

Equinox 24 17/18th September

By Mark Halstead

"The daftest thing to do sober."

On a very wet and windy weekend in September, 22 hardy souls descended on Belvoir castle near Grantham, to compete in Equinox 24. Equinox is a 10k relay race, where your team runs for 24 hours.

We all started assembling Camp Wrekin, which would be our home for the next 48 hours.

Our camp was a few feet from the course, and if we listened to certain members we would have been camped on the course. The rest of the afternoon was spent assembling tents and the most complicated gazebo known to man, took 5 of us to put it up while being directed by Helen, Sarah and Polly. The kitchen that Polly set up was better than the one I have in my house, and the food she produced was amazing.





Darren and Carl, did the beer run, which was down a drink then run about 1km around the camp in the dark. We just shout Darren, Darren, Darren, till he passed, then chanted Carl at every one until he ran past.

The rest of the evening involved lots of cake, drinking beer and laughter.

Saturday we all woke up to more wind rain and the thought of running for 24 hours in the monsoon did not appeal. I thought we were going to drown. At about 10am the rain stopped and the wind dropped as predicted by our fantastic weatherman Dave L. We wandered up to the start to cheer on the first of our intrepid adventurers. At 12 noon the race started from then on each one of our teams would have a runner out for the next 24 hours.

The course was a lovely 10k, with two hills 'Not that hill' which was a long slow incline, and 'That Hill' which was a short, sharp, step hill from hell. There was a hydration station about 5Km at the top of Not that hill.



For the first lap we all stood, clapped and cheered every one that passed, each runner making their way in plenty of time to receive the baton. Except for Damian, who waited too long and had to race Megan to the start, to get the baton from her...

The hours ticked by more laps were run. Apparently shouting only 17 hours to go was not the done thing.

As the light started to fail, the course was amazing, only bobbing head torches everywhere. We grabbed a few hours' sleep between laps. Although I was rudely awakened at 2:30am by a Welsh man cheers Mark G...

The night laps were fab, through the mist by the lake, watching the sun come up over the trees and cheering on tired runners.

The final Lap was run by David Issac when he passed camp we all ran the last 200 yards with him to try and cross the line as the group. David is very very very very fast, and his run to the finish nearly killed us. Poor Lesley had to sprint in flip flops.

There were some amazing solo runners that was fantastic to see There were 3 chaps that stood out, Sid in morph suits, and Phillip Box with a Tumble Dryer on his back and a bloke raising money for Help for Heroes' who did 12 laps in full army gear including an 18kg back pack.

Our Hero was Helen who stepped up to help out. Helen had never ran more than a 5km before and did her first 10km.. We managed to get her interviewed as she crossed the line. Sorry.

The camping and photos are included in the price. The atmosphere was fantastic, every one cheered everyone on. All this was to the chant of 'one more lap'. Between the 3 teams and 22 runners we did 76 laps, which was a massive 760Km or 471 miles, on no sleep fuelled on cake. When I woke Monday morning after 12 hours sleep, stairs were not my friend.

Are we doing it again, HELL YES. Already sorting teams for next year... Step up and join us.

PITCHING TENTS
WEEKEND WITH FRIENDS
SUNSET, SUNRISE, GLO STICKS



HEADLAMPS BOBBING
RUNNING IN THE DARK
CASTLE VIEW, MISTY FIELDS

24 HOUR



RUN



CROSSING THE FINISH

EQUINOX

SPITFIRE 10K - RAF COSFORD - 4th September 2016

By Christy Blackwell

The 4th of September saw a fantastic turnout from Wrekin as we took the opportunity to do a little something different. Following a successful 10k race the previous year down south RAF Cosford hosted the Spitfire 10k. A great local race for us to take part in.

The day was dry but windy. This was to help keep us cool as we pounded the tarmac. We had a fab morning as we all met up to collect numbers and get ready. The safety briefing took part in hangar 1 by James Mays Spitfire. We were warned the Runway was technically still open and to watch out for landing jets !!!

Excited, we gathered at the start line. This was a 10k with a difference. We were doing a looped out and back taking in the Main Runway. Not every day you get to run up and down a main military Runway complete with the sound of gun fire going off in the background.

A big shout out to Kathy Ling who ran both Cosford and the London Spitfire in on consecutive days.

Some really good times were posted and i think it was safe to say we were all super impressed with our bling. It was pretty flat course allowing for a good P.b if you were after one

This is a definite on the 10k race list next year.. its really well organised and well supported..



Ffestiniog Railway Race Sept 2016



Waiting for the train

By Donna Howells

Last year I went on a weekend trip and stayed near Black Rock sands and loved it. We said we'd go back so that we could go up on the steam railway in Porthmadog, as time hadn't allowed. Then with some other club members, including Sally, I entered Snowdonia

Marathon. This would be our 2nd go at it. So I looked for a half for our training and found this race. Sally thought it would be a good idea. So we entered.

Then I spent 8 months on 2 wheels and going to club most Tuesday's just to keep the running ticking over...

Race day finally arrived and the excitement of going on a steam train left me feeling rather calm about the whole thing, considering since my cycle challenge I had not done enough of my run training due to a poorly ankle. I had done 1 Wrekin run and one bottom to the top run. However this race was running downhill, easy, right?

I met Sally in the carpark... She was still getting her kit on in her van. I for once was a little more organised having been able to pick up my number the night before along with goody bag including Tshirt, bottle of Purple Moose Ale, bottle opener and 9bar pumpkin seed bar. We went over to the railway where we caught the train up to the start. The journey took about 1hr 10 and family and friends were also allowed to travel up and then back down following the runners for a 1/3rd of the price.

On the train journey I convinced Sally to run with me.... I wanted to AV. Around 6.11 per km. Sally agreed, much to my astonishment however she obviously was respecting the downhill race terrain!!



Sally didn't know at this point Darren thought she was from New Zealand! We had one guy approach us asking if we had left Kathy Ling at home, which made us smile. The train actually counted us down to the off and sounded his whistle and we were on our way.... Starting off on a Tarmac incline and then down towards a sty. Which we had to queue to get over. Already before the 1st km I knew my AV. Pace was not going to happen. Sally leading the way on the slippery downs, her Wrekin runs and earlier Race the Train paying off and I was pacing us the best I could on the straights and ups, yes this was a downhill race with many ups.

So there was only one thing for it, enjoy the views.... Which were fantastic, this was a really challenging race. We got to the 1st water station and I need a loo stop so Sally carried on but I soon caught her, even though she'd left a message with the Marshall to say she was way ahead, ha!

The organisation was brilliant, really well sign posted even I couldn't get lost and friendly and enthusiastic marshals, even though they all kept saying it's all downhill from here, as were the train staff... The feed stations were well stocked (although they had forgotten the electrolytes, oops)

We ran through mud; across bridges, stepped through streams, descended steep declines, every corner we turned seemed to include another incline to climb. We could

hear the train and even smell it for most of the race. We even climbed ladders?? To get from one field to another.

We both thought after seeing a Garmin Profile of the race that it was in fact only 12.2 m which kept us going so we were complexed when a marshal said not far now only 2.5 miles to go!! We both quickly did the maths I knew that meant actually it was measuring 13.5?!? However we could also work out we were also very close to sea level.

We got back to Tarmac and we actually began to pick up our pace, however the wind did too, after a long pavement section we crossed the road climbed some steps and we were on the rail track running towards the finish area, my feet were hurting, however I think we crossed the line smiling both together in 02:52:51

The organiser congratulated and mispronounced our name which Sally made sure she corrected.... He'd ran a fell race up the Wrekin too.

There was only 155 in the race and we took 123rd and 124th place. We were pleased not to be last, we didn't fall and looking forward to Snowdonia being much easier than our training run !!

We celebrated in the pub. Would we do it again, we both said no, but I'm sure I've said that before..... However I must train on the fells, eek

Copenhagen Half Marathon - 18th September 2016



Had my arm twisted by Jenny to write this, so here goes, first ever race report!

After marrying into a Danish family many years ago, the prospect of running a half marathon was too good to resist. Jenny had already booked her spot and after a quick call to my daughter, we had entered too.

We arrived in Copenhagen at lunchtime after a very early start. Jenny had already made friends with the elite athletes and race compere at her luxurious hotel.

We dumped our bags and headed to the expo. It was well organised, easy to find and locate numbers. The t shirts were on display, men's and ladies fit, and you were able to try for sizes. It all boded well for Sunday.

A 11 o'clock start was perfect, not up at the crack of dawn, and enough time for breakfast to settle.

Easy to find the start, just follow the hoards of people on the already closed roads.

Amazingly after arriving just a few minutes later we bumped straight into Jenny. Not bad seeing as there were 22,500 runners plus all the families and supporters. We had a photo opportunity and wished each other well for the run.

I had made the decision to run with becky and we were going to enjoy the experience together. Although the opportunities for PBs were there for the taking. A flat course and pacers for every 5 minute finishing times. You could really go for it.

I have to say the streets were packed with support from start to finish. The music zones were brilliant with everything from rock, brass bands, opera, children choirs and hip hop blasting out. The hydration stations were plentiful and well stocked with water, high 5 energy drinks, fruit and water showers.

It was great hearing "Hazel Nielsen, I'm coming to get you". Jenny had had a great run and caught us up from starting in the wave behind. Fabulous running Mrs Harrower!

We kept her in our sights as she ran ahead and I encouraged Beck to start to pick off a few people in front so we could all finish together. And we did, all 3 of us, hand in hand. What a great run it was.

The post race experience was just as good as the pre race experience.

A lovely medal, water, protein drink and snacks, Danish pastries, fruit, massage area, yoga area and Beer!!! All free! And equally important, lots of space to relax and soak up more atmosphere.

Would I do it again?

Absolutely, I'm already saving my £2 coins!

Jenny's time 2:27

Hazel (and Becky) 2:30

Womens Running 10k 2016 series

By Jo Cartwright

Sorry guys, but this one is strictly just for the ladies.... As I'm sure many of you will have seen the Women's Running Magazine, have hosted a series of 5 and 10k races all over the country. These are women only races, set in city parks.

Back in July Hazel and I ran in the Liverpool Sefton Park one, a lovely sunny summer morning with around 800 ladies running in either 5 or 10k race. It was well organised, well supported and in a lovely city park setting. The race was chip timed. There were pacers at 5 minute intervals, for those chasing a pb but generally the atmosphere was non

competitive, supportive and great fun. After a fun warm up, we were off the course was relatively flat, with 5k loops, well positioned water stations, cheering supportive marshalls, interestingly these were all men....

We both enjoyed the run, although I found it a bit tough in the warm sunshine, but we finished happily holding hands to big cheers from the supportive crowd. Goody bags, medals, and tee shirts gathered, we were thrilled to be rewarded with a glass of bubbles to toast our efforts. Time for a mooch on the few trade stalls, obligatory selfie and a big ice cream before going off to spend a day in the sunshine.

Hazel & Jo's time 62.32

Cannon Hill 10K - 18th September 2016

September 18th, and I was this time in Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, meeting up with Amanda Ellis. Again a nice morning although a bit cooler to start, a nice morning to run.

Again, well signposted within the park, chip timed and pacers as before. This was a lot smaller than Liverpool, just around 250 ladies between the 2 distances. Maybe not as well organised but was fine didn't cause any issues. A couple of trade stalls, and stands to shop at if you fancied.

After a quick warm up, we were off the course was very varied, Tarmac paths within the park, muddy trails through woods, and a couple of grass fields. Quite flat but a couple of uphill stretches and hump back bridges to negotiate. Water station available but badly positioned and not very well organised handing out bottles, good support from park users and family supporters alike. We both got over the 10k distance so not sure it was that accurately measured, but that didn't affect us too much. There was a 5k option too, although only a few entered this with a winning time of 29 min, I wished I'd taken that option, I might of won!! and would of only had to negotiate my nemesis of running the off road once. Nevertheless we made it round and both finished quite strong. Again same goody bag, medal and tee shirt. Pics taken, we said our farewells and Mart and I went off to partake in coffee and very nice cake in the park coffee shop and Amanda to celebrate with ice cream. No bubbles in Birmingham, but a nice relaxed supportive run.

Our times

62.18 for Amanda

65.36 for Jo

Overall, this series is quite expensive, saying that I found my entry in groupon. But a nice feel to a different kind of race without the chaps, look out for it next year all over the country.



Lichfield 10k - Sunday 11th September 2016

by Caroline Pollock

Clear blue skies but a crisp morning greeted us on race day. We arrived with plenty of time to soak up the atmosphere and collect our very bright t-shirts.

The race started from King Edward VI Leisure Centre. My friend and I stood in the 50 minute plus area and kept a keen eye on the 50 minute pacer - there were a number of pacers ranging from 40 minutes up to 65 minutes, clearly visible with big flags attached to rucksacks on their backs !!! The count down began and we were off - the 50 minute pacer was off like a rocket!!!! We went down the town in the opposite direction to the cathedral and managed to catch up with pacer - he'd obviously gone off to fast lol. For the first 4k we kept up with him until we hit a hill that seemed to go on for ever!! At the 5k point the timer clock said '25:00', it definitely felt fast. Tired legs started to set in but as we entered housing estates people on the side of the roads cheered us on which was a great help. The 2nd 5k didn't seem to go so fast and I remember seeing the 7k marker and thinking that surely that should be 8!! Another short hill was on our route around 7k, which wasn't too bad, then it was fairly flat going back into town. A board showed that we had 400m to go, which was all uphill back to the leisure centre and then across the field to the finish line.

There were a total of 981 runners and the organisation seemed to be spot on. When you finished you got a very nice medal, t-shirt (if not collected already), banana and water. There was also the opportunity to view your provisional times. Around the route there were lots of marshals, water at 5k and as your name was printed on your race number it was great to have people shouting out your name as you went around.

I finished in 51 minutes 30 seconds, a new 10k PB and in 335th place.

I would recommend this race if you like a route that, as the paperwork said, is 'generally undulating with some hills'.

Great North Run 11th September 2016

By Jo Cartwright



Having entered the ballot back in the dark days of winter, and against the odds making it through and getting a place in the Worlds biggest half marathon, a few weeks of training and the day was finally here. I was lucky to have run it back in 2014, with Hazel and Lorraine alongside me for company, but this time I was flying solo.

I'm sure you've all watched it on tele for years, but the atmosphere and experience really does take some beating. To set off alongside the worlds best, the well known celeb, and the thousands of amazing people all with a story raising millions of pounds for charity. All running the same 13.1 miles, every inch of it lined with cheering crowds.

So having caught the metro to the start, dropped my bag in the baggage bus, queued for that last min loo and got into the right pen. All that's seems an achievement with 54,000 others doing the same. The weather was warm, maybe too warm bright sunshine.

Obligatory warm up done, and 28 minutes behind Mo, I was off. Next stop South Shields... Trying not to get caught up in going too fast to start, trying to stick to what I know will get me through, and taking in the great vibes I'm at Tyne Bridge, wave to cameras, chat to anyone and everyone. I was running for Anthony Nolan, suddenly fellow runners are your

new best friends. Most of the run is on dual carriage way, although with the amount of runners sharing your space it does seem crowded, great fun but maybe not one for a Pb too much congestion. Miles are ticking away, sun still shining, past my charity cheering points, they make you feel like the winner the encouragement was amazing. As you'd expect, lots of water and lucozade stations, a shower or too if you fancy a cool down, and just miles of people cheering you on, calling your name, high 5ing you, offering everything from oranges, to jelly babies to a small beer, at mile 10!!! I did this time take a tiptop from a lovely family at mile 11, by then I was more than ready for a cool down, that mile 11-12 is hard, but rewarded with a steep downhill, to the final mile along the seafront. Well chuffed I'd made it in time to spend my last mile watching the Red Arrows display over the sea, lots more waving and big smiles the finish is in sight.... A very welcome sight after 13.1 sunny miles, would do it all over again just for the experience, the fab people you meet and just so as you can say you were there running with Mo and his mates. Best bit this year I made the TV, twice in the highlight programme, looking remarkably smiley after a fab Geordie Day.

So for all those thinking about it just do it, enter the ballot, it's quite a tough race a few hilly stretches, but one you won't regret, yes it's quite expensive but well worth the money for the people that just make you feel amazing . You need to be organised with your transport plans, and meeting your folks afterwards, there are lots of options for accommodation and loads of online tips n hints. But do it you'll be buzzing like I am still.

My time 2hrs 24 but it not about time it's the experience

Switzerland Marathon Light (Half Marathon) - 4th September 2016

Report by Allison Haycox

It all started during an Easter visit to my friend Lorna in Switzerland – “Why don’t you and Manda come over later in the year and we can all run a half marathon together?” It all sounded so promising until she dropped the bombshell... no medal!!! I was convinced this would be the deal breaker as Manda covets the bling. She hadn’t been to Switzerland though and this was an ideal opportunity - the flights were quickly booked before she had a chance to change her mind.

Several months later, we’re in Switzerland preparing our race bags with the usual wet wipes and oversized jogging bottoms to be told there would be changing rooms and shower facilities. “Aren’t there usually showers at UK races?” asks Lorna.....errrm no!

We met three other members of Lorna’s running club at the local train station and departed exactly on schedule (not like our 2hr easyJet delay!) and although the journey involved two changes, the six of us managed to sit together all the way to Sarnen. A very different experience to travelling from Telford to the Birmingham Half by train....

On arrival in Sarnen things started to get a bit surreal. We were directed from the train station by French mime artists waving madly, making repeated running gestures and pointing us towards the starting area. We collected our race numbers, race t-shirts and dumped our bags in the changing rooms (yes, they really had changing rooms!) and PROPER toilets, with loo roll, as well as the odd portaloos thrown in for good measure. There was also a separate area to drop off valuables.

Unfortunately we missed Lorna at the start line as she went off to do some serious warm up exercises involving intervals and other painful sounding stuff with her club coach (we politely declined their offer to join them in favour of a few knee lifts and a gentle jog!). Our block was due to start at 11:04, just after the faster runners starting at 11:00. Unsurprisingly at exactly 11:04, our group progressed to the start line.

It was a great atmosphere and for the first 4½ miles everything was going well. I don't know whether it was the heat, the humidity, the altitude, or the fact that I'd not been feeling too well during the week but at 5 miles I began to question whether I would actually finish. I was desperately thirsty all the time and couldn't get my breathing sorted. Although we had planned to take the race at a steady pace, I was already struggling and reassured Manda that she should go on ahead and leave me to bumble along. Slowing down, I realised I had other more pressing concerns. I don't do alfresco peeing and besides, I was worried I'd be breaking some strict Swiss by-law. All of my worries disappeared at the water station at 10k as I spotted the welcome sight of a blue box. Not the TARDIS (which would have been useful in getting me to the finish line), but a wonderful portaloo – relief! After regaining my composure, I still found it a struggle to run, but decided to settle into a walk/run routine and relaxed and enjoyed the route.

So what's so special about the Switzerland Marathon Light? Well here are some of the highlights:

- Stunning scenery (big lake, open fields, snow-capped mountains, pretty villages)
- Local bands along the route playing everything from modern pop to cellos, accordions, bagpipes (!) and alpine horns (my personal favourite)
- The biggest cow bells I've ever seen (Jennifer Harrower, you must get one!) being rung using the knees.
- An archway of enormous cowbells strung across the road.
- Continuous yells of "hopp, hopp, hopp". (We later learned this meant go, go go!)
- Loads of support and encouraging comments (I'm assuming they were encouraging as I couldn't actually understand any of them!)
- Did I mention the stunning scenery...?

All this meant that although I was struggling along, the whole experience was amazing. An added bonus was that the race photographers had a large flash on a pole so you could see where they were positioned before you reached them. This meant I had chance to break into an athletic run as I approached so hopefully there is no photographic evidence of me taking a gentle stroll.

With only a mile and a half to go I was determined to run all of the last stretch. Luckily, Lorna's coach had already warned us that the start line wasn't the finish, but that we'd continue through it and run into the sports track around the corner. As I ran through the starting arch, the announcer called out "Allison Haycox, Telford, Grande Bretagne". While I contained myself to grinning like an idiot, Manda confessed that when her name was announced she raised her arms to the adoring crowds.... I was so glad we had been prepped as we passed through at least 2 more finish-line looking archways before finally reaching the actual one.

Knowing I was the last to finish out of our group I was just slightly miffed there no one was there to meet me so I consoled myself by helping myself to all the freebies on offer.... A sports bottle (not quite the same as a medal!), Rivella (the national drink of Switzerland, made from milk whey – weird but nice), non-alcoholic Erdinger and an apple. After wandering around looking for everyone I did the sensible thing and went to pick up my

mobile phone – no one else had theirs switched on. After a bit more wandering I finally had a call from a slightly hysterical Manda. “Are you ok, did you finish?” Somehow they had both managed to miss me at the finish and had been jogging back along the route looking for me while I was enjoying the freebies...

We headed off for a paddle in the lake to cool our aching legs and further admire the stunning scenery. We then made use of the shower facilities, which by now were a bit cold but still surprising clean given their usage, before soaking up the atmosphere and grabbing some well-earned potato wedges.

Overall, this race can be summed up as both my worst and favourite half marathon. Although I ran like a bag of spanners, I absolutely loved it! I realised that day that running is not just about the clock – it’s about fantastic friends, meeting new acquaintances and amazing new experiences.





Birmingham Half Marathon - 15th October 2016

By Sarah Green

Wrekin invade Brum!

Heading towards Birmingham on the fun bus in the driving rain I will admit my enthusiasm was lingering somewhere between taking the car for an MOT and visiting the dentist. Taking refuge in a coffee shop it wasn't until I looked round I realised I was the only one running who hadn't set off for the start line but with over an hour till my race start the lure of coffee and croissants was too strong to resist. In the end the race gods were merciful and it dried up by the time I shuffled off into my starting pen. As usual it took a while to move forward to the start and the first couple of miles were crowded but most seemed to be in the right wave as I didn't get stuck behind anyone (or hold anyone up I hope!) My only gripe was the amount of runners with head phones in, very hard to navigate round someone who can't hear anything that's happening around you!

I love this run, it's got a great atmosphere, music and bands on the sidelines, random families coming out of their homes offering refreshment, use of their facilities (!) playing the eye of the tiger on their stereos and the hill just adds to the challenge. In spite of there being nearly 40 runners from the club I only saw a couple, Donna who grimly informed me she'd gone off too quick, a wave from Darren on the loop back and Chrissy who breezed past

me fresh as a daisy at 10 miles. I did apologize for telling her the hill wasn't that bad when I saw her at the endit'd been a year I forgot!

It was getting warmer as we went on and I was struggling as we hit the 10 mile marker. A huge rowdy cheer from our amazing support group on the flyover halfway up the long drag gave me a huge boost which lasted until I turned the corner to another hill, shorter but steeper. But the end was nearing, I could hear the announcer and smell the chocolate waiting for me in my goodie bag. A few runners were sitting or lying on the pavements, that last hill and the heat had taken its toll on some. Another mile and there's the 400m sign, then the 200m....longest 200m ever!

Absolutely wiped by the finish and then off to get changed and meet up with the others for a well earned pint.

This was my fourth year, it's the first race I ever did so will always have special meaning for me. I will be back again in 2017 though the course change will no longer include the hill which is a shame (though I didn't think that on Sunday!)

Massive well done to everyone some really great times. Special mention to those half marathon first timers and a really big thank you to everyone who gave up their time on a Sunday to stand in the cold for hours and cheer us all on. Fantastic support. Fantastic club!

Alec Hough 01.33.34
Damien Whitehead 1.40.11
Ashley Cartwright 1.40.32
Darren Owen Jones 1.40.50
David Davies 1.41.59
Johnathon Smart 1.47.33
Sarah Green 1.49.30
Christine Symms 1.49.40
Megan Owen Jones 1.50.07
Stephen Williams 1.52.00
Rob Lampitt 1.52.47
Craig Teckoe 1.53.22
Steve Compton 1.54.24
Elaine Gerrard 1.54.48
Andy Jones 1.55.41
Robin Hartley 1.59.46
Donna Howells 2.00.22
Christy Blackwell 2.01.20
Kelly Jones 2.01.38
Jon Shore 2.01.55
Megan Do Toit 2.01.55
Rebecca Owen Jones 2.03.36
Rob Hurley 2.05.57
Jane Kind 2.07.20
Sally Withington 2.07.26
Warren Smith 2.14.28
Amanda Ellis 2.18.28
Dan Lewis 2.18.49
Nicola Cooper 2.20.06
Debra Hickman 2.21.02
Sharron Warren 2.21.41
Debbie Gwynne 2.25.06
Amanda Taylor 2.28.58
Laura Mackinnon 2.33.04

Julie Kaur 2.34.26
Stacey Paskin 2.34.33
Caz Millward 2.48.17
Joanne Carswell 2.56.01





Cross Country - Mold - 14th October 2016



By Stephen Gill

As I am always nagging people for race reports so here's mine.

For those that are new to club a bit of history.

I had been injured since 25th January 2015 and all last year had to support many a race but also my beloved Cross Country. Don't ask why but I just love it. Mud, sweat, rain, cold afternoons, more mud, hills and more sweat – what more is there to like.

As race day comes around I am an excited puppy.

We head out to Mold and the journey only takes 1.15hrs so reasonably short. We see Sally (who doesn't need a sat nav) who happens to be going the opposite way but mine says straight on. We arrive and find the toilets for a relief break as you do. Sally turns up and we ask her how did the journey go? Very good we came straight here! Oh that's strange as we saw you driving in the opposite direction to which she then knew she was rumbled. Sorry couldn't resist putting it in Sally J.

It was brilliant sunshine as the 5 ladies took to the start. They had 2 large laps after a short first lap. Each large lap was around a school field and then around a farmers field, up one side and then back down the other side. The total length was 3.2 miles. The course was quite firm and only the occasional muddy bit. Quite tame in Cross Country terms as last year they were ankle deep in mud on the same course. All the ladies had fantastic runs and they were even smiling at the end.

The sun was still shining as the men's race started 45 mins after the ladies. The 6 men had 4 full laps of the course which came out at just over 5 miles.

Starting at the back as that's my preferred strategy I watched the speedy ones sprint off into the distance. I wanted to try to keep a steady pace and pass people along the way if I could. The first lap was ok, the 2nd was ok, the 3rd started to get harder and the 4th was hard.

I was running along with Mark Goodridge and as we were on our 2nd lap I noticed that the leaders were motoring and said "s**t it won't be long before we get lapped." It was actually quite a while but never the less it happened, I didn't get around 3 laps before the gazelles came leaping past. Why did they make it look easy as we pounded along.

The support from the ladies and our traveling supporters was fantastic and even if we didn't acknowledge them every time we really did appreciate all their cheers.

So for me it was a fantastic achievement just to be there and where I finished or what time I did didn't really matter. Running means so much to me that I just want to do it.

Please come along and try the cross country as team events its up there with the best. Comrades together battling the elements thrown at us.

P.S

Did I every tell you I love Cross Country?

North Wales Cross Country – November 29th – Bangor

Report by Steve Gill

Another journey into Wales for the third leg of the series. A beautifully sunny, if not slightly chilly day awaited. As we headed down the A55 towards Bangor you had the lovely flat sea to your right and the snow covered hills to your left.

The location for the races were the playing fields alongside a local Athletics track, all within sight of the old bridge linking Wales to Anglesea over the menai strait.

The ladies race (3 miles) consisted of one small lap and two large laps. Starting in the bottom field (which somewhat resembled a bog) you headed around and up a slope into the large field. Around the field and past the club house. Then it was down through the woods on a single track and out back into the bottom field.

In numerous areas the going would be best described as heavy. This was a true XC course J.

The five ladies all did fantastic in the conditions. Special well done to Samantha Hall – Davies on completing her first XC race.

Next up were the five men.

The men's race (5.4 miles) consisted of two small laps and three large laps. The conditions underfoot were obviously better now the ladies had ploughed up the course (not). I used my usual strategy of starting near the back and slowly picked people off as we went by to finish behind the same guy as the last race (note to myself next time to try and beat him). As usual great support from the ladies as we tackled the hill 4 times. As I approached the hill for the third time I was lapped by the winner (Rob Samuels who won the Snowdonia Marathon in the year I did it) as he floated over the mud as though it wasn't there. Amazing in the conditions.

I loved this cross country even though it was the toughest one yet.

Next up in series is Baschurch in Shropshire on January 14th 2017. So with not so far to travel I hope to see more men and ladies taking part.

Las Vegas Half Marathon - 14th November 2016

Report by "Awesome" Jo Smith

I've never been one for bucket lists, that's just me, I guess I would then be disappointed if I didn't achieve them. That said I've always wanted to go to Las Vegas the bright light city, too many Elvis films I think. Then when I spotted that they do a half marathon and actually shut the strip a plan was formed.

The strip is only shut twice a year: New Year's Eve and for the Rock and Roll Vegas events. I didn't appreciate the complexity and impact of this till I arrived. This is 12 lanes of traffic which are constant.

Having had a few days to acclimatise and develop a rotten stinking cold, sympathy vote, race day arrived. It was the hottest and most humid day I'd known since we were there but the deed had to be done. I hadn't come all this way for a DNS.

The event started with a concert by Snoop Dog. Although I'd heard of him I'd not heard his lyrics and I'm glad to say there were only adults at the event. Google his lyrics but not for the faint hearted.

I said goodbye to my best mate and joined my green pen I knew it was going to be "awesome" when I found myself next to not one but 3 Elvis look a likes. Feeling "all shook up" there was a massive count down next to the Sphinx and we were off.

The first mile is running out towards the airport and then you turn and after about another 500 yards you see the famous welcome to Vegas sign. A huge grin appeared on my already dehydrated face this was reality.

I ran past the Excalibur as with everything else brightly lit up then past the Empire State Building and New York New York on my left with MGM studios, Planet Hollywood home to Britney Spears, on my right and the M&M store, how many varieties !!!! With over 22,000 runners in the half it was tight to start with but I have to admit when people stopped and started walking just after a mile I was a little shocked.



The crowds were great on the Strip all screaming that I was "just amazing" or " simply awesome " 😊

At mile 3 I had to take a little detour and I'm glad to say I went right to the facilities as left would have taken me through the run through marriage ceremony 😬

Continuing down the strip was simply amazing and incredible to think a few hours earlier it was heaving with traffic, the event is slick and well managed.

Just as I approached the Cosmopolitan and then the Bellagio all was going very well I was buzzing on the atmosphere. On my right was the Flamingo home for the 9th year to Donny and Marie Osmond then Harrahs where I was to spend many a few hours with Big Elvis and the odd Jack Daniels.

I heard my name and turned to see my best friend who had been able to track me due to a kind American the app didn't work on English handsets which was disappointing.

According to this chap I was totally rocking it, and I was at this point. Niggles, sinuses pain and a tight chest were all in my imagination. Running past the Eiffel Tower then the Venetian they really are beautiful buildings and not the tacky imitations I some how had imagined. On my left Ceasars palace where Celine Dion has been performing for 13 years. At mile 6 I had a little sing along with Elvis at the Little White Chapel and indulged in a bit of audience encouragement well we did come to party 🐱🐱 the race then continued past endless places where you could tie the knot and if you were feeling lazy there was even a drive through venue.



I picked up a nice chap from Surrey at this point and we ran together for the next few miles. He never trains he told me but has done 137 park runs and volunteered 78 times. He'd also done the 5k the night before to triple his bling. He was dressed head to foot in Union Jacks and knew from my vest I was from Telford!! He'd run Vegas before and commented that it was very hot dry and humid this year.

We parted at mile 8 as I headed into downtown Vegas as he said his pb wasn't going to happen and he'd catch me up. Alas I never saw him again and didn't join him to use our voucher for a discounted tattoo as he suggested the next day.

As we headed into downtown I started to feel tiredness hitting me. I'd forgotten to pack my usual gels but had some gel shots from the expo. Downtown Vegas takes you past the famous Pawn Shop, I've never heard of it but I'm told there is a tv show about it. You go past the stratosphere and storage yards and into the old town. This is where the sign is of the smoking cowboy I'd seen in loads of old films.

I'd already realised I was going to have to stop at every water station I tried to run and drink from the paper cup but without success apart from a nasal wash. The cleaners are straight there tidying up but paper cups are slippery.

A quick glance at my garmin showed my pace had really slowed down I tried to pick it back up as I got to 9.5 miles but as it ticked over to 10 it wasn't happening and my chest was suddenly being compressed by a boa constrictor, OK slight exaggeration but blimey I thought I've come all this way and I'm buggered if I'm not having that medal even if I can't breathe, strange what us runners think. Had I been home I wouldn't have even attempted the run.

At mile 10 those doing the marathon split off and run out down a long dark strip into the desert, phew so glad that wasn't me. But again the number of people walking with only a 5hr window I seriously had my doubts they would make it.

The next 2 miles takes you behind the casinos and wasn't inspiring so I just had to keep telling myself I could get through it. I have never been so glad to see a mile 12 sign and try as I might to up the pace there was nothing left in the tank. The Mirage sign shined bright guiding me home, I don't recall seeing the volcano I just saw the finish sign ahead and pushed on. I had plans for a thumbs up arms in the air finish photo it was more of a stumble.

The finish line blurred and I found myself having convulsions but like a cat with a fur ball stuck. Next minute there was a paramedic with a wheel chair offering me assistance. That wasn't going to happen so I just slowly walked the half mile finish , jeez hadn't I done enough !! Collected my water, banana, fruit ,chocolate milk and pint of beer 🍺

I have to say at this point I was more than glad the finish line was right next to the Bellagio where I was lucky enough to be staying, with it's amazing musical fountains, and my wonderful friend then looked after me as I recovered and rehydrated before heading back out wearing my fabulous bling and ate the most ginormous turkey burger, fries and pickles 🍔

Verdict - Vegas has been an amazing experience and if you want to do a flat crazy race then put it on your list. The bling is fantastic. The event is well run and the strip is back up and humming within a few hours. There is live music most of the way round but the downtown bit for a few miles is quiet. I finished 4588th out of 22,052 runners and 1836th out of 13,758 women putting me in the top 25% which I was blooming chuffed with all things considering.

As the the rest of my holiday What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas 😊

North Wales Cross Country – November 5TH 2016 – Llandudno

On a somewhat chilly and breezy morning we set off to Wales. In the car today was Johnathon Smart and my good lady Susan (Chief Photographer for the day).

Now Llandudno is a good 1.50hr car journey so it required a pit stop along the A55, I drove into the Mcdonalds car park and parked. I have to admit it looked more like I had abandoned it rather than parked it when we returned.

Onwards we went to Llandudno to St David College where the races were held. After parking in a field I asked the car park attendant where is the start and where can we put the gazebo. Not a great place to put one, most people just chuck there stuff by the wall down there. I think basically it interpreted as you don't need one you soft English runners. Well if had been raining I would have had to argue he point but on a dry day she may have been right.

The ladies race consisted of one smaller lap (around the playing fields and around a farmers hilly field) and one big lap (after small lap head on to gravel path and then up a short sharp path and a sharp lump of grass before heading through the woods and out around another dirty great big farmers field). The course was overall quite dry but with

plenty of up bits extremely tough. A great effort by all the ladies and special mention to Megan Owen-Jones on completing her first xc race.

Just to let you show you the calibre of runners there that the lady winner of Snowden Marathon took part.

While the men warmed up Mark Dean and myself contemplated on how long it would be before us older ones were running with the ladies (Men over a certain age run in the ladies race) and I thought maybe it would be great to chase a women around a field even if there was no chance of catching them.





The mens race started 45 mins after the ladies race. We had one small lap and two big laps to do. The usual frantic start by the speedy ones and before you knew it they were half way around the small lap, well almost. Apparently unbeknown to me the marshals didn't send them the right way so we missed out the first small field.

After starting at the back I gradually moved through the pack doing really well on the upwards bits passing quite a few people. I never did see Lee through the race but as usual he made it look easy and had a fantastic run.

Special mention to Darren Owen – jones who doesn't really like xc but played his part for the team.

Thanks also to Paul Spriggs for his support alongside, Susan Gill, Mark Dean and James Withington.

Funny moment of the day was after completing the small lap and just completing the first big lap a runner in front of suddenly burst into life and started to sprint. I couldn't help but chuckle as he then realised he had to complete another lap –doh. Made funnier by his club mates p*****g themselves with laughter at his mistake.

Afterwards Sally, Johnathon and myself all headed to the sea front for the consumption of fish n chips by the seaside. The fish and chips was gorgeous.

Upon trying to have our picture taken Sally went to show off our food only for a cheeky b*****d of a seagull to swoop down and nick her chips. At that point its mates joined in and it became a scene from Alfred Hitchcocks the Birds film.

Sunrise to Sunset – 27 December

Report by Amanda Ellis

Ever since running those first two half marathons in September and October of 2016, the thought of "how will I ever run more than 13.1 miles?" had been in the back (or sometimes,

forefront) of my mind. I became aware of a local company, How Hard Can It Be Events, <http://codrc.co.uk/> which runs long distance races/events with the added draw of great bling. On 27 December they were holding the Sunrise to Sunset challenge which allowed participants to run any distance of their own choosing between sunrise (at approx 8.20am) and sunset (at approx 4pm). You could record an official half or full marathon time and then carry on as long as you wanted. The venue was at Sundorne Sports Village in Shrewsbury, around a cycle track just short of 1km in length. The course length had been officially measured by Wrekin Road Runners' own Jon Aston.

This event appealed to me as the ideal incentive to break the 13.1 mile barrier for the first time, where I could perhaps experiment with pacing, rest breaks etc, with plenty of people around me and easy access to refreshments (with a 1km circuit, runners passed the aid station every few minutes). Plus, what better way to run off my Christmas roast goose?

Debi agreed to join me and we signed up.

December 27 dawned crystal clear and sub-zero. I think the temperature might have scraped 3 degrees C thanks to the feeble winter sun by the time we finished running, but for the first few miles our feet and hands were numb, despite warm socks and running gloves. The hundred or so participants were each issued with a laminated lap card which was punched every time we completed a lap. My intention setting out was to get to 15 miles or 24km, using my marathon training method of 2 1/2 minutes running, 30 seconds walking. I considered taking a longer break mid-distance but on the day just kept up a steady pattern.



The race started from two points depending on whether you wanted an official half or full marathon time recording. With such a short circuit, by the end of the first lap or two you couldn't tell who was running what distance, or how many laps anyone else had done. That was one of the good things about this event, there was no feeling of "I'm at the back", although being passed by someone dressed as Santa Claus (including a leather skirt over running tights) what seemed like every couple of laps was a clear indicator that there were some pretty fast people taking part. Similarly some of the conversation snippets we overheard were along the lines of "I'm training for a 100 miler so thought I'd go for 40 miles today" which put our 15 miles into perspective. There were also plenty of people taking walk breaks so our 5:1 run walk ratio didn't look too unusual.



Gradually we thawed out, though any longer walk breaks than 30 seconds would have had the frozen numbness setting in again. Walk breaks keep the heart rate down so it was the legs which started feeling it as we approached the 10 mile mark. The aid station was really well stocked, with cups of water/squash/coke and a variety of snacks including a box of Celebrations. The water was so cold due to the ambient temperature that you could feel it running right down into your stomach and it was almost good to start running again in order to raise your body temperature after the icy drink. I'm quite partial to Malteser Celebrations so took to popping one (frozen...) in my mouth every couple of laps in the latter part of my run. I'm now convinced Malteser Celebrations are the key to my running a new long distance although I do need a way of carrying them away from my body heat when I have no handy aid station every km!

The key to running a longer distance for the first time is to keep the pace down. Maintaining an average of around 11:40 min/mile, we reached 13.1 miles/half marathon in just over 2 1/2 hours, noting with some excitement that we were now in uncharted territory. Adding the extra couple of miles was literally just a case of keeping on doing what we had been doing for another 3 laps. 2 min 30 run, 30 second walk. We counted down the laps,

3, 2, 1, and there we were. My GPS watch showed 24.56km or 15.3 miles in just under 3 hours. We collected our medals, which are really eye-catching and good quality, and had a celebratory photo taken before returning to the warmth of our houses to enjoy the rest of the bank holiday. In summary, a great event for pushing yourself to a new limit, be that distance or time, with efficient, friendly organisation and good facilities.

Mortimer forest trail run - December 11th

Report by Steve Gill

First of all why this race? I have always wanted to do this race after hearing great things about it from Deb Millington and Kim Bennett but the problem was it always clashed with Telford 10k.

Having done the 10K a couple of years on the trot I then decided to look at Mortimer but for the previous two years I was injured. So this was my year of doing it.

A posse of 12 of us travelled to Ludlow to see what all the fuss was about.

Starting in the grounds of Moor Park school you were already greeted to a lovely scenic view of the forest.

After collecting our numbers, having a pre-race coffee, club photo (apologies to Deb who we couldn't find) we set off to line up. A total number of 405 runners which was a record turnout.

So Alex and Warby (I'm taking it easy) sprinted off out front as we crossed the school grounds and over a road into the forest. This I believe looked like the migration of wildebeest as all traffic was stopped for us runners to cross.

Off we went into the woods on a steady climb to the reach the top and then back down.

This put us on a track before we dropped across a stream and shortly reached the first major obstacle. Looking up all you saw was runners going up the side of a hill, no running, just walking. This was poison bank as they named it. There was no overtaking as it was too narrow. At this point I would like to question some people on their choice of footwear, road shoes? Trail shoes with little or no grip? Come on people. This coupled with overnight rain mean't the faster ones got the best of it and us at the back got a rather slippery slope to contend with. Eventually the top was reached although my average speed had taken a right hammering.

At the top you could push on as we were met with beautiful trails (muddy ones) to run on. We carried on over the road again (See Bob Wilsons pictures on Facebook) and down a slippery slope. More trails as you ran around the side of the hill with some superb views of the Shropshire countryside.

At about half way you reached the big dippers, you went down and then up each one.

Everyone did get steeper but note I didn't mention run up. Run down and walk up was the only thing possible.

At the top of the last dipper you hit a firetrack which went left and continued on upwards.

This went on a fair way just gradually meandering up the hill and if you were feeling strong you could pick a few people off.

Once over the top you were running downwards on roads, trails and firetracks. I have to admit my legs didn't appreciate the downs on the road and my calves were feeling sore. The water station was at 6.5 miles in and I stopped for drink before carrying on. Just after this point Deb caught and passed me. Again into the woods along some beautiful trails I was chasing a lovely lady as Deb bounded along with ease and me doing my best to keep up.

There was one last sting in the tail as we headed back up the first hill that we had ran down earlier on with Deb and I running all the way passing quite few that were only able to walk it. Off down the trails towards the finish which was just before our first road crossing. Not quite where we all thought it would be (note for next year).

For the record I couldn't catch Deb so was chicked as they say J .

At the finish it was great to be greeted by the loyal supporters of Julie, Becky and Vicky. Thanks to one and all.

As we all recalled our adventures and looked at how muddy we all were we reflected on what a great event it was. Would we be back again? You bet on it.

So if you fancy something different why not join us next year for more hills and mud adventures.

PS. Deb got first lady in her age group – Well done Deb