

# STRATFORD UPON AVON ATHLETIC CLUB



## NEWSLETTER

Issue No 20 May 2008

Last year when we asked for ideas about how we could improve the running club we had many excellent responses and I thought now was a good time to give you an update. Probably the area that cropped up the most was our approach to new members so it was good to see that the open night was well attended and that membership continues to grow. A big thanks to Lesley for all the work she does on the membership side - and if you haven't renewed your membership yet - "Get a move on!"

After many months of talking about looking after new members on a Wednesday evening it is very good to see that we have finally come across a system that seems to be working. We have a number of volunteers and by using a rota system we always have at least one experienced runner to guide and support the newer members in the slower group. Feedback so far has been excellent - from both sides with the new comers expressing their appreciation and the volunteers enjoying the change of pace and company. Additional volunteers are always welcome if you are interested. (I and apologies from me for taking the group through the mud and across the hills when it was my turn to lead - at least I've given the group an early introduction to the joys of Cross Country!)

We have also been looking to hold more Social Activities and Victoria has taken to her role of Social Secretary like a duck to water - and with suggestions flooding in we look to be in for a busy social year. (although my suggestion of naked mud wrestling seems to have fallen on deaf ears so far!)

The Quiz was a big success and culminated in a fantastic third place for 'Michaels Boys' - until our prizes were cruelly taken back off us when a 'scoring blip' was identified and we were relegated to fourth.

We have also sorted out a club tent and I'm lead to believe that we now have this branded with our name (although I've yet to see this 'in action' yet) and after many years of the infamous plastic marshall bibs we have now gone upmarket with some excellent branded fluorescent jackets that should have a much longer life span.

Other suggestions are still being considered but as I've said previously there is no time limit on good ideas. If you have a suggestion that could improve the club please pass on your idea to me or any member of the committee

**Tony Jackson**

**Editor**

**Contact the Editor - Articles / Feedback Wanted**

You can get in touch with me by any of the following

Write to 32 Sanctus Road Stratford upon Avon CV37 9AE

E mail to Anthony.Jackson27@ntlworld.com

Tel No 01789 - 209102

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

## 12 stage road relays

I'm sure you will have read the full details in one of Keith's many excellent newspaper articles but here are a couple of snippets that didn't quite make it into the local press.

- Keith (the organiser) missed the start of his leg – although apparently the adrenalin rush caused by his embarrassment meant that he more than made up the 5 second time loss during his run.
- Pete Law brought his off road shoes to race in. (Pete the clues in the title of the race)
- Grand National Sweep won by Lesley Kirk
- Having checked before my leg what time I needed to beat Paul & Andy I couldn't quite raise the pace up the final hill and incredibly we all finished in the same time of 19.37. Makes me think there are going to be some close Shakespeare races over the coming months.
- Watching on course it was good to see the lead motorcyclist come into view immediately followed by Martin Todman. A brief moment of glory before he was lapped by the lead runner.
- Coming home we stopped at a pelican crossing just outside the park and incredibly watched as a Giant Panda crossed in front of us. We also heard stories that a Tiger had been spotted. Allegedly there was a WWF collection in town

## Warwickshire Road Running League

Belated congratulations to John Turner who was First in the V60 category for the overall WRRL for 2007. John was our only prize winner last year although there were many creditable performances from a variety of different members at individual races.

The races in the WRRL are always popular with members so as a reminder here are the races that comprise the 2008 league. I am sure that there are entry forms in the 'big black book'!

<b>Date</b>	<b>Race</b>
June 1 <sup>st</sup>	Northbrook 10K
June 25 <sup>th</sup>	NP Aerospace Godiva Midsummer 5 mile
July 5 <sup>th</sup>	Stratford Summer 6 mile
July 10 <sup>th</sup>	Rowheath 5K
Aug 29 <sup>th</sup>	Godiva Memorial Park 5 mile
Sept 14 <sup>th</sup>	Nuneaton 10 mile
Oct 5 <sup>th</sup>	Kenilworth Half Marathon
Nov 2 <sup>nd</sup> or 9 <sup>th</sup> (TBC)	Rugby 10 mile

## Stratford Summer Six

Just a quick note to remind you that this year's race will be held on 5<sup>th</sup> July starting at 7.30pm. As Race Director my priority is that we have enough marshals and helpers on the day to ensure that the race is a continued success. With the race date invariably clashing with holidays etc and again being on the same day as a Midland T&F Fixture I appreciate that many members will not be available to help out. Unfortunately this means that I have again taken the decision that Stratford members will not be allowed to run. I am sure you understand the reason for this and will offer your support to help when I come asking in the next few weeks. In the mean time if you are going to a race your help in taking and distributing entry forms is much appreciated.

## **How to be a good runner (the cheats way!)**

- Measure your times based on your own watch times not the official one (The exception to this rule is if the official time happens to be quicker)
- Make sure you know your age group (and everybody else's) Following this guideline means that Keith has never beaten me (I am 5 years and a few days older so we are never in the same age category)
- Pick someone you can beat and set up a challenge trophy. I'll have you know that I am the reigning holder of the South Warks Registrars & Spouses Challenge Trophy. (Other runner is Graham Roberts from Leamington C&AC)
- Send out your training colleagues to race on your behalf. But only say afterwards who it was, just to make sure you always get a good time. (e.g. Sending Mark Francis to run London rather than Paul)
- Lie about your average weekly mileage. E.g. tell people that your best weekly mileage from the last six months is your average weekly mileage (Really impressive if you can manage one really heavy week)
- Always have a variety of excuses ready just in case someone unexpectedly beats you or you run badly. Saying that you have just given blood is always a good explanation.
- Introduce a new height and / or weight category. Generally guarantees me a victory in the 6ft 4 inch and over category.
- Challenge people to races immediately after they've raced a marathon. Paul's never at his best over 800m the day after London
- Change the route as you're running to make sure you stay at the front of the group. (If you've run with my group on a Wednesday you know what I mean)
- Don't be afraid to tell people what a good runner you have been in the past. You can get a lot of respect by quoting that half marathon time from twenty years ago.
- Be good friends with the press officer. It is very flattering to read about how well you ran in a race (even if they have embellished the truth slightly – or just lied!)
- Training with Kate allows you to drop into any conversation that your training partner is an elite runner who is about to challenge Paula Radcliffe.
- Being economic with the truth is a good idea – I came second in the race sounds much better than there were only two of us running and I was nearly lapped.

## **Chedworth Roman Trail 10 run**

My request for newsletter articles generally falls on stony ground or at best elicits a response two or three weeks later. Hats off then to James Deacon who dropped whatever he was doing to put together a report on his latest race and send it to me within 30 minutes. (It must have been a very quiet night on the TV!!)

The Chedworth Roman Trail 10 run, which I participated in last Sunday 6th April 2008, is a scenic run through lovely Cotswold countryside on the Stowell park estate and around Chedworth Roman Villa. It is an annual event organised by Cirencester AC.

I woke up early Sunday morning to see a thick layer of snow on the ground and I was unsure whether the roads would be accessible to the race bearing in mind the remoteness of the venue in the heart of the Cotswold countryside! However, I managed to make my journey to the start venue, Chedworth Village Hall, without any problems to find that the snow had virtually melted.

(Editors Note: First rule of writing for the newsletter is not to let the truth get in the way of a good story – I heard that there was at least 6 inches of snow covering the course which meant that race times were slower than usual!!)

There were a total of 349 runners at the start of the race, which commenced near the village hall, down a country road for a short distance before turning off the road down field tracks and footpaths, which were fairly muddy and slippery following the snow melting into slush. The temperature was cold but it was sunny and very pleasant.

The race was very scenic and there was even the pleasant surprise of 1 small river crossing over the River Churn, which fortunately did not pose a serious threat due to the shallowness of the water! (Editors Note: See above! The River was swollen due to the melting snow and was knee deep in places – waist deep for some of the smaller runners like Lesley!)

The course then meandered before cutting back and continuing along a fairly straight gulley at the base of a steep wooded hill. We then climbed this tough hill at approximately the 7 mile mark. To the uninitiated such as myself as this was the first time I had run this course, I thought that this hill would be the last serious climb but no the course descended again before we proceeded up another steep hill. Finally, the course brought us back to where we had started.

The race was won by an unattached runner called Tom Fisher, who was the only runner to go under 1 hour in 59:46. The leading Stratford-upon-Avon AC runner was Pete Hill who ran a magnificent race in 1:16:01 (62nd), and who managed to overtake on the steep hills Phil Howell (1:16:25, 66th). I was the next Stratford runner clocking 1:22:18 (135th) followed by Lesley Kirk, who ran a very creditable 1:25:25 (174th), then Kim Johnston (1:36:26, 270th), Maxine Horsman (1:39:32, 293rd) and last Anna Schofield (1:49:57, 339th).

All in all it was a challenging but enjoyable race that was a worthy alternative to the Wright Hassell road race which took place on the same day. I would definitely run in next year's race and would recommend it to all Stratford AC runners.

## **The Jane Tomlinson Inspiration Award Mick and Phil Curry**

Many of you will know the local running duo that is Mick 'n' Phil – and in fact the regulars who turn up on a Monday night quite often get to see them getting in some training on the track to support their Full and Half Marathon exploits. I am very pleased to report that Mick 'n' Phil were rewarded for their services to running by being awarded the Jane Tomlinson Inspiration Award in the recent Running World Annual Awards.

Here is a brief synopsis of their background

“If you ever needed a pep talk, you could do worse than have a chat to Mick Curry. Along with his son Phil, Mick has completed 278 races since 2002, including 27 full marathons and 162 half-marathons.

Mick and Phil wouldn't run without each other, but this is no ordinary partnership: Phil has severe physical and mental disabilities and is completely reliant on his parents for round-the-clock care, so Mick pushes Phil around races - no mean feat considering Phil is now a young adult.

Running has given Mick and Phil - and Phil's mother Dawn - a new lease of life, but in return they've given back so much support, friendship and awe-inspiring guts to the sport, motivating the thousands of runners they meet both at races and on the runnersworld.co.uk forums.

Following on from this award Mick 'n' Phil were contacted by David Bedford and offered a place in the this years London Marathon – a goal which had previously been denied them because of the ruling which excludes 'wheeled vehicles' taking part.

NB They were given a time limit – “Don't finish in under 6 hours!!”

## The Stratford Half & Full Marathon

For those of us who have Stratford more times than they care to remember and / or object to paying a high entry fee to run around a favourite training route, the Stratford Half / Marathon provides an ideal opportunity to watch and support. The route conveniently passes outside my house and with the Green way only a short walk away I get the chance to see the race at two interesting points – Firstly just a mile or so after the start when the race is starting to get going and everybody is still in high spirits and secondly just before the 11 Mile marker when the realities of the race are starting to hit home – not helped by the boredom of the Greenway.

Supporting your fellow runners and friends sounds an easy task but when the club is so well represented, plus those people who have been members, work colleagues and friends (and friends of friends) then suddenly it becomes a bit of nightmare. This is particularly the case outside my house when the field is still grouped together and runners are passing 10 a breast. Short term memory loss comes to the fore and whilst you are trying to remember the name of the woman who you nearly bought a house from 6 years ago half a dozen people have gone past with nothing more encouraging than a ‘come on Stratford’ or even worse someone says ‘Hello Tone’ and they’re gone without a backward glance or acknowledgement. As such please accept my apologies if you thought I ignored you.

At least seeing all runners twice (with a decent time for thinking in between) gives you the opportunity to try and remember names and get a feeling for where in the field they will be when you see them next time so that you can be more prepared.

After finishing breakfast there is a leisurely walk to the Greenway accompanied by my trusty companion ‘Rocket’ who is carrying his favourite cuddly toy aka ‘Charging Charlie’ for those of you who noticed.

And here is another quandary. When you see someone coming what do you shout as encouragement.

- ‘Come on Stratford’ seems a bit dull and boring
- ‘Not far to go now’ doesn’t sound right when you are standing next to the 11 mile marker and
- ‘Fantastic run you’re looking great’ is an obvious lie except to Dawn.

As such I like to make my “support” topical and individual. For some this effectively comes out as abuse e.g.

- Malcolm you’re rubbish (when actually / obviously he is doing really well)
- Get a move on Wayne (because Mick W is close behind) or
- You’re looking knackered Kate (because she is)

For others there is hopefully a bit on incentive

- Come on you can catch Kate – she’s really struggling (to Emerson)
- Come on Sarah, Dave (Maundrell) is only just ahead (to Sara O) and two seconds later
- Come on Phil / Tony, Sarah is only just ahead (to Phil M and Tony H) who were running together at that stage

NB - although as Emerson also looked tired and Dave might have just overtaken Sarah who might just have overtaken Phil and / or Tony - this might not come across as encouraging as I might have hoped!

Some people just acknowledge that they are really struggling at that stage (e.g. JT, Emma & Johann) for which all you can do is offer a consoling smile (not very encouraging I know – especially for Johann who still had to go round again)

Otherwise it's the usual mixture of 'well done' and 'great run' – hopefully attached to the right name! – to encourage people on toward the finish. Although here comes the woman who we nearly bought a house from 6 years ago and I still can't remember her name (and its two hours later before it comes to me which is a bit late).

One difficulty is, having offered suitable encouragement, to then show restraint not to shout something when 50 yards past you they stop to walk (You know who you are!)

Note – there is **nothing** wrong with walking during a race – we have **all** done it at some stage.

The one thing about supporting along the Greenway is that you have no idea on finishing times or positions. A lot can happen in the last two (or 15) miles but at least that gives lots of opportunity to talk to different people on the next training run

Those of you with long memories will remember the One Hour Track that was one of the Shakespeare Races last year. Many thanks to Sara B for this article which unfortunately due to an error in the printing process\* was omitted from the previous newsletter (\*i.e. I forgot all about it!) However, the content was so good that I make no apologies for including it now even if it has lost some of its topicality!

### **Running the Numbers Or Things to occupy one at the Track Hour**

- 16 The number of times I was lapped by Rob
- 2 The lap I was on when he lapped me for the first time
- 85 The number of painted markers on the second lane
- 3 The number of times Phil Howell flashed his backside at us (yes, really!)
- 9,200 The number of strides I took (roughly)
- 2 Heavy breathers – Paul Hawkins and Martin Todman
- 1,379 The encouraging comments from the counters (I just made that up but it was a lot)

Some other random musings....

The hockey ball hitting the back of the goal sounds incredibly like a gun shot, you could get away with shooting someone if you picked your time, the locals would never notice.

Is the weight saving Rob gets from his racing shoes counteracted by the weight of his Ipod?

Taking it in turns to make up stories is a great way to occupy some time but it's rubbish for PB's.

There are some really cold pockets of air at certain spots around the track, is this related to the location of the trees?

I definitely run faster on the home straight when everyone is watching and slow down on the back straight. What does that say about me?

## Running and still learning . . .

By Victoria Jeffs

I've been running for over seven years now and although I love to run I'm still, after all these years, one of the slower runners in the club – you'll probably have seen me tagging along at the back of a Shakespeare race – and if I'm having a good day, possibly not at the very back of the pack. I do appreciate someone will inevitably be last in every race, I just wish it wasn't me quite so often.

With a general goal to 'speed up my running', in March this year I took the decision to take part in a running camp with Rob Minton's new project – 'Run Stratford'. To be fair I was a little on the dubious side before the event, couldn't quite imagine doing 4 running sessions over a weekend let alone listening to someone talking about running for the whole weekend but as I said earlier, I love my running, but to my mind there are limits to what a girl can and should do.

Having said that I'm nothing if not game to give something a go – so the weekend arrives and my first action is to text Rob with my excuse to avoid the first Friday afternoon run, what a success, being the dedicated work horse that I am I rightly or wrongly put that as my priority that Friday afternoon – well, that and the fact that Friday is normally my day off any sort of exercise and I really did get delayed on an appointment.

I did however make it to the evening meal and quiz that followed (based from the sports club), my motivation being some of Kari's excellent clubhouse cooking and something to do with the fact there was alcohol available from the bar and, lets be really honest here, Sarah and Paddy have been teaching me the wonders of drinking copious amounts of alcohol on a Friday night since last November and its become a little bit of a habit – what a great end to the working week!

It was great to meet the rest of the team for the weekend, what a mixed bunch we were, some people from London, Cornwall, Derbyshire and little old Warwickshire too. I took one look at the rest of the participants and limited my alcohol consumption to 'just the one' as I was suddenly terrified I'd put in a poor performance the next day and still be the last runner even amongst a group of strangers.

Fear not, my strategy was sensible and my 'just the one' approach was perfect and on the Saturday morning – far too early for my liking but necessary I'm told - we headed out for a 'gentle hill session', well I think that's how Rob described it! We headed up onto the Welcome Hills, cannily someone invited Sarah Bland and her wonderful dogs along for the ride, I'm sure to help us take our minds off what we were doing. Several other people joined us on that morning run and I am proud to say I was not at the back of the pack and my previous attempts at some of Paul's hill sessions had clearly been paying off and some of the hills I was almost bounding up – Dawn was a superb help at this point giving us tips and strategies for powering your way up a hill in the most efficient manner possible – I had no idea small changes to my technique here could make such a difference to how I got up the hill and indeed how I felt once I got to the top of that hill.

We headed back to the Sports Club for stretches then a shower and breakfast – Kari surpassed herself with her breakfast offerings including a fabulous porridge that went down a treat. But, how cool can stretching be – Rob has a way of making stretching fun and more to the point something you want to do – not something I thought was possible but truly it is, just give it a try.

The next session was all about improving our technique – technique I thought, didn't know there was real technique, I always thought you just put one foot in front of the other and ran –

you know a bit like Forest Gump. After all of us had our running technique, gait and posture recorded and analysed – we sat down and debated the differing styles – how is it one person can land on their mid foot and others on their heels or toes? Well I suddenly found out what my main problem was and already I could see the impact some small changes might make. The trouble with knowledge is you do need to put it into practice and changing a style of running that I've had for 7 years is easier said than done. Check me out now, guys and gals, if you look carefully you'll see some subtle differences in my running style that are really making a difference!

Somewhere in the morning session we managed to fit in a core stability session, now if you ever do one of these with Rob and he tells you to wear loose clothing – don't take him too literally – I wore some loose jersey bottoms – well actually they were pyjama bottoms but no one would ever know the difference – the trouble is when your lying over a stability ball and it decides to stick to your 'loose' trousers and you're rolling over the ball the reality is they'll roll straight off the body – hmm, not what I really had in mind – possibly my enjoyment of this section was curtailed by my concern over exposing myself to a group of strangers.

The afternoon bought us the lovely Henry Lowry and a session on preventing injuries – always a good thing to avoid like the plague but conversely something we all, as runners, will face at some time – god bless sports massage, is all I can say!

The rest of the afternoon was taken up with a speed session and us learning about pacing and heart rates – now this is something I've always struggled with – if you've ever watched me run you'll know I have two paces – fast and slow, sadly the latter tends to take precedence and the former I can only ever do in short bursts (and frankly there not normally very fast anyway) but I've taken away lots of tips and ideas this weekend and I'll continue to work on this side of things.

Saturday night is taken up with a team dinner in town, what a great and relaxing end to the day, excellent company and strangely enough not full of talk about running! Oh and more alcohol too, did I mention the alcohol, I mean did !!!!

Sunday dawned bright and clear, I successfully managed to avoid another run as I had a bike ride scheduled for today – well, I am training for a triathlon – Rob did say it was an excellent form of cross training but the reality was I've never before run twice in one day and although I probably would have been able to run I couldn't get my head around running three times in 2 days. The rest of the team did run though and I redeemed myself with a swift 18 mile cycle before heading back for a shower, more stretching and, of course, more of Kari's porridge – oh and did I mention the stretching!

The final session of the weekend was all about training plans, schedules and race strategies – god bless Rob for helping me to design my own very specific training plan focussing on speeds and paces that are spot on for me and targets that are designed to make ME run faster – now I know that physically I can run faster, its all about making it happen. A huge thanks to Rob and the rest of the team for such an enjoyable and informative weekend. As for the rest of you, watch out because I'm getting faster by the minute and you just never know when I might over take you on a run! Having said that, I think Kate Wright will be safe after her fantastic performance in the London Marathon – you go for it girl, what an inspiration.

Victoria Jeffs - April 2008

Editors Note : Despite what you might think Victoria was not paid for this article!!!

## Things You Never Knew about your Fellow Runners:

- Lesley Kirk used to take her pet ferret for walks on a lead. He was called Snoopy
- Keith Hawkes got to the final of the Midlands Cluedo Championships in 1976
- Steve Kirk's Brother-in-law was Mr Angry on Steve Wright in the Afternoon
- Rob Minton was in the Laminating Club at school
- Sarah Bland admits to being in the Morris Dancing Society at University
- Tony Jackson once slept with two blokes in an Italian brothel (*reward to the person that gets an explanation out of him for the next newsletter!*)
- Sarah Odell spent the night with her husband Nick in one of those tunnels in a kiddies playground (*And yes they did!*)
- Pete Evans owns more bicycles than he has ever had girlfriends
- Victoria Jeffs was in the Country Dancing Team at school
- Dawn Davies volunteered to run an Astronomy Club for her pupils in her spare time. It was, however on a Tuesday *lunchtime*. (Think about it!)
- Graham Black got sacked from his holiday job packing Coleslaw because he was caught dribbling on the packing line! (*In his own words, had things been different he might have progressed to Fresh Salads by now*)
- Whilst innocently out for a walk on holiday in Jordan, Martin Todman looked up to find several guns pointed at him.
- In a previous life Paddy Davies was a Council Ratcatcher
- John Turner is a keen stamp collector (*give him a hard time he can do better than that*)
- Paul Hawkins, your revered Chairman, smoked 25 a day until 1988 when he threw the last pack out of the window on the way to a race. And he **never** does any ironing.
- Helen Evans (A level geography teacher) once wrote Corkscrew on the board, but accidentally transposed one of the "r"s for a "c" She has never forgotten it, in spite of several months of counselling.

And finally.....

- Emma Bexon freely admits that most things she does are entirely selfish!