



SERPENTINES

AUTUMN 2006



INSIDE

The Serpentine Interview:
Karen Hancock

Helvellyn Tri

Plus

- Annie Emmerson
- London Marathon 22 Years On
- Track and Field 2006



Relief at surviving Prague marathon, 2003 (photo: Ian Hodge)

I have to admit to a tinge of pride when I saw the spring 2006 issue of *Serpentines* in print. I had hoped for some time to print the magazine in colour and from what many of you have said, I think the new look is a real success.

Whether it's the prospect of seeing your photos in colour or general summer madness I'm not sure, but something prompted several of you to offer articles for this issue. It also seems that the more challenging the event, the more likely Serpies are to write about their experiences. Hence you can read about the triathlon challenges of Rachel Powell at the Helvellyn tri, Mark

THE EDITOR SPEAKS

Richardson's Wimbleball half Ironman and Lars Menken in his first Ironman event. Just when I was starting to worry that those of us who merely run were in the minority, Alex Marklew's Snowdon race report reached me; not that running up Snowdon can be described as merely running, by any stretch of the imagination.

Someone else, who can by no means be described as a mere runner, is Karen Hancock. I'm delighted that Karen agreed to talk to Juliet Allan for the Serpentine interview. Karen not only currently tops the 2006 club championship table, but is also a valued member of our coaching team. We're very lucky to have access to the wealth of knowledge of our Serpie coaches as well as the advice of many experienced runners and triathletes. The views of Charles Doxat and Debbie Edwards, as well as Annie Emmerson's advice to Leila Hudson, show there are differing opinions and they've certainly given me food for thought. And if

you're looking for inspiration to keep your training going, you need look no further than Andy Lloyd's determination to return to running.

The end of summer brings the winter three parks route, but also the start of the cross-country season. If you're a regular cross-country fan, you'll already have your spikes greased and ready to go. If you're new to it, Malcolm French's article tells you everything you need to know to join your Serpie friends for what's a great way to spend winter weekends – far more fun than Christmas shopping.

I must thank everyone who has written and/or sent in photos for this issue. Finally, my heartfelt thanks go to Steve Brett for his superb design and patience with my seemingly never-ending requests for copy changes.

I hope you enjoy our autumn issue.

Sally Hodge

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Lock Up Your Porridge (or Hancock's half marathon)

by Juliet Allan

My heart rate's up as I step out of the train at Westcombe Park on a sultry August Saturday lunchtime. I'm on my way to interview Karen Hancock and I'm horrendously late. I'm gripping a small bunch of Serpie-coloured flowers I've brought by way of apology and thanks for her time. But it's not just my lateness that's making me nervous. I'll come straight out and admit it: I'm intimidated by Karen. And a quick look at the results database that morning has done little to allay my fear.

She ushers me into a calm and tidy Victorian house, and kindly plays down the fact that I've kept her waiting. I say a quick hello to Rory (or "The Young Master" as she affectionately calls him) before diving in at the deep end and rewarding her kindness by telling her I'm scared of her. (I have a way with people, you see). I comment on her amazing string of 80-something per cent performances. "Yeah. I've done quite well this year" she admits. She got her first 80% age-graded performance (1:30:55) at the Milton Keynes half just before the 2005 London marathon and was "absolutely amazed and delighted". Since then (injury permitting) there's been no stopping her.

It all started back in the mid-1960s. It was Karen's first PE lesson at Lowestoft Grammar school and the girls were sent on a two-mile cross-country run. The thought would be enough to make many 11-year-olds hide in the changing rooms, but not so Karen. She returned way ahead from a bracing run down to the beach and back up a steep hill. "That was the first time in my life I realised I was good at something." Her athletic success fitted in well with her self-image as "a bit of a tomboy". A lot of other girls were already wearing makeup and dating. In a way, the revelation that she was a talented runner felt like a sort of pay-off. Karen was spotted by one of the boys' PE teachers when she won all the track races at her first school sports day. He persuaded her to join the local athletics club and coached her at lunchtimes. Her passion for running lasted right through secondary school.

Then, early in the '70s, she went to the LSE to read economics. She started smoking and running went out of the window. Cigarettes maintained the upper hand through a master's degree, an abandoned year of DPhil studies in Oxford and a spell as a school teacher (which was "too much like hard work"). Even pregnancy failed to stem her tobacco cravings. But at 28, six months after the birth of her daughter, Lucy, Karen kicked the habit, and what could reinforce the benefits better



Karen in Lanzarote, 2006 (photo: Leila Hudson)

than starting to run again? Three months in, she ran her first 10k and then tackled the Glasgow marathon the next September. She trained herself, using Bob Glover's *The Competitive Runner's Handbook* and came in in 3:22. Noticing that she'd beaten most of the women back to the changing rooms she realised that she "must be quite good at this marathon lark".

In the meantime, she became (the only female) lecturer in economics at the University of Strathclyde. A brief interlude as a consultant in a large accountancy firm well and truly put her off the private sector. She hated the culture, the hours and the lifestyle (not helped by being a single parent by then). She retreated into a research fellowship at Glasgow university. The fantastic sports facilities and congenial running community were ideal and when Karen came down to London in 1989 for her third marathon, she clocked her PB of 3:03. She began to train seriously, hoping to better her time the following year but, thrilled to be invited to run for Scotland in a 15k road race in Naples a month before, she ignored her coach's advice and ran. The hilly course injured her and she had to pull out of London. Thoroughly disheartened, she threw in the marathon towel.

Karen became an economist in the Scottish Office Department of Health in Edinburgh later that year and has been happy as a civil servant ever since. She started accompanying her daughter

to races, content to improve her own times at shorter distances, and lower mileage gave her more time to do other things. She studied and wrote about film (particularly film noir). She fell in love, got married and Rory arrived. But, watching her daughter in a Christmas cross country race a month after Rory's birth, she realised she had to get back fully into running and it wasn't long before she was dashing with the pram to start lines.

Karen bid Scotland farewell after 20 years when, in 2000, she moved to London to be with her then partner, a Serpie. Bit by bit she began to feel that, if she trained sensibly, she could do a marathon again. She joined Serpentine in 2003 and stunned herself the next year when, after a 15-year gap, she ran Copenhagen quite comfortably in 3:16. She started on the championship start in London in 2005 and pulled it off in an amazing 3:07. "It was absolutely fantastic not being impeded by people." From 18 miles onwards she was constantly overtaking people and her spirits rose and rose. That was days before her 50th birthday. She was first woman over 45 and the result ranked her third in Britain. She rounded off a fabulous year's running by clocking 1:28:45 (her first sub-1:30 since her mid-thirties) in a frosty St Neot's half marathon in November.

Karen famously wears racing shoes for marathons. She thinks, it saves a minute or two, though she wouldn't recommend them for people taking over four hours or for heavier runners. "You do feel more like you're racing, you know, instead of just plodding. You feel so light on your feet."

Frustratingly, a persistent chest infection robbed her of the chance to shine again in London this year, but her sensational run (2:15) in the Bramley 20 was some consolation. It gave her a great boost and put her at the head of the British 20-mile rankings, where she remains. And Bramley was more than just a running landmark: Karen set a new fashion. She suffers from Raynaud's syndrome – a circulatory problem that she confesses has made her hands so cold it's reduced her to tears. Put off medicine by the potential side-effects, she'd considered everything, right down to heavy battery-heated gloves. But it was a humble pair of ski mittens that eventually did the trick. (They weren't pink by choice, honest.) She claims that they make her look a bit like a boxer, but she doesn't care. She never races in anything other than a crop-top and shorts. "So if you ever see this strange woman running in winter with almost nothing on but with a huge pink pair of ski mittens..."

Serpentine is different from her three previous clubs. For a start, there's the demographic: mostly single 25 to 50-year olds. "Most don't have kids, which I think is sort of very sad for them. One of the great joys of my life is my children" she says. "The team spirit of the Serpies is just amazing. The way people encourage and support each other. It's like an extended friendship network." She makes brunch for her long run companions; they, in turn, help her out when she's baffled by technology (if Rory's not there to help her). People have different talents and you begin to learn more about people than just their running.

And then there's the coaching. "I absolutely love it" she says, her face lighting up. She took it up when she was injured in the 1990s. Then, a couple of years ago, she and her partner decided



Crop top and mittens (photo: Nadya Labib)

to start hill sessions in Greenwich park, which was more convenient for them than west London. She was terrified no-one would come at first. "It was like having a party." But they took off. She admits that people travel quite a long way for them now. "The nice thing about the hill session is I feel it's really mine." She puts a lot of thought into it and it gives her a real buzz. And she's met so many people. A small long run group has formed in the area too. "The joy of coaching is that you get so thrilled when people you've helped improve." It's not quite as good as setting your own personal best, but it's a close second. She coaches Rory twice a week, by phone when he's in Edinburgh. And she's loved being the club's running coach in Lanzarote. I suggest that she probably inspires people – not just by coaching but by doing so well. She looks almost bashful, but admits that I'm not the first person to have said that.

"I do get very worried about women worrying about their safety when running" she says. She's encountered all sorts of surprising things, from flashers to packs of Alsations. She still gets wolf-whistles sometimes. But the most scary thing she's come across was her first flasher "and he was busy flashing; he wasn't really interested in me. Anyway, he wasn't going to run very fast with his trousers round his knees". The second time, she just laughed. Obviously there have been women murdered when running, but it's so rare. It is dangerous running with

headphones, though: you should have all your senses. She likes to encourage women to run – especially those who think there's something frightening about it or who are worried about being laughed at. "There are so many people out running these days. Nobody's looking at you." London's such a melting pot. "You see much stranger sights than a slightly over-weight middle-aged woman out in her running shorts."

And she can't relate to people who don't push themselves. "They don't seem to want to experience that level of pain." She likes coaching people who are prepared to put the effort in. She doesn't care how slow they are. "It's their attitude that's important. It's not going to be comfortable all the time." She admits she's very competitive herself. "I really like beating blokes in races" she says, with a bit of a twinkle. "I don't often go out with men who run faster than me." But she still gets very nervous before races, especially road races, which are her forte. She likes everything except 10ks. ("They're so hard to do well in. You have to run so hard for so long.") And there's nothing as satisfying as doing a good marathon. The training and the focus motivate you for so long. It's only afterwards, though, that she thinks about age-grading and prizes. In the race itself her focus is on the person closest to her, whatever age and sex. Her focus can be unnerving to the uninitiated. A friend who supported her in the North Downs 30k was perturbed by her failure to acknowledge him round the course. "Have you got any concept of what it's like in my head when I'm racing?" she retorted. She knows that some people can smile and wave when they're racing but she just can't do it.

Karen only has to look at other people her age to feel hugely motivated. She thinks that as people get older and more comfortable, they start to take it a bit easier, then out come the elasticated waistbands and that's the beginning of the end. She suspects it happens more often to people who are in settled relationships: it's easy to stop making the effort and caring quite so much. But there's nothing inevitable about middle-age spread. It's a sign, she thinks, that you've given up the unequal struggle. And it's a struggle worth struggling with. She can run about with her kids and doesn't have to sit on the sidelines. She's very much a morning person. She goes to bed early, wakes up full of energy and does most of her training before work (concentrating on weights and core stability when she's injured). Although Rory says he finds it "kind of scary" waking up to find his mother already doing the cleaning, he grins and nods assent to my suggestion that it's pretty cool having such a fit mum.

Lunch, which we've been eating as we chat is all good and healthy. "I always count my calories, I'm afraid" she confesses. "Oh, is that going to go in the interview?" She explains that she worries people might regard her as a bit obsessive. But with last night's giant ice cream sundae fresh in my mind, I can't help thinking I might take a leaf out of her book. "Everything in moderation" she says. In fact she's a bit suspicious of people who eat a lot of pumpkin seeds and drink pomegranate juice, or whatever the latest fad is. She's lucky to love vegetables and only drinks socially. But she does like cake and she cites protein-rich ice cream and yoghurt as great recovery foods.

Which brings me rather neatly round to the matter of the porridge. It was the 2005 London marathon. Karen was optimistic but nervous. She'd spent the day before loafing around. Dinner was risotto (her favourite carbo-loading food). Before bed she went methodically through everything – her number, her chip, her socks. She weighed out her special porridge – 45g oats, 330ml water (no milk), seven Canderel tablets and a handful of raisins and some salt (how could anyone resist?) But her anxiety showed through when she woke herself and the rest of the household screaming "Andy Reeves has stolen my porridge!" She knew that Andy (a good friend who was, incidentally, nowhere near) was a fellow pre-race porridge eater and since porridge had been the last thing on her mind before she went to sleep...

But it's not all hard grind. She does find time to relax. She's sailed a lot with her father, including trips round the coast of Cuba and through the Azores. She enjoys reading and has a penchant for adventure stories, returning to her self-description as a bit of a tom-boy. She still loves cinema and is excited about the new Greenwich Picture House, right on her doorstep. If she weren't an economist, she'd like to do something in the fitness industry. But she's quite senior now, and she finds an outlet for her coaching strengths as Head of Profession for the economists in the Department of Education. I ask what would make her really happy. There's no hesitation. "For my injuries to be cured. And I guess I still hanker after a sub-three marathon." Her Bramley performance has renewed her hope. But she wouldn't retire. There's always another goal and you're only as good as your last race.

Rory's watch lets out an alarming beep and I fear my time's up. But Karen happily shows me round her lovely house. Her hallway's lined with framed running photos (including a particularly treasured one which Serpie friends gave her for her 50th birthday). She shows me her trophies, her weights, her substantial collection of running shoes. Rory shows me his room, adorned with pictures of Paula Radcliffe and Kelly Holmes. Then we have another coffee and a relaxed chat before I head back to the station, wondering why I'd been so scared.



New Year's Day 10k, 2005 (photo: David Knight)

Never Say Never

by Andy Lloyd

On the day that Andrew Lloyd won the 1992 Sydney half marathon in 64.02, Andy Lloyd finished some 60 places back in a shade over 81 minutes. Four years later, after suffering a massive stroke, learning to walk again was the order of the day and that PB a distant memory.

I had just finished surfing and walked up the hill to my house in Sydney, Australia, and got into the shower. It had been a particularly notable event as it was my first surf since the birth of Jasper, my son, some 10 days prior. All I wanted was to rid the salty taste from my mouth and put on some warm clothes. I never got that far. It came on me like a ton of bricks. I felt this warm tingling sensation which started from my toes and engulfed my body, until I collapsed a few seconds later. A few hours later in accident & emergency, I had my second attack, which was far more serious and I lapsed in and out of consciousness, slipping in and out of coma for the next few days. When I had stabilised, after about three weeks, I was transferred to a recovery hospital, and so started the therapy. I was still unable to walk; this was not to change for months.

It would have been so easy for me to give up but Victoria (my wife) wouldn't let me. She was now constantly looking after our son and running our restaurant business and I wasn't going to give her the extra burden of a disabled husband. I was in no doubt that I had to learn to walk and talk again. So, my rehabilitation began. I would lie in my hospital bed and mimic the movement of my left arm with my right and then with my legs. Slowly but surely I had the strength and co-ordination to walk, but it was painstakingly slow and frustrating. I just kept thinking 'why do I need to put myself through this torture?' but Victoria would arrive with our son and a smile and I knew why.

After a couple of months I could, after a fashion, walk again, thanks to heavy physiotherapy. Once I could move without support I found that the whole learning process became faster. All of a sudden I could do things for myself again and I liked it. The more I could do, the more I wanted to do.

The hospital itself was set between three golf courses, overlooking the ocean, with lots of room to walk and feel free. The increasing freedom as I progressed through rehabilitation gave me purpose but I still needed the safety of the hospital and all its machines and nurses. My first day trip away from the hospital was incredibly traumatic; I had a real fear of losing my safety net but with the support of my family I gradually overcame this.

Therapy continued long after I had left hospital, and I made the long trek on public transport two or three times a week. As soon as I could walk, you couldn't stop me, and what a blessing it was to have Jasper's pushchair to give me balance. If I kept hold of this I couldn't fall over, could I? Hmmmm. The physiotherapy was great; they had me trying to run in the gym and round purpose-built obstacle courses outside but never did I think I'd be running half marathons again.



Andy on the first run, T2 duathlon 2006
(photo: Sally Hodge)

After a couple of years I was able to hold down a job (I had given the restaurant business the flick and returned to the less physically-demanding occupation of computer programming) and life was ticking along nicely. There were still tricky moments, like when my boss threw a set of keys for me to catch and I contorted to bring my left arm in front of my body to catch them, whilst trying to look as natural as possible. By this stage, I had realised that writing with my right hand was going to be impossible, so I switched to be a lefty. Also, my brain had forgotten it had a right side, so every now and then I would walk into walls for no apparent reason!

At this stage, I didn't really have any sort of training regime, just run and cycle as much as I was able. But I did have goals. My first target was to complete a half marathon within five years of the stroke. This I did in May 2001, the Sydney half again, just four weeks inside my self-imposed deadline, in a time of around 93 minutes. Thinking back, my training for the event started in earnest some six months earlier and consisted of the normal build up you would expect, but with longer periods of rest after longer runs. The feeling as I came down towards the Sydney harbour bridge to finish the race was awesome. I couldn't believe I'd done it. I'd worked so hard to recover mobility that this was beyond the realms of my expectations and the feeling was sweet. So sweet, in fact, that I wanted to repeat the sensation again and again.

Having regained my confidence, and knowing my abilities were up to the task, I was looking for a further challenge. Then a work colleague mentioned duathlon. I used to cycle road race so I

figured I could do that. And that's where Serpentine comes in. Joining the club has given me a focus that I didn't have before – a sense of purpose to my training like a mad person. Realisation that, despite what my wife says to the contrary, there are, rather worryingly, other people in the world who are just like me. I finished the T2 full course duathlon in May 2006, in a time of 02:28:43, just prior to the 10th anniversary of my stroke.

Each race, however, comes at a price. I am completely drained for days afterwards. Maybe this is down to the stroke, maybe it's down to old age but whatever the reason, I don't like it!

What's my next challenge? To run 10km in less than 40 minutes would be an immediate aim, but I'm thinking of trying my luck back with cycling in the LVRC road race series next season.

My advice to any person supporting a stroke victim would be keep hounding them to within an inch of their lives, keep pressurising them to achieve more, have new experiences, live life again. But remember, what once would have been very easy could now be an almost impossible task, so be realistic.

And for anyone reading this who has just suffered a debilitating stroke, surround yourself with positive thinking people, and no, you can't borrow my wife!



*On course for a sub 2:30, T2 duathlon
(photo: Sally Hodge)*



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Annie Emerson

by Leila Hudson

Leila Hudson managed to catch up with Annie Emerson and found out what it takes to turn into a world-class athlete.

LH: I had heard that you were retiring in 2004 but you appear to have ended 2005 as the World No 1 duathlete. Some retirement!

AE: My run had been really strong in 2001 & 2002, both in running races and triathlons/duathlons. Running has always been my best and favourite discipline, and after running a 1:12 half marathon I decided to try for the marathon at the Athens Olympics. But I got injured and had to give up the hope of competing there, so rather than turn back to tri, which I felt I had already done and wanted to move on from, I turned to duathlon. After finishing number 1 in the World Series in 2005 I felt it was the right time to retire and follow a different career. It's been a tough decision, but the right one. I've had over 10 great years in the sport, but I've trained very hard and now was probably the right time to give my body a good rest. Well, sort of – I have a trek to Everest base camp this October!

LH: Which was your best and most memorable win last year?

AE: Oh, that would be the long distance duathlon in Italy (15k run, 80k bike, 7.5k run). I won a bronze medal. My dad had died a month beforehand – he was due to come with me to watch and support. It was a really tough race for obvious reasons, so I was really happy to win a medal in memory of my dad. He had come to so many of my races; he was my number one fan.

LH: Let's go back a while then. How did it all begin? How did you get involved in triathlon to start with?

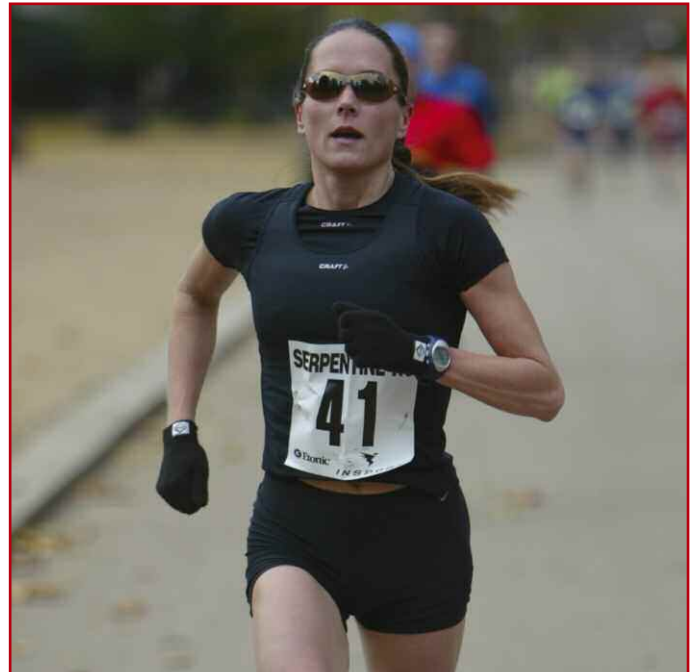
AE: To be honest, I was 21 years old working in sales & marketing in London and quite frankly, I was a big partygoer!! Basically I woke up every morning with a hangover; I'm not kidding, it was so easy to go out drinking every night and I just wanted to have fun.

LH: What changed?

AE: I got fed up of waking up every day hung over, so I decided to start swimming to get fit. I thought that if I swam before work, it would force me to go home early and get some rest the night before. I met some triathletes at the pool and it sort of took off from there. I did my first triathlon aged 24 and improved really quickly. Within my first year of competing I'd finished third in the national championships and was getting quite a lot of recognition. I thought that maybe I could get quite good at this so I started racing internationally. By 1997, I was winning international races and it pretty much kicked off from there. But the one thing that held me back was the swim – I hated it; I'd feel sick before a race and it never got any better.

LH: So how did you overcome this?

AE: I don't think I ever did. At the start of every race I'd find myself saying 'I never want to do this again'. But I did, although it has to be



Annie winning the Serpentine LFOTM5k, November 2005 (photo: David Knight)

said swimming was a big challenge – it's tough when you find yourself racing against ex-Olympic swimmers! It became tougher when they made drafting legal, but in races with tough bike and run courses I could make up the deficit. The flat courses would be tough for me though, especially if I lost too much time on the swim.

LH: What was the problem?

AE: I didn't start swimming until I was 21 and, although I trained really hard and swam well in the pool, I lacked confidence at the races. I just hated the start, the fight with other swimmers, being pulled under; it's quite a scary experience really.

LH: Fair enough, but it didn't hold you back that much. You won 10 European cup races and got bronze at the European Championships a very short space of time after taking up the sport. In 2002 you won Half Ironman UK, so next step, surely, was a full course Ironman?

AE: No way, I think that it is completely mad. Ironman is just so nuts. I just couldn't deal with those six-hour bike rides.

LH: When you were in your peak training mode, what was your year plan?

AE: I'd be at home with my family from October to February, then, depending on races; I'd spend the rest of the year in Switzerland, Brazil, Spain or Australia. It made training much more bearable and enjoyable to train with others in such a great team environment. I spent a lot of time in Switzerland with my coach Brett Sutton who had a very positive influence on my career.

LH: What would be a typical week during this period?

AE: In my tri training days it would normally consist of three sessions a day of a swim, bike and run for six days with one day off.

LH: So you would take one day off?

AE: Well, I'd do a one-hour run, but that was all, so yes, you could call it a day off!

LH: What would the training sessions be in that week?

AE: A tough week was a 5k swim, 100k bike with a 10k run straight off the bike. I'd do this on Monday, Wednesday & Friday. Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday had a 3k swim, 25 x 400m on the track or 20 x 1k repeats on the treadmill, then a one-hour spin bike ride. You must remember, it's easier to train in an environment with 20 other athletes all striving for the same thing.

LH: What would you suggest were the "key" sessions in the three disciplines for those who work full time and try and train and compete in tri?

AE: I see so many people spending so much time doing swimming drills badly. Drills are good, but they have to be done well. What helps is getting the mileage in, and combining the mileage with drills, such as using hand paddles and pull buoys. When you get strong enough, tie a band around your ankles and just use your arms. Only do this when you're strong enough though, and keep the reps short. Long steady-state swims make you stronger and sprints are beneficial to increase your race pace.....(huge yawn).....

LH: Sorry, am I keeping you up? (It's 10am)

AE: (laughing) No sorry, I'm just knackered!

LH: Right, well carry on then...

AE: OK – the run tip: if you're a novice runner then find a group of runners and run with them. Your club, Serpentine, is perfect for this and it makes running so much more fun.

For the more experienced runner, the one key session is running up and down hills: either short or long reps. It's good for strength, fitness and, done on grass, helps prevent injury. Whatever you do though, always start gradually and build on speed, distance and time. This helps you stay away from injuries, which is the most common reason people underperform and miss races.

LH: So how can we avoid injuries, apart from being careful?

AE: Deep tissue massage is most beneficial, but more importantly, developing your core stability. This is what most people neglect and is probably the most important aspect of training – so get some good advice on core and glute strengthening exercises.

LH: What other run sessions would you suggest?

AE: For tri, the main one is to practise running off the bike. After your bike, try running for 20–30mins, which helps you get your muscles used to the transition. Also, something that works for many triathletes is a build session: doing 15 mins increments over an hour. The first 15 mins is easy, the next steady, the third is firm to hard and the last is pretty much as hard as you can go. It's a hard session but it works.

LH: Finally the bike?

AE: Simply get miles and miles of hills under your belt. One three-hour hilly ride is very beneficial. Everyone needs to get miles done on the bike.

LH: What's your view on marathon training? I read in *Runner's World* that you said "you don't need to run all the time to do well in a marathon; triathlon training can be just as effective and will avoid injury".

AE: In 2001 I spent most of the winter swimming in the pool five times a week trying to improve my swim for the tri. I was swimming with 15-year olds at Leatherhead swim club. I ran 50 miles a week maximum, did no track work and so hadn't pounded my legs. I entered a half marathon in March and after a few miles found myself in the lead. I finished it in 1hr 13 mins. Generally, those that do that sort of time do about 80 miles a week and certainly not all the pool work. I feel that I achieved that through all the swimming and cross training. When I did specifically train for a marathon, I ended up running myself into the ground. My view is that you don't have to. Do some good runs, but include the swim and bike. Just don't run, run, and run. It may run you flat. Also, the harder the mileage, the higher the risk of injury. I believe that you need to build gradually.

LH: What about diet? What's your view on protein, carbo and vitamin drinks?

AE: Your diet is important – as long as you have a well-balanced diet you don't need all these protein powders, vitamins and minerals. Just eat healthy: a bit of red meat once a week, lots of fresh fish, potatoes and salads. When you're racing, especially if it's hot, you might want an electrolyte drink. I found the PSP products worked well, but always try drinks in training before you race.

Protein drinks can work if you're flat out at work and don't have time to eat regular healthy meals, especially for people who are on the go, trying to combine work and training. Finally, people leave it far too late to get fluid and food inside them after training sessions. It's really important to start refuelling your body as soon as you finish each training session to help the recovery process.

LH: So Annie, you are now retired, what are you up to these days?

AE: This summer I've spent my time horse riding, water skiing and playing tennis! Fantastic fun and very relaxing – these are my new sports. But now I'm back working. I am doing a bit of tri coaching, sports massage and have just set up "The Winners Institute" with my boyfriend. The purpose is to work with different sports to improve performance. He's a neuro-scientist and currently we're working with a Formula 1 racing team. I help the drivers on fitness. So we're busy!

LH: Annie thanks so much for taking the time to talk to me today, sorry for keeping you awake, but can I just ask you what you'd say to budding triathletes or those that want to perform to the highest level possible?

AE: Well, I see so many athletes taking it so seriously; unless it's your job you have to have fun, you have to love training and racing. Don't make it your life and don't let it take over everything you do. The more relaxed and happy you are the more likely you are to succeed.

LH: Thanks Annie, finally, when can I book my massage?

AE: Whenever you like!

Warm Weather Training

by Urban Bettag

It's the usual scene at a running track on the Algarve coast on a hot afternoon. Belting out another 80-second quarter, one more lap looking straight into the sun and pushing hard against the howling gale in the home stretch – that's another repetition completed. With the legs still shaking and sweat running into the eyes, a glimpse at the watch reveals that only another 20 seconds are left before the next interval starts. Calves are aching after another lap, when suddenly a bystander walks into lane 1 without looking around. "Track!" someone shouts. Exhausted, but happy, that's the first track session completed. Then it's off to cool down the legs in the cold seawater before a few hours rest and the next run – five miles later on in the evening. Just another typical hard training day in Portugal.

I wanted to do some warm-weather training a few weeks before taking part in the 2006 Rotterdam marathon. I was principally looking for somewhere that offered flat running routes, suitable for quality, paced runs and a nearby track to do speed sessions. The Algarve is recognised as a great place to train, with its warm climate and good running routes. A few years ago the IAAF World Half Marathon Championships were held in Vilamoura and there is a well known international cross country race held there every year: the Almond Blossom XC meeting.

So, three weeks before the 2006 Rotterdam marathon I opted for a short, five-day stint of warm weather training at the Alfamar complex, which appeared to match all the criteria I was looking for. In terms of road running, there's quite a lot of choice at Alfamar: a flat, five-mile route, out and back to the marina in Vilamoura; another undulating six-mile, two-lap route around Falesia; or a 14-mile long run via Falesia to Vilamoura to Alfamar. Of course, any of those three runs can be combined.

There are two running tracks both easily accessible from Alfamar. The track nearest to the Alfamar complex is a four-lane track, which costs 5 euros to use. The charge includes use of the changing facilities, showers and also the gym, which has some dated weights equipment. This may be a little old, but, if you want to do some strength training, it's perfectly adequate. The other track is in Falesia, which is approximately 1.5 miles up the road from Alfamar. There are two cross-country courses close to the complex and there's another trail along the cliffs that is good for running. The beach is also good for running on.

In summary, the facilities at Alfamar were good. When I was there, a few other foreign running groups were also spending time on the Algarve, preparing for spring marathons. For example, Mike Gratton's group was based in Falesia. Joining in with any of the other training groups posed no problem. Amongst others, Lars Riedel the German discus thrower and five times world champion was training on most days on the multi-event field. He has been using the same facilities for many years with great success.



Urban, pre-Alfamar, club 1-mile championship, 2005
(photo: David Knight)

Alfamar is very accessible and my journey from London Gatwick to Faro and on to Alfamar went very smoothly. Would I go again? It was a good location with the facilities I needed, but on the other hand there are many other warm-weather training venues in Europe to try out. If any Serpies are thinking of going and would like information about running in Alfamar, please feel free to contact me.

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Acclimatisation

- Take it easy on your first day

Less is more

- Don't try to catch up with runs you've missed by adding extra runs into your training schedule at the camp

Recovery

- Rest, hydrate and eat well between training sessions

Triathlon Training – The Good News: Do Less (Maybe!)

by Charles Doxat

This article follows on from the last *Serpentines*. It is not aimed at the ‘titanium and lycra’ quasi-professional brigade! It is for runners contemplating their first triathlon, probably early summer next year: up to Olympic distance, but not further.

Maybe you’ve decided that bashing out the miles is not the best way to keep fit and injury free, and that just maybe multi-sports are more fun.

The good news is that you don’t have to do three times as much training! In fact, some distance runners (50+ mile per week) will only have to split their training time three ways.

There’s more good news: there is a fourth discipline in triathlon, and it’s not, as is often mentioned, ‘the transition’, which you’ll pick up as you progress. The fourth discipline is in fact Rest. What’s more, it’s the most important discipline.

As quoted in a recent edition of *Peak Performance* magazine: “the body does not get fitter through exercise, it gets fitter through recovery from exercise”. Indeed some athletes are starting to plan their regimes starting not with the workload required, but the recovery required. Because you can often achieve significant improvements in, say, your cycling or swimming performances when you start training, do not assume that increased training will bring yet more improvement. There is no geometric progression.

Hey, but there’s even more good news. There’s another huge advantage for cross training over running per se. Because swimming is non-weight bearing, it can be incorporated as part of your recovery routine.

For our purposes, I’m going to assume that typically you can run OK, cycled when you were young, but struggle with your swimming. So here’s the plan.

For swimming, as recommended previously, the focus must be on technique (drills). Your simple objective will be to swim a comfortable 1,500m in 1,500, individual front-crawl arm strokes in 1,500 seconds (pro rata for shorter distances).

This is a neat but very important year-one objective, and for many runners will require plenty of dedication. The heavy emphasis elite swimmers place on interval training is not relevant until you can achieve this standard. Check out: totalimmersion.co.uk; maximumswimming.com; swimfortri.com; and slipperyfish.co.uk.



The Serpie mini-tri in Lanzarote (photo: Lars Olsen)

For cycling, this writer believes you can get away with one decent ride (with your peer group) per week. Two to three hours should suffice for your year-one entry level. Serpentine now provides good opportunities for this type of ride. You should aim to do plenty of miles at 90 rpm, and some hill-work. After all, you want to be able to pedal up to 40k without stress on the day. The sophistication of turbo-training, spin classes, bricks and time trials can follow when your addiction gets serious!

Your running will be cut back to two sessions per week, during the winter, staying aerobic – for example the (longer) Wednesday and Saturday club runs are fine. But in March you must substitute a track session for one of these.

In addition, I strongly recommend all would-be triathletes (especially if you’re V35+) to incorporate at least one serious weights session per week. The maintenance of bone density and body strength is vital. Get advice, but tell your fitness instructor you’re interested only in core and upper body strength.

We need to split your running and (less critically) cycling with rest and swimming to maximise the opportunity for recovery. Hence the following outline schedule:

SUNDAY	Group ride >3 hour	THURSDAY	Swim session 45 mins
MONDAY	Rest	FRIDAY	Gym weights 40 mins
TUESDAY	Swim session 45 mins	SATURDAY	Run > 1hour
WEDNESDAY	Run > 1hour		

Now start to colour in the details to fit your domestic situation and the training opportunities around you, but please try to, effectively, have two-day ‘leg-rest’ days between runs.

If you can’t start next week, start the week after!

Let me know how you progress, or if you want further (not too technical!) advice, try me on doxat@doxat.com

Charles Doxat won many National age-group swimming championship and records; and 10 National age-group triathlon titles (inc V50 record of 2:09:37, Royal Windsor 1994).

Twenty-two Years Later

by Andrew Maynard

It's there in the lounge at my parents' house; I always look at it with a smile when I go to visit. On the cabinet, towards the back of a group of assorted photos of various branches of the family, there's one of a younger version of me running across Westminster Bridge, my arm punching forward in celebration. Above my head is a clock that reads 2:54:48. My first London marathon: my first marathon, come to that.

On that day, as I gazed proudly at my medal and munched on the Mars bar the sponsors had provided, I knew I'd be back – I didn't think it would take me 22 years, however!!

It would require a much longer article than this to fully explain quite why it took me so long to get back to the start line. Let's just say that it was due to a combination of injury, living abroad and Southampton reaching an FA Cup semi-final for the first time in 17 years! I had run other marathons in the interim, of course: some faster, most slower, but this year was my first chance to do my "home" marathon again.

Back at the end of 2005, when I was looking to get an entry, I thought that 2006 wouldn't be my year, yet again. When I didn't get in through the ballot, I started to think about the Rome marathon. Then I got an email from David Knight, the then Serpie Honorary Secretary, to announce that, to my surprise I had been given one of the club places for London. "All" I had to do now was the training!



Andrew punches the air in 1984



Twenty-two years on (photo: David Knight)

For once I managed to stay free of injuries. I did have a bit of a panic (well, more than a bit, if the truth be told) in late January when a bout of cellulitis inflamed my shin. I missed 10 days of training before it disappeared as quickly as it had come on. I ran for half an hour on the Tuesday, then on the next Sunday I ran the Bramley 20. After that, I never looked back.

The weeks rolled by, the days got longer, and my early morning runs, which I had been doing in the dark, were now in broad daylight. Then, suddenly, race day was upon me. There was some initial disappointment when it started raining as I left home to go to Blackheath. Somehow I had always imagined myself running in the sunshine, just like in 1984. Still, you can't control the weather. I would just have to get on with visualising myself running up Birdcage Walk in the rain, rather than blazing sunshine.

So, what had changed in the 22 years since my last effort in this race? The crowds were big back then, but they are HUGE now. I'm not a very emotional person, but, for some reason, the noise at Cutty Sark was so overwhelming that I found myself almost bursting into tears. It was the same again at Tower Bridge.

Back in 1984, there was no-one shouting "go Serpies". In 2006, it was a different story. I had to wait until mile 5 before I heard it for the first time, but I lost count of how many times I'd heard

it long before reaching Tower Bridge. There were so many Serpie supporters on the Highway that I got carried away and ran that section much faster than planned and I couldn't make myself slow down until I was past Westferry Circus.

Then there's the Isle of Dogs. The last time I ran the marathon, the Isle of Dogs was an industrial wasteland laid out ready for development. Canary Wharf had yet to become even a glint in a developer's eye and there were no spectators for several miles. What a difference 22 years makes. As the course weaved its way through the "canyons" between the skyscrapers, the noise was deafening, but not too loud to stop me hearing my partner, Nikke, shout, "I love you, Andy". That didn't happen last time either!

Amongst all the changes, however, one thing did stay the same: I met someone I used to work with, who had also run the 1984 marathon. I just looked to my right early on in the race and there she was! It was so strange to meet someone I hadn't seen for nearly 20 years in the midst of 35,000 people running the marathon.

These days, the photographers don't include the clock in the finish photo – I guess with chip timing it would be meaningless. It's a pity. If they did, my mum and dad would have a new photo on their cabinet. This one would show an exhausted looking bloke in his mid-40s, his face showing relief that it's all over and far too knackered for any punching the air. The clock, however, would show a time almost four minutes faster than on that sunny day in April 1984.

Digital Watches & 35mm Film

by Philip Dee

In 1982, 25 years ago, I marshaled at the finish line for the second London marathon. It was a lucky opportunity that came about when friends of friends told me that Woking Running Club needed more volunteers and so I ended up at the finish line on Westminster Bridge. After this first association with the London marathon, it took 25 years before I finally crossed the finish line as a competitor. Several differences that have occurred over the intervening years stand out in my mind.

Firstly, as I came around the last corner at the Victoria monument, I naturally headed straight for the finish gate on the right. Why? Because, before the advent of the timing chip, the timing was all done manually. There were three finishing gates: the centre one for the ladies, the left hand gate for the elite and right hand one for the men. When competitors crossed the finish line, my job in 1982 was to funnel the runners in the order they finished. This produced a very long queue of finishers – our production line.

The marshals closest to the finishing line greeted and cheered the finishers; and further down the line, marshals sometimes swapped places with runners who weren't feeling well whilst somebody ushered them to the first aid crew. Another group of

marshals handed out the goody bags and silver blankets, next a marshal with a clipboard manually recorded each runner's number. Finally, the finishers were presented with their medals and allowed to find their baggage and supporters. Whilst all of this was going on, there was a great atmosphere in the queue, with many finishers reliving their personal marathon stories with all of us around.

However, with the age of the chip, finishing this year's marathon was an anti-climax by comparison. Once I crossed the line there was no mutual sharing of stories in a queue, the de-chipping process was quick, and once the medals had been handed out, finishers were very quickly lost behind the lines. To offset the feeling of anti-climax, however, one of the benefits of the timing chip is that the results are quickly available on the internet. I remember friends of mine who ran London marathons in the early 1980s having to wait for the official results to be published in one of the national newspapers as much as three or four days after the race.

The second job that sprung to mind as having been made redundant by the advent of the timing chip was loading 35 mm cameras with film. In 1982, as a back-up against problems with the manual timing system, a group of marshals photographed every finisher with the clock showing the time as they crossed the line. Teams of marshals spent the day continually loading and unloading 35mm film cassettes, each of which had to be labeled and stored in the correct sequence.

Chips are by no means the only technological change in the intervening years. In 1982 you were lucky if you had a Casio digital watch with a stopwatch feature. Some lucky runners even had Sony Walkmans (for the younger Serpies amongst you, these played cassettes). However, today, GPS is the norm, everyone has a mobile phone to let mum know where they are on the course and the Walkman has been replaced by the iPod.

Finally, and possibly the biggest change, is the sheer number of runners taking part. I remember going to a marshals' briefing where Chris Brasher explained that the London marathon that year was set to be the biggest ever, with 15,000 entries, and at the peak finishing time he expected in the order of 2,000 runners to cross the line per 30 minutes. This year, in the hour that lapsed between my target time of 3:55 and my actual time of 4:54, over 15,000 finished – almost four times the numbers in 1982.

SERPENTIMES

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The Hills Are Alive

by Rachel Powell

It all began with a magazine article and a chance encounter at a BBQ. I've been a keen mountain walker for years, and although I don't get to the hills as often as I'd like to, I still like to peruse the mountaineering press. I happened to read that a group of crazy people was going to swim a mile in Ullswater; bike 38 miles around Helvellyn (the second highest mountain in England), including over the notorious Kirkstone Pass; and run the 8.5 miles to the top of the mountain and back. Crazy, I thought. Not long afterwards, I met a fellow Serpie at a BBQ who had just taken part and told me all about it, leaving me wanting to do it, too. All I needed was a road bike and some swimming lessons: the run would be the easy bit for me.

So began my first nine months of triathlon...

January

I collect my beautiful new bike from Condor – I can't quite believe it's mine. I can't wait to get out on the roads but the weather is so vile. For 10 days I look longingly at my new purchase before I finally hit the road – literally on a couple of occasions.

As a matter of urgency I sign myself up for the new SwimForTri technique sessions. By the end of the first session I'm completely demoralised. I knew my swimming was bad, but that bad? I wonder if I have bitten off more than I can chew.

At the end of the month I run (or rather run and walk) Box Hill Fell race. It's a gorgeous day and despite my severe lack of fitness, I love it. If I can do this, I can do Helvellyn. I go straight home and sign up.

February

I do a recce of the Helvellyn route. Although I used to live in the Lake District and know the area well, I need a short, sharp reminder of what I've let myself in for. I get it. I drive around the bike route: even on double speed, my windscreen wipers can't cope with the incessant, driving rain. Kirkstone Pass is steep, really steep – even my little car struggles to the top. Will I really be able to cycle up here? Walking the run route, the sun makes a rare appearance to light up the knee-deep snow. Surely the weather won't be this bad in September? I decide on a simple race-day goal – to get round the course and to enjoy it. If I can do it in less than six hours and not be last, that'll be a big bonus!

March

While my Serpie friends are enjoying the Lanzarote sunshine, I'm out in the Hertfordshire countryside on my bike, battling against the snow and wind. My first rides out of town bring an unexpected problem: I discover I'm scared of downhill, really scared. As there are some long and technical descents on the



Ullswater – not noted for its warm water

Helvellyn route, I need to take action fast, so I book myself onto a tri training camp in mountainous Sardinia for next month.

April

My first multi-sport event (well, the first since I was 15, when my best friend and I did a 10-mile sea kayak and 1,700ft fell race for fun!) On arrival at the Seaford duathlon I'm so nervous that I accidentally let the air out of my bike tyres. Luckily, a fellow Serpie parks next to me and saves the day with her track pump. I make a mental note of what to bring next time. I also learn that trying something new in a race is really not a good idea. My lock laces are far too tight and I struggle to get my shoes back on for the second run.

I go to Sardinia and discover that most of my companions for the week are potential world championship qualifiers. I feel like a fish out of water. I soon settle into the daily routine of a challenging hour-and-a-half swim session before breakfast. I'm over the moon when I find I'm not in the slow lane, but horrified when I see the video analysis of my stroke. In the afternoons I get my first taste of open-water swimming. The first time I hate it; the sea is grey, cold and I can see jellyfish. By the end of the week, I don't want to get out.

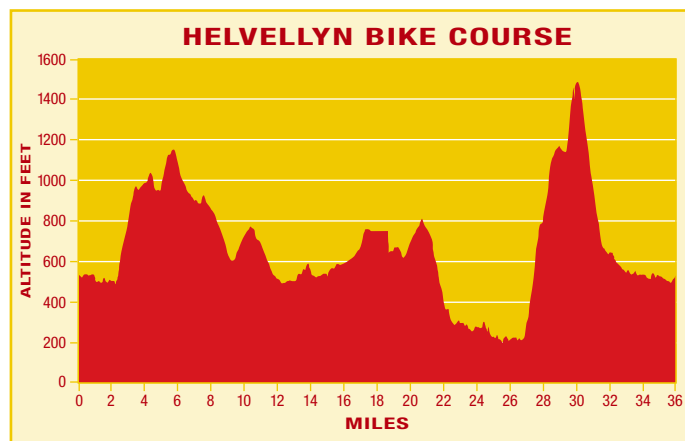
The bike rides are the most challenging sessions for me: the distances aren't that long but the mountains and wind are never-ending. I'm the slowest on the flat, and struggle to catch the others to draft. I'm petrified of the downhills (the Sardinian roads have more than their fair share of steep hairpin bends) and have to be talked down on the worst. On one, I have to get off my bike and send for the support van, I'm that scared. However, I am delighted to find that I not only keep up on the uphill, but can even overtake some of the others. By the end of the week I manage the ascent of Monte Limbara – over 4,000ft of ascent in just 9k, with only a small breather half-way up.

Back at home, and by complete chance, I bump into Lynn, a fellow Serpette, at my local gym. She's training for a middle distance race, and we're of similar ability, so we team up for some training. We make our first forays to Box Hill on the bikes and discover the joys of the top-of-hill café; a superb range of cakes and the fact that, being two female cyclists on our own, we're never short of male company.

May

Time for my first swim event, ever: the Morden 6n6. I'm shaking like a leaf when I get into the water. I have no idea how to pace myself for the swim, and get out feeling I could have tried harder. The run is just right for me – four laps off-road and with a nicely challenging hill in the middle of each lap.

With just a couple of 70-mile bike rides under my belt, I take a huge leap and enter the Wessex 100, a tour of the Somerset countryside with over 7,000ft of ascent. The group I start with is soon dispersed and I find myself riding alone for long periods of time. The hills are tough, really tough; as I'm ready to get off (or rather fall off) on the first real toughie, I'm delighted to see a fellow Serpette start walking. I do the same. The heavens then open and I spend the rest of the day battling through driving rain and on waterlogged roads. The descent of Cheddar Gorge makes me wonder whether I am still on the road or have veered off into the gorge itself. I occupy my mind for the last 20 miles by wondering how on earth anyone could contemplate doing an Ironman – there is no way I could run five miles after this, let alone a marathon. At the finish I realise I did nearly 40mph on a downhill today and enjoyed it – I have conquered my fear.



It's all downhill from here

June

A month of highs and lows, literally. At the Welsh Castles Relay I have one of my worst runs ever. It's far too hot and there's little support (water or cheering) along the route, except from my Serpie team-mates of course. The sweep car driving at my ankles telling me I'm last (when I'm not) doesn't help. I've never been so pleased to see a finish line. I have planned to have a week with no training at all – I had been dreading it, but now thank my good planning that it is now.

My week off is great; I enjoy forgotten pleasures, lying on the sofa and watching trash TV. By day six, I'm climbing the walls, but I hold out and manage seven exercise-free days. I even resist the temptation to throw my running shoes away and take up aqua-biking instead.

The Midsummer Munro half marathon on Box Hill reinstates the joy of running in me. It's hot, and the 3,000ft of ascent and descent are tough, but I enjoy every single minute. This is why I run.

July

I spend the month eagerly anticipating my first tri: Hathersage Hilly, in the glorious Peak District. It's a rare, pool swim, road bike and fell run combination – perfect!

By race day I'm feeling most confident about the swim – this turns out to be the worst part of my race. My lane in the pool is overcrowded, I can't overtake and it takes me a couple of lengths to calm down. The bike, however, is great. I feel really strong and thoroughly enjoy every minute, including the five-mile uphill. The run is very tough indeed – straight up a steep fellside, which, despite the July heatwave, manages to be wet, muddy, slippery and awash with the speedy fellrunners the race attracts. I'm pleased with my time, and feel more confident of my ability to get round Helvellyn.

August

The month begins with the National triathlon relays in Nottingham and my first open water swim in a race. My confidence in the water lasts for about a minute. I'm surrounded by faster, stronger swimmers and end up doing a lot of breaststroke – at least then I can see when the next kick or blow is coming!

My first Olympic distance tri, Swanage, ends with my first DNF. I have a fantastic swim; my time is beyond my wildest dreams and I love every minute of being in the sea. On reaching transition I'm gutted to find I have a flat tyre and know that I can't possibly change the tube fast enough in front of the mount line audience. I do the run though. It's very hilly, but I feel very strong and manage a faster time than I did on a flat 10k three months ago, so I'm over the moon. I must be doing something right. I go home and practise tube changing.

I spend a weekend supporting at Ironman UK, and do laps of the swim and bike courses while I'm there. It doesn't take long

for me to decide I want to be here again next year, but on the other side of the fence. I go to the Lakes for a few days of last-minute training, including a ride of the bike course. I make it up all but the final short section of the mountain pass, and finish 25 minutes faster than I was expecting. I'm all set for the big day.

September

Race day dawns bright and still. On the walk to the start an elderly couple stops me, shaking my hand they tell me they have the greatest respect for everyone competing today. This is a taste of the genuine, heartfelt support I'll get all day. Setting up at transition, I don't feel nervous at all; I'm surprised. The race director rightly warns us that "the water won't be hot" – it's a chilly 12 degrees as the 400 athletes get in, an awesome sight against the mountain backdrop. The air horn sounds: we're off. This is it! I start at the back. I soon find clear water and get into a rhythm, breathing on one side to avoid the blinding sun. Before I know it, a large orange buoy is alongside and I'm turning. I feel good, and start to overtake. I still can't quite believe I'm doing this! When I reach the exit I'm delighted. I'm faster than I expected and there are still loads of bikes in transition. Yes!

In T1, my feet are numb from the swim, so getting my shoes on is fun! I get out onto the road and immediately something is wrong. My brake blocks are rubbing, so I pull over to fix them. Aside from one long, hard climb, the course is uneventful for the first half. I eat, drink and enjoy the stunning views. Then the fun begins – Kirkstone Pass, three miles and more than 1,700ft of ascent. I sort my brake blocks again – I don't need any additional challenges now! For two miles it's relentless, out-of-the-saddle, nose-on-the-wheel climbing. A short downhill brings relief before "The Struggle" – its name says it all. I get off. Walking is faster, I tell myself. There's a big crowd at the top, making lots of noise, Alpe d'Huez style. Fantastic! The descent back to transition is steep, winding and fast – I love it.

T2 is where I make my best decision of all – to change my socks! My clean ones are soft, fluffy and free from transition field grass. Bliss. The first half-mile of the run is flat, so I settle into a steady pace. Then the mountain begins for real, as does my low point of the race. The next mile-and-a-half is seriously steep and rocky. How I manage to climb the 2,000ft, I don't know. My legs feel empty even though I'm walking. Jelly babies keep my spirits up. Up and up and up I go, until I reach flat ground and can run until the final 1,000ft ascent: a hands-and-feet scramble up the narrow ridge. Hikers are coming down, making passing difficult, but they all give way and lots of cheers too. Suddenly I'm at the top, the marshal takes my number and I'm off! The run down is not easy: there's loose scree, rocky slopes and kamikaze mountain bikers to contend with, but I feel strong, really strong. Soon the bright lights of Glenridding are in sight. Everyone cheers as I run through the village – everyone. I feel like a star. I can hear a friend screaming for me as I sprint towards the finish and over the line. I've done it.

Standing in the post-race ice-bath that is Ullswater, I feel rather pleased with myself. I finished, I enjoyed it, I was nowhere near last, and my time was well under six hours too. And somehow, I just know I'll be back...

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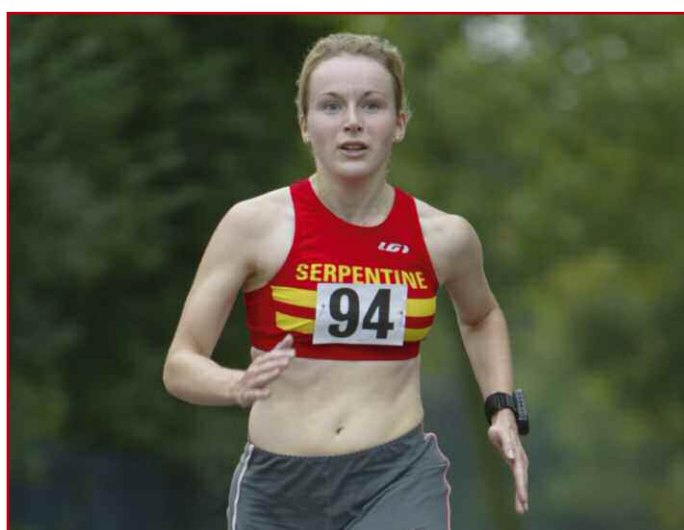
www.sbrsports.com

New Committee Members

by Jane Harris

At the AGM in July, the committee gained four new members. Jane Harris caught up with them recently.

Rachel Whittaker



*Rachel, Middlesex 10k, September 2005
(photo: David Knight)*

Rachel describes herself as “quite normal”, and in Serpie terms, where so many people do so many unusual and extraordinary things, perhaps she is. She has taken part in numerous races including a charity triathlon relay from London to Paris (which included a couple of hour-long, ferry-dodging dips in the channel), and in her own words, “is so dedicated to the club that I took a job nearer to Hyde Park so that I could start going to track sessions and help out at the LFOTM!”

From taking part in cross-country races at junior school, Rachel took up rowing, ice hockey and kick-boxing, but now just concentrates on running and triathlons. Rachel’s a regular at the Wednesday club run, Saturday hills, T&F, cross-country and Serpie swimming. She’s currently training for her sixth marathon in October and has just competed in the Vitruvian middle distance tri.

Rachel’s been a member of the club for two years, and as the new volunteers representative she’s keen to encourage more people to get involved with the club, and to recognise those that already do so much. “It’s very rewarding being involved, and motivating for my training, although I do organise the swim sessions and my swimming has become worse!” She’s also taken part this year in T&F events and is keen to help develop a pipeline of coaches, officials and athletes. “At some events this summer

there were only one or two Serpies competing which is terribly sad, especially when one of them is me.”

Her lifetime ambition? “Not to be last out of the water in any more triathlons!”

Jo Currie

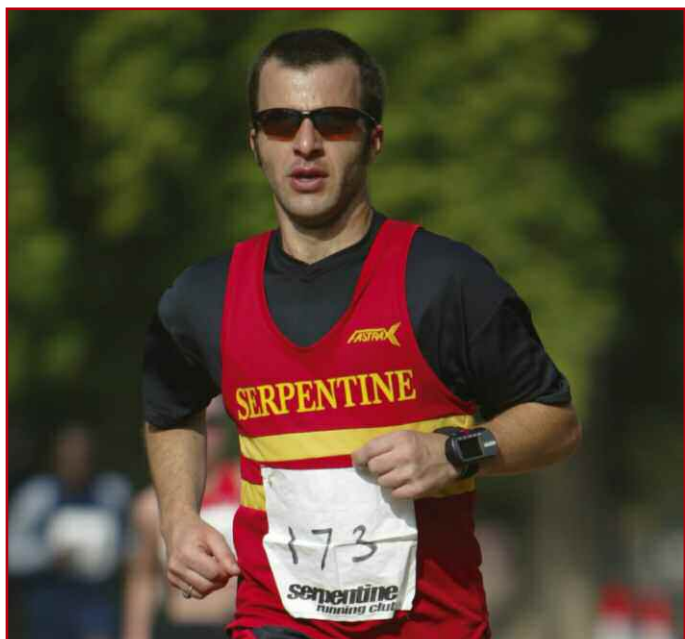
You may not have seen Jo pounding the pavements over the last 18 months but fortunately that hasn’t stopped her being a regular in the pub on a Wednesday night! Out of action with a foot injury, Jo describes the last year and a half as being “the most frustrating 18 months of my life”. But during this time she’s been a regular at Stephanie’s TI swimming classes and has continued to play netball – luckily her position as goal shooter doesn’t involve too much running about.

Jo joined the Serpies in 2003 after an encounter with a colleague in the (women’s!) changing rooms at work. Already a keen runner, she completed a couple of half marathons and was a regular at the monthly handicap until injury forced her to take a break. In spite of her injury, Jo’s continued to be an active member of the club and has officiated at T&F events and helped out with marshaling. And as the new Treasurer, Jo’s day-to-day tasks involve writing lots of cheques, paying in money and presenting the accounts to the committee (“plus the bank statements, to make sure I haven’t been embezzling the funds!”) By her own admission, Jo “loves accounts”, and in the long term is keen to work on updating the accounting procedures and bringing the system into the 21st century!

Now back training again, Jo’s working hard at regaining her fitness. She’s already taken part in an aquathlon and the Nottingham tri relays this year, and is building up to doing some 10k races. How would she sell the club to a new member? “It’s the mix of people and the inclusiveness – there’s always someone to run with or an event to go to ... plus there are always plenty of opportunities to go to the pub!”



Jo, Serpentine handicap, November 2004 (photo: David Knight)



Wayne, Serpentine handicap, September 2005
(photo: David Knight)

Wayne Maurer

Between the ages of 18 and 25, Wayne admits to doing no exercise. "It was too warm in Australia!" he jokes. He set off travelling in 2001 and after many adventures, including trekking in the Himalayas, he found himself in London where the more temperate climate soon had him reaching for his running shoes.

Having discovered the SRC via the internet, he joined the club in 2002 and became a keen advocate of cross country. "It's one of the best ways to meet people, and it makes you strong!" Unfortunately, an injury following the Windsor half marathon that year forced Wayne out of action, and although he kept up his membership he hadn't at that point met enough people to reap the benefits of the Serpie social scene. It was nearly two years before he started running with the Serpies again, and by March 2005 he'd pretty much decided to leave London and move to the country. The SRC was a major factor in his decision to stay.

As training, coaching and fitness rep, Wayne is keen to get more involved with the club and to ensure that the training programmes on offer meet the requirements of runners and triathletes. His role includes liaising with all the Serpentine coaches, as well as Alex Lord, organiser of the La Santa trip, and Rachel Whittaker regarding swimming programmes. He'll also be organising the marathon seminar and the training aspects of Serpie Camp, and he's in the process of putting a cycling skills session together. "It's a large club with a lot to choose from and I want people to get the best out of it and achieve their goals"

As for his own goals, he's got his sights set on a sub 1:30 half marathon in St Neots in November, and a sub 40-minute 10k along the way!

Angie Palin

Angie's been actively involved in the club since joining in September 2002, and is a regular at Tuesday track and the Wednesday night club run. She's captained the women's cross country team for two years and this year she took charge of the ladies' team for Welsh Castles. She's also a qualified field official and regularly helps out at T&F events.

A keen runner for the past 10 years, she admits to taking part in "all sorts of ridiculous events at university, usually involving running an unfeasibly long distance between pubs." She helped to organise the Chunder mile and the Naked Relay Race in Paris. As she says, "Now there's an idea for Serpentine...!" On a more serious note, Angie's participated in numerous races and sees running as part of her life. "I love running because it's so simple. And I'm a strong believer in regular exercise – the benefits vastly outweigh the negatives. Running allows you to physically push your comfort zone and most of the population never get to experience that."

As the newly-appointed rep for external liaison and sponsorship, she's keen to be involved with how the club is run. "I think the club is run exceptionally well for a volunteer organisation and I'd like to continue the legacy of past committees. But the committee can only ever achieve a certain amount – the key to the club's continuing success is for more members to get involved and volunteer their services."

Angie's biggest achievement so far is running this year's London marathon, and after being off for a month through injury, she's focusing on getting fit in time for the start of the cross country season.

And how would she sell the club to a potential new member? "One word will do... Sociable!"



Angie at the Wilmslow half marathon, 2006

Cross Country with Serpentine

by Malcolm French

October signals the beginning of dark nights and colder weather. It also signals the start of the cross country season. This is a wonderful part of the British running scene and one that is steeped in history and tradition. More than 150 Serpies competed for the club during the 2005/6 season and enjoyed both the running and the socialising that is an integral part of the cross country experience.

Cross country is a discipline that is a great sport in itself. It is also invaluable preparation for any road races you have planned for the spring of 2007, be it the London marathon or a local 10k.

Cross country works everything. It builds strength and endurance; it helps you develop an efficient running style; running across uneven terrain improves your core strength, thereby making you less prone to injury; it toughens you mentally; it's also great to be part of a team in a sport that is otherwise mainly about individual performances.

The racing programme takes in local leagues, graduating as the season progresses to county, area and national championships. All the league races are open to all Serpies, as are most of the other events. The running is varied, challenging and exciting. The venues vary from town parks to country estates and from flat parkland, to woodlands, boggy fields and up and down hills.

In terms of the leagues, the Metropolitan League will be our main competition focus. The Sunday League is less competitive and the events are good ones for novices who want to try out cross country running. We'll be looking to compete strongly in the London Championship, the South of England Championship and the English National Championship. We'd also like to see a much better showing from our older runners at the Southern Masters event.

So what are some of the questions you might like answers to?

Where can I find out about the races?

All the cross country races are on the Planner section of the Serpie website and any additions or changes to dates, times or venues will be added to the Planner. Most are in North London, Hertfordshire and the surrounding area. See below for details of a few of the early races of the season. Details of individual races will be posted on the Serpie e-group, in John Walker's regular Seymour Sentinel, or can be obtained from your team managers, Angie Palin and Malcolm French.

How long are the races?

Distances vary depending on the nature of the event. League races are the shortest and are about 5km for women and 8km for men. As the season progresses, races tend to get longer, up to a maximum distance of 8km (women) and 15km (men).

Will I be too slow?

The races will include competitors of all shapes, sizes, ages and abilities. It's highly unlikely you'll come last! Some races are more suitable for novices than others and Angie and Malcolm will be happy to point you in the right direction.



The Serpie ladies set off, Southern championships, 2006 (photo: Nadya Labib)

What does it cost to enter the races?

Nothing. The club pays your entry fees (except for the Watford Joggers autumn challenge, which you have to enter independently).

How do I enter the races?

You do not need to enter any of the league races in advance. Just come along on the day – with your Serpie top. Trophy and Championship races require advance entry. Please contact Angie and Malcolm to let them know which ones you're interested in.

How do I get there?

The club doesn't provide transport. However, virtually all the venues are easily accessible by public transport. In fact, it's often quicker to go by tube or train rather than drive and you'll be able to go to the pub for a drink after the races. Angie and Malcolm will be happy to provide travel guidance.

Do I need special equipment?

As with any winter running, you'll need to dress appropriately for the weather, especially if the day is cold. If you're a novice and the autumn is dry you may find that you're able to run the October races in ordinary trainers. Thereafter, underfoot conditions will become too soft and you'll need shoes that give you more grip, or you'll find yourself slipping around. A pair of cross country spikes, studs or fell shoes is a wise investment. The good news is that cross country shoes are much cheaper than ordinary trainers.

You'll also need a large bin bag to put your wet and muddy kit in after the races!



Onwards and upwards (photo: Nadya Labib)

Do I need special training?

Your normal training programme will equip you for cross country races. This should include a long run, a faster pace (threshold pace) run, a shorter, faster run, and rest/recovery days. If you have a particular race as your main priority, work back from this and create a training programme that builds progressively to a peak 10 days before your main race. Thereafter, taper and to sharpen up, replace some of your harder efforts with some controlled 400m efforts at a fast, relaxed speed with plenty of recovery between each run.

Where can I find race results?

Your individual results will be added to the Serpentine results database (www.serpentine.org.uk/rdb). Full Metropolitan League results can be found on www.hillingdonac.co.uk; Sunday League results will be on www.runherts.com; and Middlesex County Championship results will be on www.middlesexaa.org.uk.

Does everyone go straight home after the races?

Hopefully not! Cross country races are team competitions and part of the attraction is socialising with your team mates and people from other clubs after the races. It's a great way to meet other club members.

Who do I contact to find out more?

Angie Palin and Malcolm French will continue as our main team managers and can be contacted on:

- **Angie Palin**
07967 643976
angiepalin@hotmail.com
- **Malcolm French**
020 8422 3900
MalcolmFrench@aol.com

MET LEAGUE EVENTS

October	14	St Albans
	28	Ruislip
November	25	Claybury
January	13	Wormwood Scrubs
February	10	Perivale

SUNDAY LEAGUE EVENTS

October	22	Cheshunt
November	19	Digswell
December	10	Southgate
February	18	Royston
	25	Watford

CHAMPIONSHIPS AND OTHER EVENTS

November	4	North London Championships , Kingsbury
December	2	Dysart cup & Ellis trophy , Richmond Park
	9	London Championships , Hampstead Heath
January	6	Middlesex County Championships , Perivale
	20	North of the Thames Championships , Kingsbury
	27	Southern Counties Championships , Wells-next-to-the-Sea
February	3	Middlesex Veterans Championships , Ruislip
	24	CAU Inter-counties , Nottingham (selected athletes only)
March	3	Thames Hare & Hounds inter-club match , Wimbledon
	10	English National Championships , Herrington Country Park, Sunderland

The History of Shot Putting

by Malcolm French

The origins of shot putting are shrouded in the mists of time. It was not one of the events in the Ancient Greek Olympics. The Greeks preferred more aesthetically pleasing events such as the javelin and discus, which required graceful, flowing movements. The idea of heaving a heavy stone using brute force did not appeal to them. However, in the Iliad, Homer makes mention of Greek soldiers taking part in rock-throwing competitions at the siege of Troy.

Turning the clock forward to Britain in the 16th century, King Henry the Eighth, as a young man, was a noted sportsman and the chroniclers of the day report of his prowess in court competitions of weight and hammer throwing. English soldiers were known to have organised cannonball-throwing contests to alleviate the boredom between battles.

However, only scattered reports exist of stone or ball-throwing contests in rural sports until the 19th century, when the Highland Games developed in Scotland. The games included weight-throwing competitions. The main weights were the light stone, weighing 14-16 pounds and the heavy stone, weighing 18-24 pounds.

In the middle of the 19th century, metal balls were introduced and the rules for shot putting competitions were first established in 1860. Initially, the throw had to be made from a square (not a circle) with sides of seven feet. In the first Olympics in 1896, a 16-pound implement was used and this remains the standard senior men's weight, although we now recognise it better as 7.26kg. The first Olympic shot put champion was Robert Garrett (USA) with a winning throw of just 11.22m.

In 1906 a 2.13m diameter circle replaced the square and to this day this remains the size of the circle. The rules relating to the action of putting were also changed to outlaw bent arm throws. These were replaced with a requirement that the shot be released from the crook of the neck; a rule that still applies.

The 1912 Olympics in Stockholm saw both the standard shot competition and a left and right-handed event, which Ralph Rose (USA) won with a combined distance of 27.7m.

The women's 4kg shot competition made its first appearance at the London Olympics of 1948, where the winner was Micheline Ostermeyer (France) with a putt of 13.75m. She was a concert pianist, not an occupation you'd usually associate with a shot putter!

Initially, throwers stood virtually still when delivering the implement. Gradually, other techniques were developed. Today, the two main styles are the glide and the spin. In the 1950s, American, Parry O'Brien developed the glide and he became the first man to throw over 18 metres. One of the early pioneers of the spin technique was Aleksandr Baryshnikov of the USSR, who in 1976 became the first 22-metre thrower.



Claire Browse, London Masters League
(photo: David Knight)

The reigning world champions from Helsinki 2005 are Adam Nelson (USA) with a putt of 21.73 metres and Bulgarian, Nadezhda Ostapchuk, who put the women's lighter 4kg shot 20.51 metres.

SERPENTINE SHOT PUTTING PERFORMANCES

Some notable Serpie performances in this event are:

7.26kg shot	Fyn Corcoran	13.19m	June 2003
7.26kg shot	Danny McIntosh	12.21m	August 1995
6kg shot	Derek Prentice	10.52m	April 2003
6kg shot	Enrico Figuerido	8.89m	September 1996
4kg shot	Georgina Price	8.71m	September 1993
4kg shot	Sally Giles	8.28m	July 1996
3kg shot	Jan Farmer	7.75m	September 2001

Spot the Difference

by Jan Farmer



The trio at Comrades in 1996 (photo: Paul Ingram)



World age-group duathlon championships, Cornerbrook 2006 (photo: Paul Ingram)

Ten years, a bit more grey hair for some of us – and a change of strip!

Ten years ago, Ros Young, Hilary Walker and Jan Farmer wore Serpentine colours when they ran the 87k Comrades marathon from Durban to Pietermaritzburg in South Africa.

GB Blue was the fashion this year, when the same trio competed for their country at the World age-group duathlon championships in Cornerbrook, Newfoundland, Canada. Perhaps fortunately, they are currently each in a different age-band.

Young Hilary got a 6th, Ros a 5th and Jan a bronze medal. It seems older runners never give up – they just mutate!

A new run for your race calendar

Come and try a 10k in Pezenas on **Sunday 19 November 2006**, an undulating out-and-back course through local vineyards, with spectacular views.

Self-catering and B&B available in our beautifully restored home in the medieval village of **St Thibery**. Very accessible from airports, road and rail. **We look forward to seeing you!**

For full details of accommodation and rates visit our website.



www.stthibery.com

Multi-Sport Championship

There are still a few chances to get your name into the 2006 Serpie Multi-Sport Championship Table and after all, it's never over 'til the fat lady sings.

Of the five categories of race, you can still get a score in four of them.

Cross country

This is where you can make your mark on the 2006 table, with the chance to run in Met League events on 14 October and 25 November.

Duathlons

Ballbuster on 11 November is an infamous race, but one which always attracts a number of Serpies.

Road race championships

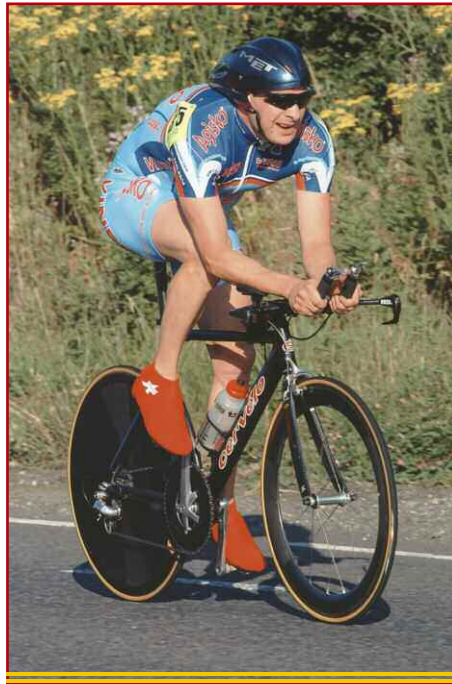
Nine of the ten championships are decided, but there's still time to get a marathon score into the table.

Triathlon championships

We already have Serpie champions for three of the four events, but a few of you out there may still have an Ironman to complete in 2006!

The 2006 multi-sport champions will be announced at the end of the year.

Look out for the announcements about which races will be included in the 2007 Serpie Multi-Sport Championship. It's a great way to try out something new – perhaps you joined the club for tri training but fancy the chance to have a go at pole vault in the decathlon, some cross country, or perhaps you've done lots of road racing but have never tried a duathlon. The Serpie multi-sport events often have lots of others just like you giving a new event a go. There's information about how the championship works at www.serpentine.org.uk/events/multisport/.



Serpie's own Laurence Harding showing how it's done

Cycling Time Trials

Serpentine is now affiliated to Cycling Time Trials, which means that Serpies can enter cycling time trials without the need to join a separate cycling club and can wear Serpie cycling kit in time trials (don't forget that sleeveless tops, so Serpie tri suits or running vests, are not permitted, however). Most time trials are in the spring and summer months, but there are still some events held over the winter.

If you're new to time trials, a time trial is a cycling competition where the rider covers a set distance by him/herself without taking pace from any other rider or vehicle. It's a solo effort against the clock with each rider usually starting a minute apart, and the race winner is the person with the quickest time. The most common distances for time trials are 10 miles, 25 miles, 50 miles and 100 miles, but for those wanting something more extreme there are 12-hour and 24-hour races where you ride as far as you can in the set times. Time trials are commonly referred to as the "race of truth" as they require considerable mental concentration and toughness as well as the ability to tolerate intense physical discomfort.

Laurence Harding has posted some helpful information about time trials on the Serpie website: www.serpentine.org.uk/tri/advice/timetrial.php. The official cycling time trials site: www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk also has lots of useful detail and is the best place to find out about upcoming events. You can search the site by distance or by region. There's also an annual handbook with details of all the open events which can be purchased from the website or is available at some bike shops including Sigma Sport and Condor Cycles. So get planning for 2007.

Club Places for London Marathon

If you receive a rejection letter from the 2007 London Marathon, don't despair. Serpentine receives a small number of London marathon places that are allocated to club members.

Of course there are far fewer club places than Serpies who would like them, so there are certain criteria you have to meet to be eligible for one of these club places. If you've taken part in club championships, various league races, T&F events, the handicap and have helped out once or twice, you may find that you're eligible to apply. You can check out the full details of the criteria required on the website: www.serpentine.org.uk/london/enter.htm#club.

If you want to apply for a club place, please send your application, accompanied by your London Marathon rejection slip, and a written statement of how you meet the criteria to the Honorary Secretary, 67c Gondar Gardens, West Hampstead, London NW6 1EP to arrive by 15 December.

The names of those applying who meet 100% of the criteria will go into a hat, and the available places will be offered to the first names drawn, up to the number of places available. The remaining names will be drawn to form a reserve list which will be used in the event of withdrawals, before the final cut-off date for substitutions, which is sometime in February.

Winter Tri Training

There are more and more Serpies taking part in triathlon every year and there's certainly plenty of opportunity to train with others over the winter and prepare yourself for the 2007 season. Whether you're just starting out in multi-sport or planning an Ironman, there'll be swimming, cycling and running training to suit you.

Cycling

There are regular Sunday rides out from Richmond Park which are organised by the regulars who turn up. There are also plans for group turbo sessions and cycling skills sessions. You can find out more from the website www.serpentine.org.uk/tri/training/bikerides.php or by sending an email to cycling@serpentine.org.uk. Keep an eye on the website and e-groups for more information about sessions starting up.

Swimming

Serpentine has regular swimming sessions led by Dan Bullock and Stephanie Ellis which will continue throughout winter. All the details can be found on the website at www.serpentine.org.uk/tri/training/swimtraining.php.

Monday's swims are popular and swimmers who come regularly keep their places, hence the waiting list is already very long. Tuesday's technique-focused swims are booked in blocks of 10 weeks and we operate a waiting list system. Email tri-swim@serpentine.org.uk if you have further questions about swim sessions.

Running

With club runs on Wednesdays and Saturdays from the Seymour Centre, track sessions on Tuesdays and Thursdays at Paddington and Battersea respectively and long runs in Richmond Park on Sundays, there's a Serpie run to suit just about everyone. Check out the website for up-to-date information: www.serpentine.org.uk/clubruns/clubruns.php.

2007 Relay Weekends

– Provisional Dates



Martin Wieland, WCR finish 2006 (photo: Sally Hodge)

If you're a GBR or WCR regular, you'll want to put these 2007 dates in your diary. If you are a newcomer to these two great relay events, you should think about keeping the weekends free and joining the Serpie teams taking part.

For the faster runners among you, the Welsh Castles Relay is one of the most important races of the year for Serpentine, so PLEASE try not to double-book yourself with another race.

Green Belt Relay – 19/20 May

The race is a two-day, multi-stage, multi-terrain relay around London's Greenbelt countryside and surrounding towns. The route is divided into 22 sections (between 7.6 and 13.8 miles each), and teams consist of 11 runners. This means that runners must run at least twice, once on each day of the race.

We enter several teams: a fast men's and a fast women's team plus other teams for the rest of us who run at slower paces (down to 10-mins per mile, which is the cut-off pace). Lots of Serpies will tell you that the GBR weekend is one of the most enjoyable Serpie weekends of the year.

Welsh Castles Relay – 9/10 June

This is a 20-stage event starting in Caernarfon on Saturday morning and ending in Cardiff on Sunday afternoon. The stage distances range from 8 to 14 miles in some challenging terrain. Teams have 20 runners, who each run one stage over the course of the weekend.

Serpentine usually enter three teams: men, women and vets. With 20 runners per team and a very high standard at the 'sharp end' of the event, we need lots of you to keep the date free and sign up nearer to the time.

If you'd like to learn more about the relays, there are dedicated pages for each one on the Serpie website. You can also check out the organisers' websites: www.greenbeltrelay.org.uk & www.lescroupiersrunningclub.org.uk/castles/

So take a look, talk to Serpies who've taken part before, and most importantly, keep the dates free!

Serpies Needed for Met League October 14

The first Met League cross country race of the season is on 14 October at St Albans. We need as many of you as possible to come along and run for Serpentine at that first race.

It's particularly important because the number of Serpie runners at the first event determines how many runners we can enter in the rest of the season's league races.

So, not only can you take part in a fantastic race in St Albans and socialise in the pub afterwards, but you'll earn club multi-sport championship points into the bargain and make sure that we can enter lots of Serpies in future Met League races.

Serpentine pays for your race entry; all you need to do is turn up with your Serpie top. If you're new to cross country, you can read all about it in the feature article on page 19 of this issue.

Sunday Runs in Richmond Park

If you're training for a spring marathon, Sunday morning long runs in Richmond Park are a great way to do your long slow distance run in the company of others. The path around the perimeter is about 7.2 miles and there are usually people doing one, two or even three laps. Just like on Wednesday and Saturday club runs, different groups of runners go at different paces.

We meet in the car park next to Pembroke Lodge, near Richmond Gate: there's a map on the website at www.serpentine.org.uk/clubruns/sun.php. The run starts at 9am so aim to arrive by 8.50am at the latest. All Serpies are welcome and you don't need to contact anyone before you come along, but if you'd like to ask us anything, email sunday@serpentine.org.uk.

NEW YEAR'S DAY 10k

Start off 2007 with your Serpie friends in Hyde Park. Our New Year's Day 10k and 3k fun run are a great start to the new year for lots of runners and we need your help so their new year's resolutions last past new year's eve.

The 10k starts at 11am and the fun run follows that, with a 12-noon start, so there's ample time to get over the night before and get yourself down to the bandstand in Hyde Park.

We'll need marshals around the course, helpers with registration and the finish area, people to give out goody bags and lots more besides.

If you can help out, there are several ways you can let us know. You can use My Events on the website, register as a helper at www.serpentine.org.uk/events/nyd10k/register_help.php, or email nyd10k@serpentine.org.uk.

Do keep an eye on the e-groups and website for more information over the coming months.

WANTED Fast Serpies for Championships

If you're one of our faster Serpies over 5k, we'd like you to make a note of two important dates in spring 2007. The Southern (SEAA) Road Relays are on 31 March at Milton Keynes and we'll be putting teams of 12 men and 6 women together for this highly competitive event. If you're a man whose 5k time is 18 minutes or under, or a woman with a 5k time of 20 minutes or under, please keep a note of the date. Contact Ian Hodge: ihodge@serpentine.org.uk if you'd like to be considered.

If we're successful at the SEAA races, we'll be eligible to race at the National Championships, which will be held on 14 April at Sutton Coldfield.

2007 Club Championships

The Serpentine Club Championships are a series of races of 1k, 1 mile, 3k, 5k, 5 mile, 10k, 10 mile, half marathon, 20 mile and full marathon. Some of the dates for the 2007 Club Championship races have been announced recently.

At Club Championships, not only do you get to compete to be Serpie Club Champion at that distance, but also your result counts towards to the overall 2007 Serpie Age-Graded Championship. The championship is awarded to the first claim member with the highest average percentage from 6 of the 10 championship races. To qualify, you must run all events in club colours, with the exception of the marathon, where we would ask you to wear club colours if you possibly can. All events must have been entered under your own name.

There are always lots of Serpies taking part in Club Championship races, so they're great events to plan to do, but don't forget that some of these events fill up very quickly, so don't delay in getting your entry in. You can find the events easily on the Serpentine Planner on the website: www.serpentine.org.uk/events/planner.php where they're highlighted in yellow. Keep an eye on the planner, e-group and news on the website for announcements of the rest of the series.



*Mo Farah at the National Road Relay Championships 2006
(photo: Sally Hodge)*



*Who didn't eat all the pies?
(photo: David Knight)*

Jekyll & Hyde Park Duathlon

Serpentine are once again organising the popular Jekyll & Hyde Park duathlon, which will take place on Sunday 22 October at 8.15 am in Hyde Park.

With 150 competitors running, cycling then running again, there's lots of scope for experienced or novice helpers to get involved as volunteers. Volunteering is also a great opportunity to watch the race and catch up with lots of other Serpies. To get into the Halloween spirit, helpers are encouraged to wear fancy dress. If you can spare some time to help, please go to the Jekyll & Hyde duathlon page on the website: www.serpentine.org.uk/events/duathlon/index.php and follow the link to register as a volunteer. Alternatively, you can email David Lipscomb at davidlipscomb@serpentine.org.uk. Non-Serpies (friends, family and general hangers-on) are also very welcome as helpers.

Seymour Centre

One of the many extra benefits of being a Serpie is that you have free access to use the Seymour Centre's changing facilities and showers at times outside our usual Wednesday and Saturday run times. So if you want to run in Hyde Park on a Tuesday morning before work, you can leave your bags at the Seymour and shower after your run for no extra cost.

There continues to be no problem for Serpies wanting to use the Seymour facilities "out of hours" – leaving bags in the lockers and using the changing rooms and showers after a run. The Seymour management have asked, however, that this is limited to individual Serpies, or small groups of up to 5 people together, so they aren't inundated with large groups except for regular Serpie runs.

If you want to use this facility, the staff at the reception desk will ask you to show a valid Serpentine membership card, and to sign in to a book. This will allow them to monitor the level of Serpie use of the centre. Members who are also Seymour Leisure Centre members are, of course, exempt from this.

Don't forget that on Wednesday nights and Saturday mornings there are lots of us using the Seymour and we have committed to

storing Serpie bags in our clubroom instead of using the lockers in the changing rooms. The Seymour is a great facility for all Serpies and if we all play by the rules, we'll keep it that way for everyone.

Serpie Xmas Party

The past year you've spent building endurance by doing marathon or Ironman training, added to speed endurance work at track sessions, and not forgetting those Surrey Hills rides, will be tested to the full on the dance floor at the event of the year – the Serpie xmas party.

Make sure you make a note of the date: Saturday 16 December. The place is the Kensington Hilton – the same great venue as for last year's party.

There'll be eating, drinking, dancing and a raffle with great prizes. This is one Serpie event where you don't need your club kit to take part.

Tickets will go on sale nearer to the date, but keep an eye on the e-groups and website to make sure they don't sell out before you book yours.

Can You Help?

All our club events are run by Serpies who've volunteered to help out. Without this help there would be no Wednesday night runs, track sessions, spin classes, Sunday cycle rides, handicaps and the list goes on and on.

If you enjoy the opportunities Serpentine gives you, why not think about helping out too? There are lots of things that need doing, on a regular or ad hoc basis. If you'd like to volunteer, but you're not sure how and when you could help out, send an email to

volunteers@serpentine.org.uk.



*Jeanette Mueller offering much-needed water at Welsh Castles Relay 2006
(photo: Penny Thorn)*

Ras yr Wyddfa 2006

by Alex Marklew

For a few days I'd been worrying about what I'd got myself into by entering the 31st International Snowdon Race, an annual dash to the top of the highest mountain in England and Wales and back down again. Would an injury-interrupted training programme based mainly around Greenwich hill sessions be enough to get me up 3,300 feet of ascent spread over five gruelling miles? I hadn't given much thought to coming back down again, so I was worried about making it to the top in the first place.

Lining up at the start, carefully positioning myself towards the back of the 450-strong field, my nerves were hardly eased when I found myself standing in the middle of the Italian national mountain running team. Their English, Welsh, Scots and Irish counterparts were also present: men and women legendary in the world of fell and mountain racing. And me.

We set off at a slow, steady pace. Although the first half-mile was fairly flat, everyone knew the full horror of what lay ahead. Turning sharply, the path lurched upwards like a rollercoaster, steeper than anything I'd ever run up. People were already walking, hands on thighs. I vowed to pass this early test without resorting to similar tactics, but still less than a mile from the start, my legs were already turning to jelly.

Once we turned off the tarmac road and onto the summit path, the gradient eased off to more of a gentle incline – troubling, but nothing compared to the slog we'd just completed. Now there was a different foe to contend with – trying to stick to anything approaching a steady pace on the jaggedly uneven surface of the rock-strewn trail. It was hard going, especially in the searing heat, but I felt strong and hit the water stop at the mountain railway's halfway station bang on schedule to meet my two-hour target time. But things were about to get a lot tougher.

The summit, hidden behind Snowdon's many ridges in the early part of the race, was now clearly visible ahead. There were about two miles to go to the top, but well over half the ascent was still ahead of me. Once again, my fellow competitors and I were reduced to a brisk walk, striding up as best we could. As we rose up, the temperature started to drop: a brief, much-needed boost to morale. The leader, England's Andi Jones, had hurtled past us as he headed back down the mountain, just as we were starting to think we were performing respectably...

The path remained brutally steep for much of the rest of the way, despite assurances from a marshal at Clogwyn Station that "it's all easier from now on". I was able to start running again for the final kilometre or so, but as the summit drew nearer, the path narrowed. At the same time, it filled with hikers, tourists who had taken the train up and, of course, hundreds of runners heading back down.

I picked my way through the crowds, and before long, was climbing the summit cairn steps, tripping on the top one and nearly taking out the S4C cameraman. I tagged the trig point

and trotted down the other side and stopped to perform the calf stretches I'd learned would save me from agonising cramps on the dash back down. Then I saw the ChampionChip mat – another few metres down the slope; and a few 'slower' runners had already passed me while I stood there. But, 1:19:20 to the top – could have been worse.

I suddenly realised how cold I was, and discarded the water bottle I'd carried since Clogwyn, a mistake I would later regret. I set off down at a cracking pace, surprising myself at how sure-footed and speedy I was. The feeling of flying down the path that was such torture to come up was amazing, running faster than I thought I ever could, wind in my hair, the spectators cheering... AARRGH!

For the briefest of moments I allowed my mind to wander and instantly folded my ankle on an uneven rock. I limped to the side of the track, yelping in pain, convinced that it was game over. A fellow runner stopped to help, thinking I was cramping up, while a marshal helpfully told me that his colleague further down the mountain was a first-aider and had a radio. Thanks, mate.

After five minutes of rubbing and rotating, I gingerly put some weight on my left leg. It hurt, but it was bearable. Just. I set off again, trying to combine a sprint with a limp with a steeply descending, uneven surface. It was just about manageable, but I cursed my carelessness for blowing my chances of hitting my two-hour target when I'd been doing so well moments earlier. However, my self-pity evaporated in an instant when I saw another runner lying beside the track, wrapped in a sleeping bag and surrounded by mountain rescue personnel – a stark reminder of how risky such events can be.

As I trundled back down into the valley, the temperature began to soar again, and I regretted discarding that water bottle. I'd already passed both water stations, and as the path began to level out (meaning I had to actually run rather than freewheel) I began to suffer in 30°C heat. I was on the point of wilting altogether when a kind marshal offered me his drink; it proved to be the vital boost I would need to reach the finish.

By now I could see Llanberis' Padarn Park down below, still a long way off but visible. We reached tarmac – agony for hot, tired feet after pounding the rocky trail for the past two hours. "Well done, losers" shouted a kind young man outside the Victoria Hotel. By this point I lacked the energy to point out that his statement, while accurate, was hardly what people wanted to hear at this point in proceedings. My faith in 'young people today' was restored further down the road, where a local schoolgirl was busy cooling off runners with her parents' hosepipe. The sensation of running on the flat after 10 miles of steep up and down was almost too much for my legs and only a fellow runner's encouraging words stopped me grinding to a halt. A final burst of energy and I was on the finish straight – still lined by enthusiastic spectators, despite the fact that Mr Jones had crossed the line an hour earlier.

In the end I made it round in 2:05:34, 355th place out of 430 finishers. It was painful, it was soul sapping, it was depressing. So obviously I'll be back next year, and I'd heartily recommend it to any other Serpies out there!

Track & Field Season 2006

by Penny Thorn

The 2006 track and field season began at the end of April when many Serpies were coming out of winter training, or competing in and recovering from spring marathons. It's a huge testament to the commitment of our captains and officials that around 40 women and over 70 men competed at the various T&F meetings, especially with a packed list of other races and events during the summer months. The main 2006 T&F events were the Serpentine decathlon; the Southern Men's League, in which we had a team in each of three divisions; six Rosenheim League matches, the Southern Vets Mid-London League, and the women's final.

It's impossible to report on all the matches. Here, however, is a snapshot of some of the highlights.

The Second Serpentine Decathlon

Despite the wet afternoon, the Serpentine decathlon kick-started the T&F season and provided a great introduction to the different events. In the men's competition, the winner was Jamie Nelson, with an excellent all-round performance. Second and third places went to relative T&F newcomers, Michael Hadmon and Jason MacKenzie, who were impressive in all events and showed enormous talent.

For the second successive year, Rachel Brough won the ladies' decathlon, winning five out of the ten events. She was challenged all the way by Jen Marzullo, who finished top three in eight of nine events to finish in second place. Rachel Whittaker set a new club record for the pole vault at 1.30m to place third overall.

Thanks to everyone who participated, supported and assisted including: Nadya Labib, Malcolm French, John Walker, Angie Palin, and Ian and Sally Hodge. Also, thanks to Ashley Kibblewhite, Tony McGahan, Derek Paterson and JT Wong who demonstrated the technical events.

As the 2006 T&F season came to a close, Serpie Jaysn Savage, competing in the Surrey decathlon championships in Crawley, scored an impressive 4,123 points to finish a very respectable sixth out of eight competitors. Jaysn will be tough to beat in next year's Serpentine decathlon.

Southern Men's League

The first Southern Men's League match on 29 April saw three Serpie teams competing across divisions one, three and four. With 2005's dramatic promotion of our division four team to division three and the prospect of aggressive competition amongst dedicated T&F specialist clubs, together with a new team in division four, we definitely had our work cut out to field a team in all three divisions. The challenge was on!



It's just a running race with a few barriers in the way (photo: David Knight)

In the last match of the season, our division one team came fourth at Dartford. There were some outstanding performances, including another club record for Andy Nanton, who shaved 0.1 second off the 400m time he set at the previous match, finishing in 49.0. Both our javelin throwers, Keston Thomas and Kelroy Bridgeman, threw over 50m, Eric Vamben became the fifth fastest Serpie of all time over 5,000m with a superb 15:29, and Jaysn Savage became the Serpentine's second longest discus thrower for the season, behind only uber-athlete Fyn Corcoran, with 33.36m. Overall, the division one team finished the season 14th out of 25 teams and aim to finish in the top half next season.

Our division three team secured their position in the division for 2007 with an amazing 17 personal bests leaving them in third place in the final match. Overall, they finished 13th out of 16 teams – a commendable effort in their first season after promotion. The team demonstrated that they're not lacking ability or depth of talent, however, next year they'll strive to be in the top half of the division by fielding a consistent team throughout the season.

The division four team were a revelation this season, finishing an outstanding sixth in the league. This was the first year Serpentine had three senior men's league teams and for our third team to compete so well against other club's A or B teams was superb.

All in all, our men's teams had great success all round. The captains would like to thank everyone who competed as well as the officials who made it all possible and did a fine job.

Rosenheim League

In other T&F competition there was more success. We secured our place in the inter-divisional final and placed a very creditable fifth position. For full results, visit the results pages on our website: www.serpentine.org.uk/rdb/trackfield/welcome.php.

Southern Vets' League – men's team

The 2006 season was outstanding and brought an enormous improvement on our performance in 2005. We finished second, just behind Herne Hill Harriers, who went on to the finals of the Southern Vets' League. The proof of how strong our challenge had been came as Herne Hill were pipped in the final by only half a point by Oxford City, who won the competition.

Highlights of this season included Ashok Jamdagni and Lionnel Pradier helping us win the opening match of the season by undertaking the 2km walk at short notice; Tony Silverman, who won several of the over 50's sprints; and Ashley Kibblewhite competing in the field events. Ola Aralepo and Simon Baird trained consistently throughout the summer and improved as the season progressed, whilst Richard Smith and Cliff Hide provided great support to the team and scored plenty of points to fill in wherever the team needed them.

Thanks must go to Richard Smith for the contribution he made at the matches, managing the team and ensuring that we had representation in many different events. Without our officials, the team wouldn't be able to turn out, so a huge thank you goes to them, for helping make the events run smoothly.

Southern Vets' League – women's team

This year a total of 21 Serpie ladies competed and we once again won the mid-London division of the Southern Counties Vets' AC T&F League and qualified for the final, where we finished sixth out of seven teams. The contest was a tie between Epsom & Ewell and Blackheath & Bromley.

In the final, we welcomed back world gold-medal winner Brenda Green for her first race for 15 months. At 76 she was 16

years older than some of the other competitors in the 100 metres; which in itself was a truly remarkable achievement. Winners included Louisa Reeves in the 400m, Sue Lambert in the 1,500m and Sue-Ellen Horrocks, who won the triple jump in her first competition of the season. Sue-Ellen was also second in the high jump and the 800m and third in the long jump.

While it was a great team effort this year, there were many great individual performances including Phil Kelvin, who made a come back after a long lay-off with injury and Hel James, who secured two PBs. Karine Pradier, Ros Young, Hilary Walker, Carole Wisdom, Christel Beukes, Marianne Morris, Ruth Jackson, Val Metcalf, Liz Tapp, Hannah Arbeid, Margaret Sills and Sally Hodge completed the team and all earned valuable points. Special thanks must go to Bev Thomas, who not only managed the team in every match, but also did whatever throws were necessary! The whole team would like to acknowledge the support of our officials and supporters including Malcolm French, Richard Smith, Jo Currie and Sally MacKay, without whom we couldn't compete and would not have had nearly as much fun.

Ashok Jamdagni is the recipient of this year's Derek Paterson trophy and Ruth Jackson and Valerie Metcalf are the joint recipients of the Jan Farmer trophy. The full list of winners of the 2006 T&F trophies will be announced in the near future.

With so many T&F events at all levels and for so many age groups, this can only be a brief taster of the season's highlights. It also can't begin to describe the enjoyment that the many Serpie participants got from competing at T&F in 2006. Hopefully, however, it has inspired you to take part in 2007 and we look forward to seeing many new faces taking up the challenge next year! The 2007 T&F season will kick off in late April so keep an eye on the website and e-group for details nearer to the time.



Serpie Women Masters at the Final, September 2006 (photo: Paul Ingram)

35+ and fancy some track & field competition next year?

If you're a woman of 35 or over, you can come and join us!

Serpentine takes part in the Mid-London Division of the Southern Counties Vets' AC Track and Field league.

There are four Monday evening fixtures at Battersea throughout the summer, with runs, jumps and throws, as well as a 2,000m walk, and different age-classifications. We're very happy for you to come along, even with no experience, and try out different events on a non-scoring basis.

Contact **Jan Farmer** or **Bev Thomas** for more details and watch out for more information on the website and e-group.

Race the Train

by Adrian Lloyd

What a contrast in weather from the typical summer sunshine described in Lynda Isaac's comprehensive write-up of the 2005 race. This year it rained for all of the 14.75 miles, and by all accounts had done for most of the preceding week. The sheep tracks were collapsing on the hillsides after they had been pounded by the first couple of hundred runners. The knee-deep ford at around 11 miles did at least wash the worst of the mud off for the final section. Trail shoes firmly laced on were vital – road shoes would have been positively lethal. The consensus seemed to be that the hindrance of the mud more than outweighed the benefit of cooler conditions – and gave the train an unfair advantage!

The first train finished in 1:47:36, beaten by 86 runners (12% of the field). Unfortunately, arriving before the second train, at around 2:07, won no prizes. I have not checked the results for all 23 times the race has been held, but since 2000 I have found 10 Serpies who ran. The nearest to beating the train was Michael Hanreck in 2003 (1:49:37).

The winning team this year was Ranelagh Harriers, the only club with three members who all beat the train. This shows the race is not just for hill-hardened Welsh runners! The only time Serpentine has formed a 'team' since 2000 was with our three ladies last year. Three fast Serpies (preferably with half marathon times of well under 1:30) are needed for a winning team in 2007 – and a great weekend by the sea!



Battling through the mud (photo: Sportpix)



Legs versus steam (photo: Sportpix)

Wimbleball Half Ironman

by Mark Richardson

Lycra at 4am is not pleasant. Lycra's not generally a good idea out of exercise-crazed spin classes or certain Soho nightclubs, but before dawn it takes on a life of its own and forms a strange symbiosis with the bananas I'm consuming to provide a modicum of energy for the trials ahead.

Triathlons, I've learned, are as much about forward planning, ruthless execution and fanatical commitment as they are about physical fitness. This is a shame, as my planning skills generally peak with putting on matching socks and the definition of commitment would be to say no to a fourth toasted cheese sandwich at lunch. Thank heavens for my fellow triathlete, Martin, who, using a combination of wisdom and cajoling has ensured that I'm ready for the challenges ahead – in at least as much as I won't try cycling in a wetsuit or running wearing a cycling helmet.

We arrive at Wimbleball Lake and the pre-race checklist begins: don wetsuit and very fetching swimcap (think 1,000 Kojaks, all with blue heads); put air into tyres; find start line; run to start line due to lateness. The 400 brave souls of wave two gather at the start line. Blimey, 1.2 miles looks a long way when not subdivided into lengths of a 20m pool. Some card plays the Jaws theme and then we're off! One minute into the swim, I want out. Panic has set in, pure blind inescapable panic – like the feeling you have when you've locked yourself out of your flat. With the gas on. And a small child inside playing with matches. Now I know what it feels like to be a mating salmon, albeit a mating salmon at a gay 24–35 swimsuit salmon mating party. People are thrashing about on all sides, it's nigh on impossible to draw a full breath and thoughts of having to email everyone saying "the first 60 seconds were alright, but that was it" are running through my head. Breathe. Breathe. That's better. Oh b....., b....., b..... breathe. Breathe. The crowd is thinning out and the water's less choppy. A few minutes of breast stroke and then onto the trusted front crawl.

Now there's hope. I start to pass people. As the last turn looms, the sun rises over the lake. A quick smile, one test is soon to be passed. Out of the water, greeted by cheers from Lorna and Toni, Lorna poised to take unflattering pictures to doubtless be used for future blackmail attempts. Onto the bike. Ah, the trusted steed, my chosen form of transport in fair London town. Crowded, polluted, traffic-ridden London town, but delightfully pancake flat, which Exmoor is not. The event organisers promised an 'undulating and challenging' course. I now understand that these words are in fact Esperanto for 'mountainous' and 'only attemptable by bloody idiots'.

The first 20 miles fly by, with a couple of uphill but generally flat or downhill. One hour for 20 miles, good average speed, legs feeling fine – move aside Lance Armstrong, there's a new king



1,000 Kojaks with blue heads (photo: Lorna Clark)

of the mountains coming through. For the next 45 minutes, the mileometer hardly seemed to move. Another hill. Did they move in earth specially to create these? How much of my entry fee was spent on helicopter reconnaissance missions to create the longest uphill seen outside of Mount Kilimanjaro? The course is circular, so I'll be seeing those hills again. Energy bars, water, EPO, adrenaline injections – whatever's going, I'll take it.

I get a puncture. A combination of emotions. Hope I can fix it. Glad to have a cheeky rest whilst fixing it. I really need to answer a call of nature in that farmer's field. Twenty minutes later, all three goals achieved, and the race was back on. The second set of hills pass as expected, in an orgy of pain, epithets and recriminations towards my legs (for not being Lance Armstrong's, despite earlier comments) and the bike (for not having an engine secreted in the frame, or at least some lower gears).

A dash back to the lake, a second wardrobe change for the day (we triathletes like nothing more than to look our best for the adoring public) and it's onto the run. Only 13 miles to go – a de-mob happy attitude starkly at odds with the half marathon still to be completed. The run starts well but tails off quickly as it becomes apparent that the organisers have decided to carry on with their hill policy. Get the head down, get running. Walk the steep hills, run the rest. The course is three laps: start counting off the miles.

People start to smile and talk to each other. For most of the day my fellow competitors/sufferers have maintained poker faces and a distant disposition, but now a more celebratory air emerges. Suddenly it's 10 miles gone, then 11, 12 and 13 and it's a dash for the finish line. Come on you lovely finish line, envelop me in your grasp and, if possible, teleport me to the nearest hostelry to a waiting pint of cold beer and chunky fries.

It's done, finished, complete. We are given medals, which everyone wears with pride. Smiles all round, a real feeling of achievement. Would I do it again? Definitely. From having no idea that such things existed or that I could complete them six months ago to this. Top of the world, now where's that pint of beer?

Another Ironman Report

by Lars Menken

The start of an idea

When I first joined Serpentine, I read a report by Bo Engelbrechsen, who'd just completed his first Ironman. Surely normal people couldn't contemplate an Ironman, especially me, just starting out as a runner?

Time passed, I started beginners' swim training, then bought a road bike and it seemed natural to sign up for the 2004 club championship sprint triathlon. By race day, I could comfortably ride 20k on the flat and swim freestyle. I had even bought clipless pedals. And about 1 hour 25 mins after the start of the race, I was a triathlete! I wasn't fast, but had enjoyed it so much that I entered a second tri later that year. A conversation with Richard Melik, whose first Ironman had been that year in Zurich, ended with "you could do that as well" and the idea was planted. So in 2005, I signed up for IM Switzerland 2006.

The training

The day after signing up, I did my first Surrey Hills ride. I was a confident rider on the flat but really struggled on hills, so hills were what I needed most. By March I could ride to Windsor and back with my eyes closed, though not much faster. I signed up for more swimming lessons too and got all the gadgets: fins, paddles, pull buoy, and even a wetsuit as a Xmas present.

Lanzarote 2006 brought seven days of mainly swim training. I had to rely on the day hire bikes, which wasn't ideal, but Laurence Harding's advice on riding was vital: to learn to ride up hills well, you have to ride up them. I really needed some hill training. I learned the Surrey Hills route and headed there every week. Building up to 130k, I finally did what I should have done in Lanzarote, and rode the full distance in training. This also gave me a sense of a target time. I might finish the bike under seven hours, escaping the dreaded bike cut-off by a whole hour. Added to a swim time of 1:15, that gave me a 1:45 safety net, leaving a five-hour marathon for a finish time of under 14 hours – my target time.

Dress rehearsal

With four weeks to go to race day, it was the Serpie half Ironman championship in Weymouth: my first open water triathlon. I went from third to having no-one in front of me in the water. They were all about 20m to the left, swimming the shortest possible route. As the cold of the sea kicked in, my feet were freezing, my head was freezing, everything was painful. I finished the swim but in pain.

I knew I'd be overtaken by lots of people on the bike, but thought if I could do 5:20 here I might do seven in Zurich. On the only hill, I looked like I was standing still. Serpies from the fast wave caught me, as did the Serpies from my wave. Finally I finished and hoped to be able to catch some people up on the run. I stormed out of transition, took a gel and overtook people for all of 10 minutes, then ran/walked the rest of the way.

My dress rehearsal had been a disaster, but I had learned some valuable lessons. First, try to follow someone in the swim and sight more often to keep on course. Second, it's not just a bike race where you can give 100% on the bike, there's that run to leave energy for. So, I had four weeks left but no confidence at all.

The race

Carrying a bike and luggage through Zurich airport was enough to leave me needing a nap when I reached the hotel. Thursday afternoon was registration and Friday brought the race briefing. The evening's pasta party was in a nice ski chalet-like restaurant. Germany had just beaten Argentina in the World Cup, so the party started a bit late. Saturday saw a rest day; Portugal beating England; and bike racking. Half of those racking seemed to be inflating their tyres while the other half were deflating theirs. I didn't have a pump with me, so I joined the deflators. Dinner with other Serpies was in a Chinese restaurant – so much for carbo-loading.

On race day, transition opened at 5am so I was there at 5:30. Bikes were racked by country of residence, and my area quickly filled with people I knew in recognisable club kit. I put my race gear neatly next to my bike, then checked it all over again. And again. I inflated my tyres and checked the race gear once more.

With 45 minutes to go, most people started the 1k walk to the swim start. The walk was a better prospect than checking my gear again, so I joined them. With 20 mins to go, wetsuit on, I waded into the water. It was warm – already better than Weymouth. I positioned myself to the right of the field and not too far up front. When the start signal was given, I jogged into the water and looked for room to swim. After 30 to 40 metres of swimming, another wave joined us from the right and there I was, right in the middle of the pack. I hit people and was hit by people. Turning at the first buoy, I looked for the next one and for feet to follow. Although following the feet didn't really work out, I did reach the buoy, then it was on to the third turn at an island lined with hundreds of people – not hard to find, but the water was very shallow. The second lap was easier, as the field had spread out, but I was getting tired. In the end I swam just 35 seconds outside my 1:15 target. I hadn't been able to get the draft I was hoping for, but my swim was much better than it had been at Weymouth.

In transition I quickly found my bike and took off my wetsuit. Covering myself in just not enough of the sun protection foam from the goody bag, plus putting cycle gear over my tri-shorts and slipping into cycle shoes took nearly six minutes: five more than the winner. No wonder fellow Serpie, Doug, overtook me in transition. The cycle started quite well: it was flat and I quickly built up more speed than I should have. It would be 20k before

I reached 'the beast' and my plan was to take on water until about 40 mins into the ride then switch to energy drink. The best-laid plans! After 20 minutes I felt a bit low, and with no energy drink on the bike yet, I took my first gel – my reserve gone already. After 22k I passed 'the beauty': the first aid station, at the bottom of 'the beast'. I took on some energy drink and a fresh bottle of water and started climbing.

I hadn't ridden the course before so I didn't know what to expect. It wasn't very steep and I hadn't started to use my little chainring, but I asked a rider who was flying past me how long the hill was. The answer was 16 minutes – for him. So the little chainring it was, up to the top. The downhill was awesome. Nice smooth road, no wild corners, just pure, controllable speed; you could even get away with not pedalling for about 5k. The climb up to Forch was another long one, but not steep, although my tiredness meant that I still needed the 'granny gear'. The descent was a bit different. Not that fast for a while, then really steep – going at 80 km/h on a small road. Back at the lakeside, we had a long, flat stretch past transition until we hit Kirchberg, and heart-break hill. This is the steepest hill of the race, with spectators lining the road on both sides. I'd completed the first lap in 2h 10m: 10 minutes up on my target.

The second lap was more difficult. A lack of long ride practice meant I couldn't use the aerobars comfortably any longer. Also, I was suffering on the hills. I was lapped by the eventual winner on the first ascent to 'the beast' – at 85k for me, 145k for him. But I didn't mind, I was still on target. On heart-break hill, the crowds were still cheering, but probably for the steady flow of people who were now lapping me. I finished the lap in 2:20, so, despite difficulties, still 10 minutes up on target. Just to give me another problem to deal with, my body decided that it no longer liked energy bars.

Lap three gets pretty lonely towards the end. The cowbell ringers on 'the beast' were looking even more tired than I was; the DJ on Egg was running out of tunes; the crowds on heart-break hill were concentrating on the marathon – with the race winner coming into the funnel as I approached T2. I still managed to hold the final bike lap to 2:18, which gave me a 6:58 overall time. Still on target!

T2 is somehow more relaxed. There isn't as much buzz as in T1. People sit down to change their shoes and have a quick chat about the race so far. At least if you're racing in the 14 to 16-hour group, the speed of transition doesn't really count. The serious athletes have long gone. I changed my top, socks, shoes, put on some more sun-foam (but still not enough), a running cap and took two gels. Six or seven minutes in transition and only a marathon to go!

I settled into my shuffle speed. At the first feeding station I grabbed soup, energy drink, lots of water for over the head and some solid food. Then the shuffle continued. For a while I was feeling great, even dreaming of a 12:30 overall time, but then came the point where it really got tough. I managed to run/walk for a further 3–5k, but from 25k in to kilometre 34, I walked more than I ran. This was where the mind games came in. In my head, I tried to plot graphs of my current pace and estimated finish time. My graphs didn't work: my mind was thinking in miles but the markers were in kilometres.



*Almost at the summit of heart-break hill
(photo: ASI Photo)*

The big wake-up came with 16k to go, which even my tired brain could easily translate to 10 miles. I had two hours left to complete the marathon in under five hours, and to finish under 13:30: much better than my previous calculation of a 15-hour finish. With a new motivation, I stormed past people on the last lap and a half. I didn't let anybody overtake me. At the end, with two minutes left to get under 13:30 and just 500m to go, I even managed a sprint finish. The finish of an Ironman is very special and I had fully intended to enjoy the final 50m in the finish funnel, but, with every last metre needed to hit my target, I hammered through the finish with no looking around and smiling. The official watch stopped at 13h 29m 4.3s (very precise these Swiss).

Directly after the finish, you're tempted with goodies and food. I received the biggest medal I've ever seen, a finisher's shirt, a towel and the finishers' area even had free massages available. Food was free and plentiful, however I couldn't eat. Instead, I just kept drinking coke and waited for my finisher's certificate.

On Monday there was an award banquet, with a nice breakfast – as much as you wanted to eat. There were a couple of films of the race and race pictures for sale, and the results lists were out. Since I was 237th in my age group, we decided not to wait around for the presentation. The guy sitting next to me was Swiss age-group champion, so I guess he stayed.

What next?

After an Ironman there isn't much left to do. I wondered about a channel swim, but thought better of it, although I remember saying that to Richard about the idea of an Ironman 18 months ago. But, suddenly, lots of Serpies have thought "If Lars did it, it can't be that difficult" and have signed up for Ironman Switzerland 2007, and yes, I've decided to join them. This time the target is 13:29:4.2!

Serpentine Handicap

by Simon Maughan

Since 1982, the club handicap has provided members with a monthly opportunity to improve their previous race times and to challenge their fellow club mates, irrespective of ability. The way that the handicap system works is that each runner has a start time that is worked out according to his or her previous handicap performances. The goal is for all runners to finish the course of 4.335 miles (6.975km) at exactly the same time, that is, 48 minutes after the watch has been started. Any runner who significantly improves from month to month, therefore has a good chance of being the first person to cross the finish line as the race winner.

The most recent handicaps have provided some very good performances from club members.

In May, Bob Davidson was the race winner. Bob also set the 2006 record for his age group, with an age-graded performance of 71.9%: a great effort for a man who recently celebrated his 75th birthday. In second place was John McDonald who took 55 seconds off his PB, while Steve Edwards was third.

The June handicap saw Piers Faulkner comfortably win the race, one minute ahead of Francesca Wright and Jean-Luc Hoez. In the same race, Anthony Stranger-Jones achieved an age-graded percentage of 82.7%. Keith Evans also had reason to celebrate, completing his 100th handicap.

Robert Howells stormed to the finish line and won the July race, followed by George Allan in second place. Hel James took 26 seconds off her previous PB to finish third.

Wayne Maurer returned from injury to win the August race with a very strong finish. Wayne was closely followed by Val Metcalf, who has also been gradually returning to fitness following injury. Andrew Hibbert finished in third place.

September's race was won by Jon Knox, who has been training hard over the last few months since returning from injury. In second place was Russell Dixon-Box, who took five minutes off his previous best time. In third place was Sue McGinlay.

The leader of the Tom Hogshead trophy table at time of writing is Mark Braley, followed by last year's winner, William Simpson, with James Edgar only five points behind William, in third place.



Mark Braley, current leader of the Tom Hogshead, fighting for the line (photo: David Knight)

HANDICAP RESULTS

	1st	2nd	3rd
MAY	Bob Davidson	John MacDonald	Steve Edwards
JUNE	Piers Faulkner	Francesca Wright	Jean-Luc Hoez
JULY	Robert Howells	George Allan	Hel James
AUGUST	Wayne Maurer	Val Metcalf	Andrew Hibbert
SEPTEMBER	Jon Knox	Russell Dixon-Box	Sue McGinlay

TOM HOGSHEAD

Current standings

1	Mark Braley	161
2	William Simpson	157
3	James Edgar	152

It's always great to see new faces coming along to take part, volunteer or spectate at the handicap. One of the nicest things about the race is the opportunity that it provides to catch up with old friends, to meet new ones and enjoy the scenery that Hyde Park has to offer. So, if you've never been to a handicap before, do try to come along. The race takes place on the first Saturday of every month at 9am in Hyde Park with registration from 8.15am at the Bandstand.

Editor's note

The Serpentine handicap team has recently expanded from two to three with the arrival of **Evie Grace Maughan** on **18 August**, in time to watch her first handicap on 2 September. I would like to congratulate Lynne and Simon Maughan on the birth of their daughter.

SerpieQuiz

1 In which city were the 2006 European Athletics Championships held?

- A** Helsinki
- B** Gothenburg
- C** Oslo

2 Great Britain placed 10th in the medal table at the 2006 European Athletics Championships winning 11 medals, but how many countries won more medals?

- A** 1
- B** 5
- C** 9

3 Where will the 2007 World Athletics Championships be held?

- A** Fukuoka
- B** Tokyo
- C** Osaka

4 How many medals did Great Britain win at the 2006 World Junior Championships?

- A** None
- B** 5
- C** 8

5 Where were the 2006 World Junior Championships held?

- A** Beijing
- B** Shanghai
- C** Macau

6 Which of these famous Irish runners is an Olympic gold medallist?

- A** Ron Delany (1,500m – 1956)
- B** John Treacy (marathon – 1984)
- C** Sonia O’Sullivan (5,000m – 2000)

7 Steve Backley holds which honour?

- A** CBE
- B** MBE
- C** OBE

8 Which American is the only man to win a clean sweep of Olympic long jump medals (ie gold, silver and bronze)?

- A** Ralph Boston
- B** Carl Lewis
- C** Mike Powell

9 At the 1948 Olympic Games in London there were more than 4,000 competitors in all events. How many were women?

- A** 189
- B** 385
- C** 963

10 Which country won the women’s 2006 Marathon European Cup?

- A** Germany
- B** Italy
- C** Russia

Answers on page 38

In Olden Times

by Malcolm French

Looking back to the autumn of 1999

People involved with IT seemed to spend much of 1999 looking for the “Millennium Bug”. The rest of us were looking forward to the first total eclipse of the sun to be experienced in Britain since 1927. About 1.3 million people packed into southwest England, where the two-minute eclipse should have been best seen at 11.11am. Unfortunately, Britain’s weather was in party-pooing mood. It responded to this historic event by being cloudy and wet, so all the watchers experienced for two minutes was even colder and darker weather than they had for the rest of the day!

The autumn of 1999 was an historic period on the British political front. Elections were held for the new Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly. This was to be Scotland’s first parliament in 292 years. Meanwhile, parliament in Westminster passed a bill abolishing the rights of hereditary peers to sit in the House of Lords, bringing to an end 800 years of English history. Overseas, the Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, named his Federal Security Chief, Vladimir Putin, as Prime Minister designate.

In sport, Lennox Lewis beat Evander Holyfield on points in Las Vegas to become the undisputed, heavyweight boxing champion of the world. Manchester United caused controversy by withdrawing from the FA Cup. Instead, the club decided to compete in the meaningless but lucrative FIFA World Club Championship. At the athletics World Championships in Seville, the outstanding performance came from Michael Johnson (USA) who broke the 400m world record. His time of 43.18 has yet to be beaten. The best of the Brits was Colin Jackson, who took gold in the 110m hurdles, with Paula Radcliffe (10,000m), Denise Lewis (heptathlon), Dean Macey (decathlon) and the men’s 4x100m relay team all taking silver.

Autumn 1999 saw a notable Serpie first: the first edition of *Serpentines*, edited by Arthur Garrison. The Serpie website also got a major revamp. The website had been initiated by Ros Young and further developed by David Hoatson. In late 1999, Owen Barder took on the task of further upgrading it into what has become the most comprehensive and informative UK running club website and made it into the mine of information that you see today.

The track at Battersea closed to enable a major redevelopment of the facility to take place. This included the extension of the track from 6 to 8 lanes, construction of a stand for spectators and a new main building, now known as the Millennium Arena. While the work was taking place, our track sessions relocated to Paddington Recreation Ground and Parliament Hill Fields. This was intended to be a temporary move, but Paddington proved so popular with Serpies that it became a permanent addition to our weekly workouts.



Owen Barder (photo: Ian Hodge)

On the running front, we had two teams in what was, I think, the final running of the London to Brighton Relay. The race was organised by Muswell Hill Runners (now part of London Heathside AC) with the route running from their headquarters in Muswell Hill to the Brighton seafront. The race had teams of eight people each running two legs. In the handicap, Pat Kearsey won the Tom Hogshead trophy with 205 points from Baiju McCubbins who scored 198 points. Richard Smith had the dubious distinction of winning the Serpentine Egg for recording the lowest points score from 8 races. This was despite him registering a very respectable 51 points.

The club’s 10-mile championship was incorporated into the Cabbage Patch 10. Richard Holloway and Rokea Schiller won, from John Hudspith and Hilary Walker, respectively. However, all the Serpies were some way behind the race winner, 1993 World Cup marathon winner and more recently race director of the Great Ethiopian Run, Richard Nerurkar, who finished in a rapid 48:18. If you think that was fast, Nerurkar ran 46:02 over the Cabbage Patch course in 1993, which remains the UK 10-mile road record.

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The Five Golden Rules of Avoiding Injury

by Debbie Edwards

If you get a group of 10 runners together in the pub there are a couple of things that are fairly likely. Firstly, at least six will have had some kind of running injury in the past six months and secondly, they'll all be able to name the five most common running injuries. For those of you not currently in a pub, here are the top five injuries.

INJURY	SYMPTOMS
Achilles tendonitis	Pain & swelling between the calf & heel
Chondromalacia (Runner's knee)	Pain beneath or on the sides of the kneecap
Illiotalibial band syndrome	Pain & inflammation on the outside of the knee
Plantar Fasciitis	Pain & swelling on the bottom of the foot
Shin Splints	Pain & swelling along the front of the shin bone

A nasty and painful collection indeed. So with an estimated 60% of runners injured at any one time, are running injuries an inevitable part of our sport?

Analysis shows that just over half of running injuries are of the gradual and over-use variety, rather than being caused by sudden or traumatic incidents. It's impossible to predict when you'll trip over your neighbour's dog, but are you doing everything you can to avoid gradual and over-use injuries?

A review of our top five reveals some common underlying factors. Being aware of these and heeding the five golden rules won't guarantee your prolonged good health but should maximise your chances of remaining injury-free.

Rule 1: Stretch & Flex

You wouldn't start your car in fourth gear, so why do it to your body?

When you're keen to get out and run or you are short of time, it's tempting to shorten your warm up or skip it completely. Equally, you may think that a couple of minutes stretching after a run will suffice. This is asking for trouble. You should warm up dynamically for about 10 minutes, gradually easing your body into its workout. Similarly, at the end of a run, don't just slam on the brakes, but progressively ease up on the pace and finish with a comprehensive series of stretches held for 6-10 seconds each.

You should also build a weekly flexibility session into your schedule to condition your muscles and increase their range of movement.

Rule 2: Avoid Excessive Training

We all know what it's like to go out on a run, feel like it's going really well and be tempted to just do that bit more. Or, maybe you've missed some of your training and are desperate to make up for lost time? These scenarios can lead to injury. It's far better to focus on the quality of your training and keep to a manageable, sensible schedule. Gradually increase the endurance and intensity of your workouts rather than suddenly increasing the load you're putting on your body.

It's important to follow a schedule that's right for your needs and current fitness level, and not just do what your mates are doing.

Rule 3: Wear the Right Shoes

Shoes play a huge role in cushioning our feet from the constant pounding of running, and for many runners they also continually correct their running action. Needless to say, you should buy your shoes from a reputable running shop with expertise in analysing running gaits and who can help you select shoes to fit your personal requirements. You can find a list of shops on the website: www.serpentine.org.uk/links/index.php#shops.

Once you've got your shoes, look after them. If you're running more than every other day, you should have two pairs to use on alternate runs. This allows the foam in the shoe's construction sufficient time to recover its shape and full cushioning capability.

No matter how much you love your shoes, there's a time to say goodbye – typically after they've done 300–500 miles. Once your shoes have worn out, they no longer provide your feet with the protection they need and continuing to wear them is risking injury.

Rule 4: Maintain Your Balance

The running action is relatively short and repetitive, and endurance running in particular causes the body to repeat the same movements many thousands of times. Inevitably, any slight imbalance in your action, continuously repeated, will result in even greater imbalances over time.

In order to minimise this, you need weekly exercises to even up your movements and keep your running action balanced, such as squats and walking lunges. These should be done in a relatively slow and controlled manner, focusing on maintaining good form throughout. Core stability exercises are also highly recommended.

Rule 5: Vary the Terrain

Roads and pavements are man-made surfaces and our bodies aren't designed to handle the severe impact that results from running on them. In addition, continually running on cambered or banked surfaces can overstrain one side of your body. Varying the terrain that you run on is not only kinder in terms of minimising impact damage, but also develops your overall leg strength by making your muscles move in different ways as they work to handle the different surfaces.

Get creative with where you run. Try grass, trails, paths and even sand, and ensure that your weekly schedule contains as wide a variety of surfaces as possible. A change of terrain can be a psychological boost to your training too.

For more information or advice on training ask any of the Serpie coaches – they'll be happy to help. You can email coaching@serpentine.org.uk.

Happy injury-free running!

Sudbury Court Report

What's happening in our sister club?

So, as the late summer bank holiday slips by, it's time to bring you up to date with happenings in the depths of 'sunny Middlesex'.

As the spring edition of *Serpentines* was hitting your doormats, the club was busily preparing for our annual 10k race. Sadly, at the tail-end of what was apparently the wettest May for 23 years, we didn't escape our share of the precipitation, and only 66 gallant souls made it to the start line (compared to 142 in 2004): scant reward for the amount of effort members had put in to staging the event. It was good to see the conditions didn't have too adverse an effect on the Serpie presence, however, with 15 members (virtually 25% of the field) coming under 'starters orders'; Malcolm French and David Lipscomb taking charge of the timing; and John Walker marshalling in his own inimitable style. As ever, the red and gold 'refuelling' efforts in the bar afterwards were also much appreciated.

As for the race itself, perhaps a little surprisingly, given the conditions, both the men's and women's course records were broken. In the men's race, Haggai Chepkwony (Army) clocked 33 mins 22 secs, finishing 25 seconds in front of Serpentine's Eric Vamben, with last year's



Our Sudbury Court friends (photo: Gowan Clews)

winner, Peter Stainer (Shaftesbury Barnet) in third. In comparison, Alice Braham (Harrow AC), who I understand only entered "to keep her mother company", had things very much her own way in the women's race, finishing some eight minutes ahead of the field in 37 mins 20 secs, and in fourth place overall. For Serpentine, Anthony Stranger-Jones continued his rich vein of form, joining Eric in the top 10 finishers, whilst Jeannette Mueller was second lady.

Aside from the 10k, the spring and summer months have been, as ever, dominated by the summer league and our own internal handicap series. I am very pleased to report that, in the summer league, we recorded our highest aggregate turnout since joining the league in 2001, with 18 different members representing Sudbury over the

four events. In addition, we shattered our points record in the second fixture at Ealing, finishing in a 'nose-bleeding' second spot. Needless to say, normal service was quickly resumed, and we eventually ended the season fifth, some distance adrift of league champions, Ealing.

In our handicap series meanwhile, going into the final race, thanks to the excellent efforts of our handicapper Mark Mulvenna, half a dozen members are still in with a chance of laying their hands on the Docherty Shield.

Club membership seems to have stabilised around the 50 mark, and we probably need another dozen or so to be able to regularly field teams in events. Still, as ever, I remain cautiously optimistic.

PS: For those of you who like to monitor my 'stimulant of choice' whilst concocting these reports, this time it was St. Peter's organic best bitter, which received a definite thumbs up!

Front cover photos

*Start of stage 3, Welsh Castles Relay 2006: Nadya Labib
Karen Hancock: David Knight*

Serpie Quiz Answers:

1=B 2=A* 3=C 4=B 5=A
6=A 7=C 8=A 9=B 10=B

**Only Russia, which topped the medal table with 34 medals, won more medals than GB)*

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COMING UP

In the next issue of Serpentine

Serpies Circumnavigate Norfolk – the 2006 Round Norfolk Relay

The Serpentine Interview

Looking Forward to Track and Field

Berlin, Amsterdam, Florence – An Autumn Marathon Report

A Serpie A-Z

Cross Country Round-up

PLUS

- Serpie News
- Advice from the Coaching Team
- Why Do They Do It?
- Serpie Quiz

SERPENTINE

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Photo: Leila Hudson

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Kit can be purchased from the kit room in the Seymour Leisure Centre.

The kit room is open:

- Most Wednesdays, usually between 6.15 and 6.40pm, except the last Wednesday of each month, when it is open after the run (around 8.30pm).
- On Saturday mornings after the run (except the first Saturday of the month which is the Club Handicap).

Watch the e-group for notices on exact opening times.

Please note we do not provide a mail order service for kit.

If you have any questions please email: club-kit@serpentine.org.uk

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Cotton T-shirts	£12
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– long sleeves	£23
Waterproof jackets	£15
Stormtech jackets	£35
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Tri shorts	£30
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Cycle jackets	£50
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