

Striders of Croydon

MARCH 2025 MAGAZINE



Striders' M60 team (Matthew Stone, Steve Corfield and Graham Hansen), who placed third in the British Masters 5K Championship at Battersea on 1 December (photo by Peter Johnson)



Striders' women celebrating promotion from Surrey Cross-Country League Division Three (photo by Stephen Allport)

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Competitive Highlights: December 2004–February 2025

40 Years Ago – Local Athletics in January-June 1985

20 Years Ago – Local Athletics in Spring 2005

10 Years Ago – Local Athletics in Spring 2015

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 13 April – Sutton 10K – Nonsuch Park (Surrey Road League)
Monday 14 April – Southern Veterans League – Kingsmeadow
Thursday 24 April – East Surrey League Road Race – Ewell
Wednesday 30 April – Striders Annual General Meeting – Sandilands
Saturday 3 May – British Masters 100km Championship – Kirkby Mallory (Leicestershire)
Saturday 10 May – Surrey Track & Field Championships – Kingsmeadow
Sunday 11 May – Ranelagh Half-Marathon – Richmond (Surrey Championships & Road League)
Sunday 18 May – Surrey Masters Track & Field Championships – Kingsmeadow
Wednesday 21 May – Rosenheim League – Battersea Park
Sunday 1 June – Dorking 10 miles – Betchworth (Surrey Championship & Road League)
Monday 16 June – Southern Veterans League – Wimbledon
Wednesday 18 June – Rosenheim League – venue tbc
Sunday 22 June – Ranelagh 10K – Richmond (Surrey Championships & Road League)
Monday 30 June – Southern Veterans League – Ewell
Saturday 12 July – Elmore 7 Miles – Chipstead (Surrey Road League)
Wednesday 16 July – Rosenheim League – Tooting Bec
Sunday 20 July – Elmbridge 10K – Elmbridge (Surrey Road League)
Friday 25 July – Wedding Day 7K – Bushy Park (Surrey Road League)
Monday 28 July – Southern Veterans League – Sutton Arena
Wednesday 13 August – Rosenheim Shield Final – Kingsmeadow
Sunday 24 August – British Masters 5000m Championship – Nuneaton
Saturday 13 September – British Masters Track & Field Championships – Derby



Striders' team at our mob match against Croydon Harriers at South Norwood on 1 February

EDITORIAL: MARCH 2025

Welcome to the March issue of our club magazine. In December, Debra Bourne ran two parkruns in Canberra before running the Winter Wanderlust 50K trail race in Kent, and in January she completed a long-distance walking event starting and finishing in Leatherhead. She gives us her accounts of all four events. In November, Selena Wong made the long journey to China to study at the Qufu Shaolin Kung Fu School, and she gives us an account of her experiences. We follow this with an article about training for a fast 10K or 10 miles.

We include our usual 'competitive highlights' article. We did very well to field a club record turnout of 70 runners in our annual mob match against Croydon Harriers, giving us victory in the match. In the Surrey Cross-Country League, our women did very well in the second half of the season, climbing into third place in Division Three and winning promotion back to Division Two, where we have spent most of the last 30 years. Unfortunately our men had a disappointing Surrey League season: we fielded more than 20 runners in three of the four matches, but never had more than one runner finishing in the top 40, and were duly relegated back to Division Three. On the road, three of our oldest runners did very well in the British Masters 5K championships, taking third place in the M60 age-group, which is the first time that any Striders team have won medals in a national road running championship.

We also include our usual history articles. The '40 years ago' article is a reminder that it is just over 40 years since the M25 was opened, and also notes that it was in June 1985 that Alan Purchase became the first Strider to complete a race of more than 50 miles. And if any Strider has wondered how the Goodall Trophy got its name, the '20 years ago' article provides the answer.

I hope that all Striders continue to enjoy their running.

Alan



Congratulations to former Strider Rosie Gibbons (centre of picture), who represented Cornwall in the South-Western Inter-County Cross-Country Championships

CANBERRA PARKRUNS – MOUNT AINSLIE AND BURLEY GRIFFIN

(by Debra Bourne)

In early December I had the fortune to be travelling to Canberra, Australia, for the Wildlife Disease Association conference. With the conference starting properly on the Monday, and some meetings I needed to attend on the Sunday, I decided that I had better arrive on Friday to give myself an extra day to recover from travel and jetlag – which would, coincidentally, give me the opportunity to run a parkrun on the Saturday. 😊

After some online research of the four parkruns available in Canberra, I chose **Mount Ainslie parkrun** at the foot of Mount Ainslie, which sounded great – and maybe I would be able to trot up to the top of the hill afterwards for views across Canberra. I contacted the team, said I was visiting and would be happy to write a run report, and to scan after running if that would be helpful.

I was booked into a hotel for the conference, but looking at the map it seemed running to the parkrun in the morning would involve lots of twists and turns, and might be rather nerve-wracking to navigate early in the morning, with jetlag, so I found a different hotel for the Friday night, that was only 2 miles and about three road turns from the parkrun.

Saturday morning I set my alarm nice and early, having remembered that the parkrun would start at 8am, and made sure I had my parkrun ID. I drank some tea and ate a protein bar before setting off down the road in light rain. The venue, at the foot of Mount Ainslie, is very easy to find by following signs for the Australian War Memorial, and once near there I was able to spot the parkrun feather flag and follow the signs along the trails the short distance to the start. This parkrun started in April 2018, and often has 150-200+ runners.

The course is an out-and-back on a wide trail of crushed and well-packed red gravel with, on a rainy morning, a little bit of mud and some puddles, through woodland. It's an undulating course, which I always find more interesting than a flat one. We were warned to take a bit of care with footing, but as a trail runner I found it fine - a few small rocks and bits of gully, but no roots or other major trip hazards. Compared to Lloyd parkrun there was no major hill, and it was a lot less muddy than Lloyd in winter.



The trail heading off into the trees – the cones took us away from a wet patch of mud

The set-up crew had seen several kangaroos, but sadly none put in an appearance for me during the run. I did see three Great Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, with one, presumably a female, sticking her head out of a tree-hole and being fed, which was wonderful to see. I also got a brief view of two kangaroos after the run, which was another treat for me.

The rain had kept many of the locals away, with only 78 finishers, but there were a number of visitors from across Australia (and me from the UK) – 14 visitors in all. It was great to see two young volunteers, including one doing the pre-race announcements.



With the Run Director after finishing. Soggy volunteers.

I did trot up the hill to the top afterwards, but with the rain the views were rather murky.



View (ish) over Canberra from Mount Ainslie in the rain

The conference kept me busy during the week, but Monday morning, which was forecast to be bright and sunny, I got up early and headed back to Mount Ainslie to run up again and see the views – and some kangaroos (and crimson rosellas, and more sulphur-crested cockatoos, and other birds). It was definitely a less straightforward route, and I was very glad I had not had to go that way on Saturday morning but it was interesting going down the avenue of war memorials.



View over Canberra from Mount Ainslie with sunshine



Kangaroos over on the right if you look carefully

Burley Griffin parkrun

The conference finished on the Friday and I decided to head to the Blue Mountains, via Sydney, on Saturday - but first, another Canberra parkrun.

I was tempted to go back to Mount Ainslie, because the volunteers there had been so nice and because it was on trail, but in the end I chose Burley Griffin parkrun. This started in June 2016 and generally has 300-500 runners.

Burley Griffin parkrun was a bit further away, about 3.5 miles. Canberra has a large river/lake (Molonglo River, Lake Burley Griffin), lying west to east through the middle of the city. Looking at the map, I could see an easy-to-follow route without too many turns from my hotel to Weston Park where the parkrun was held.

I left in plenty of time, and it's a good thing I did, because I soon discovered that the major part of my chosen route along a large road didn't have any pavement. I ended up running up the central reservation of one large road to cross a bridge, then had to divert onto a cycling/walking route that somewhat paralleled the road but wiggled more in towards the lake shore, so was longer – and without the road signs, I wasn't sure whether I'd spot my turning into the park. On the plus side, the path took me past a picnic area near which a few kangaroos were resting.



Kangaroos, with Burley Griffin Lake in the background

In the end I made it to the start area with about 5 minutes to spare, and found where I could stash my small backpack. Several people commented on my parkrun 500 shirt – they didn't get to see many – and it was the first 500 volunteer shirt they had seen.

This was a considerable contrast to Mount Ainslie parkrun: all on tarmac and concrete paths, lots of people – particularly because this was their 400th run – and it wasn't raining. It was, however, another out-and-back course, and was gently – very gently – undulating. We basically followed the lake, with the shore on our left for two and a half miles before returning with the lake to our right.

I was hoping for a decent time, but I was feeling very tired after a busy week, plus hurrying and worrying on the way to the parkrun, my legs felt incredibly heavy, and in the end I was pleased to squeak in at just over 70% age graded.

I also bumped into another British runner, from Tunbridge Wells, which was a nice surprise.



After the run

Afterwards a 3.5-mile trot back to the hotel, with rising temperatures and mostly in sunshine – I was very aware that I hadn't put any sunscreen on (advisable from 9 am) and that I was getting through my single 500 mL bottle of water faster than I had expected. I took a different route, so at least I had pavements all the way, but navigation was needed, with my tourist map not showing all the road names.

I would definitely recommend both parkruns (there are others in Canberra as well), with Mount Ainslie if you want undulating trail, and Burley Griffin if you prefer smooth, solid paths and less undulation.



**Mount Ainslie seen from the Old Parliament:
the pale shape at the foot of the hill is the main War Memorial**

WINTER WANDERLUST (by Debra Bourne)

The Winter Wanderlust is a trail race on the North Downs that started in 2024, with two distance options, 50K and marathon. It's organised by a newish race company, Embrace Ultra, which aims to provide "generous time limits, amazing aid stations and well-marked, easy to navigate courses". I noticed it online and decided to run it because (a) I love the North Downs; (b) I had run fewer ultramarathons than usual during 2024 and this would bring me to a nice round dozen for the year.

The Wanderlust started at Detling Village Hall and finished at Wye. As a member of The Green Runners, I try to travel to races (and recces) by public transport, or ride-share. In this case, the finish was conveniently close to a railway station but the start, not so much, and no trains could get me there on Sunday morning before the start. Having neither booked nearby accommodation nor found anyone else travelling there from the Croydon/Bromley area and willing to carpool, I ended up making use of my wonderful husband's willingness to drive me to Detling.

We had allowed plenty of time, in case of any diversions or missing a road turning, and reached Detling early, while there were still places to park the car nearby, and before the queues had started to build up in the hall. I got my number and tracker and made use of the toilet facilities (real indoor toilets, that flushed, and had toilet paper, and sinks for hand washing).



Official photos by Mark Witter, courtesy of Embrace Ultra

Back at the car I put my number on, changed into my running shoes and checked that I had everything in my pack. I had decided to use my 15-litre Decathlon trail pack and had attached the pole quiver to it for the first time. It was a bit tricky getting the quiver to stay in the correct place while putting the pack on, but after that it was fine. It was clearly going to be sunny and I had forgotten to pack my peaked running hat, but thankfully I keep an emergency hat in the car, so grabbed that. Once I was sure I had everything, I picked up my finish bag, which mostly contained warm, dry clothes and footwear for the journey home, and Aidan set off home.

Back to the village hall, which was somewhat busier than it had been 20 minutes earlier. I started bumping into people I knew from Centurion races and from SVN (Saxons, Vikings and Normans) challenges. I also met a couple of people who were wearing T-shirts from this year's Lakeland 50 (where I had run the Lakeland 100 the same weekend).

At the pre-race briefing the Race Director asked if anyone was doing their first marathon or 50K, and a few people were. I thought that running this as your first marathon was rather brave, given the somewhat hilly trail route. He warned us that it was very muddy in places.

Most of the course was the same for the two distance options – from Detling almost into Wye along the North Downs Way, followed by a hilly loop around the Wye area. The 50K route added a hilly 6-mile loop at the start, and we 50K runners set off 15 minutes before the marathon runners. It was fairly chilly, but dry, sometimes sunny, and without much wind – great weather for December.

The route was well marked, plus I had it on GPX. I had run two 50K challenges the previous weekend, and was nowhere near as fit as I ought to be, so I was simply aiming to complete and have a nice day out on

the North Downs, not to compete. The first 6-mile loop was definitely hilly and my poles came out of my quiver (much more easily than I had expected) at the first major ascent at about 2.7 miles. Once they were out, I simply kept them out, even though there were long sections later where I didn't need them. The main disadvantage of running with poles, for me, is that it makes it harder to remember to eat regularly, on a little-and-often schedule – particularly because usually I eat while walking uphill, which doesn't work if you're using poles on that ascent.

There was a bit of mud in places, but nothing that I would call 'very muddy' and not much that would even qualify as 'quite muddy'. As a survivor of the extremely muddy Winter Downs 200 in 2023 my idea of 'very muddy' is definitely different from the race director's!

Coming back into Detling I nipped back into the hall to make use of the facilities, as I wasn't sure where else there would be toilets. Then I made sure my water bottles were topped up (not that I'd drunk much, in the cold temperatures), took something to eat, reminded myself to drink more, and headed back out.



Official photo by Mark Witter, courtesy of Embrace Ultra

I'm more used to running (or walking!) this section of the NDW in the dark with more than 80 miles already in my legs, so it was a nice change to be able to see my surroundings and have legs that were not already beaten up. Additionally, I commonly spend large parts of ultras running alone. On this occasion I had a pleasant change because I spent a while leapfrogging with one of the Lakeland 50 runners, Steve, who I'd briefly met before the start, then we ran together for the rest of the race.

Detling to Hollingbourne is rather hilly, with sets of steps both up and down as well as some steep hillsides. Again there were a few muddy sections, but nothing too bad. It definitely looked different in the light and in winter – I have run it in daylight a couple of times in training, but always in the summer when the nettles and brambles were plentiful. It was at Hollingbourne that Steve and I joined forces for the rest of the race. I was really glad to have company on the next stretch, because I've always found it rather boring, both on recce runs and during both times that I've run the NDW100. On this occasion, whether because of the daylight, fewer nettles and brambles, the company, or all of those, I found it a lot less monotonous than I had expected and I actually enjoyed it. Some bits were very familiar, others less so – it's strange how memory works. The second aid station was at Lenham Cross (25 km), near the Lenham War Memorial Cross. The following section of trail was lined with several messages in support of anyone who was struggling with depression.



With my race buddy, Steve



Onward, along mostly broad stony tracks and lanes. After about 23 miles we reached the point where the NDW100 route leaves the North Downs Way and heads into Ashford. At this point I switched from the

comfort of the familiar to the pleasure of new trails to experience and explore. Soon we were back onto footpaths and crossing fields.

Coming into the indoor aid station at Boughton Lees, about 24 miles (39km) was fun because coincidentally I knew all the people inside. It was being managed by Paul Commons, who I'd run my first 10-marathons-in-10-days with (and many other events) and his girlfriend, and the other runners in there were all people I knew from SVN and other races, who were doing the marathon today. This led Steve to comment later to another runner that 'she knows everyone!' There were hot drinks on offer as well as the usual cold drink and food options, and there were toilets. There were some vegan options at each of the aid stations, which I much appreciated.

We approached Wye with about 26 and a half miles on my watch, and could see a marshal only a few hundred yards up the road – we were so tantalisingly close to the finish! – but we were turned away to head left and off in a triangular route around Wye. A couple of miles into that section, which was rather hilly, we were passed by two women, one who looked to be about my age and the other a younger woman we had been leap-frogging with quite a bit. It was on a downhill, stony track and we were all concentrating on placing our feet carefully as we made use of the slope to increase our pace – when I risked a quick glance at my watch and realised we were no longer following the route line... "Stop! We missed a turning!" – and we all headed back up the hill (why is it always uphill to return to the route when you've gone wrong?) to a small gate.



Just after passing the NDW100 turn-off towards Ashford

Up on the top of the hills for a while, and we were treated to a beautiful sunset, with the sun shining through a gap in the cloud layer. I wanted to stop and capture it with my camera, but I also wanted not to break the rhythm of our running, so drank it in with my eyes, did my best to store it in my memory, and kept going.

Just over 30 miles and we reached an insanely steep descent. There were steps off to the right, but we weren't entirely sure from the placement of the markers whether we were supposed to follow those, or whether perhaps the steps would go off to the side while our route went straight on or left and therefore we

were supposed to go straight down the slope. In the end we did a bit of each and both made it down without falling – and on the correct route.

Now on flatter ground, once the watch hit 31 miles I knew that Wye might come into view at any time. We hit 32 miles. Any time now... The light was going by this time but neither of us wanted to stop and fish out our headtorches. I thought we'd be fine so long as we didn't hit a wooded section. Surely the finish had to be close... Then the footpath turned into a track and the track became road, at about the same time that the last of the light faded, and we trotted down the pavement, pushing on now – I was pulling ahead of Steve a bit, and the other two women had dropped off a little. Where was the finish? Weaving between pedestrians, and finally, I saw a Marshal in a high-viz vest on the other side of the road. He was looking at his phone and I had to call several times before he looked up and beckoned me to cross and turn up the driveway next to him. Through a car park – I slowed and waited for Steve. Having come this far together it would have felt wrong not to finish together. Over the carpark, onto the grass, between the light sticks and across the finish line hand in hand!



Finishing! [Official photo by Mark Witter, courtesy of Embrace Ultra]

We were directed towards the hall for food and drink. Several pairs of muddy shoes were outside, so we both removed ours and I banged most of the mud off mine. Inside we discovered there was the option of shoe covers, but as those are single-use I was happier having removed my shoes. Thankfully I had packed dry shoes and socks to wear for the way home, and a bag for my muddy shoes. Food was pasta with sauce and choice of cheese or vegan cheese, plus of course, in mid-December, mince pies. The drink options included mulled wine as well as tea or coffee.

There was one young woman hobbling around looking physically and mentally shattered and completely overwhelmed, barely able to stand. She'd done this as her first ever marathon! 'Never again,' she told me. I tried to encourage her that she would feel differently in a few days, but she didn't believe me!

After seeing a few more people in, I headed the few hundred yards to the rail station and home.

I would definitely recommend this – if not for your first marathon.

(Embrace Ultra also organize some other races, plus monthly free guided trail runs around Kent, and (not free!) coaching. **Addendum:** the 2025 edition is going to be 50K only – no marathon option)

LDWA WINTER TANNERS (by Debra Bourne)

The Long Distance Walking Association pretty much does what it says on the tin – promotes and provides long-distance walks. The Association is organized by county, and each county puts on walks in their area. Many of these walks are guided and are social affairs, but some of them are Challenge Events, and these are also open to runners. The Winter Tanners is one of those challenge events (there used also to be a Summer Tanners, but that's not been held for many years). The name comes from the Tanners YHA, which the route always passes.

“Which the route always passes.” Hold on. Does the route change? Indeed it does. The event starts and finishes in Leatherhead, and always passes the Tanners YHA a few miles after the start or close to the end, but the route changes each year. It is also unmarked, and traditionally is navigated by following a set of route directions: “in 200 yd, at the FiP [fingerpost] turn left...” (map and compass backup recommended). In these modern times, a GPX of the route is also provided – although neither are available until a few days before the event.

I was really looking forward to this event – I'd been waiting for it for 11 years. I had first entered the Winter Tanners back in 2013, only for it to be snowed off – hard to get volunteers to the checkpoints, and no guarantee of an ambulance getting through if anyone got into difficulties. In 2014 I couldn't use my carried-over place because I was injured, and one thing and another (sold out, clashes with other events, etc.) had stopped me from running it each year – until now.

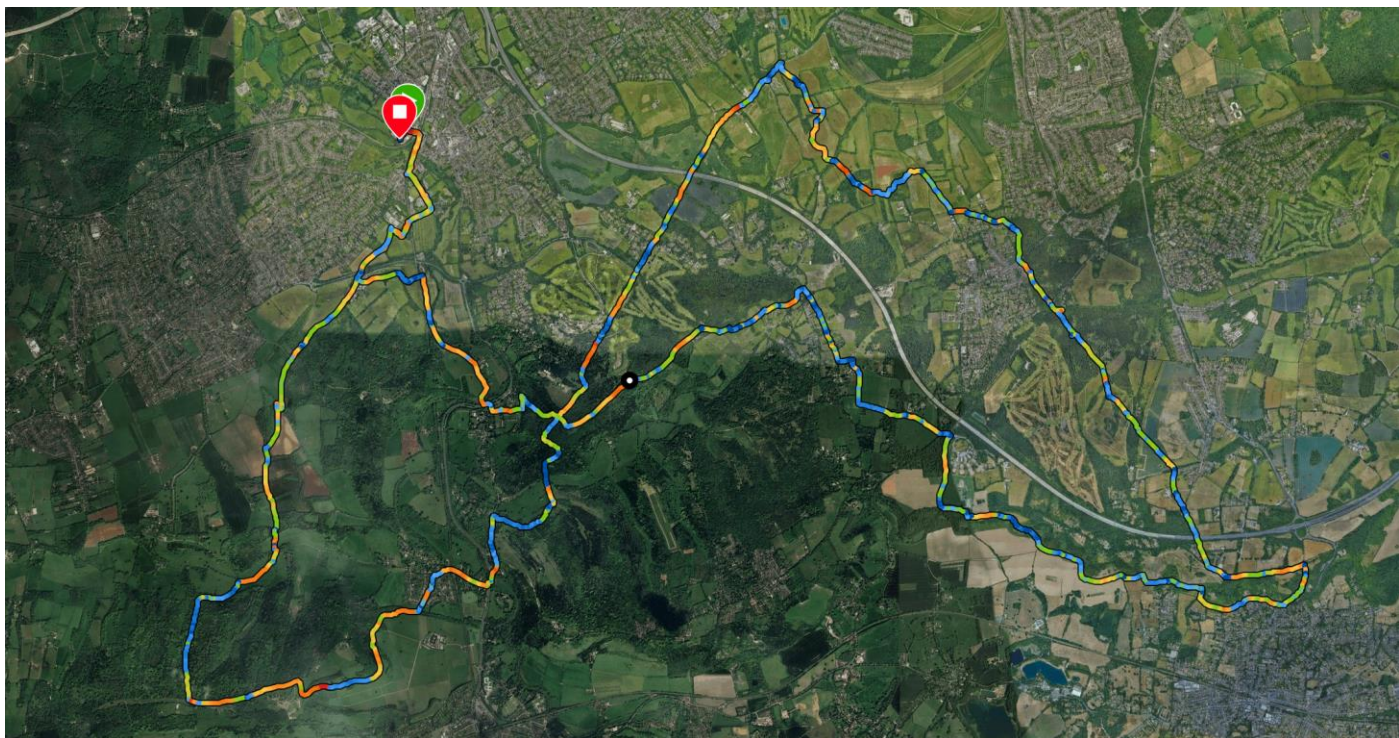
One of the great things about LDWA Challenges is that they are budget-friendly. For a member of LDWA the entry fee is a whole £10 – yep, a tenner. Joining LDWA for a year costs only £18 (or £15 if you use Direct Debit), so incredibly good value for money, particularly if you run in more than one of their events in the year.

I had intended to travel to Leatherhead by train from East Croydon – the map showed that the station was only a short distance from the start – but chatting with another volunteer, Richard Spear, before the start of Lloyd parkrun the day before, it turned out that he was also entered and was driving there, so I accepted his offer of a lift.

Riding with Richard was helpful for all sorts of reasons, from being able to easily carry extra layers without worrying how much to stuff into a finish-line bag, to finding out more about how LDWA challenge events are organized.

- There is no single start time. There's a start window, which begins earlier for slower walkers than for faster walkers and runners, based on when the checkpoints will be open.
- No race numbers to wear, but we were each given a credit-card size piece of plastic with an ID barcode on it, to be scanned before starting, at each checkpoint (no water or food) and aid station (water and some food available), and at the end.
- You get a certificate saying you have finished, but no medal. You can buy (£2) a patch badge for the event.
- You must bring the route directions (and GPX if wanted) with you – they are not provided on the day.

Richard knew the way along the back roads, and it wasn't too long before we were parking at an industrial estate in Leatherhead where the event started. I was lucky not to have to queue too long for the toilet (singular – one women's one men's) and changed into my running shoes while I was waiting. Richard had already been wearing his, so, leaving me the car key, had set off. I had a brief chat with two runners I knew from Saxons, Vikings and Normans events, then with another. After checking I had everything, and bumping into several people I knew, I collected my card and set off – between buildings of the industrial estate, along a road, over a road, further along, then finally leaving the tarmac for footpaths. Looking at the GPS track afterwards, I see we headed slightly west of south for about the first 5 miles, then meandered north-east to about 12.5 miles, then southeast to about 18.5 miles, before meandering vaguely northwest and back to Leatherhead.



2025 LDWA Winter Tanners Route – it's different each year

I had decided to take it easy, not pushing at all, so as not to stress a niggle I'd had since finishing the Winter Wanderlust in December. After four miles or so we passed Tanner's Hatch Youth Hostel and a bench dedicated to Alan Blatchford, who started this event. Onwards, and at 5.5 miles we suddenly emerged from woods onto the road near the church just before Denbies on the North Downs Way.



Looking out over Denbies vineyards and Dorking

Here there was the first Numbers Check – simply two men scanning your barcode and checking your name. Down through Denbies, and I bumped into a guy who used to be a Lloyd parkrun regular, so I walked and chatted with him and his friend for several minutes before starting to run again. I was just getting into my stride when I realised that my watch was telling me to turn left, NOT go all the way down to the main road. Thankful that I had noticed before making a big detour, I went through the kissing gate and on to descend to the road near the subway under the A24. Onwards, passing Box Hill to our right, and a toilet block to our left – I think the only ones we passed, and strangely, not noted on the route description. Past Box Hill and onwards. At about 9 miles we reached the first checkpoint, with water and some food – although only the bananas were suitable for vegans.

At this point the route split, with a 20-mile option going in one direction while those of us doing the 30 miles went a different way. In this case, straight up a long, steep flight of steps, which I recognized as ‘Satan’s Staircase’ from the Copthorne Loop of the Copthorne Races with Canary Trail Events. At least this time I only had to climb it once. Finally at the top, then along a way, and through some open areas that I recognized from the Copthorne Loop, as well as more woodland.



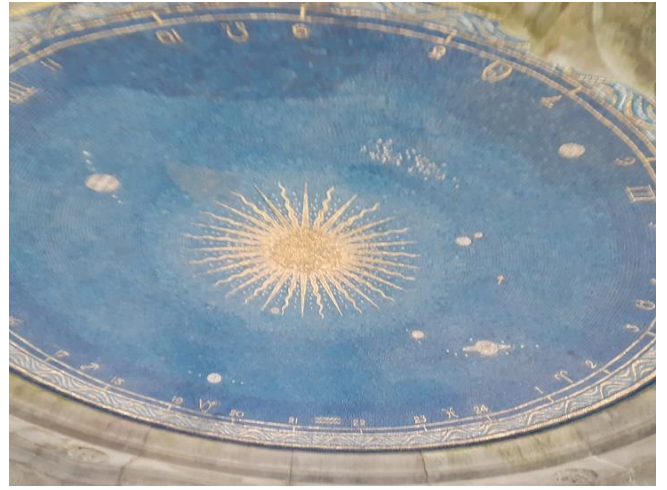
Satan’s Staircase

Through an area with a variety of sculptures, the Regiment of Trees, near Epsom, and onwards. Had a nice chat with three guys walking the event – they were moving on pretty well. It was nice, having decided to take this one easy, to feel no pressure about walking for a while and chatting with people.



Regiment of Trees

Checkpoint 2 came at 15 miles, so I topped up my water and had more banana, as well as a couple of falafel (vegan 'pork pies' were also on offer but not appetizing to me at all). The next time that we emerged from anonymous woodland to somewhere I recognized was, once more, on the NDW – this time at Colley Hill (part of Reigate Hill), where we trotted along the open area at the top heading towards the Inglis Memorial, with its beautifully painted ceiling and the marking pointing to different landmarks. The guys I'd seen earlier came along and would have gone straight past (it doesn't look particularly interesting from the outside), but I suggested it was well worth stopping and looking inside – and after doing so, they agreed.



Heading towards the Inglis Memorial – originally built as a horse trough – and looking at the ceiling

Onwards, past the wooden airplane wing-ends – a memorial to a British bomber plane crew that crash-landed there and were killed, past the Reigate Fort, then shortly before reaching the café and toilets there was another Numbers Check and a right turn back off the NDW, heading downhill.

A few miles further and we reached the point furthest away from Leatherhead and the route turned us back, heading northeast-ish. One section on the North Downs Way, with the national trail signs suddenly appearing – some bits looked familiar despite being in the ‘wrong’, westerly, direction, then veering away again onto other paths.

The third checkpoint at mile 22 had some very welcome malt loaf that they hadn’t yet buttered, so I happily took that and a pack of crisps, with thanks. They asked me what else I would have liked to have, which I really appreciated. I said that simply leaving some of the malt loaf unbuttered was good – one of the other checkpoints had had fruit buns, but all were already buttered. I also saw James and Claire, who I’d seen briefly before the start, but they set off again while I was filling my waters.

Soon after I caught up with Richard and we ran together for a little before I pulled ahead of him. Then for a while I ran with another guy I knew from other races, Matt, and we definitely pushed each other a bit – he got me running faster and I encouraged him to run with fewer walking breaks. With just a few miles to go he said he was trying to go under a specific time and had decided to push on, so I wished him well.

Not far now and approaching Leatherhead, I caught up with James and Claire, and we ran together a little, and caught up with Elaine from SVN (first woman in the UK to run 1,000 marathons), and slowed to chat with her, then speeded up again. I glanced at my watch and realised that I might, just might, make it back in under 7 hours so, despite my original intention to take it easy throughout, I started to push. I was moving quite well, despite tired legs, as I ran back up the last roads – then was stymied by a busy road to cross, where I not only needed to detour a little to the pedestrian crossing, but also wait what seemed like a VERY long time for the lights to change. Finally I was offered the green man – and watched James and Claire run past me through the stopped traffic, without needing to take the detour! I did my best to speed up and pursued them along the last roads, back into the industrial estate and to the table, fishing out my ID barcode for scanning one last time – at officially 7 hours and one minute! If I hadn’t had to wait for the lights to change...

I was looking forward to a nice mug of tea and something to eat, but was told they only had coffee (which I can’t drink, because it gives me headaches). I got into some warm layers, then hot water arrived and I was able to have my first mug of tea from that, before heading to the car where I had, thankfully, a large lidded soup mug, a pack of instant noodles, and my own flask of hot water. A short chat with James and Claire and Elaine, and a rather longer one with Matt – who had travelled to the event by (electrically-assisted) bicycle – before Richard finished and we set off back home.

All in all a good day out - and very good value for money. I have to say that I would definitely have got lost on several occasions without the GPX of the route (and did help out some experienced-looking walkers a time or two where the written directions were unclear).

TRAINING AT QUFU SHAOLIN KUNG FU SCHOOL: A JOURNEY OF DISCIPLINE AND SKILL (by Selena Wong)

Shaolin kung fu (also known as Shaolin wushu) originated over 1,500 years ago in China, developed by warrior monks for protecting the Shaolin Buddhist temple. This ancient martial art is one of the most revered in China and has been the origin and influence for the development of other martial arts in Asia.

In November 2024, I embarked on a brief but unforgettable training experience in Qufu in rural China. Several of my fellow Striders have been interested in hearing more about this fascinating adventure, so I decided to share an account of my time there.

Motivation

So, how did I arrive at the decision to enrol as a beginner student (with my husband reluctantly in tow) at a martial arts residential school particularly when neither of us has any prior experience in Chinese martial arts?

Well, you could say that it was my maternal protective instinct to check out the safety and comfort of this place for my 18-year-old son, who had travelled solo in October to spend half of his gap year there. However, it was not only for my peace of mind. I was also deeply drawn to the notion of trying something new and very different for myself and to see if I was up to the physical challenge.

Preparation

Enrolling through the school's website is straightforward and Joy, who speaks fluent English, sends out detailed travel instructions and all the required documents. The only real hassle was securing a visa, which involved a tedious trip to the China Visa Application Centre near London Bridge.

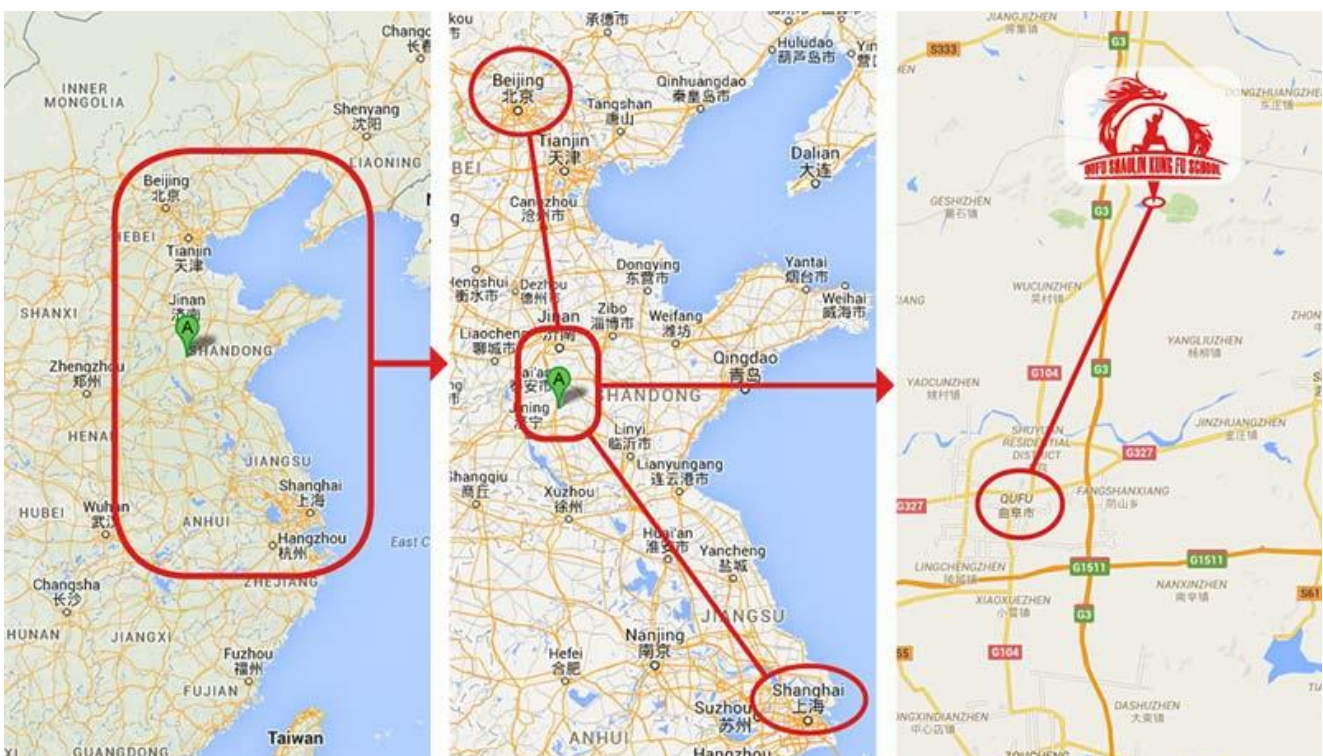
The cost was surprisingly affordable:

Flights: £400 (Heathrow to Beijing, Air China)

High-speed train: £50 (Beijing to Qufu)

School fees: £80 enrolment + £40 per night (£20 if staying over a month), covering accommodation, meals, and training

Location





At the foot of Shimen Mountain within a picturesque national park, the school is surrounded by crop fields, a serene lake and a local village with small shops and restaurants. The charming compound features a traditional gateway which gets locked at 9:30pm. It houses about 70 local children aged 8-18 years old, who train in Kung Fu in addition to their academic studies.

During my visit, there were around 30 foreign adult students, ranging in age from 17 to 70 years old. Most had never done martial arts before, while some had been there for a gap year or were on a return visit, others working as digital nomads or funding their stay by renting out their home property. I encountered a diverse group, including an ex-military tax accountant who had found a passion for Tai Chi and was considering becoming a disciple, a stuntman who gave us a fire demonstration using poi (spinning fire balls on chains), a midwife, and a bouldering gym owner seeking a year-long escape.

The accommodation was reminiscent of university halls of residence - basic but clean and comfortable. Meals were simple, home-cooked and tasty. We had use of the outdoor courtyards, an indoor training hall and a separate block for dining and laundry rooms. A small shop inside the gated entrance was run by ShuShu, a grumpy, chain-smoking man who opened the shop for an hour each day, but it was never the same hour so getting supplies of water, kung fu shoes or a hoodie required some vigilance.

Physical challenges

Days began with a 1.3 km warm-up run through a scenic avenue of autumnal colours. While I struggled with Kung Fu and acrobatics, I redeemed myself by outrunning other students (even if it was just a warm-up).

Compulsory training sessions were from 8:30 to 11:30 am and 2:30 to 4:00pm. Students could choose between different Kung Fu styles: the physically demanding Shaolin Kung Fu with the stricter headmaster Wei – a warrior monk trained at the Shaolin temple – or the simpler, efficient Wing Chun style with the gentle and popular Master Zhang. My husband and I opted for the latter. We learned the basic first fist form, a series of movements which can be applied for self-defence, and the basic philosophy of Wing Chun style. I also attended the optional Tai Chi lessons at 6am and 4:30pm and found a new fondness for this gentle martial art, which I plan to continue learning back in Croydon.

On Tuesdays, there was an optional “Jump and Roll” class using soft mats to practise breaking falls and flips. I was completely unable to master the move called a ‘Starfish kip-up’ and I refrained from attempting a forward flip for fear of breaking my neck, but I was ok with that.



Power training on Thursday afternoons



Practicing my Tai Chi on the great wall

Thursdays offered a Qi Gong and meditation session in the forest, providing a calming balance to the rigours of training, followed by conditioning exercises back in the school courtyard involving hitting your hands, arms and legs repeatedly on tree trunks, sandbags, wooden boards and each other to harden up your body for strikes and eventually develop capability to break concrete blocks with your bare hands. In the afternoon we all had an outing for the strenuous climb to the top of Shimen Mountain, followed by power training games such as crawling down steps on our hands – easier than it sounds! Many of these physical challenges pushed us to cultivate our perseverance and determination, whilst accepting our current limits, which made each experience rewarding.

Leisure

Weekends are for free time and many students go into the local town, Qufu, famous for being the home of Confucius and having historical attractions which draw Chinese tourists. The town also has good facilities for anything else that one could need. Westerners are a bit of a rarity so we drew some attention when we were out in a group, which was amusing.

I had last visited China 30 years ago in 1994 and it had changed massively; I found Beijing and Xi'an unrecognisable and very modern compared to how they had been before.

Recommendation

In summary, this trip was truly memorable, and my only regret is not staying longer, as one week at the school was not enough. If you're looking for a unique cultural experience, a physical challenge, and the chance to meet fascinating people, I highly recommend Qufu Shaolin Kung Fu School.

TRAINING FOR A FAST 10K OR 10 MILES (by Alan Dolton)

The last 25 years have seen a substantial growth in Striders' membership. And there has also been a very welcome increase in the number of Striders who are keen to improve their knowledge of training and coaching. When I joined the club, back in 1998, I was the only active member with a UKA coaching qualification. We now have at least five active members with such a qualification. However, I have the impression that as the club has grown, some of our newer members may not be aware of the opportunities of help with training that the club can offer, or may simply be too diffident to ask for personal advice. Looking at our all-time ranking lists, it is noticeable that many of our best performances were set in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, three of our top four 10K times were set before 1993 (when the club had fewer runners than it does now), and five of our top nine 10-mile times were set before 2000. My personal opinion is that we have had quite a number of other runners with enough physical ability to match these performances with the right training, but that they have not done quite enough quality training to do so.

My first ten-mile road race was at Epsom in 1980, where I ran just over 65 minutes off relatively light training (about 20 miles per week). I significantly increased my training after this, and in the 1985 Woking 10-mile race I ran a lifetime best of 51 minutes 32. (Unfortunately I can't claim this as a Striders record, because I wasn't a Strider at the time.) I hope that some of our runners might be interested to see how I trained in the four weeks leading up to the race:

- 28 Jan AM 4 miles easy; PM 5 miles easy
- 29 Jan AM 4 miles easy; PM 8 x 800m on track (reps averaged 2 minutes 34; 400m jog between reps)
- 30 Jan AM 4 miles easy; PM circuit training in gym
- 31 Jan AM 4 miles easy; PM 6 miles fairly hard
- 1 Feb AM 4 miles easy; PM 7 miles slow
- 2 Feb 13 miles in 96 minutes (a slow run for me then: I could not race at that pace now!)
- 3 Feb 50 x 200m on track, starting a rep every minute (i.e. 25 laps of the track; reps averaged 36-37 seconds)
- 4 Feb AM 4 miles easy; PM 5 miles easy
- 5 Feb AM 4 miles easy; PM 8 x 800m on track (reps averaged 2 minutes 29; 400m jog between reps)
- 6 Feb AM 4 miles easy; PM circuit training in gym
- 7 Feb AM 4 miles easy; PM 6 x 600m on track (reps averaged 1 minute 45; 400m jog between reps)
- 8 Feb (Holiday from work; travelled to South Wales for training weekend with a group of 400m/800m runners) Hill session: 6 reps of 300-350m uphill on sand
- 9 Feb AM 6 x c.200m uphill on sand; PM 5 miles easy then 10 x c.120m on beach
- 10 Feb 4 miles 'fartlek' including 12 x 100-150m uphill sprints on sand
- 11 Feb 4 miles slow (roads icy)
- 12 Feb AM 4 miles easy; PM 16 x 250m on track (light snow on track: reps averaged 44 secs: 150m jog between reps)
- 13 Feb AM 4 miles easy; PM circuit training in gym
- 14 Feb AM 4 miles easy; PM 12 x 250m on track (light snow on track: reps averaged 46 secs: 150m jog between reps)
- 15 Feb 4 miles easy
- 16 Feb 5 mile cross-country race (Surrey League)
- 17 Feb 5 miles 'fartlek' including 10 x c.250m

- 18 Feb AM 5 miles easy; PM 5 miles easy
- 19 Feb AM 4 miles easy; PM 5 miles easy
- 20 Feb 2000m time-trial on track (5 minutes 36 seconds, i.e. average 67 seconds per lap)
- 21 Feb AM 4 miles easy; PM 7 miles slow
- 22 Feb 4 miles easy
- 23 Feb 4 miles easy
- 24 Feb Woking 10 mile road race: 51 minutes 32 seconds.



Start of the 1985 Woking '10': Melvyn Page (1395), Gary Ribbons (734) and Nick Sirs (1365) are already well to the fore.

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(photo by Noel Manchee from 'Running Review')

1, K. Penny (Cambridge H)	48:21
2, J. Boyes (Bournemouth)	48:23
3, G. Payne (Southend-on-Sea)	48:28
4, K. Steere (Ilf)	48:38;
5, N. Sirs (WS&E)	49:02;
6, G. Ribbons (E&E)	49:24;
7, D. Rixon (Car)	49:25;
8, D. Cox (W. Gn)	49:26;
9, K. Johnson (Els)	49:27;
10, P. Jones (Camb.H)	49:28;
11, M. White (AF&D)	49:32;
12, M. Page (Wok)	49:39;
13, C. Tall (B'stoke)	50:01;
14, W. Snelgrove (Th. H&H)	50:11;
15, R. Hillier (E&E-disq)	50:13;
16, M. McGeoch (Les C)	50:23;
17, K. McDonald (Hill)	50:37;
18, M. Couldwell (AF&D)	50:43;
19, J. Watson (E&E)	50:49;
20, S. Brace (Bridge)	50:58;
21, R. Roath (Om)	51:01;
22, E. Barrett (Om)	51:05;
23, I. Lamplough (Box H)	51:12;
24, B. Walters (BA)	51:21;
25, A. Mason (Barn)	51:30;
26, G. Lizieri (GM)	51:31;
27, A. Dolton (Croy)	51:32;
28, S. Faulkner (High)	51:38;
29, R. Witt (Om)	51:40;
30, A. Gibbons (Th. H&H)	51:42;
31, G. Newhams (Bridge)	51:43;
32, S. Almond (Ash)	51:45;
33, M. Duff (WS&E-V)	51:58;
34, M. Woods (AF&D)	51:59;
35, K. Bell (Ox. C)	52:01;
36, C. Bradley (Ton)	52:02;
37, M. Coughlan (Houn)	52:05;
38, C. Hall (Wok)	52:06;

I set my personal best for 10000 metres just over two years later, in the Surrey Championships at Tooting in April 1987. My training in the three weeks leading up to the race at Tooting had benefited by including a week where I was training in Portugal and did four track sessions on successive days:

- Mon 6 Apr AM 6 miles slow; PM 5 x 600m (average 1 minute 44: 200m jog recovery)
- Tue 7 Apr AM 6 miles slow; PM 5 x 800m (average 2 minutes 21: 60 seconds recovery)

Wed 8 Apr AM 6 miles slow; PM 8 x 400m (average 66.5 seconds: 60 seconds recovery)
 Thu 9 Apr AM 6 miles slow; PM 8 x 400m (average 67.3 seconds: 60 seconds recovery)
 Fri 10 Apr AM 8 miles slow; PM 4 miles easy
 Sat 11 Apr AM 6 miles slow; PM 2 x 2000m on grass (3 minutes recovery)
 Sun 12 Apr 7 miles slow
 Mon 13 Apr 10 miles steady
 Tue 14 Apr AM 5 miles easy; PM 10 x 400m (average 68.2 seconds: 200m jog recovery)
 Wed 15 Apr 5 miles slow
 Thu 16 Apr AM 3 miles easy; PM 4 x 700m (500m jog recovery)
 Fri 17 Apr 10 miles slow (hilly)
 Sat 18 Apr 10 miles slow (hilly)
 Sun 19 Apr 10 miles slow (hilly)
 Mon 20 Apr 10 miles slow (hilly)
 Tue 21 Apr AM 5 miles easy; PM 3 x 1000m (average 2 minutes 57: 400m jog recovery)
 Wed 22 Apr 8 miles steady
 Thu 23 Apr 'Pyramid' track session – 600m / 800m / 1000m / 800m / 600m (300m jog recovery after first rep; 400m jog recovery after each of the next three reps)
 Fri 24 Apr 5 miles easy
 Sat 25 Apr 5 miles easy
 Sun 26 Apr 10000 metre track race – 2nd in 31 minutes 01.9

During the ten weeks leading up to this race I had averaged 67 miles per week, including regular track sessions, and was probably as fit as I had ever been. I did not do any runs of more than 10 miles in my build-up to the race, but I was doing several track sessions including repetitions of up to 1000 metres in length. Incidentally it is a reflection on how much I have slowed down that in 1987, at the age of 30, I was able to run a session of 10 x 400 metres in an average of just over 68 seconds. Nowadays, at the age of 68, and with too much wear and tear on my ligaments and tendons after more than 90,000 miles of running, I could not run a single 400 metres at that pace.

Obviously I recognise that there are many runners who will not want to do this volume of training. With the benefit of hindsight, I think that I would still have run some respectable times without doing so many miles of training. However I am convinced that my ability to run relatively fast times was largely attributable to the fact that I did regular track sessions, and I would encourage Striders of all standards who are interested in improving their 10-kilometre times to include regular track sessions in their training routine. In the four weeks prior to my personal best for 10 miles, I did seven track sessions and three hill sessions, and in the three weeks prior to my personal best for 10 kilometres I did eight track sessions. Some of the track sessions involved running fairly fast over relatively short distances, and most of the track sessions were done with a training partner to push me: I think that I would have run slower if I had been training alone. Many of our current athletes seem to think that one speed session a week is enough. That may be the case if your main aim is to finish a marathon. But I would encourage those who are training for shorter distances to do more than one speed session a week, and personally I would be very happy to help advise any Striders who are interested in doing so.

(This article previously appeared in the December 2020 club magazine, but is republished here – in a slightly revised form – for the benefit of newer Striders)

COMPETITIVE HIGHLIGHTS: DECEMBER 2024 – FEBRUARY 2025

In the British Masters 5K road championships, at Battersea on 1 December, Tatsuya Okamoto ran well to place second in the M40 age-group (16:19). Striders' M60 team all ran well to place third in their team event. Steve Corfield was 12th (17:54) with Graham Hansen 16th (18:47) and Matthew Stone 17th (19:02).

In the South of the Thames Cross-Country Championship, at Tonbridge on 21 December, Andrew Aitken placed 69th of the 166 finishers. James Rhodes was 78th, Jason Gallagher 105th and Robert Zietz 136th. On the following day, Debra Bourne was the eighth woman to finish the Winter Wanderlust 50K, from Detling to Wye in Kent. She placed first in the W50 age-group, recording 7 hours 29 minutes 46.

In the Surrey Cross-Country Championships, at Lloyd Park on 4 January, Striders' women were 14th in the team event. Kara Boaks placed 60th out of the 104 finishers. Ellyw Evans was 67th, Cindy Siu 75th, Selena Wong 84th, Leonie Hondeborg 88th, Debra Bourne 89th, Rachel Gwynn 92nd, Linda Jones 96th, Ruth Pearson 97th, Jay Brzask 99th and Hannah Luffman 100th. Striders' men were also 14th in their team event. Tatsuya Okamoto placed 80th out of the 198 finishers. Conor O'Hara-Barrett was 88th, Chris Bourchier 131st, Andy Perks 135th, Liam Redmond 136th, Stephen Harris 144th, Erik Schrijnemaekers 156th, Darren Jackson 177th and James Harrison 198th.

Striders' women placed sixth out of 14 clubs in their penultimate Surrey Cross-Country League Division Three match of the season, at Oxshott on 11 January. They were led by Ellyw Evans, who ran well to place 13th out of the 113 finishers. Cindy Siu was 22nd, Selena Wong 35th, Debra Bourne 41st, Rachel Gwynn 61st, Ruth Pearson 62nd, Jane Hughes 73rd and Jay Brzask 90th.

Striders' men had to settle for tenth place in their Division Two match. They were led by Phil Coales, who placed 45th out of the 248 finishers. James Rhodes was 62nd, Conor O'Hara-Barrett 82nd, Marc Burrows 108th and Lee Flanagan 116th. Steve Corfield was first in the M60 age-group and 136th overall. Andy Perks was 144th, Liam Redmond 152nd, Nathan Robertshaw 153rd and Simon Ambrosi 154th.

Striders' men placed 21st in the South of England Cross-Country Championships, at Beckenham on 25 January. James Rhodes ran well to place 188th out of 633 finishers. Tatsuya Okamoto was 200th, Phil Coales 263rd, Conor O'Hara-Barrett 284th, Lee Flanagan 316th and Chris Bourchier 375th. For Striders' women, Selena Wong was 241st, Debra Bourne 249th and Linda Jones 282nd.

Striders won the eleventh annual mob match against Croydon Harriers, held on 1 February in conjunction with the South Norwood parkrun. Striders were led by Phil Coales who placed fourth (18:34), while Niamh Vincent was the first female finisher, placing 31st overall (21:28). Striders had a record number of 70 finishers, while Harriers had 44. Under the 'Thornbury' method whereby all 114 finishers score, Striders won by 3786 points to 2769. Scoring 44-a-side, Striders won by 2156 points to 1760.

Striders' women produced an excellent team performance to place second in their final Surrey Cross-Country League match of the season, at Lloyd Park on 8 February. They placed third in the final Division Three table, winning promotion back to Division Two. Rachel Lindley ran very well to place fourth out of the 93 finishers. Ellyw Evans also ran well to place seventh, while Cindy Siu was 19th, Lauren Cotton-Walkington 29th, Debra Bourne 30th, Ruth Pearson 42nd, Jay Brzask 59th and Jane Hughes 81st.

Striders' men had 25 finishers, but had to settle for tenth place in their Division Two match and were duly relegated. Phil Coales placed 33rd out of the 241 finishers. James Rhodes was 44th, Tatsuya Okamoto 52nd, Harry Madgwick-Lawton 74th, Lee Flanagan 94th, Peter Mills 114th, Greg Kirby 115th, Nathan Robertshaw 124th and Chris Bourchier 127th. Steve Corfield was first in the M60 age-group and 135th overall. He won the individual age-group award for the season, as did Robert Zietz in the M65 age-group.

In the National Cross-Country Championships, at Parliament Hill Fields on 22 February, Striders' women were 68th in the team event. Ellyw Evans was 349th, Cindy Siu 441st, Selena Wong 629th, Rachel Gwynn 698th, Linda Jones 740th and Ruth Pearson 741st. For Striders' men, Phil Coales was 632nd, Marc Burrows 804th, Andy Perks 1038th, Liam Redmond 1055th and Jason Gallagher 1347th.

40 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN JANUARY – JUNE 1985

The completion of the M25 motorway was marked by a ten-mile road race, starting and finishing at the Leatherhead junction, on 27 January. Cambridge Harriers won the team event with Croydon Harriers second, led by future Strider Alan Dolton who placed seventh in 53:11. Eleven Striders completed the race, led by Mick Meech who ran 62:35. His successor as club secretary, Ron Carver, ran 65:06.

The Surrey Women's Cross-Country League completed its sixth season with a match on a snow-covered Brockwell Park on 9 February. Croydon Harriers won the league title for the third successive year. Belgrave placed second while South London Harriers were third.

The Surrey Cross-Country League completed its 23rd season with matches on 16 February. Aldershot retained the Division One championship, with Herne Hill second and Ranelagh third. Woking won the Division Two championship, but the final match at Lightwater saw a close battle between Croydon Harriers and Thames Hare & Hounds for the second promotion place. Before the match Croydon had 765 points while Thames had 776. Croydon clinched promotion, winning a close match with 182 points, while Thames scored 191 and Woking 200.

In the Woking 10-mile road race on 24 February, Alan Dolton placed 27th in a lifetime best 51 minutes 32.

The annual Forbanks Half-Marathon was held at Beckenham on 3 March. The winner was Bob Treadwell of Surrey Beagles in 65 minutes 47. Striders were led by two of the club's founder-members. Colin Golding ran 92:44, finishing just two seconds ahead of club colleague Mick Meech.

The East Surrey League held its annual road relay at Box Hill on 9 March. The race was won by Croydon Harriers. Their team comprised Martin Walmsley (10:21), Alan Dolton (10:20), Peter Yarlett (10:44) and Gary Bishop (10:18). They finished just over a minute ahead of Hercules-Wimbledon, with Crawley third.

Several Striders competed in the Worthing 20-mile road race on 10 March. Their first finisher was Rob Pinfield who ran 2 hours 12 minutes 02, followed by Alan Purchase who ran 2 hours 16 minutes 09.

On 17 March, seven Striders completed the Hastings Half-Marathon. Mick Meech led them home with a personal best 82:14, while there were also personal bests for Ron Carver (85:30) and Simon Smith (88:28). David Hoben ran 97:30, finishing eight seconds ahead of Colin Golding.

The East Surrey League held its annual road race at Ewell on 9 April. Mark Greenaway of Crawley won (21:20), with Alan Dolton second (21:25). In the overall league table, Croydon and Hercules-Wimbledon placed equal first with Crawley third.

On 13 April, James Zarei of Croydon Harriers placed second in the Gloucester 100-mile road race, finishing in 16 hours 00 minutes 14.

Herne Hill Harriers promoted a 10-mile road race in Brockwell Park on 20 April. Future Strider Graham Hansen, running for Guildford, was tenth in 54 minutes 27.

The fifth London Marathon was held on 21 April. Future Strider Bob Ewen, who was then serving with the Royal Air Force, ran a personal best 2 hours 47. (Forty years later, Bob is still running well: in August 2024 he set a Striders M65 record for the mile.) Striders' press report claimed a total of 14 finishers, eight of whom were from Croydon and six from other branches of Philips. Striders were led by Alan Purchase, who ran a lifetime best of 2 hours 55 minutes 45. Rob Pinfield ran 3 hours 03, while Len Picott ran 3 hours 22 and Mick Meech 3 hours 23. Striders' only female competitor was Debbie Picott, who ran 3 hours 27 in her first marathon. Cecil Chisholm and Colin Golding both finished in 3 hours 43.

The Surrey 10000 metres championship was held at Croydon Arena on 28 April. Ian Lamplough of Box Hill Racers won (31:25.0) with Ray Marriott of South London Harriers second (31:30.4). Two Croydon Harriers fought out the bronze medal. Alan Dolton took third (31:50.5), with Martin Walmsley fourth (31:50.6).

Three Striders completed the Paris Marathon on 12 May. They were led by Simon Smith, who ran 3 hours 22 in his first marathon.

On 29 June, Alan Purchase completed the South Downs Way 80-mile race in 14 hours 45 minutes 40.

20 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SPRING 2005

On 5 March, Striders won the team event at an inter-club cross-country match in Lloyd Park, organised by local rivals Croydon Harriers, and held over a very muddy ten-kilometre course. The race was won by Colin Oxlade of the Harriers in 41 minutes 49. For Striders, John Foster ran very well to finish second (42:21). Striders packed well to have five of the first 13 finishers. Scott Antony had another good run to place fourth (43:34), while Bob Ewen placed eleventh (45:07). Andy Allison was twelfth, just one place ahead of team manager Chris Morton, with both runners recording 45:32. Striders' Kerry Backshell was the first woman to finish, placing 26th overall.

On 12 March, Striders produced an excellent team performance to win the East Surrey League's annual road relay at Box Hill. They were given a good start by Damian Macenhill, who placed fifth in a competitive first leg, covering the undulating 2.2-mile course in 11 minutes 38. New member Matt Morgan made his Striders debut on the second leg and gained three places, running 11:49. Justin Macenhill ran the third leg in a very good 11:13, closing the gap on leaders Dorking. On the final leg Scott Antony rapidly caught and passed the Dorking runner, running a very impressive 11:03 to bring Striders home as clear winners. This was our only victory in this long-standing event, which was discontinued after 2012 because of traffic problems.

On 20 March, Striders produced some good performances in the Cranleigh 21-mile road race. They were again led by the Macenhill brothers, with Damian producing an excellent run to place third overall in 2 hours 16 minutes 57, and gaining a rare victory over his younger brother Justin, who placed sixth (2:17:37). Don Kayum returned to form with 13th place (2:22:06), while club secretary Chris Morton was 34th (2:29:32). Serena Stracey produced an outstanding run to place second in the women's race and 47th overall (2:35:44). Striders' second woman was Jo Corrigan who placed 140th overall (2:53:16).

The 28th Croydon 10K took place on 3 April. The winner was David Warrington of Oxford City, who ran 33 minutes 20. For Striders, Scott Antony ran very well to place second in 34:09, with club colleague Justin Macenhill seventh (34:59). Damian Macenhill was 19th (36:55) and Bob Ewen 29th (38:25). The first woman was Janet Ray of Dorking, who ran 38 minutes 48. Striders' Helen Furze was second (39:40).

The 25th London Marathon took place on 17 April. Striders did very well to have 25 finishers, which was more than 20% of the club's membership. They were led home by Scott Antony, who produced an excellent run to finish in 2 hours 53 minutes 18. He was closely followed by Justin Macenhill, who improved his personal best to finish in 2:54:36. Dave Shaw ran steadily to record 3:09:59, with Damian Macenhill not far behind in a personal best 3:10:34. Striders' women were led by Serena Stracey, making her marathon debut. She produced an excellent run to finish in a lifetime best of 3:17:13. Striders' next finisher was Dave Goodall, who ran 3:40:19. Sadly, this was Dave's only marathon, as he was diagnosed with cancer a few months later, and died in June 2006. The Goodall Trophy (presented to the winner of our annual road handicap) commemorates him.

The first Southern Veterans League match of the season was at Crawley on 3 May. Striders' men placed fourth while their women were fifth. Striders' best placing came from Dave Hoben, who was second in the 2000 metre walk (13:27.8).

Striders' first match in the Rosenheim League was at Battersea on 11 May. The team placed fifth, ahead of Herne Hill. Matt Morgan was second in the 1500 metres (4:40.5), while Duncan Lancashire was third in the 800 metres (2:12.03) and Justin Macenhill was third in the 3000 metres (9:43.92).

On 15 May, Justin Macenhill won the Heatherley 10 mile road race at Copthorne. His time of 58 minutes 31 saw him finish three seconds clear of the runner-up, David Baker of South London Harriers. Striders also won both the men's and women's team events. Damian Macenhill ran well to take fifth place in 61:50, while Bob Ewen had an excellent run to place eighth (62:54). Striders also had the first two women to finish, with Serena Stracey running a personal best 70:19 to finish 26th overall. Club colleague Helen Furze was 28th overall (71:04) while Karen McDermott was 75th (84:48).

In the Rosenheim League match at Tooting on 25 May, Striders' men were fifth while their women were fourth. Matt Morgan was second in the 2000 metre steeplechase (6:58.7) and third in the 1500 metres (4:35.0). Sophie Shaw was third in the women's 3000 metres (13:20.5).



Scott Antony and Justin Macenhill in the 2005 London Marathon

10 YEARS AGO: LOCAL ATHLETICS IN SPRING 2015

On 7 March, Striders placed third in an inter-club cross-country match organised by Croydon Harriers at Lloyd Park. Striders were led by Krzysztof Klidzia, who ran well to finish second, covering the ten-kilometre course in 37 minutes 12. Justin Macenhill was fifth (38:37) with Andy Perks 12th (42:20) and Mick Turner completing the scoring team in 16th (45:16).

In the Hastings Half-Marathon on 22 March, James Bennett had an outstanding run to finish fourth in a new club record of 71 minutes 55, which was more than a minute faster than the previous record, set by Simon Morris at Reading in 1986.

Striders promoted the fifth annual Croydon Half-Marathon on 29 March. The race was won by Sergiu Gadec of Dartford in 73 minutes 12. Striders won both the men's and women's team prizes. The men's team were led by Bill Makuwa who placed sixth in 79 minutes 20. Krzysztof Klidzia placed eighth (81:08), while Justin Macenhill was 22nd (85:54). The women's race was won by Sophie Grant of Serpentine, who ran 87 minutes 06. Striders' women were led by Tamsin Carelse who was the seventh woman to finish, (1:46:19). Debra Bourne was eighth (1:46:42), Carolyn Storey 12th (1:48:20), Allie Cairnie 15th (1:51:10), Sandie Fay 21st (1:55:03), Emily Tanner 24th (1:56:05) and Jessica Thomas-Cole 26th (1:56:26).

Striders placed third in the East Surrey League's annual road race, at Ewell on 2 April. Epsom won with Hercules-Wimbledon second. Striders were led by Ernie Hann who finished fourth, covering the four and a quarter mile course in 25 minutes 10. Krzysztof Klidzia was ninth (25:34), Andy Perks 22nd (27:42), Darren Woods 26th (28:14), Paul Stanford 34th (29:14), Mick Turner 36th (29:36) and Steph Upton 43rd (31:43).

Striders had 17 finishers in the Brighton Marathon on 12 April. They were led by Bill Makuwa, who ran very well to finish in 2 hours 51 minutes 01. He was followed by Andy Perks (3:05:11), Steve Harris (3:12:40), Dave Shaw (3:17:07) and John Collins (3:21:36). Striders' women were led by Carolyn Storey (4:03:04), who was followed by Adele Boesinger (4:20:27) and Jessica Thomas-Cole (4:21:00).

Striders had 24 finishers in the London Marathon on 26 April. James Bennett had an outstanding run, setting a new club record of 2 hours 37 minutes 42. Simone Luciani also ran very well to finish in 2:41:54, while Krzysztof Klidzia set a new club M45 record of 2:45:25. Lee Flanagan ran 2:49:24, and was followed by Mike Stewart (2:57:56), Ernie Hann (3:03:55) and Graeme Drysdale (3:06:00). Striders' women were led by Karen Stretch who was the 249th woman to finish, recording a personal best of 3:11:36. She was closely followed by Rachel Lindley who was 259th in 3:12:10. Michelle Clarke, making her marathon debut, also ran very well to finish in 3:42:50. She was followed by Allie Cairnie (3:52:12) and Selena Wong (4:12:44).

The Ranelagh Half-Marathon, which incorporated the Surrey Championship, took place on 3 May. Krzysztof Klidzia, who had celebrated his 50th birthday a few days earlier, was the first M50 to finish, placing 27th overall (81:23). Peter Mills also ran well to place 28th (81:55), with Justin Macenhill completing the scoring trio in 40th place (85.11). They placed fifth in the team event.

Striders had 22 finishers in the Sutton 10-kilometre road race on 10 May. They were led by Iain Harrison, who ran very well to place eleventh (36:03). Justin Macenhill was 42nd (38:13), Graeme Drysdale 67th (40:02), Andy Perks 77th (40:24) and Steve Massey 84th (40:43). Striders' men placed tenth in the team event, while Striders' women placed 15th. They were led by Becky Laurence who was 217th overall (47:03). She was followed by Michelle Clarke (55:05), Linda Daniel (55:09) and Melanie Hinds (59:45).

In the first Southern Veterans League match of the season, at Kingsmeadow on 18 May, Striders' women did well to place third. Maggie Statham set a club W60 400 metre record of 98.3. Linda Daniel was second in the W50 400 metres (86.9) while Sandra Francis was second in the W50 long jump (2.93). Both Steph Upton and Melanie Hinds gained valuable points by competing in three different track events. Striders' men placed fourth. Julian Spencer-Wood won the M60 1500 metres (5:27.5), while Krzysztof Klidzia won the M50 5000 metres (18:07.7) with Steve Massey second in the M40 race (19:06.9). Striders' leading points-scorer was Steve Smith who competed in six events, placing third in the M50 100 metres (14.6).

In Striders' club handicap on 20 May, Rachel Lindley had an excellent run to set a new women's course record of 30 minutes 23.



James Bennett setting a club record in the 2015 Hastings Half-Marathon

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