



The Bulletin

Handy Cross Runners
Newsletter

October 2015

When I resigned from editorship of the Bulletin in March I had hoped that someone would come forward to continue the publication but unfortunately that hasn't happened yet. This then is a one-off edition to celebrate the many articles provided by Terry Eves over the last twelve years.

Two weeks before his heart attack, Terry asked me for a copy his contributions to the Bulletin as he had not kept his own copies. No problem I thought without realising there were over twenty articles to be retrieved from a not very fast computer system, so unfortunately I hadn't completed the task before his tragic and untimely death. However I have now completed the task for this commemorative edition.

Terry could always be relied upon for a gem to put in the Bulletin although I always had to chase him for it. He would ask when it was required and I soon learnt not to say there was no rush, as nothing would happen for weeks! However a deadline of 'next Tuesday without fail' always produced something at the last minute, I think he worked best when given a target.

Anyway it was always worth waiting for and Terry's article was the first thing (and probably the only one) people read when they received their copy of the Bulletin

One of his earliest poems (see opposite) was the ever popular *Menage a Trois (Mange Toute)* or *The Ballad of Ellen'nKaren'Sue*, while his last was, appropriately enough called *The Greatest Diver*, which he undisputedly was!

Probably his finest effort was *A Runner's Tale* which was first published in *The Daily Mail* and was read by Craig and Phil at his funeral.

Enjoy reading once more these stories and poems and remember the Handy Cross Runner and great character who was Terry Eves.

Martin Dean (Former Editor)

Some Handy Cross Runners are absolute stunners,

Believe me I've known one or two,
But few of the rest look their best in a vest,
Like Ellen 'n' Karen 'n' Sue!

Good things come in threes
But I'm brought to my knees,
By this trio of temptresses true.
I just can't compete, will I always be beat,
By Ellen 'n' Karen 'n' Sue?

But wait for the day of the Datchet 5k,
And I'll show them just what I can do,
But my time's a disgrace, I can't keep up the pace,
Of Ellen 'n' Karen 'n' Sue!

A total disaster, can't run any faster,
But who cares, for if only they knew,
That I really don't mind, I love running behind
Ellen 'n' Karen 'n' Sue!

But one thing keeps me thinking,
and drives me to drinking,
Will I ever be able to choose?
Whose form is the best when displayed in a vest,
Is it Ellen's or Karen's or Sue's?

2012

Ten years have flashed past, so we're not quite as fast,
And the prospects of PBs are few,
So my mind often strays to those halcyon days,
Chasing Ellen 'n' Karen 'n' Sue.

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A Walker's Tale

Handy Cross Walkers? Well Heaven forbid!
That I'm ever reduced to their ranks!
A leisurely stroll is their ultimate goal,
So Handy Cross Walkers? No thanks!

This club's about winning and PBs and sweat,
And standards we strive to attain.
Walkers will whinge when the going gets tough,
While runners just soak up the pain.

But disaster has struck, and I'm fresh out of luck!
'Cos a niggle has knackered my knee,
It's a terrible night as there's no blokes in sight,
Just eight girlie walkers and me.

We march off to the west by the sun's fading light,
At a pace 'twould befit a 5K,
And we're trekking through cornfields when day turned to night,
With eight Amazons paving my way.

But what would I do, seen by someone I knew?
Pull my top up right over my head!
As eight (XtartsX) girls and me on a synchronised limp
Would completely destroy my street cred.

We rushed up dark alleys without falling down,
Which for me, you'll agree, was a first,
And girls being girls they gossiped non-stop,
Some might say (it's not true) I was worst!

And they sang that they'd walked for five hundred miles,
Which seemed quite excessive to me.
As no-one wore a Garmin I couldn't be sure,
But proclaimed it was nearer to three.

When at last we got back I'd forgotten my knee,
It was only my ears now that hurt,
And that ends the tale of The Walkers and me.
Will I join them again? It's a cert!



Saga of the Aborted Cressex Carjack

(Or: It could only happen to Terry!)

Over the Christmas period I was on the forecourt of Tesco Express in Marlow Road when I was approached by an elderly lady asking for directions to the John Lewis department store. I instructed her to turn right at the large roundabout and watched her walk off towards a small red car.

Minutes later when leaving the garage I glanced along the road only to see the car turning right at the mini-roundabout into Cressex Road. Compassionate soul that I am, and after all it was Christmas, I took up pursuit to redirect her, completely oblivious to the time and expense involved. Fortunately, I spotted that the car had stopped at red traffic lights halfway down the road, but as I approached they turned to amber.

Time being of the essence I screeched to a halt, leapt from my car, and yanked open the car door. I was somewhat surprised to see a young teenage girl behind the wheel but said in an extremely stern and authoritative tone, leaving no room for further misunderstandings, "Left! Left at the next roundabout!", to which she nodded acquiescently. On slamming the car door I glanced towards the passenger seat expecting to see the old lady, so was completely taken aback when I saw instead another equally terrified-looking teenage girl. Moments later the small red car, not surprisingly, turned left while I, rather quickly, turned right seeking to dispense yet more seasonal goodwill.

March 2008

Dancing on Ice ??

On the 5th April a group of Handy Cross Runners went to Bracknell ice rink for a session on the ice. They arrived at around 7:30, eager to start the evening's skating and after changing shoes to blades were away, some quicker than others! Ellen Haynes early years skating on iced-over canals to school in Holland had certainly paid off whilst others found it a little more difficult

After thirty minutes or so most were skating quite confidently and had even progressed from the barrier to centre rink. One of our runners (Steve) who skates on a regular basis, soon showed 'how it's done' with proficient turns, back skating and the occasional jump.

After about forty minutes or so we were graced with the appearance of Terry Eves and his wife Maureen, who were about to take to the ice, quite literally. A group of us had collected around the entrance awaiting Terry's arrival and within seconds of putting his blades down he managed to wipe out Ellen, leaving her sitting on the ice exclaiming, "I haven't fallen in years." It was hilarious, definitely a video clip for 'You've Been Framed'.

Terry then went on to circumnavigate the rink, which took around forty-five minutes, more of a shuffle than a glide. Maureen was a little more adventurous and with the aid of Steve, was soon skating quite well. So all in all, a good time was had by everyone, but the evening belonged to Terry. Lucy said, "Terry.....you run better than you skate, so no 6's from us on your performance but the entertainment was definitely three 6's !"

Now read Terry's version of these events overleaf.



The Iceman Cometh (A Cropper!)

As a founder member of the Handy Cross Divers, I am no stranger to painfully crashing to the ground with monotonous regularity. Equally, over the years, I have had many misfortunes indirectly associated with ice, though no doubt these were due rather more to the large gin and tonics it has invariably accompanied. On reflection therefore, it should have appeared from the outset that it would be extremely foolhardy to undertake a trip involving a significant risk of falling, in conjunction with a large measure of ice.

A cursory risk assessment however, ascertained that pre-skate cocktails were unlikely and that the ice was completely smooth and not the treacherously root-infested uneven surfaces that normally lead to my downfall. Even so, it was with some trepidation that I joined the band of Handy Cross wannabee ice dancers at the Bracknell Ice Emporium.

By the time I arrived, Jo Hutchby and Trevor Hunter had already been red-carded for inappropriate behaviour on the ice, and though there is some doubt as to who fell on top of whom, the fall was apparently due to one of them being top-heavy! Obviously this was just a scurrilous rumour, perpetrated by one of their less well-endowed rivals. Even so, I thought that perhaps this was an omen and was having serious doubts about continuing the venture, when dependable Steve (Greg Ruzedski) Fordham appeared offering to be my mentor.

Having eventually guided me to the edge of the rink, he solemnly warned me, "Don't go straight on the ice!" However, just a few feet away was the seductive Ellen Haynes, with outstretched arms, whispering, "Come to me, Tel!" What should I do? In an instant my mind was made up for me, for I was now an Ancient Mariner and she was the Siren, luring me on to the rocks.

So, shrugging off Steve's vice-like grip, I threw caution to the wind, stepped boldly onto the ice and skated both effortlessly and gracefully to her waiting arms. Well, that was the plan, the reality, much to my eternal regret, was somewhat different. As runners accustomed to falling, you will be aware that from the time of the initial trip, it often seems like an age before you finally crash into the ground, during which time there is even a period when you hope to regain your balance and not fall at all. Ice-skating, as I was about to discover, has no similarities whatsoever.

Having spurned Steve's advice I took my first, faltering steps towards the waiting Ellen, and in the blink of an eye, or as in this case the flash of a blade, my world was transformed. I was unaware of any pain however, as somehow Ellen had contrived to break my fall and I found that I was horizontally ice-skating on top of the Ice Maiden. At this moment time stood still (froze?) so I have no knowledge of just how long we remained in this position but would guess it was about ten minutes, though in reality it was possibly nearer to three seconds.

All too soon I was brought back to my senses by muffled cries, seemingly coming from far, far below of, "Get 'im off! Get 'im off!" For a brief moment I became even more disorientated when I misconstrued the command as "em" and not "im".

'Midst the ensuing furore I found myself being lifted back into the upright position, but at this stage I was rather concerned about Ellen who was still lying on the ice. So, even though I was unable to stand unaided, I thought the least I could do was to help her to her feet. However, this thoughtful gesture on my part was met with a somewhat ungrateful and near hysterical response of, "Keep him away from me!" After which she was seen rushing for the bar.

As for me, I had found the whole episode extremely unnerving but 'faced my fears' and continued to practise for another hour, but in view of the earlier excitement, never quite mustered the courage to let go of the handrail.



Babes In The Wood (Part I)

As we are now into our fourth year of Summer Runs it has become something of a misnomer to call them Mystery Runs, with the exception of course, of the one planned(?) each year by our much-maligned chairman, which always contains a high degree of mystery not only to him but more so to the rest of us. Regrettably, the run starting from The Rising Sun was no exception.

There was, as usual, no gentle build up and the run “it’s not a race, yes it is” started at a break-neck pace with Mike Hickman in hot pursuit of the nubile front-runners. Disaster however, was imminent as we were barely out of the pub car park when he crashed to the ground sustaining a Postman’s Knock to the head, much to the delight of our four-legged guest runner, Molly Stracey, who enthusiastically followed the trail of blood.

It is open to conjecture whether he also sustained the lump in his trousers at the same time, or even if this lump was the reason for his fall, but there was a weekly progress report on this wondrous swelling which took on a life of its own and for weeks after he would proudly display it to all comers, whether they asked to see it or not.

Some time much later, back at the pub actually, Pete decided to regroup and discovered that the caring group of runners who had stayed behind to help Mike was missing. Initially, there was much concern for my own safety when it was thought I was alone in the woods with Amanda, but this abated when a cursory head-count revealed that Craig and Dave were also missing.

Meanwhile back in the woods, darkness was beginning to fall. When we’d first fallen behind we’d decided that if we took a shortcut we could catch the rest up. Amanda objected to this, however and insisted we ran the whole distance, making her largely responsible for our present predicament.

Occasionally during the last hour we had glimpsed them, always two fields in front, so were relieved when we saw Pete and Mike waiting for us, only to have our hopes dashed when we realised it was just a pair of pathetic-looking scarecrows. Another time on a distant skyline we witnessed Jo chased by Mike chased by Molly like an old Disney film. It was now sometime though since we’d seen anyone and we were getting rather worried (Amanda was terrified!).

Realising our plight we thought how fortuitous to have a schoolmaster with us who not only assumed control but took full responsibility for finding the way back. He lead and we just followed, so our faith was fully justified when we eventually saw lights ahead, and our panic was fully justified when we saw the village sign reading ‘DUNSMORE’.

So we studied the map for the first time and were faced with the alternatives of either going back through the woods or taking a five mile detour, keeping to the roads. There was a third alternative however, as Amanda revealed that she had a phone but wouldn’t use it, as she said it, “Would make us look silly.” Yeah right! Having decided to retrace our earlier steps it was pure luck (or was it divine intervention?) that we just happened upon the scene of Mike’s earlier fall, but when we arrived back at the pub at 9.40 most people had long gone, so fortunately very few witnessed our sorry arrival.



Babes In The Wood (Part 2)

Any run with Pete is a giant leap into the unknown, so it says much for our sense of adventure, but more for his powers of persuasion, that on August 28th, when the nights were really beginning to draw in, we joined him on a quest to find the aptly named 'Hard to Find' Farm. We reached the Winch Bottom Woods just as the light was fading, but any waverers were persuaded by his supreme air of confidence that he knew exactly where to find it.

This confidence was still in evidence twenty minutes later when we found ourselves back at our starting point. It was however beginning to wear thin with the passage of a further twenty minutes, when we couldn't even find our starting point! Every trail we took either lead us into a dead-end or round in a circle. We did find our way out of the woods once, but at completely the wrong side, as far below we could see the twinkling lights of Bourne End.

Ominously, thirteen of us re-entered the wood, which by now was completely dark, leading Linda to wail, "It's the lostest we've ever been!" It was also probably the scariest we'd ever been. (I personally was marginally more scared when I christened my bus pass some weeks later to attend the Notting Hill Carnival and felt like Michael Caine in *Zulu* at the battle of Rourke's Drift, but that's another story!)

Our journey was now accompanied by bats overhead and worrying, scurrying sounds coming from the undergrowth and with every step we took we were either scratched, stung or bitten some more. Then suddenly, far in the distance, we spotted the red light atop the Abbey Barn mast and scrambled towards it, through brambles, across ditches and over fences in a mad panic to escape the woods.

We fled until our path was completely blocked by a megawatt electric fence! Cometh the hour, cometh the man, and in a flash, (that's what we were expecting) Pete, who was surprisingly still with us, reassumed command, decided that Darinka was the most expendable and instructed her to lift up the wire while the rest of us crawled under it.

Shortly before we reached the safety of the road, Hard to Find Farm loomed out of the darkness like a Transylvanian castle in a Hammer horror film, but gained hardly a second glance. We were still some distance from the club when we passed my house, so I ran a ferry service for the neediest, but regrettably despite his protestations, Pete failed to qualify.

January 2009



Diary of a Diver (Diva?) 2009

Five weeks to go before the big day of the Flora London Marathon! With the Bramley 20 behind me, the plan is to run the Datchet 20 easy, the Bournemouth Half hard, then two weeks of tapering. Looking good!

March 19. The day had already gone badly following the final trip to the vet for the much-loved family feline whose last resting place, the vet had instructed, should be no less than three feet deep. That was a tall order, but as dusk was beginning to fall it could wait till the morrow, as this would be the last club run before the clocks changed.

I was tucked towards the centre of a tight-knit group of about twenty of Handy Cross's finest as we neared the end of Cressex Road and it was at this point that Laura and Tora accelerated to the front. Whether their Lycra-clad silhouettes played a part in the ensuing melee I am unsure, but I was literally swept off my feet and felt myself hurtling towards the upcoming pavement. Despite the pain and shock, I fortunately made the wise decision to stay down until the rest of the pack had raced round, and over, my prostrate form. There were a few perfunctory enquiries as to whether I was OK, which being semi-comatose I was unable to answer, before they disappeared into the darkness. Apart, that is, from my old mate Gora who escorted me home.

An initial inspection revealed that my remaining good knee was bleeding profusely as were two lacerated fingers, my ribs hurt and it was difficult to walk on my twisted ankle. No cause for alarm then!

March 20. It would have been a daunting task to dig a three-foot-deep hole with two good legs, so as a monopod with the use of only one hand and damaged ribs my pathetic two-foot effort took up most of the day.

March 22. Ankle now swollen grotesquely so finally go to A&E where I leave three hours later having been issued with a pair of crutches.

March 23. Receive phone call from Falls Prevention Unit who say they're concerned about my many A&E visits, but say I probably won't heed their advice as I'm a runner. *Au contraire*, I need all the falls-prevention advice I can get! Do they suspect domestic abuse I wonder?

April 3. Consultant tells me that my ankle needs exercising and yes, that can include some light running. I decide to keep *schtum* about ever-nearing London Marathon. He ominously tells me that I needn't return the crutches, does he possibly envisage future falls?

April 4. Jog to track and do four laps with no ill effects. Yippee!

April 5. Decide to jog to track via Winch Bottom. With my propensity for falling I think it unwise to go down steps so run down adjacent path. Have hardly started descent when Wallop! . . . and I find myself face down in the dirt with blood seeping through my jacket from a badly skinned arm. "Stop the fight, ref! This man can't take any more punishment!" I was thinking to myself, whilst deciding whether to stay down or to attempt to get up and beat the count. My woes were further compounded at the other end of Winch Bottom when I encountered the Trevor Hunter Dining Club entering the Blacksmiths Arms. They visibly recoiled from the sorry spectacle I presented, covered in blood, sweat, tears – and now mud.

April 25. Race Day Minus One. 11pm. All packed and ready to roll but strangely enough my ankle, which has been fine for the past couple of weeks, has been hurting all day, dismiss this as probably being psychosomatic, but will make final decision in morning.

April 26. RACE DAY! 5.45am. Ankle holds up for 400 metre jog to Marlow Hill so, being an eternal optimist, decide that 26.2 miles will be a breeze as all my suffering had been before the big day, unlike Mr. Lansdowne's harrowing account elsewhere.



The first 26.1 miles of the race pass uneventfully and it is only 200m from the finish, when storming (struggling to put one foot in front of the other actually) down The Mall, that my ears are assailed by a shriek of recognition from my bosom buddy, the irrepressible Jo Smith and, incredibly, having started from different places and at different times, we had achieved the perfect synchronized marathon run, triumphantly crossing the line together!

I only discover later that the day itself is a race of two halves, the actual marathon and then the three-mile, energy-sapping slog back to the coach led by Sam Amend, going for yet another PB from the Mall to the Embankment, leaving in her wake the motley crew of Handy Cross also-rans, with me bringing up the rear.

The Divers Updated

We all very much regret the imminent departure of Dave Nash but none more so than The Handy Cross Divers, of whom he was a co-founder and very much one of our biggest falling stars. It says much for his replacement, therefore, that in the past six months she is rapidly achieving notoriety on the diving circuit with a series of awe-inspiring X-rated crashes.

I refer, of course, to the highly-acclaimed Helen Moseley, whose most spectacular dive to date regrettably necessitated hospitalisation, a fate few of us have achieved despite years of apparently trying. This was due to her daring, and inspirational technique, completely oblivious to the ensuing pain, of using her nose to break a fall. A strategy that probably makes good sense as, unlike knees and ankles, noses do not normally delay a return to competitive running.

Her originality appears to know no bounds, as shortly after recovering from her initial fall, she hurled herself onto the barbed wire at Bluey's Farm, and her most recent escapade was to impale herself on what was probably the only stick in the middle of Fernie Fields at an interval session.

Andy Walsh rather unkindly remarked after a Sunday run that running with me was like running with Norman Wisdom, but I'm beginning to think that if Helen maintains her current "strike" rate The Divers will have a new champion.

Following Helen's spectacular "nose-dive" detailed in the last Bulletin, it seemed a fair assumption that it would be some time before a fall of this magnitude would be rivalled. However, not to be outdone, Mark swiftly followed her brave example and contrived, when tripping on roots whilst rushing headlong through woods at breakneck-pace (no pun intended) to break his fall with his face.

Fortunately for Mark, and even more fortunately for all the blokes, Amanda was on hand to whip off her top in a flash, as a makeshift tourniquet. Regrettably I wasn't there personally so am unable to verify either account, but there are those killjoys who suggest it was a spare top being worn around her waist! But why let the facts spoil a good story?

Having struggled the three miles back to the club, this brave little soldier returned to a hero's welcome in the bar, where he endured the pain even longer before eventually going to A & E for the obligatory six-hour wait to have his eyelid stitched.

It was therefore with some trepidation on last Sunday's run that I found myself in the company of both Helen and Mark, particularly as Mark was arguing that falls should be judged on the number of stitches, whereas Helen's injury had necessitated the emergency services attending her. I was not anxious to emulate either but did have my position as a founder Diver to consider. So with this in mind I maneuvered myself to the back of the pack (no mean feat in itself considering Pete was present) and projected myself towards the ground whilst skillfully nicking my arm on barbed wire on the way down, thus maintaining some credibility, relatively painlessly, by finishing the run resembling an extra from Reservoir Dogs.



A Diver's Demise

Considering some of their spectacular efforts earlier in the year, the Divers appeared to be resting on their laurels and by late December no major falls had occurred. Even Tora's run at sub zero temperatures passed without incident, possibly because I was uncharacteristically late and only ran the last mile. Regrettably all this was about to change with the onset of the Arctic weather.

Rod and Margot's Boxing Day run was as popular as ever with about twenty runners and ten or so walkers taking part. However, the snow had started to thaw and then refrozen leaving a treacherous icy surface so there seemed a certain inevitability that the day would end in tears or in A&E, or both. I was already beginning to wish I'd chosen the safer option and stayed in bed.

My misgivings were further compounded by the presence of Ellen who had vowed never, ever to go on the ice with me again, following our horizontal rendition of Bolero at the Bracknell Ice Palace. This performance had gained a near-perfect score (no pun intended, yes it was) marred only by her hysterical cries of "Get him 'orf!" I rather think she held me responsible, somewhat unfairly, for the ensuing debacle, so was pleased to see she had regained her confidence in just a couple of years. These worries were to prove completely groundless though as the run itself, cross-country to Hughenden Park, was immensely enjoyable, but ironically the only faller was Rod who was obviously disoriented by the snow as he is familiar with every flint and tree-route for miles.

And so it was with a feeling of elation that I arrived back at Rod's in one piece and trusted that my wife, who had joined the walkers, had had an equally good time. She had been placed under the care of Grade One Athletics Coach Mike so I certainly had no worries regarding her safety, and was still unconcerned when she said she'd had a minor mishap, but nothing serious just a bit of mud on her trousers.

Unusually, though not surprisingly being Christmas, it was a quiet night at A&E when we finally checked in several hours later, as her wrist had become increasingly more swollen and more painful throughout the day. Eventually it was diagnosed that she'd broken two bones in her wrist, and this on her first attempt!

John Lennon was once asked if Ringo was the best drummer in the world, to which he replied "Ringo is not even the best drummer in The Beatles!" Well, my position is similar, having spent years of pain and discomfort establishing The Divers I'm suddenly not even the best Diver in my own house!

"Cliveden is cancelled due to the dangerous state of the ground and we are unable to guarantee runners' safety." Most people would have thought this news an excuse for a lie in, but not our Nick! He thought it a good idea to 'seize the day' and organise an alternative run from the club on a bitterly cold day - with predictable results! On a surface that would have done justice to an ice-rink there were nine starters, which was an appropriate number as we were to go down like skittles..

Scarcely had we hit the open road when we incurred our first casualty in the shape of Helen '2008 Diver of the Year' Moseley, who found herself unceremoniously dumped on her rear on the ice. As her party piece is to break falls with her nose, she was caught completely by surprise and retired hurt. We had travelled a further mile or so across the frozen tundra when our guest runner, who must have been recruited from the local sanatorium, performed a similar sit down strike.

I guessed by now we were out past Lane End but there were no recognisable landmarks and the landscape resembled more the foothills of the Hindu Kush so trust Donna to choose this point to go over on her ankle and stay down.



The one thing you instantly need, and never have to hand for an injury, is ice. Well she was in luck as there was ice as far as we could see in every direction. We were then faced with the bleak choice of carrying Donna or leaving her to an uncertain fate, so it was just as well she decided to struggle on. Personally I would have waited with her, but I'd already sacrificed a good time in the Marlow Half by carrying her and Cheryl across swollen rivers (See results elsewhere).

It wasn't until nearing the end of the run that I performed the notorious 'head banger' when six-minute-milling and completely oblivious to the underlying ice, my glasses flew in one direction and my hat flew in another but, unlike Bracknell, there was no soft body to cushion my fall and my head hit the ground with a resounding crack.

I lay motionless on the cold ground staring up at the leaden sky for what seemed an eternity before being hauled to my feet and forced to run the rest of the way with my hat crammed full of ice to cover the purple lump on my head. I remarked to Donna that twisted ankles were worse as bumped heads don't stop you running. But she disagreed and quite rightly stated that twisted ankles don't kill you! Thanks again Nick for an unforgettable experience!

But that was then, and now it's a new year and Pete's just started his Marathon training. So last Sunday, with the heaviest snow of the year still on the ground, eight of us took off on the first Club Run of 2010. It was nine miles long and through woods and across fields of virgin and often deep snow. No falls, no injuries, except Pete, just a thoroughly enjoyable run! In fact the most dangerous part of the run was probably racing across Booker Airfield in deep snow dressed like terrorists! Roll on Summer!

January 2010

What A Shower!

February 28th and Aston Villa were due to play Manchester United at Wembley. So what! Whatevah! Who cares? Certainly not seven of the eight runners who so selflessly met at the Spade Oak at 7.30 a.m. on what was probably the most miserable and wettest morning of the winter. However, we had assembled at this ungodly hour to support the eighth runner, Craig Atkins, who regrettably for the rest of us, needed to get to Wembley early enough to buy a ticket, and prior to this wanted to run 20 miles!

So the plan was to join up two of last year's mystery runs in a figure of eight, running first to Boulter's Lock, and then back through Cookham to Temple Lock, with a few added-value points of interest thrown in. Having slipped and slithered our way along the towpath to Cookham, running into the teeth of a sou'wester and struggling to keep up with Grace, we left the Thames Path and headed across open fields along the Greenway in search of drier land, only to be greeted by a sea of mud.



It was here that I planned the first point of interest, as some years earlier Liz had pointed out a tree in which dwelt dozens of parakeets. On this day though even the tree looked dead, let alone the birds but I attributed this to the fact that on the earlier occasion it had been a glorious summer morning (come to think of it I don't recall seeing any parakeets then either). Our disappointment was short-lived though as minutes later we came upon a statue of a family of hippopotami, but in these swamp-like conditions to encounter the real thing would have been no great surprise! We were now nearing the halfway point of the first stage and eagerly anticipating what was planned to be a major highlight, namely the state-of-the-art loos at Boulter's Lock. Imagine our crushing disappointment when our access was barred by a sign saying "Flooding - Island Closed!"

With our spirits somewhat dampened we headed back along the towpath, stopping only when we reached the tree which bears the historic legend 'At this spot in 1745 absolutely nothing happened' and incredible though it may seem, absolutely nothing happened again! We were now nearing the halfway point and tragically we were to lose half of our number when Margaret retired, with the somewhat lame excuse that she'd run a cross country race the previous day in similar conditions. Dave, Amanda and Grace also left in sympathy.

Craig, Cheryl 'the indefatigable' (look it up) Jo Smith and myself then started the long haul to the summit of Winter Hill, normally well worth the effort for the magnificent views, except on this day the only view was of the clouds below us. Clouds which we ran through minutes later when hurtling down through Bisham Wood in what appeared to be a flash flood. At this point we decided not to go to Temple as the footpath would have been impassable, so headed towards Marlow Bridge. Hallelujah, at last we're heading home and that would be near enough twenty. However on reaching Higgi(n)son Park I was alarmed that they were heading back towards the Temple towpath, where only a few weeks earlier I had waded waist-deep through icy water with Amanda, but a last-minute change of direction led us out onto the Henley road.

Before the advent of the GPS we would have known by how we felt that we had run twenty miles and nobody would have argued. Well, when we eventually got back to the car park, I knew we had run 20 but Cheryl's duff Garmin wrongly said that we had run just under 18.5, so they decided to round it up by running to the level crossing. Whilst I was collapsed on the level-crossing gate it was decided that running back to the Bourne End road would make it up to nineteen, so off we trudged again.

Having lost the will to live some miles previously and bringing up the rear with Cheryl, I wasn't party to the decision that having reached the road we turn right and run towards Bourne End, but when we finally got back to the car park we were still one-tenth of a mile short of twenty, so Jo and I ran to the level crossing again while Craig and Cheryl did a couple of laps of the car park. Twenty miles of misery in atrocious conditions in four and a half hours - and I'm only training for the Wargrave 5k!

(Sore) Footnote: Craig got to Wembley too late to buy a ticket and had to settle for watching his beloved Villa lose in a pub near the stadium!



Tales from the River Bank

Over the last few months the 8 a.m. Sunday morning river runs from the Spade Oak have become immensely popular, in fact some weeks there have been as many as six of us scaling the dizzy heights of Winter Hill.

However, no run has ever been more popular than this year's pre-London undress-rehearsal when no fewer than eighteen runners turned up, even coming from as far afield as Little Kingshill. The reason for this spectacular turnout was the much-publicised guest appearance of our very own celebs, namely Alice in Wonderland and her bosom-buddy (I use the term advisedly) The Queen of Hearts, aka Donna and Cheryl.

The run started at an electrifying pace with the two A-listers at the head of the procession, and the rest of us in hot pursuit like the proverbial Mad Hatters, or was it March Hares? They were undoubtedly spurred on by the shouts of "Cor!" and "Phwoar!" which greeted them as they streaked along the riverbank, and the rest of us were spurred on by the belief that with such gravity-defying outfits a 'wardrobe malfunction' was on the cards.

It is normally our practice to walk through Cookham churchyard, though under the guise of respecting the deceased it's actually because we seize every excuse to stop running, and this day was to be no different. It would have been difficult for our heroines to have been less appropriately dressed in a graveyard and the more sensitive among us, *moi* included, attempted to shield their scantily-clad forms from the decaying gravestones. Even so I wasn't sure if the rumbling we heard was the angered gods voicing their disapproval or, far more likely, the churchyard's incumbents striving to cop a better look. Particularly Sir Stanley Spencer, Cookham's most famous son, whose painting "*The Resurrection*" depicted himself and other villagers leaning naked against the gravestones. Life imitating art or what?

Our run then took us across the golf course, much to the amazement and delight of the early risers who had doubtless never witnessed a finer pair of birdies, but our birdies were the sort more likely to be found in Tiger Wood's address book than on a golf course. We then began the ascent of Winter Hill where the air and the crowds became much thinner and at this point we realised that one of our hotties was missing which beggared the question "*Alice! Alice! Where the **** is Alice?*"

After our earlier experience it was with some trepidation we heard the church bells announcing our imminent arrival at Marlow churchyard just as the congregation was beginning to file in, but our prayers went unanswered and the much anticipated "vicars and tarts" *ménage* never materialised, due solely to the apparent shortage of vicars.

For those who missed the momentous occasion the paparazzi were on hand and photos will no doubt eventually appear on our website, but if you can't wait I believe they're already available on the less discerning areas of the internet.

STOP PRESS. Beware all you red-blooded males as one of our dynamic duo is already planning to run next year's marathon dressed as the leather-clad Xena the Warrior Princess. I'm not at liberty to say exactly which one, but Xena would never have allowed the barman in The Old Sun to knock a drink over her as an excuse to enthusiastically give her nether regions a good polish with his Pledge-impregnated duster!

For those people who didn't go to The Old Sun on that propitious occasion, the young lady in question had her shapely legs stretched out across two chairs, the sight of which so confused the barman that, after knocking over her drink, he grabbed the first cloth he could find, which had been used previously to polish the furniture!



The change to British Summer Time always brings a new set of challenges for Handy Cross Divers when the treacherous icy pavements and ill-lit kerbs are replaced by the half-hidden stumps, roots and flints, which never forgive a lapse in concentration, and this year has proved no exception.

There was initially very little scope for falling, however, as the first two weeks of the lighter evenings were spent hopelessly lost in Winch Bottom Woods looking for the exit, under the leadership, of course, of our much-maligned chairman. No doubt we would have spent the third week doing the same had Rod not run the route in reverse prior to our departure. This enabled us to pick up the pace and give Pete the opportunity to execute a manoeuvre of such rare athleticism and grace (not you Grace) as to be unparalleled for a person of his stature. Though undeniably a fall of great artistic merit it was, very regrettably for all who witnessed it, completely lacking the three main elements of a worthy Dive, namely, bone-crunching pain, blood, and tears.

So the Dive of The Year thus far must be that of Angie's, a previous Diver of some repute. Whilst out in the woods over Skirmett she stumbled and badly grazed her shin, got to her feet, took hardly a step, then, for reasons known only to herself, hurled herself to the ground, very badly injuring her finger, knee and elbow and had to be helped, bleeding profusely, to a nearby house. Nice one Ange!

August 2010



The Telstars

It was to be the final mystery run of the year and seeing that Ellen, Frank, Sally and Phil (S not H) had chosen the shorter option, I was anticipating what promised to be a good fast run. Shortly into the run however, Trevor handed me his map and asked would I assume control as he was finding it too tough. So, regrettably, I had to make a sacrifice for the greater good of the group and although running well within myself I decided to regroup and wait for the stragglers by the Harrow. As it was still quite light I suggested that we add a loop to the proposed route and perhaps run up to Speen or Kingshill, as minutes earlier we had briefly met with those doing the long run who had headed off in that direction.

When my suggestion was met by a sea of shaking heads, I looked for a bloke for back up, as it is a well-known fact that girls can't be as decisive as us men and could easily be persuaded to go the extra mile. So I scanned the dissenting faces looking for the inevitable support then, as I felt the panic rising, I scanned them again individually; Laura, Donna, Gemma, Kat, Liz, Cheryl, Fran, Amanda, Lucy, Rachael and Helen, slowly the terrible truth dawned on me, there was to be no male back-up as there were no other blokes present, just eleven young maidens (well, once they were!) and me.

Having been forced into this unenviable position, my first thought was to leave them to fend for themselves and rush off after the earlier group. But I could ill afford the five-minute start they'd had, so having exhausted the alternatives I decided to take seriously the mantle of responsibility that had been thrust upon me and strive to guide them safely through the difficult, wooded terrain that lay ahead. I firstly told them that I realised they were probably rubbish at map reading and navigating but just to trust me, and I was further encouraged when one of them referred to the group as Terry's Tarts! Although this epithet had a certain cachet I thought it would encourage too many knockers (*sic*) so thought Telstars more apt.

Night was rapidly falling when we finally set off on the hazardous trek toward the distant forest and hardly had we started when an ear-splitting clap of thunder and a short, sharp shower thankfully silenced the cacophony of high-pitched gossiping voices that surrounded me. Whilst sheltering under a tree it was suggested that to pass the time we hold an impromptu Miss Wet Tee-shirt competition, but the motion was defeated by eleven votes to one, and quite rightly so.

Having been disorientated by this excitement I proceeded to lead them three times round the village hall car park looking for the footpath, before one of my appointed deputies, who we'll call C.S. (it's a gas, gas, gas!) discovered it in an adjacent field. This footpath led ever upwards and confirmed my worst suspicions that some of these fit birds were not as fit as they looked, but at long last we arrived at the edge of the woods. I began to rue the day many years ago when my mum insisted I join the Church Lads Brigade instead of the Boy Scouts, but on the other hand, it seemed highly likely that we could be doing a lot of praying in the hours ahead.

So without further ado, we plunged into the eerie darkness and I instantly realised that nothing in my life thus far had prepared me for the experience of being lost with eleven scantily-clad babes in the wood and the realisation that, if I was to fall, I would be unlikely to survive to tell the tale. Having wandered round aimlessly for what seemed like hours after A.P. (an ap for every occasion) mistakenly said she knew the way.

Hysteria was beginning to take over, but I bravely fought it without it spreading to the girls and our ordeal came to an end when a gap in the clouds enabled me to catch the briefest of glimpses of the Ursa Minor constellation, by which I triangulated the position of the Le De Spencer Arms and led them triumphantly back to base.

There would now have followed an eye-witness account detailing the scenes of absolute debauchery when the Handy Cross Ladettes, ably assisted by a guest Belgrave Harrier, descended on The Falcon to celebrate Donna's birthday - had I not finally succumbed to the significant rewards to let "What goes in The Falcon stays in The Falcon!"

October 2010



A Walk In The Park

Having reached my allotted three-score-years-and-ten some weeks earlier I remarked, somewhat smugly, on the London Marathon-bound coach, that I only had to get under five hours for a Good For Age entry so would probably be eligible for ever.

These words were to come back to haunt me some hours later when, my calf having conked-out at the nine mile point, I found myself laid back on a grassy verge enjoying the warm Spring sunshine and the ministrations of two Bermondsey Belles enthusiastically massaging my legs with Deep-Heat, and yes, I am aware that injuries need ice not heat, but had no wish to curb their obvious enjoyment.

I was brought sharply back to reality when out of the sea of passing runners a voice called out, "Alright Terry?" The race number was Pete's but the runner bore a striking resemblance to Nick Martin. I set off in hot pursuit at a fast hobble to ask if he could tell my support network at Mile fourteen that I would be running late, but he sped off out of sight, confirming my suspicion that it must have been Nick as Pete would have joined us on the grass.

It was with some trepidation that I eventually reached the St Johns Ambulance station at Tower Bridge, knowing that in previous years Chris had entered the tent as an injured runner and emerged as the bandage-swathed Invisible Man. So after a relentless pounding (just like Mike's) had no effect I decided I would pull out of the race when I met up with my supporters just one mile away.

At last I spotted the helium-filled dolphins on extendable fishing rods (thank you Chez!) and knew that my ordeal was at an end. My family and so-called friends had other ideas though and rather than give me the sympathy I so richly deserved, they thrust me unceremoniously back into the melee with promises to see me at Mile twenty one and assurances that there were still Handy Cross runners behind me (and I actually believed them!).

Though initially the prospect of walking another twelve miles seemed daunting, I set off at a brisk pace and soon found that I began to rather enjoy it, particularly with the massive encouragement I was receiving, though I'm not normally one for milking the crowd (much!)

I found I was able to wave my appreciation and was being treated more like an all-conquering hero than a pretty miserable also-ran. It wasn't, however, until I reached the depths of Whitechapel that I encountered all the usual suspects who make up the Handy Cross Barmy Army supporters and whose reputation for keeping up the fluids on Race day is legendary, in fact it is usual for the marathoners to have to help the supporters back to the coach, and even at this stage it was apparent that this year would be no exception.

By the time I'd walked to The Embankment the proper runners had long gone, and most people, mainly in fancy dress, were walking, and having already been overtaken by hula-hoopers, tray-carrying waiters and jugglers it was no surprise when entering Birdcage Walk that the first of the rhinos passed me!

When we finally turned into The Mall absolutely everyone, except me, started to run and when I neared the finish line the cheering reached a crescendo which even I thought was a fraction O.T.T., but then realised that the cheers were for the two-man bus that pipped me to the post!



I was now left with the problem of running a marathon in less than five hours before the GFA deadline of mid-July. Being injured the options were extremely limited to just Cork (too far) the Marathon of Wales (too hilly) and finally Boddington.

The advantage of Boddington was that it was flat and (the organisers lied) fast. The disadvantage was that it consisted of eleven anti-clockwise laps of 2.2 miles preceded by half a lap, and then an extra spur to finish in the scenic grounds of Boddington Manor.

Concurrent to the marathon, and on the same course, there was to be a 50k race (fourteen laps) and a 100k race. Prior to this was a 10k charity race which shared part of the course. It would be virtually impossible to think of anything more mind-numbingly boring and even with six weeks to go the prospect filled me with dread!

It was a certainty that the day would be warm, particularly as all the preceding weekends were miserable affairs, so it was no surprise when the forecast was for the hottest day of the year with temperatures nearing ninety degrees. It was no small feat therefore, convincing the memsahib how enjoyable it would be for her to stand for five hours in the middle of nowhere watching dozens of sweaty runners!

The day started promisingly with complete cloud cover, but the race was not due to start until 11.15 and temperatures were already soaring when we reached Boddington Manor to collect my chip from the organisers, the aptly named 'Beyond the Limitations' and it became apparent that most of the entrants were seeking GFA times and the rest were the nut jobs who make up the 100 Marathon Club, who think running marathons every week is fun!

It was a walk of a mile to the cluster of cottages at the start and apart from this the only other distractions on the course were the water-station dispensing bottles of water and cups of Hi-Five, and a churchyard wall where the small group of supporters were positioned. The course itself was completely flat and featureless apart from 5-mile markers for the marathon and 10k markers for the rest. With no mile markers I had calculated I needed a lap time of about twenty three minutes, which would leave a bit in reserve for the odd walk, a doddle in normal conditions. Not so for those looking for a GFA time of three hours which meant completing each lap in under fifteen minutes.

With the first lap completed in twenty one minutes, I made the conscious effort to slow down, but every subsequent lap was slower than the previous one. The race soon settled into a regular and monotonous pattern consisting of a drenching at the start of each new lap where a hose was left on, followed by a soaking at the water stop and a third when we reached the spectators, whose numbers seemed to be growing when joined by more runners who were dropping out, including the legendary wheelchair duo Mick and Phil last seen in the Wycombe Half.

It wasn't until the seventh lap that I stopped to walk for the first time and at this point my time started to drift. By Lap nine, the runners were few and far between and it was impossible to tell which lap they were on, or even what race they were in, as many had taken time out to recover, but whereas I wrongly assumed that many had finished even more had given up.



By now the heat was unbearable and my lap times had slipped to twenty seven minutes when I espied in the distance a mirage, not palm trees and a cool oasis, but unless I was hallucinating it looked remarkably like Craig Atkins in his running gear! Yep, good old Craig had come to support me for the last lap. I still had forty-five minutes left to finish but thought at this stage anything could happen.

With Craig doing all the talking I struggled round the last lap but when we came to the finishing spur a strange thing happened, I found that although I was certain to achieve my time, Craig was running faster and faster leaving me for dead, until he disappeared from view to be violently ill. He says it was an iffy gel, but I rather think the sense of occasion overwhelmed him. Thanks, anyway Craig, you're a star!

The temperature when we left at 6 p.m. was still twenty nine degrees and having come 40th out of the 60 finishers, with 64 non-finishers I decided to put the experience to good use, but regrettably The Marathon des Sables in The Sahara is already full for 2012.

July 2011

Terry's Birthday

Rarely am I stuck for words as can be seen elsewhere in this Bulletin! The party that was arranged for my 70th Birthday however, was one such occasion, in fact I was undoubtedly more speechless and overawed than I've ever been or will be again.

I am completely baffled as to how it could have been kept such a secret, when I do like to know what's going on, and how I was excluded from all the relevant emails, with the exception of those relating to the fake post-marathon dinner.

I was even asked for a choice of venue for this occasion and suggested curry as Donna had said she didn't want curry, little realising that La Tasca's had been booked some weeks previous!



A Blast from the Past

It was incredibly, ten years since this classic literary masterpiece was first published in The Bulletin when it was wrongly attributed to Alfred Lord Tennyson. Terry made no apologies to the PC brigade for its sexist theme, as it reflected the attitudes of a more innocent age, when it was *de rigueur* to ogle one's fellow runners.

MENAGE A TROIS (mange toute)

(The Ballad of Ellen 'n' Karen 'n' Sue)

Some Handy Cross Runners are absolute stunners,
Believe me I've known one or two,
But few of the rest look their best in a vest,
Like Ellen 'n' Karen 'n' Sue!

Good things come in threes but I'm brought to my knees,
By this trio of temptresses true.
I just can't compete, will I always be beat,
By Ellen 'n' Karen 'n' Sue?

But wait for the day of the Datchet 5k,
And I'll show them just what I can do,
But my time's a disgrace, I can't keep up the pace,
Of Ellen 'n' Karen 'n' Sue!

A total disaster, can't run any faster,
But who cares for if only they knew,
That I really don't mind, I love running behind
Ellen 'n' Karen 'n' Sue!

But one thing keeps me thinking, and drives me to drinking,
Will I ever be able to choose?
Whose form is the best when displayed in a vest,
Is it Ellen's or Karen's or Sue's?

2012

Ten years have flashed past, so we're not quite as fast,
And the prospects of PBs are few,
So my mind often strays to those halcyon days,
Chasing Ellen 'n' Karen 'n' Sue.



The Beach Bash

The expression that, “A bad day on the beach is better than a good day in the office!” is a mantra that has rarely failed me! Consequently the first hot day of the summer found me running along the Bournemouth promenade on what so far had been anything but a bad day.

I had just completed a couple of efforts between the piers and was enjoying a gentle jog recovery full of *joie de vivre* and things were about to get even better as I saw what appeared to be a fellow runner approaching. She was deeply tanned, wearing dark shades, a pink skimpy top, the shortest of shorts and was about six feet tall, from the crest of her long blonde hair to the base of what I now realized was a skateboard.

The promenade at this point is about thirty feet wide with high cliffs on one side and a vast expanse of sand on the other and being midweek was relatively un crowded, so there was ample space for us to pass. So, chin up, chest out, I smoothly accelerated to ten-minute mileing, estimating our combined speed when we passed would be about 26 mph, at which point I would give a perfunctory, laid-back “Hi!”. However, I had completely failed to allow for the fact that as she came closer I became like a rabbit transfixed by oncoming headlamps (no pun intended) and what was even more disconcerting was that the distance between us was decreasing alarmingly.

In retrospect this was one chicken run that was destined to end in disaster from the outset. Me, visually challenged, and running into the sun with my cap pulled way down over my face and she, hurtling along with a pair of mirrored, look-great-but-can't-see-a-thing Raybans! And so it was at the last possible moment we both took avoiding action and turned towards the beach. The first point of contact was the hard polymer front edge of the skateboard scything into my shin followed a nanosecond later by the aforementioned headlamps slamming into my bare torso, sending us both in an arcing trajectory back on to the unyielding tarmac.

We lay motionless with our limbs entangled and the sun beating down on us for what seemed an eternity but in reality was somewhat less. As her breathing was erratic I was wondering if I should administer CPR and deeply massage her medallion point *a la Vinnie Jones*, or could such a kindly gesture be misinterpreted?

But my thoughts were interrupted when she softly murmured, “Why did you run into me?” to which I should have countered, “Why did you hurl yourself at me?” But this was not the time to fall out with my new bosom buddy, so I gallantly helped her to her feet (though perhaps it was she that helped me).

“Oh my God I've never knocked anyone over before, I'm so upset!” I was about to agree that I too had never knocked anyone over, but my mind raced back to the HCR trip to the Bracknell Ice Emporium when Ellen the Ice Maiden, now Mrs F, had somewhat hysterically held me responsible for a similar no-fault accident!

“Are you sure you're OK?” She asked worriedly, holding my arm, “Yeah, I'm cool!” (That's how we talk on The Beach!) “How about you?” and despite her reassurances I lingeringly patted her down just to make sure.

Then after we hugged, as people do who have just shared a traumatic experience, she sped off and I surveyed the damage that I had manfully shielded from her. Two bloodied elbows, a lacerated shin, an egg-sized lump on my thigh and a broken toe, now just how cool was that?



Tel's Tall Tales

My woeful account in the last Bulletin of the brief but brutal meeting with the statuesque blonde skateboarder was preceded by a note from the editor, "This could only happen to Terry". I thought at the time this was a little bit unfair, but following subsequent (mis)adventures I am beginning to concede that perhaps he was right after all.

.....

Having kept a low profile following the aforementioned encounter, I had decided not to run until midday when cyclists, skateboarders and fellow runners with any sense would be avoiding what was an unusually hot summer's day. Entries for the Poole Festival of Running had closed weeks earlier, but as the Poole Park venue was just a couple of miles from the beach I thought I'd jog over, once more in swim shorts (not Speedos) to see how it had gone.

As I entered the park I noticed that the road was bisected into 'male finishers' and 'female finishers' and the gantry clock in the distance was showing 9.00 minutes, to which I attached no significance. Thinking how pretentious it would appear to spectators, of which there were still quite a few, for me to cross the line in swimming trunks after the race had ended, I sidestepped up onto the pavement. Retrospectively this split-second decision was to save me from a lifetime of embarrassment.

Ambling past the finish line I spotted a compound containing piles of left-over goody bags, so asked the young girl overseeing them if I could have one, she seemed a bit unsure but nodded anyway, regrettably though I couldn't see any tee shirts up for grabs. However, as I walked away a typical jobs worth marshal demanded sternly, "Where did you get that bag, did you just help yourself?" I assured her I had been given it and nodded vaguely in the direction of the compound, at this point her younger colleague said it's alright it's not a problem. Still feeling self-righteously indignant I huffed, "I should think not, we give dozens of extras away!" and made off.

As I was leaving the park I saw a group of runners rapidly approaching and the terrible truth slowly dawned on me as I glanced back and saw the gantry clock now registering 16.00 minutes. I approached the nearest marshal, despite him glowering at my goody bag, who confirmed that the 5k was just finishing and the main event, the 10k, was not due to start until 2p.m.!

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I was nearing the end of a long Sunday morning run and was just above the ski-slope in Abbey Barn Lane when I decided that rather than run up to the junction I would take the footpath across the fields. Having crossed the stile, I was faced with the option of the official footpath which cuts back diagonally across the corn-field to the top of Keep Hill, or alternatively what appeared to be a recently-made vehicle track of flattened corn running parallel to the woods, which would be considerably quicker.

Shortly after starting along this track I heard the sound of distant gunfire and recalled that the Prestwood Clay Pigeon Club held their shoots in the neighbouring woods every Sunday morning. The further I went the louder the crashing and banging became, but having passed the point of no return I consoled myself with the belief that clay pigeons, like their namesakes, are supposed to fly and therefore there was no immediate danger at ground level.

But the noise reached a deafening level and was now accompanied by whooshing sounds overhead, and just as it reached a crescendo and I was seriously beginning to fear for my life, it suddenly stopped. Only to be replaced by unintelligible shouts, most of them ending in "off" from a group of wildly-gesticulating angry men in a clearing fifty yards to my left.



I was now faced with the age-old dilemma of 'Fight or Flight'. Though heavily outnumbered I assumed I was probably fitter than they were and undoubtedly faster but, on balance, they were heavily armed with an array of high-velocity shotguns and wearing army surplus camouflage fatigues, whereas I was just in a Marlow 5 high-vis tee shirt. So without further ado I gave a brief gesture of acknowledgement and dived headlong into the corn.

The following Monday morning I received a call from Grant and Stone asking to speak to the Suicide Runner of Flackwell Heath. They recounted how whilst out shooting they had been astonished to see a head bobbing about in the corn directly in the line of fire, as evidently some clays are not shot until the last minute, and they were yet more incredulous when having drawn my attention to the danger I was in I had just waved back at them!

.....

Having run the last eleven miles of the Wycombe Half and dodging the St John's ambulance after crashing at mile two, I was awaiting my chance to really milk the crowd's sympathy by resembling a victim of Vlad the Impaler when I went to collect the Old F**ts trophy.

So, after all the trophies had been presented, and the crowd had drifted away, I approached our esteemed Chairman, prior to visiting the St John's tent, and asked if there had been a prize for my age group? "Of course", he replied, "Why, would you have won it if you had run?" Doh!

.....

Congratulations to me for completing a mystery run through the woods at dusk without falling over. Admittedly, there were probably more people photographing my severely injured shin than Harry Wales's privates, and yes, Lucy, the white bit showing was the bone, but I never fell over. I just trod on one end of a log and the other end came up and whacked me! Surely that couldn't only happen to me?

September 2012



Tel's Trivia

(Could it really only happen to me?)

I returned from my recent holiday at Disneyworld in Florida with my grandson and great-grandkids with memories enough to last a lifetime. The most vivid and abiding memory however, is of the incident that occurred on the outbound flight shortly after take-off.

I had just been served with a cup of steaming hot coffee when disaster struck as the hostess slipped and knocked the contents into my lap. I leapt up, clattering the meal tray onto the floor. My gritted teeth, watering eyes and barely muffled scream of anguish conveyed just how much I was suffering. Struggling to make amends and in a complete panic at being responsible for this potentially life-changing catastrophe, she was ineffectively dabbing a tea-towel all around the affected area but embarrassingly making a huge effort to avoid the actual trouser area where most of the coffee had landed.

She declined my offer allowing her to inspect the damage when I retired to the loo but said she would make an entry in the in-flight captain's log. Adding insult to injury, I was forced to spend the rest of the flight in an XXL Virgin jumpsuit, just to identify who had been the victim of this calamity! Memories are made of this.

.....

I was sitting on the prom at Bournemouth recovering from a run and reflecting on my misfortune and a cruel twist of fate, having turned up twenty four hours late for a hot date with Sue Neale at the aptly named Groyne 13 when I noticed a rather attractive lady approaching. "Excuse me," She breathed, "Are you on your own?" Though never having previously encountered one I had heard of cougars, older women who go after younger men solely for their bodies and I deduced that she had been understandably attracted by my youthful good looks and gently perspiring pecs.

I realized instantly that my life was at a crossroads and the answer I gave could determine my whole future, but alas my mouth dried up and I found myself unable to speak! Probably just as well for she continued, "Only my husband and I have bought this pack of three Magnums and we'll never be able to manage the third one so we were wondering if you would like it?"

.....

When sneaky Craig Atkins moved to Bracknell, he promised that when Ascot Races was on he would invite us over for a BBQ at his place. So, as I was going to Ascot last week I reminded him of this and he shamefacedly admitted that, "Yes" he was going to the races and "Yes" he was having a barby 'cos his mates from up north were coming down, but we would probably bump into each other on the day.

We texted each other a couple of times during the races bemoaning our luck but made no arrangements to meet up. After the first five races things had gone so badly that I was forced to go to an ATM for a much-needed cash injection which entailed battling through an unyielding phalanx of disgruntled punters. Finally arriving at the head of the queue for the battery of ATMs I found that I was wearing contact lenses, great for distance vision but there was no way I could focus on the instructions of how to insert my card.

Eventually I decided despairingly I had no alternative but to seek help. But from whom? Racetracks are by definition notoriously attended by chancers and ne'er-do-wells, so who on earth could I trust with my bank card at a cash machine? The capacity of the Ascot grandstand is about 12,000 so what are the chances of my asking help from the person at the adjacent ATM only to find, in mutual astonishment, it was none other than Craig Atkins experiencing a similar run of bad luck! Coincidence, as they say, is God's way of staying anonymous.

August 2013



The Passe-a-Grille Hot Run

It was with some trepidation that I boarded the Orlando bound Virgin plane as I was still traumatised from the hot-coffee-in-the-lap episode of a few months earlier. (*Sounded like a lot of fuss over such a small thing! Ed.*) But the flight passed predominately cloud-free with just bits of minor turbulence along the way, similarly to the last fifty years of our marriage which was what we were going to celebrate.

Many thanks to all for your congrats and messages of goodwill. I won't bore or shock you with all the lovey-dovey bits but will just tell you about the incidents on the other three days. A week after arriving I noticed road-closure warnings advertising the inaugural running of the Tampa Bay Radio Hot Run. I had a bit of a knee niggle so hadn't intended running much while away and certainly hadn't contemplated a race. But all that changed when I read the pre-race publicity!

At its southernmost tip St Pete Beach tapers to Passe-a-Grille an area of craft shops, villas and restaurants about a hundred yards wide, bordered on one side by the beach and the Gulf of Mexico and on the other by Boca Ciega bay. The race was to be run through the streets and was to start at 7.20 precisely, on September 19th, the 5k would be two laps and the 10k obviously four.

The precise start time was so that runners would see the sun set over the Gulf at 7.30 and the Harvest full moon rising over the Bay at 7.40 so each lap promised a different level of lighting. There would be live bands and a cryogenic cooling mist to run through, a technical t-shirt, a three-inch wide medal, free photos and "When the race stops the party starts!" So afterwards there was to be cold drinks and a complimentary spread at The Hurricane Lounge sea-food restaurant. How could any runner resist such an array of goodies?

Having decided to enter the 5k I discovered that late entry was an eye-watering \$45 so the 10k at the same price gave you more bang for your bucks. There was another decision to be made at the start when the Star Spangled Banner anthem was played and everyone stood ramrod straight with their hands on their hearts, so I decided to follow suit and be a fake American for five minutes rather than stand out as an alien among my fellow runners every one of whom was a Florida resident.

It is not unusual to have a violent evening thunderstorm at this time of year to cool things down which would have rained big time on this particular parade, but this was a perfect evening for a great sunset, not quite so perfect though for racing as the mercury at the off was nudging 90 degrees. To set your pulses racing girls just look at the photo of the starting line-up on www.hot101.5tampabay/hotrun

The course was a rectangle with two long sides each of just over half a mile and two much shorter sides. So when running north we saw the sun dropping into the ocean and even got the bonus of a clearly visible star which was evidently Venus. On the next lap running south we witnessed the moon rising out of the Bay, a truly awesome sight, completely fulfilling the much-hyped expectations. The other fulfilled expectation was that I would set off much too fast and so was desperately wondering, "Where oh where was the 1k marker?"

But surprisingly enough the 5k and 10k races were being run simultaneously yet the course was marked with mile markers! Plus the fact that the 5k runners had started a bit earlier so it was extremely difficult to judge your pace or position (would have been easier had I not pressed the Garmin stop button instead of the lap button at the first marker!).

And after the buffet came the prize giving!!! Three winners were announced in each 5-year age band from fifteen all the way up to me, two races, male and female, a total of 156 winners. Are you listening Handy Cross? Admittedly only the first in each category received a prize which when I collected mine it was a huge HOT medal twice the size of the previous one!



My time was 1:01:02 nothing special but not so bad considering the distractions and the conditions and I was 129 out of 290 10k finishers, but many more did the 5k. Anyway, this race had always been more about having a great time rather than running a good time!

As promised, the course was peppered with DJs, bands, cheerleaders, water and Gatorade stops and the biggest hit of all, the cryogenic blower which pumped out an icy-cold mist. I had to pass by the side of the finish line three times before actually finishing and each time there was rapturous applause for the finishers until at last it was my turn. It had been thoroughly enjoyable and exhausting at the same time and was made even more exhausting by wearing the giant HOT finishers medal!

We were dining under a starry sky one night at the beach restaurant, surrounded by flaming torches (that's to set the scene) when I saw a large black gentleman in a floral shirt approaching. My immediate thought was that he was either going to sell me something or more likely enrol me in some religious cult.

"Hi, I'm Stan from Indianapolis." He opened, thrusting out his hand, and I motioned him to sit down. He continued.

"My wife and I have been watching you two and we've decided we'd like to grow old like you!" (and that's a compliment?)

"Are you sure, Stan?" I asked, "It's not always as good as this".

"Tell me, how long have you been married?"

"Well, I'm glad you asked, because actually we're here for our Golden Wedding Anniversary so it was fifty years last week!"

Stan congratulated us and shook hands again confirming that we got married three days before he was born.

"And tell me Terry do you have a secret you could pass on to us for a long happy marriage?"

"As a matter of fact I do and it's always worked for us, so listen good. Never, ever go to bed on an argument." I had Stan's full attention. "Stay up and fight!"

Stan's laughter echoed round the bar and out over the beach, and for the rest of the evening he was introducing us to all and sundry and asking me to tell them the secret! By the time we left everyone knew so I just feel privileged to be able to pass on such advice to so many.

November 2013



A Runner's Tale

For fifty years I'd done my best all exercise to shun
The archetypal couch potato was me in ninety-one.
I didn't own a bicycle and I could hardly swim,
There was no way wild horses could drag me to a gym,
A set of basic golf clubs would set me back a "oner"
So with breath-taking naivety I thought "I'll be a runner!"
(How was I to know a runner has to pledge his life,
And that to run is more important than his children or his wife ?)

I joined the local running club, Handy Cross by name,
Always bringing up the rear was my only claim to fame.
But even so I persevered and in time became much faster,
For I was now a servant and running was my master.
I became the county champion, not too hard to do,
For their old legs were wearing out while mine were good as new.
Five K's ten K's - ran them all, running was my fix,
It was great to be a runner way back in ninety-six !

And then I ran the "London" three-twelve was my PB,
Good enough for others but not enough for me,
For surely on the fast start with no queuing at the gate
A sub-three would be likely if I upped my mileage rate.
So I started training twice a day - eighty miles a week,
What's an odd knee niggle or a little ankle tweak,
For I was now a runner and had a runner's brain,
Not for me R-I-C-E, I could run through pain.

But for years of pavement pounding the price to pay was great,
And my body hit the buffers hard in nineteen ninety-eight
So I saw a host of experts and spent a load of dough,
Just to listen to opinions that I didn't want to know.
Though they finally convinced me my last race had been run,
I'd come way back in second place and Father Time had won.
No pressure now, no stop-watch, no need to watch my weight
No fartlek, parlauf, track sessions who cares about heart-rate?

No hills, no drills, no creatine, no more sweaty socks,
My life was back to normal watching football on the box
And I started seeking solace from the friends that I once knew,
My old mate Tennents Super and my buddy Special Brew!



Of course I felt despondent when I still recalled so well
How the streets of Deptford echoed to the shouts of "Come on Tel!"
But I still had my memories to last me through the years
And I'd be reminded daily of my precious souvenirs
A drawer half full of medals, cups and several XL T's,
A dodgy back, a bunion and a pair of wonky knees.

Epilogue 2005

I'd love to make a comeback though I've had to rule one out
Due to bouts of arthritis and a painful dose of gout
And though I'd rather be a has-been than a never-was,
I missed not only running but good times at Handy Cross
So you'll find me in the beech woods, or jogging by the stream
No time now for Personal Bests, only time to dream
And enjoy the sights I'd once rushed by, and the views I'd failed to see
Like the half-dressed Lycra lovelies who stop and wait for me.

March 2014



The Greatest Diver

Most of us at one time or another, particularly after a painful fall, have qualified to join the hallowed ranks of the Handy Cross Divers, but regretfully I appear to have been falling for longer, more often and certainly more painfully than the rest of you.

My last pub run ended with my having a cut through to the bone, on my last Wycombe Half I fell after one mile and ended looking like an extra from *Saw III* having spent the preceding twelve miles dodging St Johns. A leisurely run along the Bournemouth promenade was truncated by a bone-jarring collision with a blonde skateboarder and even a routine walk by a swimming pool resulted in multiple lacerations and a broken thumb. These just in the last two years.

My greatest pleasure is running across the fields and through the woods on summer evenings but I decided some months ago that due to a combination of bad luck and failing eyesight this pursuit had become far too risky, and that henceforth I would only run off-road on Sunday mornings where my frequent stumbles are eagerly anticipated by Tel's Belles who tote a wide range of first-aid prerequisites. I always instruct them, however, 'Nil by mouth!' Little did I realise that my greatest fall was becoming ever more imminent.

Having repaired my fragile garage roof, I gingerly traced my way back on all fours and only dared to stand up when I reached the relative safety of the edge. "Job's a good 'un" I thought to myself. It was some time later that I found myself lying on the patio and I realised that although I wasn't in pain, I was unable to move. My first concern was how to attract attention but luckily my wife heard my first call and the ambulance arrived in minutes.

The medics immediately cut my clothes off before manoeuvring me onto a spinal board whilst administering oxygen, inserting a morphine drip and telephoning the air ambulance which was coming from Southampton but would be landing at a nearby school field. Shortly after, a second ambulance arrived with a supervisor who said that as the helicopter was refuelling, it would probably be quicker to go by road to the John Radcliffe trauma unit. It was only at this stage did I realise that my injuries could be serious, but surreally wasn't too worried, probably because of the morphine.

My wife and daughter accompanied me in the ambulance which they say was sometimes travelling in excess of 100 mph in the Friday afternoon motorway traffic. I've no doubt this is true as I had no head injury when we left but a significant graze when we arrived, due to sliding up the board every time we braked.

In retrospect I now realise that falls from this height can often be life changing, so there was general relief when a scan revealed that the extent of the injuries were five broken ribs, a broken elbow and a punctured lung. Keep running folks because they advised me that had I been less fit the outcome could have been considerably different! The only work to be done at the time was to temporarily plaster the elbow after which I would be sent to the trauma ward prior to an operation. Always having had an inherent fear of hospitals, the thought of an overnight stay was not something I relished.

My arrival on the ward was like walking on to the set of *Casualty*. A motorcyclist had crashed having taken ketamine, he was also carrying a kilo of ketamine, and was on licence for supplying Class A drugs. Despite having two broken vertebrae he was understandably anxious to leave before the police arrived to arrest him and having gone out for a smoke he never returned. Until the following morning, that is, by which time the effects of the drug had worn off and he was in great pain but again discharged himself after being fitted with a plaster jacket.



I evidently could not have an op on my elbow until my chest had been drained, so the following morning the consultant came round with a group of trainees to insert the drip, after a local anaesthetic he announced to his entourage, "I am now going to make an incision in the chest large enough to insert my finger." You're what??? Not a pleasant feeling!

I had always thought that if I had to spend time in hospital it would be a great opportunity to catch up on reading, TV etc. But I found that I descended into a semi-vegetative state in between the constant rounds of drugs, blood tests, meals, X-rays, temperature and blood pressure tests, so there was little time for anything else and if I went anywhere I had my chest drain trailing behind me like Mary's Little Lamb! This state was undoubtedly also induced by the endless supply of Tramadol and Oramorph on demand.

At last the big day of the op arrived, so I was prepped at 6 a.m. and the legendary notice "Nil by mouth!" went on the end of my bed and I was to be number four. At 5 p.m. I was informed that time had run out, so it would be postponed until the next day and I could now eat normally. Big day two, prepped by 6 a.m. Nil by mouth, I was number three. At 3 p.m. time out again. Big day three, prepped, Nil by mouth, and I was fifth in line, as I hadn't been done when I was number three or four, I wasn't at all hopeful, but hooray, I eventually went down for the operation which entailed inserting a large figure 8 of tension wire in my arm secured by a pin at each end and three days later I was discharged.

Many thanks for all your Get Well messages and cards, big thanks to Craig, Tara and Jessica, Mike and Martin for visiting (much appreciated) and special thanks to Bev and Amanda for humouring me and becoming my odd bedfellows!

The treatment I received on the NHS was second to none, the ambulance men, the nurses and assistants, indeed every one I came into contact with at the JR Trauma Unit made my stay as comfortable as possible and showed a degree of care and attention far greater than what could possibly be expected.

UPDATE two months on:

I've finally kicked the tramadol and my ribs, which were evidently untreatable, still hurt like buggery and my lungs aren't inflating fully so I shall be short of breath for some time (not good news when I've a marathon to run in six months time.) But far more importantly I still don't know why I fell but I was told that it would be difficult to fall on to a patio from a height of eight feet without incurring far greater injuries than I did! For which I shall be eternally thankful!

It was good to see Terry out running with the Beginners Group last week, but we were worried that he may have incurred some brain damage as a result of his fall as he left the group early to return to the Judo Club and was found later wandering along the road looking for the old Booker Cottage Hospital!

October 2014