

Compton Harriers Running Club Review of the year, 2011

Sue Francis (Secretary, Compton Harriers)

Have you ever wondered about the small group of 'fluorescent people' who run round the streets of Compton on a dark Thursday evening? In 2011, membership of Compton Harriers Running Club rose to a total of 29 - the highest in the Club's 21-year history. Our members have a wide range of ages (from 18 - 65) and standards, from those who are fairly new to running and run mainly to keep fit and enjoy the local countryside, to those who race competitively on a regular basis. We are a friendly group, who meet twice weekly on Tuesday and Thursday at 6:30pm, generally at our HQ at 'The Pickled Pig' up Churn Road. Our Thursday run is usually about an hour long (but we split into groups according to ability, and short-cuts are available) and is followed by drinks and a meal at one of the local pubs.

In 2011, our members represented the Club in at least 90 races covering a range of distances and terrains, including: Woodcote 10K, Wokingham Half Marathon, Portsmouth Coastal Marathon, Isle of Wight fell races, Marlborough Downs 20-miles, and Boneshaker duathlon. We had eight finishers in the London Marathon. Some have broken personal barriers by completing a longer distance for the first time, or setting a new personal best performance; others have collected prizes for being winners in their age categories. In June, we finished 16th out of 40 teams in the Ridgeway Relay, covering the 89-mile route (from Ivinghoe Beacon to Marlborough) in 11½ hours. Our team of ten runners was Guy Watts, Sue Francis, Lucy Gettins, Gillian Anton, Ryan Morris, Terry Bartholomew, Richard Disney, Dick Kearn, Martin Fray and Pete Oliphant.

As in previous years, the Club staged four races in 2011. The Compton 20 and 40-mile Downland Challenge races were held on a warm and sunny Easter Saturday - perfect for helpers and spectators if a little warm for the competitors. The route takes in the villages of Hampstead Norreys, Ashampstead, Streatley, Aldworth, Chilton, the Hendreds and the Ilsleys. Competitors came from all around the UK, and a total of 250 completed the course. First home in the 20-mile race was Peter Cusick from Chippenham Harriers in 2hr20min, while the leading lady was Yvette Wrapson in 2h58m. The 40-mile winners were Ryan Brown (5h25m) and Susan Sleath of Hardley Runners (5h57m). The 16th Compton Downland Challenge races will take place on 7th April 2012 (Easter Saturday). Volunteers to help on the day (with marshalling the route, manning a check-point, first aid, or preparing hot drinks) are always much appreciated, and helping at such an event can be a rewarding experience. If you are willing to help, or would like to find out what is involved, please contact Dick Kearn (01635 578411, or dickjan@talk21.com).

The 6th Compton Canter was staged in conjunction with the village fete. The undulating six-mile race attracted 58 runners, the winner being Newbury's Nick Jones (32:16) and first lady was Sophie Voller of Westbury (37:22). For the first time we also hosted a series of junior races which saw 23 youngsters running loops of the Recreation Ground, the number of laps depending on their age. This proved very popular with both children and parents and all finishers were rewarded with a medal.

The annual Relay and Boundary Race are summer events based at the Institute for Animal Health, and supported by the Institute's Recreation Association who ensure that competitors can enjoy a drink from the bar and a burger from the barbecue after the event. The relay is contested by teams of four, over a 1.5 mile route and using a handicapped start so that the faster teams have some catching up to do! The 2011 winning team was 'The Disney Characters'. The 8-mile Boundary Race is held around tracks which mark the boundary of the Institute's land. Thirty-one runners and walkers (and 2 dogs) took part, some being very competitive, others attempting the distance for the first time and enjoying the scenery and fresh air.

Each year Compton Harriers use the profits from the Compton Downland Challenge to make a donation to a local charity or good cause. Thanks to all who supported our 2011 events as competitors or helpers, we were able to make two donations, each to the value of £750, to the 'Newbury and District Cancer Care Trust' and 'Friends of Charles Clore Unit', both located at Newbury hospital.

We rounded off a successful and enjoyable year with a fantastic Christmas meal at The Swan in East Ilsley, where Richard, Kim and staff made us very welcome and served us plenty of very tasty food.

If you are interested in finding out more about the club, visit our website, www.comptonharriers.org.uk , or feel free to turn up on a Tuesday or Thursday to see if you like us!

Contact: 01491 875946 comptonharriers@comptonharriers.org.uk