

Christmas Meal and Presentation

This year's Christmas dinner and awards presentations took place at the Plough Inn at Stathern where 49 members and guests enjoyed an excellent meal. (Top Tip 1 remember what you ordered - we want no more fights over the last pate.) The awards this year were presented by Mr Paul Ainscough and his assistant Theresa. Paul acknowledged the achievements of the club and was impressed by our friendliness since becoming associated with us. The award winners were:

Best Male - Chris Southam

Best Female - Nicola Clay

Most Improved - Christian Davidson

Best Veteran - Phil Douglas

The Club award was fittingly presented to the junior coaches Diane Underwood, Andy Robinson, Nick Brown and Richard Cox.

Leicester Road Running League 100% awards were presented to Phil Douglas and Darren Glover, with Clive Wright receiving his trophy for 2006 (lets hope he's a bit quicker in 2008). This was the 4th time in 5 years that Phil has gained the 100% award. Phil also received a veteran's award from the league. Congratulations to all of our winners on their achievements.

The club places for the London Marathon went to Liz and Kirsty - best of luck to them and all our entrants in the big event in April.

Once the formalities were over, Neil 'treated' us to a review of the Summer Outrun season with the help of some cartoons of the highlights, including Darryl's own formula nettle killer, Ian's tips on what to do with a dead badger, and did 'Hero to Zero' Steve hibernate during the Summer?

Two further awards were presented - Julie won the Summer run 100% award which was a mystery gift (this turned out not to be a thong after all). The most prestigious and sought after award was won by Diane for being a Mother Hen to the new members, training them from someone from Chicken Run to Road Runners (beep beep). The Mother Hen flanked by Chicks on a mahogany plinth trophy now sits proudly in a display cabinet in Diane's Melton home.

Following the presentations there was a raffle with loads of top prizes including wine, chocolates, tins of biscuits and fitness packs. A 1982 quiz was won by Gary as he was the only person in the room with a pen. (Top Tip 2 always carry a pen.) There were also some internet phone cheats in the room - this will not be tolerated. Neil promised Theresa he wouldn't mention it.

This was followed by a True or False last man standing game, the winners being Vicki, Liz and Debbie all last women standing. Some late news on the quiz. The question about Fatima Whitbread being related to a Grizzly Bear was in fact true not false as originally stated.

All in all it was an excellent evening and a fitting end to our 25th anniversary year and everybody agreed it was the best Christmas Dinner since last year. Thanks to everyone who made it a great evening.

Two of our award winners: Chris Southam, once again best male and Christian Davidson, most improved runner.

(See next page for images)



Southwell 10km - 30 Dec

Gary Christmas travelled to Caythorpe Nr. Lowdham to compete in the Southwell 10km and finished in a time of 47.14. Also running were Nicola Clay 1st lady in 36.00 (PB) and Darren Glover 36.39.

Barrow 6 Handicap - 26 Dec

A lone strider made the effort to compete in this festive run. Mr. Consistency ("Theresa said") - Phil Douglas came 75th out of approximately 280 runners. The run is normally the opposite way round to the league race but this year it was run the normal way to avoid clashing with the Quorn Hunt who met at Prestwold Hall - approximately half way round the course.

Phil was pleased with his time of 44.24 although he had four layers of clothes on !!!!

Schools' cross country

A cold wind and steady rain greeted the competitors in the Leicestershire Secondary Schools Cross Country League meeting held at Melton Country Park recently. Amongst those who toed the line in the dreadful conditions were Stilton Striders Jasmin Southam, Amelia Coltman and Emma Brown. Jasmin and Amelia both took part in the year 7 girls race over one small lap of the testing, hilly course and performed admirably despite the adverse weather. Jasmin raced to 3rd place, her highest ever league finish, whilst Amelia again broke into the top ten with a strong run for 9th place. In the Intermediate Girls race for year 10 and 11 pupils, Emma made light work of the conditions and also produced her best ever league performance in powering to a superb 2nd place over the two lap course.

The Gravy Pud 5

Five Stilton Striders made the 100 mile journey to Tintwistle in the High Peak to compete in the Gravy Pud 5. Driving conditions were horrendous all the way to the venue but on reaching Tintwistle the clouds lifted and the race was run in the dry although there was plenty of standing water and mud en route.

Leaving the village on a cobbled road the route then ascended a long climb up onto the moors before a very steep climb which had to be negotiated using hands and feet. A run across the moors before entering the woods and a long muddy section, before a track along the shores of the reservoir and back to the cobbled section and onto the finish. First Strider home in 12th place in a time of 39 32 (5 miles is he losing it) was Chris Southam. Next in was old sleepy-head Christian who made his own way there after getting up late finished 52nd in 46 59. A battle royal between Phil and Neil ended in a sprint finish after Phil who was closing in made the mistake of exposing himself. On seeing him Neil took off and sprinted the last half mile to finish 77th in 53 22 with Phil 79th in 53 52. Last Strider home was Ian Mason who really enjoyed his first fell run to finish 94th in 57 56. There were 111 finishers.

Although we didn't win any prizes for running, Neil won the cake competition with a decorated victoria sponge with a runner and cheese garnish.

Many spot prizes including wine, running kit and pots of gravy. A great event - its a shame more members were not involved - maybe next year.

Neil Jaggard's prizewinning sponge from the 'Gravy Pud' run. Requests for birthdays and other occasions welcomed.



Schools Cross Country Relays

Junior Stilton Strider, Amelia Coltman became the Leicestershire Secondary Schools Cross Country Relay Champion on Saturday 17th November at Shepshed. Representing year 7 at De Lisle Catholic Science College, Amelia put in a strong performance over the challenging 1 mile course, to help her team pull away from Loughborough High School by over a minute. However, after a strong finish by their rivals, they had to dig deep to hold on until the finish. The team have been unbeatable this year, as they have won all three races in the Leicestershire Secondary Schools Cross Country League.

Seagrave Wolds Challenge

Two Striders took on the challenge of this 15.7 mile off-road event around the Leicestershire Wolds. On a perfect morning, some 200 runners set off from Seagrave. A lot of congestion at stiles and road crossings early on meant that the first 3 miles were covered in a modest 33 mins. After that point, the field began to spread out, enjoying beautiful views and jelly babies at the checkpoints (other snacks were available).

Neil Jaggard finished 86th in 2hours 20mins with Clive Wright 102nd in 2hours 23mins. Julie Dooley and Zoe did the walking event.

North Midlands Cross Country League, Markeaton Park, Derby

Stilton Striders Emma Brown and Joe Carnell were the club's only representatives in the North Midlands Cross Country League meeting at Markeaton Park, Derby last Saturday. 11 year old Joe took part in the under 13 Boys event held over a distance of 3.3 kilometres, the longest distance over which he has competed to date. The course was firm underfoot but incorporated two testing climbs after halfway. Joe paced himself well and, after a steady start, was able to put in a strong finish to cross the line in 33rd place. Emma's race, for under 17 Girls, was over the slightly longer distance of 4.6km. Once again she acquitted herself well and showed good strength over the last half mile, pulling clear of her nearest rival to take 10th place in a time of 18 minutes 15 seconds. Both enjoyed their first taste of competition in the North Midlands League, which Striders have rejoined after an absence of 6 years. The club is hoping to turn out a larger contingent of juniors for the next meeting at Berry Hill, Mansfield on 1st December.

The Wrekin Wrecker - Sun 4th November

On Sunday 4th November, Neil Jaggard travelled to Wellington in Shropshire to compete in the Wrekin Wrecker, an 8.1 mile fell race with 2,500 feet of climbing.

An uphill start (over a mile from the registration, that's something road runners moan about) took us through the wooded foothills for the first ascent of the Wrekin which is a geological anomaly in the flatlands of this area of Shropshire. It is also 407 mts to the top. On reaching the trig point you could see, well about 10 yards because of the fog. As this was an A category race and visibility was impaired all runners were required to carry warm waterproof clothing, a whistle, map, compass and emergency rations - in my case jelly babies. The descent took us down near vertical drops strewn with fallen trees and boulders covered in autumn leaves causing a number of fallers.

On reaching the bottom we began climbing along a nice track to reach the bottom of a vertical up-hill section with a long snake of runners scrambling to the top. The trig point was reached once again and the fog was now beginning to lift with views to the M54. Over the top and down through the trees

again back to the bottom for a third ascent this time up the north face. By the time the trig point was reached this time the views must have been terrific but i was in no state to appreciate them. The tricky descent began along the rocky spine of the Dragon's Back before a long undulating track back to the finish (which was again more than a mile back to the changing area - still at least I had a warm down for a change), where there was soup, samosas and a selection of home made cakes all included in the £4 entry fee.

Finishing in 81st place in a time of 1hour 42mins. More in front of me than behind as usual but it was a well organised race and well worth the trip - one for the diaries next year.

Shepshed 7 - 4 Nov 2007

The ladies team was 1st at the Shepshed 7:
Nicola Clay 2nd 41.07 (13th overall) (CLUB RECORD)
Theresa Colman 13th 50.35 (149th overall)
Laura Ackers 14th 50.55 (157th overall)

They were backed up by Kirsty Ainscough 25th 52.44 (202nd overall), Vicki Lowe 26th 53.30 (212th overall)

Men's positions were as follows:

Chris Southam 4th 38.10 pb
Darren Glover 23rd 42.24
Darryl Woolward 146th 51.01
Wayne Hackett 153rd 51.30
Clive Wright 190th 53.35 in a field of 533

In the Fun Run, Jasmin Southam finished 5th in 7.01 just missing out on first girl by 3 seconds. Amelia Colman was 5th girl 19th overall closely followed by Lucy Golland 6th girl 20th overall in 7.31. Lucy's sister Elizabeth was 8th girl 22nd overall and little brother Thomas was 18th boy in 8.39 and 34th overall.

Snowdonia Marathon - 27 Oct 2007

Report from Gary Christmas:

"Last weekend I travelled to Llanberis to compete in the 25th Snowdonia Marathon. Start was from Nant Peris (300ft) and we followed the A4086 to the top of the Llanberis Pass at 1100ft. Went through half way in 1.56, but the real challenge was yet to come at the 21 mile marker with a rapid climb to 1200ft and then followed with 900ft downhill descent on tracks to Llanberis. The weather was typical Welsh, Rain, Fog, Mist, but I will be back next year to see if I can beat my time of 4 hours 23 minutes."

Tui Marathon

Report from Chris Southam:

"Just got back from Mallorca and my autumn marathon (and half term holiday). The Tui Marathon started and finished on the sea front just below the Cathedral in Palma; this was also the venue for the children's races on the Saturday night. Jasmin ran in the mixed race for 10 to 12 year olds over 1.5 miles and finished 6th and first girl.

The marathon started at 9:00am on Sunday with the temperature at about 14 to 15 degrees and the sun shining. The marathon ran around a lot of the old city and didn't leave until 20k. At this point I was told I was in 4th place and about 300m down on 3rd. I went through half in 1.17.56 and set off in chase. The last 7 miles were along the sea front with plenty of support from the bars. The temperature was now up in to the low 20s and I made third place with about 3 miles to go.

I Finished in 2.36.14 (second fastest marathon) in third place after a sprint over the last 400m trying to keep an angry chap from Sweden at bay who I passed earlier! Fantastic well organised event (also 10k and Half Marathon) in a great city."



The Waltham Winder

Of all the results from the Leicester Marathon and more importantly the Waltham Winder this weekend surely the most impressive performance was from the husband and wife power walking duo of Neil and Julie Jaggard who took on the might of the Long Distance Walking Association and the Ramblers Association (who had all arrived at Waltham in their BMW's - some of you who listen to radio 4 may actually get this joke) and came out on top. Following the leaders as far as Sproxton, Neil and Julie took the lead and stormed ahead for a 3 minute victory. Pride is a terrible thing but Julie was determined to cross the line first, refusing to stop at any drinks stations. Our bodies are now wracked with pain and Julie's feet are covered in blisters. She is however very keen to tackle the non-stop Lands End to John o Groats record.

And from Gary Christmas who completed the 26 mile Waltham Winder (gps 28m) over a new course, which headed east out of the village to Freeby, Sproxton, Buckminster, Skillington, before turning back to Croxton Kerrial and Waltham. "Conditions were very muddy and I struggled over last 6miles but I was pleased with my time of 5hours 17minutes. I finished 9th out of approx 40 starters."

Leicestershire Secondary Schools Cross Country League - Groby Community College - Sat, 22 Sep

The opening fixture in the Leicestershire Secondary Schools Cross Country League was held at Groby Community College. Amongst the runners were a number of Stilton Striders representing their various schools, and all turned in creditable performances.

Making their league debuts in the Year 7 Girls race were Jasmin Southam (Belvoir High School) and Amelia Coltman (De Lisle). Jasmin was well to the fore from the gun and she went on to finish a superb 5th over the undulating 1.5km course. Amelia was well placed in the chasing group and although fading a little towards the end still held on for 15th place. Following on was Charlotte Marsh (John Fernley) who took part in the Junior Girls race for Year 8 & 9 pupils which covered a distance of 2km. As a Year 8 Charlotte is at the bottom of the age group but was undeterred by this and acquitted herself well to claim 11th spot. Also competing was Georgina Alexander (Longfield) who finished 42nd despite feeling unwell. The Intermediate Girls (Years 10 and 11) race over 3.5km featured two King Edward VII pupils, Emma Brown and Polly Eayrs. Emma made an excellent start to her campaign by finishing in 6th place, only losing out on 5th in a sprint for the line. Polly, a recent addition to the Striders ranks, started more conservatively on her league debut but gradually worked her way through to 12th place. Last but not least, Jon Appleby and Loz Robinson, both of King Edward, competed over the longer distance of 5km in the Intermediate Boys race. This was the furthest that either had raced before and this was a factor as both struggled on the last of 3 large laps. However, they stuck to their task well and finished well up the field in 16th and 22nd places respectively.

Chelmorton Chase

Three Striders travelled the 70 miles to the Peak District to compete in the 5 mile Chelmorton Chase with 1000 feet of climbing which culminates in the ascent and descent of the famous Chelmorton Low. This was the 10th running of the race and the Lady of Hollinsclough (remember her from last year with the big flag) had us all singing happy birthday before the start. We had a chat to her afterwards and she had taken a break from a world tour to come back and start the race. What dedication.

First Strider home in 21st place in an excellent time of 42mins 51secs was Steve Dewick. Further behind involved in their own race were Gary Christmas and Neil Jaggard who were swapping places all the way to the bottom of the big climb where Gary made his move and pulled about 20 seconds clear, a brave comeback on the downhill finish saw Neil close the gap to 7 seconds but Gary held on to finish in 47mins 08secs with Neil in 47mins 15secs finishing in 41st and 42nd positions respectively.

Usual array of goodies on offer afterwards including bakewell tarts, hot oatcakes and cheese melts, tea and biscuits all included in the £4 entry fee, we were also given an anniversary T shirt this year.

This is a really good event and one which we should consider running as a club outing!!

Belvoir Castle 10K Run for Cancer Research - Sunday, 2 September

Report from Catherine Voyce

"A first event for Belvoir Castle which attracted 560+ runners and at least an equal number of spectators. On arrival I had to immediately join the loo queue - 10 portable toilets and no bushes within a mile of the field meant that even the men had to queue up! This led to a delay to the start of the race which was preceded by a lively aerobics warm up, led by an amusing/crazy fitness trainer who frightened most runners into joining in. It must have been quite a sight to behold - a sea of turquoise (Race T-shirts) all doing a choreographed warm up. I looked around for any familiar faces from the Stilton Striders, but I guess a lot of you were racing at Oadby.

The conditions for the run were perfect, sunshine, a breeze and a great atmosphere with a real buzz of enthusiasm from both runners and spectators.

After the second hill climb, I soon realised that achieving a PB in this race was out of the question. The course literature described the run as challenging and it certainly was. However, the stunning views over the Vale from Belvoir Castle and other vantage points, were ample compensation for the tough hills, which made my legs weigh like lead!

The course was mainly trail and tarmac, all off road and there was a water station half way round. The stewards were very supportive and vocal which I always appreciate. Each finisher received a medal, bottle of water and a Tracker bar, together with a T-shirt which was sent out prior to the race with the numbers etc.

As the race was generally non-competitive, runners had to record their own timings. I finished the course in an embarrassing 59 minutes and 19 seconds - but was told by a very observant steward that unofficially I was the 39th lady to cross the line and approximately 150th overall, which I was quite pleased about.

I think there are plans to hold this race again next year and I certainly recommend it to anyone who likes a challenge and to raise money for a worthy cause in the process."

Peterborough City Games

Tim Hicks ran in the masters' 3,000 m at the Peterborough City Games on Mon 27 Aug. Under a blazing sun, he won in a time of 10.32.6. OK, there were some seniors in the same race who beat him but the trophy shelf is no longer bare.



Rye 5km

Whilst on holiday in Rye, East Sussex, Gary Christmas ran in a local 5km race starting from Rye Harbour. Conditions were ideal and he completed the race in 22.19, finishing 50th out of 130.

Iron Man Race Report from Emma Bermingham

Woke up at 1am and nearly cried when I heard the rain on my tent. Luckily I managed to get back to sleep and woke up at 3.45, to start my day. Breakfast was fun – porridge and scrambled eggs that wouldn't quite scramble (thanks to cousin katie for her skills in reminding how to scramble eggs!). Got

JJ up, and gave him all the heavy stuff and we commenced our walk across the muddy fields to the race area. It was quite eerie – lines of people walking along the same path with head lamps made me feel like I was going into the depths of a coal mine somewhere. The silence and “zoned” state of people was really obvious. Got into transition to do the bike checking etc. Went OK except when they said there was 15 mins until we went down to the lake and then I panicked as I hadn’t said my “a bientot’s” to JJ. I sprinted out of transition half dressed in my wettie and luckily spotted the Fisherman (JJ’s attempt at blending in with the English) for kisses and cuddles goodbye.

Back in transition with a race delay (15 mins) and I couldn’t spot ANYONE I knew - started to feel a bit alone at that point so randomly talked to people as we headed down to the lake. A couple of these people I literally ran into on the marathon!

Once in the water (brrrr!) and after a compulsory pee, I actually spotted Caro and Lucy at the start line so had someone to do the last “eek what the hell am I doing here” with...

The swim: 1:11:38

I decided in a fit of madness to start in the middle of the pack. Not sure why I did this and about 2 mins into it I wondered if it was the right decision. I remember a guy saying “this is total chaos” as we tried to move forward. I got kicked, hit, punched, pushed and somehow managed to stay calm the entire time! I did get a leak in my goggles from someone’s fist (cheers!) but managed to sort that out and eventually find some relatively clear space to carry on. The swim was pretty uneventful (bar the turn points – bun fights again!), a few bits of biffo here and there (people whose stroke comes out “sideways” rather than out the front) and I did get quite aggressive myself (apologies to the person whom I shoved out of my way with my legs; but there was no need to be pushing my legs down at that point J) but really had a good swim. I was a bit worried at one point that I was supposed to do 3 laps, and was totally amazed to exit the water in under 72 minutes! I spotted my support crew - JJ, Lisa, Kev, and Katie in the swim exit and managed to pose for a piccie too!



Transition was fun. Wet bum+ bike shorts = 6.26 minutes !

The bike: 6:48:07

The bike started off really good; think in hindsight I did push it too quickly to start with (and this was with me trying hard to hold it back). I kept the focus on my heart rate trying to get it down under 175 bpm, and keep cadance up in the 80’s. The first half of the bike was pretty good. I felt good, was eating and drinking regularly, and spinning up hills as much as possible. The massive decent was tough mentally after nearly being taken out by some fast dude the first time down, and then passing an accident on the 2nd lap, but I survived and maxed out at 63 km/h so not really TOO wussy I guess.

My supporters kept me focussed on where they would spring from next although most of the time it was a case of me spotting them !

Had a stop (had to tighten my aero bars and ended up helping some dude with an inner tube and patch – his 3rd puncture on the first lap!) on my first lap where I lost a few minutes and a toilet break

(blast having to find open gateways!). The wind really started picking up, felt like a cross wind on the descents and a head wind on the hills, but luckily we only had one rain shower as it was cold enough with the wind.

By the half-lap to go mark on the bike my back was killing me (never happened in training) so I stopped for a decent toilet break/stretch and downed a pain killer. I felt like I flew up the final hills to the end, passing a few people for a slower than expected time (I was aiming for 6.30ish) on the bike.

Transition: Change of shorts, smear of vaseline : another 6.41 minutes J

The run: 4:10:39

The run was always going to be my big unknown. The most I had run in training was a hilly (the road behind waltham to wymondham) 2.5 hours, and a few ½ marathons in other races. My strategy was to run the first 21k (aside from walking the aid stations) and then after that do what ever it took to get me home.

The first few miles weren't as bad as I was expecting. Everything hurt, but nothing too bad. I just got into my shuffle mode and shuffled! The weather was a bit warmer than on the bike, but still really over cast and windy...walked the aid stations as promised, taking in a couple of bananas, but made sure i ran all the hills...

I think the hardest thing about that first half of the run was running past Kev, Lisa and JJ who were at the tent (the campsite was on the run course) drinking BEER!

Headed out on to the dual carriage way for the final 21k's. This bit was mentally draining with a head wind and hills that just dragged on. By this stage I decided to walk the aid stations and the up hills and then run the flats/down hills. Got chatting to lots of people on the walk sections to keep me motivated (as you do! "so what lap are you on" "is this your first ironman") which was good. Also by this point the toilet was calling (luckily I packed my own tissues!) so a fence was jumped over and nature was left a calling card ;-)

I was eating bananas, gatorade, and 1 gel per hour (eww! I must have lost my own gels really early on so had to have the ones supplied at the race!). On the last leg of the race I switched to pepsi and water, and kept that going until the end (with my final gel about 6 miles to go)...

So the final leg! I looked at my clock and saw that I was 11.05 into the race! I was at this stage realising I could make my 12.30 dream if I legged it on my walking sections. So walking became power walking with one dude even commented on my "walking speed" and when I ran past him with 2 k's to go it was the "zee girl who walks really fast"...so that strategy really paid off. The final 5 miles I just put my head down and ran. I think I passed about 10 people with 2 miles to go and literally just chugged my way, one leg in front of the other.

I thanked everyone I could at this point, and at one stage almost started crying when someone told me there was a mile to go! Holding back the tears I ran into the castle gates for the last time to be told I could beat the dude in front of me (which I did!) and I literally just ran. My breathing was haggard with the effort, and as I came around into the finishing chute I just couldn't stop smiling! I raised my arms in "hellos" when I heard my name being announced and had the BEST feeling in the world as I ran onto the red carpet and under the finishing sign! I, Emma Bermingham, am an ironman in 12h 23 mins and 31 seconds!

Over the line with some guy holding me up I started feeling a bit wobbly! I looked around for JJ, Lis and Kev (katie had to go home before I finished). I was still smiling like a mad woman and when I saw JJ I started crying - poor boy!



I don't think I went through any stage of the race where I felt I couldn't do it (aside from the 2 mins at the start in the swim!)...I was pretty calm before the race and I think the week before hand was more stressful than the actual day. I think though I was just ready. I was lucky in that I didn't have any mechanical issues (so many punctures out there!) and my body held up better than what I thought it was going to. While I wasn't the fastest person out there I think my pace was great and perfect for me.

So my thank-yous!

- My coach Mark Tickner – I think you made a sows ear into a silk purse !
- Sandy C, Root and Nic for all those inspiring emails!
- Training crew: Melton Olympic Cycling Group (esp Bill & Tina, Dicky, Mike), the Stilton Striders (esp Chris, Daryl and the other Monday runners) and the Masters swim group, David TD, Emily and Matt
- Rod Perez - trusty bike mechanic!
- Donna Wright - fabulous sports massage
- Caro – well done on your Kona Qualification!
- And finally and most importantly Jean-Jacques, Katie, Lisa and Kevvy who were the best supporters! Without your help, faith and encouragement I would not have undertaken the event in the first place.

And now ?

mmm beer!

Leicester Round - Sun 13 August

On Sunday 13 hardy, or some would say fool hardy, Striders competed in the 85 mile Leicester Round Relay. This event started and finished at Mowacre Hill in Leicester and complete a clockwise loop around the county over roads, footpaths and open countryside. On what turned out to be the hottest day of the year so far the 36 teams set off at 8.30am with:

Darren Glover running from Leicester to Ratcliffe - well I guess it wasn't quite so very hot for that one - a good fifth place for the Striders in a time of 44.24 and just a minute behind the leaders.

Darren handed over to Chris Genes (on to Ashby Folville) who was 22nd fastest for the leg in 50.51 bringing the team through in 11th place.

Matt King took the next leg on to Somerby over Borrough Hill - he was 13th in 45.18 and the team then lay in 12th place.

Time for the first restart and Gary Christmas set off to Loddington - he was 15th on his leg in 44.02 with the team in 13th place

Steve Dewick ran to Slawston in 45.08 and finished 11th and brought the team up a place to 12th - yeah!

Up popped Neil Jaggard for the Foxton trot. He later described it as a near death experience (I dont suppose he was the only one) - it just happened to be the longest leg. He ran for a short while next to GPS boy who had measured it last week, who confirmed in that GPS type voice it was 8.58 miles give or take a gnats crochet. Neil asks if anyone spotted the irony of perhaps the one person in the club who dislikes road running opting for the long leg, although in truth he did not know it was the long leg and just selected one randomly - I think this is rich coming from the one who calls himself Big Leggy - Neil would also like to point out that he has yet to win the lottery. On the bright side it will now be 13 years before he has to run that leg again, and would like it put on record that he now bagsies Somerby to Loddington in 2008, and he will run his leg in March and email his time to Ted Toft. Including numerous drink stops and an extra long wee after about 3 miles, Neil crossed the line in 30th place in 78:23 with the team slipping, stumbling, and grumbling to 17th.

Neil says he felt sorry for Tim Hicks who had waited for what must have seemed like hours for him to arrive. Worry not Neil, I had calculated the change-over time with great accuracy, taking into account the form of the earlier runners, the weather conditions, and the fact that I set off a little later than planned from home... So I ran to to Bruntingthorpe after a slick baton change with Neil which I reckon saved us about 1 second. My leg started with a mile of xc. It was horribly rutted in places, but once through the worst of it I luckily (I thought) saw a runner in the distance and so followed - bit of a mistake as she had no more idea of the route than I did and took a wrong turning. Most of the rest was on a long straight road which suited me far better - few turnings or junctions to worry about and only the occasional look at the map. Very picturesque but meltingly hot although I didn't find it too uncomfortable once on the road. Had another mile or so of xc towards the end and back to that nagging doubt about whether I was following the right path with not a soul to be seen anywhere - so was greatly relieved to meet up with what looked like and was the road to the finish. A fantastic, outstanding, and truly amazing 3rd fastest for the leg in 48.21 hauled the team back up to a magnificent 14th place.

Another restart meant that Phil Douglas had already started the leg to Frolesworth before Tim had started the previous leg. Phil was 21st in 57.31 and the team stayed in 14th place.

Ian Mason was next up with a run to Burbage Common. He was 22nd in 52.25 and the team climbed a place to 13th.

Gary Postle ran to Market Bosworth and was 25th in 66.16. Gary's leg involved 75% off road with at least eight stiles and three rutted ploughed fields. The team wilted to 16th.

Danny Keightley took over for the leg to Markfield and was 22nd in 62.04 with the team holding on to 16th.

Darryl Wollward ran to the top of Beacon Hill. According to Chris G he hated it - through the woods, up Beacon Hill on your own on a hot Sunday afternoon was not his idea of Fun. Chris is sure he was only jesting but he was suspicious when Danny joined him with the threat of stuffing him in the nearby 'beacon' and burning him. He was 29th in 68.50 and the team fell to 19th.

And finally Chris Southam ran the final leg back into Leicester. He was 2nd fastest for the leg in 43.35, which got the club back to 16th place overall as he finished at around 6:10pm.

See full results here. Anyone else got anything they want to add about their epic run. Let me know.

Chevin Hill Race - Thu 2 August

On Thursday 2nd August Neil travelled to Milford nr Belper for the Chevin Hill Race - a 4.5 mile event with 879 feet of climbing. Setting off on a perfect evening along the road before a left up the first climb, which was a rock strewn gully made even more rocky after the recent heavy rains washed away the top surface, halfway up and another left down a rocky track before another climb which took the runners across a golf course up in the hills. Across the ninth fairway and a tough climb through the woods and more rocks. A long steady climb along an undulating track took them to a left turn reached just as the leader had completed his loop of an old quarry and was on his way back. Around the loop and a short uphill took them back along the track towards the finish. The sting in the tail was the last 600 yards - a 1 in 4 downhill road section on which he was running as fast as Chris does on the flat. 88 runners competed and he finished in a time of 40 mins 55 seconds for 60th place. Winner 29 minutes.

A good well organised event only 40 miles from Melton - so close we could have an outrun from there.

Huncote 5 - Wed 1 August

Wednesday evening (1 Aug) saw the running of the penultimate Leicestershire Road Running League (LRRL) summer league race, the Joy Cann 5, which is a single road loop out and back from Huncote Leisure Centre. The warm and humid conditions did not suit all the 530 runners. Darren Glover (29:04) was first Strider home in 36th position, just in front of Chris Southam (29:22) in an unusually low position of 40th. Southam struggled with his breathing between miles 1 and 2 and was actually walking back to the start but turned round to complete knowing that a 40th position would help the team score overall in the fight against relegation from division one. Next in was Tim Hicks (30:20) 62nd, Andy Robinson (32:28) 120th, Richard Gray (32:29) 122nd, Steve McGarry (33:50) 179th, Chris Genes (35:52) 258th, Phil Douglas (36:06) 271st. Supporting the team were John Cresswell (36:25), Matt King (36:38pb), Darryl Woolward (37:44), Ian Mason (37:53) and John Stares (43:29). In the ladies' section Natalie Fryer (35:52) came in 15th, Kirsty Ainscough (38:35) 48th, Vicki Lowe (39:11) 62nd and Pippa Hicks (39:51) in 71st. Supporting were debutant Catherine Voyce (43:54), Julie Duley (44:12) and Liz Beasley (45:24).

Notts 5 - Wed 25 July

Gary Christmas travelled to Nottingham on Wednesday 25th July to run in the Notts 5 mile road race from Trent embankment. In ideal conditions he finished in a time of 36.44.

Whissendine 6 - Thu 12 July

Quite a few Striders took on the Whissendine 6 - some having run the day before at Hungarton. Nicola Clay was 2nd lady in 35.28 (behind Felicity Milton), Darren Glover was 3rd male (5th overall) in 35.41, and Stewart Owen (27th in 40.44) was first Whissendine male. Tim Hicks (18th in 37.38), John Cresswell (19th in 37.48), Steve Dewick (27th in 40.23), Clive Wright (55th in 43.36), Darryl Woolward (76th in 46.08), Wayne Hackett (88th in 47.15), and Kirsty Ainscough (94th in 48.07) were amongst the Striders in the event. A warm evening and the hills were as tough as ever on the second half of the course, but it proved a good workout.

Hungarton 7 - Wed 11 July

It was fantastic to see 21 Striders running in the Hungarton 7 on a warm but good evening for running. First four men finished 4th team (with Chris 3rd vet) and the first three ladies were 9th team. Hopefully the vets and seniors LRRL teams scored well.

6 Chris Southam 38.55
 11 Nick Brown 40.13
 30 Darren Glover 42.07
 52 Tim Hicks 43.57
 95 Steve Dewick 46.28
 111 Andy Robinson 47.37
 113 Richard Gray 47.39
 157 Simon Maggs 49.18
 168 Steve McGarry 49.35
 180 Phil Douglas 49.50
 189 Danny Keightley 50.08
 215 Matt King 51.22
 253 Chris Genes 53.29
 287 Kirsty Ainscough 55.18
 288 Vicki Lowe 55.19
 300 Wayne Hackett 55.49
 308 Ian Mason 56.21
 317 Nathalie Fryer 56.47
 390 Liz Beazley 1.01.33
 394 Julie Duley 1.02.07
 401 Jenny Miles 1.02.20

The exploits of Chris Southam

Holme Pierrepont Heritage Grand Prix (total of 4 races):

26th June Race 1 Holme Pierrepont 10k - Flat fast 10k with 282 starters. Felt ok in a time of 33 43 and 5th place 2nd vet 40.

28th June Race 2 Woolerton Hall 5k - Hilly grass and track 5k with 243 starters. Nice venue but it rained (some more) 17.05 5th place 2nd vet 40. Out-sprinted by 15 year old school boy and a 42 year old post man!! Chris Genes was pleased to be racing again and finished with a time of 22.54.

1st July Mansfield Half Marathon - New start and route this year finishing on berry hill park running track. Very hilly but interesting. Finished in a slightly disappointing 16th 3rd vet 40 in a time of 1.15.24 which included a 40 second toilet break at 5 miles! (Just got to the car before it rained a bit more.)

Juniors results round-up

Emma Brown took part in the Race for Life event at Loughborough University on 17th June. The distance was reduced from 5k to 4k for Health and Safety reasons following heavy rain during the preceding week but Emma put in a strong run nonetheless to finish 2nd overall in 16.44.

Three Striders took part in a 1,500m track race at Loughborough a few days later. James Butcher took up the running from the gun with Lizzie Mellor and Emma Brown settling in to the main pack. James continued to lead until the last lap and although he was overtaken by a senior athlete from Charnwood before the end he took 2nd place in a pb of 5.06.9. There was only half a stride in it at the end for his team-mates as Lizzie just got the nod over Emma as they finished 5th and 6th respectively in 5.19.4 and 5.19.5.

On 1st July Emma Brown took part in the one mile fun run at the Everyman Racetrack, Prestwold Hall and finished as 1st girl, and 4th overall, in a personal best of 5.35. Also taking part were new members Spencer Keightley and Matthew Riddle who ran well on their debut for Striders

Humber Half Marathon, Sun 24 Jun

Nicola Clay led from gun to tape in the Humber Half Marathon to finish first in a superb time of 1:20:40. The course included crossing in both directions of the landmark Humber Bridge which was exposed to the elements. Completing the county line up were Birstall's Liz Cocks 3rd in 1:23:30 and Hermitage's Gemma Steel 9th in 1:30:42.

Stathern 10K, Sun 24 Jun

A large group of striders ran in the Stathern 10K on the 24th June 2007. Darren Glover 37.28 (finished 8th), John Cresswell 39.56, Richard Gray 40.11, Stewart Owen 42.26, Gary Postle 43.29, Clive Wright 45.55, Gary Christmas 47.03, Wayne Hackett 48.12, Joanne Shore 52.36, Jenny Gladney 56.47.

Chrome Hill Race, Sat 23 June

A bright sunny afternoon greeted the 61 runners for the 4.25 mile Chrome Hill race on 23/6/07. Heading up the high street and through Newgate farm and across the extremely muddy path through the woods. This was ok for anyone under 5ft10ins everyone else was ducking and diving to avoid the low branches. A downhill stretch through a meadow aka paddy field and across the brook with a tough uphill to farm track and a long drag across the moor. A sharp descent to the bottom of the 700foot Chrome Hill before a scramble/climb up and across the boulders and stones to the top ridge with incredible views of the Peak district. A treacherous downhill to the farm track and back to the village in 47th place with a time of 49mins 24secs, slower than previous years.

Long Eaton 5, Sun 10 June

I don't know much about this one, but Nicola Clay was 3rd in 29.12.

Corn Dolly 8, Sun 10th June



Several Striders ran in the Corn Dolly Eight (8.22mile), which was part of the Hickling Country Fair. Chris Southam took first place in 44.42 and not to be out done Vicki Lowe also put in a superb performance to be 1st lady in 62mins. Also competing were Andy Robinson (57.17), Gary Christmas (61.06), Martin Miles (62.55), Joanne Shore (70.09) and Richard Gray (time not available but I think approx 57mins).

County Secondary Schools Track & Field Championships, Sat 9 June

Five Stilton Striders were in action in the County Secondary Schools Track & Field Championships at Saffron Lane. First up was Charlotte Marsh in the Year 7 Girls 800m and she acquitted herself well finishing in a top ten position. Briony Bendle ran a superb tactical race, tracking the early leader in the Junior Girls 800m before unleashing a devastating last 200m to take gold in a new personal best time of 2.20.8, and inside the English Schools qualifying time. In the same race Lizzie Mellor finished fifth in 2.28, a new personal best by 2 seconds. In the Junior Boys race John Appleby also lowered his personal best as he produced a strong last lap to claim 6th place in 2.19. Finally, Emma Brown ran in the Intermediate Girls 1,500m but suffered in the heat, and after a bright start faded to 5th in 5.27.4, some 10 seconds outside her best.

Swithland 6, Sun 3rd June

Several Striders made welcome returns to the LRRL in the Swithland 6, with Chris Southam and Tim Hicks back for their first LRRL races since the London Marathon, and Danny Keightly back for his first race in, well, many years. And it was a bright, sunny, and hot morning - vest-shaped sunburn again. Chris led the way around the roads and dusty, pot-holed tracks for the Striders with a fine 6th place and first vet, and Nick Brown, Darren Glover and rapidly improving Christian Davidson put in strong runs. With a good turnout, the senior men's and vets' teams look to have put in much improved performances - can relegation be avoided? Much will depend on the turnout at Hungarton the day before the Whissendine 6 - oh the dilemma. Maybe as Danny returns to the sharp end of the field, the Striders can put in a strong finish to the season. The Stilton ladies were led heroically as ever by Nicola Clay, who finished just outside the top three in a very strong field.

- 6. Chris Southam 32.57
- 15. Nick Brown 34.40
- 23. Nicola Clay 35.26
- 28. Darren Glover 36.00
- 39. Christian Davidson 36.53
- 67. Tim Hicks 38.19

73. John Cresswell 38.44
 116. Richard Gray 40.55
 147. Stewart Owen 41.59
 159. Phil Douglas 42.18
 224. Clive Wright 44.41
 240. Danny Keightly 45.24
 293. Ian Mason 48.03
 324. Vicki Lowe 49.24
 343. Louise Hargrave 50.22
 408. Liz Seazley 54.01

West End 8, Sun 20th May

Sun 20th saw the running of the West End 8 mile LRRL race, which started and finished at Syston Rugby Club in Queniborough. The race included a single loop course which took in the testing steep climb up and through South Croxton. First strider home was Nick Brown (46:46) in 9th position in front of Nicola Clay (47:30) 15th who had an off-day to finish only as third lady. Following behind were Darren Glover (48:06) 20th, Christian Davidson (49:42) 31st, Richard Gray (54:45) 93rd, Phil Douglas (55:22) 101st, John Cresswell (55:40) 107th, Stewart Owen (56:21) 122nd, Natalie Fryer (59:08) 167th, Clive Wright (1:01:22) 190th, Vicki Lowe (1:02:35) 202nd, Ian Mason (1:04:39) 220th, Darryl Woolward (1:04:42) 221st and Abi Arnott (1:10:36) 286th.

Mount Famine Fell Race, Sat 19th May, a report from Neil Jaggard

How far would you go in a day to run in a race when you know you are going to finish closer to the back than the front? Last Saturday it was 86 miles to the village of Hayfield in the High Peak, just 4 miles from Glossop for the 5 mile Mount Famine race, with 1700 feet of climbing. I thought it would be tough when we all lined up facing a steep bank akin to Burrough Hill and had to scramble up the hill through the tree line to a narrow path at the top. A steady climb took us onto the moors to begin the tough part: an undulating narrow track with a steep drop on the left and wilderness on the right. A big climb and a long ascent took us to the bottom of Mount Famine and the rock strewn track to the top, down the other side and over the tussocks to the bottom before turning and running back to the top. At the summit a hilarious marshal who noticed me proudly wearing my Striders shirt remarked that it wasn't much like Melton; had I got any energy left he might have experienced a dose of my renowned wit but, lucky for him, he got away with it as oxygen was in short supply. A nice undulating but mainly downhill run to the finish on the sports ground with a huge crowd and welcome applause. The old saying, "its not the winning its the taking part", is one I particularly like when describing a fell run. The winning time for this 5 mile race was 47mins 50sec with less than half the field of 107 runners breaking the hour; I regret I wasn't one of them finishing in 77mins 10secs and 92nd place beating many of the old, infirm and disabled lagging in behind.

Track and Field County Championships, Saffron Lane, 12-13 May

Leicestershire and Rutland track and field championships were at Saffron Lane on 12 and 13 May. Chris Southam was 2nd vet in the 5,000 m in 16:14.5. Joseph Carnell produced a time of 3:02.3 in the U13 boys 800 m. Jonathan Appleby was 2nd in the U15 boys 400 m in 65.8. Emma Brown was 2nd in the U17 women's 1500m in 5:17.6 and won the 3,000m in 12:00. Hope that's all the Striders who ran.

Hinckley Half Marathon, Sun 13th May

In atrocious weather conditions, 14 Striders lined up with 800 others to contest the first Leicestershire Road Running League summer race, the Hinckley Half Marathon. Starting and finishing at the appropriately named Bosworth Water Park, the 13.1 miles were run in almost continuous downpour, over a testing and undulating course. Undeterred by the conditions, Nicola Clay (1:19:33) continued where she left off from the London Marathon by taking first position in the ladies' section, with only 21 men able to beat her position. First male Strider home was Christian Davidson (1:24:05pb) in an excellent 53rd position which is an indication of how he has improved over the past year. Next in was Darren Glover (1:26:52), followed by Steve Dewick (1:31:46), Phil Douglas (1:32:10), Richard Gray (1:34:21), Natalie Fryer (1:40:56), Vicki Lowe (1:43:15), Stewart Owen (1:45:19), Wayne Hackett (1:52:06), Joanne Shore (1:57:42), Abi Arnott (1:58:37), Elaine Garton (2:07:36) and Suzanne Birley (2:21:28).

The Cressbrook Crawl, Fri 11th May

On Friday May 11th Neil Jaggard travelled to Cressbrook in the dark peak to compete in the Crawl, a 6.5 mile fell run with 1100 feet of climbing. Not having done this run before was the 140 mile round trip worth it? In atrocious conditions (much worse than was to follow at the weekend) and conditions underfoot treacherous, 85 runners left the Cressbrook Club uphill before a long descent to the river valley. Over the river, the first big climb saw a snake of runners ascending at snail's pace and magnificent views even through the torrential rain. Another downhill before a long climb up the next hill and across the moors and back along the river before the sting of the mile long climb to the finish. Finishing time of 67 mins for 64th place. Entry fee £4 with a free beer at the end. Was it worth it? What do you think?

London Marathon, Sun 22nd Apr

Great result for Nicola Clay finishing 14th in the London Marathon in a club record of 2.46.25. The later start for the main race meant that the other Striders suffered the extremely warm conditions through the afternoon with mixed results. Most were outside their target times. Good runs though from Chris Southam, Natalie Fryer, Paul Kerr and Richard Grey. Tim Hicks fell at the speed bumps after the first mile, resulting in various cuts and a knee injury, and the usual cramp later slowed him to a walk.

Women

14 Nicola Clay 2.46.25
 622 Natalie Fryer 3.38.05
 1061 Katherine Hughes 3.51.03
 1186 Vicki Lowe 3.53.31
 3969 Louise Hargrave 4.39.11

Men

148 Chris Southam 2.41.15
 2134 Paul Kerr 3.18.34
 2978 Richard Gray 3.27.25
 4259 Tim Hicks 3.38.15
 4390 Phil Douglas 3.39.11
 17633 Wayne Hackett 4.58.31



Belvoir half marathon, Sun 8th Apr

12 Nicola Clay 1.19.19
37 Darren Glover 1.24.21
103 Phil Douglas 1.32.18
127 Richard Gray 1.34.01
137 Natalie Fryer 1.34.30
142 Steve Dewick 1.35.00
250 Darryl Woolward 1.42.24
275 Vicki Lowe 1.44.01
280 Martin Miles 1.44.48
331 Louise Hargrave 1.49.02
384 Ian Mason 1.52.27
385 Kirsty Ainscough 1.52.31
458 Matt King 1.58.35
466 Jenny Miles 1.59.00
469 Liz Wildman 1.59.14
509 Joanne Shore 2.03.01

Nicola, Natalie, and Vicki won the ladies' team event.

Cape Town half marathon, Sun 8th Apr

Gary Christmas competed in the Two Oceans Half Marathon in Cape Town, which ran in conjunction with the ultra marathon (35 miles). A total of nearly 20,000 runners competed in the two races, with the ultra race running alongside the Indian and Atlantic Oceans. The race started at 6.00am to avoid the extreme heat, which would have affected the ultra runners but even early in the morning it was getting very warm. The atmosphere was electric for the whole race with huge crowds watching the runners and Gary was pleased with his finishing time of 1hour 51min over an undulating course.



Kibworth 6, Sun 25th Mar

Nicola Clay was crowned Champion of the Leicestershire Road Running Winter Series by claiming first position at the Kibworth six mile event. She finished in 36:15, one minute in front of the second lady and five places in front of defending champion Kate Ramsey. Inspired by Clay's individual performance, the ladies continued to show their form with Viki Lowe (46:08) in an excellent 23rd position out of 88, along with Kirsty Ainscough (48:12) 33rd assisting Louise Hargrave (48:12) to a superb 34th finish in her debut race. Abi Arnott (51:54) completed the ladies' results in 52nd place. Although the ladies

finished fourth on the day they remain in third position in the league overall.

In the men's section Darren Glover (35:18) finished 15th, with Christian Davidson (37:56) edging up the finishing positions in 51st spot of 253, Tim Hicks (38:32), suffering from a cold, struggled to 65th, John Cresswell (40:14) showed signs of returning to form in 85th, Phil Douglas (40:43) was 94th, Stewart Owen (41:53) 117th, Ian Mason (45:46pb) 178th, Darryl Woolward (48:11) 205 and Harvey Hopwood (49:15) 216th.

Ashby 20, Sun 18th Mar

As part of their London Marathon preparation, a group of Stiders took part in the Ashby 20. A two lap, undulating 20 mile out and back course around Ashby. The weather was cold and windy, with occasional hail storms. But this did not stop Nicola Clay winning the race and smashing the course record by over three minutes to post a new personal best and Stilton record time of 2:06:42. Taking advantage of Nicola's pole position the ladies, Natelie Fryer (2:28:17), Nat Hughes (2:30:00) and Vicki Lowe (2:43:40) ran away with the ladies team prize as well. In the men's section Chris Southam (1:56:25) took second position (also a club record) along with an excellent run by Paul Kerr (2:12:52), Phil Douglas (2:27:03) and Wayne Hackett (2:52:00). Bad luck for Chris Genes though - he had to drop out at 14 miles with a recurring knee problem.

Desford 10K, Sun 11th Mar

The fourth Leicestershire Road Running League Race took place on 11 March with a 10k race at Desford. Nicola Clay once again led what has become the strongest Stilton ladies team in over a decade. A 2nd place finish for Nicola (36:52), with Natalie Fryer 18th (43:28), Vicki Lowe 30th (46:25), Abi Arnott 51st (50:09pb), and Liz Beazley 73rd (53:16pb), the team has now moved up to third position in the 24 team league.

Both the senior and veteran men's teams lie in 6th position in their respective Division One leagues. Hopefully we will be able to improve on these positions during the summers stage of the season if some of our leading runners are able to return. First man home was Chris Southam (33:56) in 2nd position and Darren Glover (36:01) 14th. Tim Hicks knocked a minute of his best for the distance to get his best league finish of 31st (37:04pb). Christian Davidson (38:55pb) was 65th, Phil Douglas (40:24) 97th, John Cresswell, returning from injury (41:00) 114th, Stewart Owen (41:37) 127th, Steve McGarry (41:52) 131st, Matt King (41:57pb) 132nd, Darryl Woolward (45:55) 209th, Ian Mason (46:21pb) 214th, Gary Christmas (46:41) 227th, and Harvey Hopwood (47:54), 240th.

Newton's Fraction 1/2 Marathon, Sun 11th Mar

Three Stiders travelled to Grantham to race the Newton's Fraction half marathon, over an undulating course that included three miles of canal towpath and two extreme hills at Woolsthorpe and Barrowby. Running his first half marathon, Gary Postle finished in an excellent 1:39:58, just in front of Chris Genes (1:40:04) and Wayne Hackett (1:43:17pb).

Cloud Nine, Congleton, Cheshire, Sun 4th Mar

Gale force winds, driving rain, biting sleet and poor visibility on the hill tops greeted Neil Jaggard amongst 300 runners in this year's Cloud Nine - a 9 mile (ish) fell race with a 950 foot climb to the top of Bosley Cloud. The hill was so named following a visit to Congleton by the renowned actor Tom Bos-

ley of Father Brown and Mr Cunningham (in Happy Days) fame.

Setting off along the Biddulph Valley trail we headed across the fields now masquerading as swamps to the bottom of the cloud up a narrow boulder strewn track to the bleak and windswept trig point to be greeted by 2 marshalls who had drawn the short straw. The descent through the woods was a pleasant relief before more fields with ankle deep mud and a further steep climb into the quarry and the 5 mile mark in --- wait for it 58 mins. With all the hard work behind me, some easy tracks, boggy fields, a short road section and the disused railway line meant the last 4 miles were covered in a brisk 34 minutes to complete the course in 1 hour 32 mins 25 secs. A 3 minute improvement on last year. A good event with good changing facilities and soup and roll afterwards.

Markfield 10k, Sun 25th Feb

The third race in the LRRL series, hosted by Beaumont Leys RC, took place on a very undulating course at Markfield 10K. Nicola's winning time of 37.19 for the 10k helped the ladies team to third place, and the team is in 4th place overall. The team comprised Natalie Fryer (26th in 45.16), Vicki Lowe (32nd in 46.34), and Kirsty Ainscough (39th in 47.19) and Abbie Arnott (69th in 52.00).

In the men's race Darren Glover, 21st in 37.10, was first home for the Striders in the absence of Chris Southam, followed by Tim Hicks (37th in 38.06), Christian Davidson (83rd in 40.20), Steve Dewick (98th in 41.18), Richard Gray (99th in 41.23), Phil Douglas (with foot injury) (103rd in 41.34), Steve McGarry (83rd in 43.00), Darryl Woolward (197th in 46.01), Clive Wright (46.28), Ian Mason (48.33) and a welcomed return for Harvey Hopwood (49.46). With these performances we have dropped into the bottom half of the league and with the league changing from two divisions to three divisions next year Striders must stay in the top half to avoid relegation.

Belvoir Challenge, Sat 24th Feb

Several Striders took part in the Belvoir Challenge starting from Harby in the Vale of Belvoir. The course for the 26 mile race rose up along the Belvoir Escarpment towards Goadby Marwood and then through the villages of Waltham, Croxton Kerrial, Woolsthorpe, passing Belvoir Castle, on the way to Eaton and back to Harby. The route took the runners through wet, mud-strewn fields. Gary Christmas's GPS showed 29 miles by the time he returned to Harby in a time of 5hrs 59mins.

The 15 mile course passed through Eaton, Branston, Belvoir Woods and took the runners along the Grantham Canal. Steve Dewick finished in 2hrs 14min, with Natalie Fryer (2.23), Sui Cushing (2.43), Wayne Hackett (2.47), Elaine Garton (3.10), Joanne Shore (3.12), Susanne Birley (3.18), and Tina Harkin (3.35).

Ashby 5, Sun 11th Feb

The second Leicestershire Road Running League Race took place at Ashby on Sunday. The five mile race is the shortest in the series and gave the runners an opportunity to open up their stride length and run at a faster overall pace. This certainly worked well for Nicola Clay (29:30 club record) who took top spot in the ladies' section with Kirsty Ainscough (37:58) a fine 33rd, Abi Arnott (40:39) 52nd and Liz Beazley (46:00) 99th. In the men's section Darren Glover (29:03) was first home in 15th position with Nick Brown (29:53) 32nd, Christian Davidson (30:54) in an excellent 49th spot, Richard Gray (31:46) 72nd, Phil Douglas (32:33) 95th, Clive Wright (34:37) 143rd, Matt King (34:51) 147th and Darryl Woolward (36:20) 193rd. Completing the team were Wayne Hackett (36:41), Ian Mason (37:52) and Ron Grove (38:25).

Stamford 30k, Sun 11th Feb

Six Striders tackled the Stamford St. Valentine's 30k road race, run over a very testing undulating course as preparations for the London Marathon gathered pace. Chris Southam ran a good race to finish 4th (1:48:13) in a field of almost 600 and was first veteran 40. Tim Hicks (2:05:45) continued to show his fine form by finishing in 46th place just in front of Paul Kerr (2:06:50) in 55th place. Steve Dewick finished 100th (2:14:05) to complete the team of four that finished second overall based on cumulative score, a mere 35 seconds behind the winners Long Eaton. Chris Genes was 241st (2:31:14) and Vicki Lowe 257th (2:32:43).

Charnwood Hills, Sun 4th Feb

Sunday saw the running of the Charnwood Hills 13.5 mile off road race, which is billed as the 'toughest race in Leicestershire' and the event lived up to its reputation. Starting in temperatures just below freezing, the 350 plus runners set off from Anstely towards Bradgate Park and the ascent of Old John. The course then followed part of the Leicestershire Round towards Woodhouse Eaves then via Broomsbrigg Hill to the top of Beacon Hill. By the time the runners started the return route back to Anstey the sun had thawed the ground to make the last few miles difficult through the deep mud. First Strider home in 4th position overall was Chris Southam (1:24:40), followed by Steve Dewick (1:47:32). Natalie Fryer ran an excellent 1:52:19, with Chris Genes 2:00:21, Vicki Lowe 2:01:21 and Sui Cushing 2:09:17 making up the contingent.

Folksworth 15, Sun 21st Jan

Nicola Clay was the first lady in the Folksworth 15, finishing in 1.31.30. Results here.

Barrow 6, Sun 14th Jan

Despite knocking a remarkable one and a half minutes off her own club record (held since 1995), Nicola Clay's time of 34:51 for the Barrow 6 mile race (the opening Leicestershire Road Running League event), was only good enough for second spot behind international runner Beth Eburne of Hinckley AC (33:48). Supporting Nicola were debutant Natalie Fryer (42:51) 23rd, Vicki Lowe (45:03pb) 37th, another debutant Pippa Hicks (45:30pb) 49th, and Liz Beazley (53:23) 117. The ladies' team achieved fifth place, one of our best results in the LRRL in recent years.

Chris Southam also produced a pb (32:09) to finish in third place and first veteran. Next Strider home was Paul Kerr in 26th place also in a pb (35:21) and he was closely followed by Darren Glover (35:27) 27th. Tim Hicks was fourth Strider home (36:26) 47th, with Steve Dewick (37:18) 63rd, Christian Davidson (38:10) 83rd, Richard Grey (38:15pb) 87th and Phil Douglas (40:04) 130th. Supporting the team were Steve McGarry (40:25), Stewart Owen (41:23), Chris Genes (41:36), Matt King (41:41pb), Clive Wright (42:46), Wayne Hackett (45:10pb), Darryl Woolward (45:38), Alistar Bishuty (46:09), Ron Grove (47:54) and Ian Mason (48:19). The men's team finished third overall and the vets were fifth. Full results.

Ropsley Raid, Sun 7th Jan

Gary Christmas travelled to Ropsley near Grantham to do the Ropsley Raid. Approximately 13 mile of cross country. Conditions were very muddy with a biting wind. Gary was pleased with his time of 2hrs 15mins.

Leicestershire and Rutland Cross Country Championships, Sat 6th Jan

The cross country championships were held at Brocks Hill Country Park in Oadby and a handful of Striders braved the weather for what turned out to be some excellent races. Rain started falling during the first race and continued on and off for most of the afternoon with the result that much of the course rapidly turned to mud - a good pair of spikes was essential. Emma Brown and Briony Bendle were the first Striders to set foot on and unravel the complicated course in the U15 girls race (4.3 k). Good recent form in the schools' league races brought a fine bronze medal run for Emma in 19.36. Briony was 8th in 20.31. Anne Brindley flew the flag for the club in the senior and vets ladies' race (7k) and finished a fine 12th (4th vet). Liz Mellor (12th in 13.55) and Jasmin Southam (18th in 14.58) ran in the U13 girls' race (3k). The club put in a much better showing in the senior and vet men's race (10k). Chris Southam was 9th and 3rd vet in 38.40 and Tim Hicks continued his recent good form finishing 37th and 16th vet in 43.56. Next home was Tim Legge in 54th place and 28th vet in 45.41 to complete a vets team that finished 2nd overall. Christian Davidson was hot on Tim's heels to finish 55th in 45.47. Steve Dewick was 70th in 48.35 and Chris Genes was 79th in 51.35. Full results.