



# NSRRA April 2021

Virtual Edition 5



***“It is during our darkest moments  
that we must focus to see the  
light”***

Aristotle Onassis

Dear Runners

A new NSRRA year we are moving out of lockdown at last however, the hands, face, space will be a new way of keeping us healthy in the future.



On the subject of health, you may be aware that I suffered a stroke a year ago and was very fortunate to get swift attention from Royal Stoke and whilst the recovery journey has been extremely challenging, I am now getting my running fitness back, not so fast and not so far, I am thankful to my wife Jue for our weekly “not parkruns” and Sarah Taylor for our steady 10k weekly run. I hear that Stafford Harrier Mick Jones has suffered a stroke and I wish him a speedy recovery.

I have included notes from the Stroke Association web site on the symptoms of a stroke at the end of this newsletter.

Stroke strikes every five minutes in the UK. Would you know how to spot the signs of a stroke in yourself or someone else?

Your Editor Graham

## CHAIRMANS REPORT

On behalf of NSRRA I said goodbye to the great man who started NSRRA back in 1974 Don Shelley as we laid him to rest. The family wish to say thank you to all the great tributes that were given to Don.

Well what a start to 2021, we are still on Virtual events but as the vaccine rolls out we are definitely on the way to live events. With a record number of new members 245 runners joined us for the first time, a big majority of these being ladies This led to the creation of an extra ladies group bringing the total to 5.

And so, we moved to the first event the Alsager 5, always a popular event but how would it stand up as a Virtual event? Well the entries just kept coming in and we closed with an amazing total of 687 and 340 NSRRA finishers. Compare this to 189 NSRRA finishers in 2020. We moved on to a new event the Potters 10 mile and once again we had close to 500 entrants with 260 NSRRA finishers, Knighton 10k over 500 entrants and 297 NSRRA finishers. Absolutely amazing and thank you to each and everyone one of you for supporting NSRRA.



We definitely have to thank Andy Vickerman for making it possible with his timing system, Shell Harrop for her amazing T Shirt designs and Mick Hall for his really popular e numbers. We are moving Ipstones 5ish out of a very crowded September to August 28<sup>th</sup> An updated fixture list can be found on our website.

Some more good news, we have a date for our presentation evening, July 9<sup>th</sup> is the date for your diary at Florence Sports and Social Club in Lightwood Road, Lightwood. Tickets are now available via our website.

Ken



## Virtual Alsager 5 Race Report

Hello to all NSRRA runners, old timer competitors and to the newbies out there, like myself. 2020 had been a strange year for us all, 9 months being in and out of lockdown, some furloughed and some working harder than ever. It sure did affect us all differently, some embracing the time in a positive way and getting fitter and probably faster, whilst if you were like me, hardly ran, got slower and my mojo had been lost along the way. So this is the main reason why I entered the NSRRA as I couldn't have a 2021 like 2020.

The build up to the race weekend was playing on my mind, I had much needed encouragement from my running friends virtually, pep talks the day before, it's just not the same as turning up to an event, being nervous and seeing the other nervous faces but seeing faces making the challenge so much easier.

Sunday morning and it's race day, I was lucky enough that my partner and also NSRRA newbie Jon Thompson – Group G was going to do this with me, a last minute decision but one I was definitely glad of. We started with the breakfast of Champions and no better way than with Oatcakes... High Lane our preferred choice but one good thing is doing this virtually... no issues with toilets. Sorry, too much info I know.

We set off from home, it was a cold and breezy start, the wind against us too. Thankfully no rain today which is unusual as rain seems to be all we've had of late. The route unfortunately wasn't scenic as we made sure we stuck to the lockdown rules and ran from home also this route isn't particularly flat either. But it is what it is and gives me a base to work on for future.

High Street running, trying to avoid the walkers who are also getting out and doing their bit, trying to break up the monotony of being stuck indoors. As always, I'm an anxious runner and my head is the main battle that has to be won over. The usual, why am I doing this, I'm shattered, need to stop, don't stop, all going on in my head for the first mile until I can get into any rhythm. I made sure I concentrated on my breathing as I really didn't want to stop on this run.

Before we knew it, a comfortable pace had been reached and 2 miles done. Some downhill ahead and thankfully a time to recover but also enjoy the downhill and pace increasing slightly. My mind also winning



the battle because I'd manage to talk myself into... the competition isn't the beating of others, it's the beating of my demons and its negativity. The last up hill challenge waits ahead for mile 3. Slow and steady wins the race (well for me) lamppost to lamppost running to get me onwards and upwards... Challenge done. Thankfully now a flattish section, more main road, roadworks and more walkers. No road closures for us today!

Finally, it's the home straight and the last mile in sight.... Totally shattered but we've not stopped. Got to dig in and keep going. At this point, I'm thinking about having the usual sprint finish! The route I'd planned ended up being slightly shorter on the watch so needed to add a little to the run and able to add that sprint finish. Typical that our next door neighbours drove past wanting a chat as they're slowly driving past.... Sorry ain't got time to chat I'm in a race! Will have to explain my rudeness later over the fence.

So for our first time run in the NSRRA it's been a great one. Hoping to improve over the coming months and maybe in the not too distant future get to see you at 'actual' races to say hello and good luck.

Best wishes on your 2021 running journey. Take care and stay safe, – Tracy Chevin Group X runner and Stoke F.I.T Chair.

## Virtual Potters 10 Mile (19th Feb – 23rd Feb 2021)

The Dazzler and I first joined the NSRRA gang in 2020 following a fantastic talk from Ken at one of our South Cheshire Harriers social events. It all sounded very exciting and we signed up before we'd even left the room!

..... then one race down (Alsager 5 if you're interested) and well, you know the rest!!!

To be honest we wrote 2020 off race wise, then craving some much needed motivation decided to renew our membership and embrace the 'virtuals' in 2021.

And what a FANTASTIC start to the year it has been.... Two races

down and I have to say, much of the drive and enthusiasm I've seen (and felt) has come from my fellow Harriers, who like most of us had perhaps lost that sense of community quite often gained from a physical club and race environment.

Taking to the 'socials' #teamSCH have shared their stories, encouraged their team mates and given huge (virtual) high fives spurring each other on in this year's NSRRA championships.

So, before I tell you about my Potters 10 attempt I want to say huge THANK YOU to my team mates and thank you for inspiring me to #bemoreSCH

Anyway, now to the task in hand.....

So, yes the race was virtual which meant that there was a great big window of time to complete it and lots of things to consider, from the route, the day, the weather etc; however it was also a 'double bubble' being part of not only the NSRRA programme but also our own Club Championship too, so what's not to like?

On the morning of my race I was nervous, why? Well I didn't realise when running a virtual I'd experience the same pre-race nerves as an actual, physical race. Also Ken had very kindly moved me up two 'letters' following a complete fluke of a run for my Virtual Alsager so I knew I was now going to be competing against some lovely ladies who quite frankly are speed demons; and finally I've never raced a 10 miler before so wasn't quite sure how to pace myself.

After much deliberation the night before (with wine and brownies) I decided to run on the Saturday to 'get it out of the way' and to do an 'out and back' route. I considered potential traffic issues, didn't consider potential elevation and absolutely did not consider the weather.

So with my Harriers vest and running shoes on off I went, left on to Rope Lane then on to Crewe Road and up towards the college, up Danebank Avenue, right on to Moreton Road, around the park then eventually a nice little speedy bit downhill towards the Rising Sun before heading off towards Nantwich, turning around at Sainsburys to head back home... All very straight forward yes... No!

The way back was far more traumatic (yes, I do exaggerate), enter 1 x set of road work traffic lights, an upside down 'nice little speedy bit'

away from the Rising Sun, back around the park and then running against a great big headwind off I went back up Moreton Road and on to Danebank. I resorted to shouting at myself 'come on Rachel' and eventually got back home and took the now obligatory selfie to share with my team mates on the 'socials' and job done – I even managed a reasonable time too!

And that's it... not a lot to write about the actual race part, once done it was indeed done; however the real prize (for me anyway) is to then see the posts and updates from others, this is what I have really missed, that joined sense of achievement and celebration, the smiles, the enthusiasm and of course those lovely league tables at the end.

So, bring on the next of the NSRRA... Knighton 10k... let's give it what we've got!!!!

Rachel Beach

### **Knighton 20 (Now Virtual 10k)**

One year of Covid restrictions, what a bizarre time we are living in. So much has changed, but us humans are a resilient bunch and seem to adapt to things fairly well.

What started out as a weird experience of running a virtual race, now seems quite familiar. I'm sure that we all want to return to actual racing, but there are a few positives to come from these virtual ones. We've learnt to race and pace solo, we've found ways of racing without drinks stations, and we've all got routes for various different distances.

For my Knighton race, I considered revisiting my Kidsgrove 10k route. I decided against this, as it uses a section of canal towpath that can be quite busy, especially as race day was the first good weather day for a couple of days. A quick plan on Strava route builder, and I had an "out and back" to Endon.

As with all my virtual routes, I try to minimise road crossings. This one had two in each direction, with an option of slight route changes if





traffic dictated.

My first mile went ok, but mile two felt really tough. I've had races like this before, and hoped that, as previously, it wouldn't get any worse as the race progressed. Sure enough, as I reached my turn point I was consistently struggling, but now had a slight downhill to help me. Even the headwind didn't seem to be too detrimental. Approaching the main road crossing with 1km to go, the traffic lights changed at the perfect time for me, saving the effort of muttering expletives at an inanimate object!

The final gradual downhill back to my start point helped me to give a last hard push, and I hit the 10km mark about 30 seconds within my target time.

Another race done,  
another virtual route  
banked.

Steve McCann.



## Air Products 10k

Being relatively new to running, I unfortunately haven't had the chance to run a race with other people and only to run in virtual races. This I'm sure comes with both pros and cons. I certainly enjoy the freedom of a clear road with very few people but I am very much looking forward to participating in races with other people.

I am very keen to have a go at any race possible up to a 10k and it was the turn of the Air Products 5k and 10k, hosted by my running club The South Cheshire Harriers. It just happened to be Easter weekend which meant lots of food and chocolate was consumed. It was such nice weather over that weekend, however I left it until the Monday to run with terrible winds and not making the most of the nice weather. This did have its advantages, as I chose an out and back course, one I had done a few weeks ago to compare my progress. Not that long into my run I the pleasure of listening to a song from Hairspray which

definitely put a spring into my step, with the sun beating down on me was lovely. Checking my watch I was definitely at a comfortable pace but knew I had more so upped it slightly. About 2km in another of my favourite songs came on 'This is Me' from the Greatest Showman and it really got me thinking. Only a few years ago I hated any form of exercise and look at me now, not a care in the world running and feeling like a runner.

Bleep 5 on my watch meant I was half way, woohoo and time to head back home. As I turned the head wind was so strong. I knew it was windy but not that windy, this meant only 1 thing, I had to pace myself to get home otherwise I wouldn't make it and be a mess on the floor and calling my husband to come get me which is something I was determined not to do as I am a runner and I am strong. Looking around the only think I had around me was lamp posts so I decided to speed walk 1 and run 3 maybe 4 depending on how I felt. 7.5km in and I knew I was on the home straight and was going to give it all I had. The best sight was seeing my husband and 2 young children coming to meet, I knew at this point I'd nearly completed the 10k. I off loaded my water bottle and jacket and headed for the finish line which was my home. At this point Journey came through my head phones, 'Don't stop believing, hold on to this feeling' and at this point I was nearly home, it couldn't have been the most perfect song to end this run.

Whilst out I used the advice I was given to help me become a better runner and it definitely worked. What is the one piece of advice you were given when you started running that you'll never forget?

Philippa McCulloch



# Symptoms of stroke

Stroke strikes every five minutes in the UK. It can happen to anyone, of any age, at any time. It's vital to know how to spot the signs of a stroke in yourself or someone else.

Stroke is a medical emergency. The **FAST** test can help you recognise the signs.

**Facial weakness:** Can the person smile? Has their mouth or eye drooped?

**Arm weakness:** Can the person raise both arms?

**Speech problems:** Can the person speak clearly and understand what you say?

**Time to call 999:** if you see any of these signs.

Acting FAST will give the person having a stroke the best chance of survival and recovery. Always call 999 straight away. Ambulance paramedics are trained in stroke, and will ensure the person receives emergency medical care and specialist treatment.

The FAST test helps to spot the three most common symptoms of stroke. But there are other signs that you should always take seriously. These include:

Sudden weakness or numbness on one side of the body, including legs, hands or feet.

Difficulty finding words or speaking in clear sentences.

Sudden blurred vision or loss of sight in one or both eyes.

Sudden memory loss or confusion, and dizziness or a sudden fall.

A sudden, severe headache.

If you spot any of these signs of a stroke, don't wait.

## Call 999 straight away.

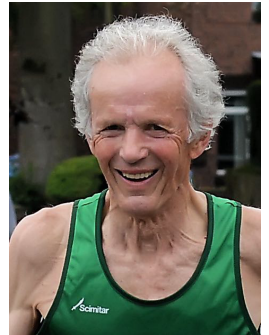
### PRESIDENT'S RAMBLINGS

#### Runners and friends

Since these are my first ramblings of the new season, I would like to express a very warm welcome to all the many new members of NSRRA this year. I am sure that by now you will have realised what a great organisation this is and I hope that it will benefit your running and social life, the way that it has benefited mine over many years.

I was quite saddened to hear of the death of Don Shelley, the NSRRA founder and successful Potts Marathon and Half Marathon organiser. Don was my early mentor and the man who first got me into running after a chance meeting back in October 1982. It's thanks to Don's great input that running in the area is so strong today. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

There are a very great number of virtual race routes around the area now and I hope that you have managed to find a good one. Quite a few of my running mates are now using the towpath of the Caldon Canal in Cheddleton as their main route for the current races, starting and finishing in Station Road. The main advantage of this run is that you get away from traffic and with the exception of a couple of locks, it's a flat course. It is also quite well sheltered from the wind and is very good for feeling close to nature. The drawbacks are the puddles when it's wet and a few loose stones when it's dry. Loose dogs and their owners can also cause problems, with some seeming quite oblivious to the runners and obstructing the fairly narrow path. It has been something of a problem for as long as I've been running.



These virtual races have been a real godsend and although only a rough guide, they have provided runners with a real incentive to train and to get "race fit". Hopefully, with the restrictions beginning to ease a bit now and with us more senior members all vaccinated, there is the exciting prospect of some genuine racing coming over the horizon and won't it be wonderful when that day arrives!

For myself, I've had a fairly quiet winter, having been unable to run since last September, but have been fortunate enough to get a walk with Liz most days, if only to the shop and back. I have now been given a long awaited diagnosis of Parkinson's Disease. I have had my suspicions for quite some time and I am feeling much more optimistic now. I have been very well supported by my running friends and greatly appreciate their concern and encouragement and jovial wit. The good news is that the recent sunny days, together with the re-opening of Pointon's track, seem to have given me quite a boost. With a bit of good fortune, I may be able to return to running in the not too distant future. I have missed it greatly!

Good running and regards, Stan.





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

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