

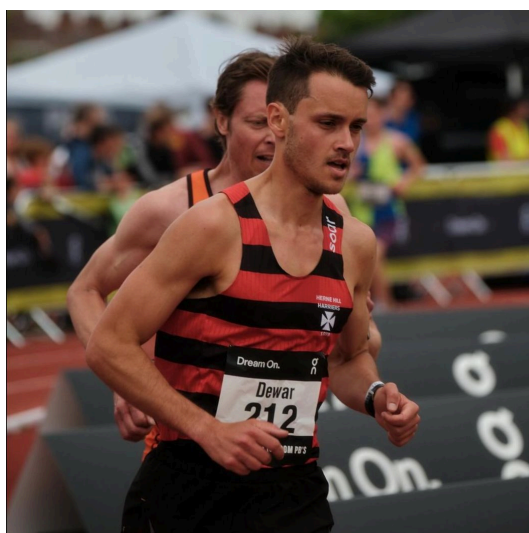
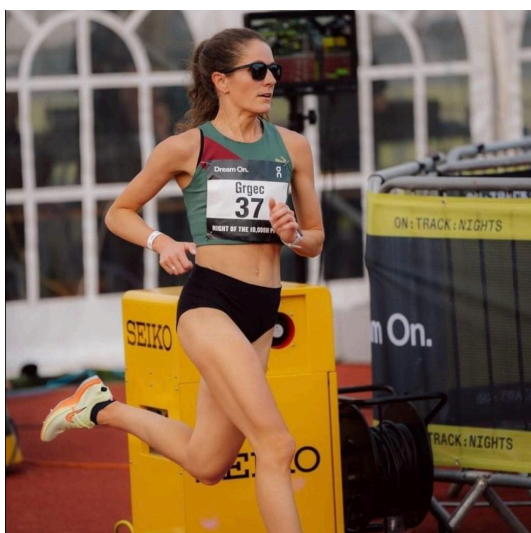


HERNE HILL HARRIERS HIGHLIGHTS

May 2024

Welcome to your monthly Newsletter – I hope you enjoy it. Athletes, coaches, team managers if you have any photos and achievements you would like include in future issues, please email me: glenkeeganhhh@gmail.com

Night of the 10K PBs





Pictures: Danny Easton

The Highgate Harriers 'Night of the 10K PBs' meeting was held on Saturday at Parliament Hill. This was an extravaganza of high-level club and world-class 10,000m track races.

The international flavour was illustrated by Georgie Grgec placing fourth in the second of the women's races behind athletes from Italy, Holland and Greece. Grgec reclaimed her Herne Hill women's club 10,000m record by clocking 32:43.18, following Phoebe Anderson's recent debut run which had first taken the mark below 33 minutes earlier in the month.

Her excellent run was an improvement of well over a minute on her previous track best for the 25 laps as she now seeks to bring her track performances in line with her stellar road and cross country exploits.

Four others raced in Herne Hill colours at Highgate. Brandon Dewar was 19th of 35 men in the second of the nine 10,000m races in 31:19.67. Lewis Laylee finished 22nd of 38 in the opening race of the day in 32:07.66.

In the third race, which was the first of the three women's races, debuts were made by Grace Leyland, 25th of 38 starters in 37:58.38 and Jenny Nandi, 28th in 38:15.08.

There were also 800m races for younger athletes and Keeran Sriskandarajah placed 10th in a fast U20 race clocking 1:52.89. **Geoff Jerwood**

Katie Snowden achieves Olympic standard



Picture: Noble Boutin

There was a strong track season opener for Harriers' English women's 1,500m record holder Katie Snowden on Saturday.

Seeking to test her form after completing a block of endurance training at altitude in Arizona, Snowden ran 4:00.89 for eighth place in a stellar field at the Los Angeles Grand Prix meet. This was also an Olympic qualifying time and

moves her to pole position in the UK early season women's 1,500m rankings for 2024.

Her next big race will be over the same distance at this weekend's Nike Prefontaine Classic Diamond League meeting in Eugene, Oregon. **Geoff Jerwood**

Beautiful beyond belief. Savage beyond reason . . .





The Snowdonia mountains are an old, rugged, treeless range with rocky trails winding through the grasses, lakes and stones. These majestic mountains were also the scene of the Herne Hill Harrier ultras latest attempt at coping with their midlife crises. And if the mountains got too much, there were always the sheep...lots of sheep.

There were seven of us; track Tuesday veterans, who can also be found wheezing around a variety of south London parkrun, nursing injuries, comparing age gradings and dreaming of a sub 3-marathon.

The race was the UTS – the Ultra Trail Snowdonia, which offered up four distances: 25km, 50km, 100km and 100 miles – each with insane elevation and scary predicted times.

The HHH crew was led by Captain Ian Jack, an ultra-addict, who prepped for his 100-miler by running Boston and London marathons on successive weekends, ruining his feet in the process. El Presidente himself Glen Keegan was also towing the line, coming out of ultra retirement on the premise that he would be able to power walk the 50km run in time to beat the 14-and-a-half-hour cut-off.

There was Derek Lee, whose injuries over the years have reached legendary status, but still manages to notch rapid parkruns. He was tackling his first competitive run longer than a 10km and had offset his lack of experience with a huge upgrade in mileage, and regular trips to Box Hill. Derek was running the 50km alongside Paul Enright, who was flying the flag for Ireland and HHH, and whose super power was his abilities with running poles. Joining them in the 50km was Julian Bentham, who fuels himself with M&S quiche on every ultra, and Al Sadler, the best dressed of the bunch, who partied at the Brixton Disco Festival as part of his race taper programme. And finally, 100km entrant Mark Preskett, who had a haircut specially for the race.

What race-specific training we did consisted of rounds of Hell Hill, near Dulwich College, but little in the way of actual mountain training. Ian was the only one who managed a recce of Snowdonia and returned with tales of 45-minute miles, bogs, tortuous climbing, getting lost and mythical creatures. Paul also managed a 30km mountain run on a visit to the States, and immediately downgraded from the 100km to 50km race, leaving Preskett to fly the flag solo

for that distance (thanks Paul!).

So the seven descended on Wales, woefully undertrained and under-prepared but full of hope of conquering the mountains.

Well, let's cut to the chase. How did we do?

The score was 4 to HHH ultras, 3 to Snowdonia. Some beat the mountains, others came up short.

The highlight was Derek's performance, snagging the V55 win and a nice trophy, in a time of 10 hours and 4 minutes for what turned out to be a 55km, not 50km effort and 3,300m of elevation. This was good enough for 148th out of 789 runners. Next in was Julian, who was 386nd in 11 hours and 45 minutes, followed by Paul in 11 hours and 53 minutes (417th) and Al in 11 hours and 58 (425th).

And those who came up short? Ian Jack's effort will go down in the annals of the HHH ultras, reaching 133km after 34 hours but missing the cut off for the next mountain aid station at 1am in the morning on his second night. Glen was racing against the cut-offs the entire race, but pushed through the heat of the day all the way. And finally, Mark who was scuppered partly by lack of water at the 40km aid station but mainly by ruined quads.

I'll finish this write-up with some words from the some of the runners themselves.

Julian Bentham: "Definitely one of the best weekends of my life, much due to the company and camaraderie. Such a gruelling beautiful beast of a race. I spent the end of my 55km thinking there's no way I'll do the 100km in 2025, but now can't wait to go back and have a crack at it!"

Glen: "I always knew it would be tough to beat the cutoffs. I reached the first checkpoint with just seven minutes to spare. In my mind, I thought I could make up time on the next stage, but the second climb of Snowdon in the midday sun proved too much. I managed 38 km and 2100 meters of climbing. Will I be back?"

Paul: "The build-up to this race was fantastic. Great banter in the group, solo and group sessions on hell hill, loads of new kit and nervous energy was a highlight. A forced pitstop on the second climb to Snowdon summit for liquid and food in the mountain top cafe gave Super Hands (Jules) the ability to slip past me unnoticed. Totally up for the 100k next year and still dreaming of UTMB entry before I turn 50."

Mark: "I realised quite quickly that I had bitten off way more than I could chew with this one. I had read the 100km course was 'technical', not quite realising what this meant. The clambering and scrambling across rocks was insane. The climbs were slow going but it was the descents that killed me, and after 24km and six hours out there, I was cooked. There was no water at the 40km aid station, but I'd already decided to pull out at the halfway aid station by then. Made it there in 13h 30m; and will downgrade next year!"

And last but not least, Ian, whose summary I've taken from his excellent Strava

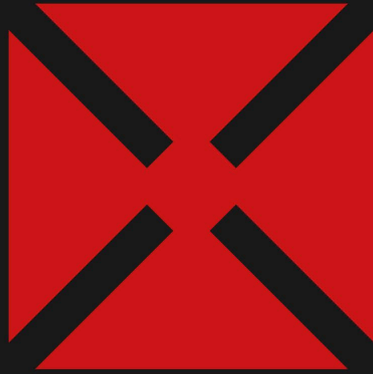
post: "Some good some bad. My feet took a real pounding, and blisters started to hurt around 60k in, making going downhill very painful. Got them popped and patched at 73k. Then those blisters got their own blisters, which was nice, so another two foot-maintenance stops required at 86k and 100k. Climbs were ok. It's not a running race. it's a hiking and climbing race with some sporadic flats (bogs). Whoever designed the course is a sociopath.

"First night was good, saw the northern lights and felt lucid. Hallucinations didn't start until about 30 hours into the race. On the last section I had 30 minutes to do the last 2k before the 1am cutoff, but it was so technical it was just one careful step after another and not fast enough. Once I realised I'd missed the cutoff, it was like my brain put my feet back in control of their own emotions and I was immediately hobbling. Took another hour and 10 mins to finish off the remaining 1k and get to the aid station."

So there you have it. HHH hit Snowdonia. As you can imagine, the overall DNF rate was pretty high – 62% for Ian's 100-miler! Definitely by far the hardest race any of us had run.

And a final mention to Andrew Clarke, from Geoff's speedster group, who absolutely smashed his first ultra in a time of 7 hours 57 minutes and 18th out the 789 runners, so just five-and-a-half hours slower than his London marathon effort! We only realised he was in Wales for the race when some of us bumped into him in the starters pen. Well done sir, a fantastic run. **Mark Preskett**

CELEBRATING 135 YEARS OF



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SATURDAY 9 NOV 2024, 7PM TO 2AM THE BEDFORD, BALHAM

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