

Hello Striders

First I'd like to say how honoured and privileged we both feel to represent this amazing club as your captains. Last year I went from being a long time reclusive but dedicated strider to an active member of the committee. This change was largely down to me joining forces with Catherine, my purple partner in crime. Ever since our first parkrun pacing 'date' a couple of years back, we have grown together as a purple team. This club has played a huge part in our lives and it's great to be able to give something back in return.

Before becoming club captains we had been more than happy just showing up on Wednesdays. Running hard at races, wearing purple with pride, doing the odd Relay and a few XC's when time allowed. We never really gave much thought as to just what goes on in the background to make the club run so effectively. The commitment, dedication and time given to the club by so many people continues to amaze us and we are proud to be part of that team. Without this hard work the club simply could not function. So we'd like to say a big thank you to the committee, our coaches and run leaders, and everyone else who has helped in so many ways to make the club such a joy to be a part of.

It's been a pleasure to watch the progress of so many over the past year and for us to play a small part in guiding the way - we've seen PBS galore across a diverse range of races and distances, we've seen people nail their challenges and seen some fail to achieve their goals or suffer with injuries but come back stronger from that experience. It's been an exciting year for me personally, From the trauma of running swaledale (which I'm still coming to terms with) to the amazing feeling of getting a full Mens team together for the first time at the national road relay championships. With your support we are hoping to field men's and ladies teams for the first time at next years 12 stage relay championships on the 25th March. So keep your diaries clear!!

As a club we have faced some challenges over the past year and at times it has been stressful but as captains, we have done our best to ensure the club remained a positive place to be.

We've recently had the opportunity to invite new faces to join our purple posse. We've loved welcoming these new and returning folks into the family and seeing how well they have integrated into the club and how quickly they have progressed. It's a massive credit to the club as a whole how welcome these members have been made to feel. It's a scary step joining a running club, I'm sure we can all remember how it felt on that first club night, surrounded by Lycra clad people, wondering which run to join and afterwards trying to remember the name of the person you ran with!

Club run nights continue to be a big part of this running year, a chance to meet new people, catch up with fellow Striders and enjoy the sport we love. We have tried to make them as inclusive and as interesting as possible with some mile PBS chucked in and of course the fantastic purple club photos. If anyone has any creative ideas they would like to try then please let us know & we can give it a shot! Shout out for any budding run leaders too, we can only offer runs if we have folks to lead them, we can't do it all by ourselves twice a week for 52 weeks of the year....

The willow miner trail race was a huge highlight this year and showcased just what a fantastic and friendly club we are. At many events we hear positive comments about our club and members especially when we marshal - we are renowned for cheering all participants equally not just our own members.

The Christmas Handicap and the Strider do were also highlights, a chance to celebrate our accomplishments & of course socialise and practice other sports like racing round the woods in fancy dress and Ceildhi dancing - it's hard to recognise folks when they aren't in purple lycra though!

The achievements of our club over this past year are really too numerous to mention and we would inevitably miss so many out. The progress is easy to see on our social media platforms, Strava, Garmin and of course chatting to our members. Every week we see countless shout outs of PBS, podium placings, team prizes, age category prizes, Bob Grahams, Joss Naylor's and grand slams nailed, distance pbs, improvement on course times, new challenges met, fantastic locations being ran. It is almost impossible to be a lone strider / first time strider at an event nowadays and the claim to first strider home on the day is celebrated as much as the last.

Because we have so many fabulous and frequent achievements we would like to propose the introduction of a member of the month virtual award to recognise club contributions and member achievements in a timely manner - we can consider this proposal when we discuss ROTY / AOB

So to conclude, whatever the goal, we are definitely stronger as a team willing each other on, cheering, supporting, sharing our experiences to help one another and it's a honour for us to play our part. Run strong, run happy and we look forward to another successful year ahead - we are so proud to be purple!

Team Smitchard