

THE TROTTER

Teignbridge Trotters Newsletter

Number 4

March 2014

OUR CLUB DELIVERS AGAIN!

Another reason why being a Trotter is great! Our club Christmas card delivers again. Ron and Rog explain.

The club were approached by Bob (previous Chairman) and Marion Luker to see if there was anyway the Trotters could raise money for Clic Sargent on behalf of their granddaughter, Emilia. The committee decided to donate half of the money raised from the giant charity Christmas card signed by so many members, rather than each of them writing out personal ones to each other. This raised a record amount, which the club matched pound for pound. This meant we were able to present Clic Sargent and Torbay Hospital League of Friends (our other chosen charity) with £323 each.



Mark Becker, Sophia (sister), Katherine (Mum), Ron (Dad), Emilia and Roger

We were delighted to invite Emilia, her mum, dad and sister along to a recent training night to receive the cheque. Emilia is an amazing little girl, something I'm sure you'll agree after reading a brief history of her battle against cancer, kindly written for us by her dad, Ron.

In March 2013 when she was just 5 years old, Emilia was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic Leukaemia (ALL), a cancer of the white blood cells. This is a rare blood Cancer that affects approximately only 300 children a year in the whole of the UK, (predominantly boys) that is only 300 out of over ¾ of a million children born, you do the odds!

Emilia started intensive chemotherapy immediately in Bristol Children's hospital and since in Royal Devon & Exeter. Tests showed that she has responded well to the intensive Chemotherapy and they indicated to her consultant that a complete remission was achieved quite quickly. However, despite this excellent news, there is always a chance that there are some leukemic cells still lurking in her body,

[Contd on page 5](#)

In This Edition:

NEWS DESK

AGM REPORTS

2015 CLUB CAMP

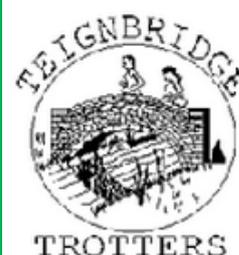
ON THE ROAD TO CHINA

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

PREP FOR LONDON

EUROCROSS

CAPTAIN'S CORNER



NEWS DESK

Chairman Rog with the latest.... starting with the Bovey Cross Country

Let me start by saying a massive thank you on behalf of Wavell Vigers (Race Director) to all those who helped out at the Bovey Tracey Cross Country. We were blessed with dry, sunny conditions and excellent firm underfoot conditions for the runners to race over. It was Waves first year at the helm and along with Ruth Johnson, who was chief marshal for the first time, they both did an excellent job. The feedback we received from many runners was that the course was their favourite on the Westward League circuit. With the increased popularity of the new cafe and a lovely sunny day, parking was a major issue. Hopefully this can be resolved for next year, as it would be a great shame if we were no longer allowed to stage the event there.

Dartmoor Discovery

Our next race is of course the DD. It really is a case of all hands on deck. A monster of a race to organise, only achievable with the wonderful support we receive from you our members. If anyone would like one of the DD running jackets with Team DD on it, please let me know ASAP and I will get it ordered for you. Likewise, if you want one of the generic jackets in a particular colour, please let me know as my stocks are limited! The jackets are £30 each, however, if you purchase one before race day you'll only pay £25. This discount is available to Trotters only.



2015 AGM

It was pleasing to see so many of you attend our AGM. There were three new faces elected onto the committee, two of which were officers! Kevin Besford replaced Dave Dunn as Membership Secretary, Gary Watson is now the new Club Championship Secretary and Ryan Anthony became a general member. I would like to extend a warm welcome to each of them and look forward to working with them over the coming 12 months. Officers reports from the AGM can be found on pages 6 and 7.



(From left to right) Mark Becker, Kevin Besford, Chairman Rog, Tina Caunter, Gary Watson and John Caunter.

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Club Marathon Trip

This year's club foreign marathon trip to Brussels in October has proved really popular. There is already a huge posse of Trotters signed up to go. It's not too late if you would like to join us, drop me a line and I'll happily give you the details. Another event to look forward to is the club camp, which takes place a week after the DD. Stuart Moulson is organising this and more details can be found on page 9. Of course there's also the club trip, another popular Trotter social occasion. This year we're off to Cotleigh (north of Honiton) to take part in the Cotleigh Canter.

On a personal note, I have decided to step back from a few of the roles that I've done for many years. I don't think it's particularly healthy for anyone to do so many jobs within the club, especially when we have nearly 300 members. Two of the main things that I will no longer be doing are organising the annual lads weekend away and presenting the prizes at the dinner and dance. So if there is anyone out there willing and able to arrange a drunken weekend away (open to all Trotters and not by invitation only!) for a great bunch of guys, then please let me know and I can give you a few pointers!

I've presented the prizes at the dinner and dance for the past 17 years - a time for change and perhaps a fresh approach. I have compiled a list of what's involved and would be happy to go through it with anyone who fancies giving it a go. It really isn't that onerous.

On On
Chair



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Dave Dunn gives us his last ever update on the club comings and goings.

After 17 years as Membership Secretary, I am passing the baton on to Kevin Besford, in whom I have every confidence that he will serve you all well. I finish with our membership standing at record total of 294. Such a figure is testament to all the hard work put in by our coaches and leaders, as well as the time and effort spent by your committee behind the scenes, making our club so attractive to prospective new members.

Speaking of new members, I have several to introduce to you in this, my last report. Rex Barnes, 54, from Bovey Tracey, is back with us having spent the last couple of years in Australia. I bet Rex missed running on cold blustery and wet nights around the delights of Brunel Industrial Estate!

From what I've seen of Roger Easterbrook, 41, from Totnes, in training, we would seem to have captured a real talent. It will certainly be interesting to see how Roger goes in the royal blue vest in races.

Margaret Garrett, 41, from Newton Abbot, stepped out of her comfort zone last Wednesday to dip her toes, well both feet in fact, into the waters that were a speed training session consisting of lamp-post relays.

Jess Hayes, 15, from Teignmouth becomes our current youngest member. Jess is our Chairman's daughter, and I'm certain that Rog will be one proud father when Jess makes her Trotters bow.

Mike Johnson, 33, from Bovey Tracey, is this month's enigma. There's always been one member about whom I struggle to write anything, and this time round it is Mike! I'm hopeful that Mike will soon leave an indelible impression on us with his running.

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Robert Mann, 49, further strengthens our contingent from Widecombe-in-the-Moor. If Robert plays as active a part in the life of our club as the others from that village, then he will be a more than useful addition.

David Mead, 47, from Kingsteignton, has been trying to get along to both of our training nights each week once he had recovered from his very first outing with us on a recent Monday evening.

Suzie Mills, 35, from Chudleigh, is throwing herself into her running have just done her first Parkrun 5K at Parke. I'm sure that it won't be her last, and Suzie can look forward to setting many pb's over that course once the ground starts to dry out.

Graham Penn, 60, from Lustleigh, needs no introduction to a lot of our members. Inky, as he is affectionately known, is back in Devon from a spell in Dunstable and has already been very busy on the racing scene.

Daniel Pocock, 17, from East Ogwell, is a young man of great promise, and has been seen on a regular basis at Coombeshead these dark winter nights.

Timothy Pratt, 20, from Newton Abbot, was already running regularly before joining us and demonstrated his potential with a very speedy performance in the recent Fulfords 5.

Charlie Rice, is back for a second spell after a short break. Charlie, 20, from Chudleigh, straight away took up the challenge of the Westward League cross country fixture at Parke

Neil Skinner, 56, from East Ogwell, is the older brother of Derek. Neil joined us after running in last year's Drogo 10 and had the beating of his brother at Dalwood last weekend.

Lorna Spayne, has been very busy racing and training these past couple of months. Lorna, 32, from Dawlish, came to us as an experienced runner who just loves racing, particularly the longer distances. Lorna may just have found her spiritual home at the Trotters!

Kirsty Stickland, 26, from Kingsteignton, is a netballer at heart and was a sprinter in her school days. Now her target is to run a 10K comfortably, having taken part in one of the Race For Life runs last year.

Simon Thorne, 30, from Newton Abbot, had been trying to get fit by running on a treadmill before joining us. Although he classed himself as a beginner when he joined, I'm sure that Simon will soon be trying his hand at all the different sessions on offer across the week.

Several of our members will be celebrating a notable birthday during either March or April. Our Coach Co-ordinator, Keith Anderson, reaches 65, Tim "The Hoff" Hassell will be 45, Hannah Jones turns 40, Mahnaz Soufian becomes 50 and Wavell Vigers will also be 45. Happy birthday to all of you, and may you all enjoy running under your new veteran status.

Finally, may I just say that it's been a pleasure to have been your Membership Secretary all these years. The club only had around 70 members when I took up the post in 1998, and we have gone from strength to strength over the intervening years. That strength lies in you, our members, and was amply demonstrated during the tragic events of last August and September, when everyone pulled together and got us through some difficult moments. I will always proudly display my Trotters tattoo on my right shoulder. On On!

Dave Dunn
Membership Secretary



Graham gives his Trotter shirt an airing again for the recent Oh My Obelisk run.

Contd from front page

so having gone through the several intensive phases of treatment she is now in her maintenance phase.

Emilia's day to day outlook is as happy as ever, however she was very poorly throughout the process and did lose her hair (see picture below), she often found it very difficult and painful to walk, amongst other things and has had to endure more in her short life so far than most people do in their entire lifetime. We are now in February 2015, and always trying to gain some normality to her process. Despite this, she spent the whole of 2014 New Year in Hospital.

The maintenance phase is to be extra certain that there are no leukaemic cells hiding somewhere in her body. She will continue this "maintenance" chemotherapy until May 2015 when she will be 8yrs old, a total treatment period of over 2 years and over 25% of her life.

The aim of maintenance is to keep her immune system (i.e. white blood cells) suppressed to as low a level as possible, but not so suppressed that she is poorly. It is a fine balancing act and although normality is trying to be resumed, she is on constant watch.

Although she looks a bit different today, hair is growing back nicely (but curly) and is currently very well. She is still receiving the following treatment:

- Daily oral chemotherapy
- Weekly oral chemotherapy
- Strong antibiotics to protect against a form of pneumonia twice daily at weekends



So far since March, she has had week long periods of IV chemotherapy every two weeks, she has a "port" inserted into her chest that will stay the length of her treatment, into this are injected the various chemicals of the chemotherapy. She has received intensive steroids treatment, 10 lumbar punctures under 10 general anaesthetics with chemotherapy injected also directly into her spine. 3 Bone marrow aspirations. In addition, various medications to combat the side effects caused by all these drugs! She still has mobility issues and occasional has to use a buggy for long distances. If she has a temperature of 38 degrees or above she needs to be admitted to hospital within an hour to start IV antibiotics - this is because febrile neutropenia can be fatal and so we must always be alert to this, even if she seems well.

Once a week she has a blood test. This is done as a finger prick test by the CLIC nurse in school or at home. If the nurse didn't come to us we would have to take her out of school and drive her to Exeter every week which would be very disruptive.

The test checks her blood counts and enables us to know how well her medication is working and to calculate what doses of chemotherapy she should have that week. Although she has a lot to deal with, it is really important that she has as normal a childhood as possible. After all, she won't have this all going on forever!

We are so grateful to two main charities, CLIC Sargeant and Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research. Believe us when we tell you that money paid to these charities helps everyday children like Emilia.



We would like to thank everyone in The Teignbridge Trotters who has supported us and Emilia. You are a fantastic group and we feel proud that Emilia's Grandad and Nanny know so many lovely people.



2015 TROTTER AGM REPORTS

Chairman's Report

Good evening everyone and welcome to this year's AGM. As you will see from the agenda, there aren't any resolutions put forward this year. I have to say it's rather disappointing that with nearly 300 members there weren't more people standing for positions. In fact there are two positions that remain unfilled. For more on that, see the News Desk pages.

2014 was another successful year as far as staging our races was concerned. The Haytor Heller once again sold out well in advance, a fitting tribute to Buzz Terrill, who's last year it was as Race Director. Buzz did a fantastic job in ensuring the race reached its race limit of 300 during his five years at the helm; he will certainly be a hard act to follow.

The Totnes 10K saw a record entry of 631 entrants, making it the biggest event the Trotters have ever staged. The Fun Run also had a record entry with 141 youngsters charging round the 1-mile course. As with all our races last year, it took a huge team effort to ensure the day went well.

The Ladies 10K attracted an entry very similar to the year before. It was Lucy Payne's last year as RD, having done it for the previous three years. It was an emotional day for many of us as Jacquie Milstead and her daughter, Cameron, were there to start the race and present the prizes.

The Templer Ten took place, albeit at the 11th hour! It's probably our most difficult race to organise as far as controlling the traffic is concerned. We are looking into changing the course slightly to try and improve the safety of the runners and thus ensuring the future of the race.

The DD had 202 finishers, a new record. The course record was taken below 3 ½ hours for the first time. An awesome time that I believe will stand for many a year, unless of course John Ward beats it this year! The DD range of clothing was a massive hit, adding to the race's cult status.

On behalf of my fellow Race Directors and all the chief marshals, I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who helped out.

However, 2014 wasn't all good; there was of course the tragic death of our great friend Dennis. I'm sure I speak for many of us when I say I still miss him. He was a very special person who will live long in our hearts. Dennis's death was followed by more devastating news. The death of Graydon's wife and stillborn baby followed. The Trotters family was certainly shaken to the core during that period. However, what it did do was show a remarkable sense of togetherness, something that I and many others found so comforting and reassuring.

The clubs training nights have continued to flourish. Our thanks must go to the small army of coaches and leaders for doing a great job.

Jon Grimes has done a fine job in continuing to produce the Trotter magazine. Please remember it's your club magazine and your contributions are what keep it going.

It's the end of an era for one particular committee member, having first joined the committee in May 1993; Dave Dunn has just attended his last meeting this month, that's just short of 22 years service, a remarkable achievement. Dave has been a pleasure to work with and committee meetings genuinely won't be the same without him. Ed (Roger led a standing ovation).

2014 saw Jacki Woon and Lance Mason crowned club champions. We had a record amount of Trotters complete the championship, which was great to see. There were nine club records set last year, with Jacki setting three of them.

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Before I sign off, I would just like to thank my fellow committee members for their support during the past 12 months. It's been a difficult year at times; we've come in for a lot of criticism, with me in particular bearing the brunt of it. I know I'm never going to please everyone but I've always believed in strong leadership and I've always had the club's best interests at heart. Whilst I remain Chairman of this club those principles will always be maintained.

I shall now hand you over to Mark for his secretary's report.

Rog Hayes

Secretary's Report

Good evening everyone and thank you for attending this year's Annual General Meeting. Over the past year we have once again been affiliated as a club to both England Athletics and the Association of Running Clubs.

All our races were successful during the past year and we continue to have members answer the call to fill the major roles of Race Director and Chief Marshal as well as general marshalling duties. The committee has drawn up a Guidance Sheet to assist the RD's in the preparations of their races, which has been well received. This should further ensure the smooth organisation of our events.

At the end of last year we were granted three club places for this year's London Marathon. Those successful in the ballot at the Dinner and Dance were Dave Dunn, John Tweedie and Rachel Pallant although, due to injury, Rachel has since had to give up her place. This has been passed to first reserve, Mark Hutchins. I wish them all well in their training for this memorable event.

The Club Championship was once again well supported and won by Lance Mason and Jacki Woon. Congratulations to them both on a great effort.

Jon Grimes took over the role of editor of the Trotter in July of last year. I'm sure you'll agree that he has done a great job in maintaining the quality of the magazine. Thanks must also go to the contributors of regular and one-off articles.

Club Camp was once again a great success thanks to Dennis Milstead. He is, and will continue to be greatly missed by us all following his sudden death last August. Thanks go to Stuart Moulson who is currently organising this year's camping trip.

Kevin Besford organised the Club Trip again last year, which was well organised and well received, and thanks must go to him for his continued efforts in this role.

I am pleased to say that committee meetings have had an average attendance of approximately 88% since the last AGM. Last year there were eleven members nominated for the seven available general committee positions and this year only seven and so no voting required. This is rather disappointing in a club with almost 300 members. As there is only one change to this nomination 'line up' I can only deduce that the remainder of the club are completely happy with the way the committee conducts itself and acts on your behalf. Since you are responsible for electing the committee we ensure that we act democratically and always with the best interests of the club at heart.

The club has grown to a record number of members this year. A cap on membership is often discussed at committee but the growth of the club has been left to the coaching department to monitor as we are mainly governed by how coaches and leaders can cope with the numbers at training and the safety issues involved with this. It is to the credit of the coaches and leaders that they continue to provide excellent safe sessions, with competent 'leading' and I thank them for that.

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The coaches have been denied nothing that they have requested of the club, by way of the committee, and Jess Whitehouse has worked hard recently to purchase printed, Trotter logo-ed' coaches' bibs of a high quality. First Aid courses were agreed for coaches and leaders and are currently being taken. Rod Payne and Daryl Milford unfortunately could not complete their Coaching in Running Fitness Awards for personal reasons. This was fully accepted by the committee due to the detailed content of the course. Although at significant cost, these awards were previously sanctioned by the committee to reflect the growth and kudos of the club. I hope that this qualification might be sought by some of our other coaches in the future.

Unfortunately, it has to be said that over the past few months, for reasons still beyond me, the coaching departments' attitude to the way the committee governs the club has been perplexing to say the least. Especially since 70% of the committee has been made up of coaches and leaders over the past year. Since I am neither a coach nor a leader myself I was not party to the negative coaching Facebook comments directed at the committee. On the club's behalf I went out of my way to source them though and I was deeply shocked by what I read. It has been very upsetting for a number of my colleagues and to their absolute credit they did not resign from their committee posts which would have left this club floundering.

I would like us all to draw a line under any bad feeling, whatever that may be, and move positively forward. If any of you feel so strongly that you must discredit your own committee then I put it to you. Have the strength to bring your grievance to me; I am your first port of call if you have a problem with the club.

I personally miss the shouting out of 'Glasnost' by Dennis at our committee meetings. I feel sure he would want us to move forward together as a club and be open with our grievances. I feel we owe him that.

On a lighter note, Keith Anderson has recently taken on the position of Coach Co-ordinator and he can expect the support and backing of the committee as he proceeds in this role. I would urge you all to do the same.

To close, after 22 years total service on the committee Dave Dunn is stepping down as our Membership Secretary. His absence from meetings will take some getting used to. He is one of the most respected members in this club and his input, comments and advice will be missed at committee along with, dare I say it, his dry sense of humour. Well done, Dave, on your outstanding commitment to the club.

I would like to finish by thanking all my colleagues on the committee for their work and support. There have been many highs and lows over the past year and I'd like to think that we've all pulled together to get through it.

Once again I wish you all a great year's running. Thank you

Mark Becker

Treasurer's Report

Good evening Everyone

As usual the accounts show the performance of our races as these are what keeps this club solvent, allows us to keep our subscriptions so low, and to make charity donations which last year amounted to £2346; now £18452 over the last 11 years.

As last year the balance sheet shows the race profit for the calendar year and to the right the actual profits from the races regardless of which year they were accounted in. These figures are a true reflection of our races performance and now that the DD income is in the same year as the race both calendar year and actual are very similar.

The balance of funds at the end of 2014 was £23011 and at the end of 2013 was £22785, so very little difference over the last 12 months. At the end of 2009 (pre DD) our balance was £18664.

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Regarding the finer details of income and expenditure:

- Miscellaneous now includes both income and expenditure for our races in the previous and following years.
- With income the E & Kit is up with other income following the usual pattern.
- With Expenditure R & C is up and Social is down: this is largely due to the fact that I have now listed the club trip as R & C rather than Social (seemed to make more sense in that category), but also that we spent more on coaching courses (£135 in 2013 and £1710 last year)
- The club kit in stock at the end of 2014 was £3128 (£3167 at end of 2013 and £3325 at the end of 2012).

As always a big thank-you to all our Race Directors for their hard work and enthusiasm, and along with this a big thank-you for the willing support of all the Trotters who help. Finally, a thank-you to the officers and committee for their support during the last 12 months, and to wish the club and all its members every success in 2015.

If there are any questions I will be more than happy to answer them and I would propose that subscriptions for 2015-16 remain as 2014-15.

John Caunter

Treasurer

CARRY ON CAMPING.... TROTTERS STYLE

Trotters Club Camp 2015 will be **on 13th/14th June.**
Stuart gives us the low down.

Summer is just around the corner and that means the annual Trotters Camp weekend is fast approaching.

For those that regularly go, they know all about it. But for those that haven't been before, you've been missing out! Just speak to anyone who's been before and I'm sure they will tell you it really is a great weekend away with your fellow Trotters and their families.

Most camp on the Friday and Saturday night. Obviously as we are a running club there will be some running for those that want it and for those that don't, just relax and enjoy the sea views and lovely sunshine we are bound to get! This year we are off to Cornwall, we haven't been there for a couple of years so hopefully by now they have forgotten who we are!

The campsite is called Higher Harlyn Park which is very near Padstow. It has a beautiful beach just one mile down the road where there is also a pub which serves food.

The site has all the facilities we need, a restaurant which provides breakfast, lunch and evening meals with a licensed bar too, not that there are many drinkers in the Trotters!! There's also an outdoor heated swimming pool. It even has a hair salon for those that desperately need their hair attending to on that particular weekend!



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There are hook up and non hook up pitches together with lovely views out to the sea.

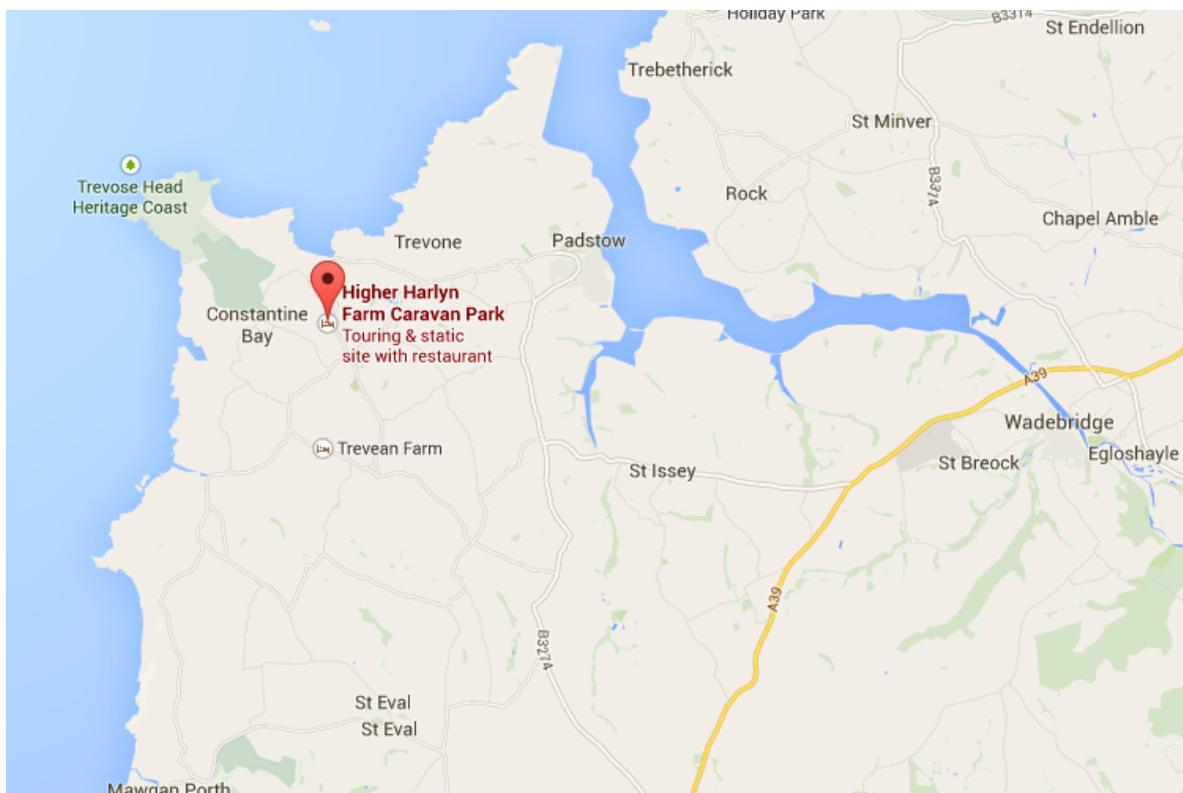
I negotiated a deal on price which will be £15 with hook up and £12 without. That's per pitch per night for up to 6 in the tent. To secure your pitch on this fantastic weekend away I would like to collect a deposit of £10 per booking please.

So if you want a fun weekend away with your fellow runners get those deposits to me. But if you don't, I would avoid Cornwall that weekend!

Although I'm not running at the moment I will try and come in at the start of Monday and Wednesday training throughout March and if I can't make it I will arrange for someone to collect on my behalf.

Please email me if you have any questions. stuartsrnning@hotmail.co.uk

Stuart Moulson



ICE TAGS UPDATE!

ICE (In Case of Emergency) tags that attach to your trainer laces have been purchased for all trotters. There will be a box at training with named envelopes containing three tags.

The box also contains permanent marker pens for you to use (please don't take these away) to write your name and your emergency contact number and any medical info. There are also some cable ties and we can get more of these if needed.

Thanks

Tamsin (on behalf of committee)

European Cross Country Championships

Chris Broadbent gives us the inside story on his recent trip to Bulgaria

I don't know if you noticed but there was a ridiculous clash in the international athletics calendar in December. The European Cross Country Championships were organised for the same weekend as the annual Teignbridge Trotters Christmas Party. I'm really not sure what on earth the European Athletics Association were thinking when they scheduled their big cross country event in the shadow of the Trotters bash, but incompetency know no bounds when it comes to major sporting bodies.

Sadly for me, I was commissioned to work at that weekend's second biggest running-related event. So, with mouths to feed, off I went to Bulgaria. I've worked on and off in athletics for 15 years. Firstly as the Communications Manager at Scottish Athletics and later as Media Manager for UK Athletics, including attending all major championships with the British team from 2007-2009. I've retained a connection with the sport and now dabble in the odd bit of writing, including magazine features and reporting on major events. I've reported at the last two Commonwealth Games and interviewed athletes such as Mo Farah, Christine Ohuruogu and Jo Pavey.

On this occasion, I was writing for the IAAF website and some Scottish newspapers - based on some old contacts from over the border. In advance of the event, I had interviewed GB's best hope for the senior women's gold Gemma Steel and Scottish prospect Rhona Auckland who was racing in the under 23 race. After staying with a friend in London, I hopped on a 6am flight from Gatwick to Sofia ahead of the event on the Sunday.

On the eve of the championships, there is a pre-event press conference at the official hotel, where I am also staying. The only point of these conferences seems to be so the local mayor can have his craving for attention satisfied by sitting on a top table whilst a room full of people have to listen to what a lovely welcoming place his town is. The other reason is to talk about drugs in sport and the mayor, nor the European Athletics head really fancy saying much about it. For me, the real joy is in the mini-reunions at these events. I don't work in the sport full-time any more but I still know plenty of people who do. So it's great to catch up with fellow journalists, photographers, team officials, coaches and athletes themselves as everyone mingles in the hotel reception.

After an evening meal and a few beers I bed down ahead of the event. The next day I head to the course on a shuttle bus that has just about survived Communism. The course for the race is muddy, snowy, icy, hilly - everything a proper cross country should be. It's refreshing as sometimes these events are held on much more forgiving courses, far removed from the grass roots. This one isn't. And it's even at altitude. The Euro Cross is always a little bit extra enjoyable from a British perspective as there are usually a lot of British medallists. This event is no different. Both Steel and Auckland win their races, the latter is a bit of a surprise.

But it's great news for me. As a freelance journalist, you take a bit of a punt sometimes. The Scottish newspapers would only take a minimal article without any significant Scottish success, but as one of their girls wins gold, it is a bigger story. Also a better paid story. I call the sportsdesks at The Herald in Glasgow and The Scotsman in Edinburgh and they place orders of 600 and 850 words each. It makes for a busy afternoon. I am simultaneously writing my reports for the Scotsman and Herald whilst writing the full event report for the IAAF website, which must go live soon after the conclusion. The newspaper pieces naturally have a strong Scottish slant, the online article is not so parochial. There are six races in total consisting of senior, under 23 and under 20 races for men and women.

The senior men's race is an exciting spectacle, but also a little deflating. All three medallists are African-born, which kind of defeats the object of a European Championships. I'd hate to get all UKIP on this issue, but the Kenyan-born 'Turkish' athletes who won gold and silver are not refugees, didn't emigrate to Turkey as children, did not go to school in Turkey, are not related to anyone Turkish, do not live or train in

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Turkey and have no obvious connection to the country. They are good at running and Turkey wants good runners. Sadly, it's that simple. The biggest challenge of the day for me is getting interviews with athletes whose English is not great. For the IAAF, I have also been commissioned to write some feature pieces for the week after the event with the winners of the junior men's and senior men's races.



The 2014 euro cross winners podium

Given this is my only chance to grab the interviews, I speak with the 'Turkish' senior men's gold medallist who has limited English and the Italian winner of the junior men's race. I befriend an Italian blogger at the event and he acts as translator. Post-event, there's a tense atmosphere in the media room as stressed journalists from all across the continent tap away furiously on their laptops with deadlines to meet. Given the option of world peace or a good wireless connection at this point, I am genuinely unsure which way most of us would go.

I file my articles and head back to the hotel. I enjoy a few beers and food with some old friends as we review the day and then head to bed. I rise early to drive back to Sofia for the morning flight. At the airport, I quickly grab some last minute overpriced souvenirs for the wife and kids and head home. It's been a fun weekend, an adventurous one and - as I feel every time I come to an event like this - I can't help but feel a little inspired.

I file my articles and head back to the hotel. I enjoy a few beers and

On the Road to Singapore - The Journey Continues

Next Stop China. Ashley Brent continues his journey.

No other country has enthralled, enraged and enticed us as has China. Some incredible highs yet some aspects that tested our patience and resolve, it became the benchmark by which we would compare every previous country and every country yet to come.

The transition to China was immense. Most notable was that food was everywhere and incredibly cheap. We would eat well here and hopefully regain some of the weight lost to the Giardia. Secondly, we now couldn't understand a damn thing! Whereas before we could muster a rough reproduction in sound of a word written in the language of the area at any given time, the sudden switch to Chinese characters made this impossible. The one character that we would know very well before long was the symbol for 'mountain'. Pronunciation was also incredibly difficult. With five different tones, the same sound was five different words depending on the tone it was given. Most notable was the word for 'noodle'. In a different tone, this sound meant 'tampon'. Ordering noodle soup was a minefield.

The official border post in China is a rather confusing 143km from the actual border post. An impossible distance to cycle in an afternoon on a road that was being upgraded – a subject to which we shall return later. We arrived late and as we sat in army barracks being given watermelon, four clerks we duly ordered to return to work and complete some overtime as we were ushered through a huge and deserted customs and immigration control building. The guy scanning our luggage got bored and left halfway through inspecting my freshly imported Chinese noodles that he found hilarious.

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Unable to withdraw cash to pay for a cheap hotel room, the receptionist took pity on us and sent us away with her friend to stay in her house whilst she worked the night-shift. An amazing if somewhat humbling (not to mention illegal) experience of daily life in a far-flung Chinese province. Her friend came the next day to let us out and we continued on our way to Kashgar.

Faced with a visa that was going to be too short to allow us to cycle the whole of our route through the country, we decided to jump on a train and skip the desert (in summer) and spend longer cycling on the Tibetan plateau and in the tropical south-west. As such, 56 hours later, after three changes and some interesting collective bargaining to retain our fuel canisters and cooking knives (all of which are strictly banned on Chinese railways), we found ourselves in Xining in the foothills of the plateau.

The climb was long. We were sub 2000m and were heading to an area that averaged well over 3000m. For the next three weeks, we would cross at least one 4000m pass a day, more often than not two. We reached the highest part of the trip at 4824m with a Chinese cyclist we had picked up along the way. The scenery was vast, the weather changeable and the road epic.



We passed through improvements that essentially comprised of ripping the old road up, whilst it is still open, then laying hardcore that is impossible to cycle over, topped with plastic that gets caught in your wheels and then finally, eventually, maybe one day, tarmac. Oh, and if the hardcore can be dredged from the nearest river to aid liquefaction then even better. And not to forget replacing bridges. We cycled over half of a bridge that was in the process of being demolished. No replacement had been built and no alternative was visible. Swimming would have been the only other way around. And in crazed, mad, ill-treated dogs and some sections were quite hairy!

The prayer flags and yaks of the plateau dropped suddenly into a tropical swap of humidity. A quick coach dash (with the worst toilets I have ever seen/smelt/lived through – ask for a description) to Leshan to get a visa renewal with only one day left on our current visas meant we were able to carry on into the hilly jungle of Yunnan and Szechuan.

As we tumbled down an ominously quiet 16km descent into the Yangtze gorge, we rounded a corner and saw an incomplete bridge. There was no way in hell that I was cycling back up that hill. The 'f' work came out strongly and with vigour. 'Ferry'. Thank goodness there was a ferry.

Some towns' security police were rather vigilant on tourists and we were only allowed to stay in places that were of suitable quality for a westerner. i.e., twice the price. With nowhere to stay or pitch a tent though, we had no choice but to follow directions. When enquiring about breakfast at one hotel, the owner's English speaking daughter-in-law was called and we found ourselves eating at a family banquet at her aunt's restaurant followed by a night time tour of the city. We managed to dodge the requests for karaoke though.

We crossed the Tropic of Cancer as we neared the Laotian border and the jungle really began in earnest. Two months of the worst driving in the world, hundreds of near misses, thousands of horns blown in our left ears yet millions of smiles, laughs and countless gestures of kindness made our time here incredible.

Captains Corner - Ladies Report

Helen reviews the ladies highlights

I missed out on reporting in the December newsletter so there's lots to catch up on since October. Well done to all those ladies that completed last year's club championship and congratulations to all the 2014 prize winners.

The trottettes saw a great finish to the year. Sally Ingedew, Emma Pearcy, Tamsin Cook and Ruth Johnson took on the overseas Lisbon marathon, all finishing in respectable times, Tamsin recorded her first time for the distance of 4hour 34 min and Ruth battled on after an injury set back to get another marathon under her belt. Stef Ross and Becky George completed the half marathon and Vicky Hales the 5K.

The following week, an impressive number of ladies turned out for the Dartmoor Vale races and we saw some superb performances and prizes aplenty. In the half marathon, our V40's stood out from the field with Tracy Elphick and Mandy Wheeler finishing 3rd and 4th lady. Hannah Jones picked up a 2nd V35 prize, Sharon Bowman 1st V45, Jacki Woon 1st V50, Hylda Stewart 2nd V55 and Lucy Payne 1st V60. Madz Soufian completed her first half marathon on the tough course in a time of 2hrs 47, well done Madz. In the 10k, Susie Ashleigh-Thomas was 2nd V65 and more great times were posted, especially by some ladies returning to running. Sally Ingedew was lone trottette to take on the marathon, a week after Lisbon marathon. Putting in another solid performance and then going on to run Snowdonia marathon the following week.

The autumn off-roaders present more of a challenge in the winter months, but we were represented strongly in last year's races. Mandy Wheeler demonstrated what a versatile runner she is by taking the spot of 2nd lady at the Yarcombe Yomp and featuring in the top ladies results at Drogo 10 and the Bicton Blister. Five other ladies braved the Yarcombe Yomp, six the Drogo 10 and ten took on the Bicton Blister. These are all testing courses and it's great to see the trottettes undeterred and ready for anything. Tina Caunter was the only other lady to tackle all three races, with others opted for two of the three. It was great to see the welcome return of Emma Boobyer after her maternity break, finishing in a strong position at the Bicton Blister. Tracy Elphick, Hannah Walsh and Cath Pilton ran in our own Templer ten. All recording commendable times, Tracy and Hannah bagged spots in the top 20 ladies race and Cath took 3 mins off her time from last year.

The Cockington Christmas Caper, Otterton Reindeer 10k and Stoke Stampede 10k all provided for some challenging fun for some of us over the xmas period.

Into 2015 and the standard of running by all of the ladies has continued to impress. Only two months into the year and the silverware is already stacking up and pb's tumbling. Myself, Tracy Elphick and Mandy Wheeler picked up the ladies team prize at Oh My Obelisk and Jacki Woon took 1st V50. Mandy Wheeler (1st V40) and Jo Randall 3rd (Snr F) both picked up prizes at Braunton 10 and Katrina Zapple managed to take nearly 9 minutes off her time from last year. A clutch of personal bests were achieved at the First Chance 10k, with notable improvements by Hannah Walsh, Lorna Spayne, Kirsty Bowman, Donna Walker, Emze Iles, Sarah Charnley and Kim Nichols.



Hannah heads towards Chudleigh during the DV half

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We enjoyed a healthy attendance at the Bovey XC, these events provide for great strength training but I know fill lots with dread. Well done to all those that ran. Great results all round on a gritty little course. Hylda Stewart has been racing hard this year and making great progress in the Westward cross country league, she is currently standing in 2nd place in the V55 category with only one race left in the series. Hylda also competed in the Scottish National XC champion, finishing strongly in her age category.

Dalwood 3 hills challenge presented the most challenging club championship race of the year so far and the conditions on the day made the race all the more testing. As always, the steely determination of trottettes shone through as lots of you showed up to take it on. I was extremely pleased to see the finish line and be first lady over it and equally pleased that Tracy Elphick wasn't far behind as 3rd lady. Well done to all the trottettes that braved the conditions, it was a tough one and will have made us all stronger runners somehow, I'm sure!! Katrina Zaple faced similar condition on the Lanhydrock Fire and Rescue half but still managed to take 4 mins of her time from last year.

Marie Taylor overcame her nerves to complete her first 10k recently at the 9bar Chilly 10k with the support of her husband Alan in a time of 1hr 15. Another great achievement and I look forward to seeing Marie in her trotter vest again soon.

Lots of ladies have already made a great start to the 2015 championship, with 26 already clocking up points. It's fantastic to see so many of you tackling different distances, taking on new challenges and improving so impressively. The next race to look forward to is Bideford half where I'm certain they'll be more personal bests achieved. Keep training hard ladies and let's keep challenging ourselves, you're all doing great.

2015 London Marathon Training: An Experienced Runner's Perspective



Nathan Elphick

Dave Dunn shares his thoughts on training for the big event.

I didn't bother entering the ballot for this year's London Marathon soon after last year's race had come and gone. I had just completed my 10th London and my 51st marathon in total, and hadn't particularly had a good run. At the time I thought that 10 was a good number to finish on and resolved not to do London again. However, after running 2 marathons in the autumn and discovering some reasonable form, the idea of running London again had begun to take hold.

However, the only way I would get a place now would be through my running club, Teignbridge Trotters. We had been allocated three places by England Athletics to hand out to our members. Our system for doing this was to draw names from a hat at our club's Christmas party and awards evening in December. To qualify, you had to have marshalled at a minimum of two of our club's races during the year, a criteria that I easily met. However, the distraction of arranging a surprise weekend in Rome for my wife and myself, to mark our Ruby wedding anniversary a week before the party, meant that I'd so far overlooked to notify our Chairman of my wish for my name to be in the hat, with the deadline for doing so was one week before the draw.

It was whilst enjoying more than a glass or two of Chianti in a Roman restaurant that it dawned on me that I hadn't put my name forward.

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Not having our Chairman's mobile number to hand, I sent a text to our son back in England asking him if he would do the necessary on my behalf. When the party came around the following Saturday, and the draw was about to be made, I'd forgotten that all this had taken place, and remarked to my wife something like: "Blow! I've forgotten to tell Chairman! Still, I don't want to do it anyway." At that moment fate decreed that my name was the first one out of the hat!

It quickly dawned on me that, actually, I would very much like to do London again, not least for the great time we have with our fellow club members on the trip there and back, as well as the fun time to be had in our nation's capital. I quickly purchased tickets to go and see Les Miserables in the West End for the Friday evening of Marathon weekend, and established that my beloved Crystal Palace would be playing at home on the Saturday afternoon – as long as the TV moguls don't decide to broadcast it to the nation. A great weekend was beginning to take shape!

Now that New Year has come and gone, I suppose that I ought to commence a proper training programme that would deliver me in the best possible shape on marathon day. Maybe it's because I have so many marathons behind me, and the knowledge that my two sub-4 hour marathons run in the autumn are still fresh in the memory, but I have yet to really start down that road. Not that I've been all that lazy, having raced these past 3 weekends. At the Oh My Obelisk! multi-terrain event, I took more than 10 minutes off my time recorded in 2014, then followed this up with a 10K time at the First Chance 10K in Exeter 35 seconds quicker than anything I'd done over the distance last year, and I've just bettered my time for last year's Braunton 10 mile race by 7 minutes.

So I'm in good form, relatively speaking, but now I mustn't let complacency creep in. I have been making sure that I include at least one quality interval session each week in addition to the races I've been doing, but now I've got to start thinking about upping my mileage. To help focus my mind, I've entered a 17 mile run on the Camel Trail in North Cornwall at the beginning of March, and I am targeting the Gloucester 20 mile race the following Sunday. Those two runs will give me a good indication of my endurance, yet still leave me 3 or 4 weeks to work on any deficiencies before I start to think about tapering for the big day.

Meanwhile, I will continue to use my club's Monday, Wednesday and Friday evening sessions as the core of my training, sprinkled with a few Parkruns over Parke's quite testing 5K course thrown in for good measure. I feel that it's important to keep some speed in my legs whilst trying to build the stamina necessary to take on a marathon.

I've tried to resist setting myself a target time, but the obvious one would be to continue ducking inside 4 hours. At the back of my mind is the goal of achieving the "good-for-age" time of better than 3:45 for somebody of my advanced years. I'll have a clearer indication of my chances of that once I've done those two events in early March.

Contact Us

If you have some news or gossip that needs sharing, feel free to have a natter with us during club training or contact us via facebook or the trotter mag email address below.

Editors: Jon Grimes and Keith Anderson

mag@teignbridgetrotters.co.uk

(No pills, porn or abuse please)