Welcome to the latest edition of the Newsletter. It seems like only yesterday we were reading the last edition of the Newsletter. Looking at the content of this edition you haven’t been staying in and putting your feet up despite we have had Christmas and some wet, windy and wintery weather to deal with.

As well as your running reports you will also find a summary of the AGM held last month, it was a great evening in which we recognised you the members for your achievements in 2018. Looking at our first Two Championships races of this year there have been some fantastic results and plenty of PB’s to keep Carl busy. These results can only be achieved by your continued commitment and enthusiasm to running as well as your support to Corsham Running Club and its members.

As I’m sure most of you will be aware of Craig, Dan, Rachel and Mo stood down from their roles on Committee after serving for 2 years. Richard Moore is our new Secretary, Carl Zalek has taken over the role as Treasurer but as yet we have not found a replacement for a Social Secretary, it would be really nice to have this role filled as soon as possible and you can be assured of plenty of help and support from the Committee, if you would like to know more or are interested in filling the role please speak with any of the Committee members.

My final thanks go to you for supplying the articles for this newsletter and to Andy for his editing skills.

Richard Biggs
Since the last Newsletter, our members have been very busy, not only with the club championship races but other races too!
Grittleton 10K on 14th October saw 16 members run in rainy conditions and 4 gained PB’s including Alison Graham who also collected first prize in her age category.
The White Horse Gallop on 21st October attracted 7 members and this time Pete Allen gained first prize in his age category.
On 3rd November Southwick Park run took place, the second of 3 park runs for our club championship, and 8 members ran.
Avebury 8 took place on 25th November which proved popular as 13 runners attended.
Westonbirt 10k on the 16th December welcomed 8 of our runners with Marie, Lucy and Lois achieving PB’s.
15th December saw the last of the Park runs in the championship this year, where 11 ran with James Lye coming in first Corsham club runner obtaining a PB as well.
2019 started with the Slaughterford 9, wow! Such a great turnout for such a challenging race, 29 runners in all, Damian Hall came first in his age category and 5th overall. There were many PB’s achieved by Becky Townsend, Tom Frost, Alison Graham, Susan Mackie (knocking 12 minutes off her previous time) and me!

Jane Tunnicliffe

Club Championship Races

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>27/01/2019</td>
<td>Slaughterford 9</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>Devizes 10K</td>
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<td>03/02/2019</td>
<td>Lungbuster (WORL)</td>
<td>27/10/2019</td>
<td>Calne Clock Change Challenge</td>
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<td>Calne Clock Change Challenge</td>
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<td>19/04/2019</td>
<td>Good Friday 10 Miler (WRRL)</td>
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<td>18/05/2019</td>
<td>Semington Slog</td>
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<td>Off Road Race for WORL 2019</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>Broadtown 5</td>
<td>May/Jun/Jul/Aug</td>
<td>Best of any Lacock Relay</td>
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<td>July</td>
<td>Chippenham River Run 5K</td>
<td>May/Jun/Jul/Aug</td>
<td>Best of any Heddington 5K (WRRL)</td>
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<td>21/07/19</td>
<td>Colerne Under the Posts (WRRL)</td>
<td>Apr/May/Jun/July</td>
<td>Best of any AVR 5K Series</td>
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<td>14/08/19</td>
<td>Hilly Helmet 4M</td>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Best Parkrun**</td>
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<td>08/09/19</td>
<td>Chippenham HM (WRRL)</td>
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<td>Best Half Marathon (not Chippenham)</td>
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<td>Best Full Marathon (any)</td>
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New Members

Warm welcome to our new members:

Steven Gotobed
Leah Brown
Amy Kearsey
John Ashworth

Dave Townsend
Simon Marsh
Joanne Spry
Michaela Curtis

Robin Curtis
David Sanson
Charlotte Wilton
Roger Tovell
Paul Piggin
AGM - Awards

CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP
365 runners in the specific races, improving on last year’s record of 345 and this despite only one beginner’s group and graduation and what I felt was a more varied and wide-reaching set of races. The majority of the races which we’d run before, saw an increase in numbers.

We also had 46 people who completed a non-Chippenham Half Marathon, 26 marathoners (compared to 12 last year) and 52 who did at least one CRC event. We had 6 ladies and 10 men who completed at least 8 races.

This year we ran two concurrent championships, the traditional age-graded championships where your time in club championship races is adjusted based on your age. We also introduced a straight race championship where it was all about your finishing position with no adjustment. The age-graded championship is still our main one, so I’ll start with the race championship.

**Ladies Race Club Championship**
3rd – Claire Hunt got 139 points from 8 races
2nd – Alison Graham got 159 points from 10 races
1st – **Marie Vinolo-Young** got the maximum 165 points from 11 races

**Men’s Race Club Championship**
3rd – Stewart Unsworth got 149 points from 14 races (a record number of races)
2nd – David Mackie got 153 points from 12 races
1st – **Jamie McBrien** unsurprisingly got a maximum 165 points from 11 races

**Ladies Age-Graded Club Championship**
3rd – Claire Hunt got 156 points from 8 races
2nd – Marie Vinolo-Young got 158 points from 11 races
1st – **Alison Graham** got a maximum 165 points from 10 races

**Men’s Age-Grade Club Championship**
3rd – Peter Allen got 157 points from 11 races
2nd – Alan ‘Rex’ Kember got 160 points from 10 races and may have won 3rd time if he’d not moved.
1st – **Jamie McBrien** takes both men’s title with the only non-maximum - 161 points from 11 races

All awards & AGM photos courtesy of Craig Rumble
AGM - Awards

CAPTAINS AWARDS

Marie Vinolo-Young – 21 races and 6 PBs. Something suddenly clicked early in the summer and times came tumbling down and performance went rocketing up. Completed 6 laps at Endure 24 in an average time of 39:32 and our most consistent runner with just under two minutes between slowest and fastest and completing her final lap quicker than her first. She placed first at the Aspire 5 Mile Summer Series Race 2 after being 2nd at Race 1, Won Hazelbury Hurrah! And set a new Course Record, had an age category win at the River Run and she came 4th at the Lacock Relay Handicap race, which really shows just how she improved over the summer and she hasn’t stopped since then.

Katherine Burrett – 15 races and 5 PBs. Katharine has taken on new challenges this year, completing a Half Marathon, or should I say two half marathons taking off 13 minutes in 5 months. She started the year with a 10K PB of 1:07:39, at Malmesbury in August she took 5 minutes from that, took another 2 minutes and nearly broke the hour in horrendous conditions at Grittleton 6 weeks later and a month after that SHE DID break the hour posting a 58:13 at Castle Combe Chilly 9½ minutes off from her PB at the start of the year. Her 5K PB also went from 32:29 to 30:08 although her 10K PB is now at a faster pace than that.

Kathryn Roynon – 11 races and 5 PBs. I don’t think Kathryn had run a 10K before this year setting a 1:08:29 in her first one at Corsham, this came down a couple of times, including taking 6 minutes off between June and September when it agonisingly went to 1 hour and 6 seconds. Luckily, she only had to wait 2 weeks to break through the hour. Kathryn got her PB to 56:35 at the Castle Combe Chilly, 12 minutes off in 7 months. Kathryn also organised Team Corsham Regis for the Corsham 2K.

Lauren Edwards – 9 races and 5 PBs. Lauren has spent much of the year training for her first marathon at Bournemouth in October and all the training paid off as she completed the course in under 4 hours with a time of 3:50:30, a faster pace than she completed and PB’d Bath Half in 18 months previously. She took 11 minutes off of that Bath time at Tewksbury before taking a little bit more off at Chippenham as part of her training for the marathon. A new 5K PB of 22:40 and I suspect the only reason she didn’t set a 10K PB was because she didn’t run one this year.

Winner is Katherine Burrett
AGM - Awards

CAPTAINS AWARDS

Chris Hunt – 19 races including a 3rd place M50 finish at Westonbirt 10K. After a health scare he got his brother-in-law running while on his annual 3-month trip to China, improving him constantly and getting him running 6 miles, almost to Da Fo Si temple. They’ll do it this year. His daughter Sophia is a regular at Parkrun. Chris has been running every day for around 6 months and it has helped him to get the sort of times he hasn’t been getting for many a year showing that age isn’t a barrier to improvement.

James Lye – 6 races with 5 PBs at all distances 5K, 10K, Half Marathon and Marathon. It was a sub 3:30 at the marathon and he’s very close to the 20 and 40-minute marks at 5K and 10K. He organised the 6 nations drinking handicap 5k, which went very well.

Julian Thornhill – 7 races and 2 PBs including dipping under 55 minutes for the 10K distance but perhaps most impressive was his 3 half marathons in 4 weekends in September. It’s a testament to the man who joined us 18 months ago and struggled so much he nearly didn’t return that now he is injured he is just so anxious to get back to it.

Mark Cortaville – 17 races and 3 PBs. His 10K time is getting close to 40 minutes. One of his PBs was I believe his first marathon, completing in 4:15. A brilliant time for a first attempt at the distance. I was most impressed with his 3 times in the Heddington 5K – 20:18, 20:18 and 20:22. Extremely consistent.

Winner is Chris Hunt
AGM - Awards

CLUB AWARDS

Individual Recognition Award – James Shaw
Griff Award (as voted by the members) – Natalie Inman
Unsung Hero – Jane Tunnicliffe
Bottle of Prosecco – Gill Fox
I’ll start as I did last year, with our beginner’s course from spring last year. It’s always great to see a huge influx of new faces and watch as they develop from nervous newbies to accomplished runners and go on to join our club. After we applied through an EA scheme, we had 3 great sessions with Bryan Clinton in the summer, words used to describe them were - useful, painful, everyone of all abilities can do this, bloody hard work but really beneficial, learnt so much about myself, one of my favourite club sessions of the year. It seems a lot of people really responded to what he had to say and pushed themselves harder than they thought possible. And it must have been appreciated as we invited him back and had a fantastic crowd this week.

In November we had our ‘moving up month’ where we encouraged people to try the next group up. It worked really well as the leaders adjusted the sessions to ensure they were accessible and many have stayed in their new groups for the last couple of months.

Dave Mackie the weather God – Avon Valley Relay in 31c heat, glorious conditions for our 2 solstice runs where we had 16 runners and 3 dogs with a rude awakening in the morning. Starting at 4:30am to run 500 feet of climb in a mile to be on the top of Little Solsbury Hill for sunrise. And then in the evening we had 14 runners and 0 dogs for a slower climb to be at Oliver’s Castle on the Roundway overlooking Devizes for sunset and some prosecco which Dave carried in his rucksack.

In fact, looking back over the year on Facebook, the only time it rained on a full moon run or away run was when we invited our friends and neighbours from AVR and Chippenham to join us at the annual For Fox Sake run and I think that may have been deliberate. Luckily it didn’t dampen any spirits as we had also organised prosecco and cake.

Weather has been a big factor last year from heavy snow in March to the blazing temperatures of the summer; however it doesn’t stop CRC running.

After Bath Half was called off due to the snow, Teddy’s girls; Paula Lye, Lois Norcott, Katherine Burrett and Helen Wilkinson; didn’t want to waste their training so signed up for the Bournemouth Bay Half Marathon and ran that instead.

A group of us ran the Slaughterford 9 route through the snow. Some of the drifts were nearly taller than us, but it didn’t stop some people from trying to run through it, rather than going around.

We also had 20 runners at the Grittleton 10K when storm Callum hit our shores, some great photos of runners splashing through a huge puddle at the start and end of the race.

There was a great photo of many of our members hiding in a bus shelter at the Compton Bassett 5 to keep out of the chilly wind and rain; it’s nice that we all have our jackets and fleeces now to keep us warm while waiting for races to start.

CWR was held in horrific temperatures, with extra time and extra water stations. We had 40 runners for the second time and as with 2017, the final 2 finishers at leg 10 came in together as Angie and Jo rounded off our day. I was especially impressed with Max who had hardly been running for about 3 months due to injury but as she had been counting down to leg 10, her final leg, for many years she was desperate to do it. She asked the organisers if she could set off 20 minutes early and just be given the cut off time so she could complete. Not only did she complete but she managed to run much of the second half. As well as Max becoming a Queen of the Cotswold Way, Dave Camm also became our second king. He did legs 8 and 9 for Team Bath though so he’ll have to complete them for us too.

While waiting to see Angie and Jo, Dave Aplin assisted a runner from Dursley who had succumbed to the heat and made sure she was able to get to Bath safely and re-join her team.

Dave wasn’t the only one of our members who assisted others. Jane Tunnicliffe gave up her race at Great Chalfield to help Judy from AVR who was really struggling and keeping her company as they ran around together.

We had 3 teams at Endure 24 this year. Mostly CRC members but with a few ringers thrown in including Susan’s brother travelling from the Netherlands. Wendy joined the team late in the day, tentatively saying she’d happily do a lap. She enjoyed it so much that she ended up running 4 laps. 20 miles in total. Our elite team did the same number of laps as 2017 but in a time 8 minutes quicker. In total our teams ran 36, 31 and 29 laps for a total of 480 miles.
Also, on the weekend of Endure 24 we had Rosie’s Rainbow Run and Ride at Castle Combe race circuit. Many of our members either helped, took part or both, in what was by all accounts an excellent event that raised lots of money for Springboard Opportunity Group.

Andrew Wood qualified for and took part in the Obstacle Course Racing World Champs, unfortunately for him this year they were held in London whereas the previous 2 he’d flown to Canada.

It’s fair to say that as a club we enjoy the social side of running. As well as joining up with our neighbours for the For Fox Sake run mentioned earlier we also joined with Chippenham Harriers, Calne, Chippenham triathlon and a couple of others for the Castle Combe Christmas Eve run, this year in memory of Harriers member Lucy Jillings. A great crowd joined together for runs of 6 quick, 6 gentle, 5 gentle or a 2 mile walk before re-joining for cakes and mulled wine and general merriment.

And of course, we had the Ceilidh, the Christmas party and breakfast runs. Good luck to whoever is replacing RaMo.

Craig Rumble put in an impressive performance at the Ham & Lyme 50K – 5:00:01, gutting to not be 2 seconds quicker.

Danny Parker ran the Forest of Dean HM on a Saturday, followed by Devizes HM the day after.

Jo Gill did Dartmoor Discovery 32 mile ultra, she’s done it a few times and set a new PB this time, but she was most chuffed to see her name on page 1 of the results.

Despite late notice of the date and a clash with our Solstice run, Danny Parker managed to persuade a team of 5 to attend the Mob Match at the reverse Over-the-Hills where he along with Simon Wharton, Michael Luff, Annika Davidson and Diane Aldridge were able to bring the trophy home for Corsham.

At the Exmoor Trail Fell Race – Chris Hutton 2nd overall having run 18 miles of the 15-mile event. The whole field got lost.

WINNERS

Jamie McBrien – 1st and new CR Devizes HM, 1st Bratton Hilly
Jon Morrell – 1st at Windsor and Eton Autumn Classic 10K
Damian Hall – 1st Vet Slaughterford, 1st Overall Bath Running Festival Trail Marathon, Over-the-Hills
Marie Vinolo-Young – 1st Aspire 5 Mile Summer Series Race 2 (2nd at Race 1), HH Course Record (13th Overall-Not unlucky), 1st F35 River Run
Dave Mackie and Richard Biggs, were in the winning team at June Lacock Relay
Teddy the wonder dog – 1st at Bowerhill Bomber 5K
Alan ‘Rex’ Kember – 1st M60 East Midlands 10K, Compton Bassett 5M, Lacock HM, Heddington 5K Race 2, Malmesbury 10K
Richard Biggs – 1st M55 Dark Larmer 8M
Debra Kearsley– 1st F45 Bowood 10K
Steve Hible – 1st M60 Bratton Hilly, Neolithic HM
Alison Graham – 1st F55 Woodbridge 10K, River Run, Devizes 10K, Grittleton 10K, 1st F50 Malmesbury 10K
Luke and Eimi Morrell – 1st U7 Male and Female at Corsham 2K
Pete Allen – 1st M60 Devizes 10K, White Horse Gallop
Ade Hurren – 1st M50 AVR HM
Westonbirt 10K – Last Club Champs, picked up trophies for Marie 3rd Lady, Chris Hunt 3rd M50 and our ladies (Marie, Lucy (who having clocked 50:04 twice at the distance, got a sub-50 PB,) Caroline, Katharine and Lois) were 3rd ladies team.

BIG NUMBERS

36 at Slaughterford 9, 25 at Wiltshire 10, 23 at Compton Bassett 5, 29 at May Parkrun graduation in Chippenham, 34 at Great Chalfield 10k, 40 at Cotswold Way Relay, 20 at Avon Valley Relay, 56 at River Run, 21 at Chippenham Half, 20 at Grittleton 10k, 22 at Bromham Pudding Run.

The 56 at River Run would have been a record if it hadn’t been for the 58 at Corsham 10k, including pacers. Fantastic numbers when you also include that most of those also help with the set-up of the event. 49 of the 2k runners were either members of OMC or children of CRC members.
PBs
68 people set 128 PBs. I garner these from Strava and Facebook so I will have missed some.
I won’t read the list of names as it would take too long, I will provide it for the newsletter article though. For today I’ll just point out a few of the really impressive PBs:
Lauren Edwards – 11 Minute PB at the Tewkesbury HM.
Kathryn Roynon – 6 minutes at Devizes 10K
Katherine Burrett – 5 minutes at Malmesbury 10K
And if you really want to set a 10K PB then Castle Combe Chilly is the race to aim for. We had 6 runners out of 12 who set a PB and some of them were taking huge chunks out of their time.


CRC ON TOUR
As well as running all over this country from Scotland to Cornwall, from Wales to Kent and everywhere else in-between we’ve also been represented in far flung corners of the world such as Madeira, France, Portugal, Switzerland, Italy, Auckland, Ireland, Chinax2, Guatemala, Disneyland Florida, Czechia. Although I’m disappointed that nobody has taken on the challenge of the Pyongyang marathon in North Korea, maybe for someone for 2019. There have been some great pictures throughout the year and it’s always worth wearing your top on tour.

STORIES
Last year here, I gave Steve Parham a ribbing for missing his pacing time at the Corsham 10K, admittedly due to helping a runner who collapsed, well this year he got his time spot on and I missed mine as I had a runner collapse on me 300 metres from the finish line. That’s Schadenfreude for you.
While rectifying what I said last year, I’d like to issue an apology to Dan Harman, last year I told the story of his one and only lap at Endure, this year he went 5 times further so well done to him.
Also, at Endure, in 2017 we noticed that some teams had some way to show themselves to their teammates at the switchover, so this year Susan Mackie brought something so we didn’t just have to shout at each other. In keeping with the club colours, she brought some gold and black pom-poms for us to shake. It’s fair to say that some of us were more enthusiastic than others. I tried to get a Corsham chant going but to no avail.
I’ve already mentioned the CWR but that was just the running side, the day is about far more than that. We had all of the great photos throughout the day of the before and after. Max was disappointed that Mike stood in the wrong place for the before leg 2 photo, out of numerical order, luckily, he rectified for the after shot.
And of course, the CWR is a chance for us to celebrate. As mentioned Max and Dave were made a Queen and King of the Cotswold Way, for completing all 10 legs, and they get their plaques and receive their congratulations at a pub in Bath after leg 10. Max was nearly given a plaque with King of the Cotswold Way on it. About 20 of us were in Bath to see the end of leg 10 and then enjoy the delights of Bath with curry, sparkling wine, Gin and SHOTS! We added the Hilly Helmet Challenge to our club championship this year, where helmets are part of the mandatory kit; many runners will put on a bicycle helmet while some will go the extra mile metaphorically. Richard Moore wore a few pounds extra by having a Spartan/Roman helmet, complete with the brush on top. And CRC won lots of spot prizes.
Reputations can be easily made and broken. Dave Mackie is known far and wide, whether it’s bumping into Diane Aldridge as he raced over Ingleborough in the Yorkshire Peaks or when Alison met the race director of the Preseli Beast who knew Dave and his picture has been used to advertise the Ham and Lyme 50K.

Of course, reputations can be affected by non-running things; mine was immeasurably enhanced at Hazlebury Hurrah! by my pink laptop and Andrew Wood is well known at the Roundway Revenge for his bright orange tutu. Those that were at the Christmas party loved Danny’s spectacular Christmas suit and Jane Tunnicliffe is known by everyone when she is supporting at races and shouting ‘COME ON CORSHAM!’, recognised all across Wiltshire.

And if anyone is looking to improve their running reputation, Alison has challenged you to run up Croagh Patrick. It is Ireland’s holiest mountain, with a chapel on top, but to get there involves a steep climb up huge rocks. Good luck to anyone attempting it.

Some of our members like to race for the bling and we’ve seen some great medals throughout the year, Renata got a cookie as a medal at the Portishead Coast Path 10K and the Avebury 8 gives out a handmade mug, Steve Hible now has a full set of 6 of them. Maybe he can start collecting them from Imber Ultra in future.

Many of our runners like to do races that are a little different from the norm; I’ve already mentioned the Hilly Helmet but Andy Goreing requested that we add the Manchester beer run for the club championship, involving a beer every kilometre.

James Lye managed to get 12 runners together for the inaugural 6 Nations 5K handicap, the idea was to have a drink from each of the 6 nations before doing an 800 metre loop with everyone setting off at different times based on their 5K time. John Smiths (ENG), Kronenbourg (FRA), Guinness (IRE), Moretti (ITA), Merlyn Cream Liqueur (WAL), Famous Grouse (SCO). It was won by Gavin Johnson in a Scotland shirt. No deaths, no arrests, so James counts it as a success.

Rob Bennett found what he called ‘My kind of race’ on holiday when he found a Parkrun start sign and a finish sign just 5 yards apart.

Richard did a race at the end of the year called the Gingerbread Man, the gingerbread man ran for 5 miles but if you could catch him quicker, then you could stop early. Richard caught him at 4.5 miles

In the past, Richard has been known to do a sprint finish to beat kids to a finish line, so when a picture of him emerged at the Avebury 8 looking determined we all assumed he was chasing a child, but no, just a lady from RWB Hounds. Good to see him beating adults.

Richard also did his first ultra this year, the Ridgeway 40; he was less impressed when on the coach to the start I told him that there is a Ridgeway 20 event on the same day, with a later start time so he didn’t need to get up at 4. We’ll call it character building and he joined the Long Distance Walkers Association so must have enjoyed it.

As our chairman he leads by example which must be why there were lots of photos at the White Horse Gallop showing many of our members walking up a big hill.

We get to see lots of photos on Facebook and it’s always a pleasure seeing ones like the river crossing on Over-the-Hills. Some seem to really enjoy it, others not so much.

Although while flicking through Facebook researching for tonight, I was nearly blinded by what can only be described as an Orange explosion from the River run photo.

Now it’s time for a little bit of blue – Be careful what you map on Strava, Katherine Burrett managed an obscene image, although some of our more innocent minded thought it may have been an apron or the start of a drawing of a person. They were wrong though. And it goes very well with the route of the Swindon HM which is two big circles.

And those at Endure will well remember the Hardley Runners logo, check it out on the Facebook Endure 2018 photo album. We are very lucky to have Luke doing our designs.

Jo Motto ran Loch Ness Marathon at end of September in beautiful conditions, at the same time, those of us running around this area of the country were getting very wet, very cold and blown over. Who would have thought that Scotland would be nicer than Wiltshire?

Stewart is no stranger to embarrassment, but I think he really excelled himself by writing his Slaughterford 9 report for the newsletter to the tune of I Fought the Law – check it out.
Dave Mackie has been responsible for organising a great away runs calendar building on those already in place; however things fall down when he’s not in charge. He asked me to put together a route for the Solstice morning run. It all went well up to Little Solsbury Hill, but we did a full loop of the top before backtracking to find the route down and then after Dave took a shorter route back so he could get the bacon cooking, I took us on a magical mystery tour clambering up through some woods to find the top blocked. I’d only recced it 3 weeks previously. Oops!

Again in Dave’s absence, we returned to the Quarryman’s after our November full moon run to find that we’d gatecrashed the pub quiz. Shame it had already started as I’m sure we would have won too.

Although Dave isn’t perfect as much of the talk after the Kingsdown away run was about the stingers (that’s stinging nettles for those non-natives) and how some were taller than our runners.

Damian Hall finished 5th at UTMB, some would say an improvement on his 12th place from 2017. However, stats are all about how you look at them. In 2017, he was 1st vet, in 2018 2nd. In 2017, he was first inov-8 athlete, in 2018 2nd. In 2017 he was first Brit, in 2018 Beth Pascall was 4th lady so technically not first Brit. And worst of all he was not even the first Hall as Hallvard Schjolberg finished one place in front.

At the Great North Run Helen graciously let Mo Farah beat her by a mere 1 hour and 45 minutes, although she was the first CRC runner over the line. It’s all about how you use stats and in fact 42 of our runners managed to be the first (and last) CRC runner on 87 occasions.

It’s a well-established fact that Dave Bethune is awesome, I think we can all agree, but his stock rose even higher with many of our members when he came to a club night in early October armed with 3 boxes of top quality flapjack leftover from the Marshfield Mudlark. Many of our members even set personal bests that night I’m sure.

While waiting for the Cotswold Way Century to start, myself, Craig and Stewart were talking to 3 runners from our friends at Calne Running Club. And one of us (I forget who), jokingly said that we were racing for the title of the real CRC. Unfortunately, none of us finished and one of the Calne runners did so we are now the fake CRC, we’d all like to apologise for letting you all down.

Carl Zalek
One Mile Club

Another big intake in September many of whom were brothers and sisters of existing members. We regularly have 50 to 70 runners. On two occasions there have been 80+ this year. There are 15 families on the waiting list.

Adam Thomas achieved his 200 mile certificate, T-shirt and trophy and had his picture in the local paper. Oscar Zalek is not so far behind and has his 150 mile T-shirt and trophy and has done 177 miles. Bea Yates will soon receive her 150 mile T-shirt and trophy.

In the winter: treasure hunts, the Halloween Spooky run and the Christmas Decorated run are the most popular activities.

In the summer, we are able to use the Corsham School playing fields with many opportunities for games, relays etc.

Many thanks to Carl Zalek, Chris Sapiano, Gill Fox and Pete Allen for all their help throughout the year. It could not be done without them.

Humphry Barnikel

The Chris Hunt Challenge

As I’m getting older I thought I’d set myself some new challenges just for a bit of fun. I’m going to cheat though by running forwards. I’m targeting the marathon world record first which is 3:42:41 for men. The women’s happens to be 4:26:06 for anyone who would like to have a crack at that. The mile is a bit harder at 5:47, it’s a distance I’ve never raced, but may try it just to see how far I’m away from this world record. The women’s mile looks more achievable at 7:34. Anyone else up for this challenge - name your distance and I’ll publish the world record. Just in case I didn’t make myself very clear in what these official records are for - they are for the non-cheating version i.e. for running backwards.

You may think it bonkers that I even thought about this, but there is a reason – I witnessed this a lot in Xishuanbanna in China where the other half comes from. When running along the embankment of the Mekong I saw more runners running backwards, than I did forwards (the unconventional method in China). I tried it, and realised how hard it was, then was intrigued so researched it a little.

On a slightly serious side, there is actually incredible benefit from running backwards, which is mainly for the quad muscles – just try it for two minutes (obviously on a bit of desolate trail where you won’t get ridiculed), and you will feel where it hurts – exactly the muscles that this style of running develops! I expect it’s good for the neck muscle as well for obvious reasons. I wouldn’t recommend including much of this in the weekly routine, but maybe ten minutes or so. Don’t put it on Strava though whatever you do as it will take miles off your total.

I’m wondering if there would be any interest in having an informal race around the park (about 600 metres) after parkrun one day – it would, quite aptly, be called krap nur. It would be fun at the same time as providing some cross-training benefits, along with entertainment for casual park goers and dog walkers.

Chris Hunt
Club Kit


For more details on the new kit - including pictures, sizing and the order process please go to the Club Kit page on our website at https://corshamrunningclub.co.uk/club-kit/

If you have any questions or queries then please email kit@corshamrunningclub.co.uk

**We are still co-ordinating orders for hoodies and jackets. The hoodies have a small embroidered CRC logo on the front and the hoodie in addition to the logo on the front has 'Corsham Running Club' embroidered on the back (Photos show the tops without logos on them).

If you would like to place an order please do so through the website. Orders to be received by 22/02/19 and if you miss the deadline you can go direct to the company 'With Style' Church Street Calne.
The end of the year is always a good point to reflect on the previous twelve months and take stock. So in that vein, I share the picks from my running related reads in the year just past.

**The Runner - Four Years Living and Running in the Wilderness by Markus Torgeby.**
An open, honest and thought provoking account of going backwards in life to move forwards. Markus describes his running journey from talented but pressurised teenage athlete living with an MS-afflicted mother through his escape as a 20 year old to the wilds of Sweden, where he lived as a running recluse for four years, and what he found out along the way.

**The Perfect Distance - Ovett & Coe: The Record-Breaking Rivalry by Pat Butcher.**
I was lucky to grow up during a golden age for British middle distance running when Steve Ovett and Seb Coe duelled it out on athletics tracks around the world, driving themselves onto repeated record achievements. The Perfect Distance is a biography of that rivalry; it is the polar opposite to Markus Torgeby’s book but is no less an inspiring and absorbing read on the effort, dedication and drive required to achieve great things.

**Running Hard by Steve Chilton.**
Running Hard is, like The Perfect Distance, a book about running rivalry in the ‘80s. However, this battle was not fought out on TV screens in front of millions but on the hills, fells and mountains of Britain. In the early eighties, John Wild an international steeplechaser from the Midlands, gate crashed the British Fell Racing scene. The book describes his subsequent head-to-head tussle with Kenny Stewart, an equally gifted athlete born and bred in the Lake District, for the 1983 British Fell Racing Championship. The brilliantly told and insightful story plays out over fifteen races coming down to wire at the final event. Fell Racing is a unique and peculiarly British sport, which this book provides a wonderful and vivid insight to.

**Swoosh - The Unauthorised Story of Nike and the Men Who Played There by J B Strasser and Laurie Becklund.**
Continuing on the historical theme but at the other end of the spectrum from British Fell Running, Swoosh is probably more accurately described as business biography than running book. However, Nike’s story is inextricably linked to the running boom. Swoosh provides a fascinating insight (at least for a person who hides his trainer addiction behind a running hobby) into the evolution of a business behemoth and the characters behind it.

**Running Free - A Runner’s Journey Back to Nature by Richard Askwith.**
If big business biographies and Nike are not your bag then Running Free might be. With its first sentence, “Sometimes I wonder what non-runners dream about.” it had me hooked. All about running for the sheer pleasure of it, and a paean against its commercialisation, Richard Askwith’s evocative writing will help put you in touch with your running roots. Usefully for Corsham runners it also includes tips on how to avoid being stampeded by cows.

Dave Mackie
Away Run Update

**Full Moon Fun.**
The weather has been kind and those who have joined the Club’s monthly away run outings have enjoyed spectacular moonlit, if not warm, conditions.

December and January saw us venture onto new ground (and into new pubs) with runs from The Kings Arms, Monkton Farleigh and The Dumb Post, Bremhill respectively. No one got left behind and both routes offered grand views of the full moon and, due to their elevated position, the Avon Valley. Stewart Unsworth put his navigation demons to one side and ably led the Bremhill adventure without putting a foot wrong or scaring the cows. To cap the evenings off rather nicely, the pubs provided warmth and welcome for weary runners; after all recovery, rehydration and reflection are as important as running!

There are a couple more opportunities to join in with the Full Moon running fun so please do come along and give it a go. They are social runs and it is all about the enjoyment and experience, not the effort. To that end, the intention is to offer a choice of runs, of around 4 and 6 miles, for the February and March editions.

Tuesday 19th February - The White Hart, Ford.
Thursday 21st March - The Neston Country Inn.

**Other Away Run Action.**
Over the Christmas and New Year period the club enjoyed its traditional annual outings around Castle Coombe on Christmas Eve and Slaughterford on Boxing Day. For the former we joined with Chippenham Harriers and other local clubs to run in memory of Lucy Jillings, who was a Chippenham Harrier member who sadly lost her battle with cancer last year. The turnout was fantastic, particularly given the moist conditions.

Also in December, and again with a super turn out of runners, was a belated Breakfast Run from The Quarryman’s Inn. All the groups enjoyed a well earned breakfast back in the warmth of the pub, who did a grand job to get hearty, good quality cooked breakfasts out to 43 hungry folk in short order. The Club’s next breakfast run will be on Sunday 24th March at the White Hart Inn, Ford.
Spring is Around Corner!
The snow drops are out and the daff’s are starting to show, which must mean it is time to think about evening away running in sun rather than moon light. As is tradition, our regular evening away run season will start at Biddestone. Dates for that run and those that follow until the evenings draw in again the other side of summer are provided below. All have the same aim; providing an opportunity for social group runs off road in the wonderful countryside surrounding Corsham, plus post run recovery and banter in a local pub. Runs start at 7pm unless otherwise stated and there will be no organised, led club runs from Springfield on these evenings.

- Thu 11 Apr Biddestone (6.45pm run start)
- Tue 23 Apr Lacock
- Thu 25 Apr Pre Corsham 10km Club Run
- Thu 9 May Yatton Keynell
- Tue 21 May Monkton Farleigh
- Thu 30 May BoA
- Thu 13 Jun For Fox Sake, Broughton Gifford. Local clubs will be invited to join CRC to run in memory of Tom Fox. Prosecco and cake on completion in the Village Hall
- Fri 21 Jun Solstice Sunrise and Sunset Runs (Batheaston, Solsbury Hill and Heddington, Roundway Hill respectively)
- Tue 25 Jun Cherhill
- Thu 11 Jul Pre Hazelbury Hurrah! Club Run
- Thu 25 Jul Marshfield
- Tue 6 Aug Castle Combe
- Thu 15 Aug Bowood
- Thu 29 Aug Dumb Post, Bremhill
- Thu 5 Sep The Quarryman’s (6.45pm run start)

Dave Mackie  
CRC Away Run Co-ordinator  
awayruns@corshamrunningclub.co.uk

Please send all news & articles to:  
news@corshamrunningclub.co.uk
After doing a winter Fan Dance in 2016 - I’ve always loved the Brecon Beacons but I’ve only gotten into hill running in the last 18 months or so. Considering my relative success at the Scafell Skyrace and Ring of Steall sky races in the summer (I survived, I’m counting that as success!) - The Blade Runner Ultramarathon popped up on my radar about September time.

50 kilometres in the central hub of the Brecon Beacons including 2 summits of Pen Y Fan with the first 2 hours run in darkness. In January. Lovely Jubbly! What could possibly go wrong?

Whilst I consider myself a morning person - I will admit the 0410 alarm clock was pretty antisocial. Jo my other half had also volunteered to come and be my support crew and we were both bleary eyed, throwing our kit on and turning the air blue. Thanks to work commitments we hadn’t managed to get to our hotel till gone 10 the night before and as such had to go register on the day - luckily a pretty seamless process even considering the extensive kit check!

Military precision ensured that the scheduled 0600 start time was adhered to. Setting out from the old red phone box by the Storey Arms, a steady climb into darkness begun. Trying not to go too crazy and blow up this early I settle into a steady hike. It’s worth mentioning the weather at this point - it turned out to be probably the nicest it’s been in January in the Beacons for years. Following a stream of head torches up the hill I noticed I couldn’t hear a sound - other than the heavy breathing of other runners and my own persistent tinnitus!

A short descent led to a right turn before a left to begin the climb to the first summit of Pen Y Fan. Entering the cloud base then presented it’s own challenge - freezing fog. What little I could see of my surroundings was beautifully encased in a shell of frost. I wish I could have seen more to be honest as it would have been stunning! It also turned out that the brightness of my head torch was too much as the fog reflected it back at me - dazzling me in the process!!

Checking in at the RV point on top of Pen Y Fan I knew what was coming. I’d done this descent as part of the Cribyn Fell Race last year and loved it but the prospect of doing it in darkness was one that terrified and excited me in equal measure. I’ve learned a lot about downhill running and it turns out that doing it in the dark actually helps me! If anything not being able to see what I’m doing allows me to feel my way on the ground in front of me - rather than over thinking it!

Given we were still running in freezing fog - the paths were incredibly slippery. Luckily there was plenty of open fell to run on and at one point I even hear exclamations of “he’s got the right idea getting off the path!” - truly wonderful fun running at this point!

Some mixed trail and a bit of road led the way to the Gap road. A reasonably famous part of the beacons featuring a rocky but steady climb up to the gap between Cribyn and Fan Y Big. This was laced with its own problems - plentiful patches of Black Ice which my Inov8’s were NOT keen on! Managing to stay upright however I reached the top and met Jo who had agreed to run with me a while.

Climbing up to the summit plateau of Fan Y Big (luckily only another 150 metres or so of climb) we got above the frost line and were greeted by a sparkling white panorama over a couple of the many valleys in this part of the world. Truly an awe inspiring sight!

Summit check point bagged I started the long sweeping descent down to Talybont Reservoir. I’d previously recce’d this part of the route and felt comfortable in the knowledge that this was very runnable terrain. What I hadn’t banked on was the frost melting and making the normally very sticky grass and earth - incredibly greasy. Every time I tried to up the pace I found myself surfing down the hill - my hip flexors and core working overtime to try and keep me upright!
Somehow making it to the bottom without falling over - a marshal handed me a cup of coke and a warm Greggs sausage roll. Certainly a first in my running career but very welcome. It also hit me at this point that I was having a wonderful day out but was barely over halfway! The Blade Runner was not making life easy and had more than one sting in its tail to come!

The third climb was a cheeky summit called Tor Y Foel. Sitting just to the Eastern edge of the central Beacons - this hill looks unassuming on a map. At just 550 metres in height it is somewhat dwarfed by nearby summits such as Cribyn, Corn Du and even Fan Y Big. Unfortunately I was about to discover that it is very much more than just a little hill. A painfully steep ascent on open fell revealed firstly a false summit - then what looked to be a lovely sweeping grassy descent to the trail. Remember what I said about the grass though? Yep this was greasy too. Halfway down I stacked it big time - my left hamstring and right calf both cramping before I’d even hit the ground!!

A few minutes of rolling around in agony later I picked myself up, ate a bit more Mint Cake and hobbled off the hill. That had hurt. A lot. Picking up the trail I set off in search of the next aid station. A mere 10k away on relatively boring trails. I’m not going to lie - this is when it got tough.

My legs were sore where I’d cramped and running hurt in general. I was also starting to feel the cold a little as it was more exposed than I remembered. The company was excellent though with other runners seeming happy to make conversation - helping to distract from the pain of running. This also helped the time pass and before long I hit the final aid station where I refilled on water, coke, sausage rolls and Haribo!

Setting off on more familiar ground I knew I had about a 10k to go - unfortunately it was up and over the biggest mountain in the South of England and Wales. I’d had in mind that I wanted a time of less than 8 hours. I had 90 minutes. It felt doable so I picked up the pace and got cracking.

Unfortunately 45km of fatigue in your legs makes the rocky path around mountains somewhat dangerous. The Roman Road back up to the gap was fine but skirting the side of Cribyn was just lethal. It took all my energy and concentration not to fall over and go rolling down the mountainside!! This was all before the last nasty climb known as Jacob’s Ladder.

Some poor buggers had decided to do this with 35lb on their backs!! Overtaking a few of these guys I felt a bit sorry for them but I certainly wasn’t setting a record pace either! Feeling relieved to reach the summit and hit the last major checkpoint I tried to set off to bring it home. Unfortunately my right knee had other ideas and decided I couldn’t run!! Half hobbling half shuffling my way off the mountain - we passed a gate where Jo met me to run in. Managing to break into a half run I reached the old red phone box once more and collected my finishers patch. 50km of the finest the Beacons had to offer complete in 8 hours and 26 minutes.

I had my first ultra in the bag!

I won’t lie and say I enjoyed every minute of it but it’s taught me a lot about myself. Namely that I seem to be developing an enjoyment of endurance events. I’ve already decided that it’s worth repeating the experiment! I had wanted to attempt a 50 miler in the summer but that will just have to wait for next year I think! In the meantime I reckon I can probably find another hilly 50k to attempt!

Andrew Wood
A Run With No Witty Name

Saturday 6th October 2018.

Having passed twenty years of marriage the annual struggle to find a different and unique anniversary present gets harder and harder. So when serendipity played its hand and Crooked Tracks’ “A Run With No Witty Name”, with the strap-line of “it’s more about buying memories than paying an entry fee”, appeared in my Facebook feed whilst I was desperately searching the internet for anniversary inspiration Sue’s fate was sealed; a 50km autumnal jaunt around Tisbury and the Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was her anniversary gift for 2018.

Unfortunately the weather had not read Crooked Tracks’ marketing and the day of the event dawned with memorable weather of the cool, moist and breezy kind. So following the well worn adage, “there's no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing”, Sue and I donned and battened down our waterproof tops and trousers in preparation for the off. At least heat exhaustion and dehydration would not be a worry.

Due to the late arrival of the event’s medical cover the start was delayed. Not that anyone was too bothered or in much of a rush to leave the shelter of the event marquee and test the quality of their waterproofs.

All good things come to end though and we were soon heading up the first of many hills and immersing ourselves in the character building weather. One benefit of longer races is that pace is slow and permits banter with fellow runners. The field soon spread out and I fell into a loose group, passing the time chatting with half a dozen runners, including the club’s third entrant in the event Danny. Sue won the “best banter of the day” award however, having fallen in step with a professional sex-blogger.

The first six or so miles provided the worst conditions of the day as we headed right into wind driven rain; suffice to say that both morale and waterproofs were tested fully early on. A change in direction, which put the weather on our backs and took us along a lovely ascending drovers’ track, lifted the spirits, if not the dampness, and the first of three checkpoints hove into sight.

And what a checkpoint it was; the unstintingly marvellous marshals had laid on a smorgasbord of food akin to, but better than, a Harvester’s all you can eat buffet. Having recharged with the food of champions (pork pie) for main course, desert was a new one for me; peanut butter and jam wraps. Whilst I will not be rushing to have them as part of my daily lunch menu, they proved excellent fodder for a long run in the rain.

A series of roller coaster undulations eventually lead us into the Vale of Wardour, which hid its delights behind Tolkenesque swathes of mist and moisture. Up to this point navigation had been relatively straight-forward and based on the “follow the runner in front” principle. As I briefly lost sight of other runners and the trail, it became apparent that yellow marker tape was perhaps not the optimum choice for an autumnal event and closer attention to the map would be required from hereon-in.
A Run With No Witty Name

On the up side, a focus on not getting too misplaced provided a welcome distraction from the weather, which was starting to become a little tiring. A craving for more pork pie and wraps kept the legs turning over, and the second checkpoint, which was wonderfully sited outside the impressive ramparts of Old Wardour Castle, duly satisfied it.

I found myself running the next leg, and playing spot the yellow tape, pretty much solo. Thankfully the slumps I had previously experienced when running longer distances never materialised; maybe peanut butter and jam wraps rather than pork pies are the food of champions...

With slightly improving weather and a last minute change of route that slightly reduced the overall distance, a couple of minor navigational derailments did not cause too much consternation on the way to the final checkpoint. Disappointingly it was outside rather than inside the wonderfully rustic Compasses Inn. By this stage I could not do the food on offer any justice and flat cola it was (having resisted the devil on my shoulder pushing for a pint in front of the pub’s fire). Suitably charged by the cola’s sugar high and the marshals’ words of encouragement, I commenced the final leg, which was supposedly known ground having done a social recce of it a couple of weeks previously.

Two weeks is a long time for my goldfish memory at the best of times, and with tiredness setting in too, I was repeatedly pausing at junctions to check the map and make sure I did not go adrift. My legs however remained in reasonable fettle and I found myself in the morale boosting position of not slowing down as much as the other runners around me. As a consequence, and for the first time in the event, I found myself overtaking. When I say overtaking, it was more akin to one lorry passing another lorry uphill on the motorway; an attritional slow motion exercise lasting many, many minutes. It did however help pass the time and made the final miles into the finish almost enjoyable. The final stretch into the finish really was enjoyable as it was a gentle downhill slope right into the welcoming embrace of the marquee containing dry, warm clothes, and food and hot beverages aplenty, plus a unique race memento; wooden dog tags. Marvellous!
The walk back up the finishing slope to retrieve the car was less marvellous. It did however provide an opportunity to cheer in other runners as they enjoyed the gravity aided run into the finish. This included an ever cheerful Sue at the top of the hill, albeit coming from a direction completely the opposite direction to everyone else but that is another story....

About Crooked Trails:
“Crooked” Adjective: not straight or not even; twisted, bent, or uneven.
“Track” Noun: A rough path or road, typically one beaten by use rather than constructed.

Crooked Trails are a not-for-profit ultra running event organisation. They do not keep any of the money paid by entrants to their events. No shareholders, no wages to the Company Director, Chairman, Executives, no staff wages, etc. They are fully supported by and ran by volunteers. Any profit made is passed to their charity partner - Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health NHS Partnership Trust; AKA Headlight.

The weather certainly ensured the first running of Crooked Trails’ “A Run With No Witty Name” was twisted, rough and memorable. That said, the epic checkpoints / all you can eat buffets, ace marshals and a wonderful running route in fantastic Wiltshire countryside means that I do not need to think too much about Sue’s anniversary gift for 2019; it might include new waterproofs and gps navigation though.

Hope to see some other Corsham folk there at the second ARWNWN on 12th October 2019.

Dave Mackie
My Love/Hate of the Marathon

There are many reasons why we run and they are different for each of us. It may be for social reasons, health reasons, a change of life style, to lose weight, to achieve a goal, to get outside, to escape housework etc. etc., or a combination of these. For me it’s several of these. Mostly I would say I enjoy getting out on the trails in the fresh air, seeing new places, and enjoying the comradery of people sharing a common interest.

However when asked the same question about running a marathon, I have in the past been stumped as to why. Especially during training, when going out on my own on a cold rainy Winters morning, running on hard tarmac to do the gruelling lonely 20 mile Long Run with already aching limbs. That’s when you really find it hard to answer the ‘Why’ and find a positive answer.

I think the honest answer is that in certain times in life, I need a challenge. That’s how it came about 22 years ago, when I entered my first marathon. I hadn’t run up to that point, so the difficulty was a complete unknown. The last time I’d broken from a walk to a run was in games at school 18 years previous to this, where I reluctantly and miserably ran around a track. I remember having to run 800m twice around the track and I remember vaguely how difficult and painful the second lap felt. That and a bit of cross country, all hated. However the thought of a marathon still felt quite exciting. I’d seen the London Marathon on TV and thought that was the only marathon in the world where they let Joe Blogs run. I bought a running magazine in WH Smiths, looked through it and was hooked / caught by the bug.

London Marathon

The London Marathon it was. I was probably in my mid-life crisis, and I needed something else. This was at the age of 34, sometime late in 1996 I believe. After entering, I remember joining the Chippenham Harriers (sorry I hadn’t heard of Corsham Running Club back then), and going along to my first club run, actually my first run since reluctantly running around that track as school nearly twenty years earlier. There, at the Harriers, I was actively encouraged, and came back for some more 5 milers around the town. Well I skipped a few club runs, got the London Marathon place, and then sort of forgot about the whole thing for a while - it seemed so far away, far far too far away to start thinking about.

When I mentioned to one or two others at work that I was running in the London Marathon, they sort of decided I couldn't just run it, I'd have to raise money, and so I got on to the Cancer and Polio charity and they sent me a bunch of forms. I wandered around Westinghouse offices, with nearly everyone offering me money to finish. That's when it got scary, pages and pages of sponsors whom I couldn't now let down or go back to and say "oh sorry, I've changed my mind". It got more scary with non-runners asking how far it was, and then saying "what, how far, that's from Chippenham to Bath and back, is that possible?" or more often just giving me a weird look. They would ask me what’s the furthest I've ever run, and look puzzled when I said "5 miles". Back then it was quite rare and abnormal to run a marathon. Nobody I came across had run a marathon back then, and I did start to panic and wonder if I'd done the right thing. Perhaps I should have started with a 5K, a 10K, or even a Half Marathon, but no, it didn't have that same ring to it. The reality of what I'd dropped myself in to, sort of shocked me.

Marathon Training

November came around, and I thought I'd better now take it more seriously, I was galvanised into action by the panic of impending doom. I got prepared, I invested in a stopwatch, went out in the car and chalk marked mile markers, then started timing a mile. After a few weeks I decided that wasn't really adequate training, so I started attending Tuesday and Thursday club runs on a regular basis, and joining a few runners for a long Sunday run. They are still around - Colin Morris and Ian Wiggins, there was another who was a postman whose name I cannot recall (Not CRC Stewart, as he wasn't yet born). The former two were both running in London and going for a time of 3:30, so I thought what the heck, I'd aim for 3:30 - really it wasn't a shock as that time, luckily, as the time meant absolutely nothing to me. The time wasn't based on a calculation of current form or fitness as I didn't really have either of those. It was just copied. I had no plan, just followed others. By January I remember running 12 miles and thinking "ok yes, this is so easy, it's just a little over double what I've just done – how hard can that be". That's not what I really thought, what I actually thought of course was "Oh hell I've got to run more than double what I've just run, when in fact I couldn't have run another mile, what on earth am I to do". Soon after this I got a pain in one of my feet. Went to Doctor Williams (the one who had a punch-up with another doctor in the waiting room), whom was about 80 at the time, and he diagnosed shin splints. I remember clearly to this day his exact words - "You will never run again, but you are lucky, if you were a horse you'd be put down". I got the impression it was a sort of "serves you right for running, why would you do that" type of attitude.
My Love/Hate of the Marathon

Thanks doc for the complete rubbish advice! And as you do, I took absolutely no notice and hobbled and ran through it until it didn’t seem to be the main problem anymore. The main problem then becoming chest pain, and a sciatic nerve pain, and a massive struggle to run half the speed I’d run up to this point. It was the lack of a training plan together with building up too quickly.

Apart from the shin splints, the sciatica, and chest pain, and three weeks out of action, training was going smoothly and by the end of March I’d completed a run along the A4 from Marlborough to Chippenham (yes, I know, so uninspiring), and the club canal run, both about 20 miles, and both on which I felt like I’d nearly died. They were a lot slower than target pace, but I thought that I could only get faster by the time D-day came along a couple of weeks later. Had no idea about tapering so managed to get some valuable last minute training in.

The Flora London Marathon 1997

Suffice to say, D-day came too quickly, we made our way to London, got in the pen with thousands of other bewildered and equally confused and unexperienced runners. No chip timing of course back then, the gun went, and nobody seemed to move for a good 10 minutes which of course got added to your time. Nobody had told me about this, and the plan was sort of already unravelled because of this, but after the first 20 crowded minutes, everything got going, and the miles ticked off so easily, just slightly over the required eight minutes per mile for a good 11 or 12 miles. It then got tougher, and slowing down mile by mile the target completely slipped out of the window. A revised target of 3:40, then 3:45 popped in to my head over the next 4 or 5 miles. Then it was just a case of wanting this thing finished with. Well just when you think you’ve hit the bottom with exhaustion, a strange thing happened, a thing that is not supposed to happen, a thing that ought not to happen in the worst case scenario until you reach 20 odd miles - you've guessed it and you've done it, it's the dreaded WALL. Legs went to jelly, weighed 3 tonnes each, cramp set in and kept sending bolts of pain down either leg, and I just wanted to sit on the floor and stay there, actually to be more precise I wanted to lie down and take every bit of weight off my body and stay there for the rest of the day. But on we went.

All said and done, we walked, ran, walked, limped, and cried/laughed to the finish, each encouraging the other as much as we could, all being in the same pain-boat. I finished the marathon and that was glory enough. The time of 4 hours and 15 minutes was immaterial; I was in another world celebrating my success. Even when my partner of the time waiting patiently at the end, told me I was beaten by the man with one leg, my spirit wasn't dampened, I was A MARATHON RUNNER, I was euphoric. It sounds odd, but despite the hardship and pain, I would not have foregone this experience, and would recommend to anyone to run a marathon.

Never Again

Anyone who has run a marathon, knows that in the seconds that follow the crossing of the finish line for the very first time, the words you utter over and over again, are "NEVER EVER EVER AGAIN!", and you truly mean it – why would you want to anyway, as you’ve proved you can do it. Obviously by the time you have got to the pub and downed the first pint, you are planning the next one, and analysing where you went wrong, convincing yourself it wasn’t that hard, and how you would beat your time for a PB. I hadn’t even heard of the term PB up until then. But that is where the target of a sub-3:30 got permanently burned in to my brain.
My Love/Hate of the Marathon

More Marathons, more disappointment
So I started my routine. I’d run a marathon, rest completely for nine months, then take up running again for the three months leading up to the next marathon. My target was fixated in my head - 3:30, “I can do it, 3:30”. It became a mantra during the nine month off-season. The following year I was close, at 3:39 in London again. Subsequent years I ran Singapore, South Coast, and Beijing, it just fitted in, as I was working in those places. However my times slipped and slipped and I blamed it on age catching up on me, and the last marathon was over 4 hours. I was 40 after all and at that time I believed that was quite old to be attempting such foolish goals. I then packed marathon running in realising it wasn't possible to get a PB any longer, it wasn’t worth the pain of those long winter months training, but it did irritate me and over the years it bothered me and was often in the back of my mind.

OK, one last go
Many years later in 2010 and approaching 50, and another mid-life crisis, I decided that if others my age can do it then, is it not impossible for me to run a sub 3:30 marathon. So I decided not to have nine months off every year, and I’d do it properly using all the information, nutrition, and gadgets that was now available to help me. I read book after book about marathon training, I ran stupid miles for two years, raced every race as training, and slowly got faster and faster, eventually coming third in the Chippenham Old Peoples league in 2011, and with my confidence at an all-time high, I entered the most pancake flat marathon I could find - Abingdon.

Crushed Dream
Have you guessed yet, I didn’t get my sub 3:30 in Abingdon. It was a major disappointment as I had put so much in to this dream, built up to this for so long, and it felt so really hard, I couldn’t have gone faster on the day, I did hit the wall again. I was shattered and broken. The consolation of a PB at 3:37 didn’t really give me joy. I think my face in the picture below says it all - despair. The thought of ever running a marathon again gone for good. I put my sensible hat on, and accepted that my dream was over, I wasn’t capable of running that fast or prepared to go through all that again for such a silly dream. I was on form and couldn’t do it, thus it just wasn't meant to be. In a way it was a relief as I could put away the dream for good now, it was over, case closed.

It turned out to be a godsend, as it got me to look at what else there was away from road running, and my next move in avoiding long distance, avoiding fast running, and avoiding road. It turned out to be trail running, which inevitably led on to guess what, long distances, in the form of ultra running, which I have to say is infinitely more enjoyable and I've had some incredible experiences on that front, including two failed attempts at running 100 miles and a few DNF's on 50 mile ultras in the Brecons during winter. A pattern seems to be emerging here doesn't it?
2018 Renewed Dream
Roll on six years to 2018, twenty-one years after my first marathon, and I have had a renewed enthusiasm for club events including road racing, trail events and parkrun especially. Suddenly my form seemed to improve from a deep troth, mainly on its own, effortlessly and unexpectedly I have to say. I think that is partly the result of forgetting about competitiveness and just enjoying running. I ran my first half marathon for a long long time at under 1:45. The previous year I was hitting about 1:50 for halves. I did some maths and realised that twice 1:45 is 3:30. My average parkrun time is a tad over 25 minutes, a marathon being 8.4 parkruns, and guess what 8.4 times 25 minutes is 3:30. You might be lost by now, but what any mathematician will tell you, this logically means that all I have to do is maintain my average parkrun racing speed for three and a half hours, or do two consecutive half marathons at my current average half marathon race pace, and da da da dah, I CAN RUN A 3:30 MARATHON. Running the same maths through the race time predictor calculators comes out with a different number, around 3:49 to 3:55, but these are obviously all completely wrong and misleading and can be ignored.

2019 Brighton Marathon
So with this list of figures to hand, I have entered my final and last last last ever marathon, the Brighton Marathon in April this year. I have a plan, I will run 8 minute miles throughout the race. Ideally I would run slightly faster, thus giving myself a buffer for the last dreaded 6 miles, but I just can’t run much faster than this as it wears me out much too quickly and I won’t then reach the end, so an even paced marathon at a slightly uncomfortable pace it has to be. It will be the classic two halves of the race, the first half being 20 miles and probably achievable if everything clicks on the day, then the second half of the marathon, the final six miles which I’m hoping against all odds I can get through at the same pace. It’s usually where my pace falls off a cliff, but this time around I cannot let it, and am training appropriately to give myself the best possible chance to avoid that.

Training is going well, running marathon pace for more than 10 miles is still a struggle, but I’ve done it a few times now and remain optimistic, and also realistic - I probably have a 25% chance of getting my target time of 3:30. If I fail, that will surely be it, never again ha ha, how many times have I said it, but age is genuinely catching up with me now and I need to put this one to bed or forget it and move on to other challenges. For 22 years I’ve dreamt of a sub 3:30 marathon. It will happen or it won’t happen. Sorry to miss off the end of this story, but I will let you know the result surely enough. If I succeed in my sub 3:30 it will be all pasted all over Facebook, on every running forum, mentioned at every meet-up, and the photographs and proof will be permanently displayed in my house. If I fail however, the news may be released in a slightly more subdued manner - i.e. in the back of a disused filing cabinet in a basement of a locked office on a small remote island on the planet of Ursa Minor. I will also go into hiding.

So you see, my motivation currently is mainly driven by a tough target. If you are lacking motivation to run for whatever reason, I can’t recommend strongly enough, enter an event that will challenge you a bit more than just the next step would, then start to worry/panic about it. It’s exciting, occupies your mind, drives you to get fitter, and it works in breaking a period of staleness/boredom. Winter is a good time to do this for me as that’s when it’s hardest to get out the door without a really good reason!

Happy Running!

Chris Hunt