

The plethora of races currently on offer has been keeping local runners very active lately, whether they be using them as warm-ups for forthcoming longer events or specific goals in their own right. The Regency 10k in Leamington attracted its largest field in the event's 5-year life, with 1,714 finishers arriving back in Mill Gardens, and a dozen Stratford AC runners made the short journey to join in. The weather was a whole deal kinder than the snow-covered scenario of 12 months previous, and the combination of cool conditions and spring sunshine helped bring new course records for both the men and women, as well a clutch of personal bests for many others. The course is generally conducive to fast times, with the route taking in parts of many of the pleasant parks that Leamington has to offer, although the climb over the Newbold Comyn golf course is never easy.

The first three back for the club had all raced in a road relays championships the day before, and all put in top performances, so maybe rest isn't always the best preparation for a race! Malcolm Bowyer (38:25, 27th) demonstrated yet again that he seems to be able to hit peak form when the London Marathon comes round, James Deacon's (42:23, 105th) big PB was just reward for working smarter at his training in the last few months while Martin Todman (42:55, 125th) has been setting the world alight recently. Martin's tremendous showing secured a rare victory over Roger Wilson (43:21, 134th), and with no prizes again for the O65s in this race Roger had to be content with 3rd in the M60 age category.

Dave Maundrell (44:43, 200th) made sure that he narrowly edged out the remarkable Allan Coldicott (44:49, 203rd), if only to keep him quiet for a while, while Phil Brennan (45:08, 219th) is another O65 – and another previous day racer - who seems to have the ability to train and race harder than most people half his age. The highly consistent Michael Oliver (50:25, 546th) was next in the frame, followed in by splendid runs from both Debbie Crisp (55:13, 1016th) and Kate Sergent (55:28, 1034th). Kate was especially impressive as she gained a large PB, 6 minutes quicker than what was her club debut race last year, and looks justifiably much more confident these days about racing. Jane Mason (61:58, 1328th) continues to make progress after long-term injury problems, just ahead of John Butler (61:21, 1333rd) who is preparing to join that Stratford AC over-65's elite training squad!

The club's males were 5th in the team competition (4 counters), the women's team were 10th (3 counters), the Boat Club's Megan Johnston put in a great effort (60:13), Stratford's Sophie Williams (Birchfield) was an excellent 17th (37:29) and Ryan Kenny (31:53) and Joyce Kirui (34:48) were the said record breakers.

The Cleevewold 14 race is one of the toughest around, but if you want stunning and expansive views from Cloud Cuckoo across Cheltenham to the Malverns and Black Mountains then this is the race for you! On a beautifully sunny but cool Sunday morning the hardy group of entrants had to cope with very hard ground this year, and with much of the Cotswold Way having been resurfaced with chippings there were a lot of sore feet by the end of the race. A marshal accidentally sent everyone the wrong way by the golf course on Cleeve Common so the entire field also had to do an extra half-mile, entailing climbing a rather large hill to get back up on to the escarpment!

For the Stratford boys and girls Johann Breytenbach was first back in 1 hour 49:58 minutes for an excellent 16th place, and he was followed back by a veteran of this event - Brian Thornett (2:05:21, 53rd). Ian Thornett (2:11:56, 71st), like all dutiful sons, made sure that his dad was safely home before crossing the line himself, Lynn Sherren (2:12:54, 73rd) excelled again on her natural mountainside terrain and the old goat himself, Pete Law (2:40:47, 129th), continues to get fitness back the tough way. (Pete's gentle easing back into running after his shoulder operation included the 40-mile Coventry Way ultra race!) The winner was Steve Osborne in 1:41:04, first female was Kate Goodhead in 1:47:52 (11th overall) and the increased quality of the entry this year was underlined by Brian 'only' finishing 5th O60 and Lynn 'only' coming 10th female and 3rd O45.

A lot warmer and nearly as tough, but not quite so green as Cleevewold, was the 13k volcano Ridge Run on Lanzarote, which is organised by the sporting haven of Club La Santa (whose residents make up the vast majority of the field). The multi-terrain course takes you round the "Caldera del Cuchillo" ridge, 151m above sea level, with terrific views of the Atlantic Ocean and a fine selection of volcanoes!

Stratford AC's Pete Hill was exactly halfway amongst the 108 males competing, with a time of 59:33 minutes, while fellow club members Debbie Cooper (61:19) and Lesley Kirk (62:14) also interrupted their sunbathing to work rather hard and finish 6th and 7th respectively amongst the 55 ladies. The relevant winners were local resident Jose Santos (42:20) and the not so local Tracy Cook (52:33).

The White Horse Half-Marathon is another event that sells out its 500-limit weeks before the race itself, partly because it's a fast course and partly because it's a picturesque route. The start and finish is in the village of Grove, about 12 miles south of Oxford, and John Turner's aim was to gain a stunning O65's club record so that future old members would have a challenge on their hands / feet. Unfortunately the warm weather and tired legs from the previous week's Ashby 20 meant that while John's 1 hour 34:00 was a new club age record (by 3:37 minutes, and 7:10 faster than when he ran it in 2000), it wasn't the sub-1:30 that he was looking for. Looking good and on schedule at 10 miles, John then struggled for the last few miles as things rather slipped away. Even though there were no trophies for O65s John did claim the 3rd O60's prize, although he couldn't stay for the presentation ceremony because his carer was waiting to take him back.