

# Striders of Croydon

SEPTEMBER 2024 MAGAZINE



**Jay Brzask, Striders' first female steeplechaser,  
competing in the Rosenheim League at Tooting on 12 June  
(photo by Stephen Allport)**

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## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Saturday 14 September – British Masters 5000m Track Championship – Birmingham University

Saturday 28 September – East Surrey League Cross-Country – Lloyd Park

Saturday 5 October – Surrey Relays – West Horsley Place

Sunday 6 October – Switchback 5 miles – Lloyd Park (Striders marshalling)

Saturday 12 October – Surrey Cross-Country League Divisions 2 & 3 – Reigate

Saturday 26 October – Surrey Masters Cross-Country Championships – Nonsuch Park

Saturday 9 November – Surrey Cross-Country League Divisions 2 & 3 – Hurst Green

Sunday 1 December – British Masters 5K Road Championship – Battersea

### **2025**

Saturday 4 January – Surrey Cross-Country Championships – Lloyd Park

Saturday 11 January – Surrey Cross-Country League Divisions 2 & 3 – Oxshott

Saturday 8 February – Surrey Cross-Country League Divisions 2 & 3 – Lloyd Park

Sunday 9 March – British Masters Half-Marathon Championship – Paddock Wood



**Striders in the Rosenheim Shield Final at Kingsmeadow on 14 August**

## EDITORIAL: SEPTEMBER 2024

Welcome to the September issue of our club magazine. This summer has seen various Striders competing over a variety of distances, ranging from 100 metres to 100 miles. At the end of July, Debra Bourne completed the Lakeland 100 mile race, which is particularly challenging because of the amount of climbing which the race involves. We begin this issue with her account of the race.

One of the highlights of this summer was that, 42 years after Striders were formed and 28 years after we first became a registered track and field club, Jay Brzask became the first female Strider to compete in the steeplechase. We include an article about hurdles and the steeplechase, and the long battle to achieve equality of opportunities for women in athletics. This is followed by a review of a book about strength and conditioning written by Richard Blagrove, a former 800 metre runner and a lecturer in physiology. We also include an article giving a brief overview of how athletics is organised in the UK in general, and specifically in Surrey.

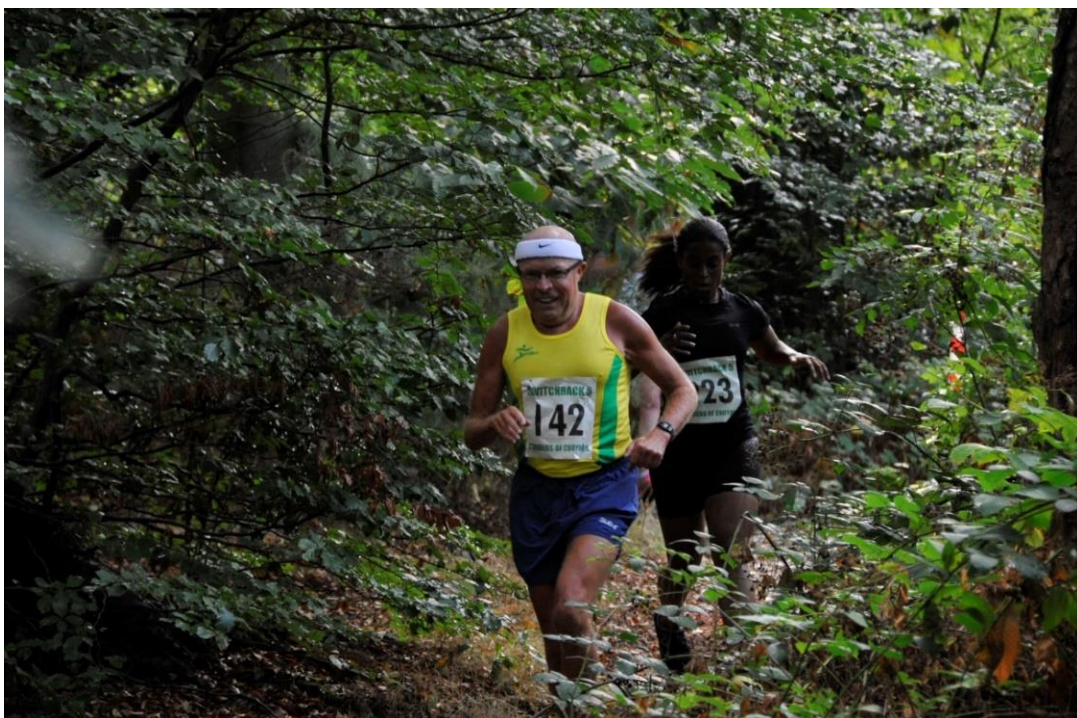
We follow this with our usual 'competitive highlights' and history articles. The 'competitive highlights' include some very good performances by our women in the Rosenheim League. For the second successive year, they finished ahead of some longer-established track and field clubs (including our local rivals Croydon Harriers) and qualified for the Rosenheim Shield Final, which was held at Kingsmeadow in August. The '40 years ago' article notes that it was in November 1984 that Striders, who were originally formed as a road running club, took part in a cross-country championship for the first time.

I was interested to see some of the results of the World Masters Championships, which took place in Sweden in August. I was particularly impressed by the performance of the Greek runner Konstantinos Chatziemmanouil, who set a championship record when winning a gold medal in the 800 metres. Most Striders could run faster than his winning time of 5 minutes 46, but what makes his performance impressive is that he was born in 1929, and was therefore 95 years old.

With autumn approaching, many of our runners will be looking forward to the return of the cross-country season. Our men will be hoping to consolidate their position in Division Two of the Surrey League, where we have spent most of the last 20 years. Last season our women were unexpectedly relegated to Division Three for the first time. On paper our squad appears to be strong enough to hope for promotion back to Division Two, but we will need a minimum of five women to compete for us in each of the four league races.

I hope that all Striders continue to enjoy their running.

*Alon*



## THE MONTANE LAKELAND 100 (by Debra Bourne)

The Lakeland 100 is a 105-mile ultramarathon, starting and finishing at John Ruskin school in Coniston. The route avoids all the major peaks, but nevertheless provides over 20,000 feet of ascent and descent.

This race has been on my radar for some years. I first read an article on the Lakeland 50 in late 2011, and ran it in 2013, as part of my self-challenge '5 x 50 mile races at age 45'. Back in 2013, the coach to the 50-mile start at Dalemain estate was full of tales of how much harder the 100 was than the 50, and people running it were seen as another breed. I remember feeling guilty about passing 100-mile runners on the narrow path alongside Haweswater, and pleased when I was able to prevent a very tired-looking 100-mile runner from taking the wrong turning on the gentle descent towards Troutbeck.

After losing most of 2014-2016 due to injuries (mostly NOT caused by running) then gradually returning to trail ultras, running the Lakeland 50 again in 2019 – with a faster time and first VF50 as a bonus – was a real sign that I was once again fit for the tougher trails. Following the Centurion Grand Slam of 4 x 100-milers in 2021, I had intended to run the Lakeland 100 in 2022, only to discover that I needed to set off during the race weekend to get to the other side of the Atlantic for a work conference. I was gutted, particularly when the conference, that had previously moved around somewhat in dates, was set for the same week in 2023. Then came the news that 2024 the conference was going to be moved to later in the year. I grabbed the chance, put my name into the ballot, and waited.

Having got the welcome news that I was in the race, I was both excited and nervous. I'd finished the 50 in 12:26 in 2019 and we had 40 hours for the 100, but I'd heard so much about how difficult this race was, and I knew that I had still not regained all the speed I lost after I got COVID in 2022.

I started thinking about recces. I definitely wanted to go on the official recce days for the first 60 miles of the course, which I hadn't covered before. In the end I did those; a walking recce of the last 15 miles, Ambleside to Coniston, with my husband; and a mega-recce long weekend in which I covered nearly the whole course over four days.

The race starts at 6 pm on the Friday evening, with 40 hours to finish – cut-off being 10am on the Sunday. Reaching Coniston on Friday morning, we parked and walked up to the school for registration and kit check. The kit check part is taken quite seriously, and the whole process takes quite some time. Arriving at the marquee, we discovered that the line stretched some distance out the door and I was not at all happy at the idea of spending possibly 2-3 hours in the queue – thankfully someone told me that they had put out a call for 100 runners to jump the queue, so I gratefully did that. Having pulled all my gear out of my backpack to be checked, I dumped it all into the large shopping bag I'd brought for that purpose, before collecting the map, routebook containing detailed instructions, a buff and this year's memento – a set of dog tags (because the theme for this year's race was Topgun).

Back to the car, where I re-packed my running vest before closing my eyes and doing my best to sleep until it was time for the race briefing. After that, it was only an hour to go (start is at 6pm), which went quite quickly in queuing for the Portaloos; making sure I had double-tied my shoe laces; eating some snacks; and unfolding my running poles.

It is a long time since I felt so nervous before a race. It wasn't the length of the race that worried me – I had completed a 200 km and a 200-mile race, as well as more than 10 100-milers, some of which were 103 miles. I was also quite confident that, even with the more than 20,000 ft (6,000+ meters) of elevation, I could cover the course in under 40 hours. However, the first 32.8 miles and 8,615 ft to Braithwaite, with some of the biggest climbs and trickiest descents – in the dark – had to be done in under 12 hours. In my first recce (in cold, wet winter weather) I had taken more than the race-day time to get as far as Buttermere, and the second time I recced I had taken more than three hours for the 6.9 miles from Wasdale Head to Buttermere. I knew I would need to push on during those first sections, rather than taking it steady, and I was worried that I would over-tire myself and be running the rest of the way on trashed legs.

Soon I was standing in the loose crowd of runners shuffling feet near the start, fiddling with my watch to get the route ready. Then a traditional rendering of *Nessun Dorma* before we were off!



The first section is run surprisingly quickly, with many runners racing to get to the front of the pack, because once along the road and up the slope of the wide gravel way, the route crosses the Miners' Bridge and there's a bottleneck at the kissing gate leading onto a single-track trail. It seemed like forever but was probably about 10 minutes before I was through and setting off on the track upwards. Obviously the fact that there are now some 700+ runners doing the 100 each year means that bottleneck holds people for longer.

The route is unmarked, and back in 2013 I had been worried about navigating the 50 using the route book. The ready availability of GPX on watches has definitely helped; additionally, as in 2013 and 2019, I was very pleased to be able to follow other runners who knew the route better than I did.

The first four and a half miles we strode up and up Walna Scar, with glorious views, before descending into Seathwaite to the first checkpoint. A very brief stop to top up water, then onward over a much gentler hill and down to Boot. The cut-off here was an elapsed time of 5 hours and I came in at 3:39, comfortably ahead – too far ahead? Out of Boot and it was still daylight. I knew that it would be dark before much longer, but I don't like to wear my head torch for longer than necessary, so I didn't get it out and put it on. This was a mistake, because a few miles later I had to dig it out, and connect the cable (left unconnected to make sure it couldn't accidentally come on in the pack) in the gloom while the group of people I had been comfortable running with disappeared in front of me. Upward and contouring round Burmoor Tarn, with a long line of head torches snaking into the distance both in front and behind.

Here I fell for the first time, in some nice soft bog. For a few seconds I couldn't work out how to get back upright, with my feet stuck in the mud, then a kind runner gave me a hand up (thank you!). A little more ascent then a long descent into Checkpoint 3 at Wasdale Head. Another boggy fall somewhere along here, but as with the first one no damage done except for wet, muddy, legs and shorts, and this time I regained my feet without assistance.



I had hit 15 miles almost exactly on 5 hours – 3 miles an hour, which sounds very slow in terms of road marathons or even a road ultra, but was exactly what I had hoped to do, giving me a decent cushion so that I knew I didn't need to rush during the next section. After Wasdale Head came the steep climb up Black Sail Pass. The promised overnight showers had held off so far and I briefly dared to hope that they would hold off a little longer, until we had completed the descent that I was dreading. Vain hope. A few drops,

then more; soon it felt like it was going to settle in and get heavy. Several of us decided to don our waterproof jackets, knowing that this risked overheating during the ascent, but not wanting to be on the exposed top while soaked through. Further up and further, following the torches in front. The rain slackened and died away, but I kept my coat on, only unzipping it at the front. Then we were descending the wet rocks.

I had read about the 'better path' somewhere 'left of the rocky outcrop' but had not found it on either recce. This night, although I had not been aware of veering left round any outcrop, the descent was somewhat technical and slow, but definitely better than I had been expecting, so I think the runners ahead of me had found that better line. The rain picked up and I was glad I had kept my coat on. I was pleased to get down without falling, although I discovered later that another runner had been less fortunate and had broken her ankle. Down, down, down to the little River Lisa before the isolated YHA hut. Normally there is a bridge here, but it had collapsed in floods earlier in the year. The last time I had done this section we had gone 100 meters upstream to find shallower, slower-flowing water. For the race there was a rope to follow and two marshals to assist, and it was not too bad. Past the YHA and a short level section before another climb up Scarth Gap pass (Haystacks to our right and High Crag to the left, although we couldn't see them) and another fairly steep descent, then finally onto a section of wide, gravel-surfaced and flattish trail contouring alongside Buttermere (the lake) and eventually reaching Buttermere (the village).

Fill waters, stock up with food, get going. Through a little wood, carefully stepping over the gnarly roots, then up again to Sail Pass, the second highest point on the race, where on my last recce I had watched in awe as a runner trotted up the switchbacks heading to the top of Sail on our left. Down on a scree path. I was slow on this surface, always expecting it to start sliding under my feet, and several runners passed me. Never mind – I would much rather take it slow and get down in one piece. Eventually down into Braithwaite. 32.8 miles and 8,504 ft completed in 10:35 – I was nearly 1.5 hours ahead of the cut-offs, giving me some comfort. Unfortunately, the church hall was crammed full of runners. It took me a good five minutes just queuing for water to fill my bottles. They had run out of pasta and we had to wait for more to be cooked – the 'few minutes' for that turned into 10. I managed to get a mug of tea, and finally the pasta, leaving after about 20 minutes (past a queue of runners waiting to get in the door) and feeling it had been rather a waste of time, although probably sitting down for 10 minutes was beneficial.

It was getting light again as I ran down the road and along the A66 towards Keswick for about 2 km. I felt tired and took a caffeine tablet – surprisingly, my first that night. A few miles quite flat, then ascending again, more gently, through some woodland, reaching a car park, through some gates and onwards and upwards. We had been warned to take care not to go on the wrong path and I had definitely worried about this during recces, particularly because veering off onto the path to the right would take an unlucky runner down into Buttermere having cut off several miles (at which point they would have the options of dropping out or heading back up to find the route again, if they had time!). On race day I followed the other runners and my GPX and never really noticed the paths off to left or right. The recces nevertheless had been useful, because I knew where to expect the unmanned checkpoint that would record our passage, proving we hadn't cut the course, and was able to reassure a couple of other runners that we hadn't missed it. Finally the stone ruin holding this came into sight and we made sure to get close to it before heading off down the path to the other side of the valley, then contouring along the hill and gradually descending into Blencathra.



A very brief stop to fill one water bottle, then onwards on a bit of road then a flat footpath and cycle path on what used to be a railway line; this is also used by the local parkrun. I tried to appreciate this, tired legs and all, because I knew what was coming next. First, nearly a mile uphill through bog (the instructions say 'narrow indistinct path' but even the path is basically bog). Then onto the old Coach Road. It's a sobering thought that the wide track we were on used to be, presumably, the nearest thing to a highway! The Coach Road goes on, and on, and on, undulating, with lots of wide puddles stretching the full width of the track. Given I was wearing waterproof socks I could have splashed through these, but they were muddy, so I couldn't see where I was putting my feet, and I was very wary of turning an ankle on a hidden stone, so mostly I skirted through the shallows. It also started to rain quite heavily, a soaking rain that leached body heat. Tired, I wasn't going fast enough to keep warm. I considered stopping to put my warm layer on, but there was absolutely no shelter, so I decided it would be more sensible to keep going to the Dockray checkpoint.

The last section before the checkpoint was marked by a series of demotivational signs and I was not in a mood to find them funny. The marquee was full of runners sheltering from the downpour, but a few folding chairs had been set up in the small lorry that had carried the equipment. I accepted assistance (was lifted up!) into there and sat down. My absolute priority was getting more clothes on. With my hands already cold and clumsy it took longer than I would have liked, but eventually I had my warm layer on under my jacket and my waterproof trousers on as well. I also managed a mug of tea and some bites of food, before filling water bottles, picking up snacks and setting off again. The rain had stopped for the moment (it started again a bit later). I was still feeling cold, but I knew I would warm up better if I got moving. As expected, within 30 minutes I paused to take off the extra layers again. It was definitely worth the time dealing with the extra clothes to warm up faster and not risk injury from cold, tight, shivering muscles.

This section I hadn't done on my big 4-day recce. Some bits I remembered from the official recce I had done earlier in the year, but even when it didn't look familiar it was quite easy to navigate. It was also net downhill by about 800 ft, although there were some climbs. About four miles of boring road and surfaced path, and I had some pain from pressure on the tops of my feet, as well as a rub on my back that I could feel was getting worse, and two rubbed/bruised areas over the front of my hips, all of which felt worse on the road section with nothing much to distract me, but eventually I reached Dalemmain.



By this time I'd been on the go for 19 hours and 13 minutes. The checkpoint was a large marquee. I was lucky to be allocated both a chair and a blanket to sit on, and I was asked what I wanted to eat and drink (tea, and pasta with thick vegetable soup), and my drop bag was brought to me. I had quite a bit I wanted to get done here, including a complete change of clothes and footwear and a change of battery in my head light. The waterproof socks (worn with Injinji liner socks) had done well – my feet were fine, whereas I saw quite a few people with huge blisters over the ball of the foot and/or the heel – but now I wanted to change to Injinji trail socks (thinner) and my other pair of shoes, which were a slightly different model and would therefore put the pressure in a different place. I also asked for some medical assistance and got dressings put on the rubbed areas on my back and hips, which made a huge difference for the rest of the race. Soon after I arrived the heavens opened and I was very glad I'd beaten that rain to shelter. The warm layer and gloves I had worn were wet, so I switched those out with replacements from my drop bag. The waterproof jacket was okay so I didn't bother to swap that. I was pretty sure I wouldn't need the thicker waterproof trousers from here on, so I carried my lighter pair instead. Wet gear went into the trash bags I'd brought for

this purpose. There was no food at the checkpoint suitable for carrying away – not even a bag of crisps – but I was able to choose some stuff from my drop bag. I will admit that a lot of what was in that bag I didn't need, but I was glad it was there in case I needed it.

It didn't feel all that long, but I spent nearly 75 minutes at Dalemain. On the plus side, the abrasions were well patched, I was in fresh clothes, my feet felt a lot better – and the rain had stopped. 59.1 miles done, 46 to go. I felt really slow setting off again, and a bit low. I was lucky, because a friend who lived nearby and had said she would see me at Pooley Bridge came out and gave me a hug, and I felt much better afterwards. Apart from the bit to Pooley Bridge, which I had only ever done with hundreds of other runners around me on race day, the route was now pretty familiar, and the first section had a well-trodden path from the Lakeland 50 runners who had set off from Dalemain before I arrived. I briefly joined another runner, who was feeling much lower than I was. I tried to cheer him up and encourage him, but unfortunately he sounded like he was talking himself into dropping out, and nothing I said seemed to be helping him, so I pressed on. A relatively short pull up, then down to Howtown. Fill up water and choose food for the next section, then onward – onward and most definitely upward. The next section included the highest point on the whole course, with a long pull up Fusedale. Part way up a quad bike came past, carefully, with a first aider/paramedic sitting on the back. Shortly after that I passed her and three runners. We discovered later that one of the runners had developed a heart problem during the climb and the other two had stopped to help him and stayed with him. He was clearly in good hands and there was nothing I could do to help, so I continued.



All the way up Fusedale and onto High Kop, the highest point on the course. I remembered how worried I had been about the risk of going wrong up here back in 2013. Now with GPX, and some other runners around, I felt fine. More bog, and at one point I nearly went sideways into a pool of water and mud but thankfully caught my balance with the help of my poles. Onward, picking the least-boggy path as best I could. At one point the sun came out from behind the clouds and I reached into my pocket for my hat only to find it wasn't there. That was frustrating. After the hat I'd lost during the Winter Downs 200 never reappeared, I thought that the chances of this one – green, on a green-and-brown hillside – being found was minimal. The descent from High Kop was muddier and slipperier than I had ever seen it, which wasn't surprising given the rain and the number of pairs of feet in front of me, but thankfully I stayed on my feet with only one worrying slide – the poles definitely helped. I passed a couple of the slowest 50-mile runners here. A sharp right turn and onto the section contouring above Haweswater. The path here is awful – narrow, with high bracken on either side, a steep drop-off to the left, and lots of large stones, sometimes boulders, to step or climb over. This goes on forever – or nearly 3 miles – and I passed a few more of the slowest 50-mile participants. When the worst section ends there's still about another mile to the checkpoint at Mardale Head. Lots of runners and wonderful cheery volunteers here, but I stopped only for as long as it took me to get water, crisps, and jam sandwiches to eat on the next climb.

Out of the aid station and straight into the next ascent up to Gatescarth Pass, the 4<sup>th</sup> highest point on the route. Somewhere on the ascent it grew dark again – headlight time. I was pleased with how good my legs were feeling, considering I had covered more than 75 miles. A long but easy descent, and I reached Kentmere. A short stop then onwards towards Ambleside. I was running with some other runners for a while, which was nice. Into Skelghyll Woods and I passed a Lakeland 50 runner who was stationary and looked very unhappy. Turned out that both her main and backup lights had given out. I knew that my main light battery would hold out, and I was also sure that I could manage the section from Ambleside onwards



without a head torch by tagging onto someone else if somehow I fell and broke the light (very unlikely), so I offered her my backup light – and the spare batteries for that. She looked very, very relieved. I told her I was the only 'Debra' in the 100, so she would be able to identify me to get it back to me afterwards.

Onwards, down into Ambleside, running with other runners again. I would have avoided entering the checkpoint (up the stairs!) if possible, but I really did need to visit the toilets, so I braved the steps. I also emptied the grit out my shoes, had a bite to eat – more jam sandwiches – and took a couple of sandwiches and some crisps with me. Nearly forgot to pick my poles up but remembered just in time. Only a little way down the path and I realised my feet still felt gritty, so I stopped at a convenient bench in the park and shook them out well, although they soon felt gritty again. Only 15 miles to go!

I was now on very familiar territory from both recces and previous Lakeland 50 races. Up onto the lower reaches of Loughrigg – a hill I have walked over many, many times – then contouring round the side and dropping down to Skelwith Bridge. The long, flat path all the way to the Elterwater car park. It was cold along here, near the water – much cooler than higher up. I spent most of this stretch with two other runners, one of whom I'd run with for a while earlier in the evening, before Kentmere, but at Chapel Style I decided to stop for long enough to change my socks, as the grit was clearly inside them and I didn't want to risk rubs and blisters, not to mention muscle pains from altered gait. Feet clean and new socks on, I went back out (and soon got wet feet again, but they definitely felt better). 10 miles to go. The sky was getting lighter as I left the checkpoint, in reverse of the situation when I'd run the 50 and always needed to put my light on by this point. Up the Langdale valley, through the new kissing gates – so much easier than climbing the old wall stiles – then the short sharp ascent at the end. Here I got too hot and had to pause and remove my jacket. I was slowed because there were a lot of runners here and it was impossible to pass people on the narrow path up the hill. Finally to the top and onto a long runnable downhill stretch, past Blea Tarn.

Onward and more contouring round the hill on a so-called path through the bracken with lots of stones ready as trip hazards. For a while I couldn't work out where I was. I had expected the whole of the last 15 miles to look familiar and this section simply didn't. I realised this was probably accumulated fatigue playing tricks with me after about a day and a half on the trails with no sleep.

Then we came to some white flags marking a route over boggy ground and towards a wall and I knew exactly where I was – heading to the second unmanned checkpoint. I reached the wall and turned down the road. Quiet past the cottages, then soon uphill again – only a short ascent. It felt different in the early morning light, and below I could see a layer of mist rising -absolutely stunning. The descent and jog along the road to the Tilberthwaite checkpoint surprisingly felt shorter than usual.



I didn't stop for long – a bite of food, a quick visit to the Portaloos, a pound in the bucket for Jacob's ladder – the name given by the Lakeland 50/100 family to the steps leading out of the checkpoint, named after a brave little boy who died of cancer, and all the money goes to childhood cancer research. Then up those steps. Which were vile, worse than I remembered. I decided, as I hauled myself upward, that they must have been designed by people at least 6 foot tall, given the height of some of the steps. Up the scramble sections, past the brave little rowan tree at the stream. Finally at the top and suddenly I felt tired – not so much sleepy as bone-deep tired. I couldn't make myself run, even though the narrow path was pretty flat and runnable, so instead did my best to power march. I probably should have taken another caffeine tablet (I had taken maybe three during the night). Another runner said something about Coniston 'being sure to come into sight soon' and I broke it to him that we had about a mile to go across the top before the descent.



About the descent... the less said the better. I've never been fast on this semi-constructed, uneven stone staircase, but this time I was slower than usual – very aware that my legs were stiff, and that if I tripped I might not catch myself, even with the poles. Most other runners were not fast either, although two guys came skipping past evidently having a great time! Down, down, onto a shallower track and there we were, back at the Miner's Bridge.

"Just think," one of the other 100-mile runners commented, gesturing to the single-track path snaking up the opposite hillside, "on Friday evening we trotted up the road and along that path just so we could come trotting back down this path and take the road back into Coniston again this morning!"

Down the road, able to jog just a little, into Coniston. Walking the tiny incline over the bridge, then down Lakes Road to the school, under the arch – and done! 38 hours, 36 minutes.



My wonderful husband had got up at 5am to check my progress and drive back up from Manchester to see me in. It was lovely to see him. After I had a bite to eat, he found my drop bag and we walked slowly back to the car. I decided to clean the worst of the mud off my legs before trying for a nap. Strangely, when I had almost finished this, I saw a load of newsprint in varying sizes all over my legs. I tried to work out where I had been leaning against a newspaper. I didn't remember doing so. I showed it to Aidan and he looked at me sadly. "No. There are no words on your legs." My first hallucination! Now I know it takes about 40 hours of no sleep before I start hallucinating. I took a photograph of my leg and I could still see the writing, but strangely enough when I looked at the picture the next day, the writing had disappeared!

A brief nap in the car, then back to the school for the presentations. The runners who had stopped for the guy with a heart problem, and the one who had stayed with the lady after she broke her ankle, were all given guaranteed free entries for 2025. We had raised £4,000 pounds from collections at Jacob's Ladder – which the organisers had pledged to match. During the ceremonies runners continued to straggle in (you're permitted to finish if you pass the Chapel Stile cut-off within time) and always got tremendous applause.

Bonus: my hat, with its The Green Runners badge, was found, posted on Facebook, and made its way back to me via two other runners. My headlight was also returned to me.

All in all, a great experience. It's a lovely area and the views during daylight hours were fantastic. One day, when I don't have work commitments interfering, I'd like to go back and see if I could improve my time. In the meantime, other ultrarunning adventures await!

*[Finish photo provided by the race organisers. Others by me but some taken on recce days and not necessarily in order!]*

## **WOMEN IN THE HURDLES AND STEEPLECHASE (by Alan Dolton)**

Striders were formed in 1982, and registered as a track and field club in 1996. By the end of 1999, we had male club records for all the standard track events including 110 metre hurdles, 400 metre hurdles and steeplechase. However, none of our women had competed at the hurdles or steeplechase, and it was not until June this year that we had our first female steeplechaser, when Jay Brzask set our inaugural women's steeplechase record in our Rosenheim League match at Tooting.

In the run-up to the match, there was some discussion in the club's Facebook group about the fact that the men's steeplechase was being held over 2000 metres and with barriers 91.4cm in height, whereas the women's steeplechase was being held over 1500 metres and with barriers 76.2cm in height. This prompted me to look into the historical background to the disparity in treatment between men and women in hurdles and the steeplechase.

The Amateur Athletic Association (AAA) was formed in 1880 and held its first championship in July that year. The events included a hurdles race which was held over 120 yards and with barriers 3 feet 6 inches high (which still seems remarkably high to me), and a steeplechase which was held over the somewhat unusual distance of 1 mile 1440 yards, and with barriers three feet high. There were no women's races.

The AAA Rules for Competition were adopted for the first Olympic Games in 1896, where there was a hurdles race over 110 metres (the metric equivalent of 120 yards) with hurdles 106.7cm high (the metric equivalent of 3 feet 6). The Paris Olympics of 1900 saw the addition of a 400 metre hurdles race and two steeplechase races, one over 2500 metres and one over 4000 metres. All three of these races were held over barriers 91.4cm high (the metric equivalent of three feet). Subsequent Olympics saw variations in the distance of the steeplechase: it was held over 2590 metres in 1904, over 3200 metres in 1908, and was not held at all in 1912. The International Association of Athletic Federations (IAAF) was formed shortly after the 1912 Olympics, and subsequently recommended that the steeplechase should be held over 3000 metres, which was adopted for the 1920 Olympics and remains the standard distance.

The failure of the IAAF to promote athletics for women led to the formation, in 1921, of the Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale (FSFI), which became the first international governing body for women's athletics. In England, the Women's Amateur Athletic Association (WAAA) was formed in 1922. It held its first championships that year, which included a race over 120 yards hurdles, with barriers 2 feet 6 high (12 inches lower than the height of the men's hurdles). In 1927 the WAAA reduced the distance from 120 yards to 100 yards, and in 1929 it reduced the distance still further, to 80 metres, which was the distance that had been adopted by the FSFI.

The first Olympic Games to include any athletics events for women was in 1928. However the women's hurdles were not included in the Olympics until 1932, when an 80 metre hurdles race was included over barriers 76.2cm high (the metric equivalent of 2 feet 6). The FSFI continued to be the international governing body for women's athletics until 1936, when it was succeeded by the IAAF.

In 1969 the IAAF decided to replace the 80 metre hurdles with the 100 metre hurdles, and increased the height of the hurdles from 76.2cm to 83.8cm (the metric equivalent of 2 feet 9). These changes took effect for the 1969 European Championships, the 1969 WAAA Championships, and the 1972 Olympics.

In 1973 the WAAA included the 400 metre hurdles in its championships for the first time. It fixed the height of the hurdles at 76.2cm (about six inches lower than the height used in the men's 400 metre hurdles, and about three inches lower than the height used in the women's 100 metre hurdles). The women's 400 metre hurdles was not included in the Olympics until 1984.

In 2002 UKA (which had succeeded the WAAA in 1999) included the steeplechase in its championships for the first time. The race was held over 2000 metres, with barriers 76.2cm high (the same height as the hurdles used for the women's 400 metre hurdles). In 2004 the distance was increased to 3000 metres, the same distance as the men's steeplechase. The women's steeplechase was not included in the Olympics until 2008.

Initially, not all tracks in the UK could host women's steeplechase races, because many tracks were still equipped with old steeplechase barriers, which were fixed at three feet in height, rather than modern adjustable barriers, which can be fixed at either 91.4cm or 76.2cm. For example, Croydon Arena did not acquire adjustable barriers until 2012, and staged its first women's steeplechase that summer. However, almost all tracks now have adjustable barriers, in the same way that all modern hurdles have six different heights ranging from 68.6cm (which is used for men aged 80+ and women aged 60+) to 106.7cm (the height used for the men's 110 metre hurdles).

At club level, the UK Women's League introduced a steeplechase (over 2000 metres rather than 3000 metres) but the Southern Women's League did not. This was controversial, and 2011 saw the formation of the Southern Athletics League, to provide mixed-sex competition. Many Southern clubs which had previously had separate teams in the single-sex Southern Men's League and Southern Women's League joined the new league. From the very beginning, the new league provided steeplechase races for both sexes. However, it did not provide equality in distances. In its first season, it fixed the distance of the men's steeplechase at 2000 metres, rather than the 3000 metres which had been used in the Southern Men's League, and it introduced the steeplechase for women at the shorter distance of 1500 metres, which was the distance used by male athletes under the age of 17.

These changes were somewhat controversial, as some clubs wanted steeplechase races for both sexes to be held at the Olympic distance of 3000 metres. However, the majority opinion appeared to be that it was necessary to hold the races over shorter distances in order to reduce the length of the matches, and that having a shorter distance of 1500 metres (with only three water jumps) might encourage more women to take up the event. The Rosenheim League, which had previously held men's steeplechase races at 2000 metres, also introduced a women's steeplechase at 1500 metres.

Thirteen years later, in both the Southern League and the Rosenheim League, the men's steeplechase races are still always longer than the women's steeplechase races. Whether this discrepancy in distances remains justified is open to question, and I would encourage female Striders to enter a steeplechase, and then form their own opinion as to whether 1500 metres (with three water jumps) was long enough, or whether they would prefer to have run 2000 metres (with five water jumps) or 3000 metres (with seven water jumps).



**Stevie Lawrence of Croydon Harriers has become one of Britain's leading steeplechasers**

# BOOK REVIEW – STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING FOR ENDURANCE RUNNING

(by Richard Blagrove: reviewed by Alan Dolton)

In the March 2014 issue of this magazine, I reviewed a book entitled 'Conditioning For Marathon Runners and Endurance Athletes' by Mike Winch, a well-known coach who was one of Britain's best shot putters. Winch's book was first published in 2006 and was 160 pages long. Richard Blagrove's book is both longer, comprising 296 pages, and more recent, having first been published in 2015. Richard himself was a student at Loughborough University, where he ran 800 metres in 1 minute 53.01 (which is faster than any Strider has managed). At the time of writing this book he was working at St Mary's University in Twickenham, but he has subsequently returned to Loughborough where he is now a lecturer in physiology.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part is called 'understanding your needs'. A brief introduction to strength and conditioning observes that "the running action relies heavily on the elastic properties of tendons and connective tissue to produce the majority of force". This is followed by chapters entitled 'physiological perspectives', 'biomechanical and injury considerations' and 'assessing strengths and weaknesses'. The chapter on biomechanics includes the observation that "for the distance runner, it is unwise to try to focus on running with 'high knees'. Although the hip flexors work hard initially to remove the foot from the ground and pull the thigh through, the height your thigh reaches will mainly depend upon your running speed. Efforts to pull your leg excessively high will simply lengthen the recovery of your leg and delay your foot reaching the ground ...". Blagrove also comments that "whether you strike the ground with your heel, mid-foot or forefoot isn't of huge importance. However, if you heel strike in front of your body this will cause high braking forces and stress to the knee. Forefoot striking is a characteristic of fast running as it enables you to use elastic energy more effectively, therefore saving you energy."



**The runner in second place appears to be heel-striking with his foot in front of his body, which puts stress on the knee and increases the risk of injury**

Like most coaches, Blagrove recommends that runners should regularly vary the surface and terrain they run on, commenting that "the problem with very soft terrain, such as sand, is that your muscles and Achilles tendon have to work overtime to provide sufficient stability and stiffness to store and return elastic energy effectively. This actually places a high degree of stress on your lower leg, which conversely increases the risk of injury. At the other end of the spectrum, concrete provides a very stable surface to run on, so your muscles and tendons don't need to work hard ... The problem with hard surfaces, though, is that all impact forces are directed through your body so the external stress is still very high. Woodland paths or soft grass offer a compromise, so both are ideal to carry out the majority of your running. However, mixing things up regularly and varying your running surfaces also makes your joints more robust ..."

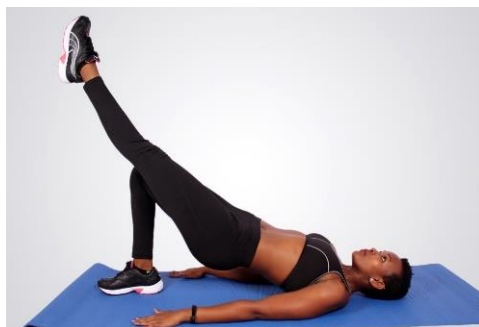
The chapter on 'assessing strengths and weaknesses' is 36 pages long, and is very well illustrated, with many good photographs showing not only how to do various exercises, but also showing common postural errors which can lead to injury. A runner who always carries out strength and conditioning exercises on their own may not realise that their posture is incorrect, which is why it is advisable for runners to do some sessions with a qualified coach or personal trainer. Blagrove also observes that "the ability to flex (or hinge

at) the hip whilst keeping the lower back in a neutral position is probably the most important of all fundamental movement skills. When bending over to pick up an object, or lifting the knee when running, it is crucial that the stress is placed on the gluteals and hamstrings rather than the lower back. The gluteals and hamstrings (often referred to as the 'posterior chain') possess a huge capacity for handling and developing force, whereas the structures around the lower back are comparatively weak." He illustrates this with some good photographs of a female runner in the position which many yoga teachers refer to as 'dekasana', but which Blagrove himself refers to as an 'arabesque' (although the head and shoulders are held significantly lower than they are in most 'arabesque' poses).



**'Dekasana' (which Blagrove refers to as an 'arabesque')**  
**This is a good way to test a runner's balance and ability to hinge from the hips**

The second part of the book deals with strength training. A short chapter entitled 'dispelling myths' is followed by a long chapter (55 pages) on 'resistance training' and a shorter chapter (20 pages) on 'plyometric training'. The chapter on resistance training observes that "mastering technique should be the main priority in every exercise you perform. Loading up on exercises too soon, or simply 'going through the motions' is likely to result in a poor posture being adopted or an incorrect movement pattern, both of which risk injury ...". Blagrove also comments that "single-leg resistance training offers a number of important benefits that exercises on two feet cannot. Lunging and step-up exercises will develop high levels of strength in each leg, correct imbalance and challenge your stability".



**Blagrove recommends single-leg gluteal bridges to strengthen the gluteal muscles**

The chapter on plyometric training observes that "hopping and bounding develops your explosive hip strength and single leg stability through movements very similar to running". Blagrove also comments that "by far the most important technical error to be aware of during any plyometric exercise is landing in a collapsed knee position. ... It is important that if you feel or observe your knees collapsing inwards when landing from a jump, hop or step that you lower the intensity of the exercise."

The third, and longest, part of the book deals with conditioning exercises. Blagrove observes that "making a decision as to the important areas to target with tissue-conditioning exercises isn't as straightforward as you might think. Knee injuries that account for around a quarter of all endurance runners' injuries are a good example of how simply finding an exercise that loads that joint won't work well. The reason a runner suffers from knee pain could be due to many issues, including landing in a knee valgus (inward collapsed) position, weakness in the gluteals, poor foot and ankle mobility, an aggressive heel strike action, or a muscle imbalance between quadriceps and hamstrings." The introduction to this part of the book is followed by six chapters dealing in turn with trunk training; foot and ankle conditioning; hamstring conditioning; gluteal stability; technical running drills, and mobilisations and stretches. The chapter on trunk training notes that "a common misconception about training the core is that one or two muscles hold the key to trunk stability and control. Often the term 'core' is interpreted as meaning the abdominal (six-pack) muscles, probably because these are the most visible and impressive-looking! This muscle group is

responsible for flexing the spine, so is used heavily during exercises such as a sit-up. However, performing dozens of spinal flexion exercises in an attempt to condition this muscle group is actually very unhealthy for the spine, and will eventually lead to lower back injury.”

The chapter on foot and ankle conditioning observes that “attempting to fix a problem in your hips or back by wearing a pair of running shoes that changes your foot position is likely to lead to compensation somewhere else, which ends up doing more harm than good! If you are diagnosed as being a ‘pronator’ or ‘supinator’ it would be advisable to be screened by an experienced physiotherapist, or to visit a gait analysis lab, where a more rigorous assessment of your whole running action can be performed.” The chapter also includes a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of running barefoot (or in minimalist shoes). Blagrove’s conclusion is that readers should “carry on running most of your mileage in running trainers that are suited to you, but incorporate some barefoot conditioning drills to help strengthen your feet and mobilise the joints” and “ensure you spend as much time as possible doing everyday indoor activities without shoes on”. (One of my few criticisms of the book is that I was somewhat surprised that, in connection with this discussion, Blagrove makes no mention of yoga: my personal experience has been that one of the main benefits of yoga is that it has helped me to become accustomed to exercising and balancing with bare feet.)

The chapter on gluteal stability observes that when people spend long periods of time sitting, the gluteal muscles tend to weaken. Blagrove observes that every time a runner’s leg strikes the ground, “the gluteus medius and minimus in particular perform an isometric contraction to prevent the thigh bone (the femur) from collapsing inwards ... If the glutes aren’t sufficiently strong and well-conditioned to cope with repeated landings, the femur will get pulled across and rotate inwards, which loads the knee in a vulnerable position ... Unfortunately for female distance runners, the risk of knee valgus and patellofemoral injury is significantly higher as compared to male runners. Due to their disproportionately wider hips, women have a higher Q-angle than men, which means the angle of the femur relative to the midline is greater. ... The importance of glute strengthening for female endurance runners cannot be overstated!”

The final chapter in the third part of the book deals with mobilisations and stretches. Blagrove observes that “repeated muscle contractions, particularly of the eccentric type, cause damage to connective tissue. During the running stride, the muscles in the legs are subjected to repeated eccentric loading, and this often leads to feelings of soreness. ... To ‘iron out’ these adhesions in overstressed muscles, the best advice here would be to have a massage a few times a week! For most runners, however, this recommendation is unrealistic both practically and financially. The next best alternative is to use ‘self-myofascial release’ techniques, which is a fancy term for self-massage, usually using a foam roller.”

Blagrove ends a discussion of stretching by stating that “prior to a run, a series of long-hold static stretches to remove passive stiffness may not be a good thing and probably won’t lower your injury risk, whereas long-term static stretching is still likely to offer benefits to mobility. However, unless you have a personal preference for a few short-duration static stretches prior to a run, it is recommended that you leave your static stretching until after your workout and stick to dynamic mobilisation to prepare for your runs.”

The final part of the book is entitled ‘organising your strength and conditioning’. It consists of a 19-page chapter on ‘planning your strength and conditioning’ and a chapter of case study examples. In the introduction to this chapter, Blagrove comments that “magazines and internet pages are filled with suggestions on the best exercise or training session for runners to perform, but it is no coincidence that recommendations always differ. A magic formula simply doesn’t exist. ... The prescription of training activities and combinations of exercises, volumes and intensities should be individualised for every runner. When training background, injury history, personal constraints and screening results are taken into account, each individual will require a bespoke training programme that caters for their own particular needs.”

I found this to be a very interesting book, and I would definitely recommend it to all Striders who would like to take steps to reduce the likelihood of incurring running-related injuries.

*(This article previously appeared in the December 2019 club magazine, but is republished here – in a slightly revised form – for the benefit of newer Striders)*

## **A BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO UK ATHLETICS (by Alan Dolton)**

When I was club secretary (more than 20 years ago), a new Strider who had previously been a footballer expressed some bemusement at the variety of competitions which Striders competed in, and asked if I could write a brief summary and explanation of them for the club magazine. I duly complied, and a version of the article stayed on our website for several years. Needless to say, there have been many changes in the years since I wrote the original article, and I thought that an updated version might be useful for newer Striders.

Athletics in the UK is organised on a 'federal' basis. At the top of the tree is UK Athletics (which was set up in 1999, after the previous British Athletics Federation had become insolvent). It organises annual track and field championships, and selects UK teams for the World Championships, etc. It also writes the UK athletics rulebook. It has four constituent organisations, covering England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### **'ENGLAND ATHLETICS'**

'England Athletics' succeeded the Amateur Athletic Association as the body responsible for athletics in England. It selects England teams for the Commonwealth Games and other international matches, and organises annual championships for Under-23s, Under-20s and Under-17s. 'England Athletics' has a registration scheme, partly to raise funds, and partly to prevent athletes from changing clubs without official sanction. (Under UKA rules, all athletes wishing to change clubs must register their change of clubs with their national association. In an attempt to deter 'poaching' of athletes by rich clubs, athletes whose change of club is not caused by a change of residence are often not allowed to represent their new club in team competition until six months after leaving their previous club.)

### **SURREY COUNTY ATHLETICS ASSOCIATION**

Under UKA rules, clubs are also required to affiliate to their county association. For this purpose, athletics does not recognise the boundary changes that politicians have imposed in the last 150 years: there is no such county association as 'London', and Croydon is deemed to be part of Surrey. The Surrey County Athletics Association organises annual track & field and cross-country championships, and also recognises certain road races as county championships (e.g. the Dorking 10 Miles and the Ranelagh 10K usually incorporate the Surrey championships). It also organises the annual Surrey Road League.

### **OTHER ASSOCIATIONS**

The English Cross-Country Association organises the 'National' Cross-Country Championships. The South of England Athletics Association organises the South of England Cross-Country Championships, as well as annual road relays and track & field championships. The British Masters Athletics Federation organises various championship events in five-year age bands for men and women aged 35 and over.



**Lorraine Hunte competing in the 2024 British Masters Championships**

One other association which several Surrey clubs (including Striders) are affiliated to is the South of the Thames Cross-Country Association, which was formed in the late 19th century. It organises two annual



aces. Its main (or senior) championships are normally held in December, and it also hosts a five-mile inter-club race in November. Originally, this was described as a 'junior' championship, but the title was highly misleading because the word 'junior' normally means an athlete aged under 20, whereas the STCCA 'junior' championships were restricted to athletes who had not previously placed in the first 50 in the STCCA senior championship, or in the first 100 in the Southern or National Championships, or been part of a winning team in the STCCA senior championship. Most of these restrictions have subsequently been dropped, and the race is officially now called an 'inter-club' race. Until the 1960s, the STCCA championship was regarded as quite a prestigious event, but the emergence of the county leagues (see below) has seen it decline in status, and several eligible clubs don't bother to compete.

## LEAGUES

Surrey clubs compete in several leagues. The Surrey Cross-Country League was formed in 1962. It now comprises four men's divisions and three women's divisions, and has four races each winter. Originally it was for men only; an equivalent league for women was formed in 1979. The men's and women's leagues merged in 2021. Striders joined the men's league in 1986; until 2002 we spent most of our time in Division Three, but in 2002 we won the Division Three championship for the first time, and spent most of the next 20 years in Division Two. In 2018 we achieved our best ever position of second in Division Two, and were promoted to Division One for the first time. However, we only managed to remain there for one season, and subsequently dropped into Division Three before regaining our Division Two status in 2024.

Our women joined the Surrey Women's Cross-Country League in 1988, and spent most of the next 35 years in Division Two. We have won promotion to Division One on four occasions (the first being in 2001 and the most recent being in 2010), but each time we were quickly relegated again. In 2024 we were relegated to Division Three for the first time.

The East Surrey League was formed in the 1930s. It currently organises three events each year: two cross-country races and a road race. It currently has nine affiliated clubs. Striders won this league for the first time in 2003 and for the second time in 2017.

The Surrey Road League was formed in 1992. It is organised by the Surrey County Athletic Association, and consists of seven races each summer, ranging from 7K to half-marathon. Striders' men placed fourth in 2003, which is our highest placing in the league.

On the track, the most prestigious league is the National Athletics League, which was formed in 2020 and replaced the British Athletics League (which had been formed in 1969 but catered for men only) and the UK Women's Athletics League (which had been formed in 1975). The National Athletics League has 32 teams, with a premier division and four regional divisions. Below the National League is the Southern Athletics League, which was formed in 2011 to provide competition for both sexes (replacing the separate Southern Leagues which previously existed for men and women). The Southern Athletics League currently has three divisions, with both Divisions Two and Three being regionalised. Striders have never entered this league, but some Striders have competed as second-claim members for either Croydon Harriers (who are currently in Division Two) or Holland Sports, who are based in Oxted and are currently in Division Three.

For athletes aged 35 and over, there is a separate league called the Southern Veterans League, which was formed in 1990 and comprises several regional divisions. Striders joined in 1996, and compete in a division of nine clubs: the others are Croydon Harriers, Dorking, Epsom, Hercules-Wimbledon, Kingston, Reigate, Walton and Woking. There are four matches each summer, usually on Monday evenings.

Also on the track is a local league called the Rosenheim League, which was formed in 1964 and has four matches each year on Wednesday evenings. It has two divisions. Striders entered the 'eastern' division in 2005, withdrew at the end of 2013, but rejoined at the start of 2023. In both 2023 and 2024 our women exceeded expectations by doing well enough to qualify for the Rosenheim Shield Final, which brings together the best four clubs from each division.

*(This article previously appeared in the June 2020 club magazine, but is republished here – in an updated version – for the benefit of newer Striders)*

## COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: JUNE – AUGUST 2024

The Dorking 10-mile road race on 2 June was the third race in this year's Surrey Road League. Tatsuya Okamoto ran well to place 14th (57:46). Andy Perks was 56th (62:25), Steve Harris 103rd (67:17) and Peter Mills 119th (68:19). Selena Wong was the 73rd woman to finish, placing 307th overall (90:41).

Striders' women did very well to place second in the Rosenheim League match at Tooting on 12 June. Jay Brzask became Striders' first female steeplechaser, placing third in 8:43.0. There were second places for Vanessa Wheeler in the 100 metres (19.3), Yasmin Anderson in the 200 metres (42.3), Ellyw Evans in the 400 metres (77.1) and Natalie Ballarin in the shot (6.06). Striders' men were fifth. Luke Burden was second in both the 2000 metre steeplechase (7:17.9) and the triple jump (10.04). Phil Coales was second in the 800 metres (2:04.9). James Harrison was fourth in the shot with a club record of 8 metres 16.

In the Southern Veterans League match at Kingsmeadow on 17 June, Striders' women were fourth, while their men were sixth. Steve Corfield won the M60 400 metres in a club age-group record of 61.93, and also won the M60 mile (5:27.34). Lorraine Hunte won the W60 100 metres, setting a club W70 record of 17.16. Paul Cripps won the M50 high jump (1.45). Jon Dean was second in the M50 2000 metre walk (13:09.52).

The fourth Surrey Road League race was the Richmond 10K on 23 June. Tatsuya Okamoto was 15th (34:29), Phil Coales 36th (35:51), Andrew Aitken 48th (36:16) and Andy Perks 90th (38:11). Selena Wong was the 39th female finisher (53:43), with Jane Hughes 45th (55:40) and Linda Jones 52nd (59:22).

In the Surrey Masters Track & Field Championships, at Kingsmeadow on 6 July, there were gold medals for Tatsuya Okamoto in the M40 5000 metres (16:20.99); Steve Corfield in both the M60 800 metres (2:25.81) and the M60 1500 metres (4:55.05); Sandra Francis in both the W65 long jump (2.66) and the W65 100 metres (21.10); Alan Dolton in both the M65 400 metres (107.11) and the M65 800 metres (4:11.87), and Sarah Allport in the W45 1500 metres (8:52.85). Lorraine Hunte took silver in the W70 100 metres (18.14).

In the Southern Veterans League match at Sutton on 8 July, Striders' women placed fourth, while their men placed seventh. Steve Corfield won both the M60 800 metres (2:20.8) and the M60 5000 metres (18:23.4). Lorraine Hunte won the W60 200 metres, setting a new club W70 record of 37.0.

The fifth Surrey Road League race of the season was the Elmore 7 miles on 13 July. Striders' men placed seventh. Tatsuya Okamoto was ninth (39:32), Conor O'Hara-Barrett 39th (43:06), Erik Schrijnemaekers 44th (43:58) and Simon Ambrosi 53rd (44:52). Cindy Siu was the 38th woman to finish (57:28).

In the Rosenheim League match at Tooting on 17 July, Striders' women placed third, while their men were fifth. Max Veglio won the men's 400 metres (59.0). Phil Coales was second in the 800 metres (2:07.4). Holly Harrison set a club women's 100 metre record of 15.0, and was second in the 200 metres (42.3).

The sixth Surrey Road League race was the Elmbridge 10K on 21 July. Tatsuya Okamoto was seventh (34:31), Erik Schrijnemaekers 61st (38:10), Steve Corfield 63rd (38:14), and Jason Gallager 108th (40:26). The last Surrey Road League race was the Bushy Park 7K on 26 July. Erik Schrijnemaekers was 68th (26:17), Darren Woods 195th (30:44), Martin Gourlay 537th (44:00), Karen Peake 549th (45:51) and Keith Dube 550th (45:52). In the final league tables, Striders' men were ninth, while their women were 18th.

In the British Masters Championships at Derby on 27 and 28 July, Lorraine Hunte placed fourth in the W70 100 metres (17.42). Steve Corfield was fifth in the M60 800 metres in a club age-group record of 2:16.41.

On 4 August, Ally Whitlock was the third woman to finish the North Downs Way 100-mile race, placing 20th overall (22:26:55). Tatsuya Okamoto placed 13th overall in a personal best 21:56.27. Erik Schrijnemaekers won the Vanguard Way Half-Marathon (1:42:20) with Marc Burrows second (1:44:49).

Striders' women placed seventh in the Rosenheim Shield Final at Kingsmeadow on 14 August. Jay Brzask was fifth in the hurdles in a club record of 43.35. In the London Masters Championships at Tooting on 31 August, Lorraine Hunte won the W70 100 metres (17.44), while Steve Corfield won the M60 400 metres (61.99) and Sarah Allport won the W45 1500 metres (9:06.29).



**Holly Harrison setting a club women's 100 metre record  
in our Rosenheim League match at Tooting on 17 July  
(photo by Stephen Allport)**

## 40 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN JULY – DECEMBER 1984

The Surrey 20-mile championship took place at Wimbledon on 21 July. The race was won by Melvyn Page of Woking (1:47:32). Dave Bryant of Croydon Harriers was 17th (2:14:03). No Striders competed.

The highlight of the 1984 athletics season was the Olympic Games, held in Los Angeles in August. Two Croydon Harriers competed. Judy Oakes did well to place fourth in the women's shot, recording 18 metres 14. Her club colleague Helen Barnett reached the semi-finals of the women's 400 metres, running 52.26 seconds. She also ran in the women's 4 x 400 relay, where Britain placed fourth.

On 9 September Croydon Harriers' leading ultra-distance runner, James Zarei, placed sixth in the Bolton 40-mile road race, recording 4 hours 46 minutes 32.

The Surrey Women's Road Relays took place in Brockwell Park on 6 October. Herne Hill won the senior race with Epsom second. Croydon Harriers won the under-17 race.

On 20 October Striders' chairman, Steve Owen, ran a personal best of 58:42 for 10 miles at Battersea Park (achieved on a training mileage of 33 miles per week). Club colleague Rob Pinfield ran 60:42.

The fourth annual Croydon 10-mile road race took place on the following day. It was held on the same course as the two previous years: a relatively fast two-lap course starting in Oaks Road and finishing in the grounds of John Ruskin School (which has subsequently been demolished). Surrey Beagles' international Bob Treadwell repeated his victory of 1981, finishing almost two minutes clear in 49 minutes 22. Richard Higgins of Portsmouth AC was second (51:13). The first Croydon Harrier to finish was Alan Dolton, who placed seventh (52:25). South London Harriers had the first female finisher in Caroline Letchford, who placed 110th overall in 63:04 (and beat all Striders' male runners). She was followed by Jane Laird of Collingwood (64:00) and Samantha Lloyd of Croydon Harriers (65:22). Striders distributed recruitment leaflets after the race to demonstrate that, despite the club name of Philips City Striders, membership was no longer restricted to people who worked for Philips. The most prominent recruit was Alan Purchase, who had placed 88th in 61:46, and is still competing 40 years later.

The Surrey Cross-Country League began its 23rd season with matches on 13 October. The first three Division One matches were all won by defending champions Aldershot, with Herne Hill taking second place on each occasion. Woking won the first three Division Two matches, with Thames Hare & Hounds second in the first two, and Croydon taking second in the third match. In the overall table after three matches, Croydon held second place, just eleven points ahead of Thames.

The Surrey Women's Cross-Country League began its sixth season. Croydon Harriers won the team event in the first two races. The first race was won by Croydon's outstanding 17-year-old Niobe Menendez. New Zealand international Gill Drake won the second race, running for Downland Harriers (who no longer exist).

The East Surrey League held its annual cross-country race at Lloyd Park on 27 October. The winner was Jonathan Lamont of Epsom, who completed the five-mile course in 28 minutes 23, while future Strider Alan Dolton placed second (28:57). Another future Strider, Peter Yarlett, placed 24th (31:10). Hercules-Wimbledon won the team event with Epsom second.

Striders made their cross-country debut in the London Championships at Parliament Hill on 24 November, sporting the new club colours of red, white and blue (which had replaced the gold vests originally supplied by Philips, which the club's runners had worn in the 1983 London Marathon). According to founder-member Rob Pinfield, the choice of these club colours was attributable to the club's first secretary, Mick Meech, who was a Crystal Palace supporter. Eight Striders finished a very muddy course, although none of them still compete for us. Steve Owen led the team home, followed by Rob Pinfield, Simon Smith and Mick Meech.

One big frustration for road runners is running a good race on a course which subsequently transpires to be short of the advertised distance. There was an example of this on 30 December, with a race at Crystal Palace which was advertised as 10 kilometres. One of Striders' youngest members, Simon Smith, set what would then have been a Striders club record of 35 minutes 15, but the organisers subsequently accepted that the course was short. (It was probably at least 300 metres short, as Alan Dolton placed 22nd in 30 minutes 11, almost a minute faster than his lifetime best on an officially measured course.)

## 20 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN AUTUMN 2004

The Surrey Road Relays were held at Wimbledon Park on 11 September. Striders' senior men finished ninth. New member Duncan Lancashire ran an excellent first leg to place fifth out of 22 runners, completing the 2.9 mile course in 15 minutes 15. Paul Finch faced strong opposition on the second leg and slipped to fourteenth (17:51), but Don Kayum regained four places on the third leg (16:47). Tom Thrower lifted Striders to ninth place (16:07), and both Justin Macenhill (16:01) and Damian Macenhill (18:34) held this position. Striders' M40 team finished seventh. The team comprised Colin Cotton (18:28), Nigel Davidson (17:56), Alan Dolton (18:45) and Dave Batten (17:23). Striders' women placed ninth out of 18 teams. Their team comprised Kerry Backshell (20:25), Elene Kayum (21:15), Faye Stammers (20:26) and Karen McDermott (20:51).

From 1996 to 2004, Striders had provided track and field competition for the club's older members in the Southern Veterans League, but had not catered for the club's younger members. The 2004 AGM rectified this by agreeing to apply to enter the Rosenheim League (which we subsequently competed in from 2005 until 2013, and later rejoined in 2023). The AGM also saw Alan Dolton retire as club secretary. He was succeeded by Chris Morton, while Karen McDermott (now Karen Macenhill) joined the committee in the new post of membership secretary. The club's membership had grown from 77 in 2002 to 130 in 2004.

The Wimbledon 10-mile road race took place on 3 October. Justin Macenhill was eleventh (59:16) and Don Kayum was 14th (60:17). Kerry Backshell was the sixth woman to finish, placing 53rd overall (71:59).

The Surrey Women's Cross-Country League began its 26th season with a match at Wimbledon Common on 9 October. Division One had been expanded to 15 clubs for the first time, thus increasing the chances of promotion from Division Two. Striders' women did well to place third of 14 clubs in the first Division Two match. They were led home by Serena Stracey, in her first race for eight months after a knee operation. She ran very well to finish sixth of the 83 finishers, covering the undulating six-kilometre course in 26:07. Striders' next three runners had their own private battle, packing very well to finish within 13 seconds of each other. Clare McFadzean, making her league debut, ran strongly for 19th place (27:59) and was closely followed by Kerry Backshell (20th, 28:01) and Faye Stammers (21st, 28:12). Elene Kayum completed the scoring team in 28th place (28:55).

Meanwhile Striders' men competed in the Division Three match at Epsom, and finished fourth of the nine competing clubs. They had 18 runners, led by Justin Macenhill who finished tenth in 31:33. Tom Thrower was 16th (32:21), Don Kayum 26th (33:28), Nigel Davidson 30th (34:16), Tony Sheppard 32nd (34:20), Iain Harrison 41st (34:36), Chris Morton 46th (34:59), Paul Finch 55th (35:24), Ian Campbell 67th (35:59) and John Foster completed the scoring team in 74th (36:49).

The 27th Croydon 10K took place on 17 October. Dereje Kebede of Hercules-Wimbledon was the first man home, finishing more than a minute clear in 31 minutes 02. Jonathan McCallum of Croydon Harriers was second (32:36). The first Strider to finish was Justin Macenhill who placed 12th (35:28). Club colleague Duncan Lancashire was 18th (36:27). The first woman was Gill Wheeler of Hailsham (38:29).

On 30 October Striders had 16 finishers in the East Surrey League cross-country race in Lloyd Park. Our men's A team placed sixth. Justin Macenhill was 16th (31:45), Damian Macenhill 27th (32:53), Chris Morton 32nd (33:41) and Tony Sheppard 37th (34:05). For our women, Kerry Backshell was 85th (40:10) and Patricia Carr 105th (45:11).

The second Surrey Cross-Country League races of the season were on 27 November. Striders' women did well to finish third in their match at Richmond Park, and remained third in the overall table. Jo Corrigan, making her league debut, produced an excellent run to place 12th (30:12). Serena Stracey was not far behind in 15th place (30:36), and Striders' other three scorers packed very well with Faye Stammers placing 21st (31:19), Clare McFadzean 22nd (31:26) and Kerry Backshell 23rd (31:32).

Meanwhile Striders' men placed fourth in their Division Three match at Lightwater. Duncan Lancashire, on his league debut, ran very well to place fourth (29:30). Justin Macenhill was 13th (31:20), Damian Macenhill 27th (32:36), Iain Harrison 28th (32:45), Tony Sheppard 31st (33:08), John Foster 32nd (33:13), Chris Morton 40th (33:26), Paul Finch 56th (34:50), Mike Willans 66th (35:22) and Peter Yarlett 86th (36:50). The team moved up to third in the overall Division Three table.

## 10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN AUTUMN 2014

The Surrey Road Relays took place at Wimbledon on 6 September. Striders placed 16th in the senior men's race. Their fastest time was set by Ernie Hann, who ran 17 minutes 03 on the second leg.

On 20 September Striders gained an 'away win' in our mob match against Blackheath & Bromley, held in conjunction with the Bromley parkrun. We comfortably outnumbered our hosts, having 41 of the 491 finishers, compared with only 29 for Blackheath. We were led by Simon Ambrosi who placed fifth (17:42).

Striders hosted the 23rd Switchback five-mile multi-terrain race on 28 September. Striders also had four of the first five finishers. Bill Makuwa won the race in 29 minutes 31. Ernie Hann placed second (29:49), with Lee Flanagan placing fourth overall and first in the M40 category (31:22). Justin Macenhill was fifth (31:34). Striders won the men's team prize. The first woman to finish was Ola Balme of Dulwich, who placed 18th overall (34:16). Striders' women were led by Serena Stracey, who placed 20th (34:34). Michelle Clarke (now Michelle O'Mahony) was 48th (41:54), and Beatrice Schaer completed the scoring trio in 61st place (47:38). Petts Wood won the women's team event with Collingwood second and Striders third.

Striders' men finished third out of nine clubs in their opening Surrey Cross-Country League Division Two match of the season, at Guildford on 11 October. Their first man home was Ernie Hann who ran strongly to place 22nd of the 152 finishers, covering the hilly five-mile course in 29 minutes 33. Simone Luciani, making his league debut, also ran very well for 23rd (29:38) with Bill Makuwa close behind in 25th (29:40). Matt Morgan made a welcome return to Striders colours in 30th (30:07) with Lee Flanagan 41st (30:47), Justin Macenhill 47th (31:05), Simon Ambrosi 60th (31:53) and Damian Macenhill 63rd (31:59). Matthew Stone, making his league debut, did well to place second in the M50 category and 71st overall (32:36) while Simon Pannell completed the scoring team in 80th (33:12).

Meanwhile Striders' women placed fifth in their Division Two match at Richmond Park. Alice Ewen led them home, placing 20th in 29 minutes 44, just one place and three seconds ahead of Steph Upton. Striders' next two runners were even closer together, with Becky Laurence placing 52nd in 33 minutes 56 and Michelle Clarke 53rd in 33 minutes 57. Debra Bourne completed the scoring team in 56th (34:28).

In the Surrey Masters Cross-Country Championships at Richmond Park on 18 October, Kevin Burnett placed second in the M75 race, while Simon Pannell placed fifth in the M50 race and Dave Hoben was tenth in the M60 race.

On 19 October, Striders had 52 finishers in the Croydon 10 kilometre road race. Bill Makuwa placed seventh (35:22), while Lee Flanagan was the first M40 to finish, placing 14th overall (37:43). Karen Stretch was the third woman to finish, placing 40th overall (40:54). Alice Ewen was the eighth woman to finish, placing 83rd overall (44:45).

Striders placed second in the East Surrey League's annual cross-country race at Lloyd Park on 25 October. We had 16 of the first 37 finishers, led by Ernie Hann who placed second in 30 minutes 04. Krzysztof Klidzia was seventh (31:25) and Tyler O'Callaghan eighth (31:51). Matthew Stone was first in the M50 age-group, placing ninth overall in 32 minutes 06. Josephine Thompson was the third woman to finish, placing 32nd overall (37:33).

Striders' men placed fourth in the second Surrey Cross-Country League Division Two match of the season, at Ham on 8 November. Bill Makuwa placed eleventh out of the 193 finishers, covering the five-mile course in 30 minutes 55. Simone Luciani placed 15th (31:09), Matt Morgan 26th (31:50), Lee Flanagan 39th (32:32) and Matt Smith 40th (32:34).

Striders won the club's first mob match against Wimbledon Windmilers, for the Helen Furze Memorial Trophy, which was held in conjunction with the parkrun at Nonsuch Park on 29 November. We had 65 finishers, which was our biggest turnout in any event since the club's formation in 1982. We were led by Matt Morgan who ran well to finish fourth (18:15). Ernie Hann was ninth (18:46), while Simon Ambrosi was 15th (19:46), Dave Shaw 23rd (20:30), Chris Morton 24th (20:33), Paul Finch 25th (20:36) and Mick Turner 27th (20:42). Serena Stracey was the second woman to finish (22:17). Alice Ewen was fourth (22:59), Steph Upton seventh (23:07), Becky Laurence 13th (23:51), Michelle Clarke 14th (23:54) and Zoe Williams 20th (25:06).



**The 2014 Switchback. Race director Debra Bourne with Striders' winning men's team: Bill Makuwa, Lee Flanagan and Ernie Hann**



**Striders had 65 runners in the Helen Furze Memorial mob match on 29 November 2014**

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