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All kit is on sale on Wednesday nights at the Seymour Centre (check out the website for full details).

You can order vests only by post. If you want to order a vest, please send a cheque (made out to Serpentine Running Club) to Lynne and Simon Maughan, 5 Skelgill Road, London SW15 2EF, and remember to state men's or women's and the size you want.

SERPENTIMES

The magazine of the Serpentine Running Club

November 2005



Inside

Ironman UK

Training for the Travelling Runner

plus:
Antarctic Adventure

Looking forward
to cross country

London to Paris



Editor's Message

It's almost the end of 2005 – time to reflect on the past year and look forward to the new one; and this issue of Serpentines does both.

2005 saw the inaugural Ironman UK triathlon event held at Sherborne and Serpentine was well represented with over 30 competitors. Nadya Labib, who supported at the event, has drawn together Serpie impressions of the (long) day.

I'm sure that the die-hard cross country fans amongst you have already donned spikes and got out in the mud in the first few races of this winter season. For those of you who are still wondering whether or not to give it a try, Malcolm and Angie have answered lots of the questions that newcomers to cross country usually ask. As someone who had always professed to have no interest in getting cold and muddy but was completely converted after giving it a try, I'd urge you to have a go – you don't know how much fun you're missing.

As usual, Serpies have been active at events all over the globe and in this issue you can read about Rachel's London to Paris tri relay, Urban's escape from Alcatraz as well as Linda's race against the train in Wales. Given how many club members seem to travel regularly, I know that Daniel's advice on how



to continue to train while travelling will prove useful to many of you. We have more advice of a medical nature from Serpie Rajat Chauhan, who specialises in sports medicine.

Just to prove that Serpentine isn't all work and no play, we have a Serpie girl's guide to hunting and fishing: invaluable advice in advance of that not-to-be-missed social event of the year – the Serpie xmas party. Get your ticket now if you haven't already.

There are many people I must thank for their hard work in getting this issue of Serpentines to you. I'd like to give particular thanks to our writers, without whom we'd have nothing to read. David Knight's wonderful photographs, have obviously inspired others to have a go and several people have sent in great pictures of the events they have taken part in or supported at. I'd like to thank the committee for working with me and for uncomplainingly (at least in my earshot) supplying the information I asked for. Finally, I would like to thank Hel James for stepping in to do the layout of this issue when it became clear that for the rest of the year either I or Richard Melik would be out of the country.

One last postscript remains: to thank David Knight, on behalf of myself and Richard, for awarding the Secretary's shield to us at this year's AGM for Serpentines. I admit to grumbling on occasion about the amount of work involved, but knowing how much people enjoy reading each issue makes it all worthwhile.

Sally Hodge

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Why Do They Do It?

by Jeni Vlahovic

With the autumn and winter training season upon us, the club relies on several volunteers to help organise and lead these sessions. Two in particular are going to require some extra effort this year as they continue to experience a high level of interest from members. These are the Saturday morning club runs and the weekend club cycles.

One has been going for several years, the other has come on leaps and bounds just over the past couple of years as the club's triathlon activities have taken off. Both of them will need lots of help from additional volunteers over the coming months to ensure fun and safe training for all.

Here we interview the main volunteers organising on these sessions and find out why they do it.

Sue McGinlay
 – Saturday morning club runs

Sue joined the Serpies on 2 December 1991, after being a member of the Garden City Joggers (now the Garden City Runners). Like many Serpies, Sue was looking for a running club in central London so she could run after work. She can't remember exactly when she first got involved in the Saturday morning runs but it was over seven years ago.

Q: Why did you volunteer for this particular role?

A: Maggie Moran and I set up the group, based on a similar scheme that I had organised for the Garden City Joggers. From my own experience, I knew how nervous many people, particularly women, are when they first come along to a running club. We also saw the group as being helpful for runners returning from injury.

Q: What successes have you had in this role?

A: I am sure that Maggie, and Bev too, would agree that the group has been even more successful than we had hoped. Several participants, most in the 'starter group', have moved on to become regular runners and have participated in various races including marathons. Maybe we should have been counting all the new people we have seen over the years!

Q: What challenges have you faced in this role?

A: The only real challenge has been getting enough volunteers to help us out with the increasing numbers of people who want to take part. We have a constant stream of enquiries from people who would like



to participate in both Saturday morning and Wednesday night club runs.

Q: What plans do you have over the next few months?

A: I would like to encourage more people in the starter group to take the leap to being a Runner with a capital R. Many people are reluctant to move on, even though they are obviously improving and capable of running with the other groups. As the cross-country season approaches, I will be encouraging them to have a go at some of the low-key cross-country races.

Q: What advice do you have for anyone who wants to volunteer to help you out with these sessions?

A: Please get in touch with me, especially if you know the 2 Parks route! Helping out at these sessions is particularly good if you are racing on Sunday and

don't want to push yourself too hard the day before. As anybody who has helped out will tell you, there is nothing more rewarding than seeing the delighted smile on the face of a beginner who has just completed his or her first run.

Chris Tant – weekend club cycles

Chris joined the Serpies in 2003 to get more involved in tri and find people to train with. He has just taken over organising the weekend club cycles from Lucy Dove, who got these training sessions off the ground a couple years ago.

Q: Why did you volunteer for this particular role?

A: There are specific things that I am looking for in my own cycle training that I want to help the club provide. It will help me get motivated and will also be a chance to get more involved with the club.

Q: What successes have you had in this role?

A: The role is very new to me still but so far lots of people have some really good ideas and are keen to get involved. It is an area with lots of scope to grow and help people in a variety of ways.

Q: What challenges have you faced in this role?

A: Again, it's early days, but one of the initial challenges has been getting enough experienced cyclists stepping forward to help out. Most of the offers for help have been from less experienced members. This is great, and there will be lots for them to do, however, we need help from the experienced members, especially those that have really gained from the club over the last few years. I also anticipate another challenge as being able to cater for the massive range of needs and abilities out there.

Q: What plans do you have over the next few months?

A: Continuing the Sunday rides plus organising numerous different sessions including coaching for beginners.



Q: What advice do you have for anyone who wants to volunteer to help you out with these sessions?

A: Let me know what would be good for you personally and where you would be willing to help, then we can put it together. In general, the more ideas the better!

Are You Ready for E-Serpentines?

If you received this copy of Serpentines in the post, you may be interested to know that you can choose to download Serpentines from the website.

If you'd prefer an electronic version of Serpentines (maybe two or more Serpies at the same address would like to share one printed copy), you can log onto SerpieBase, choose "Edit my personal details" then untick the box beside "Serpentines by post." This lets the Serpentines team know not to post any future issues to you.

Don't worry though! If you don't make this change on SerpieBase you will continue to receive your copy of Serpentines in the post.

Mud, Mud, Glorious Mud

The 2005/6 cross-country season is upon us

The 2005/6 season will be the usual popular mix of league, trophy and championship events. The season started on 1 October with the Horsenden Relays. The 2006 English National Championships, an awesome event to take part in or watch, will be at Parliament Hill in February. The season will again close with a "mob match" against Thames Hare and Hounds on 11 March.

More than 160 Serpies competed in the 2004/5 season's races and many of them enjoyed the post-race socialising that is so much a part of the cross country scene. If you're a cross country regular I'm sure you'll already have added your favourite races to your diary (and hopefully used My Events). If you've never taken part in cross country before, why not give it a go?

For those of you who are new to cross country, here are a few of the questions we are often asked.

Will I need special equipment?

Not really, no. You will need to wear your Serpie top and you may find it useful to buy a pair of cross country spikes (much cheaper than trainers) for when the ground is less firm. However, you might be able to make do with trainers for some of the events at the start of the season when the ground should still be firm. You may find that you can borrow a pair of spikes for your first race so you can see whether you like it before taking the plunge and buying your own cross country shoes.

Will it be like cross country at school?

Most of the courses (with the exception of Wormwood Scrubs) don't resemble a school playing field in any way and are often in really nice parks or the countryside. Also, Malcolm French and Angie Palin, the cross country team managers, will be joining in the races rather than standing around in warm tracksuits with a cup of coffee (like the PE teachers at school used to).

How far are the races?

They vary from 4k to 8k for women; and from 6k to 15k for men. Even though the distances may seem

short to hardened long distance runners, running cross country is much harder work than running on roads and so you get a very effective workout for a relatively short distance. Because the courses are on grass it also gives your joints a rest.

I'm really slow, does it matter?

Some of the races are more suited to beginners than others, although you are more than welcome to come along to any of them. You'll probably find that there are others taking part who are far slower than you.

Will I have to pay for my entry fees?

No – the club pays the fees for all of the races.

How do I get there?

All of the races are accessible by public transport and Malcolm or Angie always send out directions by e-mail (or by post on special request) a few days before each race. Most of the races are within easy travelling



Paul Fromme at London Cross Country Championship 2004.

distance of London. It's generally easier to go by public transport than drive and it means you can come to the pub for a drink afterwards!

Will I get all wet and muddy?
Yes!

I'll be really hungry and thirsty afterwards, will I be able to get some food and drink?

There is normally homemade cake after races, courtesy of one of the Serpie runners (notable star turns recently have included Lars' coconut cake, Justin's Anzac biscuits, Robin's brownies and Lynne "Domestic Goddess" Maughan's amazing cake selection). In addition, a merry band of us always finds a pub serving food to go to after each race. It's therefore a great opportunity to meet others in the club and, if there's a fire, to dry your socks.

Sadaf Awan (right): London Championships 2004; and Justin Lock, Richard Melik and Nick Paine in Richmond Park (top right)

How do I train for cross country?

There are two informative articles by Frank Horwill on cross country specific training on the Serpie website: Blueprint for Cross Country Success and Analysis of and Training for Top Class Cross Country Performance.

Where can I find more information?

The cross country race schedule is in the Events Planner on the website. If you are intending to have a go at some of the races, it would be great if you can use My Events to add them to your own list which also lets Malcolm and Angie know who's planning to be at the races. Feel free to contact Malcolm (tel: 020 8422 3900; email: MalcolmFrench@aol.com) or Angie (tel: 07967 643976; email: angiepalin@hotmail.com) directly if you have any queries.



The Results Database now includes cross country results

My Results on the Serpie website now lists your recent cross country races below your road races. There's a page to display all your past cross country results and a search page you can use to find any cross country race listed in the database. If you view all your races, the cross country results are in a table below the age-grading graph for your road races.

All races which contain a significant off-road element but were previously classified as road races, e.g. Box Hill fell race, Davos K78 and the Meon Valley Plod, have been re-classified as cross country races. This means that they are no longer age-graded and so won't appear in your graph of age-graded performances.

Ian Hodge



Metropolitan League

This league provides our main competitive focus. The Met League, which is made up of teams from 17 clubs, is open to all first claim Serpies. Second claim runners are welcome to compete as guests. The race venues are all within easy travelling distance of Central London and all of the races are on Saturday afternoons. There are separate races for men and women. The men's races are approximately 5 miles and the women run 2.5 miles.

The league is a team competition. The team scoring the least number of points, according to the finishing positions of the runners, is the winner. The men's "A" team comprises 12 runners. Provided we have more than 24 finishers in the opening event, we will be entitled to run a second, "B" team, also of 12 runners. The women's "A" team numbers 6. Here again, provided we have more than 12 finishers in the opening fixture we will be able to run a second team. Incorporated within the main races is a Veterans competition. Both men's and women's veterans teams have 4 scoring members.

Sunday League

This league comprises 10 clubs from North London and Hertfordshire. The standard is somewhat lower than the Metropolitan League, therefore, it provides less experienced club members with an excellent introduction to cross country running. The races are longer than those in the Met League: women run approximately 4 miles and men 6 miles. The women's race opens each fixture and starts at 10.30am. and the men's race starts at 11.15am. In the Sunday League both first and second claim Serpies can count towards the scoring teams.

Like the Met League, the Sunday League is a team competition. There are 8 "scorers" in the men's "A" team. The next 8 finishers count as a "B" team. The first 5 women score as an "A" team with the next 5 counting towards a "B" team. There are also veteran men's (4 to score) and veteran women's (3 to score) teams. At the end of the season there are trophies for the winning teams and the leading runners in various age categories.

A Year with Serpentine

by Nancy Labiner



Yesterday I ran the Fifth Avenue Mile. It was a straight shot down Manhattan's Fifth Avenue on a clear, sunny day, starting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and ending at the southern edge of Central Park. This morning I ran the Newport Liberty Waterfront Half Marathon. There were beautiful views of the Manhattan skyline and the Statue of Liberty felt close enough to touch. I ran both races alone. Sure, there were hundreds of other runners participating but I didn't see a single red and gold vest in front of me. I didn't hear screaming voices cheering "Go Serpie" as I ran by. I didn't head to the pub after the race to recap the course with teammates and catch up together. When the races were over I went to baggage check, picked up my backpack and went on my way.

Was it the Saturday morning run my first week in London when I was warmly invited to head back to the club room with everyone for tea? Was it the following week after my first handicap, when I was cheerfully encouraged to join the club for the first cross country race of the season, the Horsenden

relays? Was it watching the commitment and camaraderie of everyone helping out at the inaugural Jekyll and Hyde duathlon on a beautiful, crisp autumn morning in October? I don't think I can pinpoint one moment over the many others that jumps out as that moment of clarity. What I do know is that after that first handicap early last autumn, the day I bought a Serpie vest "just in case I decide to run this cross country race everyone keeps talking about," the day that I was cheered on by teammates whom I had just met that afternoon, the evening that brought me to the pub in Perivale well into the dark hours of the evening to spend time with fellow club members I had just met earlier that day, I knew that I was very lucky to have found such a special group of people.

From that milestone cross-country race last September, to the many others in which I participated all winter, to the Watford half and the Meon Valley Plod in February, to the Green Belt and Welsh Castles relays this spring, to the Alpine Swiss marathon and the Nottingham relays this summer, to Tuesday track and Wednesday club runs, to the



health weekend and to Lanzarote, to cheering on the sidelines at the New Year's Day 10k and at the Paris marathon, I looked forward to every minute I spent with the Serpentine Running Club. The London marathon this spring was my sixth marathon, but the only one where I literally had people shouting my name and screaming "Go Serpie" throughout the course. What an incredible day – to see so many familiar faces, both on and around the course for 26.2 miles – and to have the opportunity to celebrate together at a post-marathon gathering; I don't think that anyone else could feel so happy and so blessed as I did.

I have never encountered any other club, and I know now that I never will, where the support is so genuine, the members so welcoming to new faces, where the focus on running as well as on fun is so strong, and where there is a group of people always game for getting out and participating together, whether the race is in Hyde Park, the Lake District or Davos, Switzerland. I knew how incredible it was

over the past year and I know even more intensely now, that the Serpentine Running Club is a place where life-long friends and soul mates are made.

I knew I had found a very special group of people and a very special organisation last autumn.

As I ran along the race course this morning, surrounded by unfamiliar faces, I thought of the group of Serpies running the Berlin marathon today, quite possibly at the exact same moment, across the ocean. I thought of their weekend together, the group's pre-race dinner, the celebrating and carousing after the race, the bonding and the stories they would share. I thought back to the many memories I have of Serpentine weekends like the one I imagined today, in tents, B&Bs and hotels, and I know that the people with whom I have shared these adventures and the memories that I have will always be with me, and that there will be many more to come.



A Serpie Girl's Guide to Hunting and Fishing

Advice for the singleton Serpie and for those who've recently acquired a Serpie Man

It's a truth barely concealed that the Serpentine Running Club is the biggest dating agency in London...

It's spawned successful couples too numerous to mention, but judging by the frantic activity in the ladies' changing room on a Wednesday night, there are still plenty of single women willing to make an effort to catch the eye of a Serpie Man.

And why wouldn't they? Especially now it's an acknowledged fact that runners make better lovers, oh yes indeed. According to the recent 'sex special' edition of Runner's World, experts agree that running is good for your sex life – the rush of those feel-good endorphins will not only make you feel sexier but they'll do wonders for your between-the-sheets performance too ... in fact, a quick 5k could be just the aphrodisiac you're looking for... And if that's not enough of an incentive to have you reaching for your trainers, it's worth remembering that a shared passion for running can lead to true love. But first, you need to identify and catch your prey. And, most importantly of all, you need to be aware of the potential pitfalls in your path if you do snare your Serpie Man (SM).

So, here are a few pointers to help you on your way: DO gen up on your technical terms if you want to impress a SM. And don't worry if you think you sound like a bit of a nerd – this will be a 'turn on' for many a SM. Learn to slip in acronyms and 'technical' phrases you would once have scorned as the preserve of the 62.5% of men who are on the autistic spectrum. Become interested in splits (positive, negative and banana), orthotics (nothing to do with teeth) and Davos (not a Dr Who character, that's Davros). And remember that you're not being invited to a music festival if your SM mentions VO2 max.

DO expect to leave parties sober at 11pm to make sure that you're fit for some 10k race the next day in an obscure town you'd never normally visit. And if you do persuade a SM to hit the booze, remember he gets drunk very quickly so be prepared for him to be the life and soul of the party one moment and com-

atose in a corner the next. And forget trying to persuade him that it's nicer to stay cosily spooned in bed the following morning than it is to schlep to a cross-country relay in some mud-soaked field. It won't work. But it's nothing personal. Honest.

DO visit some of the world's greatest cities with your SM, but don't actually expect to see any sights apart from the road that your man is running along. And if you're preparing for a race yourself, don't worry about your training programme as you'll probably find that you've run a 10k PB battling to make it to the 10 cheering stations along the route. And don't be too surprised to find that you're not having a candlelit pre-race dinner for two, but are in fact cramming pasta with 40 other Serpies in an all-you-can-eat restaurant.

DO prepare yourself for a life of servitude if you've set your sights on a particularly speedy SM. You'll never be able to run with him (his snail-like trot is your Paula sprint), so there's no point in embarrassing yourself by throwing up on his feet after your 10-minute 'warm-up jog'. Instead it might be better to invest more time wearing something a little more seductive than your usual shorts and t-shirt and accepting your role as marshal, time keeper, pasta maker, bike stand and adoring supporter.

DO take the initiative and don't be shy about striking up a conversation with your SM. You already have a lot in common, so as long as you've done your homework and can happily talk the talk of a seasoned runner, then asking your SM how his three parks run went should be a stroll in the ... well ... park...

DO take compliments where you can get them – okay, so he might not clock your fantastic £200 pair of LK Bennett boots, but he might well notice your shopping spree at Run and Become and your brand new pair of Mizuno Wave Riders. And don't worry if your SM turns up for your first date wearing his running trainers and a 2002 London marathon finishes t-shirt. You can work on this – it's what's inside that counts.

DON'T expect to snare your man by turning into Nell McAndrew overnight – remember that most people don't actually lose weight and no part of your body changes significantly in shape (apart from your feet, which swell). Also, when you get past jogging and start to run, you'll more than likely start to ming. Your feet become a mixture of blister pustules and yellow leathery hide and you develop indelible chafing marks around the body parts that once might have been considered erogenous. You might also find that after a frighteningly brief period, stale sweat seeps so deeply into the threads of your running clothes (no matter how sophisticated the breathable wicking fibre), you can actually get nauseated by your own smell. And if it's that bad for you, imagine what it's like for your Serpie lust object...

DON'T be surprised to find that food = fuel, so forget about being wined and dined at a fancy restaurant for hours on end with a tasty bottle of wine and instead expect to eat as much as you can in as little time as possible. And don't be put off if your date is keen on combining some very unusual food groups at unusual times of the day, and frequently seems to be sporting a pro-biotic yoghurt staining around the mouth. Ah yes, and remember that porridge goes with everything.

DON'T be too upset if you weigh more than your lust object. SMs can sometimes be on the stringy, insubstantial side. Also while their bodies are healthy they can show the marks of extreme and frequent weathering, which can make them look like pre-pubescent boys who've been artificially aged in a laboratory.

DON'T introduce your SM to normal friends unless you've primed them on ITB, VO2, PBs and WCs, and the intricacies of the Pose technique. Otherwise they might do something embarrassing such as call-

ing running 'jogging' or trying to motivate your SM for a race by saying "don't worry, you'll walk it".

DON'T be put off by the dodgy spelling and grammar you might encounter as you get acquainted with your SM. Many runners are far too busy to bother with trivialities as basic as literacy. But don't worry; you'll have plenty of time to teach your SM when he's laid up for a month with a groin strain. And don't be put off by the inclusion of naïve notation such as ? or ? – it's meant well.

While their bodies are healthy they show the marks of frequent weathering, making them look like pre-pubescent boys who've been artificially aged in a laboratory.

DON'T expect your SM to introduce you to a thrilling new social life full of exciting cultural experiences. However, if you prefer cosy nights in, in front of the telly, then a SM could be just what you're looking for. Just don't expect him to stay awake. In fact, don't be too surprised if your SM falls asleep any time, any place, any where ... with a shandy in one hand and a protein drink in the other.

And finally, DON'T read all this and despair! Serpie men have lots of things going for them. Really. Like bags of energy, optimism and that 'can-do' attitude so sadly lacking in many British males. Oh and we may have been a bit harsh about their physique too. Many SMs have great calves and thighs – and let's not forget that irrepressible sex drive. So don't be put off if your SM doesn't work out ... just start chasing the next one!

Invisible Members

Are you one of our invisible members? One of the many who haven't ticked 'Share this info?' in SerpieBase and are therefore totally invisible to any other Serpies logging in?

If you're one of these mysterious people, why not login to <http://www.serpentine.org.uk/serpiebase> and click 'Edit my personal details' to share your mobile number, email address or other contact details?

While you're logged in, why not check that your other details are correct: especially your emergency contact and medical details? The club needs these to be up to date for obvious reasons.

London to Paris, a Serpie Way...

by Rachel Whittaker

The Challenge

A relay race from London to Paris based on the Enduroman concept: 87 mile run to Dover, 29 mile swim to Calais, 180 mile overnight cycle to Paris.

The Teams

Six athletes (must include one female) from each of two investment banks, going head to head to raise money for Age Concern and Teenage Cancer Trust.

The Serpies

Rachel Whittaker on the Morgan Stanley team, Marco Agostino on the CSFB team.



This August bank holiday weekend turned out to be one of the most exhilarating and adventurous I have ever spent! In the culmination of my first season of triathlon I raced from London to Paris with a team of five work colleagues, exchanging a virtual baton every hour to travel the distance in just over 40 hours from start to finish. We had a support crew of six, including Eddie Ette, pioneer of the Enduroman Arch to Arc Challenge, and the first person crazy enough to do it solo.

The Run

Running to Dover was a bit like the Green Belt Relay, but changing over every hour instead of at fixed places. We set off from Canary Wharf on Friday at 10am, with our lead cyclist, Tim, clutching print-outs from the Streetmap website. The rest of us piled into a minibus (with the back seats pulled out to make room for all the bikes). Immediately we got stuck in traffic, but pulled through just in time to spot Tim and Wayne heading off in the wrong direction and get them back on track, before driving on to find a safe changeover spot.

After three hours we had gained a lead on CSFB, and I hopped out to run my hour. By now the sun was scorching. We were just outside Maidstone and Eddie gave me strict instructions on the route to take should I get as far as the town centre. I had vaguely assumed that one runs down to the sea, but some fairly horrendous hills seemed to have sprung up overnight between London and Dover. Fortunately Karen's hill sessions stood me in good stead, but even so, after about half an hour, the CSFB guy overtook me. Disaster number two happened upon arriving in Maidstone – all of Eddie's instructions went out the window as I went the wrong way round a giant roundabout, playing chicken on four lanes of busy traffic. We then got lost in the town centre, but after changing over on the hour for Ben to run, we discovered so had CSFB! So we were even again with half the race to go. On the ninth hour, Steffen brought us into Dover, smacking into our designated finish line (a billboard outside Dover railway station!) four minutes ahead of CSFB. Now we just had to grab some food and a few hours sleep before setting out to swim the Channel.

The Swim

At this point I should add a little background. I am a terrible swimmer and I'm not being modest. When I heard about this challenge I was training for my first tri and saw it as a great chance for me to learn from the more experienced triathletes who would undoubtedly be taking part. I should have thought twice when no other women stepped forward to fill the compulsory female spot. But anyway, it was too late for regrets as I climbed aboard the boat at 3:30am on Saturday morning, with my team-mates, Eddie and Tim, three crew, and an observer from the Channel Swim & Piloting Federation.

We motored from Dover Marina to Shakespeare Beach, the official start of any channel crossing. It was dark, choppy, and the boat lurched horrendously. I was not happy. It's normal practice in a relay to put your strongest swimmers first so they do the most swimming, so just short of the beach we threw James in and he swam ashore to wait for the official starting horn before running back in to swim for his hour.

By the way, did I mention that we were not wearing wetsuits? (Possible reasons for no other women wanting to take part suddenly become clear...) For channel swims to be officially recognised they have to be unaided; that means no wetsuit. Yes, it was cold. No, we did not cover ourselves in goose fat.

Once the sun rose the day grew into a lovely one. The hours passed quickly, and we settled into a pattern – push a swimmer in, haul the previous one out, warm him up, give the current swimmer regular time updates, then start the cycle again. The boat moved at the speed of the swimmer, with someone always watching to check he was ok. The slow speed meant some people on the boat were prone to sea-sickness, which wasn't helped by the crew smoking continuously.

Around 8am it was my turn. I climbed down the ladder at the back of the boat and stood on the small wooden platform. Eddie gave me the signal to go and I threw myself into the cold water. Training in Dover Marina had prepared me for the initial shock – the cold hits your body and brain and for the first few moments I could only gasp for air and flap around – but it didn't prepare me for the choppiness of the open water. The swells were terrifying and it was all I could do not to panic every time I saw a wave



looming. My attempts to settle into a front crawl were abandoned when Eddie shouted "just do breast-stroke!" which turned out to be good advice as I started to relax. That left only jellyfish to worry about, but to my immense delight and relief I didn't see a single one the whole way to France.

Swimming alongside the boat was reassuring – much easier than sighting in a triathlon. I stayed a few metres away so I wouldn't get thrown against the boat by the swells from passing ferries. Some of the guys preferred not to wear a watch, but I needed to know how much time was passing. The first 10 mins goes slowly, but the next 20 are never-ending! After halfway it gets easier, although by then I had lost the feeling in my fingers. Finally the end of my hour came but I couldn't pull myself out of the water. I clung onto the steps and the guys pulled me aboard and wrapped me in my big red Serpie towel.

It took an hour before I was totally warm again; helped by the thankfully sunny weather, hot tea, cup-a-soups, and bananas. The five hours until my next swim passed all too quickly, but this time the water didn't feel as cold, and was definitely less choppy so I was able to swim properly.

After a little over 13 hours, Luke climbed out onto the French beach. Our elation at finishing was short-lived when we remembered we now had to cycle to Paris.



The Cycle

At about 10pm we set off. Ben and I had done one hour running and two hours swimming, so we were to cycle first and second. The minibus drove ahead to guide through any difficult areas, and the support car trailed the cyclist with headlights on full beam to light the way. Changeovers were a little hairy as it was hard to catch up with the new cyclist if you took too long loading the finished one into the bus. When I set off on my first cycle, I shot off down a fantastically long hill towards a small French town, and promptly got lost in it because the car hadn't caught up. After several minutes of panicking, I circled back to the main road where I had gone wrong and saw the CSFB bus and cyclist. I had lost the lead that Ben had built up, but at least I was back on track.

The mood in the minibus was quieter than on the boat. We were all tired after our day of swimming and the lack of sleep. We tried to keep energy levels up by eating bananas and energy bars; it was important that we stayed alert as we were cycling on the wrong side of the road, in the middle of the night, after two days of very little sleep!

Disaster struck about 4:30am: we took a wrong turn off the main road and ended up leading our cyclist through a French town before admitting we were totally lost. For the first time, tempers frayed. We were all tired and up to this point had built up a reasonable lead on the other team. We came to a standstill, and it was time for me to get back on my bike for my second shift. Then we saw CSFB up ahead – they had gone the right way and we had done a big circle, but ended up almost back on the correct road again!

The next hour was possibly the longest one of my life. I was wiped out, but pedalled as fast as my little legs would go. Dawn was just around the corner, but so, unfortunately, was the worst and longest hill I could possibly have imagined. At one stage I was convinced it would be quicker if I got off my bike and ran with it, but my ego and sheer bl***-mindedness would not permit me to give in in front of my team of blokes! Unfortunately this hill turned out to be indicative of the terrain for the rest of the hour, and by now the air was getting chilly so even the downhill sections were uncomfortable. At about 6am, Luke took over and I almost fell off my bike; I could barely rip my feet out of the cleats.

The Finish!

I collapsed into the bus, and just 30mins later we pulled into the finish area, just two minutes behind CSFB! We finished at a ramshackle café just outside Paris, as we didn't want to risk racing in rush-hour traffic. We were all semi-hysterical with relief (I was anyway) at having finished, and amazed that we were so closely matched on both the run and bike stages. Even with navigational errors by both teams, we were only a few minutes apart over the two 9+ hour races. CSFB won the overall race as they finished their Channel crossing about an hour and a half ahead of us, but we were not surprised by that as they had six good swimmers and we... well, half of us breast-stroked most of our way to France!

In summary – an amazing experience, fantastic support crew, the best team-mates I could ever possibly have asked for, and most importantly, we raised a lot of money for Age Concern.

If you'd like further information, see the following:

Eddie's website: www.enduroman.com

MS fund-raising page:

www.justgiving.com/EnduroTeam

Channel Swimming & Piloting Federation:

www.channelswimming.net

Read about going solo:

London to Paris The Hard Way, by Andy Mouncey

Training for the Travelling Runner

by Daniel O'Donoghue

As I started planning this piece, I realised I hardly knew which continent I was on, having travelled across four during the previous 10 days: Africa, Europe (briefly), North America, Europe again and Asia (India specifically). And I ran in each place I stayed – although sadly, not as an elite athlete, drifting from one Golden League event to the next, with little to worry about apart from tactics and sorting out a recuperative post-race Golden-Emu-oil massage!

No, I am just an ordinary Serpie, trying to combine my training with work, family and social commitments. This can be hard enough when you are at home, but if you allow it to, a busy travel schedule can play havoc with your carefully planned training. So what are my tips as an experienced runner, and coach, on how best to combine demanding training and travel programmes?

First things first

When travelling, I always start as I mean to go on. Often this means that I will go for a run before leaving for the airport. Then I can relax, enjoy a glass of wine on the flight, smug in the knowledge that I have done my training for the day. On arrival at my destination, if time permits I might squeeze in a short run or, failing that, I always try to go out the following morning. The duration or intensity of these first runs is not important – the key thing is quickly to establish a daily routine that incorporates running, to get your bearings and acclimatise in your new location. My own preference – and advice to others – is to run first thing in the morning. For most people this is the time of day that they can best control – evening runs can be jeopardised when things crop up during the day. And in warmer climates, it may be the only time when it is cool enough to run outside.

Focused and flexible

Being away from home means being separated from your normal running routines – the regular Club run, track session and pals you do your long run with. In this situation it is easy to drift into a routine of mainly short- to medium-length easy runs. Not such a problem if you are only going to be away for a few days, but if your trip is a longer one, you will under-perform in your target race after you return.

When travelling, it is especially important to be focused in your training. Identify your key sessions

each week – such as a long run, a lactate-threshold run and a speed session – and work out how you will do them. You also need to be flexible. For example, a fixed training schedule which works well for you at home may not be suitable – perhaps because you don't have the right facilities available, or because your travel plans require you to juggle the days on which you complete your key runs.

Being flexible also means taking advantage of the training opportunities your location has to offer. If you are in a mountainous or hilly place, you might find a suitable spot for a hill session, and in many cities or towns there are excellent off-road paths that cry out for an invigorating variable-pace fartlek session!



Fast and far

Perhaps the hardest two training sessions to complete in an unfamiliar location are speedwork and a long run. In the case of speed sessions, if you are lucky, you might be able to find a track you can use, in which case you can simply replicate the session you would otherwise have done at Battersea or Paddington. But remember, you don't need a track – any reasonably level and quiet section of road or path can be used. I recall completing a session of 10 x 800 (approximately) going back and forth on a rural road in Northern Nigeria. The only problem was dodging the occasional goat!

Long runs can be tough on your own, so the best option may be to hook up with some local runners. Many cities have running clubs that welcome visiting runners, as Serpentine does. If that isn't an option, then plan how you will do the run. In my experience the main risk in running long (at home as well as abroad) is getting lost! To avoid this, I generally don't plan a long run in my first few days on a trip, since I can use my earlier, shorter runs to explore the geography and work out possible long-run routes. A fairly failsafe strategy is a simple out and back route – ideal if you can find, for example, an attractive road or path beside a river. Just run one hour out (or whatever), turn around, and run back home. In desperation, you can always run laps of, say, a three or four mile circuit. Plan how you will get enough water – this is especially important in hot climates and rural areas – and take money with you to get a taxi or rickshaw back to your hotel if something goes wrong.

Feeling safe

It is natural to be more concerned about running safety when away from home. But there are few places where the risks are such that they might force you to look for the dreaded hotel gym treadmill! In

most countries 99.9% of people are either friendly towards, or ignore runners. OK, a few people may be amused by your appearance, but this is no different to the way things were in the UK a few years ago. For women, choosing appropriate running clothing may be an issue. Fortunately, however, there are relatively few places where expectations about women's behaviour are so conservative that it is impossible to run outside.

In practice, in most parts of the world the main safety risks are the same as those at home: traffic, road/pavement hazards, dogs and weather. Common sense should prevail: run during daylight – traffic and weather conditions may be best early in the morning. Stray dogs can occasionally be a problem, especially in developing countries. Normally they are harmless, but if they become aggressive, stand your ground, and be prepared to pick up a stone to throw at them.

Fun and friendship

Finally, remember to enjoy yourself while you are training abroad. Perhaps you could get to know a new city by planning an early morning running sight-seeing tour. And try to meet up with local runners – either by plan, or by accident. Recently, in Khartoum, I joined up with a group of fast, young men who turned out to be members of the Sudanese Army athletics team. One of them interpreted the cheering (in Arabic) of some soldiers we passed “they were amazed that an old man like you could keep up with us kids!” (I'm sure something must have been lost in translation.) Later, I was able to give them some shoes I no longer needed, to help with their training. And I was invited to meet the family of one – for me, a rare opportunity in that country to get to know ordinary people, rather than the senior government officials I normally work with. As we all know, running is a great way of making friends!

Make 2005 the Year You Start Writing

If you've found something to inspire you in this issue of Serpentines, why not contribute to the next issue? It's a great way to share events you've loved (or hated) with others; to give advice, ask for help or to let every Serpie know about something that's coming up. With over 2,300 members there is lots of hidden talent out there.

Email your contributions to the Serpentines team at serpentines@serpentine.org.uk

Searching for Khartoum

The second in Daniel's occasional series describing runs in interesting corners of the world

Khartoum is the capital of Sudan. I lived here as a child in the 1960s, but left when my father moved to another job, and this is the first time I've been back in 38 years.

Although I arrived on Monday night, this will be my first run – the intense heat and thick dust in the air have made running unappealing the last few mornings. But the morning is bright, and the air seems clearer today and as it is Friday, the day of rest in Muslim societies, the roads will be clear as well.

My plan is to try and find the house where we used to live. Through the city centre I run towards the river, turn right at the Presidential Palace, and along a broad road towards the university. Although it is warm, it is not yet unbearable for running, and the road is quiet, shaded by trees. Around here there are few of the typical African running hazards – missing man-hole covers, piles of rubble in the road, stray cattle, goats, dogs – that sort of thing.

So I am able to make steady progress, passing the University of Khartoum, where my dad used to teach, and towards the district where we lived. Few people are about this morning, but those I see are invariably friendly, trying out their few words of English on me. I have covered about 2.5 miles by now, and I am looking for a landmark: the old power station near our house, which I have been assured, is still there. But I can't find it. The map my father gave me was hand-drawn from memory. He may have forgotten features, and the place will have changed.

So I turn back towards the city and then onto a bridge over the Blue Nile. But it is not blue today: wide and full of reddish brown floodwaters from the Ethiopian highlands where it rises. I time myself crossing it – over two minutes, running at a steady pace, so it is probably about one-third of a mile across. Re-crossing the bridge, I run along Nile Road. On my right there are grassy paddies where goats are grazing and herons, egrets and other birds are feeding. I continue steadily on the traffic and pedestrian-free road.

These are momentous times in Khartoum. In a few days time the Government of National Unity will take office. The new Government has been estab-

lished under the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which ended the 21-year civil war in Southern Sudan. But if big changes are afoot, they are not apparent today. Soldiers still guard the public buildings: one directs me away from the river – passing on foot is not permitted, apparently.

So I go around the Presidential Palace, built by the Turks, and the place where General Gordon was killed by Mahdist forces in 1885. Back onto the river, beginning to feel the heat now, and in the hazy distance I can see Omdurman, on the far side of the water at the confluence of the Blue and White Niles. Omdurman was where Kitchener's forces defeated the Mahdist Rebellion – a war crime really – using the most modern weapons available and dum-dum bullets, killing thousands of unarmed civilians, as well as the enemy.

In a few more minutes I pass the former site of Khartoum Zoo. A vivid memory from childhood: a camel leaning over the fence, and my mother warning to stand back in case it spits. But there are no camels there now. The zoo has gone, to be replaced by a massive hotel, modelled along the lines of the London Assembly building.

There are grassy paddies where goats are grazing and herons, egrets and other birds are feeding

I am getting tired now, and feeling de-hydrated. Foolishly, I hadn't taken a water bottle with me, thinking I would be back before the heat really got going. So I take the shortest route possible back to my hotel, thankfully avoiding getting lost. Just before I arrive, I see another runner. Possibly he is trying to get from A to B quickly, rather than taking exercise. But it's still running: an African reminder of why we started to do this in the first place!

Later the same day, and travelling by car, I managed to find our old house, largely unchanged. I also talked to two former neighbours, one a colleague and the other a student of my father, who remembered our family well. So I found what I was looking for in the end!

Advice to over-drink may cause fatal hyponatraemic encephalopathy

by Dr Rajat Chauhan, Sports Physician and Medical Osteopath M.B.B.S.
M.Sc. Sports & Exercise Medicine
M.L.C.O.M. Osteopathic Medicine

Dr Timothy Noakes, the author of *Lore of Running*, is a runner first and then a sports medicine doctor and research scientist. It was after listening to him at the Sports Medicine Conference preceding the Cricket World Cup in Cape Town I was made aware that, unknowingly, I was doing the right thing, i.e. not drinking gallons of water while running, not that I was running much then. My marathon PB last year was 2:58, after I followed Dr Noakes' suggestions, whereas in the 2005 London marathon I drank at each station, trying to keep myself hydrated, but ended up over-hydrated and hyponatraemic.

Dr Noakes recommends that runners must be warned that the over-consumption of fluid (either water or sports drinks) before, during, or after exercise is unnecessary and can have a potentially fatal outcome. Perhaps the best advice is that drinking according to the personal dictates of thirst seems to be safe and effective.

In a recent study it has been shown that, even though sodium ingestion marginally increased sodium serum in the group that ingested the most concentrated sodium drink, this practice was without benefit. Running performances were unaltered by sodium ingestion, and the incidence of symptoms was no different between the groups, as no athletes reportedly developed symptoms.

There is now a near-complete international consensus that hyponatraemic (a serum sodium concentration of 135 mmol per litre or less) encephalopathy develops in subjects who ingest excessive volumes of fluid during exercise and who gain weight, as a result developing "water intoxication". Accordingly, fluid ingestion guidelines recently accepted by the United States Track and Field and the International Marathon Medical Directors' Association suggest

that athletes should drink ad libitum during exercise – that is, according to thirst.

The apparent reluctance to accept that a basic physiological drive can produce safe drinking behaviours in exercising humans, as it does in all other creatures, continues to underpin advice that athletes must be provided with specific guidelines for rates of fluid intake during exercise. Therefore the guidelines suggest that rates of fluid intake during exercise should be between 400 ml and 800 ml per hour in most forms of recreational and competitive exercise; less for slower, smaller athletes exercising in mild environmental conditions, more for superior athletes competing at higher intensities in warmer environments.

From antiquity to the late 1960s, athletes were advised not to drink during exercise since it was believed that fluid ingestion impaired athletic performance, but the publication in 1969 of an incorrectly titled article, "The danger of an inadequate water intake during marathon running," provided the impetus for change, even though the study neither examined a 42 km marathon race nor did it identify any dangers. Since then athletes have been advised that dehydration during exercise is detrimental to both health and performance such that: "the greatest threat to health and well-being during prolonged exercise, especially when performed in the heat, is dehydration" and "if strenuous exercise is undertaken by hypo hydrated subjects, the medical consequences can be devastating". Rather, in various studies, the most dehydrated athletes have won the races, as is usually the case. This article's incorrect title provided the intellectual incentive for numerous studies, many funded by a fledgling sports drinks industry, culminating in specific guidelines for ingestion of fluids during exercise. Thus athletes are now

advised to replace all the water lost through sweating (that is, loss of body weight), or consume the maximal amount that can be tolerated. American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM), Gatorade Sports Science Institute, and the United States Army have promoted rates of fluid ingestion of up to 1200–1800 ml/h.

There is no evidence that athletes must drink "the maximal amount that is tolerable" to optimise performance and prevent medical consequences. Thus the hyperbolic statement, "if strenuous exercise is undertaken by hypo hydrated subjects, the medical consequences can be devastating," has no factual basis. Nor is it proved that all the weight lost during exercise must be replaced immediately, since the resting human may carry a fluid reserve of about 2 litres. Nor were prospective trials undertaken to ensure that these guidelines are always safe. Thus it was not then appreciated that unrestrained drinking, either at rest or during exercise could have fatal consequences.

The first reports of hyponatraemic encephalopathy in athletes, army personnel and hikers appeared shortly after the change to this new "drink the maximal amount that can be tolerated" dictum. To date, more than 350 cases of this condition have been described in the medical literature. At least seven athletes or military recruits have died from this condition; all reported deaths have occurred in the United States. Such deaths are particularly regrettable if they occur in athletes or military personnel who began the fatal exercise bout in apparently perfect health. Presumably reported cases represent a small proportion of all such cases.

Dr B M Hedge, a leading clinical physiologist, points out that one of the reasons for the higher per capita death of war casualties in Vietnam compared to the Falklands is supposed to be immediate fluid and blood replacement in Vietnam in the five-star American hospital in Saigon. We should have learnt our lesson!

In a recent study of the 224 km 2001 South Africa Ironman event, Dr Noakes showed that it is the fluid excess of 3 - 6 litres that causes this hyponatraemia, and that sodium supplementation is unlikely to pre-

vent its development during exercise and might even exacerbate the symptoms in those who become over-hydrated before and during exercise. This is because sodium supplementation might increase whole body fluid retention, thereby theoretically exacerbating the cerebral oedema. Only one out of 371 participants developed symptomatic hyponatraemia. An interesting clinical paradox also shown by this case report was that, despite profound fluid overload, the affected athlete passed little (500ml) fluid during the first five hours after exercise. Overnight he passed a further 4.1 litres of urine.

Athletes should be advised to "optimise rather than maximise fluid intake during extreme exercise"

Hence the most logical explanation for the near absence of cases of hyponatraemia in this Ironman must be that all but five triathletes lost weight during the race, probably because all the entrants were advised to drink only 500 – 800 ml/h during the race and no more. Indeed, a previous study has shown that the incidence of hyponatraemia in the New Zealand Ironman was dramatically reduced by the introduction of a more conservative drinking policy, in which the number of aid stations in the cycling and running legs was reduced. That same policy was adopted for this Ironman race. We, as a running club, should make a point to apply the same in the races we organise.

In contrast, competitors in 1999 Hawaiian Ironman were advised to drink at rates of 760 – 2000 ml/h depending on whether or not they classified themselves as light, moderate, or heavy sweaters. The Hawaii Ironman has traditionally experienced a high incidence of hyponatraemia. Americans again!

I again emphasise that the practice of self-induced fluid overload (dipsomania) poses far greater health risks during very prolonged exercise than does "dehydration". Athletes should be advised to "optimise rather than maximise fluid intake during extreme exercise".

Ironman UK

by Nadya Labib

With more than 30 Serpies competing in the inaugural event, Serpentine made a real impression in Sherborne

Okay. I know what you're thinking. "What is Nadya Labib doing writing an article about Ironman UK? She hasn't done a marathon yet, swims in the slow lane in the pool and only just got herself a proper racing bike a couple of months ago – no way has she done an Ironman." Well, that's all true, but the beauty of this amazing event is that it affords the supporter an opportunity to participate at such an intimate level that they come away feeling that they've been a part of it all. This is precisely what happened to me.

I went to Sherborne to support a group of friends, new and old, thanks to the bonding power of a number of Serpie activities (relays, boat parties, Sunday rides). Many of their stories will be shared here.

But first, let me set the stage for the day. The swim was two laps of Sherborne Lake on the grounds of Sherborne Castle. Sir Walter Raleigh built the castle in 1594, but the lake was not added until 1753. Kudos to the landscape gardener who did a magnificent job giving us spectators a large sloping lawn with good views of most of the course, though he certainly had no clue of how the lake would be used several centuries later! With 112 miles to cover, the bike course took in the hilly countryside of Dorset and Somerset – two laps each on southern and

northern loops. The run was an out and back from Sherborne to an Elizabethan mansion – Montacute House – with a climb up Babylon Hill at Mile 21.

I rose at 4am to head down to the start. I had registered as a volunteer with Beate Vogt the day before but we hadn't been assigned specific duties. The coveted body-marking role was already taken so I helped direct competitors into the proper queues. Once everyone had been marked, we were released from work for a while and I excitedly rushed down to the start.

Unfortunately for the competitors, a fog had settled over the lake during the night and safety concerns delayed the start by just over two hours. As hands and feet got chilled, eating plans went out the window and nerves rose and fell, the Serpie support crew passed along the barriers talking with our friends as they waited for the all clear. I was delighted to spot Lynn Plumbley with whom I'd done some training rides and who was racing for Tri-UK. She credits the Serpie crew for calming and reassuring her while she waited to enter the water.

After the fog receded and then returned twice, it was deemed safe to start the race, but nerves had taken their toll and the front of the field false started. The



kayak marshals chased them down and once everyone was back at the start line the klaxon went off and the race had finally begun.

Sherborne is not an unknown to triathletes – it has been the site of a Half IM for a number of years, but last year the organisers took the momentous decision to step up to the full IM distance. The notion of being part of the first-ever Ironman UK was too much for some to resist – this was one of the reasons Julian Nagi chose IMUK to be his first. Julian felt that it would be a very special occasion, and with the added advantage of being able to train on the course, he took the plunge. Jane Bailey, also doing her first IM, admits that IMUK was actually a bit of an impulse buy. She had been intending to step up to the Half IM distance in 2005 but when Sherborne was announced as a full IM and entries opened she says "I just got too twitchy with my credit card and entered before I could think about the consequences."

But why an Ironman? The recurring theme is the personal challenge. Simon Gardner says that for him "aiming for the seemingly impossible and achieving it makes life worth living."

So as the sun rose and the air temperature warmed, we watched as the field of 1200+ begin their quests for the seemingly impossible. There was no way to pick out the Serpies in the water as everyone was wearing a wetsuit and the IM-issued cap. However, Jenny Gowans was wearing a startlingly bright green pair of goggles which we did manage to spot and we gave her a big shout on her way to qualifying for IM Hawaii.

But time was passing and soon it was on to the next job. Beate had gone ahead for the assignment and phoned me to say she needed backup just past the exit of T1. I arrived to discover that the start of the cycle route had no barriers so people were crossing in front of cyclists just as they were picking up speed. A race official appeared with tape, which we stretched along the edge of the route and we spent the next hour or so directing the pedestrian traffic.

For some, the bike provided the highlights of the day. Dom Walker said although the course was hard, the scenery was awesome, but the bike leg was where Douglas Gurr realised he was falling ill. Douglas hadn't felt right during the swim but on the bike flu-like symptoms took hold and he felt that he had no power in his legs. After 45 miles he decided his race was over, but as he plodded back to Sherborne he was blown away by the support. He says "I honestly meant to pull into the castle and stop, but when it came to it I just couldn't do it. I couldn't face what felt like letting down all the folk making so much effort to help us – to help me around the course." An experienced triathlete and Ironman, Douglas says he learnt a lot that day about the power of support and how much "Ironman is an emotional and mental journey as well as a physical one."

Now it was time to head out on the run course. Jane remarked that the out and back nature of the course meant that she got to see all the other Serpies at some point and "seeing the other red and gold shirts was such a boost." But there were challenges here, too. Jelle had stomach problems on the first part of the run, until a friendly Belgian recommended he switch from gels to water and flat pepsi. He doesn't regret





one bit that the caffeine kept him awake that night since it saved his day. And it was here, in the latter hours of the race, where the race organisation really fell down. Many people finished the race in the dark – and this would have happened regardless of the delayed start. That the organisers had not prepared for this was mentioned as a negative of the race. Fortunately, this is something that can easily be rectified in future.

So what do our Serpie Ironmen list as the secrets to their success? Training, planning and race strategy are all cited. Some worked with coaches and found the support and guidance invaluable. Dom found “there are many highs and lows in training...and they can be extreme...[you] really have to want to do it.” Jane

says that planning how to approach the day was key, but more important was “stick[ing] to that general plan whilst being flexible enough to take into account of circumstances changing.” Simon agrees, but also says running straight after long rides, regardless of how tired he was at the time, was a crucial aspect of his training. Whether or not you chose to work with a coach as he did, Julian recommends finding a good mentor, noting that Serpentine has some very experienced people and the opportunity to benefit from their experience is priceless. Lynn credits her physio, in addition to her coach, with getting her to the start line.

And when asked if it was worth it, the answer is a resounding “Yes!”. Everyone who responded to my



request for comments said, in one way or another, that it was an incredible experience, one they wholeheartedly recommend to others. And not just the race itself – the process of becoming an Ironman begins from the moment the decision is made to the point of crossing the finish line – and where better than with Serpentine? Simon waxes poetic saying “The Serpentine is an amazing furnace from which Ironpeople are forged.”

As for me, the small part I played in the day’s events could not have had a bigger impact. I count myself fortunate to have been able to finish my volunteer duties as a catcher – almost literally catching finish-

ers as they crossed the line. It is the job of the catchers to look after the newly minted Ironmen and women – to collect their bags and get them something to eat and drink as they rest and savour their accomplishments. And I even got to catch a couple of Serpies!

And who was there until the very end? Yes, after impressing the race commentators with our numbers (they suspected that we were there as part of a drunken pact made in a pub some months ago), it was a group of Serpies who stayed until the bitter end and cheered the last finisher through before they walked off to bed and their well-earned rest.

Other Ironman Events – a Run Down

Adrian Jones assesses some of the possibilities

France

Set in Nice. Will be in its second year in 2006. Serpies that did this in 2005 year loved it. The first year was a success, though they did run out of water! Sea swim; tough, hilly bike; flat exposed run along prom, was hot this year.

Austria

Well established and proven as a great race. On outskirts of a small town: Klagenfurt. Fastest times on the IM circuit. Lake swim finishing in canal; fast bike course; flat run passing through transition at each half loop. Weather can be scorching or normal. Same organisers as IM France i.e. Mark Allen et al.

Switzerland

Zurich’s well-established race, expensive city. Lake swim; bike has combination of flat and fast along lake & hills with a short steep “fun” hill near end of each loop; run is flat for most part with some gradient when you go away from the lake.

Germany

Frankfurt. Not so tuned into this one but the Germans love it. There are a lot of spectators on the course and it always attracts big name pros. Big city tri, as Switzerland – it will have a lot of energy. Lake swim, split transition; no major climbs on bike; flat run with a lot along river Main.

Placid

Set in mountains of upstate New York. Lake swim; 2-loop bike with substantial ‘rollers’ on second half of loop; 2-loop run with short steep hill near town and a longish medium gradient out by the ski jump’. Great race but need to sign up on day registration opens. You will hear “good job” about one zillion times.

France is a toughie. Personally I thought Switzerland was a tad expensive and lacked the buzz of Austria. Placid is a pretty tough bike but a great race – much more of an experience than Florida.

If you’re not planning on Ironman UK 2006, for a first IM I would go for Austria as it isn’t a crazy France or Lanzarote bike, the swim isn’t an exposed sea swim and it is super-organised. The good thing about the European IM is that you can play the waiting game and sign up later, whereas the US ones sell out in a day or two.

Luton Team Relay

The fun way to run a marathon

Have you ever wanted to run a marathon but thought it was just too hard work or too lonely? Well now you can, with a lot less effort, with a team and lots of fun!

Picture the scene – a brisk December morn, rooftops twinkling in the winter sunlight and undulating roads trailing through a beautiful green landscape. Gradually you begin to hear the bubbling anticipation of hundreds of excited runners eager to stretch their legs; the gun goes and they're off! Quickly you become aware that this is no ordinary marathon: about half the field are running while the rest are cheering loudly. This continues throughout the course of the event as each runner enthusiastically takes their turn, supported loudly by their team.

This beautiful vision is a reality in the shape of the Luton marathon relay, which takes place on Sunday 4 December and is an end of season race that's great fun.

The event is a three-stage relay and is run in teams of three. A team consists of three runners who each run one lap of the marathon course – just under nine miles. The course is undulating, starting on the edge of the town and quickly taking you into the surrounding countryside for the majority of the route.

Whatever your standard, from beginner to seasoned veteran or speedster, come along and be part of this great fun event. You can register as a complete team of three; alternatively if you don't already have a team, just let us know and we'll organise a team for you. With 22 Serpentine teams last year and even more expected this year; we should have no trouble finding others for you to run with.

Interested? Want to know more? Contact one of the co-organisers:

Debbie Edwards

Mobile: 0798 593 1150

deborahedwards@btinternet.com

Nick Slade

Mobile: 07906 080491

nickslade@serpentine.org.uk

Club Places for 2006 London Marathon

If you receive a rejection letter from the 2006 London Marathon, don't despair. Serpentine receive a small number of London Marathon places for club members.

Of course there are far fewer club places than Serpies who would like them, but you can check out the criteria you have to meet on the website (look under London Marathon; How to Get a Club Place).

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, 57c Rosenau Road, Battersea, London SW11 4QX 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 spots 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, sometime in February.

David Knight



Party On!

Friday 9 December 2005

What?
The Serpie Christmas party of course
a 3-course dinner and disco 'til 1am

Why?
It's Christmas

Where?
The Kensington Hilton Hotel

When?
Friday 9 December 2005, 6.30pm for 7pm

Who?
Serpies and non-Serpies

Full details on the website
– only 300 tickets available so book soon!




New Year's Day 10k

Once again Serpentine will be organising the annual New Year's Day 10k and fun run in Hyde Park on 1 January.

We need lots of volunteers to be able to put the event on. The race starts at 11am, so you won't have to miss out on your New Year's Eve celebrations and you can continue celebrating with fellow Serpies after the race.

If you can help, please register at www.serpentine.org.uk/events/nyd10k/register_help.php

100 Club

What is the 100 club?

The 100 club is a monthly lottery, the proceeds of which are used towards the costs of producing Serpentines.

How does the 100 club work?

Each member of the 100 club buys one or more numbers between 1-100 at a cost of £1 a week. All of the numbers are entered into the monthly draw, held after the handicap. If your number is picked, you could win one of eight prizes of £100, £50, £25 (x2) or £10 (x4). You keep the same number as long as you keep paying, the odds are good and the tension at the draw is high!

How do I join?

Contact David Smart on david.smart@one-name.org who will be able to let you know if there are numbers available or add you to a waiting list for the next available number.

2006 Relays – Dates for your Diary

The **Green Belt Relay** will take place over Saturday 20 & Sunday 21 May 2006.

The race is a two day, multi-stage, multi-terrain relay around London's Greenbelt countryside and surrounding towns. The route is currently divided into 20 sections (between 8 and 14 miles each), and teams consist of 10 runners but it is possible this might change to 22 shorter sections with teams of 11 in 2006. This means that runners must run at least twice, once on each day of the race which is pretty tough as you are racing two days in a row, but it's also great fun and a rewarding experience for those who have taken part.

We will be entering five Serpie teams again and are aiming to defend our men's and women's winning places from 2005. However, there's plenty of room for everyone to have a go, whatever your standard, although those wishing to take part should have a good solid background in distance running (with at least 10 min/mile pace over distance) or be prepared for some tough training between now and then. The Green Belt Relay is a great opportunity for newer Serpie members to get involved with the club and meet other Serpies.

You can find out lots more about the event on the Green Belt Relay website: www.greenbeltrelay.org.uk or contact greenbeltrelay@serpentine.org.uk.



**Ian Druce (above)
and Jane Harris (right)
at Welsh Castles 2005**

The **Welsh Castles Relay** will take place over Saturday 10 & Sunday 11 June 2006.

The race starts in Caernarfon on Saturday morning and ends in Cardiff on Sunday afternoon with an awards presentation once the final team has finished. There are 20 stages ranging in distance from 8 to 14 miles passing many Welsh Castles in some challenging terrain and each team has 20 runners who each run one stage over the course of the weekend, with 10 stages on Saturday and 10 on Sunday.

We will be entering three teams again with team registration starting around April 2006. The Serpentine ladies won the ladies race in 2004 and 2005 and our men's team had their highest ever placing in 2005. We are particularly keen to see more veteran runners taking part.

More information on the race including descriptions of each stage can be found on the website of Les Croupiers, the running club that organises and hosts this prestigious event:

www.lescroupiersrunningclub.org.uk/castles
or contact welshcastles@serpentine.org.uk.

In addition to runners for both events, we also need drivers, helpers and supporters. If you would like to run in one or both events, at this stage just make a note of the dates in your diary and keep an eye on the website for further information.

If you would like to help with pre-event organisation, please contact Nadya Labib at volunteers@serpentine.org.uk.



Serpie Success

With our ever-growing membership has come growing Serpie success in many events worldwide. There are far too many success stories to mention them all here, but here are a few.

Emma Calderbank, Jamie Felix, Christine Lutsch & Barbara Yff, the Serpentine women's road relay team, came 7th in a new club record time on the course at the SEAA Aldershot relays. Congratulations are also due to our men's road relay team of Andy Reeves, Ben Paviour, Steve Hilton, Eric Vamben, Paul Perry & Chris Blackburn who qualified for the Nationals, and especially to Chris who got the fastest ever SRC time on that course. Robert Maslen, Cliff Hide, David Smart & Richard Long made up our vet's road relay team and Derek Paterson must be thanked for organising this team despite not taking part himself.

The Serpie men's Welsh Castles Relay team, captained by Paul Fromme, attained their highest ever placing in the event, finishing in 6th place. Our women's team, with Christel Beukes as captain, successfully defended both their overall title and the Queens of the Mountains trophy.

The Serpie division 4 track & field team, with Justin Lock as captain, were promoted to division 3 this season. Anthony Stranger-Jones, Pauline Rich and Neil Tunstall all won gold medals at the BMAF track and field champs Birmingham in July. Barrie Laverick won an incredible six gold medals and 1 silver medal at the World Transplant Games.

Also in track & field, Leon George (triple jump) and Sheldon Noel, Keston Thomas, Graham Eisner and Andrew Reeves (4x200m relay) broke club records this year. Stuart Caudery (pole vault) and Megan Torkington (high jump) both equalled club records.

In duathlon, Eddie Brocklesby won silver in the W60-65 category and Josie Spiller won bronze (W25-29) at the world long distance champs. Eddie added gold to her tally at the world duathlon champs. At the national championships, Hilary Walker finished 1st W50-55. Eoin O'Connell came 3rd in the London duathlon.

At the European triathlon champs, Lucy Dove won bronze (W25-29) and Eddie Brocklesby won bronze (W60-65). In Ironman, Jenny Gowans came 2nd in her category in both Ironman UK and Ironman France; and Lynn Plumbley finished 2nd in her category in Ironman UK. Other notable successes came for Laurence Harding: 1st at Concorde Sprint, 3rd at Milton Keynes Olympic, 2nd in category at Bournemouth international tri, 2nd in category at Royal Windsor tri and 3rd in category at Half Ironman St Croix; Lucy Dove: top 3 placings in every Thames Turbo race; Candice McDonald: 3rd at Cowman, Trentham and Weymouth middle distance races; Russell O'Malley: 1st in category, Bournemouth international tri; Quintin Wright: 2nd in category at Dambuster; Claire Woods: 3rd in category at Royal Windsor tri; Vanessa Hogg: 3rd woman at London tri; Jenny Gowans and Richard Melik: both 2nd in their age groups at New York triathlon.

Serpie Camp

The inaugural SerpieCamp will take place in Devon from Friday 27 to Sunday 29 January 2006. The weekend will provide the perfect opportunity to improve your running in beautiful Devon, and to enjoy the social side of Serpie life.

Full details are still being finalised but we can reveal that the weekend will feature Mike Gratton as the key speaker. Participants will also be able (and encouraged!) to take part in the Southern Cross Country Championships on the Saturday afternoon. Look out for full details on the egroups and website soon.

Club Championship 2005

It's never over 'til the fat lady sings, but with only the marathon to be decided for definite, the **2005 Serpentine club championship** is looking pretty firmly back in the hands of **David McGregor** for the third year in a row. After the Cabbage Patch 10, there are 25 Serpies who have completed at least six club championship races in 2005.

July saw the start of the Grand Prix series of shorter races. On a hot Tuesday evening in Battersea Park, the 5k championship attracted no fewer than 73 runners. Emma Calderbank and Massimiliano Monteforte were the new 5k club champions. Massimiliano, who was due to run a marathon on the following Sunday, "took it fairly easy", shadowing Andy Reeves to the 4 km marker before pulling away to claim victory in 16:20. Emma's winning time of 17:48 was more than 2 minutes ahead of her nearest rival, Sarah Newton. However, Sarah claimed the prize for the best age graded runner in a grading of 80.9%.

The **1k championship** was held on Saturday 16 July and we had 52 finishers. Emma Calderbank was again the winner of the women's race in a time of 3:05. Andy Reeves successfully defended his 2004 title against very strong competition, finishing in 2:39. The age-graded title went to David McGregor with 88.5%. In a hotly contested race there were six other finishers with age-graded performances of over 80%: Brad Cobb, Andy Maynard, Ruairi McIver, Massimiliano Monteforte, Sarah Newton and Andy Reeves.

We were back in Battersea Park again on 26 July for the **3k club championship** race. The flat course produced some fast times. Massimiliano Monteforte finished first in 9:10 in front of early leader Ben Paviour and Emma Calderbank kept up her unbeaten record in the Grand Prix series, winning the ladies' race in 10:17. Massimiliano made it a double this time by taking the age-graded title with 81.6%.

The final race of the series was the **1-mile**, which still attracted 54 runners, despite having to be postponed from its original date of 21 July. The number of competitors meant that there were three separate races held at Paddington track. In the ladies' race, Emma Calderbank led from the start and took the 1-mile title in 5:16. Second finisher was Christine Lutsch,

**Emma Calderbank:
1-mile championship 2005**

12 seconds behind Emma. In the men's race, Ben Paviour won in an "easy" 4:37 in front of Andy Reeves in 4:43. Anthony Stranger-Jones scored an impressive 84.1% age grading to take the age-graded title.

In the Grand Prix race series, Emma Calderbank had a clean sweep, scoring the maximum 100 in each race. Second place was Valerie Metcalf with 357.6, then Jeannette Mueller with 310.9. No other women ran all four races. Massimiliano Monteforte won two races and placed well in the other two, to score a total of 393.1 and win the Grand Prix, only just ahead of Andy Reeves in second with 392.9. Ian Druce came third, scoring 386.3.

The **Middlesex 10k championship** in Victoria Park was also the Serpentine club championship 10k race. There were 59 Serpie finishers who were eligible for the club championship. In difficult conditions, with dissolving race numbers, working out who had won



was not as simple as it could have been. Ben Paviour won the men's title in 33:16 and Emma Calderbank was the leading woman in 36:20, also taking the age-graded title with 82.3%.

The number of Serpie 2005 marathon results entered into the Serpie Results database has crept above the 300 mark, but the table is still headed by Eoin O'Connell and Jamie Stott (néé Felix). Eoin and Jamie's London marathon times of 2:31:01 and 2:52:24 respectively have yet to be bettered this year.

The Cabbage Patch 10 mile race on 16 October was once again the Serpie **10-mile championship**. An ever-popular race, this year 100 Serpie finishers were eligible for the club championship. On a sunny Sunday morning, Simon Barrett finished in 54:35, to take the men's title, followed by Andrew Reeves and Eoin O'Colgain. Jamie Stott (née Felix) was the first Serpie woman home in 59:13, with Emma Calderbank only 41 seconds behind and Cathy Benson in third place. Jamie also won the age-graded title with 83.4%. Simon was the only Serpie to break 55 minutes, but eight other Serpie men and the first two Serpie women finishers had times under 60 minutes.

Ian Hodge and Lars Menken

**Massimiliano Monteforte:
5k championship 2005**



Track and Field Trophies

The 2005 track and field season was a successful one for Serpentine Running Club. Each year we award trophies to the athletes who have made the greatest contribution to their respective teams that season. All areas are considered and activities outside of actual event performance which assist the team are given more weight than actual performance. Such activities may include making themselves available for all meetings, filling-in in non-preferred events or taking on difficult events, providing coaching to fellow team members, supporting team mates and assisting the team captain or manager.

The 2005 Serpentine track and field trophies have been awarded to:

Robin Kindersley Trophy
Chris Blackburn

Tony McGahan Trophy
Eric Phillips

Derek Paterson Trophy
Nick Kennett

Jan Farmer Trophy
Catherine Shelley

Lars Menken Trophy
Brad Cobb

Ladies T&F Trophy
Megan Torkington

Who's Who?

There were no fewer than five new committee members elected to the Serpentine RC committee at July's AGM. Sharon Lindores found out a little about what makes them all tick.

Gavin Edmonds

He may have been the last one out of the water at the National triathlon relays and he may have puked crossing the finish line at the London marathon but, don't let that fool you, Gavin Edmonds is a good sport with a sense of humour.

"I like being able to come last in the swim and still find it funny," says the Level 1 coach who is training for a sub-3 marathon. The Londoner, who likes a good laugh, has only been with the Serpies for two years and he's already taken up the position of the coaching and training representative on the committee.



In his role he's hoping to learn more about triathlon. Gavin's been running for more than four years and cycling for a few months. "I like traveling to events in places I've never visited before," he says. "I especially like team events like the Green Belt and Welsh Castles relays."

This year he's got his eye on doing a couple of half marathons in St Neots and Bedford and as many cross country races as possible. The best running tip he's ever received is to "never look behind in a race because it lets people know how bad you feel." If Gavin finds himself looking for inspiration he thinks of Arsenal player Dennis Bergkamp who "makes it look so easy and has such a positive attitude."

Charles Lescott

Charles Lescott may still be recovering from a shin injury thanks to the London marathon but that hasn't stopped him from cycling, swimming and getting more involved with the Serpies.

The fundraising, sponsorship and external liaison representative is looking into ways to get funding in place for a clubhouse. "This is a long-term goal, but I feel a strategy should be in place by the end of the year," he says, adding he'd like the clubhouse to be a reality in five years. "It's important for the club to have a home near to Hyde Park to establish itself as a central London club," Charles says. "A clubhouse will give the club the opportunity to organise daily training runs on a more structured basis and somewhere for us to socialise afterwards rather than scattered over a number of pubs."



Charles has been running with Serpies for more than four years now. Despite favouring marathons he likes to run a variety of distances. "I really enjoy cross country as the terrain, hill and mud provide a challenging contrast requiring strength not just speed," Charles says. "I think that suits me as I think I have greater strength than speed. Although I will never win, I know when I have run the best that I can, which is the next best thing to winning. I don't believe in merely taking part."

Rachel Powell



Rachel Powell grew up in Devon in the same small village as the Olympic distance runner Jo Pavey. "My mum and her mum are still friends," Rachel says. "Shame I didn't acquire any of her running ability!" Rachel's been running for two years. "I did try to take it up before several times and failed miserably," she says, noting the best tip she ever received was to join the Serpentine Running Club. "Honestly, I'd have given up running without it."

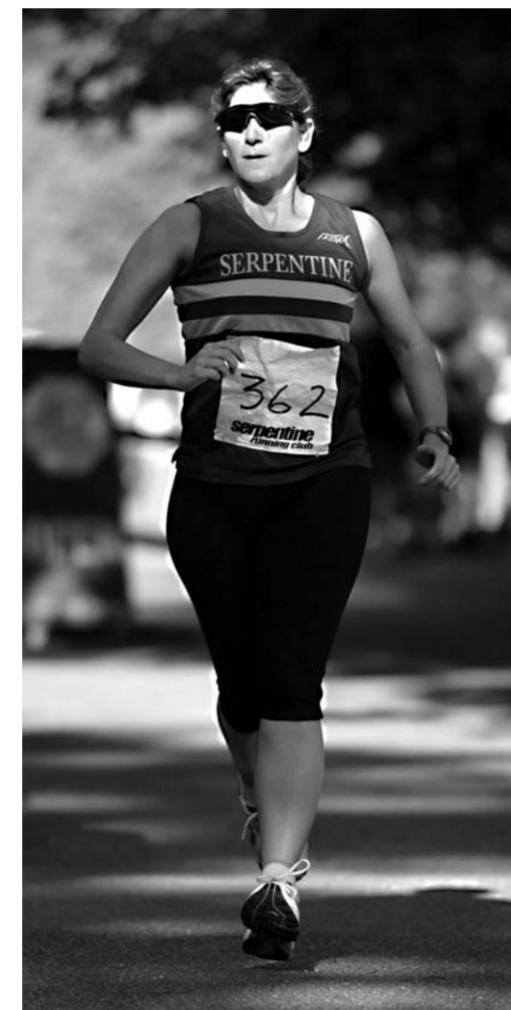
As the social representative on the committee Rachel wants to establish a wider range of more regular social events. There may even be a karaoke party in the future she hinted "if Lars [Menken] is lucky".

In addition to planning parties Rachel is also planning on doing lots of cross country, an off-road marathon and a proper fell race this year. "I have always dreamt of being a fell runner but it's rather difficult when you live in London," she says. Perhaps that's why one of her mentors is Richard Askwith, the author of *Feet in the Clouds*. She admires his determination in completing a very difficult fell-running challenge. Her other mentor is Paula Radcliffe who she respects for her absolute belief in herself at all times.

What else motivates Rachel to run? "The sense of freedom," she says. "Nothing beats reaching the top of Parliament Hill on a cold, crisp winter morning with the whole of London spread out below."

Nadya Labib

Nadya Labib may be terrified when she's about to start a race but she hasn't let that stop her from competing, training and branching out into other activities.



“Discovering that I liked running was a revelation two years ago, topped only by the revelation that I like tris too,” she says. Bit by bit Nadya has built up her training and involvement with the Serpies. The American started running a couple of years ago just before she joined the running group. “The club has provided me with such a great group of athletes, coaches and friends who have all contributed to my running in some way or another,” she says. “I like being part of a community and I enjoy supporting as much as participating,” Nadya says. “I don’t like team sports, but I quite enjoy training with others and then being on my own in competition. Unfortunately that usually means being alone at the back!”

This year she’s planning on doing St Neots Riverside Half Marathon, cross country and a spring marathon. On top of all that, she’s the volunteer representative on the Serpie committee. She wants to build a more robust volunteer structure and to improve the way the club recognizes and rewards volunteers. “Without our volunteers we are nothing,” she says, adding, “I’d definitely like to see us get some organisational structure in place [for the club overall]; not because I think we should tie people up in red tape, but because I think it will make things easier in the long run.”

Jeni Vlahovic

After years of running to train for hockey and other sports in Canada, Jeni Vlahovic took up running as a sport itself when she joined the Serpies in May 2003. That change in focus has enabled her to improve her running and to enjoy it more. What does she like about it? “The discipline and the strategy,” she says. “I didn’t get the strategy before because I was always just running to train for other sports. But now that I run to run, there’s quite a strategy to running “smart” that I enjoy.” For example she says “you should be doing 180 steps per minute, regardless of speed.”

She loves sports because they keep her sane. And her mentor is her husband Ian Druce. “He’s so focused and strategic with his running and he gives me great advice and tips.” The couple just finished the Berlin



Marathon and Jeni’s hoping to do some cross country this year. She’ll also be toiling away as the communications representative on the Serpie committee. She wants to focus on letting people know about different sports each season so members can get into the spirit of things. And she’s planning to document some of the club’s existing processes.

In the next five years she’d like to see the clubhouse issue sorted out, whether that means finding a new one or fixing up the current space. In the interim there’s no doubt she’ll do a few more races and triathlons.

Is there anything else you should know about her? “People know everything about me,” Jeni says. “My life is an open book!”

Sharon Lindores

Club Organised Triathlon Coaching Events

for the Off-Season 05/06

During the last tri meeting, Serpie triathletes expressed the desire to participate in triathlon-specific coaching events during the off-season (October to April).

We present here a full menu of events for you to select from and we’ve confirmed an array of excellent speakers and experts in their particular fields. We are now in the process of confirming dates and venues and aim to make these as convenient as possible for you. Once details are firm, we’ll publish the events on the website and information will be sent out to the e-groups so you can register.

Don’t forget, some of these events are also just as useful for runners as for triathletes. We’ve marked these with an ®.

These seminars are in addition to our regular group runs, coached running sessions (track and hill sessions), group cycle rides and weekly swim sessions.

As well as all of this, Serpentine Tri Spinning Classes are being organised this winter. The first set of 8 weeks has already started, but more will follow. Keep an eye on the website and e-groups for more details.

We will also organise regular Bike Servicing and Maintenance sessions with Kevin Worster and Bike Handling Skills sessions. Again check out the website and e-groups for more information as soon as it becomes available.

Subject	Date	Coach/Speaker	Details
Effective Turbo Training	Sunday, 13 Nov	Pete Read http://www.cyclecoaching.com/	10.30am to 3.30pm at the gym of London Rowing Club. Details and registration on website.
Triathlon Training Plan Year/Month/Week	19/20 Nov	Bob Pringle (BTA Level 4 Coach)	Saturday for novice, sprint; Sunday for advanced, Olympic and IM; combination of practical and class room sessions. Details and registration on website.
Heart Zone Training	Autumn 05	Rick Kiddle , Heart Zones UK, http://www.internet-spinoffs.com/rick_profile.htm	How to make optimum use of a Heart Rate Monitor to achieve your fitness goals. ®
Swim Technique Day	Autumn 05 and Spring 06	Dan Bullock , SwimforTri, www.swimfortri.com / www.sft-analysis.com	To improve your swim stroke
Nutrition for Athletes	Winter 05/06	TBA	®
Core Stability, Strength and Flexibility	Winter 05/06	Sarah Lawson and Jasyn Savage	®
The Art of Transition	TBA	TBA	
Goal Setting and Sports Psychology	Winter 05/06	Bob Pringle (BTA Level 4 Coach)	®
Successful Conversion from Runner to Triathlete	Spring 06	TBA	To be held after the London marathon for runners looking to do their first triathlons

My Events

More and more Serpies seem to be catching on to this handy new way of planning events and seeing who else is taking part in them. My Events helps you to know who to look out for, who to share a lift with, or whose name to shout if you're supporting.

All you have to do is log on to the membership database (using the SerpieBase link from the home page) and then go to "Races and Events". You'll notice that next to each race there is a number in brackets – this is the number of Serpies who have already indicated that they are taking part in that event, which can be handy to know if you're pondering whether you want to enter a race or not.

To add a race to your own My Events, just click on the little calendar graphic and this will take you to the "My Events" section of the website.

From here, you can enter as many details as you want to. This could be how you're getting to the race (per-

haps offer or request a lift if you want to), what race number you'll be wearing and what time you predict to finish in (so that Serpie supporters will have a better idea of who to cheer and when), and contact details, so that other Serpies can wish you luck, discuss tactics and race preparation, or perhaps even plan accommodation for the night before (for all those adventurous runners who head off to far-flung corners of the globe).

After confirming your details for an individual race, you'll go to a page listing all the races you've signed up for ("Your Events"):

By clicking on the name of a race, you can see who else is taking part:

Or, by clicking on "All" from the "Your Events" page, you can check out who's taking part in any race on the entire calendar – just by clicking on the name of the race:

Obviously signing up on My Events doesn't constitute an official race entry – it's just a useful way for you to keep track of your own and other Serpies' race timetables. If you want to use the planner purely to schedule your own races, then you don't even have to share your information – just untick the "share details" box. Personally I think this would slightly defeat the whole object of this feature, as it's designed to help club members find out what their fellow runners are up to, and to encourage Serpies to come together in a spirit of co-operation!

There is also a feature which allows committee members to email or text those registered on My Events

with up-to-the-minute news about a particular event. This was used to good effect this summer when the 1-mile club championship race had to be cancelled and those who had registered it on My Events received a text message to tell them about the cancellation. There's no guarantee this will always be done, but organisers will certainly do their best.

Anyway, check My Events out for yourself and you'll see how handy and easy it is to use. Your race scheduling may never be the same again!

Ian Payne

Swapping Race Numbers

Repeatedly we get asked whether an athlete can swap a race number with someone else. The answer is no – unless you have the explicit permission of the race organiser, and if you do, it's best to get this in writing.

Why?

- You might compromise the prize-giving, for example if a male with a female's number came above a legitimate category winner – this has actually happened to a Serpie woman.
- If you had an accident you might not get the right treatment and your relatives might not be informed – and someone else's will!

Many races have a clear rule about not allowing number swapping but you shouldn't assume that others allow it. Our governing bodies take this matter very seriously and you may get banned from racing anywhere. The Club itself will look at each case on its merits and may take its own sanctions, which can include exclusion from the Club and reporting the issue to the appropriate governing body.

Do not post messages on the e-group or elsewhere offering or seeking race numbers unless you have cleared it with the race organiser.

Serpie Quiz

Compiled by Malcolm French

1. Where will the 2006 Commonwealth Games be held?
 - a. Edmonton, Canada
 - b. Melbourne, Australia
 - c. Wellington, New Zealand
2. Where were the 2005 World Masters Track & Field Championships held?
 - a. San Sebastian, Spain
 - b. Real de S Antonio, Portugal
 - c. Perth, Australia
3. Where were the 2005 World Cross Country Championships held?
 - a. St Galmier, France
 - b. Lausanne, Switzerland
 - c. Ostend, Netherlands
4. Which Briton won the Senior Women's race at the 2004 European Cross Country Championships?
 - a. Jo Pavy
 - b. Kathy Butler
 - c. Hayley Yelling
5. By what name is J W Foster & Sons (Athletic Shoes) Ltd now known?
 - a. Asics
 - b. New Balance
 - c. Reebok
6. At what distance did Gordon Pirie set a world record on the Paddington Recreation Ground track in 1955?
 - a. 1.5 miles
 - b. 2 miles
 - c. 3 miles
7. Paula Radcliffe has the six fastest marathon times by a British woman. Who is the seventh fastest British woman?
 - a. Liz McColgan
 - b. Veronique Marot
 - c. Priscilla Welch
8. In August 2005, Ethiopia's Kenenisa Bekele set a new 10,000m world record of 26:17:53. The fastest time ever run by an athlete born outside Africa is 27:08:23. Who ran this?
 - a. Fernando Mamede, Portugal
 - b. Craig Mottram, Australia
 - c. Arturo Barrios, Mexico
9. In what year were the first World Athletics Championships held?
 - a. 1957
 - b. 1979
 - c. 1983
10. The Serpie men's team finished an excellent 14th in 4:36:58 in the 2005 South of England 12-Stage Road Relay. Approximately what distance did they run?
 - a. 45 miles
 - b. 50 miles
 - c. 55 miles

Answers on page 43

Handicap Report

July's race was held a week earlier than planned as a consequence of the Live8 concert which took place on the first Saturday in July. The change of date may have had some impact on numbers, as we had a relatively low 61 runners taking part (including the handicapper, running his first race since taking the reins from Grethe). The race was won by William Simpson, who, as will be seen below, has come to dominate the handicap in the past couple of months. Andrew McGovern was second, while Keith Evans finished third. There was also a creditable seventh placed finish, and a PB, for Andrew Maynard, running his first handicap for several months after injury. There were 22 PBs in all, including one from Richard Jones, which kept him at the head of the Tom Hogshead table with David Smart and Ken Kwok his closest challengers.

In August, the race was won by Sue-Ellen Horrocks (pictured) and there couldn't have been a more popular winner. Sue-Ellen has been a regular handicapper this year, despite the fact that her five-year old PB was seriously hampering her start time. So when she finally managed to shave five minutes from her start time, it was no surprise to see her come storming up the finishing straight to claim first place. Sue-Ellen was closely followed by July's winner, William Simpson, and Anthony Stranger-Jones. William's second-placed effort took him ahead of Richard Jones at the top of the Tom Hogshead ladder but David Smart remained in contention on 99 points.



William Simpson improved yet again in September to claim a second victory of the year with his fifth PB of the year. He has now improved by seven minutes since March, which explains why he continues to finish in the places despite an ever-increasing handicap weighting. Second place went to Helen Pidd, while August's winner, Sue Ellen Horrocks, enjoyed further success taking third. In the race for the Tom Hogshead, William's lead over Richard Jones stretched to 22 points, while Phil Kelvin moved into third after a top-six finish.

HANDICAP RESULTS

July		August		September	
1	William Simpson	1	Sue-Ellen Horrocks	1	William Simpson
2	Andrew McGovern	2	William Simpson	2	Helen Pidd
3	Keith Evans	3	Anthony Stranger-Jones	3	Sue-Ellen Horrocks

TOM HOGSHEAD

July		August		September	
Richard Jones	117	William Simpson	118	William Simpson	150
David Smart	99	Richard Jones	117	Richard Jones	128
Ken Kwok	94	David Smart	99	Phil Kelvin	120

Great Russian Run



The Great Russian Race is a relay run from Vladivostok to Saint Petersburg, which started in Vladivostok on 28 May and ended in St. Petersburg on 8 September. The advertisement calling for runners was an adaptation of Ernest Shackleton's famous advertisement for his South Pole attempt of 1913, and read: "Able bodies wanted for epic challenge. No wages, tough conditions, long hours of running. Honour and pride in taking part and succeeding".

Russia is the largest country on Earth, spanning two continents and 11 time zones. It also possibly contains some of the world's least known areas. The route of the Great Russian Race started at the most South-Eastern point of Russia in Vladivostok, passed along the Russian borders with China and Mongolia, and then all the way through Siberia to the European parts of Russia. Most of the route loosely followed the Trans-Siberian railway.

The race was divided into 15 relay sectors. I tackled sector 8 with nine fellow Brits and ten Russians. Sector 8 covered a total distance of 749 km from Kansk to Kemerova between 16 July and 22 July. The route passed through the city of Krasnoyarsk which was established in 1628 as a Cossack outpost for the protection of the Russian empire's borders from Mongol and Turkish raids. Krasnoyarsk is one of the biggest industrial, cultural and scientific centres in

Siberia, with a population of over 900,000. Most of the other settlements along our route started life as stations on the Trans-Siberian railway.

Alongside each of my team mates, I ran six half marathons over six consecutive days. The standard pace was 8 min-mile pace. Two of the team ran a marathon a day (in under 3 hours). The conditions were tough. It was 36 degrees with thunderstorms in the afternoon and we were on the road for 14 hours at a time. The running kit which the organisers provided was huge; the food was basic and when it could be eaten often contained meat the origin of which could not be identified. The mosquitoes were prolific and the only time one could escape them was when running; the terrain was hilly and the roads were a mix of gravel, dirt and concrete with pot holes. But it was the best thing I have ever done and I wish I was there doing it again this week!

The hospitality and the generosity of people who had so little, the terrific friendships I made and the sense of achievement made the half marathon a day well worth it. In fact, running was the easy part: it was everything that went with it that made it more difficult.

Among the highlights I will always remember are the internal flight from Moscow to Krasnoyarsk. The

plane was from the 1950s and boarded from underneath. To get to our seats we walked past the luggage. People were necking bottles of vodka – it was 8am.

For the first time in my running career I was asked to sign autographs, filmed for national TV, and quoted as a member of the Welsh National Running Team! It was a true experience to spend time living and running with people who didn't speak the same language but still managed to have conversations. I was sick

at one point and the doctor asked me to "dance". I can only assume that this is some sort of Russian therapy.

When it was all over, we partied on the final night in Kemerova, with over 1,000 kilometres behind us. After training for six months, the party really got going after only one glass of wine; and two hours later we had breakfast in the same nightclub!

Nicole Munro

English National 6-Stage Relays

On 22 October our little club sent a team to the National 6-stage road relay championships at Sutton Park in Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham, for the first time in the club's history. This is an extremely strong club competition, run over six identical legs of just under 6km, and it attracts many of the best athletes in the country. Fortunately we had qualified reasonably comfortably in the Southern relays at the end of September, and so had earned the right to send a team to an event which is regarded by many clubs, who focus mainly on track and cross country, as the premier road event in their calendars.

Now although our club may not, in fact, be little in terms of numbers, it is certainly little in terms of stature on the national stage, so we knew it would be a challenge even to finish in the top two-thirds. Furthermore, it didn't help that all but two of the runners we had fielded in the Southern relays were unavailable to compete in the final for an interesting variety of reasons. However, there were one or two people we could call on who had been unavailable for the qualifiers, so all was not lost, and while eventual winners Belgrave Harriers were no doubt sitting in their solid gold hotel, silver spoons in hand, polishing off their porridge and bananas garnished with gold leaf, and dreaming of a fifth successive title, our six victims were slumming it Brumwards on the 9.16 from Euston, focusing on the more humble target of beating two hours for the event.

We arrived in time to see an exciting women's 4-stage relay, won by Bristol and West who waited until the last leg to reel in the eventual second place finishers, Shaftesbury Barnet Harriers, who had nearly a minute's lead after the third leg. (Cue a couple of Colemanesque "Shaftesbury have got it in the bag" type comments from the event announcer!) Serpentine did not field a women's team due to injuries, which was a real shame since they had done so well in the heats. The early arrival gave us the

chance to scout the course which turned out to be something of a hilly affair. Although conditions were excellent, it was definitely going to be a tough day...

Simon Barrett kicked us off, running narrowly under 19 minutes... or so he thought, until the unofficial club timekeepers clocked him at 19 flat, and the official event timekeepers generously added a further second. His pitiful protests were ignored and we were off and running in 55th place out of a total of 76 full teams. Next up to the national oche was Paul Perry, one of the "veterans" of the Southern relays. Paul ran a solid leg but was up against at least one athlete who has represented Great Britain, not to mention a lot of other lightning fast runners, and was unable to prevent us slipping a few places.

Kevin Darcy ran hard in an attempt to make some ground on the third stage, but after both gaining and dropping a couple of places along the way, in the end couldn't quite catch the next team and we remained in 71st place. Next up was Ian Druce, who ran the worst time EVER in Serpentine's ENTIRE HISTORY (EVER) in the National 6-stage relays. In Ian's defence, that's not actually that surprising given the club's entire history consists only of Saturday's race, and by this stage, with the teams so spread out near the back of the field and no distance markers, pace judgement was becoming increasingly difficult. Additionally, it later transpired that Belgrave had attached some of their surplus gold bullion to his shoes - possibly in an unnecessary attempt at sabotage, but more likely they didn't want the extra weight slowing down their Ferraris on the journey home.

Our two-hour target was now touch and go, with our last two runners both needing to go well under 20 minutes. Barney Southin did his best to set us up for the last leg, hauling in 5 teams, and recording our third fastest leg of the day in a fine run, coming back

in under 20 minutes with time to spare. However, this now meant that anchorman, Eric Vamben, was left with the difficult task of running close to 19 minutes in a very spread out field in order to get us under two hours. Carrying a slight injury, Eric still managed to improve on Barney's time, picking up a couple of places along the way, but it wasn't quite enough to break the two hour "barrier", and we came home a creditable 64th in 2 hours and 35 seconds.

Our team fared as follows (5847m legs):

S Barrett (55) 19:01
P Perry (71) 20:36
K Darcy (71) 20:20
I Druce (71) 21:02
B Southin (66) 19:49
E Vamben (64) 19:47
2:00:35 - 64th place

The winners were Belgrave Harriers, who clocked 1:46:30. To put things in perspective, their individual times ranged from 18:19 to 17:20. The fastest leg on the day overall was a none-too-shabby 16:41. Full results are at:

<http://www.race-results.co.uk/results/2005/nat605.htm>

The fact that we ended up fielding 10 different people for the six legs over the two events and by no

means disgraced ourselves in our first outing at a road relay final again shows the depth we have at the club, and ought to be a thoroughly encouraging sign for the 12-stage relays in April 2006. Next year the National 12-stage has been brought forward to 9 April, 2 weeks before the London Marathon on 23 April. The Southernns are on 26 March. With the depth we have, we ought to be marking both these events in our calendar, as I believe we should now be "expecting" to qualify for the Nationals rather than thinking of it as a nice bonus. Even if you are training for London there is no reason you shouldn't be able to do all three.

Now we have competed in the Nationals, we have something to shoot at, and with the 12-stage potentially playing to our strengths, I believe we should be capable of a top 50 finish. So next year let's really go for it!

Finally, on behalf of team manager Andy Reeves (who was unavailable for the finals) and myself, many thanks to all who took part in both the Southernns and the Nationals and put us out there on the national stage, as well as race co-ordinator Ian Hodge, and our supporters and unofficial timekeepers on the day, Malcolm French and Dave Lipscomb.

Simon Barrett

Race The Train



On 20 August Emily Robinson, Pat Schuetz and I set off to race a train. We had entered the 2005 Race the Train run in anticipation of a pleasant, scenic run through the Welsh countryside. After entering how-

ever, it became apparent that the run had a certain reputation. A few people have asked me if this race was as hard as they'd been led to believe. The short answer to that is, yes, it's a tough one, especially in the heat, but also lots of fun and really well organised.

The course is over 14.75 miles alongside, as far as practicable, the route taken by the Talyllyn Railway on its journey to Abergynolwyn and back. In order to do this, the course takes in a mixture of public roads, lanes, roads, tracks, agricultural land, and rough grazing pastures. It crosses the faces of the hillsides; ascends and descends quite steep terrain; and runs on narrow footpaths with little chance of overtaking. We were advised to make as much progress as possible in the first seven miles as it would be very difficult after that point. I'd like to thank Brian Welsh for the advice: he was so right!

The race starts on the main railway line bridge adjacent to the Talyllyn railway station. The course runs

through the town before heading up a farm track to cross the railway. After the farm track it follows a mixture of tracks and fields. Most of the first half is along the railway embankment, which is very badly cambered and quite difficult to run on. But there's also lots of flat running too making it easy to make up some of the time I lost on the camber.

The train first passed me after I had been running for about 55 mins. I waved at the spectators hanging out of the train windows and carried on to the turning point at 7 miles. The hardest part of the course is between about 7 and 9 miles where the route follows a very narrow track on a steep slope. It was impossible to overtake anyone and most people were walking at this point. After that there were some very steep uphill sections, mud, some more hills, more mud and the same cambered embankment as on the way out. The train passed me again at between 9 and 10 miles as I struggled with the cambered embankment on the way back.

The event is well organised and well supported by locals. There were about eight water stations which also offered isotonic drinks and sponges. It must be a local joke to say: "That's the hard bit over; it's all down hill from here." Don't be fooled though, it's not! They even manage to sneak in a few little hills right at the end.

Antarctic Adventure

Frank Staples took up running in the 1980s and has been a Serpie since 1993. Now, nearly 20 years after becoming a runner and in the year when he qualifies for a state pension, Frank can look back on 30 marathons, including eight London marathons and marathons all over the world including New York, Boston, Sydney and Hawaii. Frank can now claim to have participated in events in five out of the seven continents, and, needless to say, he is determined to complete races in the other two as soon as he can.

This year, Frank has truly excelled himself. On 26 February he competed in the Antarctica marathon. The event was organised on King George Island in the South Shetlands, off the Antarctic Peninsula. The organisers arranged with the personnel of the four research bases on the island – Russian, Chinese, Uruguayan and Chilean – to lay out a marathon route that was demanding but not too dangerous. After all, they wanted to avoid losing runners in crevasses. It was an out-and-back route which Frank

My advice to anyone thinking about doing this race is:

- Start going to Karen's Greenwich hill sessions
- Buy some trail shoes
- Don't forget to pack your sun cream (it has been very sunny for 20 out of 22 races)

I managed one out of three and let's just say I have some very nice shoes, sore legs and was very pink!

This would make a great trip away for a group of Serpies; after all there are team prizes to be won. Next year's race is on Saturday 19 August. If you can run a half marathon in about 1:30 you are in with a good chance of beating the train which finished this year in 1:47 (although it normally takes about 1:44). The 2005 winner completed the course in an amazing time of 1:19:23 which was a new course record. The train was beaten by 88 runners and a total of 678 competitors completed the course. There were prizes for the top six finishers, certificates for everyone who beat the train and medals and snacks for everyone else. The organisers also provide evening entertainment, cheap food and wine. We may not have beaten the train but we had a great time!

Our finishing times were: Lynda Isaac 2:26:30; Emily Robinson 2:29:22 and Pat Schuetz 2:39:34.

Lynda Isaac

described as a mixture of snow, ice, mud tracks, steep climbs, rocks, shingle and streams. The route included three-quarters of a mile of a very steep ascent of Collins Glacier which had to be negotiated twice.

To reach King George Island, competitors had to fly to Buenos Aires and then take a three-and-a-half hour flight to Ushuaia, the world's most southerly city. From there, two converted Russian spy ships (formerly used to track US submarines during the cold war) took the competitors on a two-and-a-half day journey across a 600-mile stretch of water known as one of the world's roughest – Drake's Passage.

Thus on 26 February, Frank was one of 208 competitors from 16 countries, with ages ranging from 18 to 77, to start the Antarctica marathon. "It is one of the most challenging and demanding courses anywhere in the world. Even thermal clothing, a hat, balaclava and gloves could not resist the biting winds, which leave temperatures as low as minus 20

degrees Celsius. The wind just cuts through the whole lot. You must keep going and don't stop because that is when hypothermia sets in. We all agreed that it was the toughest and most challenging event that any of us are likely to have done or ever do. It was a once in a lifetime run. I won't be going back to do it again!"

Amongst the hazards which are unique to this event were the skuas. These seabirds are described by the RSPB as medium-sized dark-looking seabirds, often seen flying low and fast above the waves in pursuit of a tern or other bird, and aggressive towards intruders into their breeding territory. The marathon runners had to contend with skuas dive-bombing them whenever the route took them close to a one of their many nests.

In total, 176 runners completed the marathon and 36 completed the half marathon. The winning time was 3:34:19 by Darryn Zawitz of Pittsburgh, who was one of only two competitors to record a finishing time under 4 hours. The first woman, Alyn Park of Denver, finished in a time of 4:33:28. Frank completed the course in 5:07:27 and came first (out of 18) in the 60-69 age group. And just to show that

you can't escape Serpies wherever you race in the world, there was a second Serpie taking part in the marathon: Harry Noble, who finished in 11th position in 4:26:03.

In addition to the challenges of the marathon, the trip also gave Frank the opportunity to visit penguin rookeries; go kayaking among the icebergs; camp overnight on land; and have superb sighting of Humpback and Minke whales, numerous species of seals and 21 different species of seabirds. The crossings of Drake's Passage were fairly smooth, both outbound and returning and, as an added bonus, the party was blessed with clear visibility going around Cape Horn.

Whilst on the way home from Antarctica, Frank couldn't resist another challenge and so, a week later, he completed the Fin Del Mundo marathon in the Tierra del Fuego National Park. Finally, just three weeks after that, Frank returned to England in time to compete in his eighth London marathon.

If you would like to follow in Frank's footsteps, the 2007 Antarctic marathon is already full, but applications for 2008 are currently being accepted.

Stuck Between the Rock and a Hard Place

This year was the silver anniversary of the AlcaTri - Escape from the Rock Triathlon (aka "The Escape"), making it a worthwhile time to visit the Golden State.

The idea behind The Escape is to emulate the attempt of former Alcatraz inmate, John Paul Scott, to escape from the island. John Paul managed to swim successfully across the bay towards the shore of San Francisco. However, his tremendous efforts weren't rewarded. He was found on the shore suffering from hypothermia, and was eventually caught by the police and sent back to Alcatraz!

On 14 August, 500 triathletes were hoping to do better than John Paul. Conditions on race day were considered perfect from a swimmer's perspective: a bit foggy, no wind and the water was still calm at 6am. After the race director's briefing, we all belted out the

national anthem and were led to the ferry. Even the most experienced triathletes showed signs of fear, nerves, anxiety and respect for our impending journey. The same questions could be heard from various corners: "Which building should I aim for? What's water temperature like? What should I expect?" The water is usually 50-55 degrees Fahrenheit, the swim is long, it can be foggy and there are currents to contend with too. The fact that sharks (friendly) are swimming around the island doesn't make the event any more attractive.

The whole event consists of jumping off a ferry just in front of Alcatraz, then a 1.5 mile swim in San Francisco Bay arriving at Aquatic Park, then a 2.5 mile run to bike transition at Crissy Field. The following three-lap undulating course of 13 miles around the Presidio sets you up for the final challenge: a 7.5 mile trail run around the Golden Gate

Bridge, down to Baker Beach and up to the Legion of Honor. As if all this isn't enough, the infamous sand ladder has to be mastered during the last mile before you finish in Crissy Field.

The race itself was quite a mixed bag. Visibility wasn't very good. My goggles constantly fogged up which didn't help me to swim any faster. Nonetheless, the water temperature was warmer than expected - depending on the currents, there were warm and cold pockets in the bay. After 30 minutes, due to my lack of swim training, I got a bit tired and had to mix crawl and breast stroke, but eventually made it to the Aquatic Park in 75 minutes!

Feeling relieved about completing the swim, I was in celebratory mood. I took my time in transition, before changing into proper running gear for the forthcoming 2.5 miles. Running is my strongest event and after coming out of the water in 250th place, I quickly made up a lot of positions. Then it was onto the hilly bike course, where I soon settled into a good rhythm. My freshly serviced Bianchi was in good spirits and I worked my way through the field. Even better was the fact that on the final run, I picked up even more places and eventually finished 160th in a time of 3 hours 31 mins.

What I liked most about the Escape as an event is that the race is a non-standard triathlon and doesn't really fit into the sprint, Olympic or long-distance categories. This meant that the overall experience counted more with the finishing time becoming only secondary. It's a classic event in its own right in an inspiring environment, with the swim from Alcatraz making it truly unique. Weeks after the event, what



sticks in the mind is the humanity among the athletes, organisers and volunteers. I am already looking forward to competing in another Escape from the Rock.

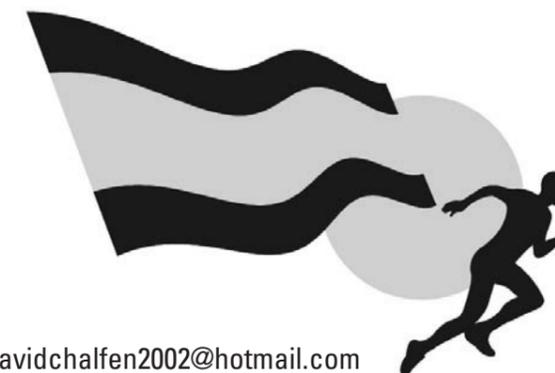
Urban Bettag

Quiz Answers: 1.b; 2.a; 3.a; 4.c; 5.c; 6.a; 7.b; 8.c; 9.c; 10.b

TRAINING AND RACING IN SPAIN

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The Starter Group

The Starter Group takes place every Wednesday evening and Saturday morning. Both sessions are fairly similar, although they reflect the different styles of the leaders and helpers. Sue McGinlay leads the group on Saturdays and Bev Thomas and myself on Wednesdays, so as a Wednesday “expert”, I’ll mainly talk here about what happens on Wednesday nights.

Well, like many things in this club, planning takes place before the event. Bev and Sue receive many emails from prospective newish runners. Some are anxious and ask questions like: “Do we run if it rains?”; “Should I eat before I run?”; “Will I get around?”; or “I did a 10k in 49 minutes, should I run with the Starter group?” Some have more than one attempt to make it along to a Wednesday night run. Remembering back to when I first joined the club, I found it daunting myself and I know I’m not the only one to have done so!

I try to make sure that I’m in the club room from 6 o’clock onwards. With over 2,000 members you would think it would be pretty hard to spot a newcomer but we usually do. After signing in I explain the format of the evening to new runners. Of course all newcomers are not beginners who’ll be starting off with the Starter group. At about 6.50pm I hold a short briefing for newcomers, covering Health and Safety issues, the inclusive philosophy of the club (and the pub). This gives me a feel for who and how many might be in the Starter group that evening. The Starter group is, of course, very dependent on volunteers and we never really know how many we have in the group and how many helpers we have until the last minute.

After we jog down to Speakers’ Corner, Bev or I explain the game plan to the group. It is often noticeable that some people are anxious. We always stress that it’s important to ‘run more slowly than you think you should’. We always say ‘talk to each other’; after all, the whole point of a club like ours is to run with other runners. We also let people know not to hesitate to alternate running and walking. After this, we finally start running.

I lead off, with our helpers running with the group behind, and Gowan usually takes the rear as a sweeper. I usually run fairly hard to the first gate, a distance of about 1k. This means that the group spreads out and we can sort people into appropriately paced groups with a helper and send them off. It is important to stress that new runners don’t push it too hard before we sort into groups, otherwise they start off in a group that is too fast for them. Obviously, the more

helpers we have, the better service we can offer. We follow the same route as the main Two Parks run, and often pass many newcomers – usually men who are too proud to join us! I usually try and chat to the groups on route, but this depends on how spaced out the groups are. After running between the groups and the front and those further back, I usually go home feeling that I’ve had a good run on a Wednesday evening.

The format for Saturday mornings is slightly different. When people contact Sue before turning up, she suggests that they see how they get on when they join in on the “social run”, which is about one mile, before splitting up into groups. Sue runs at the back of the group for the social run, so she can get an idea about people’s pace, and quite often she suggests to newcomers that they start out with the regular Two Parks group rather than with the beginners. They can always drop back and join the Starter group if they find the pace is too fast for them.

After the social run and stretching exercises, the Saturday run split into three groups: Three Parks, Two Parks and the Starter group. Thanks to regular helpers such as John Walker, Richard Smith, and anybody that Sue can pressgang on the day, there are usually enough helpers to mean that the Two Parks route can be run with one helper at the front,



another in the middle and Sue at the back. So far, Sue says “we haven’t lost anybody!”

Someone asked me recently of Starter group members: “do they come back?” Some do not – after all, running isn’t easy – but many become active club members. Others join for a short spell. Last summer, for example, two sisters joined us and ran with the group for nearly a year. Their aim was to lose weight before getting married. I bumped into one of them on Edgware Road recently, and she told me that she will always remember the club with affection. Three women joined us in order to get fit enough to join

the British Transport Police – one of them was on duty at Marylebone after the recent Tube bombs.

Many ex-Starter group members help us out, however we always need more helpers and, most important, people who will lead the groups. After all, Bev, Sue and I aren’t likely to be around forever! I would like to thank all those who have volunteered to help us on Wednesdays and Saturdays. You are far too many to name, you’ve given some wonderful nurturing and support to many people and you should feel proud of your efforts.

Sid Wills

In Olden Times

Looking back to 1987

1987: the year when Serpentine Running club celebrated its fifth birthday. Hilary Walker was Chair, with James Godber and Wendy Wood being respectively Secretary and Treasurer. Amongst the then committee members who are still actively involved with the club were Pat Green, Bob Davidson, Ros Young and John Walker. Ann Dex (later to become the second Serpie Life Member) was the Women’s Captain and Derek Paterson took the same role for the men.

1987 was the year of the “Great Storm.” On 16 October, hurricane-like winds devastated large areas of southern England. The 110mph winds left 17 dead. Kew Gardens lost a third of its trees and many trees were brought down in the Royal Parks. Serpies donated £500 to replace some of them. A number of European Line trees were later planted in the club’s name in Kensington Gardens in the area called the Great Bow, which I think is in the vicinity of the Round Pond. Keith Evans, Bev Thomas and Brenda Green were among the group of Serpies who attended the planting ceremony.

Just three days later, on 19 October, it was “Black Monday,” when the bottom fell out of the stock market. It was the worst day for shares in the 20th Century. £50billion was wiped off the value of shares on the London Stock Exchange in a single day. It wasn’t just the financial markets that were in hot water. The world’s most famous jockey, Lester Piggott, could outrun everyone on the racetrack but couldn’t beat the Inland Revenue and was sent to prison for three years for tax evasion.

However, not everything was doom and gloom. In the autumn of 1987, the art and antiques markets were booming. Christies auctioned Van Gough’s

Sunflowers for £25 million and then Sotheby’s knocked down the same artist’s Irises for £30 million. The sale of the Duchess of Windsor’s jewellery collection raised a staggering £31million.

The main focus of the club’s activities was still road running – it wouldn’t be until 1990 that we had a Track & Field team. As a relatively new club, we had difficulty entering some events. Our application to compete in the SEAA 12-stage relay was rejected, with Serpentine being told by the organising club, Belgrave Harriers, that, “the event isn’t for joggers.” Admittedly, when we were allowed to compete in 1988, we did find ourselves lining up against Sebastian Coe and Steve Ovet! However, we did manage to enter teams in the Welsh Castles relay for the first time – and the women won. Quite an achievement for the debutants and so much for the club just being a bunch of joggers!

1987 saw the first summer Serpie Grand Prix series of races. The format was the same as that which we currently use, namely races over 1km, 1 mile, 3km and 5km. The inaugural winners were Rob Johnson and Renata Dodge. On the roads, Hilary Walker and John Hudspith were the club marathon champions: our championship race was the Harrow Marathon. In 1987, John also had the distinction of winning the handicap twice, in August and December. Alan Woodward was another of the winners, in July. M. Brooks won the Tom Hogshead trophy, while the Serpentine Egg went to Rosemary Cox, although I’m not sure she’ll want me to remind her of this, as it is awarded to the runner with the lowest points scored in the year’s handicaps and as such is the trophy no one really wants to win!

Malcolm French

Sudbury Court Report

What's happening in our sister club?

Crumbs, it can't be time for another Serpentines report from 'the sticks' surely. It's true there really is no peace for the wicked! As I battle with writers' block, I've turned to the fridge for inspiration. Let's see what a bottle of Innis & Gunn's oak aged beer can do for the creative process.

Summer, as ever for Sudbury Court, was dominated by two events, our internal handicap series and the Summer League. The former ended in the traditional 'beer and pizza' presentation evening just a couple of days ago. Thanks to some inspired handicapping from Mark Mulvenna, coming into the last race of the series no fewer than five runners were still in contention for the famous Docherty Shield – it would have been seven if Andy Hope and Tony Robertson had managed to make it to the start line – and things, as they say, went to the wire. In pole position going into the race, Leah Burden ran a PB, finishing in second place, only to be edged out for the trophy by Rosa Niewiara who, as well as running a PB, notched up her third win of the series. In adding her name to the shield, Rosa emulated her mum, Sue Davison, who won the competition in 1997. Rosa also became our first pre-teen champion. The presentation evening proved to be somewhat surreal as we lapsed into the post-race celebrations, with Russ Elder modelling his costume for the up-and-coming Great Gorilla 7k, and Gowan being presented, as a thank you for his sterling efforts on our ever improving website, with the recipe, and ingredients, for chocolate and courgette cake. You have been warned, although of course by the time you read this it'll probably be too late! In addition, a third birthday cake of the year was rolled out; this time to belatedly celebrate Chris Stagg's 60th.

As for the Summer League, although the final results aren't out as yet, I'm sure we've cemented ourselves in our customary sixth spot. The club had 13 members who donned their trainers at one or more of the fixtures, with Ruth Jackson and Chris Stagg ever-present, and once again Harrow saw our largest representation. The fixture also created a small piece of club history with Sudbury, for the first time ever, leading in a relay (even if it was only for the first 50 yards – thanks Kwok!). Meanwhile Gowan, with his dual membership, tactfully restricted himself to taking photos of the proceedings and supplementing Metros' catering efforts with a few scones of his own.

With regard to membership, I'm reluctant to say this in anything louder than a whisper, but it seems to be on the up, with half a dozen or so new faces trying us out over the past few weeks, and one or two even signing on the dotted line! We're coming up to our first anniversary at the tennis club, and (hope I'm not tempting fate) things have gone better than any of us could have anticipated. Local races have been well supported, with eight members tackling the recent Harrow Hill race, and 13 already signed up for the Lynda Jackson 10k at Moor Park in October. Hopefully this year, with the influx of new members, we'll be able to put up a better showing at our year-end standards – the Watford Autumn Challenge and the Luton Marathon Relay.

Finally I have to apologise to Anthony for mistakenly 'downgrading' him to third in his age group at our club 10k in the last issue. Anthony in fact finished third overall.

Martin Garrett

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And finally –

Rory's Grandma's Chocolate Date Krispies

Rory – a 9-year-old Serpie – has a grandma in Edinburgh whose home baking is widely appreciated in that fair city. You'll never hear Rory's grandma say "you'll have had your tea", as many Edinburgh matrons are reputed to do. On the contrary, she always offers delicious home-made cake to visitors. Rory particularly enjoys this recipe of his grandma's and it's simple enough for him to make too. The Krispies are good to share after cross-country races.

Ingredients:

8" square non-stick baking tin, or a swiss roll tin
2oz butter or margarine
250g packet of stoneless dates (Sainsbury's sell packets of the right size)
4 Mars bars
About 70g Rice Krispies
At least 150g chocolate; Green and Black's Organic dark chocolate is best, but children sometimes prefer milk chocolate.

Method:

1. Cut the dates up and place in saucepan with butter/margarine. Cook over a slow heat, stirring frequently, until the dates are mushy, taking care not to burn the butter.

2. Cut the Mars bars into thin slices and add to the saucepan. Melt and stir over a slow heat until smooth. This can take time, as Mars bars are slow to break down.

3. Stir in Rice Krispies, ensuring they are well-coated with the mixture.

4. Put the mixture into a non-stick baking tray and leave to set. If using a standard swiss roll tin, don't let the crispy mix run to the full size or they will be too thin. It's easy to push the mix back along to get the desired thickness.

5. Once set, melt the chocolate, with 2 drops of sunflower oil, in a basin over hot water. 150g gives a thin layer; use 200g for chocoholics! Cover the cooled crispie mix with the chocolate, tipping the tin to ensure the chocolate covers the surface completely.

6. Chill until set, then cut into pieces (about 12-15).

7. If you wish to omit the dates, increase the butter/margarine to 4oz.

Karen Hancock (Rory's mum)