



Veterans Athletic Club

Newsletter

Summer 2025



Well done to Chris Loudon, making his major championships debut, winning silver and bronze medals at the World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships in the USA in March.

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Veterans Athletic Club was established in 1931 and is affiliated to England Athletics, BMAF, EMAA, South of England AA, Surrey County AA and the Race Walking Association. We offer athletic competition for men and women aged 35 and over. Based in London with members across the South East and beyond, we provide opportunities to compete in the cross-country, road, track & field and race walking disciplines. 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.

Welcome to your Summer 2025 Newsletter

What an amazing first half of the year it's been for VAC and its members. Reading the articles while editing the newsletter, I was in awe at your achievements. An impressive haul of medals at the British Masters Indoor Champs at Lee Valley in February. 16 individual medals and 12 British team medals at the World Masters Indoor Champs in Florida in March. Inspiring performances at the London Marathon in April.

I particularly enjoyed reading about our VAC parkrun excursions at Morden and Roundshaw Downs. What a great advertisement for the club and a lovely way to get to know other members. I'm determined to get to the next one at Beckenham Place in October. Maybe see you there?

Membership numbers are strong with around 670 members. A warm welcome is extended to around 40 members who have joined us since April.

We have laid on a full programme of events this year but regrettably we have been unable to stage an outdoor T&F Championship this summer. We explored many options but there were significant obstacles with the availability of dates, facilities and key personnel which defeated us. We couldn't get any dates and venues to work. Fixture clashes meant that key officials were elsewhere. On a positive note, please check out the Fixtures page for the events taking place over the next 6 months.

Finally, we would love to see you at VAC's AGM in central London on 2 October. Details are in the newsletter. The Committee needs help on many fronts and particularly on communications and competition organisation and management. Please get in touch if you can offer support.

Stuart Matthews – Editor and Membership Secretary

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Photographs

Many thanks to Cliff Hide who provided most of the photos in this newsletter. Cliff takes photos at VAC events and is happy to supply copies to members free of charge, but please give him a credit if you post the photos on social media. For copies of photos, look for the links to his Flickr albums on the results pages on VAC's website or contact him at cliffhide10@aol.com.

Fixtures

Refer to the VAC and BMAF websites for further details, updates and additions.

Cross Country

East Surrey League CC

Saturday 4 October 2025 Lloyd Park, Croydon CR0 5RA. No limit on numbers. 2pm start. Free entry. Men and women run together. Five mile course. VAC vest necessary. Enquiries and advance notice to entries@vetsac.org.uk

Surrey League (Men & Women's teams)

- CC Race 1: Saturday 11 October 2025 Richmond Park
- CC Race 2: Saturday 15 November 2025 Hurst Green, Surrey RH8 9DG
- CC Race 3: Saturday 10 January 2026 Oxshott Woods, KT22 0TA
- CC Race 4: Saturday 7 February 2026 Lloyd Park, Croydon CR0 5RA

All VAC men and women (1st and 2nd claim) are eligible, subject to conditions. VAC vest necessary. Advance notice to paddyclark@hotmail.com (men) / helendavies@blueyonder.co.uk (women).

VAC Open Masters Cross Country Championships

Saturday 17 January 2026

Wimbledon Common. West Place, SW19 4UH. 7.5km. Men and women run together. Start time: 2pm. Individual medals in five-year age groups. Enter on OpenTrack in due course.

VAC Track & Field

Wednesday 10 September 2025

VAC 10,000m Track Championships

Millennium Arena, Battersea Park. 3 races seeded slowest to fastest.

[Details and online entry on OpenTrack](#)

Closing date: midday Monday 8 September

Saturday 4 October 2025

VAC and Surrey, Middlesex, Herts & Sussex 10k Open Track Walk Champs. Norman Park Community Sports Centre, Bromley, BR2 9EG. 1.00pm start (TBC). Categories A and B. All ages welcome (Under 17, Under 20, Senior and Masters). Enquiries: walks@vetsac.org.uk

Parkrun

Saturday 4 October 2025

Beckenham Place parkrun, Beckenham Place Park, Beckenham, BR3 1SY

VAC gathering. Come and meet VAC members! Look out for VAC vests.

Starts 9.00am. Enter on the day (but you need a parkrun barcode).

Road

Saturday 27 September 2025

Vitality Westminster Mile

The Mall, London. Assemble in Green Park. VAC One Mile Champs!

VAC medals. [Details and online entry on the Vitality Masters Mile website.](#)

May be full. VAC members should **select Adult Wave One or Wave Two** and **select VAC** as the Running Club (on drop-down menu). Inform Maggie entries@vetsac.org.uk if you have entered.

National & International

12-14 September 2025

British Masters Track & Field Championships

Moorways Stadium, Derby DE24 9HY [Details and online entry on OpenTrack](#)

Closing date: 1 September, 11.59pm

Saturday 27 September 2025

England Masters Cross Country Selection Race for the England Team for the British & Irish Masters CC International in Leeds on 15 November.

Betley Court Farm, Betley, Crewe, CW3 9BH. Open to members of BMAF area clubs in England. Enter the race on OpenTrack and submit an application form with details of relevant athletic performances. The form is available on VAC's and EMAA's websites. Closing date: Friday 19 September

8-19 October 2025

European Masters Athletics Stadia Track & Field Championships

Madeira, Portugal [Details and Online entry on OpenTrack](#)

Closing date: 2 September 2025

Saturday 15 November 2025

British & Irish Masters Cross Country International

Roundhay Park, Leeds LS8 2HH

Each participating country has a selection procedure. There is a trial race on 27 September for the England team (details above). Details are on VAC's and EMAA's websites.

Sunday 30 November 2025

British Masters 5k Road Championship

Battersea Park, London SW11 4NJ. VAC are the hosts. [Details and entry on OpenTrack](#). Two races. Provisional start times 10.45am and 11.30am. Fills up quickly. Enter now!

VAC vests

A good stock of men's and women's club vests is available. They are made of a lightweight, quick drying, Protex fabric and feature the name Veterans AC in full on the back. The cost is £25 including postage. The remainder of the men's and women's old stock is being sold off at a discounted price of £15 including postage.

All vests are official club vests and can be purchased from our kit supplier, Doug Maughan of Douglas Sports. Details and sizes are on the Club Kit tab on VAC's website or email Doug at info@douglassports.co.uk.

Notice of VAC's Annual General Meeting

All members are invited to come to VAC's AGM on Thursday 2 October, 7.00pm – 8.30pm at the Elizabethan Room at the Civil Service Club, 13-15 Great Scotland Yard, London SW1A 2HJ.

The AGM is an opportunity for members to meet and become involved with the club. The Treasurer will present VAC's financial accounts, and the Committee will deliver reports on their areas of responsibility. Questions and suggestions are welcome.

The present officers of VAC's Committee may be prepared to continue in some capacities, but the club **urgently needs new people and extra help**. Please consider joining the Committee to bring much needed support. People to do communications, marketing and competition management are needed. The club would also benefit from having a female Welfare Officer for which UK Athletics would provide training. If you could help in any aspect, make yourself known at the AGM or to a committee member at any time.

Nominations for officers for the 2025-26 Committee and any agenda items or proposals for consideration at the AGM should be sent to Ros Tabor, the Secretary, by Thursday 11 September.

If you cannot join the AGM, you are welcome to feed in your views and suggestions in advance by email, letter or phone call to the Secretary or

another Committee member. Names and addresses are at the front of the newsletter.

World Masters Athletics Indoor Championships

Alachua County Sports & Events Center, Florida, 23-30 March 2025

Report and photos (including the front cover) by Steve Smythe

VAC athletes had a highly successful time in Gainesville, Florida, winning 16 individual medals but also being involved in a dozen British team medals. This contributed to Britain easily being the most successful visiting nation as they finished a clear second in the medal table. The event was well organised and had a friendly atmosphere and good stadium. There were also cross country, 10km road, walks and outdoor throws events.

VAC Women

Clare Elms was the most successful Briton, winning six golds, including two team golds.

While in the USA, she also received a world record certificate for 1500m from World Masters (set while representing VAC in the Masters Inter Area at Lee Valley). After a bad start to her journey – the Heathrow fire, then being told her Visa wasn't valid, and finally getting lost on the way to the first venue – things improved at the first event on Sunday where she struck gold in the W60 cross country. She also won a W55 team gold.

A few days later came the 3000m where Clare was on course to go close to the listed world record. Eventually, negotiating all the lapped runners proved too much – she lapped the entire field winning by over a minute – but her time of 10:49.83 took 44 seconds off the Championships' best.

On Saturday came the big test. In the morning Clare ran the 10km – her first for over two years – and again won W60 individual and W55 team golds. In the afternoon she ran the 1500m and was given a good race by Janice Patterson who set a Canadian record and was well clear on the early laps. Eventually Clare won in a Championships record 5:14.00 with a quick last 400m.



Clare on her way to another Gold medal

Zoe Doyle, having won the European indoor 800m title last winter, followed team-mate Maria Shaw over the opening laps of the 800m before pulling well clear to win by five seconds in 2:19.90. In the 1500m, Zoe was content to follow American Sascha Scott for most of the race, but a 35.08 last lap pulled her three seconds clear to win in 4:45.55. Zoe also won a W40 4x200 relay bronze medal.

Sue McDonald picked up two golds in the team events with Clare but she also gained two individual medals: a W55 bronze in the cross country and a W55 gold in the 10km, contributing to a team gold as well.

Virginia Mitchell, one of Britain's most reliable medal winners of the past 25 years or so, picked up two silver medals behind world record-holder and former world masters athlete of the year Sue McDonald of the USA (not to be confused with the British one!) In the 800m, Virginia ran a British and European record of 2:28.54 which bettered the Championships record but left her behind McDonald (2:26.52). The result was the same in the 400m, although she was closer, losing to McDonald's championships record of 63.92 with a season's best of 65.07. Virginia did, however, win a team gold medal in the women's 4x200, supplemented by a team silver medal in the mixed 4x200.

Ros Tabor was another multi medallist. In a top class W75 cross country race, Ros ran a steady race to be a clear third with four minutes to spare. Sadly, and unusually, there was no team for Ros to be part of with fewer Brits than normal participating. Ros then gained a bronze medal in the 3000m, finishing in 15:02.86, 90 seconds ahead of the next runner.

VAC Men

While the VAC women took more honours, the men also had a successful time on the track.

Chris Loudon, on the front cover, making his major championships debut as a 40th birthday present, first won his M40-44 800m heat in a PB time of 1:59.23, and then went on to further improve this all the way down to 1:57.48, gaining a silver medal narrowly behind eventual winner Brazilian Anderson Teles da Silva. A day later, Chris was back in action in the 3000m where he won the bronze medal, destroying his PB with a time of 8:39.08 in a



Multi-medallist Ros Tabor

race won by a 28-minute 10km runner, Joseph Gray of the USA.

David Williams also made his major track championships debut in the M60-64 1500m. With just two automatic qualifiers, he ran a fast heat to ensure he made the final and then took on the pace in the closing stages of the final with a brave run. Only former Brit and now Canadian Simon Rayner could get past him on the final lap and David (4:48.57) just held off Frenchman Alain Durand in the straight to secure the silver medal.

Adrian Day was in Britain's M65 winning 4x200 team, winning in 1:51.80, 2 seconds ahead of the American team.

With a perfect storm of few teams travelling to America and not many UK athletes but just enough to make teams, those Brits competing in the non-stadia runs did get the

chance of team medals. In the 10km, Steve Bishop won a M60 team silver, Steve Smythe a M65 silver and Andy Murray and Rob Sargent a M55 bronze (both moving down from M70). Alan Roberts won a M60 team bronze. Peter Thompson just missed a medal by 0.06 of a second in finishing fourth in the M75 60m hurdles in 11.32. Allan Long, second European, finished fifth in the M80 60m in 9.66. Kevin Craven was sixth in the M55 60m, a position matched by Pat Logan in the M60 200m. Pat was eighth in the 60m but then did win a gold medal as part of the British 4x200m team as their 1:46.39 gave them a clear win over Canada and USA.

Other notable performances included John Browne making the M70 60m final. Gaye Clarke's sixth in the W60 high jump was the equal-best VAC field result. Nina Ridge was sixth in the W50 Pentathlon. Olympic race walker Ian Richards was disqualified in his 3000m heat and his 10km walk was abandoned due to thunderstorms. Sarah Westrapp-Boon was in Britain's silver medal winning team in the W50 4x200 that finished a second down on the Americans in 1:55.97. M80 former hurdles medallist Barry Ferguson and M70 Rob Sargent were in Britain's fifth-placed team in the M70 4x200. And Gaye Clarke and Sue McDonald were in Britain's W55 4x200 team which finished fifth.



A silver for David Williams

Veterans AC Individual Medallists

Clare Elms W60-64 8kxc Clare Elms W60-64 3000m Clare Elms W60-64 10k Clare Elms W60-64 1500 Zoe Doyle W45-49 800m Zoe Doyle W45-49 1500m Susan McDonald W55-59 10k	GOLD
Susan McDonald W55-59 8kxc Virginia Mitchell W60-64 400m Virginia Mitchell W60-64 800m David Williams M60-64 1500m Chris Loudon M40-44 800m	SILVER
Chris Loudon M40-45 3000m Ros Tabor W75-79 1500m Ros Tabor W75-79 3000m Ros Tabor W75-79 6kxc	BRONZE

British Indoor Track and Field

VAC Indoor Championships, Lee Valley, 9 February

Around 100 VAC members competed in the joint championships with Eastern Masters AC which attracted a record entry of 320. There were many excellent performances including eighteen VAC Indoor Championship Best Performances.

Here are some highlights. Anthony Meikle's time of 7.52 seconds in the 60m was the fastest in the competition, winning M40 Gold. In the same event, Brian Steene was the fastest M60 in a strong field with a time of 8.08. Chris Loudon (M35) was a class apart in the 1500m with a time of 4:09.61. He also won the 800m outright in 2:03.00. Susie McLoughlin and Liz Amos, two out of three triplets, were the fastest women over 400m. Susie won Gold in 61.97 and Liz the Silver medal in 61.98. Clare Elms was tilting for the W60 indoor world record for 1500m but was thwarted by a faller. Nevertheless, her time of 5.11.07 was easily a VAC CBP.

EMAA Indoor Inter-Area Challenge, Lee Valley, 16 February

This event was keenly fought between the nation's nine Masters Area Clubs, competing in 90 (45 each for the men and women) events in four age bands. The quality was evident from the three new age-group World Records achieved in the match. One was the W60 indoor 1500m World Record of 5:03.1 set by Clare Elms representing VAC. The other World Records were set by Robert McHarg in the M60 800m and Sarah Roberts in the W75 1500m.

VAC was a commendable fourth behind winners Midland Masters, second-placed Eastern Masters and third-placed Southern Counties Vets. Gaps in events and unlucky late withdrawals knocked back our scores but we recorded 13 first places, 13 second places and 13 third places. The team's score was boosted by every single point gained. Everyone's place counted.

Highlights were the double firsts by Sarah Loades (W50 200m and 400m) and Tim Carter (M70 400m and Long Jump). Sarah also placed second in the 60m Hurdles. Other splendid outright wins were achieved by six men and three women. For the men, multi-eventer, Bilen Ahmet, won the M35 Pole Vault, came third in the Shot and scored valuable points in the Long Jump, Triple Jump, High Jump, 800m and 4x200m relay. Alwyn Lombaard won the M50 High Jump with a clearance of 1.65m, as well as placing second in the 60m Hurdles.



Bilen Ahmet, Pole Vault Gold

Vaughan Ramsay was a convincing winner of the M50 Triple Jump with a leap of 10.39m. On the track, Brian Steene demonstrated excellent form by winning the M60 60m sprint in 8.17 seconds. He also brought the baton home in the M60 relay team which placed second. In the 200m, Giuseppe Minetti won the M50 event in 24.86, was third in the 60m and was in the M50 relay team which placed second. In the 2k Walk, all age bands competed in the same race. VAC's Trevor Jones (M65) won the men's race outright in a close contest.

For the women, as well as the double firsts by Sarah Loades, three other VAC women won their events. Virginia Mitchell won the W60 800m in an excellent

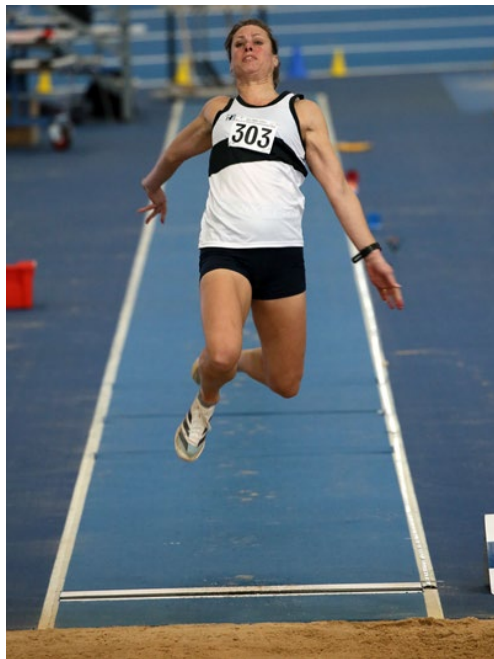
time of 2:33.65. Rosalind Zeffertt (W60) won the W50 Pole Vault with a clearance of 2.41m, the best of all the age groups. Virginia and Rosalind also ran in the W50 4x200m relay team which placed second. In the 2k Walk, Maureen Noel won the W60 category. Multi-eventer, Nina Ridge, made a great contribution to VAC's score by contesting the W50 60m, High Jump, Triple Jump and Shot, as well as running in VAC's W50 relay team.

British Masters Indoor Championships, Lee Valley, 22-23 February

Around 120 VAC members were among the 650 entrants at the prestigious National Masters competition. They came away with an impressive haul of medals. Three of them won double Golds. A further 18 won a Gold. The doubles were earned by Lucinda Cash-Gibson (W40 400m and 60mH), Peter Giles (M80 800m and 1500m), Giuseppe Minetti (M55 60m and 200m), Moira West (W75 60m and 200m), David Blunt (M70 Pole Vault and High Jump) and Virginia Mitchell (W60 400m and 800m).

Single Golds were won by Bilen Ahmet (M35 PV), Rosalind Zeffertt (W60 PV), Emily Murray (W45 TJ), Nina Ridge (W50 LJ), Israel Nworgu (M35 LJ), Barry Morris (M65 LJ), Alwyn Lombaard (M50 HJ), Geoffrey Kitchener (M75 HJ), Sue

Van Vuuren (W55 Shot), Liz Sissons (W80 Shot), Ivan Ivanovic (M80 Shot), Chik Ha Kwok (W50 3000m Walk), Clare Elms (W60 1500m), Doug Milsom (M85 800m), Zoe Doyle (W45 800m), Kat Sutton (W35 800m), Susie McLoughlin (W45 400m) and David Hinds (M70 60m).



Nina Ridge, Long Jump Gold

Amongst the medallists was Vijendran Sellayah who won a Silver medal in the M65 60 metres in his first British Masters championship. Vijendran started running in 2024, although he began sprinting at the age of 9 and was the champion of his school as a teenager. Last year he decided to rekindle his love of athletics and was put in touch with his coach and mentor, Pat Logan, who recommended that he join VAC as his first claim club.



Vijendran Sellaiah – one to watch!

Vijendran took part in his first competitive 100m race at VAC's championships in August 2024, coming second. In 2025, he ran his first indoor races and added the 60m and 200m distances to his range. His natural talent and hard work have produced excellent times, and he is proud to win medals. He attributes his success to improved self-esteem, focus and motivation. His aspirations are to continue running PB's and gain many more medals. He has since reported that he won Golds in the M65 100m and 200m at the Surrey Masters championships and achieved new PBs in July, going sub 30 seconds for 200m.

Cross Country

Many VAC members took part in the various cross country events in parks and on commons, often muddy and challenging but always enjoyable.

VAC Cross Country Championships, 18 January

There were 73 on the start line on a dry Wimbledon Common, with temperatures not above 5 degrees. The usual route around the Queensmere pond had been blocked off without warning by the Common's Rangers for clearance and drainage work. The course therefore had to miss out this section on both laps, making a difference of about 600 metres. The revised course was around 6.9km.

The race was led from the start by David Sharman (M40) of Wimbledon Windmilers. Rich Berry (M50) stayed in touch but was thirty seconds behind at the finish. He was rewarded by becoming VAC's Men's Champion and the M50 Gold medallist. Craig Jackson (M50) had a fine run in third place, a minute ahead of Eric Dol, the M35 Gold medallist. The main field then streamed in, led by Mark Tennyson (M60 Gold) in 5th, followed by Muhamud Haile (M55 Gold) and Martin Edwards (M45 Gold). Other Gold medals for age-group bests were won by Martin Leat (M65), Richard Turner (M70), Mike Mann (M75) and Peter Giles (M80).

Clare Elms (W60) was the first woman with a fine run placing her 8th in the race. Clare won VAC's Women's Champion's trophy as well as the W60 trophy and Gold medal. Mariana Marques (W35) of Clapham Chasers was the second woman, nearly 30 seconds behind, with Susan McDonald (W55) running well to place third. Other Gold medals were won by Lucy Hancock (W40), Victoria Buck (W50), Rebecca Pickard (W45), Lynn Wilson (W65) and Jane Georghiou (W70).



*The start of the race featuring winner David Sharman (80)
and women's champion, Clare Elms (37)*

Surrey Cross Country League – Men's Matches

35 men played a part in VAC's successful season. Seven of them ran in all four matches: William Brook, Malcolm Davies, Gareth George, Duncan Haughey, Chris Lee, Peter Lee and Andy Mitchelson. VAC finished fourth overall out of the 14 clubs in Division Four, commendable for a squad of masters athletes mostly in their fifties and sixties. In the age category awards, VAC's M55-64 runners dominated the rankings with the top three places going to Peter Lee, Malcolm Davies and Duncan Haughey. Duncan was the leading M60 in the list. In the M65+ rankings, Chris Lee was top, finishing fourth or better in each of his four races. After the first two matches at Reigate and Hurst Green, VAC was in third place in Division Four.

Oxshott Woods was next in January. The temperature was around 3 degrees, but calm conditions and winter sunshine made it a pleasant experience in beautiful woods and heathland. Even the notorious tree roots didn't seem so bad this year. The sharp hill on the two long laps was as steep as ever, though.

19 men represented VAC. We finished seventh, with no one younger than 55 in the scoring team of ten. Peter Lee (M55) was first for VAC, followed by Duncan Haughey (M60), Malcolm Davies (M55), Vic Maughn (M60) and Richard Evans

(M60) all under 36 minutes on the 4.8 mile course. Ben Revill, Stewart Bond, Ian Butler, Bruce McLaren and Gareth George completed the scoring team.

Lloyd Park in February provided its customary mud bath. A team of 20 tackled two laps of saturated fields, swathes of sludge and deep puddles. The temperature was a chilly 4 degrees. Peter Lee (M55) was again VAC's first finisher, closely followed by Mike Webber (M55) in an identical time of 36:00. Malcolm Davies was next with Jim Carrington close behind. Bruce McLaren, Duncan Haughey, Pete O'Connell, Richard Evans, Stewart Bond and Ben Revill completed the scoring team of ten which finished in fourth place. VAC's full B team, led by Andy Mitchelson, had great strength in depth and finished second.



*Peter Lee and Mike Webber
enjoying the mud at Lloyd Park*

A massive vote of thanks goes to Paddy Clark, the Team Manager, for organising the team and supplying the material comforts such as the groundsheets and gazebo for VAC's men and women. Most importantly, his support and encouragement were key elements in the great team spirit.

Surrey Cross Country League - Women's Matches

VAC's women's team successfully held their place in Division Two, finishing ninth out of 15 clubs, one position higher than last year. 20 women competed for VAC and everyone scored in either the A or B teams. Ramona Thevenet and Vera Blei ran in all four matches. Andrea Stehlikova, Lucy Woolhouse, Sue Dixon, Pippa Major, Ros Tabor, Sally Carr, Helen Davies and Lesley Mill ran in three of them. Lucy Woolhouse (W60) topped the rankings in the W55-64 category and Ros Tabor (W75) was third in the Over 65 rankings. Thanks go to Helen Davies, the Team Manager, who organised the team and made everyone feel welcome and supported, as well as competing herself. The season's first matches were at Reigate and Hurst Green.

The third fixture was at **Oxshott Woods** in January. 11 women competed on the challenging heathland course which had ups and downs and tree root trip hazards. The women's race was after the men's and late in the day. The fading winter sunshine barely lifted the temperature above 3 degrees. Lucy



*Ramona Thevenet at
Lloyd Park*

Woolhouse (W60) was VAC's first finisher, followed by Sue Dixon (W55), Helen Davies (W55), Sally Carr (W50) and Anna Garnier (W70) scoring for the A team.

Lloyd Park was the venue for the season's final match. The ground conditions were as bad as Lloyd Park invariably presents in February, with extensive stretches of sloshy mud and a long deep puddle to splash through. Andrea Stehlikova (W40) was VAC's first finisher followed by Helen Davies (W55), Ramona Thevenet (W65), Pippa Major (W55) and Jo Quantrill (W65) completing the scoring team. The B team of Lesley Mill, Vera Blei, Ros Tabor, Lynn Howard and Catherine Porter performed well. Having filthy legs and sodden shoes was a fitting end to the cross country season!

Interested in competing for VAC in the Surrey League in 2025-26?

Many VAC members compete for their first claim clubs. However, if your first claim club doesn't need you, you would be most welcome in VAC's men's and women's teams.

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 for their first claim club in any of the four league matches in any of the Divisions in the 2025-26 season.** Members from outside Surrey are also very welcome.

There is no limit on the VAC turn-out. The more there are, the greater the strength in depth and the bigger the impact. Please contact the men's team manager Paddy Clark (paddyclark@hotmail.com) or the women's team manager Helen Davies (helendavies@blueyonder.co.uk) if you wish to join the teams. Every VAC runner is welcomed and appreciated.

The dates of the 2025-26 matches are 11 October, 15 November, 10 January and 7 February. Check out the fixture list on VAC's website for details.

East Surrey League, Lloyd Park, 1 March

After the horrible conditions at Lloyd Park in the Surrey League in February, VAC's team feared more of the same, but it felt like Spring with sunshine, a mild temperature and mostly firm ground.

Nine ran for VAC. Terry Booth was the first finisher in a splendid sixth place in the men's race, followed by Mark Tennyson in ninth. Terry was the first M55 and beat all the M50 runners. Mark was the first M60. Duncan Haughey and Kev Stroud, both M60, completed VAC's scoring team which finished in third place behind the Croydon clubs who made home advantage count. In the overall awards, Duncan Haughey won the M60 trophy for the best scores in the three matches.

VAC is one of eight clubs in this friendly league organised by Croydon Harriers. Next season, there are three matches comprising two cross countries at Lloyd Park on 4 October and 28 February and a road race at Ewell in April.

Selection for the 2025 British & Irish Masters Cross Country International

With England as hosts, the event will take place at Roundhay Park in Leeds on 15 November. The match features five teams: England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Northern Ireland. Medals are awarded in five-year age groups. For selection for England's age group teams, there will be two trial races on 27 September, held within the North Staffordshire Cross Country League's races at Betley near Crewe. Further details are on EMAA's and VAC's websites. Entry is via Open Track. It is also necessary to submit an application form with information about relevant performances in 2025.

Mike Mann (mcmann90@yahoo.co.uk) is VAC's contact and is a member of the England team's selection panel.

Road Running

Battersea Park Summer Series

The four races were well supported. The flat 5k and 5 mile courses are the same as used by the elite Friday Night Under the Lights races and have become renowned for fast times. Many age-group course records were broken this year.

5km Race, 8 April

There were 120 finishers. VAC's Che Compton (M50) and Jani Kraner (M40) pulled away from a chasing pack. Their battle was won by Che in 16:13, five seconds ahead of Jani at the finish. Barnaby Day (M40) of Kent AC was a strong

third in 16:41, pursued by 11 men within 30 seconds of him, led by Terry Booth (M55) in fourth place in 16:46.

In the women's results, Zoe Oldfield (W45) of Eastern Masters was the clear winner in 17:58. Good conditions and a high-quality field contributed to four course records being broken. In second and third places, Rebecca Luxton (W40) and Clare Elms (W60) battled it out to finish a second apart. Clare's chip time of 18:24 improved on her previous W60 VAC record of 18:36 set in April 2024. Anna Critchlow's time of 19:16 improved her own W55 VAC record by 24 seconds. Pamela Whitter's time of 21:13 set a new W65 record, ahead of Anna Garnier's previous record of 22:06. Anna had the consolation of posting a time of 23:22 which shattered the W70 record of 24:56 held by Pam Jones since 2008.



Lara James at the Battersea 5k

5 Mile Championship, 13 May

Adrian Russell (M45) was the first of the 93 finishers and claimed VAC's Men's Champion's trophy. He was evenly matched with Ed Samuel, Philip Cooper and Jani Kraner on the three lap course before pulling away to win by five seconds in 27:05. Jani won M40 Gold. In seventh place, Steve Winder claimed M50 Gold in 28:14. In 20th and 21st places, there was an intense battle for the M60 medals with Mark Tennyson winning the Gold in 30:12 just ahead of Stephen Plummer in 30:16.

Bryony Proctor (W35) of Herne Hill Harriers was the Women's winner in a fine time of 29:42 which set an all-comers' course record for the W35 age group just ahead of Kay Sheedy's VAC members' record of 29:49 set in 2023. Clare Elms was next in 31:34, a superb time, breaking her own W60 record of 31:40 set in 2024. Clare also won the trophy for VAC's Women's Champion. Pamela Whitter ran 35:56 to improve the W65 course record of 36:33 set by Margaret Moody in June 2014. Anna Garnier smashed the W70 course record by an even greater margin. Her time of 38:15 rewrote the previous W70 record of 41:09 set by Sue Lambert in July 2011.

Take a look at Tim Grose's analysis and comparison of the times achieved in the race in the "Performance" section later in the newsletter.

5km Championship, 3 June

The weather was fine and cool for the 98 finishers. Highlights were the breaking of two course records and a contest for medals between four in the M80 age group.

Robert Laing of Kent AC won the race in 16:20 just two seconds ahead of Oliver Gosden of Guildford & Godalming AC. Robert and Oliver also battled it out for the M45 Gold and Silver medals. Samuel Evans (M40) from Kent AC was a close third. VAC's Adrian Russell (M45) was next in 16:44 and became VAC's men's 5K champion, adding to his 5 Mile champion's title won in May's race. In the M80 age group, Peter Giles stormed round to clock 22:44, an M80 course record for VAC's races and within sight of his M80 British best of 22:28. There were three M80s behind Peter with Michael Johnson winning Silver and Bill O'Connor Bronze, knocking Mike Leigh out of the medals.



*Adrian Russell,
Men's Champion*

Karima Harris of Highgate Harriers successfully defended her VAC women's 5K champion's title in a fine time of 17:58 which was a new W55 course record by a margin of over a minute. Her time was only one second off her own W50 course record of 17:57 set last year. Karima's Highgate clubmate, Lisa Gold, was the second woman in 19:07 and first W40. Ginevra Stoneley finished in third place in 19:12 in a battle for W50 Gold, holding off Kerstin Sung by one second.

5km Race, 8 July

There were 95 finishers in VAC's final race on a lovely summer's evening. Andrew McCarron (M50) of Queen's Park Harriers was the winner in a time of 16:25. Philip Cooper (M45) of EMAC was second in 16:45, holding off VAC's Ben Millar (M45) by just one second. There were fine performances from Terry Booth (seventh place, first M55) and Mark Tennyson (fifteenth, first M60).

Rebecca Piggott (W35) of London Heathside was the women's winner in 17:42, placing ninth overall. Next was VAC's Karima Harris in 11th place in a splendid time of 17:48 which broke her own W55 course record of 17:58 set in June's race. Mary James (W50) was third in 18:27. Anna Garnier's time of 22:53 again rewrote the W70 course record by knocking nearly 30 seconds off her own record of 23:22 set in April's race.

VAC Battersea Park Grand Prix

Each year, the person with the highest average of his or her three best age-graded Battersea performances is awarded the Snow Cup, a trophy which dates to 1950. 18 VAC members qualified for the 2025 Grand Prix. To be eligible, members needed to register times in at least three of the four road races.

Congratulations to Lucy Woolhouse (W60), the worthy winner of the 2025

competition with an outstanding average age grading of 90.43%. Steve Corfield (M60) was a close second with an average of 90.36%. Anna Garnier (W70) was third with an average of 89.74%. She also achieved the highest age grading for a single race, scoring 91.67% for her record-breaking time of 22:48 in July's 5km race. The full results of the Grand Prix are on VAC's website.

Thanks go to all the VAC members and open runners who competed in the races over the summer. Four members were ever-presents, contesting all four races. They were Mark Tennyson, Peter Lee, Eric Dol and Neil McKeown.

VAC 10 Mile Championships, Dorking 10, 1 June

The weather was fine and the morning was cool for the 22 VAC members who took part in the annual Dorking 10 road race which was also VAC's 10 mile championship. The start was on the village green in Brockham. The course featured pleasant country lanes with plenty of energy-sapping undulations.

Steve Winder (M50) was VAC's first finisher in a time of 58:43. He was 28th out of 426 finishers and second in the race's 45-54 age category. Terry Booth (M55) was VAC's next finisher, also sub 60 minutes, in 59:34, placing a magnificent first in the race's 55-64 age category. Mary James (W50) was VAC's first woman in a fantastic time of 64:30. Mary was the 6th woman in the race and the first in the 45-54 age category. Next was Ginevra Stoneley (W50) in 66:55, second in the 45-54 age category. Full results are on VAC's website.



*Lucy Woolhouse and Steve Corfield,
1st and 2nd in the Snow Cup*

The Ron White Shield

Every year, the huge shield is awarded to the VAC member who gains the highest age-graded score in VAC's 10 Mile Championships. The 2025 winner, based on results at the Dorking 10, was Maggie Statham-Berry (W70) whose chip time of 81:40 translated to an age-graded percentage of 88.45%. Terry Booth achieved the next best score of 88.05%, followed by Steve Winder and Sue Garner (W75) who both achieved 86.20%. VAC's quality was evident as ten of VAC's runners had age-graded scores of over 80%.



*Maggie Statham-Berry
Ron White Shield Winner 2025*

VAC 10k Championships, Ranelagh 10k, 22 June

At least 31 VAC members were among the 573 finishers in the Ranelagh 10k by the Thames at Richmond. The race was also VAC's 2025 10k road championship. The 9am start helped to reduce the effects of the heatwave, but temperatures were over 25 degrees by 10am.

Terry Booth was VAC's first finisher and M55 Gold medallist in a time of 35:49. He was also first in the race's M55-64 age category. In the race's M65+ age band, David Ogden was dominant and his time of 39:27 was over two minutes ahead of his nearest challenger. Susannah Harrison was VAC's first woman in a time of 47:07, winning W60 Gold. She was first in the race's 55-64 age category. Shun-Lai Chan was VAC's second woman and W55 Gold medallist, coming third in the 55-64s. Marilyn Davis (W65) and Maggie Statham-Berry (W70) were second and third in the W65+ age category. Sue Garner was VAC's W75 Gold medallist. Full results are on VAC's website.

London Marathon – 27 April 2025

At least 57 VAC members completed the course from Greenwich to the Mall together with around 56,000 others. It was an unseasonably hot day which resulted in discomfort and slower times for many. Nevertheless, the standard was high with 15 members achieving sub three-hour times and ten in the top ten of their age groups.

The fastest VAC member was Richard McDowell (M45) of Hercules Wimbledon in a time of 2:33:06, placing 18th in the M45-49 age group. Next was Ben Millar

(M45) of Herne Hill Harriers in a time of 2:37:27, followed by Ed Chuck (M35) of Dulwich Runners in 2:39:43.

VAC's top age group placer was Karima Harris of Highgate Harriers who was first in the W55 listing. More about Karima later. Ruth Hutton, new to the age group, was third W60 in 3:15:54. Ben Reynolds (M60), Alice Riddell-Webster (W55) and Marilyn Davis (W65) all achieved fourth placings in their age groups. It is commendable that three VAC members in the M60 age group did sub three-hour times. Ben Reynolds did 2:54:26, Phil Ahier did 2:56:51 (6th in the age group) and Stephen Plummer did 2:58:36 (10th in the age group). Stephen's time was one of the few which was faster (four minutes faster) this year than last. Others in the top ten for their age groups were Victoria Buck W50 (6th), Sue Garner W75 (7th) and Neville Critoph M70 (10th). Ian Richards, the race-walker, was again competitive with the runners and placed 11th in the M75 category in 4:38:20, three minutes faster than in 2024.

Karima Harris

Karima Harris was again VAC's first woman. Her time of 2:52:17 placed her first in the W55-59 age group but she suffered in the heat and was nearly four minutes slower than last year. However, she knew she was in good shape and had hedged her bets by also entering the Copenhagen Marathon two weeks later. On 11 May, in much cooler conditions, she was rewarded with a majestic time of 2:45:45 which was a new British best, ahead of Sue McDonald's previous record of 2:47:19 set in Berlin in 2023. It was also a European W55 record.



*Karima at the
Copenhagen Marathon*

Karima's fantastic achievement in Denmark added to three records which she had claimed earlier in the year. In January she set a W55 British record for 10 miles in 59:42 at the Fred Hughes 10 in St Albans. In March she recorded a British and European best for a Half Marathon in 77:45 at the Fleet Half Marathon, beating the previous best time by two minutes. Later in March, she was the first woman over the finish line at the Hillingdon 20, setting a British W55 record for 20 miles in 2:06:09. She took nine minutes off the previous British W55 record.

Ben Revill

VAC was allocated one club place which was awarded to the first interested member whose name was drawn out of a hat at a VAC committee meeting. This year, Ben Revill (M55) of Hercules Wimbledon was successful. He completed the marathon in a creditable 3:52:51. Here is his account:



*Ben completing
the London Marathon*

“I was thrilled to get the VAC marathon place. Tragically, plans went awry when my mum became ill in March, then passed away in early April. Consequently, and not surprising under the circumstances, this was my hardest marathon emotionally, and the slowest physically as I had managed some long runs but not enough tempo work. On a positive note, the warm weather brought out a fantastic crowd – the largest I've ever seen on the course. I'm so grateful for the response to my fundraising. Mum was always very proud of my marathon endeavours”.

Bill O'Connor

Congratulations again go to Bill O'Connor who is one of the remaining “Ever-Presents” who have completed every single London Marathon since its inception in 1981. Bill, in his final year in the M75-79 age category, duly completed his 45th event in a time of 6:58:20. In 2025, six Ever-Presents started, and six finished.

A table of VAC members' performances is on VAC's website. It has been compiled from scrutinising the official results. Apologies if we have failed to spot someone. Please let Maggie Statham-Berry (entries@vetsac.org.uk) know if this is the case.

The Jungfrau Marathon – By Catkin Shelley

As a regular visitor to the area high in the Swiss Alps, the Jungfrau Marathon was on my bucket list for many years. I finally got a place in 2022 and enjoyed it so much I was back in 2023 and 2024 and have entered this September's event.

“The most beautiful marathon in the world”

The race lives up to its billing. It is a full marathon with the added challenge of a climb of almost 2,000m (start at 560m and finish at 2,320m). The scenery is

incredible with the high peaks of the Bernese Oberland, including the Jungfrau, almost always in view (as long as it's not foggy or snowing!) The terrain varies from virtually flat tarmac roads to very steep rough mountain tracks. It is a race of different parts, and I approach it by breaking it into four sections.

Section 1: The first “half”

Except for the sound of Alpenhorns, the race starts like other marathons on tarmac roads around Interlaken in Switzerland, but with only 4,000 runners you can quickly settle into your pace. The route alternates between gravel hiking paths and tarmac, always gradually rising. It winds through pretty mountain villages with crowds ringing cow bells, bands playing and flag throwers. Reaching the halfway point in the stunning Lauterbrunnen valley is a boost. However, with only 250m climbed, there is still over 85% of the climb ahead! The section finishes at 26km with a much-needed fuel stop.

Section 2: The “wall”

The route changes abruptly from a gentle rise to a steep rocky path, and everyone drops down a gear (or three) at the start of the climb, serenaded by the Pink Floyd song of the same name. The path climbs 500m over 2km via 22 tight hairpin bends; it is all about marching to maintain pace. After rounding bend 22, there is joy as the path eases, and it is possible to start running again.

Section 3: The wilds

At 30km the village of Wengen is reached, a boost with cheering crowds and energising music, but leaving Wengen feels like heading into the wilds. No more villages, just the occasional farm hut and lots of cows. The gravelly hiking tracks wind through forest and out into alpine meadows; the high peaks are close. The route rises and as the gradient changes it's best to alternate between running and fast walking. The section ends at 39km with the last full fuel station. This is the final cut-off point and those not there in 5 hrs and 50 mins must retire.

Section 4: The brute

With only 3km to the finish but still more than 450m of climbing, the last section is certainly brutal! It is on narrow, uneven, rocky mountain paths which get steeper and steeper. The views, the sound of Alpenhornists and camaraderie amongst the runners provide some relief. In 2024, I was overwhelmed by cramp in both calves and had to stop twice; the amazing officials came to the rescue, massaging my calves and giving me water, before sending me off with a “guten fahrt”! With just over a kilometre to go, you must climb the Moraine wall, the dividing line between the alpine pastures and the

high Alps. It was wonderful to be serenaded by bagpipes at the top. The final 500m to the finish is uphill and despite the cheering crowds, it is still a killer; head down and march is the only approach. With about 100m to go, I start running, albeit very slowly, as I am determined not to finish walking. I am exhausted but elated; even more so when I discovered 2024 was my best time at 5hr 18min and I was 6th W60 out of 37 starters (31 finishers).

I can thoroughly recommend the race to anyone who wants to take on a challenge. It is multi-terrain rather than trail and does not need technical experience. The Swiss organisation is superb with multiple food stops (no need to carry supplies),

enthusiastic crowds, bands, cow bells, physios on course and a recovery beer (alcohol-free) at the end. Supporters can take trains to various points to cheer on the runners.



The Moraine wall

2025's Jungfrau

Living in London makes training a challenge. I follow a regular marathon programme, supplemented with hill training at Primrose Hill and some trail runs with Serpentine Running & Tri Club. I try to get out to the Alps three to four weeks beforehand where I hike and run to help me acclimatise and train for the steep parts. Training for September 2025 is on track and fingers crossed no cramp this year!

Performance

An analysis of the times at VAC's 5 Mile Road Race Championships, May 2025 By Tim Grose

Am I doing better relatively than my peers?

A full version of this article, with illustrative graphs, can be read on VAC's website under the Features tab.

Do you find yourself, as a masters runner, doing a race these days and wondering how long your fellow runners have been running and whether you might have beaten somebody in the past that has your measure now? I certainly do!

On 13th May, I was one of 93 finishers in the annual VAC 5 Mile Championships in Battersea Park. My time of 32:13 I was pleased with but it was literally a mile off my PB of 25:44 from way back in 1991. I did at least have a slight inner smile knowing my PB was faster than the race winner this time!



Tim Grose at the 5M Champs

My age graded score (2015 tables) this time of 79.91% wasn't too far off the 82.81% I did as a 25-year-old in that 1991 race but I have always tended to think I was relatively "better" as a senior athlete than I am now and this statistic seems to bear this out.

So, in this article, I looked at some overall trends in the times recorded in this 2025 race compared with what the athletes did at the peak of their powers in order to see what of interest pops out.

One commonly quoted "rule of thumb" is that most runners will see up to **nine years of improvement** from when they start training relatively seriously, regardless of the age they start. To test this for the runners in the 2025 race, using the data on Power of 10 and runbritainrankings.com, I worked out both the year in which each runner did the best

performance I could find for them and in which event.

How long since the runners achieved their best performance?

To my somewhat surprise, this ranges from 0 years for 13 of the 93 runners (i.e. those who have done their best performance this year) to **Pam Whitter** now an W65, who ran an amazing 2:04.78 800 in 1981 some 44 years ago. Other notable "longevity" periods are **Lynn Wilson** at 37 years (39:54 10K) and both **Mark Tennyson** (15:26 5K) and myself (3:55.5 1500) who did their best performance 33 years ago in 1992. Mark won the M60 category this time so we could argue his decline has been better than mine and we always joke I seem to be getting further behind him since my last "win" over him in 2016.

My analysis showed that about 50% of the runners have done their best performance in the last six years. Perhaps those runners have taken things more seriously since lockdown. Indeed, of those runners, more than half of them have been racing ten or more years so clearly they are not all “new” runners.

Although not a direct comparison to the “nine years rule”, some masters athletes can and still are running their best ever times as they get older.

Any correlation with age since did best performance?

For each age group (male and female combined), I analysed the minimum, average and maximum number of years since athletes in each age group did their best performance. The full article on VAC’s website includes a graph.

At least up until V65, there are some athletes in each age group that are running their best ever times essentially “now”. There are also some who are still racing way after their best. The “Mean” reasonably well illustrates the disparate spread of longevity we have.

Distribution of best race distance

Now five miles always feels like a good “fair” race distance as it seemingly allows middle distance track runners to meet longer distance road runners “half way” as it were. I calculated the number of runners according to their historical best performance at events ranging from 800m to the marathon. There is a bar chart in the full article.

The most notable statistic was the even spread of runners whose best performance was under five miles to those who seem to prefer to race for longer. Perhaps it illustrates that runners often underperform at the marathon or maybe that marathon focused runners don’t like to race shorter distances - at least in our races!

Reality check!

Of course, there is also a certain reality as we get older. Although it is not always the case, the fastest runners this time were clearly those generally better of late than in the past and not “too old”.

Every runner in the first 16 overall places has done their best performance in the last five



Steve Winder, getting faster!

years and are V50 or younger. That said they are not all “new” runners. One of these, **Steve Winder**, the M50 winner, ran a faster half marathon this year than he did back in 2004 and is generally running as well as he was 21 years ago. I see I did beat him last back in 2014. I live in hope of further “glory”!

Masters Sprint Coaching by Michele Beltramo

VAC member, Michele Beltramo, offers three months of free coaching to masters athletes who are interested in competing in sprinting events. The coaching includes a training plan, technical analysis and weightlifting for speed. The training locations are at the Lee Valley Athletics Centre and Parliament Hill athletics track. For those interested in longer term coaching or personal training, Michele says that he offers excellent monthly rates. Michele can be contacted at 400amanetta@gmail.com. His website is: www.beltramo-fitness.com.

Michele is also an expert in sports psychology and has a Masters degree in Optimal Performance for Elite Athletes. For his MSc thesis, he researched pre-competition anxiety in sprinters, exploring, for example, whether anxiety is purely detrimental to performance or can in some cases be helpful to it, and whether high self-confidence by itself is key to a successful race. The thesis attracted a lot of attention from athletes and researchers and an article derived from the thesis was published in the April edition of Athletics Weekly. Michele has kindly provided an abridged version of the article for VAC’s website (on the Features tab).

Race Walking

Battersea Park Summer Series

April’s 5km race had an average field on a cool sunny evening. The winners were Stefano Zennaro (M50) from Belgrave Harriers and Melanie Peddle (W55) from Loughton AC. It was pleasing to welcome, as guests, juniors Trejan Checkeku-Boamah and Florence Watson, both from Blackheath & Bromley Harriers. Trejan led the field for some distance before Stefano finally reeled him in.

The May race was VAC’s Five Mile championship. It was pleasantly warm and sunny, with above average temperatures. Stefano Zennaro repeated his win in the first race in a time of 46:29. Trevor Jones (M65) of Steyning AC was VAC’s men’s champion in second place in 49:05. Chik Ha Kwok (Billie) from Metros RC was VAC’s women’s champion and won the W50 Gold with a time of 49:47.

The third race in June was VAC's 5km championship. It had an average field on a cloudy evening. The women's and men's winners, and VAC's 5km Champions, were for the first time wife and husband, Chik Ha Kwok and Man Biu Lam. Chik Ha was first in 30:33 followed by Man Biu (M65) in a new PB of 30:58.

The last 5 km race was held in July on a hot evening. The winner was junior Under 17 guest Trejan Checkeku-Boamah who was second in April's race. First for VAC was Peter Gregoire (M50) of Steyning AC. For the women, Chik Ha Kwok was first in 30:30. As in June's race, her husband, Man Biu Lam, was close behind, improving his PB to 30:45.



Chik Ha Kwok and Man Biu Lam, winners in June's VAC 5K Championships

There were four ever-presents: Fiona Bishop, Chik Ha Kwok, Dave Hoben and Man Biu Lam. VAC will continue to promote race-walking and offer competitive opportunities for Junior, Senior and Masters athletes. Forthcoming fixtures are the Counties 10k track walk at Norman Park on 4 October and the Jack Fitzgerald Memorial Walk in Tilgate Park, Crawley, on 11 October.

Parkrun

VAC members have been tourists at Morden and Roundshaw Downs parkruns. VAC's Over 80s were well represented at the annual gathering of octogenarians and nonagenarians at Bushy parkrun. Our next excursion is to Beckenham Place Park on 4 October. Join us if it's local or you want to tick it off your lists. These gatherings are a great way to meet fellow members and feel part of the club. Look out for VAC vests.

Morden, 8 March

18 members gathered at this friendly parkrun which is in its first year and not overcrowded. The spacious three-lap course is almost entirely on the park's undulating natural grassland which was pleasantly firm for our visit. It was a lovely cool sunny morning. The start and finish were near the enclosed area of the bandstand which provided a great meeting point and an opportunity to chat and take photos afterwards.

Norman Urquia was the fastest for VAC in 11th place, followed by Peter Lee and Jim Carrington in 14th and 15th, also under 21 minutes. Lucy Woolhouse was VAC's first women's finisher and was the second female overall. Lucy also topped the event's age-graded results with a superb 90.69%, with Maggie Statham-Berry second on this list with 89.76%.



Morden parkrun

Roundshaw Downs, 14 June

14 members enjoyed lovely sunny weather alongside the Purley Way near Croydon. The course was two-laps on grassy trails on the site of Croydon Airport which was Britain's main international airport from 1920 until its closure in 1959. It was also an important military facility in WW2.

The course was mostly uphill for the first half of each lap and then downhill with lovely views. Steve Corfield was first for VAC with a fantastic second place overall and second in the age-graded results. Lucy Woolhouse bagged a women's first place finish and the top age-graded performance. Gina Coulson and Ros Tabor were also in the top five of the age-graded listing.

Octogenarian and Nonagenarians' gathering, Bushy Park, 5 July

VAC members were prominent at the annual gathering of the Over 80s. The event was founded in 2017 by George Frogley and VAC Honorary member, Richard Pitcairn-Knowles, to encourage the Over 80's to celebrate their age and be proud of their participation in Bushy Park, the home of parkrun. On that occasion there were 15 runners over 80.

Each year, the numbers have increased, with 71 present last year. An aim has been to assemble over 100 octo- and nonagenarians at the parkrun. This was achieved magnificently at the eighth edition of the event when 117 of them were amongst the 1667 finishers at the 1044th parkrun at Bushy Park. Prosecco, cupcakes and a bespoke medal were their rewards as well as pride, camaraderie and friendship in abundance.



Some of the Over 80s at Bushy parkrun.

There were 90 finishers aged 80-84, 20 aged 85-89, five aged 90-94 and two aged 95-99. There were 86 men and 31 women. VAC's Peter Giles (M80) was the fastest of them all in a record time of 24:17 (88.74% age grading), a minute ahead of the second M80. VAC's Michael Johnson was fourth in a time of 26:15 and an age-grading of 86.74%. In the M85-89 age group, Joe Aspinall clocked a time of 37:22 which was second fastest. Pauline Rich was third in the W80-84 age group. Other VAC members present were John Carter (M80), a good ninth in the M80s, and Bill O'Connor, new to the M80 age group.

Members: Pippa Major

Pippa, in her own words “an obsessive racer”, is well known in Surrey's road and cross country community. Her friendly nature and generous spirit make her a popular clubmate and good friend to many. She is very much a team player. If there are setbacks, she comes back with determination and never gives up. Here is Pippa's account of her running life over the last 30 years.

The beginning

I started running in my late 20's – I was a member of a gym, doing classes, and thought I was fit, until a friend persuaded me to go for a run with her. We ran

for 20 minutes, I could hardly walk the following day, but I was hooked. I had never understood the joy of running until then.

First London Marathon

My very first race was the London Marathon in 1993. I had entered it not long after I started running, as at the time it was the only race I was aware of. I crossed the finish line on Westminster Bridge in just over 4hrs 15 and burst into tears, as I couldn't believe I had managed to run that far. It was to begin a love of the London Marathon, an event I have now run over 20 times.

I joined South London Harriers shortly after this race as I wanted to improve, and from the moment I joined I became an obsessive racer. I ran in every cross country and club race, entered every local race, went to every club training session, and gradually I started to get faster.

Elite training group

In 1995 I met Stuart (my now husband of 26 years). At the time he was the fastest runner at SLH, and he encouraged me to follow a more structured training plan. Stuart started training with Alan Storey's endurance running group at Kingston track, and he persuaded me to join as he assured me there were slower runners I could train with. I had never experienced anything as tough as these training sessions, but my times rapidly improved.



Pippa at the London Marathon in 1997

I feel privileged to have been part of this group, as I got to know some of the best athletes in the country at the time who were coached by Alan – Sonia O'Sullivan, Mara Yamauchi, Gary Staines, Mo and more. These were runners I'd see winning medals for GB in a race at the weekend, and then they'd be back at the track Tuesday asking how my cross country race went. My training group included VAC

members Peter Giles and the late, great Robin Dickson. The hard training paid off as, when I joined the group, I was running 10k in over 44 minutes. Three years later I ran 37:35 for 10k and my marathon PB dropped to 3:01.

Also, thanks to Stuart, I left a job in teaching and began working for Legal & General in Training, as he worked there and had seen the job advertised. There

was a huge running community at L&G, and thanks to a strong team, including fellow SLH and VAC member, Viv Mitchell, we won the JP Morgan Corporate Challenge three times (going to New York for the final) and the Standard Chartered City Race four times (winning a free trip to Club La Santa).

Joining Vets AC

I joined in 2009 as I wanted to compete in more masters races. Three seasons ago, I decided to run for VAC in their Surrey League cross country team as my days of scoring for SLH were far behind me. I love running for Vets as I feel I make a difference and can score for the team.

I am the sort of runner who is rarely pleased with their races – even when I was running at my best, I was always hard on myself and chasing PBs. In the days before Garmin and Strava, like many runners, I kept a running diary. A typical entry even after running 63.24, my 10M PB, at the Cabbage Patch 10, was ‘disappointed’ – as I was desperate to break 63 minutes. But I think this attitude is what has always made me want to train harder. I can no longer run a mile at the pace I ran 10 miles, but I still feel just as competitive, which is why I particularly enjoy Vets races.

My first serious injury

I have always been a high mileage runner – regularly averaging 50-60 miles per week and, until last year, had only ever had minor niggles. Last March, whilst training for London, I suffered my first serious injury in over 33 years of running. My knee collapsed and I couldn’t walk without pain. An MRI showed I had torn my meniscus and my MCL, and had severe osteoarthritis and cartilage damage.

After months of rest, wearing a knee brace, and hours of tedious strength and conditioning, I started running and doing the occasional race. I was much slower than before my injury, but I was determined to get back to what I loved. I had an arthroscopy in December after which the surgeon informed me that I had no cartilage on my inner knee and it would never get me round a marathon again.



VAC W55 CC Winner 2022

An impossible marathon?

I turned 60 in April and a few days later I ran 16 miles from home to mile 25 of the London Marathon to watch the elite and support my friends – my longest run in over a year.

Over lunch the following day with friends (Gina Coulson, Viv, Ruth Hutton and Sue McDonald - all members of Vets AC), I said how much I wished I could have run. Somehow, they persuaded me to enter the Milton Keynes Marathon, which was the following Monday, as they bet me that I could run fast enough to get the Good For Age time for London next year. So with just my one long run the week before, I set off slowly, unsure of how far I'd get. I was extremely pleased to run 4:04, well inside the V60 GFA time, giving me the opportunity to run London yet again if I want. And for probably the first time ever in my running career, I was actually really proud of my run!

I feel very fortunate to have kept running for so long. I've made lifelong friends. It's helped me through some very tough times and along the way I've amassed six South of England and 60 Surrey Medals. I intend to keep going for as long as possible.

Obituary

Don Turner (1937-2025)

Don Turner passed away on 9 March 2025, aged 88. He was a worthy Honorary member of VAC in recognition of his services to the club for over 30 years. As an athlete, an official, an organiser and a committee member, he devoted most of his life to athletics at club, county and national level.

Don was a member of Epsom and Ewell Harriers for 70 years. In his youth he was an international standard distance runner. He completed 65 marathons in total, with a best of 2:32:42. He also excelled in ultra races. In the prestigious London to Brighton race, he was runner-up in 1959 and 1962 and third in 1961 and 1963. In 1960 he set a World Record for Six Hours on the track at Walton, running 52 miles and 1100 yards. He twice won the race around the Isle of Man TT course. Further afield, in 1962 he was a member of Britain's first official team to the Comrades Marathon in South Africa. He placed third, covering the challenging 54-mile uphill course in six hours and seven minutes. Altogether he ran 135 races at distances longer than the marathon.

When Don retired from competitive running, he turned to athletics officiating and administration. He specialised in timekeeping and became one of the

leading timekeepers in the south of England. In 1980 and 1981, he shared his expertise with Chris Brasher and John Disley and played a key role in organising the finish and the timekeeping for the first London Marathon. Over the years, he has filled many roles for his club and for Surrey Athletics, the South of England AA and the South of the Thames Cross Country Association. As a race organiser, he managed Epsom & Ewell's iconic Epsom 10 road race for many years as well as Surrey's County Championships. For 22 years, he was the Treasurer of the National Union of Track Statisticians (NUTS). In the 1990s, he was also a regular contributor of race results and commentaries to Athletics Weekly magazine.



Don (on the left) with Cecil Gittins at a VAC race on Wimbledon Common in 2006

In VAC, there are many who knew Don as one of VAC's most trusted and reliable officials. From the 1990s, he would turn out in all weathers on Wimbledon Common as a timekeeper for VAC's cross country races. In the summer months, he would willingly serve as the lead official, keeping time or recording at VAC's road races in Battersea Park and our regular track meetings. He still helped VAC up until 2024, turning up with his stopwatch and clipboard to contribute his expertise and calm efficiency to the officials' team.

Don was a quietly spoken man but was a leader and could command respect with just a few words. He had a fine knowledge of the sport and in his later years enjoyed attending major athletics

championships worldwide as part of the travelling pack of British fans. He kept fit by walking, especially on his beloved Epsom Downs. He will be missed by many as an official but also as a dedicated, supporter of athletics' endeavours.



Catkin Shelley enjoying a well-deserved recovery drink at the finish of one of the three Jungfrau Marathons she has competed in. She returns to compete again this September.