



JANUARY 2024 | ISSUE NO. 1

THE STRIDER

The Official Newsletter of Valley Striders AC

WELCOME BACK

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Welcome back to the Valley Strider's newsletter, The Strider. After a hiatus, and in spite of Spond's efficiency, we hope the return of the newsletter will create a space that is not just informative but celebratory of the wonderful Valley Striders community and all the fantastic things that happen within our club.

This is your newsletter, and it cannot exist without your contributions. We would love to hear about what you get up to so please do send all results / notices / race reports (anything!) to newsletter@valleystriders.org.uk.

For now, to get us off the ground, enjoy the first of some of our regular features and reflections on 2023.

Wishing you many happy miles and smiles until issue 2 in April!

Faith xx

STRIDER SPOTLIGHT:

SIX QUESTIONS TO HELP US GET TO KNOW... STEPH GLEDHILL

What made you go for your first run and what has kept you running?

Long story but I got into regular running as part of my work's team entry into the Knaresborough Bed Race in around 2008. We were given interval and hill session training from Lynn Duffy, a Kippax Harrier coach who we worked with.

After a few sessions we had to run 5 miles, that was tough.

I continued running for vanity reasons as it allowed me to keep the weight off. In 2010 I ran Leeds Half as my first race where I didn't need to push a person on a bed round a town and finish off with a swim in a river.

In 2013 I ran my first marathon with Louise Castle, afterwards she suggested we join a running club and chose Valley Striders because of the Twitter messages. I'd say it's one of the best decisions I've made to join VS.

When you're not running we will find you...

At the moment on my bike but most of the time probably on the sofa. I have dabbled a bit in surfing so would be nice if that's where I'll be found in the future.

You're allowed to go for a run with one person of your choice. Who do you choose and why?

My dad, we've been running most Wednesday's for the past 12 years, most people know him as Steph's dad but his real name is Craig (well, it's actually Ronald but that's another story). Why? We put the world to rights and it's a great way to spend time with him. My mum comes along too sometimes which is great (she's not a huge fan of running as she likes sports where she can win).

Your running goal for the next 12 months...

To not enter a marathon!

Your Groundhog Day running route in Leeds... you can only choose one route to run forevermore, where are you headed? Bonus points for a Strava map so we can follow it too!

Roundhay Parkrun, absolutely love parkrun, the people who go and the whole ethos of it.

The best thing about being a Valley Strider is...

All the lovely members.

Your nomination for the next Strider Spotlight (and why!)

Leila Kara, Leila's a brilliant runner who gets involved in events from cross country to marathons.



**NEXT TIME... LEILA
KARA, YOU'RE UP!**

THE RUNNING COMMENTARY

Learning from the Elites: Lessons from Phil Sesemann

Our sport is a simple one: you simply lace up and go. The company, the terrain and the length may vary but the feedback from sole to soul is consistent- it's what keeps us heading out time after time. London 2023 was a masterclass in grit and humility; proof that the simplicity at the heart of our sport is sustained from grassroots to the elite field.

Twenty-five years prior to the starting pistol a young aspiring runner won the Mini London Marathon. On 23rd April he completed his final professional marathon lap, eager to move onto his next chapter giving back to the next generation of young athletes: Mo Farah. Four months prior to the starting pistol a self-coached athlete ran his debut marathon having begun his running career four years earlier at a local half marathon. On 23rd April he won the men's race, clocking the second fastest time in history as he crossed the finish line: Kelvin Kiptum. Twenty-four hours prior to the starting pistol an accomplished track athlete cried to her coach, daunted by the miles that lay ahead of her. On 23rd April she raced her debut marathon and redefined excellence whilst championing sportsmanship to the end: Sifan Hassan. Their names are as familiar as their stories; their running lives not so far removed from our own.

It is therefore perhaps no surprise that our clubhouse sits in close proximity to greatness; Phil Sesemann cites the woodland stretch leading from the Ring Road to Stair Foot Lane as his favourite section of the Meanwood Valley Trail, a trail he runs most days. Just three weeks prior to the starting pistol, Sesemann stood by an old friend at Town Moor Parkrun briefing. 24 minutes later he crossed the line as 130th finisher, having enjoyed watching others strive for their PB's, inconspicuously blending into the community to which he so closely identifies: recreational runners. Catch up with his old friend completed, he returned to join the stag do that had brought him to Newcastle. On 23rd April, Sesemann dominated BBC footage in a sensational sprint finish down the mall to become the second British man over the line.

Whilst it's unlikely that regularly passing under the Seven Arches Viaduct as you follow Adel Beck is the key to being able to outkick Mo Farah on an international stage, it is clear that Sesemann- like Farah, Kiptum and Galvin- is at heart a runner just like us, and a runner that we can learn from. So, for 2024, here are five ways we can follow in the footsteps of Sesemann:

1. Never lose sight of the joy you find when running

Within a week of crossing the finish line Sesemann returned to running with his friends, but this time he traded a local 5km parkrun for the 154km West Highland Way- a long-distance trail climbing into the Scottish Highlands via 3155 metres of ascent. Whilst typically the trail is completed over 6-8 days of hiking, Sesemann & co covered the distance in just 2.5 days. Clearly this is not optimal recovery, yet it would also be tricky to fit this feat into an intense training season. It seems then that Sesemann chose to eschew the recommended post-race rest, ice-baths and physio and instead capitalise on the (however unideal) opportunity to run simply because he loves it. With no imminent race, Sesemann could 'scratch the itch' of a purely joyful running experience and remind himself of why he chooses the sport before moving on to the next goal. In 2024 we should strive to do the same and seize as many opportunities to run for the joy of running: no watch-watching, no goals, no ego.

2. Keep your friends close, and your running friends closer

Despite his commitments, Sesemann continued to don his Leeds City AC vest throughout 2023. He does not see professional racing as being at odds with club running, but instead celebrates the enjoyment he gets from competing alongside his training partners and clubmates. Though there were times throughout the year when he had to prioritise his own training and target races, Sesemann embraced club running as an opportunity to relax, enjoy the race experience and reduce his anxiety and nerves going into his main target races. It is no running secret that running with others adds that extra level of accountability and motivation that we need to get out the door. Club training aside, Sesemann reminds us that training partners are the ultimate tool on those days when you really don't feel like it. In fact, his own training partners – the mileage mutts- take this to the extreme by obligating Sesemann to get out and run come rain or shine. Whilst our regular training partners don't need to be exercise-demanding dogs, in 2024 we can take a leaf out of Sesemann's book and make sure we know who we can rely on to help us get out of the door on the days when running feels a little tougher.



3. If you have a goal- go for it!

This one speaks for itself. A goal isn't a necessary component of a running regime, but if you're a goal-setter then be a goal-getter. Sesemann made some big decisions in 2023 and prior: from committing to strenuous Kenyan training camps in January (proof if any was needed that running conditions in Leeds are tough!) to quitting his job as an NHS doctor. Whilst handing our notice in to make more time for our long run might be a reckless decision, we can choose to be brave enough to embrace difficult. Chasing our own optimum performance might mean making some big decisions: choosing an interval session over an evening on the sofa; setting the alarm that bit earlier on a busy day or pushing on for those extra few miles even when the coffee shop / pub is calling. It won't always be the easy decision to make but it will always be rewarding. Crucially we must also remind ourselves that as we chase our goals it is often within a much bigger picture. So, goal-setters of 2024: we must forgive ourselves when circumstances mean we fall short and we must adequately celebrate ourselves when - against all odds- we achieve beyond what we had imagined possible!

4. Ditch the pressure

In 2023, Sesemann came off Strava. Though previously he had a very active profile (often sharing route suggestions and responding to those curious about his training habits), he decided to bring an end to the external pressures and expectations that he felt via the app in marathon build-ups. Sesemann explains the move as allowing him to still get the work done with only those closest to him knowing how he was doing. Whilst we may not be deleting Strava any time soon, it may be worth reflecting on where our own external running pressures come from. Are we running for ourselves? Are we racing for ourselves? If we're second-guessing our stats and worrying about how others may be judging our most recent performances it's probably time for a change. There are so many more ways to measure a run than simply distance and time, and often the alternative measures are

much more personal and harder for others to pass judgment or comment on. Measuring a run by how many strangers you smiled at, how far into the alphabet game you get according to your own theme and rules (so many games can work here!) or how many items in your scavenger hunt you ticked off will make it so much more fun and allow you to celebrate success on your own (as bizarre as possible!) terms.

5. Pick yourself up and keep going

Despite our best efforts, running takes a hold of us and it's hard not to get emotionally wrapped up in our experience of the sport. Whether that be over-analysing our motivation (or lack of) to get out the door or punishing ourselves unnecessarily for a performance that falls below our expectation, we are prone to over-thinking. Sesemann is the first to say he's had many poor performances over the years and many occasions when his training has not cultivated the result he desired. In fact, Sesemann saw out 2023 at the Valencia Marathon where he ran the incredible time of 2:08:49, yet missed the Olympic qualifying standard he was targeting by just 37 seconds. Though it would be easy to wallow in this sort of outcome, Sesemann believes they teach us not to be complacent. He models discipline to the last and encourages us all to keep working hard and stay committed – the comeback is always greater than the setback. In 2024 there will be setbacks, but we get to choose how we respond to them. This year let us choose to respond in the same way Sesemann does: learning from what went wrong, celebrating what went right and lining up the opportunity to try again! (For Sesemann, this is the Seville Marathon in February!)

Sesemann is an elite professional athlete, but he is a runner just like us. Though his experiences may differ in degree, they are so similar in kind. So, this year as you run along the Meanwood Valley Trail keep an eye out for him charging through with his mileage mutts: I bet he'll be only too happy to run alongside and share his stories. And, in the event you fail to spot him, hold onto his key piece of running advice: run lots, sometimes fast, sometimes long, but mostly easy. Running lots and running easy... I like the sound of that.





Oct-Dec 23 Performance Highlights

CELEBRATING EXCITING PERFORMANCES FROM ACROSS OUR CLUB IN THE LAST QUARTER OF 2023:

WITH HUGE THANKS TO OUR CLUB STATISTICIAN GRAHAM JONES FOR
COMPILING THESE RESULTS!

PERSONAL BESTS:

ANDY PARKINSON: PB'S IN THE MARATHON,
HALF MARATHON, 10 MILE AND 5K (HE DIDN'T
DO A 10K BUT WE THINK HE WOULD HAVE PB'D
THAT TOO!)

NEW TO THE UNOFFICIAL CLUB RANKINGS:

AILEEN LOFTUS- 0:39:11 AT THE WILMSLOW 10K (12TH BEST FSEN- 10K)

AMANDA SPENCER- 0:32:58 AT THE HATFIELD 5 (CLUB BEST F50- 5M)

AMANDA SPENCER- 3:12:50 AT THE YORKSHIRE MARATHON (2ND BEST F550 - MARA)

FAITH BOWMAN- 0:19:52 AT WOODHOUSE MOOR PARKRUN (18TH BEST FSEN - 5K/
PARKRUN)

GEORGIA BAYNES- 0:19:50 AT EVEN SPLITS LEEDS 5K (16TH BEST FSEN - 5K/ PARKRUN)

RACHEL DAVIDSON- 1:07:58 AT THE TADCASTER 10 (15TH BEST FSEN - 10M)

RACHEL DAVIDSON- 1:28:47 AT THE MANCHESTER HALF MARATHON (15TH BEST FSEN - HM)

REBECCA WHALLEY- 0:37:55 AT THE ABBEY DASH (6TH BEST FSEN - 10K)

SARAH SHANKS- 0:39:45 AT THE ABBEY DASH (8TH BEST F40 - 10K)

GAVIN TAYLOR- 0:30:16 AT THE TELFORD 10K (CLUB BEST MSEN - 10K)

TOSH (TAHIR) AKHTAR- 1:19:28 AT THE TADCASTER 10 (9TH BEST MS60 - 10K)

'OOO THAT LOOKS INTERESTING!'

DAVE MIDDLEMASS AND PAUL SMITH SURVIVED THE POST HILL CHALLENGE

OVERSEAS MARATHONS: FAITH BOWMAN (NEW YORK), ANDY PARKINSON (CHICAGO), JON BALL
(VALENCIA)

IAN SANDERSON AND STEVE DIXON BOTH RAN THE SNOWDONIA MARATHON

SUE SUNDERLAND, JOHN SHANKS, JON JACKSON, LEILA KARA, JADE BEALE AND IAN SANDERSON
RAN THE PALMA HALF

OTHER HALF MARATHONS OF NOTE INCLUDE KIELDER (KAT MARTIN), ALTON TOWERS (DAVE
MERRITT) AND SWINSTY & FEWSTON RESERVOIRS (CAROL REID)

PAUL SMITH BRAVELY PARTICIPATED IN THE CALVERLEY CHAOS (A NEWLY CONCEIVED EVENT IN
WHICH COMPETITORS ARE SENT IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS AROUND THE SAME CIRCULAR
COURSE...)

MARK FARRELL'S OFFROAD ADVENTURES INCLUDED THE HOLLY HUSTLE AND THE FEWSTON
MIDNIGHT MEANDER ON CONSECUTIVE DAYS

Please do submit on behalf of yourself and others!



Oct-Dec 23 Performance Highlights

PARKRUNNING:

MARTIN SUTCLIFFE RAN 11 DIFFERENT PARKRUNS DURING OCT TO DEC, AND FINISHED THE YEAR ON A TOURIST STREAK OF 51 (!) GRAHAM PAWLEY VISITED ZIELONY JAR PARKRUN IN OCTOBER, GIVING HIM THAT ALL-IMPORTANT "Z" FOR HIS ALPHABETEER CHALLENGE

FELL:

HUGE RESPECT TO MICK LOFTUS, SIMON VALLANCE, TIM STRAUGHAN & RICHARD ADCOCK, ALL OF WHOM COMPLETED THE TOUR OF PENDLE.

CONGRATULATIONS TO BECCA WHALLEY AND GEORGIA BAYNES, 2ND AND 3RD FINISHERS IN THE COP HILL FELL RACE. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE WAS NO PRIZE FOR "1ST HOUSEHOLD".

BECCA ALSO NARROWLY MISSED OUT ON A WIN IN THE HARRIERS V CYCLISTS RACE; STEVE WEBB FINISHED 1ST M60.

CROSS COUNTRY:

HOPE WEARING MADE AN IMPRESSIVE DEBUT IN THE WEST YORKSHIRE LEAGUE, FINISHING 5TH U17 AT WAKEFIELD. HOPE ALSO FINISHED 16TH IN HER FIRST FULL-LENGTH PECO RACE.

IN THE NATIONAL CROSS COUNTRY RELAYS, OUR MEN'S TEAM (DAN GRANT, DAVID SONG, ED CHESELDINE & TOM THOMAS) FINISHED 88TH OVERALL - AND 8TH AMONG YORKSHIRE A TEAMS. BOTH VS MEN'S AND LADIES' TEAMS STRUGGLED IN THE WEST YORKSHIRE LEAGUE, BUT INDIVIDUAL HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED PLACES IN THE V60 CATEGORIES FOR BOTH STEVE WEBB (2ND) AND SUE SUNDERLAND (3RD). DAN FISHER ALSO HAD A GOOD SERIES, WITH SEVERAL TOP-40 FINISHES, RANKING 4TH OVERALL IN THE M40 CATEGORY.

OUR MEN'S TEAM WON THE FIRST TWO PECO RACES, AND HAVE A NARROW LEAD WITH TWO RACES REMAINING. OUR LADIES AND LADIES VETS TEAM BOTH LIE SECOND IN THEIR RESPECTIVE LEAGUES. INDIVIDUALLY, MARCOS VALERO PALLACIOS (4TH, 3RD & 3RD) AND JONATHAN YOUNG (6TH, 5TH & 4TH) CURRENTLY SIT FIRST AND SECOND IN THE SENIOR MEN'S OVERALL COMPETITION.

KEITH BREWSTER LIES 3RD IN THE M65 CATEGORY.

IN THE LADIES' COMPETITION, AMANDA SPENCER IS THE LEADING F50, WHILE SARAH SHANKS AND SAMANTHA HARRIS SIT 2ND AND 3RD IN THE F40 CATEGORY, AND PIP TREVORROW LIES 3RD IN THE F45.

BECCA WHALLEY HAS FINISHED 3RD AND 5TH IN HER TWO RACES SO FAR, SO COULD YET CHALLENGE FOR A PLACE ON THE F50 PODIUM.

Please do submit on behalf of yourself and others!

CAPTAIN'S WELCOME: KEITH BREWSTER

I love running. But most of all I love fell running. I was born and raised in Keswick in the Lake District and I pretty much spent most of my childhood walking and running on the fells. I'm now 69 years old and, though I've slowed down a bit, I still love getting out into the hills just as much as I ever did.

Last year 45 Striders completed 137 fell race performances across 54 different races, with outgoing captain Dave Middlemass and Liz Adams winning the VS Fell Championship trophies. With the new season starting I'd really like to encourage as many Striders as possible to give fell running a try, so I thought I'd try and give a flavour of some of the things I love about fell running.

Last Sunday I ran in the Stanbury Splash Fell Race. This is one of my favourite races. It is organized Wharfedale Harriers and starts at Penistone Hill Country Park above Haworth. Typical of many fell races it is Entry on the Day only, the £5.00 entry fee including two complimentary Soreen malt loaf bars. There is a really welcoming atmosphere about the whole event, with kids races taking place before the main race. For the second year in succession the event was blessed with beautiful sunny weather and gorgeous views across Bronte country to Top Withins. The race heads off towards Bronte Waterfalls before turning right into Ponden Valley, crossing Sladen Beck and onto the Pennine Way. The route takes us around the head of Ponden Clough and onto a great moorland path which winds its way back to the finish, again crossing Sladen Beck and rejoining the Bronte Waterfalls track. It's a glorious route involving wet feet, technical single-track running and muddy ascents and descents. Back at the finish there's free coffee and biscuits and a very sociable prize-giving ceremony which ends with the crowd being showered with chocolates and more malt loaf bars. I can't wait till next year!

The fell racing calendar is maintained by the FRA (Fell Runners Association). There are loads of races listed, many in West Yorkshire. Races are graded from AS to CL by difficulty and distance. Whilst some races are unmarked and require navigation skills, others such as Stanbury Splash are well-marked and marshalled. I would encourage you to carefully check the category and course description before going along so you know what to expect. Anyone entering a fell race also needs to be properly equipped with waterproof jacket and leggings, hat and gloves. Pre-race notices will instruct what runners need to carry with them. Some longer races will require runners to carry compass, whistle, emergency food and a map. A large bumbag or small sac is usually needed along with a good pair of fell or trail shoes.

For anyone who loves getting out into the countryside and running off-road I would really recommend giving fell running a try. My next fell race will be Runners and Riders at Appletreewick on 4 February. This is a great race in which runners take on cyclists around a moorland loop. Tea and cakes are included in the entry fee. If you are interested in running it please get in touch with me by email, messenger or phone.

Keith Brewster

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RACE REVIEW: THE ROB BURROW LEEDS MARATHON

If you're considering this year's iteration... read on!

On May 14th 2023 the Marathon returned to Leeds after a 20 year hiatus. Dinesh Kaulgud shares his experience of the day:

I was focused on my 3 peaks fell race (29/04/23) which was my 'A' race for this year. Overall training was a bit sporadic, but I did get a few long runs of 3 to 4 hours with some elevation thrown in a month before the 3 peaks. Lately my focus had been to build a strong aerobic base with lots of very easy runs. Mainly 8 to 9 minutes per kilometre with a HR around 110 to 115 bpm (walking pace zone 1). I prefer this kind of training because I love time on my feet and have found from experience that it helps me during races as well as in recovery. The 3 peaks race did not go to plan, and I think I started out faster than I should have and blew up on the climb of Whernside. There was just two weeks between the 3 peaks and Leeds marathon, so I just stuck to easy runs and strides for the 2 weeks period. In the 2 week period, I managed to run Dick Hudson fell race and the Bluebells 10-mile race and was happy with my performance. It gave me some confidence, but a marathon is a completely different beast, and I was still a little worried about how I would fare.

My first Marathon had been the Cardiff Marathon in 2005. It had gone well until 20 miles and then the wheels had fallen off and I had limped home in 4 hours and 56 minutes. The experience had been horrible. I was barely about to run the last few miles due to cramp. I wanted to avoid a similar experience this time.

I wanted to enjoy running the Leeds marathon.
Rob Burrow Leeds Marathon

The day before the marathon, I organised my vest, shorts, shoes, gels, pinned my number and began to worry about how to run the race? Should I aim for time or just enjoy the race? I was keen to break the 4 hour for the marathon.

Based on my running experience, I decided to follow a throttle method for the race. I have done long fell races and know that I should be able to sustain a heart rate of 145 bpm for a 3-to-4-hour race. For the Rob Burrow marathon, I decided to go even more conservative and set an high HR alert on the watch for 142 bpm. The idea was to run the first 20 miles very conservatively (throttle the pace) and

once I was over the A660 climb from Otley into Bramhope, release the throttle. I also set up a walk run timer as I have found this to be very helpful for long races. So, my setup was 14 minutes 30 seconds of running and then 30 seconds of walking. I found from experience that walking from the very beginning helps to keep the legs fresh during the final few miles.

I did not set an alert for gels and decided to just take a gel on every 5k or so.

Race day

On the race day, I woke up early, had my usual breakfast and then got ready. My wife and daughter dropped me at Shaw lane around 8am and I joined the throng of runners making their way to the Headingley stadium. It felt wonderful seeing hundreds of runners all walking together. I was happy that I was early and had enough time before the start at 9am.

I had a bag with a change of clothes and joined the queue to drop the bag. It was a bit disconcerting that there were no signs inside the stadium of baggage drop or any announcements. It was 8:10am but we were barely inching forward in the queue. This is one area which needs improvement for future races – announcements and bag drop. I was getting jittery as I was still in the queue at 8:45am. Finally, I managed to enter the Bag drop room at 8:55am. After dropping my bag, I quickly went to the toilet and joined the mass of runners in the red zone. I did not have any time for any warmup, so decided to run the first few miles even more slowly as my warmup.

The race started around 9:17am or so and I crossed the start line at 9:24am. The noise hit me immediately. It was a cacophony of clapping, cheering and bells. There were huge crowds lined up outside the stadium.

I couldn't believe it.

The noise, the cheering, the bells and remembering the race was for Rob Burrow made it quite an unforgettable start. I was feeling emotional and at the same time the adrenaline was rushing through me. I took a breath and reminded myself to slow down. The first few miles were lumpy as we went down Otley road towards Hyde Park, went round it and across the University. Then it began to start climbing back towards Headingley. There were crowds everywhere. I was soaking in the atmosphere and 'high-fiving' my way through the crowds, reading the placards, and smiling like a crazy man.

When we were crossing Hyde Park again, I could hear some cheering from the back. I turned around to see Kevin wheeling Rob along with his team. It was quite an emotional moment watching them run past me.

We soon crossed the Headingley start point and started the gentle climb towards Lawnswood roundabout.

At the 'Up and running' roundabout, my watch alerted me to start walking. I started walking and suddenly Amanda shouted, 'keep running Dinesh'. I felt a bit embarrassed that I was walking so early in the race, but I just swallowed my pride and committed to the plan. On the way there was great support from the Valley striders team. I had been buoyed up to see Tosh, Kath, Tim Towler, Tim S and Amanda supporting the runners. We crossed the Lawnswood roundabout and came up to the water station. I picked up a bottle, poured half the water over my head and drank a few gulps. I then decided to throw it into the large bin using a Michael Jordan basketball jump shot. I missed the bin completely, so I had to turn and pick it up and place it in the bin. I felt a bit embarrassed for trying to show off my non-existent basketball skills.

There were large crowds at Adel too and it felt great. I have run London marathon in 2006 (more like walked it) and experienced the support at London but I enjoyed Leeds even more than London. There were large crowds lined up at Church Lane too.

The other aspect of the Leeds marathon is the route. It is a hilly route but most of the route is local and I train on a lot of the route. So, it felt comforting.

We continued through Eccup and reached Bramhope from Kings Road. After Bramhope we turned right towards the steep downhill of Creskeld.

It was a surreal moment for me to see Alstair Brownlee climbing up Creskeld and cheering us on. In my excitement and fan boy moment, I shouted, 'Alistair hi' and kept looking back to see him.

The run down Creskeld was fine and we hit the 21k mark after the turnaround. I just continued my walk-run and kept my HR below 142.

The heat was stifling, and I kept pouring water down my head to keep cool. At one point I looked down and my grey shorts looked funny. It looked like I had pissed myself when running.

The crowds in Otley high street were amazing. I couldn't help but get sucked again into 'high-fiving' or tapping on the power boards as I ran.

Just before the Otley A600 climb, I ate a SIS orange soft chew and began the climb. I took it steady and just kept going at an easy pace. There were loads of runners just walking in a daze up A660 climb. After cresting the top, I began to slowly pick up pace back towards Bramhope. The hills were all done now and just the last 6 miles remained. The throttle was off.

Just before we reached Bramhope, I saw Heidi come past me. I decided to tag along with her for as much as I could. We continued running for 200 meters or so before the elastic broke and she powered on ahead. I continued at a steady pace and decided to take on my final gel (caffeine gel).

I was feeling fine. My legs were feeling fine, and I was able to continue running strongly. I wondered if I would hit the wall.

At Golden acre park, I began to feel a horrible stitch coming on. It was quite painful, and I was forced to walk. There was just 4 miles remaining, but the stitch was too painful. It felt like a screwdriver poking my ribs.

I crawled on and walked a bit more before I could begin to run again. At Adel, I saw my daughter coming across the road to hug me, 'You got this Daddy,' she shouted. I waved to my wife and continued to run. It felt great to have seen them and it gave me a good boost.

Slowly the stitch was easing up and I was able to pick up my speed. I had checked my elapsed time around the Lawnswood roundabout and felt there was a faint chance of making sub 4 hours. I picked up the stride and just enjoyed running the last few miles through the wall of crowds on both sides and peppy music.

The final few miles were run using the energy from the wildly cheering crowds.

I even managed a sprint in the Headingley stadium giving it everything I had and looked down to see my watch display 3 hours 58 mins after I crossed the line. I heaved a huge sigh of relief and slowly made my way to collect my medal and the goody bag.

Despite the heat and the hills, running the Leeds marathon was one of the best experiences of my life.

Well done to all the runners who ran the Leeds marathon and the half marathon for an excellent cause.



VSAC on Vacation

IF YOU'RE LEAVING LEEDS TO RUN THEN WE WANT TO KNOW ABOUT IT.

Andy Wicks tells us about running the Rhodes Half Marathon...

The event highlights:

- Running in pleasantly warm sunshine (07:30 start) with amazing views across the sea towards Turkey and of the walls of the ancient old town on Rhodes.
- There were plenty of water stations on the course run by the Greek scouts in their uniforms and did a great job.
- A really international race with numerous Brits, Danes and a Canadian lady doing the full marathon that chatted to early on.
- Making the final major turn outside our hotel where the current Mrs Wicks was roadside to cheer me on!
- (A friend/colleague at my London client came 8th and ran a PB in the full marathon out of just 200 entrants: in 2:58).

The event lowlights:

- A personal worst time of 2:17 (against a PB just a few years ago of 1:33!), feeling slow and slowing pace to a shuffle out and back for the last few miles along the coast road.
- Getting a blister and discovering 3 days later (after a recovery run) that the orthotic insole of the shoe was not inserted correctly... DOH!
- Generic medal and (nice) technical shirt branded as "Rhodes marathon", which should say "half".

What made this event unique and worth travelling to?

- To be honest I booked a week away before I discovered the race opportunity. As I had been trying to train for Leeds marathon, this seemed like a good precursor race 2 weeks ahead.
- The scenery, weather, friendly vibe and novelty of racing in Greece made it very much worth the effort!

Prefuel / refuel recommendations:

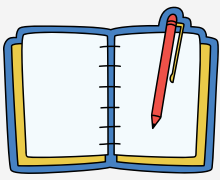
- Prefuel: Being too early for breakfast at the hotel, I grabbed 2 bananas and a Lucosade Sport drink before the race.
- In race: took sips of water and 2 SIS gels at 5 and 10 miles. (I typically would use 1 gel in a 10 mile race; 2 in a half and 4 in a marathon).
- Post race: Water and later a big buffet breakfast in the hotel and plenty of 'rehydrating' all week!

Best part of the trip overall:

- Loads of great local food (Olives, fruit) and drinks...
- Some enjoyable sightseeing in the Rhodes old town, Lindos and a boat excursion to Symi.
- Lots of walking and downtime from a busy work life and enjoying quality time with the current Mrs Wicks!
- Shout out to Jet2 holidays – great service and value.


Tempted? Rhodes Half Marathon 2024 entries are available [here](#)





Event Planning:







JAN

- 27th January: Hebden 22 / Kirkstall Bridge 10k / Kirkstall Calverley Cutter / Northern XC (Sedgefield)
- 28th January: **PECO XC 4 Middleton** 

FEB

- 3rd February: Rombalds Stride / Wadsworth Trog / Pendle Way in a Day
- 4th February: **Dewsbury 10k**  / Cod Beck Canter / Hardmoors Saltburn M - HM- 10k
- 9th February: Even Splits 5k (York)
- 10th February: **Winter Grand Prix Parkrun at Potternewton**  / St Aidan's Winter Beast
- 18th February: Snake Lane 10
- 21st February: **Even Splits 5k (Leeds)** 
- 24th February: National XC, Shropshire / South Pennine 24 / Northumberland Coastal Trail Runs Ultra - M- HM- 10k
- 25th February: **PECO XC 5 Roundhay Park**  / Hoppits Hill

MAR

- 3rd March: Ilkley Moor Fell Race / Liversedge HM / Trafford 10k
- 8th March: Even Splits 5k York
- 9th March: Haworth Hobble
- 10th March: **Trimpell 20**  Keighley 10k and 5k
- 16th March: **Spring Canal Canter**  / Grindleford Gallop
- 17th March: **Vale of York 10m**  - 5m / North Lincs 10k- HM / Thirsk 10
- 20th March: **Even Splits 5k (Leeds)** 
- 23rd March: We Need to Talk About Chevin / Hardmoors 55 / Norther 12 and 6 Stage Road Relays
- 24th March: **Spen 20**  / **East Hull 20**  / Edale Skyline / LDWA Blubberhouses Moor / Heptonstall Fell Race
- 29th March: Salford 10k
- 31st March: **Guiselley Gallop 10k**  / Hartlepool Marina 5m

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

We're a busy club, and there are so many ways for you to get involved beyond just joining in with training!



FOOD AT LEO'S



The 3rd Tuesday of every month involves both Advanced, Intermediates and Improvers training groups all starting from Leo's Rugby Club at 6.30pm. Food is then served at the Leo's from 7.30pm and costs £6. Look out for event details on Spond, so that you can place your food order.

PARKRUN TOURISM



We have just started a parkrun tourism WhatsApp group for those interested in attending some new parkruns in the local area and further afield. If you would like to be added to this group, please email your phone number to teams@valleystriders.org.uk. All planned trips will be advertised on Spond and open to all club members. We will try and share lifts where possible and will, of course, stop for breakfast in a nearby café.



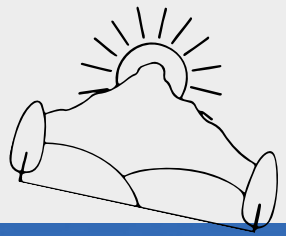
3.

VOLUNTEER

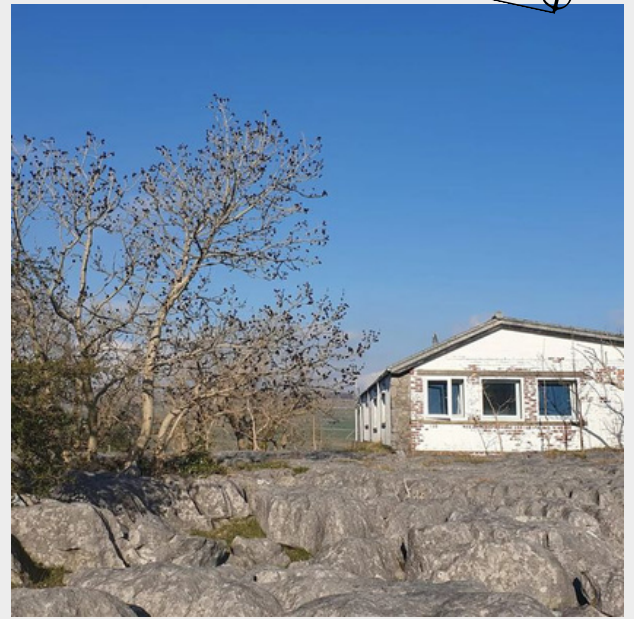
We will be hosting the PECO relays at Bramley Fall Park on 10th March. We need as many volunteers as possible! Please do sign up to help!

4.

THREE PEAKS WEEKEND



Valley Striders and North Leeds Fell Runners will be booking the Bunk Barn at Selside Outdoor Centre on Friday 26th April and Saturday 27th April to coincide with the 3 Peaks Fell Race. If you are taking part in the race or wish to spectate, and would like to book a bunk, please contact Kathy Robbins. Some Striders will be staying in nearby accommodation or camping, which is also an option for when the bunk barn is full. Any email enquiries sent to socials@valleystriders.org.uk will be passed on to Kathy.

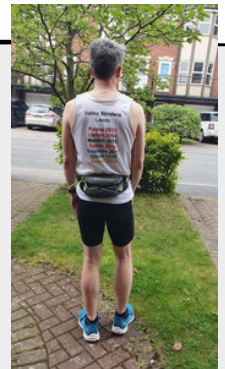
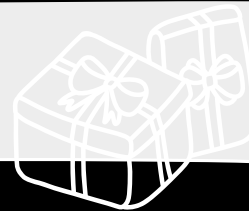


5.

VS TOUR



This year's Valley Striders tour will be to Amsterdam on the weekend of the 19th-20th October. Striders will have race options of the Amsterdam Marathon and Half Marathon. Thanks go to Kathy Robbins for organising the tour and the Three Peaks Weekend.



6.

CHRISTMAS PARTY



It's a long way off, but the VS Christmas Party is the last social event of the year and incorporates the Awards Presentation. We are looking for ideas of how to improve the Christmas Party, so if you have any ideas or suggestions, please get in touch at socials@valleystriders.org.uk.

WITH MORE TO COME!