



Valley News

THE NEWSLETTER OF AVON VALLEY RUNNERS
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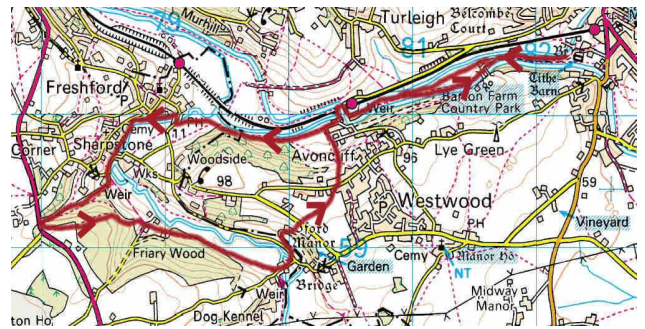
The Musings of a Race Director

It's Sunday 1st November - "Over the Hills" day. 7am in the clubhouse, it's still dark outside, I'm feeling a bit nervous and stressed. In three hours time 300 people are going to come and run our race, at the moment we have no course, no marshals, no Lions, no runners....Is everything to plan? Have we forgotten anything? What have I let myself in for?

Adding to the pressure - the success in the past has been due to the effort put in to organisation by Tina Vivian and her predecessors – a lot to live up to. So, three hours to go, should we check those well thumbed "to-do" lists again?

It's been a real eye opener for me - seeing how much work is done by people behind the scenes in setting up races and running the club generally. Previously the biggest thing I've ever worried about in terms of running was forgetting my shoes, or my towel, or...

Now I've been involved I see that all those things that I assumed just happened, don't just happen, unless someone arranges them. Things like St John Ambulance, and the Police, and hiring venues, making sure gates are unlocked, portals, timing systems and laptops, buying numbers, organising Lions, marking and checking the route, getting the ARC permit, getting water bottles, organising sponsors, then there is trophies, and, and, and....



Luckily for me these things have been arranged by others this year and all is in place, marshals and Lions soon arrive and before I know it....It's Midday - most of the runners are back, everybody has had a great time and it shows on their faces. Everyone I asked said that they loved it, the only minor crisis was the timing machine running out of paper but the unflappable Bob Ellis and Les Unsworth took it in their stride. All of a sudden it all seems great fun and really worthwhile and I've already started to plan for next year!

Simon Ringham

The Elan Valley 10

The view of the waterfall over the dam at the Elan Valley Visitor Centre showed a spectacular torrent of water cascading down to the river below. Unfortunately that's where the pleasure ended until it came back into view as we crossed the finishing line. **The Elan Valley 10 mile race** described as 'undulating' seemed anything but, having climbed two miles steeply within the first three. The conditions were appalling with wind & driving rain causing running water often shin-deep and wet leaves making the downhill stretches treacherous. "Multi-terrainers" would have probably felt at home out there, but for a wimp like me, who hasn't run further than 10K since the Bath Half, I was just happy to finish and complete the three distances for the year needed for the Club Championship.

Would I do it again? Only if it took place in the summer.

Ken Marshall

Virgin London Marathon

Congratulations to Kevin Gover, Carl Davies and Liz Gard who were drawn from the hat for the three club places at the **2010 Virgin London Marathon**. Now to get training for Sunday 25th April!

Ali Atkinson is organising a club trip up to the London Marathon through WRP. Coach pickup will be from Leigh Delamare Services – (Transport to the services can be organised nearer the time); Accommodation will be at the Novotel West London (Hammersmith); Accommodation will be £124 per person, including breakfast, based on two sharing; The coach will cost £28 giving a total price per person of £152.

Transfer to the start line at Blackheath is included, but you will need to make your own way back to the Hotel, fortunately the Tubes are free for runners on VLM day. If you are interested then please contact Ali on 07917 710123 or Alison.atkinson@fosusdiy.co.uk for more details. Please note that a £50 deposit will be required before 10th December and the balance by the 4th February.



Please send Results or Articles to news@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk

Running over Baby's Heads

As dawn broke at the start of the **42nd Original Mountain Marathon** in the Elan Valley mid Wales, that familiar feeling of fear and trepidation mixed with excitement washed over me. Denise and I had completed our first Mountain Marathon in the Brecons back in 2004 and so had fond memories of Wales. Although a tad older and less fit we were confident that our navigation skills and experience would help us. As the weekend approached and we started reading the postings on the OMM forum we started to have doubts. *"The Elan Valley is one of the worst places I've ever had to nav in- no paths just bogs and baby's heads. It rains 235 days in the year. If the mist holds out should be OK but if it comes in there will be a lot of people lost out there. Overall, though no great climbing, plenty of energy sapping bogs and soft peat. The ideal Ommer this year will be extremely long in leg to cope with the baby's heads of man eating size and density!"* Well there was no hope for us then being mere girlies older than most and a bit stumpy in the leg department! [Apparently baby's heads are large tussocks of grass.] Still nothing could be as bad as last year in the Lakes when we were nearly flung to our deaths on Dale Head in a raging storm!

This year we were bussed from the HQ at the Royal Welsh Showground in Builth Wells to the start. This meant we left the cars on hard standing. A lesson learnt from last year when cars were flooded and had to be towed out from muddy fields. We had to climb for 20 minutes in the dark to get to the start line, all adding to the excitement seeing hundreds of head torches winding up into the unknown. Again we had decided on a linear route in which all set checkpoints had to be visited and in the right order or else you were disqualified. The map told us we had a minimum of 21K to navigate as the crow flies, but unfortunately pesky objects get in the way like reservoirs, deep valleys and steep hills to go around. We started just after 8am so we had 10 hrs of daylight to do the first day in, the weather was warm but the downside was the low cloud/poor viz covering the bracken clad hills ahead, and it was starting to rain.

The hooter went and we were off! The first checkpoint was easy enough. We followed a path in the general direction along with nearly everyone else. A slight navigational error on the second checkpoint had us traversing a contour and climbing down a stream bed but we couldn't go wrong once we reached the reservoir and found it on the water edge. So far so good and we even managed a shuffling trot along a track to the next checkpoint. The weather took a turn for the worse and became wet and windy and this was when we encountered our first baby's heads, bogs and hill climbs. Oh My God, they certainly lived up to their reputation!



For the next 3 checkpoints covering approximately 9K it was a blur of tortuous river valleys knee deep in leg sucking peat bogs and hip high baby's heads, being overtaken in multitudes by leaping lanky legged young men! Very demoralising!

At least the wind had blown the mist away and our navigating was spot on, but our progress seemed so slow. This was when I started to feel blisters develop on both heels, but there was no opportunity to stop and investigate. In fact even trying to eat was problematic because the terrain was so difficult. Checkpoints 6, 7 and 8 were about 2K apart and again our navigation was good so we began to feel more upbeat and started to descend into the valley towards the



overnight camp. A last clamber down a rocky stream bed to a checkpoint 9 and a first glimpse of tents and the familiar lines of blue portaloos in the distance. It had taken us 7.30hrs and we were not last, and it was daylight still and so much space to decide where to put the tent! We gave each other a pat on the back and then got on with getting the tent up, quite difficult in squalls of rain and blustery wind. By the time we were dry and having our first hot drink, we knew Mel and Kay, Ray and Mike would be coming in but to go out in the wet and get cold again to cheer them was too much effort. Apart from one sortie out to the portaloos and to see the results and see that the others had made camp, we stayed cocooned until morning hooter at 6 am [in fact really 7am because clocks went back 1 hr] A total of 14 hrs. How time flew-----not!!!!



We had over 2 hrs to have brecky, apply compede, break camp, queue for loos and get to the start. Plenty of time you may think, but no, as usual we arrived at the start line at a jog and only just in time. The only way was up and with blisters the size of 50p pieces hurting with every step, I wondered how I would cope. By good fortune we happened upon checkpoint 1, which many people found difficult and set our bearing for 2. That's when it all went horribly wrong! There were many tributaries snaking their way down to the river feeding the reservoir and all looking the same. We tried to stay high to avoid any baby's heads and got into a crocodile of teams all heading sort of in the same direction. We missed the valley and stream we had to cross and completely lost our bearings.

We had followed B class. We came across the only other Female Vet team in our class and joined forces to traverse back across 1K of baby's heads to checkpoint 2. They then sprinted off into the distance leaving us in their wake. *[Well their combined age was 92 so only just into the vet category and ours was 101]* This mistake had taken 1hr and any advantage of the earlier start was negated. We found we were in the tail enders and starting to struggle and still had many hours of torture to go!

Denise became silent! My blisters were getting worse and it was mile upon mile of uphill bog. It was at this point I informed Denise that we were not doing this ever again! Denise became stuck and needed a yank to get out then I started to sink too. Not good, But WE HAD TO GO ON. THERE WAS NO GOING BACK! Hmm, where have I heard that before? Worse, I looked at my watch and it said 11.50 and the cut off point for checkpoint 3 was 11.45. We were too slow. End of race. What would happen when we got to 3? How would we get back? We were in the middle of nowhere and climbing to probably the highest point on the course. How could I tell Denise this devastating news? We had failed. Better to keep it to myself. Sob sob!! A team passed who had started 1.30hrs after us and I commiserated with them that we were too late for the checkpoint. There was no reaction. They looked at me quizzically then laughed and queried if I had put my watch back an hour because in fact it was only 11.00 plenty of time! I ran back to Denise whooping and hollering, overjoyed that we were not doomed to failure! Denise totally unaware of the psychological trauma I had been through was jerked out of her black depth of despair and we jumped around like loonies hugging each other. Soon after, we got to the cairn at checkpoint 3, then 3K later checkpoint 4. The navigating was not too difficult as the viz was good and the weather was brightening. At this point we joined up with a father and daughter team who had done more OMM's than us but were really finding the going tough. Usually in the second day there is more camaraderie and it helps moral to have company. They were actually going slower than us which was a real boost, but we stuck together and started to enjoy ourselves. The scenery was stunning and this was accentuated by beautiful rainbows. We even broke into song- *"Show me the way to go home-----"*

Checkpoint 7 was a toughie to find but we were just starting to believe we were actually going to finish and with plenty of time to go before the cut off at 5 so there was no panic. There was a male team who had been last the day before, who were pleased to have company so the last few checkpoints came and went quickly. Checkpoint 9 was at a bend on a track before a final descent to the finish. We couldn't go wrong. The tapes lead us to the finish.



Tina & Denise completing the OMM

If you think that this photo is scary – PTO...

What joy and jubilation.

What a team.

What blisters!

We started our OMM experience in Wales and time to end it on a high again in Wales.

Never again - no REALLY never again.

Well maybe, but it will have to be a score class.

Less distance but more difficult to navigate.

Hmm medium score----

What do you think Denise?!!!!

Tina Vivian

Fixtures

Saturday, December 26th	Stan Farr 5K – Hilperton @11:30
Sunday, December 27th	Warminster Plain Crazy 12 – Warminster @11:00
Friday, January 1st	Hangover 10K – Kewstoke, Weston-super-Mare @11:00
Sunday, January 10th	Rough 'n' Tumble 10++ – Milton Lilbourne @11:00
	Gloucester 10 – Quedgeley @10:30
Saturday, January 30th	Woodhenge Womble 10K – Amesbury @14:00
Sunday, January 31st	Slaughterford 9++ – Rudloe @09:50
	Stonehenge Stomp 10/20/30/40K – Amesbury @08:00
Sunday, February 7th	Longleat 10K – Longleat @10:00
++ Off-Road qualifying race	** AVR Race Series event



Secretary's Report

This month I thought that I would start with a roll call of all the new members who have joined us in the past few weeks, from Trowbridge: Chris Kay, Hannah Newbury, Karen & Andy Mumford; Melksham: Hayley Southgate, Fiona Newman, Liz Christie, Kerri Gibson, Sarah Woodruff, Richard Jones, Jackie Tuckett, Alison Hale, Joanna Pike, Lee Hillman, Nina Hillman, Colin Sharp, Daniel Sharp, Roger Goodwin-Fielding, Anthony & Ann Martin; Westbury: Andy Walsh, Patricia Quayle & Deborah Narraway; Bromhill: Jo-Ann Johnston; Upper Westwood: Natasha Williamson; Broughton Gifford: Christine Morris; Hilperton: Tammy Phillips, Darren & Susannah Wheller; Staverton: Elaine Knight; Norton St Phillip: Amanda Loran; Devizes: Hollie Card. Chippenham: Rachael Davies. Rejoining us after a few years away are Joby Hobbs and Brett Flook [*who still holds our club record for the Marathon*].

It's approaching that time of year when you have the opportunity to influence the democratic running of the club, through the election of officers and voting on new club business. The Annual General Meeting of Avon Valley Runners is to be held on the evening of Thursday 14th January after training in Bradford on Avon in the Riverside Inn. I am looking to receive nominations in writing for the following positions by Friday 1st January:

- Chairman - to chair our monthly committee meetings, currently fulfilled by Denise Ellis.
- Vice-Chairman – to support the Chairman, currently fulfilled by Julia Drewitt.
- Honorary Secretary - currently fulfilled by Darren Wrintmore who manages the clubs affairs.
- Assistant Secretary – to minute our monthly meetings, currently done by Tina Giles.
- Treasurer - currently fulfilled by Joyce Field who controls the financial status of the club.
- Men's' Captain – Will Whitmore currently looks after the racing interests of our male runners.
- Assistant Men's' Captain - currently fulfilled by Andrew Hoddinott.
- Ladies Captain – Kathy Kinsey currently looks after the racing interests of our lady runners.
- Assistant Ladies Captain – to support the Ladies Captain, currently done by Kay Middleton.



Any new business for discussion at the AGM must also be received in writing by Friday 1st January.

One item that will be mentioned is the need for someone to take on the administration of the **Off-Road Championships**, as after three years Ian White is no longer able to continue with it.

Darren Wrintmore

All Those Years Ago

Tales from the "Valley" 5, 10, 15 & 20 years ago:

<p>2004: Alistair Bartlett recorded his fourth victory at the Boxing Day Race from the Beehive in Bradford on Avon.</p>	<p>1999: The AVR team of Kevin Sparey, Alistair Bartlett, Deane Smith & Sean Greenland took the Men's team prize at the Bromham Pudding Run 10K</p>
<p>1994: Rosemary Barber & Judy Farr finished as 1st & 3rd Ladies at the Nunney Turkey Trot 5.</p>	<p>1989: Nineteen club members were successful with their applications into the London Marathon.</p>

The Stan Farr 5K

Following the popularity of Barton Farm Country Park as a venue for last year's **Boxing Day Race** - popular with just about everyone excepting the thirty five Avon Valley Runners who had to weave between them all! We are therefore going to relocate to a measured 5K course at Hilperton.

The 50th running of this event will take place on Boxing Day at 11:30 meeting at Hilperton Social Club in Whaddon Lane, Hilperton, before retiring to the 'Lion & Fiddle' for post-run refreshments. This event is once again closed to members of AVR only. It is planned that we will use Precision Timing chips for the event courtesy of DB Max and would appreciate early indication of your intention to run or help on the day.



Our former Secretary and founder member Ian "Stan" Farr took part in every one of these events, which he started in 1960 through to 2005.

Please see Carl Davies for more details.



I Didn't Know that about you

At a recent Melksham session to promote a little bit of team building we asked members to send in an interesting fact about themselves we then had to enquire of those present to determine who the fact relates to. So once we had removed the illegal and the indecent, these are a few that were left:

- "I once was part of an aerobic display team with Mr Motivator" - Julia Drewitt
- "I have been a Police officer for the past 8 years and today I have been riot training!" - Elaine Knight
- "I was crowned Top Tosser in Trowbridge 2009" - Carl Davies [He won the town pancake race this year].
- "I was once mistaken for Olympic sprinter Kathy Cook and even asked for an autograph!" - Hayley Southgate
- "I helped to bring down the Berlin Wall!" - Andy Strange
- "I have beaten Steve Cram twice" – Darren Wrintmore [both times at the Bristol Half Marathon]
- "I was the first female to be employed full time as a Fire Fighter by Wiltshire Fire Service" – Joanne Pike
- "I Won the Egg & Spoon race at Glaxo Sports day Aged 8 and got a paint set as a prize" – Richard Jones
- "I finished last for the first time in a race this year – The Trowbridge Pancake Race!" – Andrew Hoddinott
- "I was overtaken by a 7 foot Carrot at the Bath Half!" – Richard Newman [Don't you just hate it when that happens!]
- "I once attempted to ride a cow, the cow was NOT impressed" – Liz Christie
- "I got disqualified in a schools XC race for mooning a bus load of girls!" - Richard Morgetroyd
- "I had breakfast served to me by Kylie Minogues granny" – Alun Rees [She runs the local Cafe in Maesteg]

Please send Results or Articles to news@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk

"Over the Hills" in Pictures



1. How many runners can we fit beneath our gazebo?
2. Glyn Phillips on the winding 'steps'.
3. Tony Griffiths with back markers – Ray & Mike.
4. Carl prepares the crossing at the River Frome.
5. Linda Ladner & Sue MacGregor get wet!
6. Stuart MacGregor finds a pot hole!
7. Mike Towler coming home for third spot.
8. Rose Barber negotiates the mud.
9. The Finish line brings respite from the rain and the prospect of a warm shower and cakes.

Photographs courtesy of WRESL Photographic & Peter Moss (Chippenham Harriers)

Stop Press: There will be no formal training sessions held at any of our venues from Thursday 24th December through to and including Thursday 31st December.

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