

NSRRA

November 2020

MERRY

CHRISTMAS

& HAPPY NEW YEAR

Virtual Edition 4



"To lose patience is to lose the battle." — **Mahatma Gandhi**

Dear Runners

Some great articles which convey your enthusiasm to keep NSRRA functioning in a virtual way, well done. With regards to taking part virtual runs, please take note of the current guidance from the government.



Along with Stan I'd like to thank the NHS nurses and Doctors for their care and dedication with the nations health. Having recently spent 4 days in the cardio ward at Royal Stoke, I experienced just how hard they work.

Hope to see you at an actual event soon, keep well, keep safe and enjoy a socially distanced Christmas and New Year.

Keep well, Keep safe, see you next year.

Your Editor Graham

Chairman's Report

I think it is safe to say this is the strangest season in NSRRA history. It all started so well with great weather and good entry numbers at Alsager and Knighton and then lockdown arrived.

We made a decision in May to go to Virtual Events with the hope that would be a short term option but as we know we have been unable to have any "real" events this year. Can I say a huge thank you to each and every one of you who have entered any of the Virtual events and saved the 2020 NSRRA season. Can I also thank Andy Vickerman, Paul Clinton, Craig Carpenter, Mick Hall, Graham Fletcher and Bryan Dale for all their help.



Sadly we are going to have to start the 2021 season as Virtual Events and then at some point when we get the green light we can start the

"real" races.

As a thank you to all who supported, NSRRA membership for 2021 will be £5.

The link to renew online is available on NSRRA website. Great value I hope you will agree.

We will be having a normal presentation as soon as we are able to; we need something to look forward to.

In January you will receive your 2021 pack with your fixture list and group letter.

Have a Wonderful Christmas and Say Goodbye to this awful 2020 and hopefully see you at a race soon.



Ken

Staffs Knot 5

Like most other races throughout the country, the 2020 Staffs Knot – hosted by Stafford Harriers -was a virtual race over a 5 mile distance run during a 5 day window from 15-19 September. There were no specific elevation requirements but the organisers did request that participants avoid a predominantly downhill route.

When all the results had been received by JC Race Solutions, a total of 89 runners had taken part (there were 437 finishers in the 2019 event on Cannock Chase).

The fastest time returned came from City of Stoke runner Ross Connor. His 25:46 was almost a minute quicker than Craig Taylor (Newcastle AC) who clocked 26:35 with another Newcastle runner – Ben Bewley – coming home in 28:13.

Joanne Stanfield (Trentham) was the leading lady in 31:45 (9th overall), ahead of Michelle Buckle (Silverdale RC) in 32:23 and Amanda Kelly (Stoke F.I.T) in 33:39.

NSRRA results

Ross Connor enhanced his position at the top of Group A with Craig Taylor putting pressure on Daniel Soltys for second place with the latter not returning a time for the event. Ben Bewley is

not to be discounted from the podium as he lies close behind in 4th.

Group B leader Peter Mallison (South Cheshire Harriers) had an excellent run to finish 4th overall with his nearest rival (David Morrell) another missing name.

The top 3 in Group C (Alan Brookes, James Phoenix & Pat Hudson) all secured points in order of standing but Group D saw John Guest record his first group win ahead of Adam Lightfoot and Mark Harrison.

Group E saw Rob Irving, Alan Burt and Clive Heathcock all reduce the gap on leader Lee Davies although it looks like the battle will be down to Davies v Irving. There were no shocks in Group F as Chris Lake finished ahead of Craig Buggins and Dennis Robinson respectively and it was a similar story in Group G with James Tutton taking maximum points ahead of Simon Clarke. David Hebb taking third spot in the group.

Ladies Groups

Group L saw Joanne Stanfield pick up her first maximum haul in the absence of a result from Kelly Butler with Michelle Buckle and Amanda Kelly completing the top three finishers.

The leader of Group M, Carol Higgs, picked up maximum points ahead of Nicki Towle and Sam Hodgkinson and there was no change at the top of Group W as Donna Harris claimed the 50 points, although Michelle Harrop in 3rd pipped second placed Ellen Evans.

Finally, Group X saw Sarah Latham finish ahead of Natalie Bailey and Pat Bentley.

Chris Elsley



Virtual Ipstones 5-ish Tues Sept 29th 2020

Let's say this year has been a little different! Yes, so many negatives, but unexpected positives too. One positive has been taking part in the virtual races - although not overly enthusiastic initially, I've found them challenging, motivating and especially satisfying in knowing that proceeds are going to various charities deprived of funds during the pandemic and also helping to keep the host running clubs ticking over.

Away from the usual tough course at Ipstones, (how we miss that 1m+ uphill start), a group of intrepid virtual racers found themselves in Silverdale, on a cool and sunny Tuesday morning.

Our quartet, (Joanne 'Quick' Stanfield; Alan 'Statto' Brookes, Dan 'Lush' Jordan & yours truly), have completed several of the virtual races together. The camaraderie and banter has provided us with additional motivation, helping us to get as close to the feeling of a 'real' race as we can in these challenging times.

Our designated virtual 'Ipstones 5-ish' course, expertly marked out by our eager statistician Alan, started on the track sited on the former Stoke-Market Drayton railway line, known locally now as the Silverdale track. Alan gave detailed instructions about the course: start & expected finish, straights, bends, pinch points and landmarks... no chance we'd be derailed from this track! Thanks Al.

Incredible to think that passengers first travelled on trains along the Stoke-Market Drayton branch line over 160 years ago. The nearby Newcastle Railway Station, opened in 1852, was originally located opposite the Borough Arms Hotel on King Street. It closed in 1964, a casualty of the 'Beeching Axe' efficiency cuts.

Just after 9am, allowing time for any school run traffic to disperse, and after an informal '3-2-1' countdown, we set off along the track like a socially-distanced, Cuban-inspired conga line dance. Various two and four-legged walkers looked slightly surprised as we waved them 'bon voyage', snaking around them like a Fiat Ferroviaria tilting Pendolino. Our course on the Silverdale track would join the route of the Wammy Parkrun for a short while, until heading off up the steps onto Church Lane, looking for elevation in the form of 'Black Bank'.

For the first mile we were all within a few seconds of each other. I was the 'Brake Van' at the rear of this particular train, although at a first mile pace of 5:54, I was definitely not applying the brakes! Joanne was

'chugging' away in front of me, with Alan next, 'shunting' forwards keeping engine driver Dan on his toes. The four of us - 'poetry in locomotion', pistons roaring, full steam ahead towards the bridge.

Okay, that's definitely the last of the railway references. I discarded many more - you'll be pleased to hear!

We hit the steps after heading off the track, only a couple of short flights followed by a sharp left turn onto Church Lane... and breathe! After the rapid start, those steps upset my rhythm, it took a few seconds to regain my breathing and get back on the pace.

A left into Acacia Avenue and a slight incline provided a gentle introduction for the higher elevation ahead. I noticed becoming even more socially distanced from Joanne, she from Alan and likewise to Dan. As I looked up Blackbank Road, we were evenly spread, around 50 metres between each, but my imaginary stretchy rope was ready to snap.

Having become detached from the others as I trundled up the hill, I tried to motivate myself with a mantra: 'quick up the hill... quick up the hill... quick up the...
...Arse-nal, Aston-Villa, Brigh-ton, Burn-ley, Chel-sea'. I didn't want to think about the 'Damn Hill' (thank you Mrs Tinsley) anymore, so I sang the names of Premier League football teams in alphabetical order to distract myself.

Dan and Alan had disappeared from view, as the road wound upwards approaching Alsagers Bank. My pace had dipped relative to the others on the climb and I just happened to look up at the right moment to see the diminutive figure of Joanne, ponytail sticking out behind, like the 'tuft' (thank you Mr Lewis) of leaves on a pineapple, as she turned left into Scot Hay Road and start her descent. That would be my last sighting of a Trentham green vest until the finish.

A slight incline as the hamlet of Scot Hay invited me around its sharp left-hand bend into Crackley Lane, meant the race end was beckoning and mostly downhill to our respective 5m finishing points.

A relieved push up that final rise felt good, safe in the knowledge that gravity would bring some much-needed speed down to the finish. Although, exactly where that would be was unknown due to the vagaries of our respective GPS-enabled watches.

You often hear people say at the end of an event that the course was long or short. Or, '...that was a PB because the course was long' - no doubt, I have been guilty of that misconception too. However, the course IS the course and invariably accurately measured, suggesting inconsistencies of our device GPS reception boding the recorded distance.

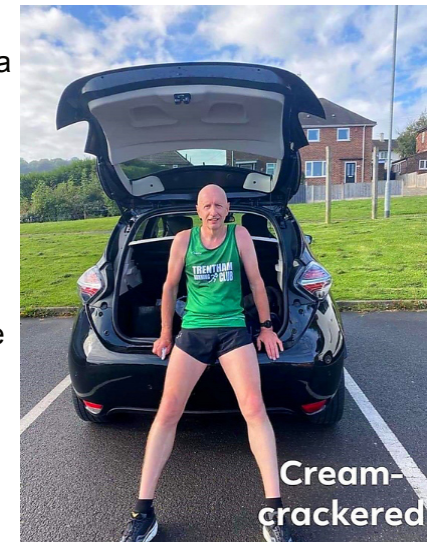
So, although this race was not the official 'Ipstones 5-ish', it would prove to be 5 miles-ish for all of us, with varying degrees of ...ish.

Pounding down Scot Hay Road towards Silverdale Football Club, I looked down to my potentially accurate Garmin showing I'd nearly hit 4.97 miles. As I looked up, I nearly hit... a car coming out of the industrial estate junction. Fortunately, the driver was alert and kindly waved me across; otherwise this report would've had a very different ending!

Final encouragement from my three faster-finishing club-mates, followed by a very welcome and reassuring buzz on my wrist indicated the 5 miles- ish was up. An image of a lovely breakfast filled my thoughts and there was peace, calm and now light at the end of the ...oops!!

Thank you to my fellow Trentham club mates for their support and encouragement, including the rest of the Cheddleton running crew, who we usually join forces with on Tuesday and Saturday mornings for more socially-distanced, fun, banter, tea, cake and mutual motivation.

John Guest - Trentham RC.



WERRINGTON VIRTUAL 10K 6th November 2020

It seems very strange to be writing a race report when I stood on the starting line alone!

To add a little competition our son David, in London, had set up a family group on Strava. It is called Farman Close Athletics Society; this is where David and Andrew were brought up.

David was to do six laps of Dulwich Park in London where he ran the Parkrun every week. I had a 10k loop worked out (with the help of Mick) round the lanes between Astbury and Congleton.

At 10 o'clock on a beautiful Sunday morning, Mick contacted David on the phone and started us off together. Mick walked back home home to do his 10k after we had started.

The start was at Astbury Mere on a glorious sunny morning, perfect for running. The first mile was mostly flat and slightly up hill, half way round the Mere and out onto the A34. I knew most of the first half was up hill. Running up past Astbury Church was at times almost a bed of acorns.

I then turned right up Dodd's Lane to the canal, and as I ran over the bridge I saw fishermen and canoeists. Passing Congleton Garden Centre. I knew my uphill was almost finished and I was making good time.

Now came the good bit - a great run downhill into Congleton at the Town Hall and through the pedestrianised centre, the fastest of my miles. There now only remained a run into Astbury Mere, on the A34, and a lap of the Mere to finish. Because of all the walkers on such a great morning, my last mile was a bit of an obstacle course.

After I finished I rang David and confirmed my suspicions - I was 53 seconds ahead. All that remained was to drive home and wait for Mick to arrive. He had had a great walk too.... who wouldn't on such a gorgeous day?

Thanks to all the clubs for putting on these virtual races. Roll on the next ones.

The Statham results were:-

Elaine 57.05 ; David 58.58 : Mick 1hr 56 mins.

Elaine Statham



Race Report: Flying Fox 10

Before this year, I'd done the Flying Fox 10 twice before, and absolutely loved it both times.

The first time was in 2014, two weeks after my disastrous first half marathon in Birmingham, when the wheels came off after 11 miles and I limped across the line. It wasn't just my performance that I didn't like, it was also my first time taking part in an event as large as that, with thousands of runners, and I hated it; far too impersonal. By contrast, Flying Fox was a delight, the organisation was fabulous, and everyone was so friendly. I'd had a flare-up of arthritis in my knee just four days beforehand, so I was pleased to finish it in 1:49:49, coming 205th out of 212 runners (as opposed to 12,928th at Birmingham!).

I came back to Standon the following year; 2015 was my third year of competing, and I was at that sweet spot where you get PB's at every distance, just because you've put the miles in and improved. In my second attempt, I finished Flying Fox in 1:36:53, a course best by 12:56 and finishing 189th out of 234 runners.

A number of things conspired to keep me away for the following few years, injury and illness, then building my running back up again from scratch; but in the five years since my second attempt at Flying Fox, I've improved my PB's at every distance except 10 miles – my time from FF 2015 still stood. Even on the comparatively flat Burton 10 in 2019, where I saw my PB attempt fall away with just 800 metres to go.

So, 2020 was going to be THE year; back at Standon to finally beat my old record. I wasn't going to let the race going virtual stand in my way!

The official course has changed since I last ran it. It used to go along Cranberry Marsh, now it goes along Butthouse Lane. It had also been five years since I ran around there, and without Marshalls to guide me, I decided to recce the route a couple of weeks beforehand. I'm glad I did, because it wasn't at all familiar to me. However, it also didn't seem as hilly as it had five years ago, so all that training around Wash Dale Lane and Old Road was paying off.

November dawned to see the storms of the previous day had cleared to leave perfect running weather. I'd arranged to meet fellow Group G runner David Hebb outside the school in Standon just before 8am (we like to do our racing early!). I arrived at 7:45, and shortly after Mark Churton of SMM arrived, ahead of a few more club members. It turns

out that the bats had the same idea to run the actual course at 8am.

David & I set off at 8, now feeling a bit like an unfit hare at a greyhound track, waiting for the bats to swoop past me (apologies for the mixed metaphor!). I knew that to stand any chance of a PB I'd got to get an average pace below 6 mins/km (including up the hills), so I attacked the early descents on the course and then dug in for the slog up Butthouse Lane. Sure enough, it was along this slow climb that first two bats went past, then another three, but actually it was great to have other runners there, all encouraging me and each other and all striving to do their best. Running the course at a hard effort rather than as an easy plod reminded me that yes, those climbs are tough, but the views across to Shropshire from the top in Chapel Chorlton are rewarding!

Three more encouraging bats went past me as I headed up the final climb back towards Weston, and then as I went back down towards the finish there were the second group of bats heading out to start their race. All happy and smiling, and full of encouragement.

As I approached the final stretch back up towards the school, a few bats who'd already finished ran back in with me, which was nice. "How far to go on your watch?" one asked. I had a look. "400 metres," I replied, "and unless I fall over I've got a PB."

I'd set my Garmin to beep at me when I'd done 10 miles, and sure enough, I was across the virtual line in 1:33:04, finally beating my 2015 10 mile PB, by 3 minutes 49 seconds.

Mark kindly took my finish line photo.

Apart from (usually) being the last race in the North Staffs League each year, Flying Fox also coincides with the weekend when my Dad passed away, some 18 years ago now. Since I didn't start my running career until 10 years after he passed, I never got to bore him with tales of my exploits, but he was a keen cyclist in his youth and he was always proud of anything I achieved. So this one's for you Dad, always.

Simon



Stone St Michaels

When the NSRRA season started in February at Alsager 5, I'm not sure anyone could have imagined what just a matter of weeks later would happen. In what has been such an awful year the competition and enjoyment of the virtual races as part of what has been a pretty full on NSRRA programme has been something of a light in these uncertain times. As it is, that brings me to the penultimate race of the season, the Stone St Michaels 10k.

I've done this race many times since I started running seriously 10 years ago now. Most of the time it has usually been in one of the very few blistering hot summer days we have. This year the race had an added incentive; it was going to be a cCounty championship race with Staffordshire competing against a very strong North Wales team.

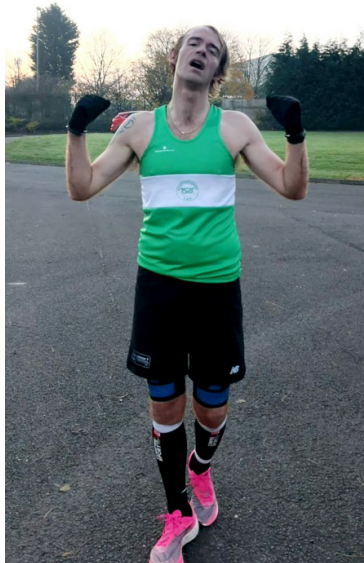
Being picked for the County has always been a bit of a dream for me and I've always had huge respect for those picked for the team. I had the pleasure of managing the team a few years back and to be asked by a superb runner and proper gentleman in Paul Swan was an absolute honour and privilege. I've been in the shape of my ideas during this year and lockdown and changes to my working life has benefitted my running massively.

I'd ran a fairly quick Flying Fox 10 the week before in dreadful weather and recovered quickly from that so I had an idea of what time I wanted to run. I picked a course with very little elevation, virtually none, to give me the chance to run as evenly paced and as quickly as possible. Anything under 34.30 was the target but my ultimate aim was under 34 mins. A very big ask, I'd never come close to that before. A little known fact about me is I've got very little self belief and confidence in my own ability and this affects me terribly in the build up of races and on race day. These virtual races have taken that pressure away so again have worked in my favour.

Race day...wide awake before 4am, mega nervous but mega excited too. Pulling that green and white vest on I couldn't wait. Trying to force a banana down my throat at 5am isn't pleasant as I really struggle to eat in a morning especially before a race. A caffeine drink gets me even more buzzing than I already am and off out I go for a few miles warm up from my house. Race conditions were perfect for me; gentle breeze and absolutely freezing cold! Warm up consisted of thinking about tactics and what pace to go off at, whether to run even pace or negative splits and the need to use the bathroom again. Typical pre-

race thoughts!

Quick change of clothing to put my vest on and a photo (which I had to wake Kerry up for, she wasn't impressed) and off I jogged to the starting point. Off I started and settled into pace early. First 400m gone and the cold hitting the lungs got me blowing hard a little but I quickly settled after that and soon enough the first mile ticked off. Just a second quicker than I wanted to run... perfect. Miles 2, 3 and 4 all ended up being quicker but were within seconds of each other and I felt good right up until mile 4 and then it was like someone had flicked a switch as my legs started to feel heavier and my mind was trying to convince me that it was all a bit too hard. I ended up having a good talk to myself for that mile and managed to hold pace with the knowledge I'd only got a mile to go after this one. The 0.2 miles was nothing in the grand scheme of things, just a sprint finish!



The last mile was just a case of hanging on really, just over 5 mins of hard running. Having come this far there was not a chance I was going to let it go at this point. Holding pace again for that last mile and emptying whatever was left, which wasn't much, on that last 0.2 miles, I hit the 10k point in 33.28. A huge PB, although not official, and a body that absolutely hated me at that point. I really can't explain the feeling; a mix of elation at running a time I'd have dreams of running before this year, pain from every bit of my body aching and still trying to get my hands warm from the cold! The one day it all came together... just perfect.

As we come to the one of the season, I just want to finish with a few thank you's. To Ken, Andy, Mick, Bryan and all of the race organisers who have worked to get these virtual events up and running as well as the encouragement you have all given us. Running has continued to enrich our lives at this time and you have all played a part in helping us lace our trainers up. Hopefully I speak on behalf of all of us runners in thanking you all for that.

A huge well done to my Staffs teammates who ran some amazing times and to Swanny for giving me an opportunity I'll forever be

grateful for. My Christmas come early this year.

Lastly, without the guidance, support and occasional telling off from my brilliant coach, Michelle Buckle, I wouldn't be where I am now. In the last two and a half years she has taken a broken runner and turned me into someone who is finally fulfilling some of that potential. That run was for you coach.

Hopefully you all made it to the end... well done to everyone competing this season and I can't wait to share a starting line with you soon.

Craig Taylor
Newcastle (Staffs) AC

James Phoenix – Westbridge 5 – Race Report

As a relatively new member of Stone Master Marathoners and my debut season entering the NSRRA, the concept of racing, whether it be virtual or a traditional race, is still a relatively new experience for me. Some people have questioned the value of these virtual races but for me it has given me a fresh focus and drive in training and ensure that I can maintain a decent level of fitness to hopefully remain competitive in my group.

So, onto the Westbridge 5 and one of my running club's local races. If I've learnt one thing with these virtual races, its running with others (socially distanced of course) definitely helps. I have ran every NSRRA race so far this season and the only race I've blown up in was the one where I ran on my own. A quick check in with some of my fellow Stone runners resulted in a consensus of running this race along the Trent & Mersey canal, starting at 'The Plume' in Barlaston at 6am. There was a requirement of running 2 miles alongside water for this race, so this meant I had to deviate from my usual go-to course at Keele University. Another advantage of these virtual races is that you can choose a day and time to suit you. On this particular occasion, I was able to run early midweek and return home to assist with the usual kids breakfast/school run routine, in the knowledge that I've already completed my race without it having any impact on my family life.

Race Day: We meet at the Plume at 6am with 5 other Stone runners and the first thing I notice is that it is still dark. Thoughts turn to whether there has ever been an NSRRA race where somebody has

fallen into the canal and had to be rescued! I also take some comfort in knowing that I'm not the only nutter who is prepared to set their alarm for 05:30 to complete a virtual race. We complete a warm up for approx 15 mins and this gave just enough time for the sun to set so we could see where we were all going!

Throughout the virtual races I've PB'd nearly all of the different distances, including the South Cheshire 20 miler only 4 days prior to this race. I could tell from my legs that I'd put a lot of effort into that 20 miler but on the whole I was feeling pretty strong and confident I could get close to the time I achieved for my last 5 mile virtual race (32:05). The race day tension and nerves are still there to some extent in these virtuals and also my usual feeling of needing to go to the toilet about ten times before the race starts!

The group are ready, we get our Garmin's primed and I lead from the front. Early thoughts are that I feel ok but running on the towpath does not feel quite as responsive as running on the tarmac at Keele. I try not to look at my watch too much during a race but look down after 1 mile and note that I am 5 seconds ahead of my target pace...all good. I continue on at what I perceive to be the same pace and note after mile 2 that I am nearly 20 seconds behind my target pace! How is this even possible, I'm running at the same pace in my head, feeling strong and it's still early on in the race?! I dig in and concentrate on upping the tempo a bit to try to get back on track. The Garmin ping for mile 3 strikes, I look down and lo and behold another 15 seconds behind my target pace for the last mile?! Now the doubts really start to creep in; Can I hear footsteps behind me? Are all of my fellow Stone runners about to come sprinting past me like a stampede? Is this going to be my lowest NSRRA race points total so far? Can I even finish this race?! I see a casual runner in the distance and use him as my target to try to reel him in. It works to some extent, as mile 4 and 5 are an improvement and back to my target pace. However, I finish in a time of 33:03, nearly a minute slower than my last 5 mile race. I'm disappointed, I instinctively look for excuses and I tell my fellow runners, 'it's harder to run on a towpath', 'my legs are still tired from my 20 mile race'. However, deep down, I know that for whatever reason I didn't give 100% effort like I'd done in some of the other races.

Once I got over my initial disappointment and had time to reflect, I concluded that I can't always go out and get a PB in every race, I'd still got my backside out of bed at 05:30 to meet a fantastic group of

individuals who offer so much support and guidance and if nothing else, I'd ran a damn good tempo run!

And it is for this reason why I for one have loved the virtual races and will try my best to go for the 'Compleat' before the season ends. Keep up the good work to everyone behind the scenes who make these races happen.

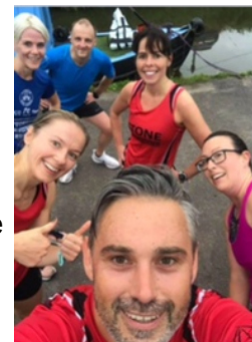
P.S – A big shout out to Sam Hodgkinson who got stung by a wasp on this run but still battled on and completed it! Knowing me, I'd have gone down like I'd been taken out by a sniper!

James Phoenix Stone Master Marathoners

Meerbrook Race Report

This race from 2018 was a turning point in my running history. My Running first started back in around 2004 when I was 17. I then joined Boalloy a few years later who I ran with until around 2010 when life and the travel distance meant I could no longer attend. I still ran socially over the years in between but not to the same level.

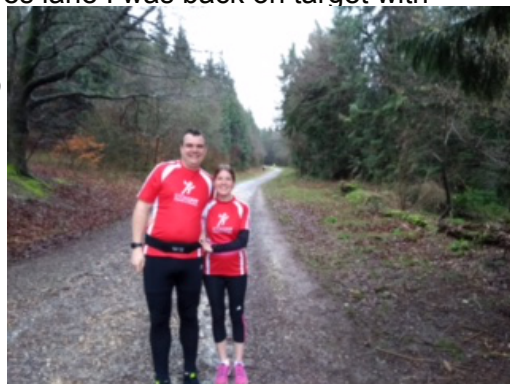
Over the years I have always had a love for running and found it grounding and a great way to run out stresses of life. In this process I may have encouraged others into the sport which is how I came to run Meerbrook in 2018. I had been running a bit more around that time and also a college friend that wanted to do a race with me. She had recently joined NRC and suggested Meerbrook. I don't think she quite realised what we had entered at the time as she wouldn't describe herself as a hill fan. It is during this race that I met one of the Stoke Fit leaders who supported me through some of the tuffer bits. Having already been considering joining Stoke FIT this encouragement was the final push I needed and Stoke FIT had 2 new members. The second member was James who's running history starts with our Second date where he agreed to go for a run with me. James has always cycled but never ran and as much as the couch to 5K is a great program he joined the Amanda couch to chase after Amanda for over 5 mile program which he has now been following for over 10 years and still can't keep up. In fairness he now runs about the pace I did then, unfortunately for him I'm now running around 2min/mile faster. So enough about Us and our running background onto the 2020 Meerbrook.



So Sunday 22nd October 2020 Around 9:15am. Perfect conditions for running. Sun was out, the ground was dry, the temperature was cold but not freezing. Our route was planned and my route took me via Eaves lane with most of the 500ft+ of elevation in the first 3-4 miles. James on the other hand opted to run the reverse saving the big hills for the end. My route took me up and over Eaves lane into Jack Haye Lane, through to Light Oaks before blasting it down hill to Milton Lights. A left turn onto Leek Road, a cut through Abbey Hulton (quick wave at James mile 5 for me ~4 for him) and a small loop of Fenton Industrial Estate and back onto Leek road having to dodge the roadworks and closed footpath, not ideal near the end with running brain but onto the finish and a new 15k PB. Glad to say that unlike 2018 I ran all the hills and can't wait to get back on the full course and race conditions. Anyone wondering why I didn't tackle the course for this year doesn't know me as if I had headed to Meerbrook. I'd probably be running around the roaches even now as I am noted for getting lost and taking other runners with me, but that is a different story.

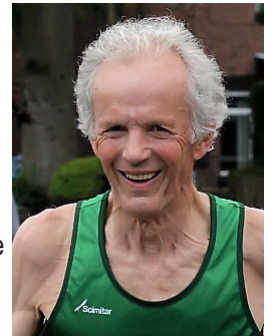
James, my race was basically the same route but in reverse. My target was to simply try and keep under a 9:05 (~2hr half). I choose to get the bit I find the hardest out the way first which oddly isn't the hills. It's the flatter side of things I just find that my pace drops off on the flat or small inclines and before I know it my pace is 30s less than what I want. So my plan was simple, do my best in the first half, get up the big hills and then make up for any slacking on the downs. As a "runner" (yes i guess Amanda has made me a runner now) we are always told to keep our heads up. It's usually great advice but I wasn't so sure as I made the turn up Bagnall Road from Milton lights and looked up to see the houses off up high in the sky and realising that the top of the hill I was about to ascend would basically take me past their front doors. Finally reached the top with a 9:20 average so still some smaller hills but a large down to come so 9:05 still looked possible so dug deep and pushed on. By the bottom of Eaves lane I was back on target with around a mile to go. And there was Amanda who'd already finished and mustered the mile to meet me and get me home. I could tell she'd worked hard as for once she was struggling to keep up with me!!!

Amanda Kelly and James Tutton



Runners and friends,

It seems the goal posts have been moved since I last wrote these notes and our proper NSRRA races seem as far away as ever. There is though now, a chink of light at the end of a long tunnel, with vaccines hopefully coming on stream in the new year, so we will have to keep our fingers crossed. In the meantime I continue to miss you all, along with all the usual race day atmosphere and banter, but stay safe everyone.



There is still the virtual Meerbrook 15K to go as I write and quite amazingly, there are still positions within the groups to be decided. I am most fascinated by the situation in group C and would expect it to be unprecedented, with the 3 leaders all level on equal points at the moment. What a final and interesting battle that promises to be!

The virtual races have been something of a life saver this year and have provided a great incentive to get outside and train, with a chance to view those glorious autumn colours. My thanks to all those who have organised the races, although sadly, I have been unable to take part in the more recent ones. I have though enjoyed going along to support my running pals, where we've all suffered from some regular Saturday morning soakings for our trouble. Well done ladies and gents and it's been very pleasing to see you making the effort and really going for it as in a proper race.

For quite some time now, I have been moaning to anyone who would care to listen, about my deteriorating form and rapidly slowing training and race times. I also had an uneasy feeling that something wasn't quite right with me, but without being sure what it was. It was then, some kind of a relief, to be diagnosed by the Medics with a condition called Polycythaemia Vera. (And yes, I hadn't heard of it either) Apparently this is when the bone marrow won't stop producing too many red blood cells, causing the blood to thicken and blood pressure to rise. Treatment is by the removal of pints of blood at intervals in order to dilute it back down again. I thank the doctors and nurses for their care and very much hope that I shall regain the energy to get back running again before too long.

I must say a very big thank you to all the NSRRA members who have supported the virtual Pudding Race this year. It has been a most difficult year for fund raising and your help is much appreciated. Hopefully we may raise a decent amount for Cancer Research UK, to add to the £121,600 raised by the race to date. A special mention to our Ken, Andy Vickerman and Mick Hall for their help and advice in putting it on. With you all having to run your own courses, at least it has saved me the work of opening the permanently blocked roadside drains on Shaffalong Lane, it seems every cloud has a silver lining!

Good running and regards, Stan.



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

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