

STARTING LINES BAILDON RUNNERS MAGAZINE

June 2015 Issue 1

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FROM THE EDITOR BY KEVIN BRAIN

Welcome to first edition of Starting Lines, the inaugural edition of Baildon Runners very own club magazine .

Though we hope it will be read far and wide. Well, actually, we hope it will be read! The first edition is very much, a trail run – sorry, trial run. The title might change for a start. We thought Starting Lines a clever play on words but someone has already suggested it might be a title for Cocaine Weekly!

The first edition is packed with features, interviews, articles and even a short story to stimulate the most demanding of appetites. Thinking of summer holidays on the beach? We have a special feature on sand and sun – Michelle Morris recounts her stunning achievement running the Marathon De Sables. Not to be outdone, Geraldine Ray reminds us what summer is actually like in Baildon with a feature on the West Yorkshire Winter League and a look behind the scenes at the Baildon Boundary. We have an interview with one of our own star runners, Quentin Lewis – watch out for his tips on running and nutrition - and yet more insightful training advice on how to get faster from our own star coach, Ian Ferris.

If this wasn't feast enough, then you can engage in armchair philosophising reading our opinion piece on the nature of running in a consumer society (yes, I too have no idea what this means, I will have to read the article now!) or, at a more genteel pace, consider the paradox of getting faster while getting slower as we look at running and ageing.

Finally, as an digestif after all this fine dining, we offer a short story, a fairy tale no less, and to round off, some insane diary ramblings (surely ramblings should only be allowed in a walking magazine!) as Diary of a Reluctant Club Runner returns.

We really hope you enjoy the magazine. There is something for everyone. That said, we have refrained in this first edition from including results round ups and features on race wins, great performances and PBs. This is not because we think these things unimportant but because we did not want to step on the toes of the newsletter. We also plan to do features on specific races and training routes in future editions but we did not have time or space in the first edition for all our ideas. But remember, this is your club magazine. If you want results and race wins/achievements in, have any other ideas for regular features or pieces you would like to see in the future or would like to write an article yourself, then please do not hesitate to contact any one of the magazine editorial committee or the club committee. We will bite your hand off – figuratively speaking of course!

P.S. If you have any criticisms or complaints please remember it was all Ben Watson's fault!

In truth, there would have been no magazine without the support, hard work, time and co-operation of a large group of people, so a big thank you to you all, you know who you are! Oh, alright, yes, and to you Ben - thanks for all the effort in designing and producing the magazine, great work.

Starting Lines has been brought to you by: Ben, Geraldine, Michelle, Quentin, Ian, Jim and Jeremy.

Kevin has been given a crayon and some paper and placed in a padded cell.



BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE BAILDON BOUNDARY WAY

Written by **Geraldine Ray**

The Baildon Boundary Way, a tough but very scenic mainly off road half marathon and the main event in the Baildon Runners calendar. Quite rightly, it's all about the runners and many of them come back for more year after year. But whilst everything runs like a well oiled machine on the surface, behind the scenes there are a 100 smelly feet paddling furiously to make the day the success it is. So I thought it would be nice to celebrate the unsung heroes of the BBW, the club members and their family and friends who gave up their time to carry out the multitude of tasks with a smile on their faces and words of encouragement to anyone who would listen.

Someone wrote on Facebook after marshalling how proud it made them feel to be part of such an amazing club. I whole heartedly agree. So here's to many more successful years of the BBW. This is just a small glimpse of what it takes to organise. Well done to everyone who volunteered or came out to support.

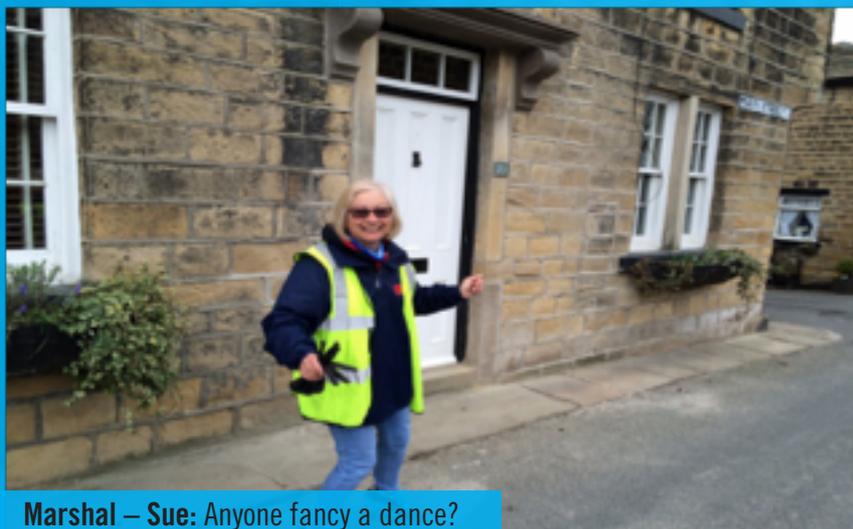
Apologies if you didn't get a mention....or maybe that should be apologies if you did get a mention! Thanks to Phil Bland & Dave Lonsdale for the (mis-)use of your photos.



The Starters – Dave & Dan: Lets have groups A & B at the front. Any announcements? Right, off you go then.



The course markers – Shy elusive creatures, never seen during daylight on the day of the race. Note how no expense has been spared on marker signs!



Marshal – Sue: Anyone fancy a dance?

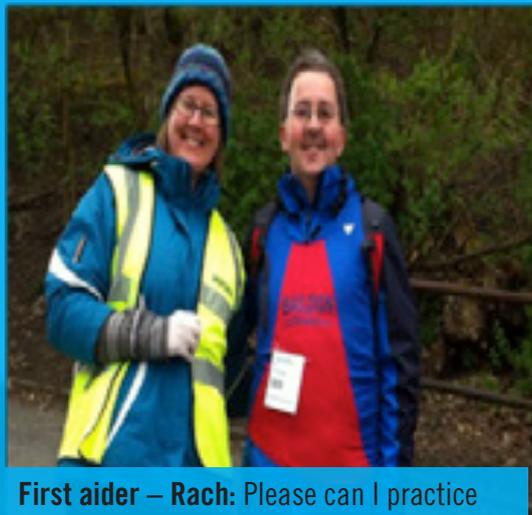


Marshal – Debbie: Have you seen some runners? I'm sure they should be here by now.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE BAILDON BOUNDARY WAY



Marshal – Paul: Can I stop smiling yet? Will you unglue my hands now please?



First aider – Rach: Please can I practice bandaging your foot? Pretty please? Anyone for the kiss of life? Not you again Dave!



Drinks station – Elinor & Carolyn: Two beers and a white wine coming up.



Drinks station – Martin & Mei-na: Well that's the drinks poured. Are you sure we're on the right road? This is the Keighley 10K isn't it?



Keep in order – Kirsty: Sue just phoned to say the runners have all gone to the Woolpack.

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE BAILDON BOUNDARY WAY



Clicker at finish – Dan: Which button do you press again? Do we really have a special lane for Finish runners this year?



Call numbers – Jackie: That's two fat ladies, 88



Chief Marshal – Emma: Oh no that's not on the list, got to dash!



Scribe numbers - Ellie: Have you got 2 minutes for a quick survey?



Results co-ordinator – Geoff: So we've got as far as 20th place but now we need some more fingers



Race Director – Alan: Ah well, it'll all come out in the wash

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE BAILDON BOUNDARY WAY



Photographer – Phil: Right, that's enough runners, I'm off to "photograph" a pint & a bacon sarnie



The kitchen staff – Sue, Debra, Hamid & Andrew: Do you think if we ignore Geoff he'll stop nicking the sausages?



Water at the finish – Shelagh & Ian: Bet I can pour faster than you can



T-shirts – Lizzie & Karen: Roll up, roll up. T-shirts, any colour as long as it's blue



Supporters – Kirsty & Karen: Well done everyone, keep clapping, I mean, running...

BEHIND THE SCENES AT THE BAILDON BOUNDARY WAY



Sweeper – Ian and Richard: Is it my turn with the broom yet?



Packing up – Off to the bar then?



The end!

Well that's it for another year. Thanks to all those who helped organise and marshal Baildon's flagship race. Planning for next year's race starts now! Any volunteers?

RUNNING AN ALL CONSUMING PASSION?

Written by **Kevin Brain**

In his book *Running Free*, Richard Askwith calculates how much money it now costs to go running. He goes into a well known running shop in London and work out that it would cost around £1,400. The brand trainers, the Garmin, the technical tops, the running jackets, the gels, the water bottle, hat, gloves, back pack, bumbag, kitchen sink and cuddly toy (I made the last two up). The point he is making is that running is now big business. Like all other areas of life, running has been commodified. Running is just one more human activity that can be turned into a market opportunity and runners are consumers to be targeted. Whether this be in the form of the never ending technical kit and gadgets we can buy or in recent phenomena of the organised mass endurance or obstacle races we can now enter – for a fee – which come complete with their brand names, technical shirts and kit, training bootcamps, groups you can join, leagues you can rank yourself in and, of course, the life transforming journey you are guaranteed to have embarked on once you challenge yourself and unleash the potential within you and realise you can be a Tough Mudder, Wilderness Warrior or Gullible F***er (I might have made one or two of them up as well).

What is strange here is that a seemingly completely natural and cost free activity has now become a mass market to be exploited. Running is no longer something that can just be engaged in for its own sake. No longer is it an expression of a simple desire to 'be in your body'. It is not enough to feel the joy of moving through the world, to feel grounded in the world and regain your sense of being connected to that world through your body. No. In corporate running, each runner is urged to become their own performance manager, an entrepreneur of the self in the never ending search for self-improvement - faster, fitter, leaner, healthier, happier, sexier. At least we will be if only we get the trainers with gel insoles that produce an extra 10% energy pay back on impact, the compression tights that help maintain consistent muscle support and blood flow, the heart monitor that helps you regulate your performance for a more consistent run, the Garmin that helps you monitor you pace.

Running is the key to that beach body, better sleep, success at work, becoming irresistibly attractive to women or men or both, an improved sex life (improved? A sex life would be nice!), promotion at work, better exam performance, mental well- being, a bigger willy (even for the women?) living until your 750 and winning the lottery (again, I made some of them up!). Well, bollocks to that.

This is not running. This, at least, is not my running or why I run. I run for the same reason my children run - because they can. They run because it is fun. They run with a smile on their face and they do it unprompted and spontaneously. Like all children, they have not forgotten to be delighted with being in their bodies or being in the world. They do not think that running is something to be endured in order to >>>

achieve some goal or that it is something only for the lucky few who are good enough to be chosen to be in a team or in with a chance of winning. They do not view it as an opportunity to prove they are better than others, to pursue personal glory or to create some sense of esteem which might validate their lives. They simply do it for its own sake because they can.

I have tried a couple of times to get them to run with me. They are both, for their age, reasonable runners. In fact, one came 10th in a school cross country race recently (spot the terrible indulgence of the boastful parent here—mind you there were only 10 kids in the race). He wasn't interested in the position, he just wanted to run with his friend who does fell races with Bingley Harriers. He ran, chatting with his friend, a big grin on his face and they finished together. He looked knackered at the end and said it was hard. Then he and his friend saw some of their mates playing football and ran across the field to join in. They had forgotten how tired they were.

Neither of my boys will entertain the idea of training – but why should they? They are 8 and 10. When I took them on a run they had given up within a hundred metres and started fighting with each other as this was much more fun. They complained of being tired and bored. So I stopped. Then I started to chase them. They loved this and ran through the woods, nay sprinted through the woods, faster than I could run without any word of complaint. They just ran for fun. They ran, because they could, because jumping over logs, splashing in mud, twisting in and out of trees while pretending to be a hare chased by a fox is just inherently, playfully, fun. It has no goal outside of itself. For them, as I suspect with all children, they just run with the sheer delight of being able to run.

Sadly, they will at some point in the future learn that in consumer societies you are what you buy. But not yet. They have not yet learned to be unhappy with who they are and they have not yet learned that they cannot be happy unless they engage in a never ending cycle of buying new selves through the clothes they wear, the foods they eat, the books they read, the drinks they drink, the cars they drive, the music they listen to... They have not yet learned to turn themselves into consumers.

They do not run to change themselves. They run just to be themselves.

And this is why I run. It is because in running I find myself returning to just being me but without that being bad. In running, I find a space where it just doesn't matter that I am me. When I run there is nobody to judge me. Nobody to impress. No target to meet or goal to be achieved. It matters not that I have no athletic ability, indeed no abilities at all. It matters not whether I am rich or poor, what my gender is or what my ethnicity is. It is of no consequence whether or not I am employed, successful, popular, good looking, athletic or anything else. I can run and in running I connect with my body and the world around me.

I feel the play of time in each run. I slide into that space where moments last forever and forever is gone in a moment. In the immediate pain of a hill climb each passing second combines into an endless present and as I top out the endless present dissolves into a distant past. I feel both the limits of my body and its potential as I drift through the forest skipping >>



over roots and twisting and turning with the changes in the paths I run. I am simultaneously imprisoned by my body and its physical limitations and yet liberated by its ability to transport me through time and space. I feel both my permanent connectedness to the countless millions of years of the world as I run past the rocks and boulders deposited in ice ages past, and the fleeting temporariness of my own life span as I move from the beginning to the end of my run. In the passing of the days into weeks, and weeks into months I become aware of both the continuity of life and its ever changing nature. As the months come and go and seasons change so I move through the seasons of my own life. I have the continuity of my sense of self set against the changes inevitable in the passing of my time. All of this is written into the landscapes in which I run. To run in nature is to be connected back to its rhythms and cycles, to its beauty and scale and its continuity and its change. It is at once to become aware of the rootedness of being in the world and passing through time. It is, in short, to become aware of what it is to be human.

Running, then, is not a way of escaping being me or transforming myself. It is not a way in which I make myself an object for change or through which I conspire with the market to turn myself into a consumer commodity. No. It is a way of returning to being human. To simply being in the world and rejoicing in the sheer, overwhelming improbability of existence and the fleeting joy of being alive. It is a way of anchoring me in the world and becoming aware of just being in the moment.

It is not that I do not set goals ever or chase time or even enjoy racing or challenge events. Rather it is that I understand that, ultimately, I do not need to have the experience of running packaged, sanitised and sold back to me as consumer experience. Running is free. Nature is out there waiting for you. So what are you waiting for? Runners of the world unite you have nothing to lose but your brand names!

JUST DESERTS – MICHELLE MORRIS AND THE MARATHON DES SABLES

Written by **Michelle Morris** (introduction by **Kevin Brain**)

MARATHON
DES SABLES



Now, I don't know what your idea of fun is but mine does not include travelling to the Sahara to run a marathon every day for six, yes six, days during the height of the mid-day sun, while carrying all my own provisions. Indeed on one of the days contestants run two marathons and their reward is to bed down with scorpions and snakes for companions in the middle of the desert and get up the next day and start again. I find it hard enough to do a parkrun on a summer's day. Well, some people are made of much sterner stuff and at Baildon we have a few such hardy souls.

Michelle Morris, our very own Wonder Woman, recently completed the Marathon de Sables. This is a truly staggering achievement.

Otherwise known as the toughest footrace on earth the race website describes the Marathon de Sables as follows: the race is a gruelling multi-stage adventure through a formidable landscape in one of the world's most inhospitable climates - the Sahara desert. The rules require you to be self-sufficient, to carry with you on your back everything except water that you need to survive. You are given a place in a tent to sleep at night, but any other equipment and food must be carried. The race covers 156 miles and is the equivalent of running five and a half marathons in five or six days. Bet you all want to do it now!

It makes being waterboarded in Guantanamo sound fun. In fact, come to think of it, I bet you dream of being waterboarded when doing this race.

So what is it like and how on earth does anyone manage to survive? Below, Michelle gives here account of the race and her own amazing achievement. Over to you Michelle.

Marathon des Sables was more than just a race. It was incredible. There is so much I could tell you about it, but here is an overview!

During a six hour coach ride from Ouarzazate airport in Morocco to the start point of the race we were presented with 'the roadbook'. The coach avidly scanned the book, I think many to see how long the longest day in the history of the race would actually be (92km)!

Eventually we pulled off the road, into the darkness.....with head torches on we made for the bivouac to find our home for the week. Tent 115 'Yorkshire tent' turned out to be a very happy place. The eight of us shared highs and lows and made fantastic memories - some painful - together.

So, these are the distances which we tackled and a few of the high and low points of each day.

Stage 1 - 36.2 km (22.6 mile)

At daybreak we were informed of a new time zone 'race time'. It was actually only 6am when we thought it was 7am. That left 3 hours till the start. Before we set off we formed a 30 shape to represent the 30th anniversary of the race. You can just see the Yorkshire flag in the bottom right of the zero. Then there was 30 minutes of race briefing/welcome from race organiser Patrick Bauer - in French. The English translation lasted about 1 minute. Good luck - stay safe! John and I got separated from the rest of our tent and ended up starting with some of our tent neighbours. We slowly caught and passed all our tent mates. Jay ran with us for a while. It took at least an hour to catch Fe and Simon. The stage started flat with some small climbs throughout the day. Tent mates Paul and Ben passed us again in a check point while we were having a routine change of socks (blister prevention). We later caught them again and spent an hour or so all together. Day one finished with a climb and a descent into camp. We ran strong into the finish. All of tent 115 back safe and not long between us.





Stage 2 - 31.1 km (19.4 mile)

This stage was stunning. A flat start and then a big climb. 360 panoramic views from the top. The scenery so dramatic and big. We soon had a river crossing and then a proper dune which turned into another big climb. We then set off in the now heat of the day across a huge plain surrounded by mountains. After a few miles we could see a check point, still miles away - there was a helicopter there which looked like something out of a kinder egg (so far away!). As we got closer we could still see no way out of this 'bowl' which we were in. But then we could see - along the right ridge of this dune and over the top! I reverted to a kid on an adventure and the excitement combined with knowing the finish was over the other side meant that I ran ahead of John. The descent was brilliant, rough like a Yorkshire fell, before a few km of little dunes which were lots of fun to 'surf' down. I finished the day with another Yorkshire participant and arrived back 3rd from tent 115. This was my favourite day of the race.

Stage 3 - 36.7 km (22.9 miles)

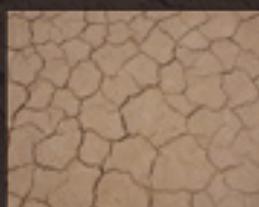
Wow - it was hot today. Really hot. The morning had lots of rocky terrain which was very runnable. Then we had to cross a huge cracked lake bed, before traversing plenty of dunes.

Again we finished with a decent climb and a descent to the finish. This time though the big climb wasn't the last climb and over the summit there was another one! I decided I wanted to try and finish in the same time as the first day, so cracked on in the heat over the last few km, finishing only slightly behind the first day time, but much higher up the positions.

Again we spent plenty of time taking photos and I think JB even thought he was on his holidays!

Stage 4 - 91.7 km (57.3 miles)

What can I say about this? We started in 40 mph winds up a huge sand dune, not conducive to running so we conserved energy. The descent was awesome and made up for the hellish hour it took to get there! The wind settled a bit but it was tough going to CP1, so more walking. The windy weather meant I missed my morning cuppa. Once I realised that was probably the cause of my lethargy, I popped some caffeine nuuns and felt much better. The day passed. The heat was immense in the middle of the day. Sunset was beautiful. We were by a ruin as the sun went down. It was really stunning. At the same time, we stumbled on camel carcasses and to quote a fellow northern runner "even camels can't survive here"! At 7pm head torches were compulsory and glow sticks were activated. Now we followed yellow glow sticks of people and green glow sticks of markers. After dinner at a check point and a scary encounter with a camel spider (like a scorpion but white), we pressed on. Dunes. Lots and lots of dunes. Hours and hours of dunes. Amongst the dunes was a checkpoint with deckchairs and sultan tea. It was so welcome but we didn't stop long. At the next checkpoint we befriended Mark whose GPS emergency tracker had failed. The three of us trudged on like zombies through the night. Sunrise brought hope and life again. My legs which were agony with fatigue felt better. We were greeted by camels on what seemed like camel race track. Somehow we ran together the last km to the finish. It was nearly 7am. We needed extra direction to find the bivouac! It was in the same place as usual! Ben and Paul were already asleep. We were next back. Quick recovery shake, wash, change and sleep. 2 hours later I was awake and my legs were throbbing despite me sleeping with them raised on my bag. I got up and walked back to the finish line and sat wrapped in my sleeping bag watching people finish. It wasn't until the afternoon that the remainder of our tent mates arrived back. I enjoyed the rest day and ate 3 meals which was a treat! Even better, we all got a can of cold coke in the afternoon. At 8pm ish we all went to watch the last runners cross the line.....





Stage 5 - 42.2 km (26.4 miles)

The marathon stage. Today we started early, about 7:20 by the time Patrick had wished us all well. It was cooler and I felt great. So did JB and Ben. We ran together. We ran well all the way to CP2. No conserving energy up hill or in dunes. We just ran, except when we stopped for photos with wild camels! The ground was uneven and rocky but hard - perfect for a runner from Yorkshire! At CP2 I urged my running buddies to go ahead. I was fading and they were strong. It was nice to have time alone in some very pretty and quite large sand dunes. This is when the emotions hit. I had less than 15km till the end of the Marathon des Sables and I felt good. I was going to do it!! After a few km of choking back the tears whilst walking and soaking it all in I started to run again. I passed people, including Graham Bell (he might have led me by a long way all week but now I was beating a former Olympian in a marathon!!). I encouraged my tent neighbour as we went into the last 5km. It was never ending but I just kept running! My recently (a mind game with myself in the final few km of the race to motivate me to keep running) set target being to beat my time from day 2 (which was 10km shorter). The finish didn't arrive. My Garmin said 42 km and no finish in sight. I stopped looking at the garmin and kept running. Eventually I summited a rise and the finish was there - only a few hundred metres more. I crossed the line. I had finished the marathon des sables!!



I missed my fastest stage time by a few minutes but I was ecstatic! All my tent mates finished too. That evening we were given a can of beer and we celebrated together. We did it!

And then we had to do the Charity stage - 11.5 km (7 miles) - this is not officially part of the MdS but it was compulsory! We were still in self sufficiency mode too so still no shower in sight. For this day we were all given a clean t shirt! As a tent we walked together. It was so good to be with the team who I had shared this journey with.

Since I have been back there have been a few reoccurring questions that I am asked, so in case you are wondering too:

How do you feel? Are you aching?

I have been super tired, but no aches and pains to report. I am feeling about back to normal now.

Did you get to meet Ranulph Fiennes?

Ran was in the tent next door but one so we saw him most days. He seemed a very lovely man. Here is a picture with Ran and his coach Rory at the start on the first day.



Was it really 'the toughest footrace on earth'?

During the long stage I realised that yes it probably was! The culminative effect of the previous days running, sleeping under canvas in the wind and the calorie deficit combined with an absolutely hellish route was pretty punishing. That said, I haven't completed any of the other races also claiming this title, so can only conclude that it was certainly tough.

Did you get blisters?

A small one on my little toe. This is it on the bus ride back to Ouarzazate. It popped in the shower at the hotel and disappeared for good.

Would you do it again?

Absolutely! The camaraderie of camp life was unbelievable. I have laughed so much. Race organisation was spot on (aside from lots of queueing) and the scenery was out of this world.....But I am in no rush - there are plenty of other places to go and see first....

So what's next? How will you top this?

I don't know yet! For now, I am going to enjoy the sofa and relish in the feeling of completing the Marathon des Sables.



DIARY OF A RELUCTANT CLUB RUNNER

Written by **Kevin Brain**

I've just blown up a crisp packet and popped it. I wanted to start with a bang. Well, it is the first issue of the inaugural Baidon Runners Magazine and my first diary column since my restraining order has come to an end.

Monday 27 Feb

My young boy thinks he is a chicken, he runs round the house flapping his arms and pecking at the floor. He has been like this for weeks. I wonder if he has been cooped up in the house for too long. Friends say we should get him treated. We would but we need the eggs (Woody Allen fans will realise I have shamelessly nicked his joke here).

I run up to Baidon Moor thinking I'm a runner. I paint myself green and tie myself to a cane. Apparently, I think I'm a runner bean. Gail says I need treatment. She sprays me with insecticide. I wake up three days later feeling better. I'm six inches taller (yes I'm now 3ft 6) and ready for shelling. I have a ravenous appetite. Luckily we have a load of eggs in the cupboard.

Friday 3rd March

I'm thinking of becoming a coach. Last week I took 12 pensioners on a day trip to Blackpool. They enjoyed it but my back is killing me. I think I've got the wrong definition of a coach. That's the problem when you were taught to read with alphabetti spaghetti. You end up with a really poor vocabulary, although the first two words I could put together were clinically obese.

Sunday March 5

I run in the final winter league race. I develop a theory about how you can judge how good a runner is. It is all to do with the amount of clothing you wear to run in. Basically, the faster you can run the less you wear because you can generate enough body heat to stay warm in a race. The best runners wear the least. Our own running great, Quentin Lewis is in shorts and a string vest (apparently it prevents jogger's nipple). Even if I did not know Quentin I would know he was a great runner because he is wearing shorts and vest but it is minus 5 and beginning to snow. Well he is either a great runner or a Geordie on a night out. Chris Longstaff (whose surname sounds like he should be a medieval knight or a porn star) is wearing a thong and Ben "cocaine" Watson is in a mankini. They must be great runners. By contrast, I have on:

- merino wool baselayer top and leggings X2
- fleece tops x2
- saloppettes
- a down jacket
- gortex jacket
- 4 season sleeping bag
- 3 pairs of mittens
- Balaclava
- Bob hat
- scarf
- hot water bottle

I'm still freezing.



Kevin dressed for the Winter League Final Race

Monday 6th March

I'm wondering what on earth to write for the magazine. I have two headlines for the front cover of the magazine. One based on my brilliant start to the final winter league race. Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you all about that so here is my first coaching lesson - how to start a race.

Well you turn up nice and early. Then you meet a bloke you know from your child's football training. You swap a few social pleasantries, polite chit chat and then the bloke asks "are you a runner?". "Yes" I say, "that is why I'm long and green because I'm a runner bean". Just like all of you he doesn't laugh. Just like all of you he will never speak to me again! He then says "are you in this race then?". "Yes", I say, "I'm just warming up". He points out that all the other runners seem quite warm already as they have all run off. I turn around to see the whole bunch of winter league competitors run off toward Baildon moor. I turn and hit the ground waddling in the opposite direction to the runners. I'm sure this is not how to start a race. I see the startled face of a marshal as a sleeping bag wearing a bob hat and mittens comes running toward him. I see the big grin spread over his face as the sleeping bag promptly goes head over heels and disappears into a sink hole. I finally escape and surprise a couple more hapless marshals by crossing the start line as if I have just finished the race. For a brief moment they think they have witnessed the greatest running performance of all time, at least by a man in a sleeping bag. Then they realise I am just an idiot who has turned up late to the start. I re-cross the start line and try to catch up to the back markers but God it is hard to run in all these clothes and a sleeping bag. I look like a giant caterpillar.

I finally pass a couple of stragglers. As I do, I dream of glory. I see myself effortlessly moving through the field. I see the headline and picture which will grace the front cover of this magazine. The picture has me crossing the finishing line hands held aloft with the headline "Baildon men come from behind". For a brief, fleeting moment I cover myself in glory. I then fall and cover myself in shit. What the hell, on reflection, the headline would never have worked anyway and as for it being the new logo on the running tops...

Never mind, I have another headline based on the amazing success of the ladies in the final winter league race. We feature one of our winning ladies team with the headline "Baildon belle ends on high". Hold on, that doesn't sound quite right does it...There goes another headline and as for it being the new logo on the running tops...

April 1st

I decide that I will go away for a week to Dorset. My family ask if I can make it two weeks as they are not coming with me. We are going to stay on a farm. I might get a bit of coastal running in and my little boy will love the chicken run. I pack my running gear and the case is full - maybe I could leave the sleeping bag, one of the pair of mittens and a scarf. I'm sure it will be warmer down south. Still better not count my chickens before they are hatched.

April 6th

A new superhero is born. There is a fire on the A35 in Dorset. A pub burns down and the road is completely blocked off. All the bank holiday traffic heads off down a single lane track. Chaos ensues with tailbacks, logjams and increasingly irate holidaymakers trapped in cars in what turns out to be a really hot day. Suddenly from one of the cars a man steps out dressed in bright red top and blue shorts. His top seems to have letters on the front. He must be a super hero. What does his top say on the back? Is that Superman? Off he runs faster than the speed of, well, an asthmatic snail. He zooms up and down the road, as only an asthmatic snail can, stopping cars and creating a traffic flow. Women swoon, grown men cry and children cheer "Go Baildon Runner Man, Go". Well, that is what happens in my head. In reality, one irate bloke calls me a "knobhead" and then the police arrest me for impersonating a traffic officer. This is nothing like the Marvel Avengers film!



"Eye witness captures only known footage of Baildon Runner Man"

April 12th

Back from Dorset. No reports in the papers about a super hero spotted down South. I slip back into ordinary life, my secret safe. No one at the running club will ever know.

Now, where is my young boy? Omelette for tea!

April 17th

Teams confirmed for the Calderdale Way Relay. I am running on one leg. This does not seem fair as everybody else seems to be allowed to run on two legs. Must practise my hopping.

May...

Practise hopping...feeling confident I will be well prepared for the Calderdale Way Relay. Ask coach Ian for some drills - he gives me a Black and Decker masonry drill. Not sure how this will help. Will let you know in my next Diary column.

COMPETITION TIME

With summer just around the corner we're entering the holiday season when some of us will be jetting off to warmer climes, or just enjoying the great British Summer (or so the tabloids always tell us...). So we thought it might be nice to have a little photo competition over the summer months. Wherever you go - a beach in Spain, Coliseum in Rome, Trekking in the Himalayas or just a wet weekend in Whitby you will have packed your running gear anyway, right? I mean it might be a long way to the nearest pub!

To enter, all you need to do is send a photo of yourself or another club member wearing an item of Baildon kit in a scenic location, to **baildonrunners@yahoo.co.uk** and put "Magazine Competition" as the subject. If it's not you in the photo please tell us who it is along with the date and location of the photo. There will be a suitable prize for the winner and we'll publish the best shots in a later edition of the mag. Closing date for entries is 30th September 2015 after which the **Editorial Team** will pick their favourite. We're looking forward to seeing where you've been. Happy snapping folks!

RUNNING AND AGEING OR THE ART OF GETTING FASTER WHILE GETTING SLOWER AND OLDER

Written by **Kevin Brain**

There are some general physiological changes that occur with age. For example, we lose a certain amount of muscle mass and strength. We tend to lose speed and flexibility and our balance changes. Women who go through menopause may be more susceptible to losing bone density and at greater risk of osteoporosis. Thought it would appear that the gap between men and women in terms of running times decreases with age over distance. Recent studies suggest that we may lose between 1 and 3 seconds per mile per year. While estimates vary, what is surprising, perhaps, is not how much but how little we may slow down.

While average times are interesting there is a huge degree of variation between individuals and our life styles and wider socio-demographic characteristics make a huge difference. Also, what we do in the here and now matters hugely.

There is an old aphorism – we don't stop playing because we get older, we get older because we stop playing. There is a deal of wisdom in this. Not in the sense that we can defy the passing of time or limits of our bodies – nobody, as yet, has escaped death (at least in this life!), but in the sense that many of the effects of ageing are not absolute. They vary depending on genetic inheritance, lifestyle, socio-demographic characteristics and psychological state and, crucially, how we train as we get older. This means we can moderate some of the effects of ageing.

For example, as we get older we can both recognise and compensate for the effects of changes in our muscle mass, bone density, balance and recovery rate by changing how we train. It might be better, for example, to focus more on quality rather than quantity, to vary our exercise more and to focus a little more on strength and flexibility. To a degree, we can compensate for loss of muscle mass and strength by exercise which focuses on strength and power. Weight training, circuits and plyometric exercise can all be good here. Our loss of flexibility and balance can be compensated for by stretching exercises, warming up and cooling down properly and doing classes like yoga.

Perhaps the biggest change we can make, however,

is in the way we view our running. One of the joys of running is that we can adjust our targets for different age categories and experience the seeming paradox of getting faster while getting slower and older.

What do I mean by this? Someone who starts running in their early fifties will get faster if they train for this over the first few years of their running career. If you start running at 50 and run your fastest 5K at 52 you got faster as you got older. This, of course, is because you start from a history of no running. Now, it is true that your 5K PB at 52 will be slower than the 5K you could have ran at 32 if you had started training when you were 30. But, of course, this didn't happen. You are faster at 52 than at any previous age. The actual running time at 52 is all that exists, the potential running time at 32 is neither here nor there because it never materialised.

Great news so far. So what about by the time you are 60? Well, it may well be that you start to slow a little. Perhaps your 5K time never quite approaches your PB at 52 but you can now enter a new age category. Not only can you get a PB for this age category 60 -65, but you can set your targets around this PB and, as you come up to 65, work on setting a new PB for 65-70. Again, paradoxically, you are getting faster as you get slower and older.

Moreover, whatever age you are your times over a short period of 6 months or a year will vary. This means that whether you are 25 or 75 you can aim to run faster than the time you set last week or last month or last year. Again, you may well experience getting faster as you get older because your 5K run in July was faster than the one you did in June.

A further way in which it is possible to get faster as you get older is to run in different types of race. This can be different in distance, terrain or both. So, If you have never done a fell race and you are in your mid- fifties then you can now set your fastest time for this fell race.

Really, for those who want to challenge themselves in this way, there is absolutely no reason why we cannot get faster as we get older. We just have to be capable of adjusting our running.

WINTER LEAGUE A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO MUD, SWEAT AND CHEERS

Written by **Geraldine Ray**

I know what you're thinking...Winter league is so last season! Well you could have fooled me on Tuesday in mid April when 8 hardy souls were doing off road parlauf in 40 mile an hour winds! I can even let us off lightly... Or maybe that's just a rumour. Anyway, now the pain of the 5 races is just a memory and the Summer League is under way, I can look back on my first Winter League knowing I'm safe until next Winter! So this is how it all began...

"Do the Winter League" Sue said, "it's fun!". Ok I thought, why not, I'll give it a go. I duly turned up at Dewsbury feeling nervous....rain, hail, freezing cold, mud...and that was just at the start. I should have realised what the course designers had in store when we set off and there was a loop round the field just to include an extra hill, because honestly there really weren't enough in the course already! Then followed hills, mud, stiles galore (a chance to catch up) and freezing cold wind.

Half way round I lost sight of all those in front of me and found myself alone in a bleak, cold field wondering why the hell I wasn't still asleep in bed and desperately looking out for a white flag (no not surrender, I'm a Baildon Runner, a course marker!). It's really quite an unnerving experience. Then, hooray, I see a flag going up the hill to the left (no surprise there then)....and then I see another flag going downhill to the right...eek. I reach the junction and head right (ever the optimist) and I catch a glimpse of a runner disappearing round a corner ahead...phew! Over all the toughest 4 miles I've ever done. The things you do for a lollipop stick, and you don't even get to keep it!

The day of race 2 dawned crisp and bright. After a long (warm) queue for chips (unfortunately not the fried kind) we all huddled together at the start for warmth. We set off along the icy course with the sun shining through the trees. I'd been warned this was a tough course with a part of the trail through a stream (well it cleaned some of the mud off my shoes) but somehow the sunshine spurred me on and bizarrely I quite enjoyed myself. The hardest part was how slippery the course was, quite icy, especially on the Tarmac. At the halfway point I again found myself running alone, I almost forgot I was in a race, but with plenty of marshals I made it back in one piece. The best part about being one of the slower runners is that you get a cheering committee at the finish! 2 down, 3 to go!

Having quite enjoyed Stainland I arrived at Keighley for race 3 with a sense of anticipation. Maybe this Winter League thing isn't so bad after all...oh yes it is! 3 long, confusing, muddy, hilly, slippery, and did I mention hilly and muddy, laps later, my shoes at least 2lb heavier than at the start, I finally neared the finish. Baildon's top supporter, Malcolm Sharp, was at the top of one of the hills cheering us on and shouting good advice "open your legs, let go" (well it sounded perfectly reasonable at the time). With Malcolm's encouragement ringing in my ears I dug deep and managed not to get overtaken at the finish, cheered on by the other Baildon runners, thanks I needed it! I understand there is a picture of me in that race smiling. Just for the record it's a grimace. Enough said.

The other notable point about Keighley was that, being a 3 lap course, I was overtaken by the faster runners. Quite an eye opener - so that's how it's done, I thought, as Emma Stoney leapt past me gazelle-like on a steep, muddy decent and still had the energy to shout words of encouragement as I dug deep and almost broke into a standstill.

Race 4, Temple Newsam. Following the quite frankly gruelling Keighley race, another sleepless night ensued. I scraped ice from my windscreen then the morning became sunny and not too icy...maybe there's hope... After the obligatory trip to the toilet (good venue, unlike Dewsbury where there was a queue for 1 outside loo in which 3 ladies allegedly died of hyperthermia) we gathered nervously at the start. Noticeably fewer people here despite the sunshine and promise of an "easier" course. The paths (note, paths not fields) were relatively flat and well surfaced and only a little mud (must be getting used to this). Beautiful scenery and we turn into a wide avenue and a sudden view towards the house....all I need is a horse and carriage to take me to Mr Darcy...OK enough of that, well anything to distract myself from the hill and the aching muscles. I pass a few walkers, going up the hill, they really should have slowed down a bit! I find I'm actually enjoying this one, what a pleasure.

So, as these races seemed to be alternating between bad and good, I fully expected race 5 at Baildon to be a freezing, hilly, mud fest. Quentin's hand drawn route map didn't exactly reassure me, perhaps ignorance is bliss! Anyway the morning of the race was windy but sunny so it didn't look too bad. Unfortunately the race wasn't in the morning...it was in the afternoon. By the time we gathered at the start it was freezing cold and raining. We stood on the moor, a bedraggled, sorry looking group of runners, huddled together for warmth. I was actually glad to get going just to warm up. The route was predictably hilly but not too muddy and would have been quite scenic had it not been for the horizontal rain, sleet and snow (well it is the winter league I suppose). It was great being on home turf with plenty of cheers from the marshals for the Baildon runners. I particularly loved the downhill finish. The marshals all deserved medals that day for standing around. At least the runners could get warm. I crossed the line and grabbed my lolly pop stick. I think Dan may secretly collect them. As I handed it to him I swear his eyes lit up and I could see him thinking, "77, I haven't got that one". Well either that or he was just bloody freezing and he was thinking "thank god, the last Baildon runner, now I can get to the bar". Never has a pint of lager and an Aero tasted so good.

So, is the Winter League fun? Well Sue, I'm not sure I'm ready to call it fun yet, but despite that I inexplicably kept turning up. Will I be back for more next year? Definitely!

Things every beginner should know:

1. A little muddy = knee deep
2. Undulating = 400m hills with slippery mud and/or ice
3. Never believe anyone who says "it's the last climb"
4. Should you have a go = definitely!



HELP! I WANT TO RUN FASTER - COACHING CLINIC

Written by **Ian Ferris**

Running faster has two benefits. If you're competitive you can gloat in the satisfaction of beating a rival and/or gaining a PB and, if you're not competitive, the faster you run the sooner it will all be over!

Your running velocity is the product of your cadence (frequency of your steps) and your stride length. You can also think of it as a function of your flight time (how long you are off the ground) plus your contact time (how long you are on the ground).

Let's first look at the flight phase. Your flight is limited by the initial velocity and factors such as gravity and air resistance. To lengthen the flight requires more force on take-off which results in a higher flight, a longer flight and finally, more force on landing. As your strides lengthen you'll land with your leg ahead of you which produces a braking effect (if you recall your school physics you'll know that every action has an equal and opposite reaction). Generally, you will find you have a natural stride length and, typically, trying to alter it just results in more braking and slower running.

So, after that not particularly helpful start, what about the contact phase? Can we do anything about this? Regulars at the structured training on Tuesdays and Saturdays are well educated in the use of quick fast feet and the advocated cadence. Trying to change the stride frequency too much can result in less ground force being applied and produce a less economical runner but, by and large, many club runners should aim for a higher rather than lower stride frequency rate.

The contact length is how far you (your centre of mass) moves forward during ground contact and is related to leg length and re-use of energy. Coaches talk in terms of "stiff springs" which is the capture and return of energy on landing rather than leakage of energy. One reason for the dominance of the East African runners is their longer tendons (springs). To understand this concept think of how much easier it is to run on tarmac compared to sand. Tarmac returns energy (i.e. you bounce) whereas sand retains energy (i.e. you sink in). You may also have heard of the Stretch Shortening Cycle (SSC) which, as related to this article, is a pre-stretch (eccentric contraction) of your leg muscle immediately before landing and the subsequent shortening (concentric contraction). If this sounds a new concept then stand up now, try to jump on the spot and it should become clear.

As we've seen we can't change leg length but we can influence contact length with flexibility, strength & posture, elasticity and fibre type composition; albeit the last is mostly genetic. These factors can be improved through a program of non-functional and functional exercises (space doesn't permit so this will need to be a future article).

We've looked briefly at the flight and contact phases and in essence to get faster what we need to do is exert force more quickly during ground contact.

Training speed takes in the region of 6 to 8 weeks and like any coaching plan is based on the SAID principle. SAID stands for “Specific Adaptation to Imposed Demands” and is based on the reaction to applying stressors or stimuli to the body. You may well be familiar with too much stress (overtraining leading to injury, fatigue and lack of enjoyment) or too little stress (training isn’t really sufficient to test your body, meaning you see no improvement). An optimal training stimulus is between these extremes and one where you see adaptations and become fitter, stronger and faster.

Coaches plan and control training stress by varying the volume (how long and how often you run), the intensity (how hard you run) and the recovery (within a session, between sessions, rests between competitions based on the periodization of training). If you’ve attended the track sessions at UAK you will be able to identify some of these factors.

Desirable adaptations to be a faster runner include:

- More forceful muscle without an increased muscle mass
- Stronger, more elastic tendons and fascia
- Improved neural firing patterns (think of this as “skill”)

These adaptations can be taught through a progressive plan moving from standing to walking to running drills. These drills start by developing posture and balance, then rhythm and timing and strength and power. The emphasis is on practising the correct running mechanics, focusing on quality not speed and practising accelerating and change of pace. Activities such as Pilates and plyometrics (I would however suggest to only do these if you are very sure you know what you are doing as there is a high risk of injury) both translate well to running. Remember that if you can’t maintain posture and balance standing then you won’t be able to do it running and if you can’t balance when running you’re going to be much less efficient and find it much harder.

Whilst I’d like to share an example drill plan as used by one of our England internationals unfortunately space doesn’t permit so, like the non-functional and functional exercises this will also need to be a future article.

Ian Ferris

Ian is an England Athletics coach qualified in Endurance, Sprinting and Fell Running

AHEAD OF THE Q

AN INTERVIEW WITH QUENTIN LEWIS

Written by **Kevin Brain**

Look through the list of records for Baildon Runners and you will find that if Quentin Lewis has run the race he will probably hold the record. While there have been, and are currently, many great runners at Baildon, it would be fair to say that Quentin is up among the best. In running terms, he is a class act. More annoyingly, he is also a really nice guy and, as you will find out from reading on, witty, intelligent and self-deprecating. I know, I hate him already too!

His PB times and race performances show that Quentin is not just a talented club runner but a genuinely class athlete. His 5K is around 15.46, his 10K 33.52, half marathon (done at the Isle of Arran) 1.15 and he has a 3.15 for the Yorkshireman Off Road Marathon.

He started running at school in about 1987 when he was about 12 or 13 because, as he puts it, "what else would you have done to escape rugby at Bradford Boys". Although he won't admit to being better than average "what's average?" he argues, he does concede that he did better than he thought in his first race round Heaton Woods. So, he showed early promise, though he claims to have fluctuated violently for the next 28 years.

Typically, he likes tough runnable off road races like class B fell races or trail races. When asked why, he says that this is for a million reasons including:

- I have short legs and bad knees
- I have an agricultural running style that seems suited to going upwards
- I don't like roads

He goes on to say that 7 miles seems to suit him as his ideal race distance but he has no idea why.

As he now enters his fifth decade (Quentin was 40 earlier this year) he has a long successful running career he can look back on. So, what does Quentin consider his greatest running achievements? He is reluctant to concede he has any achievements or to list them, though he does say that he "loved winning the Bradford Schools XC U-15 Championship at Northcliffe. "The lad who came second had already raced 5 miles in the morning for Pudsey and Bramley, Bradford City lost 7-2 to Watford, and I won 3 litres of Stones Bitter in the raffle and was violently ill" he recalls. (As we will see later, beer plays a big part in Quentin's life, just ahead, sorry behind, his wife and kids!).

In general, though, he argues that "it's impossible to classify achievements unless you live by the clock. If you can surprise yourself then that's great, and if you can see other people being surprised at you surprising yourself that's even better".

Reluctant though he is to analyse his own running, he thinks that if he has any strengths they lie in his determination and the fact that he loves running. He is much more eloquent when listing his weaknesses which in order are: short legs, bad knees, crap style, short concentration span, weakness for too much beer, excessive cheese consumption, inability to run down steep hills, wind resistant ears. >>>



Given that I have even shorter legs than Quentin (think of me being a hobbit compared to him being a Dwarf), worse knees, no running style, an even shorter concentrat...

Where was I? Oh, yes an even shorter concentration span and all of his other weaknesses it is a wonder I'm not challenging Mo Farrar. I think he is obviously missing something out of his strengths list. He does accept that while anyone who runs has mental toughness, "it is all relative and mental toughness is a lot easier if you're legs and lungs work well."

Quentin doesn't really follow a training programme. Nor does he work specifically on areas of strength or weakness. In a typical running week he would aim for 40 miles a week and anything above that would be a bonus. In part, time puts an inevitable limit on his training, especially when combined with work and, over the past few years, starting a family. Also, he has learned over the years that if he runs over 50 mile a week then his body begins to break down. So a key skill of being a good runner is to know your own body well and listen to it. Programmes of training must always be tailored to the individual.

As with most runners, Quentin has had his fair share of injury. "we're runners so we're always a bit injured!". Reflecting on the time he had a broken ankle he says "I just commuted 2 miles to university each way every day as fast as I could, on crutches, and grew a bionic right leg. Now I'm a lot faster on left handed courses". Though he now advises against trying to grow a bionic leg and just finding an aerobic alternative to running instead, when injured. Over his running career though, it is not physical injury he considers to have been the worst thing that has happened. Instead, he argues, "the worst injury i had was losing interest in my twenties (not literally, but in running) and he "wasted years getting back in shape". So, having been through this loss of interest, common I suspect to many of us who run, Quentin's top tip is "don't lose interest". You might also like to know that if he was ever on Mastermind his specialist subject would be the bleeding obvious!

As it goes, Quentin was injured at the time of the interview and struggling to run at all. But of course, he is older and wiser now than when he was a student. So, rather than trying to grow a bionic leg again, he is aiming to do 100 mile of cycling per week and having physio. "In an ideal world", he says, "we would all be doing yoga, weights, swimming, running and cycling and the physio's would be jobless". But, of course, life just does not allow time for this.

The one area where Quentin probably does pay particular attention to is nutrition. He is an expert on rehydration and carb loading. For carb loading he "always used to swear by Le Monde vegetarian pizzas with ham (for some reason it was cheaper than ham and mushroom with peppers)" and for rehydration " it is hard to argue against a pint of Saltaire Cascade to re-hydrate (at least briefly)."

As Quentin moves into his forties he has no plans to change the way he trains or the type of races he runs. Rather, he is just grateful to run any race he can and make the most of his running while he can. Over the next ten years he thinks that his running is in the hands of fate and that his only aim at the moment is to compete in next year's winter league.

Well, I, for one, could not imagine Baildon without Quentin. Even if injury or the demands of work and life take him away from running competitively, he has already proved himself a dab hand at course design, he has the ideal personality to make a good coach and could always be put in charge of club nutrition. Perhaps he could be persuaded to rejoin the committee. A look of sheer terror crosses his face, perhaps not!. Being a Baildon lad, Baildon was his first club and he has over the years put plenty of time into the club. Currently he is enjoying watching it grow. "it's great to watch it develop and attract scores of new people to running, and although I'm not competitive I'd like to see the club finish in the top 2 of the winter league before I pop my clogs". Well, the Baildon women's team area already pushing at the door and, if Quentin can stay fit, who knows what is in store for the men!

As the interview draws to a close I ask Quentin what he would be doing if he wasn't running "encouraging the Little Lewis' to run and stretch responsibly" he says. I ask him in what ways running has shaped his life and he says that "it has made him less round". This is typical Quentin. Witty, intelligent and self-deprecating, he seems reluctant to over analyse his running and to shy away from any spotlight on his running ability. This, of course, is one of the reasons he is such a likeable guy. He is easy going and down to earth and I suspect that ultimately Quentin knows that running is not about times or places, achievements or egos – it is about experiences. The experience of just being in your body and running and the pleasure this can give and the friendships it can bring. When asked why he runs Quentin does not pick out the joy of winning, the pleasure of competition or the thrill of being good at something. No, when asked why he runs, he just says "because it feels bloody brilliant."

A FAIRY IN THE WOODS?

Written by **Jeremy Smith**

This edition's short story is based on a true story. It recounts the unbelievable tale of a young man, let's call him "Jack" who was a keen runner, but also something of a nature lover and, some would say, a bit of a dreamer.

Background

So keen on running was Jack that he was a member of a top running club called Baildon Runners. Jack always entered key races and was particularly keen on his inter-club competitions, including the Summer Championship, a key part of which was the John Carr 5K series. Three races over the same 5K "ish" course on consecutive weeks in May.

Jack had trained hard for the 2015 event. In the weeks preceding he had changed the focus of his training especially, switching to short, hard fartlek sessions from the more endurance based fell and trail running.

The first event of the series had gone well for Jack, his plan to build slowly through the 3 weeks to deliver a monumental PB in race 3 was on course. Jack was content and in a good place.

However, on the 2nd of the 3 events, Jack had allowed "Jack the nature lover" a space in his thoughts, mid event. He had become distracted as he ran the course, noticing that the bluebells were blooming in the woods and that the woods were alive with birdsong. He had inadvertently allowed himself to revel in the natural and simple beauty of these things. As a result, at a critical point in his run, he had lost focus and concentration. This had cost him precious time, nearly a minute he calculated afterwards!

Jack was slightly aggrieved that his lack of focus had impacted his plan, but was comforted that he had the 3rd event to rectify the matter and he vowed to "deliver big time" at the final event. However, as a sensitive fella in touch with his inner self, he did not want to disappoint the nature lover in him and had decided that the overriding beauty of the surroundings was something he could not just ignore. So, a cunning plan was hatched to cater to both his loves on the same evening, delivering a glorious 5K result in race 3 and a new PB, along with a visit to Esholt woods, to appreciate nature at its very best.

So it came to pass that after another week of hard training and anticipation that Wednesday the 20th of May arrived, the timeline of that evening is now tracked below.

6.00pm Wednesday 20th May:

Jack was content, he had his evening meticulously planned and the weather was just perfect. He would set off to Esholt early and make for the woods to do some bird watching, delight in the blankets of bluebells and the general flora and fauna, and unwind in the sweet smell of the magical woods. He took his trusty nature notebook with him in which he would record some musings and make a few sketches of some of the flowers or wildlife he hoped to see). He then would descend out of the woods at 7.20pm to the start point, notebook secure in special pocket, supremely relaxed and ready for a violent attack on the 5K course.

6.45pm Wednesday 20th May:

All was going well, the air was clean, the sky clear, the sun rays were split into shards by the tree cover, casting a dappled light across the floor of the wood, multiplying the colour palette three fold. Even the wind, an issue for the runners, was a joy to Jack in the woods. The gusts rippled the leaves on the trees, changing the dappling effect constantly and sending waves across his bluebell sea. It was a true wonder, Jack was enraptured.

Then Jack noticed a flicker, perhaps even a flutter, his senses enhanced, he looked harder, there was flash of light 20 feet away. The flash seemed to hover. Jack's much renowned common sense kicked in. It was just an effect of the wind and the sun. But then it moved, almost danced and zigzagged through a glade. Jack followed, mesmerised, it glowed like a diamond, moving then hovering, did it have wings? It reminded Jack of the tiny humming birds he had seen on his favourite TV program, but this appeared even smaller and longer and, oh, how it glowed. Entranced, Jack closed in, his mind trying to kick away a nagging thought, surely this was not it, the thing he had dreamed of since aged 7 he'd read "Fairies in the Woods". He shook his head..... no that was for dreamers, but what if..... Jack called out softly but his voice drifted in the wind. Suddenly, a gust of wind stung his eyes, a cloud covered the sun and in a flash "the light" went out.

Jack had stopped breathing, he exhaled, he was sweating, his breathing heavy, had he just run the 5k in a dream? He shook himself down and looked around and confirmed he was in the woods, surrounded by bluebells and nettles. The sun was again strong, light and shadow bouncing across the woods, the whistling wind seemed to make the trees dance, it reminded Jack of his days in the clubs in Ibiza, lights flashing, waves of movement. What had he seen, was it a F..... no, they don't exist, just a trick of the light surely, but it was so real, so real.

Jack pulled himself together and vowed never to tell anyone about the events of the last 15 minutes. He still had time, he sat down on a moss covered tree stump and carefully made detailed notes and sketches of what he had seen, he had to have a record, just in case.

Jack checked his watch 7.15pm, 15 minutes to the off, time to go and show his club mates what he was made of and deliver a sub 21 minute 5k.

7.48pm Wednesday 20th May:

A dishevelled looking man in running gear stumbled out of the woods near the 4K marker-post, runners were streaming towards the finish. The bemused looking chap, clearly an athlete, dusted himself down, straightened his hair and, with dignity, began jogging to the finish line at the side of the passing racers.

8.00pm Wednesday 20th May:

Bypassing the finishing area to avoid confusion with race times, Jack circumnavigated to join some of his team mates

in the recovery area, over a mars bar and water, as they recounted their tales of the race.

Jack was quiet. A colleague asked how he had done. Jack looked a tad embarrassed, thought carefully and, after a pause, explained that part of his warm up strategy had been a run in the woods, but unfortunately he had been running so well, so fast indeed, that he had gone further than expected into the woods and got slightly lost. He explained that even though he had run even faster to try and retrace his steps, a few wrong turns here and there had resulted in him missing the start.

He did add, however, that he was actually quite pleased. His Garmin insisted he had run over 5k in under 21mins! All his friends nodded with sympathy and agreed that, if this was the case, then that was super effort for an off road 5k and a real shame because Jack was clearly in great shape and would have pulverised his 5K PB.

Jack smiled, he appeared to be in the clear, the chat continued and he patted his pocket for reassurance.....he patted it again.... and again. Panicking but not showing it, he quickly bid farewell to his fellow runners and jogged back up the road, where was his notepad?

His colleagues, slightly puzzled, waved, but why was Jack running back to Esholt?" It's his warm down" shouted Geoff, "ahhhhhh yes" everyone nodded.

8.45pm 20th May 2015:

Was it a dream? After 45 minutes of frantic searching in the woods, nature's beauty long gone in Jack's eyes, he gave up his search. Had it all been a dream?

8.46pm 20th May 2015: Esholt 5K results announcements:

A notebook was handed in to Saltaire Striders. It appeared at first glance to be a diary with sketches of someone's nature rambles over the last 2 months. The notebook of a secret nature lover, a dreamer perhaps. The only means of ID was the fact that it contained the initials "J B— Baildon Runner" and, crucially, had been found near the 4k marker of the recently completed John Carr 5K event.

8.55pm 20th May 2015:

The notebook was handed to a Baildon Runners committee member. The initials were quickly checked, only one JB and a rumour in circulation that a named athlete had missed the start of the race due to "directional issues". This added together with the place the book was found, well, it did not need Sherlock to work this one out. The notebook is now back where it belongs, but the story is out.