



NSRRA
September 2020

Virtual Edition 3



"Near, far, *wherever* you are...
make sure you're practicing
social distancing!" — *Celine Dion*

Note: This was created before The Joy of 6 rule!

Dear Runners

This is quite a busy newsletter and I'm impressed by the efforts of NSRRA members to keep race events funded and still being completed in a safe virtual way. My running world changed last February with a stroke and heart failure but I am pleased to say that the care and attention from the NHS has almost restored me to full health. I have taken on a new short slow running regime thanks to my wife Julie who has been my saviour in many many ways. It's also been a pleasure to work with Ken to keep these newsletters going to enable all to share some fantastic experiences. So, take care and ensure you keep up the social distancing as we move towards winter which will be another Covid challenge.

Your Editor Graham



Dear Runners

As you read this report we are now over half way in our programme and with it only being 8 to count tactics will now become a part of whether you compete either to maintain your place or help your club to obtain more points.

It has been great to see all of your comments and pictures on our Facebook page, helping each other plan routes.

If we do get ties in any of the top three positions then don't worry you will all get your trophies at the presentation evening. As I write this report I have no idea when that will be but as soon as we have a date we will let you all know.

Apologies for the fixture glut in August and September but when the Race Directors were postponing earlier in the year we honestly thought all would be clear, how wrong we were. On a positive note some events are coming back in a time trial format but this all depends on where it is being held. Most of our programme use schools, village halls and leisure centres as our HQ and at the moment we are either



not able to use these facilities or only limited numbers are allowed in. Fingers crossed by the time of our next newsletter in November we will have a clearer picture for next year.

Once again thanks to Andy Vickerman for all his hard work in producing results so Paul Clinton can work his magic and produce our league tables. Thanks also to Craig Carpenter for keeping our website up to date, Mick Hall for producing the fabulous memento race numbers and last but not least our editor Graham Fletcher for our, for now, on line newsletter.

Ken

Dave Clarke 5

It's always worthwhile checking the distance of these virtual runs 5 miles is 3km further than 5km! After confirming we were all running 5000m the task was finding a route – no elevation requirements instead the need for some 'off road'. I recced the canal since I thought that would be ideal. However, the British summertime and resident swans with their cygnets put pay to that! I decided the trusty Chase, majority on the road with the start and finish on the trails. An impressive 158 runners completed the race with proceeds going to The Chelsea Burley Trust and valuable points available for NSRRA.

The window for the race was shorter than we were used to, just 48 hours. 7pm on a Thursday night is past my bedtime, Friday's are traditionally my rest day, so Saturday became race day. The bonus of shorter window was that most runners only had time for one attempt – unless you are Danny Soltys. "In an attempt to get the best out of himself (and as great marathon prep) Danny actually ran 2 x 5k in 15.32 with just a 5 minute gap and then followed up just over a day later with 15.52 on a tougher course just in case it was needed!" High Performance Runner. Danny's 5km time would equate to a 2 hour 10 marathon!

I warmed up for the race and everything felt normal: heavy legs, heavy breathing, sweating from one sprint – I knew it was time to run. Throughout the pandemic I've just been running with Dave and we are quite close in performances. We decided the race tactic...Dave would set off and I would give him the first lump in the path (very accurate!) and then I would chase him down throughout the run. We discussed that this would work since I was sensible enough to not go off too fast.

Reality: I ran the first km in 3:21 (my average pace was 3:36) – I was in for a tough 4km!

When I picked up Dave, far earlier than planned, I toyed with sitting on his shoulder but I made the decision that my first km was going to bite at some point and I just needed to keep going. The 4th km was when I fell off the ledge (3:53 pace), some walkers gave me a sympathetic smile which confirmed my feeling that my legs were going sideways not forwards!

I wonder what other people find the hardest thing about virtual runs. The obvious, lack of other runners makes me sad every time. I miss the feeling of working hard in a group all gunning for a common goal. The other thing I find the absolute hardest about virtual runs – using the technology! My running watch is on borrowed time which wouldn't matter in a normal race, but in the virtual runs – no watch – no run!!

Rather than finish line selfies, I think it'd make a great episode of 'You've been framed' filming everyone frantically pressing the stop button on your watch at the right distance!! Sweat stings your eyeballs, you can't really see the digits, your legs are less than cooperative and you have a choice of buttons to press! Or maybe it's just me...?

So, with the run done it was time for the wait for the results. I think the appeal and success of the NSRRA is the competitive camaraderie within each group. Group B's performances has become a frequent topic of conversation. Martin Cross is flying and with four straight victories looks set for promotion. Oliver Stone is so consistent even when he chooses some of the hilliest runs which he often completes at the crack of dawn. David Morrell obviously is a house favourite but needs more scores on the board to overcome his detonation at Knighton 20. But then there is the fear, the fear of the unknown, there are many runners who haven't completed all the races but it doesn't mean they can't come back in the next few weeks! Hats off to all for keeping the NSRRA spirit going.

Kelly Butler



Stone 5 report Thursday 20th August 2020

Blythe Bridge Running club chose to do the Stone 5 Virtual Run as an "Away Club Run".

10 of us met at The Boar Pub in Moddershall with the managers consent.

Upon driving "down" to The Boar I quickly decided that that road would be a good downhill to finish on as opposed to a bad hill to start on!!

At 18:30 on a 24 degree C humid summers evening the 8 female and 2 male members set off along Knenhall, for a steady climb over to The Swynnerton Arms. Something that I have noticed with our running club is that distance and place markers are highlighted with pubs!!

It was a steady 2 mile climb to the said pub.

The heat of the early evening was felt by all and we wished that "pit stops" at the pubs had been allowed on the race but alas we had to keep going.

From The Swynnerton Arms we continued climbing the short hill to The Windmill pub. We had now reached half way and finally some shade.

The 10 of us were now distanced out and the males of the group were no longer in sight!! A nice long flat road was ahead and us remaining 8 females trundled along at equally distanced spaces along the level. A group of Lambrettas peeped and passed us in the opposite direction, and before long we were at The Black Lake. This was my favourite part for two reasons, one we had little over a mile to do and two, it was all down hill!! It was still a warm evening but thankfully we were still in the shade.

The downhill and the mile were soon over and just a quick lap of the lake at The Boar, finished the five miles into the carpark where we started.

To thank the manager for allowing us to all park on his premises our club stayed for a good hour and hydrated. I sat in the evening sunshine taking in the views of the lake and the many ducks that frequent it. A swan swam nearby enjoying my view too. The sun went in and it quickly cooled down, time for home.



We all said our goodbyes.

A very pleasant evening was had by all and we, as a club look forward to next years Stone 5, hopefully not virtual, however we are all very grateful for the virtual events that are needed for now.

Emma Lonsyk

Race Report – Cheadle 4 (Virtual) Race – ‘Run for Oakley’

My first race report for NSRRA will not be one I will ever forget for a number of reasons, and 2020 has definitely been a year that we won't forget!

The year had started off with everyone looking forward to their own personal running targets (as per normal) at New Year. For me it was soon in to marathon training for Manchester in early April. Talk of Corona virus was only heard on the news and was affecting a country far far away, whilst we battled what seemed to be a new winter storm each weekend. But as the weeks went on we were soon to be in 'lockdown' and suddenly all of our races were being cancelled or at least postponed.

In the midst of the lockdown came the devastating, shocking and incredibly sad news that young Oakley Wright, son of Jenny Dalkins and step-son of Mark Dalkins, our team mates and friends, had passed away. With this news Cheadle Running Club came together along with the wider running community to show support to Jenny, Mark and the rest of their family.

In the days and weeks after the news broke we knew we wanted to try and help in some way and then the idea of the dedicating the first ever Cheadle 4 Virtual Race to remember and celebrate Oakley's life was first discussed, it seemed fitting as he had been such a talented runner.

We were all unsure how many people might enter a virtual race but after seeing the success of St. Thomas 10k we hoped for a good up take and in-turn an opportunity to raise important funds which will be sent to the paediatric neurology department at Alder Hey Children's Hospital, which treated Oakley and gave such excellent care to him.

As the days and weeks passed from the event going live the entries came flooding in, this was fantastic to see. As the main race weekend approached we had surpassed 300 entries across the three options.

Over the weekend it was amazing to see Facebook filling up with post from runners (and walkers), young and old showing their completed efforts in many different locations all in support of Jenny and Mark.

For me the 'race' was done on Saturday afternoon, deciding that I would run the normal route I didn't have the problem of finding an alternative including 300ft of elevation, which had been the source of much discussion on social media. Standing on the start line and with a small audience of drinkers at the nearby Bird in Hand pub wondering what we were doing both Debbie Thomas and I set off. The conditions were good; although it was a warm afternoon we were soon running down Tean Road enjoying the fast, flat, slightly downhill first mile. That enjoyment soon comes to an end when you turn left and hit the first climb on the road to Freehay. With legs starting to burn from the build up of lactic acid thoughts soon turn to why I ran so hard in that first mile! The climbing keeps coming with the steepest section up through Barkers Bank, with the relief of reaching the top and some recovery. The next sections are generally flat or downhill with my legs definitely trying to go faster than the rest of my body. Eventually, the sight of Tean Road Rec and thoughts of the finish soon come and with the same audience at the pub still wondering what this chap is doing I turned left, back on to Tean Road and flat out to the finish. It was a tough and hard run which was made even more difficult when you are running alone but I was pleasantly pleased to see I had improved on my race time from last year, if only by a few seconds. Debbie had a great run too and was soon flying down towards the finish.

The main point I take from this event is how the running community



and in particular those who are associated with the local running scene and NSRRA all come together to support fellow runners in a time of great sadness.

Everyone at Cheadle Running Club is very grateful for each and every entry and I know that the show of support has been great source of comfort for Jenny and Mark to see. In the end we had more than 350 entries from all over the world.

Lastly, both Glyn and I would like to thank Andrew Vickerman, Mick Hall, Ken Rushton and all of our sponsors for their support with the event.

Thanks Gareth Knapper Cheadle Running Club

Clayton 10k

When Ken asked me to write the race report I was flattered but terrified but he suggested I tell you all a little of my running journey to set the scene so here goes:

My journey began 5 years ago when I was working as a child safeguarding social worker and due to the pressures of the work my mental health had begun to suffer. A good friend suggested running and I ignored her until one day I had such a bad day at work that instead of doing my usual 2 mile unwind walk, I broke into a run and ran the lot and couldn't move for 3 days! but it was too late the bug had already bitten. I was the type of runner back then who was almost ashamed to admit to running and tried to go out when I knew I wouldn't be seen and I always used to say "yes I run but its ok I don't take it seriously and I will never run a marathon! Fast forward a couple of years and I see a local marathon advertised organised by Stone MM's Bill Mac and NSRRAs Ken and Sue Rushton. I was intrigued and went along to as many of the recces as I could and got to know Bill and a few of the other Stone MM runners.

Doing the marathon in 30 degree heat that year and meeting Bill was a turning point. My time was 4.37 which I didn't think was bad for a first

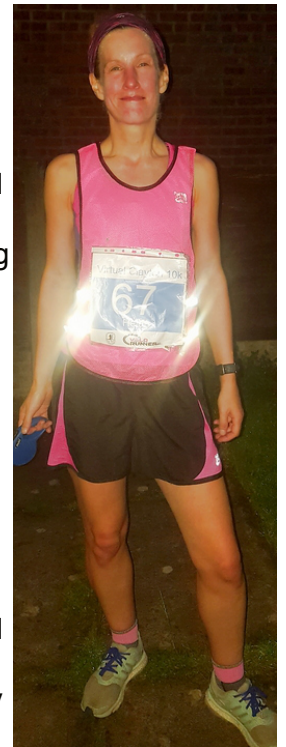
in those conditions!

I've completed 3 more since then, the best being Chester at 4.13. Bill gave me so many good tips and also introduced me to the fun of TT (Trail Tuesday) where I met Steven McCann and many other great people and was made so welcome. As time went on we come to the end of 2019 I mentioned Steve and said I was looking for my next challenge. Steve had spoken passionately about his NSRRA racing and it sounded amazing. He suggested I would enjoy it and so this year is my very first season and what a year!

I was totally gutted after loving Knighton 20 and achieving a PB at the distance for the country to be in the grip of a worldwide pandemic that shut down racing. I was heartbroken and I must admit my mental health seemed likely to suffer again but thanks to Ken and the amazing NSRRA team and the wonderful running clubs around the area we now have virtual races and it has amazed me how much fun and how exciting they can be. I am now quite hooked and I know my running has improved dramatically. The main challenge has been finding routes that meet the criteria but that is a good thing as it is so easy to get stuck in a rut. The other big challenge is trying to race as flat out as possible with no one watching and none of the brilliant support from the marshals either.

Get to point I hear you saying, Clayton 10k. Well I must admit I wasn't really feeling this one as I nearly didn't do it do to feeling I may need to save my energies for the upcoming South Cheshire 20. I had to have a good talk with myself and worked out there is plenty of time between the 2 if planned sensibly and quite honestly I had unfinished business with the route I had in mind as I was very disappointed with my time in the last 300ft elevation 10k and so off I went .

I had planned it so that it was completed just before dark on a drizzly day so that it would be virtually deserted and social distancing would



be very easy- what we have to do now!!! It didn't end up being a PB but it was a PB for that route so I will take that. I wait in trepidation to see how many points it will bring. I am doing better than I could ever have hoped this season and that is thanks to all those I have mentioned in this piece and many more. Thank you Ken and the NSRRA for helping to keep me relatively sane and healthy during this crisis and thank you Bill and Steve for setting me on my path where I am now. I am well and truly hooked on the NSRRA in my first season and love seeing all the race commentary and everyone's posts and selfies, thanks Bryan and Mick for their brilliant work with this- what an amazing community we have !. That's enough from me, now on to the virtual South Cheshire 20.

Helen Somers

South Cheshire virtual 20

I think I'd probably like to start by thanking Ken and the committee together with Andy Vickerman for rescuing the season with what's turned out to be the most enjoyable series of virtual races. It's been an absolute credit to the local running community but we've become so spoiled over the years that I suppose I'm no longer surprised.

For anyone that knows me I reached my 60th birthday at the very end of 2016 and targeted the shorter races in early 2017 with a series of PBs, one NSRRA record and two club records and by July of that year like so many runners the wheels came off. There followed a difficult two and a half years with three enforced breaks from running during which I honed some fabulous marshalling and car parking skills not just for Trentham RC but basically anyone that would have me. I can recommend it to anyone taking an injury break from running as the next best thing and it's also rewarding to put something back into a sport that gives you so much. The latest comeback started towards the end of July last year. I spotted locally that Audley Striders had set up and were doing a couch to 10K and after 9 months of walking for England I thought it might be the right reintroduction. I never thought for one moment that Matt and Calvin would be cruel enough to send their novices up Peggy's Bank but they're obviously a hardy bunch

Lovely club I've recommended a few locals. On the subject of new clubs 4 of us were over at Silverdale last Tuesday for the Clayton 10K virtual and I was well cheered to see the re-emergence of Silverdale RC and wish them every success.

Just one more thing to say it's never too late for anyone to resume running. I effectively retired from running for the school aged 14 and the next competitive race was the Tamworth 10K aged 54.... and the biggest surprise to me was that I'd lost none of my teenage enthusiasm for competition.

I live on the South Cheshire 20 course and up until last year used to marshal and help out with the car parks. The problem with the race is that it's so long that it needs marshals and water stops. I had a few options for the course from the door the first being ruled out because it would have meant doing the climb over Knowle Bank (the high point of the SC20) at least two and possibly three times. The **second option** involved running down the Audley Road which when I did the recce was overgrown with vegetation , ok for a training run but not great for racing over three laps. Going back to the drawing board the third option involved a 4.75 loop with an add on at the start and the finish. Approximately half of this loop is on the actual SC20 course although in the reverse direction. I decided to do the course in reverse because the Newcastle Road Betley section involves a narrow pavement and I felt we needed to be able to see the traffic ahead in case we needed to find our way around other pavement users. On Saturday morning I took myself off to this particular section with a pair of shears something that Stan also had the pleasure of doing down the canal in Cheddleton a few weeks back.

Originally I had threats of being joined by my fellow club runners Jill Phillips and possibly Dan Jordan together with a young, fast runner from Stone MM by the name of Martin Cross a fellow follower of the mighty Potters One by one they made their excuses and cruelly left me with this year's absolutely on fire club runner Jo Stanfield. Having run with Jo on the first lap at Knighton this year my abiding memory at the end of the first lap was begging her to clear off and leave me to plod on with what was left of my stamina. As a 5K to 10K runner it's been fantastic running with her at the shorter distances and she certainly

helped me to a respectable 1:33 at the Leek virtual half but 20 miles is well outside of my comfort zone. Having got back to fitness by February of this year the plan in my head was to do the full 20 races. This of course meant taking on the Knighton 20 a race I would normally only go anywhere near to do the relay or to marshal. Fortunately one of my fellow Fenton Manor Runners (previously Bournes), Martin Gibson of Biddulph Running Club was training for the Manchester marathon so I tagged along with him on his Monday Morning sessions throughout January and February culminating in reaching the section in Stone where the Westbridge 5 meets the canal and back again to Fenton Manor. I remember one particular morning where the deluge was so bad it's got to be one of the most miserable runs I've ever done. I remember talking to Kevin Uzzell at one of the NTC track sessions at Northwood a few months later and he'd had the misfortune of doing the canal long run on the same day.

The day chosen for the SC20 had to be a Sunday, early morning start because there were two crossings of the Audley Road and the traffic would be sparse although hurtling up and down the road. I'm very fortunate that my son and my daughter both agreed to do a water stop so one was positioned in Barthomley and the other in Betley so Jo and I were never further than a couple of miles from water or gels. I've also trained them well to take the tops off the water and to rip the tops of the gels. The bonus was that John Guest came over to support and help with the distribution of refreshments. The added bonus was the surprise of Malcolm Rushton turning up on his motorbike taking a few photos towards the end of the race. A further added bonus was that Sarah Taylor and Kerry Widdowson arranged to come over to run the last few laps.

The day started off with a shock as Jo arrived a full 8 minutes early. After a few instructions with my daughter and John at the near marshalling point it was time to do the warm up run of just under a mile to the starting point. Jo left me stretching at the start while she proceeded to do her strides. Another recommendation from her coach John Danahay although whatever else he's instructing her on it's paying off in buckets and spades this year after a fairly fantastic season she had last year.

We set off around 8:20 past the marshalling point and onto the first loop of four clocking up 6:54 for the first mile which was way too fast. The problem being that with all the virtual races coming thick and fast and being of the shorter, faster variety it's become hard to run at a slower pace. I'd set my watch to run in kilometres so we had very regular time checks between us and it became evident very early on that it was going to be a very fast time for her and following on for me if I could hold on to the pace. In my head I'd decided to run with her if possible for the first two loops which would take me over the halfway mark and hopefully give me my target time of 2:35. The kilometres rolled by on the first loop at between 4:25 and 4:40 depending purely on the incline or decline of the sections. We met my son at approximately 3 and a bit miles and passed on the gel and water deciding to leave it for a couple of miles back to my daughter at which point we both took a bottle of water quickly sipping and discarding. The two junctions of the Audley Road navigated without any issues. The second loop followed the same pattern as the first this time taking a gel from my son on the way around and water from my daughter and again no problems with the junctions. The kilometres passed by between 4:25 and 4:48.

For the third loop I'd decided to run with Jo as far as my son and then to send her off on her merry way leaving me to hang on to what was increasingly looking like around 2:30. The first three kilometres of the third lap were consistent between 4:34 and 4:39 but the following one on a flat and downhill section was a 4:17 as we came to 100 yards of the water section I told Jo that she was on for sub 2:25 and told her to kick on in the knowledge that she'd be getting some encouragement from Kerry and Sarah within the next 5 minutes or so. I settled in behind her to attempt 4:40 pace per kilometre and surprisingly managed 4:29 to 4:34 pace for the next three which took me to the start of the fourth lap, 4 miles to go. 2 kilometres before this point we reached Kerry and Sarah who had kindly stationed themselves on the junction to see us safely across. I asked Sarah to go ahead and run with Jo and Kerry stayed with me to give me some encouragement for the final lap.

The fourth lap was everything I expected it to be. It's been difficult to train for a 20 mile race with a sprint race dropping every week since I

can't remember when. I remember pushing the Clayton 10K back as far as I could and then pushing next week's race to Thursday now thankfully extended as far as Saturday. The last 8 kilometres ranged between 4:46 and 5:20 there was never going to be any effort at the finish because of the race next week. Kerry, bless her, stayed with me and talked me in, checking on the road junction ahead of me and handing me a gel with 2K to go when I was about to fade. Lovely round of applause from the gang as I went through the last marshal point to grind out the last half a kilometre for a time of 2:30:53.8 which took 10 minutes off my Knighton time and 5 minutes better than the time I'd targeted. Better news was to follow as I heard Jo shout to Kerry that she'd done a well earned 2:23 yet another PB.



After a good stretch and a slow walk back to base it was time for several mugs of tea and some fabulous home made cake, a Victoria Sandwich with apple and blackcurrant jam made by my daughter that hit all the right spots..... together with some excellent and socially distanced company. I forgot to add that unlike my previous two 20 mile races the conditions were near perfect for a change.

Whilst we all hope to get back to normality in the none too distant future the virtual races have been an absolute Godsend and we've all had some fun trying to work out suitable courses. If there's anyone out there thinking about them just get signed up

Alan Brookes

South Cheshire 10K

Hello. I'm James from South Cheshire Harriers. My first year in NSRRA was in 2009 facing a young enthusiastic Carl Moulton in Group B. Whereas Carl has gone on from strength to strength and is the 'I don't know many times Champion', I'm now back in B....and hanging on for dear life! I've always had the same plan for the NSRRA – turn up, do plenty of races, don't think too hard and then see if there is anything to play for later on.

For the last ten years I've maybe made 40 overseas business trips per year, so my training and racing tends to be a bit ad hoc, but this year has been very different.....I had a mystery virus for Knighton 20 that completely knocked me for six and took some time to fully recover from. I've been working from the garage since February and attempting to converse with the peoples of 50 countries through a plastic screen, running has been a great release.

So....I've done a lot of miles, but not very much very quick in prep for the 2020 virtual racing season. Virtual racing....whoever coined that term should be apologising. Running a great time trial is a very tough and worthy discipline that is not a race and is not at all virtual. At the same time, I've twisted the arms of a few club mates to set off at the same time – even if they finish many minutes before and occasionally after.

Having been asked by Ken and agreed to write the run report for the South Cheshire 10k in the week leading up to it, I twisted my ankle good and proper, running off-road. I was a mess.

My inability to decide if I was actually completing this or not meant one thing. I would be running solo. No Pete, Paul, Pat, Putty or Clive this time. And I really need someone to challenge/scare/support me. My 2012 PB for 10k was 36:09 from the South Cheshire 10k on the old course watched by my mum (no matter how old we are we want to run fast for our mum). This time it was going to be very different. But I had to start even though it was probably daft to try. On the plus side, our 10k course is so grim it really is improved as a virtual experience. We've all thought it, but some of the ladies of Potters Trotters reminded both our club chairman and the race director at virtual

Cheadle 4 in the Wammy car park this year. And they were quite right!

I think the cricket commenters would describe race day as 'bright and breezy,' as I set off. I felt terrible. But I started to think. I asked myself 'how did I want to feel?' Cheerful?...grateful?... fast ideally, but I could make a choice to enjoy it. I was then reminded of Stan saying to me before a race once (as I'd left the cubicle and warmed the seat for him) 'James...we're lucky to do this'. And he was right. We were lucky to do real races when we had real races and we are still very lucky to have these time trials to connect and inspire us. Usually we've managed to get a few of us together for these events, both to motivate us and make an occasion. Its worked.

Over the years one thing I've enjoyed is getting to know the enemy. I've had some of the nicest enemies over the years. Some of the battles I've had with Mick Haire over the years (a class runner disadvantaged (?) by ten years extra age than me) have had us both laughing. But the rest of you know who you are and I hope you've had as much fun as me as we've pushed each other on. I probably wasn't expecting my Under 15 cricket captain from my North West Leicestershire childhood home to rock up in my NSRRA group this year though (Dave Morrell) and running very strong. Too strong for the 2020 version James Simpson.

Anyway back to the race. A 6k loop with a Strava segment, where for some early weeks of Lockdown I owned my one Strava crown. I couldn't find a 5k one and I compromise easy.

We'd had the tail end of a hurricane in the week and there were branches down on the pavement. I ran past my work office and gave it a notional glance. Despite being one mile away, I'd not been in since February. I navigated my way round those branches and the cars safely enough, but readjusted my course so that lap 2 was a 'there and back'

I was heading for well over 40 minutes, when I gave myself a talking to. I'd tried to influence my club to create a combined 10k and 20 mile 'fractured marathon challenge; with the two club races being just one week apart and totalling a marathon distance, but I hadn't been able to convince the club. Regardless, mentally I wanted to do sub 3 for the

two events combined. No reason. I just did. With a bit of renewed gumption, I managed to duck under the 40 minutes. Four minutes behind that 2012 PB. Not even a cardboard cut out of Bryan Dale to cheer me on on this one. I hobbled a mile and a half home and I was back under the bed covers by 11am.

In the end, its all the about the people. Happiness is spending time with like minded idiots. This wasn't the best experience for me, but it made me grateful for what I've had and what I will have again.

'Foot'note: One week later I did complete my fractured challenge in under three hours, probably with a fractured foot. As my wife said.... 'That's nice. Will you be mowing the lawn this afternoon?'

Keep smiling folks!

James Simpson



TRENTHAM VIRTUAL 10K

Would you like to write a race report on the Trentham 10k says the head man? (That's Ken of course not God) Well yes of course says I. How can one say no when the call comes from on high? Then I started to think! How can I write a report about a race that isn't a race really, but virtual as the name says? No descriptions of me catching and passing other runners or watching others disappear in a cloud of dust as is normally the case in such reports. What do I write? I then thought some more and having done that found the request more and more attractive.

You see up to about 6 months ago I did not know whether I would even walk normally again let alone run. It all started some three years or so ago. At the age of 76 and a half I did the London Marathon, probably for the last time I thought, in around 4h 30min and like any running idiot followed that up with the Utttoxeter Half a week later in a tad over 2hours. Feeling pretty pleased with myself therefore and obviously very fit for my age. On we go therefore, three or four short races in May and June, Potters Arf and getting my speed back gradually. Then bang!!

Congleton Park Run, nice Saturday morning sharpener to see how speed is returning. Into the second lap and sudden pain, not in my hip but rather at the front of my thigh. Managed to complete but not going away. Thought it was some quad problem. Saw one physio who diagnosed a problem in my back, did some manipulation during a couple of visits, charged me £70 and said it would go away. It didn't! Then went to a physio in Leek who correctly diagnosed an arthritic hip on my second session and didn't even charge me for that visit. Anyway, x-rays confirmed wear and tear arthritis so was stuck with it for 2 years. Couldn't run of course but determined to keep as much muscle strength as possible so whilst Stan Winterton and my friends did their long Saturday runs and Tuesday track sessions I gritted my teeth against the pain and did long walks on Saturday and walked as fast as I could round the track at Cheddleton on Tuesday. The reward of course was eating Elizabeth's delicious cake afterwards and getting encouragement, support and banter from this lovely group of people. Helping out at races also helped to keep me in touch. Over the period weight "ballooned" to well over 11 stone (not much I hear you say) but I was under 10 when running.

Anyway I went back to the doc in October last year, more x-rays and then a referral to consultant in November. Operation in early February and a real stroke of luck. Had my date been two or three weeks later I would have not got the job done because of this horrible Covid 19. Saw consultant 6 weeks after op and he said everything was fine, just use it normally (didn't say I should run on it mind you) I was

soon into long walks and in early May decided to try some tentative jogging. Now here I am doing virtual races at around 10min/mile pace and getting quicker, with my weight back down below 10 stones.

As my 80th birthday approaches in a couple of months, therefore I have launched myself into a second running career after a break of 3 years. As far as I know I will be only the fourth member of NSRRA to compete regularly as an over 80 and the first to restart a career at such a venerable age. Pride of place must of course go to the peerless Reg Ferneyhough now in his 97th year. Remarkable to think that Reg was competing as an over 50 vet (and there weren't many around in those days) before any current members of NSRRA under 46 years of age were even born. Any of you "youngsters" who never saw Reg run have only to look at his records, some of which have stood for 40 years or more, on the NSRRA site, to realize what a class performer he was, a true living legend. His contemporary, the late Ray Bagguley, though not in Reg's class was a more than useful runner and also a bit of a poet amongst his other accomplishments. Thirdly, and more recently, is of course Charli Weller's dad, Trevor Goodwin, who has set several over 80 records, is still running a bit I think, but no longer competing in NSRRRA. Anyway, the three named above, show how, given a slice of luck and the will to do it, running with all its benefits can be continued to a great age, examples I hope to follow despite my three year absence.

Well, having not bored everyone too much I hope, I'd better turn to the task Ken set for me. We seem to have formed a satellite of Trentham Running Club based at Stan Winterton's Home in Cheddleton. The two advantages of this are that a group of runners do these virtual races with staggered start and secondly we are kindly invited back to Stan's for tea, cake and banter afterwards. For the second time we used the Werrington 10k loop with additions at the start and finish to make up the 10k distance, having previously used it to run the St Thomas virtual 10k. A group of nine assembled at the start.

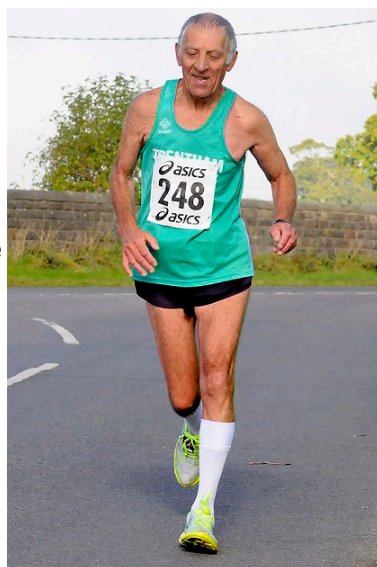
Being the slowest, I set off with Pat Bentley, a strug from Moorlands we have allowed to join us. Incidentally Pat has only been running for a few years having started off as an overweight jogger. She has now become a more than useful over 70 lady competitor and deserves much credit, showing what can be achieved even with a late over 60 start. Well done Pat. Anyway having chatted me up for a minute or two she gradually becomes a smaller and smaller figure despite the fact that I play the dastardly trick of trying to persuade her to go the wrong way at the first fork. Shortly afterwards Sarah Taylor, running really well these days, shoots past me obviously having failed to understand the meaning of

“staggered start with the slowest going first.” Then Malcolm Rushton, having accomplished his usual “greyhound” start passes me muttering something about me catching him on the hills, followed by Stan, slower these days but still as committed as ever. These two are soon followed by Gillian (The Mug) Tinsley showing commitment despite an injury. I continue the long drag up Armshead Rd soon to be passed by man on a mission Alan Brookes looking very committed and not really acknowledging this old man staggering up the hill. Not far behind comes our very own Wonder Woman, Joanne reveling in her new age category and leaving runners one, or even two, age groups below her floundering in her wake, great stuff Joanne. This leaves club Chairman Dan Jordan, a recent recruit to the satellite group and finally Doug “Pan” Alcock floating along in his usual effortless way. Well that’s it I think. One of the things about these “races” and the stagger is that I am in the unique position of being in front, seeing all other runners in the group, and finishing last. What fun, can’t wait for a real race. So I mosey on not expecting to see anyone till the finish. But then!! “Is this a runner I see before me,” I think, in a parody of Macbeth. It’s Malcolm and I’m gaining owing to the fact that he’s practicing his race walking technique. So I gradually catch him and he has to abandon his walking practice as I pressurise him more or less the rest of the way and he helps me by keeping a tantalisingly small distance ahead. In the final mile or so I am joined by pocket rocket Jill Philips, probably completing a 75 mile training run or something who kindly stays with me and shepherds me home, thanks Jill.

One final sting in the tail!! As I “sprint” towards the finish I hear the screaming sisterhood yelling that I have to go past the previous finish and ascend part of the horrible hill beyond because of some problem with the fancy equipment they use. As I finally stagger over the line my first thought is to buy a trundle wheel and settle things once and for all. The bonus for me is that I have taken almost 4 minutes off the time I did on the course a few weeks before when we used it for St Thomas 10k. Onward and upward. The perfect end to a great morning is to come as we make our way to Brund Bank for tea, cake and chat.

Bionic AI

Aka Alan lewis



Leek half

When Ken asked me to write a race report for the "virtual" Leek half marathon I was a little hesitant, however I soon agreed to do it as 2020 like no other year has become a year of virtual races, which for me has become something of a focus and a distraction and hopefully for many other runners too, so I would just like to say a big thanks to Ken, Sue, Andy, Mick, Bryan and the committee members for giving us this opportunity of "virtual" racing.

Unlike a normal race prior to Covid19, we would enter the race, pay and train for the event. One of the many challenges for virtual races is the organising of your own route, location, elevation, a start and finish point, a trustworthy watch to record your time, distance and elevation as evidence to submit to A.V timings. Then to virtually challenge yourself to race in a completely non race environment, with no road closures and no support en route.

Fortunately for me I'd had some experience of virtual challenges/races during lockdown so when a few team mates decided to also race Leek half, we soon came up with a route plan with the required elevation, safe parking, and a start and finishing point. We also had the privilege of a water station arranged by team mate Alan Brookes who's son and girlfriend very kindly manned at miles 5 and 10.

This race would be my first in a new age category as V50, so on a familiar course of the Werrington 10k route of two and a half loops round, and a slightly different start point a little lower down from Moorside High school as to avoid crossing the busy junction at Withystakes we were ready to go. We all arrived at the car park separately for our warm up to the starting point which was a staggered start including team mates, Stan Winterton, Malcolm Rushton, Dan Jordan and Alan Brookes.

Surprisingly, I had all the usual pre race nerves even though it was a virtual race, and with only two other team mates present at our virtual start point, we did a count down and we were off. The first mile felt a little too quick with team mate Alan Brookes, who gradually pulled away from me but stayed within sight as we headed out towards Rownal, before we ran down to the ponds then up the two hills making a left turn back towards Wetley Moor Common, by which point my legs were feeling heavy and we still had over one and a half loops to go. Team mate Dan Jordan called a few words of encouragement at this point and it was also nice to see the familiar sight of fellow team

mates Stan Winterton and Malcolm Rushton.

A welcome drink was also in sight at the top of the long drag near the trigg point, when the sun made an appearance just in time for the start of the second loop. With 13 mph winds and the second loop imminent I managed to find another gear and keep the pace going, when my watch informed me i had achieved a 41 minute 10k. We then turned out of the wind heading back towards the end of the second loop, after another welcome drink and knowing that the final 3 miles was insight, it spurred me on to catch my team mate and head towards the finish.

The course itself is mainly undulating giving a total elevation of 801ft so I was very pleased to achieve an unofficial PB of 1:30:47.

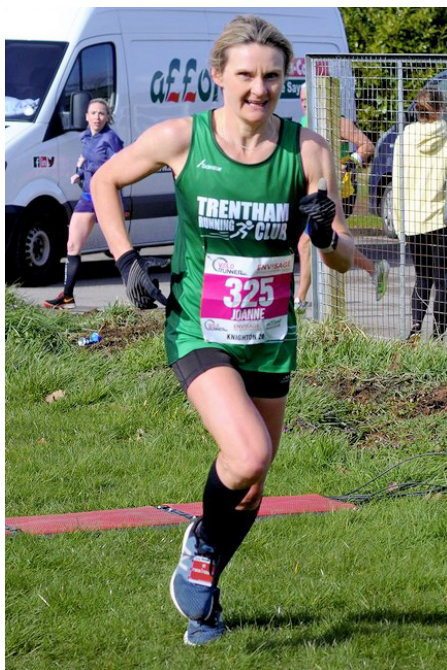
Even more importantly for me was to see my fellow team mates at the end of this tough virtual race whom I'd encouraged to race and to see the look of satisfaction on their faces.

A great morning and a well deserved pat on the back to you all especially Dan Jordan and Alan Brookes who have both fought back from long term injuries, and battled through lock down to get back on track.

Although virtual races can seem a little meaningless for some, I would encourage you all to have a go if you haven't already done so, to help support our clubs and hopefully we will all be ready to get back into the races whenever that day will be.

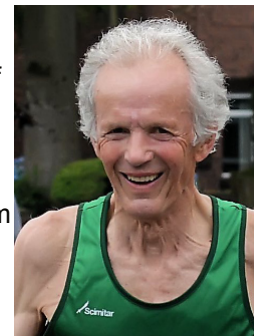
I would also like to say a very big well done to each and everyone of TRC members and all club members, organisers, committee members and anyone who are battling though these unprecedented times, and I hope to see you all again soon.

Joanne Stanfield



Dear Runners and friends,

I hope that you are well and enjoying the current crop of virtual races, that have been coming along so thick and fast lately. I have to admit that I was quite sceptical of the idea when they were first proposed, but when my running pals said they would like to try them and not being one who likes to miss out, I realised that I had better join in. I'm so very pleased now that I decided to take part, as I have found them to be most enjoyable, with the exception perhaps of the virtual Leek ½ marathon, as I was under prepared and should have known better. The tough hills and the distance combined to make it quite an arduous run in the latter stages and that is putting it mildly. My thanks though to Alan Brookes for organising the run.



A few of us old timers, have been most fortunate to have younger running friends with the modern and up-to-date gizmo watches and who actually know how to use them! This has meant that while we have been able to suggest possible courses for our virtual races, they have gone along beforehand to measure them out, although measurements quite often disagree to a small extent. Thank you ladies and in particular, the ever-willing but occasionally confused, Gillian Tinsley.

Our regular Cheddleton races seem to have become quite popular now with increasing numbers, but by having staggered starts, with the older and slower one's going off first, we are able to keep nicely apart. The good thing is that there is always someone to chase, or else someone a bit faster is chasing you. This I feel can only be beneficial, in spurring us on to a little bit more effort.

I would be very happy to think, that it's the great abundance of my natural charm and charisma, that is making our runs increasingly popular now, but of course I know differently. The real reason is the relaxing enjoyment of Liz's tea and lovely home-made cakes, all served in the garden afterwards, together with all the usual post-race banter and chat.

If you haven't as yet had the opportunity to test out any of the NSRRA virtual races, I would highly recommend that you give one a try, as they seem to be quite stimulating. Whilst, of course, they can only be taken as a guide, with so many varying routes, I believe they are a great way of gaining and maintaining race fitness. The group tables are becoming very interesting now, as they are rapidly taking shape, but with many twists and turns to come before we reach the season's end.

Cheddleton Cancer Research Committee are making arrangements, in the hope that the Christmas Pudding 10K can go ahead on the 28th of November. We will keep a close eye on developments and a final decision will be made at a later date. I am now very much looking forward to the time, when we can once again meet up in person at a race somewhere. It's been too long!

Good running and regards, Stan.



Thanks to Bryan Dale and Mick Hall for supplying the photos.

Thanks To Sue and Ken and my wife Julie for proof reading

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