



SOUTH CHESHIRE *Harriers* Newsletter

April 2009

How I 'Got my Backside kicked' on Sky Sports

(But she's still the pride of South Cheshire)

Back in January, after a superb run in the Cheshire cross-country championships (see last newsletter), Nicky Lowe was selected among the reserves to represent Cheshire in the Intercounties Championships at Woollaton Park, Nottingham, on 7 March. And so it came to pass that reserves were needed, as Nicky explains...

When I first got the e-mail from Adrian Thiemicke to say two more girls had dropped out of the Cheshire team and would I be available if required, I could not reply quickly enough.

There's nothing like the right preparation for this sort of thing. On the 2nd March I was told by my doc that my blood pressure was too high and furthermore that I had the kidney function of a 70 year old - great news! On 3rd March the call came: 'You're in the team.'

I was the scraps of the team, but on the team I was. I was, quietly, over the moon. I never thought that at 38 I would be back running competitively. I had competed for Wales at both track and cross-country when I was at school, but it was a lot easier then, and a long time ago.

The whole experience on the day itself was surreal - talk about a fish out of water - and thank God Mike Cutler, Mel Cole and Phil Cliff were there to support! My husband, David, decided I was in no fit state to drive so the Lowe family set off en masse to Nottingham.

When we arrived, the grounds were stunning and the sun shining. I was so overwhelmed, I couldn't breathe! There were miles of tape everywhere, TV cameras and lots of fit athletes. It was great having a four- and five-year-old with me to take my mind off it: all they wanted was the park and ice cream! Ruth's sister Liz had sent me a text warning me to

look my best as they would be watching the race in high definition. Great!

We had arrived early, so we searched for the South Cheshire Harriers tent that the Cheshire team were borrowing for the day. En route, we found a map of the course, which made no sense to me, and as I was nervously reading the map some lovely chap said: 'Are you likely to be at the front? Because if you aren't just follow the girls in front.' I wanted to say 'Of course I'll be leading!', and then thought better of it.

We found Mel, Mike and Phil putting up our tent - the smiles and wise words from them were worth their weight in gold because the Cheshire team were... well, I may as well have not been there.

No 'Hello' or 'Good journey?' or 'Cheers for coming'. My number was handed to me, I was asked whether I was 'Buying or borrowing' the vest, and that was it from them. It's clearly straight down to business at this level!



Nicky powers uphill

INTER-COUNTIES CHAMPS AT NOTTINGHAM (cont)

It wasn't till we were in our starting pens that I met the other girls, but nerves had rendered me speechless, although Gemma Todd was lovely, and between us we got the race into perspective, and the nerves subsided.

I found the pace fast and furious, and the race itself is a blur. Five miles of fast going, undulating, energy sapping circuits...great for spectators but nowhere to hide for the runners! Phil was hilarious and kept popping up everywhere. He must have covered quite a bit of ground himself. Mel was at the top of the hill with his enormous camera, while David had the toughest job - trying to keep the kids focused on mummy and not the park - but he did a sterling job.

Back in Cheshire, Ruth's sister's lad Toby summed the race up very well while watching it on Sky Sports. He said: 'Nicky is getting her arse kicked!' You were so right, Toby.

I finished 192nd in 34.41, I was fifth out of six Cheshire runners and I didn't come last in the race which was my fear. As a team, we finished in the top half.

To sum it up, I am glad I did it - I do enjoy competing, and to get a Cheshire vest in my first cross country-season is just grand. I owe so much to the club, BIG UP to South Cheshire Harriers!

PS Roll on next cross country season.

PPS Blood pressure is back down.

Nicky Lowe

Off-Road Championship 2009

A year or so ago, Steve Whincup ('Winky' to most of us) came up with the idea of an off-road championship to go alongside our road champs, possibly with the idea that someone other than Mike Hatton might win it. So far, it looks like we reckoned without Mike's versatility. Winky reports on progress in the champs to date and his own attempts to get somewhere near the top of the tree.

The idea of an Off-Road Championship was spawned on the mini bus on the way to Alton Towers for the 2008 National Cross-Country Championships.

I then went to try and find an interesting mix of races for people to compete in and we settled on a format of 12 races, of which the men have to complete six to qualify (including one of the three designated long races) and the ladies four (but no requirement to complete a long race). Instead of the percentage system used in the road champs, 25 points are awarded for the first Harrier home descending down to a minimum of one point.

The first race in the calendar was the Cheshire Cross-Country Championship in January, which ensured a decent turn-out for the inaugural event, despite the freezing cold day. The down side of a big turn-out is that, as I helped put the tent up, I wondered if it was worth the trouble for the few points I would get now 15 men (and seven women) had shown up. At no point in the race did I get warm and it was pretty clear as Mike Cutler disappeared

into the distance that the most points I would get would be a lucky 13 as long as I ensured Phil and Alasdair didn't pass me. Race over I sat in the tent eating the legendary after race cakes thinking this could be a long year chasing points. Nicky took an early advantage in the womens' competition. Oh, and guess who got 25 points for the men?

The second and third races formed part of a back-to-back double bill that was obviously born of the need to build a stunning weekend of racing to package for the TV channels, rather than, say, not noticing they were only a day apart. The Standish 10k on February 28th saw only two ladies and six men entered as wiser heads elected to keep their powder dry for the next day's Cloud 9.

As we arrived it was raining but then the sun came out, and again thoughts turned to the possibility of points. I had never run this race and didn't know what to expect so just before the race started I was talking to a fellow runner who explained it was a figure-of-eight course, running it in reverse the second time. I thanked



OFF-ROAD CHAMPIONSHIPS

(cont)



him and off we went. The next time I saw him was as he came out of the woods just as I entered them, leading the race by a mile (him not me, just in case that wasn't clear). My intention had been to run it to get the points I expected to get and save some energy for tomorrow's race. Well as I crossed the muddy field for the second time I began to wonder 'What energy'. Never mind, 21 points in the bank, roll on tomorrow. Road specialist Mike Hatton somehow fluked another 25 points but Rich Baker picked up 24, and Lorna Fewtrell and Jeanette Hatton picked up good points in the ladies' event.

There was a bigger turn-out for the Cloud, but there was no Mike. Four of us did the double after Standish, of whom Rich capitalised on Mike's absence to pick up the maximum. Pre-race talk was that we should all track Charlie and overtake him en masse after his comments on the forum about hoping no one else was coming so he could pick up cheap points, but once the gun was fired that was forgotten as people chased their own points. I ran this race last year for the first time and it's a very scenic route, but you need to watch out for the tree roots on the way down from the top of the Cloud - don't you Pat! Nicky picked up her second maximum among the ladies, while Liz Painter smiled her way to 24 points. I crossed the line a few minutes slower than last year but banked another 15 points. It was, I thought, not a bad weekend's work.



The fourth race

of the championship was the Milford 21. This was one of the long races that the men have to complete to qualify. Eight brave souls took on the challenge to pick up some 'easy' championship points. But as the wind blew across the car park, and pre-race nerves took hold, discussion turned to drawing lots for the points and heading off to the nearest pub - but what fun would there be in that!

I've never done this race before and it was a bit of a roller-coaster ride through 21 miles of beautiful countryside on Cannock Chase. This was not one of my best races after about 16 miles I had a few problems but will spare you the details. Despite this, I managed to finish, get another 19 points banked and climb to joint third in the table, albeit having done all the races.

If I'm going to stay anywhere near third, I think it's



a case of picking races where cheap points are up for grabs - where is that list of races? Anybody for the Cloud Challenge? The full details with race times can be found at:

<http://spreadsheets.google.com/ccc?key=pjSv6bO3Rja-liEVRJosALQ&hl=en>

Steve Whincup

Update: since Winky wrote this piece, the NSPCC Sandstone Trail 10K has taken place, with Nicky again bagging top points in the ladies' event, and Andy Mayers in the men's. James Simpson's second in the men's event gives him the current overall lead - but Mike, Rich and Pat all have a 'game in hand'.

Men

1. James Simpson 88 points (4 races)
2. Mike Hatton 75 (3)
3. Rich Baker 73 (3)

Women

1. Nicky Lowe 75 points (3 races)
2. Liz Painter 46 (2)
3. Lorna Fewtrell 45 (2)

How to Run

Head teacher and all-round pillar of the community Anthony Hadfield explains how a husband-and-wife team of teachers can both find time to train for the London marathon. (Clue: the answer is for one of them to get injured while the other one selfishly puts in the long miles...)

Have you ever sat back and wondered how you have found yourself with too much to do and too little time to do it?

In my job, a quote I often hear is: 'The art of leadership is saying "No", not saying "yes"'. It is very easy to say 'Yes'.

So if I was struggling to juggle family, work, moving house and marathon training why did I say 'Yes' to 'find time' to write an article on my marathon training for the SCH newsletter? The answer is simple if a little unpalatable - I was blackmailed by Charlie!

So here goes:

I joined SCH in October 2007 after jogging the same Wyburnury five-mile circuit twice weekly around our home. It was one of my better decisions and a few weeks later Ruth also joined the ranks of the 'Friendly Running Club for Runners of all abilities'. It has been a fantastic 18 months, finding myself running races on both road and cross-country.

Life has a habit of getting busy for us all and I was pleased with how my running was going even though I am accused on a weekly basis of racing on training nights and waving to the cameras too much during races! Imagine my surprise then to find that in a moment of foolish optimism, I had not merely entered the Flora London Marathon, but also had my application accepted. Ruth was delighted to win an FLM place through the club's ballot.

Stirred to action, I supplemented my Tuesday and Thursday club runs with a Wednesday track session at the Cumberland in Crewe and a long run at the weekend. However, we now had the added complication of fitting both Ruth's and my long runs into the weekends, around the girls' swimming lessons, parties and sleep-overs.

As winter came and went, the FLM started a slow but relentless march from the back of my mind to the front. I ran both the Helsby and the Village Bakery half-marathons. I was a little disappointed to finish in 1hr 30 mins 5 secs at Wrexham but it was pointed out to me that five seconds was equivalent to the

(and Juggle at the same time)

time I'd spent showboating for the cameras. How rude people can be.



Ruth finished very creditably in under 2 hours - but she didn't wave at the cameras!

As March draws to an end and the FLM is less than a month away, I have completed three runs of over 20 miles, one being the Milford 21 over Cannock Chase. Ruth has unfortunately developed a hip injury which has meant she's been unable to run for the last two months and she is therefore intending to defer her place until next year. I have stopped worrying about my time - if I get round and finish in anything around 3 hrs 30 I will be happy.

So what have I learned? Well, for one, Charlie needs to lead a blameless life from here on in as we have moved into a house directly opposite his. Charlie, I really do know where you live and I have the Crimestoppers' number on speed-dial! Also, with running, you really do only get out what you are willing to put in. I wish I'd 'put in more' over the last few months, but my school is still standing, Ruth is still talking to me, the girls have a new home that they love, and I'm injury free and enjoying my running.

I am now in the midst of early negotiation with Ruth for 'permission' to run the Leicester marathon in the autumn. This will be after our six-week summer break/training camp, so I will hopefully have the time and motivation to put in quality training and therefore be ready to 'go for a time'.

Good luck to all the Harriers running London, and I look forward to seeing you on Saturday night in London for pasta and a glass of Dutch Courage.

Anthony Hadfield.

We wish all our runners taking part in the 2009 Flora London Marathon on 26 April the very best of luck. For those of you online, there are details on the club forum of some people running the event to raise money for charity.

Want to get ahead? Get a club!

A year ago, she was just a trickily-named newcomer who occasionally got listed in the men's results; now Kedren Elliott has become a key member of the club who still occasionally gets listed in the men's results. (To balance this out, Pat Hudson is usually included in the ladies' results.)

Here Kedren reflects on her first 12 months as a South Cheshire Harrier.

Having only ever entered Race For Life events and run no further than a 10K, last year I decided to sign up for the Great North Run. As I had never attempted a half marathon before, I thought it might be advisable to join a running club to keep motivated.

I came across SCH at Easter last year when I signed up for the Air Products 10K. At the finish, I was very happy with my 10k time of 1 hr 2, but when I later checked the results, I was somewhat disappointed that I'd come three places from last position - and also that I'd ended up in the senior men's category. [Ah. Ahem. Well. 'Kedren'. It's a, um, tricky name for Race Organisers.] There was a lot of work to do, so I decided to pop down to the Vagrants the following Tuesday.

I was nervous as I'd never joined anything like this before and was worried that I might not be quick enough to keep up with the other runners at the club. Also, was I ever really going to be able to run a half marathon?

It didn't take long to get settled in at the club; everyone was really friendly. Every training night there were more than enough people to run with, and at different speeds, so finding the right group to run with wasn't a problem. The only thing that was difficult was remembering everyone's names, as there are a lot of Mikes and Andys. [Proper names for 10K organisers.]

I can't believe how well my running has come on since joining the club. I've received so much advice and encouragement from so many people and this has been invaluable. Having lived a relatively sedentary life up until now, I've been really bitten by the running bug and, as with anything if you're surrounded by other people who are passionate about something, the interest is only going to grow. I'm still learning now, one year on, and training for my first marathon. One thing that still surprises me is how committed people are - even on cold, wet and dark evenings in December we still have a great

turn-out for training sessions and even new people joining.

My highlights of the year have been: winning third place in the Ladies' Championship, which was very unexpected and only just managed after a few close races at the end with Liz; getting my half marathon time below the two-hour mark (big thanks to Ruth who was my running partner for the Village Bakery race where I managed it) and the Ladies' Evening in Nantwich - Carol you need to organise another gals' night out soon.

I know that I would never have improved so much and stayed so focused if I hadn't joined the club. I have several friends who run and do marathons, and I talk to them about the club and tell them they should join their local running club, but they say: 'Oh I'm not that serious about running'. I don't know where this preconception has come from as our club has so many members that run for so many different reasons.

*Kedren and Ruth
enjoying the
Four Villages
half-marathon*



For any members who have just joined, I'd like to point out some key people you really should talk to:

Mike Cutler, who knows everything and everyone associated with running. If you want to know a good race to do, then he's your man (he also knows some of the best pubs in the area).

Martin Stirna, for advice from getting started with running to training for a full marathon.

Pete Marquis-Jones, aka Mr Skinny, as he's just hilarious! [Tastes differ - Ed.]

In fact, if you want to know anything, Almost every member has a story to tell and there is nothing like getting advice from someone who really knows what they are talking about through personal experience.

I've really enjoyed my first year at the club and I'm looking forward to the next and improving my running, and my half-marathon time even further. Here's to lighter evenings, muddy cross-country and more chips!

Kedren Elliott

National Cross Country Championships

LONDON 21ST FEBRUARY 2009

- the View from the Back

Tarmac specialist Mike Cutler gives us his take on the quality of the mud at this year's National Cross-Country Championships in London.

From nowhere, spring weather greeted us at Parliament Hill Fields in north London as some 1,500 runners from across the UK faced a course to test the physical and mental strengths of any runner.

Standing proud among many old and famous club names were the sky blue banners of South Cheshire Harriers. By 2 o'clock we were all assembled in the capital, with special praise due to Phil Cliff, who not only drove down on the day of the run but, with guidance from Mel Cole, parked in the Brent Cross shopping centre and completed the last leg of the journey by Tube.

With nerves jangling and chips (no, not that sort) velcroed to our ankles, the army of runners set off up the first of many hills. As the underfoot conditions progressed from sloppy to downright ridiculous, with calf-deep sections of mud, often on banks that would be tricky at the best of times, I began to feel lonelier and lonelier, and while I had no means of knowing for sure, I was gripped by an unerring feeling that I was well towards the back of the field.

The senior men's course was 12km and comprised two laps, taking us twice over Kite Hill and up to Kenwood House. There was no time for admiration apart from a snatched view of the City of London which stood along way beneath us.

Thankfully the first lap ended, and a quick glance at the watch showed 37.45. Not good, but no time for self-analysis; a second lap had to be completed, and a smile and a grimace provided for the vocal

band of supporters from Cheshire.

The twisty nature of the course did allow views of other Harriers ascending the heights ahead: Neil Jones forging his way on; Phil Cliff digging in doggedly. In the woods at the top, I was overtaken by Trevor Faulkner from Wilmslow AC with a cheery 'Come on, Mike'.

If ever I needed an incentive, this was it. Throwing caution to the wind, I really hit the last mile hard, picking off a decent number of runners on the approach to the finish. It was nice to end on a high at least.

What I shall take away from the 2009 nationals will be the memory of the friendliness of fellow athletes from clubs as far away as Kenilworth and County Durham, but also the pride that the six of us - Neil, Mel, Rob Mayers, Phil, Martin Stirna and me - brought South Cheshire Harriers home to a respectable team place.

Well done to the whole band of supporters who cheered us on and were there for us at the finish.

Mike Cutler



Martin Stirna at the Nationals, with a view of the City behind him

Radcliffe AC 12 mile Multi-terrain Race

Somewhere near Manchester, Sunday 15th February 2009

On 15th February, the Harriers were out in force at the Village Bakery Half near Wrexham, seduced by a flat, fast and (if certain GPS readings are to be believed) slightly short course; one man had other, more challenging, ideas.

That man is Mike Cutler.

This is very much a Northern race put on by a Genuine Northern Club who are to be congratulated for keeping this gem of a race going.

The race HQ had moved to Radcliffe cricket club, still quite an impressive venue, even if it has seen better days. The drive up the M6 and M62 prepared me for the type of day ahead: cold, grey and wet.

Undaunted, we made our way to the start some three-quarters of a mile away. Very quickly we – the 200 foolhardy stalwarts – hit the trail, which follows a disused railway line towards the motorway and Salford. It is actually a very varied and scenic route, and one which on the day we shared with some slightly bemused horse riders.

At about four miles, the route crosses the river Irwell and follows the paths through parkland on the opposite side, before narrowing through an interesting Victorian industrial section with bridges and tunnels. After 7-8 miles the race climbs steeply up what I know as Brick Hill, as over the centuries the whole area has become covered with brick ends. It is very testing up-and-down terrain, with lots of steps descending into valleys with rushing waterfalls.

Finally you hit the Leeds canal and the scent of home wafts around. Putting your best foot forward and not into the cut, you have a check of the watch and push for the finish line at the Nellie Halstead running track.

I could not believe it - a respectable 55 minutes for the first seven miles. But an hour for the last five! My finish time was 1:55:17.

Thankfully the talk was of the new course being anything up to 13.5 miles. I will never know, but will console myself with the thought it was the longest possible distance. I shall definitely be back to check it out again - hopefully with some other Harriers next time.

Mike Cutler



Editor's note: no one knows as many races as Mike, and many of them will not appear on mainstream race calendars. If you are ever stuck for a race on a given weekend, Mike's your man to unearth an obscure 6.8 mile multi-terrain race in a secret forest near a town you've never heard of. Just put him to the test!

London Sponsorship Appeals

The Eve Appeal

(www.eveappeal.org.uk/) was set up to save women's lives by funding groundbreaking research into gynaecological cancers. The current focus is to develop effective methods of prediction, detection, treatment and care of ovarian cancer and reduce the death rate by 50% within 10 years. When detected at its most advanced stage, 85% of women who develop ovarian cancer will die from the disease. However, if detected early 95% survive.

I'm running in this year's London Marathon - please help me raise some money for this worthy cause to prevent other women, like my Mum, falling into the 85% category. You can sponsor me online at:

www.justgiving.com/andypainter

(don't forget Gift Aid!) or please get in touch if you'd rather not use the internet (I'll find a way to take your money!).

Thanks,

Andy Painter

On Sunday 26th April 2009 we were both due to be running the London Marathon in support of **Christie Hospital**, Manchester (Ruth has subsequently had to defer her place till next year). Ruth's mum sadly lost her fight against cancer 10 years ago and other close family members continue to bravely fight the disease each day. Over recent years the Christie Hospital has supported our loved ones with care and attention. This is our small way of saying 'thank you'.

Donating through Justgiving is quick, easy and totally secure. It's also the most efficient way to sponsor us: Christie's gets your money faster and, if you're a UK taxpayer, Justgiving makes sure 25% in Gift Aid, plus a 3% supplement, are added to your donation.

So please sponsor us now at

<http://www.justgiving.co.uk/anthonyhadfield>

Thank you for your support.

Anthony and Ruth Hadfield