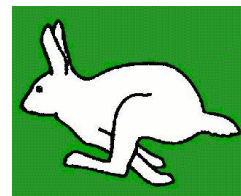


## THE HARRIERS HERALD

No. 233, July 2012

Editor: Sue Francis



### Contents, features, reports, results

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- Correspondence received
- National Athletics Trials – Lucy recommends an enjoyable spectator's day out
- Race results: *Mull of Kintyre Half* – Gillian recommends a race in a stunning area; *Yately 10K* – sub-41 for Sus; *Mourne Way Marathon Walk* – Gillian returns to her roots for a muddy challenge; *Blenheim Triathlon* – silver medal for Ryan; *St Albans Half* – good performance from Sus; *North Downs 30K* – Sus is first FV45 but says 'never again'; *Ridgeway Relay* – Harriers team finishes an excellent 14<sup>th</sup>; *Boundary Run & Walk* – Jess, Martin and Simon are the champions; *Harey 8* – Girl Power as three lady Harriers enjoy a new local race
- Handicap Race – Ricky retains the trophy, and Debbie extends her lead
- Running Life series – Richard (Ricky) Bickerton gives a fascinating insight into his adventure-packed life
- Webmaster's article – Mo features the art of recovery after hard training
- Thanks to Ricky, Gillian, Sus, Lucy, Mo and Richard for this month's contributions
- Copy date for next Harriers Herald – 1<sup>st</sup> August

### Thursday night schedule for July

Thurs	5 <sup>th</sup>	Gillian to lead
Thurs	12 <sup>th</sup>	Richard D to lead
Thurs	19 <sup>th</sup>	Run with Didcot Runners (more details in the near future)
Thurs	26 <sup>th</sup>	Ricky B to lead

### Thursday night schedule for August

Thurs	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Sue to lead
Thurs	9 <sup>th</sup>	Handicap Race
Thurs	16 <sup>th</sup>	Philomena to lead
Thurs	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Colin to lead
Thurs	30 <sup>th</sup>	Terry to lead

Correspondence received		
Sender	Subject matter	Action
Running4Women	Women's 8K, Windsor Great Park, 06-10-12	Events Diary & notice board

### National Athletics Trials, Birmingham

#### Lucy

On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June, Martin and I ventured to the Alexander Stadium in the North of Birmingham to see the second day of the National Athletics Trials. This was of much interest to the 10,000 + capacity crowd because potential Olympic contenders were being selected, and there was a great atmosphere. The organisation was very polished and there was so much to see, with the hammer, javelin, long jump, high jump and track racing, that we didn't know where to look at times! The stadium compere was Iwan Thomas who, with the commentary box announcers, put on a superior show to the BBC's efforts. We saw some great stars of English athletics, including Jessica Ennis and the 50-year old javelin thrower Roald Bradstock. Hordes of very enthusiastic children were to be seen waving autograph books at the runners as they returned from their stints. Most importantly for us, we could take in a prodigious picnic with flasks and china cups to sustain us over the 5+ hours of entertainment, unlike the 'real' Olympics where we would be forced to eat mc'ds and mc flurries! All this was surprisingly cheap at only about £11 for our seats, which were in a favourable spot near the finish line. The stadium could be reached from the M6 Junction 6 or 7, although there was a queue both in and out, but it took just 2 hours for us from door to door. We parked in a field for £5. The show was sponsored by Aviva, who also sponsor the Diamond league – there are further events in July at Crystal Palace and August at Birmingham, prices from about £22. Tickets are easy to book, with a map of the stadium so you can choose your picnic spot!

[http://www.ticketmaster.co.uk/packages/aviva\\_athletics.html](http://www.ticketmaster.co.uk/packages/aviva_athletics.html)

## *Race Reports & Results*

### *MOKRUN - Mull of Kintyre Half Marathon, 3<sup>rd</sup> June*

**Gillian**

I was intrigued by this run, as it has been voted the best half marathon in the UK for the last two years in Runners World. I decided to try to get into it, and set a calendar reminder for myself for the day the entries opened. I was a bit worried about the race, as my ITB tendon had been playing up, and I did not know if I would make the 13 miles, but it held up well.

I was not disappointed by the run, the area was stunning, both in Campbeltown, on the Mull of Kintyre and also on the Macrahanish Beach - which has stunning views over to Islay/Jura to the north and to Northern Ireland over to the south-west. If you look at the website, you can see the beauty of the route.

<http://www.mokrun.com/photogallery/index.htm>

The course was gently undulating, and, at just before the half way point, you head out onto the dunes and down to the beach. Running along the beach was firm underfoot, and the weather was amazing, beautifully sunny, but a breeze was blowing to cool us all down. After running along the beach, we turned and headed back the way we had come for a short while, and then turned off onto a much flatter section of the route heading back towards Campbeltown. The weather deteriorated a bit in the second half, as it became overcast and very windy, but we all seemed to enjoy ourselves.

There was a real mix of people along for the run, including other runners from round the country who had seen it in Runners World and decided to have a go. It was fun in the morning, meeting up over breakfast with the other runners and having a chat. I also got a lift into town from the Race Organiser, a lovely lady, who kept catching up with me over the weekend to ensure I was enjoying myself.

The first man home was Shaun Lyon of Greenock Glenpark at 1:18:46, and the first woman was Lesley McFayden of Inveraray at 1:23:45. I was quite a bit slower at 2:41:05, but was just glad to be able to run the race. If you fancy a lovely run/weekend away, then I would recommend the race. I may do it again next year, although I can feel the Skye Half Marathon calling me too.

### *Yately 10K, 6<sup>th</sup> June*

This is a very well organized race series by Sandhurst Joggers, 3 races during the summer months on undulating roads. Sus finished in 40:59, category position 2<sup>nd</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> lady overall, 657 completed the Wednesday evening race.

### *Mourne Way Marathon (actually a marathon walk!), 9<sup>th</sup> June*

**Gillian**

Having signed up for this race, (which was in my home county and only a few miles from where I was born), I was really disappointed when my physio told me I could not run it. I did ask if I could swap to the walk and she agreed, so I contacted the organisers, 26Extreme, and swapped to the Challenge Walk.

We headed over to Northern Ireland on the Thursday and, for the full 36 hours prior to the runs/walk, it quite literally rained cats and dogs! I had an email from the event organiser on the Friday advising that trail shoes MUST be worn, under no circumstances should road shoes be used. I had not brought any, so spent most of Friday running round various running/sports shops looking for the correct footwear (Summer is not the season to buy these apparently!).

Saturday morning it finally stopped raining and, although a windy day, it was bright and clear as we arrived at the finish at Rostrevor. Uwe dropped me off and I boarded the coach to the start. Unfortunately the toilets in the Slieve Donard Park in Newcastle were all locked bar one, so it took a while for everyone to use the facilities so the start was delayed. I suspect it may have been a bit chaotic later on when the marathon runners started. The walk follows the same route as the marathon, due to start later at 12:30.

Two coach loads of walkers started off the race just before 08:30 and we headed off up Slieve Donard, the highest mountain in Ireland. You head up on tracks to about a third of the way up the mountain, until after you get above the tree line. It was a steep climb, but the worst on the whole event. At the top, you get some amazing views out over Newcastle and over Newcastle Bay. Following the top of the ridge, and the traversing Little Donard and a further smaller peak, we headed up into Tollymore Forest Park. Along this whole section, of about 3-4 miles, there are stunning views. As we walked through Tollymore, we reached the Shimna River, which we then followed up towards its source. Normally there are stepping stones across the river but, due to the rain, this was too dangerous to cross. Then we headed on up for another 4 miles to the first water stop at the 8 mile point. From there, things started to get a bit tricky.

We started going off tracks and crossing very boggy ground and streams etc. The ground was very soft and the streams very full, and it was fun crossing them. Within a few minutes my feet were coated in a dark black peaty mud and that set the norm for the next 5 miles. We travelled along the foothills, along past Forfanny Dam, and then up towards the half way point at Spelga Dam. Unfortunately, along this section I put my foot in a very deep bog, and sank down much further than I had realised and upset my left gluteus maximus. From then on, it went into spasm for the rest of the walk, making hill climbs extremely slow and uncomfortable.

At the half way point, we actually got onto the road for a couple of miles, and headed on down to the other side of the dam. After this, it was off-road and back through the streams and bogs again. At one point, the only clear way down was directly in a stream bed, which gave me an opportunity to get some of the mud off my shoes, but did not help with the granite chips inside them. We then headed up to our last major climb up and around Rocky Mountain. At this point the half marathon runners came hurtling past, and I ended up on my bum in the bog, trying to stay out of their way. It was entertaining watching them pass, and I did wish that I could have been among them. It was also where the leaders of the half marathon missed the markings and went the wrong way, losing about 30 minutes on the other runners.

As we came down the other side of Rocky Mountain, we reached Leitram Lodge and the 10Km final water station. We had another section of bog for another 1.5 miles after that, and then reached the forest above Rostrevor. We headed down for the last 4.5 miles along the forest tracks and started to see a few spectators, who were very supportive. As the end was finally in sight, and also as I was getting tired, I decided to slow jog the rest of the way in. As we came over the last hill we had amazing views of Rostrevor and Carlingford Lough and the South of Ireland. It was great to finish and a real achievement with the conditions, and I did feel afterwards there was no way I could have actually run that route (finished the walk in 9:29:42). But if there is anyone out there hardier than me (all of you I know!), then I would recommend it to the more intrepid of you.

If you would like to see some of the views and the type of terrain, I would suggest having a look at the following youtube video of one of the ultra marathon runners practice runs. Having walked one way, I cannot believe these guys did 52 miles through that terrain and conditions. All kudos to them!!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28n-ODaKmaU>

### **Blenheim Triathlon, 9<sup>th</sup> June**

Ryan took part in the Super Sprint event: 400m swim in 8:19, 10K cycle in 26:03 and 2.5K run in 11:53. Ryan won his heat and finished 2<sup>nd</sup> overall out of 337, an excellent result for only his 2<sup>nd</sup> triathlon competition (see photo).

### **St. Albans Half, 10<sup>th</sup> June**

Sus finished in 1:30:27 as 3<sup>rd</sup> overall lady and 1<sup>st</sup> in her category. 2266 completed the race.

### **North Downs 30K, June**

Sus finished in 2:33:39 as 5<sup>th</sup> lady overall and 1<sup>st</sup> in her category. She says: "425 finished this muddy and slippery 'never again' race. But having said that, it is very well organized so don't let me put you off if you are thinking of doing it".



## **Ridgeway Relay, 17<sup>th</sup> June**

### **Richard D**

Compton Harriers finished a creditable 14<sup>th</sup> out of the 46 teams that started the 23<sup>rd</sup> running of the Ridgeway Relay. The Harriers finished the race in a time of 11:19:47 with Newbury AC winning the race in a record time of 9:23.50. I would like to offer a big thank you to all those runners and supporters who participated on the day. A full report will appear in next month's Herald.

## **Boundary Run & Walk, 21<sup>st</sup> June**

### **Sue**

Thanks to the IAH Farm Manager for allowing us to use a diversion through the farmyard and adjacent fields, we were able to keep a route very similar to that used in recent years. According to Google map measurements by Simon, bike measurement by Mo, and Garmin records from several competitors, the route was 8.3 miles (the route used in recent years was 8.0 miles), and underfoot conditions were more difficult, but the views from the top field were great (if you had the energy to look up!).

One walker, 30 runners and two dogs completed the route, and it was nice to have participants from four local running clubs, as well as from the Downs School and Compton-based company Ridgeway Biologicals. Simon's impressive walking time (1:39:36) was very similar to that which he set last year. In the run, Guy (Team Kennet) and James (Newbury A.C.) made an early break and looked set to have a good race and record fast times. However, unfamiliar with the route, they didn't spot the race sign in East Ilsley and turned back along the road to Compton. Meanwhile, Compton-resident Jess (Newbury A.C.), had no problem following the route and showed her class to forge ahead and win the race outright in a very good time (56:36). Next home was leading man, Martin (59:16) ahead of Didcot men Paul and Robert. Sue and Lucy were second and third ladies respectively. Full results can be found on our website.

Many thanks to all those Harriers and spouses who were involved in helping out in some way: Mo for strimming a path through the woods; Sus, Martin, Lucy and Dick for route-marking; Gillian and Peter L for being road-crossing marshals; Uwe for manning the drinks station; and Jan for timekeeping.

## **Harey 8, Hungerford, 1<sup>st</sup> July**

### **Sus**

I was not meant to do a race this Sunday since it was my birthday, but I could not resist trying this out; a new, just over 8-mile off-road race, organized by Hungerford Hares. I am so glad I did - I learned my lesson! Let me explain. Just before the start you can't help looking around to see who you think is fast, and there was one particular girl in yellow I had down to win the race for the ladies. Shortly after the start she rightly took the lead but I overtook her after about a mile expecting her to come back. About 6 miles in, at a stile, I quickly looked back and the only person I could see was someone in blue about 250 meters behind. With only 2 miles left I thought, 'super the first prize is in the bag', what a nice birthday present! I can start to relax now and save my legs for tomorrow's time trial with Tadley runners. But I got wiser about 1K from the finish as I heard a runner behind me; it must be the man in blue, I thought. But it wasn't a man it was a girl, and a bloody fast one, that whizzed past me before I realized what had happened! So the lesson learned is 1). Do not relax before the finish and expect to win a race. 2). Looks can be deceiving!

The race was good, a beautiful route, well-marshalled and marked and everybody was very encouraging. We had a nice tea cup and a goodie bag with chocolate and banana at the finish. I would do it again if I get the chance. Oh, and by the way, the lady in yellow finished as 6<sup>th</sup> lady!

1 <sup>st</sup> Man	Carlo Paul	49:06
1 <sup>st</sup> Lady	Susie Bush, Newbury AC	54:49
2 <sup>nd</sup> Lady	Sus	55:07
	Mags	1:26:22
	Gill	1:32:36

76 finished the race dominated by Newbury AC

## Handicap Race

Sue

As our usual summer route over 'The Bumps' was very overgrown, we used the IAH Relay lap for June's Handicap Race. This worked out pretty well and could, perhaps, end up being our regular summer Handicap route if the Bumps track is not maintained by IAH. At least the footpaths on the relay lap can be maintained by the Club if necessary. Twelve runners faced the starter. Dave and Dina were doing the Handicap Race for their first time ever, and Aaron for his first time since 1997! The short route and skilful handicapping ensured a tight finish to keep Jan on her toes. Ricky raced hard to just pass Tapani at the finish, and thus retain the trophy. Tapani took 2<sup>nd</sup> spot, with Dick 3<sup>rd</sup> ahead of Debbie. Everyone recorded really good times despite the breezy and damp conditions. Well done Ricky, and thanks to Jan for timing. There will be no Handicap Race in July; the next one is scheduled for 9<sup>th</sup> August. In the championship table, Debbie has extended her lead. Colin's consistently good placings have moved him into 2<sup>nd</sup> place, while Dick is now 3<sup>rd</sup>. But, remember, at the end of the series in December, it is your best five scores which will count. So, once you've run more than five races (as Debbie, Colin and I have), you can drop your lower scores, and positions may change.

Finish Position	Position on handicap	Name	Start time	Finish time	Actual time	Handicap Beaten?
1	1	Ricky	3:20	12:58	9:38	-1:02
2	2	Tapani	1:15	12:59	11:44	-1:01
3	3	Dick	2:54	13:10	10:16	-0:50
4	4	Debbie	1:58	13:19	11:21	-0:41
5	5	Colin	2:35	13:24	10:49	-0:36
6	6	Richard D	2:54	13:29	10:35	-0:31
7	7	Sue	4:08	13:33	9:25	-0:27
8	8	Philomena	2:17	13:44	11:27	-0:16
9	-	Dave	3:59	13:52	9:53	New Runner
10	10	Aaron	2:40	14:24	11:44	+0:24
11	-	Dina	1:58	14:32	13:34	New Runner
12	9	Mo	0:19	15:51	15:32	-0:09

Pos.	Name	Race points									
		Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Race 4	Race 5	Race 6	Race 7	Race 8	Race 9	Total of best 5
1	Debbie	9	5	10	7	8	-	-	-	-	39
2	Colin	8	7	7	5	7	-	-	-	-	34
3	Dick	10	-	6	8	9	-	-	-	-	33
4=	Mo	12	12	-	3	3	-	-	-	-	30
4=	Sue	7	6	8	4	5	-	-	-	-	30
6	Ricky	1	-	-	12	12	-	-	-	-	25
7	Philomena	-	4	12	-	4	-	-	-	-	20
8	Richard	-	3	9	-	6	-	-	-	-	18
9	Martin	5	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	13
10=	Pete O	6	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	12
10=	Gillian	3	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	12
12=	Jeremy	1	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
12=	Fernando	-	-	1	10	-	-	-	-	-	11
12=	Tapani	-	-	-	1	10	-	-	-	-	11
15	Pete H	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9
16	Lucy	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4
17	Aaron	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	2
18=	Neil	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
18=	Alex	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
18=	Dina	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
18=	Dave	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1



## *Running Life Series no. 14*

### **‘Running for my Life’**

**Richard Bickerton**



Running is another tool for me to see more of the world as quickly as I can. Before the Harriers, I can honestly say that I never enjoyed leggin’ it down the lane. What was the point when I might end up in the future like every bugger with bad knees, with so much pollution in the air of Manchester, and it is rather annoying to be stop-starting at the traffic lights in town. I would rather have downed a set of Kestral Superstrength tins and gone up t’Oldham with the boys for a battle!

It seems that all Richards have had asthma at some point in their lives! My most affected period was up until about the age of 12 years. Yearly trips to the hospital were guaranteed following a week at one of the child concentration camps of Great Britannia known as Pontins Holiday Park. The living accommodation was usually bunk beds next to piping hot radiators and very damp air due to the single glazed wooden window frames that were ready to fall out at any moment! A perfect environment for runts with struggling airways.

Strangely enough, I never received my first Ventolin inhaler until I had been running with Compton Harriers for a year. The Doctor in Newbury informed me that it could be exercise-induced asthma during cold periods!

My stepfather Ken is now a shadow of his former self after years of smoking have taken their toll. I never really got on with him. I think I was a little bast@£D with him when I was young and we didn’t communicate very well. Anyhow, when I visit my family now, we often talk about all the walking Ken used to lead and I remember my mum sitting on walls refusing to go any further. I used to dislike the distance and the fact that I could instead have been with my friends in the park playing football or playing the ‘get big Ste on the deck’ game! Years on, I would begin to appreciate the great outdoors that I had sampled as a child, and begin to drag the unwitting on body crunching expeditions... arh Charlotte, she’s a tough lady!

In secondary school, I was crap at football but amazing in the net until I got to the age where the nets got to full size. I used to play 5-a-side at the Oldham Athletic courts. I was amazing at saving the ball with my face. The other sport I kind of liked at school was cross-country. I was always nervous at the start of each run and felt it to be an important race each time. I would run as hard as I could at the start (sound familiar?) and then see black spots, panic, and then walk the rest of the way. I hated the last part of these runs. This was it for me. Other sports I liked were chess and garden hopping.

Over-excitabile, sporadic, self motivating, excessive, addictive, easily bored, almost insane, beefcake! These are the characteristics that best describe my personality and have been a driving force for me to achieve the package that I am to this day.

My early teenage sporting life was mainly trying to look good for the ladies. As an electrical apprentice at the hospital in Oldham, the boys and I would be out on the town Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. The staff I worked with would tell me to eat at a different kebab shop next time as most weeks I would be throwing up in the toilets pretending “I had a bad un last night!” they knew the truth I’m sure. They must have thought that I thought they were stupid! Friday night was usually fight night in Oldham and this was where I first learnt to run fast! Saturday was ‘Lookin Good’ night. And Sunday was Henry Afrikas Club night in which Big Steve worked at the bar and used to give out free drinks all night to the chosen few! Pumping Iron at the gym was

usually what went on all Saturday and Sunday, so we would spend a couple of hours of our drinking time flexing and comparing muscle groups in our Levi's tight ribbed tops! Thai boxing and Karate were a weekday pastime and again we would spend a few hours after last orders trying to pull off wicked round house kicks and landing on our asses like true knobheads!

The next logical step at 19 years old was to go clubbing and to warehouse and forest parties. We would go out all weekend and dance hard-out and be wasted for the next working week. Drugs were everywhere by this time and many of my extended friends had been seriously affected. Some going mad on cocaine, others killing themselves after crashing their car driving back from nightclubs. Two friends even hung themselves. It was a truly mad period but seemed fun at the time. Meeting gangstas, hippies, famous bands and learning for myself things my parents would never know. I felt empowered and independent but, really, we were all out of control.

During my time as an apprentice, I was moved around the hospital where I worked to shadow various sparkies, plumbers, and mechanics who all were fantastic to work with. One particular guy, Gary Greenwood, who I looked up to would over many years have a massive effect on my life. A role model that I followed into exploits like climbing Mount Kilimanjaro, Mount Elbrus, attempting the Ironman etc. He highlighted the importance of education and getting the hell out of the hospital when I was fully trained. He was a father figure to me.



Top of Mt Kilimanjaro 2001



Me, Charley and Gary at Ironman Switzerland

I listened to Gary and pushed myself hard, also driven by the need to get away from home and begin my adult life. I studied for 10 years part-time day release from work and night school and followed Gary and his ideas. I took a trip on my own to the Amazon basin and trekked through the jungle for two weeks visiting Angel Falls on the way. This appeared in 'Adventure Times' magazine over 6 pages and so I was stimulated for more adventures.

My first marathon was Manchester which I booked because it was the next big thing. I remember going to the pub, having a skin full the night before and telling my friends. One friend shouted "your f\*&^in mad you Bickerton!" which I liked and made me smile! I had not trained at all, and the next day I suffered. Wearing my Adidas Torsion trainers I set out. On the first corner I ended up going for a slash and lost valuable time. So, I pushed on. But, at the 18 mile mark my IT band flared up and I had to run like my right leg was fused straight. I managed to come LAST! The van that collected the road cones had been behind me with the guys shouting words of encouragement so that they could get home at a good hour! I don't even know the time I finished but I had the medal. My mum and sister were at the finish line. Mum was the only person clapping and shouted "well done son". My sister bellowed "YOU'RE AN EMBARRASSMENT"! I was gutted. Anyhow, I got a great massage later from a good-looking St John's Ambulance worker so I was happy! Next time I'll do better, I thought.



Manchester Marathon – dodgy finish

The move down to Newbury in 2004 came when I had finished my degree that the hospital had kindly paid for! Thanks, but time to move on! A new job and sharing a place with a good friend Lee who was a Michelin chef at the Vineyard in Stockcross sounded amazing! Until the credit check revealed Lee was in much debt and days later was arrested at work because he was on the run for reasons I will not tell! I was now in a place on my own paying £800 per month + bills in a new job with no friends to hand.

The first 6 months in Newbury were hard and pretty much lonely as hell. The guys at work were good and Gary had hinted he was to do the UK Ironman with the army boys. I wanted to be part of it. Joining Cannons gym in Newbury I set to work and, after a few weeks, a trainer in the gym said that I should forget the gym and “get out”. I began running with Matt Streater, a plasma physicist from work who had moved in with me after 6 months. We completed the Cardiff Half marathon in good time but felt rough! One night in a drunken stupor we booked the Barcelona marathon. I thought it would be a good warm-up for Ironman.

Before Ironman, I was swimming lots. Mountain bike rides at the weekend had developed from 20 miles to 40 miles. I just needed to get better at running, so Matt and I joined this club of mainly long distance mentalists, with a thin veneer of civility, called Compton Harriers. I did not know at the time but this club would be as influential as my old buddy Gary. The first club night evening meal, I was as quiet as a church mouse. Little did the Harriers know that this would change in time!

I quickly discovered that I loved to run. Early evenings on the downs, mornings on Greenham Common, adds spotted on Snelsmore Common, races in historic towns, jogs with friends, runs with guys from work on the Ridgeway. The change from Manchester to Berkshire/Oxfordshire was immense. I couldn't get enough. I would smile as I ran and still do! Running became a good reason to visit places. I would even find myself running when hiking in Wales with my walking boots, backpack, and walking pole flying to the side.



Spot the hobbit in green amongst the big boys at the Monsterman Duathlon

My bike rides on the weekend would take me to the surrounding towns of Hungerford, Marlborough, Ashbury etc. At each town or village I would stop for a coffee, a pint, or even a sneaky joint! I remember doing a 120-miler with Paul Clarke and being a little pissed and stoned. We stopped for some fish and chips in Newbury and he nearly hit the deck from exhaustion! The Chinese lady on the counter thought we looked a right mess!

The Barcelona marathon in 2006 with Streater was a fabulous experience encompassing a great city break holiday, some Flamenco and a very hot run. Apart from missing the start by 15 minutes due to sleeping in, and having to do the business in a bush on route, the marathon turned out to be a golden day! The crowd turnout really gave me a buzz, especially hi-fiving the kids on the home straight. I finished with an impressive 3:55.

My first and only triathlon before the UK Ironman was the Bala Middle Distance Tri, Wales. I remember the open-water swim start, treading water with around a thousand competitors. I was nervous, and when nervous I tend to get ‘friendly tourettes’. I mentioned to a swimmer that it was my first triathlon, he laughed at me said “no way” and my bowels started to churn!



The completion of my first Ironman in 2006 was a huge milestone and a confidence boost. I had been hammering the nutrition books, eating synthetic crap and pushing my training hard. The day of the Ironman was cautious and straightforward apart from nearly missing the cut-off on the bike leg. I had maximum energy levels for the run and sprinted most of the way around for a great 4:10 marathon time and an overall time of 14:37. Crossing the line at Ironman is hard to match. The organisers really make a big deal of it. Wearing my medal I was nearly blubbing and nutritionally naked!



Me and Paul at a duathlon at Thruxton circuit



Finished my first Ironman

The earlier post-Manchester events started to highlight how much I enjoyed being part of a team and how much the body can be punished. It's more a lifestyle than proving something to oneself and others. I had raised £700 for charity at the Ironman, had fantastic support from Penny, my girlfriend at that time, made a good training pal Paul from work, and had been accepted into a brill running club. My family think I am mad doing these things and my friends from Manchester thought that I had completely changed character.

In 2008, Paul and I were training hard for the Ironman Switzerland and also enjoying the delights of the odd music festival. We were at peak fitness when we had a vehicle accident on the way back from a festival. I managed to break my leg and Paul had broken both his arms and nose. It was a traumatic few months and sadly, not long after, we would go our separate ways.



Deflated bubble car after the smash



Paul and me at Glastonbury 10 weeks after the crash

Having my leg in plaster for 12 weeks in June really made me twitchy. I had the Amsterdam marathon booked for November, the Microsoft UK Challenge in 6 weeks and the Swiss Ironman in 2 months! I was under the impression that, when the plaster came off, I would train like hell and be back up to match fitness in no time. Instead, I had to cancel the Ironman and became a supporting/planning member of the Microsoft team. Later that year I achieved a PB of 3:37 in the Amsterdam marathon. I was back, with a slightly thicker right ankle.



Microsoft UK Challenge 2008 + Pink Cast  
Bickers



Amsterdam + 2 whole legs + some form of wet  
patch

At work I had started to push people into adventure races and shorter races like 10k runs. Many of the guys were soaking up my energy that was being produced from sport. I would encourage people out at lunch and push them into doing 8 miles. We had a great thing going.

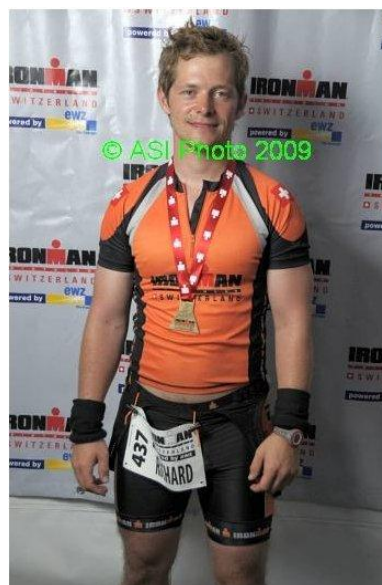


Microsoft UK Challenge 2009

A year after I broke my leg I managed to finally complete the Ironman in Switzerland and then I went travelling. I shipped all my sports gear to New Zealand and headed there via Asia.



Absorbing the power of the sun for the round  
the Mt Manganui swim in Tauranga, NZ!



Swiss Ironman Finisher!



Every day was about sport during my 2.5 year world experience. I spent 2 months in the Himalayas trekking, I ran all over Malaysia in the heat. I had even found a desert island in the Pherentian Islands of the coast of Malaysia and ran there for 2 weeks at sunset. The locals thought I was a big-time athlete, maybe because I was one of the few mad people not relaxing! I spent three months in total manning about before I met up with my girlfriend Charlotte. The first thing we did was climb Mt Kinabalu in Borneo which I thought a good idea. Charlie required a little encouragement!

Over the period of the trip, I managed to bag an Ironman triathlon in New Zealand and Western Australia. The most memorable occasion was swimming in a large swell offshore around Busstleton Pier in S.E OZ and collecting a mouthful of wine-gum sized jellyfish. The swell was huge and there had been a shark attack a week before. It was a matter of get the swim out of the way as quickly as possible! I was actually sick during that swim but I swallowed it down!



Rick “the seal” Bickerton



Before Ironman Oz



The finish in NZ

During my year in New Zealand I took part in numerous races. Mountain runs were amongst my favourite where I would be running through thick pine and silver ferns. I can easily remember the smell of those forests and the high pitch tone of the bugs. One of my achievements was completing the round the lake Rotorua marathon. I ran a cool 3:37. Part of my Ironman training was to destroy myself on the road bike around the country. Charlotte would drive on to the next place of interest and I would slowly bake and ride. A number of times I had to make the call for her to pick my sorry wilting self up from the side of the road!

I met a number of interesting friends in NZ. One good friend was Timo Bellen (nicknamed “The Bellend”!) who is a pro kayaker from Germany. I trained with him for about 8 months – running, kayaking, mountain biking and drinking. He is much fitter than I am, and kept me on my toes. He somehow convinced me to go in a double kayak over a 7m waterfall. This would be my initiation into the club! He has since promised to race me in the Frankfurt Ironman very soon...



Timo, Paul my good friend from Manchester, Me, and Charlie at an adventure race in NZ

After quitting my engineering job in Rotorua, Charlotte and I headed out to the further reaches of NZ. We managed to achieve 5 of the national great walks. Another boost for personal fitness. On the way back to the UK we bagged the legendary Everest base camp trek.

During my world trip I discovered or improved the following things about myself:

- I have allergies!!!
- My family are more important than I originally thought!
- Now I feel more secure about myself
- Able to tell people to piss off more easily!
- Tend to use the phrase “Sweet as bro” a lot
- Eat much more healthily
- Can drive for longer, no sweat
- Feel the need to discover my own lands
- Blah blah blah blah blah

Priorities have changed since returning to the UK. I still wanna hammer the training. But I tend to want to get more involved with volunteering and getting the people around me amped up about taking part in sport. It's getting to the point that lots of people at work are getting tempted to join me on my exploits. More so, as a responsible uncle, I can see that I'm having a positive effect on my two 11 and 8 year old nephews who seem to want to be as crazy as me! I try to visit them once a month and at least take them to the lakes or the local rock climbing centre. I get a kick out of watching them try something new; overcome their fears and enjoying their sense of success. I wish I had started doing these things at that age.

Yes, I still sprint at the beginning of races to try and get in the paper, and I'm still achieving personal milestones, but I don't have so much to prove as I did when I was a teeny bop. I'm now enjoying life more than ever and everybody in it!



With nephew Chris



Finishing the Compton 40 – piece of cake!

My current future plans are the following:

**Short term**

- Rock climb Mount Kenya
- Rock climb Carstenz Pyramid
- Complete a 100k run
- Complete Ironman Wales
- Become a mountain leader

**Long term**

- Climb the seven summits
- RUN THE GRAND UNION CANAL RACE :D (**MAYBE...MAYBE NOT**)

Over and out!

(Editor's note: Ricky's original article was 15 pages long. In order to fit it into the Harriers Herald, I have reduced the size of all of the photographs and have removed a few photos. However, the text has not been cut at all. If you would like to see the original article with all the photos, full-sized, let me know).

*Next month: Debbie Bishop*  
(no pressure to write 15 pages, Debbie!)



*Links of interest this month:*

You can read about “listening to your body” on page 26 of this month’s Running Free Magazine at <http://tinyurl.com/dxoc8pc>

*This month’s brief article is all about recovery following a professional training session:*

Learn the essential art of recovery after training:

Try following these steps after your session:

1. Immediately after completing your session (before warming down), drink 250ml of an energy drink (or eat a handful of jelly sweets) to top up your glycogen levels.
2. In the first ½ hour after the session:
  - ❖ Repeat step 1 above
  - ❖ Eat an amount of protein to assist muscle regeneration
  - ❖ Take any appropriate supplements
  - ❖ Ice down any problem areas
  - ❖ Complete an appropriate warm-down

An example to cover the above points would be to wash down a couple of apples with a sports drink followed by a nice chunk of cheese (or a chocolate milkshake if you don’t feel like cheese).

A more technical example could be a sports drink followed by a protein drink containing additional glutamine (to aid protein synthesis)

Then take a multivitamin such as glucosamine, chondroitin or cod liver oil, to replace the body’s natural resources and so help to protect joints and tendons. (Caution: strictly speaking, medical advice should be sought before taking supplements).

3. Up to 2 hrs after the session, after cooling down, carry out:
  - ❖ General stretching with special attention to the areas most worked. Hold each stretch for 30 seconds, without ‘bouncing’. Stretch opposing muscles in pairs, e.g. quads, then hamstrings rather than random stretching.
  - ❖ To help flush toxins from the muscles, alternate between hot and cold showers (e.g. 2mins hot, 2mins cold).
  - ❖ Eat a small carbohydrate meal with a little protein
  - ❖ Use compression clothing.
  - ❖ Rest, relax and if possible, sleep.

*Forthcoming Local Events – see Website Events Calendar for full Listing*