

Race results and members reports August 2007, including:

Alan Postlethwaite hits the big 60 by Robbie Lambie (p.6 this section, p8 overall)

Shakespeare Marathon and half by Sue Ackroyd (p.7 this section p. 9 overall)

Flora London Marathon by Maureen Kelly (p. 10 / 12)

Blackpool Marathon by Bethany Clague (p. 11 / 13)

9 June Glen Mona fell race

36 competitors took part in this 7th round of the fell league in very hot conditions.

5. Dave Young	1:12.51	29. Lorraine Stigant	1:48.31
13. Andy Gosnell	1:22.59	30. Christine Barwell	1:49.38
14. Ian Callister	1:25.01	34. Dave Quine	2:04.01
20. Roger Moughtin	1:27.50	35. Geoff Hall	2:05.12
24. Bridget Kaneen	1:35.21	36. Gareth Evans	2:05.13
25. Dave Salter	1:35.22		

12 June Bushy's Great South Run

3. Kevin Vondy	36.24
6. Alan Postlethwaite	38.43
11. Stephen Brown	41.08
13. Mike Gellion	41.15
18. James Bishop	42.35
25. Lewis Veale	44.01
27. Gail Griffiths	44.17
33. Alan Pilling	47.42
34. Ray Shooter	46.56
42. Ian Callister	50.46
44. Tony Lever	51.24

Entries were down for round 2 of this event, but it still attracted 60 runners. Kevin Vondy was the first member home, with Gail Griffiths the 1st veteran lady and 3rd lady overall.

13 June Steve Jacobs Mile

39 runners took part in this handicapped race and there were some excellent performances with 4 of them under 5 minutes. Actual times are given.

3. Robbie Callister	5.07	23. Lynne Quine	7.38
8. Garry Ross	6.21	27. Christine Barwell	7.32
9. Geoff Hall	7.21	28. Alan Kelly	7.05
11. David Quine	7.26	29. Gail Griffiths	6.11
15. Michael George	5.41	31. Sue Ackroyd	8.41
19. Moira Hall	7.34	32. Ingrid Sugden	9.02
20. Miriam Kelly	8.35	34. Maureen Kelly	9.07
22. Andy Fox	5.01	39. Arnie Jacobs	10.31

15 June HSBC Ramsey Commissioners Park run round 4

New recruit James Bishop took second place in the 3 lap race and our secretary Lesley Christian was third. The 1 lap race winner was Arnie Jacobs, making his way back to fitness.

3 laps	Actual times	25. Kevin Vondy	22.38
2. James Bishop	25.15	26. Mike Gellion	25.40
3. Lesley Christian	33.58	28. Roger Moughtin	27.19
5. Moira Hall	32.07	33. Dave Quine	34.58
6. Michael George	24.43	35. Alan Pilling	30.59
9. Stephen Brown	24.48	36. Ian Callister	31.28
11. Martin Bell	27.53		
13. Alan Postlethwaite	23.55	1 lap	
17. Geoff Hall	31.28	1. Arnie Jacobs	18.53
19. Graham Stigant	24.57	5. Sue Ackroyd	16.26
23. Dave Corrin	27.45	8. Dave Nixon	13.42
24. Robbie Callister	22.35	15. Miriam Kelly	16.29

23/24 June Clerical Medical Parish Walk

As usual the Parish provided a variety of shocks and surprises. The weather was changeable, baking hot up the Sloc as is often the case, but deteriorating into persistent rain from roughly Kirk Michael onwards (depending on how fast you were, of course!) With Sean Hands unfortunately dropping out early on Robbie Callister carried on to win again in his usual style. Everyone was delighted to see Ray Pitts improving his time to take second place, with Michael George taking an hour and a quarter of his 2006 time to take 3rd and Eammon Harkin in 4th. Sue Biggart was 1st lady, with Jane Mooney 2nd, and

Ali Brand 3rd. Jock Waddington also knocked a huge chunk of his previous time to take 6th place, and Mark Hemsall was the most improved finisher. The new timing system proved a great success and the MT texting service was also helpful, although whether it did anything to reduce the car chaos is doubtful. I think it will take more “no stopping zones” and one way systems to do that.

Finishers

1. Robbie Callister	15:36.47
2. Ray Pitts	15:51.42
3. Michael George	15:57.00
4. Eammon Harkin	16:40.24
6. Jock Waddington	16:48.18
7. Sue Biggart	16:49.46
10. Jane Mooney	17:26.36
12. Alison Brand	17:31.18
16. Andrew Tittley	17:49.56
18. Mark Hemsall	17:58.06
21. Stan Sille	18:13.08
22. Rowey Crellin	18:41.48
23. Alan Kinvig	18:49.04
33. Mike Gellion	19:23.37
41. Chris Cale	19:42.40
63. Maureen Cox	20:56.46
63. Simon Cox	20:56.46
72. Moira Hall	21:13.36
90. Lesley Christian	21:38.04

Rushen

1. Sean Hands	3:20.34
2. Dave Griffiths	3:32.51
5. Brian Cowley	4:06.07
149. Sue Furner	4:59.43
167. Lynda Kinrade	5:03.12
303. Bethany Clague	5:41.01

Lezayre

2. Colin Moore	13:47.19
8. Geoff Hall	15:27.29

Bride

29. Alan Pilling	14:32.16
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Jurby

1. Doug Allan	9:29.37
3. Gill Churcher	9:50.08

Ballaugh

1. Vinny Lynch	8:31.20
18. Michael Killey	10:36.34

German

8. Les Brown	6:50.53
24. Robert Webb	7:15.10
35. Ian Callister	7:21.56
40. Dave Tasker	7:25.03
81. Clive Berriff	7:45.16
138. Kevin Tasker	8:05.23
145. Enid Watson	8:07.29
150. Miriam Kelly	8:08.39
195. Steve Wilmott	8:21.59

28 June Laa Columb Killey 5.5 mile road race

2. Robbie Callister	33.28	4. Lewis Veale	39.08
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29 June Scott Physiotherapy Dave Phillips run round 3

A surprisingly humid night, the course was slightly altered due to road works. The race was handicapped, but actual times are given.

Two laps

4. Liz Corran	30.15
6. Martin Bell	28.36
9. Roger Moughtin	26.47
11. Wendy Ross	28.19
14. Les Brown	29.00
19. Garry Ross	29.10
22. Geoff Hall	34.33

One lap

4. Miriam Kelly	17.55
6. Peter Cooper	13.45
12. Kevin Vondy	11.15
16. Sarah Goldsmith	20.37
17. Arnie Jacobs	20.49

8 July Ellan Vannin fell racesponsored by the Kirk Michael Village Pharmacy

Both men's and women's course records were broken during this tough race, by Simon Skillikorn in 2:05.57 and Karen Robertson from Northumberland in 2:29.25 respectively.

8. Dave Young	2:29.14	25= Lewis Veale	3:44.00
15. Roger Moughtin	2:48.42	28. Les Brown	3:52.12
16. Andy Gosnell	2:49.12	29. Gareth Evans	4:19.26
18. Ian Callister	2:57.40	30=Christine Barwell	4:28.13
23=Bridget Kaneen	3:25.21	30=Dave Quine	4:28.13

18 July Veterans' mile

1. Andy Fox	4.59.8	10. Dave Nixon	6.37.1
2. Kevin Vondy	5.17.0	12. Alan Kelly	6.49.0
5. Mike Gellion	5.50.9	13. Steve Wilmott	7.07.5
7. Les Brown	6.14.5	14. Geoff Hall	7.08.8
8. Bridget Kaneen	6.15.6	15. Moira Hall	7.19.2
9. Martin Bell	6.22.0		

13 July HSBC Ramsey Park runs final round

3 laps		Actual times	
4. Alan Postlethwaite	23.58	18. Mike Gellion	26.08
5. Dave Corrin	27.39	20. Kevin Vondy	23.14
10. Les Brown	28.13	21. Steve Willmott	32.37
11. Martiin Bell	28.38	22. Moira Hall	33.45
13. Wendy Ross	29.08	25. Geoff Hall	33.08
15. Garry Ross	29.13	27. Rob Gillanders	29.00
16. Dave Quine	34.37	28. Alan Pilling	31.54

1 lap

3. Arnie Jacobs	19.02	7. Dave Nixon	13.37
4. Miriam Kelly	15.43	20. Sue Ackroyd	17.04

Final positions: 3 lap

2. Alan Postlethwaite	303 points	7. James Bishop	269 + 1
3. Martin Bell	298	10. Steve Willmott	236
5. Kevin Vondy	287		

Final positions 1 lap**17 July Bushy's Great South runs round 3 includes IOM 10km championships**

Gail Griffiths won the women's title decisively beating her rivals of the season, and Kevin Vondy was the second veteran man.

5. Kevin Vondy	36.50	32. Gail Griffiths	42.58
9. Alan Postlethwaite	38.07	40. Les Brown	45.35
18. Rob Sellors	40.01	41. Stan Sille	45.51
20. Stephen Brown	40.29	44. David Salter	46.16
24. Mike Gellion	41.52	45. Ray Shooter	46.49
26. Lewis Veale	42.30	52. Alan Pilling	49.42

19 July St Johns 10km walk

Peter Kaneen won the Herbie Cannell trophy for the fastest walker in the race. This race was run with sealed handicaps, actual times are given. It is good to see Dave Griffiths walking his way back to good times.

10 km

4. Ian Callister	60.44	11. Alan Kinvig	70.06
6. Brian Cowley	75.72	15. Mark Hemsall	57.45
7. Dave Griffiths	61.15		
8. Peter Kaneen	48.44	5 km	3. Brian Brough 39.30

20 July Scott Physiotherapy Dave Philips Peel races round 4

New member James Bishop raced to victory in the 2 lap, while Stan Hall won the 1 lap.

2 lap		Actual times	
1. James Bishop	26.01	22. Dave Corrin	29.20
3. Lewis Veale	26.33	23. Sue Ackroyd	37.06
4. Les Brown	27.49	24. Ian Callister	32.02
11. Alan Kelly	31.29		
12. Martin Bell	28.13	1 lap	
16. Liz Corran	30.28	1. Stan Hall	15.05
19. Mike Gellion	26.41	7. Robbie Lambie	13.08
20. Alan Pilling	31.28	12. Arnie Jacobs	21.16

28/29 July Dohle IOM track and field championships**Senior men**

5000m	3. Andy Fox	16.54		
3 km walk	1. Michael George	14.56	2. Alan Callow	16.40

Senior Women

5000m	1. Gail Griffiths	20.02	2. Wendy Ross	21.29
3 km walk	1. Marie Jackson	16.13		

7 August Scott Physiotherapy Dave Philips Peel races round 5

2 lap		Actual times		1 lap	
1. Geoff Hall	31.23	1. Stan Hall	14.36		
2. Ian Callister	30.23	3. Miriam Kelly	17.33		
4. Dave Quine	35.00	6. Peter Cooper	13.28		

5. Dave Corrin	28.26	9. Kevin Vondy	11.11
6. Alan Pilling	30.28		
10. Mike Gellion	26.13		
16. Alan Kelly	31.19		
18. James Bishop	26.10		
19. Roger Moughtin	26.55		

Both these handicapped races were won by IOMVAC members, Geoff Hall the 2 lap and Stan Hall the 1 lap.

12 August Salclear IOM marathon and half marathon

There were 92 finishers in the marathon this year and the Manx Championships were won by Mark Clague with Rob Sellors second, and Karen Lawrie for the women. As usual we had runners from several European countries, the leading lady was Swiss. There were also several multi-marathon runners in the field, one was running his 438th marathon, and another running his 49th in his 49th year. There were 212 finishers in the half marathon, and our own Gail Griffiths retained the ladies title. Alan Postlethwaite broke the M60 record by 11.19. He still holds the M45-49 and M55-59 records. There were several runners over 70, which is encouraging to see.

Marathon

9. Rob Sellors	3:14.51	65. Michael George	4:26.02
19. Dave Young	3:30.01	75. Dave Tasker	4:38.03
35. Dave Salter	4:00.31	78. Gareth Evans	4:40.32
62. Bethany Clague	4:24.39	79. Steve Willmott	4:42.58

Half marathon

12. Alan Postlethwaite	1:26.49	143. Stephen Brown	2:16.02
18. Chris Cale	1:28.48	152. Ian Chrystal	2:22.05
23. Neil Wilson	1:31.21	157. Alan Kinvig	2:26.26
28. James Bishop	1:33.40	160. Sue Ackroyd	2:28.31
33. Gail Griffiths	1:35.49	165. Miriam Kelly	2:30.31
54. Les Brown	1:40.28	168. Maureen Cox	2:31.52
59. Wendy Ross	1:42.34	169. Ingrid Sugden	2:34.23
66. John Grady	1:44.07	170. Maureen Kelly	2:34.23
79. Alan Pilling	1:47.43	171. Colin Moore	2:36.11
83. Gary Ross	1:48.44	175. Sue Redmayne	2:38.32
89. Andrew Lodge	1:50.51	177. Helen Lamming	2:42.17
92. Rob Gillanders	1:51.05	180. Paul Trees	2:46.05
99. Eddie Teare	1:54.30	186. Henry de Silva	2:48.56
107. Alan Kelly	1:56.24	188. Linda Rooney	2:50.24
109. Lynne Quine	1:57.24	192. Ian Callister	2:55.39
137. Dave Quine	2:10.02	194. Brian Brough	3:00.05
137. Dave Griffiths	2:11.26	209. Sue Furner	3:18.50
141. Doug Allan	2:15.09		

ANOTHER AUGUST AND ANOTHER GREAT MARATHON DAY! *the following from Christine Bathgate the organiser*

This year we had over 300 finishers for the first time - 213 had run the Half Marathon and 92 runners did the circuit twice to complete the Marathon, and from what I saw they all looked very happy. So another successful day and we all can relax for a few months before thinking about August 10th 2008.

The weather was perfect - cool and drizzly for the first couple of hours then warm and sunny for the afternoon as the runners and their families were relaxing and enjoying the wonderful buffet lunch provided by Jane Gibson.

But it takes a lot more than good weather for an event such as this to be successful - it takes a lot of hard work from a large number of reliable people, and so a huge number of "thank yous" are due.

Firstly to *Dave Salter*, one of our club members, who generously sponsored the event this year. The samples of RunLube that were in all the goody bags are one of the many sports related products made by his Castletown based company Salchem Ltd. Check out his website www.salclear.com for more information. And the good news is that Dave has agreed to sponsor the 2008 event - so that's my main concern for 2008 out of the way.

Then there is the large number of people who give their time on the day to act as race marshalls or to hand out drinks and sponges to hordes of thirsty runners. I really do not know who most of you are because I never have time to get out on the course, but a huge thank you to all of you, and I really am very sorry that I cannot say that in person.

The time-keepers - *Brenda Charlton, Judy Morrey and Colin Halsall* all did their usual excellent job.

And so to the group of 'hard core' club members who give up large chunks of their time to organise this event.....

Margy Killey and Juan Bimson who check the course and put out (and, equally important, take down) all the signage that has to go around the circuit. If you ran the course you will know that there are a lot of signs out there, and the 'Drinks Ahead' notices were a new addition this year.

Enid Watson has a very hard time persuading people to come out and marshall for us. And thanks also to her husband, *Malcolm*, for being the lead vehicle (well motorbike) for us.

This (and the drinks signs) is one of several new requirements that were part of the conditions for getting a Race Permit from UK Athletics this year. You would not believe the paperwork that has to be done before and after the event. *Robbie Lambie* helps Enid and also organises the massage service.

This year we had five physios working very hard in the "massage parlour".

Glen Jensen, Ben Scott, Robbie Lambie, Jenny Gordon and Dawn Watson. They all provided their services for free so I suggest if any of you have any injuries or niggles you should take your aching body to one of these generous people.

Maureen Cox does all the ordering of race numbers, medals, trophies and signs. Maureen had an even harder time than usual this year - the race numbers were not printed with the mandatory contact and health information form on the reverse side; our medal supplier told her at end of July that he could not provide the medals which were ordered early June, and some of the new signs disappeared en route. So there were a lot of last minute panics in Maureen's "department". But all was well on the day.

Adrian Cowin - pre-race he was providing weather forecasts which proved to be so accurate, and post-race Adrian has been putting photos and results on the website for us. If you haven't checked yet it's all on the club website www.iomvac.co.uk

Jock Waddington - for being good all-round reliable helping hand whether is it climbing up a ladder to hang banners and race clocks from the gantry; building the marquee for the massage parlour or whatever else I ask him to do.

Colin Watterson - our club Chairman starts the event by sending the runners on their way, then acts as marshall at the halfway stage, and ends the day by presenting all the prizes - frequently with a few well chosen words too!

Mike Gellion sets out (and clears away) all the drinks stations and somehow manages to persuade sufficient people to spend several hours getting their hands wet whilst handing out cups of water and soggy sponges to the runners.

Alan Postlethwaite, who along with Mike Gellion and *my husband Michael*, walked around my dining table 350 times to make up the goody bags. And they all were still good natured at the end of it all! I would also like to thank Michael for his work on the computer.

During the day it is me who receives all the thankyou's and then emails and phone calls later, but as I have said before I could not, and really would not, organise this event without this willing group of reliable people. Thank you all so very much.

Christine Bathgate

Here are some Emails received from the competitors –

From Simon Lowe..... Just a quick line to say thanks very much to you and everyone else involved in putting on today's races. I should have thanked you personally but had to leave early. The time and effort put in by everyone is really appreciated and I hope the numbers taking part continue to rise.

From Andy Beirne I would just like to say how well organised the whole event was. All the marshalls and staff were brilliant and the water stops were perfectly placed. This was my first marathon and it was a thoroughly enjoyable experience. I am already looking forward to next years event. Many thanks for all your help, you have all done such a brilliant job.

From Luc Glasbeek Hello - Just a note of thanks for organising a perfect race yesterday, it was great - well done!!

From Caroline Rose We wanted to write to say what a wonderful event it was yesterday - so friendly, well organized and a delicious buffet! We all benefited from, and really appreciated, the massages available too. So, thanks to you and all your team for your hard work. An excellent event! Many thanks once again, Caroline, Sadie and Chris in Lancaster

From Richard Shipway Just like to thank all at IOMVAC for Sundays marathon. Despite today's aches and pains I had a great day and completed my first marathon in 18 years, and only 5mins slower!!

From Peter Ferris (after his 18th visit to our Marathon) I have done the IOM marathon for the past 18 years and still keep coming back for more. It's a great marathon, challenging course, great island, friendly people and for me it's just paradise. Pre and post race festivities were superb.

Robbie Lambie on Alan Postlethwaite

On Friday 29th June, I hope there were many of you who remembered to raise a glass or two to Alan Postlethwaite as he hit an important milestone in age. No he wasn't 50, which is probably the age he could pass for, but instead the age which will qualify him for a free ride on the bus, plus a 10% discount on goods at B&Q. With his slim figure, youthful looks and full head of hair (blonde at that), it is hard to believe he really is this age. It is even more surprising considering the way he is running these days. He is very much alive and kicking!

I have always respected and admired Alan for his fantastic running ability. He has become the godfather of Manx athletics for middle distance running, much in the same way that Allan Callow has in race walking over the years. He is an inspiration to younger runners in every sense. Since he became 40 the Northern Athletic man has set so many Veterans record on the track and road it is impossible to itemise them in one article. He is the bench mark for fellow veteran athletes. Match his age performances or even come close to them, then you are running well.

I think his better marks during his veteran years have probably involved his period in the M45 and M50 category. Track times such as 16.40 for 5km, 34.48 for 10km and 9.54 for 3km are pretty impressive M45 times.

I well remember racing against him just prior to his 48th birthday over that 3,000 metres at the NSC in a veterans race. In typical Alan fashion he casually told me before the start of the race that he would be running for second place and that he wasn't fit. I soon discovered that this was a lie - and on a par with 'cheque's in the post'. He was fit alright! He took the pace on from the gun and I was dying a thousand deaths to just keep within 10 metres of him. From somewhere I managed to summon up something on the last lap to outsprint him in the finishing straight to record 9.52 to his 9.54. I was pleased with my run, but of course I was in the younger category i.e. M40. Alan incidentally still holds the 3km record in the M50 of 10.05. Also he holds the 5 and 10km marks. Some of these records still stand today.

However, it will be on the road where he will be best known. Trawling through his Peel to Douglas runs on the database makes for some interesting reading. Alan has completed the event 16 times. He's recorded on several occasions, times round the 65/66 minutes and he nearly always finished in the top 6 (during the 90's), despite being in his mid 40's. I would say had Alan been 20 years younger at the time, then he would have won this race several times. His best time over this distance is 64.14 in 1993 (nearly 46) which is worth about 56.30 for 10 miles. How good is that? The same year he ran 57.11 in the Northern 10. In fact he recorded 62.26 for this year's event (only 10 miles) which was a fantastic effort when you consider he'd been out of action for months with a back injury. He was still showing guys half his age a clean pair of heels in that race. He has also set impressive records for the half marathon. In the M45 age group his best time is 76.58 and for the M50 group he posted a time of 80.25. I would venture to suggest that during this period i.e. the mid 90's, Alan Postlethwaite was one of the best Manx runners around, pound for pound.

So what remains his best achievement on his running cv and how good was he when he was a lad? I think a trip down memory lane is required and all the way back to 1965 at that. His pride and joy could perhaps be the fact that he was the Inter School Island Cross Country Champion as a school boy when he was in sixth form (year 13, aged 17) when he represented Ramsey Grammar. He was also the Inter School mile champion (before metric) and could break 4.40 for the mile on grass. This was in the days when school boys rarely trained at all. Pretty impressive but even more so when you consider in those days he could beat the one and only Dave Cowell. But for those who don't know or have never met Dave then let me enlighten you.

Dave still holds the Senior Manx records for 3, 5 and 10,000 metres and the marathon. These records have stayed intact since 1974 and perhaps earlier, so they have obviously stood the test of time and are good records. However, Possie had the measure of Dave as a teenager which illustrates how good he was as a junior. Naturally this begs the question of how good he could have been, had he chosen to go down that path of hard training and sacrifices etc. Certainly the potential was all there.

After leaving Ramsey Grammar he went to University but never really kept his running going to any great extent and decided to stick with football.

When he returned to the Island in about 1969/1970 he began teaching Biology at St Ninians High School. Naturally in those days he went under the name of Sir! He played in the first team for Ayre

United during the 70's and early early 80's before he decided to get back into the local running scene again. It wasn't long before he started to make an impact but by then of course he was in his late 30's and had missed out on his best years.

Alan like a lot of athletes has suffered with injuries over the years but he has many other interests which are quite diverse in nature and would occupy most people. Such interests and hobbies include shooting (beating in preparation for shooting), model yachting, making model yachts, fishing and bird watching (the feathered variety). Along with his wife Linda, he also enjoys hill walking and rambling over the countryside. He was also the Treasurer of the IOM Vets for many years and was the mastermind behind the Vets Newsletter in the 90's. The Newsletter of course has subsequently been taken over by Sarah Goldsmith - and a good job she's doing as well. After all it was a hard act to follow. So you see there's much more to Alan than meets the eye and he clearly has other talents other than running.

An example of his laid back approach to athletics was when I recall doing a Park run up Ramsey once. I noticed Possie alongside the lakeside with a model yacht - I think he was in a competition. Clearly that evening he was not interested in running (unless he was injured, but I don't think so) and was totally focused on the job in hand. I don't think there are many runners around who could resist not having an occasional glance up at the runners going by but he obviously was able to detach himself from the running and concentrate on the job in hand.

As competitive as Alan obviously is, he still seems to give the impression that running is just a way of keeping fit and having fun, rather than anything too serious. He's achieved some splendid performances over the last 20 years and mainly on a modest diet of 3 runs a week and very rarely more than 30 miles a week and very little speed work at that. When you compare this to some of his counterparts in the UK, then you realise that his training is quite moderate. Nevertheless his times compare well globally with runners in his age group and it would have been interesting to have seen him compete in one or two National Vets competitions, for instance in the 10km and half marathon distances. However, he's achieved a lot doing it his way and has been fairly lucky staying away from injury and that is probably why he's still in the sport today. Less is more sometimes. But for someone who insists he has no track speed or can't sprint for toffee, he's produced some super times in his veteran years, even on the track.

Hope you enjoyed your special birthday Alan - 'Cheers to a very fine athlete and a very talented individual'.

PS. Please don't make those M60 standards too high for the rest of us, will you?

Robbie Lambie

“Mine’s a Half” by Sue Ackroyd (Shakespeare Marathon and half)

And so the January 2007 game plan went something like this:-
No place in the “London” this year, so choose another UK based Marathon as near to the date as possible. This would allow me to train with all my mates who had places. Do the miles, times and sessions just as they did but it would still give my training a focus. All through those long dark winter months everything went really well and surprisingly to plan. I got a PB in the Vets 20mile run and had another good run in the Spring handicap. My goodness all this was too good to be true....! The important thing was, I was really enjoying it. Even the early Sunday mornings nattering away the miles with Ingrid, Mo, Catriona and all the others too many to mention who were brave enough to leave their warm beds early on dark mornings to eat porridge and then jog the calories off. Ever present was Arnie carrying our juice, sports drinks and jelly babies as he cycled miles backwards and forwards between each of us at different parts of an agreed circuit. We were so grateful for his presence and encouragement on those early mornings. We must have looked really professional because on one occasion a dog walker commented that our “coach” was on his way back down the road and coming towards us so we’d better “look lively”. Towards the end of our winter training we were all feeling really good and expected great and good things to come from it. I seriously thought I was going to run a “blinder”.

My chosen race was the Shakespeare Marathon in Stratford-on-Avon scheduled for Sunday April 29th just one week after the London. It was a double loop course and according to the plan had a fair few miles off-road on old railway tracks. It started on the little road right outside the famous theatre and finished on the other side of the River Avon in the parkland opposite the theatre. Very pretty. It was being run on the anniversary of Shakespeare’s death and the whole weekend was a Festival of Shakespeare. Now it should be noted here that my experience of Shakespeare was limited to playing

the character Sir Toby Belch in A Midsummer Nights Dream in 1972 (School play) and studying Macbeth for my English Literature O level in 1973. For the former I was padded out and made up to look like a 20 stone man wearing red tights, then forced to enter by the rear of the auditorium with a packed house each night and push my way through the thronged masses shouting "What now Malvoleo" and commenting on his cross-gartering. The O-level bit involved the usual exam fear. Both were not endearing experiences for me so I approached this event with a little trepidation.

The week before on Sunday April 22nd I watched the TV and multi-screen coverage of the London and my heart sank for all the runners out there. The TV crew showed a thermometer registering 25 degrees in the shade at Tower Bridge at noon. They were going to rapidly bake to a frazzle out there. As we are all aware even the "Big Boys" were suffering and I've never seen so many of the speedsters taking on water at the rate they did in all the years I've watched it. As the texts started coming in from the usual suspects giving details of finishers and times it was clear that despite such adverse conditions every one of them had finished (and without medical intervention). To say I was proud of each and every one of my running mates and all the local Manxies is an understatement. They were all stars. Then Mo Kelly brought me back to reality with her text that finished with "Your turn next !"

The last words I heard from anyone connected to running on the Island were from Colin (Halsall) on the Monday night (23rd). "Remember to start off slow. Take it easy. That way you'll get round no matter what the weather and will enjoy it. Drink lots before, during and after. You've done loads of good quality training this winter and even though you've missed a couple of weeks with holidays you are ready". I nodded full agreement. I would do as he advised and hung on to his every word of advice given over the last months.

Saturday 28th April came and Stratford was bathed in blue skies and glorious sunshine. Roads were closed for the big Shakespeare Pageant with senior townfolk, the Mayor, Shakespearian actors in full costume and little kids from local infant and prep schools all carrying flowers. There were jugglers, magicians, street performers doing strange things with flames and fire and "cloggers" or to the uninitiated morris dancers. It was a real Carnival atmosphere in memory of the Bard and the glorious weather helped in some way to its success. My Shakespearian experiences had turned a corner and maybe, just maybe, the Bard would be kind to me and arrange for good marathon weather tomorrow. No he didn't.

The weather was glorious come Sunday the 29th. As I waited on the very picturesque start line in temperatures of about 18 degrees at 9am the texts rolled in "Have a good one" "What's the weather like? OK?" "Remember to start slow" "Enjoy – all the training is now in your legs and they are ready" "Drink lots on the way round".

9:30 and the Gun went off.

3,300 marathoners and half marathoners were set in motion. As I crossed the line I pressed the start button on my gismo (Garmin) and off I went waving merrily to Ken as I moved ahead. I felt absolutely wonderful. The body felt strong. The legs felt powerful and good. The course was flat around the little town and the people were fantastic and several deep on the pavements. Even the Bard himself was there to see us go. I hoped it was someone in fancy dress and not a spirit, so commented to a fellow runner how lovely it was to see the man himself, hoping for confirmation that I wasn't hallucinating. Yes he saw him too. Relief. All was well with the world. Earlier I had set my gismo to tell me how I was doing at each mile – hopefully acting as my personal trainer and keeping a check on my progress. My plan was to start with 3 x 11 min miles, then go to 5 x 10.5 min miles then 10 min miles after that for as long as I could hold out. Not fast in the grand scheme of runners but ok for the likes of me.

Mile 1 – BLEEP = 9.0 min mile - Oh dear..... better slow down that's far too fast a start for me
Mile 2 – BLEEP = 8.5 min mile - Come on now pull yourself together. You'll suffer later if you don't.
Mile 3 – BLEEP = 9.1 min mile – RIGHT that's it get a grip and now!
Mile 4 – BLEEP = 9.4 min mile – I'm feeling it now and some hills are coming up. Water needed.
Mile 5 – BLEEP = 10.0 min mile - I wish this flitting thing would stop beeping at me. Can't you see I'm suffering here? If you must talk to me - tell me I've slowed down to my target why don't you??
Mile 6 – BLEEP = 9.2 min mile – GO AWAY.....! It's too hot to be beeping those times at me. Aghhhh!

Only another 21.2 miles to go with temperatures of about 21 degrees, blazing sunshine, 3299 other runners on the course who are all having a much better and more comfortable run than me and I'm trying to do this with a body that will not slow down no matter what I say to it. It's beginning to suffer now and serves it right !

I was beginning to realise things were not simply failing to go to plan but were going seriously wrong and the wheels were starting to fall off.

At about 7.5 miles a peace descended upon me as I realised I had reached the top of a rather big but gradual hill with a view somewhat resembling “down from the top of the Sloc”, but my brain may, by then have been playing tricks on me. As I looked down the coming route a restful recovery jog was stretched out before me. Yes - just take this nice and easy and you'll be fine. Not a problem.....and LOOK in the distance is a low lying mist. The route goes off-road somewhere near there with a water station holding sports drinks as well as water (at 8 miles on the plan) so there'll be some respite from this hot sun and some salt/sugar. Everything in the garden was looking rosy at last and I was managing to slow it down too with the bleeps telling me I was doing 10.25 & 11.4 min miles. As we ran onto the path there was the expected drinks station and lovely welcome wet sponges. Heaven. Bliss. Sport drink in hand, I looked up and focused down the path I was to run.....

GOOD GRIEF.....

It wasn't mist at all but a serious cloud of chalk dust!!!!!!! This was a very dry chalk covered path baked by the sun and had thousands of runners on it. The dry white dust was flying everywhere as the runners kicked it up and the fast ones gave it the pace to get higher in the air. It stuck to our sweat moistened skin like glue. It got in the eyes and underneath contact lenses. It was a lovely surface to run on and so beautiful a setting, flat and fast but mightily dusty. I set to and started at a nice gentle pace but it rapidly became clear that my lungs were none too happy with the situation I'd put them in and started to protest loudly but not as badly as the fella at the side of me who was rapidly progressing into an asthma attack. I walked with him a while until we both felt better at carrying on. My ruddy gismo was still bleeping at me every mile but now the times were more in my normal range.

At about 10 miles (2 along the chalk path) with a wheezing and whistling chest accompanying the run with rhythmic but not soothing sounds, something the starter had said sprang to mind. No matter what race you had registered for you could at 11.8 miles choose to do the other one providing you were at that dividing point by 2hr 25min for the full marathon. With a chest that I visualised was gradually filling up with chalk dust I made the decision to go to the right hand side and go for a half-marathon finish rather than continue on and probably not finish at all. I rang Ken on my mobile who was waiting sports-drink-in-hand at the 12 mile point and said “Make your way to the park I'm finishing at the half”. Much discussion took place between us at this point - was it what I really wanted to do? Would I feel disappointed at not doing the full marathon? Was it just me and my stupid psyche not wanting to go around the same course again? If I was 12 miles out would I give up or just carry on and come back to complete the thing? I approached the changeover point and ran to the right telling the first marshal that despite my pink marathon number I'd changed my mind and was going for the half. They were a great bunch of people who wanted to see if they could get me anything or do anything to help me go on to do the “full” as I had planned and trained for. No thank you. My mind was made up and I wasn't the first to do the changeover either. Back in the sunshine and running along the river in such a beautiful setting I felt much better and cheered on by the crowds in the park as I turned into the finish straight I made it a sprint finish as the commentator said “...and this is Sue Ackroyd who has come all the way from the Isle of Man to run with us today”. I knew I'd made the right decision and was more than happy to receive a very pretty half-marathon medal for my efforts.

I still believe I made the right decision and remain happy with my efforts on the day. I learned a lot about myself and my training is now focused on the brain not the legs. The legs can do it but the brain needs a little more work.

Let it be known, however, that this woman never ever lets anything beat her..... at least not without a fight..... The score is now 1-nil to the “Bard”.I aim to make it 1-All at least. After a welcome shower and walk back to the pub I didn't say “Mine's a Half”. After all I needed to replace essential fluids lost during my fast 10K and to lubricate the vocals that were covered in chalk dust !

Next time the brain will be ready for any challenge Shakespeare can throw at me and I'm sure it'll rain on that chalk path to keep the dust down.

I well remember my Sir Toby Belch got a standing ovation in 1972 and also I was successful in getting my Literature O-Level a year later with the help of Macbeth and Banquo.

But seriously ----It really is a lovely course and I do recommend it to everyone. Champion-chipped times. Well marshalled and supported and good organisation. Every penny raised after the costs of staging it are paid go to good local causes (hospices and home-based cancer care etc). There are great hotels and all are close to the start so your warm up is from the hotel bedroom to the start line.

If you don't get a place in the 2008 London do consider this one.

I'll certainly give it another go.

Sue Ackroyd

Mo Kelly on Flora London Marathon

The phone call from Lesley Christian left me in turmoil as she had told me that I had been allocated a place in the 2007 London Marathon. I was torn between jubilation and terror! Jubilation because I knew from previous London Marathons that taking part in the marathon is a fantastic experience. Terror because, also from past experience, I knew what was in store for me and what hard work the training during the next three months was going to be!

Luckily I had three friends who were also training for marathons. Ingrid Sugden and Catriona Farrant had places in London and Sue Ackroyd had a place in the Shakespeare Marathon, which was just one week later. So the four of us started our training, meeting on Sunday mornings for our long runs, and also meeting our usual running gang at the NSC twice weekly.

During those months of training, as we gradually built up our mileage, I took part in the Brass Monkey half-marathon in York, the Ramsey Firemans runs, the Vets Spring Handicap (I WON!!), the Vets 20 Mile race and the Bushys Southern run and felt that the training had gone well and that I was ready for London.

So off to London with husband Alan, on the Friday and straight to ExCel where there was a huge mural for all runners to sign and leave comments. Once I was registered and had collected my race number and time-chip we met Lynne & Dave Quine at the Pasta Party for some carbo loading! Alan and I were staying beside the London Eye which was very central and made it easy to get around London. To make the most of our weekend, we saw an excellent show on the Friday night, The Blue Man Group, and did a bus tour of London on the Saturday morning. Saturday evening was time to get ready – time-chip and red laces in my trainers, number on T-shirt and gels in my bum-bag.

RACE DAY! The alarm went off at 5.30am ready for an early breakfast – our hotel had a run on porridge and bananas that day! Alan walked me to Waterloo Station to get the train to Black Heath for the Blue Start at 9.45am along with 19,000 other runners. Met Lynne again, in the loo queue, and together we made our way to the start line. It was already very warm – definitely didn't need bin liners to keep warm this year!

I presume the gun went off but being right at the back in Pen 9, I didn't hear it and later I calculated that it took about 13 minutes to reach the start line, by which time I was just about starting to run. There was no shade for the first few miles and getting hot – although I'd put lots of suncream on I could feel my arms starting to burn. Despite drinking quite a lot of water before the start I was ready for another drink by the time I reached the first water station at 3 miles, but PANIC, there was none left! Runners were scabbling around amongst the discarded bottles trying to find a bottle which still had some water left in it. A girl I was running beside found a bottle with an inch of water in it so we shared that. After that the water stations were every mile and I managed to get water at every station except one.

Ingrid, who started at the Red Start, appeared beside me – not sure where exactly but probably around 8 miles. We didn't run together for long and the last I saw of her, she was kissing and hugging all the male marshalls on Tower Bridge!

As it was such a warm day and the forecast was for it to get hotter, I decided quite early on that it would be best to take regular short walking breaks. That meant I wouldn't finish in my target time of 5 hours but at least I knew I would get around and feel OK at the finish. I believe the weather also meant that there weren't so many runners in fancy dress this year. As well as the official showers to cool us down, firemen set up extra showers using their fire engines and hoses - pure bliss running through all the showers.

Going across Tower Bridge has to be one of the highlights of the race as the crowds are fantastic, making a huge amount of noise cheering everybody on. I knew where Alan would be watching and sure enough there he was on Tower Bridge to cheer me on and also at The Embankment, with a pint in one hand – thirsty work this cheering!

Well, I survived the heat and finished in 5Hours 34minutes, After getting my finish photo taken, time-chip removed and collecting my medal and goody bag I met Alan in Horse Guards Parade, and again bumped into Lynne Quine who had finished before me. She was with Dave and Justine Bowen who had zoomed around London trying to watch the race from several different vantage points. I think they were just as exhausted as I was!

The crowds at the finish were huge and although we only needed to walk across Westminster Bridge to get back to our hotel it seemed to take ages. But once there it was time for a shower and alcohol. But not necessarily in that order!

All in all I had a brilliant time. Not only in London but during the months of training (can't believe I just said that!). Many thanks to my training partners, Ingrid, Catriona and Sue who kept me going when I just wanted to stop. Also thanks to the NSC running gang – Lynne & Dave, Moira and Geoff, Justine, Rob, Vera, Colin and Arnie who all gave me lots of encouragement and support.

Finally, thank you Isle of Man Veteran Athletic Club for giving me the place and allowing me to represent the club.

Maureen Kelly.

Bethany Clague on Blackpool Marathon

The Blackpool Marathon 2007 (www.blackpoolmarathon.com)

On 8am on Sunday 3rd June I found myself leaving the B&B and walking towards Winter Gardens, with my friend Ernie who was there as support. The sun was shining and the sky was blue. The promenade was quiet as the stag / hen night parties were still asleep. 2,500 runners were either doing the half or full marathon. I met Andy from IOM Vets who was also running the marathon and we exchanged 'good lucks'.

The gun fired at 9am and we charged round to the front of the tower. I would be running either towards or away from the tower! The promenade was closed to traffic and the first 3 miles took us past the Pleasure Beach. There were lots of water stations and some offered Lucozade as well, at 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21 and 24 miles. We turned around at the end of the tramline. Ernie was waiting for me at 4 miles. Shortly afterwards I had a 'pit stop' behind a car park! That was my only quibble – where were the portaloos? They had promised us lots costing 10p. In fact there were only 4 in a block costing 20p opposite the tower! It was to prove a huge problem for me as I suffered with major stomach trouble between 7-8 miles! The half marathon finished after a 6 mile run north from the tower to Bispham and back. The marathon went on for a second lap.

I started to catch up with many runners. I felt strong and the course was flat and straight. I really began to enjoy the race and from 23-26 miles I was using positive affirmations and overtaking everyone. Somehow I missed my supporter Ernie who kept seeing my back! The last few yards were hard, as the tower seemed to be disappearing, but the commentator was getting louder. I crossed the line to the words of...'and this is Bethany from the Isle of Man!' Everyone applauded and I saw Ernie cheering at the side. I finished in 4:44.42, not the PB I wanted, but after 3 loo stops and about 20c temperatures, it was a good time for me. Andy beat me by 45 minutes! The winner took 2 hours 25 minutes! 441 runners finished the marathon and I came in 371!

I received my medal and T-shirt, and then had to expose myself as there were no changing facilities at the finish, but after 26.2 miles who cared?! This was my fifth marathon; Edinburgh, Nottingham, Majorca and Isle of Man being previous ones. Hopefully London next year, if I get through the ballot, fourth time lucky perhaps!
Bethany Clague.
