



Hercules Wimbledon Athletic Club

TEAM SPIRIT

October 2011

Editor: Pete Mulholland

www.herculeswimbledonac.org.uk



A delighted Hercules Wimbledon squad after qualifying for the National 6-stage Road Relay



SURREY COUNTY ROAD RELAY 2011 CHAMPIONS! Photo by Ray O'Donoghue

EDITORIAL

Quite a few members have said how much they miss the old 'Team Spirit' and it was on receipt of a couple of fine articles by Alastair Aitken and Stuart Littlewood that I thought it's about time another publication was due.

Of course most members are kept up to date with my weekly e-mailed Newsletter but most of the news shown in those becomes lost in cyber space (although the results themselves find a continuous home on the HW web site) whereas articles as submitted by the likes of Alastair and Stuart deserve a more permanent home.

Not too long a 'Team Spirit' this time around as I've kept it short and sweet so as to hasten publication but if members want more pages next time, get writing.

September 10: Surrey Road Relays

Report by Tom Pollak

Hercules Wimbledon AC made history when their senior men's team won the Surrey road relay title at Wimbledon Park. It was the first time the club had won the title since the relays were first staged at Wimbledon Park in 1998.

Even more impressive was that the success was achieved without the club's top runner Liam White who was relegated to role of course marshal because of a calf muscle injury he was having scanned later this week.

After an impressive track season during which he improved his best times for 800, 1500 and 3000m, 20-year-old Andrew Penney got the team off to the best of starts as he stormed round the three mile lap to head the field home in 14 minutes 44 seconds to hand over 13 seconds clear. Penney's time improved by a massive 24 seconds on his previous best for the course and proved to be the fourth fastest of the day.

Second leg runner Rory McMahon, who after travelling down from Edinburgh looked set to maintain his lead until he went off course at St Mary's Church. Instead of running straight on, he misinterpreted a sign and turned left into the churchyard losing about 15 seconds. He clocked 16:07 and slipped to third spot 48 seconds behind the leaders.

However, the team went back to the front on the third stage thanks to Kieran White who stormed round in 15:05, the seventh best time of the day, to open up an 18 second gap on the chasing teams. Fred Slemeck (15:45)

extended the lead to 29 seconds as he kept Hercules Wimbledon in front on the fourth leg. Phil Glynn (15:58) slipped to second place on the penultimate lap handing over to Alex Robinson seven seconds behind.

Robinson, 20, lost no time in getting his team back in front and stormed away to clock 14:41, the third fastest time of the day and the best by a Hercules Wimbledon runner in crossing the line in 1:32:20, a massive 38 seconds clear. Second leg runner Pat Wright (16:17) was the fastest member of the B team which finished seventh and second B team in 1:42:54. Other members of the team were Ian Pegler (17:20), Sean Crummey (16:52), Alex Urban (16:50), Callum Hoggart (17:07) and Justin Scheltens (18:28).

September 25: Southern Road Relays

Report by Tom Pollak

Surrey champions Hercules Wimbledon have qualified to compete in the English national six-stage road relay championships at Sutton Park, Birmingham, on October 15th after finishing a solid 19th in the South of England championship at Aldershot. First leg runner Alex Robinson ran the fastest leg of the sextet bringing the team in 14th on the opening stage in 18 minutes 52 seconds. Matt Sharp, drafted into the team following the unavailability of Surrey gold medallists Kieran White and Fred Slemeck, clocked 20:39 in slipping to 25th place. Andrew Penney clocked the second best time of the Hercules Wimbledon team of 19:08 in moving up to 19th spot with Phil Glynn (20:36) and Dom Kiralyfi (20:12) slipping to 20th place before Adam Przedzimirski (20:02) regained 19th spot.

Former English cross country champion Dave Clarke was the fastest member of the Hercules Wimbledon veterans over 40 team which finished 20th. He clocked 21:07 on the anchor leg. Other members of the quartet were Jeremy Purnell (24:24), Frank Wood (24:05) and Stu Littlewood (27:52).

Clarke and Littlewood were members of the last Hercules Wimbledon team to win the Surrey senior members road relay title at Brockwell Park in 1981, the last year of a tremendous winning streak by the club which also triumphed every year from 1978 to 1981. The club took the bronze medals in 1977. The winning team in 1981 was Dick Samuel, Pete

Clarke, Dave Clarke, Stu Littlewood, Steve Badgery and Bob Holt.

Anchor leg runner Maurice Sharp was the fastest member of the veteran men's over 60 team that finished fifth. He clocked 26:43, just one second faster than Dave Betts with Martin Miller (27:16) and Dennis Williams (28:29) making up the team.

"In the end, it's extra effort that separates a winner from second place. But winning takes a lot more than that, too.

It starts with complete command of the fundamentals. Then it takes desire, determination, discipline, and self-sacrifice. And finally, it takes a great deal of love, fairness and respect for your fellow man.

Put all these together, and even if you don't win, how can you lose?"

Jesse Owens – winner of four gold medals at the Berlin 1936 Olympic Games



Are you ready for the Cross Country?

Cross Country racing does more than any other aspect of athletics to create that vital Team Spirit among club members. After all it is the team result more than the individual efforts that matters most.

All you HW members should try and target all four League matches (male and female) and the Surrey, Southern and National Championships.

Whatever your favourite track distance is, you can bet that a spot of cross-country will improve your performances.

Pencil in those race dates.

DAVE CLARKE (A Great Runner from Hercules Wimbledon AC)

By Alastair Aitken



Dave Clarke during the 1980s Photo by Ray O'Donoghue

My first claim club has always been Highgate Harriers and besides track, I did the first nineteen London Marathons under their banner but it always seemed to me that cross country was the most appealing side of the sport to do. I found Tony Simmons, the international from Luton, had that same philosophy.

I have seen many great cross-country runners competing on Hampstead Heath, very near where I lived since the early 1950's, but one who did catch my eye was the 'Abominable Snowman' Tim Johnston, the Cambridge University runner who, in 1963, won the British Universities, **Southern** and Inter-Counties in the snow. It was the year that renowned fighter Roy Fowler beat Gaston Roelants, the Olympic steeplechase Champion of 1964. That was in the International cross-country in Spain. If I had to narrow it down to just one person as being the most durable competitor and for longevity it would be **Dave Clarke**.

Dave Clarke is now 53 and has lost none of his enthusiasm, despite his length of time in the sport. He ran 2:45.45 for a marathon and 77:24 for a half marathon only last year in 2010 but let us look back through the years and I will punctuate most of his record with some names I am sure many will have heard of!

In **1977** he made the International Junior team (**National result:-** 1 Nat Muir, 30:21 and 7 Dave Clarke 31:05; The next year 1978 1 Nicky Lees 29:28, 2 Mick Morton 29:55 and 3 Dave Clarke 29:58;

1979 he was 16th in the Senior race; 1980 12th, then in 1981 he was 2nd. About the latter, his coach John Sullivan had said to him that he should treat the race just as another Surrey League and go for it! That was a big booster for Clarke who had that breakthrough into the 'Big' time of cross country running. He finished ahead of Mick McLeod, Steve Jones and Dave Moorcroft.

The winner by a wide margin on the day at Parliament Hill Fields was Julian Goater, much to the surprise of his clubmate Dave Bedford.

It was 1982 when Dave Clarke was 24 that he had his first National win, going away from Mike McLeod on the hill in the latter stages at Roundhay Park, Leeds. (1 Clarke 42:19; 2 Hugh Jones 42:33; 3 Mick McLeod 42:41).

In the World cross country Championships Mohammed Kedir won from Alberto Salazar, Rod Dixon, Kunze, McLeod and Dave Clarke came ninth.

In 1983 at Gateshead in the World Cross Country Championships Clarke was easily the first UK runner in seventh place overall.

It was 1985 at Milton Keynes, in deep mud, Dave Lewis won from Dave Clarke in the National senior event.

In 1986 it was Tim Hutchings who won (*He was twice second in the World Cross Country Championships*). The race was over a snowy surface at Town Moor, Newcastle. He was followed home by Dave Clarke, Eamonn Martin, Mick McLeod and Tony Milovsorov.

Dave was later to say, "I had been on antibiotics for several days and felt like death."

In 1987 Clarke was back again winning the National at Luton in 47:04; from Steve Binns 47:18 and Roger Hackney 47:46.

In 1988 the selection criteria was changed and no longer the 'National' was the selection race but although that concerned Clarke greatly, he still went on and ran the 'National' at Newark that year and won well with Dave Lewis second.

Something worth noting is that **the last time GB won medals in the World Cross Country was in 1992** when they took team silver medals and who was in the scoring team? None other than Dave Clarke.

As the years rolled on most people would lose their zest for tough competition but not Dave Clarke who was fighting hard in the World Trials of 1995. (1 Spencer Duval 2 Dave Clarke 3 Keith Cullen).

I went up to Lloyd Park in 1997 to see the Surrey League race and Dave, the 6 foot tall, blond haired runner, wearing his famous yellow and red Hercules Wimbledon strip and, on hardly anything approaching half of his racing diet of 100 miles a week plus having retired from the International competition was there racing it out. He waved to me as he went by and up the famous hill in Lloyd Park and came home a relaxed third. Mike Simpson was the winner on the day.

Rather than going on extolling the virtues of Dave Clarke the cross country runner, let us see what some of his results on the road and country say and even in those fields he was quite explosive.

I remember him running some storming legs in the Imperial Colleges, Hyde Park, road relay for Borough Road College (West London Institute of HE). That race was considered then an 'Unofficial European Colleges road relay Championship'

In 1988 he took Borough Road from 5 to 2 on Lap 4 in 13:22 and it was the year Hugh Jones, running for Liverpool Uni set the 'All Time' Hyde Park record of 13:12.

On the Hercules Wimbledon Club website Dave Clarke's times head the lists in many cases which includes 22:37 for 5 miles; 47:25 for 10 miles; 62:11 for a half marathon and in Stockholm in 1989 he ran 2:13:34. (*Remember the Holts' and Mike Beevor were members of that club*).

Now for the track:- 5k 13:22.54; 3:39.27 for 1500 and 27:55.77 for 10k. The latter on May 25th, 1982 in Florence ahead of Henry Rono, Martii Vainio and Alberto Cova.

A mile inside 4 minutes is still considered an excellent time for the vast majority of athletes and Clarke ran 3:56. That was in a match versus the USA at Crystal Palace " I was second to Richie Harris. That was good fun as it was a distance runners' mile, where with 200 to go I looked round and with a look of quiet smugness at most of the people around me. It was a race for 'A' standard milers (Not for people like Coe) who suddenly found themselves with Barry Smith, Geoff Smith and myself, who were all there with 200 metres to go. We all looked at each other and said, "Right, we can sort out a few of these milers here!"

There were a lot of 5 or 10k boys who ran sub-4 minutes or around that time that night."

Dave Clarke was born 1st of January 1958 in London and in his days has been the Manager or the British cross country team. His two brothers Chris and Peter have been good runners. Peter has run a lot over many years for the same club. Dave Clarke was educated at Dulwich Prep and St Pauls public school so with that in mind it was interesting to see how someone with that sort of background was able to take on the best on the cross country scene

I wanted to find that out and certainly from the facts it was quite evident. He was at Borough Road before becoming a history and PE Teacher. Before that he worked on building sites, grass cutting jobs and was a hospital porter.

He explains " When I left school I worked in a terminal hospital for nine months. It was a great leveller for me, as the second day I was there I had to carry out a dead body from a bed onto the trolley.

'I had never seen a dead body before. I was dealing with characters in hospital, where patients go to finish their life. Some of the younger people went in because they had been in traffic accidents.

As a history student you had to have imagination, and I always enjoyed history and as it was a National Health Hospital attached to the Jewish Home for Rest, a lot of people had been through the Second World War.

If you talked to them and had read *Ann Frank's Diary* one thought, How bloody lucky you were to have got what you had in life." It taught me a lot about life

My Surrey Road Relay experiences from the late 70s/early 80s [and some other stuff].

By Stuart Littlewood

I'm going to start by briefly flitting through my early running days, so if you'd rather not wallow in nostalgia with me, you might prefer to skip the first few paragraphs and cut straight to the year 1977.

I ran at school in my early teens with abundant enthusiasm but limited success. On one of the very rare occasions that my mum ever came to watch me race, I won the school sports day 400m race, and she was absolutely thrilled. She passed away in May 2011 at the age of 84.

Apart from that race, and a handful of low-key inter-school cross-country wins, my school running career was unremarkable.

I left school at 15 to study at the Huddersfield School of Music, part of the College of Technology, where I took my O levels [now called GCSEs] and A level exams. I continued to run regularly, and occasionally raced as a guest in local schools cross-country fixtures.

I left home and moved to London [permanently, as it turned out] as an 18 year old in September 1970, after winning a scholarship to study oboe and piano at the Royal College of Music in South Kensington [just behind the Royal Albert Hall] and didn't run at all in the early weeks. The self-elected captain of the college football team [a trombonist from Leicester..... you know the type!] was always bragging about his fitness, so thinking I was still in reasonable shape I challenged him to a race. He accepted the challenge but never remembered to bring his running kit.....until the day he did remember..... and I didn't. I thought I could beat him anyway and went ahead in my ordinary college clothes and everyday shoes. We ran about 2 miles in Hyde Park and predictably, he absolutely destroyed me, and from that moment I resolved to never let it happen again. That was the spur which started me training again. I ran most days, sometimes with Mike Fuller who worked in the administration office at the college, and starting my 2nd academic year in the Autumn of 1971, as we didn't have an athletics team at the Royal College, I joined Imperial College

which was next door, and ran in their cross-country and athletics teams for my remaining time as a student.

I started running cross-country colleges league with Imperial, but my first race for HW was the Walton road relay in 1973, [just after I'd left college] where I ran the lap in 18.20 [in later years I reduced my time for that course by over 2 minutes] for the C or D team. I didn't officially join HW straight away. In fact it was reported in the club magazine "Team Spirit" that there were embarrassed faces at the club committee meeting when my application for membership was received. I'd been competing for the club for quite a while, and was a familiar face in the old scarlet and gold, so everybody assumed I was already a member.

My first run in the Surrey road relays was in 1977 at the age of 25. Maurice Sharp on first leg handed over to a teenage Dave Clarke, [19] then Ken Dack, Dave Beard and Steve Webb followed, setting me off on the anchor leg in 4th position, some distance behind Ranelagh. However, I was past the Ranelagh anchor-man within a mile, running the 2nd fastest time in our team [behind Clarke] to claim the bronze.

The following week I ran the anchor leg again, in the Blackheath cross-country relays where we finished 5th, and a certain Steve Ovetv ran the fastest time of the day. It was to be 32 years before my son Alex [age 19] emulated Ovetv's feat in recording the day's fastest time in that event.

My final road relay race of 1977 was the Walton road relay, a fortnight after the Blackheath race. Again running the anchor leg, I took over in 2nd place from Bob Holt, and was immediately relegated to 3rd, and then passed by John Roberts [then running for SLH] about halfway round so we ended up out of the medals, a disappointing 4th.

The Surreys were held at Brockwell Park for a few years from 1978, and we were the inaugural Brockwell winners, with a team consisting of Fred Green, Stu "The Ox" Graham, Dave Clarke, who took us into the lead with the fastest time of the day, Mike Fuller, myself and Bob Holt, who took revenge on my behalf for the Walton experience, by going away from John Roberts, extending our lead to win

comfortably. On the following Sunday I won the Lauriston Mile in the morning [4.38] and competed in the inaugural [I think!] HW club Pentathlon in the afternoon. Organized by Jim Braben, the 5 events were mostly unfamiliar to me, and would have been described by the afore-mentioned Mr.Ovett as 4 Mickey Mouse events followed by a 1500. A 200m race was followed by the high jump, shot, and long jump, and despite easily winning the 1500m in 4.18, I could only finish 5th overall of the 9 competitors, behind Steve O’Sullivan, Martin Ingram, Jon “Belly” Owen, and [would you believe??] Steve Webb!!

Talking of Steve Webb, we ran together in our first attempt at the Tanners Marathon on 1st July 1979, a 30-mile cross-country race across the Surrey countryside starting in Leatherhead, and finished a creditable 8th in 4h 40m behind such prolific ultra-distance men as Mark Pickard [1st in 4h 10m] and Dave Rosen [4th in 4h 13m] who had both been team-mates of Steve and myself with Imperial college cross-country club earlier in the decade.



Stuart in action at one of the ‘famous’ Surrey Road Relays in Brockwell Park – circa 1980

The Surreys were at Brockwell Park again in 1979 and we were the comfortable winners once more. Steve Badgery, Stuart Graham, Dave Clarke [fastest of the day] Mike Kortzenray, [who took us into the lead for the first time] myself and Bob Holt combined to win by a big margin.

The boys had to do it without me in 1980 as I was injured. I have a squashed vertebra in my back as a result of a motorbike accident in

1973, and it used to flare up occasionally, giving me referred pain all over the place, but mainly in the hips and legs.

I finished the Colchester to Mersea 8 in August 1979 in severe pain from the injury, and ended up in hospital, where I was advised to take complete bed rest for a week or two. Predictably, after taking ONE whole day off, I was out trying to train again 2 days later, just walking for the first few days, then walking/jogging, and finally running normally again after about 3 weeks but the Surrey relays had come and gone [with another win for HW] and it was October before I was ready to race again.

Our final Surrey road relay win of the 20th century came in 1981, once again at Brockwell Park. The team comprised Dick Samuel, Pete Clarke, Dave Clarke, myself, Steve Badgery and Bob Holt, and I recorded that I was disappointed with my time [although I wasn’t the slowest in the team] as Dave Beard, Steve Webb and James Mayhew all ran faster for the B team.

My spirits lifted somewhat the following day when I won the inaugural Wimbledon Windmilers 10k at Wimbledon Park [later to become the HW 10k]. With the race being organized by a jogging club, and the jogging boom gathering momentum following the first London Marathon earlier that year, I was dubbed “King of the joggers”. In fact in a field of over 300, HW swept the board with the first 6 finishers - Dennis Williams, Steve Webb, Steve Badgery Pete Mahoney and Maurice Sharp following me home to scoop the team award. [a crate of beer if I remember rightly]. Now that’s what I call a team prize!

In 1982, with only one of the Clarkes, [Chris] available, we slumped to 10th place. Chris finished the first leg in 12th place and I ran our team’s fastest time [12.58] but only advanced 2 places to 10th on 2nd leg, and despite the best efforts of Jon Hancock, Steve Webb, Dave Beard and Dennis Williams, that’s where we stayed.

The following day, in the race which had now become the HW 10k, I opened a good lead in the early stages but was eventually run down by Mal Connelly of Walton, and then faded even further to finish a weary 3rd, a full minute down on the winner. The following week I broke 12 minutes for the first time in

the Blackheath cross-country relay on first leg, and my 11.56 held up as the fastest HW time of the day.

In the 1983 Surreys I was once again fastest HW runner, but with a team comprising Hancock, myself, Green, Hislop, Webb and Williams, we slumped even further to finish 13th. The following day I was once more in action in the HW 10k. My diary only mentions running a pb for that course, of 33.18 and winning a prize for the first HW finisher.

The Surreys moved to Battersea Park in 1984, and after Steve Webb, Gary Edwards, Pete Clarke, and Paul Ross-Davies [nee Davies] had completed the first 4 legs, Dave Clarke ran the fastest time of the day on leg 5, sprinting past Pete Barratt just before the change-over, to send me away with a lead of around one second on the anchor leg. I was immediately passed by Barratt's Woking team-mate Stu Crossman, and eventually relegated to 3rd by Francis Upcott [SLH] but we were back on the podium for the first time in 3 years.

The following day I finished 3rd again in the HW 10k behind Paul Ross-Davies and Stu "The Ox" Graham. 3 weeks later I ran what I believe remains my pb for the Walton road relay, finishing 6th on 1st leg in 16.09. Steve Webb 16.32, Bob Holt 17.35, Vince Hancock 17.40, Keith Wallis 17.45, and Dennis Williams 17.35 completed the team, but we didn't make the podium.

I only have sketchy details of 1985 and beyond. In '85 I ran in the B team after having a disastrous run in the HW 10k a week earlier, and attempting to save something for my local Biggin Hill 10k the following day. The A team got bronze medals once again.

I've got nothing in the diary relating to the Surreys in 1986, but it might have been the first of "The Walton years" when the Walton road relay incorporated the Surrey relay championships. I did run in it but didn't record the results. Same again in 1987 with no mention of the Surreys but ran 16.18 at Walton in late September, running in the C team [on first leg as I wanted an early one], as the A team was too hot for me. I did beat Martin O'Halloran who was on 1st leg for the B team, though.

In 1988 we chose to take our summer holiday in Cornwall in early September and on the 11th [when the Surreys might have taken place] I was busy winning the Roseland half-marathon, from Falmouth to Tregony, and was presented with my grand winner's trophy by the local MP Matthew Taylor.

The Surreys went to Wimbledon Park [briefly] in 1989 and I ran the first leg, finishing in 13th place [13.20] followed by Tony Austin [13.47] and Dennis Williams [13.39]. That's all I have for '89, and I had a dodgy achilles tendon around the time of the 1990 Surreys so I didn't run, and have no record of what happened, but we turned out about 15 runners in the Walton relay a week later, and with only 3 clubs competing [ourselves plus Walton and Elmbridge] we swept the board with the first 3 teams, Dave Clarke [14.42] and Simon Rayner [14.52] running the fastest times.

1991 was my final year as a senior [non-vet] and the Surreys were held at Dunsfold airfield. I ran first leg for the A team, with Simon Rayner on first leg for the B team [as he wasn't Surrey qualified] running the fastest time of the day [13.55]. I finished in 15.31 handing over to Martin O'Halloran [16.08]. Then Dennis Williams [16.15] John Roberts [16.19] and Steve Sinnott [15.19] made it up to leg 5 but what happened then I have no idea. Perhaps we only had 5 runners. The others were all in the vets race.

I turned 40 in 1992 and ran in the Surrey vets road relay which was at Crystal Palace, but that's another story.

As for that trombone-playing footballer from Leicester, we did races together from time to time, but he never came close to beating me again.

I thought I'd found true love at the Highland Games – but it turned out to be just a fling

I wanted to look for my stopwatch but couldn't find the time

I came third in the National Sun Tanning Championships.....and got a bronze

The coach was about to give his athlete some drills.

"How flexible are you," he asked.

"I cannot make Wednesdays," was the reply.



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Both of the above newly established businesses give a discount to Hercules Wimbledon members



Lauriston Cottage: scene of the ever popular club training runs on a Wednesday evening commencing at 7pm. All standards, male and female, are welcome so come along and give it a go. While nothing can be guaranteed in the way of results it would be a surprise if regular attendance didn't show a marked improvement in your running ability.