

Stragmag



April 2015

Issue 308



Simon Webb & Nick Brown finishing the 2014 Greenbelt Relay

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Editorial

To open this month's Stragmag I'm not going to write a piece of my own, but instead use this space to remind all Stragglers that membership is now due and highlight what you are getting for your £10, or £22.

Stragglers membership is £10, unchanged from last year.

For an additional £12 you can gain or retain membership of England Athletics. Runners with an EA license get cheaper race entry than those without – usually £2.

Club membership includes:

- ❖ Free entry to 8 cross country races and several local summer relays;
- ❖ Opportunity to run in Stragglers' teams in Green Belt, Welsh Castles, Round Norfolk and River Relay;
- ❖ Additional local race discounts on events including Harry Hawkes and River Thames Half;
- ❖ Running training on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evening and Sunday morning;
- ❖ Chance to obtain one of the club's places in the London Marathon;
- ❖ Take part in the club 10K and AGM.

Club membership also entitles you to the following discounts:

15% off at:

- ❖ Sweatshop,
- ❖ Up & Running and
- ❖ Kingston Physiotherapy,

10% off at

- ❖ Runners Need
- ❖ Moores Cycles,

£10 discount with Helen Westerby-Cox (physio).

Reduced Rate Gym Membership at the Hawker Centre

To renew or join go to:

<http://www.stragglers.org/index.php/our-club/membership>

or see **Phil Davies** on a Thursday night.

Non members are of course welcome to run with us and attend social events such as the up-coming Spring Marathon Party – reminder details in this issue. However only members can represent the club at cross country and the relay events listed, enjoying the team spirit and social side to XC and trips to Wales and Norfolk that are a big part of this club.

Thanks to Steve and Dave for their help with this issue as ever, as well as all who have contributed.

The deadline for the next Stragmag issue is **Thursday May 21**.

Simon Webb

Strags News in Brief

Junior Handicap

April sees the return of the Junior Handicap.

Please see the up coming races list at the end of this issue where all Junior Handicap dates are included.



London Marathon & Party

It's always been a club tradition to get together the night of the London Marathon to swap running stories with competitors and in recent years we have encouraged Strags doing different marathons (London, Brighton, Paris etc) to bring their medals and mementos.

This year we'll be at the Wych Elm in Kingston from 7 pm, on Sunday, 26th April. Buffet food is provided and it's always a great evening.

And if you've not, and perhaps never want to run a marathon, you're definitely invited too – this is one of a number of great social events in the Straggler calendar.

All welcome!

*During the London Marathon
The Stragglers will have the
usual stand on the
Embankment, opposite
Cleopatra's Needle, and we
urgently need helpers to set up
the stand in the morning, and
more helpers to dismantle it
after the race. It will be an
early start for those setting up
(just like for the competitors!).
So if you're planning to attend
the Marathon and want to add
a little extra, please contact
Mary Hyde on
maghyde@hotmail.com.*



May 7th

You may have heard that there's a general election on May 7th – you'd think there would be some media coverage of it. The Hawker Centre is being used as a polling station, meaning we're unable to use the bar area.

Post run we will head to the Tide End Cottage by Teddington Lock.

Lockers and showers are still available and we will meet and run from the Hawker as usual on May 7 – that is unless you're still deciding where to put your cross on the ballot paper.

Races

The schedule for our summer road championships is listed in the up coming races section along with other regular summer events Rothwell Relay, Bushy Bounds and River Relay.

We also have a **Mob Match against Ranelagh at the Kingston parkrun on June 13**. The winning club is quite simply, the club who has the most runners turn up, so please, all Stragglers who can run or walk, do come along and wear club kit.

AGM

And finally, the date for this year's AGM is now confirmed as Thursday 9th July at 9pm.

All members welcome, but you do need to be a member in order to take part in any votes which may happen on the night

London Calling: Stragglers Running the VMLM

In the hope that it makes spotting Stragglers out on the course easier, below is a list of those taking part in the London Marathon this year.



I'm sure I've not listed everyone, and not everyone has a time prediction next to their name. If you've been missed out do let me know and an updated list can be added to the club's Facebook page if necessary. Email Stragmag@stragglers.org

- ❖ Pascal Evans: 3 hours
- ❖ Crispin Allen: 3 hours
- ❖ Jim Desmond: 3:05
- ❖ Steve Smith: 3:10
- ❖ Ian Doyle: 3:25
- ❖ Andy Wingate: 3:30
- ❖ Dave Griffiths: 3:30 to 3:40
- ❖ Alexandra Galloway: 3:45
- ❖ Peter Dry: 3:45 to 3:50
- ❖ Peter Wedderburn: 4:15

Other Stragglers I don't have a time estimate for:

- ❖ Sula Bancroft
- ❖ Ian Johnson
- ❖ Kathy Haynes
- ❖ Joe Tong

Also look out for those once of this parish Andrew Lane and Tom Millns.



Good luck to you all.

Stragglers Running London for Kingston Can

Nigel Rothwell is a long term member of the club having first joined nearly thirty years ago.

He has served as a member of the committee for many years, including two as men's captain and has been active in assisting with club events.

Read on for his turn answering the Committee Profile questions.



Earlier this year, shortly after completing the Country to Capital 43 mile ultra in a time of 7:26 (read his race report in February's Stragmag) Nigel was taken ill and subsequently diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Nigel is being treated at Kingston Hospital and is keen to "give something back" by supporting the cancer unit. He is hoping to undertake a number of personal initiatives but would welcome support through two Stragglers who are running this year's London Marathon.

Dave Griffiths and Peter Wedderburn both have Justgiving pages, and you can support either or both of them at the following links.

Dave:

<https://www.justgiving.com/Stragglers-for-Nigel/>

Peter:

<https://www.justgiving.com/Peter-Wedderburn/>

At the time of this issue being published they have already raised over £1000 between them!

Committee Member of the Month: Nigel Rothwell



How long have you been a runner and why did you choose running as a sport?

I have been a regular runner since I joined The Stragglers in 1986, I was never very sporty when I was in school but I did enjoy the outdoors and I was involved in the Scouting movement for a long time. When I joined The Stragglers I realised that running was something I was relatively good at and I was hooked.

When did you join The Stragglers and how did you first hear about us?

I joined The Stragglers in April 1986, I ran in a charity fun run round Richmond Park organised by the pub I was a regular at (The Royal Borough Arms, now The Pottery tapas restaurant in Park Road) Andy & Kay Penty and Steve Rehm from the club also ran in the run and I got chatting to them afterwards and they invited me to come and run with the club, I joined the club the following week, 6 months later I'd run my 1st marathon in Harrow and the rest as they say is history!

Do you have a favourite running distance and favourite race?

A couple of years ago I'd have said that 10k was my favourite distance but then I discovered Ultra running and I want to push the distance I can run. My recent cancer diagnosis has meant that my ultra running career is on hold and I may have to go back to the shorter distances again. My all time favourite race is the Welsh Castles Relay, I have done it 16 times.

What do you consider your greatest running achievement to date and do you have any unfulfilled ambitions in running?

I think the best result I have had so far was coming 3rd overall and 1st vet in the Thames Towpath 10 mile race but my greatest achievement I think is completing the 69 mile The Wall Ultra race. As for unfulfilled ambitions my longest standing one is the sub 3 hour marathon, I've come close to

this but usually fall apart towards the end of the race. My next ambition in Ultra Running is completing a 100 mile race.

What do you most like about The Stragglers and how would you like to see the club develop? What do you hope to achieve whilst you're on the committee?

I like The Stragglers because it is a very friendly club and there are no real egos you can fit in whatever your ability and not be judged, really fast runners and others that just want to run more socially can mix equally well. I would like the club to continue to be a friendly welcoming club to join, whatever your ability or ambition. I have no real ambitions in the committee, just being a general member and trying to maintain a balanced view in meetings, this sometimes means playing devil's advocate (which I am happy to do) and help out with the club wherever I can.

Personal bests:

5k = 16:50, 10k = 35:42, 10mile = 60:12, Half Marathon = 1:19:17, Marathon = 3:04:56.

Round Norfolk Relay

In last month's issue was a call out for interest in Norfolk Relay. So far I have 12 people as confirmed runners, and a couple more who are possibles.

To complete the team I require 17 runners.

Right now Phil and I are especially keen to hear from runners who would be interested in running between 14 and 20 miles.

If you're not familiar with the event, the Round Norfolk Relay is something the Stragglers have been entering a team in since 1990. It is a baton relay covering around 200 miles, and as the name suggests, circumnavigating the edge of the county of Norfolk.

Teams of 17 runners complete the course, with each runner doing one stage. By day this takes in coastal paths and roads and for the small number who choose to run night legs, the course follows country roads.

The shortest stage is around 5.5 miles and the longest is around 20 miles, so ideal for an autumn marathon training run.

This year Round Norfolk Relay is over the weekend of **19-20 September**.

One of the changes made to how we organise Norfolk Relay in the club is to ask for a deposit this year. The amount is tbc but will probably be £50. This is to cover the cost of race entry and accommodation deposit. Phil or I will speak to everyone about how this is to work before we get anyone to part with their money.



We aim to stay at White Lodge once again. However at the time of writing only the Barn is available – this is the largest building out of the three for those who have been before. This means the popular social part of the weekend is still possible i.e Friday night meal and Sunday bbq. Pat and Alan have offered to come and support the weekend once again.

As this sleeps 12 we are looking at overflow options nearby and will let you know what these are when we know more. This does allow for more flexibility for people who can't commit to staying three nights. All questions welcome, ask either me or Phil. Emails to: simonwebb79@gmail.com

Simon Webb



Kingston
Physiotherapy

Clinics at:

8 Dukes Av. Kingston KT2 5QY
(2 minute run from Hawker Centre)

31 Old London Road Kingston KT2 6ND

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Race Report: Paddock Wood Half Marathon: Sunday 29th March 2015 (and why most of you will never do it...)

The Paddock Wood Half regularly rates as one of the best halves in the Runners World readers' polls for its scenic course, great organisation and fast time potential (more of which later), so why is it not more popular with Stragglers?
In a word, time, or more specifically, British Summer Time...



The eagle eyed among you will have spotted that the race in question takes place on the morning when the clocks go forward. In doing some background research, I pulled out an article in *The Independent* entitled 'What time is it? And why clocks going forward is a total waste of time'.

Reading the article, Stragglers fears about completing the Sunday morning race an hour earlier may be well founded. Summarising the article, there is the well made point about the hassle of actually changing all the clocks in your house, with the resulting drain on your time, since virtually everything is now electronically controlled. If you don't, the chaos of turning up late for all sorts of commitments the following day. Then there are the issues specifically Paddock Wood related, including a reported 17% rise in car accidents after the hour change attributed to drivers being overly tired and less attentive due to lack of sleep.....ZZZZZ.

Assuming you do actually get there in one piece, the bad news is not over, studies have reportedly shown that there is a noticeable spike in heart attacks at around the time that the clocks go forward, generally attributed to the disrupted circadian rhythms at that time. As the author says this might cast a slight shadow over the extra jog you do that day.... Lastly, for those of you who've ever been to a race with me before, will know that all of this will have been compounded by my insistence on arriving at least two hours early to park and warm up properly and eat some breakfast, meaning, at least personally, I'm getting up at about 4 AM to do this race!

Paddock Wood is not the most exciting place I've ever been to, and whilst it does not feature in either volume of 'Crap Towns of Great Britain', there are no really outstanding features of the town either, the highlight being a convenient Costa coffee outlet opposite the station (is there anywhere in Great Britain without one?). The race itself starts in the middle of a nondescript industrial estate on the outskirts of town (so you get the general picture!).



Despite all of this, four Stragglers were on the start line, **myself, Helen, Tiago Ramos and Jim Allen**. For those of you who have not done it before, what can you expect? The route describes a single loop around minor roads to the east of Paddock Wood, passing through some pleasant Kent countryside and villages, well marshalled and with plenty of support. There is the neat addition of a couple of sponge stations and a guy cycling around on a bike shouting coaching instructions and general encouragement (not sure if he is in an official capacity!). With the exception of a couple of railway bridges and a small hill at the start, the route is mercifully flat and should be quite fast which returns me to the question of time..

I had run a personal best time at the Tunbridge Wells half marathon back in February, of 1:38:08. To those of you who know that course, it is pretty hilly and everyone was saying to me you will easily do better 'on a flat route like Paddock Wood'. I always think that this type of remark is like the 'kiss of death' for any runner trying to improve their time and sure enough I was right.

On the morning in question, it was raining and if not it actually blowing a gale, was pretty windy. By about mile 10 we were running straight back into a ridiculous headwind and I was mentally writing off the chance of any quick time. I managed to pick up a bit, sprint over the finish line and hit the stop button on my Garmin. So what time did I do?..... 1:38:09, one second off my personal best set a few weeks earlier!

Mathematically/statistically it's a freakish sort of result, what are the chances of being able to replicate that? Having said this, how many times has that sort of thing happened to other runners or maybe you? Probably quite a bit, is it just 'sods law' or is there something else at work here?

This also got me thinking, is time important? For some runners time is everything, one nano second over, is still slower and therefore a defeat or is it simply about beating the person in front?

For others, it's about achieving good age graded percentages or it's about scenery, terrain and the challenge. And still more would say it's just about being able to do it at all....

I am sure there is another article to be had here somewhere about the joys of running for its own sake, but in the meantime.... how do I take off that b****dy one second!!!

Malcolm Davies

Ex-pat Straggler: Steve Annett

In last month's issue we heard a short race report from Steve Annett, one-time Straggler now living in Gibraltar.

In the latest in our sporadic, occasional series 'Ex-pat Stragglers' here's some more from Steve.



If you know of others we should feature, email Stragmag@stragglers.org

Since my school days I had had the urge to run but never got into it until I was just about to leave. It took another ten years and a lot of heavy drinking and smoking before I moved to the next stage in 1984 and entered the London Marathon for the first time, successfully completing in a reasonable time. I then entered one or two smaller events before slipping back into my old ways.

It took until 1989, when I gave up smoking; to get back into running again as I had to do something about the subsequent weight gain. I did not intend to enter races again, but when the 1990 Cabbage Patch 10 came around I succumbed. I got so hooked then that I was entering events every other week on average. I entered more marathons including London, Paris and New York. I also entered the Swiss Alpine 72k Marathon in 1995 and because a fellow competitor said if I could run that I could "easily" run the London to Brighton, I did so in the same year. During this time I had considered joining a club, particularly The Stragglers, many times but never did so.

It wasn't until I went to Switzerland again in 1998, this time to run 30k, and met Pat and Alan Short, that I was finally persuaded to come down the Hawker Centre and sign up.

I was plunged in at the deep end, travelling to Norfolk with the club to run one of the long, night legs of the relay. I remember it was very foggy and I was driving Simon Brazil, who was running the leg before me, to his starting point in Mike Bangham's car. We were slowed by the fog and the race traffic, arriving around twenty minutes late for the handover. I remember poor Pat Short bursting into tears as she thought that something bad had happened to us. It almost did as en route I mistook a disused petrol station for the road; it was only Simon pointing out my error that stopped us ending up in a ditch. I went on to run a PB for 18 miles at two in the morning!

Things were less traumatic after this initiation. I joined the cross country boys and went on to be a regular scorer for the club, peaking at finishing 2nd Straggler to Ian Johnson at an "easy" course near Guildford. I used to enter many local road races, including the Surrey Road League and remember sharing winning team prizes at the Datchet Dash, Slough Half and Towpath Ten.

I enjoyed most of the relays. Apart from the once in Norfolk; I think I was in the Welsh Castles three times and the Green Belt five or six times as well as The Surrey Road Relays at Aldershot and several minor events. I think it was the thought of not wanting to let the side down that produced an extra adrenaline rush that made relays so exciting for me.

I consider my best performances to have been before I joined The Stragglers though, running my marathon PB of 2:47 in 1993 in the now sadly defunct Polytechnic and, my claim to fame, finishing 3rd behind Mo Farah (I think his brother was 2nd) at the Bedfont Lakes 5 in 1998. I did win the V40 then though, a title Mike Johnson took from me one year later.

I began to slow down a bit in the early 2000s having been diagnosed with osteoarthritis in my right knee. I didn't think I would be able to run again at all, it was becoming that painful but I will be forever grateful to Mark Thomas for giving me the advice that prevented my retirement from the sport. He told me about the chondroitin, glucosamine and MSM tablets and after a few weeks of these was able to enjoy pain free running again, though not at quite the previous standard. I am still taking these tablets to this day.

In July 2003 I married my wife, Elizabeth, at Pembroke Lodge in Richmond Park. Some of the longer serving members may remember the occasion. We had to make it on a Thursday afternoon and evening, disrupting club night, because they were fully booked at other times. Elizabeth is from Gibraltar, I met her on what passed for social media in those days. At first we continued to live apart, visiting each other once a month, until Elizabeth was able to move over to Twickenham in 2009.

Our original plan was to live in England until I took retirement aged 60 but then the grandchildren started arriving (Elizabeth has two children from her first marriage). We didn't want to miss the grandchildren growing up or to be strangers to them and so I took earlier retirement in 2013, sold up and moved lock, stock and barrel to Gibraltar. It had been our intention to visit the Hawker Centre one Thursday evening before leaving to say goodbye but after six months of trying to sell the house everything suddenly happened at once and we literally had no time for anything other than packing up our stuff and tying up all of the legal loose ends.

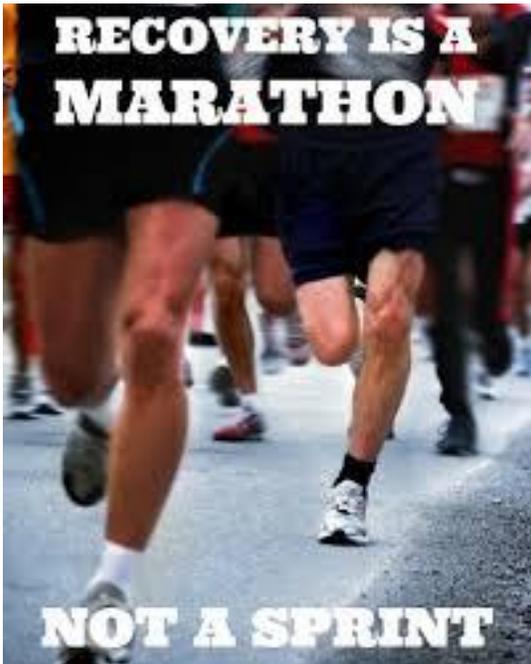


I would like now to apologise to everyone at the club who knows me for not saying goodbye.

During the months before and after moving I was not able to fit running into my life. It is only since last August that I have really started again. There is no such thing as an easy run here. Even my sprint course involves hills of the Richmond Park standard or worse. During the times I visited Elizabeth over here in the early 2000s I used to run up the rock at least once per visit and since starting training again it has been my goal to reach the summit yet again. I had planned to attempt this anyway when I noticed in the local press that the Top of the Rock race was taking place the same day. I decided that entering would give me the extra motivation needed and so it proved to be; I am sure that if I hadn't entered that I would have turned back before the top.

Well, that is a brief history of how I came to join The Stragglers, what I did while I was there and how I came to be where I am now. I do have two ambitions left in running. The first is to start up a parkrun here in Gibraltar as soon as I can find a course that isn't too demanding, is traffic free and can be available every Saturday morning; this is not going to be easy. The second is to make time to come over one December for the mob match. Keith, or whoever does the 26.2 baiting now, will be able to brag that I was flown in especially for the event! See you all then!

Steve Annett



How to Recover from the Marathon

Reverse Taper

The marathon is over, what do you do next? So many books, articles and friends have helped you get this far, but then the advice becomes vague or conflicting. Should you run the day after to clear out the toxins in your system or should you rest? Should you pig out on hot dogs, pizza, and beer in a post marathon party? The thought of that makes my stomach queasy.

You should view the next 4 to 6 weeks as a reverse taper. No running for the first week will help you more than light running. So rest it will be. The next week you'll do some 20 - 30 minute runs and build it back up over the subsequent weeks. Eat healthy. A high carbohydrate diet in the first few days will help replenish your depleted carb storage system and protein will help to rebuild damaged muscle tissue. Lots of sleep, some easy walks and you'll be ready to run again in no time.

Remember that the basic recovery process takes about a month and during this time you will have to continue to rest, run easy, avoid speed work, and keep your diet healthy.

If you have performed well in one marathon be careful not to run and race too

soon because you are at a high risk for injury during the next 6 to 8 weeks. Running another marathon or a fast 10K or 10 miler or deciding to do another 20 mile training run between marathons that are spaced too close together could be enough to cause injury.

The rule of one day of recovery for each mile raced or perhaps one day for each kilometre raced for masters runners and novices is a rule to keep in mind. The marathon was 26.2 miles or approximately 42.2 kilometres. Make sure you take the time to properly recover. If you are having serious pain, more than the usual post-marathon aches and pains, you should visit a remedial sports specialist, otherwise you may follow the advice in this article to try to prevent injury and allow for recovery.

Immediate Post Marathon

The first thing to do, if you are still standing and uninjured, is not to sit or lie down. If you do lie down, you will have great difficulty getting motivated to stand up again. Try to get out of the finish line crowd and walk for a brief period of time to cool down. Continue to replace your fluids, which of course you've done a great job of while running, eat some high carbohydrate food shortly after finishing, and a proper meal within an hour of finishing, if possible.

Do take that silvery mylar cape. Even if you don't feel cold right now it is likely that in 15 minutes you'll be cooled off and need that vest.

If possible get into some dry clothes after you've picked up your bags at the baggage tent. Before you take that ride home walk for 10 to 15 minutes and if you are up to it try another 15 minute walk that evening. Gently stretch.

Post Marathon Evening

Lots of carbs should be on the plate, with a bit of extra protein thrown in will work just fine. I don't see a reason for alcohol after your system has just done the marathon so it is not on my recommended list. Freshly squeezed orange or grapefruit juice or vegetable juices would probably better assist your recovery. While a cold bath is better for eliminating the debris from the muscles and reducing inflammation, following it with a warm one (if you are not injured) will help relax the muscles. Then some gentle stretching. Wear compression tights to off load the legs.

Sleep is your recovery friend, it is the only time your body can mend itself. Try to get to sleep a little earlier than usual and be prepared to walk a little funny tomorrow.

Sleep deprivation has been shown to

- *Increase cortisol levels*
- *Decrease activity of human growth hormone*
- *Reduce the efficiency for glucose metabolism*

The Day After

From today, take your resting pulse rate to monitor your recovery; if your heart rate goes back up you are doing too much.

The day after the marathon is a good day for a very slow 15 to 20 minute walk. Keep eating healthy. Avoid the temptation to run. Studies have shown that those who rest for a full week after the marathon actually perform better than those who run that week. Besides that, remember that running with an altered gait, from muscle soreness and stiffness, can lead to injuring some other part. Eat, drink water, relax and sleep,.

Week 1

No running, lots of rest, healthy diet. Swimming a few lengths is a great way of getting fresh blood to the muscles thus adding recovery.

Week 2

Light, short runs of 20-30 minutes.

Week 3

More easy runs 30-40minutes, some tempo runs at 15 - 30 seconds faster than marathon pace.

Week 4

Gentle tempo runs and strides. Increase distance gradually. Keep doing those easy runs.

Week 5

More tempo runs and strides. Slightly longer long run.

Week 6

Almost back to normal. Don't try to set a 10K record just yet. That is an easy way to become injured. Start a gradual speed program now. Plan for the next racing season.

Vitality Liverpool half marathon

Obviously, when I signed up to do the Vitality Liverpool half marathon I didn't check first to see when the clocks would be going forward. Working on the basis that half an hour's sleep before midnight is equal to an hour after midnight, I hit the sack half an hour earlier. Feeling fresh, I woke to the sound of seagulls, apparently laughing at what I was going to attempt today. The weather report for the race looked bad from the previous day and I wasn't disappointed. Looking out of the front of the hotel, I could see the tell tale splashing on the ground from the pouring rain.

It was a 20 minute walk from the hotel to the start of the race which I used to get my legs moving. I was soaked through by the time I got to the start. I'd decided to just go in my race kit so that I would be fully acclimatised to being wet and cold for the start of the race whereas as everyone was wrapped up warm and would suffer a shock when they stripped for the race. When I arrived at the start, everyone was huddled, penguin fashion, around the sides of the waterfront buildings trying to find their bit of shelter from the weather. I began my warm-up so that I would be ready.



I started the day with an idea in my mind to do a sub 2:30 which would be a PB. I would stick with the 2:30 pacer until the last mile and then move ahead. Looking around at the start I found there was no 2:30 pacer. There was a 2:20 pacer so I figured if I could keep them in sight I would have a chance. There was an estimated 6,000 entrants for the race and there was quite a queue in the start funnel. The start clock ticked around to 9 o'clock and we were off. Well I say we were off. It took over 8.5 minutes to get to the start line.

It was very tempting to try to stick with the people who were overtaking me at the start but I managed to discipline myself (oooo matron) and just stick to the pace I started with.



The rain was lashing down as we made our way along the Albert Dock before turning off the main road and heading up the climb of Parliament Street. This would be the only steep incline on the course according to the pre-race literature. Once at the top of the climb, we wound around the streets heading towards Sefton Park. At around the 3 mile mark, I abandoned any hope of a sub 2:30 run as everything was so heavy from the rain. The pace board time sheets were disintegrating on the ground so it was no longer possible to identify the pacers. We made our way around the perimeter of Sefton Park before doubling back on ourselves. Entering the park we followed the paths. I imagine the park looks really nice on a dry, sunny day. It is a big park and there's a river running through it. I didn't really have time to sightsee though and towards the bottom of the park we came to the first water/toilet stop. I ignored these as I knew from my training that I wouldn't need these. We doubled

back again to the top of the park before exiting where we'd come in. The race numbers were printed with our names on and it does give you a good buzz when a complete stranger shouts your name to give you encouragement.

From Sefton Park, it was a relatively short run along the road and into Otterspool Park via an underpass. Otterspool Park is wooded and it was relatively flat until we broke out of the wooded area and could see a steep incline that would lead to the promenade. At the top of the climb, I stepped onto what I thought was solid Tarmac but it was actually soft and squishy. Very odd.

Next water stop and onto the promenade at the 9 mile marker. The rest of the race was now a straight run along the banks of the Mersey. The rain was still lashing down. I felt really slow by this point and was just hoping for a sub 3 by now. Fortunately, the wind wasn't too bad along the promenade as that could have been a killer. In the distance, on the Birkenhead side of the river, I could see a couple of landmarks which I knew were opposite the

finishing point. I didn't realise the far bank doesn't have the ins and outs that the Liverpool side has.

After a long slog along the promenade, we eventually came within sight of the Albert Dock. Whereas on the way out we were on the roadside of the dock, this time we were on the river side which was mainly cobbles and flagstones (I think they're called flagstones because when I was running on them, I was definitely flagging).

Past the Echo Arena and the Museum of Liverpool with the finish just beyond. I'd decided very early on that I would just keep the same pace at the end but when you see that finish tunnel and hear the crowd, how can you not sprint? I made my move at about 150 metres out. You know you're doing a good finish when you hear someone shout "in' hell, look at that bloke go!" I made up about 8 places in the finish. There was a team of 4 in front of me who'd decided to link arms to cross the line together who were blocking the finish line. At the last second, a small gap appeared at their side which I went for and pipped them on the line (and almost took out the photographer at the same time who was stood on the finish line). I made my way along the finish funnel and collected my medal. I then remembered my watch and



looked at the time and it said 2:25. I couldn't believe it had been that quick. I didn't have time to check it and had to make my way back to the hotel for a quick shower before heading off to Anfield for the charity football game. While I was there, I got the text result. I'd completed the run in 2:25:29. A new PB by some 6 minutes. Needless to say I was very happy with the result. I think the fact I'd given up on a PB early on had relaxed me into just concentrating on my own pace and the training kicked in as I felt relatively good at the end. It's certainly a run I'd do again. It was a relatively flat course and the support all along the course was fantastic.

Mike Wheeler

The Unogwaja Challenge

In May 2015 Steve Iffland (Tuesday evening, Thames Ditton Straggler) will be taking part in the [Unogwaja Challenge](#) in South Africa.



This 10 day, 1,000mile cycle from Cape Town to Pietermaritzburg to take part in the Comrades Marathon on the 11th day is a journey of the heart inspired by Phil Masterton-Smith (whose nickname was "Unogwaja" meaning hare in Zulu). In 1933, Masterton-Smith lived in Cape Town and could not afford the train fare to Pietermaritzburg for the start of the Comrades Marathon. He got on his bike and he cycled there. Today his courage and determination in the face of adversity are at the core of the Unogwaja Challenge which has become an annual journey that started in 2011 and brings together a small group of people chosen from all over the world for this special mission of hope across South Africa.



Along with 10 other slightly unhinged individuals Steve will start cycling from Cape Town on the 21st May. They will aim to average around 100 miles a day before arriving in Pietermaritzburg on the 30th May. They will tackle the 56mile Comrades Ultra Marathon on the 31st May.

The group are raising funds to help two South African charities called Lebone (Light) Village and Vukusebenze (Wake up and Work) Shelter through the [Unogwaja Light Fund](#). Both of these institutions use funds received to further enhance their infrastructure and care,

rather than to supplement the normal day to day running costs. This is powerful as it helps them to grow and thereby help more people rather than to become dependent on hand-outs.



37 year old South African & part Brit, Steven Iffland will be leaving his base in the UK mid-May to take a place on the Unogwaja Challenge cycling team. Growing up in a home with a father who ran 2 oceans 11 times in a row sewed a seed deep inside his heart, which started to bloom six years ago when he started running.

Last year he returned 'home' to follow the footsteps of his dad and run 2 Oceans. After running the 56km race alongside his sister, while his wife and father took on the half marathon, the 'clear' next step was to run 89km. After a 10 day cycle challenge.

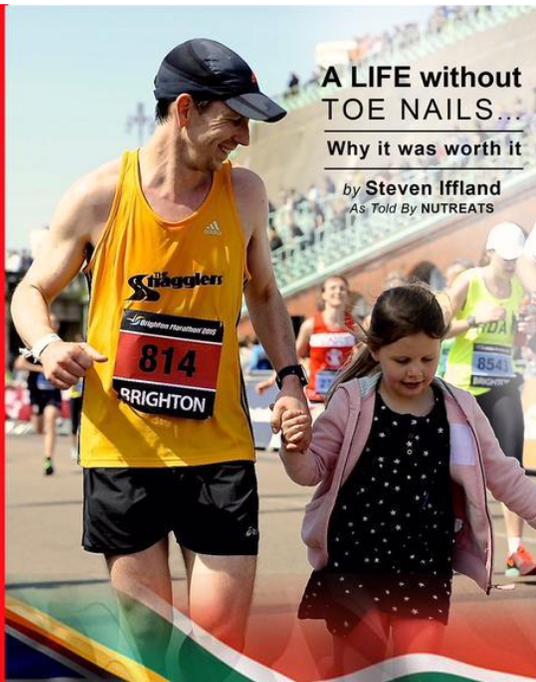


SOMEONE IS SITTING IN THE SHADE TODAY BECAUSE A TREE WAS PLANTED A LONG TIME AGO



When asked what he brings to team Unogwaja he says "Definitely not superior physical prowess" but coming from a man whose marathon PB is 3:36 and who comfortably qualified for Comrades with an easy sub-4 hour marathon, we have to think twice. A newbie to cycling with only one year of cycling experience, it's clear he's referring to this portion of the challenge. "The cycling scares the daylight out of me. Not so

A LIFE WITHOUT TOE NAILS



When asked what scares him most about the challenge Steve answered: 'The cycle and run are brutal but we will be in a team and hopefully the spirit and comradeship will pull us through. What is really scary is the flight back to London just 24 hours after the Comrades finishes!'

If you would like to support Steve please go to this link.
<https://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/unogwaja>

For more information on the Unogwaja Challenge please see
www.unogwaja.com

Steve Iffland

Soul Mates and Sole Mates – a Straggler Wedding and parkrun Tourism in New Zealand

We first met almost five years ago at the Hawker Center because of running and our mutual love of the sport has featured throughout our relationship – with highlights including the Welsh Castles and Round Norfolk Relay and running our first marathon together in Yorkshire, so what better way for me and Terry to celebrate our marriage than run together on the day we were to become man and wife?

It seemed too good an opportunity to miss when I found out there was a parkrun in the same place and on the same day as our wedding in Terry's home city of Christchurch, New Zealand.

I suspect he thought I was joking when I suggested we run it the morning of our wedding, especially as I would also be 26 weeks' pregnant by then, but I soon managed to convince him I was not and enlisted the participation of Terry's sister, brother-in-law, two nephews and my Dad to ensure it was a real family affair.

[T



The morning dawned cool and grey, perfect conditions for a run, not so perfect for a wedding. The seven of us had a fabulous time, supported by so many of the other parkrunners, who congratulated us after my soon-to-be sister-in-law announced at the start that it was our Big Day.

It was a lovely flat run around Hagley Park and we were met at the end by a fan club of my Mum and daughter Azara, who captured the moment in photographs where

we look decidedly less sophisticated than we would a few hours later. And then in true Bushy parkrun style, we retired to the local café for a breakfast of cake and hot drinks, to set us up in style for the rest of the day.

In the end, the weather was also perfect for the wedding and we had the most glorious afternoon and evening, with a small group of family and friends from New Zealand as well as my parents and Azara.

Of course we missed those friends of ours who couldn't be there, and

we made sure we raised a glass to them and particularly our dear friend Louise Neville who I'm sure would have been there if she'd have still been with us.

We hope that we can celebrate with our Stragglers friends soon, perhaps at this year's Wedding Day, when we will also have a new addition to our running family.

Hannah Storm

Life Begins at 60: Marathon and Triathlon Adventures

(Well two months before actually)



It started with the Spring Ball buster. As you may know, this is quite a tough competition in that you have to run and cycle around a circuit starting at the top of Box hill-40 miles in all. It just so happened I won my age group (in triathlon terms your age is determined by the year you reach 60 not the actual date) - not too hard as I only had to beat my friend John who was out of practice anyway. Still I made a reasonable showing for an old boy. My prize...free entry to another Ball buster or other events by Human Race to the value of £70.

So the story progresses.... I have applied to do the London Marathon almost every year since the competition started in 1981, the first time I got in was 1991 and since then my success rate for getting in is about once every other year but recently it has only been with the help of gaining a club place. Getting a place these days in the ballot- forget it. For year 2014, as usual, I didn't get a ballot place so for 2015 I was determined to get in through the "Good for age" scheme. So to qualify I looked around for a marathon as close to my 60th Birthday as possible and The Liverpool Marathon came up trumps being 6 days after. I can't say I did any special marathon training but relied on my general fitness to get me under the specified time limit of 3 hours 45 minutes.

The marathon took in several little parks and a trip round the two premier football clubs. I touched the perimeter wall at Anfield, where wreathes were laid in memory of the Hillsborough disaster. There were pacers in the race who had balloons attached with expected finishing time written on them. My pacer was in front of me for about 4 miles but I managed to get in front of him and stayed there but only just; I made it by one minute and thirty seven seconds.

Next challenge was an Iron Man distance triathlon. I read an article by Andy Gore of Cheltenham & Co Harriers in Road Runner magazine for inspiration but he didn't answer my big worry which was, if you had to carry your own fuel supply? Nevertheless I read the article several times for encouragement. Like him I thought it a good idea to try a half iron distance beforehand and entered such held at the Olympic Venue of Dorney Lake. I managed it OK but it was not really challenging enough to what I was going to be in for in the full distance because it was on the flat. Yes I won my age group but then again I was the only one.



Now we come to the big one. "The Bastion" held at Hever Castle, Anne Boleyn's house.

The organisers arranged trial runs, as it were, on various dates in each of the disciplines. The swim started under the loggia. So we swam up one side of the lake and then out into the Eden River and came back into the other end of the lake. The river was narrow and reedy but a great experience.

I'm a pretty slow swimmer but all indications were that I would make the cut off time of two hours fifteen minutes.

The bike stage was going to be the real tester as it encompassed the ash down forest and other hills in the beautiful Kent countryside: Three 37 and a bit mile laps. The local cycling club took us to do one lap of the course on a sunny Sunday. The country lanes with their overhanging trees created a dappled light effect when the sun shone making it difficult to see on the hairy downhill descents. Indications were that I would have to improve greatly if I was to make the cut off time in the actual race. I was grateful to the lady cyclist who kept me company at the back and pointed out all the pot holes and hazards along the way. The run consisted of four 10.5k laps in the country paths in and around the castle, also taking in the nearby castle of Penhurst. The course was off road, muddy, twisty, up and down and twiggy.

So we come to the big day. I booked into the Star Pub B & B in Eden Bridge so that I could make the 6am start the following day and also to attend the compulsory briefing at 6pm that night. I couldn't sleep properly because being above a pub at the weekend...well you can imagine. At the briefing Brian the race organiser got out his stick and pointed out all of it on a map. He warned us about strict cut off times and being pulled from the race if not met. We racked our bicycles the night before the race.



It was a nice quiet morning with 80 of us taking to the water. I was near the back but swam steadily-sighting is a problem for me and got close to the sticky out tree branches in the narrow river. I managed to get inside the time limit.

The bike was going to be the tester as my bike was only a normal roadster rather than the competition bikes the other competitors had. I soon became last by a very long way. I needed to finish by 16:30 and the sweeper van was ready to pluck me from the race. The marshals encouraged me and fed me bananas. With 3k to go my chain came off but luckily I put it back quickly but my hands were full of grease. Fortunately an acquaintance of mine happened to be driving by me and his girlfriend handed me a baby wipe. I got in at 16:27.

I had plenty of time to finish the run and the organiser ran a bit of the way with me offering me encouragement. I even managed to catch 3 people. Every time I passed the pub near Penhurst castle I got a cheer from the customers. When I finished the race the stewards asked me if I was all right -

I said yes and immediately slumped to the floor.



The medics put something in my ear and on the tip of my finger and pumped up a bag on my arm to measure blood pressure then put my feet up in the air. After some time I got up. The organiser saw I was in no fit state to drive so he got his wife to drive me back to my B & B.

The next morning he came to fetch me so I could pick up my car and also to give me all the prizes pertaining to my age group. This included a year's subscription to "220" Triathlon magazine.

Since then I took up my free place to do another Ball Buster and again won my age group.

And of course signed up for "The Bastion" long triathlon to try and defend my title.

Peter Dry



Reading through the parkrun emails and in one of them there's a whole bulletin of The Vitality Series and the chance to run the first ever Vitality North London Half. It's my old stomping ground and I know the route pretty well though admittedly not all of it. I'm now doing regular Sunday long runs with the Stragglers half marathon training group and have also entered the Sandown sportive, a 10km run this time on March 1.

Sandown doesn't go as well as the Winter Run which I'd done at the beginning of February. I soon discover, to my horror, I am outclassed by the way-better-than-me-field. Even though I've been doing tempo training, obviously not enough. Not being able to check out the course beforehand also didn't help matters I finish last but only a minute behind my previous race time. Never mind methinks it's done and dusted now

No point beating myself up over it. Still scope for improvement; albeit only 2 weeks. I've proved I can run 10km without stopping but can I transfer those skills and longevity to a Half Marathon? Too late to be questioning that now I'll just have to give it my best shot.

March 15th, race Day. I'm up nice and early getting to the pitch a good 90 mins before the start. I do my warm ups, conveniently situated near the steps to Allianz Park stadium stands having Chariots of Fire playing in my head. I don't think they'll be any record breakers for me here and it's hardly a 13.1 mile track run. What it is, is a stadium to stadium race through the outskirts of Colindale and Kingsbury all the way to Wembley Stadium and back. Oh...if only it were that simple.



In the first 5km I even manage to canter up Hay Line (the steepest and longest of the 5 hills) with relative ease. I have instructed my stepfather to stand at Roe Green, after Hay

Lane, one of the cheer points with water-in-hand. If I had the foresight I would have asked him to bring carbs as well. They say hindsight is a wonderful thing, not without reason. The reason being it is all downhill from there and I mean that literally as well as metaphorically... or do I - from what I recall there's a couple more camel humps on route

specifically known as The Paddocks. But by the time Wembley is on the approach and I reach the magic 10km I am already looking for the next water station. A drumming group is egging us on and adding to the atmosphere that IS WEMBLEY STADIUM.

I glance at the big screen as I jog thru the stadium but luckily I don't spot myself as all I feel is cold, tired, hungry and thirsty, depleted of much needed nutrients.

Pulling out half enters my mind but then the water station beckons as we round the corner out of Wembley stadium. Grabbing a water bottle I enquire about bananas which the kids manning the station seem clueless about, so resort to munching my muffin to refuel an almost empty tank. I continue but its uphill much of the way and there's a distinct drop in temperature.

By the time we reach the dreaded Paddocks I stagger up the hill barely putting one foot in front of the other. Others are walking it but I promised myself that this was not an option I was willing to take as walking signifies 'giving up'.

Before long I am on familiar territory and have even caught up with the girl I had started out with but she had a one track mind, the loo and my one track mind was getting to the finish without bailing out.

Only one more hill, better take that gel. By the time I am running back down Hay Lane I can see my home on the horizon less than 100m away. Wouldn't it be good to soak in a nice hot bath?

But with only 3 miles to the finish, how can I possibly bail out now? As we round the bend into Colindale Avenue there is an almighty roar from the crowd spurring us on those last few miles. For a moment I feel elated but the moment doesn't last long. Time for the final gel that I didn't take but should have done; but hindsight's a wonderful thing. I have covered 10 miles in 2 hours, an achievement in itself. All that's required is another 5km. What's another 5km? Nothing in itself but after 16km quite a killer. My legs are now beginning to feel like stone and I am cold to the bone. I'm barely running, the canter has diminished to a trot, I feel like a corpse heading for the nearest cemetery.

The majority of us are all but dead on our feet! I do notice one runner...walker...runner what I used to be but even running I am only doing so at her walking pace! Up Bunns Lane FIN-AL-LY the final furlong is in sight as we saunter down Page Street towards the finish line. It is only now a matter of meters before the end. And this girl and I are like two horses in the Grand National. Which one is going to cross the line first? I don't know where I summon the strength from but I pull out those strides like no tomorrow and it is with a great sense of pride to say this horse pipped the other to the post.

Melanie Miller

Dave Denton Races: Election Day 5k and tour of Epsom

Many Stragglers have done Dave Denton races over the years and here are his forthcoming summer events local to us – quoting from his latest email newsletter.

Dave Clark 5km on Election Day

After you have exercised your franchise (!!!) why not run the flat DAVE CLARKE 5km at 7.30pm in Nonsuch Park on Thursday 7 May? If you plan to run, please send the following information in the SUBJECT box of an e-mail to me at z_entries_z@hotmail.co.uk : start with the word DC5 and then your SURNAME, FIRST NAME, DoB, CLUB (or state UN if not a club member).

*Then, from Monday 8 to Friday 12 June, we have the 30th annual and popular **MARATHON WINDOWS TOUR of EPSOM & EWELL** including a Time Trial and the final night HANDICAP. You can enter the whole Tour or any number of races...except you must run at least one other race if you want to take part in the Handicap. If you plan to run, please send the following information in the SUBJECT box of an e-mail to me at z_entries_z@hotmail.co.uk Start with the word TEE and then your SURNAME, FIRST NAME, DoB, CLUB (or state UN if not a club member) and the races you wish to run in....TOUR, or any of the numbers 1 to 5 indicating the days(1 = Mon, 2 = Tues etc)*

Up-Coming Races:

Your Stragglers membership gets you a £2 discount on many of the races listed below.

Please see www.stragglers.org as a number exchange happens there.

If you're unable to run any race you've entered and don't want the number to go to waste please let us know via the [Number XChange](#) email link on the front page website, and see the list of current numbers available.

Dates marked with a * are those in the Stragglers Road Championships.



May:

- Sun 3: *Richmond Half Marathon (now sold out, number exchange may have some places)
- Thu 7: Dave Clark 5 – Nonsuch Park
- Sun 10: *Sutton 10K
- Sat 16-Sun 17: Green Belt Relay – Peter Wedderburn is organising a Stragglers team
- Sun 17: Staines 10K
- Weds 20 @ 7pm: Parklands Relays, Richmond Park
- Thu 21: Junior handicap
- Thu 28: Stragglers quarterly handicap

June:

- Sat 6-Sun 7: Welsh Castles Relay – team full but Steve Sandham may need injury reserves
- Sun 7: *Dorking 10 miles
- Thu 11: Junior handicap (Ranelagh hosting)
- Sat 13: Stragglers v Ranelagh Mob Match – Kingston parkrun
- Thu 18: Rothwell Relay - Hawker Centre
- Sun 21: *Richmond 10K
- Thu 25: Junior handicap

July:

- Thu 2: Stragglers Club 10k
- Sat 4: Runnymede Relay
- Thu 16: Junior handicap
- Fri 17: Beating Bushy Bounds – social run around Bushy Park stopping at 7 pubs on the way
- Sat 18: Elmore 7 (2 pm)
- Sun 19: Harry Hawks 10
- Sun 26: *Elmbridge 10k
- Fri 31: *Wedding Day 7k

August:

- Sun 9: *Wimbledon 5k
- Thu 27: Junior handicap

September:

- Sun 6: River Relay
- Fri 18-Sun 20: Round Norfolk Relay – contact Simon Webb or Phil Davies to express an interest
- Sat 19: Aldershot Ladies Relays
- Sun 20: Aldershot Men's Relays