



Veterans Athletic Club Newsletter Autumn 2021

Well done Lisa!



British Masters Female Athlete
of the Year

Lisa Thomas is the worthy winner of this prestigious award from Athletics Weekly based on the votes of its readership.

Lisa set a British 2000m W55 steeplechase record which could also be a World record if ratified.

(Photo by Anna Garnier)

VAC Committee Members: Sept 2021 – Sept 2022

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Veterans Athletic Club was established in 1931 and is affiliated to England Athletics, BMAF, South of England AA, Surrey County AA, the Race Walking Association and the South of the Thames Cross Country Association. We offer athletic competition for men and women aged 35 and over. Cross-country, road, track & field as well as race walking - there is something for everyone. Based in London with members across the South East, we can provide opportunities to compete with other like-minded masters/veterans. A fixture list is printed in the newsletter. Please support these events. The newsletter welcomes contributions and events always need volunteers, as well as competitors. If you want to get involved, contact any of the Committee members listed above.

Editor Angela Kikugawa Writes



It is nice to putting the newsletter together again after over a year's break. You may remember that I was in Japan at the time the last newsletter was published and was very pessimistic about the possibility of the Tokyo Olympics going ahead but they managed to do it, even if it was without spectators. I really enjoyed it and in particular, the women's sprints provided great viewing, as did the success of Laura Muir, Keely Hodgkinson and Josh Kerr on the track.

I am back living in the UK now and looking forward to doing some races. One of the things I miss about living in London is the informality of the VETS AC races, along with the other casual events like the Sri Chinmoy series in Battersea Park. Some of you may have read Richard Askwith's book, Running Free. In it he talks a lot about the growth of commercialisation of running, not only in the range of running products that are now available but also in the management of races by Running Companies as opposed to the running clubs. I admit that I do agree with him on many points and have been heard to call big races, like the Great Birmingham Run, all Rah-Rah and goodie bags. I dislike the aerobic pre-race warm ups led by lycra clad fitness instructors from the local gym and the tat that gets put into unnecessary plastic bags; usually consisting of reinforced plastic sachets that are impossible to open. I enter the races regardless but then stride imperiously past the goodie bags with a disparaging sniff. But there is just something about those medals and tee-shirts.... (Coventry Festival of Running).

This has turned out to be a bumper edition of the newsletter. I have had some excellent feedback recently and members clearly enjoy reading contributions from other members, so please keep them coming.



Message from Peter Kennedy

VAC Membership Secretary

At the end of November we had 596 members, which is more than we had two years ago. Hopefully this suggests that club activities and competition are returning to normal.

New members can join until 31st March 2022 at the rate of £6 for 2nd claim membership and £21 for 1st claim. In April the full rate for the year 2022/23 will be unchanged at £12 for 2nd claim members and £28 for 1st claim members, which includes the EA registration fee of £16 (a £1 increase over 2021/22). Membership expires on 31st March 2022 and you are strongly urged to renew your membership in advance (the window for online renewals will open in OpenTrack at the beginning of March). The incentive to do this is that you can then benefit from reduced rates or free entry to our early season events, which may sell out quickly, although priority will be given to existing members.

VAC is continuing to expand the amount of competition we offer but the cost of this means that we need to bring in new members. In order to achieve this, we still need more people to volunteer to become their clubs' contact for masters athletics and to promote our events within their clubs. Please let Maggie Statham-Berry or myself know via membership@vetsac.org.uk if you are willing to help.

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2022 Fixtures

Refer to the VAC website (www.vetsac.org.uk) for details, updates and additions.

Date	Organiser	Event	Venue	Entry	Entry Closing Date
Saturday 8 Jan 2022	SLAN (South London Athletics Network)	SLAN Indoor Open Track and Field	David Weir Leisure Centre, Middleton Road, Carshalton SM5 1SL	Masters athletes are welcome. Entry via OpenTrack. Events: 60m,HJ, PV & LJ	7 Jan or earlier if full.
Saturday 15 Jan 2022	Men's Surrey League Division 4	Cross Country Race Match 3 VAC Men's team	Richmond Park	All VAC men (1st and 2nd claim) are eligible, subject to conditions.	Enter on the day. Advance notice to Paddy Clark
Saturday 22 Jan 2022	VAC	VAC Cross Country champs & Masters Open race (approx. 5 miles) Men and women run together.	Start near West Place, Wimbledon Common, SW19 4UH	Start time: 2pm Online entry through OpenTrack. Individual medals in five-year age groups.	20 Jan
Saturday 12 Feb 2022	Wimbledon Common parkrun	5km parkrun Featuring VAC "mob match" gathering.	Wimbledon Common, SW19 5NR. Start near the Windmill car park.	9am. New parkrunners must register with parkrun to obtain a Barcode. Look out for VAC vests!	Enter on the day (but need your Barcode)

Date	Organiser	Event	Venue	Entry	Entry Closing Date
Saturday 19 Feb 2022	Men's Surrey League Division 4	Cross Country Race Match 4 VAC Men's team	Lloyd Park Coombe Road, Croydon CRO 5RA	All VAC men (1st and 2nd claim) are eligible, subject to conditions.	Enter on the day. Advance notice to Paddy Clark
20 – 27 Feb 2022	European Masters Athletics	Indoor European Masters Athletics Championships	Braga, Portugal	Check EMA website. Registration through OpenTrack.	Closing date for entry 5 January 2022
Saturday/ Sunday 5-6 March 2022	BMAF Services	British Masters Indoor T&F Championships	Lee Valley Athletics Centre, Edmonton N9 0NR	Online entry through OpenTrack. Includes winter long throws.	To be decided
Saturday 5 March 2022	Croydon Harriers	East Surrey League Cross Country Race (VAC is a member of the East Surrey League).	Lloyd Park. Start near Lloyd Park tram stop, Coombe Road, Croydon CRO 5RA	VAC men's and women's teams. No limit on numbers. Free entry. Start at 2.30pm. Five mile (2 lap) course. Enquiries to Entries Secretary	VAC runners declared on the day.

Date	Organiser	Event	Venue	Entry	Entry Closing Date
Saturday 12 March 2022	BMAF Services	British Masters Open Cross Country Championships	Somerhill School, Tonbridge TN11 0NJ	Online entry in due course through OpenTrack.	To be decided
Sunday 13 March	England Masters Athletics Association	British Masters Inter Area Indoor Track & Field Challenge Competition for members of BMAF Area Clubs.	Lee Valley Athletics Centre, Meridian Way, Edmonton London N9 0NR.	VAC Team to be selected in advance. Men & Women Age Groups: 35-49, 50- 59, 60-69, 70+. Enquiries to Entries Secretary	Timings for expressions of interest and team selection to be advised.
12-15 May 2022	European Masters Athletics	European Masters Non Stadia Championships 2022	Grosseto, Italy	Online registration (not yet open).	To be advised
29 June – 10 July 2022	World Masters Athletics	World Masters Track & Field Championships 2022	Tampere, Finland	Online registration (not yet open).	To be advised

For other regional/national/international masters events refer to the [Masters Athletics UK website](#).

NEWS

Peter Torre in the News!

Long-time VAC member, and former President, Peter Torre, got his name in the news in September by being the first person to travel the full length of the Northern Line from Mill Hill East to the end of the new extension at Battersea Power Station.



Peter would be delighted if Vets AC members would join him to celebrate his 80th birthday on Tuesday 28 December (a bank holiday). The occasion includes a 5km run around Battersea Park and a gathering at the Prince Albert pub on Albert Bridge Road, SW11, starting at midday. All VAC members are welcome. Email Peter

peterfunlover262@hotmail.com) to accept the invitation or find out more.

Track and Field

Once the Covid lockdown ended, VAC were very anxious to provide some track and field experience for our members. Because the summer's T&F calendar was compressed, it was not possible to hold our annual outdoor championships, but we did provide some stand-alone field events and our annual 5,000m and 10,000m championships, as well as opportunities to represent VAC in the Masters Inter Area match and in two London Inter-Club Challenge events. The BMAF also staged welcome competitions at regional and national level.

Field Events at Wimbledon Park, 23 and 30 May

With competitions resuming, we were invited to join Hercules Wimbledon in two low key field competitions at the Wimbledon Park stadium. The first date featured discus, high jump and triple jump events, with long jump and shot put the following week. We were able to offer VAC members free entry to these two events and the members who attended welcomed the competition.

VAC 5,000m and 10,000m champs, 21 July and 15 September



We again used the Wimbledon Park stadium for these long distance track championships. They proved very popular with entries sold out.

The 5,000m races were held in the hottest week of the year, making the water station very welcome. It was not a day for Championship Bests or PBs. There were four races, seeded on predicted performances, with the fastest race last. The first race was won by Rhiannon Needham (W40), the second by Pete Crockford (M60) and the third by Paul Doyle (M50). Richard McDowell (M40 and pictured left) won the final one in a time of 15:35.46, making him VAC's men's champion. Anna Critchlow (W50) was the women's champion in a time of 19:08.72.

Three seeded 10,000m races were held in benign late-summer weather, with the first in daylight and the last under the floodlights, lending a continental atmosphere. Joe Dale (M40), a guest from Victoria Park Harriers & Tower Hamlets AC made a late surge past Duncan Woolmer (M40) to win the fast race in 33:26.25. Duncan, as the first VAC man, won the McDowell VAC Champion's Cup. The women's winner was Carole Coulon (W45) from Blackheath & Bromley AC in an excellent time of 37:52.40. Kate Carter (W40) was VAC's women's winner. Jeremy Garner (M45) headed the middle race

and Steve Oliver (M60) had a convincing win in the early race. All results are in the results section of the VAC website.

Officials' Training

The main organiser of these events was Ben Noad who sorted out track bookings, permits, photo finish etc. However, they could not have gone ahead without the support of volunteer officials. We are always in need of officials and will pay for training courses for members interested in qualifying as Track & Field and Endurance officials.

Details of training courses and the officials' pathway can be found on the England Athletics website. <https://www.englandathletics.org/officiating/> . Or get in touch with Ros Tabor, VAC's Officials Secretary, who will be happy to guide you. Her details are on the Committee page at the front of the newsletter.

England Masters Inter-Area Challenge, Nuneaton, 18 July

By Anna Garnier

VAC's team of 35 men and women took part in the annual Challenge on one of the hottest days of the summer. Anna Garnier and Mike Mann were the team managers, helped by Richard Weekes and David Hinds in putting the squad together. The team was depleted due to three other Masters events being held elsewhere on the same day but everyone showed their strength and determination in the blistering heat, fighting for every position, some doing multiple events to gain points. There was wonderful camaraderie and team spirit. The new venue, the Pingles stadium, was excellent, with plenty of room outside the track to warm up (if required in the 35+ degree heat) and lots of trees to provide shade.



There were many great performances. Cara Maker (W40) was 1st in the 100m, 1st in the Long Jump and 2nd in the Triple Jump. David Hinds (M70) was 1st in the 400m, 2nd in the 200m and 2nd in the Shot. Chris Taplin (M50) achieved

a 1st place in the 400m and a 2nd in the 200m. Helen Davies (W50) and Allan Long (M75) also scored highly in two events. Midland Masters won the event convincingly, making home advantage count. VAC were 7th out of the nine clubs but could have gained a couple of places if we'd had a full team. The photograph shows the 4x100m Women's relay team: Ed Roe, Rachel Berry, Ginevra Stoneley and Helen Davies.

The next Inter-Area match is the Indoor Challenge at the Lee Valley Athletics Centre. The date is 13 March but there are no other details yet. We will invite expressions of interest when more is known. Please save the date if you are interested in being selected for the VAC team.

CROSS COUNTRY

After last season's cancellations, it was a welcome relief that the 2021-22 campaign opened as usual in October with the traditional East Surrey League fixture in Lloyd Park. The Surrey League, and other County leagues, also got underway with fixtures in October and November and we are looking forward to attractive matches in January, February and March. VAC's championships are returning to Wimbledon Common on 22 January. There is also the prospect of national competition in the British Masters Championships at Somerhill School, Tonbridge, in March. It would be good to see a big turn-out of VAC members at these events. Exciting times for cross country runners!

East Surrey League Cross Country, Lloyd Park

VAC's team of nine battled awful weather to register good scores in this friendly match with eight other clubs. Many other VAC members ran for their first claim clubs but all were made welcome under VAC's gazebo which provided shelter from the relentless heavy rain.



The two-lap, five mile course was heavy and mucky but not overly muddy. Terry Booth (M50) led the team home in eighth place and was the first Masters athlete. David Moore (first M55), David Ogden (first M60) and Chris Ness completed the scoring team of four which finished fifth overall. Annie Ross (W70 and pictured with Ron Carr) represented VAC's women and her enthusiasm set a fine example. The full race results are in the results section of the VAC website.

Men's Surrey Cross Country League



The season began in October at Epsom Downs, a lovely open course with a fabulous view of the iconic racecourse's grandstand. VAC had a magnificent turn-out with 18 finishers, some of whom are pictured above. Gary Ironmonger (M55) led the VAC team home in 29th position, closely followed by Malcolm Davies and Chris Ness. Tony Harran was next and was also the first in the M60 age group. John Barron displayed his sprinting prowess in a storming finish and was easily the first M65 in the race. The "A" Team of the first 10 men finished a creditable 6th out of the 14 clubs. For the first time, our 8-man "B" team scored well and finished third in the B team competition for which there is a separate Surrey League trophy.

The second match in November was at Denbies Vineyard, near Dorking. The course is renowned for its hills and views, although heavy rain before the race made the ground very slippery and shrouded Box Hill in mist. Nineteen men turned out for VAC. Chris Ness was the first home, followed by Malcolm Davies (pictured on the back page), reversing their order at Epsom Downs. In the age groups, VAC members were superior. In the entire Division 3/4 race, Peter Hall and Tony Harran were the first and second M60s, Mike Mann and David Hinds were the first and second M70s and Peter Giles was the first M75. VAC's "A" team finished 11th out of the 14 clubs in Division Four. The "B" team was a very creditable 6th. Overall, VAC is 9th after two matches but within striking distance of 8th, 7th and 6th.

First-claim VAC members are eligible to compete for VAC. Also second claim members are allowed to run for VAC as long as they do not compete in any of the season's matches for their first claim club if it is in the Surrey League. If your first claim club doesn't need you, you would be much appreciated in VAC's team. Members from outside Surrey are also very welcome, although the Surrey fixtures often clash with those of other county leagues.

VAC Team for the Ladies Surrey League

Some of VAC's women have asked if VAC could compete in the Ladies League. It's pleasing to report that our approach to the Surrey League has been welcomed and the way is clear for VAC to enter a women's team in Division Two next season. It must be well over ten years since a complete women's team competed in the Surrey League. It would be great to see VAC vests once again in the mix in a League which caters for a wide range of abilities and is keenly fought at all levels, usually with well over 200 finishers in each race.

The rules for the women's team will be the same as the men's. VAC's First Claim members are eligible as well as Second Claim members, as long as they compete solely for VAC in the Surrey League during the season. Five women are needed for a complete scoring team but for the venture to be viable and successful, it would be good to have lots of expressions of interest as well as some volunteers to help out with team management on the day.

Please let Maggie Statham-Berry (entries@vetsac.org.uk) know if you are interested in joining the VAC team next season, beginning in October 2022.

VAC Cross Country Championships, 22 January 2022

The championships are taking place on Wimbledon Common. All Masters athletes will be welcome. We are using a challenging new five-mile, two-lap, course starting and finishing on the open grassland alongside West Place and the Causeway, near the Fox and Grapes pub. The course heads out to the Windmill, drops down for a circuit of the Queensmere pond and returns via a very steep climb up to the plain. All being well, we will hold an awards ceremony at Belgrave Hall, Denmark Road, and do our usual presentation of trophies and medals. Because the course will be unfamiliar, we need plenty of marshals. Volunteers would be much appreciated and will have as much fun as the runners! Please let Ros Tabor know if you can help.

Road running

When UKA licensing resumed in April 2021, there was massive pent-up demand for road races despite the necessity of wave starts and social distancing. VAC was quick to organise Masters races and offered free entry for members as a reward for loyalty and an inducement to gather again as a club.

VAC Open Masters 5km, Wimbledon Park, 11 April



VAC and Hercules Wimbledon staged one of the first 5k road races in the South East. It started from the athletics track, took in the long hill up towards Wimbledon village before re-entering the park and returning on traffic-free paths. The race was full, with 120 Masters entrants, around 55 of them from VAC. For many members, it was a welcome return to racing and an opportunity to greet friends warmly after over a year's absence.

Andy Bond (M45 and pictured) of Dulwich Runners and VAC was the clear winner in a time of 16:39. Hayley Cargill (W35, Walton AC and VAC) was the women's winner with a time of 19:03.

Battersea Park Summer Series

VAC staged four 5k Masters road races and race walks in Battersea Park in May, June, July and August. Complying with the Runbritain and Race Walking Association's guidance and the even more rigorous demands of the Battersea Park authority created a huge amount of paperwork, organisation and extra features. There were wave starts, staggered arrivals, sanitiser stations, COVID signage and extra medics, officials and marshals. To facilitate the wave starts,

we used chip timing. We also engaged an organiser (Ben Noad) to pull it all together and operate the events on the day.

As well as providing competitive opportunities for a large number of VAC members, the series generated a considerable amount of goodwill and admiration and attracted many new members.

The 2022 Battersea Park series of five races is planned to return in April 2022 with a mixture of 5k and 5 mile races.

5km Road Race & Race Walk, 18 May

VAC made a welcome return to Battersea Park. We last met there in August 2019. Nearly two years later, different circumstances necessitated a new 5km course using the spacious Bandstand area as Race HQ and a start of six waves, set off at one-minute intervals to ensure social distancing of the 83 starters.

VAC members turned out in force and welcomed new members with customary friendliness. Even a downpour before the start did not dampen the spirits.



At the head of the race, new member, Jim Allchin (M35) overhauled SLH's Kevin Quinn (M40) to win by 15 seconds in 15:11. Another new member, Sage Pearce-Higgins (M35), was third, ahead of Neil Danby (M55) who achieved an excellent age-group time of 16:33. For the women, Victoria Buck (W45 and pictured) won a close battle with Rachel Berry (W45), finishing three seconds ahead in 19:31. The first in the Walk was Dave Annetts (M55) in an excellent time of 24:07. Grazia Manzotti of Tonbridge AC was the first woman in 28:44.

5km Road Race & Race Walk, 8 June

The second race took place in pleasant sunshine and unaccustomed warmth, which felt too hot for some of the 85 finishers. At the front, men's winner, Kevin Quinn (M40), strode away and clocked 15:23, three seconds faster than at the May race. In second place, Gary Towers (M45) also went quicker by 14 seconds, with 16:22. Behind him, there was a thrilling battle between three of the UK's top M55 middle distance runners. Neil Danby crossed the line first in 16:38, four seconds ahead of Steve Watmough, with Gary Ironmonger applying pressure behind.

April James-Welsh (W40) was the women's winner with an excellent time of 18:07, ahead of Kay Sheedy (W35) in second place in 18:31. In the Walk, Dave Annetts repeated last month's win, but with a slower time of 24:40. Grazia Mazotti was again the first woman, achieving a new PB of 28:35.

5km Road Race & Race Walk, 13 July

Neil Danby held off Andrew Ridley to win an epic contest between the two top M55 athletes. Both were awarded the same time of 16:34. However, on age-grading, Andrew was ahead, scoring 93.3%, compared with Neil's 92.6%.

Anna Critchlow (W50) had a fine win in the Women's race, with 18:48 and a 90.9% age-graded performance. Her West 4 Harriers clubmate, Rachel Berry (W45), was second in 19:14, followed by Lisa Thomas (W55) in third with an impressive 19:55. Dave Annetts once again won the Walk in a consistent time of 24:23. Melanie Peddle was the women's winner in 28:08, much quicker than her 29:06 in June's race.

5km Road Race & Race Walk, 3 August

There were some fast times in cool conditions for the final race of the series. Terry Booth (M50) had an emphatic win in a time of 16:45 (90.8% age-graded), well clear of Will Pitt (also M50), finishing in 16:59. Gina Galbraith

(W45) was the women's winner, 13th overall, in a high-ranked time of 18:32. Anna Critchlow (W50), the second-placed woman and 15th overall in 18:45, once again set the best age-graded mark of the race with 91.1%.

In the age-group contests, David Pitt (19:43) was ahead of Ian Kitching (20:06) in the latest of their closely fought M65 head-to-heads. Julian Spencer-Wood (M70), an ever-present, achieved his best time of the four races of the series with 21:51. In the Walk, Jonathan Ellerton, a junior Under-17 guest from Blackheath & Bromley, won in 31:16, pressed hard by Stuart Bennett (M60) who finished in 31:23. Penelope Cummings (W45) was the first woman, and third overall, in 31:46.

BMAF and VAC Half Marathon Champs, Redhill, 18 July

Twenty men and seven women from VAC finished the Caterham Rotary Half Marathon at Redhill aerodrome on what may have been the hottest day of the year. Two others wisely withdrew during the race. It was not a day for fast times and even to finish was a relief. However, there were great performances to claim national medals. Ben Goddard was the first finisher for VAC in 1:14:33, claiming a BMAF M35 Silver medal and VAC Gold. Simon Baines was next with 1:16:01, winning the BMAF and VAC M50 Gold medals. April James-Welsh was the first VAC woman in 1:27:39, winning the W45 BMAF Bronze medal and VAC Gold. Other BMAF Gold medals were won by Paul Cheetham (M45), Debbie Jackson (W45), Susan McDonald (W50) and Penny Wilkins (W60).

VAC awards the Ron White Shield to the member who gains the highest age graded score in VAC's 10 mile or Half Marathon Championships. This year the winner was Simon Baines whose age graded score was a magnificent 85.55%. Ian Kitching, Debbie Jackson, Paul Cheetham and Susan McDonald also scored over 80% which is admirable on such a hot day and undulating course.

There is a link to the full race results in the results section of the VAC website.

Marathon Running

The abundance of Autumn marathons, some repositioned from the Spring, gave VAC's marathon runners welcome opportunities to cover the classic distance in real events. The Virgin London Marathon was the focus for most with at least 41 members taking part. The table below has been compiled by scrutinising the official results. Apologies if we have failed to spot some members. Please let Maggie Statham-Berry (entries@vetsac.org.uk) know if this is the case.

The fastest VAC member was once again Richard McDowell, finishing 2nd in the M40-44 category in 2:23:06, two seconds quicker than in 2019. The fastest woman was Sue McDonald who was first in the W50-54 category, setting a new British record of 2:51:27. Her account of this tremendous achievement follows. Her SLH clubmate, Ian Kitching, also excelled. On his birthday, he came second in his new M70 age group and went on to win Gold at the British Masters marathon two weeks later. You can read his story later. Other great performances came from Jon Cross (9th M60), Karima Harris (7th W50) and Alice Riddell-Webster (12th W50).

VAC Members at the Virgin Money London Marathon: 3 October 2021				
Name	Time	Age Group	Age Pos.	First claim club
Richard McDowell	2:23:06	M40-44	2	Hercules Wimbledon
Thomas South	2:38:08	M45-49	26	Dulwich Runners
Paul Cheetham	2:38:45	M45-49	30	Thames Hare & Hounds
Stuart Beaney	2:44:10	M45-49	58	Kent AC
Susan McDonald	2:51:27	W50-54	1	South London Harriers
Robert Peacock	2:54:27	M40-44	332	Herne Hill Harriers
Tony Page	2:55:25	M45-49	209	Reading Roadrunners
Martin King	2:57:53	M45-49	254	VAC
Paul Doyle	2:57:55	M55-59	47	Ranelagh Harriers

Ralph Gomarsall	2:58:11	M55-59	48	Aldershot, Farnham & Dist.
Jon Cross	2:58:12	M60-64	9	Hart Road Runners
Karima Harris	2:58:51	W50-54	7	Queens Park Harriers
Tom Cheetham	3:04:43	M50-54	213	Hercules Wimbledon
Gerard O'Callaghan	3:05:44	M45-49	406	Ranelagh Harriers
Gavin Englefield	3:05:58	M40-44	571	South London Harriers
Alice Riddell-Webster	3:05:59	W50-54	12	Fulham Running Club
Victoria Buck	3:06:16	W45-49	22	Kent AC
Bruce Poll	3:08:03	M50-54	256	Bracknell AC
Roger Beardsworth	3:08:22	M60-64	26	Kent AC
Tim Grose	3:09:25	M50-54	266	Walton AC
Simon Danciger	3:09:32	M55-59	115	Barnes Runners
Heather Graz	3:12:11	W45-49	47	VAC
Victoria Carter	3:19:23	W50-54	29	Thames Valley Harriers
Ian Kitching	3:21:04	M70-74	2	South London Harriers
Martin Daoud	3:25:19	M55-59	217	Ealing Southall & Midd
Pippa Major	3:25:55	W55-59	20	South London Harriers
Lynn Chislett	3:34:57	W55-59	47	VAC
Jim Allchin	3:35:36	M35		Kent AC
Andy Mitchelson	3:54:16	M50-54	887	Brighton & Hove
Alan Roberts	3:54:38	M55-59	455	Vale of Aylesbury
Peter Robertson	3:59:41	M40-44	1754	West 4 Harriers
Jonathan Pitayanukul	4:06:26	M65-69	86	VAC
David Kemp	4:06:28	M60-64	294	Arena 80
Anthony Young	4:11:12	M55-59	598	Ilford AC
Karen Samuel	4:21:24	W60-64	105	Kent AC
Lisa Compton	4:24:56	W65-69	39	Lingfield RC
Julia Galea	4:36:07	W65-69	49	Ilford AC
Donna Richards	5:22:53	W55-59	585	South London Harriers
Bill O'Connor	5:34:09	M75-79	34	Queens Park Harriers
Kathy Crilly	5:45:38	W70-74	39	Serpentine RC
John Grigg	6:21:49	M65-69	306	Fulham Running Club

Another SLH runner, Donna Richards, was determined to make up for lost time and set out to run as many marathons as possible once competitions resumed. Her diary of four of these marathons, including the VLM, is later.

A marathon report would not be complete without mentioning Bill O'Connor, one of now only seven London Marathon "Ever Presents". He duly completed his 41st London Marathon in a very consistent time. His insight is later.

A PB and a British Record



By Sue McDonald

I'd love to say that London was a perfectly executed race, but the truth is that I completely screwed up the pacing in the first half and went out too fast. I had aimed to hit 5k in 20:10 with an overall target time of 2hrs 53 - but I got there in 18:56 and went on to run a new Half Marathon PB of 82:59. From halfway onwards, it turned into an exercise of damage limitation and mental strength.

I had followed an 18-week training programme but multiple joint issues and fatigue had made training very inconsistent and so average mileage had been low at 40, with peak mileage at 63. I incorporated more runs at marathon pace and gave priority to long runs, ensuring they were used as race practice.

I made changes to my nutrition this year and practised pre-race nutrition, hydration and race fuelling in advance. I'd not really used gels before but getting this right in training and the race really helped. My training group has also done lots of work on mindset this year - a really important area that I don't think is covered enough by coaches generally. This really came into play in the second half of the marathon.

Mile 23 was the first time that I thought about the possibility of being able to dip under Jo Thompson's 12-year record (2:52:30), but you know anything can happen in those last 3 miles and so I didn't allow myself to think about it

again until safely over the final timing mat with a new marathon best of 2hrs 51 and 27 seconds.

At 54 I know that I must be on the verge of slowing down, but I'm stubbornly doing my best to resist for as long as possible. Each and every PB feels very special and this one is no exception. I love being part of VAC and Masters athletics. Over the years I have been inspired, supported and encouraged by so many amazing people and life is definitely better for being involved in a sport that allows us to all share in personal achievement, whatever that might be.

I have been incredibly blessed to be coached by two amazing coaches. Mick Firth, who coached me for over 15 years and whose advice, guidance and support remain with me constantly in every race - and more recently Ben Short, whose relentless hard work and positivity got me and the rest of our training group to the start line this year feeling more prepared than ever.

A massive well done to everyone else who ran the London Marathon.

Running on my 70th Birthday

By Ian Kitching

Age-Related events give a purpose to racing; when PBs are things to reminisce, competition against similar aged athletes gives you the drive to race. I had not done the London Marathon since 2012 when I failed to win the M60 award, taking 2nd place. So, when I heard the date of this year's race I vowed "just one more", as the event fell on my 70th birthday. I managed to secure a 'Good for Age' place running a Trail marathon on no training! Not many events were available.

Having only had a diet of well-organised VAC 5km runs in Battersea Park, I ran on 3rd October, taking 2nd place again in 3:21:04 to a runner I think you will find is the fastest 70-year-old in all the current World Masters Marathons, so

no disgrace there! He is of course Mike Sheridan of Newbury AC who finished in 2.59.37.

Two weeks later I was on the start line of the BMAF Marathon Champs in York, with no extra training required, using London as my last long run. In the event I secured a Gold in 3:24:44, 1st M70, after a handful of silvers at various distances. The Yorkshire Marathon uses a more rural (and rolling) course than flat London but support on an inclement day was good. So, I conclude by saying “that was my last marathon”, although I probably said that ten years ago!

You will have read Sue McDonald’s account of her brilliant race above which proves that age is no barrier to success; so good luck to all VAC runners and please don’t look back!

My 41st London Marathon

By “Ever-Present” Bill O’Connor

COVID has had an effect on all of us. Individually and collectively, we have had to adjust how we operate and seek new ways of getting back to a safe normal.

The London Marathon faced this dilemma and came up with changes to make the 41st edition successful. Spacing became the priority. At registration we had to use the bag we were given with any clothing we were going to need at the finish already in it. The bag was taken away. Hopefully, I would retrieve this bag, by then containing a medal and goodies, on Sunday in The Mall.

I had been allocated a wave number for the start to spread out the various abilities and each wave of around 500 to 1000 athletes had a starting time with a small gap behind the previous wave. We were told to space our arrival times and had been advised to wear clothing we could throw away before the start. Bags were provided for discarded clothing, which was donated to charities.

The start was different. With the wave spacing we gradually started to run as we came closer to the starting line, so there was little of the usual pushing to get past those going slow. With the additionally smaller wave groups I quickly had space to pass safely.

The route was basically the same as we first had in 1981. At that time the tallest buildings in London were the Post Office tower and St Paul's Cathedral. London has changed so much since; we have the high buildings in Canary Wharf, the Dockland's Light Railway, Olympic Stadium complex, the Stratford regeneration area, the City Airport and the extended Jubilee Line, to list a few developments.

The race had its usual great atmosphere – crowds cheering, numerous drinks stations (now with large bags for discarded bottles), lively bands, booming drummers and participants wearing outlandish costumes trying for a mention in the Guinness Book of Records. The result was a carnival atmosphere. The weather was kind.

As we neared the finish in The Mall, people cheered from the stands which had been erected on Saturday and would be removed overnight. This also applied to the gantries at the various distance marks plus the thousands of safety barriers along the course. The finish felt different. With the spaced start taking nearly an hour and a half, there was much more room. There were no photographers waiting to snap you with your medal. Clearly marked boxes contained your bag, last seen at registration, and now containing the VLM medal. As I walked towards Horse Guards, with fewer people around, it was easier to meet family and friends.

London Marathon can be proud of what they achieve for this great city and are a great example of superb organisation. Now for the 42nd edition on Sunday 2nd October, 2022!

Running the Thames Meander Marathon

by John Carter

Always look on the bright side of life. This came in handy while running in a tropical downpour as I convinced myself it was preferable to running in 30C, which was forecast, until the weather took a turn for the wetter.

I'd chosen the Thames Meander as my annual marathon, a straightforward out and back along the Thames Path. Last year I'd opted for the Virtual London and the day was wet, cold and windy but the Thames event, held on August 7, was forecast to be run in 30+C. The organiser (David Ross, Hermes Running) had reced the event in 31C and decided to bring the start time forward to 08.30 when it would be cooler. But come the day, the weather had turned, the Thames Path had become muddy and puddled in places, and it was raining - stair rods! Before the start, the majority of the 180 runners were huddled together under a canopy next to the start line, but we were all soaked as soon as we stepped out. It was some consolation that it was around 12C and not too windy. By the time I got to the turnaround point, the rain had stopped, but there were a couple of refreshing sudden downpours on the way back, and by the time I finished it was dry and sunny.

Appropriately named, it was a Meander along the Thames Path starting at YMCA Hawker, just downriver from Kingston Bridge, with a turnaround point at the Barn Elms Rowing Club in Putney. From the start we headed in the wrong direction towards Kingston Bridge for a two-mile loop and back to the start, and on our way to Putney. After around 24 miles, you arrived at the finish, but needed to repeat the two-mile loop before arriving back at the finish, with the 26.2 miles ticked off.



The winner finished precisely three hours ahead of me 2:47:54/5:47:41 and the last finisher was over an hour behind me, so the field was quite spread out. However tired at the finish, everyone I saw looked relieved to have run 26.2 miles in less-than-ideal conditions. As the organiser put it: “The weather conditions were, at best, challenging yet you all dug deep and put pedal to the metal, many of you producing great results on a wet, muddy and challenging course, so well done”.

Not sure which marathon I’m doing next year; I’ve entered the ballot for London, so hopefully that one, but I’d like to think it might be dry for a change. I started this once-a-year marathon adventure in 2012, so the Thames Meander was my 10th; my times have become slower but I plan to carry on for as long as I can, and reckon I’ve run a marathon if I’ve run it non-stop, whatever speed I can maintain.

Marathon Diary

by Donna Richards

Brighton Marathon, 12 September, 5:46:53

Before I ramble on about what a fantastic day it's been, I have to say a big thank you to the guy who took over my 5-hour pacing duty with literally 3 seconds' notice!

Hamstring started tightening up after 5-6km, must have been the undulations! Cue the damsel in distress just past 10km, not feeling at all confident about holding that pace for another 20 miles! Balloon and Pacer bib duly handed over, the pressure was off, the relief immense and I bumbled round in 5:46.

Now, time to ramble on a bit. As mentioned, it was a fantastic day, fabulous in fact! It became rather warm at points but there were plenty of water/energy stations on the course. The crowd support was as excellent as

ever and the volunteers were amazing. Spoke to a lot of first-time marathon runners, told them how very addictive it is, they didn't believe me, they'll learn!

The best bit, always the best bit, seeing so many friends before, during and after the race, especially after!! I've missed this so much!

Virgin London Marathon, 3 October, 5:22:53

Completed in 5:22. To say I'm happy is a huge understatement, especially as I wasn't feeling overly confident in myself after Brighton. London, always an emotional day for me, my 13th one and I loved it!

I was super exhausted before I'd even started after a few long days on my feet at the Running Show with our awesome volunteer teams who were absolute superstars. This extends too for our team from Fulham Palace parkrun who were most definitely a sight for sore eyes (sore everything!) at the finish line.

I didn't have a specific time in mind but by the time Saturday came around, I thought 6-6:30 would be nice but I would have been grateful just to finish. I kept up a steady pace reaching half-way in 2:27. The second half became a steady shuffle focusing on picking my feet up enough so as not to trip over!

The crowd support was brilliant. Every time I felt my head dipping, the shouts of encouragement and support kept me going, I was determined not to walk. Funnily enough, my hammie and glute felt fine, quite possibly because everything else was screaming louder!

Beachy Head Marathon, 23 October, 5:50:32

The same amazing start and the same equally amazing downhill dash to the finish. I'm sure the chap on the bagpipes was piping the same tune last year too. A late change in course yesterday due to flooding but Beachy Head



Marathon done! 5:50, slightly short course but still would have come in under 6 hours. 6:38 last year. Less of the Seven Witches this year (I think), but I was happy! Hot food at the end, baked potatoes with beans (with sausages and cheese as an option too). Those hills! Beautiful views and fantastic weather, such a fabulous day out and awesome to

see so many of you before, during, after, from a distance and close enough for hugs too. The marshals were brilliant, encouraging and super supportive as usual. Did I mention those hills?

Wizz Air Cluj-Napoca Marathon, Romania, 7 November, 4:58:23

New York Marathon wasn't happening for me this year due to travel restrictions. Deferred to 2022, fingers crossed we get there! Having booked time off work, and my sights set on an overseas trip, I fancied somewhere new so plumped for Cluj-Napoca located in the Transylvania region of Romania. Of course, a marathon was involved! It started and finished in Cluj-Napoca Arena which suited me fine as I'm a bit partial to a marathon with a stadium (track) finish. The course was 4 x 10.555km with each lap finishing with 400m around the track.

I settled in comfortably, found my pace and was on target for sub 5:15 but with the first two loops completed in 2:18, I thought I should take a shot at sub-5. Weird how as soon as I upped the ante, my brain started playing with me, planting seeds of self-doubt, the realisation that the course was slightly long and needing a loo stop. I started to panic with four miles to go and almost went the wrong way! My official finish time was 4:58:19 and yes, I did have to run like the devil was chasing me for the last 5km to dip under 5 hours. Well worth almost popping both hips for!

Thank you for reading this, well done on your own achievements. Running. The Adventure Continues. Love 

Parkrun

42 Octogenarian Athletes Celebrate in Bushy Park

By Richard Pitcairn-Knowles



On September 4th, in ideal conditions, on a mild, windless, dry day in Bushy Park, amongst the 1275 finishers in event number 841 of this long standing traditional parkrun, there were 42 youthful octogenarians healthily exercising and enjoying the conditions, every one of them relishing the friendliness of the day. The octogenarian's parkrun is now an annual event in its fourth year. It was instigated by George Frogley and was very well organised by the dedicated local volunteers.

Of the 42, two were in their nineties and six were V85s. Three new age category best times were achieved by Eva Osborne VW80 29:30, Tom Harrison VM85 31:08 and Geoff Jackson VM90 50:27, and there was a happy link with the summer's 2020 Olympics when Albert Yee, the grandfather of triathlete Olympic gold medallist Alex Yee, crossed the finish line.

After the event, cup-cakes and bubbly soon revived tired legs and many old friendships were renewed. It is hoped that in July 2022 the next octogenarian parkrun gathering in Bushy Park will break the 2019 record of 48 octogenarians running together.

Put the date in your diary now – Saturday 2nd July 2022!

Race Walking

Enfield Open 7 Mile Race Walk & VAC 7 Mile Champs

13 November, King George V Playing Fields, Category B

The event was held in conjunction with Enfield & Haringey AC's 7 Mile Open race, now in its 94th edition. The VAC contingent was strongly led home by Stuart Bennett of Ilford AC (5th man) in a similar time to 2019. In addition, Tom Casserley from the host club posted a good time.

VAC are grateful to the Enfield League organiser, Ron Wallwork, for allowing VAC to incorporate their championships within the Enfield Open 7.

Name	Age	Age Pos.	Race Pos.	Club	Time
Stuart Bennett	M60	1	[5]	Ilford AC	1:11:23
Tom Casserley	M80	1	[12]	EHAC	1:21.08
David Hoben	M65	1	[15]	SWC	1:24.59
Chris Flint	M75	1	[16]	SWC	1:26.58

Complete results at <https://enfieldleague.weebly.com/results.html>

VAC 10k track race incorporating Sussex, Surrey, Middx & Herts County Championships, Purley, 30 October

The annual VAC and Counties championships took place in good racing conditions at Track Coulsdon. Dave Annetts from N Herts RR had an excellent win in 50:53.5 and also won the Herts champs for the third time.

For Sussex there was a new winner, David Crane from Surrey Walking Club, in 55:36.9, with other Sussex walkers, Trevor Jones and Richard Emsley, in adjacent places. Grazia Manzotti, Tonbridge AC, had another ladies win in 58:56.4 and was 3rd overall, while Melanie Peddle (Loughton) went under the hour yet again, with 59:18.4.

VAC are indebted as always to the team of officials and judges for this event to take place.

Cecil Gittins Memorial Walks, Cyclopark, Gravesend

Veterans AC 5k/10k/15k road race, 2 October

Veterans AC were pleased to host the sixth running of this event on a dedicated cycle circuit with its many gradients and bends.

In all there were 26 paid entries with 19 on the line. The winner of the ladies' 10k, and 3rd overall, was Grazia Manzotti (Tonbridge AC) in 58:23. Second placed Melanie Peddle (Loughton AC) went under the hour for the first time. It was good to see Diane Bradley (Tonbridge AC) back again in 3rd place, and Kathy Smith (AFD) did well only a week after her Trailwalker 100k endurance event.

The first place in the men's 10k was Dave Annetts (N Herts RRC) in 50:45, closely followed by George Wilkinson (EHAC) in 51:15, with Dave Walsh (EHAC) in third place with a new PB.

The winner of the ladies' 15k was ever-improving Abigail Jennings (AFD) in 1:20:58, and 2nd place was awarded to Jacqueline Benson (Ashford AC) in 1:26:13. First in the men's 15k was John Arthur coming in at 1:41:09.



Doing the Lambeth Walk

Carl Lawton (pictured left) is a regular official these days on the finish line at many veterans and other events, but there is much more to tell, and this is his story ...

My first attempt at racewalking was at school for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Having to

do 3 miles in 34 minutes, I could not reach standards in the normal track/field events.

On leaving school in Dorset, I moved up to London and saw an advert for the Lambeth 5 miles and assumed it was a local "jolly". A visit to the Town Hall and then a letter from the organiser, Phil Collins, to say I was entered found me lining up against all these "professionals". A little frightening! However, I got carried along, without full knowledge of the rudiments and was disqualified 100 yards from the finish. That was it - off home - but I got waylaid by Belgrave's Ray Hall with the words "Do you want to join a good Club" and the rest is history as they say.

I was soon competing over short distances and within two months got my 6 miles in the hour with 6 minutes to spare at Victoria Park and a few weeks later finishing 8th in the National Junior Champs. In the winter "7's" I was comfortably under the hour and progressed to 10 miles and 20kms. My first "win" was in the LPR Handicap event at Blackheath and my first team win was in the Northampton to Leicester relay bringing Belgrave home as fourth man.

My first 20 mile race was in the Surrey County Championship in 1970, up against Paul Nihill. I managed to keep up with him for 15 miles but then, always the master, he got the better of me.

In 1971 I got my first International with a trip in May to Romania for 20 kms and then the National 50kms in July where once again I held (or probably hung onto) Paul Nihill for 20 miles, before finishing 3rd and gaining a place in the European Championships in Helsinki. This was not a successful race for me but I came back and won, for the first of five times, the hilly Chippenham to Calne 6 miles and competed over 1 mile at the prestigious Coca Cola meeting at Crystal Palace in front of a 7,000 crowd.

Late 1973, the Commonwealth trial was held at Imber Court and 3rd place here got my most memorable month-long trip to New Zealand. Once again, I

failed due to a back problem. However, it was an experience and a trip I will never forget.

It was not until 1976 that I finished 4th in the National 20kms Olympic Trial and 2nd in the 50 kms. However, as there was no 50 kms in the Olympics, I missed out, but it was replaced that year by the World Championship in Malmo. Once again disaster struck, and I hit the wall at 45kms, on schedule for a PB.

In 1977, the Queen's Jubilee year, there was a 20kms in Victoria Park and in probably one of my better races I managed to split the Mexican team. Returning to the same venue and distance two years later, I won the National in controversial conditions with many being disqualified. This prompted the introduction of the three judges required to disqualify instead of one.

Probably my best week in walking was in July 1983, when I won the National 35kms on an undulating lap course around Colchester University then the following Friday I lined up for the Surrey Walking Club Ewhurst 100miles. I had started a 100 at Leicester a year earlier but did not get far due to a persistent cough. However, this was a little different, with good conditions. Although I did not take the lead until 70 miles I came through to win in under 18 hours. I returned to the same course two years later to complete and win the 50 miles.

After 1987 I changed jobs and did not race as often nor to the same standard and eventually stopped racing in 2012 due to illness.

Apart from Lambeth I was only disqualified once more, while going uphill, and there were the bad races when things did not go right but I had a great deal of success too!

OBITUARIES

MAURICE DOOGAN (1939 - 2021)

Maurice Doogan passed away in April 2021 at the age of 81. He was born in Northampton and after moving South in the early 1990s, joined Woking AC and VAC. As a competitor, he enjoyed road and cross country running before moving onto middle distance events on the track, including the steeplechase. Professionally, he was a Chartered Structural Engineer and before retirement had operated his own highly regarded consultancy business.

Maurice is best known as an officer of the British Masters Athletics Federation (BMAF) which he joined in 2002, making it clear that it would be for a maximum five-year stint. However, he was still in post as the Track & Field Secretary nearly twenty years later having personally organised almost every aspect of the national indoor and outdoor championships, pentathlons and decathlon/heptathlons each year.

Maurice was also well known as an International Team Manager for the UK's entrants in the European and World Masters Championships. He would carry out a recce at his own expense, checking on transport, hotels etc for the team. At the events, he would be at the venues from early morning until the close of the last event. It was his aspiration to see the team appropriately attired in the official GB Masters clothing and those who did not conform would soon be told if they were wearing the wrong shorts! He was particularly proud that a GB team of 704 athletes, including 100 VAC members, headed the medals table at the World Masters Championships in Malaga in 2018. Over the years, he tried many times to bring a European or World Championships to Britain but was always thwarted by external factors. If this dream comes to pass, Maurice's efforts will not have been in vain.

For VAC, Maurice was a willing official at the annual cross country championships and T&F events, as well as contributing to committee business. RIP Maurice, a truly dedicated officer.

MARY WORTH (1928 – 2021)

Mary Worth, a member of Steyning AC, died in January 2021, aged 92. She was a top-class walker and nearing 60 years of age, she achieved a time of 2:02:45 for a 20km walk in 1988, putting her 80th on the British All -Time list, and second in the W55 list for 20km. She was also a Masters record holder and European medallist at 3km on the track and 5km and 10km on the road in several age groups.

DAVE STEVENS (1936 – 2021)

Dave Stevens of Steyning AC passed away in January 2021 at the age of 84. He worked for the Stock Exchange and moved from London to Steyning in the 1970s. He was an established walker and quickly integrated with race walking in Sussex. He took over the role of secretary at Steyning AC and proved their anchor for over forty years.

As a competitor, Dave races at every distance from the 3,000m right through to the London to Brighton road walk. He won a host of Sussex track and road titles and on the national stage clocked 13:0.5s for 3,000m in 1975 and 45:19.5s for the 10,000m track walk in 1981. His best in the 20km Road walk was also in 1981 with 1:34:19s. He joined VAC in 1991 and embraced Masters competition nationally and internationally, frequently getting amongst the medals and winning titles. In recent years he served as an official for VAC, marking out the course at the Jack Fitzgerald Memorial races and acting as Starter at the Cecil Gittins Memorial road walk.



Malcom Davies battles the mud and rain in the Men's Surrey League Cross Country match at Denbies Vineyard.