



**Welcome to The Valley News**

**AVR 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary edition**  
**1986 – 2026**

**The Newsletter of**  
**Avon Valley Runners**

**Issue #285 – January 2026**

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## Wrinty's Ramblings

So here we are at the start of AVR's fortieth year and I am pleased to have been involved with the club for most of them and with this possibly being the last edition of the Valley News, I have put together my own little highlights reel...

My first 'encounter' with AVR came on a Sunday afternoon in September of 1986, when I ran the **SCBU 5-mile race** in Trowbridge where I finished second behind Russell Matthews of Trowbridge & District AC and beating the Avon Valley Runners duo of Phil Mitchell and Martin Connor into third and fourth place respectively – after the race I was approached by Ian "Stan" Farr who tried to sell me on the benefits of joining his new club. I also learned that the aforementioned Phil & Martin had both run the **Burnham-on-Sea Half Marathon** that morning!



AVR at the Burnham-on-Sea Half in 1986

I started coming across the yellow vests of AVR regularly on the local roads and at the start of 1987 I made the decision to join the club. Meeting up at the Judo Club in Innox Road a good group of us would hit the streets for a six (or so) mile run at a nice tempo pace. I then ran my first race as an Avon Valley Runner at the **Sutton Benger 5** where I finished second and the VIP making the presentation of awards was none other than England international athlete - Judy Farr (now a Life Member of AVR). The next day I raced at the **Box Highlands fun run** and finished second yet again - at least on my next outing I actually came out as the winner, at the **Westbury Leigh fun run** 😊

Over the next few years, I continued training with AVR and building a nice collection of awards, as well as setting most of my Personal Best times, which are still with me today. Then the rest of my life took over and running dropped off of the radar as I moved out of the area, built a career, bought a house, got married, started a family etc.



Receiving my runners-up  
award from Judy Farr

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I re-engaged with AVR when I moved back to Wiltshire at the turn of the century and I mentioned to Stan the possibility of my creating a website for the club.

He agreed that it would be a good move for AVR particularly as "City of Bath AC" (now Team Bath) had just launched a website. I finally brought an online presence to the club in September of 2001, using the free Geocities web hosting service provided by Yahoo, the site was an immediate hit and has gone from strength to strength.

In 2004 and again working with Stan, a proposal was executed for AVR to support the BBC Sport Relief charity by hosting one of the 144 **Sport Relief Mile** events being held nationally – ours being along Woolley Street in Bradford on Avon where it was ideally timed to coincide with the annual street festival, so on an already closed road. The event reached it's 200-runner capacity and saw AVR's Alistair Bartlett clocking the fastest time on the day of 05:05.

After a two-year break the Sport Relief Mile returned but unfortunately the Woolley Street festival did not. An alternative location was sought and a course measured out in Barton Farm Country Park. The event reached it's 200-runner capacity and with local entertainer "Kooky the Clown" getting proceedings underway we saw Ewen Malloch of the British Milers Club taking the win in a very fast 04:22 but in third place our own Michael Bryant recorded 04:47 to set a new club best (*that stood for five years*) and Jackie Rockliffe also finished third with a new club record time of 05:37 which stood for six years. After the main event we held a special mile race for those Avon Valley Runners who had helped on the day, Bob Ellis ran out as winner in 05:21 with me a few seconds behind - **The Avon Valley Mile** had begun.



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I was put forward by Stan to become the Men's club captain and readily took on the role. One of my responsibilities was trying to drum up support for Avon Valley Runners to attend local races where we might bag a team prize or two and in 2006, I received an invite from Team Bath for AVR to enter teams into **The Cotswold Way Relay**, something that we had not done before. Getting 10-runners fit and to their respective starting positions on time was a challenge for me and my co-captains, but it was so rewarding with the feedback that we received, and the third place for my Vets-team was the icing on the cake. This was the start of many ventures along the Cotswold Way for AVR and we also became a regular entrant at **The Uphill to Wells Relay** where we met with a good degree of success over its 6-legs covering the 30-miles along the West Mendip Way.

On the back of these successful ventures, I suggested that AVR host a 4-stage Relay starting from our training venue at the Christie Miller Sports Centre in Melksham and finishing at Bradford on Avon Rugby Club in Winsley, utilising the towpath of the Kennet and Avon canal for most of it's 17-miles. Our first edition was held in 2010 attracting just 8-teams of which six were from AVR. Not to be deterred, our next edition of **The Avon Valley Relay** saw double the number of teams sign up. The relay grew year on year and by 2015 we had a healthy 45-teams on the start line.



One relay race in which we don't get much mention takes place in Trowbridge town centre every February and is organised by the Town Council...**The Trowbridge Pancake Race Relay**. I put together a team in 2009 which bagged us third spot and was one of a number of 'alternative' races in which we sent teams. We competed in such "classics" as **The Great Cheverill Soap Box derby**, the **DARE 3K** blind-fold race and the **Badminton Horseless Trials**, taking on the obstacles around the Duke of Beaufort's estate in South Gloucestershire.



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In 2006 on the back of my training for the **Walt Disney World Marathon** (which was my 40<sup>th</sup> birthday present to myself), I decided to tackle **The Somerset Race Series**, where competitors are given a score according to their best eight finishing positions. I managed to finish in 8<sup>th</sup> place overall and 2<sup>nd</sup> MV40 after completing 9 of the 14 races in the series – an idea was formed for a new AVR competition. **The AVR Race Series** was launched in 2007 with the following line up of ten races:

Devizes 10K	Moonraker 10K	Swindon Half Marathon
Trowbridge Lions 10K	The Foxtrot 5	Wimborne "10"
The Roundway Chase	The Corfe Beast	Bromham 10K
Warminster Forest "10"		

The format proved to be successful and was something that I took forward when I became the Road Running Secretary of Wiltshire Athletic Association (WAA) and forms the basis of Wiltshire Road Race League, which has been dominated by Avon Valley Runners with our club winning ten League titles over the past 14-years of the competition.

I started to get involved with WAA shortly after becoming Honorary Secretary of AVR in 2007. The thing that stood out for me at WAA was the dominance of the main two Track & Field clubs (Swindon Harriers and City of Salisbury A&RC), but we are a county of pre-dominantly Road Running clubs!!! so I pushed for AVR to get more involved in county level competition and was delighted when in 2009 our Ladies won the county XC title at the championships held at Corsham Court and went on to retain their crown in 2010 with the Men claiming their first XC title that year too, with the event having moved to Bath University alongside the county XC championships for Avon & Somerset.



I moved into the role of Road Running Secretary for WAA in 2011, standing down as Honorary Secretary of AVR in 2012 and then becoming Chairman of WAA in 2013 as well as taking on the management of the county's senior teams. With Avon Valley Runners providing the nucleus of my teams I was able to achieve regional level success for Wiltshire and also elevate our county profile nationally too.



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In 2018 I decided to hang up my running shoes and also retire from my role at WAA, but I was still a Life Member and Vice-President of Avon Valley Runners. We now had a multi-sport section, so time to have fun on two wheels with AVT. With my running days now behind me, I relished the opportunity to partake in Triathlon Relay events where I could take on the cycle leg and others the swim & run.

During the days of COVID-19 lock-down and the suspension of any racing, I borrowed an idea from my cycling club (Westbury Wheelers) and came up with the **Strava Segment Challenge** which could be undertaken in isolation and the results collated by the Strava application. This then morphed into the annual competition within AVT which has just concluded its fourth season. Post-lockdown, I suggested that for the keen cyclists within AVT that we hold a club **Time Trial championship**, one had been tried several years earlier but was discontinued due to safety fears on the open roads around Trowbridge. My idea was to leverage off an existing event, such as the DB Max TT series at Castle Combe and it seemed to work well on the fast, traffic-free circuit.



In 2023 Sarah Emery decided that after five and a half years and 63 editions that #253 would be her last issue as the editor of The Valley News. I had first become editor of the club's newsletter back in 2007 with issue #85 taking over from Tim Northwood who had produced 67 of the previous editions on his trusty word processor, with Stan having hand typed the editions prior to that!

I then stepped down as editor in July 2011 having produced 40 editions, finishing with issue #125. In the intervening years, Richard Morgetroyd (28 editions from #126 - #154); Ken Marshall (13 editions from #155 - #168) and Gary MacAllister (21 editions from #169 - #190) have all kept the editors chair warm for me until my return with issue #254 and here we are some 31 editions later delivering my final and what may prove to be last edition of the Valley News.



**Darren Wintmore (Winty) – Vice-President & Life Member of AVR**

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# AVR Timeline

<b>1986</b>  <b>Club Formed.</b> <i>Bob Roots sets club record for 10K of 33:25</i> <i>Tim Northwood sets club records for 5Miles, Half &amp; Full Marathon</i> <i>Judy Farr sets club records for 5K, 5Miles, 10Miles &amp; Half Marathon</i>	<b>1987</b>  <i>Bob Roots sets club record for 10Miles of 53:38</i> <i>Sheila Jennings sets club record for Marathon of 3:38:47</i>	<b>1988</b>  <i>Richard Bailey sets club Mile record of 4:55</i> <i>Darren Wintmore sets 5K club record of 16:42</i> <i>Keith Elsey sets club record for 5Miles of 26:42</i>	<b>1989</b>  <i>Gerry Fice sets club record for 5K of 16:21</i> <i>Martin Connor sets club record for Half Marathon of 75:15 and Marathon of 2:44:32</i> <i>Ann Bull sets club record for Marathon of 3:26:45</i>	<b>1990</b>  <i>Martin Connor lowers club record for Half Marathon down to 74:43</i> <i>Linda Brown sets club record for 5Miles of 31:45</i>
<b>1991</b>  AVR 10K first run in Trowbridge <i>Linda Brown sets club record for 5K of 19:19 and 10K of 39:08</i>	<b>1992</b>  The St George's Running Club merges with AVR	<b>1993</b>  <i>Linda Brown sets club record for 10Miles of 67:14</i>	<b>1994</b>  Club relocates Trowbridge training sessions to Clarendon <i>Linda Brown sets club record for Half Marathon of 1:28:08</i>	<b>1995</b>  <i>Maureen Laney sets club records for 10K, 10Miles &amp; Half Marathon</i> <i>Jackie Rockliffe sets club record for 5Miles of 30:42</i> Maureen Laney wins the "Bristol Half".
<b>1996</b>  <i>Jackie Rockliffe sets club record for 5K of 18:35</i>	<b>1997</b>  "Over the Hills" first run	<b>1998</b>  Last running of the AVR 10K	<b>1999</b>  Boxing Day Run moves to Steeple Ashton after 40-years in Trowbridge	<b>2000</b>  Boxing Day Run moves to Bradford on Avon <i>Jackie Rockliffe sets club record for the Marathon of 3:16:18</i>
<b>2001</b>  AVR launch website	<b>2002</b>  Club membership reaches 100 Rosemary Barber carries the Commonwealth Games Baton	<b>2003</b>  <i>Brett Flook sets club record for the Marathon of 2:43:28</i>	<b>2004</b>  AVR host the Sport Relief Mile in Woolley Street, Bradford on Avon	<b>2005</b>  The first running of the Conkwell Killer!!! <i>Rachel Bown sets club record for the Marathon of 3:15:04</i>
<b>2006</b>  New AVR club colours AVR enter teams into Cotswold Way Relay for the first time First running of the Avon Valley Mile <i>Michael Bryant &amp; Jackie Rockliffe set club records for the Mile</i>	<b>2007</b>  AVR affiliate to the ARC Inaugural AVR Race Series <i>Jackie Rockliffe sets club record for the Marathon of 3:07:45</i>	<b>2008</b>  Club membership reaches 200 AVR launch Melksham Training sessions Boxing Day Run renamed as the Stan Farr 5K <i>Liz Ringham sets club record for the Marathon of 3:03:21</i>	<b>2009</b>  <b>AVR Ladies crowned county XC Champions</b> Issue #100 of the Valley News AVR launch Trowbridge "speed" sessions The Stan Farr 5K moves to Hilperton	<b>2010</b>  <b>AVR crowned county XC Champions</b> AVR Coaching team honoured by Melksham Town Council Inaugural Avon Valley Relay <i>Tom Fisher sets club records for 5Miles of 26:13 &amp; 10K in 33:01</i>

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<p><b>2011</b></p> <p>AVR celebrate the club's Silver Jubilee.</p> <p>Alistair Bartlett &amp; Rosemary Barber named as "Greatest ever Avon Valley Runners"</p> <p><b>AVR Ladies crowned county XC Champions</b></p> <p><i>Dan Woolford sets club mile record at 4:42</i></p> <p><i>Tom Fisher sets club record for Half Marathon of 72:53</i></p>	<p><b>2012</b></p> <p><b>AVR win the inaugural Wiltshire Road Race League (WRRL)</b></p> <p>Junior AVR founded</p> <p>Inaugural AVR Half Marathon</p> <p><i>Michael Towler sets 5K club record of 15:53</i></p> <p><i>Ruth Barnes lowers club mile record to 5:18</i></p>	<p><b>2013</b></p> <p><b>AVR retain WRRL</b></p> <p><b>AVR crowned county XC Champions</b></p> <p>Avon Valley Triathletes formed</p> <p><i>Michael Towler lowers club records for 1Mile to 4:37, 5K to 15:52 &amp; 10K to 32:50</i></p> <p><i>Ruth Barnes sets club record for 10K of 36:07</i></p>	<p><b>2014</b></p> <p><b>AVR win the inaugural Wiltshire Off-Road League (WORL) and Junior League (WJRL)</b></p> <p><b>AVR retain WRRL title</b></p> <p><b>AVR crowned county XC Champions</b></p> <p>Club relocates sessions to Doric Park, Hilperton</p> <p><i>Ruth Barnes sets club record for 5K of 17:33</i></p> <p><i>Laura MacGregor sets 10K club record of 36:03</i></p>	<p><b>2015</b></p> <p>Club membership exceeds 500</p> <p><b>AVR retain WRRL &amp; WJRL titles</b></p> <p><b>AVR crowned county XC Champions again</b></p> <p><i>Ruth Barnes sets club records for 5K of 17:13, 5Miles of 29:29 &amp; 10K of 35:32</i></p> <p><i>Michael Towler sets club records for 5K of 15:40 &amp; 10K of 32:46</i></p> <p><i>George Gurney sets club records for Half of 71:12 &amp; Marathon 2:29:04</i></p>
<p><b>2016</b></p> <p><i>Ruth Barnes sets club records at 1Mile of 5:14, 5K of 16:41, 5Miles of 29:08, 10K of 34:15 &amp; 10Miles of 56:47</i></p> <p><i>Michael Towler sets club records for 5K of 15:26 &amp; 10K of 32:09</i></p> <p><i>Jackie Rockcliffe lowers club record for the Marathon to 3:03:17</i></p>	<p><b>2017</b></p> <p><b>AVR win the WRRL for the 5<sup>th</sup> time!</b></p> <p><b>AVR crowned county XC Champions</b></p> <p><b>AVR win EA "Club of the Year"</b></p> <p><b>AVR Men win South West Road Relays</b></p> <p><i>Ruth Barnes sets club records at 5K of 16:38, &amp; 10Miles of 56:44</i></p> <p>AVR Track opened</p> <p>Ruth Barnes wins the "Bath Half"</p> <p>Anna-Marie Watson wins "Half Marathon des Sables"</p>	<p><b>2018</b></p> <p><b>AVR retain WRRL title</b></p> <p><i>Max Davis sets club records for 1Mile of 4:31, 5K of 15:15 &amp; 10K of 31:20</i></p> <p><i>Ed Knudsen sets club record for 5Miles of 25:54</i></p> <p><i>Ruth Barnes sets club record for Half Marathon of 1:14:59</i></p> <p><i>Chris Roxburgh sets club record for 20Miles of 1:57:59</i></p> <p><i>Holly Rush sets club record for 20Miles of 2:08:52 &amp; Marathon with 2:47:33</i></p>	<p><b>2019</b></p> <p><b>AVR retain WRRL title</b></p> <p><b>AVR win the WORL title</b></p> <p><b>AVR crowned county XC Champions</b></p> <p>Inaugural AVR Goal Getters recognised with awards</p> <p><i>Max Davis sets club records for 5K of 14:52 &amp; 5Miles of 25:09</i></p> <p><i>Ed Knudsen sets club record for 10K of 31:18 &amp; Half Marathon of 69:38</i></p> <p><i>Holly Rush sets club record for the Marathon with 2:45:41</i></p>	<p><b>2020</b></p> <p>Jay-Sims Bagshaw wins Volunteer Leader of the Year at the England Athletics South West Awards</p> <p>Holly Newman wins Young Volunteer of the Year at the England Athletics South West Awards</p> <p>The Avon Valley Relay went Virtual – Lowries Legends taking the title</p> <p>AVR win the Active Trowbridge "Beat the Street" challenge</p>
<p><b>2021</b></p> <p><b>AVR win the WRRL</b></p> <p><b>AVR Ladies crowned county XC Champions</b></p> <p>Dave Hyde and the Chickens win 'Group of the Year' at the England Athletics Volunteer Awards for the South West</p>	<p><b>2022</b></p> <p>AVR Men come in at a magnificent 17th overall position in its first ever South of England 12 stage relay.</p> <p>Jackie Rockcliffe is 1<sup>st</sup> FV50 at the London Marathon</p>	<p><b>2023</b></p> <p><i>Ed Knudsen sets club record for the Marathon of 2:27:03</i></p>	<p><b>2024</b></p> <p><b>AVR win the WRRL</b></p> <p>Fiona Price wins 'Coach of the Year' at the England Athletics South West Volunteer Awards</p>	<p><b>2025</b></p> <p><b>AVR win the WRRL for the 10<sup>th</sup> time!!</b></p> <p>AVR prepare to celebrate the club's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.</p>



# The Stan Farr 5K

Forty-one club members and their guests took on the 65th edition of our Stan Farr 5K run on Boxing Day.



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Leading the field home in 20-minutes 34-seconds was Jack Prout a full minute ahead of Eric Whitehouse and third placed Dan Angell. For the Ladies Amelie Higgins led home in fifth place overall, in a time of 23:23 and ahead of Leah Sartain and Imogen Smart.



**Imogen Smart and Mike Towler**



**Amelie Higgins**



**Leah Sartain**



**Bob Ellis**



**Tina Towler**



**Sarah Emery**



**Super Sweep – Hayley Anderson**



**Vicky Bodman & Jack Prout**

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# Avon Valley Races

Since the 15K race in Melksham held on New Years Day 1986, Avon Valley Runners have been in attendance at nearly 10,000 races. So, it seems only fair that we put something back and over the past forty years AVR have organised a good number of races for the benefit of the local running community.

From the very first days of the club, our expertise in running races has been sought and we assisted Trowbridge Lions with their race which started out as a five and a bit miler in the 1980's from the town park and then became a 10K'ish race around Southwick Country Park which ran until 2014. We also assisted the Westwood PTA with their 7-mile which ran until 1993 before scaling back to become a 3-mile fun run and went on for another 10-years. Another PTA that we assisted was that in Bromham, where we helped them with the Pudding Run 10K until we went our separate ways in the noughties.

The first attempt in hosting our 'own' event came in 1991 when we held **The AVR 10K** in Trowbridge, this road race remained on the race calendar until 1998. The previous year saw the first edition of our very successful "**Over the Hills**" multi-terrain race which was devised to show off the beautiful routes with which we are blessed to run through the Avon Valley. Twenty-six editions have now taken place with most being able to offer runners the chance to 'wash off their shoes' as they cross the River Frome ☺



**Shoe washing - AVR style**

During the 2000's the club took on several new events: **The Conkwell Killer** was an 8-mile multi-terrain race out from Winsley, down to Limpley Stoke and along the towpath of the Kennet & Avon canal before forcing runners up the quad-burning 'miners track' into the hamlet of Conkwell and back to the rugby club. The club also took over the organisation of **The Foxtrot 5** road race held at Broughton Gifford from Corsham Running Club. Also, we launched **The Shaw&Whitley Stampede** multi-terrain race just outside of Melksham.



**The Conkwell Killer**



**The Foxtrot 5**



**Shaw&Whitley Stampede**

**The AVR Half Marathon** joined the club's portfolio of races in 2012 and a couple of years later was joined by one of our most ambitious undertakings - **The Imber Ultra**. At the other end of the distance scale, the club organised the **5x5x5** at Steeple Ashton which then morphed into the successful **Westbury 5K** which is still attracting some of the fastest athletes in the South West of England.

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## So, you think that you know AVR?

As we start our celebrations for the fortieth year of Avon Valley Runners, I thought it would be good to test out how much do you know about the club and its history...

- 1) In 2011 as part of the clubs' Silver Jubilee celebrations, all of our results were processed and attributed a score, as a result who were named as "The Greatest ever Avon Valley Runners"?
- 2) The first edition of the Valley News appeared in the summer of 1986 but when did the first photograph appear in its pages?
- 3) In 2008 we held our first Mob Match, using the "Over the Hills" course, only in reverse, which two clubs joined us to race on that summers evening?
- 4) As you know AVR was founded in 1986 but had to wait until July of that year before we had our first overall race winner – who was it?
- 5) The club used to present "The Grape Blister" and "The Goofy" awards, but for what were they given?
- 6) AVR organise an ultra-marathon around the Imber Range path, but how many miles do runners cover to complete the course?
- 7) In 2017, which Team GB sprinter turned up to officially open the track at Doric Park?
- 8) Which "closed" AVR event was founded by club members Bernie Hobbs and Colin Williamson?
- 9) The Avon Valley Mile grew out of the Sport Relief Mile in 2006, what did all finishers receive for that race?
- 10) Founder member Ian "Stan" Farr ran the Boxing Day race (*which now bears his name*) on 46 occasions, but how many times did he actually win the race?

- 1) For the Men it was Alistair Bartlett who pulled on his AVR vest on 321 occasions and managed 131 Top-10 finishes, 66 visits to the podium and 13 victories; for the Ladies, Rosemary Barber represented AVR 531 times and managed to make the podium on 297 occasions. A list of the Top-100 Avon Valley Runners was printed in the July 2011 edition of the Valley News.
- 2) Issue #65 in July 2002 featured a very grainy black & white photograph of Rosemary Barber carrying the Commonwealth Games torch.
- 3) Corsham Running Club & Team Bath AC, Chippenham Harriers were also invited but only one turned up so he joined Corsham for the evening.
- 4) Maurice Cockell won the Whaddon Fun Run over 3-miles, clocking 18-minutes 54-seconds; Judy Farr was our first female winner with a 70:58 clocking at the Sutton Benger '10'.
- 5) The "Grape Blister" was for most original injury and "The Goofy" for most outstanding moment of muppetry.
- 6) 33-miles
- 7) Danny Talbot who competed at both the European and World Championships.
- 8) The Bern-Col Relay - so now you know who to thank for your chips.
- 9) A single sock to complete a pair – the first sock was received along with their race number.
- 10) Once, in 1968 (when it was hosted by Trowbridge AC), his wife Judy achieved victory on a record 17-times.

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# Club Records

Distance	Who	Time	When	Where
1-Mile	Max Davis	04:31	2018	Avon Valley
5K	Max Davis	14:52	2019	Westbury
5-Miles	Max Davis	25:09	2019	Compton Bassett
10K	Ed Knudsen	31:18	2019	Belfast
10-Miles	Bob Roots	53:38	1987	Corsham
Half Marathon	Ed Knudsen	1:09:31	2019	Fleet
20-Miles	Chris Roxburgh	1:57:59	2018	Gloucester
Full Marathon	Ed Knudsen	2:27:03	2023	London

Distance	Who	Time	When	Where
1-Mile	Ruth Barnes	05:14	2016	Avon Valley
5K	Ruth Barnes	16:38	2017	Aztec West
5-Miles	Ruth Barnes	29:08	2015	Chippenham
10K	Ruth Barnes	34:15	2016	Cardiff
10-Miles	Ruth Barnes	56:44	2017	Melksham
Half Marathon	Ruth Barnes	1:14:59	2018	Granollers, Spain
20-Miles	Holly Rush	2:08:52	2018	Gloucester
Full Marathon	Holly Rush	2:45:41	2019	London

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# #Social Gallery

To tail-end this edition, some of my favourite pictures over the past 40-years of Avon Valley Runners...



**Tough Guy - Bob Washbourne in 1993**



**Ruth Barnes wins the Bath Half in 2018**



**Sean Price, the Lemon of Leer in 2015**



**The AVR "Grizzly Girls" in 2010**



**The AVR "Lemons" at Trowbridge 5K in 2015**



**Mike Towler at Wilts XC in 2009**



**Rich Morgetroyd & Linda Ladner - 2009**



**Tina Vivian & Denise Ellis at Bromham - 2006**



**Stan Farr & Viv Toms at Warminster in 2003**

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