

Review of HPR Training Group (and some associates) competitive activity in 2020

January

New Year's Day saw Parkrun PBs for **Jim Hickinbottom** 15.53 and **Michelle Stevens** 21.31, and Parkrun first place finishes for **Will Neill** and **Danny Soltys**.

Matt Hall and **Jim Hickinbottom** 2nd and 3rd at the Shropshire Cross Country Championships. **Vinnie Martin** was a competitive 7th in the Staffordshire Cross Country Championships. A Parkrun PB for **Danny Soltys** at the Wammy with 15.55. **Matt Guilder** first finisher at Durham Parkrun.

Matt Hall won the North Wales Cross Country League fixture at Oswestry beating the winner from the Shropshire Championships the previous week, with **Jim Hickinbottom** finishing with a best league result of 5th.

Danny Soltys, continued his rapidly improving form into 2020 with an excellent 2nd place finish at the Kidsgrove 10k in 33.11. This was Danny's fastest 10k for 4 years. Although not in form due to reduced training recently **Bruce Johnson** was also in action at Kidsgrove and finished 13th with a solid run of 38.12.

At the last Peak Raid off road navigation event of the year in the Peak District, **Martin Dearden** reported a much improved running performance as he finished 4th overall in his age-category today and 5th overall in the series. These are tough events especially in the wet conditions of this morning.

Will Laye stormed to 2nd place in the tough Trig Points race on Cannock Chase in 1 hour 43 minutes, an excellent time for the 16+ mile hilly off-road event with no set route, other than visiting the 5 Trig Points.

Representing the UK Police Service at Cross Country in the Sefton Brankner Cup v the RAF and other public services **Lindsay Dixon** ran much more strongly than last year to finish 4th counter for the police team.

Bryan Lomas raced in another one of the Derbyshire mid-week 5k evening races at Alvaston and consolidated his progress with 18.29 despite it being January and not really conducive to fast times.

Bryan Lomas finished 9th overall and 1st M50 at the Sheffield Open Cross Country.

Rob Haines was in action at the Gloucester Marathon with a London GFA target of 3.05 in his sights. However Rob smashed through that and actually ran 3.00.00! Nearly a 19 minute PB and very unlucky not to have gone sub 3 hours for the first time.

At the Helsby Half Marathon **Jim Hickinbottom** beat his PB by more than 2 minutes as he finished 6th overall in 71.13. **Lindsay Dixon** was just 23 seconds off her target time with 90.23 and it was her fastest half marathon for 2 years. **Neil Dixon** has been suffering from sciatica and was 3 minutes down on his best with 82.32.

In difficult weather conditions **Debbie Hope** completed the first of her 50th year challenge races with Tigger Tor. This is 15.8 km (almost 10 miles) of mud, rock and heather, with ascent of some 513 m (1700 feet), helped along nicely by wind, hail and rain showers.

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Matt Hall also had an excellent run with 22nd place in the Midland Cross Country Championships at Wollaton Park, Nottingham. **Danny Soltys** was 61st and **Scott Zikmanis** 180th in the same race. **Amy Neill** was 61st in the senior women's race.

At the Northern Championships at Camp Hill **Michelle Stevens** finished 132nd in the senior women's race and club mate **Bryan Lomas** 247th in the senior men, both big improvements on previous performances at this level of competition.

February

There were some great HPR performances at the Alsager 5 Road Race:

Vinnie Martin 26.13

Danny Soltys 26.20 PB

Will Laye 27.56 PB

Bruce Johnson 29.51

Amy Neill 32.00

Craig Hurst M45 32.53 PB

Emma Weston W45 34.37

Michelle Stevens W40 35.57 PB

Paul Birdsall M45 38.19 PB

Suzanne Lynn W50 38.47 PB

In Division One of the Birmingham Cross Country League at Leamington, **Vinnie Martin** produced his best league run of the winter to lead his club home in 30th place, his highest finish so far at this level.

In Division Two of the Birmingham League **Bruce Johnson** and **Scott Zikmanis** finished 75th and 82nd respectively to help their club achieve promotion to Division One next season.

In the Midlands Women's League Division Two race at Aldridge **Amy Neill** finished 24th. In the Division One race at Leamington, **Wendy Swift** and **Jo Stanfield** who have done some training sessions with us recently, finished in 39th and 49th places helping their club to win the masters team title.

In the Manchester Area League race at Heaton Park **Bryan Lomas** had his strongest league race as an M50 so far as he finished an excellent 3rd in his age-category

At the Durham Riverside parkrun Durham City's **Matt Guilder** zipped to his fastest run of the year so far with 17.16 despite the much tougher wind conditions than usual.

At the Knype 5 trail race **Dave Bethell** ran strongly to finish 3rd overall. **Wendy Swift** showed the benefits of regular road rep and cross country sessions with HPR over the past couple of months with an excellent 2nd place finish.

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Matt Hall was first HPR man in the National Cross Country Championships senior men's race with an excellent 160th placing. In his last National race 4 years ago in pre HPR days, Matt was 420th in an arguably weaker standard National race at Castle Donnington, so a big improvement! Next HPR training group man was M50 **Bryan Lomas** who beat the ageing process yet again with 659th, also by some way his best placing over the last 4 years. Making his debut in the National, **Ben Williams** returned from recent illness with a strong run in 932nd. **Michelle Stevens** finished 351st in the senior women's race, a 276 place improvement on her only previous run in the National 3 years ago!

Debbie Hope and **Martin Dearden** were in action at the High Cup Nick fell race over nearly 10 miles and more than 1700ft of ascent in the Eden Valley in Cumbria. Conditions were really difficult but Martin 60th and Debbie 236th out of 409 finishers had excellent races.

At the Leicestershire Half Marathon the 3 HPR representatives all set PBs. **Danny Soltys** smashed his 11 year old PB with 71.21 and 2nd place in this race of nearly 1000 runners on a blustery day too. **Michelle Stevens** set a 3 minute PB with a time of 1.46.48. **Paul Birdsall** also ran brilliantly to revise his best by more than a minute with 1.51.06 despite feeling under the weather earlier in the week and missing some training.

Andy Roberts raced the Terrys High 5 Fell race at Macclesfield and finished 1st M50.

At the RAF Shawbury 10k **Jim Hickinbottom** finished 2nd in 34.31

At Hanley Parkrun **Danny Soltys** was first finisher in a PB for the course 16.41.

At Albert Parkrun in Middlesbrough **Matt Guilder** was also first finisher in 17.15

March

Vinnie Martin recorded his first ever sub 33 minute 10k at Trafford with 32.59

At the Cloud 9 hilly trail race at Congleton, **Dave Bethell** 11th and **Ben Williams** 25th helped SMAC to a team win.

At the re-arranged but still very tough Long Mynd Valleys in the Shropshire hills **Matt Marston** returned to fell running action after a 10 year absence with 15th place, closely followed by M45 **Martin Dearden** (3rd in age-category) in 19th. **Debbie Hope** continued her 50th year challenge with a strong run in 81st place and 4th in her age-category.

Matt Guilder set a 5k PB of 16.50 at the Endeavour 5k race in Middlesbrough.

Matt Hall had an excellent run in the Inter-Counties Cross Country finishing 93rd in the Senior Men's race.

At the Wammy parkrun **Vinnie Martin** smashed his previous best by 10 seconds finishing 2nd in 15.49. Leading Vinnie home in 15.29 was Keele student **Hassan Ben Tiba** who sometimes trains with us. Also at the Wammy **Neil Dixon** stuck brilliantly to his training session target pace with a controlled 18.01.

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Matt Guilder was first finisher in 18.39 at Hackworth parkrun, whilst **Matt Marston** was first finisher in 19.17 at Newtown parkrun.

At the Wrexham Freedom 20 **Emma Weston** bounced back from a tough period of injury niggles and colds with her strongest run for a while hitting her London Marathon sub 3.15 pacing target comfortably. Emma ran 2.25.25 and finishing 6th woman, first W45 in the race.

At the Knighton 20 **Danny Soltys** confirmed his improving form with a gun to tape win and an excellent 1.56.15 PB time, well under his target 2.36 marathon pace! **Bruce Johnson** was also using this race as a training run and suffering from a bit of a cold wisely throttled back after half way to a 2.13.01 clocking, still under 2.55 marathon pace.

Craig Hurst set a parkrun of 18.24 at the Wammy

Just before the national lockdown **Scott Zikmanis** competed in the Tiger Beetle Trail 10k on the sand dunes at Southport with his best performance in a long time. Scott was 1st finisher in the second wave, 4th overall in the timed race results, and 1st M40 overall in a time of 38.37, a great run on this course.

At the Lads Leap fell race at Crowden, **Andy Roberts** finished 25th overall and 2nd M50, another strong and improving run as he benefits from some much more consistent training.

April

No events due to National lockdown because of the COVID crisis – although started the HPR Challenges

May

In the HPR 4 Mile Challenge fastest times were set by **Jim Hickinbottom** 20.37, **Vinnie Martin** 20.57 and **Danny Soltys** 21.42. **Anna Hollingwoth** 23.06, **Louise Hackett** 23.56 and **Nina Skilton** 25.25 were fastest.

June

Will Page 4.34, **Euan Nicholls** 4.38 and **Alex Brecker** 4.39 produced the fastest men's runs in the HPR 1 mile Challenge, with **Kelly Butler** 5.18, **Louise Hackett** 5.41 and **Anna Hollingworth** 5.44 leading the women.

In the HPR 30 Minutes Continuous Hills Challenge top results came in from **Danny Soltys** 1442ft, **Andy Roberts** 1322ft and **Jack Ross** 1319ft. For the women **Emma Weston** 1162ft, **Jo Stanfield** 1100ft and **Lindsay Dixon** 751ft led the way.

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HPR coached athletes **Danny Soltys** and **Gareth Copley-Jones** were in action for the NSRRA St Thomas virtual 10k.

Danny ran the actual hilly race route (600ft+ of ascent) and was pleased with his 35.42 clocking, whilst Gareth hit the tough Silverdale Country Park trails for his new club, recording a strong effort of 41.56.

July

HPR training group results from the Cheadle 4 Virtual Race for Oakley (plus a few who do some sessions with us)

1. **Danny Soltys**, Stone MM, 21.14
6. **Paul Tatler**, Newcastle Staffs AC, 23.01
20. **Shaun Haddrell**, Newcastle Staffs AC, 25.15
21. **Harry Bond**, Buxton AC, 25.30
27. (4th lady) **Amy Neill**, City of Stoke AC, 26.13
28. **Martin Dearden**, Staffs Moorlands AC, 26.17
30. (1st lady O45) **Jo Stanfield**, Trentham RC, 26.20
37. **Gareth Copley-Jones**, Silverdale RC, 26.28
51. (3rd lady O45) **Emma Weston**, Congleton Harriers, 27.48
79. (3rd M60) **John Guest**, Trentham RC, 28.56
96. **Debbie Hope**, Buxton RC, 29.47

262 finishers!

Paul Tatler put his base fitness to really good use as he ran a brilliant 2.44 marathon time trial at Westport Lake, 7 minutes faster than his official best time set at Manchester last year.

Scott Zikmanis was in Virtual Race action in the Tolkien Virtual 10k Trail Race, which he did at Rudyard Lake in North Staffordshire with a fantastic 2nd place overall and 1st in his age-category (M40) in a time of 36.51, only 26 seconds outside a lifetime best set in a road 10k more than 6 years ago!

Three HPR training group members were in action in the NSRRA Virtual Leek Half Marathon. All runners in this event had to complete at least 500ft of ascent during their run to qualify, and more than 100 completed this event. **Danny Soltys** ran the fastest time overall by nearly 8 minutes as he charged around the high roads in the Moorlands in a very impressive time of 72.38. **Jo Stanfield** celebrated her move into a new age group as she finished 2nd lady overall and 1st W50 in an unofficial lifetime best of 90.47. **Emma Weston** also ran very strongly on a tough course to finish 5th lady overall and first W45 in a time of 93.09.

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August

In the latest round of the North Staffs Road Runners Association virtual race series **Danny Soltys** and **Jo Stanfield** finished 2nd overall in the male and female categories in the Trentham Virtual 10k which had 138 'finishers'. Danny was 26 seconds slower than arch-rival for the league title Ross Connor of City of Stoke AC in 34.48, and Trentham RC's Jo continued her recent improvement with an unofficial personal best for 10k of 41.00 behind Birchfield Harrier Kelly Butler despite the mandatory 300+ feet ascent included in the criteria for this one. **Gareth Copley-Jones** ran strongly on his club's trails at Silverdale Country Park finishing 22nd overall in 41.35. **John Guest** who often trains with HPR finished 2nd M60 in 45.35

Lindsay Dixon got a mention in AW for her time trial performances as part of the Midland Masters Perfect Distance events. Despite being on holiday in Cornwall resulting in a twisty route and strong winds that were not in the right direction, Lindsay finished 2nd overall in the W45 age-group.

In the Dave Clark virtual 5k **Danny Soltys** was fastest overall with an excellent 15.32. In an attempt to get the best out of himself (and as great marathon prep) Danny actually ran 2 x 5k in 15.32 with just a 5 minute gap and then followed up just over a day later with 15.52 on the Wammy parkrun course just in case it was needed! Equally impressive was **Jo Stanfield** who stormed to a 'virtual' best of 19.39 and 2nd place in the women's results, the first time she has ever run 5k under 20 minutes. Silverdale Running Club's **Rob Haines** flew around a tough trail course at Silverdale Country Park to record 19.10 and 2nd place in his age category whilst club mate **Gareth Copley Jones** overcame a twisted ankle, and strict lock-down conditions due to his job, to record 23.21.

The Stone 10k was another NSRRA virtual event: **Danny Soltys** put in a strong 26.33 run on roads local to Stone itself for 2nd fastest. **Bryan Lomas** put in a very rare road running appearance with 31.50 for 13th overall. Not far behind **Jo Stanfield** yet again smashed her unofficial best over this distance with 32.24.

An actual Mid Cheshire 5k race saw some improving HPR performances: **Dan Whittle** ran 17.40 – missing his 5k PB by 1 second. **Sammeyjoe Daley-Davies** ran 18.56 her first ever official 5k race, and first proper race for 6 years. **Bryan Lomas** ran 18.05 his 2nd fastest time as an M50. **Emma Weston** ran 20.12 her 2nd fastest 5k ever.

Scott Zikmanis won a Pennine Trail virtual event, The Pirates Aztec 8 Mile Trail Race, in a time of 48.13

September

In the latest race in NSRRA virtual series, the Air Products 10k, Trentham RC's **Jo Stanfield** again excelled with an unofficial best time of 39.55 over the distance and 2nd lady overall. Having recently reached 50 Jo is getting faster! Club mate **John Guest** also improved on his best virtual 10k result this year with 43.57 for 2nd in the M60 category.

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The Clayton 10k a week later was another NSRRA virtual event with **Chris Gidlow** who has had more than a year out with injury bouncing back into virtual competition at least with a strong 2nd place overall and first M40 in 35.11. **Jo Stanfield** ran an excellent 40.14 for 2nd lady and first W50. Club mate **John Guest** also coped with the hills really well and finished 3rd M60 in 43.39. **Jane Holt** tackled a particularly hilly course and recorded a really strong 53.40 for 3rd W50.

Suzanne Lynn completed the 37 mile Gritstone Grind Trail Ultra in 7 hours 36 minutes and finished 1st in her age-category.

The NSRRA virtual race, the South Cheshire 20, saw some strong performances: **Danny Soltys** returned to NSRRA competition with a quick 1.54.35 (sub 2.30 marathon pace) for first overall. **Jo Stanfield** ran by far her fastest time ever for 20 miles with a superb 2.23.46 for 2nd lady overall. **Emma Weston** showed her strength over the longer distances with a great time of 2.28.28 for 3rd lady overall.

A week later **Jo Stanfield** finished 2nd fastest lady in the latest NSRRA virtual series race, the Westbridge 5 as she set yet another best time over 5 miles of 31.49.

A slight thaw in the COVID restrictions saw a couple of actual races:

Debbie Hope and **Martin Dearden** from finished 2nd V40 pair in the Peak Raid event at Win Hill.

Robbie Campbell finished 15th at the Hullavington 5k in a time of 17.01, just outside his best for the distance.

There was a first ever NSRRA 'win' for racing machine **Jo Stanfield** in the Staffs Knot virtual 5 miles race with a best time of 31.45

The month finished with an excellent 4th place for **Scott Zikmanis** in another actual race the Clipstone Trail Marathon

October

The month started with another NSRRA 1st place for **Jo Stanfield** in the Ipstones virtual 5 mile race with 33.08 despite more than 370ft of ascent.

3 big PBs over the marathon distance for M45 **Neil Dixon** 2.46, W45 **Lindsay Dixon** 3.07 and W45 **Emma Weston** 3.13 in the virtual London Marathon event. **Gareth Copley-Jones** completed his 3.42 virtual London over the bumpy trails in Silverdale Country Park

There was a 4 minute PB of 90.14 for **Geoff Marchment** in the actual Elvington Half Marathon.

Bryan Lomas completed a good attempt of 3hours 26mins on the 5 Trigs Gritstone Challenge.

M40 **Chris Gidlow** won the real 10k race at Tatton Park in 32.58 his 2nd fastest time ever. Youngster **Harry Bond** ran 36.57 for 24th place.

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Jo Stanfield was fastest lady overall in the latest NSRRA virtual race the Werrington 10k with 40.56, despite more than 400ft of ascent.

An actual 10k Race at Arley Hall, Cheshire was another highlight of this month and saw a good HPR turn-out: Quickest was **Paul Tatler** who in running 34.18 improved his life-time best by more than 5 minutes! **Dan Whittle** was another big improver as he ran 35.4, nearly 2 minutes faster than his previous best. Unfortunately suffering from a cold **Shaun Haddrell** was determined to get a race in and did really well in the circumstances to finish in 36.12 just 4 seconds off his lifetime best. **Amy Neill** is gradually getting her form back too and it was good to see her run 39.17, her 2nd fastest 10k. **Jo Stanfield** has been demolishing the recent NSRRA virtual races and here she came away with a personal best real 10k race time of 40.37 at the age of 50. Not surprisingly Jo also won her age category in this race. M55 **Dave Maydew** raced despite a fall and knee injury that stopped his training for a week but still ran strongly for 41.19, enough for 3rd overall in his age category. **Alison Husbands** also returned to racing and was close to her best set more than 4 years ago with 55.12. Although not a regular member of the training group **Craig Hurst** also took my training advice and with 39.44 achieved his goal of a sub 40 minute 10k, an amazing result for the former City of Stoke AC athlete who was one of the Midland's top 100m and 200m sprinters 25 years ago. M60 **John Guest** often does our rep sessions with Jo Stanfield and it's great to see those efforts pay off with a time of 42.26 his fastest 10k for 8 years.

There was also a brilliant 3rd place for **Lisa Ho** in her first ever completed Duathlon at Clumber Park. This resulted in Lisa gaining selection for the European Age-Group Championships in 2021.

November

Fastest ever 10 mile run for W50 **Jo Stanfield** and another NSRRA virtual win at the Flying Fox virtual 10 with 67.16

A bumper turn-out of HPR runners for the Stoke St Michaels: **Chris Gidlow**, 32.40, 1st M40 - Chris's fastest ever solo time around a bumpy industrial estate! **Scott Zikmanis** 37.09 (36.13 actual time but didn't stop watch correctly!), 4th M40. Representing Staffs for the first time. **Megan Huxley** 38.19, 4th Lady - a debut over the 10k distance for Meg and also representing Staffs for the first time. **Jo Stanfield**, 40.26, 1st W50 - Jo's 2nd fastest virtual time, showing amazing consistency on different courses. Representing Staffs. **Amy Neill**, 40.33, a strong run despite the course selection. **Emma Weston**, 40.44, 2nd W45. Emma's best 10k so far, and on the greasy lanes of South Cheshire too. **Gareth Copley Jones**, 40.59, 6th M40, An amazing run on the bumpy trail at Silverdale Country Park. **Liza Ho**, 42.49, On the comeback trail 5 months after a broken foot and only 30 seconds away from her fastest time. **Judith Ho**, 59.02, 1st W65, Judith's first ever 10k and fastest in her age-group after only starting running a few months ago. **Naomi Ellis**, 63.32, 5th W40, a fab effort only a few months after baby Stanley arrived!

Bryan Lomas set a new M50 record of 3hours 21mins on the 5 Trigs Gritstone Challenge.

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Jo Stanfield was fastest in the Meerbrook virtual 15k to take a brilliant 2nd lady in the NSRRA individual championship for 2020. **Emma Weston** close behind in 3rd place at Meerbrook.

December

Jo Stanfield set the fastest overall women's time of 40.22 with **Emma Weston** running 41.03 for 2nd in the Cheddleton virtual 10k. 17 year old **Harry Bond** was fastest competitor on the actual hilly course with 37.45 for 5th overall.

A strong run of 19.40 for **Wendy Swift** with the 3rd fastest time in the Tinsel Trot virtual 5k. Closely followed by **Lisa Ho** and **Emma Weston** for great HPR packing. W65 **Judith Ho** yet again improved her PB to 27.21. 4th fastest overall for **Gareth Copley-Jones** in the 10k with 41.44.

Lindsay Dixon ran a brilliant solo 19.49 in the British Masters virtual 5k event.

There was a big finish to a much improved year for **Scott Zikmanis** with 80.28 in the virtual Monsal Trail Half Marathon