

Valley Striders AC Newsletter

June/July 2025

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- Valley Striders Christmas Day
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Things to know

- Roundhay Parkrun Takeover 19th June – Please volunteer
- Please email Sam at teams@valleystriders.org.uk for Leeds Country Way 7th September, please run this instead of Vale of York
- Keep 28th August free for volunteering at Meanwood Valley Trail
- Socials every Third Tuesday – look out for Spond Invites
- Simon and Tim's Tour De France Update
- Grand Prix Update



Rounday Parkrun Takeover 19th July

Message from Rachel Davidson

Hi Striders!

As you should be aware I am organising a takeover at Roundhay parkrun on Saturday the 19th of July.

If you're available to volunteer please can you email Roundhay parkrun at: Roundhay@parkrun.com with your name, barcode number and the role you wish to volunteer for. Please can you mention you are with Valley Striders.

James Slater has kindly agreed to step up as the Run Director once again this year.

If you would rather run please do come along, and remember to wear club kit. Or if you want the double whammy you can run and volunteer as a pacer!

Looking forward to seeing lots of you there. It's always a fab morning and a great chance to advertise the club plus our MVT race on 31st August.

Thanks,



Leeds Country Way (Valley Striders Christmas Day)

Leeds Country Way Relay

Our favourite day of the year is coming up, please contact Sam at teams@valleystriders.org.uk or say you can go via the Spond Event.



Volunteers Required

Please contact
steph@valleystriders.org.uk to
discuss volunteering
opportunities including
helping out at MVT, becoming
a run leader, supporting the
committee

Let's avoid what happened in
the 90's!

Valley Striders News

March 1999

1999 Issue 1

Stop Press - Chaos At Meanwood Valley Trail Race

Exclusive! Chaos at Meanwood Valley Trail Race due to lack of race marshals! First back to Leo's was a very surprised J.Plodder from Fast Pacers Racers who said "There must have been 100 or so ahead of me, but after 15 minutes I couldn't see the next runner ahead, and by the aqueduct I just asked the man with the dog which way to go for the Meanwood Trail. He sent me back up here". A further 30 runners followed in the "Meanwood Valley 4". There was a similar problem of a missing marshal in Meanwood park and the first 10 runners finally finished back at Leo's after 2¼ hours, having travelled the whole of the Meanwood Valley Trail to Woodhouse Moor and back, so running the "Meanwood Valley 15". Geoff Webster did an Arsene Wenger and suggested a replay a week on Wednesday (but still with home advantage). Paul Briscoe said he couldn't get another 200 bottles ready by then (but that the 10 he'd drunk while waiting for all the finishers to come in had been one of his best brews). The confusion had rubbed off into the start/finish area where Mike and Eileen had lost their watch in the mud and Max didn't know whether he'd started his watch 3 minutes early and stopped it for 2 minutes or vice versa so the winning time was 50:30 or 52:30. And the results service of Bob, Joyce and Jo had labels all over the place (except on the results sheets) and it was only Jo's nursing skills of removing elastoplast that saved them from some very sore parts.

So it's not true (and not very humorous either), but if this is not to appear in the next V.S.News, then come and marshal on Saturday 27 March.

James's Grand Prix update – June 2025

In this month's newsletter, I'm providing the latest results, sharing an updated calendar of all the forthcoming events for the remainder of the year and I'm also asking you for your thoughts, requests and recommendations for some new potential events you'd like to be considered in the Grand Prix schedule for next year!

Latest Standings

Here are the current Grand Prix leaders, as at 31st May 2025; Well done and congratulations to all of you, so far!

As at 31st May	Overall	Under 35	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	65 and over	
Women	Steph Gledhill	Hope Wearing	Sarah Shanks	Steph Gledhill	Sue Sunderland	Ruth Warren	
Men	Gary Mann	Andy Parkinson	Gary Mann	James Slater	John Wallace	Ken Fox	
As at 31st May	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Women	Amanda Spencer	Steph Gledhill	Liz Adams	Sue Sunderland	Louise Jennings	Jillian Sabourn	Laura Sabourn
Men	Gary Mann	Ian Sanderson	James Slater	Ken Fox	Chris Sawyer	Andy Mace	James Forbes

These standings are as at 31st May, so at time of writing, they don't yet include the following two recent events, which will be added to our website GP results page in due course;

- Wharfedale Half (Saturday 7th June)
- Otley 10 (Wednesday 11th June)

Bob Jackson does the honours with maintaining the results spreadsheet – thank you Bob!

Here's a link to the latest standings, so you can see where you currently feature;

- <https://www.valleystriders.org.uk/run/competition/grand-prix/latest-standings/>

An extra shout out to the following 4 stalwart members*, who have participated in the most GP events so far this year;

- Ken Fox 13
- Chris Sawyer 12
- Andy Mace 12
- Sue Sunderland 11

*myself excluded, as I previously committed to leading by example by entering as many GP events as possible this year.

Grand Prix Event Calendar

Here's a calendar showing the forthcoming GP events from June through to September;

2025 Grand Prix events scheduled June to November (across all seven categories)

[illegible]

If you're interested in taking part in any of these forthcoming GP races, here are the links to each event (note: many of these events are also available via the RaceBest website)

June

- [Hyde Park Summer Mile](#)
- [Evensplits 5k series](#)

July

- [Eccup 10](#)
- [Ilkey Half Marathon](#)
- [Danefield Relay](#)
- [Golden Acre Relay](#)

August

- [Golden Mile](#)
- [Track Restoration Fund](#)

September

- [Pudsey 10k](#)
- [Kirkstall Abbey 7](#)

October

- [West Yorkshire XC](#)

November

- [Guy Fawkes 10](#)
- [Tadcaster 10](#)
- [Abbey Dash](#)
- [PECO \(TBC\)](#)

What events would you like to see included in the Grand Prix calendar for 2026?

A few members have approached me with their suggestions and recommendations for some new / different races, which could potentially be included next year.

Suggestions I've received so far include the following;

- Brass Monkey Half (Jan)
- Thirsk 10m (March)
- Rudding Park trail run 10.5k (May)
- Shadwell 10k (June)
- Crackpots trail run - Kirkby Malzeard (June)

Obviously, I can't make any promises just yet and I'll make a start planning next year's calendar in earnest during early Autumn.

Do you have any favourite local (or fairly local) events that you'd like to be considered for inclusion next year?

If you do, let me know when you see me during training, or at Parkrun, or any of our forthcoming events, including the Tuesday Socials at The Beck and Call.

In my next update, I'll provide an advance preview of the events we're considering for next year, which may start with the Abbey Dash on 30th November if we can't squeeze this in as the last event of 2025 (TBC). This will all depend on when we have our Xmas party in December and if we have sufficient time to get the winners' vests printed – I'll keep you posted on this, nearer the time.....!

All the best, James

Training Sessions

Tuesdays

6pm: Improvers, relaxed and friendly group, catering for all runners, sessions tend to be a combination of social runs with some intervals. Generally suitable for people starting out running, wanting to build fitness or those who'd prefer a gentler, more relaxed run.

6:15pm: Fast paced interval session at West Park, suitable for all runners under 19 minutes for a 5k and for runners 19-21 minutes who want a harder session.

6:30pm: Advanced (sub 24 5k) and Intermediate (24-30 5k). Intervals including monthly hill session. We all run together with options for shorter runs for Intermediates, people returning from injury. Good transition for those from Improvers who want to improve on their times, have a harder session.

Track Tuesdays: Available to all, second Tuesday of the month.

All sessions advertised on Spond: [Spond - Valley Striders](#)

Thursday & Sunday Runs

- Thursday Social: 7pm Scott Hall Leisure Centre, 7-8 miles at 8:30 minute mile pace with stops to regroup.
- Intermediate Thursday Socials 6pm start, meet at 5:50, 5 miles at 10 minute mile pace with stops to regroup, sets off from various locations, please say you are going on Spond so the leader knows you are going.
- Sunday: 8:45am, top of Church Lane, Meanwood, approximately 10-12 miles at 9 minute mile pace.
- Adhoc Runs: There are runs for the faster group planned informally throughout the month, please contact Tom Thomas or Andy Parkinson for more details

Calderdale Way Relay 2025

We have had an eventful time over the years with the Calderdale Way. We have, of course, had many many successful teams, but we have also had a few ups and downs with runners running two legs, very narrowly failing to finish a full team, and on rare occasions struggling to get a team at all.

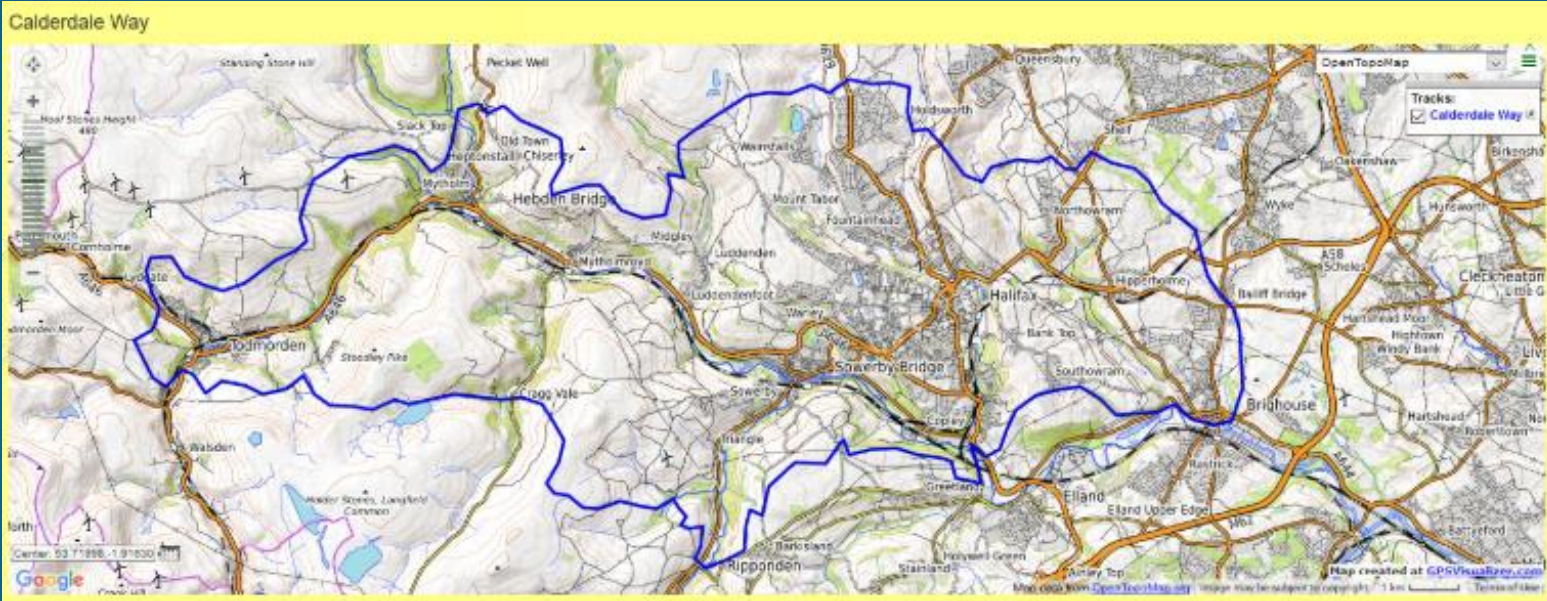
With much relief, this year was wonderfully uneventful! We had plenty of keen, enthusiastic runners signed up - we even had reserves! - and our original team all made it to race day fit and healthy. In fact, two of our reserves had to make do with a lovely long run around the Calderdale countryside spectating and cheering on our team.

Every team member ran superbly. We had a mix of old (and young) pros, and an encouraging number of runners new to the event. If you are interested in taking part in the Calderdale Way Relay in the future, please email teams@valleystriders.org.uk. We would love to see some more new faces.



As you can see from the results there were some great performances. Keith and Chris, in particular, would like to be considered for the award of highest combined age, and possibly fastest runners with a highest combined age of135+ years, we'll let you decide!

Sarah and Becca set a new Valley Striders Ladies record for leg 6. They may well have been the first ladies' pair to ever run leg 6 for Valley Striders. However, given how fast they ran, I think it may take some beating.



Leg	Start Location	Runners	Distance	Time	Position*
1	West Vale, Greetland	Jonathan Young & Daryl Hibberd	10.55 miles	1:30:10	26 (26)
2	Cragg Vale, Mytholmroyd	Richard Irvine & Tony Mills	8.46 miles	1:17:26	30 (31)
3	Todmorden	Sophia Lubiecki & Holly Button	4.8 miles	56:37	50 (33)
4	Blackshaw Head	Tom Thomas & Steve Jones	9.36 miles	1:39:20	49 (37)
5	Wainstalls	Keith Brewster & Chris Sawyer	7.76 miles	1:33:37	72 (47)
6	Shelf	Sarah Shanks & Becca Whalley	10.21 miles	1:31:14	31 (45)

Thanks everyone for your
amazing support and fantastic
send off



**Around le
Tour in 60
days**

[Just Giving Page](#)

**Simon and Tim are
well into their tour
now, see overleaf
for a ride report.**

Around le Tour in 60 days

Daily updates available on Insta (@letour1965) and on our JustGiving page (<https://www.justgiving.com/tdf1965>) We are so nearly at our target, so please share to help us get there 😊

Review of week 2:

And so, a much needed rest day in Roubaix. We'd booked an apartment on Booking.com in what estate agents would call a vibrant part of the city. Very multicultural and a little in need of TLC. The apartment itself had possibly the steepest set of stairs I have ever seen in a property. Quite seriously, as challenging as climbing Whernside in the 3 peaks race. And we had to get two fully laden bikes up and down. It proved to be a two person job, and probably the most dangerous part of the trip so far.

The day was spent on admin - cleaning the bikes, minor fettling, washing clothes and generally recuperating. I finally found time to repair the tube I'd punctured coming in to Cologne and discovered that the smashed vase had pierced the side wall of the tyre. Closer inspection showed a slash in the tyre wall. Worrying. I used a heavy duty patch on the tube and put it in the same place as the hole to hopefully prevent blowouts. I'll be looking to replace the tyre sooner rather than later though.

Around le Tour in 60 days

We had feared leaving Roubaix and travelling across Lille in rush hour, so rose early and were on the road by 7. The streets were puzzlingly empty and it wasn't until we got into conversation with a local cyclist that we discovered that it was a French public holiday. So we sailed through both cities on traffic and cycle free roads, enjoying being able to relax until we were out in open countryside. It was still mostly flat with occasional steep climbs onto wooded ridges. It was sobering to realise that these were the vantage points highly sought after in the first World War, and the frequent military cemeteries and memorials paid testament to the many soldiers killed trying to take and retake this ground.

By now we were riding through quiet French villages and rural farmland, often running parallel to the much busier autoroutes leading to and away from the channel ports. We'd also started ignoring the Garmin and Wahoo insistence that we follow gravel and farm tracks, opting instead to ride on smooth, sealed tracks. This made the routes longer in terms of distance, but faster and considerably more comfortable in the saddle. We finally rolled into Abbeville to camp on the banks of the Somme just after 6.30pm. That night we were lulled to sleep (although to be fair not much lulling was required) by a chorus of frogs, geese and owls and the distant hum of autoroutes A16 and A28.

Around le Tour in 60 days

A more leisurely start to the second part of stage three, with time for breakfast and coffee, before rejoining the route as it climbed away from the Somme and onto the plateau to the west of Abbeville. Having hoped we'd seen the last of the headwind, being sheltered in the valley, we were delighted to find it as fresh as ever once we had finished climbing. The terrain here felt very familiar, with rolling chalkland similar to the downs in the South of England where I grew up and first started cycling in earnest. More sleepy villages, huge mansions, decrepit farms and acres and acres of farmland, both livestock and arable. Once again we stuck to the roads, passing through bustling market towns and then back into the empty roads that I'd had in my mind's eye when I first started planning the route. We hit Rouen at rush hour and despite cycle lanes and protected space, it all felt pretty hectic, especially after a long day in the saddle. We were surprised by a very steep descent down to the station where the route had finished back in the day (a planned transition by train to Caen). Reaching our hotel proved even trickier providing sensory overload dodging the ubiquitous scooters, pedestrians, cyclists and cars. Matters weren't helped as we were routed first down a closed road and then through a bustling market. Tired and hungry we were pleased to finally gain the Ibis budget and stow our bikes in the baggage store. Phew!

Next day, transition, should be a bit easier. The competitors from 1965, such as Poulidor and Gimondi would have finished in Rouen, jumped on the train and begun their next day in Caen. We opted to take it a bit easier, staying overnight in Rouen before catching the 10 o'clock train.

Around le Tour in 60 days

Transition day dawned cold and grey with a stiff breeze, but with promise of better weather to come. A much easier ride into Rouen to get the train to Caen. Despite apprehension about not being able to book space for the bikes, it was dead simple - loads of bike hangers and excellent infrastructure allowed us a bit of chill time on the train. Getting out at Caen, it could have been a different world. The sun shone, everything felt just that little bit cleaner and better off than the industrial cities of the North we'd ridden through so far.

It didn't take long to get out of Caen and we were soon on more quiet country lanes with the sun for company and, at long last a tail wind. This is cycling at its finest, almost effortlessly moving through beautiful countryside on quiet lanes accompanied by birdsong and the chirrup of crickets.

The final miles of the day were on an arrow straight rollercoaster of a road that delivered us to our overnight stop at Sous Les Etoiles campsite in St Martin de Besace. It's a beautiful spot, run by a Brexit-hating Englishman, with a bar and restaurant on site, well worth a stop if you are ever out this way.

Around le Tour in 60 days

It was baking hot, and our first ever early arrival (tailwind, good weather) allowed us to chill, wash and dry clothes, catch up with loved ones and tell people about what we are up to. It actually started to feel like a holiday!

Overnight, the ominous patter of rain on the tent had us fearing the worst for the day ahead. It held off whilst we were striking camp, but the heavens opened as we rode into the village for breakfast. It was grim. Rather than wishing us 'bonne journee' (translation 'Have a nice day') the boulanger and cafe patron wished us 'Bonne courage' (translation 'Rather you than me fellas ') as we pedalled off into the downpour. Winds were light, but spray off the road and passing vehicles constrained our enjoyment somewhat. After an hour, we were relieved to leave the ruler straight ribbon of tarmac and join quieter roads winding their way up and down through rich farmland. As the rain eased, it became increasingly muggy, giving us the opportunity to shed a few layers and start to enjoy the day. We followed the autoroute for most of the morning, crossing and recrossing the river of traffic beneath and above us. And finally, after a glorious long descent, we began the final climb into Avranches. Eschewing the suggested 17% road, we climbed more steadily below the castle ramparts, imagining our predecessors 60 years ago racing to finish in the square in front of the town hall. Until we remembered that the stage didn't finish in Avranches at all, and they would have sailed through with barely a second thought, finishing as we will tomorrow instead, in St Brieuc.

Around le Tour in 60 days

After lunch we set off for a campsite at Mont St Michel, the aim being to give ourselves a shorter day the following Friday. We were excited to see the route that Ride with GPS had recommended, approaching Mont St Michel from the east on what looked like a causeway. It led across the bay to the island itself and then gained the campsite via the raised bridge that allows tourists to get to Le Mont on shuttle buses.

Well now, I'm not sure if it was hallucinating, but there was no route across the salt marshes as far as we could see. Imagine our delight at having to ride back to Avranches to head out to the campsite in a completely different direction. In truth it wasn't too onerous as the roads were empty, and as we approached Mont St Michel, mirage-like, the spire of the Abbaye de St Michel floated on the horizon, constantly in our field of vision.

We set out not long after dawn to finish the leg to St Brieuc. The day was warm and promised to get hotter - forecasts suggested the temperature could get as high as 35 degrees - as we crossed the dam to join Eurovelo 4, a long-distance coastal path that extends as far as Holland. Despite its promise, the route is not especially well suited for cycle touring. It might appeal to MTBers or energetic gravel tourers, but it was mighty difficult going, rutted and full of hidden holes. Hard work.

As soon as we could, we left the trail and regained smooth tarmac, where, aided by a favourable wind, we sailed through villages bordering the marshy land of the estuary, stopping only for breakfast (the best pains au raisins of the trip to date). As the day wore on, we found ourselves routed onto increasingly busy roads. As we criss-crossed inlets and rivers along the coast, accessing bridges meant sharing the road with local and holiday traffic. Despite the volume, every single driver gave us plenty of room and was happy to wait as we traversed busy intersections on the dedicated cycleways. Not one close pass, not one idiot shouting incomprehensible gibberish from an open window, not one Range Rover driver squirting windscreen fluid at cyclists they've just overtaken. What a difference.

As we approached St Malo, my thoughts turned to our friend Sarah Smith who died last year. She'd been living on Guernsey and, before we both understood how poorly she was, and knowing that she was a fan of madcap adventures, I'd invited her to join us on our Tour. She would have been great company, although as her brother Neil pointed out, the trip probably wouldn't have been extreme enough for her.

Around le Tour in 60 days

To cross the mouth of the Rance river to the west of St Malo, there is only one bridge, and as we approached it, signs strongly recommended users of two wheeled vehicles not to use the road approach. We could see why as lorries and cars roared and thundered over the bridge that our cycle path went below. Follow the diversion signs were the instructions. So we dutifully did, down 30% gradients, over boulders and along a wooded path overlooking the queued traffic. Eventually we could gain the pedestrian walkway down a narrow ramp installed over the stairs. Traffic duly avoided, but perhaps not the best example of French cycling infrastructure we've encountered.

From Dinard we continued south west, the day getting hotter and more oppressive the closer we were St Brieuc. Finding water was starting to be a challenge - I tried and failed to refill my bottles in a fountain outside the Mayor's office in one of the many empty villages we rode through, but thankfully we were spared by the charity of the local church which had a toilet and water available (seemingly this is something that many of them do). A useful hack for days to come.

As we approached St Brieuc, we rode through Yffiniac, birthplace of Bernard Hinault, and which will feature in stage 7 of this year's Tour. We found the final pull up the hill into town quite challenging, but I'm sure the likes of Pog and Jonas won't even notice it.

Around le Tour in 60 days

We'd intended to ride Stage 5 St Brieuc to Chateaulin in one go as it was comparatively short (in '65 the riders completed the stage and then went onto race against the clock in a time trial the same day). However, we cut ourselves some slack and aimed to stop 60km out in Carhaix overnight instead. This would give us the luxury of finishing around 4.30pm and give us time to recharge a little. And so we did. Another day of gently rolling terrain, decent weather (the hot conditions from the previous day had abated) albeit with headwinds to contend with yet again.

At the campsite we met Simon and Mark who had just ridden off the ferry at Roscoff and who were aiming to get to Lourdes by next weekend. We spent a pleasant evening chatting about cycling trips, drinking beer and eating pizza which they'd generously treated us to after hearing of our 'epic challenge'. I enjoyed Simon's recommendation for future trips: just cycle till your legs hurt then stop.

The final part of the stage into Chateaulin was quite lumpy. The route I'd plotted took in the Voie Verte which follows the Nantes-Brest canal, so it needn't have been, but previous experience of canal side paths had prejudiced us against this option, so instead we rode on smooth, sealed roads. The climbs were steep, but the long, flowing descents off the back made them worthwhile. We finished with a long straight downhill into the centre of Chateaulin before another climb up to the station to catch train, following in the wheel tracks of Gimondi and Poulidor for the transition to Quimper.

Around le Tour in 60 days

Reflections on week 2

All in all a pretty good week. A few minor irritations like the rain and persistent headwinds, but very enjoyable all the same. The much advertised veloroutes are not ideal for long distance bike touring, at least not if on a schedule as the surfaces can't always be relied on and can be quite sapping. Better to stick to sealed surfaces which are a joy to ride and a considerable saving in watts. It's better to arrive earlier at a destination to allow time for all the inevitable admin, so we are adjusting where we stop to even out distances and avoid too long a day. Rest days on a Sunday are best avoided as everything is closed. Ditto Mondays.

French people (or at least the ones we've met so far) are much more willing to speak English than I've experienced previously, despite my best efforts to speak French. And I'm getting better at making Instagram reels (feel free to disagree 😊) or at least they are a lot less frustrating than they once were.

So, southwards next week after a day of rest in Quimper, with the weather forecast to steadily warm up. Our next challenge...

Article from yesteryear

**Sunday Runs! We still run on a Sunday, starting from a slightly different location. If you want to run on a Sunday please drop me a message:
steph@valleystriders.org.uk**

The Sunday Run (from Assistant Editor Tim Towler)

Every running club has their own "Sunday Run". Traditionally we have met at Smithy Mills, off the Ring Road. My own training diary shows my first Valley Striders Sunday Run was on the 31st August 1986, by which time the route which rarely varied was long established. In dry summer conditions it went through Adel Woods, skirting Headingley Golf Club, round Eccup Reservoir and over the country to the Harewood Estate. Onwards through Dunkeswick and on to Arthington on the Pool Road to dash up Creskeld Lane before the weary trek through Golden Acre Park and down Adel Lane back to Smithy Mills. A sixteen mile circuit. In the wet winter months the early off-road sections were substituted by on-road routes through Adel to the reservoir and the Harewood Estate was ignored for the road through Eccup, past the New Inn, "Christmas Tree Lane" or so we called it, past "Dog Bite Farm" to drop down the Arthington-Pool road. A slightly shortened circuit of fifteen miles.

After losing its popularity, thankfully the Sunday Run is back. The routes are certainly less rigid, often decided on the morning though occasionally a bit of planning or even plotting takes place beforehand.

During the last four or five weeks one of our runs took us from Smithy Mills to join the Leeds-Liverpool Canal at Kirkstall, travelling eastwards through the city centre to leave the River Aire at the start of the Aire-Calder Navigation Canal and work our way back through Knowsthorpe, Richmond Hill, Burmantofts and Sheepscar back to home territory of the Meanwood Valley. We have also run westwards along the canal, joining it at Sandoz, near Rodley, and travelling almost as far as Shipley, leaving the canal we skirted Baildon to run through Tong Park heading towards Hawksworth, to drop down into Guiseley where by arrangement we were picked up and driven back to Smithy Mills (thank you Jane and Louise.)

Regulars will also now know the route through Roundhay Park and North Hill Woods, over the Ring Road and the fields beyond to Shadwell and from there again over the fields to Wike. The circuit working its way back to the Harrogate Road, Eccup Reservoir and via Adel Woods home.

Steve O' as club captain and chief scout is to the fore in finding new routes and in his words "You see a little local geography, learn a little local history and hear a lot of bullshit!!!!"

A long Sunday run is a must to anybody wishing to race half marathon distances and longer. All that is required is to be fit and sober enough to run at 9.15 on Sunday morning, to have a 2½ hour "pass out", to have the ability to run at 7½ to 8 minute mile pace for two hours (15 or 16 miles) and to have a reasonably broad mind.

See you next Sunday.....Tim