important in detail compared to the joys of spending a weekend in Keith's company (during the race we were only briefly together). All six courageous runners performed very well on an interesting course run over rejuvenated former mining land. With surprisingly dry underfoot conditions, but an interesting headwind there were a mix of challenges to contend with and contend we did with some great performances.

Katie Taylor	3K U13 Girls	13:51 (199th)
Sam Taylor	4.5K U15 Boys	19:57 (246 th)
Jack McMullen	4.5K U15 Boys	17.46 (162 nd)
Rob Minton	12K Senior Men	44:37 (224 th)
Keith Hawkes	12K Senior Men	52:17 (591 st)
Paul Hawkins	12K Senior Men	54:53 (694th)

More important however was the race to the nearby folly that overlooked the course and surrounding countryside (I think the Taylor's youthfulness helped them to win that one).

One amazing incident was when Keith and I bumped into a member of Sunderland AC who is friend with Roger Wilson (ex-Sunderland now Stratford runner). I was trying to initiate a deal which would allow us to swap Keith as part of the package for Roger until I found out he had come across on a free transfer (plus the guarantee of a few beverages with John Turner).

So unfortunately with Keith still in tow, we ventured back to the car for the journey home which took a whole two hours less than the journey up. It did however give us enough time to go through one of Keith's mixed tapes of every Eurovision Song Contest winner since time began. I thought he might fall asleep on the way back but he had cleverly placed the 2006 winning song – Lordi and Hard Rock Hallelujah as every 3rd track. So some serious head-banging prevented him entering the land of nod.

We eventually found ourselves back home and I can honestly say I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience and would recommend anyone no matter what level of runner you are to give this one a go.

Next years event is being held in the Midlands on 23rd February. (so no-one will need to share or room or possibly have to travel to the venue with Keith)

DIDN'T WE HAVE A LOVELY TIME THE DAY WE WENT TO SUNDERLAND by Keith

Whatever my state of form and fitness I'm always keen to do the National XC Championships, one of my favourite events of the year, since they're always held on 'proper' XC courses and are a great chance to run with (for the first 100m) some of the country's best athletes. Having missed Parliament Fields in 2006 through injury I was determined that the same wouldn't happen this year, despite another fairly depressing winter running-wise. Also, with the race being staged in Sunderland (it gets rotated geographically) I was determined to support an event where travelling distance was putting off a lot of people.

And so it came to pass that three wise men, two even wiser juniors and one parent found themselves crawling up a traffic clogged M1 on a sunny Friday afternoon in March. I was in Rob Minton's car, and had already decided that my main aim for the weekend was to see how much annoyance he could take before snapping – no-one can be that easy going can they? It started badly as he was very laid back about the state of the M1, and I then found out that his whole family were just as talented as him – we listened to a fantastic CD that his Mum had recorded, and discovered that his Dad is a successful businessman. Irritating.

After 6.5 hours of crawling along we arrive at Sunderland still in convoy – Paul Hawkins' car containing Karen Taylor and offspring Katie (U13) and Sam (U15). Amazingly enough we somehow negotiate our way through the town OK, and get onto the sea road going north to Seaburn. After going through some less than glamorous areas ("I'm sure that your shiny new car will be just fine here overnight Rob" I snigger) we get to something a bit jollier, and can't really miss our hotel – it has an old railway carriage at the front as a reception and dining room. Decision time – who gets the single room to themselves? To continue my campaign of harassment I needed to be sharing with Rob, so I let Paul have it, with the Taylor clan in another.

We dump our bags and then a couple of friendly policemen send us in the direction of a decent Italian restaurant nearby, where we have a pleasant evening along with the obligatory excitable Frankie Dettori-type Italian waiter. A relaxing post-meal stroll along the sea-front revealed that there actually aren't always bitterly cold winds in this part of the world and also, rather bizarrely, that some people like to fly kites on the beach in the dark. Is this a northern thing Roger?

Just before we switch the lights off at night I mention to Rob about my sleepwalking and nocturnal fire-starting habits, but annoyingly he sleeps soundly and I toss and turn. Everyone wakes up in the early hours though as Sam arrives back drunkenly, singing the national anthem in a fireman's uniform after clubbing in the city centre. (It is possible that I may have dreamt that bit though).

The next morning Rob wakes me up with a honey and lemon surprise, which is nice! The boy wonder likes to start the day with lemon and honey dissolved in hot water and, bless him, he brought enough for two. I leave Rob having a bath and walk along the front and, remarkably, the beach and sea look really inviting and I'm tempted to just dive in (but not quite that tempted). Sam looks none the worse at breakfast for his late night escapades (it probably was just a dream) so I don't bring it up.

The others head off for Herrington Country Park, a few miles south-west of the town, since the juniors' races start quite early, and Rob and I follow at a more leisurely pace. We meet up with Jack McMullen, running with Sam in the U15 boys' race, who has been up in Newcastle all weekend on a stag do (I think that's what his Dad said). The three juniors all have good runs and we start to explore the course, which looks to be up to the usual high standard. Despite a lot of rain in the previous few weeks the going is good to firm, possibly because the park is a well-draining reclaimed coal pit, and with two nice hills on one half of the course there's something for everyone.

As we go round the course we chat to one of the marshals, who is very interested in how one of their ex-members – Roger Wilson – is getting on down south. Obviously Roger was as popular up there as he is down here. With a couple of hours to go to the senior men's race we all troop up an extremely steep hill to inspect the nearby Peshaw monument – an ideal warm-up for a tough race! When we get back down we bump into Mike Warner ('Spike', son of Mick), who many from the club may remember as an extremely good and active member before his migration to a village near Durham. He's not running at all these days and said afterwards that when he saw Rob gliding round he got a great urge to run again, which miraculously seemed to disappear a few minutes later when he saw myself and Paul grimacing along behind!

The man on the PA states that the start of the senior men's National XC race is one of the great sights in British athletics, and I for one wouldn't argue with that (the first time I did it the experience made my bits slightly tingle). The first mile is not quite such a bunfight as normal, although there are still over a thousand competitors, and with poor fitness I set my targets for the 12K 3-lap course – get under an hour and don't get lapped. The wind has built up throughout the day to a stage where the flat half of the course, against the gale, is actually harder than the hilly half that has the benefit of the elements. I struggle round though, achieving my first target a lot easier than the second (I think the winner failed to lap me by only a couple of minutes). Rob and Paul both have excellent runs and thankfully, since we discovered that there were no showers, there were a distinct lack of muddy legs at the finish. The journey back that evening was going to be long enough without our legs being set in concrete!

After bidding farewell to Spike, we all stop at the first service station on the A1 to refuel bodies and cars. Rob appears with what looks like a 'You Are What You Eat' family's weekly intake, but in fact he's treated Sam and Katie since they were so patient all afternoon in the cold wind. My campaign to discredit him has not gone well at all and I make one last effort in the car to bore him while he's tired and a long way from home, but even 20 minutes on cloud formations doesn't seem to do the trick. After this I give up, relax and reflect on a weekend of good fun and good running with a group of annoyingly nice people.

10 Things I learnt From my 'work experience' day as a Track & Field Official

- 1 On reflection the decision by the SAC T&F officials not to wear fancy dress (based on the theme of The Jungle Book) was the correct one.
- 2 Gardening is the ideal development ground for raking the Long Jump pit
- 3 Even for two responsible adults the temptation to have a mock fight with the rakes is too great
- 4 No matter how well things are going you can trust John Turner to point out something you're doing wrong.
- 5 It surely isn't right for officials to hope for a 'no jump' so that they can get to roll flat that strip of plasticine.
- 6 It's surprising how nervous you get when the T&F Referee walks past.
- 7 It was exciting when one competitor fell back leaving a hand mark close to the edge of the pit which meant I could observe the practical application of Rule 126 (8)
- 8 Helping the senior official to fill in the results is no guarantee that it will be done correctly or tidily – especially as rubbing out ball point pen isn't an option
- 9 Even with all those helpful marks and numbers on the tape measure it helps to have someone to double check the distance.
- 10 Concentrating is difficult when you are 5 yards from the steeplechase water jump and the Club Chairman is swimming in it every two minutes.

Editors Notes:

a) Hopefully the fact that I enjoyed being an official for the day comes out in the above article. On a serious side the club needs officials to ensure that the club is properly represented at the various leagues we compete in. The club loses points otherwise. If you are interested in putting something back into the club / sport this is an ideal opportunity. Help and support is available from the club to help you achieve a level of competency. If you are interested please speak to Paul H,

b) As a simple formula for producing an article for the newsletter, describing a runner related activity by using the 10 things I like / hate / learnt / laughed at etc is well recommended. There are other examples in this edition to get you thinking and hopefully inspire your contribution for the next edition.

EVERYTHING YOU NEEDED TO KNOW ABOUT EXERCISE AND DIETING

Q: I've heard that cardiovascular exercise can prolong life: is this true?

A: Your heart is only good for so many beats, and that's it... Don't waste them on exercise. Everything wears out eventually. Speeding up your heart will not make you live longer: that's like saying you can extend the life of your car by driving it faster. Want to live longer? Take a nap.

Q: Should I cut down on meat and eat more fruits and vegetables?

A: You must grasp logistical efficiencies. What does a cow eat? Hay and corn. And what are these? Vegetables. So a steak is nothing more than an efficient mechanism of delivering vegetables to your system. Need grain? Eat Chicken. Beef is also a good source of field grass (green leafy vegetable). And a pork chop can give you 100% of your recommended daily allowance of vegetable products.

Q: Should I reduce my alcohol intake?

A: No, not at all. Wine is made from fruit. Brandy is distilled wine, which means they take the water out of the fruity bit so you get even more of the goodness that way. Beer is also made out of grain. Bottoms up!

Q: How can I calculate my body/fat ratio?

A: Well, if you have a body and you have fat, your ratio is one to one. If you have two bodies, your ratio is two to one, etc.

Q: What are some of the advantages of participating in a regular exercise program?

A: Can't think of a single one, sorry. My philosophy is: No Pain....Good!

Q: Aren't fried foods bad for you?

A: You're not listening....Foods are fried these days in vegetable oil. In fact, they're permeated in it. How could getting more vegetables be bad for you?

Q: Will sit-ups help prevent me from getting a little soft around the middle?

A: Definitely not! When you exercise a muscle, it gets bigger. You should only be doing sit-ups if you want a bigger stomach.

Q: Is chocolate bad for me?

A: Are you crazy? HELLO Cocoa beans! Another vegetable. It's the best feel-good food around.

Q: Is swimming good for your figure?

A: If swimming is good for your figure, explain whales to me.

Q: Is getting in-shape important for my lifestyle?

A: Hey! 'Round' is a shape!

Well I hope this has cleared up any misconceptions you may have had about food and diets.

And remember:

"Life should NOT be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in an attractive and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways – Chardonnay in one hand – chocolate in the other – body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming "WOO HOO, What a Ride!"

Circuit training, continued.....

1. Never write articles accusing Rob Minton of being vile and horrible before the series has finished.....
2. Rob Minton is in fact a really incredibly nice guy honest
3. Its really difficult to stand on one leg while holding the other earlobe without laughing
4. After several weeks of practice most women can do nearly all of the exercises whilst still talking. Much to Rob's irritation.
5. Its amazing how much you can say in a minute.
6. The ability to "lunge" is clearly genetic and not acquired, and I didn't inherit it.
7. Amongst many things the Romans gave us were despicably painful chairs.
8. In normal life I can no longer hear the words "hold" and "halfway" without an immediate cold sweat, shaking and other symptoms of terror.
9. Rob has a completely different interpretation of the phrase "nearly there" compared to the rest of mankind.
10. In spite of the pain Circuit Training is great fun, and we all recommend it. Mostly. And we have got more supple. Well a bit anyway. Rome wasn't built in a day (although they obviously never sat down)

Editors Note: To protect the innocent I should point out that the unattributed article on circuit training in the last edition was the work of none other than Keith 'William Shakespeare' Hawkes. To protect Keith from further abuse from Rob I should point out that the above is a work of art from Sarah B.

Lesley & Sarah's big Adventure

Dynamic Adventure Endurance Race

Sat 25th March 2007

I've always quite fancied the idea of adventure racing but for one reason or another, had never actually tried it. So, when Sarah Bland, fellow member and Adventure Racer Extraordinaire, suggested I team up with her in her next race, it seemed too good an opportunity to miss.

What I hadn't realised at the time was that it was to be an eight hour non-stop combination of running and biking - some of which would be covered in the dark! I discovered there was also a five hour version on the Sunday (which seemed a lot more appealing to me), but Sarah said it was far too short and purely for wimps and beginners!

So, having run out of excuses as the day neared, Sarah and I set off early for the New Forest in her big camper truck thingy, which was to be our luxury accommodation overnight. It contained everything a five star hotel could provide, even having a kitchen and full shower facilities. All I knew was, I was already looking forward to seeing it again at the end of the day.

We arrived and parked in a field next to the registration hut. I started getting nervous as cars and trucks appeared with mountain bikes attached to the back and serious-looking adventure types milling round with their camelbacks, woolly hats and other outdoorsy gear already in place.

We had half an hour to get changed before the race briefing. I checked out my mountain bike (Sarah had lent me), my head torch (Sarah had lent me), my compass (Sarah had lent me) my camelback (Sarah had lent me) and got changed ready for the run (at least I had my own gear for that). Sarah said it was better to run first as we could then navigate in the dark on the bike. I didn't really want to think about that bit.

At 12 noon, we started off in groups at two minute intervals; some on bike, some on foot, in teams of two's, three's or as an individual. The idea was to cover as many checkpoints as possible in an eight hour period, before heading back to base. I had looked at the map we were given in the race briefing and couldn't make head nor tail of it. Navigation was not my strong point, and as for using a compass.....!! I was going to have to rely totally on Sarah to get us through.

In complete contrast and totally at ease with the situation, a cheerful Sarah suggested our plan of action and we headed off towards our first checkpoint. We began by following a couple of guys who seemed to know exactly where they were going, but soon lost them in the trees and gorse bushes. After running backwards and forwards for approx twenty minutes, we finally came to our first CP hidden behind a tree and punched a marker in the relevant box on our card.

We continued on, and with each CP successfully found, our confidence grew. We ran at a comfortable pace, sometimes spotting other runners in the distance, but generally, we were on our own. Some checkpoints were easier to find than others and at one point we were totally lost in the trees, but then got back on track. The terrain varied from open scrubland to pine forest, with New Forest ponies wandering around completely oblivious to us.

So keen were we to cover as many checkpoints as possible on foot, we hadn't realised how much time had slipped by. We had been out for nearly six hours! In fact, when we arrived back at base, the organiser was about to send out a search party as we were so late!!

By now we were both tired and hungry, but undaunted; we quickly changed into our bike gear, topped up with bananas and isotonic drinks, before heading out into the ensuing darkness. I was relieved to know we only had a couple of hours left to spend on the bike – and at least we would be sitting down while doing it!

The bike section was indeed, as Sarah had said, easier than I expected. We followed the bike trails through the forest, picking out the route with our head torches and bike lights. There was something surreal about

being out there cycling in the dark on a Saturday night. Especially, each time a pony, deer or rabbit suddenly appeared out of the darkness!

With another five CP's under our belt and only twenty minutes remaining of the 8 hour deadline, we headed back to base. The final few miles were on road, but fatigue was starting to take over and we struggled to cover the distance. We passed runners heading for home, while at the same time being overtaken by fellow bikers also rushing to get back by 8pm. We didn't quite make it, arriving back at 8.07pm. However, despite picking up penalty points for going over time, we were both elated.

We dumped our bikes and kit back in the truck, grabbed a quick, blissful shower and cup of tea, before heading the thirty yards or so back to the registration hut for the prize presentation at 9pm. Unfortunately, by the time we got there, we'd missed most of it, but were pleased to discover we had picked up a prize for first female pair. It didn't matter to us that it was because we were the ONLY female pair!

We retired back to our luxury accommodation, opened the wine, cooked a fabulous meal of chicken pie, jacket potato and veg (none of which touched the sides) and congratulated ourselves on our achievement. On eventually retiring to bed, I slept really well - even the ponies munching grass outside the window all night, couldn't keep me awake.

Thanks Sarah for a great weekend.

www.dynamicadventureracing.co.uk

10 THINGS I LEARNT ON TRI TRAINING CAMP IN GREECE by Keith Hawkes

1. At the grand old age of 44 I can at last change a bicycle inner tube – my Dad is going to be so proud of me!
2. Try and avoid going to activity resorts at the top of a very long and very steep hill. Seven days of going up it when it's hot and you've just finished a bike ride, or run, or a walk into the nearest village, or you've left something in your room, and believe me the novelty wears off.
3. The nice coaching man was spot on when he said "Take that tight turn very slowly otherwise you'll fall off your bike".
4. It is physically possible to eat the equivalent of 6 large meals a day and still fit into your wetsuit with surprising ease.
5. Open-water swim racing seems to turn previously mild-mannered, gentle folk into older versions of the Karate Kid – what you thought was a tan was actually just bruising.
6. If God had meant me to come down a Greek mountain road at 46 mph on two wheels then he would have given me some b*****ks and some more money for a decent bike.
7. Every detailed talk I hear about nutrition and sport seems to leave me even more confused than the last one.
8. Trying to get my feet into cycling shoes whilst I'm on it and moving may have the potential for a 10-second transition saving, but it has a much greater potential for a short stay in hospital.
9. Doing open-water swimming in the clear blue, warm waters of Greece just sneaks it over Market Bosworth on a wet, cold day in April.
10. And finally.....! If you're not sure where you should be sticking your bike bag (or in my case a borrowed bike bag) for taking back to the airport, then it's perhaps best for us kids to double-check with a responsible adult. At the time of writing (22 days later) and it's made it back as far as a DHL depot in Coventry, via Brighton and a few other places.

Allan Coldicott – 25 years on

Ever heard the saying 'there is no such thing as a free lunch' – Well here is your chance to prove it's wrong. To celebrate his being a club member for 25 years Allan has kindly set a question for the membership with the prize being a Sunday Lunch chez Coldicott for 2. Cooking and washing up is courtesy of Allan (or Mrs C) – at a time / date to be agreed at the winners convenience.

The question is how many miles has Allan **raced** in the past 25 years. Race miles include all road and XC races but not Shakespeare races.

Being Allan he will have the correct answer to the nearest foot – but anticipating that guessing the right answer is going to be impossible **the winner will be the entry closest to the correct answer.**

Allan has not yet embraced the technological age of electronic communication so as they used to say in the olden days when Allan first joined the club – Answers on a Postcode to Allan @ 23 Sackville Close, Stratford upon Avon CV37 9LB or pass your answer direct to Allan (he's usually at training on a Wednesday)

Closing date for entries is 31st July 2007.

My Secret Life as a Marathon Coach

I am sure that I am not alone in taking my trainers and kit when going on holiday and earlier this year was no exception as the Family Jackson headed for Tenerife and some Easter sunshine. Usually the fortnight training session is based around lonely and relatively slow runs as I take the opportunity to explore the neighbourhood. (NB Paul kindly put together a warm weather training programme for me to follow whilst I was away consisting of, among other things, a 20 mile fartlek session, 12 x 1000m hill reps and a 6 x 5000m track session. Despite my best intentions I would be lying if I claimed I followed this programme to the letter!) However, this year was slightly different as on my second run I was flagged down by an attractive woman who said her husband was training for the London Marathon and would welcome some company and support whilst they were in Tenerife. Being the kindly person I am I gave her my phone number (did I mention she was attractive?) and said I would be quite happy to arrange a meeting (with her husband) Following a quick exchange of texts we were set for 8.30am the next morning. (actually on my part 'quick' was not the word. Still being a bit of a luddite on such matters it was quite an initiation into the world of texting for me)

Meeting and running with new people is always a bit of experience because one never knows how good or bad the other runner is going to be. Imagine meeting up with Paula Radcliffe and going for a 'steady run' – of 20 miles at 6 min mile pace!! Anyway no such problems with Tyrone – he's looking for c 4hrs at London – and I have no problem with his pace and take the opportunity to tell him of some of my running experiences. (He didn't seem too bored!) Although he was new to running he did admit to having been a keen footballer and eventually admitted to playing at a very decent standard – semi professional with Woking in the Conference.

For the rest of that week before he returned home we met each day and we parted with the best advice I could give him for the big day – Take it easy at the beginning drink plenty of fluids and remember that 20 miles is half way, but most of all enjoy it.

I assumed that would be the last I heard of Tyrone but for those of you who read Runners World take a look at page 51. Out of 20,000 runners they have a short feature on 12 of them and one of them is – yes you've guessed it Tyrone. His finishing time was 4hrs 54min 50sec and his quote was

"I'm disappointed. I've done a half in 1hr 49min so I was hoping for under 4 hrs. I got cramp after about 17 miles and that slowed me right down. But I've pictured myself crossing that line a hundred times. I would have crawled across it if I'd needed to".

Unfortunately editorial licence and space limitations mean that his quote about the expert coaching he received in Tenerife being so important to his preparation has been omitted but I'm sure that is what he said (or at least should have said!!) Nevertheless my reward is having met someone with the fantastic name of Tyrone Hercules

GUCR Report

The Grand Union Canal Race (GUCR) is run from the centre of Birmingham to the centre of London along the Grand Union Canal. Competitors are required to complete the 145 mile distance within the time limit of 45 hours.

This year Kim Johnstone was one of the lucky 80 runners on the start line. Here is his report

What a weekend!

Everything started well at 06:00 AM on Saturday morning. In order to run 145 miles I calculated I'd need to average 5 MPH to the first Checkpoint at 11 miles, then slow down to 4.5 MPH for 22, 36, 53 Checkpoints in order to reach the cut off point at 70 miles by 01:00 AM on Sunday, 19 hours into the race. After that it would be a case of walking at at least 3.5 MPH to hopefully finish in 45 hours, allowing for stops. Perhaps I'd run parts of the last bits. Best laid plans and all that.....

After 20 or so miles everything was great. Sunny (although expecting rain on Sunday), ahead of schedule with a short stop at 11. I had met up with a chap who had once run from Oxford to Cambridge, on his own, in winter. He'd given up playing rugby seriously some months before and was doing this to keep fit. It seemed like a good partnership as we were combining spots of running with a bit of jogging and fast walking. Perhaps we'd keep each other company for the race. At 22 we set off on a run and I felt a funny numb pain in my left leg, nothing like I'd had ever before. I sent my mate on – rule is every man for himself. I remembered that last year's winner had a similar problem cured by ibuprofen gel. Tried that, tried running, the same. Walked for a bit, tried running, same. Then took some ibuprofen capsules; still no improvement. Maybe I'm getting cramp because I've drunk too much water? Took some salt (ugh!) same problem. I realised that something was up which had made it doubtful I would finish however I could walk fast OK so I worked out that I could just about do the whole lot by walking and not taking much time (had allowed 30 minutes) at the stops.

So I started walking, occasionally running, having to stop after a few minutes. Then the rain started. Whilst there are many stretches with paved or tarmacked towpath many stretches were grassy; my running shoes got wet and without going into details my feet began to suffer. It didn't seem proper to retire so I pushed on, reaching 36, then 53 miles. In order to go past 70 miles I needed to reach the 70 mile Checkpoint by 01:00 AM on Sunday i.e. 19 hours. I decided that I had to do this in order to get past the furthest distance I have run before which is 85 miles. Time was pressing and I ended up hopping/hobbling the last few miles to get to 70 miles with 25 minutes to spare. Some beans and quiche and off again through the night.

Hopefully the occupants of moored canal boats weren't woken by a loony runner singing Monty Python's 'Always Look On the Bright Side of Life' at 02:00 AM. The night was a bit spooky especially as by now I knew I couldn't run away from any trouble. Finally the birds woke up, dawn rose and I found myself in Milton Keynes – lovely. 85 miles was possible, maybe 100, even 120, however my feet were suffering from the damp uneven surface and I didn't dare look to see the damage. I reached 85 with 45 minutes to spare. The rule with the Checkpoint is that you must reach it otherwise you are automatically retired, However, even if you reach it with only a minute to spare you are permitted to carry on to the next stage. The volunteers at some of the checkpoints had been there in the rain for 10, 15 hours, allowing for the leaders and stragglers like me. I worked out that at my 'staggering' pace I'd get there just on 12:00 Sunday, the cut off point. The next stage was 20 miles. I had actually run the 45 miles from the 100 stop to the end on 'shorter' events this year and last so knew that although the towpath was better there were some dodgy areas to get through. I also realised that whilst I could make 100 I wouldn't make 120 so would be stranded and may be have to walk back. Plus because I was last I would be keeping all the marshalls waiting. I decided that 100 miles, given the knee and the rain and the feet, was something to be pleased about, so rang ahead to tell the Checkpoint that although I'd get there on time, I was going for a 'century'.

More ibuprofen, lots of singing, and I finally met up and overtook a fellow runner, Rainer, who spoke little English and was wandering all over the place. Gave him some pro plus tablets then his support crew (I didn't have one) turned up and sorted him out. I reached 100 miles just at 12:00 and knew it would be foolish to carry on. I felt OK fitness wise and had eaten and drank well however I wanted to come home with something resembling feet, and had worked out that in order to finish I would have to run the last stage at half marathon pace. Or steal a boat.

So, I'm afraid I managed 100, which was not quite as much as I had hoped. However I got home to see the results, which have put things into perspective slightly:

- 83 entered, 8 pulled out beforehand
- 75 due to start, 68 actually started
- 33 finished
- 35 retired (they don't say 'did not finish' as there is more likelihood that one won't make it
- 2 ended up in hospital; have recovered OK
- A previous two time winner retired

2008? Don't ask, I may say 'yes'.

Postscript: 1 week after - I'm going for it!

The Longest Day (a.k.a The Hilly Hundred)

5.04am The cat stretches beside me, nonchalantly sticks a claw in my leg and I stir. Glancing across at the alarm clock I fleetingly realise that somewhere not so many miles away there are people who have already started running. To think people choose to do leg One. Incredible.

9.36am I have an important assignment which prays on my mind – moving Rob, Team Manager from his car to his start at leg four. All my kit is ready and I begin to put it in the car.

9.46am I really need to be on the road, but somehow still haven't quite finished deciding exactly which fleece I might need at the finish, which bag I should have at the start and which at the finish. Will I need an extra drink just in case? Oh S*** I forgot my watch...

9.54am I set off. Of course I am immediately reminded that Sunday morning is the territory of those taking Granny out for an airing, moving the caravan, taking the beloved vintage tractor to a rally or going to a horse show. At 5 miles an hour. I wish that I had set off earlier.

10.30am I break the law and the news to Rob that I am still the wrong side of Stow. He is his usual relaxed self and calmly tells me that there is an accident on the Fosse anyway. Given two minutes we are back on the phone with cross country directions. I do some overtaking manoeuvres that would impress Stirling Moss, which is difficult in a Mitsubishi pickup.

11.10 Rob is safely dropped at his start point, thankfully before Steve Kirk finishes leg 3. I heave a sigh of relief and set off back to Moreton to meet Pete Law. I find that all the slow traffic has now turned around and is once again going the same way as me. Including about five thousand scooters off to a rally somewhere in the area.

11.40 Pete wrestles with his mobile phone and manages to persuade it to call me. We speak whilst waving at each other – I have arrived.

12.15 Waiting at the start of leg 7, gradually other runners arrive. Pete and I are joined by Paul Hawkins and then we are all surprised to see a cheerful Martin Ashworth bounding along to meet us. Martin happened to have the (mis?!) fortune to meet Rob and Dawn out recruiting on Friday night whilst innocently walking through Stratford. It kind of sums up the whole great spirit of the Hilly Hundred.

12.36 There is a shout "runner!" We all look back down the road. Oh God its Debbie, that means it's me, am I ready? S*** s*** I leap around in a panic, but then realise I am ready. Onto the fray...the baton is in my hand and I am off. Although I have not driven my route I know from looking at the map that it's all downhill at the start, which is brilliant. I feel invincible striding along, gravity on my side for once. I even feel able to look at the gorgeous scenery and pretty houses.

12.43 Mmmm. The invincibility is wearing a bit thin now.

12.54 A red Peugeot keeps driving past me and then stopping. As I go past the driver looks at her watch. The intervals between her coming past me and stopping seem to be getting shorter. This can only mean one thing....

12.55 I look behind me. I do have someone approaching but its Pete. Can't quite decide how to feel so just carry on running.

12.59 Pete goes cheerily past me. Fantastic. At least we still have a Stratford runner at the front.

1.10 I feel like I know this woman in the red car really well now. If she had a clock on the top I'd pretend I was Paula Radcliffe for a while (well we can all dream)

1.18 I am starting to get annoyed by this car now. Still, not long to wait before I am overtaken, I can hear footsteps behind me. Thinking about it it is probably the hill that is starting to annoy me. It's been going on for a while now.

1.20 The hill continues. I am no longer in front. There are some vintage trial motorbikes all around me as I trudge upwards – they keep popping out onto the road and then going back into the woods again. It looks fun – what on earth made me think that running was an easier sport.

1.20.10 Is it really only ten seconds since I last looked at my watch?

- 1.21 This is ridiculous. I have been going up hill for bloody ever now. Whose idea was it to have this stupid race anyway?
- 1.21 I wrestle with myself about the "WALKING" issue. My legs tell me that I really need to walk and it would be so much easier to drink whilst walking. My pride won't let me. I have a big argument with myself and the moment is saved by a passing car. One must never be seen...
- 1.40 I am finally near the top. I feel like I am about to die. There are now several cars around; no doubt someone else will overtake me shortly. The summit is marked by a main road. As I am waved over the road by a person from another club I fleetingly wonder if I should trust them but I am too relieved to be at the top to care!
- 1.50 The reward for all my hard work is a two kilometre down hill stretch. It feels wonderful even if I know it's not going to feel quite that way tomorrow. I hope so much that its downhill all the way to the end. The thought of going up again has got completely out of proportion.
- 2.05 I had forgotten that at the bottom of the hill was a two kilometre flat run, which after the downhill I have done feels like I am pushing an elephant. Can't wait to get to the end. Not long now. The cold fear that there won't be someone in a yellow vest waiting to take the precious bit of plastic from me starts to set in. Stuff of nightmares.....
- 2.10 At last I see the throng of waiting runners rather absurdly mixed in among those having a lunchtime pint at the pub in Moreton. My eyes frantically search for a yellow vest and yes, its there. Yvonne awaits me and I can manage a bit of a sprint knowing I can stop soon. She goes, its over!
- 2.11 I feel great now. Pete and I watch a few runners pass the baton. Tony and Tessa (resplendent in brand new vest to mark her coercion into the club membership) are waiting to go. Tessa seems very good natured about it. (That'll change halfway up the first hill!)
- 3.10 Having got transport sorted out I make my way to the changeover point between leg eight and nine. At each station the number of smug "I've done my bit" runners increases and so does the party atmosphere. Here I meet Keith, and Patrick – yet another new member stolen from the clutches of the Rowing Club just in time. He ran a blistering 65 minute leg, so won't be allowed back to a boat now. Yvonne and Tony come in while we are there, and Roger and Dawn set off. Poor Dawn – having been up since 4am she has had to wait until leg Nine!
- 3.35 Having organised everyone else to perfection Dawn sets off without her map, drink and forgets to start her watch! It doesn't seem to matter though – she finds a drink, and I drive along in front of her. After the initial shock of being out there wears off she soon picks up a decent pace and seems astonished when I tell her there is less than 5 km to go.
- 4.55 The countryside becomes more familiar as we head to the Final Station. Dawn flies along and gratefully hands over to Naomi who has her own back up crew on board a bike.
- 7.00 We are all back at the club now. Those who set off at 5am and at other odd times have re-emerged. It's a great day, we didn't win a thing, but forty of us ran ten miles. It's half of the club. How good is that.

Editors Note – Thanks to Sarah B for the above article and to Rob and Dawn for their efforts as Team managers on the day- and to Ashley for all his behind the scenes organisation. The event was a big success and for those that don't know the monies raised are donated to charity. This year we were able to donate £400 to each of our appointed charities being Redwing Horse Sanctuary and Wellesbourne Youth Group.

Congratulations

To Pete Plimmer (and his wife!) on the birth of their first child – Freddie - presumably named after Freddie Flintoff in which case expect him to be nicknamed Fredalo! (you need to be up to date with cricket issues to understand!) I was talking to Pete the other week and he was asking for some parental advice on what to do about the crying. I said the best idea was not to cry as tears in the eyes make it difficult to look after the baby!

And to Phil and Anna on their engagement – parents consent obtained, romantic meal, down on one knee, ring bought etc etc – makes the rest of us blokes look a bit short on the whole concept of romance. Good job she said Yes!

Dear Parents/Guardians of our young stars of the future,

As you are all aware many willing volunteers run the club, and from time to time we need to recruit new helpers. More often than not this happens naturally when a parent, who is willing to support the club, puts their name forward. The majority of us see that it's giving our time in return for our offspring receiving a quality experience in athletics in our fun and welcoming environment.

But sometimes we have to actively try and recruit new helpers because people don't voluntarily step forward or are a bit reserved and as the club continues to grow and develop and demand for places increases we need new blood supporting us.

If you show an interest in a particular area, perhaps coaching, being an official at track meetings or administration or in fund raising etc, we can help you to help your kids and the club.

All the current coaches and officials have busy lives too but got involved with no particular skills or interest in some cases in athletics but we all get an enormous sense of involvement, commitment and fun being involved with not just our own offspring's lives and athletics activities, but with others as well.

We all are involved for various personal reasons and I quote:-

"It gets us out of the house for a couple of hours

"I'm doing something different"

"I like helping make a difference to young peoples lives"

"We have a laugh"

"Who would have thought I could teach someone to throw a javelin at my age?"

"I'm in touch with my own kids lives"

"It helps keep me young" (that's Paul Hawkins and I)

So please step forward and help, we need all the help we can to make the club, better, safer and more enjoyable for our youngsters.

POSITIONS VACANT

Junior Section Newsletter/ Website Coordinator.

You will have noticed that there isn't anything in this Newsletter appertaining to the Juniors which is very disappointing and we are currently looking for someone to take on the Junior Section Newsletter/ Website Coordinator.

Sarah Seccombe who, has performed this task superbly for many years whilst her children were members, now finds it necessary to pass the baton on to someone new, so we are appealing for anyone to put yourself forward to coordinate gathering information from primarily the Age Group Leaders about the glories of our young athletes 3 times a year and to pass on information to the respective Newsletter and Website Coordinators in the Senior section.

The ability to gather information, put it into a good, readable format in Word and liaise with people are the main skills required.

The post just needs a relatively small amount of time each week and help and information on results will be supplied by the Age Group Leaders, so if you feel you have a calling to take over the baton please contact Paul Bearman (01789 268462 or 07767 343925) or speak to the Age Group Leaders Sandie Evans, Carolyne Johnston or Michael Lane to discuss details.

After the summer season we are going to lose, through various reasons, coaches and officials from regular involvement with the club. **The club needs to replace and expand both the number of coaches and officials** and we are lucky that this year several new people have attended the Level 1 and 2 Officials courses which is great – thank you.

Coaching

Main duties

- To attend the appropriate courses to become conversant with coaching the various disciplines and Child Protection (including being checked by the Criminal Records Bureau)
- Assist with the club's junior coaching sessions in one or more of the various age groups and the running of each session.
- To assist in the preparation of coaching sessions in advance
- No previous experience required, but being enthusiastic and a good communicator are essential

Officials (Time keepers, Track and Field)

Main duties

- To attend the appropriate courses to become conversant with being an Official in the various disciplines and Child Protection (including being checked by the Criminal Records Bureau)
- To travel to competitions with the junior team(s) and actively support them by working in a small team of people in the various disciplines
- No previous experience required, but being prepared to get involved is essential

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have already or are currently helping and to encourage any others to come forward and make yourself known to a member of the coaching team if you would like to become more involved.

If you are interested in Coaching or being an Official please contact Helen Lane (01789 269174) or Paul Bearman (01789 268462 or 07767 343925) or speak to the Age Group Leaders Sandie Evans, Carolyne Johnston or Michael Lane to discuss details on club evenings.

Thank you for your support and we would like to encourage all our young athletes to continue to work hard on their fitness and training through the winter.

Regards

Paul Bearman

