

Firstly, we'd like to thank you all for supporting us this past year while we find our feet and try to explain our mad ideas to you! Even just this past year we have seen the club grow further, new talent emerge and witnessed the improvement of so many people, there has barely been a week we haven't seen a new PB or record broken. It is such a thrill to hear of all of the Striders incredible achievements. I wonder how many of our members have ran faster or further than they would have dared to dream this year?!

Some highlights of the year for us would include the five athletes who qualify for championship entry to the London Marathon (Mark Kearney, Michael Littlewood, Emma Thompson, Stephen Jackson and Michael Mason), Elaine continued her success in the ultra-running world with the completion of the Lakeland 100, we also saw the first race of its kind; Stuart Scott ran until he could run no further at the Last Man Standing, and Gareth continued to excel by retaining his winning title at Endure 24 Leeds, and breaking his previous course record at the same time. The tradition of summer seeing successful Bob Graham Rounds continued with Tricia, who battled the elements along with a small army of Striders to become the latest to complete the challenge. However, the triumphs are not all endurance challenges! Proving that we have success across the board, we have four people above 80% age grading (national level!) at parkrun (Roz Layton, Fiona Shenton, Jean Bradley and Stephen Jackson), we had representation this year in North East Counties Fell Running and Cross Country teams – out of the six women in the fell running team, two were Striders – and the first two home for the North East! Stephen continues to dominate in every discipline, and has even picked up an England Masters Cross Country vest, seems we haven't seen the best of him yet.

For an unbelievable example of true grit and a never give up attitude look no further than our very own David Toth who conquered the UTMB this year on his 4th attempt. Closer to home, Mark Kearney seems to have cemented his very own happy place, running the ridiculously tough Hardmoors events. At the time of writing, he is leading the marathon series.

Striders also seem to set themselves apart when not running. Many of our members are part of the core team at our local parkruns, we thank you. This is in addition to helping out at other local races, we are a supportive bunch and we all know that without the volunteers, these events would not happen. Speaking of parkrun.... apparently running 1 in one day is simply not enough of a challenge, why not do 8 in one day (and a junior parkrun!). parkrunathon raising money for If U Care Share Foundation was such a special day, terrific work by Catherine and the team for making such a memorable and important day happen.

For us, one of the best parts of having these roles is seeing the enthusiasm of members; when we lose the track in the winter months and everybody rallies to the alternatives, the monster turnouts at relays events (50 at Durham, >90 at Sedgefield!) – exciting as it is when we make it onto the podium, the turnout and energy of everybody who comes to run is what really makes these events. The club is only as good as its members, so we have a pretty good start there! With representation in every discipline from road, track, fell and cross country, and a truly diverse membership of old and new alike we truly are a force to be reckoned with in the North East.

Fiona and Michael (Captains)