



Vegpatch

The Newsletter of the Vegetarian
Cycling and Athletic Club



February 2013

Welcome

Hope you have all had a good Christmas and are well into your new year of sport. Presents for me included new trainers, new dog walking boots (already showing signs of wear since my partner has been in New Zealand for six weeks), and some posh running gloves – a revelation after all these years in thin cheap or free ones. And to me from me, entry into The Wall – a 69 mile run the length of Hadrian's Wall in June. Interestingly, David Anderson The Elder has entered the 2-day version of the event that starts at the same time. Presents out included a fleece for Lennie in VCAC green.

As I haven't managed to hand on the Newsletter Editor post and need to cut down the hours I am spending on things VCAC, I intend only producing three editions of Vegpatch during the year. This is a belated post-AGM one, focussing on the reports and subjects that cropped up there – the minutes went out separately shortly after it had taken place. If you find that all a bit dry, though, we'll kick off with a cracking report from Mick Wigglesworth on his trans-Pennine trail ride.

Have a good year.

Steve Coote

General Secretary VCAC



VCAC subscriptions 2013

Club subscriptions fell due on the 1st January 2013. Sharon Hammond has kindly taken on the role of Membership Secretary for the year. Your cooperation in making what, at this time of year in particular, is one of the busiest periods any of us on the committee have as easy as possible by subscribing without delay would be much appreciated. Club subscription rates remain the same as last year (details on the website) though please note that individual England Athletics affiliation has risen to £10. We have no control over this

As they are much easier to process, we are looking to do renewals as much as possible by electronic means. If possible, please go to the new website to download renewal forms to email in and choose either PayPal or BACS as your payment method. Renewals coming by post/cheque will, of course be dealt with, but may take longer.

Cover photo: Rose Wigglesworth at Hit the Trail 5 – photo Mick Wigglesworth

TPT 2012 – Mick Wigglesworth

I leant back on the sea marker, faked a smile for the inaugural photograph and had a last glance at the half sun quickly disappearing into the Irish Sea. "How far is it again?" ...Silence ensued as everyone pondered the enormous challenge ahead...



Southport start, Friday evening. Front to back - Alex, Brian, Nicky, Mick

"Two hundred and fifteen miles" I silently responded; then actually responded: "We'd better get started".

I've been training on the northern spur of the Trans Pennine Trail for several years now and consider it far safer than cycling on the local roads, even in total winter darkness. Just as well really, as it was in that very same total darkness that we planned to tackle the first part of this trip, some familiarity then, unlike being able to see Blackpool tower from the trail's official start marker in Southport – this was a very unfamiliar feature, and certainly not one visible from my local section just south of Leeds. A gps fix established itself and there was suddenly no reason left not to do this. I submissively pushed the

'record track' button, started pedalling, had a quick glance over my shoulder to satisfy myself that all four of us were moving, and settled into a slow and steady rhythm.

My fascination with the TPT, ever since learning of its existence, had never been more real, this was it, now or never – only now with a beleaguered conscience of responsibility too, having convinced three work colleagues that to do the entire thing in one straight push was a great idea. The full team consisted of Brian, a fell running guru with calves¹ the size of err, calves². Nicky, the female of the group, inherently gritty, determined, and up for any challenge; Alex, our very own pseudo-Yorkshireman adopted from north east Scotland and respected bicycle owner of only two years, and me; about whom you will at some point be able to read in the members' gallery of the Club website.

I have ridden coast to coast before but over a slimmer part of the country, and over several days, and have also been well-rested between sections. Furthermore, I don't recall ever staying awake all night, and I've certainly never cycled more than the length of the Leeds Liverpool canal (137 miles) in one push. This now seemingly

trivial distance I'd managed with my solo completion of that canal's towpath (plus a ride to the start of the ride) the previous summer.

This though, was different; it was a non-stop attempt of the entire west to east trail from Southport to Hornsea, and mostly off road. Oh well, at least there is only one significant climb: how big can the Pennines be anyhow? With this thought in mind I tried to blank my memory of ever having read the 'Highest Motorway in England' sign on the M62's Lancashire/Yorkshire border.

The first miles disappeared quickly, no doubt helped by worrisome thoughts of nutrition, hydration, weather, fitness, failure – and by the altogether more surreal experience of being bombarded by bats flashing scarily within inches of us all, our headlights probably attracting their food source. Several incredibly near misses led to serious questions about the speed and accuracy of echolocation, only from us though, I don't think the bats themselves worried too much about it.

Amidst the bat-antics, Nicky suddenly shot impressively to the front, peddling faster than my brother in one of his medium gear time trial events – only to announce that far from reacting to some girly-bat-fear, her chain had dropped and was now stuck on the granny ring. This was a great excuse for our first off-bike stretch and reflection on the first twenty plus miles. A quick fix and snack, and we were soon back on route, only slightly disappointed with mechanical issues less than two hours in.



Middle pitstop: Nicky grazes while Mick empties debris from his shoes.

Aintree to Halewood, essentially the span of Liverpool, is navigated via a disused railway line and during darkness feels like anything other than a bustling metropolis. A secret corridor strewn with brassy urban foxes, the city lights never materialised and neither did the drunks or gangs. Just the frequent and pleasant wildlife encounters – though daylight may tell a different story. Widnes to Warrington follows the Mersey then the Manchester Ship Canal to Lymm which rejoins the River Mersey north of Sale, though a shadow of its famous self by this point.

A familiar sight, Reddish Vale Country Park; the haunt for the regular veggie Hit the Trail cross-country race was next. It brought rain though, before the mixed blessing of clouds clearing to make visible the wall of the Pennines, and a distinct feeling of uphill-ness towards Hadfield (film location for *The League of Gentlemen*). Following the graft of the staircase of sequential reservoirs up Woodhead pass we were reassured by the fact that it would be (mentally) downhill to the finish from this highest point, though not in a fully freewheeling sense. A stones-throw from Penistone where we took a well deserved sit down breakfast and were almost halfway.

Refuelled and refreshed from a belly full of proper food, mood levels elevated in line with the ambient temperature and it was nice to be able to strip away a few layers of clothing to enjoy the rays. About 13 hours of riding in saw us hit a significant crossroads, the west/east, north/south intersection of the trail. We stopped, looked at the signs pointing in each direction, then all paused and looked at each other with some unease. No words were spoken but everyone knew that this was the place; the place closest to home, a comfy bed – and failure. Surprisingly there were no takers, though I guarantee it was more than a little contemplated by all. We pushed on, through Old Moor RSPB nature reserve, joined the River Dearne, and followed it's meandering path through the Dearne valley. Nicky dropped off the back and we patiently waited, assuming of a call of nature. Unfortunately we were wrong and she reappeared in shredded lycra covered in blood and mud in roughly equal quantities. The three blokes watched with wincing admiration as she cleaned the cuts with blasts of energy drink from the bike bottles, shrugged it off as the norm, clipped in, and pushed off.

Past Doncaster the trail turns and heads directly north up the New Junction Canal and on to Selby and tea time. Munching on a veggie burger and chips sat in a musky doorway, sheltering from a passing shower, and the local Saturday evening drinkers was a stark contrast from the previous twenty-some hours experience. The rain passed and we moved on, joining the tidal Ouse towards the Humber estuary and a sense of actually heading in the right direction again. The terrain is flat, sparse and very pleasant all the way to Broomfleet. From here it was difficult to navigate the seemingly pointless up and down leapfrogging of the A63 through Ellerker, Brantingham, Elloughton, Welton, Melton and eventually North Ferriby. You have to ride this section to appreciate how annoying it quickly becomes. We stopped underneath the Humber Bridge and couldn't help myself looking across the span of the structure, not to marvel at the engineering, but half expecting to see a certain

club member traversing back and forth. As darkness again fell this was our own version of hell, not on, but instead under, the Humber.

The forthcoming section had always nagged me as it was clearly mapped and well reported that the trail passes pretty much through Hull city centre. No secretive river paths, back alleys or tracks, just plain old city centre traffic on a myriad of busy roads. It could only have been made worse by the timing, say for example Saturday night around 10:00 PM. And it was. My phone mapping and gps which had been frequently relied upon to confirm direction was now on it's last legs regarding battery life and our backup, a home printed map had to be read on the wing (thanks Brian) as stopping was no longer an appealing option due to the jaywalking merry citizens and intoxicated weekend visitors amassing Kingston Upon Hull. A sense of relief as we finally found the entrance to the last section, only the freshly deposited slalom course via the Brandsholme estate left to navigate, then open country via a disused railway to the finish.

The coastal lights of Hornsea flickered in the distant darkness like a reassuring oasis in the darkened abyss, the only problem was they never seemed to get any closer. We slogged on into the dark, the manicured shale trail depleted into deep muddy singletrack with overhanging wet vegetation that occasionally brushed and clawed as



Hornsea finish; early Sunday morning

a reminder that there was still work to do. The last couple of hours whether it be through exhaustion or sleep deprivation were both mentally and physically the toughest though nothing could possibly stop us now. Not my new and first of the journey slow puncture that I simply ignored or the phone battery that died after 209 miles of use ruining my otherwise, unbroken gps track recording.

After seemingly lasting forever this last part ended abruptly, finally ejecting us through a cluster of residential prefab garages and onto a side street. From here it was just a short coast down past the Mere and onto the seafront. The finish marker was easy to recognise having left it's identical

counterpart back in Southport. No need to fake the smile here. It was a joyous occasion with mixed emotions, elation of completing the challenge but at the same time, saddened that it was over.

¹ The fleshy muscular back part of the human lower leg.

² A young cow or bull.

Vital statistics.

Total elapsed journey time 27hrs and 49mins. Distance 216 miles.

Energy consumption >20,000 kcal.



gps track recording

Your Club Needs You

With only six members attending this year's AGM at Milton Keynes, and the need to find new volunteers for at least two positions even if everyone else was willing to stay in post, the need for more members to take on responsibility for running the club has seldom been so evident. To stress the need for this we only need to point out that three members are currently filling ten posts. Simply put, this is not sustainable. While none of the jobs are particularly onerous or time-consuming in themselves, though some such as Membership Secretary or Newsletter Editor have pinch points, even for willing workers doubling or tripling up on roles, can certainly make them feel somewhat put upon.

With the advent of the new website we are hoping that some of the posts may become even less burdensome and so be a good starting point for those considering taking on roles. It is now possible for all members able to access an internet connection to upload both their own upcoming races and results to the listings (you can still send these to the Diary and Results Secretary, Keith Hammond, for uploading). Given that in future we do not intend producing the full listing of the year's results on the grounds that they take a lot of time to collate and produce with

no evidence that anyone is really interested in re-visiting them (they will be available in a raw format for Secretaries to analyze for AGM reports and for anyone else who asks for them for awhile at year's end) it is hoped that both these roles will be largely confined to sending out quarterly reminders to members and uploading a limited number of events and results for those not able to use this option. Even this much involvement from someone new may facilitate a redistribution of other roles.

A second thread that emerged in this regard was whether or not the feeling that being a post-holder more or less obliged one to travel, perhaps long distances, to attend the AGM. Those of us who do attend feel that in theory at least it is a valuable thing, giving the chance for the sort of exchange of views and give and take on points at issue not readily possible in separate phone calls or via emails. On the other hand, this is only really the case if sufficient people turn up to represent the different views.

Both with the AGM minutes mail out and subsequently on the website forum, opinions have been sought from members on whether a 'remote' AGM, based on but not exclusively done on the website forum would attract more interest and help with the travel problem. Thanks to those who have replied, but a handful of such seems hardly a mandate for a major change. Without more contributions the likelihood is that this matter will be decided by the committee. Unfortunately for me as General Secretary, there is no consensus within the committee. We will leave this matter open for further contributions until the end of March then make a decision.

On a personal note, I would point out that I am in my mid-fifties and currently hold five VCAC posts. I have a month's sabbatical on top of my regular annual leave due in two or three years time that will prevent me being active in important posts for a portion of that year and so would require that I relinquish most even if I were younger. Whilst I hope to continue being involved in both the club generally and it's organisation if required, by the time I have had this break I shall be nearer 60 than 50 and won't be returning to anything like my current level of involvement. Too many things still to do and too few really active years left to do them in.

Website (Updated since the AGM) – Steve Coote

The site proposed at the AGM is up and running, with some 30 members having accounts on it. It would be good to see more members doing so as it really needs member input to be a dynamic site rather than just a static signpost for those looking for the club.

Anyone can browse the site and download membership application forms and see the latest 5km league standings that are being provided on a regular basis by



Steve Wigglesworth. Facilities for those with accounts include the ability to post on the forum, to upload both upcoming events and results on the relevant pages and to put a picture and brief profile in the Member Gallery. To date, this latter is but little used, which seems a shame given the few chances most of us have of meeting given our geographical diversity. It's nice to know a little more about the person behind a name in a results column, and even be able to put a face to the name. Give it a go; click add content and the relevant listing, and there are comments below the relevant bits in all of the above sections to guide you through the first times you use any of them.

For the future, I have a list of things to do on the site to get it to where I want it to be – it was put together at a time when I should probably have been still doing the course work rather than applying it, so it's a bit of a work in progress. But after that it's really down to you guys; and the more it's used the more inspired I will be to try to keep improving it.

Clothing

We have quite a store of race and leisure kit in stock in a variety of sizes. Life being perverse, the two items the secretary has been asked for this year have both been in sizes we didn't have as new. A few items have been ordered from Impsport to fill the gaps, though the running vests have the cycling jersey design on them rather than our traditional style. The Impsport logo is also rather too prominent on these items. Though the company have said they can reduce the size by 10% in future, the colours of the logo are red and black which stands out on our yellow tops. The best bet is to see what we have in stock first; as we run this down we may be able to do another largish order for racing kit that would put us in a better position to negotiate design and a discount.

I have managed to obtain an up to date password for the online store for individual items – just our triathlon and cycling kit. As we only let members buy race kit this is available from the Clothing Secretary for members – just drop me a note requesting it and the link.

Treasurer – Sharon Hammond

The Treasurer's report was emailed and posted out to members. In essence, we are gradually recouping the money from the large kit purchase we made a couple of years ago and with member numbers remaining stable, the club is in a healthy position financially. Paypal has been well-used and seems well-worth the slight cost for the convenience. No need for a rise in either membership fees or other (mostly clothing) costs recommended.

Membership Secretary – Steve Wigglesworth

As of the AGM we have 125 members, 16 of whom are honorary. On or after 31/12/11, 93 members were invited to renew. 25 did not renew, the vast majority offering no reason.

In sum, this represents pretty much a steady state for the club with our ability to attract new members roughly equalling those who leave. Some, of course, find their 'home' with the club. And hopefully a more active website and continued attempts to promote leagues and teams in other competitions will further this.

Athletics Secretary – Keith Hammond

As I type this, outside it is cold with snow and ice on the ground, not ideal conditions for training runs and indeed races (some of which were cancelled at the weekend). The weather has presented some extra challenges for those of us out training for target races and events. As shown on the Events page, quite a few club members have marathons and/or half marathons planned for early Spring and therefore January is an important time to commence training plans and if possible to start doing long runs etc.

Unsurprisingly this is the time of year that Marathon Talk has its 'Jantastic' event and a number of club members signed up for the VCAC team. The objective in January is for team members to set a weekly run target. I can certainly confirm that at an individual level having such a target is definitely a motivation on a cold and snowy day. In the first couple of weeks the team members have done well and hopefully despite the challenging conditions, this will continue.

Also in recent weeks some of the club's runners have completed parkruns. One aspect of parkruns is that the results are taken into account when the club's 5K league is updated (as set out in the Results section of the website). If you are included as a VCAC member on parkrun your results should be forwarded to me by the organisers. If the VCAC isn't listed as your first claim club, you can send details of the results to me and also upload them onto this website. Of course other 5K races count towards the 5K league. You don't have to have the fastest time to win one of the leagues, as the results are adjusted for age, gender and year on year improvement.

Finally, whatever the distance of your target race and the type of event you are planning (e.g. road, cross country, fell race), I hope that the weather soon improves and also that your training goes well.

Delamere Forest Night Run – Steve Coote

A waste of time trying to explain it at work but I'm sure you people will know where I'm coming from when I say that as soon as I saw this series advertised I knew that I was going to have to be on the start line for at least one of them.

The frosts and clear skies of the previous week ended on the Friday prior to this in a day-long deluge. Thankfully, it hadn't promptly frozen again so even with little further rain the going promised to be soft to squelchy.

We set off at 7 in the evening, a thin sliver of moon in the sky. Xmas songs belting out of the speakers in the marquee, fairy lights in the trees, the cheery enthusiasm of a congested mass of runners - some in fancy dress - the occasional expletive as someone slipped, then we crossed the road and entered the dark side. Some may be surprised to find that this lies just to the west of the B5152 but that's what it said on our notes. The field spread out as fitness and tactics took hold - were you running this as a 10k or a fun run given possible obstacles - and the world became a simple and beautiful place, focused on the wagging puddle of light from your head torch and rhythmic breathing. The glimmer of other disembodied pools of light up ahead added a surreal touch.

The run was mostly done on well made up stone tracks, but it wasn't a time to get complacent as loose rocks, large puddles and the occasional diversion along boggy paths with prominent tree roots had one trying to both focus on the few steps ahead whilst being peripherally aware of the lighting up of the reflective scotch tape that had been put around the direction arrow boards. Cheerful marshals and light wands hanging in the trees helped to avoid the temptation to cut corners into the rough stuff engendered by seeing runners who had already turned a corner ahead and reassure you that you were on the right route.

Back over the road and a steep, short climb up to a flat finish and it was done. Shorter than the advertised 10k I'd say but 44:17, 44/170 and second out of 8 MV50, and another run to remember and treasure.