



Running Commentary

2019 Edition

22nd February 2020

www.hooknortonharriers.org.uk

2019 — A year of highs and lows

Inside this issue:

2019 - A year of highs and lows	1
Club Races for 2020	1
Dragon's Back Musings by James	2
The Cotswold Way Century by Vince	4
The origins of the Harriers by Steve	5
Club Awards	6

2019 was a fantastic running year for the Hook Norton Harriers. We had lots of new members join us and the club is now the biggest it's ever been! We organised our races the Hooky 6 & Christmas Canter again which were both amazingly successful and the Christmas Canter sold out in record time! Thank you to all who took on the important roles to make these days so successful & the Marshals too as we couldn't run them without you. As most of you know we sadly lost Bryan Walford one of our Harriers in July last year. He was a very valued member of the club and touched many of our hearts. Some of our Harriers are raising money this year in events for MIND a charity he cared so much about. 2019 was Tom Bradford's last year as Chairman of the club as he stood down at the AGM in December. We want to thank him for all he has done for the club in the time he's been Chairman and wish Steve Frame and Nell Darby all the best as they take on their Co-Chair role. The Harriers competed in lots of races far and wide across the country and even overseas. Every single Harrier achieved something, whether that was a new distance they had set themselves and accomplished it, a new race PB, pushing to see what they are truly capable of, or turning up to the club for training each week. We are part of such an amazing club and we like to applaud everyone's efforts, however big or small. To try your best is all we ask! Here's to 2020!

Lisa Moulder, Social Media Secretary



Club Races for 2020—please email results@hooknortonharriers.org.uk



Bryan Anthony Walford

16th April 1981 ~ 25th July 2019

Not the Roman IX	Ilmington Tempo 10k - 5 race Series	
Bramley 20/10	Bourton 10k	Banbury 15
Chedworth 10	Motavation Series	Silverstone 10k
Oxford Town and Gown	Tysoe Windmill 10k	Chiltern Chase 10k
Banbury 5	Kingham 10k	Hornton 6
Headington 5	Witney 10	Winchcombe Hill Climb 10k
Woodstock 12	Eynsham 10k	Andy Reading 10k
Any UKA certified Half Marathon or Marathon		

Club Handicap System—run six races from this list in 2020 to qualify—two under 10 miles and two at 10 miles or over, plus any two others (incl. Motavation). 10 bonus points for every extra club race you do—this can make all the difference to who wins!

Dragon's Back Musings by James McLaughlin

What is the Dragon's Back Race?

The Berghaus Dragon's Back Race is a 315Km 5 stage race along the length of Wales taking in most of the hills which was run in 2019 for the 6th time.



I first became aware of the Dragon's Back Race when the original race was shown on Transworld Sport in 1992. This show was a fixture on Channel Four on Saturday mornings and although I was very much an athlete in the Homer Simpson sense at the time, I remember watching it over a few weeks in stage instalments and along with Ironman Triathlon it stuck with me. It wasn't enough to dislodge me from my beer swilling, junk food eating lifestyle but something was filed away unknowingly for later.

After starting with the 2000 London Marathon, via 25 Ironman triathlons and many other running races I entered the world of Ultrarunning in 2014 with the Pilgrim Challenge and quickly started looking for bigger, longer, tougher races and reading every book I could find, listening to every podcast available and generally being the obsessive I am. I did my first 100K at CCC in the Alps in summer 2015, my first 3 Hundred Milers in 2016- Thames Path, Lakeland and Autumn 100 and started trying to get into the UTMB although my plans were thwarted by my neck problems requiring spinal surgery in Sept 2017.

If I am honest, I had already begun to think of bigger things and had listened to Ian Corless interview finishers at the 2015 Dragons back on Talk Ultra with a sense of awe but also of what if?...

I started back running in 2018 with a new sense of the need not to postpone things which I wanted to do as you never know what is around the corner and when the entries for DBR opened I was poised over my keyboard to enter even though I was not at all sure I was capable. It was a steep return to running going from a tentative 2miles in December 2017 via Scafell Sky Race and Mourne Skyline as well as Berlin Marathon and Cotswold Way 100 to the point at the end of 2018 where it felt sensible to start training specifically for the Welsh adventure.

Training for DBR - I knew the key to my training for this event would be different to previous racing. I figured the main targets should be:

1. Time on feet
2. Plenty of vertical, whether running or hiking
3. Get used to doing big days on tired legs
4. Improve my navigation skills
5. Become familiar with the course itself

I decided to book onto some of the organized recce weekends when the organizers would guide us over each day's racing split over a weekend each. These were in March and April and so prior to that my focus was getting generically fit. I ran the Wychavon Way race in late January and the Grizedale Trail marathon in February without tapering and went into the first recce in March feeling fit.



Recceing the course - I did 4 of the organized weekends which were challenging, especially the storm on week 1 over Snowdon, the snow on week 2 then the heat on the 4th and 5th-no pleasing some runners! I ran leg 3 solo on Good Friday and was pleased to have completed it without getting lost or dying of dehydration or Giardia from all the hillside streams!

The Race itself started on Monday May 20th in Conwy Castle so we travelled to Llandudno on Saturday 18th to be ready for recce next day. Michelle, Eddie and Danny and I spent Saturday around Llandudno and enjoyed Fish and Chips on the seafront. On Sunday we took the tram onto the Great Orme for a stroll to kill time in the morning and then it was time to go to registration. I lugged my 59l Dry bag for camp, my 22l day back and my hill kit to Conwy and began the very organised and smooth registration process. I had a bit of time to kill then before the compulsory briefing and dinner so went for coffee and cake in Conwy.

During the briefing Shane Ohly the Race Director told us he only expected half of us to finish and that many of us wouldn't get past Day 1.

Stage 1 (49.2K) is from Conwy to Nant Gwynant over most of the high peaks of Snowdonia including Snowdon, Tryfan and Crib Goch. It is runnable at times and technical in others with Crib Goch being a scramble rather than a run. I enjoyed the running parts and survived the technical bits intact, if slow.

Stage 2 (55.5K) after a first night under canvas with my 7 tentmates and a valiant attempt to eat as much vegetarian food as I could-had forgotten all about Linda McCartney's sausages until then, it was time to run across the Rhinogs and Moelwyns to our next campsite just north of Dolgellau.

These hills are much less visited than the north of Snowdonia and there are some tricky parts. At one stage I realised I hadn't managed to run a step for 4 hours and yet I was catching people and never stopped! I had to thank my tentmate Ian who had done a lot of recceing this area and knew some fantastic lines to make up time. The last time I had been here was on the recce months earlier and that time we were in deep snow but today was warm and sunny and the day went smoothly as a result.

Stage 3 (69.1K) takes runners from just north of Dolgellau over Cadair Idris and Maccynlleth then Plynlimon (Pumlumon in welsh) to campsite near Dyffryn Castell. The worst weather of the week was on the climb over Cadair Idris to start the day but by the time we ran through Maccynlleth everyone was diving into the Co-op to buy ice cold drinks and ice creams.



By now the smell in our tent was fairly ripe and I felt very sorry for our one female tentmate Irma but she didn't seem bothered. The food continued to be plentiful and much needed as tomorrow was another long day although much less hilly.

Stage 4 (67.3K) might be less hilly, but the terrain gives in other ways! Today had tussocks the size of "babies heads" to quote one of my run mates as well as long stretches of bog and 2 long road sections. We went from Dyffryn Castell through the stunningly beautiful and isolated Elan Valley to the final overnight campsite near the most welcome sight of the week for many of the runners-a well-stocked country pub with cold drinks, a stream to soak in and a hog roast for those craving meat although I didn't feel the need to partake. I ran the last 10 miles of today's course with a swiss Olympic marathon runner called Kristian with a 2.14 marathon PB who had entered as a dare on a stag do while under the influence! Think it might have been his slowest run ever.

Stage 5 (63.4K) the final stage goes through the Brecon Beacons over the last hills of a lumpy week (total ascent for the week is approximately 15500m over the 315K) but also included the welcome village of Llandovery where the early opening bakery was a much visited site. Cans of coke and buns and chocolate purchased my mate Chris and I set course for Llandeilo via Carreg Cennen castle where the original race finished but the race has now outgrown this historic site and finishes at Llandeilo in a school grounds (not as romantic but it has warm showers!)

Finished!!! I finished the race in a cumulative time of 58hr and 6 minutes. The prize giving and post-race feast was held on the Friday night at the school where trophies were awarded to the podium and mini dragon statues to all the finishers. After all the build-up, the week of running, the broken sleep due to snoring tent mates and cold ground I couldn't have been happier to get on stage and receive my award before Michelle drove me home for a long sleep and a week of eating everything in sight.



What's next?

After DBR I didn't race until the Wendover Woods 100 in mid-July which I only did to get the points for one of 2020's main targets UTMB-a 105 miles race around the Mont Blanc massif at the end of August. Doing these races exposes you to ideas of all sorts of crazy and often tough events which others have completed and in the intervening months my mind has turned to perhaps the toughest off them all, The Montane Spine Race along the 268 miles Penine way in January. Having watched this year's race I took a leap and signed up with a view to running it in memory of one of my friends and former nurse colleagues who sadly died a few weeks ago of a brain tumour. Jo was a marathon runner, member of Adderbury Running Club and regular at Banbury parkrun and I am sure thinking of her, and the money will help me keep going next January. I will get my Just Giving page up soon and all donations will be gratefully received.



The Cotswold Way Century by Vince Blake

Race Description - 102 miles of Trails following exactly the way marked Cotswold Way from Chipping Campden to Bath Abbey. With 14000ft of ascent and descent it's a semi supported event having strict cut off times, 10 checkpoint/feed stations set at approx. 9-14 miles. 3 of these also have bag drop facility. No pacers are allowed to support you until the outskirts of Bath city are reached and then only as guides through the city – no equipment carrying

The Race - the plan assumed 14min/mile average pace, walk up the hills beat the cut offs but don't push hard at any stage – this was a distance that needed a little caution. At 1200 a mass start immediately sees you climbing out of town to join the trails on their way to Broadway Tower. With the sun beating down, the temperature set in for mid to high 20s until early evening. The first 14 miles flew by as we went through Broadway Tower a steep descent into and through Broadway and climbing back out again to Snowhill and Stanton then into the 1st checkpoint at Stumps Cross. We arrived at 1500, ½ hr later than planned, early anxiety set in; was the pace too slow? Next down into Winchcombe and climbing up onto Cleeve Common with fantastic views out across the Cotswolds and into Cheltenham. The Sun was sinking as we rose up to Aggs hill, 27 miles in, already a little dehydrated due to the heat of the day. We were now ½ hr in front of plan and an hour ahead of the formal cut off. It never ceases to amaze me the emotional lift you get from the Family support crew, they were there doing their awesome job. A quick change of socks from the drop bag, renew the salt tabs and gels, a caffeine shot and the night beckons. We hit the Bidlip carpark about 2030, ½ hr in front of ETA and well in front of cut off 2200.



Hot soup served from Gazebo and few more sweat offerings were consumed. Gently along the Cotswold escarpment and through beech woods we are clambering our way up the cheese rolling Cooper Hill. By 2130 we are looking down into Painswick RFC, glowsticks guiding the way to hot vege chill and another change of socks. 3 1/2 hrs ahead of cut off and 1 1/2 ahead of ETA timing is looking pretty good; the tiredness is starting to show.

Navigating around Haresfield Hill, bypassing Stroud, avoiding the double back via the canal 55M at Kings Stanley and through the wood at Penhill we emerge at 58.5M at Coaley Peak Carpark. The rain starts. In a damp hot tent friendly crew serves tea and snacks, I cant sit down for fear of not getting up. Zombies arrive, those not destined to finish. It spurs me on. The rain becomes torrential, the trails disappear underwater and feet hot and sweaty become drenched and soggy.

Rolling down hill to Wotton under Edge 70M where we get Indoor toilets, more zombies. I feel like one too now. My feet are hurting. The damp has taken its toll. With a severe history of poor health on one foot the mental demons start to penetrate deep and my mind race really starts, I have stopped having fun. I contract with myself and running buddy, when I make it to Horton, if the soles of my feet peel off when changing my socks then I'm done. I failed to comprehend the impact that would have; my real life, walking, running podcast stops transmitting and I wish I had kept my big mouth shut; the pain plays on. Daylight is truly here now and the trail rolls on. Not really sure of the details only there was a lot more walking than running, the hills a little less severe and the dampness prevails.



The southern part of the Way is a more gentle trail and just seemed endless. As we passed the church at Little Sodbury my daughter came out to cheer me on which provided just a little lift. Endlessly toward Tormarton 87M ~1030 at the next check point, 2 hours later than ETA and 2 hours ahead of cut off. Here my running buddy re-energised by bacon rolls set off at a blistering pace singing at full volume – all the way to Cold Aston 92M, which was now warm, very warm. More sweet tea and a mega road down and huge trail up. Spirits were not exactly high; it was a silent trudge of agony. Where the hell was Bath? We started to run properly again. It was my mission to finish but I could not comprehend finishing last. My feet screaming at me dragged us forward down to Weston and the outskirts of Bath. My eldest daughter Ellen guided us uphill then down, feeling like we are sprinting 10min/mile pace. We wont be last, we will finish. Streets getting busier, buses, cars, people. I am a running zombie. Left, right down, pass another runner and we break into the Abbey Square the main door is golden in sunlight, the finish, we hit the door at full pace. Done. Proper Done. We are Ultra Marathon Runners. We have joined the 100 Club!



Hook Norton Harriers—the Early Years

Steve Kaplan one of the founding members answered questions for Graeme Hackland on the origins of the club:

What year did the Hook Norton Harriers Form? We officially registered with the then AAA in December 1985. Meeting through the year at races and the Sports and Social Club.

Who were the founding members? Robert Gittus-Smith, Toby Benn, Don Cornelius, my brother Stuart Kaplan, and myself. Robert and Toby were already running for Leamington Cycling & Athletics Club. Don had organised the village fun run in 1985 which we turned into the Hooky 6 in 1986.

Why did you all decide to setup a running club? It seemed a good idea as there were a few of us running unattached and seeing each other at races. It would be cheaper to enter events too.

I remember it being Robert that made the suggestion and with him and Toby already running for a club they had the experience of a club set up.

Where and when did the club members meet up? The original Hook Norton Sports and Social Club, now the store area for the tractor and various equipment. We met on a Tuesday evening at Hook Norton which was the main training night. Because we had members traveling from the Chipping Norton and Banbury areas we started a session on a Thursday evening in both those places.

How did you decide on the club colours, motto and the club badge? We could not have the same colours as any other club in the county. I seem to remember we chose green for the two hoops on the vest as a sign of our rural location plus we liked the colour of Emerald Green so decided on Emerald Green for the shorts too, they really stand out! We liked two hoops better than one or other designs. It was great to pick and design a kit from scratch. The Club Badge has a Gate and a Hollybush which represents the two ends of the village of Hook Norton. Then the two lines to represent the hoops on the vest. The Club Motto is "To try your best is all we ask" and then we turned it in to Latin the best way we knew how "Conata Perficio". Some have disagreed with the accuracy with the translation because I don't think there are exact Latin words to replace the English words. We did consult more than one person who knew Latin so we were happy with the advice given. I think we used Latin because it sounded more impressive, historical, and other clubs had Latin mottos! Conata Perficio translates to, I carry through what I attempt. A motto of perseverance and steadfastness.

Did you all race together in the early years? Cross-country, marathons? A lot of the time we raced together in local races, cross country league and county champs, county relays, road races of all distances, even some track events from 100 metres to 10k. We had some members running ultra distance events like the Swiss Alpine Marathon while some members also did fell running, quite a variety.

What other milestones do you remember in the club's history? We started to give out t-shirts to all finishers of the Hooky 6 from the 10th anniversary. We wanted to do something to celebrate the club being 10 years old. We then carried this tradition on for several years because it was so popular with the runners.

Photo Gallery



Running together in club colours is extremely popular with many of our racing members: Motavation, Bourton 10k, Banbury 5, Cross-Country and The Club Half are good examples!

Photo Gallery

Email Lisa:
social.media@hooknortonharriers.org.uk



Hook Norton Harriers Running Club—Group Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/587750595093344/>



Hook Norton Harriers Page:
<https://www.instagram.com/hooknortonharrier>

2019 Sporting Achievements

Female Runner of the Year	Nell Darby
Male Runner of the Year	David Bannister
Club Handicap	Samantha Rees
The Hailey Award for Service to the Harriers	Tom Bradford
Alan Roche Trophy for most improved runner	Lisa Moulder
Triumph over Adversity Award in Memory of Bry	James McLaughlin
Female Cross Country Champion	Suzie Field
Male Cross Country Champion	John Critchfield

2019 Standards - Winners						
Name	5km	5Mile	10km	10Mile	Half Marathon	Marathon
Sam Rees	Diamond		Diamond	Diamond	Diamond	
Suzie Field		Gold	Diamond	Gold	Gold	Gold
Nell Darby		Diamond				
Taryna Goode	Silver		Silver		Gold	Silver
Paul Taylor			Silver	Silver	Gold	
David Bannister	Gold			Silver		
Sally Ormiston	Gold					
Mark Norris			Gold			
Ian Malcolm			Silver		Bronze	Bronze
Philip Ormiston	Silver					
Martyn Banham		Bronze			Bronze	Bronze
Lisa Preston					Bronze	
Vince Blake						Bronze