



Valley News

THE NEWSLETTER OF AVON VALLEY RUNNERS
#116 – October 2010



25-Years Ago....

Avon Valley Runners came into existence on the 1st January 1986. These are my memories of the events leading up to the formation of the club.....

Things were not going very happily with the members of Trowbridge & District Athletic Club during the early 1980s, the club was becoming increasingly divided. The reasons for this were (a) the decision of the track and field elements (*mostly involving youngsters and their parents*) to move Tuesday-evening training sessions to the Christie-Miller track at Melksham, the surroundings of which had no appeal for distance runners; (b) the increased cost to every member of 70p per visit, compared with the 20p then being collected at Clarendon School. The runners felt that they were already being discriminated against in the allocation of club funds for expensive coaches to track meetings whilst they always paid their own way to compete in road races around the country.

Stan Farr (*the quiet man of the club*) started to express discontentment, and this found support with most of the runners. Once Stan realised he was not the only one to feel slighted by the club he started to sound people out to find out if there was enough support to form a breakaway group.

The consensus of the runners was fairly unanimous and it was decided that a new club should be formed. Individual notice to resign from the club had to be given to Trowbridge & District Athletic Club by the breakaway group. At the time this didn't go down very well, and the Trowbridge AC chairman unearthed an AAA rule suggesting that a new club wouldn't be allowed within 20 miles of the old one; however, there was eventually no attempt by them to obstruct the club's formation. The distance runners had their last run from Clarendon School on Tuesday 29th October 1985, after which six of them (*Stan Farr, Miles Holland, Mike Hehir, Paul Morgan, Neil Fyfe and Tim Northwood*) marked the occasion with a drink in the nearby Anchor & Hope.



The Tuesday runs from November to December took place from Stan & Judy's house in Victoria Gardens, and during these and other gatherings, discussions were held on all the factors involved in leaving one club and forming another. Stan worked on the constitutional aspects whilst Judy kept notes of progress.

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

In the last two months of 1985 training continued from Culver Close in Bradford on Avon, sharing the facilities with our soon-to-be-former clubmates in a friendly spirit; there was very little hard feeling on either side.

The aim of the new club would be simply to cater for our shared love of running — away from the multi-discipline complications of ‘athletics’. From the start every decision that was made was guided by the need to keep things simple. A lot of thought went into the name, deliberately avoiding words like Athletic, Harriers and even Club, which might have suggested a too-serious image. What were we? — Runners. Where would we be running? — Whenever possible, in the beautiful valley of the River Avon. So: Avon Valley Runners was the name adopted.

The colours were carefully considered: having run marathons in the heavy, heat-attractant dark-green vests of Trowbridge, it was decided that the clearly visible and cool yellow with green insignia would be the colour. Tim Northwood took on the job of designing a club badge along with taking on the roles of Club Captain and Press Secretary. No time was lost competing under the new colours, the first event being the Melksham 15K road race on Wednesday 1st January 1986.

Stan arranged a new Tuesday venue, and on the 7th January we commenced meeting at the Judo Club in Innox Road, Trowbridge. On Thursdays we continued sharing Culver Close with Trowbridge AC, an amicable arrangement which continued until they ceased running from there a few years later. Continuing the emphasis on informality, it was resolved that the necessary monthly committee meeting should be like almost any other Thursday. If you could make it to the pub, you were commandeered onto the committee. Within weeks of being set up, the modest group began to attract equally keen runners from all over the area, and within five years the handful of original runners had increased to around a hundred.



The legacy of the hard work and determination of Stan, Judy, Tim and those few people who met in the pub after the run in October 1985, the small band who joined and participated in the club from 1986 is Avon Valley Runners.

A special thanks should go to those people who have kept the club thriving during the past 25 years, to this day, for their time and dedication. A toast to the next 25 years.

Bob Wasbourne

Fixtures

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| Sunday, October 10 th | 101010 10K – Cirencester @10:10 |
| Sunday, October 17 th | Tadley 10** – Tadley, Hampshire @10:00 - *** AVR Coach Trip to this event *** |
| Sunday, October 24 th | Exmoor Stagger++ – Minehead |
| Sunday, October 31 st | Clock Change Challenge 10K – Calne |
| Sunday, November 7 th | Over the Hills – Bradford on Avon @10:00 *** Marshalls Wanted *** |
| Sunday, November 14 th | Kidney Canter – Bradford on Avon @10:30 |
| Sunday, November 21 st | The Avebury 8 – Avebury @10:30 Chilly 10K – Castle Combe @11:30 |
| Sunday, November 28 th | The White Horse Gallop – Westbury @10:00 |

** Race Series Event ++ Off-Road Championship

If you are able to assist with the marshalling at our **Over the Hills** event on Sunday 7th November then please contact Simon Ringham at oth@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk

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The West Highland Way Race

The **West Highland Way Race (WHWR)** takes place every year in late June. The idea is to follow the well defined path from Milngavie to Fort William in Scotland, 95 miles in 35 hours maximum and only 14,000ft of ascent!

All competitors assembled at 1am on a Saturday morning at the start line. As part of the safety checks I was weighted, this is to guard against dangers of drinking too much water and the possibility of killing myself. In the 25-year history of the event there has never been a case of severe dehydration but there have been a few cases of over hydration. As always there was a full range of body sizes, shapes and ages and a couple of real dogs. My support crew was my wife Maria and her brother Chris; it was their job to keep me fed and watered and to keep a positive attitude when mine was failing. By now my wife had donned her midge head net as the little devils had already started to bite. A good luck speech from Sean – The Lord of the Bridge, and 165 runners/crawlers were off.



The first section is fairly flat with lots of chatting going on. I started up a conversation with Pauline, a local runner who had completed the race a few times. Her advice was to walk all the hills, push on when you feel good and take it easy when you don't. At Dryham we reached the 13-mile mark, a quick hello to my support crew, a refill of water and I was off again. Feeling good I shuffled up the first major climb of Conic hill. At the top a beautiful view of Loch Lomond and the Scottish mountains waited for me. The steep descent brought me to Balmaha where Maria and Chris supplied coffee and a rice pot. The route now follows the east shore of Loch Lomond the path is good but undulating.



27-miles and it is breakfast time at Rowardennan. Sloppy weetabix and plenty of strong coffee all with lashings of sugar and a sit down in my St George's cross flag chair. 5-minutes later and I am shuffling again, from here the next 13 miles is some of the most demanding on the route with constant steep short climbs followed by steep drops with rocks and exposed roots waiting to catch you out. I could feel myself starting to fade and was glad to reach the next check point for a sit down and refuel. 40-miles gone and from here on the route improved and the scenery was fantastic. For the next 20 miles the route gets better and better with the surrounding mountains getting bigger and bigger. The weigh-in at 51 miles (half way) showed I had already lost 4kgs. More food and I was off again but stiff in the legs now and the weather was very warm.

I passed the Green Welly shop and was hoping to see Maria and Chris because the ice creams looked so good, but no, so I just kept on going. A runner cruised past me on the next climb; he was going well and soon dropped me. 5-miles later I found him conked out on the side of the track having run out of energy. This section of the trail is popular with day walkers who cheered on the runners. The next check point is the Bridge of Orchy at 59 miles. A cold can of orange Fanta was requested and Chris got one from the local Hotel as Maria force fed me pasta. The pack is very strung out by now and I only saw two other runners in the last section.



The next section takes you across the infamous Rannoch Moor, but this year the weather gods were smiling down on us. I was going well until I got to within a mile of the next check point. The well laid track turned into a rough and rocky descent upsetting my rhythm. I was really struggling with my legs after 70 miles as I arrived at the Glen Coe ski station car park. Maria and Chris as always there ready to refuel me. I had my legs elevated but this didn't help. The most painful section of the course for me was the gentle downhill road towards the A82. I never really got going again, so when I caught up with Pauline at the top of the Devil's Staircase it was an easy decision to team up for remainder of the race. We arrived at the final checkpoint at Kinlocheven for our weigh in. The midges were rampant here and I donned my midget net for the final shuffle. There is a stiff climb out of Kinlocheven and then it's fairly flat to the finish. With 6 miles to go we came across the Marshalls sat by a roaring fire, a cruel temptation...

We told each other that we mustn't stop or we'd be here all night. The final hours going through the spooky woods in Glen Nevis I started to have full on hallucinations. I started seeing strange objects and creatures around me, very weird but all part of the fun. After 27 hours I got to the low key finish, with no medals on this race just a tot of whiskey as I crossed the line.

After a few hour sleep the prize-giving presentations takes place with every finisher being presented with a very nice engraved glass except for the dogs who get a silver dog bowl.

The West Highland Way is a well organised, great race and I'd recommend it. I too would like another crack at it...hmmm can I go under 24-hours?

Ian Harryman.

Club Half Marathon Records under threat

September saw two high profile local Half Marathons and a number of excellent runs by our members. First off was the **Bristol Half Marathon** where Ruth Barnes ran a "disappointing" (in her words) 1:23:10 to become our second fastest lady ever over the 13.1-mile distance. Not so disappointed was Warren Wade, who only took up running at the beginning of the year and celebrated Bristol with a Personal Best run of 1:24:36. Fiona Price (pictured) ran her first Half in AVR club colours recording 1:45:45 just missing her PB by less than a minute.

A week later and the club had it's biggest turnout of the year with over forty members at the **Chippenham Half Marathon**. Tom Fisher led the club home finishing in 9th place overall recording a time of 1:14:52, just 9-seconds outside of the club record. Following close behind was 12th placed Michael Towler in 1:16:56 with club captain Carl Davies in 36th place recording 1:23:07 and 39th placed Warren Wade lowering his Personal Best time for the second time in as many weeks to 1:23:53. This saw the club take third spot in a very competitive team race behind Thames Hare & Hounds and Cardiff's Les Croupiers.

Below are listed the top five Avon Valley Runners for the Half:

- 1 – Martin Connor* 1:14:43 – Devizes 1990
- 2 – Tom Fisher 1:14:52 – Chippenham 2010
- 3 – Keith Elsey 1:15:25 – Fleet 1990
- 4 – Tim Northwood 1:15:51 – Ranelagh 1986
- 5 – Andy Robertson 1:15:51 – Bath 1996

*Martin also ran 1:15:15 at Devizes in 1989

- 1 – Maureen Laney+ 1:19:17 – Great North Run 1995
 - 2 – Ruth Barnes 1:23:10 – Bristol 2010
 - 3 – Mandy Spedding 1:25:22 – Sturminster 1999
 - 4 – Jackie Rockcliffe 1:25:50 – Bath 1996
 - 5 - Rachel Bown 1:28:00 – Bath 2005
- +Maureen also ran 1:20:07 at Argentan in 1995
+Maureen also ran 1:22:40 at Bristol in 1995



AVR Challenge on four wheels....briefly

A small team of Avon Valley Runners and a larger team of supporters attended the **Great Cheverall Soap Box Derby**. Despite the efforts of Andrew Hoddinott and Darren Wrintmore to build a slick wheeled mean machine, it was not able to take the 9-stone weight of lead driver Liz Clark. So after eliminating the rest of our elfin physiques in the drivers seat, eight-year old Jaret Wrintmore was drafted into the team. Unfortunately after a promising start the kart came to a crashing halt and it was left to Andy Strange and Liz to carry it home across the finish line.



1. Chief Engineer Andrew Hoddinott checks out the kart with Andy Strange & Liz Clark; 2. Team AVR on the move; 3. Oops – the wheels have come off; 4. AVR resort to running; 5. Jaret tackles the beer stop; 6. Crossing the finish line; 7. We may not have won but we had good fun.



Captains Kathy & Carl on the beach

Uphill to Wells

Avon Valley Runners fielded two teams for the **Uphill to Wells Relay** over 29-miles from Uphill beach at Weston Super-Mare to Wells Cathedral.

The ladies team of Kathy Kinsey, Mel Nicholls, Claire Howard, Linda Ladner & Sue MacGregor managed to retain the title that they won in 2009.

The Mens team also ran well but a couple of navigational foupars meant that they only managed third place overall.



Linda celebrates Leg-5 with a Guinness

A New Badge for a New Club

With an embryonic Avon Valley Runners in the offing, Secretary Stan Farr set about contributing to the efforts to design a badge for the club.....



SECRETARY'S EFFORTS
 TO ~~SUBMIT~~ DESIGN A BADGE
 WELL AT LEAST I TRIED