



October 2019

Issue 360



In this issue

Contents

Editorial 3

Stragglers News 4

Straggs Make Strong Start to Surrey XC Season 5

Ben Nevis Ultra 6

Recent Results 8

Snowdonia Marathon 9

How We Staged the 2019 Cabbage Patch 10 12

Future Races..... 14



Editorial

It's been a very busy few weeks for us at the Stragglers. So busy in fact that we missed a month of Stragmag, but we return with much news to share.

The cross-country season has begun and the Stragglers have made an excellent start to the Surrey League season. We also saw the first Cabbage Patch 10 under its new organising team, entirely made up of Stragglers. The feedback from participants from the moment we announced we were taking over the race to long after we'd packed up on race day, has been brilliant! There is no doubt it has raised our profile and, with good performances in cross-country competition too, this is an exciting time to be a Straggler.

Elsewhere it's marathon season again, with Stragglers competing in Berlin, York, Abingdon, and a group taking on Snowdonia. There's a report on the latter, plus the Ben Nevis ultra.

November's deadline is Thursday 28th, which is the date for the first in the new series of the club 5k handicap and also the draw for our London Marathon places. If you were rejected from the main ballot please send your proof to our new club secretary Dave Griffiths, davidjgriffiths@waitrose.com.

Dave continues to support me in producing Stragmag and thank you to him and other contributors to this issue.

Simon Webb

Stragmag@stragglers.org



Stragglers News

Believe it or not, recruitment is now underway for the Green Belt Relay. The dates are 16 and 17 May 2020, with a Men's, Women's and Vets teams entered – the Vets will be defending their Walking Stick title won in 2019. Once again the team organisers are Simon Webb, Kevin Price and Maddie Garner, and anyone interested in running should email simonwebb79@gmail.com.

We're also now looking for interest in the Welsh Castles Relay. The dates are 6-7 June, with entries opening in January. Once again we hope to secure two teams, however this is at the discretion of the race organisers. 40 runners would be required and this is often extremely hard work for those organising on behalf of the Stragglers.

If you would like to be considered for Welsh Castles, please contact Simon Webb (simonwebb79@gmail.com), as if there is insufficient interest by January, we will only try for one team. Simon will be joined in organising our Welsh Castles teams by Sarah Winter and Phil Davies.

Committee update: we would like to welcome Dave Griffiths to the role of club secretary, a post left vacant at the summer AGM.

The date for our annual mob match with 26.2 has been confirmed - Sunday 1 December. This year it's their turn to host, with the venue being the British Legion on Hollyfield Road in Surbiton. Registration is from 10 am with walkers expected to begin at 11 and runners a short time afterwards. The distance will be approximately 4 miles.

Another 4-miler is the Cabbage Patch 4. Later in this issue we'll reflect on the Cabbage Patch 10, with a more laid-back, lower key race at the same venue will return for its traditional Boxing Day running.

Full details will be confirmed nearer Christmas, but usually this begins at 11 am, with the race HQ the Cabbage Patch pub in Twickenham.

The Christmas pub crawl date is also now confirmed - Friday December 20th. Location TBC with Kingston currently being considered.

Straggs Make Strong Start to Surrey XC Season

After fixture 1 of the Surrey League cross-country season our ladies sit in 8th place in division 1, with the men 4th in division 2. Our 5 scoring ladies were Sarah Kinsella with an excellent 14th place and Sophie Biggs who was 20th. The scoring was completed by Eliza Hawthorn, Alexis Prince and Sabrina Cant. Stragglers scored 212 points and are just 20 behind Ranelagh who sit 7th on 192, and 50 ahead of Woking who are 9th.

Ranelagh made a dominant start as they look to bounce back following relegation last season. Reigate finished home on home-mud with 363 points, with Stragglers in 4th on 419. It's 10 to score for the men, who were led home by Tim Haughian in 12th, ahead of Oli Garner in 17th. The rest of the scorers were Ben Osborn, Pete Gregorowski, Jim Lurkins, Charlie Jeffrey, Paul Bowden, Crispin Allen, Donovan Duffy and Alastair Hall.

On Saturday November 9th the ladies are at Mitcham Common with the Men at Wimbledon Common.

Elsewhere in cross-country news, there was a great performance at the Surrey Masters Championships for the Straggler ladies. Five ran. Everyone looked strong and enjoyed the Morden Park course which was grassy, muddy and undulating, and ideal for spikes. Sarah Kinsella leading the way: a brilliant 3rd lady overall and bronze medal for W35.

And we started the XC season and Winter Grand Prix with our own championships. Oli Garner took the title for the men, with Alexis Prince your 2019 champion.



Ben Nevis Ultra

When my alarm woke me up at 4:30am on my 31st birthday, I began to question some of my decisions in life. As a birthday treat to myself, I had decided to sign up for an ultra skyrace in Scotland called the 'Ben Nevis Ultra',



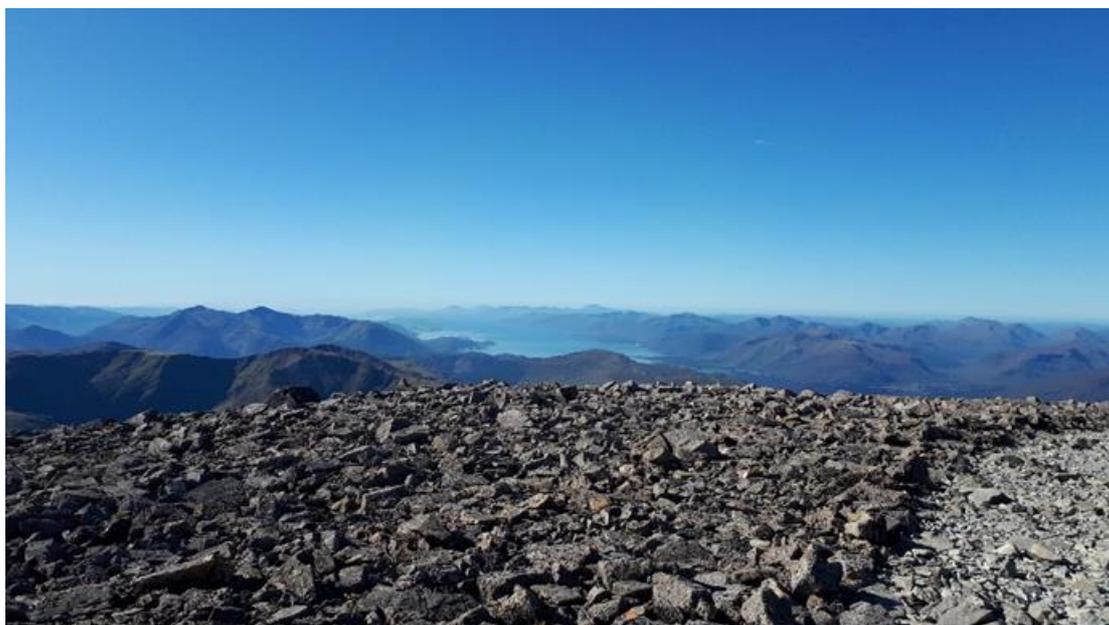
part of the 'Salomon Skyline Series' of 4 skyrunning races and 3 trail races over one weekend in September. Somehow, I had also managed to persuade my long-suffering wife to come along for some moral support, having sold the trip as a lovely weekend break in the Highlands!

I naively thought that my experience in running road and trail marathons, plus putting in a reasonable block of training in the Surrey Hills would hold me in good stead. In hindsight, it's fairly safe to say I massively underestimated the nature of the challenge! On paper, 52km within 12 hours sounded like a piece of cake, but what I hadn't appreciated was how little of the course was going to be runnable. With 4000m of ascent and descent packed in, including summitting Ben Nevis and three other Munros, there was not much flat! To add to the difficulty the terrain was a combination of peaty bog up to my knees in the lowland areas (where I almost lost my trail shoes on several occasions) and uneven, steep, rocky trails. A couple of tumbles early on left my hands cut open and bleeding, and my misguided confidence had taken a knock.



The saving grace that day was the weather, which given it was Scotland was nothing short of a miracle. Glorious sunshine with not

a cloud in the sky allowed for incredible panoramic views ascending Ben Nevis along the CMD arête.



It also gave me slightly more confidence descending dry(ish) trails, and the thought of doing this race on a typical wet and windy Scottish day gives me palpitations just thinking about it. I remember one particularly tricky mile of scrambling up towards the summit of Ben Nevis, where my watch flashed up that I'd just completed a 32 minute mile, without a doubt a new personal worst!

In addition to the beautiful scenery, one of the fantastic things about this race is the comradery amongst other participants and the superb marshals, who definitely helped keep me going when the going got tough. With only one aid station at half-way, taking plenty of food and water along was

essential, although one aspect of this race I loved were the numerous natural highland springs along the route, which provided plenty of fresh, ice cold water to fill my bottles up.

There were points in the second half of the race I would rather forget now, my amateur status in both ultra and skyrunning were very

clear to other runners when I simultaneously developed cramp in my thighs and also ran out of food...with about 10kms to go! Thankfully, I was saved by a fellow runner who selflessly and heroically gave me some electrolyte tablets and half his ham sandwich!

In spite of the challenges I faced, I would highly recommend skyrunning for those keen to give it a go, but I would recommend that you prepare slightly better than I did, particularly when it comes to practicing mountain running and taking enough food! The photos from my phone certainly don't do it justice, the views were literally breathtaking and well worth the 11 hours of blood, sweat and tears.

Jim Lurkins

If you have any specific questions about the race then drop me an email: jameslurkins@doctors.org.uk.



Recent Results

At the Berlin Marathon Matt Coakes ran 2:45 and Sarah Winter 3:07. Sarah followed this up with a personal best over 10 miles at the Great South Run two weeks later, 64:36.

Paul Bowden (1:22:40) and Heidi Russenberger (1:30:56) were first male and female Stragglers in the Kingston Half marathon at the beginning of October.

At the Yorkshire Marathon today Crispin Allen snuck under 3 hours with 2:59, presumably with another of his famous high-mileage training programmes. Well done also Matt Brady for 4:03.

Meanwhile at Abingdon Jim Lurkins ran a personal best 2:43, Pascal Evans ran yet another sub-3 and Green Belt Relay Race Director Peter Kennedy, in his first marathon for several years, ran 3:21:55.

Snowdonia Marathon

“The Snowdonia Marathon has been voted best British marathon twice. The demanding and spectacular route, encircling Snowdon, Wales’ and England’s highest peak, gives the event a unique place in the annual marathon calendar.” For this reason it has become one of the ‘must do’ races. Throw in unpredictable weather conditions and this presents a different challenge from that of London, Brighton or the other popular UK road marathons.

In 2016 a group of Stragglers travelled to North Wales to take on this great race. The experience was excellent, both for the race itself and the weekend overall. Personally I felt I couldn’t have wished for better and was content with my one visit, however, towards the end of 2018 there was growing interest in a return. Stragglers’ club captain Phil Davies had announced that Snowdonia 2016 was to mark the end of his marathon-running career, but having already followed this up with another Beachy Head Marathon, retirement wasn’t going well. With Phil as the inevitable ring-leader, nine of us succeeded in the not inconsiderable challenge of entering – the 2019 race sold out in 5 minutes and will now switch to a ballot.

We were promised rain, lots of rain. Heavy, relentless rain. The drive up the day before was almost entirely in heavy, relentless rain. We hired one of the minibuses some of you will remember from this year’s Welsh Castles trip. We hope we returned it in a clean enough state that they haven’t blacklisted us, as we’d like to use them again.



As in 2016 we stayed in the ironically named Sunnyside Hotel. Friday night in an excellent Llandudno pub and we were fuelled and ready for whatever the Welsh sky was going to drop on us. It turned out to be wet, but not anything like as miserable as I’d feared and halfway round I realised it had stopped. It was cold though;

I’ve never run a marathon in long sleeves before.

The course offers three hills, one of which I’d forgotten about from three years ago. After a first mile which is flat, the road begins to climb and gets steeper until a final big effort to the 5-mile point.

Runners then drop down a steep hill before undulating to the halfway point, a small village with a wonderfully enthusiastic crowd. There is then a climb, which was much longer than I remembered, before another drop and then one last push from 22 to 24.5 miles. This is probably not as tough as the first hill, but steeper and with 22 miles in the legs, run-walk is the way many get up here.

Kevin Price, Dan Greenslade and I had run together to this point. Kevin and Dan taking turns with guiding for a few miles each. It's an excellent way to run a marathon, as at different points someone is feeling good, whilst another needs a lift and the group pulls us all through. The other stragglers were Phil, Noel Hollingsworth, Neil Carrington and Simon Shanks and they were a few minutes behind, each running their own race. Neil Browning was also in the race, but had travelled independently of our group.

At 20 miles Kevin, Dan and I were just ahead of where Dan and I had been in 2016 (with Jim Desmond and Andrew Lane). Part way up the final hill it was clear Dan had considerably more running than me and we let him go. He pulled away to finish in 3:40, two minutes quicker than he'd ran in 2016. Had Dan ran his own race it would have been interesting to see how much quicker he could run, and we wait to see what he'll do on his next flat marathon.



I however had a tough time of the final miles. The race finishes with a steep downhill stretch. This is off-road, and with so much rain was extremely muddy. Kevin and I both ended up on the ground, and this was even with taking it very carefully. Being able to see where he was putting his feet, Noel was able to bound down the hill and overtook us. His watch recorded a sub-6 minute mile and he finished in 3:48. Kevin and I ended up with 3:52, 9 minutes slower than my run in 2016 when the downhill had been dry. Phil, in yet another "last-ever" marathon was close behind in 3:53, with Simon and Neil crossing the line together in 4:03.



Then it was on to the other reason to join Straggler trips like these. I'm a big fan of Saturday marathons as the night out after is especially good. First, we found a pub from the Robinson's chain, significant as these are the people who brew Iron Maiden's Trooper ale. The sky had cleared and we had a fantastic,

sunny drive back into Llandudno. We ended the night in the same Irish Bar Noel and I had found three years ago. The sort of place where 'Mambo No. 5' is a guaranteed floor-filler, and fill the floor it did as the place was packed, including a couple of guys dressed as the 118 runners who seemed to be dancing with anyone they could find. Another bonus was the clocks changing that night meaning an extra hour to play with. For the record, Kevin and I were the last Stragglers to leave the bar.

Snowdonia has long been a tricky race to enter. For a while they used to open the entries at midnight on New Year's Day. They recently moved this to a more civilised, 7am on a Saturday morning, but this has only led to the race selling out even faster. In 2018 the 2600-ish places went in under 10 minutes resulting in the website crashing. Unsurprisingly, they've moved to a ballot for the 2020 race, which unfortunately makes getting a group together harder. The 2020 race is on October 24th, with the ballot opening on December 1st.

An alternative race which has a similarly strong reputation is Loch Ness. Having done Snowdonia twice and Loch Ness once, I'm keen on a return trip to Inverness.

Simon Webb



How We Staged the 2019 Cabbage Patch 10



“Some races are part of racing history. The Cabbage Patch 10 is one of them.”

The Cabbage Patch 10 has long been associated with the Stragglers and it often came as a surprise when someone discovered it wasn't officially our race. We've held the race license and provided a substantial number of marshals. An organising group has looked after this event which has developed a strong reputation, not least for its fast course. The British 10-mile record of 46:02 was set here by Richard Nerurkar in 1993. Ray Coward, a Straggler and familiar face as one of the run directors at the Bushy parkrun gladly tells the story of driving the lead van that day.

So whilst it was not our race, it still came as a surprise to us when we learnt via Twitter in December 2018 that the race was to be cancelled. The statement put out suggested charges from Richmond Council as a contributing factor. Our own conversations with the council, led by our chair Kevin Price, found them to be very keen to support the race's continuation, and with the support of the Stragglers committee, an experienced team from within the club was assembled to take over the organisation of the event. Peter Wedderburn was installed as Race Director, supported by a team

which included Mark Thomas (from Sportsystems), Keith Haworth (long term marshal co-ordinator) and Simon Brazil. Evan Bond looked after a rebrand and the website redesign.

We got our first indication as to just how well-loved the Patch 10 is when the announcement of its return was made. The first 1000 places sold fast, despite many loyal to the event having already entered alternatives such as Royal Parks and the Great South Run. Fixing a date proved a challenge and our original choice had to be moved due to the anticipation of England's path through the Rugby Union World Cup – the Cabbage Patch pub is an essential part of the race day experience and they were keen to avoid a pub full of England fans as we were trying to stage a race. Even with the late announcement and subsequent alteration of the date, the first 1000 places sold faster than in 2018, and within weeks the race was sold out. A few adjustments were made around the course, most notably taking runners by the river behind the Hawker Centre, rather than along the road in front of it, thus avoiding runners mingling with Sunday morning football traffic using the Hawker carpark.

A new logo was designed, and a wooden medal which doubles-up as a practical drinks coaster chosen as a more environmental option, sourced from local Twickenham supplier Classic Miniatures; not only a more eco-friendly alternative, but important to us to be supporting a local manufacturer. We added Princess Alice Hospice as a benefiting charity, one which has been a popular choice in the club for many years – many of you will remember Louise Neville who received care from them before she passed away. Clarendon School and MDS UK remained as benefactors from 2018.

Final preparations were made more tricky for Peter, as his own Kingston Half Marathon took place seven days earlier. Roadworks on Kingston Bridge meant a re-route of a short section of the course with less than 48 hours' notice. The race itself went without incident, which is always a huge relief to those who organise them. The only complaint from participants seems to have been the lack of small sized -shirts which, as anyone who has been involved in sourcing these for Wedding Day or Green Belt Relay can confirm is a perennial nightmare.

Joe Morwood of Aldershot, Farnham and District AC took victory with a time of 50:18. Club-mate and GB international Steph Twell was the women's winner in 55:02. Friend of the Stragglers Dan Cheeseman from the Surbiton Up and Running store was 4th overall in 51:44.

45 Stragglers took part. Jackie Balfour was first Straggler lady in 68:45, securing her second place in her age category of F55 and the third highest female age-grade in the race with an impressive 87.8%. Special mentions to Pete Gregorowski who ran one hour exactly, and Eliza Hawthorn (71:34) who both scored well for the club in the Surrey League the previous day.

The public response via the CP10 Facebook and Twitter accounts was extremely heart-warming. A huge amount of positivity and appreciation towards the race organisers, marshals and the Stragglers for taking the event on and keeping it going. We've seen an increase in membership requests to join Stragglers following the race and there is no doubt this has been nothing but a positive thing for our club, and we would like to thank each and every one of you who helped in some way to make this a reality.

October 18th is the date for the 2020 staging of the Cabbage Patch 10 and entries will open on April 1st. As we always say, the success of the race relies heavily on club members for marshalling, so please do volunteer again next year to enjoy and support what is now a major day in The Stragglers' club diary.

Simon Webb - CP10 Comms coordinator



Future Races

With the Summer Grand Prix now complete, attention will soon switch to cross-country action. The full Winter Grand Prix schedule will be announced soon, but for now see below the important dates of the Surrey League fixtures, including a double-header on the opening weekend with both ladies and men racing at the same location.

Ladies Surrey League Division 1 Cross Country Dates:

- Saturday 9 November – tbc (Mitcham Common?)

- Saturday 11 January 2020 – tbc (Wimbledon Common?)
- Saturday February 8 – Richmond Park

Men's Surrey League Division 2 Cross Country dates

- Saturday 9 November - Wimbledon Common
- Saturday 11 January 2020 – Woking (Chobham Common)
- Saturday 8 February 2020 - Lloyd Park, Croydon

Other dates:

- Saturday 23 November: South of the Thames 5 miles, Morden Park
- Sunday 1 December: Mob Match v 26.2 – Surbiton British Legion, Hollyfield Road, register from 10 am
- Sunday 8 December: Hogsback Road Race, Guildford
- Saturday 21 December: South of the Thames 7.5 Miles, Lloyd Park
- Thursday 26 December: Cabbage Patch 4 – race start 11am, race HQ Cabbage Patch pub in Twickenham

Team contacts:

Simon Brazil – simonbrazil@hotmail.co.uk

Helene Hill – Helene.hill@btinternet.com