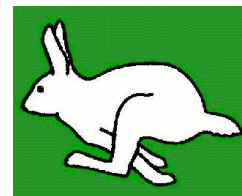


THE HARRIERS HERALD

No. 220, June 2011

Editor: Sue Francis



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- GPS watches – Simon proposes an experiment to test the accuracy of ‘Garmins’
- Running Life series – for those who have asked ‘Who’s Simon?’, now’s your chance to find out
- Webmaster’s article – Mo features a link to ‘Sports Massage’, and lists forthcoming races
- Thanks to Mags, Mo, Philomena, Simon, Richard and Sus for this month’s contributions
- Copy date for next Harriers Herald – 1st July

Thursday night schedule for June

Thurs	9 th	Handicap Race
Thurs	16 th	Lee to lead
Thurs	23 rd	IAH Boundary Run & Walk? TBC, or Terry to lead
Thurs	30 th	IAH Boundary Run & Walk? TBC

Thursday night schedule for July

Thurs	7 th	Sus to lead
Thurs	14 th	Colin to lead
Thurs	21 st	Lucy to lead
Thurs	28 th	Mags to lead

Correspondence received		
Sender	Subject matter	Action
Running 4 Women Ltd	Ladies Windsor 8K (24-09-11)	Events Diary & notice board
‘jelleylegs’	Trail Running breaks & Ultra Running breaks in Yorkshire	Leaflets distributed and on notice board

IAH Annual Boundary Run & Walk

Sue

This year’s IAH Boundary Run & Walk is scheduled for either the evening of Thursday 23rd or 30th June – TBC.

Participants run or walk around the Boundary of the Institute estate and farms, a scenic 8- mile route on tracks, through fields and woods. Complete the route at your own pace: fun runners/walkers and competitive runners/walkers all welcome. There are trophies for the first runners and walker, but many choose to take part for fun and to enjoy the scenery.

The bar and barbecue will be open to all. For entries (no entry fee), route maps, offers of help and more information, contact Sue.

Start Walk (16:45, IAH Main Gate), Run (17:45, IAH Main gate), finish in Cricket Field.

Race Reports & Results

Stockley Park 10K, 25th April

Richard

A new race to me but, as I was looking for a race over Easter and I knew Stockley Park from when it used to hold the Thames Valley Harriers Road relays, thought I would give it a go. The race is promoted by Purple Patch Runners and, although the field was a small 197, it was well organised.

Despite being almost adjacent to Heathrow, the course takes advantage of the adjacent golf course so that only the first and last Ks are actually on road. The rest of the course is very undulating on off-road trails and surprisingly hilly. With the weather being both warm and breezy I was quite pleased with my time, despite being pipped by the first Vet 60! I would recommend the race as being low-key but run on an interesting course, well organised and not too far afield to get to.

Time: 42:40, 20th

Race winners:

Men: Hassan Raidi, UA, 33:53;

Women: Isobel Rea, West Four Harriers, 40:54 (10th overall)

MV40: Laurence Miles, Maidenhead AC, 36:20; WV40: Karmen Pardoe, UA, 41:22

MV50: Bill Neely, Ranelagh Harriers, 39:13; WV50: Barbara Allen, Running4Women, 51:41

Red Kite Run, 30th April

Dick took part in this tough 11-mile fell race in Wales. He finished 74th, from 130 finishers, in a time of 1:46:32. I came across these photos on the race website.



Running along 'The Dragon's Back'



Finishing

North Dorset Village Marathon, 1st May

Lucy and Martin ran together finishing 43rd (3:23:05) and 44th (3:23:06) respectively, from 302 finishers. Lucy's performance earned her the prize for 3rd lady (1st FV50).

Ridgeway 40, 7th May

Three Harriers took part in the Ridgeway 40-miler, from Overton Hill to Streatley. For Gillian, this was her first attempt at any distance further than 20 miles! Gillian says: "The first 2 hours were lovely and wet, which meant I got a few blisters (wet socks and trainers rubbing), but I kept going. I managed to run to 20 miles, and then my calf started niggling, so I walked until the top of Churn Road. I then jogged and ran the rest of way to Streatley. I finished in 11:25, with 30 minutes for lunch; I was very pleased with that".

Martin and Lucy are regulars at this event. They finished together in 7:26.

Charlton-on Otmoor 4 Miles 168 yards, Mota-vation Series Race 1, 5th May

Richard

This race is both the final race of the Oxford Grand Prix series and the first of the summer Mota-vation series, so has always had a high entry. As a result separate Men's and Ladies races take place, the Men's race starting some 15 minutes before the Ladies.

The course is run over a flat figure of 8, passing through the two small villages of Otmoor and Oddington. Being a short distance, the race is run fairly 'flat out' which I found quite hard as my speed work has been almost non-existent the past few years, so I was pleased to beat my last year's time by a few seconds. As usual in this race, there were some pretty impressive performances, especially amongst the Vets. Sophie Carter, who won the Ladies race, also seems to be an up and coming talent and one to watch locally.

Time: 27:02, 96th.

Race winners:

Men: Steve Naylor, Woodstock, 20:04;

Women: Sophie Carter, Woodstock, 24:06

Male Veteran 40: Steve Male, Oxford AC, 21:31;

Women Veteran 35: Jude Craft, Headington, 24:11

Male Veteran 50: Brian Green, Oxford AC, 23:40;

Women Veteran 45: Nicola Gomm, Witney RR 25:54

Male Veteran 60: Roy Treadwell, Oxford AC, 24:28;

Women Veteran 55: Kate Williamson, Eynsham 29:56

Bracknell Half Marathon, 8th May

Sus

Maybe I am unaware but I do not recall any from the club have ever done this race, now in its 27th birthday - which is a shame. For half the price compared to the Reading half marathon you get a very well organized race run on mixture of footpaths, cycleway and closed roads, chip timed, free t-shirt and medal, goodie bag with energy drinks chocolate, shoe bag, flask, free access to physio treatment on site, free swim at the Coral Reef and this year free barbeque at the nearby forest! And on top of that in a beautiful setting of the South Hill Park. All right it does not attract the big runners (hence the price I presume) and it is not a PB course but it does boast of a Mr Bolt being the first man home!

1st Man, Chris Bolt, Bracknell AC 1:14:29

1st Lady Liz Hartney, Reading Roadrunners 1:23:53

2nd Lady Sus 1:29:01

964 finishers

Hairy Legs Challenge, 8th May

Sue

The Hairy Legs Challenge is an annual Run-Bike-Run duathlon in Goring, which can be contested by individuals or teams. Mo and I competed again as 'Team SuMo': I did the two 5.5K run stages, while Mo did the 15-mile bike stage. As this was the 10th HLC, all entrants were posted their red 10th Anniversary event T-shirts in advance, and asked to wear them on race day to create a 'sea of red' competitors. A nice idea, but I was concerned I would have a job to spot Mo coming into the hand-over area amongst a load of other red T-shirts and black cycle helmets: he decided to wear a pair of garish lycra shorts to help me out!

The event was very enjoyable and generally very well organised. Due to a last-minute change of start time, which wasn't clearly announced, I found myself right at the back of the bunch and, having taken 10 seconds to cross the start line, I was trapped behind slower runners for the first 2K. The run route is along the quiet road from Goring, up the 'Hairy Legs Hill' to Upper Gatehampton Farm before a nice downhill woodland section leads to the bottom of a second big hill. Once at the top of this hill, there is a good downhill run-in back to the transition / finish area in Gatehampton Rec. Once the runners spread out and I got into my stride, I enjoyed catching the faster starters through the woods. Running down to the transition area, I couldn't spot Mo (despite his shorts) until he started waving his arms about! Once we'd swapped the timing chip from my ankle to Mo's

he hopped onto his bike and set off at a great rate of knots on the nice flat road to start.

Although the tough terrain meant he couldn't keep this pace up all the way, the new bike (27 gears, good suspension, and good knobby tyres) made for an enjoyable ride. The route was a mixture of off-road tracks and quiet roads, through Hartslock Wood to Whitchurch, on to Mapledurham, and back via Goring Health. Although he got fed up with people overtaking him uphill, Mo flew on the downhill sections. At one stage, he heard a big bang as the tyre on a lady competitor's bike completely exploded! Mo was relieved to finish without having any punctures or other mechanical problems.

I was pleased to see Mo finish with a big smile (not a big grimace). I set off on my second run, focussing on reeling in the runners immediately ahead, and counting them off. Since 2/3 of them were competing as individuals (and had thus spent the last hour cycling, instead of resting like me!) there was a steady stream of targets. I put in a sprint finish and caught my 53rd target as I re-entered the Rec.

There were 280 finishers - 187 individuals and 93 teams. We were very pleased with our performance, since we finished in the top 1/3 of teams. Good performances also came from Compton resident Jess Franklin of Newbury A.C. (2:02:45, 2nd individual lady), Peter L's mate Glynn Jones (the running member of the 3rd team), and former Harrier Gill Harrison (2:19:47, 3rd in the 'Ladies Old Crumblies' category). There was also a surprise spectator in the form of Pete H, who happened to be on a weekend cycle ride to tackle Streatley Hill.

Name / team	Overall time	Place overall	Place in class	1 st run	Place in 1 st run	Bike	Place in bike	2 nd run	Place in 2 nd run
Chris & Ben Sumner	1:34:42	1 st	1 st team	24:16	20 th	45:59	1 st	24:27	12 th
Jon Darwent	1:37:57	2 nd	1 st man	21:44	4 th	54:14	3 rd	21:59	2 nd
Bridget Ostrehan	2:00:03	67 th	1 st lady	27:49	86 th	1:07:17	57 th	29:57	93 rd
Team SuMo (Sue & Mo)	2:04:57	92 nd	31 st team	25:27	34 th	1:14:25	194 th	25:07	18 th



Go Mo!



Crazy-Legs Sue

Marlborough Downs Challenge, 14th May

Four Harriers took part in this multi-terrain 20-miler, in good conditions. Martin was 12th (2:27:54), Lucy 21st (2:35:01, 1st FV45), Terry 23rd (2:36:06) and Philomena 42nd (2:49:24). There were 118 finishers.

Woodley 10K, 15th May

Simon

Another year, another Woodley...this was my 21st year at this event, so I won't bore you with all the minor details. Suffice to say it was as well-organised and well-marshalled as ever and is now so popular that the entries closed at the beginning of May.

Although not traffic-free, most of the race is on pavements and the traffic is stopped for main road crossings. The course was the same as used last year, which meant the previous bottle-neck of runners leaving Woodley's Memorial Recreation Ground was once again avoided and the start was very smooth. The rest of the 10K was, well, what can I say?, as enjoyable as the previous ones; the start, route, marshals, drinks stations and finish were impeccably organised and you would have to work hard to fault anything.

Joanna's sister Emma and I were intending to run together, but a last minute change of plan (she didn't feel up to trying for a PB) meant we 'did our own thing'. So off I pootled with the aim of clocking under 50 minutes for the first time in a long time. It was going fairly well, too, until about 7.5K when the up/down/up going under the A329(M) and the railway caught me out (again – yes I know I should be used to it by now!). I missed my target by a few seconds, finishing in 217th place in a time of 50:06, but injury-free and feeling good so all-in-all I was quite pleased. Emma finished in 56:17 – not a PB but a time with which she was happy.

Getting hold of the results this year was a bit of a pain – although they were available on the Sports Systems website on Sunday afternoon, my laptop locked up every time I tried to access them; I also found out that it wasn't possible to obtain a copy of the results without paying (grrrr) and I couldn't cut and paste the results either. Something that needs looking at by the organisers, I think. Anyway, first man home was Richard Kinnersley of Reading AC in 33:41 and first lady was Kay Walsh in 39:56. There were a total of 596 finishers, last of whom took 1:35:28. If you want any more race information I'm afraid I shall have to charge you...

As always, a very enjoyable race and I've already put my name down for next year.

Oxford Town and Gown 10k, 15th May

Richard

I've run this race several times in the past, although not for a few years. I've always found it very frustrating as it is a pancake flat course but, due to its many turns, I've never felt that I've produced the really fast time such a course should allow – I put that down in the past to the sharp corners and some rough pathways. Previous race routes also meant several laps within the Parks, which meant a lot of overtaking slower runners on the second and third laps.

The course this year was revised markedly from the previous one I had run, with one single, but very irregular loop, meaning there was no need for overtaking slower runners. Over 2,600 runners took part, with a lot of fun runners as the race is promoted by the Muscular Dystrophy campaign. I approached the race a bit cautiously as my left hamstring had been sore most of the week and my left calf had been cramping since the day before, so I took advantage of a free massage beforehand which seemed to help in that quarter.

The race is chip and pin, but unfortunately many slower runners did not adhere to the approximate finishing time signs, as a result of which I found myself hemmed in by a lot of slower runners at the start. I also quickly realised that I had a very tight chest, probably due to the spring pollen triggering my asthma. As a result I spent a rather uncomfortable race mainly trying to finish and was pretty disappointed with my time, well down on what I had expected, especially given my time at Stockley Park just three weeks earlier on a much tougher course.

At the finish I was met by Ann, who asked me if I had seen Sus in the race. I said I hadn't, not surprisingly as she finished well ahead of me, coming in 4th Lady and winning the Vet 45 ahead of the first Vet 35! I'm not sure if she was disappointed or not in just failing to beat 40 minutes(*), but it was a very fine performance. Interestingly the results had initially placed a male as first female finisher! The Women's winner, once again, was Sophie Carter.

My Time: 43:30 (264th).

Sus' Time: 4th Lady, 110th overall. 40:01. (P.B.) (*) Chip time = 39:57

Race winners:

Men: David Bruce, Oxford University 31:56;

MV40: Peter Haarer, Ranelagh 33:44;

MV50: Simon Dales, Oxford Tri 39:06;

MV60: Roy Treadwell, Oxford AC 38:08;

Women: Sophie Carter, Woodstock 36:54

WV35: Sarah Rendell, Alchester 40:15

WV45: SUSANNE ENHARD, COMPTON 40:01

WV55: Janet Upcher, UA 45:52

Copenhagen Marathon, 22nd May

Mags

The Copenhagen Marathon was very well organised and resulted in a very enjoyable day. Although it was my first marathon, and so I have no other to compare it with, I would recommend it to anyone who would like a pleasant flat marathon. You go past many lovely buildings and along the sea front. There were also plenty of drinks and fruit stops along the way. My only slight gripe is that two toilets aren't enough, especially at the first few drinks points. The men just used bushes but there just weren't enough of them for us women to hide behind!

The weather had been warm and sunny up to the marathon day and I was relieved to find the day cooler and cloudy. My only aim when I arrived at the starting line was to finish it before the 6 hour time limit. The race was run in a looping route so there were points we crossed twice. It was a little upsetting to find people running past on the way back to finish when the rest of us had such a long way still to go but, apart from that, it was lovely. The Danish people had come out in droves and were doing lots of cheering and flag waving, from balconies as well as the roadside. Bands played along the route, choirs sung, people danced. It made the time pass very pleasantly.

The fastest runners started coming in at 2:22 with the fastest woman at 2:45. How they manage this is alien to me! I forced myself to start slowly and so managed to keep running for far longer than I normally do. I didn't hit my normal mental block and was able to run on until my legs started to complain sometime after 20 miles. After this it was a fast walk and jog mix until the end. I almost burst into tears when I crossed that finish line at 5 hours and 11 minutes, smiling and thinking to myself "You did it, you just ran a marathon". I now have a medal and t-shirt to prove it! We only got wet once and, although the weather did get progressively windy and cooler, the real big storm didn't come until well after the event had finished. Will I do another? Hmm, let me think about that one!

Tewkesbury Half Marathon 22nd May

Philomena

Sus and I did this race on a somewhat blustery day but fortunately the wind was behind us at least for the first half of the race. It is gently undulating and quite scenic along most of its length. However there is also quite a bit of running through the town towards the end which I found a bit tricky under foot because of having to run on and off the pavement and along shop fronts! On the whole it is very well organised, and even has one side of the road closed in busy sections which helped a lot otherwise there would have been a lot of congestion on the pavements with over 1000 runners taking part. The prize giving after the race was a rather low key affair. It was made on a very quiet megaphone from an open-top double-decker bus with the announcer facing away from the finish! This was a shame because hardly anyone seemed to know it was going on.

Fortunately we just about heard what sounded like Sus' name for second lady overall as we were walking back to the cars to get changed, so we came back. Nick Jones, who ran with us a few times last summer, was there and he did really well. Over all though, a nice friendly race good for anyone wanting to try out a half marathon race for the first time.

Gun to Chip Times

Sus: 1:28:50 2nd lady overall

Nick Jones (Newbury AC): 1:17:57 5th Overall

Meena: 1:40:49 1st FV50

IAH Annual Relay, 26th May

Sue

After a wet afternoon for setting up, I was very pleased that the weather improved for the evening's race, and it was great to have nine teams taking part, which included a total of 14 Harriers. The handicapping system made for a good race. The 'Disney Characters' (Ryan, Stephen, Mags and Richard) took the lead on the first lap and stayed ahead to win the race. 'The Four Musketeers' (Pete H, Gareth, Lucy and Peter L) gradually worked their way up from 8th position to finish 2nd. There was a good battle for third spot, as 'The Only Pirbright Relay Team', 'The Hippos' and 'The Old Boys' finished within the space of 9 seconds. The Pirbright team clinched third place, while 'The Hippos' recorded the fastest actual time of the day.

The fastest laps of the evening were recorded by Ryan, Gareth Lloyd and John Marriot. The fastest three ladies were Sue, Lucy and Lidia Lasecka. Special congratulations to our two youngest ever relay competitors, Beth and Chloe Jones (aged 9 and 11) who did their family team proud. Full results can be viewed on our website.

Thanks to all those Harriers who helped out: Jan and Pete H for time-keeping; Kirsty and Sus for marshalling; Mo for setting up the results programme; and Dick for mowing and signing the course.

GPS watches – are they really that accurate?

Simon

Now here's something to get you thinking: Emma wore a Garmin Forerunner 305 GPS watch in the Woodley 10K and, when she downloaded the data after the run, the stats told her that the Woodley 10K course had 660 feet of ascent and 621 feet of descent in it.

Now, given that the start and finish is on the same (flat) playing field, there simply cannot have been a height difference of 39 feet between the two. Also, having run Woodley so many times before, I am quite sure that there is nowhere near that much ascent and descent in it; 660 feet in 10K would make the course, relatively, as hilly as the Compton 20 – and believe me it isn't!

So that got me thinking ... what if the Garmin is wrong? Then it occurred to me on the way home that, being a wrist-worn GPS system, the Garmin may include the rise and fall of the arm during a run in the total ascent and descent – after all, it's only a GPS system so it would register the relative 'height' of the wrist during the time it was recording. The thing is, if that's true then it would surely mean that any data calculated in part using ascent or descent (e.g. speed, average, possibly even distance) wouldn't be correct, would it? And that, to me – although I was quite interested by all the data which Emma downloaded – means it'd all be a bit meaningless because if you can't rely on the information given there's not much point in paying a hundred and twenty odd quid for an inaccurate gadget, is there?

I did suggest to Emma that she starts the Garmin, lifts it up and down in a doorway ten times and then stops the watch and uploads the data. If my theory is correct, the movement would replicate an arm rising and falling during a run and the watch would record a total ascent and descent of around 60 feet, even though it hadn't actually gone anywhere. I don't think Emma wants to discover her beloved gadget has a flaw, though – so if any Harriers have got a Garmin GPS watch and want to test my theory, can you let me know what the result is please, 'cos I'd be really interested. Thanks, Simon.

Running Life Series no. 5 **The Runner In Front Smokes Superkings...**

...or 'My Running Life', by Simon Bolton

Note: Most of this 'Running Life' article first appeared in the Harriers Herald back in December 1999; any Compton Harrier who was a member back then is therefore excused from having to read it again. Then again I have updated a few bits and added a couple of new paragraphs, so if you really have nothing better to do ...

Your first run. It's one of those things that you remember forever, like your first kiss, the first time you drive a car, the first time you have an orgasm in company (1). You know what I mean. I remember mine vividly (2).

The first time I ran was at an inter-house sports day in my third year at the Thomas Peacocke & Sons Correctional Home and Secondary Modern Sanatorium in Rye, East Sussex, in June 1974. By an incredible coincidence, this was where I also went to school. I was 'volunteered' for the 200m and having drawn (or been stuck in) the outside lane, ran as best I could to finish third out of eight, then retired gracefully to the changing rooms assuming that my running days were over. However, I was fingered by the Fickle Finger of Fate thirty-five minutes later when some b*st*rd found me and told me I was running in the 400m too. Once again I got the outside lane and, having little or no regard either for my personal safety or the rule of diminishing returns, I assumed that I would only have to do what I did in the previous race and double it. So I did.

Four hundred metres is a bloody long way. Legend has it that I was going so fast that I was five seconds inside the school record at the halfway mark. It didn't last. By the time I started down the home straight somebody had moved the finish line and I still had two hundred metres to go. First my team-mate overtook me, then someone else went past. Once again I held on to finish third and decided to retire from athletics while the going was good – and before I was asked to 'help out' in the 4x400 relay team.

My retirement lasted several years and the remainder of my time at Thos. Peacocke's was spent on more physical pursuits such as hockey, threatening younger pupils and drinking. I got quite good at some of them. I even rose to the dizzy heights of Captain of the School Hockey Team and was top scorer in one season. But cross-country running? Forget it. They used to be exercises in survival, especially when the more, er, academically challenged in the school joined in; they used to throw other participants in the local river. And that was if they liked you. But I digress.

After I left school in 1979 I worked for a year in the kitchens of a local hospital. This, in retrospect, was a very safe place to hide as shift work and long hours meant it was always either too early or too late to go running depending on what shift you were on and, as you only got one weekend in three off, I was fairly well sheltered from entering races as most of them took place on Sundays. Rather foolishly, and believing I was safe after a year, I left the hospital and joined the Civil Service in June 1980. And that, as they say, is when things started to go wrong...

I got in with the wrong crowd, guv. The Civil Service Running Club. They were a bit like drug dealers; they won your confidence, treated you like a mate and then, just when you least expected it, dropped you right in it. I'd taken to socialising with a few of the club members because they were good company and we had a few things in common like music and snooker. I even went to the Sunday Times National Fun Run (anybody remember them?) in Hyde Park in 1982 – well, it was a day out and it was only 2½ miles. Ten of us went up by mini-bus for the event and one of the guys smoked a pack of 20 Benson & Hedges before we got to London – I found out later that he only ever smoked on the morning of a race and with best times of around 60 minutes for 10 miles and 80 minutes for a half marathon I figured out that running and smoking weren't mutually exclusive after all.

I actually quite enjoyed the National Fun Run (3). I even did a local 2 mile fun run the following March, which took me just over 17 minutes. Then, in April 1983, they got me. Right in the middle of a particularly strenuous session (4) one Friday lunchtime one of the club members asked me why I didn't go running with them at lunchtimes. "Oh," I replied in a matter-of-fact way, "I go out in the evenings when I get home. I prefer running then." "So when's your next race then?" he asked. "Er ... Dover 10 mile Fun Run," I said. I only said this because a) I'd seen it advertised and b) as it used to be held on a Wednesday at 7pm I figured it was too far to go for a run after work in the middle of the week.

"Oh, I'm doing that one too," he replied. "So I'll see you there." "OK," I said (5). And that, as they say, was that. I had to start training, and fairly sharpish too as I only had five weeks before the run. I went home, found some running shoes and did 2½ miles in 25 minutes. I went out and did the same thing every night for the following week, until someone asked me what rest

Notes:

(1) Not necessarily in that order.

(2) And my first run.

(3) I didn't die and I wasn't last. These have been my primary criteria for enjoying running ever since.

(4) Several pints.

(5) I actually thought "Buggerbuggerbuggerbuggerwaddyahavetosaythatforyouwazzock." It just came out as "OK".

days I had when I was running. I said I didn't (because I thought runners didn't have rest days) and was told I should because my body needed time to recover every now and then. So I started to have rest days (6).

And so, on 13th July 1983, I lined up on the seafront in Dover for the start of my first 10 mile race. A flat first mile, a 400-foot climb in the second mile, and hang on for the final eight to finish in 1 hour 16 minutes. I learnt later that it was probably a short course so I wasn't going as fast as I thought I was, but by then it was too late; I had a medal and wanted another one. Three months later I went over to Paris to run the International 20K, which I finished in 1:41:22; I had been planning to run the lot with a friend of mine who went over to run it as well, but he got caught very short indeed at the halfway mark and ended up begging a 1F coin off a spectator so he could use one of the loos on the route. Ah, happy days...

After that there was no stopping me. I'd done a 10-miler and a 20K, so I figured the next thing was a marathon. And London it was. I entered but got rejected in the ballot but then a friend of a friend said he couldn't do it and offered me his number so I actually ran as a 50-year-old. I looked like one at the finish too. My first marathon took 3:47:15 and I could hardly walk for three days afterwards (7). But I did it.

And that, basically, was how I started running. After I'd 'done' London I started what became my usual training pattern of doing nothing until about six weeks before a race, then train for it, run it and assume semi-retirement again until about six weeks before the next one. I wasn't particularly good (8) and this was reinforced by friends of mine like Alan McCleave – East Sussex Open Table Tennis champion and guitar wizard, who ran the Dover 10 miler one year in under 70 minutes after only two weeks training – and Iain Cudmore – East Sussex Under-25 Snooker champion who ran sub-1:25 in the Hastings Half Marathon after deciding to enter on the day.

Then, in 1990, something happened. I still to this day don't know why it attracted my attention, but I saw the South Downs Way 80 advertised in one of those running mags (I only bought them for the cookery tips). "Why not?" I thought. "I've done one marathon so I can do three." I needed a sub-3:30 qualifying marathon so I entered the St Albans marathon, clocked 3:23 on what turned out to be a very hilly course and entered the 1991 SDW. I made a vague attempt at training for it (I didn't have a clue how to go about it) and, as things turned out, I made the first 64½ miles to Itford Farm before I dropped out with serious blisters and I swore I would never do it again.

Three days later I was waiting for the following year's entry form, having worked out where I went wrong and what I needed to do to get to the finish. I actually recorded my first SDW finish in 1992 when I did it with a friend of mine and, despite getting lost going over the Long Man of Wilmington after 70-odd miles, we finished in 24 hours 19 minutes and 24 seconds. I finished the SDW four times in all, out of seven starts, and got my time down to a few minutes under 18 hours; the only thing that stopped me trying for an eighth time was Harry Townsend pulling the plug on the event after 1997.

My complete lack of any proper or co-ordinated training or stretching regime finally caught up with me in late 2007, when I started to suffer from repeatedly tearing calf muscles. It took a couple of years and a few visits to an osteopath to sort out, but basically because I'd never really stretched properly after a run, the small tears in the calf muscles caused by doing daft things like the High Peak 40, the Abingdon Marathon and the Seven Sisters Marathon one after the other within five weeks, or the Marlborough 33 mile trail race one day and a 10K the following day, never had a chance to heal. So when I had some 'time off' from running the tears scarred up, which was fine until I started running again; then they tore apart and boy did I know about it! I now stretch three times a day and, although I can get round a 20-miler, I'm just not as fast as I used to be.

I'm hoping to get up to Buxton again this year for what will most probably be one last crack at the High Peak 40 because I do miss it – I started every one from 1992 until 2007 (15 starts, 11 finishes) and these days I feel a bit like Christopher Walken in the Russian Roulette scene in *The Deerhunter*. "Just one more. Just one more..."

To date, over the years, I've completed the marathon distance 94 times, although I've actually done more ultra-marathons than marathons. I think it's the challenge of the distance rather than the race against the clock which attracts me; it doesn't really matter if it takes 7, 8 or 9 hours to complete a 40-miler, it's finishing that counts (9). And let's be honest – running off-road is far more interesting than pounding tarmac, and you get to meet nicer people too! I did have a couple of trips to hospital after the SDW (my 'record' is losing 18lbs in weight during the run) and yes it's a bit scary when it happens but it's surprising how quickly you get over it and start planning the next one.

In terms of high points and low points over the years, I have to say that there have been so many I'm not sure I could really pick just one instance of each. Obviously finishing my first marathon was one of the high points (isn't it for everybody?), as

Notes:

(6) I have, over the years, developed my own training pattern of having more rest days than running days on the basis that, if rest is good for you, you can't overdo it.

(7) Some things never change.

(8) See (7).

(9) Preferably in one piece.

was finishing the South Downs Way (every time) and being part of the Compton Harriers team which won the men's team prize at both the Compton 40 and the High Peak 40 in 1998 (10). Actually, finishing an ultra is pretty much a high point every time. Of the low points, apart from the usual disappointment associated with dropping out of any race/throwing up for 24 hours after a race/spending the night in hospital on a drip and so on, I think my biggest disappointment was pulling out of the Trailwalker 100K event at Ditchling Beacon in 1998; as a team event I felt as though I'd let the rest of the team down by dropping out, although I knew I was doing the right thing by not holding them up any more than I had. It still grates to this day.

One regret I do have happened whilst on honeymoon in Canada in 1993. Three days after we arrived in Vancouver, I went for a run on the sea-wall around Stanley Park. Apparently it is exactly 10K around the park and so with running from the hotel and back it was closer to 15K for me. Off I trolled at 7.30am, got to the sea-wall and went all the way round, taking in the sights as I went. As I got back to the point where I started I ran under a banner which hadn't been there 50 minutes earlier. I slowed and looked back to read it. "Stanley Park 10K Finish" it said. Oh well, maybe next time...

Those Harriers who know me also know my 'party trick' of recalling not just my own but other Compton Harriers' finishing times in races. This is in part down to my love of all things statistical (11) although I also seem to have a knack of remembering times, averages and finishing positions – even running numbers from every event. Just after I started to get serious with running – that is, training when I hadn't entered an event – I went back through my collection of running 'memorabilia' (12) and started keeping a record of races I'd done, together with my time, average, finish position, number of runners and so on. Once I'd got everything up to date it wasn't too difficult to keep going. I'm now up to volume seven in running folders and to date I have competed in 192 races covering 3503.9 miles in 602 hours 06 minutes and 59 seconds ... at an overall average of 10 minutes 18.63 seconds per mile. And I can probably tell you what shoes I wore too. Actually, by the time you read this I will have done my 21st consecutive Woodley 10K, so that makes...

I have to say that probably the best decision I ever made with my running was to join Compton Harriers back in 199something – funnily enough, it's one of the few dates I don't remember with any great accuracy. I'd always been a dedicated unattached runner – the number of loonies I'd met who were members of running clubs was enough to put me off joining one – but I was persuaded to think about joining after I bombed out the SDW and I didn't know where I'd gone wrong. I'd seen Dick at several races previously (13) and finally plucked up the courage to talk to him (well, he was faster than me and I didn't think the better runners had time for people like me), found he was sort of normal and went along to a Thursday evening run a couple of weeks later. The rest, as they say, is history...

Finally, I'd just like to echo what Susanne wrote about her sporting inspiration in her 'Running Life' article last month. For me, though, it's not just Sue and Dick; it's Compton Harriers as a club. Ever since I went along for my first run with the club all those years ago I've felt as if I'm part of the Compton Harriers 'family'; there have been good times and bad times, happy times and sad times; there have been arguments and disagreements; there have been marriages, divorces and births (14). But whatever has happened, the Harriers are always there to offer help, support and encouragement to each other when it's needed. I can honestly say I am proud to call myself a member of the Compton Harriers – I really cannot think of a better group of people.

After all, how many other people do you know who would take part in a relay race carrying an assortment of vegetables?

Simon

Oh, and in case any of you are wondering about the title of this piece: back in 1997 I did the London Marathon for a second time. On the way round I overtook so many runners wearing bright yellow running vests with 'The Runner In Front Drinks Isostar' printed on the back that I thought it'd be a bit of a giggle to have 'The Runner In Front Smokes Superkings' printed on mine. The vest got more recognition than I did; runners in numerous events would greet me with 'I saw you at [insert name of race]' – someone even said he'd seen me at one race which I didn't do! Sadly I had to 'retire' my vest a few years ago when I ran out of material to which I could pin running numbers, but I still have it...

Notes:

(10) OK, so I wasn't actually a scoring member of either team, but I was in the team and I could have been if the others hadn't run so fast. The thing is, I've got a team trophy. As they say in Crete, 'tis a small thing but Minoan.

(11) Like Nicole Kidman.

(12) One person's memorabilia is another person's cr*p.

(13) Oh please, don't lower the tone any more than I have done already.

(14) Mine, mainly.

[Website update... http://www.comptonharriers.org.uk](http://www.comptonharriers.org.uk)

Mo

Links of interest this month:

Did you know that Sports Massage is separated into five basic categories: Effleurage, Petrissage, Friction, Tapotement, and Vibration; as well as Cyriax (deep transverse friction) and Acupressure massage? No? ... well in that case I'm sure you'll find the article attached to the following link will provide you with a sound education ... <http://goo.gl/4Kut7>

Listing of forthcoming Events – see Website Events Calendar for full details:

Thursday, 9 June	Club Handicap Race
Saturday, 11 June	The 28 th BROAD TOWN 5
Sunday, 12 June	The Wargrave10k Chiltern Chase 10k
Thursday, 16 June	Club Night (Lee Leading)
Sunday, 19 June	22 nd Ridgeway Relay Dash for Dad - 5k and 10k runs
Thursday, 23 June	IAH Boundary Run & Walk (TBC)
Sunday, 26 June	North Devon Marathon Run for Heroes 5km
Wednesday, 29 June	Back in a Flash 5K (Race 2)
Thursday, 30 June	IAH Boundary Run & Walk (TBC)
Saturday, 2 July	Compton Canter 9.3k (Trail)
Sunday, 3 July	Didcot 5 road race Toad Hall 10k (Also 5k race) Watlington XC XK
Wednesday, 6 July	Thames 10K
Sunday, 10 July	Hughenden Manor 10k New Forest 10
Sunday, 17 July	Wycombe ½ Marathon & 10K
Sunday, 24 July	Down Tow Up Flow Half Marathon Downland Challenge Ultra 30
Wednesday, 27 July	Back in a Flash 5K (Race 3)
Saturday, 30 July	Dorney Dash 10k
Sunday, 7 August	Lambourn Festival 5
Saturday, 13 August	NORTH DOWNS WAY SERIES 2011 (50 & 100 miles)
Sunday, 14 August	NORTH DOWNS WAY SERIES 2011 (50 & 100 miles) Salisbury 5-4-3-2-1 Trail Marathon
Saturday, 27 August	Ridgeway Challenge 85
Sunday, 28 August	Vale of Pewsey Half Marathon
Sunday, 4 September	Maidenhead ½ Marathon FEED THE CHILDREN (UK) SAMUEL HOOD MEMORIAL PEPPARD 10k RUN and 7k WALK
Sunday, 11 September	Pangbourne10k - multi-terrain
Sunday, 18 September	Farnham Pilgrim Marathon & Half Marathon The Boneshaker Duathlon
Saturday, 24 September	Running4Women Windsor 8k
Sunday, 2 October	Basingstoke Half Marathon Loch Ness Marathon, 10k & 5k
Sunday, 9 October	Swindon Half Marathon
Sunday, 16 October	Abingdon Marathon Frieth Hilly 10k
Saturday, 22 October	Beachy Head Marathon
Sunday, 20 November	The Avebury 8