

The Strider



June
2015

Newsletter of the Goyt Valley Striders

This edition:

2015 Championship Tables

The Fellsman

Yoga for Runners

Plus much more!



Dates for the diary

Saturday 17th October British Athletics Fell & Hill Relay Championships 2015 at 10:30am.
Barley Village Hall, Barley, Near Burnley.
GR 823403.

I am looking at entering a team from the club. If you would like to take part please let me know ASAP, so I can enter a team.

Kevin Day

August

11 - Away Run

12 - Eccles Pike - Marshals needed

September

8 - Away Run TBC

25\27 GVS away weekend - Wales

November

22 - Terry's Race

Away weekend in North Wales

Blaen-Y-Nant, Crafnant Valley

25th-27th September 2015

Dave and I were asked to book the Mynydd Climbing Club hut, Blaen-Y-Nant by both members of Goyt Valley Striders and Pennine within a couple of days of each other so we thought we might as well organise a joint meet.

Both clubs have had away weekends at "the hut", as it is known, in recent years and those who have attended have had a great time. There are a number of fabulous runs and walks straight from the hut and the main Snowden ranges are within easy reach. There is also mountain biking for anyone so inclined. Activities can be arranged according to the people attending so don't worry that you won't be able to keep up!



"The hut" has alpine bunk, dormitory style accommodation, toilets, showers and a drying room. It is self-catering with a good size kitchen and dining room and a cosy lounge. It sleeps 32 and there is camping space as well so no shortage of room. You need to take your own sleeping bag. Cost is £9 per person per night.

If you would like to reserve a place email Chris Bowen chris@whitebriars.co.uk or mention it to her while out running.

New message board - Security question when creating your new account

"The First Championship Race this year Is? (first word)"
Answer: Lyme

Officers

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In This Issue

Page

- 4 The Fellsman
- 6 Yoga for Runners
- 7 Land's End to John O'Groats - Barefooted!
- 10 2015 Championship Info
- 16 Maz and Sally's Community Woodland
- 18 Too Cold to Run

The Fellsman

The Fellsman is an annual fell run and/or walk across the Yorkshire Dales – 61 miles and 11,000 ft of ascent. Starting in Ingleton, the route takes in numerous peaks, including two of the three peaks of the Three Peaks Walk.

It crosses rugged moorland for most of the way until it finishes in Threshfield near Grassington. There are no marked paths over much of the route so participants have to be up to the added challenge of navigating as they go. This year's event took place on April 25/26 and myself, Dave, Sarah and James decided to have a go together. Tracy as ever was up for the challenge and Paul having completed the event on several previous occasions had also entered.

Dave's dad, who died last year, completed the event several times in the seventies and early eighties when it was seen as a tough walking challenge. More recently it has become largely a runners' event.

Dave and James had done the Fellsman about five years ago but despite encouragement from Dave's dad, Sarah and I hadn't previously picked up the baton – until a moment on 1st January when the entries opened and we pressed "enter". Dave's previous participation was on his Version 1.0 leg, leg v2 has proven to have a few bugs which Dave was hoping he had ironed out. James is currently working in Moscow and had to come back especially from Russia so had an extra tiredness factor to contend with.

Training for everyone was, of course, less than ideal what with Dave's leg, Sarah being ill for a couple of weeks and James in Moscow. I managed a few long runs when Tracy dragged me out and Tracy, Sarah, Paul and I

did manage to reece the final 18 miles over the Easter weekend.

I had no idea how we would get on but we got all of our kit together and arranged to meet Tracy and Paul at the kit check on the Friday evening. Arrangements are complicated as it is a linear route and buses are laid on to take you to the start on the Saturday morning. We passed the stringent kit check and passed the night in our camper van (me and Dave), or on the hall floor (James and Sarah) or in a B&B (Tracy). I'm not sure what Paul did! The forecast was bad but we got up very early and arrived in Ingleton at the start.

The Saturday morning turned out to be as forecast with cagoules on at the start. It was raining and cold and foggy. We set off up Ingleborough, down to the Hill Inn, up Whernside and down to Kingsdale walking the uphill and running the down. We climbed Gagareth to find the checkpoint had been moved to a more

sheltered spot due to the deteriorating conditions. By now it was sleeting and windy and it soon turned to snow. We got very cold, struggling to put on our extra layers and over-trousers. We were walking now and continued to walk for the rest of the route. We managed to reach the



checkpoint at Dent (about 20 miles in) only to discover that many people had dropped out at this point just too cold and wet to continue. After food and dry clothes we continued up on to Blea Moor, at least by now it was drying up. We continued over two more peaks and reached the dreaded Fleet Moss around the time when darkness fell.

Now for the overnight section on the Fellsman you have to be grouped in groups of at least four. We had decided to stick together

but Tracy met Paul at this point and they continued together grouped with two other people. Dave, James, Sarah and I were lucky in that we were just behind a group who had done the event lots of times before and we followed them over the trickiest part of the route to reach Cray around 3am – we had been on the go for nearly 20 hours. By now it was dry but well below freezing (minus 5 - but at least the bogs were frozen) and reluctantly Sarah decided that she was too cold and too tired to continue. She had covered 45 miles – an amazing achievement for someone who hadn't run more than 10k before Christmas. Dave decided to drop out with her and fortunately they didn't have to wait for the mini-bus to take them back to Threshfield which is just as well as it took her ages to warm up in spite of two sleeping bags and the heater on in the van.

I don't remember any low points overnight - I just focused on the next part of the route and the next checkpoint and the miles were soon covered. We had an amazing sunrise as James and I continued with three strangers who we were now grouped with. What they saw they had been re-grouped with a young man with his mother(!) I'm not sure. However, I could keep up as we climbed Buckden Pike and Great Whernside and then continued on the final few miles to the end. I remember one of the checkpoint volunteers saying only 10 miles to go and then realised that is the normal distance of a days' walk yet I felt we were nearly at the end!

Eventually we reached the final checkpoint just before the final two miles on the road. A final quick drink of orange and a biscuit forti-



fied us to begin the longest two miles in the world. By now James' foot was really hurting – he had fallen in a bog quite early on and probably strained it a bit. While it was wet and cold he didn't notice it too much but by now the sun was quite warm and the road was unforgiving for sore feet. He tried using my walking poles, he even tried taking his fellshoe off and walking in his socks. In the end, he just hobbled very slowly into Grassington and onto Threshfield and into the school to the finish.

We'd been out for 26 hours but had made it! Tracy and Paul finished in about 20 hours. The winner Adam Perry amazingly did it in less than 10 and a half hours. More than a quarter of the starters dropped out due to the conditions.

At the end I said I'd never do anything long again but now I'm wondering about next year and what time I could do it in if I was going at my own pace...Sarah is also planning to learn how to navigate better so she can do it and finish it this time. In fact with more favourable weather I am sure she could have finished it. PS James ended up having wheelchair transfers as he had to travel back to Moscow the next day. A private medical clinic x-rayed his foot and pronounced that there was no stress fracture only a sprain. He is running again now so no lasting damage done.

CHRIS BOWEN



Yoga for Runners

By Paul Oakley

It seemed a simple idea back in June last year to set up a yoga class for runners while I train to be a yoga teacher. I blame Sal hunter who kept asking me when I was setting up a class - as her yoga teacher had died! It was obviously an emergency so I came to the rescue.

I have been practicing yoga for over 15 years and I have always found it really helpful. First I attended classes to aid recovery from an illness, then to reduce work-based stress, and then to find a greater focus and awareness in my daily life. It just seems to offer so much whatever the issue is.

The body is an amazing thing, and it continues to surprise me how little most people are aware of their own bodies. Our modern working lives often mean we spend many hours sitting, often working on a computer. We then go home and sit on a soft sofa. We are either trapped in thoughts and ideas or zoned completely out. I know this is different for runners who do spend as much time as practical outdoors and on the hills. For runners we usually know our bodies quite well, particularly where it hurts! So as a yoga teacher I spend a time on the bits that hurt, or more accurately are tight.

In class we spend many an hour working on hamstring, quads, calves and hip flexors. But



yoga is a whole body experience and the upper body needs our attention too. The spine needs freedom to elongate, the shoulders to broaden and of course we need good alignment and core support.

My yoga classes always involve some gentle warm ups for the body and an opportunity to relax. As runners we can be driven which is good in many ways but we need time to stop and restore. Letting go and knowing how to relax is a crucial part of recovery and can minimise injury.

I want to thank my GVS yoga students who have put up with me for the last 10 months trying to teach them yoga as I make the transition to full-time yoga teacher. We stretch, we develop stamina and in between often have a laugh. I intend to write more articles on yoga for runners that you can add to your own toolkit, identifying a few postures that might help your running career.

If you want to try it out or join the Monday evening class in Whaley or the Wednesday evening class in Marple.

email yogapaul@icloud.com. Happy running!



<https://www.justgiving.com/barefootlejog>

Land's End To John O'Groats - Off-road, Barefoot & Unsupported

By Aleks Kashefi



We lost my Grandfather just over a year ago as a result of multiple strokes, watching him change from a strong and confident man to a former shadow of himself, both physically and mentally. I witnessed my mother have a stroke at an early age so I'm supporting Stroke Association in their work to improve the outlook for those who are affected by strokes.

So far I have run several races including Edale skyline Fell race (20 miles in sub-zero conditions) and the Ultra marathon called The Fellsman, where over 100 people failed to finish due to the conditions, and I did them barefoot (as in no shoes).

I'm continuing my training so that I can complete the 1,206 mile off-road route from Land's End to John O'Groats, barefoot and unsupported, both as a personal challenge and also to fund raise. Any donation is greatly appreciated and will go towards helping those that are affected by strokes.

Follow the journey on
Facebook.com/BareFootLeJog

Questions:

Age, job, from where, based in?

37 years old, Biology Teacher from Derby and live in Buxton.

Why Lejog and Stroke Association? When? Can people join you?

It's kind of a stepping stone to the next big thing, and it's the best known long distance challenge in the UK. I also wanted to have something that's a bit more of an adventure, and things like BGR (never done it but I'm

supporting a friend on in June) are amazing challenges but they

are a single-staged challenge. I'm going to start running on the 26th of July - as long as nothing goes wrong between now and then.

I'm more than happy for people to join in along the way. It would be good to meet some of the people who are supporting the idea and the charity aspect of it and say thanks in person.

The reason behind the charity aspect is the fact that my mother had a stroke when I was about 7 years old and my grandfather passed away because of numerous strokes fairly recently. SA provide funding for lots of research, prevention and after-care work with strokes which is why I decided to use my own selfish little adventure to help them keep doing what they do.

Why a barefoot version?

Three reasons for running it barefoot. First is the cost of shoes and the logistics of getting shoes from one place to another or having to carry various pairs of shoes. The other is that I recover faster, since I did the Fellsman this year (40 miles barefoot/sandalled) and I was running the day after without any muscle issues!

Which bits or why will you pop your sandals on?

If I damage the sole of my foot in anyway I'd have to get the sandals on since the goal is to finish the challenge. The only other reason is if the terrain is so harsh that I have to keep making the progress I need to but I think after

a while it might start to feel like I'm cheating if I put them on when I don't need to.

How did you go from running in trainers to barefoot? Time it took?

I started to transition as soon as I started to run 3 years ago and my shoes have always been minimal and what you'd call 'zero drop'.

First my shoes became more and more minimalist, going from a 14mm shoe stack down to the thinnest fivefingers I've ran in, that are 3.5mm thick, over a period of about 6 months.

Then it was a case of take off the shoes and build the non-shoe distance using longer shod runs. All together I'd say its taken about a year to a year and a half.

What's it like to run on trails barefoot?

Its hard to describe unless you actually do it and this will sound so cliched and romantic, but it feel completely free. It's both exhilarating and frightening, especially when you really relax into it and fly along a technical downhill and your brain suddenly realises what it is you're actually doing. It's part of the reason I tend to laugh out loud and let out little whoops when I'm running barefoot!

Why do you like running barefoot best?

The sense of achievement when you finish a technical trail run, the sensory feedback you get as you run and the way you seem to just float forwards as you run is why I like running barefoot. Shoes and sandals have their place but they are nothing like actual barefoot.

What's biologically great about it?

I studied human evolution and locomotion at uni, and really our legs and feet are designed for walking and running, so its what I enjoy doing in its simplest form I guess. The other advantage is that you get feedback (if you learn to understand it) when something isn't right early on, like pushing off too much will give you hot spots on your feet before it does anything significant further up your kinetic chain, so you change till the soreness goes away.

Don't your feet get cold? (Edale Skyline was freezing!)

Feet can get cold, but mainly when my core and head are cold. Trick is to keep your core, hand and head as warm as you can with extra layers and big woolly hats so that the blood keep circulating to your feet, which seems to keep my feet nice and warm most of the time.

How tough are your feet in terms of the animal kingdom? eg as tough as an armadillo, etc!

Ha! My feet are as tough as spider's silk. I know its not an animal, but my feet don't look calloused or gnarly as you'd expect, but they are tough enough to cope with most terrain.

They've only ever been compared to hobbit feet in the past, so the animal comparison is kind of a tough one to do.

Should everyone try it? Why?

No reason why everyone shouldn't try it, especially if they want to improve their running or be a bit more aware of their form or body as they run. I've found it's made my running more efficient and I really can't believe how fast my legs recover, even after runs that would be considered ultra distances.

How should readers approach giving it a go? – all the research points to transitioning slowly, what are your top 3 tips?

Go for a trail run on your favourite trail, find a section that you feel confident you can run on without really having to worry about foot placement (like a dirt track or grassy section) and just take your shoes off for a short section.

Top 3 tips would be a little at a time, focus on cadence, posture and breathing, and lastly run as relaxed and lightly as you can.



Were you inspired by Chris McDougall's *Born to Run* etc? Have you read his latest book? (I can send you a review copy if you like?)

There's an amazing video by Xero shoes about "Born To Run" and being a barefoot runner. I have read it, but I read it really recently after I'd already made my mind up that barefoot was for me. Great little story though.

Strangest thing someone has said to you on seeing you're wearing no shoes?

Nothing really strange but someone did shout "Oh my god, you're wearing . . . you're wearing barefeet!" during a race. The usual comment is either "did you forget your shoes?" Or "couldn't you afford shoes?"

Do you wear shoes day to day?

Being a teacher I have to wear business dress so I have a really comfortable pair of vivobarefoot gobi shoes. 3mm of rubber between my feet and the ground and a super wide toe box.

What will be the hardest thing about doing Lejog with no shoes on?

The no shoe bit doesn't really come into it but I'm not looking forward to the road sections and the Scottish Midges!!

What will be the best thing?

Waking up everyday to a new sunrise, seeing something new everyday, meeting lots of helpful and generous people along the way and ending each day with that calm sense of achievement you get when you finish a long run, followed by the sunset.

Anything else you'd like readers to know about running barefoot? (any quirky facts and interesting details you've come across in your barefoot journey would be good to mention here.)

The arch of your foot becomes more developed (even if you have feet that are almost flat) if you keep running barefoot and you develop a stealthy, ninja like running style that lets you sneak up on almost any animal!

Quick facts

4 - 6 weeks, 43 - 28 miles a day, 1,206 miles, 1 pair of feet, 2 pair of Luna sandals and spare lacing, 0 shoes, 1 tent, sleeping bag, mini stove, roll mat and waterproof, several bags of Tailwind Nutrition, 180 caramel waffles consumed in training, 103,224ft of vertical ascent in training (3.5 x the height of everest).

CHOCOLATE & BEETROOT BROWNIES

It's chocolate and you can pretend it's healthy because it's got a root veg in. What's not to like? Makes 20.

Ingredients:

250g unsalted butter cut into cubes
250g dark chocolate broken into pieces
3 eggs
250g caster sugar
Pinch of sea salt
150g self-raising flour (wholemeal or white)
250g cooked beetroot grated (or boil fresh beetroot until tender, cool, peel & grate)

- Grease and line a shallow baking tin 20cm x 25cm. Set oven at 180c/Gas Mark 4.
- Melt butter and chocolate in a heat proof bowl or in the oven as it warms up.
- Whisk the eggs and sugar together in a large bowl then beat in the melted chocolate and butter until smooth.
- Combine the salt and flour and sift over the chocolate mixture, fold in with a metal spoon.
- Fold in the grated beetroot, don't over mix or the brownies will be tough.
- Pour the mixture into your prepared tin and smooth out with a spatula.
- Bake for 20-25 mins. A knife in the middle should come out a little bit sticky. Overcooking will make them dry.
- Leave to cool on a wire rack before cutting into squares and scoffing. Or serve warm with ice cream as a pudding (but not before bedtime if you have small children)!

CLAIRE ELSWORTH



Club Championships 2015 (revised)

After much discussion with the committee and others we have made a few changes to the Championships for 2015 in the hope that more people will compete and that more people win prizes!

It's always really great to turn up to a race and see a big GVS presence and I hope that we'll see you all at these races (and others!) next year.

For 2015 we have slightly reduced the number of races you need to complete. There are 16 races and your best 8 will count towards your total score. Additionally you need to do at least 1 of each distance (short, medium and long) and at least 1 on each terrain (fell, road and trail). Hopefully that's clear!

As usual individuals are allocated points depending on their finishing position within the club in the race. The highest place Goyt Valley runner will

get 60 points, the second 59 points and so on.

We have also introduced some new vets categories and will be keeping men and women separate - with the exception of the Overall Club Champion.

So, prizes will be awarded as follows:

Mens 1st, 2nd, 3rd. Womens 1st, 2nd, 3rd. Overall champion (1 prize)

Vets: Mens 40, 1st, 2nd, 3rd. Womens 40, 1st, 2nd, 3rd. Mens 50, 1st, 2nd, 3rd. Womens 50, 1st, 2nd, 3rd.

For the Summer Fell Series the format remains the same, i.e. 5 races from 7 but we will be awarding the following prizes:

Mens 1st, 2nd and 3rd. Womens 1st, 2nd and 3rd. No vets.

Without further ado, here are the races for the main champs:

Main Championship

<u>Month</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Surface</u>	<u>Distance</u>
January			
Any Sat Jan-Mar	Lyme Park parkrun	Trail	Short (3.1 miles)
February			
Sun 22nd	Stockport Trail ½ Marathon	Trail	Long (13.1 miles)
March			
<i>Sun 8th</i>	Trafford 10K	Road	Medium (6.2 miles)
<i>Sun 22nd</i>	Wolf's Pit (Shatton)	Fell	Medium (5.5 miles)
April			
Sat 18th	Chicken Run (Hayfield)	Fell	Short (5 miles)
May			
Sat 9th	Bollington 3 Peaks	Fell	Medium (5.4 miles)
June			
Wed 17th	Round the Resers (Tintwistle)	Trail	Short (5 miles)
July			
Sat 11th	Buxton Carnival Race	Road	Short (4 miles)
<i>Sun 19th</i>	Kentmere Horseshoe (Lakes)	Fell	Long (11.9 miles)

August

<i>Sat 8th</i>	Long Tour of Bradwell	Fell	Long (31 miles)
<i>Sun 30th</i>	Crowden Horseshoe	Fell	Medium (8 miles)

September

<i>Sun 13th</i>	Gawsworth 10K	Trail	Medium (6.2 miles)
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October

<i>Sun 18th</i>	Oldham ½ Marathon	Road	Long (13.1 miles)
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November

<i>Sat 7th</i>	Langley 7	Road	Medium (7 miles)
<i>Sun 29th</i>	Famous Grouse (Birch Vale)	Fell	Short (5 miles)

December

<i>Sun 13th</i>	Litton Christmas Cracker	Fell	Medium (7.6 miles)
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Short = 5 miles and under, Medium = 10 miles and under, Long = over 10 miles

Hopefully there is something to please everyone amongst the selection!

Points to Note:

- Dates in italics are provisional, based on those for 2014
- Some events are pre-entry and will fill up early

Explanation of parkrun: You can run Lyme Park parkrun any, some or all of the Saturdays in January to end of March. Your best time will be used to calculate championship points. This gives you the opportunity to try and better your time over a few weeks which I thought would add a fun element.

Parkrun is free but you need to register on the website, print off a barcode and take it with you. Further details can be found here:

<http://www.parkrun.org.uk/lymepark/>

Races for the summer series are as follows:

Summer Fell

<u>Month</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Distance</u>
April		
<i>Wed 15th</i>	Herod Farm (Glossop)	3 miles
May		
<i>Mon 4th</i>	James's Thorn (Glossop)	5 miles
June		
<i>Fri 19th</i>	Fun on the Fells (Hayfield)	3.2 miles
<i>Fri 26th</i>	Tideswell	4.4 miles
July		
<i>Wed 1st</i>	Hope Wakes	6 miles
August		
<i>Fri 7th</i>	Salt Cellar (Fairholmes)	6.8 miles
<i>Mon 24th</i>	Hairy Dog 6 (New Mills)	6 miles

[illegible]

2015 WOMEN'S CHAMPIONSHIP

[illegible]

2015 MEN'S V40 CHAMPIONSHIP

[illegible]

2015 WOMEN'S V40 CHAMPIONSHIP

[illegible]

2015 WOMEN'S V50 CHAMPIONSHIP

[illegible]

2015 MEN'S V50 CHAMPIONSHIP

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Paul Oakley (5)	60		60		60		60	60									300
Brian Holland (4)	57		59		58		57										231
Paul Hunt (4)			58	59		58	56										231
Steven Berry (4)	53	59		58			55										225
Trevor Hindle (3)	59						59	59									177
Adrian West Samuel (3)	56			60		60											176
Anthony Rodgers (3)	58				59		58										175
Matthew Simon (3)	54				56	59											169
Chris Tetley (3)	51	58			55												164
Peter Fotheringham (2)	50	57															107
Dave Ardern (1)		60															60
Peter Davis (1)					57												57
Steve Hennessey (1)	55																55
Stephen Sanders (1)	52																52



Sally & Maz's Marple Bridge community woodland thriving

It is now over a year since Sally Mitchell and Maz Simon started work on a new 7-acre community woodland in Marple Bridge and with the help of friends and neighbours they have made amazing progress.

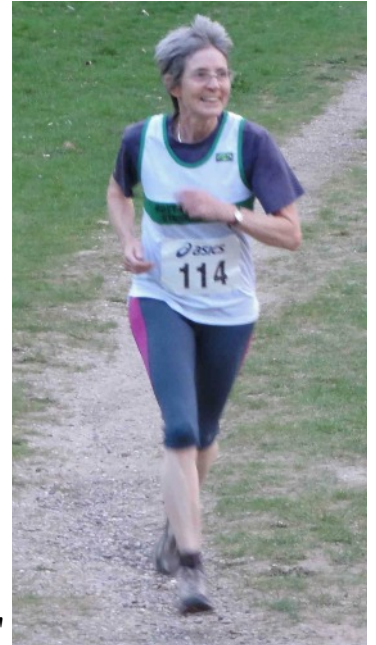
In January over 80 volunteers, including some Striders, came to help plant 1,200 trees, which are growing up in spite of a lot of weeds.

The wood is named after Rollins Lane that runs from the Iron Bridge in Brabyn's Park towards Compstall Rd, along the western edge of the wood. Until recently, the land comprised two neglected fields with overgrown hedges but this description doesn't

do justice to the variety of wildlife habitats and scenery.

"We thought this wild, interesting patch would be ideal for a community woodland – and as we looked, and discovered the wildlife, our ideas expanded,"

says Maz. "We found orchids, ancient woodland flora, wet bog, bluebells; and we saw many butterflies, birds including owl, sparrowhawk, wren, buzzard, jay and blackcap; plus a local fox and badger digging in the riverbank."



"The local residents were enthusiastic and we now have a flourishing communal vegetable patch, the beginnings of a community orchard, a meadow for events and beehives for honey."

The plan is to set up a cooperative to own the land later this year, with £50 shares on sale to anyone who wants to support the project and share in the fruits of everyone's labour.

Sally, as well as being a good runner, was a skilled ecologist who taught Biology at Cheadle & Marple sixth form college. She and Maz devised the plan for the wood last summer and spent many happy hours monitoring the plants and wildlife through the seasons.

As many of you know, Sally died in November from ovarian cancer she had had for three years and Maz sees the wood as her legacy for future generations.

Next year, the wildflower meadow will be regularly cut with wild areas left for butterflies.

There are six willow beds which from 2016 will provide basketmaking withies of different colours. The hazel trees will be coppiced too, in years to come, for beanpoles and other products. Other plans include a forest garden of perennial food plants and fruit bushes. The concept is of a productive, educational woodland.

Maz, as well as being busy with his local furniture making enterprise, is often to be found down in the wood, weeding, cutting firewood or measuring the growth of trees.

Trees are his passion. "We have planted sixteen different types of native trees thanks to the Woodland Trust", he explains, "my vision is for a local arboretum with as many of our native trees as we can manage, including species such as hornbeam, lime, downy birch and whitebeam that are not common locally. Then children can follow the tree trail and see just what diversity we have. I know that children really benefit from time spent outdoors."

Rollins Wood is open to all, with signs from Compstall Rd and Rollins Lane pointing the way. The paths across the wood are used by Marple Bridge residents to reach the park and some have stopped to help, becoming part of the network of volunteers that has included Marple Guides and Friends of both Brabyn's and Etherow parks.

"There is always work to do in the wood", says Maz, "and we have regular volunteer days all year for everything from bat surveys to weeding the new trees. Plus barbecues and bonfires, of course." He maintains a Facebook page: (facebook.com/rollinswood) and a presence on the Marpleuk website forum as well as sending regular updates to friends of the wood.

"Everyone of all ages can help just get in touch!"

more information:

facebook.com/rollinswood

matthew.sally@gmail.com



Sally Mitchell 1952 - 2014

Too Cold to Run

By Shaun Coram

Its Saturday, January 24th and I have a few hours to kill before it's reasonable to pour my first wine of the night. I gaze outside from my window seat and see trees bowing in the wind and small animals fly past my window, caught in the blustery winds. A small log cabin sits in the middle of my road and two ruby red slippers furnish the feet sticking from under it!

The clouds have that misty hue that signals that snow is on its way and even frosty the snowman would rather be sat in front of the fire on an afternoon like today. Inside, I do not have to strain my ears to hear the carnage that my two children are creating; like two whirlwinds, forces of nature inside the house that can equally match the outside turmoil. I hear my wife shout something upstairs to the children about daddy coming to sort things out and help tidy up.

I decide to go for a run!

I peruse my many pairs of training shoes and like a workman I put my fingers to my mouth and purse my lips as I choose the best pair for the run ahead. I dust down my base layers that have sat nice and snug in my running cupboard (yes I have a running cupboard, which also is used for cycling, gym and swimming gear) since Summer. Ah Summer, how long has it been. I reminisce the glory of the warmth for a few seconds but the wind whistling through the

passageway at the side of my house brings me back to reality. I put my base layers on the radiator with the rest of my running kit; lets face it, I may as well start off snug and warm even if its not going to last long. I do a few sit-ups, stretches and glances outside before I pluck up the courage to put my three layers on and get out into the cold, bleak and almost 'Ben Fogle Extreme' weather.

I press the button on my new Tom Tom device that pops up with an arrow pointing back inside the house. I probably should have heeded the advice from the device but i don't - I put one foot forward and soon I am running down from my hill top location. Mist swirls around me and I struggle to see in front of me. I may have to add that this is not fog but

the last of the warm air emitting from my lungs out of my mouth as steamy breath. Though that does not last long as my pace slows down and I get out of breath; my lungs feel like they are now frozen. I run along at a reduced pace and try to admire the views over to Lyme Park to my left. I run past the local pub and gaze in quickly at the people sat snugly round a burning fire drinking alcohol

(the cause and solution to all life's problems). Oh, how I look in on them in envy and oh, how they look out at me with great pity.

I am two miles into my run and now ascending up a slight gradient. I am still really cold and frost is gathering on my goatee beard. I hope that the uphill run will warm me up. The orange/red hue of the clouds deepens as



I run; the sky is bruising, it is time to make haste. I turn a sharp right onto a steep path upwards that will take me through a crop of trees. For the first time I start to gather some needed heat. After about half a mile I exit the trees and see my destination - Mellor Cross. Always a great landmark to aim for, though on probably one of the coldest nights of the year in blustery winds in hindsight also not the best place to run to!

Stood next to Mellor Cross I look outwards towards Manchester, Werneth Lowe, Winter Hill (through the clouds I can just make out the lights on top of the mast). Apparently on a good day you can see right over to North Wales and Snowdonia, though today is not a good day. I run onwards and upwards along the track, higher than the cross and it's here when it happens. First I felt the tiniest of pin-pricks on my face. Too hard to be snow. Then another, followed by another followed by an abundance of hail driven into the side of my face by the icy cold winds. I now happen to be on the most unsheltered part of my run. Oh deep joy and jubilation! I struggle to see in front of me and I am constantly swept from my running poise by the side wind; my face feels like I have just had three fillings at the dentist and I even try to say 'Ahaaaa' and yes, I sound like Sylvester Stallone. I chuckle to myself, who says its no fun running on your own?

Luckily the hail does not prevail as it bows down to the greater need to snow. Compared to the hail this feels like someone's turned the heating on. The visible hills around me are enveloped in whiteness and Narnia has come to the High Peak. I look around hoping that I can find a Snow Queen to offer me some Turkish Delight and a warm glass of milk, but alas, there is none. As it darkened I switch on my head torch, which was next to useless as all it did was catch in the mist from my mouth making it even less visible than it

was without it switched on. I made a mental note to invest in a proper 'moonlight' running torch.

It was completely dark by the time I hit the concrete of the country road above Birch Vale and I set myself on a quickened run downhill home. As I ran down hill the odd car passed me coming up; obviously driving home from a days shopping or visiting of relatives. At one point a car's light dazzled me and I could not adjust my vision quickly enough and I ended up running into the watery ditch at the side of the road. So for nearly the last mile my feet sloshed forward, my lamp was useless and I was freezing cold.

Then the snow turned to sleet. The sleet turned to rain.

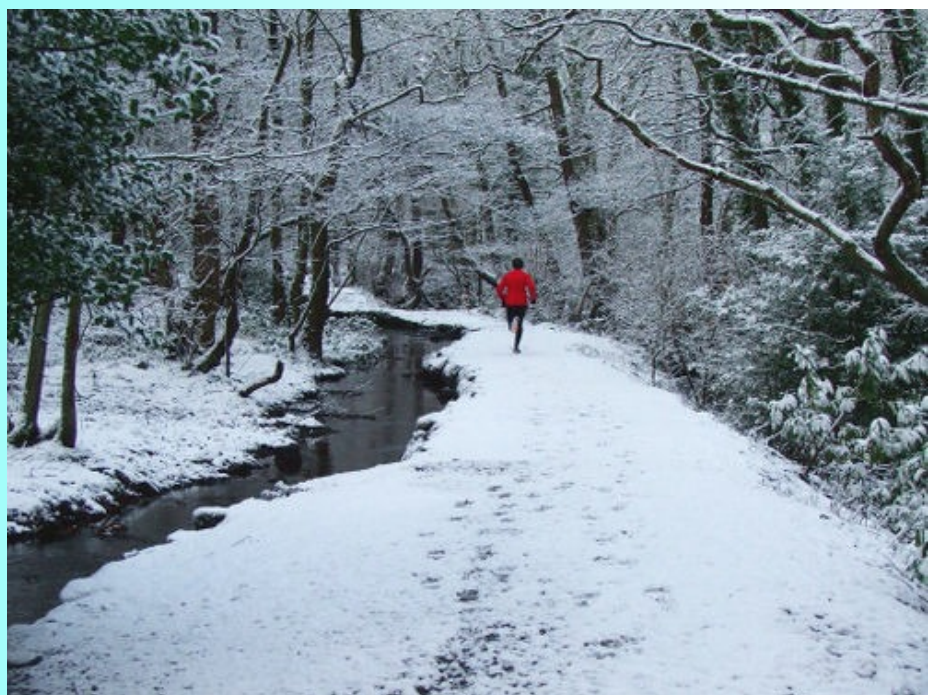
I sang songs in my head to keep sane and waved my arms around like a nutter to generate more heat.

'Ha', I thought to myself, 'I bet Ben bloody Fogel wouldn't run in this.'

I got home, took my wet trainers off at the door and went upstairs to de-mud myself in the shower.

The kids were sent upstairs to play before bedtime; I put a record on my player and poured a very large glass of wine. I remembered my shoes outside, so I opened the door to bring them in to dry. As I did so a runner ran down past my house.

'Mad fool!' I thought to myself.



Kentmere Horseshoe, 2015

