



# Valley News

THE NEWSLETTER OF AVON VALLEY RUNNERS  
#103 – September 2009



## AVR Track Championships

On Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August the club held its inaugural Track Championship at Clarendon school in Trowbridge, just one problem – the track had vanished!!! Cue, Darren Wrintmore and Andrew Hoddinott armed with a tape measure, a few bags of flour and instructions on setting out a 400m track downloaded off of the Internet. Within an hour a new track was laid out and the prayers for good weather were answered.

The first event was the **Men's 800m** which saw a close three-way race with Andy Grist taking victory in two minutes twenty nine seconds from Will Whitmore and Carl Davies. The **Ladies 800m** also saw a tight race with just one second separating the victorious Claire Howard from Tina Giles. The **3000m** saw an early break away from the field by Michael Towler and Alex Booth, unfortunately a missed timed finishing-kick by Alex saw Michael capitalise to take the victory. Kay Middleton took the honours for the Ladies. The **Men's 400m** proved so popular that two heats were required and saw Club Captain Will Whitmore take victory in 1:04:13 from Carl Davies in 1:04:66. The **Ladies 400m** saw Tina Giles take revenge upon Claire Howard for the earlier 800m recording 1:17:62.



Ladies 800m



Men's 3000m



Men's 400m

Michael Towler claimed his second win of his lunch-break from work, winning the **Men's 1500m** in 4:39 from Alun Rees. Sue MacGregor claimed the **Ladies 1500m** title running 6:28.

The evening's final event was the **4x400m Relay** with teams drawn at random. Victory went to the grouping of Tina Giles, Chris Atkinson, Andy Britten and Carl Davies. Head Coach, Alan Hayes dished out the winners medals to our new club record holders!



Men's 1500m



4 x 400m Relay



4 x 400m Relay

## Wetnecks!

Two intrepid AVR members set off on Sunday 26th July to do the **The Nettle Warrior XII**, the summer alternative to The Tough Guy. It took place at Mouse Farm, Porton near Wolverhampton.

I was challenged by my son, Paul, who had already done the Tough Guy twice and had told me that I would never be able to do it! Never one to ignore a gauntlet being thrown down, I found myself as a 'Wetneck' [1st timer] alongside Kay Middleton on the start line, with identity passport with medical details card around our necks and numbers tattooed on our foreheads! This is an event where you have to arrange your own insurance and sign a Death Warrant at registration. In January 2009, 600 people were treated for hypothermia and there were 12 serious dislocations, fractures and a broken neck! We were not expecting to get hypothermia, the weather was dull, drizzly and warm but we were required to do the assault course twice, so lots of in and out of water. The start is in waves with the Front Squad, King Visitors Tough Guys and Teams, then the Wobblemuckers, QweenTeams and Qween Wizzas, then at five minutes us, the Wetnecks, then the Ghoons, the Dick heads and at seven minutes the Late Buggers!



Before

First the 5-6 country miles of Multi-terrain running around the fields and woods bordering the farm. Time to look around at fellow competitors, the Stig, a few Bat men and Spider men, fairies, knights in armour etc etc the usual assortment at these events! Within a half mile we were negotiating **Chataway Chase**, logs you had to jump over or go under. Some competitors were already walking and Kay and I were cruising through them. They were obviously not runners and were there for the fun of it. We had to negotiate around a team carrying a cannon in the **Bracken Maze Torture** and then try to avoid the boys throwing themselves downhill in **The Slalom** a series of 12 ascents and descents on the side of a forest hill. We then entered **Big Bear Wood**, consisting of walls of hay bales to clamber over and crawled under netting. Next we found ourselves going in and out of a ditch chest high in slurry mud with impossible shear sides called **The Brasher Disley Steeplechase**. We had to get help from strong lads to get out either side, as being only 5ft 4 has a real disadvantage. We both struggled to clamber out of the mud filled ditches. There were more water and ditches, **The Gurkha Grand National**, and then eventually we started on the first of the obstacles at the beginning of **The Killing Fields** which was the assault course.



During

Up and over army ropes and netting then through **The Tiger**, electrified wire, one spectator said it wasn't connected but we were not risking it so were careful to shimmy through it! **The Colditz Walls** were next, log walls getting progressively higher and then the 'Big One' - **The Behemoth!** This was two rope walks high above the ground where we were stretched almost beyond our limits. It did not help when I remembered seeing a girl fall through the safety net and onto rocks and seriously hurting herself in the January Tough Guy – it was a great relief to get through that unharmed!

Then off to negotiate **The Battle of the Somme**, burning hay and muddy trenches with a skin grazing tyre crawl in the middle. More swamps then **The Vietcong Tunnels** which were concrete tunnels, very claustrophobic.

More Skywalk climbs then the water tunnels where you have to fully submerge in the water, ducking under poles 4 or 5 times. Next up was **The Death Plunge** into the lake off a 5 metre wobbly plank, then grab a log and swim the perimeter then out and into **The Dragon Pool** which you could either walk across on high wires or swim. We decided to slide along the ropes as were getting cold. A run across planks over a bog brought us to **The Somme Surprise**, a crawl under barbed wire in mud over sharp stones. Agony!

There was then a little bit of a run then through **Tyre Torture**, tyres of different sizes including huge tractor tyres. We were beginning to wonder how much more they could throw at us! **The Anaconda** was next, huge concrete pipes to get over, very painful if you slipped off and impossible to jump. We again needed help. We then ran through **The Green Rolling Hills** up **Paradise Hill**, grabbed a yellow ribbon marking the 2nd lap then did it all again! Well, actually we didn't do the start of **The Killing Fields** again and instead of swimming around the lake with a log we paddled a raft.

We were starting to get very cold and the second time round everything seemed much harder. It started to get windy which was frightening while you were trying to balance up high and everything got more muddy and slippery. When we turned into **The Green Rolling Hills** for the second time and climbed **Paradise Hill** to the last obstacle, a dunking into **The Viagra**, a steep slide into a muddy pond, I thought never again! Medal around the neck, a hot cup of tea later, I thought, "I wonder if we could get a girls team from AVR to do it next year. It would be fun"!!!!

**Tina Vivian**



## Treasure Running

Nearly thirty Avon Valley Runners took on the frustrating challenge of the **Bradford on Avon Treasure Run**. Over the five mile course there were twenty cryptic clues to be de-ciphered including: "How many rats on the roof?", "An alarming former London Marathon sponsor and did too", the obligatory anagram "Racial Pleaduff" and the contentious "When is shoeing time?".

First back in from the rain were the pairing of Mike Pace and Sue MacGregor in one hour six minutes and getting half of the questions correct giving a net score of 66-minutes. One minute later, Michael Towler, Carl Davies and Simon Ringham proved that three heads were better than two getting eleven correct answers and with a net score of 65-minutes claimed the second place treasure. Finishing in one hour and fourteen minutes Tom Simpson and Kevin Gover managed to collect sixteen correct answers and with a net score of 62-minutes claimed the winner's treasure.

## Fixtures

**Saturday, September 12<sup>th</sup>**

**Sunday, September 13<sup>th</sup>**

**Sunday, September 20<sup>th</sup>**

**Saturday, September 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup>**

**Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Sunday, October 11<sup>th</sup>**

**Uphill to Wells Relay** – Uphill, Somerset @13:00

**Chippenham Half Marathon\*\*** - Chippenham @09:30

**King Alfreds Torment++\*\*** - Stourhead @11:00

**Lynham 10K** – RAF Lynham @11:00

**SEAA Road Relay (Women)** – Aldershot @15:55

**Mells Scenic 7** – Mells near Frome @11:00

**Biddestone 10K** – Biddestone @11:00

**SEAA Road Relay (Vets/Senior Men)** – Aldershot @12:30/14:30

**Cricklade Half\*\* / 10K\*\*** - Cricklade @10:30

**Marshfield Mudlark++** – Marshfield @10:30

**Clarendon Way Marathon++ / Half** – Salisbury @10:15/12:00

**Swindon Half Marathon** – Swindon @11:00

**Box Fun Run** – Box @11:00

++ Off-Road qualifying race

\*\* AVR Race Series event

## Melksham Beginners

Avon Valley Runners are offering a beginners running course starting on Wednesday 9th September @19:00 starting from Melksham's Christie Miller Sports Centre on Bowerhill. The sessions are aimed at the complete novice and commence with walk/run/walk sessions leading onto running for up to thirty minutes at a comfortable pace by the end of the programme. The sessions will be conducted under the expert guidance of the clubs qualified coaches and running group leaders (*Julia Drewitt & Andrew Hoddinott have both gained their UK:A Level-2 coaching awards and Carl Davies his UK:A Group Leader certification*). It is hoped that by the end of the course that the 'beginners' will have sufficient confidence to undertake a 10K run. If you know anyone who would like to start running, then please point them in our direction.

Please send Results or Articles to [news@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk](mailto:news@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk)

## The Pen y fan Fell race

I love mountains and I love running, so for some time I have wanted to take part in a “real” fell race. I found such a race on the internet last year being held in the Brecon Beacons, mid July but could not get an entry in 2008. So this year it was diarised early. The race is held on the north side of **Pen y Fan** (4 miles, 2000 ft) adopting the classic formula of straight up and straight down!

The race starts in the cwm on the north side of Pen y Fan and the whole route literally towers above you at the start. I had walked up Pen y Fan from this side before so I knew what was in store. Race fee was a bargain at £4 and that included a substantial roll and flapjack after the race! Plus 6 photos of me (and every other runner) in the race gallery. I had read the website about needing “full body cover” so I came with long tights and a sleeved top. I also carried a whistle, compass and a photocopied postage stamp of OS map pinned under my number.



I immediately looked overdressed. The experienced fell runners had shorts and vest, but they were carrying either a bum bag or a running rucksack with a top, whistle and compass. I could tell they were experienced as they had places like Pennines and Northumberland as well as Fell Running Club on their vests. The race was designated as for “experienced runners, so we were warned that there were no route markings, hence the equipment. Although in fact there were plenty of marshals and visibility was excellent. However it was easy to imagine that if there was cloud at the top, it would have been easy to run off the wrong way over the cliffs on the north of Corn Du and Pen y Fan.

The field was small, 62 in total and the start was directly uphill, so we soon stretched in to a line along a footpath. I managed to run for a while then I noticed that all of us were doing a fast panting power walk up the hill. The gradient did vary a lot, but after a while any gradient at all was enough to slow things down. I got half way up and was told I was 16<sup>th</sup>. I climbed the steepest part up to Corn Du, then 500m across a neck to the summit of Pen y Fan, when I was 19<sup>th</sup>. 2 miles and 2000 ft gone, I had taken 33 minutes.

I then found out what sorts out the real fell runners from middle-aged runners from Bradford on Avon, it is all in the descent. The “course” did not go down a track, but straight down the hillside on a very steep grass slope. I was very glad I wore studded orienteering shoes. Even so I was too slow and cautious, despite slipping down on my bum a few times. The race split times confirmed what I knew instinctively, I was being overtaken and caught up. 14 minutes down to the finish was the 35<sup>th</sup> best time of the day. But I was very happy with my overall performance in what was obviously a field of runners who were a lot more committed than the average road race.

I knew I had done a fell race as the front of my thighs hurt for three days after due to the effort in climbing. But I will be looking out for future races in the Brecon’s. If anybody from Avon Valley wants to get serious about fell running, then the training is simple, just keep running up and down the slopes next to the Westbury White Horse, they have similar gradients, if shorter lengths to the slopes of Pen y Fan. For those interested look at the Fell Runners Association website, and more specifically the Welsh Fell Runners Association website as well. For value of money and sheer adventure I can thoroughly recommend you try a fell run at least once (but please wear some studded shoes!). **Richard Hudson**

