



EASTER EDITION APRIL 2011

Ultra Special



An ecstatic Jen Salter being presented with the Anglo Celtic Plate at Perth on 27 March. Our Ultra Correspondent (and Welsh Team Manager) Derek Williams reports:

This race was run in good conditions last Sunday morning. Mel James and I have managed Welsh teams since 1997 with very little success. Last year Emily Gelder (Dulwich) won the ladies race but she was the only Welsh lady competitor. This year Jen Salter joined her and Wales not only won the team event but it was in the fastest time of any team in the history of the race. Jen was running 100 kms competitively for the first time and recorded the excellent time of 8-43-03. The two Welsh women ignored their competition running intelligent races. At half way Emily was 5 minutes behind the English runners who were treating every post as a winning post. Jen kept running well and in spite of some problems raced strongly. At the start of the final lap we thought that we had 4 minutes in hand over England. Towards the end of her race she ran each of the final three laps quicker than the previous and so we beat England by 1min 47 seconds. It was a privilege to manage this team because as well as the excellent runs of the women, Sean McCormack and Jeremy Mower also ran significant PBs. The other runners ran well and only one runner failed to finish. This meant that Wales is the only country to finish a team in every event since its inception.

A pleasing aspect of the race was that the teams are getting younger and Ultra Running in general is on the up. It has been said that Norman Wilson wishes the race next year to be in Cardiff in January. I hope this is another April fool or as they say in France a 'poisson d'Avril'.

The Little Ones Double Up Again!

Having spent Christmas (that is to say, most of December) in a state of snow-bound drunken debauchery, it was high time for The Little Ones to blow away some cobwebs. The snow had severely affected both the quantity and quality of our running; speedwork was not possible, and it was only safe for Little Lolo to run on trails and in fields, so we could both sense our fitness going rapidly down the pan. There was the Barry 40 to train for, and of course Alan's MDS quest, so we had to do something before we turned into The Little Slobs!

During the later part of a typically 'merry' evening, Alan was scouring the 100 Marathons Club website, and he found an event called the Liverbirds Marathon Double, comprising a marathon on each day of New Year's Eve and New Year's Day, which was run on a multi-lap course along the River Mersey promenade.

"Are you up for it, My Awfulness?" Alan enquired.

"I'm always up for it, you know me!" I replied with a mischievous smile, "And the marathon double!"

The next day, after work, Alan asked me if I was sure that I really wanted to do the event, given that I was pretty away with the fairies the night before when he suggested it. Of course I was, being a woman of my word – after all the best plans are often conceived when the mind is suitably lubricated with The Black Stuff...

Although we had done very little training, I assured myself that we were both suitably seasoned ultra-runners to complete such an event, even though we weren't in the shape of our lives. And it was the first running of the event, so we felt we ought to support it and check it out. So Alan e-mailed the organisers, and we were in. I tried my best to run every other day, slogging around fields in knee-deep snow, or going for long walks. It was not easy; I hate the cold, and get very nervous when there's ice about, having broken a leg slipping on black ice in 1999. But then I remembered how well we did in the Barry 40 last year after snow and a housefire virtually stopped our training. Proof of the idea that a seasoned runner is often better off going into a race under, rather than over, trained. And running in deep snow is good resistance training. We lived from one snow-bound day to the next. On the day of a particularly heavy snowfall, I went to Whitchurch Village and carried half my bodyweight of shopping home in a rucksack. When I got on the scales with it, I weighed 10 stone 9!

Because of the snow, we didn't know if the event would go ahead, so we waited until December 28th to e-mail the organisers. To our amazement, they said that all the snow was gone in Liverpool. Game on! Time for lots of scoffing, and not feeling guilty about not running.

The Little Ones are known for adventures with a logistical twist, and this one was no exception. As Alan had to go in to work on the evening of the 30th of December, we would have to drive up to Liverpool on the morning of the race, which would mean that we'd have to leave in the wee small freezing hour of 4 am. Alan planned to get in from work at 2 am, and catch 1 ½ hour's kip before getting ready to go. As Alan is Chief Organiser, Navigator and Tour Operator, I was on Foodbag and Flask Duty. We drafted in my sister Baboo and nephew Alec to look after our mad Korat cats, Jedi and Leaia, and as I packed our foodbag, all four of them sat in the kitchen and watched. Baboo was amazed at the amount of organisation that went into our adventures. I am used to it; when you have to leave the house at Stupid O' clock, you have to take breakfast with you. An advantage of this is that you have exactly what you want to eat.

I went to bed about 11.30, after spaghetti Bolognese, red wine, raspberry ruffle bars and dark chocolate Oreos, hoping for 3 hours of quality sleep. Instead I lay staring into the darkness, listening to Absolute 80s, telling myself that I'd had so much lying-in and so little training lately I probably didn't need much sleep anyway, so I just lay there and chilled. I must have slept, though, as I looked at my watch at 2.30 am, fresh from a dream in which I had arrived for the race late, mortified to discover that I was wearing no bra! So I had to hold on to my titties as I ran; the mental fortitude of us ultra-runners knows no bounds!

Alan was already home and in bed at this point, so I rose as stealthily as I could, not to disturb him. Stealthy, be buggered! As I got into my running kit every sound seemed magnified, as the combination of early morning clumsiness and block flooring produced enough clatters and bangs to

wake the dead. Added to this was the high, girly meowing of Leia outside the bedroom door, demanding to know What Was Going On, and if she could Help in Any Way. Korat cats love to 'help', usually by sitting in or on, or fiddling with, whatever you are trying to do. As she was making such a racket outside the bedroom door, I had to let her in for poor Alan's sake, whereupon she proceeded to 'help' by sitting in my suitcase, tossing my socks around, and sitting on my lap giving me kisses while I was trying to put them on!

I don't know whether Alan got any sleep, but we set off punctually at 4 am. I lay in the back of the car with a pillow and blanket, and a sleeping bag on the seat to stop those seatbelt things from sticking in me. You learn from experience. As Alan hurtled along the motorway like Jenson Button on acid, I was amused and tormented by more stupid dreams about the race being run in a swamp, being beaten by Wagner, and losing my false eye. It was still dark when we arrived in Liverpool. The city was quietly psychedelic, with its impressive architecture and multicoloured lights, and although we had clearly caught it napping, it exuded an air of history, music and fun. I was excited, but I needed a wee...

The Greatest Invention of All Time, apart from the toilet, has to be The Sat Nav. However, the trickiest part of the journey is that last little fiddly bit, when you are actually trying to arrive at your destination. While I held on to my bladder in the back of the car, I wryly smiled, while Alan and The Sat Nav were having a domestic.

“Recalculating. Turn left, then turn left. Recalc...”

“Shut up, you stupid cow!”

“Arriving at destination, on left...”

“There's gotta be somewhere better than this to f***ing park!”

“Recalculating. Turn right, then...”

“Shut up, bitch, I know where I'm f***ing going!”

Ah, it's great to see that chivalry is alive and well...

As Paula Radcliffe can testify, weeing in public becomes an ultra-runner's commonplace privilege - Alan and I parked up and proceeded to flood the place, while the seagulls yawned and stretched their wings. It was about 8.30, and as I thought the race started at 10.00, I was beginning to panic, as we had not had breakfast yet. Alan informed me that we were starting at 12.00; there were 3 starts -10.00, 11.00 and 12.00. Alan had chosen 12.00 to allow time for a kip. I was immediately relieved; we collected our numbers and had breakfast at 9.30, giving us 1 ½ hours of dreamtime. At about 11.30, we made our way to the start area. The recurring theme of toilets once again reared its ugly head, so we asked the organisers where they were.

“There are none, only bushes,” was the apologetic reply.

I looked along the long, sprawling Mersey promenade. There were no bushes. There were probably more bushes in the Gobi Desert...

“But you don't have any,” I replied. “We've got loads of 'em in Cardiff. If I'd have thought, I could have brought some...”

While the organiser shifted in his shoes and smiled, Alan discretely pointed out that portaloos would be a good idea next time. So we went to a deli for a coffee and a Numero Dos, and arrived at the start for 11.45.

About half a dozen of us towed the start line; many of us would be travelling on foot more in two days than we had been in the last four weeks. We were variously dressed, from multiple thermal layers to shorts and vests. It was chilly, so Alan and I were glad of our thermal layers, thank you very much! As part of his MDS preparation, Alan was carrying 2 litres of water in a Camelback, as well as a cotton sleeping bag weighing 7 pounds, giving him an extra 5-6 kilos to carry. The starter set us off, and I immediately went ahead. The course was a straightforward out-and-back along the Mersey promenade, 5k out and 5k back, 4 times. Well, a little more than 5k, to make 42k, the marathon distance. You had to run to the end of the sea wall, then all the way back again, and the turnaround was marked by a red hat in a box, that you had to run round before starting the next lap; a nice festive touch, I thought! But when you are as shortsighted as me, nothing is straightforward, and adjacent to the promenade was a park, with lots of meandering paths...And because lots of races

had obviously taken place there, there were arrows all over the place. So, naturally, Little Lolo felt obliged to follow them all...

“Where the f***k are you going, my 'Orrible Girl?” came Alan's dulcet tones, as I was following arrows around the park. “Just follow the f***ing river!”

“Ta, my sweet!” I replied, forging ahead.

Once I had got the hang of the fact that it was just there and back, four times, I just got on with it. However, being along a promenade, the course was not on tarmac, but rather a mixture of pavement, concrete, brick and cobble; all hard, unforgiving surfaces. Plus, there was a section, that I affectionately christened 'the farty bit' that had twists and turns, a bandstand, and steps at three points, just to catch the unwary, and break your rhythm. Rather than seeing this as an irritation, I chose to be more careful at this point, and have a breather! Due to the unfamiliar surfaces we were running on, the going felt a lot tougher than usual, or was it the lack of training? My advice to anyone doing this event is that, while it is pancake-flat so has clear pb potential, wear well-cushioned shoes. And, if you have good eyesight, don't look ahead, as it is 5k as the crow flies pretty much, and that long, snaking view along the river wall is bloody demoralising. Or so I've been told... In my case, ignorance is bliss. I live and run in the moment, so I get on with it and get there... There were various snacks on offer at the turnaround point, including raisins, jelly babies, crisps, gingernuts and chipsticks. At the halfway point, I treated myself to a mixed handful of raisins and crisps...ew!! My tastebuds didn't know whether they were coming or going! But it was necessary; between the rock-hard surface and 'the farty bit' with the twists and turns and steps, I was feeling it in my calves, so I knew that salt and fruit was a good idea, to keep the electrolyte balance, and prevent cramp. Between mixing raisins and crisps together, and doing our ablutions in public, us ultra-runners are an unholy breed, unfettered by social graces. Don't marry one; you'll never get it past the in-laws... Fortunately, I am happy to say I am married to one, and as I crossed paths with Alan on my last lap, he informed me that the sleeping bag was waiting for me at the finish. What a gentleman; he knows I always go hypothermic after races, so he was clearly thinking of his Little Lolo, plus there was the obvious bonus of carrying 7 pounds less on the last lap!

I finished comfortably in 4.06, a little annoyed that I didn't break 4 hours, but it was an unfamiliar event on a funny old course, and I still had another one to do tomorrow. I was happy to note that I had no blisters or niggles, so I wrapped myself in the sleeping bag, rehydrated, and took a walk along the promenade, hoping to meet The Little Sod. I sauntered along for about half a mile, but still no sign of him, so I went back and sat down for a bit. But I was feeling the cold, so I thanked the organisers for standing about in the cold while us silly buggers ran around, and set off again, only to return and sit on the bench, all wrapped in a sleeping bag and shivering, like some homeless drop-out! Alan came in in 4.36, and we exchanged a shivery, smelly hug. Oh, the romance of ultra-running!

We found a take-away, and took our greasy, carbohydrate take-away to our bed and breakfast. The trouble with doing a long, gruelling event is that, very often, the appetite gets switched off a bit. But if you are doing another one the following day, there's no time to be dainty, So we just had to get on with it and shovel it in there. We both did well to nearly finish our meals. It was New Year's Eve, and everyone else was out getting pissed, so being the dedicated athletes that we were, we only had 5 cans of Guinness each... While imbibing, we discussed New Year's Resolutions.

More yoga was my call; this would improve my strength, balance co-ordination and focus, without interfering with any of my pleasure-seeking behaviour. What about Alan?

Mischievous grin - “My resolution is to drink less... but, seeing as I have the whole of 2011 to do it, I obviously don't have to start now...” I'm sure 7 days in the Sahara will cover that one, my sweet... We are serious drinkers with a running problem... After a Big Cuddle, we slept like babies, and woke to the strident sound of the 8.00 alarm. I got up and made coffee, groping around with no contact lens in, but managing admirably. As Chief Organiser, Navigator and Tour Operator, it is naturally only right that The Little Sod gets to rest his velvet head until the last possible moment. He is the Last Minute .com prototype, and that morning, he was about to excel himself like never before! We finished breakfast by 8.30, and as we decided to go for a 11.00 start, we figured that we would need to leave by 10.15, so Alan set his 'get ready' alarm for 9.30. I got into my running kit while I was awake, and lay

back on the bed for some dreamtime by 8.45. Alan's alarm went off at 9.30, so I got up and made a coffee. By 9.45, the velvet head was still on the pillow so, relying on the fact that Alan had spent some time in the Army, I said "YOU NEED TO MOVE NOW!" in my best Windsor Davies voice. The Little Sod was galvanised into action, and quickly got into his kit. We set off, and arrived at the start area for 10.45. We affectionately christened our car 'the bush', as it was the only thing we had to hide behind for that last-minute wee! Alan pointed out to me where he had stashed the car keys; was he expecting to finish behind me? Hopefully he was covering all bases, as by the finish time, it could be cold...

I spoke to Baboo on the phone that morning, and she informed me that the only patch of rain on the weather map was on Liverpool. Great... Ah well, forewarned is forearmed, so I put on a double thermal layer, two vests, double leggings and thermal gloves. When we were summoned over the line, though, the sun was shining. "OH, NO!" exclaimed The Little Sod.

"What?" I asked.

"I've left my gadget on the roof of the car!"

"OH. ALAN!" I barked, launching myself over the line. I could already smell home; it was only a marathon now, and I felt fine..I bombed down to the turnaround point, shimmying my way through the Farty Bit, and as the sun was peeking through, I was sweating and overheating, feeling that I may be wearing too much. I tucked my gloves in my bottle belt. I would need to eat some crisps and shed some layers at the turnaround point. When I turned round to go back, though, a stiff, cooling wind pushed into my face, instantly cooling me. I thought of Alan; he hates the wind, so feeling fresh and full of competitive instinct, I relaxed, embraced it, leaned into it, and pushed on. I bulldozed through the first half in 1.50, a totally different animal to the day before. The surface that we were running on had had no effect on my joints, and I wore a slightly more cushioned pair of trainers on the second day, so I wasn't taking any prisoners. I scoffed a handful of crisps at halfway, and set off on my third lap. At this point, a driving, drizzly rain became a feature that was set to continue for the rest of the race. The gloves went back on., and stayed on. From this point, I did not feel overdressed at all. This was the third quarter of the race, the part when concentration can flag. This is as true for 100m, 800m, 10k or the marathon. Because we had learned from the first day that the course was ruddy boring (yes, more boring than the beloved Barry 40; at least at Jenner Park you've got some poor bastard telling you you're looking good every two minutes or so), The Little Ones decided to sod everyone else and use their iPods. This was definitely a godsend; it helped you to internalise and find rhythm in the face of driving drizzle and a brooding, grey Mersey.

One lap to go, 6 miles, this is surely done and dusted. But I still held back a little; there was still the possibility of running out of energy, so I held back a teeny bit till I hit the final turnaround point, with 3 miles to go. With 3 miles to go I ran like a bastard, even making mincemeat of The Farty Bit, at which point I crossed over The Little Sod as he was embarking on his last lap."Well done," he said.

I charged my way through the last 3 miles, winding it up to a last 100m sprint! I finished day 2 in 3.54, 12 minutes faster than the day before, but judging by the way I sprinted in, I could've gone faster! But I have never been so glad to see a red hat in a box... Because of the cold and rain though, I became severely distressed and hypothermic, retreating into the car, changing, and burrowing under a sleeping bag and blanket. But I had to be there to see my hubby in, so I wrapped myself in the sleeping bag and hobbled back out into the driving rain. Despite being wrapped in the sleeping bag, my body temperature continued to plummet, turning my fingers white, sending me into tooth-chattering, shivering spasms, and making my feet scream in icy pain with every step. The time wore on, and it began to get dark- the clock was on nearly 5 hours now, and The Little Sod was still not in. By this point I'd lost all sensation in my fingers, and my lips were so numb with the cold that I sounded pissed when I talked. At last Alan came in, very cold and very tired, in 5.01, exactly the same as my personal worst marathon time, that I set last year in Brentwood, when I caught my foot in a rabbit hole and hurt my knee. Considering that it was a multi-lap course, Alan had several opportunities to pull out, but he didn't. It's easy to push on when you're feeling on top of your game, but to continue on doggedly in the face of shitty desolation is proof that Alan has the mental fortitude, patience and humour to complete the MDS. I was relieved to see him, and I am very proud of him. I bet he was glad to see that bloody red hat for the last time, too.

The Little Ones drove to the bed and breakfast, picking up some curry, rice and chips on the way. As we stood in the take-away, two girls arrived, looking very hung over, in coats and wellies, still in their pyjamas. Very smart; we were well impressed, and they smiled as we let them know it! After the curry and a kip, we got up and hobbled over the road to the pub, for some much-needed, and hard-earned, Black Stuff, to soothe the agony in our legs and replenish our iron reserves. We found the Scousers a friendly and talkative bunch, and The Little Ones will probably happily return to do the event next year. I'd like to do both marathons in under 4 hours next time. Oh, and ,we'd better take some bushes along...

Keep on Running,
Little Lolo

Cross Country Review

Very many thanks to Eirian Arwyn for another comprehensive analysis of our ladies performances during the past Gwent League season. When we think back to the winter, probably our abiding memory is of the snow, and of training in bitterly cold weather for a long time. All very character-building! Cross country is very character building too, and I believe brings the very best out of our club. Looking back now to October and Newbridge Fields, Bridgend, it seems strange to recall that our season got underway in tropical temperatures and bone-dry conditions underfoot. Unfortunately there was a late cancellation to the second fixture, which was a shame because the University of Bath is a popular venue.

However, by the end of November the weather had turned unseasonably cold, leading to early snowfall, which disrupted the travel plans of many for the third fixture at Blaise Castle. Never was the club tent more welcome than on that day! The biting cold relented slightly, only to be superseded by rain, which many mudlarks delighted in calling proper cross country!

Most of the cold weather had passed by the time we got to February, which meant that the Brecon course was again firm underfoot, which the surrounding hills as ever providing a spectacular backdrop. The Gwent League season concluded on what many observers call the best cross country course in Wales, Singleton Park. Thankfully it was again dry – this is a tough venue at the best of times, but it was fitting that the awards for the season were able to be conducted in Spring sunshine.

Very many thanks for everyone for your contributions. I have included an analysis of our fortunes throughout the club's history, which is meaningful seeing as it plays a such focal part in our calendar. We had some tough battles this year, but runners-up in the senior team competitions together with victories in all the masters races was a good return. No doubt we will receive tough competition again next season – TROTS were unfortunate to be hampered by the adverse weather more than ourselves, and Neath gave our M40 team a real scare – losing by a mere 11 points. And of course, this is a real team game, it's not just about the runners. So, on your behalf, we should pay tribute to our admin. team Derek and John, our team captains Phil and Yvonne (not forgetting help from Liz), to Phil and everyone who helped with the club tent, to Flash for his disc-dispensing service, and to Jeff (and his volunteers) for continuing to provide such a speedy and efficient results service. And finally, a special thanks to those of you who made our team the most civilised – I refer, of course, to those who made and brought cakes!

Post Script: We aim to present the various team trophies, along with the traditional mugs for the Gwent League ever presents for the season at club night on Thursday 14th April as part of the Announcements. Please support this if you can.

Gwent League 2010/11 points

Open			Newbridge Fields	Blaise Castle	Penlan	Singleton Park	Total	Ranking	
Libby	O'Duffy	35	100	120	107	104	431	1	9
Cath	Tailby	40	127	98	92	74	391	2	19
Sarah	McCarthy	35	133	95	0	87	315	3	30
Julia	Becker	35	83	70	76	82	311	4	31
Yvonne	Bullen	45	97	67	67	64	295	5	35
Maria	Zubizaretta	40	156	0	0	98	254	6	43
Caroline	Dallimore	55	89	57	54	50	250	7	45
Jane	Coker	50	146	0	0	97	243	8	52
Jo	Tucker	35	119	88	0	0	207	9	
Anne	James	60	71	49	43	40	203	10	
Liz	Ashton	30	125	0	0	78	203	11	
Julie	Scholey	50	0	76	68	56	200	12	
Edwina	Turner	55	91	61	0	45	197	13	
Tina	Rossiter	45	51	37	32	27	147	14	
Claire	Beatty	30	147	0	0	0	147	15	
Sue	Neal	55	60	12	31	22	125	16	
Wendy	Boon	50	124	0	0	0	124	17	
Aileen	Lyons	30	122	0	0	0	122	18	
Clare	Johnson	65	44	25	25	16	110	19	
Gwenno	Dafydd	50	47	38	24	0	109	20	
Glenda	Edwards	45	64	0	44	0	108	21	
Rachel	Banfield	30	107	0	0	0	107	22	
Cheryl	Hudgell	30	0	0	94	0	94	23	
Liz	Merryfield	30	93	0	0	0	93	24	
Helen	Jessop	30	0	0	84	0	84	25	
Gill	Murphy	55	34	24	20	0	78	26	
Jemma	Nurse	35	0	40	36	0	76	27	
Annie	Conroy	65	33	21	0	0	54	28	
Carol	Miller	45	0	0	0	54	54	29	
Ruth	Galloway	30	0	54	0	0	54	30	
Lisa	Muller	55	53	0	0	0	53	31	
Jenny	Hughes	35	0	52	0	0	52	32	
Jane	Ash	35	0	0	52	0	52	33	
Eirian	Arwyn	55	17	13	9	5	44	34	
Angela	Neal	50	15	11	6	4	36	35	
Sarah	Dawes- Clark	35	31	0	0	0	31	36	
Gill	Kellam	45	20	0	0	0	20	37	
Mal	Rowson	60	0	14	0	0	14	38	
Karen	Phillips	40	14	0	0	0	14	39	
								40	

ran/finished	176/171	140/135	120/118	115/115		
Les Croupiers	709	477	445	468	2099	2
B	538	268	269	253	1328	8=
C	344	150	90	11	595	27
D	183	0	0	0	183	

F35

			Newbridge Fields	Blaise Castle	Penlan	Singleton Park	Total	Ranking
Libby	O'Duffy	40	67	76	79	81	303	1 5=
Cath	Tailby	35	83	67	71	59	280	2 10
Julia	Becker	35	55	51	62	65	233	3 18
Yvonne	Bullen	45	66	48	55	50	219	4 21=
Sarah	McCarthy	35	86	65	0	68	219	5 21=
Caroline	Dallimore	50	59	41	44	40	184	6 27
Maria	Zubizaretta	40	102	0	0	78	180	7 28
Jane	Coker	50	95	0	0	77	172	8 29=
Julie	Scholey	50	0	54	56	46	156	9 35
Anne	James	60	49	35	35	30	149	10 37
Edwina	Turner	55	61	44	0	35	140	11 39=
Jo	Tucker	35	78	62	0	0	140	12 39=
Tina	Rossiter	45	36	27	28	23	114	13
Sue	Neal	55	42	7	27	19	95	14
Clare	Johnson	65	31	19	21	13	84	15
Wendy	Boon	50	82	0	0	0	82	16
Gwenno	Dafydd	50	34	28	20	0	82	17
Glenda	Edwards	45	45	0	36	0	81	18
Jemma	Nurse	35	0	29	31	0	60	19
Gill	Murphy	55	24	18	17	0	59	20
Jan	Hall	45	0	0	0	44	44	21
Jane	Ash	35	0	0	42	0	42	22
Annie	Conroy	65	23	15	0	0	38	23
Lisa	Muller	55	38	0	0	0	38	24
Eirian	Arwyn	55	9	8	7	5	29	25
Angela	Neal	55	8	6	4	4	22	26
	Dawes-							
Sarah	Clark	35	21	0	0	0	21	27
Gill	Kellam	45	12	0	0	0	12	28
Mal	Rowson	60	0	9	0	0	9	29
Karen	Phillips	40	7	0	0	0	7	30

ran/finished	104/103	80/78	82/81	81/81		
Les Croupiers	448	324	323	369	1464	1
B	331	219	188	239	977	3
C	229	121	113	120	583	8
D	148	45	11	9	213	26
E	57	0	0	0	57	35

F45

			Newbridge Fields	Blaise Castle	Penlan	Singleton Park	Total	Ranking
Yvonne	Bullen	45	44	35	38	36	153	1 5
Caroline	Dallimore	55	41	32	35	31	139	2 8
Anne	James	60	36	28	30	27	121	3 12
Julie	Scholey	50	0	39	39	34	112	4 14
Jane	Coker	50	61	0	0	45	106	5 15
Edwina	Turner	55	42	33	0	29	104	6 16
Tina	Rossiter	45	27	25	26	21	99	7 18
Sue	Neal	55	31	6	25	18	80	8

Clare Johnson	65	22	17	19	13	71	9
Gwenno Dafydd	50	25	26	18	0	69	10
Glenda Edwards	45	34	0	31	0	65	11
Wendy Boon	50	54	0	0	0	54	12
Gill Murphy	55	18	16	15	0	49	13
Carol Miller	45	0	0	0	33	33	14
Annie Conroy	65	17	14	0	0	31	15
Lisa Muller	55	28	0	0	0	28	16
Eirian Arwyn	55	7	7	7	5	26	17
Angela Neal	55	6	5	4	4	19	18
Gill Kellam	45	9	0	0	0	9	19
Mal Rowson	60	0	8	0	0	8	20

Tina turned 50 in mid-season.

ran/finished	63/63	48/47	48/47	46/46			
Les Croupiers	242	168	173	179	762	1	
B	156	98	103	108	465	3	
C	91	26	11	9	137	13	
D	13	0	0	0	13	29	

F55			Newbridge Fields	Blaise Castle	Penlan	Singleton Park	Total	Ranking	
Caroline Dallimore	55	20	17	19	21	77	1	1	
Anne James	60	18	15	17	19	69	2	3	
Edwina Turner	55	21	18	0	20	59	3	4	
Clare Johnson	65	12	12	13	12	49	4	5	
Sue Neal	55	14	5	15	14	48	5	6	
Gill Murphy	55	10	11	11	0	32	6	10	
Eirian Arwyn	55	6	6	6	5	23	7	14=	
Annie Conroy	65	9	9	0	0	18	8		
Angela Neal	55	5	4	4	4	17	9		
Lisa Muller	55	13	0	0	0	13	10		
Mal Rowson	60	0	7	0	0	7	11		

ran/finished	21/21	19/19	20/19	22/22			
Les Croupiers	86	76	75	86	323	1	
B	42	31	10	9	92	3	

F65			Newbridge Fields	Blaise Castle	Penlan	Singleton Park	Total	Ranking	
Clare Johnson	65	4	3	3	3	13	1	1	
Annie Conroy	65	3	2	0	0	5	2	3	

Gwent League 2010/2011 Women

Growing old together.

As in previous seasons I express a concern at the age distribution of the club's female competitors in the Gwent League. The club's results were again good, but evidenced once more that the club continues to depend at senior level upon athletes who have been masters for several years. The age distribution of competitors in the open (senior races) was as shown in the table below:

Age	Newbridge Fields	Blaise Castle	Penlan	Singleton Park	Ever present	Scored	
23-34	5	1	2	1	0	904	16.43%
35-44	8	7	5	5	3	2134	38.79%
45-54	8	5	6	6	2	1300	23.63%
55-64	7	7	5	4	5	1000	18.18%
>64	2	2	1	1	1	164	2.98%
Finishers	30	22	19	17	11	5502	

The contribution by runners aged 35-44 would have been greater but for travel difficulties experienced by Maria Zubizarreta and Sarah McCarthy en route to Penlan where they arrived too late to participate.

The table shows that the contribution from runners aged under 35 was low both in numbers participating and in the percentage of total points gained. It is somewhat disturbing for medium and longer term that athletes in the 55-64 age group should accumulate more points in the senior races than the under 35's.

None of the 60 ranked athletes came from Les Croupiers' under 35 age group. Of the eight members to make the rankings two were 35-39, three 40-44, and one each were in the 45-49, 50-54 and 55-59 age groups.

Ever presents

None of the eleven ever presents were under 35 and only three under 45. The majority – six – were aged 55 or older. This is how the older runners were able to accumulate more points than the under 35's. There were not anything as heavy scorers per race as their younger club mates – they just turned up and ran in greater numbers and with greater frequency.

Next season

Will the younger members change the age distribution of Les Croupiers representatives in the Gwent League in 2011-12? Will the teams grow older? Is this evidence of a cultural change effecting not only Les Croupiers but also many other clubs in a League that has seen declining participation for some years?

Eirian.

Les Croupiers at the Gwent League All-Time Analysis of Team Positions

Year	Senior Men	MV40	MV50	MV60	Senior Ladies	FV35	FV45	FV55
2010-2011	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1
2009-2010	1	2	1	1	3	2	2	1
2008-2009	1	1	1		4	2	2	
2007-2008	1	1	1		2	1	1	
2006-2007	2	1	1		3	1	1	
2005-2006	3	1	1		2	1	1	
2004-2005	2	2	2		2	1	1	
2003-2004	2	1	1		1	1	1	
2002-2003	2	1	1		1	1	1	
2001-2002	1	1	1		3	1	1	
2000-2001	1	2	1		3	1	1	
1999-2000	1	3	1		4	1	1	
1998-1999	2	1	1		2	1	1	
1997-1998	1	1	1		1	1	1	
1996-1997	2	1	3		1	1	3	
1995-1996	2	1	5		2	1	1	
1994-1995	4	3	4		2	1	1	
1993-1994	4	3	2		1	1	1	
1992-1993	3	2	6		3	1	1	
1991-1992	3	3	4		2	1	1	
1990-1991	2	3	8		1	1	1	
1989-1990	2	1			2	1		
1988-1989	1	3			3	1		
1987-1988	3	2			3	1		
1986-1987	5	1			4	1		
1985-1986	3	4			4	1		
1984-1985	3	4			5	2		
1983-1984	3	4			6			
1982-1983	4	6			3			
1981-1982	5	6			15			
1980-1981	20							

The above shows our respective teams' positions in the Gwent Cross Country League in each of the 31 seasons since the club formed in May 1980. The sport then was very different to what it is today. Most striking is the age of the runners. In 1980 there was very little veteran competition, unlike today. Gradually, over the years, more team competitions have been introduced to reflect this change.

1984-85: F35 Team Category introduced.

1990-91: M50 and F45 Team Categories introduced.

2009-10: M60 and F55 Team Categories introduced.

During these 31 years, our ladies teams have won 50 titles and our men 37. Our first team win was in 1985-86, since when we've won at least one category every year. Our most successful year was 1997-98 when we won all six titles on offer at senior and veteran (now masters) level.

Breakdown by age group:

F55: Category introduced 2009-10. Winners since inception.

F45: Category introduced 1990-91. Regained the title from TROTS this year, 18 wins in 21 years.

F35: Category introduced 1984-85. Regained the title from TROTS this year. 23 consecutive team wins 1985-2008.

Senior Ladies: The title is currently out on loan. Six team wins in all. It should be noted that the early snows of late November contributed greatly to our defeating TROTS in the F35 and F45 sections— they'll no doubt want those titles back next season!

M60: Category introduced 2009-10. Winners since inception.

M50: Category introduced 1990-91. Winners for 13 of the last 14 seasons. Haven't lost a single fixture for 5 seasons.

M40: First won in 1986-87, team winners 14 times, but this year's win over Neath Harriers was exceptionally close!

Senior Men: First won 1988-89, team winners eight times in all, narrowly lost out to Wells & Yeovil.

25th Annual Barry 40 Mile Track Race

Sunday 27th February, 2011

Official Result

1. George Dayantis (V45)	Christchurch Runners	4:24:17
2. Paul Fernandez	Abingdon Amblers	4:31:47
3. Colin Gell	Sale Harriers	4:47:41
4. Adela Salt (FV35)	Trentham RC	4:47:59
5. Karen Rushton (FV40)	South West Vets AC	4:59:29
6. Eamonn Dorling (V55)	Thorney RC	5:01:14
7. Alan Ryder (V45)	Erme Valley Harriers	5:05:12
8. Jen Salter (FV35)	Les Croupiers	5:09:15
9. Rasmivan Collinson (V40)	Sri Chinmoy AC	5:28:13
10. Mark Baker (V45)	Northbrook AC	5:37:03
11. Mike Feighan (V45)	Exeter Harriers	5:40:50
12. Robert Treadwell (V40)	Headington RR	5:42:13
13. Anth Courtney	Serpentine RC	5:42:53
14. Loretta Daley (FV45)	Les Croupiers	5:50:48
15. Edward Otto (V45)	Road Runners Club	5:53:46
16. Alan Mann (V50)	Les Croupiers	6:21:37

Retirements

Geoff Oliver (V75)	100km Association	149 laps in 6:00:10
Garfield Jones (V50)	Islwyn RC	133 laps in 6:00:24
Mark Shepherd (V40)	Team Kennet	108 laps in 3:14:04
Rory Coleman (V45)	ULTRArace Ltd	Marathon in 3:44:25
Mike Robbins (V45)	Wrexham AAC	84 laps in 2:23:05
Gary Hyatt (V60)	Les Croupiers	58 laps in 2:04:44

Split Times Analysis

Athlete	5Mile	10 Mile	15Mile	20Mile	25 Mile	30 Mile	35 Mile	40 Mile
1. George Dayantis	31:58	1:04:02	1:35:52	2:08:11	2:40:18	3:14:25	3:48:59	4:24:17
2. Paul Fernandez	32:24	1:04:17	1:37:29	2:11:06	2:43:58	3:17:51	3:53:46	4:31:47
3. Colin Gell	32:06	1:05:34	1:38:21	2:12:36	2:47:52	3:26:13	4:04:28	4:47:41
4. Adela Salt	34:20	1:08:57	1:43:32	2:18:12	2:55:10	3:30:44	4:08:30	4:47:59
5. Karen Rushton	36:26	1:13:02	1:49:21	2:25:53	3:02:54	3:41:29	4:20:42	4:59:29
6. Eamonn Dorling	35:09	1:10:59	1:47:12	2:23:50	3:00:47	3:39:17	4:19:28	5:01:14
7. Alan Ryder	30:18	1:01:54	1:33:59	2:06:43	2:41:45	3:29:58	4:19:49	5:05:12
8. Jen Salter	36:54	1:14:32	1:51:56	2:29:16	3:07:04	3:47:03	4:27:49	5:09:15
9. Rasmivan Collinson	35:27	1:11:35	1:48:25	2:26:04	3:05:30	3:50:57	4:42:02	5:28:13
10. Mark Baker	36:50	1:14:33	1:53:06	2:33:20	3:14:41	3:58:31	4:45:42	5:37:03
11. Mike Feighan	33:47	1:08:43	1:43:46	2:22:25	3:05:46	3:59:19	4:51:27	5:40:50
12. Robert Treadwell	37:04	1:15:07	1:53:36	2:36:02	3:19:34	4:08:58	4:56:10	5:42:13
13. Anth Courtney	41:14	1:21:17	2:03:58	2:46:30	3:29:40	4:14:33	5:00:19	5:42:53
14. Loretta Daley	41:38	1:22:10	2:03:45	2:47:19	3:31:11	4:16:54	5:04:28	5:50:48
15. Edward Otto	40:19	1:20:14	2:02:15	2:46:03	3:31:46	4:18:16	5:07:46	5:53:46
16. Alan Mann	41:59	1:24:44	2:08:18	2:51:40	3:39:41	4:33:59	5:30:17	6:21:37
Geoff Oliver	41:36	1:22:30	2:05:10	2:49:06	3:33:54	4:18:45	5:29:59	
Garfield Jones	41:57	1:24:52	2:11:20	3:04:11	3:59:37	5:18:52		
Mark Shepherd	33:45	1:08:16	1:42:03	2:16:38	2:52:29			
Rory Coleman	41:10	1:22:30	2:04:26	2:51:30	3:34:01			
Mike Robbins	34:35	1:08:17	1:41:52	2:16:38				
Gary Hyatt	42:08	1:25:06						

25 Entries accepted

22 Starters

16 Completed the 40 Miles

Welsh Ultradistance Championship

The race incorporated the 22nd edition of the Welsh Ultradistance Championship, with 10 entries accepted, 8 of whom started and 4 completed the full distance. The Welsh Ladies Championship saw two exceptional personal performances in what was an outstanding ladies field. For the first time ever, it was a lady who was the first athlete to finish, and by a decisive margin. Jen Salter made an excellent Barry 40 debut last year, recording 5:19:21 for the runners-up spot behind Emily Gelder. This year she maintained her rhythm significantly better, and her reward was a 10 minute PB for the gold medal. This should give great confidence for her debut in the Anglo Celtic Plate 100 km next month.

Loretta Daley (Les Croupiers) has built up a great record in this event, with 5 finishes in 6 starts, including a hat-trick of Welsh titles 2006-08. This year she took silver in a personal best of 5:50:48, thereby bettering her 2010 time by 5 minutes.

Mark Baker (Northbrook AC) has been a staunch supporter of this race, previously winning silver and bronze in four finishes. It was therefore just reward that his persistence earned him his first Welsh title in 5:37:03. Alan Mann (Les Croupiers) is another remarkably consistent athlete who has competed at Barry for the last nine consecutive editions of the race, only failing to finish once. His clocking of 6:21:37 saw him collect his second Welsh Championship silver, matching the performance of his debut in 2003.

Welsh Mens 40 Mile Championship

1. Mark Baker (V45)	Northbrook AC	5:37:03
2. Alan Mann (V50)	Les Croupiers	6:21:37

Welsh Ladies 40 Mile Championship

1. Jen Salter (FV35)	Les Croupiers	5:09:15
2. Loretta Daley (FV45)	Les Croupiers	5:50:48

Open Race

1. George Dayantis (V45)	Christchurch Runners	4:24:17
2. Paul Fernandez	Abingdon Amblers	4:31:47
3. Colin Gell	Sale Harriers	4:47:41

Other recipients of trophies as winners of sub-categories within the event were:
(Eligibility for male trophies is dependent upon finishing outside the first three)

Ladies Race

1. Adela Salt (FV35)	Trentham RC	4:47:59
2. Karen Rushton (FV40)	South West Vets AC	4:59:29
3. Jen Salter (FV35)	Les Croupiers	5:09:15

Age Categories

M 40 - 44	Rasmivan Collinson	Sri Chinmoy AC	5:28:13
M 45 - 49	Alan Ryder	Erme Valley Harriers	5:05:12
M 50 - 59	Eamonn Dorling	Thorney RC	5:01:14

Race Report

The Barry 40 Miles Track Race is a cult event. Born exactly 25 years ago on the Jenner Park cinder track, it has developed into an international class endurance race that is known around the world in ultradistance circles. It is a major trial for international team selection. Three athletes who have triumphed at Barry have gone on to win the World 100 km crown. And in the past 24 editions of the event, 57 world best performances have been set. That was a figure that was to be revised yet again.

An excellent field of 25 athletes from all parts of the UK entered, of whom 22 toed the line. However, the one factor that can never be determined is the weather. As the gun went at ten o'clock, the heavens opened. This wasn't quite what the runners were hoping for. Temperature-wise, 8 degrees is pretty much ideal, but the other deterrent was the energy-sapping blustery wind that seemed to be snapping at the heels of the athletes all the way through.

The first circuit of so arduous an event is always revealing, for it displays each athletes' intentions of how they plan to tackle the race. Most start conservatively. Alan Ryder (Erme Valley Harriers) started fast, making a statement of intent to the rest. His first lap took just 1 minute 28 seconds, and his next lap was only marginally slower. The other race favourites appeared content to let him go. A chasing group of three formed, comprising defending champion George Dayantis (Christchurch Runners), 2008 champion Colin Gell (Sale Harriers) and Paul Fernandez (Abingdon Amblers).

Alan Ryder continued to maintain his fast early pace. As a past winner of the very tough Dartmoor Discovery 32 mile race from 2009, his credentials were certainly sound enough. By 5 miles, which he reached in 30:18, he had already lapped the entire field. The chasing group had also split up, leaving each athlete with a personal battle with the elements. George Dayantis was now 1 minute 40 seconds in arrears on 31:58, with Colin Gell just behind with 32:06 and Paul Fernandez 32:24.

The next 5 miles saw Alan continue to pull away, though not as fast. At 10 miles the clock showed 61:54, with George 2:08 adrift on 64:02. A short pit stop meant that Colin Gell had conceded third place to Paul Fernandez and they came through in 65:34 and 64:57 respectively. It was still very much anyone's race. Mark Shepherd (Team Kennet) and Mike Robbins (Wrexham AC) came through together next in 68:16, thereby contesting the Welsh Ultradistance Championship which was again incorporated into the event. Mike Robbins is an athlete with local connections – in his entry he mentioned that his first ever race whilst at Cadoxton Junior School was at Jenner Park, and his grandfather played soccer for Barry Town prior to the outbreak of the First World War.

Meanwhile, the ladies race was shaping up very nicely too. Adela Salt (Trentham RC) who had placed 16th lady in the 2006 London Marathon in an outstanding 2:47:41, led through in 68:57. However, Karen Rushton (South West Vets) was still close in 70:59, as was Jen Salter (Les Croupiers), who'd finished runner-up in 2010, clocking 74:32. Loretta Daley (Les Croupiers) completed a very impressive quartet of ladies on 82:10, and all looked very comfortable.

Shortly after this juncture Alan Ryder took a tumble whilst taking a drink at the feeding station. He quickly regained his composure and was straight back into his running, but such misfortunes can be disconcerting. The early rain had by now thankfully relented, but the wind remained a nuisance.

By lap 78 (of the total of 161) the first major psychological turning point occurred. Having been a lap and a quarter ahead for quite some time, Alan found that George was beginning to eat into his lead, and on this lap George reduced the deficit to exactly one circuit. This meant that the two athletes were actually running shoulder to shoulder, so that each could sense the relative strength

or weakness of the other. These moments can prove critical. Whilst ultradistance can often see many swings and roundabouts in fortunes, it was clear the George was the man with the momentum, at least for now.

By halfway Alan still held the lead with 2:06:43, though his lead over George was slowly shrinking and was now down to 1:28. George's clocking of 2:08:11 meant that he had extended his advantage over Paul Fernandez (2:11:06) to almost three minutes, with Colin Gell by no means out of the picture on 2:12:36. Realistically, these were the only athletes with a chance of still winning.

Mark Shepherd and Mike Robbins were still locked together in equal fifth and thereby contesting the Welsh Championship with 2:16:38.

Meanwhile, the relative positions in the ladies race remained unchanged, with all four athletes going really well. Adela Salt had moved up to 7th overall and clocked a superb 2:18:12. Karen Rushton had actually speeded up marginally and came through in 2:25:53, and Jen Salter was now ahead of her 2010 schedule in 2:29:16, as was Loretta Daley on 2:47:19. With so many of the athletes still going so well it was obvious that there were some hugely significant personal performances being recorded.

However, for now the focus remained on the ongoing battle up front. The difference between the relative momentum of Alan and George was becoming increasingly apparent and by lap 99 George swept into the lead. He is a relentless athlete and was showing no signs of letting up. George actually passed the 20 miles point a minute quicker in this event last year, but it was evident that he was actually judging this effort significantly better. Passing the marathon in 2:48:58, he went on to post 3:14:25 for 30 miles, thereby revising his own Greek National record (set in Barry last year) for this distance by 29 seconds. Just a few minutes later he posted his second national record, this time for 50 kms, with the clock showing 3:21:43.

Nevertheless, as a race, the outcome still wasn't settled. Paul Fernandez had now moved into second and was still only 3:26 behind (approximately 2 circuits). Athletes have reached 30 miles with much larger leads than this and still lost. The race was still on! Colin Gell had moved into third with 3:26:13, whilst Alan Ryder was still fighting hard, even though he was losing ground, and was 4th in 3:29:58.

Meanwhile, the ladies were all still going superbly. Adela clocked 3:30:44 at 30 miles and looked assured of a very high ranking on the World All-Time lists. She had improved to 5th position. Karen came through in 3:41:29 and was up to 7th. Jen lay 8th in 3:47:03 and Loretta 14th in 4:16:54. As is often the case, the ladies' pace judgment and overall control was superior to the men, and they were all coping wonderfully well.

Watching an ultra is like seeing a number of sub-plots unravel simultaneously, and it's difficult to know who to concentrate on at times. It's something like a soap opera. The star of the show, just as he has been many times in the past, was just beginning to emerge. Step forward, Geoff Oliver. Having demolished three world bests for the M70-74 age group in two visits to the Barry 40 in 2005 and 2007, Geoff had subsequently made two unsuccessful attempts on the M75-79 records in 2009 and 2010. Surely, at 77, and in such unfavourable weather, he couldn't better them this time. Part of the battle is knowing what the records are, and planning specifically to better them. Heinrich Gutbier's 30 mile time of 4:21:02, set at Ottweiler, Germany in 2000 was the target. At 20 miles the record was a possibility, but that's the time when the going starts to get hard. By 25 miles Geoff was still ahead of schedule. The word began to get round. The record was "on", Geoff knew it, the other athletes knew it, the supporters knew it, the whole stadium knew it. The countdown continued lap by lap. Three quarters of the way around lap 121, with the clock showing 4:18:45, Geoff took the record by 2 minutes and 17 seconds. A gentle wave of the hand, and then head down once again. The 50 km mark lay just over a mile away, and the chance of

another record. Gutbeir's time for that mark was 4:30:51; Geoff clocked 4:29:29. However, the difference between the two times was now just 1:22 – a sure sign that Geoff was fading. He had given his all, but two more world bests were his. That makes Geoff's tally 5 world bests at Barry, and the event can now boast 59!!

After that flurry of excitement, the focus returned to George Dayantis. He came home in splendid isolation in 4:24:17, marginally outside his 2009 time, but a decisive winner by seven and a half minutes. He also completed a hat-tick of titles, only the second athlete to do so (the first being Simon Pride 1997-99). In many ways it was a triumph for pace judgment and clinical execution. Paul Fernandez came next, repeating his runner-up position from 2009, but his time of 4:31:47 was eight minutes faster. The battle for third was very exciting. Colin Gell was third at 30 miles, but it was evident that he was being closed down by Adela Salt. Having been four and a half minutes ahead at 30 miles, by 39 miles the gap was down to 11 seconds. With 3 laps to go it was 8 seconds. The prospect of a sprint finish was looming large. Colin dug in. Adela was still chasing. Both athletes were being cheered all the way as they emptied every last ounce of effort. Colin looked a very relieved man as he clung on in 4:47:41. Adela's reward for a brilliant 4:47:59 was that she had just put herself No:9 on the All Time World ladies lists for 40 miles. 5 of the fastest 13 times have been recorded in Barry, including the outright best mark of 4:26:43 by Carolyn Hunter-Rowe in 1993.

Meanwhile, Karen Rushton was posting a super-fast time of her own, clocking 4:59:29 for 5th place. This was also remarkable as it was the longest race of her career, and she judged it brilliantly. For the first time ever two ladies had bettered 5 hours at Barry. Third lady in an equally brilliantly judged effort was Jen Salter, 8th place overall and a personal best by ten minutes in 5:09:15. This won Jen the Welsh Ultra championship, and for the first time, the fastest Welsh lady also beat the fastest Welsh man. Loretta Daley also recorded a personal best of 5:50:48, this time by five minutes in taking silver.

Mark Baker (Northbrook AC) took the Welsh Men's title in 5:37:03, a triumph for persistence as he had previously won silver and bronze in four attempts. Alan Mann (Les Croupiers) was another athlete showing amazing consistency, and he matched his debut in 2003 by taking silver.

From a total of 25 entries, 22 started and 16 completed the 40 miles, a remarkable achievement. Unfortunately one of those not to make it was local man, Gary Hyatt, who has been one of the staunchest supporters of the race over the years. Gary will now concentrate on the London Marathon next month, which will be his 30th consecutive run in the event, an amazing sequence. Thanks are due to team Hyatt, that includes wife Pip and daughters Kate and Sally for the catering that kept the army of supporters going on a bitterly cold day. Thanks also are due to ground staff Bill Cooke and Mike Dodds for all their help and support on the day.

Twenty five years is a long time for any event to survive, and survival is very much the name of the game in a race of this duration. Life is, in many ways, a game of survival, so perhaps of the most abiding memory should be for the athlete who has survived longest. Geoff Oliver, at 77, remains an inspiration, and it was a privilege to watch yet another master class.

Mick McGeoch

The History of the Barry 40 : Race Winners and Survival Rates

27 Feb 2011	4:24:17	George Dayantis (GRE / ENG)	4:47:59	Adela Salt (ENG)
14 Mar 2010	4:31:19	George Dayantis (GRE / ENG)	5:04:14	Emily Gelder (WAL)
08 Mar 2009	4:22:57	George Dayantis (GRE / ENG)	5:41:19	Maria Zubizarreta (PAR / WAL)
09 Mar 2008	4:20:14	Colin Gell (ENG)	4:52:10	Emma Gooderham (ENG)
11 Mar 2007	4:28:02	Andrew Farquharson (SCO)	5:25:49	Elaine Calder (SCO)
12 Mar 2006	4:29:14	John Pares (WAL)	6:59:21	Loretta Daley (WAL)
06 Mar 2005	4:27:38	Stephen Pope (ENG)	5:12:46	Lizzy Hawker (ENG)
07 Mar 2004	4:08:16	Brian Cole (ENG)	5:15:35	Siri Terjesen (ENG)
02 Mar 2003	4:13:10	Brian Hennessey (ENG)	5:17:50	Samantha Bretherick (WAL)
03 Apr 2002	4:20:03	Mikk Bradley (ENG)	5:27:20	Hilary Walker (ENG)-6
04 Mar 2001	4:11:45	Alan Reid (SCO)	5:01:56	Jackie Leak (ENG)
05 Mar 2000	4:21:57	Chris Finill (ENG)	5:12:09	Hilary Walker (ENG)-5
07 Mar 1999	3:53:55	Simon Pride (SCO)-3	4:35:42	Carolyn Hunter-Rowe-2
01 Mar 1998	4:01:32	Simon Pride (SCO)-2	5:18:41	Hilary Walker (ENG)-4
02 Mar 1997	3:54:24	Simon Pride (SCO)-1	5:05:58	Hilary Walker (ENG)-3
03 Mar 1996	4:10:35	Stephen Moore (ENG)-2		No Lady Finishers
05 Mar 1995	4:17:46	Robin Gardner (ENG)		No Lady Finishers
06 Mar 1994	4:01:28	Stephen Moore (ENG)-1	4:50:11	Eleanor Robinson (ENG)
07 Mar 1993	4:00:20	Mike Hartley (ENG)-2	4:26:43	Carolyn Hunter-Rowe (ENG) -1
01 Mar 1992	4:04:01	Mike Hartley (ENG)-1	5:18:10	Hilary Walker (ENG)-2
07 Jul 1991	4:27:34	Paul Belcher (WAL)	5:14:12	Marianne Savage (ENG)
04 Mar 1990	3:55:21	Erik Seedhouse (ENG)	6:14:49	Kay Pritchard (WAL)
05 Mar 1989	3:59:24	Martin Daykin (ENG)		No Lady Entries
06 Mar 1988	3:58:40	Mick McGeoch (WAL)-2	5:04:30	Hilary Walker (ENG)-1
09 Mar 1986	4:11:32	Mick McGeoch (WAL)-1	4:47:27	Ann Franklin (WAL)

Entries / Starters / Finishers / Gender Split / Completion Rates 1986-2011

DATE	Entries Accepted	Race Starters	Race Finishers (M / F)	Percentage Completion
27 Feb 2011	25	22	16 (12 / 4)	73%
14 Mar 2010	17	15	11 (8 / 3)	73%
08 Mar 2009	20	16	12 (11 / 1)	75%
09 Mar 2008	29	26	23 (21 / 2)	88%
11 Mar 2007	31	23	18 (15 / 3)	78%
12 Mar 2006	30	23	14 (13 / 1)	61%
06 Mar 2005	34	24	19 (17 / 2)	79%
07 Mar 2004	36	28	22 (18 / 4)	79%
02 Mar 2003	55	34	28 (25 / 3)	82%
03 Mar 2002	48	33	27 (25 / 2)	82%
04 Mar 2001	52	33	23 (21 / 2)	70%
05 Mar 2000	50	35	24 (22 / 2)	69%
07 Mar 1999	48	33	25 (23 / 2)	76%
01 Mar 1998	42	28	19 (16 / 3)	68%
02 Mar 1997	44	39	22 (21 / 1)	56%
03 Mar 1996	31	26	17 (17 / 0)	65%
05 Mar 1995	35	17	13 (13 / 0)	76%
06 Mar 1994	38	28	23 (19 / 4)	82%
07 Mar 1993	29	24	17 (16 / 1)	71%
01 Mar 1992	30	27	19 (18 / 1)	70%
07 Jul 1991	19	14	10 (8 / 2)	71%
04 Mar 1990	35	27	22 (21 / 1)	81%
05 Mar 1989	29	25	21 (21 / 0)	84%
06 Mar 1988	33	27	23 (20 / 3)	85%
09 Mar 1986	24	15	11 (10 / 1)	73%
TOTALS	864	642	479 (431 / 48)	75%

Our Barry 40. *The Little Ones*

Happy New Year ,fans, it's The Little Ones, with Lolo in italics and Cute Little Alan in normal type; that's the only normal thing about him, anyway! I know we're known for our mad adventures, but The Little Sod is taking the biscuit doing the MDS; he's not really a fan of the sun, and What, no Guinness! But he's been putting in the preparation, with marathons and double ultras with a backpack, as well as trying out the MDS trainers and gaiters in the deep snow that we'd had. After all, it was very much like dry sand! The start of the year had been a much more settled affair than last year (if you call a marathon double settled), and the snow went away earlier.

This year's training has been a lot better than last year, I'm less anxious. The weeks before the Barry 40, Loretta is asking me how am I going to do the event; I'm very evasive. We are also trying to find lap scorers for ourselves. During the coming weeks Elio volunteers for Loretta and Terry volunteers for myself and, as he has done this event, I had no worries of his capabilities to do the job.

The night before Loretta ask a really girlie question - "What re you wearing?" - as if we're going out on the town!

So I start from the bottom.

MDS (Marathon de Sable) trainers - they're one size bigger, and have Velcro along the sides to hold my gaiters.

MDS socks - they're Ingie, which cover each individual toe, like gloves.(which takes a bit of getting used to. I wore them everyday for a while, then at some races. Plus my trademark socks up to my knees, which I'll also be wearing at the MDS.

So I should be used to it.

London marathon capries - "what's those?" exclaims Loretta; well, the tie around the waist came out, so I replaced it with a London marathon red shoe lace!

A thermal top, plus another long sleeved shirt.

A buff.

A base ball cap (in the unlikely event it's sunny)...

Also the one thing that I think was the best £25 I ever spent EVER, my Newline waterproof jacket (very light, but keeps the rain out), and its on it's last legs.

*Going out on the town! I can get all girlie for a night out in ten minutes flat, but getting ready for a run is a much more lengthy affair; in fact, I'm known for it, well, in my house, anyway! Everything has to be Just So, especially if it will be with you for the next 40 miles. So I lay everything out the night before; it's surprising how much time that saves when you're a bag of nerves, having just woken up. I chose tights, a thermal long-sleeve, a vest and matching hair tie. (if you looked smart, you had to keep smiling, and therefore more relaxed, and it was therefore inappropriate to frown, sweat, need a pitstop, or swear). It worked last year; well, almost – I did tell John O'Shea to f*** off once, but that was only a little understanding, and I said I was sorry.*

My phone alarm goes off at 7:00. I look out of the window and I'm amazed the sun is shining, and it looks like it'll be a good day. We have breakfast, then I go back to bed. I've got everything laid out, so all I have to do is put it on.

Last Minute.com was on form as usual, snoozing between the sheets in his running kit, while I seem to have millions of things to do.

8.00, I get dressed ready to run. 8:15 we are setting off to collect Terry Caveney, as he is lap counting for me.

We arrive at Jenner park just before nine, and we are some of the first there. Mick is walking around the course putting the 5 mile markers up. Phil is in the changing room to do registration, we sign the entries form, Loretta asks if Maria is going to be here, while I go to the changing room to put my numbers on.

Have a sit down to think about what I'm about to do AGAIN.

(I'm sure last year during the race I thought I'm not doing this f*#ing race again).

So what is it that draws us back time and again to this windswept fishbowl? In my case, there's no impediment to my running; no dogs, bikes, cars, potholes, and everything you need, when you need it. And even I can't get lost! Alan just keeps coming back because it's there...And we have a reputation to keep up...

Off to the track, to sort out drinking arrangements, when I spot Elio, who is counting Loretta's laps. As he has never done this before, I show him how it's done- 1st column elapsed time, 2nd column lap time.

I give Elio my watch to help him, and I reassure Loretta he has the hang of it.

Mick calls everyone to the start, and it starts raining; this is not looking good. *And we haven't even got Pam Storey, to command those black clouds to be gone, in the name of Jesus our Saviour (well, I have actually seen it work before...)* I rush to my bag and get my favourite waterproof. *Ah, yes, that beloved florescent yellow waterproof, that makes The Little Sod visible in the distance; reeling in that florescent dot is a great help.*

The gun goes off, and 22 runners cross the line at various speeds, by the first bend I'm at the back.

I look at this as a good thing, as I'm out of the way.

Because I gave Elio my watch I can't keep an eye on my pace, so on the first lap I watch the time that is on the side of the track. 1st lap 2:10 perfect, pretty much what I told Terry I wanted to do. After that I just ran how I felt.

The first 5-6 miles I was about 100 metres behind Loretta, who had a group of other runners who included Geoff Oliver, age 77 and Garry Hyatt.

After a little while I notice Loretta was getting further away, only Geoff stayed at her pace, at about 9 miles Loretta lapped me for the first time. Geoff was finding it hard to keep up with her, complaining 'she's picked the pace up'.

I was conscious of Geoff Oliver following my pace. I was not comfortable with this for two reasons; first, I did not want to be beaten by a 77 year old, and secondly, I knew he was going for some records, and I felt that it was important that he ran at his own pace, and didn't burn himself out following me. So I put in some of my Little Invisible Surges, and I was soon pulling away, leaving Geoff to stick to his own race plan.

Not long after that I passed Garry, that was the last time I saw him until I got to about 18 miles when I saw him walking along the back of the stands.

Feeling more comfortable now that I wasn't sabotaging any record attempts or ruining my street cred, I settled into an economical rhythm, relaxing into the wind. I must have relaxed too much, for all too soon, I heard a familiar 'slap-slap-slap' – it was The Little Sod, making up ground...oh no! Although I knew I was 800 metres out in front anyway, I was still uncomfortable with The Little Sod being so close, so more Little Invisible Surges put paid to that scenario. Unfortunately, it led to a rather keen marathon time of 3.41. 10 minutes quicker than last year. I hoped I hadn't done too much too soon. Anyway, I was not dressed to walk; I was determined to run every step of the way. The fine art is forgetting what you've done before; once you've done the marathon, it's only a half to go, isn't it? There, you'll all be signing up now, won't you!

Meanwhile, Mick was continuing with his 'Norman Collier impressions' every 30 minutes or so, on a P.A. System that looked like Noah knocked up before he built the ark.

20 miles; although the rain had stopped for some time now, the wind was constant, mostly on the back straight, and I was slowing down, I thought 'Right, get to the marathon distance, then I'll walk the back straight.'

When I started walking it felt strange, first because my mind/body was saying keep running, and second because my trainers were a size bigger, and I felt like Coco the clown. . . (who said that?).

Loretta passed me again, then Geoff who was going for the 30 mile/50 kilometre records.

I kept this up for the rest of the race; I was happy about this, as I had a double 29 miler to do the next weekend in preparation for the M.D.S. at the beginning of April.

30 miles, and I've got that thought - 'I'm not doing this race again', but it's different this time; I was calm about the thought, that it wouldn't hurt not to do it, I could do all the other races that I don't do because of this.

You're not going to count my laps then....?

20 laps to go, and I see Geoff ahead, I'm gaining on him, oh good I think, I might beat someone yet. I catch up with him, I give the usual "well done Geoff," and I saunters pass. 6 laps later I catch him again, and I ask how much further he has to go, to see how many more times I need to unlap myself with him to beat him, and he says he's got a good few miles. "How's that?" I exclaim Apparently he stopped for a while after he beat the records. I was gutted; I didn't want to beat any one like that.

After the marathon the wind whipped up, not only that, it became changeable, so you don't even know when it is going to hit you! Although I had a comfortable 10 minute cushion on last year's time at the marathon stage, the remaining 14 miles proved a tough test of body and soul. Luckily, during a horrendous spell of high winds in early February, I deliberately went out and ran round the cricket pitch by Whitchurch Hospital, sprinting into the teeth of the wind, telling myself that, in the event of a windy Barry 40, I would be prepared... And prepared I was; although the wind made a dent in the performance of the body, it did nothing to dampen the spirit. It was still a PB, but only by 5 minutes; sorry, fans, better luck next year...

Special thanks to Ellio, whose unwavering encouragement was what produced another PB in far worse conditions than last year.

5 laps to go Loretta pipes up "Nearly there sweetie boy!" I start to get emotional, 'don't do that,' I think 'you'll burn electrolytes.'

3 laps to go, and I've got a big grin on my face as I've thought 'they're gonna want me to run all the way round on the last lap,' and sure enough, Brian Richardson pipes up "You gotta run the last lap!" So the last lap I did as fast as the Alan Ryder did his first lap...And given the fact that he unfortunately faded to fourth, this shows what an extravagant effort my last lap was – wait for it – 1.44! As I sprinted past Scot he shouted 'you should have done that ½ an hour ago' I gave him some verbal abuse...

Verbal abuse included, the Barry 40 is a unique event, a great day out, and the Little Ones would like to extend the warmest gratitude to everyone who continues to support the event.

*Keep on Running,
The Little Ones*

Plaudits

Hi Mick

I have attached a tidied up lap score from the stop watch that equalises a missed lap at lap 81. I hope you managed to get away in reasonable time after a 'full day in the saddle' Someone should present you with a new microphone before next year I think! By the way, everything seemed to go very well so thanks for the experience. I am now looking hard at how I might run sub 5 hours for that race!

Regards
Eamonn Dorling
Thorney Running Club

Hi Mick,

Luckily I am only doing the 50km! Back in my youth (37) I did loads more events than I do now but now I am far more careful... Next one really for me is GUCR145 which is far more suited to me. Very happy with Sunday and with more prep could do sub 3:30 again. Got a good lead living with Super Jenny...

Kind regards,

Rory Coleman

Hi Mick,

Many thanks for sending the results.

Top marks for those who took part, how they managed to run 40 miles is incredible on such a cold damp day.

The images should be in the GEM next Thursday.

I've put some on my website if you want to see any of them, www.ffotoimage.co.uk.

I'm freelance, mainly press work but I'm concentrating more on covering Welsh Sporting events.

I'm trying to promote sports other than the traditional football and rugby.

I'm holding a few exhibitions on Welsh sport during the summer, is it OK if I include an image from the 40 mile?

Kind regards,

Glyn

Mick,

I just wanted to say "thanks" for (again) putting on such a brilliant event yesterday. Of all the ultras Mark does, I always enjoy Barry the most and it's absolute testament to good organisation. I wish other event directors would take a few hours out to come and see how it should be done!

Another excellent run by George, and great to see some good ladies turning up yesterday. I took quite a few photos yesterday which you're welcome to use in any way you'd like! Let me know if you'd like the big copy of any of these:

http://www.flickr.com/photos/rach_e/sets/72157626038860301/

We hope to come to Cardiff within the next few months, and will let you know when we plan to visit.

Thanks again!

Rach

Nice report Mick

I think your race hates me.

See you soon
Mark

And thanks to you Mick and all your team for putting on such a fantastic race. I did enjoy the run, despite the 160 odd laps, and the support was fantastic considering it was a small field. Hopefully I will be back one day, and maybe run a little quicker.

Thanks once again,

Adela Salt

Mick – Many thanks for the results and all your (and your teams) hard efforts in organising a superb event. I didn't have a great run with a suspected hernia, so off to the doctors to get it checked out. I'll definitely have another go one day to better my mediocre time.

Kind regards

Robert Treadwell

Thanks very much for the results (and everything on the day) please mail me when next years event is open for entries, i will be back and hopefully post a better time.

All the best

Eddie Otto

Hi Mick

Just want to thank you and everyone else, especially John my counter, for a superb event. Obviously I didn't set the ultra world alight with my performance but I enjoyed it nevertheless. Hope to run into you somewhere else. I'm doing a 100 km in Scotland this month and a 24 hour in Germany next month, and, among other things, the Man vs Horse race in June.

Take care

Garfield

Hi Mick,

We hope you had fairly stress free day! Thanks for the results and information in the post, I've got them all ok. I was disappointed to drop out but over the next few days realised it was a good idea as I'd aggravated an ankle/shin injury from last year that had set me back a bit when it first struck. It's ok now though. I'm a bit surprised that the race has been a massive talking point with a lot of people as well (and John Messum recalled his first sub 1.55 was on the track at Barry!)

Chris (my scorer) was really pleased with the t-shirt, food and help received on the day which also makes me feel a load better after dragging him down there.

My thanks as well Mick,

Mike

Hi Mick,

Just got back from NZL - arrived in Christchurch two days after the earthquake - also took in Thailand and Dubai - very contrasting societies.

Great report, great race - well done. Good to see yet more world records - and Adela Salt's run was a major addition - the best female mark since Carolyn. Britain still has some very strong women runners. You have heard of the problem with the Gibraltar course - short.

I will pass on the results to Jurgen Schoch. He will want the world age group marks too.

Best,

Andy

Hi Mick,

and thanks again for an excellent race. In case you hadn't spotted it, there is a brief write-up in this week's Athletics Weekly (17 March, page 45). I enclose the relevant extract.

I hope to see you again next year (and if you plan it for after 6th of March, I will be V50 then!).

All the best

George Dayantis

Ballycotton Revisited



If you've never heard of Ballycotton, and there may be many of you that haven't, then it might be worth your while putting it in Google. It says:

Ballycotton is situated twenty five miles from Cork and one hour from Cork Airport. It is a village with a population of almost five hundred people. A famous fishing village, Ballycotton has both a lighthouse and a world-famous lifeboat. A rocky spur thrusting out into the sea, its cosy harbour side contrasts with its wild Atlantic cliff side, giving variety in scenery and climate. Ballycotton

has pure air, clean seawater, incomparably beautiful views and the tranquillity of being at the end-of-the-line.

It's also the home of a cult road race, the Ballycotton 10 miles – which carries the impressive slogan “a classic race at a classic distance”. It's certainly that, and more. Born in 1978 with just 31 runners, Ballycotton now has an entry limit of just over 3000 athletes and is always oversubscribed. The Race Director is John Walshe of East Cork, and always has been. Perhaps more remarkable still is the fact that John has run every race too. He's a modest and quiet man, is John, and the philosophy of the race reflects his principles. He knows the lanes around Ballycotton are too narrow to accommodate any more runners, so he won't compromise safety in the pursuit of profit. The race costs just 15 Euros to enter. But it's a most endearing event to run. The village is such a tiny place; there are almost as many pubs as houses. And the whole community comes out to watch and support. It's a beautiful Irish welcome.

I had a very personal reason to run there this year. My last visit eight years ago, held on 9th March 2003, is a day I'll never forget. I managed to finish the race in 56:52, but in doing so I sustained an acutely inflamed Achilles tendon which took weeks to rectify. The significance of that injury was that I was unable to run the London Marathon 5 weeks later, and having successfully completed the first 22 editions of London, I was, to put it mildly, a little upset that I wasn't able to continue the sequence. It wasn't anything to do with the Ballycotton course that I'd got injured, but I still felt I'd got a score to settle. Unfortunately, the race usually clashes with the Barry 40, but this year the races were a week apart.

Phil Cook has always enjoyed doing this race, and this year his sister Sarah and Maria were also keen to experience the unique atmosphere of the event, so we entered early in the New Year.

Unfortunately, you can't fly to Cork from Cardiff anymore, so we flew from Bristol. It's a very straightforward journey, and Cork City Centre is only around 5 miles from the airport. As away trips go, this was pretty much a whistle-stop tour. We arrived early on Saturday evening, raced at lunchtime on Sunday, and left early on Monday morning for an 11 o'clock flight. But it was none the less enjoyable for the brevity. After checking in at our city centre hotel, we found a really nice Italian restaurant called Rossini's. Being a Saturday evening it was very crowded, but it was just what we all needed after the journey.

Sunday dawned cloudy but thankfully still. One of my abiding memories of previous races here is the strength of the wind – it's not a hilly course, but it's very exposed. After a quick breakfast we set off early. The area around Ballycotton is full of quiet rural lanes, and there were many special detour signs about specifically for all race traffic. It soon became quite apparent as to the level of manpower involved to organise this event – it was if the whole community had come out for the day. Car parking was specifically in a number of designated fields, and it occurred to me that we were lucky that the ground was relatively dry! We walked down to the start / finish area – nothing had changed since our last visit. It was a hubbub of excitement.

The road at the start / finish is no more than 5 yards wide, and as the end of the road is literally the sea, it's important to start in the correct place. There were marker boards up with anticipated finishing times, but unfortunately there were still athletes standing at the front of the field who were either supremely over-optimistic as to their ability, or just plain selfish. This never ceases to amaze me, because they were jeopardising their own safety and others by occupying such a position. Yes, it happens everywhere, but the narrow nature of this start means that people need a bit of savvy. The course is basically 3 miles out, a 4 mile loop, followed by the final 3 miles retracing the route of the start. The first mile and a half is gently downhill, then it's mainly flat with just a few mild undulations, with the section from eight and a half miles onwards a bit of a climb. It's most definitely a PB course in favourable conditions, with the course record an impressive 47:00 (Gary Staines).

The start was reasonably orderly, if a little congested, and it took perhaps 4 seconds to cross the start line (there was Chip timing). I won't bore you with the personal details of my race, except to say that I was quite pleased with a finishing time of 61:14. This is based upon my fastest 10 mile time of 2010 being 61:02, and I reckon a deterioration of 12 seconds is acceptable (at my age). If you're a regular reader of my articles, you won't be surprised to learn that I logged all my mile splits straight after the race for future reference for when I return. Information is power. Sarah and Maria were both delighted to record sizable PBs of 4 and 3 minutes respectively, and Phil, who has enjoyed a very good winter's racing, clocked his fastest 10 miles since 2004 – 54:52. On finishing you receive a Ballycotton mug (these are collector's items – just like the Barry 40!) and lots of schoolchildren were giving out bottles of water and Mars Bars, which was a lovely touch. My mood improved still further when I was told that Liverpool were 2-0 up on Man Utd at half-time!!

Whilst the weather had been perfect for racing (7 degrees, still and cloudy), it now began to drizzle, so we decided to jump in the car before we got cold. After an uneventful journey back to Cork, we all went out for a few miles jog. After all that activity we were all starving, so we agreed upon a Chinese for the evening cuisine, which was a nice change and hugely enjoyable (Scotty – you'd have loved it!!). Three course meal, with a free bottle of Chinese beer, which was very refreshing. Naturally, the evening was rounded off in a local hostelry, which a few pints of Murphys.

It felt a bit of a shame to have to leave so early the next morning, because we didn't really get a chance to explore Cork or the surrounding area. But we'll be back.

Mick from Barry

Note: Here's a link to a web site featuring the start, Sarah McCarthy can be seen in the 2nd video clip shooting past in Club colours.

<http://corkrunning.blogspot.com/2011/03/results-of-2011-ballycotton-10-racesun.html>

You can also hear the Ballycotton song too, maybe something for the Barry 40?

Always Look On the Bright Side of Life

As many of you know I have recently been doing very good impressions of Eddy the Eagle. The resulting prospect of weeks to come without being able to run was daunting.

Many of us are in this position from time to time, so I thought I would put finger to key-board and try to cheer up anyone facing the same problem.

Firstly, remember that as Mick says, you are in the greatest running club in the world Keep in touch!

I have really appreciated all the good wishes; this in itself has made me feel a whole lot better. Also appearing with your arm in a sling is a great conversation opener and I have had long chats with people that I hadn't known very well. Lots of new friends have been made.

Having many friends from the club, it is a great opportunity to socialise, drink coffee, drink something stronger, go for a walk, watch a film, go shopping.....

You can still go to events and help with marshalling etc. In my case as long as runners had to turn right and not left. Phil always appreciates help at Park Run and there is the added bonus of breakfast at Tesco afterwards. Love my bacon sandwiches. Don't forget to cheer on your club mates, where else could you shout and scream to your heart's content. Oh, and bring your camera to embarrass them afterwards!

Many of the events are at scenic venues. If you are lucky enough to have the bonus of glorious spring weather you get the chance to stop and look for a change. Atlantic College, for example was fantastic with spring lambs, flowers and the having the beach all to yourself.

Try and stay active if you can. After a week or so I was able to start going for a walk and they are getting longer and longer. At least that way you keep some fitness. Our guru Loretta also recommends this.

I decided early on that I would try and be positive and began to think about what I could do, rather than dwell on the negative. For a long time I have wanted to search for my family history but I have never found the time. So I began the search and I am finding the journey fascinating. I have discovered relatives in Cardiff, Swansea, Chepstow and Bristol. I haven't discovered any runners yet but I have found an uncle who was a cyclist.

It's always good to have something to look forward to, so Mike and I have spent hours planning our next big holiday. We are going to China next summer and I am so excited.

I suppose that I could learn some Chinese, but then I would have to take at least a year out.

Don't forget that you will at last have the time to write that article for ACE that you've been meaning to for ages.

Finally it's good to have someone at home to help, so thanks Mike you have been a star.

Although I am glad that I can manage to cook again, even if I do still need my apprentice to chop the veg. I was beginning to tire of pasta.

So I guess that I am saying that being injured is a pain, but it's not the end of the world. It won't be too long before I will be running again, all be it near the back of the field. Those of you anywhere near the front may need binoculars to see me! I know that it will be hard work and that I will moan that I am unfit, but I will be secretly enjoying myself. After all absence, as they say, makes the heart grow fonder.

Gill Murphy

Atlantic College 10K, March 2011

Ever since I joined Les Croupiers in the summer of 2007, the 10K distance is one that has held considerable appeal for me, possibly because, in terms of the effort required, it matches the races I enjoyed the most as a racing cyclist. Though my times tumbled considerably during my first 2 seasons as a 'proper' runner, I had been stuck at around the 40.25 mark for some time and, irrespective of the time of year, the course or the conditions, I could not break the 40 minute barrier.

I have for some time held up the 40 minute mark as being a notable milestone and the fact that I had been unable to achieve this in my previous 4 or 5 outings was making this something of a monkey on my back. That said, my last race at 10K, the corresponding fixture at Atlantic College 12 months ago, was poor, for reasons I can only put down to a distinct lack of training miles.

As I am currently in training for a spring marathon and have therefore been training much more consistently this year, the Atlantic College 10K 2011 was an event I was looking forward to for a number of reasons. Firstly, having already clocked a PB over 10 miles, as well as running a ParkRun PB of 19.07 in recent weeks, it looked as if I was on decent form. The second factor was that if I was racing 10K, I would not have to run 20 miles on the Taff Trail and could start thinking about my pre-marathon taper. Talk about every cloud having a silver lining !

Sunday 20th March, as those who raced will I am sure testify, turned out to be a stunning day and much better than the weather forecasters had predicted. The complex at race HQ shimmered in the sunlight and the views across the Channel towards the West Country were breathtaking, making it difficult to believe it was still only March.

Having arrived nice and early, in order to enter on-the-day and giving myself enough time to prepare, I was able to spend a few minutes with Mike and Gill Murphy, sat on the old cobblestones, enjoying the warmth of the sun and comparing notes on previous editions of this great early season event. With the start time looming, I jogged off to get a 2 mile warm up in so I could be on the line feeling ready to go.

My race plan was relatively simple : try and run at a hard but sustainable pace for the first 5K and then open up in the second half of the race. For me 'hard but sustainable' was going to be in the region of 6.25-6.30 a mile as I knew already from the Pontypridd Reverse 10 that I was capable of 6.40 a mile over a longer distance so, in theory at least, I should have the legs for this slightly faster tempo. I also wanted to keep a little in reserve in the early stages of the race as I remembered hitting some hilly sections in 2010 that, thanks to my poor fitness at the time, finished me off as early as the 4K mark.

To start with, I was happy to let the elite level runners drift away from me, as well as the over ambitious that often tear off too quickly, only to be caught at a later stage in the race. Out past the pond and up the first hill away from St. Donats, I was holding what I felt was a comfortable enough pace and, seeing some very competent Les Croupiers runners just ahead of me, gave me some early confidence that I was running sensibly.

Although lots of runners switch their Garmins over to kilometres for 5K and 10K races, I took the decision to leave mine on miles. As I had joked with Rob Scott on the line, fewer alarm beeps must mean I am running less distance mustn't it ?? I do not look at my Garmin religiously when training or racing but I think it is always important to check the first mile

split as this has often been my undoing, going out far too fast on fresh legs and paying for my over-exuberance later on.

Mile 1 came up in 6.29 and I took this to be a good sign as I still felt really comfortable. In fact I was already wondering if I had gone out too easily. A few minutes of bit-and-bit with Mike Murphy ensued as we pooled our efforts to pass several of the athletes ahead of us. Despite the gradual incline, I could feel the pace increasing and, somewhere between miles 2 and 3, I pulled away from Mike, again a good sign for me personally as he has been running strongly of late.

Half distance came up in 20.07 and, for a second or two, I began to wonder if, yet again, a sub 40 minute run at 10K was going to slip through my fingers. I then took some time to evaluate the race so far in my mind. The race up to now had seen us steadily climb away from the start point, so common sense told me that there would be some descending to do. I also remembered Mike mentioning during our pre-race chat that the second half of this course was typically a lot faster than the first. Perhaps the most important factor, as far as I was concerned at this point was that, in terms of exertion and how much I had left in the tank, I felt I had a lot more in reserve. So this was, in objective terms, looking quite good.

With the terrain having levelled off somewhat and a tight right hand turn looming, I pushed a bit harder and, pleasingly, I could definitely feel an increase in pace. There was also a good target to aim for with fellow 'carthorse' Rob Scott and evergreen Sandy Johnston going well about 15-20 seconds ahead of me. Slightly further into the distance, I was pretty sure I could make out Ben Farag. While I knew that Ben was too far away for me to have a chance of closing the gap on him, the fact that I could see him at all at this stage in the race gave me some confidence that I was doing something right.

Having only raced Atlantic College on one previous occasion, I had not quite realised quite how fast the section from 5.5K to 7.5K really is. If you are holding onto a good race pace, this gradual descent can help you raise the pace nicely and, while chipping away at the lead Rob and Sandy still had on me, I was picking off more and more runners as we headed towards the latter section of the race. By this time, I had switched my Garmin display to show me my average mile pace so that, when I did have an occasional glance at my watch, I would be able to see whether my speed was increasing or decreasing.

The only wobbly moment of the race came just before the 8K marker where we took a sharp left past a group of cheerleader-marshals. The incline caught me out slightly and, being only just off the back of Rob and Sandy, I probably pushed up this hill a little over-enthusiastically. A few seconds of nausea passed, thankfully without incident and, with the road flattening out again, I gave myself something of a breather, after all, there would be no point in overcooking it now when I still had a fair distance to cover.

Happily the final kilometre marker soon came up and I was ready to open the taps and give it everything I had left to make the most of the ski-slope approach to the finish. I had forgotten just how long it takes to run through the village and it took far more effort than I anticipated to run from the gate we had exited at the start of the race up to the final right hand turn down onto the main drive of the college. Again there were a vocal set of marshals and the support continued right down to the finish line.

Though Sandy was only just ahead of me at this stage, the line came up just too quickly for me but the good news was that I had smashed my previous best with a 39.13. I hope a 38 won't be too long in coming.

The Newton's Fraction Half Marathon

The Lincolnshire town of Grantham is where my parents now live and is also home to the above race, organised by Grantham Athletic Club. Why not combine a visit to my parents with a half marathon then? Why not indeed.



Grantham is notable for a number of things: it's the birthplace of Isaac Newton and more recently of Margaret Thatcher. It has been a prosperous place, as evidenced by the impressive edifice of St Wulfram's Church. At one time it was home to a number thriving light engineering companies, sadly most of these have closed down. The grocer's shop in which the redoubtable Mrs T grew up stood at one end of an impressive Edwardian terrace. The building now houses a chiropractors and alternative therapy practice. An architectural oddity is the existence of a number of buildings with 'moustache windows', so named because of their lintels which are shaped to resemble said items of facial adornment.

I assume that the term Newton's Fraction refers to some mathematical concept but it can't be found on Wikipedia so that's as much as I can tell you. My guess is that it involves differential calculus or logarithms, or possibly both.

Newton's Fraction the race has existed for a few years and has in the past been a 10k but for the last couple of years has been 13.1 miles. It starts at South Kesteven Sports Stadium, home of Grantham Town FC. This is a bleak and windswept place at 9:00 on a March morning and as I waited for the start I wished I'd worn a long sleeve shirt under my singlet. The race has an upper limit of 500 so it was a small group of us gathered on the running track listening to the health and safety announcements. These completed, the gun went off and we set off round one end of the track and out of the gate.

We were soon out of Grantham and heading for the small village of Barrowby, where we took a sharp left and headed along a road lined with daffodils which undulated for a while before plunging sharply down to where we joined the canal towpath. A couple of weeks earlier Alan Mann ran a rather longer race which passed by here. It's very scenic and tranquil, the only other people along its banks were anglers, who were surprisingly tolerant of a bunch of runners thundering past them and scaring the fish. With a small field there wasn't any problem coping on a relatively narrow path such as this, there was room to overtake where necessary but for the most part we'd settled into a long line of runners which could be seen snaking ahead as the canal followed the contours of the land. Every so often we'd pass under a bridge, cheered on by knots of supporters leaning over the parapet.

After a few miles of this we left the towpath and it was back on to a series of quiet roads, passing near to Belvoir Castle, an attractive stately home perched high above the valley through which we now ran. What little traffic there was gave us plenty of room and the marshals kept everything in order. All in all the race is very well organised, plenty of warning signs, markers at every mile, sufficient water stations. Plainly a race organised by runners for runners.

Shortly after leaving the village of Woolsthorpe we hit the first sharp uphill. There's a commonly held view that Lincolnshire is flat. It's not. The fens are flat but elsewhere it boasts a number of steep ridges of high ground, one of which we now struggle up before descending slowly along an arrow straight bit of road to Denton, where we do a sharp left and spend a couple of miles running along the base of the ridge we've just been up and down. We cross the canal (It's a figure of eight course) and then hit the longer of the two climbs. By the time we get to the top my legs are protesting and it's a real effort to pick up speed again.

Fortunately we're almost back in the pretty little village of Barrowby again from where it's a very gentle downhill all the way to the stadium. Someone with more energy than me goes past as we get into the last mile, he recognises my vest and informs me that he's looking forward to doing the castles again this year.

Back into the stadium and I summon up the energy for a presentable last 300M round the track to the applause of Mum, Dad and Loraine. The goody bag includes a technical T-shirt and in recognition of how far I've come, I'm awarded a bottle of beer.

My verdict – well organised, well chosen course, friendly atmosphere, oh, and chip timing. Spot on!
Alan Mason

When Sweetie-Boy went to the Desert

When Sweetie-Boy went to the desert,
There were many things that he would miss;
No bathing or shaving,
And no misbehaving,
No spending the night on the piss.

When Sweetie -Boy went to the desert,
He carried a bag on his back,
He said "It'll be tough
With the weight of this stuff,
But there's one thing; I won't need a mack!"

When Sweetie-Boy went to the desert,
He had to leave chocolate behind
For surely, he felt,
In the heat it would melt;
For his Sweetie- Boy moments he pined.

And, adding to all this injustice,
There wasn't a Guinness in sight!
Sweetie-Boy found it tough
Without The Black Stuff.
And he said "F*** this, when's the next flight?"

As Sweetie-Boy trudged through the hot, shifting sand,
His feet and his legs start to ache.
When he reached the aid station
He screamed out in frustration
"I don't want a f***ing Jaffa Cake!"

When Sweetie-Boy went to the desert,
There wasn't a telly for miles.
No Jeremy Kyle
To raise a smile,
No Gadget Show, and no X Files

When Sweetie-Boy went to the desert,
There was no Weakest Link for ten days
No remote in his hand,
He saw nothing but sand,
And the sun, with its dazzling rays.

But every night was a visual treat,
With the moon and the stars shining bright.
With no CSI,
He made do with the sky,
Entertained by his own Sky at Night.

As Sweetie -Boy sat in the camp late at night,
For Guinness he started to pine...
Without The Black Stuff
Life was cruel and tough,
And he uttered a pitiful whine.

When Sweetie-Boy went to the desert,
He had to leave Lolo behind,
The rocky terrain
Would drive her insane
She's much too small, and she's half blind!

And, though it was Sunday, no Cuppa and Cuddle
Would greet Sweetie-Boy in the morning.
He felt barely alive
To be rising at five,
Making breakfast, and stretching and yawning.

And no Sunday dinner was waiting for him,
When he finished his long desert run
No lamb, corned beef hash,
No chicken with mash,
At the end of the day, it's no fun...

When all that is left to look forward to
Is a meal that you boil in the bag.
With his feet hot and sore
He wanted nothing more
Was a Guinness, a bath and a shag!

When Sweetie-Boy marched through the desert,
He held his velvet head high
He was on a brave quest
To give of his best
And his motto was 'Never say die.'

When Sweetie-Boy got back to Cardiff,
Lolo skipped along, dancing and singing
She embraced him so tight,
And said "God, you're a sight;
You could do with a shave,
And you're minging!"

Back Page Snippets

Subs

£35 remains fantastic value for being a member of the greatest club on the planet. Matt Townsend is now the Membership Secretary, and he has devised a variety of options to enable you to pay (these are outlined on the website). The subscription rate rises to £40 by 1st July for late payment, so it is worth your while paying promptly. Should you wish to post payment, Matt's address is:

Les Croupiers Running Club Membership Secretary
15 Marlborough House
Westgate Street
Cardiff
CF10 1DE

Dinner Dance

St Peters Hall has been a very popular venue for several years and tickets are now on sale @ £20 from Clare Johnson. The date is **Friday 13th May**, which is the week before the Masters Road Relays so you can stay out a bit later than usual!

Upcoming Races

We try to give plenty of notice regarding upcoming races both on the website and at Announcements on Thursday. Of course, you can always post details of any race which interests you on the forum.

However, relays take a lot of administration, so we try to give advance notice of these, and hope that you will reciprocate and let your team captains know of your availability (or not!) Three such events which you'll be hearing plenty about are:

Saturday 21 May: British Masters Road Relays at Sutton Park.

Saturday/Sunday 11/12 June: Welsh Castles Relay.

Wednesday 13 July: Cosmeston Relays.

Club Championships

You will have noted from the Announcements that we're trying to keep these high on the agenda – nothing better than a bit of internal rivalry! Please refer to the relevant sections on the website for details of this year's Long Course, Short Course and Off Road Championships. I'd also like to thank Mike Davies and Graeme Donnan in particular for regular updates, and indeed anyone else with any administrative input.

Track & Field

This may be a new venture for some. I'd firstly like to thank Mike Davies for all his announcements and general encouragement regarding track and field: and also Rob Sage for organising a club track and field night last year, which was enthusiastically supported. Now we have some warmer weather and lighter evenings, we'd like to bring your attention to more of the same. Welsh Masters will be staging 4 Open Meetings during the coming months, and the first of these will be organised on their behalf by Rob Sage on Wednesday 11th May at Leckwith Stadium. See you there!!