

GOYT VALLEY STRIDERS

Alistair Fitzgerald
Macclesfield Half



NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2005

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to this autumn issue of the newsletter. The nights are now drawing in and the temptation to snuggle up in front of the fire and forget about running is something that we are all tempted to do. Being a dedicated Strider, as I know you are, this of course will just be a mere thought and you will be relishing the opportunity to splash in the puddles, roll in the mud and pound out the miles! Why do this by yourself though, when you can come along to one of the club sessions and benefit from training with your club mates. See you there?

Details of Terry's race are on the opposite page, please make a special note of the date and time of the race and make every effort to attend. Over the past 5 years this has become a very special race in the calendar and is always well attended. Let's keep it that way.

Congratulations to Mark Richards who has had an excellent summer racing on the fells and the roads. He has achieved his first race win taking first place at the Chevin Chase and has also had numerous other top 3 and 5 finishes.

Once again a big thank you to all those that have written articles, please keep them coming in for future editions. Remember, however small we want to hear about it!

Mark

Terry's Race.

This will be the 5th year that Terry's race has been run. Terry was a respected and well-liked member of the club, who unfortunately died prematurely in 2000. The race is unusual in that anybody who takes part has a chance of winning. The course details are below. You will set off at 3-minute intervals wearing NO watch. Having guessed your time for the distance the nearest person to their guessed time will win.

The race will take place on Sunday November 20th, starting at 9:30am from the Taxal Lay-by.

A reminder of the course: (Anti Clockwise this year!)

The course starts at the lay-by on Long Hill -- passing the church -- cross the road -- through the fields onto Taxal Moor road -- takes the 45° path onto Taxal Moor (passing the tree planted by the rambling club in memory of Terry) -- across Taxal Moor -- through the woods -- Over Windgather -- climb to Pyms Chair -- down road to Hoo Moor -- Across Hoo Moor -- through the farmyard to Knip farm -- round the back of Knip farm to bridge -- along fields and track to lay-by.

Maps will be available for those who require one. Please make every effort to attend; this is one of the most respective events in the clubs calendar. Notification in advance would be appreciated.

Kevin, try and remember the way this year, we don't want to spend the rest of the afternoon looking for you!!

Following Terry's race we will retire to the Shady Oak for a drink and Sunday lunch - all welcome!

World Masters' Mountain Running Championships 2005

1) A Weekend in the Lakes

Assembled in Keswick this September was the largest ever field (over 1,000 competitors) contesting 15 titles in seven separate races. The normal format for World events so far has been uphill only, but on this, its fifth year, the up-and-down course typical of the host country was followed, thus allowing the British to show off their fast descents. The other local assistance was that the rain diverted itself from the Lake District to the Oval to help win the Ashes.

Encouraged by a world event on our doorstep and a weekend's camping in the Lakes, the Goyt Valley assault on the championship was undertaken by Mark Richards and Steve Hennessey in the M45, and Kevin Day (a recent veteran) in the M40 race. They set up their camp the night before in Keswick next to Derwentwater and enjoyed the rare treat of a Lake District both warm and dry enough to barbecue and drink beer outside well into the night. This was camping on a grand scale, and Mark took some time to get used to being able to stand up inside the tent, and each of them having their own bedroom. Though Kevin complained that he had to travel light and leave much of his normal camping gear at home, they lacked for nothing (except perhaps a television).

As with most veterans events, "if you are old enough, you are good enough". Proving the former was easy - producing a passport at the pre-race registration on the Friday night; but proving the latter would be a little harder. We usually talk of ourselves as veterans, but every year we are temporarily elevated into Masters, and looking at the fitness of most of the 70-year-olds, it certainly is a well-earned title.

2) Race Day

Our races didn't start till the afternoon, so we took the opportunity of a morning recce around the top part of the course. Steve and Kevin accepted a lift in Mark's car up to the mid-way carpark, an experience they may have regretted owing to the nifty clutch and handbrake work and the bump-starting required to work around the one-paced carburettor. We all found the recce useful to confirm which would be the best shoes to use, and also to help during the race as we would know on the uphill how much further to the summit. The course was path and trail most of the way with the only real fell terrain being the steep climb to the top and the first mile of the descent. We, like most of the competitors, had chosen between studs and off road shoes, though it was interesting to note that several of the overseas winners (including Franco Torresani, who won the M40 and recorded the fastest time of the day in 50:39) wore standard road shoes.

From mid morning to mid afternoon the races started and finished in Fitz Park in glorious weather, and allowed the competitors to mingle creating a great atmosphere among all the nationalities. There had been talk earlier in the year of using a special England Masters racing vest, but it never materialised, perhaps thankfully as otherwise the event would have been awash with red and white. The event itself was very well managed with only positive comments about the administration, course, weather and racing. Apart from the beer tent closing for an hour from 5-6pm (they had to get ready for the pasta party), the only adverse comment we picked up was concerning something that Kevin himself suffered from.

3) Kevin's Race

"I'm not a very good uphill runner so I was looking forward to the downhill section, as I can be quite quick on the downhill. Having been around the top section in the morning, I decided to use my tried and trusted Walshes for the race to give me good grip for the fast and steep downhill. This would later prove to be a bad choice.

I did not have high expectations of doing particularly well, but I worked hard on the uphill and made the top in 50:37. My downhill run went very well. At about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way back down both feet became very painful, but I carried on to the finish without slowing and although it was very uncomfortable to run, I managed to pass 16 runners without being passed on the down hill. I made the descent in very respectable 22:36, giving me a finish time of 1: 13:13 in 150th place out of 190. As soon as I had finished I took off my shoes and socks to discover that about a third of the skin on the soles of each foot had disappeared. Both feet were in a very bad way, to an extent I could hardly walk on them, so I had to walk about on my toes.

I then made my way to the medical room to get patched up. The room was full of runners that had fallen or had blisters on their feet. The interesting thing was that all the runners who had been seen to for blisters at the championships had been wearing Walshes on their feet.

My excuse for not going round the course again on the Sunday was I couldn't have walked it never mind run it with my bandaged up feet. I very much enjoyed the event and would consider doing another Masters in the future (but not in Walshes)."

Kevin Day



4) Steve's Race

“So – day breaks on a chilly Keswick campsite & I wake with an uncomfortable heavy feeling in my stomach.

Apprehension for the forthcoming race? No, last night's pre-race 'carbo loading' (Kev's BBQ) & fuzzy head (Mark's real ale), perfect preparation for a mountain race. Hmmm!



After a light breakfast 'al fresco' it's up to Skiddaw car park, courtesy of Mark's asthmatic Nova, for a quick recce of the summit. Shoes are tried, decisions made & minds changed & we are all confident of the right choice of footwear!

Back to campsite, breakfast two & feet up in preparation for the race ahead.

XMAS CRACKER RACE
December 18th 2005 11:00am

Fitz Park & race start – a lovely sunny day, 1100 runners, friends & family. The place is buzzing. 3:30pm M45 category we're off. It's uphill all the way to Skiddaw car park, then off the path, up the sheep trod & the race really starts – 1000ft of climb in less than a mile & an even steeper, rock hard descent – don't our feet know it!

Then a gentle two-mile downhill back to the park & race finish – easy. Just enough time to jog back to the start & see Kev off in the M40 category – if only he knew! Time 1:11:22 pos 105th.”

5) Mark's Race

“I was well up with the leading group at the start, and spent most of the race exchanging positions with a Scotsman called Ronnie, who seemed to have supporters everywhere on the course calling out “Come on Ronnie”, and who came in 5th. I came 6th in M45 with a time of 56.51, and was pleased with my result – 6th is a great place in a world event, and I got a very good time compared to most of the people I normally meet in races. I was really dreading the steep descent on the hard path, but somehow managed it much better than expected, with only one (that Ronnie again!) getting past me. My M45 race started only 20 mins after the M50s, and after only 25 minutes I started picking my way through the stragglers of the previous race; luckily nobody got in my way too badly but after the summit I was overtaking so many M50s that it was very difficult to judge how far the leaders in my own race were ahead of me.”



6) Post Race

Back to the campsite for a wash & brush up & then 'pasta part' and it's medal presentation, an enthusiastic & sometimes comical round of 15 ceremonies of English, Scottish, Italian and German national anthems. Some were more enthusiastically applauded (Italian) than others (Scottish) – one bagpipe rendition of 'Flower of Scotland' is more than enough for any awards ceremony. Grateful thanks were expressed to the organisers for what was a well-organised race.

Then the floor was then cleared for the main event – the disco. We escaped to a fish & chip supper followed back at the campsite by a few glasses of wine, a bit of stargazing & general reflection on an enjoyable day's running.

Sunday found excuses from us all for not doing the open race – Mark made up an appointment in Oxford with a fried breakfast, though Kev's 'blisters on the feet' was particularly feeble. In truth twice in one weekend was just too hard. So another lovely sunny day found us watching the local club runners and a few foolhardy souls from the previous day's race. Run on the same course in a generally slower time. A great weekend, the lovely weather being the 'froth on the beer'.

Steve, Kevin and Mark

LANGLEY 7 Road Race
November 5th 2005 2:30pm

THE ROACHES
November 13th 2005 10:30am 15m/3700'
From Village Hall, Meerbrook, Near Leek, Staffordshire,(GR 987608) . £3.00 on day only.

CARDINGTON CRACKER
December 4 11:00am 2005 9m/2600'
From Cardington Village Hall, Cardington, Nr Church Stretton, Shropshire, .£3. on day

The Ben Nevis Fell Race.

As most of you know I have been staging a 'come back' for about six years now. I thought I'd mark this particular come back with a trip to Scotland. I didn't think they'd have me back; the last time I did this race in 1999 I threw two cups of water over my head on the finishing line only to discover it was lemon juice, but I've always liked hills and Ben Nevis is a particularly fine one. So off I went to Bonny Scotland, Land of the Brave, the finest whisky, the most spectacular scenery, the biggest hill.

Firstly, the co-star; Frankie-nutcase-Bruce Smedly. A new Strider. Just when you thought there was hope. Runs like a girl. Talks like a girl. Actually looks a bit like a girl. And you should see him dance. Together we took a piece of the Goyt and we shoved it where the sun always shines.

I had chosen to arrive early. I was helped in this particular choice by Francis showing about as much direction as that time Pete got us lost looking for the mast stood right underneath it. Francis selfishly bought his own super duper cheap rail ticket promising me that I too could join his berth for an all night liquid-carbo-load on the way up. Of course that turned out to be untrue. I used my extra day to recce the route. I actually ended up in a large and very intricate council estate where a very big dog pointed me out to the local chav's. I had otherwise not looked too obvious, and it crossed my mind that my camera, ipod, gps watch etc may be in danger. I sprinted for the hills and after a bit of an argument with a railway line and a bit of a spell on a dual carriageway?! I managed to find the path.

To cut a long story short I then got a bit excited and found myself on the summit. I phoned a few people and said “bet you can’t guess where I am right now”. They all said the same thing... words to the effect of “you’re on the top of a mountain aren’t you, err you’re in Scotland so you must be on Ben Nevis summit?” All in all, considering my earlier navigational blip I seemed to manage about 20 miles. Good start.

I met Francis the next morning and took him straight to the best brekko bar. We spent the rest of the day slightly tearful at the prospect of trying to get up and down the ‘big one’ in one piece and before the cut off times (the shame!) Francis phoned his mum and asked if she’d do a letter but it was no good.

We posed for some shots in our striders vest before the big off. After a short discussion about whether to drink the mini whisky all entrants get in the goody bag we fell in behind a piper band and strutted our stuff round the playing field in the pre-ordeal warm up jig. Francis had the face on that I last saw when we got lost on Pillar in the dark. Several small children expressed astonishment at my honey monster hairy shoulders. “look at the funny man”. In the field a horse was startled.

We were off. I applied my usual race strategy. Start slow and try to speed up. (I consistently achieve the first aim but always struggle with the second). The first mile is undulating road. It’s quite runnable. Then it’s off on to the path proper and away you go. The first section is a series of switchbacks, all of which can be avoided; it’s a straight up race. I’d mentally tagged a bridge about a mile in and felt okay at that point. I was also in the prizes, but then I hadn’t really aspired for the female vet 70 top spot.

I settled into a fairly decent rhythm and went through Red Burn feeling positive enough to do some overtaking . The scree section to the summit is like climbing a ladder. It's a proper hands and knees job and I'm sure someone I was running had a rope round his waist. At the summit I burped a few times and regurgitated a bit of breakfast (look, this is an honest account!) With the taste of sick in my mouth and sweat sodden hair in my eyes, my lungs burning and heart jumping out of my chest I admired the view and felt happy. It was a very fine view, a totally clear day. Four and a half thousand feet away was my lemon juice. I then saw the first lady coming down. I was pleased to be that near to her. I then realised it was Francis. But, low and behold, at his side a few paces away was the leading lady. The old dog (Francis not the lady)

The descent is just a blur to me. I held on for dear life. Bodies were flying in every direction. I do not know how I survived it. I can recommend Inov8 mud claws though. There is a grassy slope after the scree, it is so steep that someone once overtook 28 people there and he wasn't even running. It's like the last little bit of climb on Eccles Pike, (times two). Were it not for my big bruiser shoulders operating as a wind break I would have been in serious trouble. I managed however to keep on overtaking , and somehow my descent time was only 10 minutes slower than the winner. Don't ask about the ascent time!

By the time I hit the road again I was in exquisite pain. The road hammers anything you have left out of you and by the finishing field I was on empty. In a sick sadistic twist you have to do a lap of the field at the end. Because your legs are on vertical mode when you try to run that lap you wobble and fall and it's a bit like that game where you spin round on the spot then run as fast as you can towards something.

I was able to focus on Francis who had stumbled over to the beer tent. With his encouragement I made it to my lemon juice, which I drank with decorum then jumped in the river.

Francis had broken 2 hours, I was about ten minutes behind him. When we left about an hour later people were still finishing so I think that's okay. We didn't bother getting changed. Straight into the pub still displaying race numbers. The bar man asked Francis if he was first lady. We replaced all of our body weight with beer over that coming evening. Francis chatted up most of the local Scottish female population and at some point in the very, very early hours of the morning we ended up in the loch. I remember the sea weed and then falling off a very big wall. The rest is a blur.

The next day we walked half-way up the Nevis. Just for a change. We then perched on some rocks at the burn and drank the river water like fish to re-hydrate after our late night session. Francis sighed that it was the cleanest water he had ever tasted. He refilled his bottle four times, two litres in all, whilst reflecting on it's "amazing purity". I'm sure the dead sheep we later found further up stream won't effect us long term. And the toilet roll looked newish too!

With one day left, we thought we'd drive out any adrenalin left in our bodies with a spot of canyoning. Francis somehow teamed us up with two Australian girls who wanted to be dragged on ropes through waterfalls and this turned out to be one of the funniest things I've ever done. Think wet suit and helmet. Then think huge jumps off rocks into rivers. Myself and the Instructor played a game where he lowered me off the rock face into the mouth of a waterfall then I swam back underwater to a cave behind it. Having seen me disappear into the white foam and not re-emerge Francis decided he'd follow anyway! Nuts.

The train journey back was a bit depressing. Fort William is a fantastic place. Our sleeper berth seemed to have had a bad smell emanating from Francis's bed, but other than that was very comfortable (in a sleeping inside a washing machine sense)

At Crewe I jumped off and headed for a very long day at work. Francis was staying on to London where he too had a suit to don. I mischievously slapped him hard round the face as a parting gesture. He didn't even flinch or open his eyes. He said something about his body being broken in every sense and I disappeared into the cool morning air.

Alistair Fitzgerald

ECCLES PIKE

Thanks to everyone who helped out at the Eccles Pike Fell Race. The evening was a great success with 119 runners taking part. This year the weather was perfect and all-in-all the event ran very smoothly.

XMAS DRINKS

I thought I'd give you plenty of warning this year! The annual GVS Xmas drinks event will take place on Friday 16th December at the Navigation Inn, Buxsworth, 8:00pm onwards. The draw will also take place for the London Marathon place.

LONDON MARATHON

The club will be allocated one place for this years London Marathon. As usual the place will be first offered to those who have entered but been rejected. In the event that no one falls into this category then the place will be up for grabs by anyone. Let me know ASAP if you are interested in the place.

The Snowdon Race

Following this year's Snowdon Race the postings on the Fell Runners Association website (www.fellrunner.org.uk) race forum revealed that many runners suffered badly with their heels. No consensus yet, though many of us found out the hard way why the First Aid tent had been set up directly after the finishing line – St John's knew what to expect and had arranged rows of chairs each with its own footbath of cold water. The best pre-race advice I'd received had been to tape up my heels or coat them with Vaseline (I chose the tape) – even so my heels quickly became red-hot from the start of the descent off the summit, and stayed that way for the next 5 miles. My own discomfort, however, was nothing compared to that of some of the other runners in that tent, many of whom, in addition to the battle scars on arms, legs and shoulders, had heels so blistered and raw that they wouldn't be running again in comfort for a long time.

That aside, this was a fantastic race. Llanberis becomes almost carnival-like on race day (this year's was its 30th), and this is the closest I've seen a fell- (or mountain-) race gets to the atmosphere of the London Marathon – people lining the roads, crowd barriers, police, live TV coverage with helicopters, glossy race program, and electronic timing. Other indications that this is not a normal low-key fell race were the AA road signs that guided us in from the A55, the post-race DVD, and a colour certificate.

This is the one race that seems to give a reference point to those who don't race in the fells - most people know Snowdon is a high mountain, and a lot have climbed or walked on it; they know that it takes a bit of time to get to the top (the sign at the bottom of the path makes this clear and advises to allow 3 hours up and 2 hours down).

When you let on that you're about to do, or have just done, a race up and down, they can relate to that in the same way as the London marathon; but they can't relate so easily when you tell them that the record, held by Kenny Stuart since 1985, is just 62 minutes for the ten miles to the 3,000 foot summit and back. Kenny's time, and most winners since, requires a climb of just over 40 minutes, immediately followed by a 5 mile descent run in just over 20 minutes (that's almost 4-minute-miles).

In the presence of the holder of this incredible record 466 runners (of whom only 10 did not finish) massed at the start on a warm but dull afternoon; the forecast rain had kept off making the path dry and the conditions great for running. Included in this number were 36 internationals (9 women, 27 men) in teams representing Italy, France, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and England. There was an interesting mix of trail shoes, fell studs and road shoes (as worn by last year's winner) reflecting the varied terrain – roads, well-worn rocky paths, loose scree, and some grass, needing cushioning at times, and a close grip at others. I'd chosen trail shoes for good grip, toe protection against the rocks on the path, and high lacing to hold them tight for the descent.

Anyhow, at the start the Internationals raced off as if for a sprint, while the rest jostled for position for the first ½ mile on the road (the line getting longer as the slope grew steeper and steeper); when we reached the trail path the full extent of the route became clear with a line of Internationals stretching ahead into the distance. The uphill section had some level sections to offer some respite, along with the two water stations, and several points at which it seemed quicker to walk than to continue running.

It was a beautiful day, and many hikers were taking advantage of the weather, although a little bemused by the stream of runners toiling towards to summit; I managed only a couple of snatched glimpses at the scenery, as most of the time I was focused on the ground about 6 feet ahead.

Near the top we had to give way to the leaders who had already rounded the summit and were now at full speed downhill. This is where the real skill lies – for not only are you now headlong at just over four minute mile pace on rapidly changing gradients, and on alternating stable and unstable surfaces on rocky ground and scree with steep drops to the side as well, but (as there is only one path) you are also dodging the other runners toiling upwards and also the walkers (and their dogs!) on both sides of the path. I got to the summit knowing I'm not usually too fast downhill so I chose the self preservation tactic; my times show this – I was 35th fastest to the top, but 62nd on the downhill section. The other limiting factor downhill was the pain in my toes (your feet slide forward inside your shoes, crushing your toes into the toecap), heels and now calves which were starting to cramp up, forcing a short walk at the halfway drinks station. The worst was to come on the final steep road section on road – too steep to run slowly, and running fast adds to the pain already in thighs, calves, heels and toes. I got overtaken by 6 on the downhill but at least I arrived in one piece in 1 hour 19 minutes, in 41st place and 13 minutes behind the winner. A good result considering that 21 International men and 1 International lady had finished ahead of me.

We've already discussed the gory details in the First Aid tent, so given the all-clear on the heels I limped slowly and stiffly off to the lake for a proper cool down

Here a long immobilising spasm of cramp in my right leg reminded me what might have happened on the descent, so I stayed in shallow water. The swim was a great way to end the day, but I underestimated what the race actually takes out of you, so while driving home I got some indistinct but powerful cravings. These gradually worked out into urgent needs for salt, protein and caffeine, and at Oswestry I found a Little Chef and discovered their Special Grill and Everlasting Mug of Coffee fitted the bill exactly. Thankfully the expected epilogue of legs-too-painful-to-walk did not materialise as promised, though they were as sore afterwards as any other race I've done.

Do it again? No question. Of course.

The Snowdon International Race is held every July starting in Llanberis. Details on the website <http://www.snowdonrace.com/>. The race is 10 miles, climbs about 3,000 feet; the record is 62 mins 29 seconds.

Running Down Under

During January/February this year I was fortunate to stay in Western Australia for a time on a work/pleasure trip. I was my third time to the region and during each of my previous visits I had joined in the activities of a local running club at Bunbury. The members are a great bunch and the club puts on regular evening events usually 5/10k runs up and down the Indian Ocean Sea front. The weather is always glorious with the sea breezes filling the moist salty air. The evening runs conclude for everyone with a good natter and maybe a beer in the large clubhouse.

STOCKPORT 10

December 11th 2005 11:00am

This year I entered the Australia Day 10k run around the harbour a couple of times. It was a great way to start the day apart from the moment I took a wrong turning and nearly ran into a swamp, a typical striders trick but luckily some local guys shouted at me just before I had disappeared out of sight otherwise I would probably still be there now.

I made a point of wearing the Striders top to promote global awareness of our little band. I was referred to as the guy from gay valley strippers and a whole host of interpretations. My biggest experience during my trip this time was literally running into a 6 foot brown snake when out running one morning. We passed each other by less than a foot, one of those life changing experiences when I met all my previous deceased relatives and they were all shouting stay away from the light.

Here is a picture of the Bunbury Runners Club house with our striders representative and a regular sub 20 minute 5k runner who is over 70.

Kevin Gleave



CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

The club championship is being well contested this year. The finish could be the most interesting yet. Both Steve and Kevin could pip Mark at the post. Why not travel to the Cardington Cracker and be part of the event!

Date	Month	Race	Distance	Climb
Race 13	Nov	The Roaches	15m	3700'
Race 14	Dec	Cardington Cracker	9m	2500'

	Mickledon Straddle	Cloud Nine	Herod Farm	Vanessa Chappel	Eyam Half	Shining Tor	Kettishulme	Boars Head	Offerton 10	Goyts Moss	Macclesfield Half	High Brown Knoll	The Roaches	Cardington Cracker	
Name	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Total
Kevin Day	16	18	16	18	20	17		18	16	18		20			177
Steve Hennessey	18	19	19	14	19	15		19	18	17		19			177
Mark Richards	20	20	20	20		20	20		20	20					160
Stephen Sanders	14	17		17	18	16	16	17	14	15					144
Jonathan Hull				19		18	19	20	19	19					114
Alistair Fitzgerald	19		17				17		17		20				90
Peter Hill	15			16			15		14		18				78
Andy butler			18			19	18								55
Kevin Gleave											19				19
Will Meredith	17														17
Shaun Coram															16
Daniel Herdwhite				15											15

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