

THE HARRIER

The Official Newsletter of Huncote Harriers Athletic Club

Issue Number 199

January 2021



The start of the AAA National Road Relay in April 1967 - Whetstone

The runners are on what was the old staff car park on the corner of Dog and Gun Lane and Cambridge Road. It is now the site of the new Baptist Church. The office block behind has recently been demolished and replaced by a large dull grey shed, however the fitting shops right at the back remain

2021 - Happy New Year

2021 has not got off to the greatest of starts. My headline was to be 'Club Training Resumes' but events have overtaken me before publication.

However we must make the best of our situation and not get too disheartened. We are allowed to meet up with one other person outside for exercise. Use this opportunity; it will help your fitness and your mental state of mind by adding structure to your day and give you energy to face the day. Embrace the weather whatever it throws at you just like some of our hardy Hash runners in recent weeks.

If you are struggling don't be afraid to call our Welfare Officer, Kate Parry or put a message out on our facebook page, someone will answer.

HUNCOTE'S NEWEST MEMBER SMASHES LADIES CLUB MARATHON RECORD

Gill Bland and her husband, Steve, have just moved to Huncote from London. Both were very active members of Harrow AC before recently joining Huncote Harriers. Gill has made a sensational impact on our Club by smashing the Ladies Club record for the Marathon.

The Oulton Park Grand Prix Series took place on Sunday 6th December 2020 around the Cheshire race circuit. Not the flattest of circuits and with 10 laps to complete, certainly not the straightest. Her gun to tape time was 2:53:33, knocking nearly 7 minutes off Nicki Nealon's time of 3:00:30 set in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 2008 and narrowly missing out on her own personal best time.

Gill has times of 1:24:22 for the Half Marathon and 38:24 for 10k, both set in 2019, so she is capable of making further in roads on the Club's all-time best list.

We look forward to meeting Gill and Steve on Club nights and hopefully some races too.

An Omission from the last Newsletter – The Virtual London Marathon 2020

2106 Lucy Carveth 3:27:40

Congratulations to Lucy on a wonderful virtual run. Originally missed from the results as she was not recorded as a Huncote Harrier



Gill Bland



Lucy Carveth

Huncote Harriers Grand Prix – Race 1 – November 2020

In your backyard 5k

The first race in our virtual GP Series. Thank you to Jane and Ben Benson once more for setting up this series, details of which were published in the previous Newsletter.

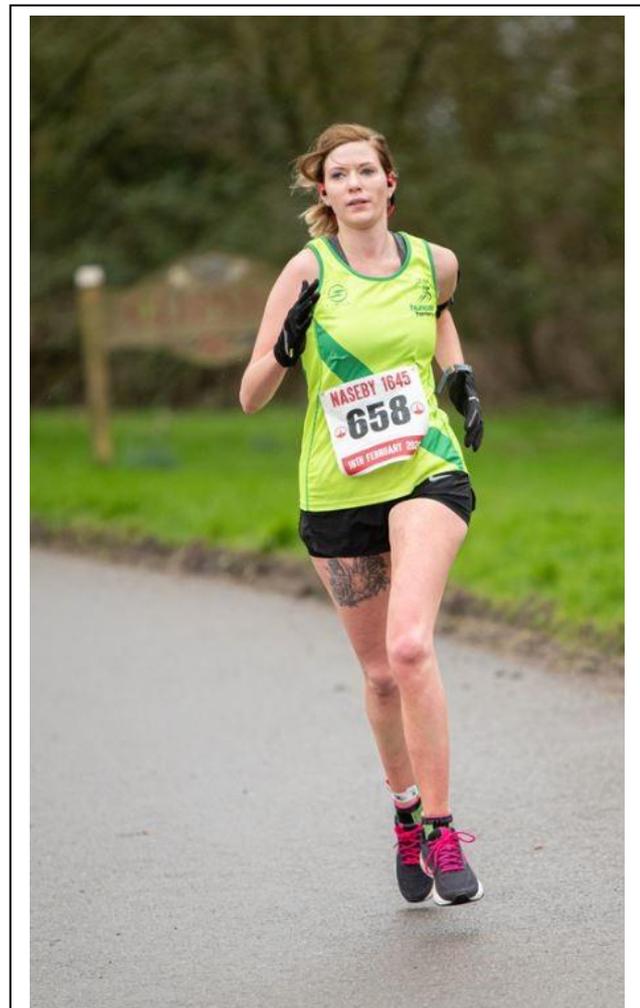
Sophie Cook has set the bar for the first race edging out Lucy Carveth and nice to see Sarah Pegg racing again. Quite a few new names here for me and apologies for not having photographs of the new faces but without regular races the news team have been unable to capture you all in action. Your time will come.

In the men's race, Andy Green continues to dominate on the road but only just keeping Kieran Flannery at bay. This was Kieran's last road run for the Harriers as he has now departed for his new home back in the grim north. Good luck to Lauren & Kieran, we wish you well for the future.

A mention too for Ben Benson who seems to be benefiting from lockdown, and continues to impress

Huncote Ladies

- 1 20:26 Sophie Cook
- 2 20:42 Lucy Carveth
- 3 21:02 Sarah Pegg
- 4 22:16 Gill Bland
- 5 23:16 Katrina Wightman
- 6 24:37 Lorna Gurr
- 7 24:40 Bev Parry
- 8 24:26 Sue Gardner
- 9 25:58 Katherine Dean
- 10 26:09 Kate Parry
- 11 27:44 Nicky Jones
- 12 27:53 Deb Hulbert
- 13 29:13 Julie Brown
- 14 29:21 Simona Salajan
- 15 29:49 Irene Scowen
- 16 30:46 Carol Maguire
- 17 31:02 Wendy Thompson



Sophie Cook

| | | |
|----|-------|-------------------|
| 18 | 31:48 | Judith Cox-Rogers |
| 19 | 32:39 | Sherry Rolls |
| 20 | 32:49 | Janine Dellar |
| 21 | 33:09 | Carrie Betts |
| 22 | 34:27 | Nicki Nicholls |
| 23 | 37:30 | Wendy Marsden |

Huncote Men

| | | |
|----|-------|-----------------|
| 1 | 18:04 | Andy Green |
| 2 | 18:13 | Kieran Flannery |
| 3 | 19:22 | Ben Benson |
| 4 | 19:31 | Kelvin Wilson |
| 5 | 19:43 | Steven Snow |
| 6 | 20:16 | Phil Woods |
| 7 | 20:58 | Ian Thompson |
| 8 | 21:11 | David Lawson |
| 9 | 21:12 | Andrew Spare |
| 10 | 21:45 | Dave Harry |
| 11 | 22:13 | James O'Dowd |
| 12 | 22:21 | Simon Pettet |
| 13 | 22:53 | Stefan Brakes |
| 14 | 22:53 | Mike McSharry |
| 15 | 23:15 | Tony Nicholls |
| 16 | 23:29 | Graeme Slight |
| 17 | 23:55 | Al Cosbie |
| 18 | 24:11 | Scott Madden |
| 19 | 25:12 | Simon English |
| 20 | 31:02 | Paul Nealon |



James O'Dowd

Derby Runner XC League – Prestwold Hall Sunday 13th December 2020

Three hardy Harriers entered this real race in real mud, Covid-19 secure and survived

U20/Senior Men

| | | | | |
|---|-------|-----------------|------|------------------|
| 1 | 24:25 | Skip Nelson | U20 | Banbury Harriers |
| 2 | 25:16 | John Tarrant | SM | Barrow Runners |
| 3 | 25:20 | Phil Chritchlow | MV50 | Beaumont Leys RC |

Huncote Harrier Men

| | | | |
|----|-------|---------------|------|
| 12 | 26:38 | Arron Cox | SM |
| 20 | 27:41 | Kelvin Wilson | SM |
| 28 | 30:24 | Duncan Smith | MV50 |

46 Finishers



HANDS – FACE – SPACE or as we know them; Duncan Smith – Arron Cox – Kelvin Wilson



Conquered - Croft Hill in the Virtual Hash

Huncote Harriers Grand Prix – Race 2 – December 2020

Huncote Hash

Well done to everyone who braved the Hash for our Grand Prix Series. This time there are REAL prizes, so congratulations go to Lucy Carveth - fastest woman with a superb 51:42, Ben Benson - fastest man in at 47:42 (amazing what he can do when there's wine involved!). Slowest winner goes to Wendy Marsden, you did it Wendy, well done! Our best and most appropriate fancy dress was lifeguard Katherine Dean and muddiest competitor (no surprises) was Sophie Cook.

Special prizes and our grateful thanks go to Sue Gardner for getting so many people round and the amazing (now Sir) Martin Tom Coley our superstar and Hash MACHINE!

Happy New Year all! X

Jane & Ben Benson

Ladies

| | | |
|----|---------|------------------|
| 1 | 0:51:42 | Lucy Carveth |
| 2 | 0:55:18 | Gill Bland |
| 3 | 1:03:00 | Katrina Wightman |
| 4 | 1:03:42 | Lorna Gurr |
| 5 | 1:04:24 | Wendy Thompson |
| 6 | 1:04:43 | Bev Parry |
| 7 | 1:04:54 | Sue Gardner |
| 8 | 1:09:36 | Katherine Dean |
| 9 | 1:15:24 | Carrie Betts |
| 10 | 1:17:30 | Deb Hulbert |
| 11 | 1:19:30 | Demi Tsekrekou |
| 12 | 1:20:00 | Janine Dellar |
| 13 | 1:20:00 | Davina Kaur |
| 14 | 1:20:00 | Carol Maguire |
| 15 | 1:20:00 | Vicky Orton |
| 16 | 1:20:00 | Cathrine Cramp |
| 17 | 1:24:25 | Julie Brown |
| 18 | 1:26:54 | Nicky Jones |
| 19 | 1:29:54 | Irene Forty |
| 20 | 1:30:18 | Sherry Rolls |
| 21 | 1:30:18 | Simona Salajan |



Typical Hash conditions

| | | |
|----|---------|---------------|
| 22 | 1:30:18 | Joanne Stark |
| 23 | 1:49:05 | Jenny Harrier |
| 24 | 1:49:06 | Wendy Marsden |

Men

| | | |
|----|---------|--------------------|
| 1 | 0:47:42 | Ben Benson |
| 2 | 0:52:00 | David Lawson |
| 3 | 0:52:54 | James O'Dowd |
| 4 | 0:52:42 | Ian Thompson |
| 5 | 0:54:00 | Phil Woods |
| 6 | 0:54:18 | Stefan Brakes |
| 7 | 0:55:32 | Graeme Slight |
| 8 | 0:57:42 | Simon English |
| 9 | 0:59:42 | Steve Nash |
| 10 | 1:00:06 | Al Cosbie |
| 11 | 1:00:06 | Leonard Symeonides |
| 12 | 1:02:30 | Russell Frost |
| 13 | 1:14:24 | Tony Nicholls |
| 14 | 1:17:30 | Paul Nealon |
| 15 | 1:20:00 | Satnam Singh |



Sir MTC with Clair Davis

THE WHETSTONE 5K RACE CIRCUIT – A 50 YEAR HISTORY

In the recent 'In your backyard Parkrun 5k', the first race in our Huncote Harrier Grand Prix Series, a number of Harriers used the Whetstone, Littlethorpe, Cosby circuit without realising they were running on such hallowed ground. Starting in 1962 and ending in 2013, the circuit was the oldest, most regularly run circuit in the country but its history cannot be told without looking at the history of the host Running Club.

The English Electric Athletic Club (Whetstone) was affiliated to the English AAA in 1962 and was made up from around 20 employees of the English Electric Company based at the Cambridge Road site, The Whittle Estate as it is now called.

Incidentally, did you know Sir Frank Whittle did a lot of his pioneering work on the development of the jet engine on the old English Electric estate? Unfortunately all of the buildings where he worked were all demolished before any preservation orders could be served.

The Club got off to a flying start by winning a 3 way competition with YMCA Harriers and the College of Art & Tech AC. The classic headline in the local paper read.....
'English Electric in Shock Victory'.

The newly formed Athletic Club was mainly track based but staged its first road race on 11th September 1962 around the aforementioned circuit, a loop of 3.3 miles. A repeat race followed on the 24th September 1962. This time the race was set on fire by Coventry Godiva runner, Juan Taylor, who set a course record time of 15:07, never to be beaten in the next 50 years, even when it was shortened to 5k

Juan worked at English Electric at Coventry and was part of the Coventry Godiva team that was about to explode with talent with the likes of Bill Adcocks, Basil Heatley, Brian Kilby, Dick Taylor, John Hammond and Colin Kirkham.

We've all heard the phrase "Success breeds success", if you are placed in to this environment, then this acts as a spur, to be as good as, if not better than, your Club mates. There must have been a real buzz around the Coventry Club at that time. Taylor recently passed away in February 2020.

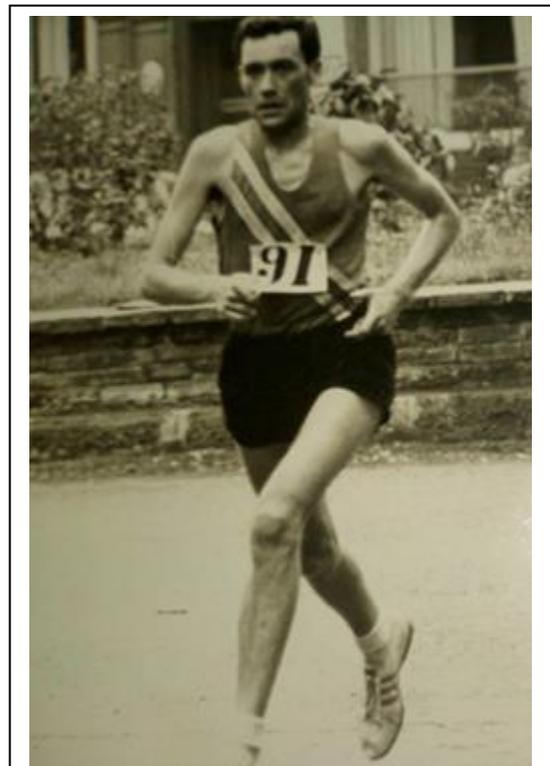
Coventry Godiva were easy winners of the team award with Alan Dowall finishing second in 16:20 and Mick Crossfield fourth in 16:28. Other notables in the race were Leicestershire legends Dave Lem (Leicester Coritanians) 6th in 16:39, Ron Grove (Holwell Works AC, Asfordby) 7th in 16:44 and West End's Brian Ashwell running for Leicester Y.M.C.A who finished 15th in 17:42.

The host Club's Paul Stevens (English Electric AC) finished 17th in 17:45

Ronnie Grove and Brian Ashwell both passed away on the same weekend - 24th and 25th August 2019.

Ron Grove (Holwell Works, LCAT AC, Leicester Coritanian AC and Stilton Striders), was a Track and Cross Country international. He also still holds the Leicestershire and Rutland County Championships best performance for the 10km in a time of 28:59.4 in 1969.

Brian Ashwell (Leicester Harriers, LCAT AC, Leicester Walking Club and West End Runners) was a British Vets International, British Vets Record Holder and oldest winner of the Isle of Man Parish Walk.



Juan Taylor – Coventry Godiva

In July 1963 the English Electric Club won the Leicestershire Counties Business Houses One Mile Medley relay in 3:46.8 beating British United AC who had held the title for 7 years.



17th June 1963 - English Electric (Whetstone) AC
Left to Right P Chelverton, Alan Mellet, Paul Stevens, P Wardle, George Cole, N Phillips and G Bannister (S&SC Secretary)

The Club was also active in Cross Country and was confident enough to host the Leicestershire County Cross Country Championships in 1964 on the fields adjacent to the English Electric works. Sadly most of the fields are now built upon.

In April 1967 the Club hosted the prestigious AAA National Road Race Relay attracting some of the best road runners from around the country. Olympic Bronze medallist and former World Mile record holder, Derek Ibbotson, European Marathon Champion, Jim Hogan, National Cross Country Champion, Dick Taylor, Olympic Marathon runner, Ron Hill and European 5000m Champion, Bruce Tulloh were amongst the elite runners competing.

The Club continued to organise athletic events but in the mid 1970's road running was making a bit of a resurgence. Bob Quale was a leading light in the newly named GEC (Whetstone) S&SC AC and was organising races over 3.3, 4.5, 10 and 20 miles, mainly for GEC employees only. In 1977 the Club staged its first annual 10 mile road race. The GEC '10' would be a regular inclusion in the LRRL, but more about that another day.

The 3.3 mile circuit was still in regular use but it had now become a Christmas Run being held a few weeks before the annual holiday. The Club was now calling itself the GEC Harriers but the name change was not made official until 1983.

On 12th June 1979 the GEC Harriers were to gain a young raw recruit and he was NOT going to set the world alight! On my first day in the Office, a face appeared over the adjacent drawing board and asked 'Do you run?' 'Do I what?' 'Do you do any running'? It seemed a most bizarre question. As lunchtime approached Mick Carter and Cliff Lyth gathered their kit together and set off for the S&SC for their lunchtime run. I set off for the canteen. I later walked around the local area to explore my new workplace, as lunchtime was coming to an end I witnessed all these runners returning to the S&SC from all different directions, some looking easy while others seemed to be at death's door. What was going on?

The GEC Harriers were quite a force at this time with runners such as Geoff Balfour, Paul Spare, Martin Knowles, Gerry Thomas and Tony Penn in its ranks. In the early eighties there was literally just a handful of Clubs in Leicestershire such as Charnwood AC, Leicester Coritarians, Rutland AC and Stilton Striders before the explosion of new Clubs as the 80's running boom took off.

Mick and Cliff regularly tried to get me out running. I knew from a recent 5 A-Side football game I was not very fit so I eventually said 'I'll go out if John Alcock goes out', expecting John to say no, 'OK I'll go' he said. Damn, I thought.

On Monday 31st March 1980 I take my first tentative steps as a runner, a 4 mile jog along the Great Central Line, which ran along the back of the Whetstone site with bridges still intact at this time. I was at the back of the group and finished red faced and knackered. I spent the rest of the afternoon glowing in my chair and did not do a stroke of work. I left it a week before I tried it again, and the 3.3 mile circuit seemed an obvious loop.

The 1981 GEC Christmas Handicap Run was cancelled due to bad weather, and by that I mean snow, something of a rarity these days. So the rescheduled run was 6th January 1982. The race had two starts, 5 minutes apart. First away were the novices which included the likes of me and then the more experienced runners chased us down. As we moved down to the start, Mick Carter told me to watch out for the sharks, those better runners pretending to be novices. I didn't know it at that time but I was the shark! I led the first wave home. I was obviously not the fastest overall but after some kind of handicap Fudge Factor was taken in to account, I was declared the winner and received a bottle of Teachers Whiskey. This running lark is all right I thought. First race and first win.

A few years later the GEC Harriers were dealt a massive body blow. The National Nuclear Corporation (NNC) decided to move their business from Whetstone and consolidate further north in Knutsford, Cheshire. At the same time GEC Gas Turbines decided to do the same and vacate Whetstone and combine with Ruston Gas Turbines in Lincolnshire.

Within months the GEC Harriers had lost 60% of their members. That is the one of the pit falls of basing your membership around a working business. Other GEC Companies moved on to the GEC Site to fill the void but the Club never fully recovered, in fact the Club very nearly collapsed if it were not for myself and Mick Carter stepping in at the last minute, an early apprenticeship of Club Organisation for me which would see me in good stead a few years later with HHAC.

By 1985 the handicap system was scrapped in favour of a straight race straight race with prizes going to the winners of the various categories. There were 46 finishers on this occasion, not bad for a lunchtime run at work but it did include a few guests. On this occasion the distance was shortened to 3.2 miles because of roadworks on Warwick Road. Are race organisers that flexible these days?



The start line for the 3.2 mile version of the GEC Christmas Run in 1985

Official and GEC Legend Paul Stevens walks with clipboard in hand, number 429, Kevin Harris (Coalville Harriers) on the far right was the eventual winner ahead of GEC's Paul Spare and Tony Penn (423). Others; 425, Rugby AC's Brian Acford, 422, GEC's Graeme Slight and Huncote's only representative, John Heywood, fiddling with his shorts.

In 1988 the race was shortened to the 5k distance, the 3.3 miles was always a bit of a quirky distance. It was also decided to make a draw for the hotly contested bottle of whiskey so anyone could win. As the years went by the draw turned in to a lucky dip in which no body went away empty handed, Mince Pies, Christmas Puddings and bottles of wine and spirits were all on offer. I never did win another Whiskey.



Under starters orders, the first GEC Christmas 5k in 1988

The GEC Spring 5k Road Race – Wednesday 3rd May 1989

The race was not exclusive to the festive period, there were several lunchtime 'Revenge Handicaps' during the early 1980's and in 1989 the Club experimented with an evening 5k race. Although several of these races were staged, organisational pressures eventually saw it withdrawn from the calendar.

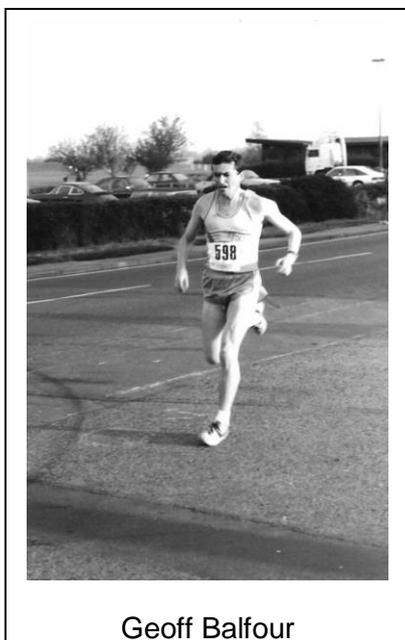
The Harriers dominated the men's field on this occasion and Irene Forty being the one and only lady competing.



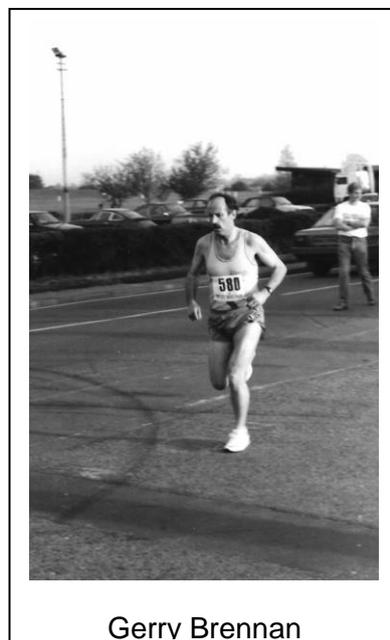
Eventual winner Karl Orchard (578) leading out with Huncote's Billy Farrell and Phil Watts in close attendance while GEC's Graeme Slight and OWL's John Noble follow on

Leading Men

| | | | |
|---|-------|--------------|----------------------|
| 1 | 16:00 | Karl Orchard | Leicester Coritanian |
| 2 | 16:04 | John Noble | OWL's |
| 3 | 16:06 | Bill Farrell | Huncote Harriers |



Geoff Balfour



Gerv Brennan

Huncote Harriers

| | | |
|----|-------|----------------|
| 4 | 16:12 | Don Randle |
| 8 | 16:46 | Geoff Balfour |
| 9 | 16:54 | Gerry Brennan |
| 10 | 17:00 | Sean Heaney |
| 11 | 17:06 | Phil Watts |
| 12 | 17:17 | Dave Blockley |
| 14 | 17:30 | Chris Hevey |
| 15 | 17:45 | John Shade |
| 17 | 17:56 | Ian Burbage |
| 18 | 18:10 | Trevor Longman |
| 19 | 18:17 | Kevin King |
| 20 | 18:22 | Joe O'Brien |
| 21 | 18:31 | Martin White |
| 28 | 19:44 | Irene Forty |
| 29 | 19:46 | John Tyers |
| 30 | 20:04 | T Porter |
| 32 | 20:23 | Phil Tyler |



Only Lady – Irene Forty

Participation in the race did start to fall away in the 1990's and it was decided to open the Christmas race to outsiders. This was not appreciated at first by the GEC employees as they saw it as their own personal race but in time they began to enjoy the extra competition. As the race was always held during the firms lunch hour (Stretching to 1-1/2 hours) not many could make it anyway, so outsiders were kept to a minimum. We had our fair share of postman; it suited their shift pattern perfectly!

The Whetstone Club has undergone several name changes in its 57 year history. The English Electric (Whetstone) AC, the GEC (Whetstone) Sports & Social Club AC, the GEC Harriers, the Alstom Harriers and finally the Whetstone Harriers. Another pitfall of basing the Club on a working business is linking the name. GEC became GEC Alstom, and then a management buyout led to Alstec Ltd which in turn was bought by Babcock. Adopting the name Whetstone Harriers finally broke the link but sadly the Club was wound up in 2019.

2012 marked the 50th Anniversary of the Whetstone Harriers and it was thought that this would be the very last 5k race, the reason being; Babcock had recently bought out Alstec Ltd which had taken over the old GEC businesses, and was moving its offices to Radar Road, off Scudamore Road. As it turned out the move was delayed 12 months and one more race was run before the series was drawn to a close.

Whetstone Christmas 5k – Tuesday 11th December 2012

The Harrier – Issue 163 by Phil Watts

(The Editor was running to report the race)

The Leicester Mercury was on hand to record the final race in a series which started 50 years ago in 1962. The early races covered a whole lap of the circuit, 3.3 miles in length, and in 1963, Coventry Godiva legend, Juan Taylor, ran 15-07, a record that still stands today (equating to a 13-46 time for 5k). Former County cross country champion, Brian Ashwell, now 81 years old, was present at the first race and recorded 24-49 in this race.

This was a good day for the Harriers as the race was won in fine style by Graham Fenton: he looked impressive as he crossed the line 18 seconds clear of weekend Turkey Trot race winner, Andy Peat. The ladies' race was thrilling too with a re-run of the longstanding rivalry between Nicki Nealon and Charnwood's Kate Ramsey. There was a serious glint in Kate Ramsey's eye as she was warming up for the race and she recorded 18-18 to finish first lady ahead of Nicki.

The Editor suffered at the hands of two of his rivals, Barry Hibberd and Warren Bennett. Barry got away during the first mile to Littlethorpe. Warren Bennett ran well to catch and pass Barry near the motorway bridge coming back to Whetstone, and then had the temerity to outsprint ex 400 metre runner Mike Aylwin (Whetstone Harriers) crossing the finish line!

| | | |
|----|-------|-------------------------|
| 1 | 17:13 | Graham Fenton |
| 4 | 18:00 | Chris Talbot |
| 5 | 18:06 | Dave Egginton |
| 7 | 18:31 | Andy Ball |
| 8 | 18:39 | Nicki Nealon |
| 11 | 19:06 | Graeme Slight |
| 16 | 20:17 | Wlodziu Kula-Prezwanski |
| 17 | 20:22 | Warren Bennett |
| 19 | 20:46 | Barry Hibberd |
| 20 | 21:04 | Phil Watts |
| 33 | 26:55 | Irene Forty |
| 40 | 29:30 | Helen Bennett |



Wlodziu Kula-Prezwanski

FINISHING POST: END OF THE ROAD FOR HARRIERS' CHRISTMAS RUN

Fenton's final flourish

Graham Fenton is celebrating after winning the final Whetstone Harriers' Christmas 5k run.

ATHLETICS

by **JAMES SHARPE**

by Olympic torchbearer John Noble, who has raised around £15,000 for charity

The route used is the oldest, most regularly-run road course in the country, with an unbroken sequence of 50 years of races since its inception in 1962.

But as the company that hosts it, Babcock, are moving their premises next autumn, this was the final race.

Fenton, who works for Babcock and runs for Huncote Harriers, won in a time of 17min 13 sec ahead of the Wigston Phoenix pairing of Andy Peat (17.31) and Neil Carter (17.43).

Charrwood AC's Kate Ramsey was the leading woman, finishing in a time of 18.18 ahead of Nicki Nealon, in 18.39.

Brian Ashwell made history. The 80-year-old, who is also the European track record holder for 10km for V75 athletes, is the only runner to have competed in the very first as well as this, the last race.

There was also an appearance



FOR ONE LAST TIME: Competitors get ready for the final Whetstone 5k Christmas run, with Olympic torchbearer John Noble and Whetstone club member Mick Carter at the front

Whetstone Christmas 5k – Tuesday 10th December 2013

The Harrier – Issue 170 by Phil Watts

Thirty seven runners faced the starter in this year's edition of the "last of the last GEC 5K races". Coventry Godiva's Steve Emery, quite a useful performer and on a works secondment to the factory site, easily won the race from Leicester's Dave Pearce. Nicki Nealon in 4th place was first lady home beating long time race supporter, Graeme Slight. Graeme now has difficulty in remembering how many of these lunchtime races he has run - it must be well over 20! This must also be the best value race on the calendar, £3 to enter and everyone a prize-winner.

| | | | |
|----|-------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 15:36 | Steve Emery | Coventry Godiva |
| 4 | 18:39 | Nicki Nealon | |
| 5 | 19:15 | Graeme Slight | |
| 7 | 19:54 | Wlodziu Kula-Prezwanski | |
| 10 | 20:16 | Andy Wilford | |
| 15 | 21:22 | Rob Tate | |
| 23 | 24:07 | Sandra Stevens | |
| 28 | 25:38 | Irene Forty | |
| 30 | 26:20 | Bernard Cherry | |
| 32 | 27:06 | Helen Bennett | |

Perhaps fitting that a Babcock employee and a Coventry Godiva Club member should win the very last Whetstone race, a homage to Juan Taylor and the great runners of the past.

I've had a count up Phil, 30 Christmas Runs over a 34 year period

HOW ABOUT 6 LAPS AND WE'LL CALL IT THE GEC '20'?

Sounds crazy doesn't it? No doubt an idea that sprang to mind in a pub after a few beers, a joke at first maybe but it became a reality. The first running was in 1980 but my first attempt was in 1982. Then it was for GEC employees only plus a few friends and guests.

On paper it may sound the most boring of runs but it was actually quite fun to do. When the results sheet finally came out, the officials had recorded every single lap so you could analyse your pace throughout the race. At a time when there were only a few 20 mile races available (the AP20 Leamington to Banbury race was popular at this time) this race proved ideal as preparation for the fledgling London Marathon.

Towards the end of the 80's the GEC Harriers decided to open the race to the masses but the field had to be limited to between 150 and 200 as recording became a little difficult after 3 laps when the top runners would start lapping the slower ones at the back. The Club was surprisingly overwhelmed with the number of runners wishing to compete and had to turn many away.

In the 1989 event (12th March 1989), Trevor Hawes, a top marathon runner with a personal best of 2:17:33, used the event to train for a 100km ultra event and ran 9 laps, a distance of 30 miles. He also took the opportunity to experiment with different energy drinks provided for him at the drinks station with permission from the organisers. He finished the 6 laps in second place behind West End's Mark Freer (1:51:42). Trevor completed the 9 laps in 2:55:59.

He went on to complete the Nottingham 100km in May in 6:43:55

The event finally finished a year or two later, once again to organisational pressures on a small Club and organising team.

The GEC '20' – Sunday 18th March 1990

The Harrier – Issue 35 by Phil Watts

It is nice to see this long standing race return to something like its former glory as a full field of 150 runners entered. Many were using the race as preparation for the London marathon. For the Harriers star performers were Joe O'Flynn, third in the men's race and Marie Wilson, likewise third in the ladies. Some way behind Joe the two Huncote village rivals, Brian Mackey and Tom Cann were having a battle royal with Ian Burbage in attendance. On the last lap, Ian dropped back while it was the signal for Brian Mackey to open a small gap on Tom Cann and finish quite fresh – roll on London! Perhaps the performance of the day came from Mark Wittering. You might not think there was anything exceptional about his time of 2:11:41 – pretty slow for Mark when he is capable of close to 2 hours – but when you realise that he competed in a 33 mile endurance run, 'The Haworth Hobble', over the Yorkshire Pennines the day before! How about that for a warm up?

Leading Men

| | | | |
|---|---------|--------------|------------------|
| 1 | 1:52:45 | Steve Davies | Mansfield |
| 2 | 1:54:10 | Mick Strange | OWL's |
| 3 | 1:55:01 | Joe O'Flynn | Huncote Harriers |

Leading Ladies

| | | | |
|---|---------|-----------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 2:13:37 | Hillary Johnson | Harborough AC |
| 2 | 2:24:32 | Mary Haworth | Steel City Striders |
| 3 | 2:26:28 | Marie Wilson | Huncote Harriers |

Huncote Harriers

| | | |
|-----|---------|----------------|
| 12 | 2:05:17 | Brian Mackey |
| 15 | 2:06:06 | Tom Cann |
| 25 | 2:10:37 | Ian Burbage |
| 28 | 2:11:41 | Mark Wittering |
| 34 | 2:14:21 | Bob Hall |
| 35 | 2:14:25 | J Sherwood |
| 74 | 2:25:31 | M Griffiths |
| 81 | 2:27:21 | Dave Chambers |
| 83 | 2:28:12 | A.N.Other |
| 94 | 2:32:01 | Derek Milner |
| 114 | 2:44:31 | Jim Diaper |
| 117 | 2:47:46 | M Hall |
| 127 | 2:56:25 | Lyn Ludden |
| 139 | 3:06:28 | Joy Cann |



Brian Mackey finishing the GEC '20'

The circuit has also been used as a 10k circuit, most notably in early 1985 when it was the very first race in the very first Leicestershire Winter Road Race League.

Roadhogs AC have staged several 7 mile races here, a Summer League race in June 1998 and a Winter League race in April 2001. Because of the extended distance, the start of the race was further up Cambridge Road on the industrial estate to enable the normal finish on the GEC visitors car park opposite the GEC S&SC. I remember the 1998 race particularly well as I had moved house the same day, not recommended if you intend racing the same evening!

Roadhoggs '7' (Whetstone) – Sunday 8th April 2001

The Harrier – Issue 95 by Phil Watts

Because of the curtailed fixture list caused by the current foot and mouth epidemic a big field was expected to take part. Not so, but Craig Sabin got back to something like his best form as he led home the Harriers in the third and final Winter League fixture. A strongish turn out by our Club couldn't prevent Birstall from taking the overall League honours for the second year in succession.

Leading Men

| | | | |
|---|-------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 36:40 | Gordon Lee | Nuneaton Harriers |
| 2 | 37:21 | Ian Murday | Beaumont Leys RC |
| 3 | 37:30 | Paul Warden | Birstall RC |

Leading Ladies

| | | | |
|---|-------|------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | 41:01 | Claire Tomkinson | Charnwood AC |
| 2 | 45:41 | Heather Jennings | Beaumont Leys RC |
| 3 | 46:30 | Nicki Nealon | Huncote Harriers AC |

Huncote Men

| | | |
|-----|-------|-----------------|
| 9 | 38:31 | Craig Sabin |
| 13 | 39:32 | Mike Sandford |
| 15 | 39:44 | Graeme Slight |
| 34 | 42:44 | Pete Beaman |
| 36 | 42:51 | Adrian Moreton |
| 39 | 43:00 | John O'Sullivan |
| 42 | 43:18 | Jack Angrave |
| 51 | 43:56 | Dave Shields |
| 60 | 44:31 | Phil Watts |
| 63 | 44:46 | Mike Keenan |
| 67 | 45:07 | Nick Nealon |
| 69 | 45:12 | Steve Wright |
| 74 | 46:00 | Mike Newton |
| 79 | 46:37 | Bernard Cherry |
| 97 | 48:22 | Jeff Wickham |
| 112 | 49:29 | Pete Coogan |



Bernard Cherry

| | | | |
|-----|-------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 137 | 54:18 | Kevin King | |
| 141 | 54:58 | Roger Kyle | |
| 153 | 62:10 | Clive Alexander | 157 Men Finishers |

Huncote Ladies

| | | | |
|----|-------|--------------|-------------------|
| 3 | 46:30 | Nicki Nealon | |
| 19 | 54:11 | Claire Love | |
| 22 | 55:39 | Irene Forty | 35 Lady Finishers |

There was one obvious event to which the 3.3 mile circuit was well suited – The Relay

Between 1991 and 2001, Ted Toft brought the Pace Consultants Relays to Whetstone. The men ran 4 x 3.3 miles and the Ladies 3 x 3.3 miles. The changeover was once again in the GEC visitor's car park which did involve several sharp turns to get back out on to the main road. Huncote Harriers participation was patchy unfortunately but we did seem to improve in the last few events. Towards the end the status of the race sadly declined and the series finally finished through lack of support, such a shame as it originally attracted top quality teams from around the midlands. It used to be a great warm up for the autumn Midland 6 stage Relay Championships at Sutton Park.

PACE Consultants Relay – Saturday 11th September 1999

The Harrier – Issue 86 – by Phil Watts

Harriers best-ever performance in Whetstone Pace Relays

Dave Blockley assembled three strong teams for this year's relay on Saturday 11th September and was rewarded by 3rd place for the Senior Men and the Vets were 5th not far behind. The Vets were well clear of all the other Vet teams and an anticipated battle with Redhill failed to materialise when they did not enter a team. As this incorporated the Leicestershire County Championship the senior men had the added satisfaction of winning bronze medals. Tim Buckton showed he is still one of the fastest in the Club in spite of long working trips away to China which have inevitably interfered with his training programme. His 17:33 for the 3.3 mile course was the Harriers fastest of the afternoon. This represents approx. 15:58 pace over 3 miles on a course which although flat is not particularly easy. However the whole quartet was impressive as only 29 seconds separated fastest and slowest runners – a great team effort. For the vets Graeme Slight showed a welcome return to form with a fastest of 17:53. Mark Beeby was fastest for the 'B' team with 19:16

| Harriers 'A' | | Harriers Vets | | Harriers 'B' | |
|--------------|-------|---------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| Chris Talbot | 17:52 | Graeme Slight | 17:53 | Mark Beeby | 19:18 |
| Mark White | 18:02 | Mike Sandford | 18:42 | Colin Bartlette | 19:58 |
| Eric Carter | 17:42 | Joe O'Flynn | 18:31 | Jon Milner | 22:46 |
| Tim Buckton | 17:33 | Simon Boulter | 18:20 | Jack Angrave | 20:12 |

No Ladies on this occasion

So there you have it, the Whetstone 5k or 3.3 mile circuit has had thousands of runners going round it for nearly 60 years. Some of the best runners from around the country have graced its roads. As far as I know, always in the anti-clockwise direction. The course has seen a large amount of development over this period but the road itself has barely changed.

The start on Warwick Road now has a Co-op on the corner where a derelict farm building once stood and a new cycle way takes you up to Littlethorpe. The 5k start line is just before the junction with The Dicken. A tunnel like bridge has been demolished where it passed under the Great Central line. Always damp with echoes from cars which missed you by inches, as it was so narrow without a path.

A massive housing development changed the road layout slightly so Warwick Road now flows straight in to Riverside Way and on to Narborough Railway Station, but the racing line continues on the aforementioned cycle way to the T-Junction at the top. You will have noticed that you have been gently climbing from the start so reaching the corner in a slightly 'distressed' state is quite normal!!

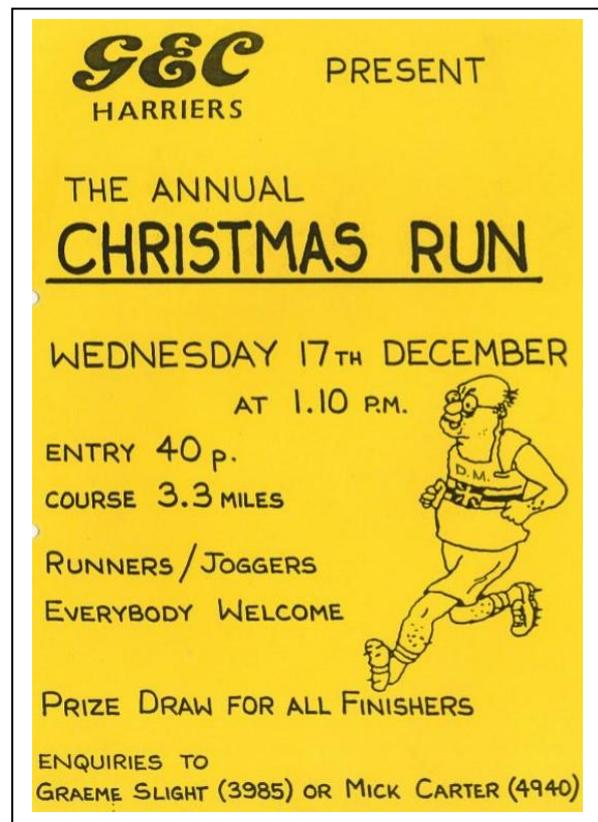
The Cosby Road / Narborough Road has not changed except for small developments either side. A new mini roundabout has been added at the Narborough Road – Cambridge Road junction in Cosby but the racing line is unaffected. This is where the short tough hill is. You have to dig deep here but your reward is not far away. At the top of the climb another Great Central Line bridge has gone and new houses built. From here it is downhill all the way to the finish, if you're on top of your game you can really fly down here.

A new industrial site on the left where 'Simmo's' scrap yard used to be and then flat for the last 800m in front of the old GEC offices. This is where personal battles have been won and lost. On to the main gatehouse then filter in to the left for the short finish in to the visitor's car park in front of the GEC Sports and Social Club which is now submerged under another new housing development.

If you've never ran the circuit I suggest you give it a try sometime and if you can clock 15:07 then I also suggest you book your ticket for Tokyo.

Stay safe everyone and keep training

Graeme



1985 GEC Harriers Poster