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Editorial

So we thought it was Spring, and announced our Stragglers Summer Grand Prix plans, and then it wasn't Spring anymore.

Even though it's probably still cross-country weather we've moved on from that with this issue providing the leap from winter into summer as we present reflections on the months past, and throw ahead to events to come. An XC season review and award winners sit alongside details of your summer race schedule and an important call out for runners wishing to make the ever-popular trip to Wales in June. Please see the future races section at the end of this issue as there is a lot going on.

Away from club events there's the Steyning Stinger, Wymondham 20 and a few Stragglers have been taking parkrun tourism to Germany.

Thanks as ever to those who have contributed and to Dave for assisting with putting this issue together. The April deadline is Friday April 27th.

Simon Webb
Stragmag@stragglers.org



Stragglers News

Welsh Castles Relay

Our annual Welsh Stragsteddfod takes place over the weekend of June 9th/10th – an epic twenty stage, 211 mile, trans-Wales relay from Caernarfon to Cardiff. It's one of the highlights of the Straggler year and once again we have two teams meaning 40 club members head to Wales for an excellent weekend of running and socialising.

Over half the places are already filled so please let us know if you would like to be part of this – email email WCR2018@stragglers.org.

Green Belt Relay

We now have three complete teams, but we are looking for a few reserves, contact Malcolm Davies malcolmdavies@blueyonder.co.uk or Helen Davies helendavies@blueyonder.co.uk.

The Stragglers are the organisers of the Green Belt Relay, and Race Director Peter Kennedy requires assistance across the weekend, covering course marking (especially around Kingston and Staines i.e.: the local sections). We're also suggesting a "tail" team which would make-up the sweep for each stage and have the job of removing orange route markers and ensuring no litter is left behind. The tail team would appeal to anybody who is interested in participating in the race and weekend at a leisurely pace. If you can volunteer over the weekend, please contact Kevin Price kevinp@bafta.org.

Straggtri

Straggtri are encouraging All Stragglers to, er, Try a Tri. On the Morning of Sunday 27th May the XCL Leisure Centre in Walton is hosting a free triathlon, and Straggtri are encouraging club members who are either new to or less experienced at the multi-sport event to join them.

“INTOTRI was founded to show a completely different side of the sport. People of all ages, from novice to running mermaid on wheels, can participate in our triathlon events which emphasise finishing over winning. The focus is on challenging yourself, having fun and embracing a healthy lifestyle. So get INTOTRI with the “parkrun of the triathlon world”, a grassroots initiative powered by volunteers.

“A swimming costume, any road worthy bike, helmet and a pair of trainers and you are ready to get INTOTRI. Front crawl or breaststroke, all in one go or stop after every length, the choice is yours. We group swimmers by ability to make it fun for everyone.

WHAT ARE THE DISTANCES?

- Senior Short (15y+) – 400m swim – 10k bike – 2.5k run
- Senior Long (17y+) – 400m swim – 20k bike – 5k run”

For more on the event visit <https://intotri.com/event/freetri-20/>

Straggler Membership Renewal

This issue is packed with opportunities and successes by Straggler members, and it's important that you are one of those to be able to compete for the club. If you've enjoyed the cross-country season (go on admit it, you loved the cold and the mud really), want to come to Wales with us for Welsh Castles Relay, or fancy taking advantage of the club's offer to pay your entry fee in two selected races over the summer, it's essential your membership is renewed.

Important information:

- The new membership year starts on April 1st;
- If you have re-registered and checked your profile, including whether you want to be registered with England Athletics (EA), your membership will automatically renew on April 1st;
- If you have not re-registered you need to have done this by March 28th otherwise your membership will not automatically renew;
- Fees will be charged to registered members on April 1st and statements will be sent by email on April 15th, payment taken towards the end of the month;
- Club membership has increased to £15 for adults and remains at £2 for juniors;
- Membership of EA is £15 for everyone;
- If you are already set up to pay by direct debit you do not need to do anything, payment will be taken towards the end of April;
- If you don't currently pay by this method we would encourage you to do this, however alternative options will be listed in the email statement sent out on/around April 15th;
- Whichever method you choose, please could you pay promptly, EA membership will not be renewed/processed until your club membership is paid.

England Athletics membership is optional. If you don't wish to race but do want to train with Stragglers and take part in parkrun you do not need to be an EA member. If you wish to remain as an active Straggler, whether competing or not, you still need to renew your club membership.



Cross Country Season Review and Award Winners

With the Ellis & Dysart Cup being called off, it was down to the National Cross-Country Championships at Parliament Hill (end February) to bring the curtain down on the Stragglers championships this year and what a finale that was! Mud, hills, a couple of swamps and the best of UK athletics on display, this race had everything and was an excellent way to finish the season.

In total, eight races made up the club Cross-Country Championships starting off with the club's own race on Hamlands back in October, with two South of the Thames events and four Surrey League fixtures plus the Nationals making up the eight qualifying events. Any Straggler completing four or more races were eligible for an award.

For the ladies there was a tremendous competition in all the age categories except sadly the senior lady award. So once again, it was down to the vets to lead the way. Overall winner and defending her title from last year was Sarah Winter. She also scooped the F35 award with Juliana Greenwood the runner up in her first season of cross-country. The F45 category was very keenly contested between Karen Levene, Juliet Cleghorn and Helen Davies with Helen eventually coming out on top with 135 points, from Karen runner up on 132. The F55 category was equally competitive with Pam

Whitter winning this one on 130 points from Dee Smale on 123. The hero award goes to the virtually ever-present Mirella Genziani completing seven of the eight races with the other athletes having completed this number of races (Helen, Karen and Juliana) picking up awards in the categories listed above. Honourable mention also goes to Julie Haworth and Sabine Duffy who are true team players and managed to complete 6 of the 8 races.

For the men there was a gratifyingly high level of competition in all categories. Rob Wilcox, for another year running, came out as overall winner with a perfect score of 140 points and scooping the Senior Man Award. Runner up in the Senior Man category was Jim Lurkins making his welcome return to the club and putting pressure on Rob with a total score of 134 points. The M40 award was equally closely contested with Donovan Duffy on 126 points just shading it from Crispin Allen on 123. The M50s had a runaway winner in Roy Reeder with Malcolm Davies the runner up in that age group. Club captain Phil Davies showed the way for the M60s winning that trophy.

Once again it was down to the ever-present Gareth Pritchard to pick up the hero award with a perfect clean sweep of attendances at all the qualifying cross country races this season. Gareth is making such a habit of winning this one that the club are thinking of renaming it the 'Pritchard Perpetual Trophy' and leaving it permanently in his house, truly a heroic attendance record! Mention must also go to Tiago Ramos, Rob Greenwood, Richard Patient and Jon Parry who completed seven of the eight races.

The most satisfying part of the 2017/18 Cross-Country season was, once again, the phenomenal level of participation and enjoyment throughout the whole season. Looking at the four Surrey League fixtures, for the ladies last year there were an average of 16 ladies in the team, a very good figure, but that itself has increased to an average of 24 for this season, a remarkable 50% increase. This has been mirrored by the men with participation last season averaging at 25 (a very pleasing figure in itself) but this season we have had an astounding average of 38 men turning up at league fixtures, making

the Stragglers consistently the best represented club in the Surrey League.

Many of those involved have also picked up the reward from a hard cross-country season with very impressive personal best times in some of the early road races in 2018, at all distances up to and including half marathons and this bodes well for the eagerly awaited Stragglers Summer Grand Prix – details follow this report.

Full set of cross country award winners can be found below:

Ladies

Overall winner: Sarah Winter

F35 winner: Sarah Winter

F35 runner up: Juliana Greenwood

F45 winner: Helen Davies

F45 runner up: Karen Levene

F55 winner: Pam Whitter

F55 runner up: Dee Smale

Hero: Mirella Genziani

Men

Overall Winner: Rob Wilcox

SM winner: Rob Wilcox

SM runner up: Jim Lurkins

M40 winner: Donovan Duffy

M40 runner up: Crispin Allen

M50 winner: Roy Reeder

M50 runner up: Malcolm Davies

M60 winner: Phil Davies

Hero: Gareth Pritchard

Action resumes in October with the ladies aiming for a return to Division 1 and the men, having gained promotion this season, look to establish their position in Division 2.

Malcolm Davies (with some additional words from Simon Webb)



Announcing the Stragglers Summer Grand Prix

Time to update your running diaries with the eleven must-do events which make-up the 2018 Summer Stragglers' Grand Prix. Every Straggler is encouraged to participate in this series which kicks-off Sat 28th April at Nonsuch parkrun with a 5k mob-match against Sutton Runners. Your progress during the Grand Prix will be recorded and various prizes awarded at the end of the season. Also, four of the races make-up the individual Stragglers Championship Races (5k, 10k, 10 miles & half-marathon) for which there are special prizes to be won.

See below for the list of dates, which are the club championship races, what to enter in order to represent the club in the Surrey League and, perhaps the most exciting bit of information, which races the club will pay your entry fee for?

Date	Event	Stragglers Championship	Surrey League Race	Notes
Saturday 28th April	Mob-match v Sutton Runners at Nonsuch park	5K Championships		
Sunday 6 May	Richmond Half-Marathon	Half-Marathon Championships	Yes	
Sunday 3 June	Dorking 10 miles	10 miles Championship	Yes	Club paying the entry fee
Sunday 17 June	Richmond 10K		Yes	

Thursday 21st June	Club 10K	10K Championship		
Saturday 30th June	Mob-match v Ranelagh at Crane Park			
Sunday 8th July	Claygate 5 miles			
Saturday 14th July	Elmore 7 miles		Yes	Club paying the entry fee
Sunday 22nd July	Elmbridge 10K		Yes	
Friday 27th July	Wedding Day 7K			
Sunday 12th August	Wimbledon 5K		Yes	

To request a place in the races we're paying the entry fee for, or for any other queries, contact the Men's Captain Malcolm Davies or Ladies' Captain Helen Davies.



Race report – Steyning Half Marathon

The temperature of the week preceding the Steyning Half Marathon consisted of plummeting temperatures and snow, causing travel problems and cancelled races. After much doubt about the weather we decided the previous day to race. The trail shoes, gels and a change of clothes were packed.

Stragglers' presence at the race saw Pedro Das Gupta, Phil Davies and myself running the half marathon and Noel Hollingsworth taking on the tough and challenging marathon.

After registering and changing at the relatively luxurious school Head Quarters (normally for most cross countries we change in the middle of a field) we got a taste of what was to come when we encountered our first mud on the way to the start. The start was

ideal, having the flexibility to begin at anytime between 08:30 and 09:00 on the minute. We set off and in Pedro's words, "it is very difficult to set off too fast because the mud slows you down".

The course is one lap on the beautiful South Downs with a variety of surfaces ranging from mud in the woods and mud in fields and mud out in the open, but with wonderful views. One of the reasons for doing this race, which I was questioning myself why I had committed to do this, was the scenery and it certainly didn't disappoint. The other reason for doing it was that I was promised a PW! (personal worst) and I managed to achieve this.



At mile six, there was a long hill with deep sticky mud like I'd never experienced before. You could see runners slowly making their way up a distant hill, which looked a long way off. A photographer had strategically placed himself to capture photos of runners desperately trying to put one foot in front of another, staying up right and trying not to go backwards. Once I finally arrived at the top of the hill, I glanced back and saw the stunning views along the South Downs, which made

the effort worth it. We continued steadily and at 10 miles seeing the landmark of Chanctonbury Ring at the top of another hill was extremely pleasing. I told myself, not far to the finish. What I didn't realise was the next challenge was a steep decline. There were tree roots, an uneven path and not surprisingly, a lot of mud, which took immense concentration for me to stay upright.



The half marathon is actually 13.4 miles and at the last 800 metres Phil commented, "look what value we have had, mud, snow, ice, and now cow dung!" What joy I thought to myself. Finally I could see the finish ahead marked by a white tent and I wanted to do a super sprint finish. I have never put so much extra effort in pumping my arms and legs and not actually getting anywhere fast. After we had successfully finished without me falling over we had the privilege of having a hot shower in the leisure centre, a full English cooked breakfast, tea / coffee

and a medal all of which was all included in the entry fee, and very welcome. We also received a free photo, although I am not sure whether I would put it on display but it will remind me of the fantastic experience.

Thank you very much to Phil for supporting me and ensuring the morning remained incident free! I now know what a skylark sounds like.

I was asked would you do it again? My reply would be “yes, it was great and my only question would be, do I run the half or the full marathon next time?”

Karen Levene



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Die Briten kommen: Stragglers (and others) visit Leipzig*

With the proliferation of parkruns across the UK, Leipzig is a long way to go for your weekly 5K fix. Unlikely as it might seem, my own motivation for joining a group of parkrun enthusiasts to run the Küchenholz parkrun in Leipzig was actually an article in StragMag, probably ten years ago, written by former Straggler Alan Purkiss, who had gone there to run a half-marathon.

Instead of the usual fare of pre-race nerves, worries about sleep, food, gels etc., the battle against fatigue and ultimate elation at finishing, Alan's account was more of a historical and cultural tour of a city which, at that time, was still emerging from Communist rule. It sparked the thought that Leipzig would be worth a visit, so, when I heard that this was the latest destination for parkrun tourism, I quickly accepted the invitation to join the group, even though my own tally of 19 different parkruns (prior to the visit) meant I didn't really qualify for the status of a "parkrun tourist".

Leipzig's relative obscurity means that the choice of direct flights from the UK is limited, so we arrived late on the Friday evening, allowing only time to sample the local beer, and to arrange a taxi to take us to the parkrun the following morning.

In one sense, our timing couldn't have been better, as the temperature was an ideal 8-9 degrees (balmy by comparison with the previous Saturday's minus 12). The generally cold weather is probably one reason why, having started the event at the beginning of December, the total of runners has yet to exceed the 57 that took part in the inaugural race. On the occasion of our visit, we accounted for 13 out of only 34 participants, with Straggler's Roy Reeder and Thames Turbo Tri's Becky Thurtell our best finishers.

Our numbers also meant that the post-race coffee couldn't take place in the normal café, so we had to decamp further afield to find a venue capable of accommodating such a "large" group.



Photo: Nicola Tarrant

As our return flight wasn't until 9pm on the Monday, we had almost 3 days to sightsee and partake of the local food and drink. Like many German cities, Leipzig has a largely pedestrianised city-centre, making it easy to visit locations such as the Nikolaikirche, a large church which was the scene in 1989 of demonstrations against communist rule which then spread to Berlin and elsewhere, and ultimately led to the fall of the Berlin wall. Another impressive sight was the Völkerschlachtdenkmal, or Monument to the Battle of the Nations, a massive edifice commemorating the 1813 Battle of Leipzig, in which armies from Russia, Prussia, Austria, and Sweden fought against the French army of Napoleon. The monument took 100 years to be built, and at the time of its construction in 1913 was the largest building in Europe. Undaunted, our party ascended 91 metres (up what seemed like several hundred steps) for the weekend's spot of hill-training.



I had already realised, from a couple of previous overseas trips, that my fellow travelling companions take their parkruns very seriously, only matched by their devotion to sampling the local beverages. This meant that my lack of parkrun knowledge was sorely exposed when we settled down to Ian's Germany parkrun quiz after our meal on the Saturday evening, and also by an ingenious card game devised by

Nicola (Tarrant), based on Top Trumps, which featured the respective achievements in parkrun tourism of the rest of the group.

Our good fortune with the weather (up to 18 degrees on the Sunday) couldn't last, and Monday started with steady rain. This meant a change of my plans to spend another day seeing the city on foot, and I opted instead to join a small group on a trip out to Colditz castle, the Second World War prisoner-of-war camp made famous by the films *Colditz Story* and *Escape from Colditz*, and a popular TV series. Another piece of luck resulted in our being given a tour of the castle and explanation of some of the daring (foolhardy) escape attempts, most outlandishly a planned launch of a glider from the castle roof. This was never actually attempted, as the camp was liberated before it was ready; a subsequent reconstruction, involving a replica of the glider, proved it could have worked.

Possibly the only vestige of the former Communist era attitudes that we encountered was the non-appearance of our train back to the airport (and the failure to offer any explanation or apology). We did make it, via a Cold War-style assignation with two taxis in an otherwise deserted industrial wasteland.

In my own case, I have contracted the “prison habit”, as my latest parkrun outing was to Wormwood Scrubs, though on this occasion I stayed outside the prison walls.

Dave Griffiths

*The British are coming



Stragglers Return to Wymondham

Five visits in six years from the Stragglers, there's something going on at the Wymondham 20, especially now that the race director is one Andrew Lane, once of these parts. This race is Norfolk's equivalent, pre-spring marathon event to the likes of Spitfire or Cranleigh, and as you run around it can be tricky to tell who is racing and who is training, such is the low number who turn up just targeting a 20 miler. For me that's more recently been exactly what I go for, plus the fine selection of cake on offer.

A 9:30 start in the market square felt like we had the town to ourselves. Aside from this year we heard of plans for a Palm Sunday donkey parade to the Abbey which, disappointingly, did not result in runners and donkeys mingling on the same stretch of narrow street.

The course consists of two 8-mile laps through the farmland outside the town, with a 2 mile out and back to reach this. For me this makes finding guides that bit easier as it's ideal for one to drop out and another to take over. This year I was joined by Simon Brazil as first half guide, and Jim Desmond, making his return to Wymondham for another pre-London hit out. The second guide was a Wymondham runner Sam, who too is preparing for London. Saturday night in the fine Green Dragon pub was the first time he and I had met one another, he had no prior guiding experience, but with Simon, Jim and Andrew around the table, we'd assembled the ultimate guiding advice group for him, and a brilliant job he did on race day.

The four of us ran to 10 miles as a group, at which point Sam and I were left on our own with Simon dropping out (having guided a chunk of the first half) and Jim pushing on to wind up the pace in the second half. This gave him a good sense of where he's at pre-London, following our 74 minutes first 10 with a 68-minute second half. His finishing time was 2:22:43. My second half was a mere few seconds slower than the first as I achieved a three-minute personal best for this distance, clocking 2:28:05. Out of a field of 371, Jim was 40th and I was 58th.

While we were running through the farmland for a second time, Simon was being recruited to support the race director with various tasks. Our favourite being handing out envelopes at the post race presentation – it really looked like he was presenting the prizes. We'd have enjoyed this even more had Jim not been one place away from winning a 2nd M50 prize – that would have been a great photo opportunity! The Norfolk road running community must have wondered who Simon was, one or two might have thought “isn't that the bloke who dropped out at 10 miles?”



A select group of Stragglers have travelled up for this race in previous years. Once again, I'm going to recommend it's one more of us should consider making the trip for next year.

Simon Webb

Future Races

See below the list of club priority events, the Stragglers and Ranelagh Junior Running Group (SRJRG), and a few others you might be interested in.

April

- Sun 22: London Marathon (and Straggler post-race social TBC)
- Thu 26: SRJRG – Hawker Centre
- Sat 28 (TBC): Mob Match v Sutton Runners – Nonsuch parkrun

May

- Sun 6: Ranelagh Richmond Half Marathon
- Sat 19/Sun 20: Green Belt Relay
- Thu 24: SRJRG – hosted by Ranelagh
- Sun 27: StraggTri Triathlon: INTROTRI – Walton
- Thu 31: 5k handicap – Hawker Centre

June

- Sun 3: Dorking 10
- Fri 8/Sun 10: Welsh Castles Relay
- Wed 13: Parkland Relay – Richmond Park
- Thu 14: SRJRG – Russell School, Petersham
- Sun 17: Ranelagh Richmond 10k
- Thu 21: Stragglers 10k Championships – Hawker Centre
- Tue 26: Imber Court Relay
- Thu 28: SRJRG – hosted by Ranelagh
- Sat 30: Mob match v Ranelagh – Crane parkrun

July

- Sun 8: Claygate 5 (miles)
- Thu 12: SRJRG – Hawker Centre
- Sat 14: Elmore 7 (miles)

- Sun 22: Elmbridge 10k
- Fri 27: Wedding Day 7k

August

- Sun 12: Wimbledon 5k
- Thu 30: SRJRG – Hawker Centre

Other races:

April:

- Sun 1: The Royal Borough of Kingston Half Marathon
- Sun 8: Paddock Wood Half Marathon (Kent)
- Sun 8: Fuller's Towpath 10