

WESHAM ROAD RUNNERS



SPRING 2021

Spring 2021

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Welcome

Welcome to our Spring edition of Wesham Road Runners Magazine.

Things are starting to look brighter now with restrictions easing and the lighter nights meaning that running is more pleasant. In line with England Athletics guidance, we were delighted to be able to restart some limited club activity at the end of March and it was very clear on the first evening that those who joined us were glad to be back running with friends.

Last week we restarted our Wednesday structured sessions and these have again proved to be popular and demand for these has been high. If you are intending to join either Monday or Wednesday sessions then booking via our website is essential.

This edition once again contains some great articles from members talking about memorable events and runs that they have enjoyed over the years and is well worth a read!

April is the time of year when our club subscriptions are due for renewal. Thank you to those who have already supported your club by renewing your membership – it would be really appreciated if others who are intending to renew could do so during this month.

Finally, I hope to see many of you back at Club over the coming weeks when you feel it is right for you and in the meantime hope you will enjoy your Spring running.

Enjoy the read!

Peter





Podium 5k

"I'll give you a countdown from 3 to 1, and then you can start on the 'G' of 'Go'. Everyone got that? Ok, 3...2...1...G-..."

The nervous energy, the deathly anticipatory silence, the buzz and swirl of adrenaline rushing through your tummy and down to your legs that are itching and straining to be let loose at last. It's been a long time coming to experience these feelings again. 492 days in fact.

Wesham 10k, 29th November 2019. Little was any of us to know what was to follow in the months and indeed more than a year since. That was the last time I pulled on the Wesham vest and

toed the start line of a road race. Saturday 3rd April 2021, and I am eventually back there. Albeit on a closed cycle track loop around Barrowford.

I would say it was good to be back rubbing shoulders amongst fellow runners on the start line, but I think that will be a little while away yet.

"Please - I know it's difficult - but could I ask you all to give yourselves some room. Can you try and keep some distance please. This is very important. Thank you."

Chris Barnes is a man who (I'm sure he will readily admit himself) has been known for contro-

versial opinions, ideas, and comments. But one thing is for sure, he is leading the way in bringing back our sport and getting racing going again. His 'Podium 5k' event has grown in both popularity and stature amongst athletes over the last 3-4 years. So much so that the last staging of the event bore witness to a British record time of 13:20 being set by Marc Scott.

On Saturday night, there were to be yet more records to tumble. We will revisit those later.

492 days. It is a long time by anyone's book, and especially so in the times and circumstances in which we have all lived through during the coronavirus pandemic. I have become a father, I have lost my nanna - a mainstay in our family unit - and although I have been extremely fortunate to remain working through the majority of the pandemic, we have all lived through such strange and uncertain times.

Running has been my therapy, my escape, and one of my ways to maintain some normality and focus in every day life. The return of racing provides a glimpse of a better future just around the corner.

One other big change for me in the last 492 days of course, has been taking on the role of men's captain. I feel that it is an important part of this role to encourage people to get back racing when and where possible, and to show them that it is both safe and possible to do so. Hopefully by participating in events myself I am giving some of our members confidence that I get too can get back racing as soon as possible in a safe way.

I decided on running Podium 5k roughly 2 weeks ago. Although I have maintained a good level of basic fitness, and have ticked along with decent mileage (around 60 a week since Christmas), I have done very little in the way of serious pace work and 'race specific' training. Therefore my expectations for performance weren't particularly high, and in all honesty I didn't have a clue how it would go!

I kept my cards pretty close to my chest about doing the race until the day or two leading up to it. My final bits of preparation indicated that I was in better shape than I initially thought, and my target shifted slightly from being happy with a time of 15:45-16 minutes, to a more respectable 15:20-15:35. I had done strides and a single interval session of 8 x 2 minutes at 4:40 mileing pace, but I really wasn't confident that I could possibly string a run of those intervals together without the recovery between efforts.



Upon arrival at Barrowford I found that I had been entered in the 'sub 15' race, and that ensured that essentially it was going to be a case of sink or swim - there was going to be no hiding place.

The pace was quick from the outset. I managed to hold pace with the main pack through the first kilometre, heading through the marker in 2 minutes and 46 seconds, passing through the mile in 4 minutes 37 seconds. I became conscious that the pace was a little bit beyond me and the shape that I am currently in, so backed off a little.

This was of benefit to me initially as I immediately felt more comfortable in a bit more of a sensible pace for me. I passed 2k in 5 minutes 47 seconds, and 3k in 8 minutes and 51 seconds. I felt good. I felt strong. I felt in a steady, consistent rhythm.

The problem then was that I found myself pretty isolated, and in a bit of no-mans land, as the pack I had dropped off the back of were now moving further and further ahead of me, and with few pushing behind me it was difficult to draw extra strength and effort from the source of direct competition.

The one thing I did know though, was that I was somehow in with a chance of a dream return time of under 15 minutes. I drew on my reserves and kept plugging away. I got through 4k in 11:53 and that meant that I had plenty to play with on the last lap to produce a time that I would have ripped your hand off for.

By now my lack of race sharpness was very definitely becoming evident and I could feel myself tightening up. I got around the final bend and headed to the 300 metre home straight and saw the clock ticking down.

14:50, 14:51, 14:52...

I summoned the last of my energy and dipped for the line.

14:59.

Racing is back, and boy have I missed that feeling!

Back to those Records, and Beth Potter, a Scottish international triathlon specialist, ran 14:41 to beat Paula Radcliffe's women's world lead time for a road 5k, and Mick Hill broke the British vet 45 lead time with a superb 14:45. It was some event to be a part of!

Rob Danson



Northern Athletics Relays

One of the highlights on our Club calendar is the Northern Athletics Relays; a chance for us as an Athletics Club to line up against the best teams in the region.

My first experience in these events was at Blackpool in 2014 when Men's Captain Garry convinced me to run; and what an experience.

Going out as first runner in our team was certainly a baptism of fire but with support from other Club members it was something I embraced.

As the nerves kicked in I asked the official if it was too late to enter the fun run! My sense of humour fires into over-drive when I'm nervous!! On finishing my leg with only two runners behind me I definitely gave Garry on leg 2 some work to do, but as a team we got the job done. The finishing sprint takes place on the track & with friends bellowing support on the home straight it certainly gets the adrenaline flowing.



Never once at that point did I think that a couple of years later it would be my job (with Kerry) to rally the troops.

The admin involved in these events is quite complicated; cut off times for arranging a "pool" of runners, more deadlines to select runners from that pool & then a final declaration process. Not to mention the pressure of hoping the paperwork is all in order on arrival at registration.....never do I want to hear over the tannoy "would the team manager of Wesham Road Runners report to the stewards".

Over the past few years we've managed to attract an excellent turnout, usually taking around 36 runners plus a support crew. With initial help & support from Garry I think the events have been successful & whilst trying to remain competitive we've also attempted to remember the spirit in which our Club operates.

A big Thankyou must go to Kerry who throughout the past 3 years has worked closely alongside me as Captain but also to the members who continually show a desire to enter these events.

At Manchester last year it was remarked to me by two officials how impressed they were by our Club's turnout. It was also noted how so many of our runners not only supported each other in their running but also cheered other runners who had been deserted by their team mates.

This for me was one of my proudest moments as a Captain.

So hopefully we will be able to enter these events again next year; I'm sure we're all desperate to get racing again.

Stuart

Stuart Topping



Wesham and the England 12-Stage Road Relays – A tale in perseverance

Back in the Noughties Wesham had a new men's captain and some hot new recruits and the vision was to qualify for the English Road Relays through gaining a position in the coveted top 25 at the Northern territorial event. The game was on in 2004 and the venue was Lister Park in Bradford where the club had not been before. Assembling a relay team can be notoriously a challenging order and all clubs face the same issues, but Men's Captain George Kennedy had a vision and he both inspired the teams and put together a sociable package with coach transport and those there will remember the great camaraderie on arrival at the group breakfast in the café in the park. The date was 3rd April 2004 and the weather was approaching spring-like. The course was a good undulating loop through the park, big trees, a lake and a mansion house, a single lap for the short stages (2.5 miles) and twice for the long stage (5 miles).

Steve Littler headed out on Stage 1 the first long stage and handed over in 20th place to Ian

Sharples after 24:29. Ian had the first short stage in 12:56 placing 23rd and then Gary Pendlebury on Stage 3 ran 13:03 to pull the team up to 22nd. Alex Rowe then took on the second long stage, returning 21st in 25:43, followed by Les Cornwall 18th in 12:31, excitement counting as the team were steadily pulling back places. Dave Waywell then took Stage 6 in 13:51 coming in 21st, and Barry Norman on the third long leg on Stage 7 26:22 holding on to 21st place. Chas Linkinson took Stage 8 in 13:15 maintaining that 21st position, and Peter Cruse followed 21st in 13:32. Charlie Pass on the last long stage famously had a problem with his shoe halfway round but the new recruit with youth on his side (!) quickly recovered and still completed 25:57 for 23rd place. Then the anchor boys took over with Lee Barlow running 13:19 to hold the 23rd place, and captain George Kennedy took it to the finish in 14:05 for that 23rd place, a cumulative team time of 3:29:03, 50 seconds behind Liverpool Pembroke and a full minute ahead of East Cheshire. We'd done it! A thoroughly sociable day out in the park

and a national qualification to boot! In terms of local competition, Preston Harriers were 17th in 3:26:16; North Fylde 27th with 3:32:02; Lancaster 29th in 3:32:52; Blackpool and Fylde 33rd in 3:37:17; North Fylde 'B' team 44th with 3:58:10. Wesham's own 'B' team had completed 49th in 4:26:08 with Karl Lee 56th in 29:23; Tony Howard 51st in 14:05; Alan Taylor 56th (16:34); Graham Vickers 56th (34:22); Andrew Owen 53rd (15:00); Peter Cooke 52nd (16:38); Barry Edwards 51st (23:29); Neil Morris 51st (15:31); John Whiteman 51st (19:32); Peter Gleaves 51st (34:42); Paul Carter 50th (19:31); and Dave Young gaining 49th in 18:21. The Wesham women finished 30th in 1:51:52, so this was a truly inclusive day out. Bernadette Dickinson (16:39), Michaela Dempsey (15:46), Pat Swarbrick (20:39), Celia Gregory (19:17), Beverley Brooks (19:21) and Marie Wyld (20:10) made up the team around six laps of 2.5 miles. The women did not have to qualify for the English National 6-stage as there is an open entry policy, but they were never motivated to enter and send a team, a long way to go to run 2.5 miles!

Charlie Pass on Stage 10 in Lister Park, shoe laces flying!

With the national qualification in the back pocket there is only a week to get the entry in for the English National to be held just three weeks later, and unfortunately that first year the dream team was not available to travel again to Birmingham's Sutton Park. It is a tough call to get all the arrangements in place in such a short period of time, so it was on to 2005 and a second attempt to re-gain that hallowed qualification.

The venue was Heaton Park in Manchester closer to home and the scene of a past highly successful British Veterans road relay, similar course and a glorious day in early April with temperatures up in the 20s. The long stage was 8km and the short leg 5km and the action was scorching to witness. Steve Littler was first off again completing the first 4.97-mile stage in 27:11 on the undulating double loop placing 22nd with a good start with Les Cornwall first out on the short lap with 16:20 for 23rd place. Then Paul Dunkerley took over on Stage 3 for 31st place in 17:57 with Alex Rowe clawing back 27th on Stage 4 with 28:21. Peter Cruse was next running 17:33 for 28th place and Alan Hudson 29th in 17:57.

Charlie Pass clocked the next long stage in 27:28 for 26th place followed by Dave Waywell 26th in 17:23 and Derek Buckley 25th with 17:34. Gary Pendlebury brought it up to 24th on the final long stage in 28:56, and George Kennedy pulled in 23rd (18:05) and Lee Barlow holding steady with 17:13. The team finished 23rd in total time of 4:11:58 for the 72km (44.74 miles). A second qualification in the bag and the team were delighted and determined to make it to the National. This time the team was 3:06 behind Wirral AC in 4:08:53 and 12 seconds in front of Trafford AC 'B' team. Preston Harriers had finished 14th in 4:02:44; North Fylde were 28th with 4:15:12; Lancaster 33rd in 4:19:55; and Blackpool and Fylde 34th with 4:20:36. North Fylde 'B' were 47th in 4:45:45. The Wesham 'B' team finished 51st in 4:59:15 with John Bertenshaw opening up with 32:37 for 55th place; Karl Lee on Stage 2 with 18:07 for 53rd; Peter Gleaves 19:36 to retain 53rd; Dave Johnson 54th (33:29); Peter Bartlett 56th (26:00); Mark Midgley 54th (19:06); Martin Bates 54th (36:41); Alan Taylor 54th (21:51); Paul Carter 53rd (20:40); Trevor Rayner 53rd (32:22); and Dale Wallis 53rd in 18:20 and Jonathan Lawson clawing back 51st in 20:25.

On to the English National Road Relays three weeks later on 23rd April 2005 Wesham made their one and only appearance to date in Sutton Park on the longer 12-stage course, with six long legs of 5.38 miles and six short stages of 2.995 miles, a 50.25-mile total. Alex Rowe took the team away over the first long stage, with the famous long out and back to the Streetly Gate in the top corner of the park, handing over to Mark Midgley in 49th after 29:36 minutes. Mark ran 19:22 for the first short leg, finishing 57th, and then Ian Sharples clocked 32:10 for the next long stage, placing 58th. Les Cornwall brought the team up to 53rd with a fine run to record 16:21, and Charlie Pass pulled the team further forward to 49th place with 29:30. Graham Vickers with 19:44; Lee Barlow 31:45; Russell Mabbett 18:44 and Barry Peatfield in 32:40 held the team steady in 49th, and John Collier ran 18:05 to finish 48th. Peter Cruse maintained the pace and retained the tea 48th place with a final long stage run of 31:49, and Paul Dunkerley, recovering from his 3-hour run in the London Marathon, brought the team home with 18:00 up to 46th position. Their total running time was 4:57:46 and they finished 16 seconds behind Stroud and District and 29

seconds ahead of Cheltenham and County. The North Fylde team were 49th in 5:01:00 but this year none of the other qualified west Lancashire teams made it to the final.

Wesham returned to Heaton Park the next year in 2006 for another Northern 12-stage where the team of Steve Littler, Karl Lee, Ian Sharples, Alex Rowe, Les Cornwall, Alan Hudson, Joe Hodgkinson, Trevor Rayner, Barry Peatfield, Charlie Pass, John Collier and Steve Myerscough finished 28th in 4:44:13, just outside qualification despite there being two 'B' teams who were not eligible in those days. Wesham were never able to qualify for the 6-Stage autumn relays which suit the faster clubs better, this is a much keener challenge.



Alex Rowe



Ultra Running

"What can I do next?" That familiar thought process that occurs not long after crossing a finish line. It might have been a PB day or one where the wheels fell off but you can guarantee a few hours later I will be looking for the next challenge.

With five road marathons under my belt at the time, one particular 'next challenge' came in the form of Coniston Trail Marathon in June 2018. The Lakeland Trails series are a favourite of mine; stunning scenery, well organised and way marked - I have a drawer full of their t-shirts! I loved the marathon and finished in a respectable enough time of 06:35, a mere two hours more than my road marathon best time.

After such a brilliant day, the inevitable "what can I do next?" hit me. I know, the Lakeland Trails 55k in June 2019. Only 8 miles further than the marathon, how hard can it be?

Well I'll tell you how hard it can be.

The hottest day of the year, technical terrain, 7000 ft ascent, three mountain passes and a race against the clock.

As we set off from Rothay Park, Ambleside at 10am the day was already a muggy 25 degrees. Within the first few miles we made our way up and up running parallel to The Struggle and the first checkpoint station opposite The Kirkstone Inn. Not wanting to lose any valuable time, I didn't stop. I had the cut off times for each checkpoint written down and so far I had plenty of time to spare.

Head down and onwards towards Patterdale then Glenridding and checkpoint two. I fell down but got back up unhurt. Still ok for time I changed my socks and filled up my water flasks and headed back out and on to the tough climb up Grisedale Hause.

By now the heat was overwhelming and there seemed to be no escape from the sun on the route; I was longing for shade. I reapplied the factor 50 and dipped my cap in every stream. The 12 hour cut off time was starting to feel like it might not be enough. I swore 'never again'.

By the third checkpoint at Grasmere I no longer had plenty of time to spare and I heard a runner ask a marshal about the large stack of bib numbers on the table. "They're from the folk who've decided to call it a day." Wow, that was a lot of DNFs. At 20 miles in shall I stop now rather than be told at the next checkpoint I've timed out? But then I'd wonder whether I could have done it! I bumped into a familiar face from Preston parkrun who told me he had decided to stop. I thought, "he's a proper runner, if he's stopping, perhaps I should?"

The next section was gruelling. My shins hurt, my feet were blistered and my negative self-talk was at its worst. The terrain was the most technical I'd ever attempted and I was frightened of falling again.

I arrived at checkpoint four with an ever diminishing window between my time and the cutoff to find they were waiting on water as they had run out! My supplies were low, I had taken on so much water. Do I wait and risk timing out or carry on and hope for the best? After a long 15 minutes the water barrels arrived and the marshal delivering them told me that the organisers had added an hour to the cut off time due to the weather.

Off I went with a glimmer of optimism that I might just do this but the technical descents were as hard as the ascents on my weary legs and my pace was slowing further. My mind was filled with calculations and I couldn't stop checking my watch.

Making my way uphill I heard shouting behind me. I turned around to see two people beckoning me towards them. Heading back downhill they told me I was going the wrong way! Some of the flags had been removed so I had missed the right turn. I thanked them profusely and chatted to them for a short while. By this point, I had been mostly on my own with no one in front or behind as far as the eye could see so it was good to talk to people!

I arrived at checkpoint 5 within minutes of the



cutoff so didn't dare hang around. The thought of timing out now with less than 7 miles to go filled me with dread. I was hot, nauseous and soaked from head to toe from throwing water over myself at every stream but on I went. Every footfall hurt and it was starting to go dark!

As I descended the path into Rothay Park and turned the corner I saw the finish line and somehow managed something resembling a sprint finish! I had done it with a whopping 10 minutes and 36 seconds to spare!

I later learned that of the 542 to start there were 346 finishers and I was 333rd. Exhausted but elated, I headed home absolutely adamant that my foray into ultra running was a one-time-only, never-to-be-repeated event.

Fast forward to 2021 and as I write this it is ten weeks before I take on The Wall 70 mile ultra from Carlisle Castle to Newcastle Quayside, postponed from last year. Another five weeks after that it'll be my first self-navigated race at the Montane Lakeland 50 mile.

I learned so much from that day in the Lakes in 2019 and I have changed my training drastically. Will I have done enough? I'll come back to you on that one!

Helen Greenhalgh

