



The Magazine for Thornbury Running Club

OCTOBER 2011



Still smiling: Chepstow/Tintern/Chepstow, one of the wettest, coldest runs ever!

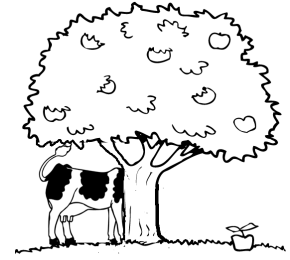
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Captains Column

It's been a busy few months for many TRC members since the last edition of Prattle and Run.

On the racing front we claimed the mob match trophy that 'Chepstow' won last year, thanks to a great turn out of members, down at Oldbury. As well as organising this, Arthur was also busy with the Oldbury fun run which our club has a fair bit to do with. Getting on for 1000 runners meant that the fun run was again a great success. And talking of Arthur, he's still collecting names and twisting arms for the Severn Walkway Relay on 29th October...



We had 3 teams in the Cotswold Way relay, the Ladies team leading the way in 4th, male vets in 5th and our senior men's team in 13th.

The 'Carnival 10km' again was a success, I have spoken to a couple of people from other clubs that commented on how well organised, the event is and how friendly the marshalling team are. The day of the Oldbury Power Station 10 was very hot for October, and many runners performed below their best, but again all went smoothly thanks to Race Directors John Watt and Justin Taylor.

These things are great for the club's image, within the running fraternity and also in the eyes of the general public. Especially when they see thousands of pounds being raised for charity, and also when they see our happy smiling faces as we run around the countryside!!!

I must also mention John Francksen's 50 mile ultra: 26.2 is just not long enough for some people. We will have to wait and see if there will be another 8 ultras to complete his surname. The club's Triathletes have also had a busy time. 4 members travelled to Lanzarote for the famously tough Ironman, while 2 of our ladies completed the Elbaman Ironman; well done to Maddie on completing her first with a good measured performance, and to Jo Plumbley who is still on a high after her improved time.

More recently 9 members took part in the 'Upton on Severn' tri events. There have been many more events both close to home and abroad, just too many to mention here.

It's not been all hard training and racing; in July the 2nd annual summer party seemed to go down very well. Organiser Karen did a fabulous job!! Another group has enjoyed the sea air at Boscastle while Pete reminded them occasionally that Wales won and England lost in the rugby. We have plenty more to look forward to in the coming months, so let's keep running and smiling.

Rob

Thornbury Running Club came away from the Sri Chinmoy races at Eastville Park this year with an impressive haul of medals and trophies, namely those for FV60-69, 6th lady, MV50-59 and overall series winner in the FV60-69 category. Jan and Wilf Burke with their son Graham took the prize for 1st Family Team while the Thornbury ladies' team came an impressive third in the club event. The men's team was seventh.

A Transcendental Meditation

Why do we run? Is it for the rewards, the medals, the trophies? What is it in the human spirit which drives us to endure pain and suffering? Is it a rehearsal for something worse which may or may not befall us? Is there a subconscious need to keep our bodies fit enough to react to the "flight or fight" response? How can Metcheck get the weather so wrong?¹

The forecast had been for rain in the afternoon, clearing later. In fairness, that was correct, though it only cleared for about five minutes. Nevertheless, with sunshine in our hearts, Wilf and

¹ Mind you, it was forecasting winds of 227mph for Bristol for the following day. I still haven't found Toto.

I set off on Friday 10th June to Eastville Park for the Sri Chinmoy Self Transcendence 5k. I've done various races there over the years: there's a series each year with races of various distances from 2 miles to 5k, then a 3 x 1 mile relay. I've always enjoyed them as they're run round a one mile loop and there's always exceptionally good support at the lap point. Nobody ever minds what position you are or how long you take and I haven't got lost yet.

The weather didn't seem to be getting any better. As we drove around the edge of the park, I saw there was a fair in full swing, dodgems and helter-skelter. Great. No doubt there would be hecklers to contend with as well as the usual assortment of slightly dodgy characters and very friendly women wearing very short skirts.

We parked the car, went to collect our numbers and I was surprised that we seemed to be early as only a few people were there. Ten minutes later a couple more had arrived. Not only was it wet, it was also cold and windy. I was wearing shorts and a short-sleeved top, plus by a hoody. I put a jacket on over the hoody. I was starting to look like the grandma of some of the kids who hang around the park on warm summer days. They weren't there. Neither were many runners.

A small field in a race isn't a good sign for me. It usually means that I will be even further behind the main pack. Cold wet weather probably means that only the serious runners are there. I will be even further behind than in a normal small field. I'll probably be running the last lap by myself as they'll all have finished.

I am still asking myself those unanswered questions, plus the additional one of "Why on earth didn't I wear tights and a long-sleeved top?" We are warned that we are going to start soon and seven or eight of us meander down to the start line, the extra 0.1 mile which makes the distance 5k. Note that word "down." As we then turn around and come back it means the start is uphill. For a loop that (obviously) starts and finishes in the same place there seems to be a lot more up than flat or down. A dozen or so more people arrive. I'm chatting to a lady from GWR who is a bit younger than me. I'll be last, then. Everyone else is either faster or younger (and therefore probably faster) than me. I find my rightful place at the back which, for once, is very close to the front. It's a novel experience.

The gun goes (well, the race director shouts "go!") and we run off. I wish I'd worn gloves. A hat might have been good as well. A woman, wearing a mac, hat and carrying an umbrella is standing under a tree and clapping and cheering all the runners. The GWR lady is soon a few yards ahead of me and nobody is behind me. I suppose it was to be expected. It's unlikely I'll catch her but I'll try and keep her in my sights. The downhill stretch, my favourite part of the course. The marshal at the bottom is encouraging, as is the one at the end of the flat slightly uphill section. The next part is uphill and goes past the fair. There are no hecklers. They have more sense than I would have credited them with. They are probably at home in front of the telly with a bag of crisps and a can of Coke waiting for Gardener's World to start.

I do everything I can think of to make myself feel positive. I can still see GWR lady and, just in front of her, another lady wearing black tights and black hoody. I overtake two people. They are an elderly couple out for an evening stroll, or maybe just on their way back from Tesco. I miss the route. I have veered around them at the only point on this well-marked course where the path diverges. Fortunately it reverts² later and I'm still on course.

End of first lap. Rousing cheers from the onlookers. More encouragement from the lady under the hat, umbrella and tree. GWR woman has passed the Lady in Black. I keep her in my sights a bit longer, though. Corners are useful at times. Footsteps behind me, coming closer. Is it one of the local dodgy characters? No, it's the race leader, followed by a Portishead runner. Someone

² It's a perfectly cromulent word.

else. Fairground. No hecklers. The music's good and loud with a strong beat – a real bonus. Uphill (still). An ice-cream van has decided to call it a day and is about to drive across the path in front of me. I know I'm not going very fast but I am moving and surely he won't make me do a detour. He spots me and screeches to a halt, Popeye the Sailor man chiming at full jingle. Wilf goes past. I can still see the lady in Black and am getting closer to her. Uphill. Start/finish point. More cheers, smiles, applause.

Downhill. Make the most of it. Hat, umbrella, tree lady is still there. I am impressed by her dedication and am deep in thought about her when I look up and see Lady in Black five yards ahead and I will gradually catch her. I am overjoyed, exuberant, ecstatic, over the moon, thrilled to bits. At last, after twelve years, one month, twenty-five days and thirty-two minutes of running I will at last be able to write a race report which says that I went past someone. Now all I have to do is make sure she doesn't come past me.

Wilf jogs back to cheer me on a couple of times and waits to cheer the Lady in Black. I struggle on and sprint to the finish, with one runner telling me I've got a good turn of speed. That's nice of him, if a knickerbocker glory.³

The presentations are done as soon as the last runner finishes as the weather's so cold. Wilf was fourth finisher and first MV50-59, so gets two medals. The family medal haul improves 100% when I also get two for being first in age category and sixth lady.

The next day the results are on the Sri Chinmoy website. Not only have we had such fantastic success in the medals but TRC is now the joint third ladies' team so if I'm there next time and there are no women from Southville Running Club, we still will be.

Fingers crossed.....

Jan Burke

Postscript: The Three-legged Race

The final race of the series is a 3 person relay. We had a reputation to keep up as we won the family team prize last year.

A Load of Burkes

Graham (hadn't run or cycled for six weeks) 5:41
Jan 9:30 (managed 7 minute-miling at one point then we hit the flat part)
Wilf 5:44 (no-one in sight so time-trialled it)
Total time 20:55

Fifth team overall, first family team (beating the Special Offers).

Presentations followed for the race and series. I was first FV60-69 and won a £20 voucher for Run and Become in Cardiff. Thornbury Ladies Team were third in the series.

JB

³ A trifle exaggerated.

So: we were a running club, but members couldn't limit themselves to one discipline, so they got on their bikes or in the pool, and did duathlons, then triathlons. It's no surprise that we're now up to Quadrathlons (Hept- and Dec- still to come?)

European Quadrathlon Championships – Bude

For the majority of club members that have never heard of a 'quad' it is basically a triathlon with an extra kayak leg. This year, the European Champs were held in Bude on one of the toughest short-courses known. The quadrathlon started with a mass start 800m sea swim. Unfortunately the race occurred as the remnants of hurricane Irene was hitting the UK, making the surf one big huge mess. Luckily for me, I have been a member of a surf life saving club for a number of years so the huge surf played into my hands. Still, I was surprised to emerge from the swim as the second lady.



The swim is then followed by a transition onto the bike with the 30 km route climbing out of Bude southwards on the coast road. It was at this point that I realised I had made my first error - rimmed wheels in gales force cross-winds don't do much for bike handling! After seeing a couple of blokes quite literally blown into the hedgerow I eventually make it to the more sheltered, but significantly hillier section of the bike course. It is at this point that I was glad I had my triple chain ring as the road climbed over two 25% hills, with equally challenging narrow-lane 25% descents on the other side. A tight hairpin later and I hit the bottom of the notorious Millook Hill, an 800m climb at 30% gradient – well at least it should have been an 800m climb, but with my zig-zagging up the road I think I probably doubled that distance! After this the course flattened out and headed inland. It was at this point that my race took a turn for the worse when I heard a hissing sound emerging from my back wheel. A quick tube change later and I was back on the bike having only lost a couple of places in the women's race. The course then turned onto a fast A-road for the return leg into Bude, all was well, until a second rear puncture decided to ruin my day. The problem I now faced was the fact that I only ever carry one spare tube in a race and had no spares left – after stopping to re-inflate the tube a few times, I eventually had to walk the last 1km into transition – on the positive, I had a lot of vocal support from the crowd!!

In T2 I was asked if I wanted to carry on – having ascertained that I wasn't in fact last – I jumped in my kayak hoping to do some damage limitation. A large number of people that do quadrathlons come to the sport from triathlon and really struggle throughout the 10 km canal paddle. Luckily for me, my sporting background has been as a member of the GB kayaking team, and I therefore find the 3rd leg of the quadrathlon the easiest. The adrenaline was still in my system from the disastrous bike leg – probably contributing to one of my best ever paddles. This resulted in me overtaking a large portion of the field, but even so, I was amazed to discover that I had pulled myself so far back up the field as I exited the kayak as the 3rd lady.

The final leg of the quad then involved a 10km run along the canal path followed by a hilly off road section along the coast path. I've never been a good runner (in fact I joined Thornbury RC in the hope that this would change.....I'm still hoping!), and knew I had no chance of catching the girls ahead – the aim was therefore to keep my third place for as long as possible. The run was

horrifically hilly and windy and I spent the majority of it preventing myself looking back at the girl behind me. After what seemed like an eternity I eventually hit the road back to the finish and realised that I just might be able to get the bronze medal – I gave it everything I had for the last 1 km and was delighted as I crossed the finish line in 3rd place after having run a 10km PB. Finding out that I was way clear of 4th place made me realise that I had just put myself in a lot of pain for no good reason and discovering that I was only 2 min off the silver medal definitely made the race ‘a case of what might have been’. But, after the disaster on the bike I was happy with a European medal of any colour, and who knows, next year it might even be silver!

Zoë Betteridge

Letters to the Editor:

Cross-country communication

Just thought that I would let you know that I have been contacted by an athlete in Cumbria who was trying to find out information about my Neuroma operation.

She simply googled for cryo-surgery mortons neuroma and found our Prattle and Run and called me directly. It is interesting to see how wide the audience is, but also do the people who write articles at TRC realise that what they write is so widely public? I guess so. Best regards

Jim Broughton

Jim and Bettina have relocated to Toulouse, but hope to return to visit and run with us on occasions. Since it is clear Prattle and Run has a far wider readership than just the Thornbury area, I can hope they read this as we wish them well and hope that Jim's surgery has properly done the trick!-Ed.

Pot of Gold?

For the people who were out running, several years ago, along the riverbank and saw the rainbow.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow> You will know what I mean if you were there!"

Jan Burke

"I remember it well ..."



WELL ... here is a picture of a top runner at the London Olympics in 1908.

For info, it is Tom Longboat. It was sent to me by Bob Wilcock who has done a book on the 1908 Olympic Games. He sent it to me as I was showing an interest in Tom Longboat. I don't believe this is in his book and he didn't say anything about it being copyrighted But I guess if you put it in the next P&R then we should acknowledge where it came from.

John Grimsey

Also inspired by Ji Broughton's article, Simon Young gives us the details of his treatment, with a commentary on the 2007 Ashes Series as an aside

I don't think I can match Jim's article on coming back from injury / operation "a New CRYO Surgery Method For Treating Morton's Neuroma" for gore... no photographs!

In my article, I shall also save you the photographs of more gore, stitches and swelling. I shall also save you from my mentioning leaking wounds, blood, stinking plasters, scars, bruising, a person dying in the hospital bed next to me at 2.30am in the morning with only a flimsy curtain between me and the crash team (The old boy fought hard for 4 hours before finally succumbing to fluid on the lungs), casts, air cast boots, crutches, physiotherapy, pain killers and being dependent upon my wife for almost everything.

I shall, however mention sitting on the kitchen floor crying in a pool of split tea and crutches. After days of doing nothing but feeling sorry for myself with my leg in air, the boredom got to me and I struggled into the kitchen to make a cup of tea and take it back to my prison called the spare settee. On my return, I put one of my crutches in a wet patch on the kitchen floor, slipped and spilt the tea. The tears were because I realised that I really couldn't do anything for myself and I was dependent upon others. I didn't like that feeling. I was told by the Consultant it was going to be tough...I had no idea how tough!

On the plus side, because I had to have my leg elevated at all times, I slept on the settee with my leg on the back of the settee. As I didn't go to bed, I had a very pleasurable time watching The Ashes. I watched the Morning Session between 11.30pm to 1.30 am our time; fall asleep in a very uncomfortable position and then wake up to see the evening session at 4.30 am to 6.30am. If you know your cricket, you will know that this all-night TV watching would have been a much less pleasurable experience in 2007...we lost 5 nil then.

In my view, in the 2007 Ashes Series, we had a Head Coach under pressure, the wrong captain, wrong spinner, missing our two opening batsmen, wrong wicketkeeper, missing the seamer who caused that Aussies most problems in 2005 – Simon Jones with 2 other bowlers who were out of form – we were always going to lose that series.

Anyway back to my story. I have been suffering with Achilles pain since 2001, well before I joined the Club in 2004. During this time the discomfort came and went. By July 2004, after I had started to race and train with the Club, the pain had become really bad. Between 2005 and early 2008, the discomfort was manageable. Later on in 2008, my Achilles tendon deteriorated considerably. By September, it hurt so much, I could barely walk. Rest and physiotherapy during 2009 worked a little. To cut a long story short, after a year of pestering my GP, I eventually convinced the NHS to treat me.

I had the operation on the 16th December 2010. Whilst being prepared for theatre I was proper bricking it. I nearly ran out of pre-theatre. People were drawing on me, poking me, taking blood samples from me, sticking needles in me, starving me, asking me questions, making me sign pieces of paper and many other unpleasant things.

After all this, I was stuffed on a trolley and taken into another room where there was more poking, prodding and questioning. Next thing I knew, they said to me this needle will make you feel drunk. I said can I have a beer instead. They stuck another needle in me and the next thing I knew, I woke up with a cast on my right foot.

I was in a cast for two weeks and then another 2 weeks in an air cast boot. By the end of January, I was walking and back full-time at work and undergoing physiotherapy, with plenty of discomfort. Mid March I was given the go-ahead to start running. I rushed home and immediately put my trainers on and went for 10 minute jog.

When I started running the tendon was bad at first. The main focus of pain was the insertion point. The mid part of the Achilles, the area where I had my problems for the 10 years, was okay. The Consultant and physio didn't seem too worried about discomfort at the insertion point, saying that that area may never get better on its own. It did get better slowly. In fact it got better the more I ran and cycled. May be it just needed "freeing" up and being made to work.

The day finally arrived. The day I was waiting for. It happened on Thursday 13 April 2011. This day was first day in about 10 years where I ran without pain. I still need to careful not to overdo it. I am building up slowly.

I knew the operation was a gamble and as with all operations, there is no guarantee that it will work. I had many days post operation when I thought it hadn't worked. It is still early days and I shall know for sure in 6 to 9 months whether the operation has been successful, but after 4 months it is looking good.

All I've got to do is get fit. The older you are the harder it is to get fit and importantly, the harder it is to get back into the suffering mentality for races. As with fitness, suffering needs working on and if you don't practise suffering, you lose the ability to suffer properly. I can see why some people in their 40s never come back from injury.

I have to remember my sporting hero Sean Kelly saying, the way to get good is to

Learn how to suffer
Get the miles in, and
Never give up

I shall add one more to Sean's list... Always have a smile on your face and enjoy it; even when training in February when it is cold, wet and horrible outside.

Simon Young

*Some dodgy music choices revealed by John and Andrew in this edition's 20 Questions feature.
Sorry if you don't recognise them from their pictures!*

Today, John Watt- this is your 20 Questions

1. Where were you born? *Crumpsall Hospital Manchester (Same place as Jan Burke)*
2. What is your favourite race? *Liswerry 8, very flat I initially thought it was a memorial race for a lady called Liz Werry*
3. What is your favourite film? *Absence of Malice with Steve McQueen ad Sally Fields stands out for me*
4. What sporting moment you are most proud of, (PB etc)? *There was a severe weather warning on the Severn Road Club evening time trial one night and I went to do it because I thought I would be the only one stupid enough to turn up so I would win but Roger Denton*



(Read into that what you will) also turned up and beat me into 2nd in a 2 bike race

5. What is your favourite book? *Amanda Craig Hearts and Minds tells stories of how illegal and legal immigrants live amongst us and how they get by*
6. How many years have you been running? *8*
7. What is your occupation? *I run my own business carrying out conveyancing searches for Solicitors*
8. How many miles a week on average do you run? *8*
9. What is the first piece of music you ever bought? *I am ashamed to say it was a Bay City Rollers single*
10. What is your favourite piece of running kit? *The Finish Line*
11. Secret crush? *I am too busy chasing Mrs. Watt to have any secret crushes*
12. Do you have any pre/post race rituals/habits? *Porridge before a long run and lots of settee time after*
13. Which is your favourite, winter or summer? *The summer light enables you to get out and about more*
14. Who is your sporting hero? *Martin Buchan was a centre half at Man United and was the first man to captain both a Scottish and English FA Cup winning team*
15. How do you get through 'the wall'? *If I ever hit it I would probably phone a friend for a lift*
16. Tell us about an embarrassing moment. *I escorted my daughter's infant class to the Zoo and lost a boy with the brightest red shoes ever seen in the Penguin enclosure, fortunately someone found him before he got in*
17. What is your current running goal? *I have a significant birthday this year and would like to do a marathon even if it is the one where one man and his dog is the only spectator*
18. When you were a child what did you want to be when you 'grew up'? *I wanted to complete surveys/questionnaires*
19. Do you have any secret ambitions? *I would one day like to do Lands End to John' O Groats on a bike*
20. Why did you start running? *My daughter got friendly with a girl in Infants and her dad suggested I join the running club. Her dad was John Boyle who emigrated to Australia leaving me running around Thornbury*

And today ...Andrew Darton....this is your...20 Questions!

1. Where were you born? *Yeovil, Somerset*
2. What is your favourite race? *The Full Monty 'Cute' (offroad run in Somerset)/ London Tri Docklands*
3. What is your favourite film? *Chariots of Fire (even before I started running)*
4. What sporting moment are you are most proud of, (PB etc)? *Finally getting a sub 1:30 in a half marathon in 2009 and beating my brother at London Tri in 2010*
5. What is your favourite book? *Any landscape photographic book (e.g. Colin Prior)*
6. How many years have you been running? *8 years*
7. What is your occupation? *Financial Accountant*
8. How many miles a week on average do you run? *Not a lot recently due to long-term injury (normally 20-30miles when fit)*
9. What is the first piece of music you ever bought? *Shakin Stevens –*



This Old House

10. What is your favourite piece of running kit? *2XU Calf Guards (that extra bit of lycra!)*
11. Secret crush? *Has to be Kylie! Growing up in the 80's*
12. Do you have any pre/post race rituals/habits? *Numerous visits to the toilet and turning up extra early to races*

13. Which is your favourite, winter or summer? *Has to be summer when open water swimming can be added to training schedule*
14. Who is your sporting hero? *Kerry Dixon (Golden Boot in 1985) and Tim Don*
15. How do you get through 'the wall'? *I don't, I crash (all or nothing – neck on the line)*
16. Tell us about an embarrassing moment – *has to be New York 2005 (don't mention it!)*
17. What is your current running goal? *To be able to run without pain and race against Garry Slater and Richard Phillips etc.....*
18. When you were a child what did you want to be when you 'grew up'? *A wildlife photographer*
19. Do you have any secret ambitions? *To retire asap and therefore have more time to train and spend time with my family*
20. Why did you start running? *As a bet – during a time when I caught a bus from North Bradley Stoke into the centre of Bristol (work) [8miles] and whether I could run it quicker > to this day I wish the bus had won!*

John Grimsey has submitted another article from his Canadian running club (Longboat Roadrunners) newsletter

John says: "This one is about running. Maybe it is slightly contentious – but as I've always gone with the philosophy of – 'you don't read a poem just to get to the end so why run a race just to get to the finish' I do have a lot of empathy with what Sandra Tam has written here."

Running – Not faster, not slower, just running

By Sandra Tam

What if you woke up one day to find that there aren't any faster runners or slower runners; there are just runners. People would still run faster and slower than others, it just wouldn't mean anything. How would your running, training and racing change?

To start, you might not have conversations like the one I had with M. After I ran a 30km road race, 20 minutes slower than my best time, M. turned to me and in a low voice, and he said "I guess you didn't do that well at Around the Bay". His expression was the kind you save for telling your child her goldfish went belly up. At the time, I thought, I ran decently, I ran the entire route, 20 minutes, who cares? Now, in a running world without faster or slower runners, 3:00 would be the same as 3:20 or 2:30 and M. would not have been so embarrassed for me.

Runners would ask each other, "how was the race?" not "what was your time?". One might answer: "I felt strong all the way to 8km" or "The head wind died down after the turnaround" or "I was in pain by the railroad crossing" or "The tulips were in bloom at 6km." Wait a minute – don't runners already dwell on the minutiae of the running experience? If you've read any race reports, you'll have to answer in the affirmative. Runners have extreme sensitivities to race conditions, reporting every tiny incline, decline, rain, wind, cold, coffee, juice break, banana stop, energy surge, passing duck-footed runner, and flying acorn that bounced off the sidewalk. Runners would continue this borderline pathological obsession with detail; we just wouldn't be concerned with time, because in a world without faster or slower runners, one time is as good as another. Timex sales might drop off, since the only reason you would wear a watch to a race is to make sure you get home in time for dinner.

How could you set running goals if there are no faster or slower runners, you ask? I guess one would have to show a bit of creativity in defining running and race goals. Nowadays, time-based running goals are clearly the norm. Even runners at the back of the pack aim to best their personal faster time. Instead of a time goal, maybe to want to race pushing a toddler in a stroller, or run 25 hours on a treadmill, or run 50 marathons over a lifetime, or race a 10km race once a month, or run in fire fighting gear, or run while portaging a canoe. Maybe your goal is to fundraise by racing for your favourite charity. Aren't these significant and worthy timeless goals?

Runners wouldn't feel bad about placing poorly on time ranked lists. Since time doesn't mean anything in a running world without faster or slower runners, these lists would likely go the way of the dodo bird. (Let's face it – age-graded scores are make-believe anyway.) People would be listed in alphabetical order, by height, or shoe size. What would count is if you participated in the race, you'd make it on the list.

Perhaps more significant than changes that would occur at the individual level, a running world without faster or slower runners, changes the entire focus of running from getting to the finish line to getting to the start line. Without the notion of faster or slower, which is how competition is operationalized in this sport, we encourage participation, at any speed. So then, the million-dollar question is: without competition, operationalized in the idea of faster or slower, would you still run?

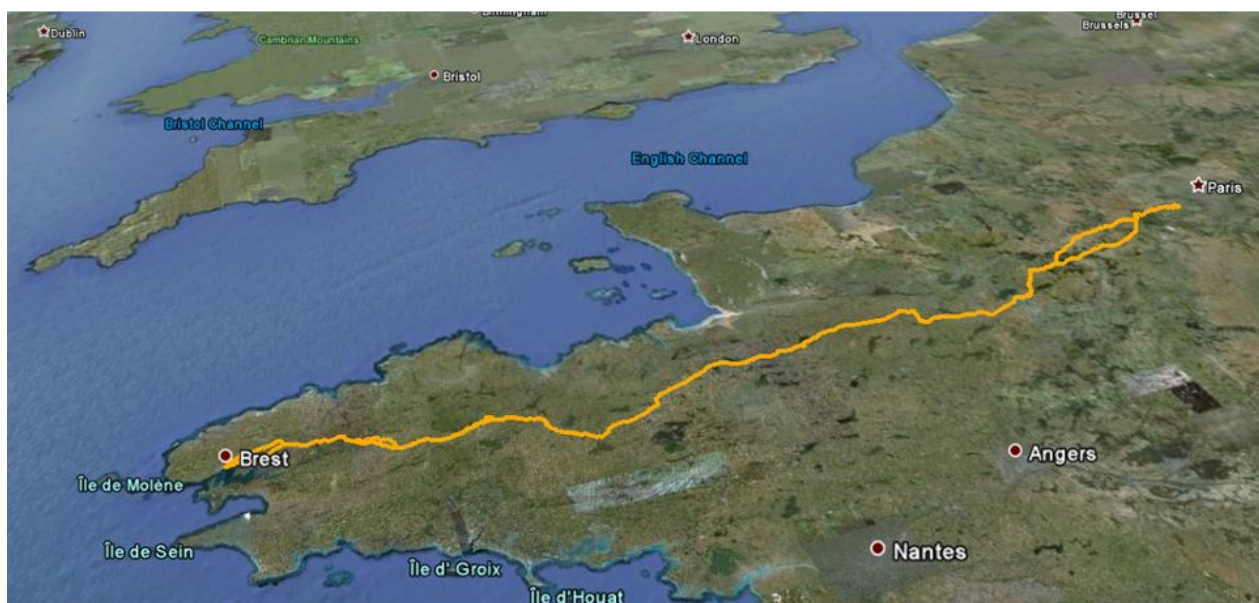
I guess it would depend on what you value and what you believe is important about this sport. What I do know is that runners give plenty of reasons why they run that have little to do with going faster or slower; we run for camaraderie, to sustain good health, to feel belonging in a community, or powerful in our own bodies

Finally, I would remind those habitual few, who believe this exercise of imagining a running world without faster or slower runners is but a futile brainteaser for us analytic types because running has always been about running faster, and that's just the way it is, - that when we run, we move our bodies, but we should also move our minds. See you at the start line.

Paris-Brest-Paris, August 2011



It all began innocently enough, with a cycling friend asking if I would like to join him and some others for a 200km Audax. That sounded like fun, so I did. The others did not turn up but my friend and I had an enjoyable day's cycling – so enjoyable that we considered entering more Audaxes. Three rides later (300K, 400K and 600K) and now I have qualified for the PBP - the oldest and largest long distance cycling event in the world. For those who may not know, Brest is a seaside town on the far North West corner of France. It is not very near to Paris:



Preparations involved upgrading the lighting on my bike, buying energy gels by the boxful and entering the event on the French website (*wikitranslate* was useful). The big day approached and my friend and I did a test ride through the night, saying goodnight to our families around 6.30 one evening, set to return sometime before lunchtime the following day. The experience was unnerving but wonderful to cycle through both dusk and dawn. We saw the pubs turning out, amazing stars and had a conversation with a milkman about where the earliest-opening cafés could be found. Still not put off, we made final plans ...

Sadly, my friend was injured, so I ended up going alone (if you do not count the other 6500 people there). The start of the event, in a western suburb of Paris, is spectacular, with entertainments including a man on the tallest stilts in the world, music, balloons and a whole lot of excitement. Different groups are sent off at different times, and I had entered the last group – for the slowest and least confident. We started after the “Specials”, recumbents, tandems, a 2nd world war historical fixed wheel bike, the bloke with one leg, the bloke with no legs.

The rules of the event are that cyclists must ‘check-in’ at set points on the route. The check-in locations offer food for sale, and a few have areas set aside for people to sleep. I did not manage my sleep well however, only getting two lots of 45 minutes during the 1230km ride. The support from locals in the small towns is amazing; many are providing water during the day and leave out bottles over night. At the top of one hill I was given a very welcome mug of hot chocolate – and rather confusingly a tomato.

It was a fantastic experience. I took 63 hours which was comfortably within the time allowed. However returning to running has been a bit of a shock and I still cannot feel my toes.

Tom Usherwood

Cross Country Season 2011/1012 Or Triumph in Adversity

What better to do on an autumn afternoon? Enjoy the sun as you stand in the middle of a grassy field, watching your team mates run joyfully up and down the slight inclines of the Cotswolds or the Welsh Valleys.

It may be better if you have brought a coat (or three) hat, gloves and wellies as the grass is fast being eroded into mud by hundreds of spikes and studs. At some point you have to take-off several layers of clothes and huddle together at the start line – but soon it will be over and you can put those layers back on drink coffee or soup and maybe, just maybe, someone will have brought some home-made cakes.

It can't be too bad, as year in year out the same people turn out to take part in the Gwent and Gloucester Cross Country league races. Are you going to admit that Nick Langridge and Ros Rowland are made of tougher stuff than you are? You don't *have* to beat them, just **be there!** After the first two races of the season, Thornbury has failed to field a men's team, though the ladies have been out in force. The proposed calendar for the rest of the season is as follows:

Gwent League	Sun, Nov 13	University of Bath (tbc)
Gloucester League	Sat, Nov 5	Blackbridge, Glos (Glos AC)
Gwent League	Sun, Dec 4	Singleton Park, Swansea

Gloucester League	Sat, Dec 10	Cheltenham (CLC)
Gloucester League	Sat, Jan 7	Glos County XC Champs Plock Court, Glos (Severn AC)
Gloucester League	Sat, Feb 4	Tewkesbury (Tewkesbury AC)
Gwent League	Sat, Feb 11	Penlan Leisure Centre, Brecon
Gwent League	Sat, Mar 3	Blaise Castle, Bristol

Team Captains Garry Slater and Maddie Parrott, supported by Pete Mainstone, Jo Plumbley and Judy Mills will all be reminding club members of these events. No-one is too slow: ask any of those who turn out regularly. Just Do It (as they say).

Editorial

It has been a few months since the last edition of Prattle & Run for which I apologise.

It is true to say that things have not been the same since the magazine went solely online; it's not the same as having a few sheets of paper in your hand to read over coffee (or in the bath, on the loo or wherever). Printing, especially with colour, can no longer be done free of charge, and it's questionable whether club funds should be used for this purpose.

Is there anybody out there whose company would perhaps consider sponsoring Thornbury Running Club by financing 40-or-so copies every couple of months? Or quarterly? The editor is quite happy to reduce font sizes etc to make the whole publication smaller if that will help.

There is another issue: material for publishing. Reading this, are you thinking 'it's a shame there's nothing about ... the Club's London Marathon runners ... the Triathlon team relay success ... why aren't there more photos? ... why's it all about longer, harder stuff: what about 5k races? 10k races? Just running and not races at all'? The fact is that I can only use the articles I am given, and I am very grateful to those who keep me supplied, but like everything else, there are many people in the Club and very few contributing.

So please, put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboards. Let me know what you want from Prattle & Run. Let me know what you are doing. Send me your photos. All items to judy.mills@live.co.uk – or just hand them to me on a piece of paper.

Until next time ...