

# E-BULLETIN

## 2 OCTOBER 2020



# BACK ON TRACK



## Chairman Chat

### Phil Reay

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*Phil joined the club in 2010 and from 2016-18 was the Men's Team captain. Outside of running he works in Marketing, Sales and Business development roles. Phil enjoys long distance running and has completed over 59 marathons, including the ultramarathon Marathon des Sables in 2016.*

*chairman@readingroadrunners.org*

Together, we're focusing on what we can do.

In September we moved to phase two of our return to club-led activity. Understandably we remain severely constrained by government rules, England Athletics guidance, and Reading Sports & Leisure's arrangements for operating Palmer Park safely, however members have a choice of options delivered well within the limits of the guidance. We've three track sessions and six outruns on a Wednesday operating at 90%+ overall on current capacity. We've also seen the return of the Friday evening sessions, which are increasing in popularity. We've been able to reach this point through teamwork. Thanks to the dedication, commitment and desire of the committee and coaches, and to the athletes for embracing the return to activity. Phase two will be extended for a further four weeks so please look out for an email on how to book.

For those not ready to return to club led track or outrun sessions, that's OK too – we all have our own set of circumstances and opinions. We are pleased to be able to continue to offer virtual activities. Thanks to **Coach Katie** for leading the Wednesday evening strength sessions via zoom and to our captains for their consistently inclusive and creative virtual challenges – this month it's London Marathon related scavenger hunt.

We're looking for volunteers for two roles:

- 1) After 18 years of welcoming hundreds if not thousands of athletes the club, Anne Goodall has shared that she'll be standing down from the Membership Secretary role at the AGM in March. The good news is that Anne intends to stand as Ex-officio. Anne's contribution to the club has been and continues to be outstanding – expect a dedicated feature on Anne in a future Newsletter.
- 2) Covid Co-ordinator. England Athletics strongly recommends that clubs appoint a club Covid Co-ordinator, preferably someone with experience in a health and safety role. Responsibilities of the role are to work with the club committee to co-ordinate matters concerning COVID-19 including risk assessments and ensuring the club complies with EA, Government and Facility guidance.

If you're interested in either role please email me at [chairman@readingroadrunners.org](mailto:chairman@readingroadrunners.org)

There are some races taking place under strict guidelines and there is the virtual London Marathon coming up. I know many members are participating in some of these events – enjoy, wear the green vest with pride and above all, stay safe.

Wishing you and your loved ones well.

Phil  
[chairman@readingroadrunners.org](mailto:chairman@readingroadrunners.org)

## Editor's Note

Ben Fasham

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Dear all,

Welcome to the first Newsletter since the return to the track. If you've been lucky enough to get one of the slots then, like me, you'll have been enjoying the feel of polyurethane beneath your feet, not to mention the sensation of doing laps with barely another person in sight.

That we are able to enjoy track sessions, or the outruns put on by our various Leaders in Running Fitness (LiRFs), is down to a huge amount of work that has been put in behind the scenes by the committee; it must be some reward for all those hours slogging through Covid guidelines to see people going round and round on a Wednesday night. The work of track evening volunteers should also be recognised; not just **Phil Reay**, **Bob Thomas**, and **Liz Dibben** making sure the stadium is a Covid-secure environment (and there may be others who I've not seen, please shout if so), but also the coaches and LiRFs who've been put their hands up to extend the opportunity to run as a group to as many people as possible.

There are still slots free on Wednesday evening so don't be shy and get involved – it's as Covid-secure an experience as I've had in the last 6 months, which includes being in my own house. There are also Friday sessions starting up – check out the latest at <https://readingroadrunners.org/training/>.

As you'll see in the results section, the number of races are slowly increasing again – if you're taking part in anything then do let the Results Editor know at [results@readingroadrunners.org](mailto:results@readingroadrunners.org). The most recent England Athletics Covid guidelines seem to have left our sport in relative peace, so hopefully I'll see some of you at Newbury Racecourse HM or Woodley 10k in the coming weeks.

Otherwise this month we've a write-up on the Round Reading Relay from **Mark Worringham**, some thoughts on mental health from Katie Gumbrell, and return to the Newsletter for former editor **Pete Cave**, who documents in necessary depth the agonies he's endured in the name of Roadrunning. I wanted to call the section Pete's Feet but having read it, that felt a bit flippant. There is at least a happy ending.

Looking forward to bumping into you all on the track, at events, on Strava, or out on the pavements of Reading,

All the best,

Ben

[newsletter@readingroadrunners.org](mailto:newsletter@readingroadrunners.org)

## Reading Roadrunners Committee Meeting

Tues 15<sup>th</sup> Sept 2020, 7pm (by video call)

### The Committee

Phil Reay	(Chairman)
Alice Carpenter	(ex-Officio)
Jill Dibben	(Treasurer)
Anne Goodall	(Membership Sec)
Liz Johnson	(Social Secretary)
Paul Monaghan	(Social networks/Web)
Vroni Royle	(ex-Officio)
Claire Seymour	(ex-Officio)
Bob Thomas	(General Secretary)

### Apologies for absence

Alice, Liz, Paul

### Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were proposed as a true record by Jill, seconded by Claire.

### Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting

Nothing to report.

### Chairman's report

Phil commented that over the past five months we have seen some fantastic initiatives to stage virtual events and we have now successfully completed the first phase of our return to group training.

Phase 2 expands on Phase 1, with additional training options, including Friday evenings, and more flexible booking arrangements.

Whilst we have effectively been forced into charging track fees as part of the booking process, Phil sees this as a wholly welcome step, avoiding the need to take cash on entry.

Despite all the lockdown and restrictions on our activities, the charity account continues to make progress, with the latest initiatives being the

Fantasy Football league organised by Liz and the opportunity to win a hamper by guessing the winning times of the Men's and Women's London Marathon, which is being organised by Kerri.

Finally, Phil expressed his concern that we have so far had no expressions of interest intaking the role of COVID Co-ordinator, a post that is heavily promoted by England Athletics, the lack of which could cause issues with our use of the track.

### Treasurer's report

Jill has continued to seek a new investment account to avoid having all the Club's resources in one bank.

Jill has identified the best option as Santander, but they are presently not taking on new business in that area. Jill was advised that suitable new accounts should become available shortly.

The Committee concurred with Jill's recommendation to wait for the block on new business to be lifted.

Jill has refunded all but two coach fares for the cancelled London Marathon and awaits advice from the remaining two on the bank accounts to receive the refunds.

### General Secretary's Report

**BBO Championship.** This year's BBO Championship, in which the Club would normally compete, has been cancelled.

### Membership Secretary's Report

Anne reported that two new members have joined.

Anne announced that she intends to stand down as Membership Secretary at the next AGM but will stand for election as an Ex-Officio Member of the Committee.

### Social Secretary's Report

Liz was on holiday, but Phil noted on her behalf that her initiative to run a Fantasy Football League has attracted 32 entries.

## Coaching Report

Pete reports that Phase 1 of our return to training was tentative but positively received. The coaching team is supporting Phase 2 with three coached track sessions and six outruns on Wednesday evenings and a coached training session on Fridays.

The outruns have been graded to suit a cross section of the membership:

- One at 8-9 min/mile pace
- One at 9-10 min/mile pace
- One at relaxed pace
- One following Coach to 5K
- Two mixed ability

Pete advised that several Leaders in Running Fitness have expressed an interest in qualifying as Coaches in Running Fitness, which the Club will be pleased to fund and support. Unfortunately, England Athletics is not presently offering courses but is reported to expect to publish dates next month.

## Return to Track

The first phase of our return to group training has been completed and, apart from an invasion of mosquitoes, was successful.

Phase 2 is now underway and runs for a period of four weeks. Phase 2 has extended the number of members who can take part, has introduced a Friday session with a coaching group and a small experimental group running without a coach.

For the foreseeable future, the size of these groups is constrained though, for now, organised sport is exempt from the government's recent extension of curbs on our civil liberties.

The Committee expressed its thanks to Pete, Katherine, Claire, Angela, Catherine, Sian, Liz, and Sarah for leading groups and making Phase 1 a success.

## Any other business

**Wednesday track marshalling.** Phil is keen for members to offer to help with marshalling the Wednesday evening training sessions.

## Club Vacancies

**Treasurer.** Jill intends to stand down as Treasurer at the 2021 AGM. It would be ideal if her replacement could be in place in time to shadow her for some time prior to taking over.

**COVID Co-ordinator.** To continue group training, the Club has a responsibility to ensure that it is paying due regard to prevailing guidelines, for which the Club needs to appoint a specific post of COVID Co-ordinator.

Members with Health & Safety experience or a specific interest in COVID-related operating practices are invited to speak to Phil in the first instance.

**Membership Secretary.** Anne intends to stand down as Membership Secretary at the 2021 AGM. It would be ideal if her replacement could be in place in time to shadow her processing renewals in the New Year.

**DONM:** Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020 by video call

*Main Club contact points:*

Chairman, Phil:  
[chairman@readingroadrunners.org](mailto:chairman@readingroadrunners.org)

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[membership@readingroadrunners.org](mailto:membership@readingroadrunners.org)

Secretary, Bob:  
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Treasurer, Jill:  
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Social Secretary, Liz:  
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Coaching co-ordinator, Katie:  
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Team Captains, Sam & Jamie:  
[teamcaptains@readingroadrunners.org](mailto:teamcaptains@readingroadrunners.org)

Welfare Officer, Tom Harrison:  
[tom.harrison13w@btinternet.com](mailto:tom.harrison13w@btinternet.com)



## Women's Captain's Report

Sam Whalley



*Sam joined the club in 2015 just after her first marathon. She has 3 teenagers, 2 dogs and one husband; she works part-time as a secondary school teacher. She is a huge fan of XC running, doesn't mind swimming and is a fair-weather cyclist. When not running, she will quite often be baking.*

*teamcaptains@readingroadrunners.org*

We've seen a (hopefully not short-lived) return to racing in recent weeks. I'm really impressed with those of you who have managed to retain race fitness over the lockdown months!

**Helen Pool** was first female at the Dorney Lake 10k, still chasing that sub 40 with a great time of 42.09; she was also second FV45 at the Run Through Grand Prix 10k, in 41:24.

At the Run Reading Riverside Half Marathon, **Liz Jones** was 1st FV50, **Lorna McLeod** was 3rd FV50, and **Sarah Dooley** was 3rd FV40. There were also good performances from **Steph Smith** and **Katie Macaulay**.

In the Saturn Great British Bake Run, which sounds like my kind of half marathon, **Trisha Arnold** was 1st FV65, and **Gill Manton** also put in a good run.

To my knowledge there haven't been many PBs over the shorter distances, but **Christina Calderon** got a PB in the Chiltern Wonderland 50 miler, with a mere 11 hours, 39 minutes and 33 seconds of running. Wow! **Nicki Randall** has also favoured the longer distance, with a 61km trail circumnavigation of Guildford in the Fox Ultra in a mere 8 hours 44.

This past weekend a number of you enjoyed the Sonning 5k and 10k. In the latter, **Sarah Bate** was first FV60, and her sister, Steph Smith, was second FV50. **Heather Bowley** was second FV70, and set a new club record in that age group - amazing - well done!

At this point in the year I'd usually be sending out my traditionally huge email about upcoming XC events, but having just ploughed through the latest EA guidance on that matter, I don't think I'll be doing that again any time soon.

Still, there are plenty of ways to keep yourselves occupied. Club sessions have restarted, but if you don't fancy those, try having a specific time, pace or elevation goal for each run, or reaching a target distance over a month. You could try a run streak, but don't overdo it and rest if you need to. Some of you have continued to circumnavigate Reading, even after the Round Reading Relay has finished, and getting out on the trails is always fun.

I have started easing myself off the injury bench this week, and will definitely be taking it easy.

Keep your running tales coming in,

Sam

## Roadrunners' Race Results

### David Dibben

LET'S hear a warm round of applause for Alex Harris, who ran a PB of 36:40 in the Olympic Park 10k. His time slashed 41 seconds off his previous mark — which had stood for eight years — and was only one second off Brian Kirsopp's club V50 record.

Alex's achievement was some consolation for his disappointment at Dorney a fortnight before, where a dodgy late course re-measurement cost him a certain PB in the 20 miles event.

The England age group masters star set a new PB at half-marathon distance earlier this year to follow up PBs at both parkrun and the marathon last year.

#### August 29th

##### Temple Newsam Marathon (Leeds)

Pos	Name	Chip
29	Pete Morris	5:24.22

#### September 5th

##### Thames Path 100

Pos	Name	Chip
62	Gary Tuttle	22:36.08

##### Dorney Lake 20m

Pos	Name	Chip
3	Alex Harris (1st M50)	2:11.42
11	David Caswell	2:30.31

##### Dorney Lake Half Marathon

Pos	Name	Chip
63	Julian Hough	1:45.17

##### Dorney Lake 10K

Pos	Name	Chip
4	Pete Jewell (1st M50)	39.29
11	Helen Pool (1st lady)	42.09

#### September 6th

##### Run Reading Riverside Half Marathon

Pos	Name	Chip
6	Tony Page (1st M45)	1:22.54 PB
25	Sarah Dooley (3rd F40)	1:35.53
31	Tony Walker	1:37.37
32	Dan Whittaker	1:38.24
42	David Caswell	1:41.51
44	Richard Usher	1:41.54
67	Liz Jones (1st F55)	1:49.07
107	Lorna McLeod (3rd F50)	1:55.07
109	Eion McLeod	1:55.08
138	Joe Akem-Che	2:05.20
159	Stephanie Smith	2:12.41
201	Justin Watkins	2:34.59
204	Katie Macaulay	2:45.05

208	Colin Wilson	2:54.48
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##### Saturn Great British Bake Run (13.1m)

Pos	Name	Chip
-	Trisha Arnold (1st F65)	3:18.23
-	Gill Manton	3:44.03

#### September 12th

##### Chiltern Wonderland 50

Pos	Name	Chip
165	Christina Calderon	11:39.33 PB
184	Phil Reay	12:10.51



#### September 19th

##### Olympic Park 10k

Pos	Name	Chip
27	Alex Harris (1st M50)	36:40 PB

**Fox Ultra (61k)**

Pos	Name	Chip
176	Nicki Randall	8:44:30

**September 27th****Sonning 10k (provisional)**

Pos	Name	Chip
1	Stephen Ridley	33.37
20	Dean Allaway	45.25
77	Gary Clarke	52.19 PB
78	George Nyamie	52.31
81	Phil Sharman	52.47 PB
85	Sarah Bate (1st F60)	52.56
98	Leanne Home	53.59
99	Miriam Coleman	54.14
100	Steph Smith (2nd F50)	54.20
113	Rabea Hands	56.26 PB
129	Zoe Browne	57.56
149	Charlotte Gleadhill	60.12
169	Heather Bowley (2nd F70)	62.30
203	Peter Glass (2nd M70)	70.52
205	Linda Wright	71.36
206	Kathy Tytler	73.35
207	Kingsley Starling (2nd M70)	74.45

**Sonning 5k (provisional)**

Pos	Name	Chip
10	Richard Usher (2nd M40)	22.11
21	Kathy Vickers	26.44
44	Emma Caswell	40.48

**Run Through Grand Prix Half Marathon**

Pos	Name	Chip
32	Fergal Donnelly (3rd M45)	1:28.07

**Run Through Grand Prix 10k**

Pos	Name	Chip
51	Helen Pool (2nd F45)	41.24

**NoblePro MK 5k**

Pos	Name	Chip
-	Jack Gregory	15.29
-	Mark Worringham	16.06
-	Alex Harris	17.39

**Henley Trail Half Marathon**

Pos	Name	Chip
61	David Leake (3rd M60)	1:57.55



## Results Photo Special – Gary Tuttle

David Dibben

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**ROADRUNNERS'** Ultras star **Gary Tuttle** (above with wife Trinity) is celebrating finishing another 100 miles race... and is already planning to run another!

Gary ran the Thames Path 100 in 22 hours 36 minutes and 8 seconds earlier this month; it was the second time he had completed the Richmond to Oxford course.

"No PB for me this time" he said, "but I was very happy to go under 24 hours again."

Finishing at all was something of a triumph as – just four weeks before – ill-fitting running shoes forced him to pull out of the gruelling North Downs Way 100, barely 13 miles from the end.

Our man had signed up for all four 100-mile events in this year's Centurion Grand Slam, only for postponements caused by the pandemic to play havoc with their schedule of fixtures. They're all too close together!

That won't stop Gary lining up to take on his next big target, the Autumn 100, at Goring-on-Thames, on October 10<sup>th</sup>.

## Round Reading Relay

### Mark Worringham

Below are the results for the Round Reading Relay, run in August.

Congratulations to **Mrs Browne's Boys** who stormed home in 4:14.

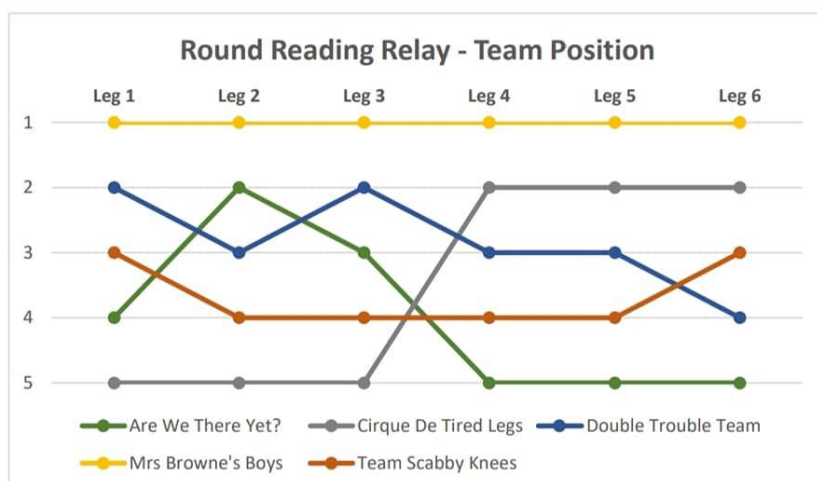
Behind it was a right royal tussle with all four remaining complete teams within 10 minutes of each other. Places changed frequently, and eventually it was **Cirque de Tired Legs** who emerged in 2nd with 5:21, and **Team Scabby Knees** in 3rd with 5:26. This was less than a minute ahead of **Double Trouble** (5:27), with **Are We There Yet?** in 5th (5:30) thanks to some amusing detours. In a live race, this would've been a fascinating scrap.

I have had to dig around on Strava for a couple of results, and estimated times for Sarah Ds 3 legs based on splits. I still don't have everyone's times in the incomplete team and for the soloists, so have left blank.

Congratulations to **Sarah Dooley** for getting more lost on each of her 3 legs than anyone else. Kudos also to the hardcore enthusiasts who ran the whole thing.

ROUND READING RELAY RESULTS, August 2020						
DETAILED RESULTS						
Leg	Dist. (miles)	Runner	Leg time	Cumulative time	Team position	Individual leg position
<b>COMPLETE TEAMS</b>						
<b>1: Mrs Browne's Boys</b>						
Leg 1	6.1	Jack Gregory	00:35:07	00:35:07	1	1
Leg 2	4.9	Brendan Morris	00:28:20	01:03:27	1	1
Leg 3	4.8	Mark Apsey	00:32:51	01:36:18	1	1
Leg 4	6.3	Calum Pratt	00:40:47	02:17:05	1	1
Leg 5	6.4	Mark Worringham	00:38:24	02:55:29	1	1
Leg 6	6.5	Zoe Browne	01:06:45	04:02:14	1	5
<b>TOTAL TIME</b>			<b>04:02:14</b>			
<b>2: Cirque de Tired Legs</b>						
Leg 1	6.1	Sian James & Donald Scott-Collett	00:56:25	00:56:25	5	5
Leg 2	4.9	Sian James & Donald Scott-Collett	00:49:57	01:46:22	5	5
Leg 3	4.8	Ian Giggs	00:41:02	02:27:24	5	2
Leg 4	6.3	Richard Smith	00:46:52	03:14:16	2	2
Leg 5	6.4	Vroni Royle	01:00:32	04:14:48	2	3
Leg 6	6.5	Shweta Saikumar	01:06:42	05:21:30	2	4
<b>TOTAL TIME</b>			<b>05:21:30</b>			
<b>3: Team Scabby Knees</b>						
Leg 1	6.1	Sahan Jinadasa	00:51:48	00:51:48	3	3
Leg 2	4.9	Sara Lopez & Nicola Gillard	00:50:01	01:41:49	4	6
Leg 3	4.8	Brooke Johnson	00:55:00	02:36:49	4	8
Leg 4	6.3	Angela Burley	00:58:33	03:35:22	4	5
Leg 5	6.4	Carmen Fuentes & Elizabeth Johnson	00:56:39	04:32:01	4	2
Leg 6	6.5	Peter Cave	00:54:40	05:26:41	3	2
<b>TOTAL TIME</b>			<b>05:26:41</b>			
<b>4: Double Trouble Team</b>						
Leg 1	6.1	David Walkley	00:51:35	00:51:35	2	2
Leg 2	4.9	Katie Gumbrell & Chris Cutting	00:45:24	01:36:59	3	4
Leg 3	4.8	Katie Gumbrell & Chris Cutting	00:47:19	02:24:18	2	3
Leg 4	6.3	David Walkley	00:53:59	03:18:17	3	3
Leg 5	6.4	Catherine Leather & Claire Seymour	01:04:31	04:22:48	3	5
Leg 6	6.5	Catherine Leather & Claire Seymour	01:04:39	05:27:27	4	3
<b>TOTAL TIME</b>			<b>05:27:27</b>			
<b>5: Are We There Yet?</b>						
Leg 1	6.1	Tony Page	00:52:06	00:52:06	4	4
Leg 2	4.9	Tony Page	00:37:10	01:29:16	2	2
Leg 3	4.8	Sarah Dooley	01:05:39	02:34:55	3	6
Leg 4	6.3	Sarah Dooley	01:04:50	03:39:45	5	6
Leg 5	6.4	Sarah Dooley	01:03:20	04:43:05	5	4
Leg 6	6.5	Tony Page	00:47:36	05:30:41	5	1
<b>TOTAL TIME</b>			<b>05:30:41</b>			

## COMPLETE TEAMS - POSITION BY LEG



## OTHER STATS

Furthest distance run*		
Runner	Number of Legs	Total distance
1= Anthony Eastaway	6	35 miles
1= Sue Jones	6	35 miles
1= Sarah Walters	6	35 miles
4= Sarah Dooley	3	17.5 miles
4= Tony Page	3	17.5 miles
6= Adele Graham & Angelique Haswell	2	12.9 miles
6= Catherine Leather & Claire Seymour	2	12.9 miles
8 David Walkley	2	12.4 miles
9 Gary Clarke	2	11.2 miles
10 Sian James & Donald Scott-Collett	2	11 miles
11 Katie Gumbrell & Chris Cutting	2	9.7 miles

\* Not including getting lost - see below

Most additional distance per leg due to going the wrong way		
Runner	Leg	Extra distance
1 Sarah Dooley	3	2.7 miles
2 Sarah Dooley	4	1.0 miles
3 Sarah Dooley	5	0.9 miles
4 Adele Graham & Angelique Haswell	6	0.5 miles
5= Angela Burley	4	0.4 miles
5= Peter Cave	6	0.4 miles
5= Brooke Johnson	3	0.4 miles




## London Marathon Competition

Kerri French

Win more amazing goodie hampers on London Marathon day (4<sup>th</sup> October).

Such a shame that we won't be sending an army of green vests and hi-vis clad volunteers up to London this year.

This is usually a great opportunity to raise a bit of money for our charity of the year with our 'Guess the time of a random Reading Roadrunner' on the Coaches  Well this year we can do it virtually instead and be in with a chance of winning 2 amazing hampers of goodies.



1 for the person with the nearest guess for the winner of the Elite Men's & 1 for the nearest guess of the Elite Women's Race.

Sign in to Web Collect:

[https://webcollect.org.uk/sec/index.php?page=login&action=login.sign\\_in\\_or\\_sign\\_up&organisation\\_id=2154](https://webcollect.org.uk/sec/index.php?page=login&action=login.sign_in_or_sign_up&organisation_id=2154)

-Browse more upcoming events

-Select Charity Initiatives

-Book a Place

You must guess the times in HH:MM:SS format for both races when you checkout. It costs £5 to enter, and the winners will be announced after the race.

And finally.... Good luck to all our members running their own 'Virtual London'.



## Now For Something Completely The Same

Katie Gumbrell

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In June, I wrote a blog entry called: Now for something completely the same. This is a slight rehash of that blog for the newsletter and it has almost nothing to do with running.

Earlier in the year, I followed an online discussion about which words/phrases were best to describe living through the COVID-19 pandemic. Suggestions ranged from the ubiquitous 'unprecedented times', to those directly targeted (unfavourably) at the UK Government, to some which were terribly British in their vagueness: 'predicament'; 'uncharted territory'; 'The Event' (a reference to an old Mitchell and Webb sketch). More recently people have been describing, 'getting back to normal,' and, for me, that's the bit that really doesn't make any sense.

According to Chambers dictionary, normal means usual; typical; not extraordinary. How can life on earth, with all its events and relationships and weather and celebrations and illnesses etc. ever be described as such?! Life has been irrecoverably changed by everything that's ever happened and it is, therefore, largely impossible to predict the future (although, at the time of writing, I'm listening to Professor Brian Cox discuss the predictability of humans and the regular nature of the universe; more on theoretical physics another time, perhaps, and in the meantime, watch Devs).

The Committee and Coaching volunteers have worked exceptionally hard to bring about a return to track training. It's not going to look like it did and some people won't like it. In that respect, it's a bit like when libraries started hosting Rhyme Time and encouraging people to talk to each other and drink coffee in their 'social' areas. Urgh. What happens next could be a collective experience of grief: shock that training has changed; anger that the rules seem unfair and what we enjoy has been taken from us without our permission; guilt that we are somehow to blame. Or the return could be wonderful and exhilarating; a chance to try something new.

As humans, we crave order and stability and any routine can have a positive effect on us. I have many furloughed friends who really missed work - jobs that they had been at pains to tell me were terrible. I've been particularly interested to chart the return to track of athletes who have previously told me that they, "hate track". Is that Joni Mitchell's Big Yellow Taxi I see in the distance?!

However you want to describe the COVID-19 pandemic, and however its ongoing impact is making you feel, it's worth remembering that emotions are all that we can truly predict: loss, disappointment and nasty surprises are as inevitable as excitement, joy and lovely surprises. The changes will affect us all differently and emotional response is not a competitive sport.

[If you're experiencing a low mood or negative feelings that are stopping you from doing day-to-day tasks, please seek professional support: your GP, Samaritans and Mind are there, amongst others, to help.]



## The Cavus Chronicles 1

### Peter Cave

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I am by no means a seasoned runner. In 2017 I entered the ballot for the 2018 London marathon and, despite it being the first time entering, I got in. I started training using an online training plan, Hal Higdon's beginner plan. Although my training came to an end around January due to an ITB problem ('Glutes!', Alexa later told me with great delight) I started to get pain in the pad of my fifth toe on mainly my left but also my right foot. It felt like pinching, like the skin was being squeezed, or that I had a corn seed. I experimented with wider shoes, thicker insoles, foot moisturising creams and even took to a form of autotomy with my penknife and the skin on my foot to try and alleviate the pain.

During my injury, the pain obviously left, walking causing me no issues. Like most people, when I walk I'm a heel striker, but when I run, unlike most people, I'm a forefoot striker. Not running meant that the problem vanished, but it wasn't long after coming back from injury and training for the Amsterdam marathon that it started to materialise again.

I got through Amsterdam, but it was after whilst training for Ras Dewi Sant trail marathon when it became a chronic issue. The solution seemed to be taking off my shoe and rubbing my foot, but the intervals between rubbings became shorter and shorter, and I remember spending far too much time stopping to do so, frustrating my friend who was running it with me.

It was around this time that I was introduced to an orthotist. An orthotist is a doctor who makes orthotics and unlike a podiatrist isn't limited to below the knee work, although that's where they spend most of their time. He examined me privately, gave me some damning news about my feet, threw in mention of a significant leg-length discrepancy (10mm) and made me some orthotics. These came with a large heel, one larger than the other to address the leg-length discrepancy, and lots of cushioning.

The diagnosis? Pes cavus feet with equinus.

For those like me that didn't learn Latin at school, I have a very high arch and a downward-pointing forefoot. It made sense to me therefore that a heel raise would be appropriate, stopping the heel dropping too much and keeping the foot in a position it likes. I was further informed that the pain on the fifth toe was an overloading caused by the foot essentially being squished by my own weight. All seemed well and £200 per pair later (I bought two to make sure I could cycle them) I was back running – without pain.



The trouble with feet is that they are very sensitive to change. A runner puts up to eight-times their body weight through their feet when running, so a man of my height and weight is putting quite a lot of pressure on the bones of his feet. Making a small change in the foot can impact on not just the foot, but the ankle, the knee, the hip and lower back, maybe even the neck and shoulders. These insoles are described as medical, such are the changes they are making to the position of your feet, and so not only do they (legally) have to be fitted by a doctor you have to wear them in slowly to let your body adjust, or risk another injury elsewhere.

As my long runs lengthened, I started experiencing a new pain, this time on the head of the second toe right in the middle of the pad. I thought this was caused by the shape of the insoles and had them adjusted but it didn't go away. By this point I'd gotten used to running with some form of pain, and ploughed on, running the London marathon (eventually) in 2019. By halfway I was in pain, and I have a distinct memory of running along Victoria Embankment and seeing Katie Gumbrell gesticulating that it was only four track laps to the end. She probably thought the pain on my face was from my legs but it wasn't; it was my feet. I was in agony, and after finishing I sat down against some Heras fencing and cried. In the days to come my left foot swelled up and a bursa appeared such that I couldn't put my foot down.

In the months that followed I was diagnosed with a stress reaction but baffled the MSK doctor at my local surgery with all-clear X-rays and MRI scans after the swelling had subsided; apparently there was nothing wrong with me. It is now early 2020 and this has been going on for about 2 years.

The private doctor told me, literally, that he was out of talent. What was interesting about him was that I came in with a problem, pain on the fifth toe, and he busied himself fixing what he saw as the problem, not what I had complained about. His solution, in his eyes, fixed my condition but it didn't fix my problem (the pain). So when I told him that he didn't know what to do. That's £400-worth of insoles now not being used.

If you Google my conditions, lots of websites purport to being able to fix it. They show pictures of big arch supports and testimonials from happy customers, but all come in surprisingly cheap. My advice? They're all snake oil: see a specialist. Despite my poor experience with the first doctor, I learned a lot and understood that this wasn't a solution that could be fixed by purchasing a generic device off the internet.

I had by this point got rid of the orthotics and was back running in normal insoles, so of course the original pain came back. I tried some Enertor insoles, championed by Usain Bolt, to see if the shock absorption helped the pain; it didn't.

I went to see Luke at GoPerform (he is excellent by the way, I couldn't recommend him enough) and he pointed me in the direction of another specialist along with some strengthening exercises (all running therapists love your bum, if you're injured start there!). I should say that by this point having experienced two years-worth of problems, constant mild but sometimes considerable pain, being described as 'deformed' and facing a possibility I could never run more than a half-marathon ever again, I was desperate.

The specialist clinic was in Marylebone, inside the congestion zone and not half a mile from Harley Street. My biggest fear with this place was not only the cost, which I worried would be substantially higher, but also that this would be another excursion featuring lots of emotional energy, hope and ultimately failure.

She assessed me in much the same way, determined that I don't have legs a different length at all (how can this be?) and watched me from in front and behind, in slow-time, walk and run on a treadmill; already this was different. She observed how my foot was landing and lifting off and talked me through what she saw. Most importantly, she used reassuring language, referred to it as my 'foot type' and not a deformity, and dismissed entirely the possibility of it being fatal to future events. I watched her as she designed the orthotic, squiggling and drawing on a foot outline. I noticed in particular that she was asking for a lump on the outside of my arch as well as the inside and it intrigued me.

One evening some days later, having just returned from a run, I was sat on a stool in the kitchen bemoaning my feet to my long-suffering confidant and remembered what she had done. I bent down, lifted up my toes, keeping my heels on the ground, and put them down slowly, thinking about how they landed and watched my foot move. I kept doing that and could feel each time they landed the pain return slightly from the impact, the pad particularly sensitive after the run. I then stuck two fingers under the outside of my arch, lifted and lowered my feet again and observed a remarkable difference. The load appeared to now fall over the entire pad and the fifth pad felt immediate relief! Perhaps she was right?

No stranger to experimentation with my feet, I cut my Enertor insoles in half and swapped the halves over, such that the arch support was now on the outside and mimicked my fingers, put them in my shoes and when the next run appeared on my plan, tried it. Although not perfect, the improvement was noticeable and I managed 90 minutes with only one foot rub. Exciting!

Three agonising weeks later I returned to London and got the new insoles. These ones came with a lifetime guarantee (so didn't need replacing every 2-3 years unlike the other pair) and were specifically for sport. I went for a run that night and although not perfect, a significant improvement.

I write this having yesterday finished a leg of the round Reading relay, a 6.6 mile run across the bottom of Reading, with a run to/from the start/finish tacked on; in total about 10 miles. I didn't experience a single twinge or pang from my feet, and as I walked home I felt a sense of elation, delight and relief. Was I fixed?

It's too early and I'm too pragmatic to declare victory just yet, but I certainly feel the closest I ever have to having solved this problem. The verdict? Seek expert advice early. Whilst the first doctor was no good for me I know he has helped others, and unfortunately it's been an expensive journey for me to get the right solution. In hindsight I should have sought out a sports specialist over a 'normal' specialist sooner, the issue being a running-specific issue. It was tremendous to have someone to talk to and lean on as well given the emotional energy I invested in getting this sorted. Right now she wants to stick around, so to make sure I'm marrying her.