



# Valley News

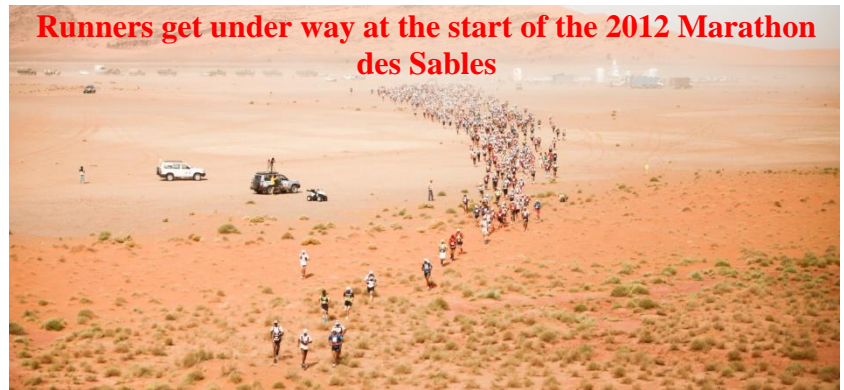
THE NEWSLETTER OF AVON VALLEY RUNNERS

#136 – June 2012



## *Dave of the Desert - Marathon des Sables 2012*

Marathon des Sables (Marathon of the Sands) is an annual 250km race across the South Moroccan Sahara Desert. It is run in six stages of varying length over seven days. The cost of entry is £3,500, which meets the cost of organisation, safety and support, but some of the funds raised through entry fees are put towards good causes in the region such as healthcare, education and generation of economy and self-sufficiency.



Having submitted my application in 2009 I eventually got a place in the 2012 race. With everything ready, weighed and cut down I set off to Gatwick before boarding the charter flight organised by 'Best of Morocco' who managed the majority of the UK participants. Gatwick was awash with Raidlight backpacks and the scene was reminiscent of a pack of wild dogs meeting for the first time and sizing each other up! The three and a half hour flight and the overnight stop in the Berere Palace Hotel were good opportunities to get to know a few of the other competitors and to further discuss equipment, rations and other provisions – the experience of veterans present was particularly useful.

After breakfast on Friday all of the UK runners loaded up onto a fleet of buses and joined a convoy with the other nationalities for a four hour coach ride from hell to the race start point. The drivers knew no fear; no overtaking manoeuvre seemed too dangerous and overtaking on blind bends presented a relief from the boredom of the drive. After decanting from buses into trucks we arrived at Bivouac One which was like starting basic training with the Army; queues for everything, not a great deal of information and a ship-load of anticipation and nerves. The first quest was to find an empty tent in the UK allocation, which was filling up quickly as people found their cases and made a dash for the tents closest to the central area.

Food at the Bivvy site was provided until breakfast of the first race day, and was exceptionally good considering the field conditions; wine and cheeses were on offer too. Registration was well organised and the administration went smoothly for all as we kissed goodbye to our luggage and started to fend for ourselves with what we could carry for 250km. The build-up was complete, the test was about to begin.

### **Kit and Equipment**

The amount of time that was spent on choosing kit combos can be clocked in days rather than hours. I opted for a very expensive but light sleeping bag which paid dividends on the rather cold nights. My tent buddies opted for the cheap and light sleeping bag which equated to 'travel light freeze at night' mantra of many a cheapskate.

### **Conditions**

It is difficult to succinctly describe the conditions that each day entailed but to generalise; the conditions were a combination of: the heat of an Afghan summer patrol, the terrain of the rockiest part of Scafell Pike, the wind from your Gran's most powerful hair dryer on full heat directly in your face, and the biggest sand dunes you will ever see. Oh and we had to run large distances across these throughout the heat of the day. The heat soon started to take its toll and every pore of the body seemed to be emitting fluid at a vast rate of knots.

## Bivouac Routine

Upon crossing the finish line on all stages runners were issued 4.5 litres of water for overnight routine. Participants must then hobble, crawl, limp or be carried back to their tent and begin preparations for another day of punishment. Most simply dropped their kit, grabbed a water bottle and headed over to 'Doc Trotters' for some urgent foot care.

Reveille was usually around 0530 hours, no cockerel crowing but certainly a lot of very noisy French competitors who didn't think that shouting or singing was inappropriate at that time. Breakfast was a delight of freeze dried porridge, 3 salt tablets all washed down with 2 litres of water and a nice cup of coffee – what more could a man ask for? A back rub would have been nice!! Military training now took over and I packed up my kit in seconds few, while the remainder floundered with their bergen grenades. Thereafter it was back to the start line to wait for the admin vortexes to get their stuff together and then listen to an annoying French bloke to take 30 minutes to say go.

The exception to this fairly well set routine was the second day of the fourth stage which had a 36 hour cut off and extended over two days for many. As I managed to finish it in just over 12 hours I was rewarded with a full day off, which was well needed after completing 81.5km. Unfortunately this day of rest was rudely interrupted by a savage thunder, lightning and hail storm! Absolutely no joy was taken from watching one of the neighbouring French tents from collapsing – honestly!!

## The Race

The race finally began in earnest and the enormity of the challenge ahead was now evident. So too was the allyiest bit of helicopter flying as he buzzed 10 feet above the competitors heads sideways surging up and down so the cameraman could get some good footage.

**Stage 1 – 33km.** The route seemed to be designed to break us in with a little bit of everything, including a cheeky Jebel to finish on, which included a long incline on a sideways sloping sand path.

**Stage 2 – 38km.** Not knowing how we were able to walk, let alone run, we set off on the second day which was largely flat, but with lots of sand. Might have been an easier day, but the temperature rose to 52 degrees C.

**Stage 3 – 35km.** The third stage was a series of plains broken up with a serious set of dunes and rocky features. Not as hot as the previous day, but still well into the high forties.

**Stage 4 – 81.5km.** This was what it was all about. Feeling totally drained before I even started, I now faced over 80km of the toughest terrain on the entire route. After 38km of soft sand tracks and wadi beds, there was 20km of proper Sahara sand dunes. I was lucky enough to be able to pass through these in the daylight and finish with only 1 hour of running in the dark. Others were not so lucky.



**Stage 5 – 42.2km.** Having defeated the long stage, the marathon stage seemed less intimidating, but 26 miles over the desert was not to be sniffed at. The route was flat, with the exception of three sections of dunes of about 4km each. The storms of the previous day had improved the sand in some areas, making it solid and suitable for running on, but other areas became heavy sinking sand that drained what little energy was left in the legs. Some respectable marathon times were still achieved and Dave and Ben came into their own on this stage, despite Ben never having run a marathon before!

### Looking strong on Day 5!

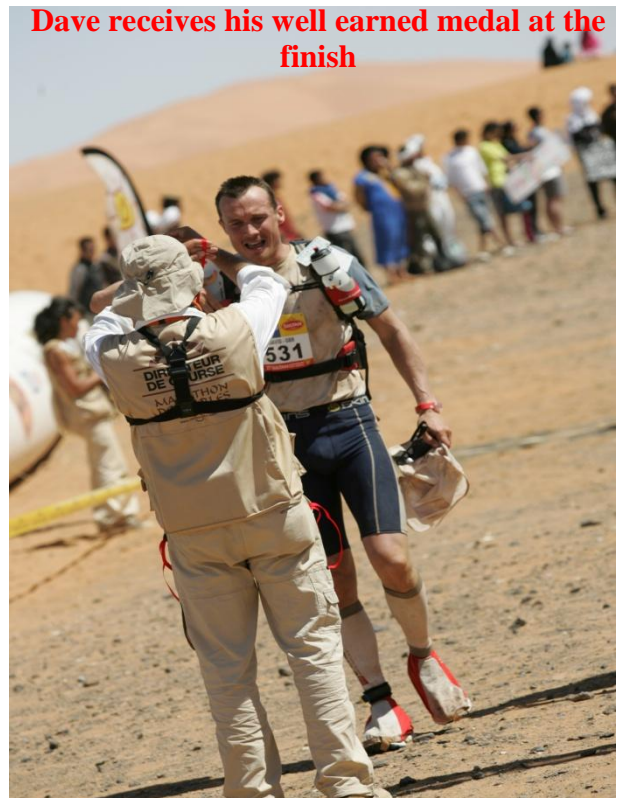


**Stage 6 – 15.5km.** Some had written off the final day as a jog to the coach, but those who had surveyed the colossal dunes to the West of the final bivvy site knew different. A straight run to the first check point 6km North took us to the edge of the dunes, leaving 9km of relentless dunes that were drying out and were extremely tough to climb. Telling yourself that you wanted to savour the final stage was one way to trick your mind into enjoying it, but it would have crippled you on any other day. The finish line never looked so good and as I crossed it and instantly became an MdS veteran with bragging rights forever.

Final position of 97<sup>th</sup> with stand out performances on stage 5 – 47<sup>th</sup> and a flying stage 6 – 28<sup>th</sup>.

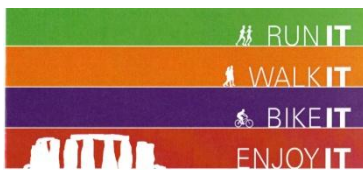
*David Spencer*

### Dave receives his well earned medal at the finish





## Tales from the Ridgeway – The Neolithic Marathon



It was whilst at one of our evening track sessions at Bath University that I was challenged to enter the Neolithic Marathon by our road race secretary Warren Wade, he was considering entering it and wanted some encouragement, which I duly gave him and before I knew it the gauntlet had been thrown down and I was doing it too. I left Bath that evening with Warren's words "we'll run it together" ringing in my ears and so that same evening not wishing to lose any impetus I put my entry in.



All that was needed now was to get some serious training in before the event. I had a fraction less than three months to get something like marathon fit. So plans were laid for getting some long runs in at the weekends and doing some speed work on week nights. I was even contemplating cycling to work just for a bit more background fitness. As with all the best laid plans none of this happened. Well I say none, that's not quite true, I did get out and do some 10K races and attended a couple of spin classes at the gym, but nothing like what you might call training to build up endurance. Then as the event loomed ever closer, I received a devastating text from Warren who, following a duathlon, had an old injury flare up and was unable to run. Damn I was on my own....

The first time I did a marathon I took the training very seriously and was out come rain or shine getting the miles in and was rewarded with a time of 3:17, the last time I did a marathon was in 2008 and I recall having a slightly more languid approach to the training and was rewarded with a 3:08; perhaps then I could do it again. It did niggle me however that I may struggle a little so one fine sunny Sunday morning in March I did get round to doing 16 miles of varied terrain and felt absolutely fine. So I then managed to convince myself that that would suffice and so back to just racing 10Ks and 5 mile events I returned.

The big day arrived and I didn't really feel any pre-race nerves and just rocked up to the start line with another AVR member, Jimmy Lowther, who is an old hand at this event which starts at Avebury and finishes in sight of the standing stones at Stonehenge, largely following the route of the Ridgeway. It is organised by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust to raise funds for their work and there are several events to choose from, ranging from walking, cycling, Cani-X (running with dogs), a half marathon and the full marathon.



We got underway at 10:30 and made our way out of the village of Avebury and out onto the trails passing the early mile markers with ease. The views were stunning at the top of the climbs as the sun shone across fields of rapeseed. It was nice to receive encouragement from the walkers along the route, especially when I encountered Denise Ellis, Tina Vivian and Kathy Kinsey at a particularly hilly part of the route at 11 miles in. I also met some of the 'slow and social' ladies at a water station who said I still looked sprightly at 18 miles!

As suspected things started to slow drastically after mile 19 as my right knee started to bother me as did a blister forming on my right heel and things were pretty lonely on some parts of the route but I plugged away at it knowing this ain't no *Marathon des Sables* and those stones would soon hove into view.

I managed to catch up with some of the half marathon runners in the closing miles so that gave my confidence a boost and someone to chase, then we made a right turn and there they were, resplendent in their ancient and mystical glory, the stones of the henge. I even managed a little sprint for the line passing a guy from Team Bath and a Hogweed Trotter to claim 18<sup>th</sup> place in a time of 3:36:00. Glad it was over but pleased to have got away with it reasonably unscathed I exited through the gift shop clutching my finisher's medal and a plastic model of the stones.



**Richard Morgetroyd**

## Reeto, Street 'O'

As reported in last September's edition of The Valley News, I have joined North Wiltshire Orienteers and given that I have been known to organise the odd event or two it was probably only a matter of time before I tried pulling together an orienteering event. Having now taken part in a few NWO events the one that I believe will work for us is the "Street O" which to my mind combines elements of the Mash (*See Valley News #127*) and the Treasure Run (*See Valley News #99*). So on Wednesday 4th July from our venue at Christie Miller Sports Centre in Melksham I am organising the **Melksham Street 'O'** and have also invited my new friends from NWO to join us.

With Street 'O' events you will be given a street map (*absent of street names of course*) with the 25 possible checkpoints overlaid and a clue sheet with such helpful questions as "what is the number of the roundstone?" - it might sound cryptic now but when you reach the location of the checkpoint as indicated on the map and are stood by a four foot high round stone with the number eight carved into it, you will know what the answer is [**Note to self** - *I may have just given this one away, so replace clue*].

Each checkpoint is assigned a value between 10 and 50 with the ones further away generally worth more points. The aim is to score as many points as possible, within the allocated hour. Of course you will receive penalty points for every minute that you are late. The optimum route between all of the checkpoints is about 11-miles so unless you are going to hit 5-minute mile pace you will need to prioritise which checkpoints to aim for. Once back at Christie Miller your scores will be assessed on the number of checkpoints reached and any penalty points taken into consideration. The highest scoring Man and Lady will receive a trophy to mark their accomplishment. We will then reconvene at "The Pilot" public house (about half a mile away as the crow flies) to recount tales of navigational faux pas.



Registration will take place in the first floor bar area of Christie Miller from 18:45 and will be free for members of AVR and NWO. There is ample car parking as well as showers and lockers onsite which take a refundable 50p. If you can please indicate your intention to participate in advance it will assist me in printing out the correct number of maps for the event.

AVR members may also be interested to know that a few days later, on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July @14:00, Christie Miller Sports Centre provides the start line for the third running of the **Avon Valley Relay**. This is a traditional 'pass the baton' type event covering just under 18-miles in four self-navigated stages through the beautiful Avon Valley and finishing at Bradford on Avon Rugby Club in Winsley. The event is free to teams from AVR and so if you would like to put a team together then please see [www.avonvalleyrunners.org.uk](http://www.avonvalleyrunners.org.uk) for details.



**Darren Wrintmore (Vice-President)**



## Wiltshire Track And Field Championships 2012

The Wiltshire Track and Field Championships were held at Tidworth Oval on a day with changeable weather, including a fair amount of hot sunshine. 8 members from Avon Valley Runners participated most of whom had not competed on a track since their schooldays.

Mike Towler was 2<sup>nd</sup> in the 800m and topped this with 1<sup>st</sup> place in the 1500m. Our ladies team claimed glory in their 4 x 100m relay race, which was a huge reward for the 3 members who turned up just to do this event at the end of the programme.

Carl Davies is going to write a book on how Marathon training helps sprinters (he did the 100/200/400 on the day) - Usain Bolt beware! Sean Price took part in the Hammer and Javelin for the 1<sup>st</sup> time and has decided to watch closely when these events are shown on television at the Olympics. Fiona Price ran the 3000m and ran close to a 6 min mile for the 1<sup>st</sup> time during the race.



All the AVR members enjoyed their day including Tim Lowrie who has recently qualified as a track judge and was officiating on the day and ran in the relay to make up the team. Perhaps next year more members will chance their arm and relive their youth (Note to Darren- keep your shot polished!)

### AVR Results:

SM 100m - Carl Davies, 6<sup>th</sup>, 13.3s

SW 3000m - Fiona Price, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 11m 55.8s

SM 200m - Carl Davies, 4<sup>th</sup>, 28.1s

SW 4 x 100m relay - 1<sup>st</sup> - 56.9s  
(Fiona Price, Mel Nicholls, Rebekah Scott & Kate Hails)

SM 400m - Carl Davies, 6<sup>th</sup>, 64.9s  
Sean Price, 7<sup>th</sup>, 77.0s

SM 800m - Mike Towler, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2m 03.7s

SM 1500m - Mike Towler, 1<sup>st</sup>, 4m 15.5s

SM Long Jump - Carl Davies, 5<sup>th</sup>, 3.78m

SM 4 x 100m relay, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 56.9s  
(Carl Davies, Mike Towler, Sean Price, Tim Lowrie)



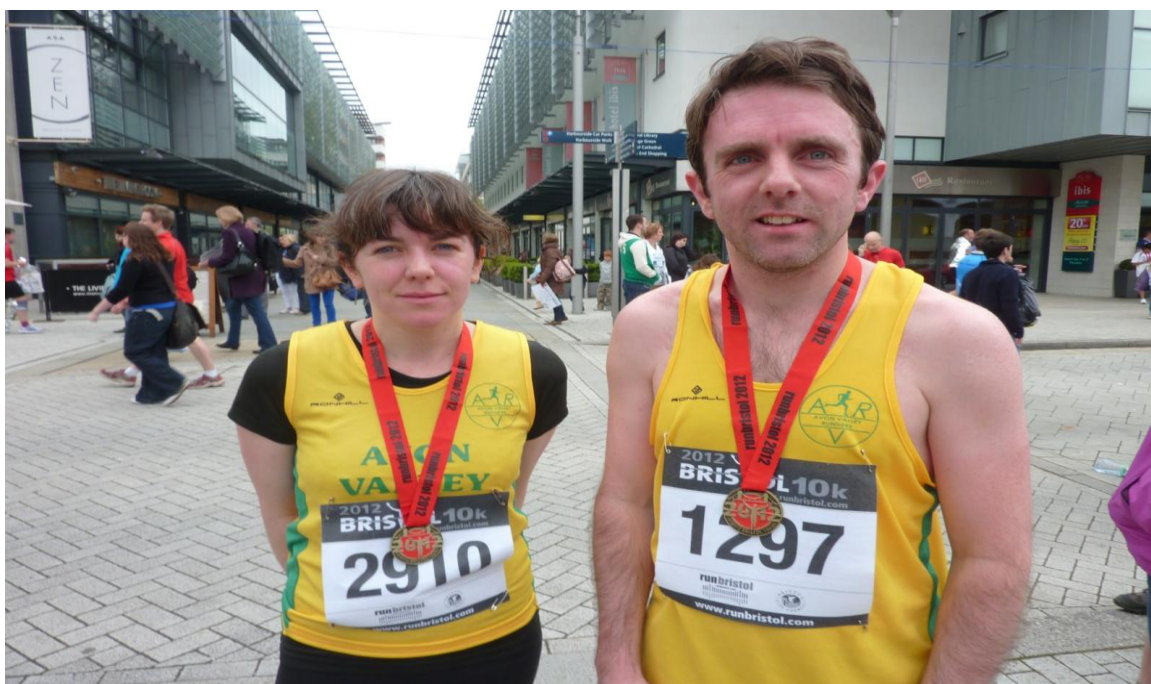
*Alan Hayes (Head Coach)*

## New Club Kit at Bristol 10K

Two Avon Valley Runners showed off the new club vests at the Bristol 10K on 20<sup>th</sup> May. Alexander and Leah Russell reported that the new sportswear most definitely helped them claim times of 40:32 and 47:20 respectively for the 6.25 mile distance. Pictured below are the pair wearing their club vests and well earned medals in Millenium Square at the end of the race.

Three other club members also took part, Tim Lerwill (44:23), Kirsty Doonan (46:35) and Anthony Royle (47:17).

Well done all!



## All Those Years Ago

Tales from the "Valley" 5, 10, 15 & 25 years ago:

**2007:** Jackie Rockliffe was the fastest lady at the **Heddington Relays** on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June she ran the 3.4 mile course in 21:31. Other members of the team on the day were Sue MacGregor, Mike Pace, Joyce Field and Anthony Hickson.

**2002:** Rosemary Barber was 1<sup>st</sup> FV40 at the **Long Ashton 10K** on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June in a time of 48:09.

Liz and Simon Ringham crossed the line together at the **Poole 10K** in a time of 47:45 which also took place on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June.

**1997:** A team of ladies from Avon Valley Runners claimed the 1<sup>st</sup> female relay team prize at the **Man Vs. Horse** 22 mile multi terrain event over in the Welsh valley's on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> June. The team were Irene Warden, Rosemary Barber and Jackie Robertson.

**1987:** Attention was briefly turned away from the murders on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June as crowds flocked to see the AVR contingent tackle the **Midsomer Norton Half Marathon**. Martin Connor led the 12 strong team home in a time of 1:24:51. Interestingly no AVR ladies took part; perhaps they were helping *DCI Barnaby* solve the latest mystery...

## Shaw Stampede



**Podium finishers at the Shaw Stampede**

One hundred and ten runners lined up for the seventh running of the Shaw Stampede and Keane Kanter fun run organised by Avon Valley Runners and Stampede Sports. In the 10-Kilometre Stampede the runners tackled some of the most technical and picturesque terrain in the area, as it passed along the bridle paths and country lanes around the villages of Shaw, Whitley, Neston & Atworth.

First home in a time of thirty seven minutes and ten seconds was Stuart Henderson of Corsham Running Club who was nearly two minutes ahead of second placed Chris Hall of Stubbington Green Runners and David Wright of Cirencester AC.

First Avon Valley Runner home in 6<sup>th</sup> place was Richard Morgetroyd who claimed the 1<sup>st</sup> MV40 prize and led fellow club mates Richard Stokes, Alan Tate and Amelia Oughtibridge to the mixed team prize. Unattached runner Andrew Vaudin from Marshfield was the 1<sup>st</sup> MV50.

In the ladies race Denise Grech of Calne took victory in 45:19 ahead of Zoe Ecclestone from Whitley and Amy Bentley from Malmesbury. Debbie Taylor of Fareham Crusaders claimed the 1<sup>st</sup> FV40 prize and Diane Aldridge the 1<sup>st</sup> FV50.

In the 2-Kilometre Keane Kanter Fun Run Josiah Burgess completed the course in a speedy eight minutes and forty seconds with Indy Jennings the first girl. Junior Avon Valley Runner, Kira Wrintmore was honoured to be carrying the Park Run torch which has been specially commissioned by the Park Run organisation to commemorate Olympic year and is currently touring running events in the South West of England and finished as second girl.

It is hoped that the event will have raised over £500 for Bristol Area Kidney Patients Association.

Pictured right is Kira Wrintmore with the Park Run Torch...





## Wozza's Road Warriors



Hi All, and welcome to flaming June and what a busy one it is too!

Race number 5 in the league is the **Bath Hilly Ten** starting from Culverhay Sports Centre on Sunday June 3rd at 10.30am. For anyone who hasn't pre-entered, entries are available on the day at £11.

The first running of the **Trowbridge 5K** will be on Wednesday 6th June 2012 @ 19:30 with the race headquarters in The Albany Palace in Park Road. Entry is £8 in advance and £10 on the day if the limit of 200 isn't reached. More details and entry form [here](#).

The Chippenham Harriers **5 Mile Road Race** and Family Fun Runs takes place on Sunday 10 June 2012 at 11:00am from Chippenham Rugby Club, Allington Fields, Chippenham, SN14 0YZ Entry costs £8 in advance or £10 on the day, more details [here](#).

The **Melksham 5K** takes place on Tuesday 12th June 2012 @ 19:30 from the Christie Miller Sports Centre, Bowerhill. Entry costs £6 in advance and £8 on the day, more details [here](#).

The second of the Chippenham Harriers **Lacock Relays** series takes place on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> June at 7.30. Registration is between 18:45 and 19:15 at the Red Lion in Lacock and the entry fee is just £1 per person. More details [here](#).

The **Great Chalfield 10K** will take place on Thursday 28th June starting at 19:30 from The Common, Broughton Gifford. Entry costs £8 in advance and £10 on the day and there is also the 'Around the Common' fun run on the same evening. More details [here](#).

Moving into early July and the 3rd race in the **Springfield 5K** summer series makes up the 6th event in the WAA and AVR road race league. It takes place on Tuesday 10th July at 7pm from the Recreation Area behind the Springfield Leisure Centre, Beechfield Rd, Corsham. Entry is just £3, more details [here](#).

Hope to see you at a race soon and keep a look out for my next road race E-news update on the 15th of June.

**Warren Wade (Road Race Secretary)**

## *Anthony's Off Road Athletic Antics*



Well done to those who ran the **Roundway Chase** on 8<sup>th</sup> May in difficult conditions. Two brave ladies, Millie and Tina; but especially Tina's son, Mike, who won the race outright.

The next Off Road championship race is the **Ninesprings 9** in Yeovil on June 10<sup>th</sup> a virtual run of the route is available at <https://picasaweb.google.com/yeoviltownrrc01/Ninesprings9kmCourse1Lap>.

This June there are not many local off road events on Sundays, but I can recommend **The Clench 8** on 17th June.

This is 8 miles in the Pewsey countryside It is held to raise funds for the charity Afrikaya, see <http://www.afrikaya.co.uk/page13.php>

June is a month for relays, so if you are interested in Team Events please let me know. The forthcoming events are worthy of consideration:

- Saturday, 2nd June: **South Downs Way Relay**, by invitation only.
- Sunday, 3rd June: **Link Foundation Maidenhead Relay Marathon**, teams of 10.
- Saturday, 10th June: **South Downs Relay Marathon**, Arundel to Petersfield.
- Sunday, 17th June: **Ridgeway Relay**. Ten legs, finishes in Marlborough.
- Wednesday, 20th June: **Shugborough Relay** - teams of 4, 2 miles each.
- And, finally, **The Cotswold Way Relay** on 30th June. - Kathy Kinsey is organising the AVR teams for this event.

On Saturday, 7th July the **Avon Valley Relay** is being held. This event is a traditional pass-the-baton relay over 18-miles in four self navigated stages from Christie Miller in Melksham to Bradford on Avon Rugby Club in Winsley.

It is limited to just 32 teams @£20.00 – for further details please see <http://www.avonvalleyrunners.org.uk/index.php?page=avon-valley-relay>

At the end of September I will be holding the **White Horse Relay**, see <http://www.WhiteHorseRelay.org>. This event visits all the 8 visible White Horses of Wiltshire and is held to raise funds for the Wiltshire charity Carer Support.

If you are interested and not going to run the Bristol Half Marathon, then please let me know. It is an event which lasts all day and culminates in a mass gathering of all the teams at the White Horse Inn in Compton Bassett where drinks and meals are available.

Have fun out there in the wild,

**Anthony Hickson (Off Road Race Secretary)**



## Member Profile – Sean Price

<b>Date of Birth:</b>	16/02/1967	<b>Residence:</b>	Westbury
<b>Height:</b>	5' 10"	<b>Occupation:</b>	Self Employed Catering (www.fionapricecatering.co.uk)
<b>Weight:</b>	13 stone 13 lbs	<b>Shoes:</b>	Nike Lunarglide (only got one pair)
<b>PBs:</b>	5K: 23:07 (Swindon parkrun 30 <sup>th</sup> July 2011)	<b>10K</b>	49:21 (Devizes 10k 2012)
	10 Miles: 1:22:05 (Wiltshire 10 2012)	<b>Half Marathon</b>	1:54:32 (Bath Half 2012)

I played indoor football and was chairman of the West Wilts five a side league from the age of 29 but my knee gave me pain when I was 42. I had an operation and was told I have to give up football and could only cycle, swim or golf.

I weighed 17st 2lbs so decided to go on a “lifestyle change” to help lose the weight and take pressure off my knee. I also took up cycling which helped me lose 2.5 stone. Although I love cycling I got frustrated watching Fiona run all the time and just stood getting cold, being a spectator.

The catalyst was last year’s **Bath half marathon** where I saw loads of friends and family complete the race, I then decided to take up running. I used a coach to 5k app on my *iphone* and my first race was **Swindon parkrun** on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2011 (25:33). Running has helped me lose another 0.5 stone.

Apart from being committee member of AVR and Westbury Wheelers and a member of DBMax Tri, Westbury Run Group and Frome Wheelers I don’t do much else unless you include Town crying! I have now been running for 12 months.





## Wiltshire Athletic Association present: Half Marathon Training Day

Come along for a morning training run along the towpaths and lanes around Melksham, followed by discussions on the Half Marathon. Sessions will be led by Team GB International Marathon runner Holly Rush, England Athletics National Coach Mentor Martin Rush and Freedom Fitness Sports Nutritionist Melanie Nicholls, supported by Run England Group Leaders. There will also be the chance to win complimentary entry into some local Half Marathon events.



### Timetable:

10:30 Arrival and welcome.

10:45 Dynamic warmup session.

11:00 Training run covering pace groups suitable for beginners, intermediates, and experienced runners. On your return a session of conditioning and recovery will be carried out with each group. Changing, lockers (refundable 50p) and showers are available.



13:00 Lunch. Please bring your own. Tea & coffee will be available. Half Quiz.

13:30 Coaching talk and discussion on Half Marathon preparation with Holly & Martin Rush.

14:30 Sports Nutrition discussion with Melanie Nicholls of Freedom Fitness.

15:00 Next steps – details of upcoming Half Marathon events and the chance to win free race entries from DB Max, Events Logik & Stampede Sports.



15:30 Finish.

## Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2012

Christie Miller Sports Centre, Lancaster Road,  
Melksham SN12 6QU

Cost: £12 per runner



Please register your interest with Warren Wade – who will coordinate the discounted Avon Valley Runners attendance.

For more details see <http://www.wiltshire-athletics.org.uk/index.php?page=half-marathon-training-day>