

**Overton
Harriers**



**&
Athletic Club**

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November 2011 Issue 411

Visit us on our Web Site at www.overtonharriers.org.uk

Email your reports to me at PiersPuntan@overtonharriers.org.uk
or Franny at richard.francis@uk.delarue.com or Franny1960@hotmail.co.uk

You can view or print this and previous editions from our website

December	3 rd	HANTS XC LEAGUE POPHAM	
	4 th	Tadley XC	
	11 th	Border XC	
	18 th	CYCLISTS RACE	Club Christmas Dinner
	22 nd	FOXDOWN HANDICAP	Christmas Party

Also remember the Park Run 5k's at the War Memorial Park, Basingstoke and Andover on Saturday mornings.

FRANNY'S BITS

Congratulations to Clare & Tim on the birth of their son, Caleb Finley Darch who weighed in at a healthy 7lb 15oz. Father & son are both well while mum is busy looking for a new excuse for not to putting on her running shoes.

Following the Gosport Half it is now time for the Road Race League mid season report. We had expected good things from the men's team this year especially with the signing of James. Lee has been struggling with injury recently but I find it amazing that the team currently lie 2nd in the table with Sean pressing for a high placing in the individual rankings. The high team placing can be explained by the runners who are turning out and constantly putting in superb performances with Robin, Neil Martin, Stuart & Rich Clifford all worthy of mention.

Further good XC results at Goodwood saw the men's team move up one place in the table with their Vets team getting the better of local rivals Basingstoke. The ladies numbers were down on the great Farley Mount turnout but they also maintained their good start to the season. League tables can be found near the back of this edition.

Well done to Kerri & Emily for being selected to represent Hampshire in the annual fixture at Coutance in France, check the report to see how they got on.

For those members who probably take their running too seriously, the Basingstoke Park Run team are planning to hold events on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, Boxing Day & New Years Eve all starting at 9am at the War Memorial Park. There is also the possibility of a New Years Day run but check the Park Run Web site to be sure.

LORDSHILL 10 **6th November** *from Piers Puntan*

It was a great day for a race; good temperature and very little wind and given that this 10 mile course is very flat it was a little disappointing to see so few Club numbers turning up for this event.

Despite this we had some great performances from the men's team. Sean was first harrier home in 5th place a new PB and he took the first Vets prize as well. Next home were Neil and Robin who raced each other all round the course with Neil taking second Harrier only two places ahead of Robin; though both got a PB. Competition to be the last counter for the team was fierce with Richard just getting the better of Stuart in a close finish though, as Stuart had run XC for his London club the day before, keeping ahead of Mr Clifford was a good result.



I had decided that enough was enough and after a good handicap performance I was going to actually get my head together and race properly, it being nearly two years since my last seriously effort. I had a great first few miles and tagged on to a group of Southampton and Winchester runners doing around 65 minute pace. They drifted away from me through the farm track section, which wa a little too muddy for me, but on the return home I caught them all up. I worked hard through the "hard" industrial estate section and couldn't believe my eyes as I turned into the finish run in with the clock showing 64 minutes. Crossed the line in 64' 30" a PB by nearly 90 seconds - excellent.

Dave was only a few minutes behind me in the best time he's achieved for quite a few years. The men's team finished in 6th place but we finished well enough to maintain 2nd place standing in the league table

The ladies team was decimated by last minute withdrawals so it was only Katie, who seems to have caught the racing bug, being only female to finish clocking a highly promising time that will give her a good target to beat in the spring.

Harrier	Gun Time	Position
Sean Holmes	56:41	5 th
Neil Martin	60:46	24 th
Robin Oakley	61:17	26 th
Richard Clifford	63:10	51 st
Stuart Searle	63:17	53 rd
Piers Puntan	64:30	76 th
Dave Titcomb	71:52	180 th
Katie Rundle	87:28	400 th

480 Finished

SOUTHERN ATHLETIC LEAGUE - FIXTURES 2012 *from John Hoare*

Apr 21 st	Andover	v	Southampton, Havering Mayesbrook, Luton
May 19 th	Harrow	v	Harrow, Walton, City of Norwich
June 9 th	Welwyn Garden City	v	Herts Phoenix, Stevenage & NH, Peterborough
July 14 th	Chelmsford	v	Chelmsford, Ashford, Marshall Milton Keynes
Sept 1 st	Worthing	v	Worthing, Nene Valley Harriers, Enfield & Haringey (<i>Prov</i>)

JUNIOR NEWS *from Anna Vallis*

Our Juniors have had a busy month, competing in two cross country races and their second Sportshall event. See Georgia's race reports for how they got on.

Training is continuing every Thursday evening and Saturday morning. Despite the onset of some wintery conditions, we are maintaining a healthy turnout, so we're still looking for more helpers (you don't have to be qualified, but just have an interest in developing our young athletes and club members). No huge commitment is required, just once a month would be great.

BORDER LEAGUE **6th November** *from Georgia Vallis*

On 6th November a group of children from Overton Harries went to Lightwater. There was Molly and Lauren in the Under 11s girl's race then Rory in the Under 9s boy's race. Also there was Georgia, Emily, Jessica and Amelia in the Under 9s girl's race.



The first race was the Under 9s girl's. After our coach took us for a warm up around the course all the girl's lined up on the white line that had been painted in the ground. The gun went off to start the race and it gave all of us a fright especially Amelia. As it was quite a long race for us, so we started slowly and increased our speed as the race went on. It was a tough course for our first ever Cross Country but luckily we all got to the finish in a really good place. As there were four of us in this race we had a team and we came 3rd.

The best race was the Under 9s boy's which we had only one boy in. Rory started the race really quickly and we were worried that he had gone too fast. We were all waiting near the end of the course and couldn't believe it when we saw Rory in the lead. He wasn't actually the first person because the race has a Hare and a Tortoise so they have older children running in the front and at the back to help the younger ones. There was another boy quite close behind but Rory held on to win the race. He did really well.

Molly and Lauren were in the next race which was the Under 11 Girls. They had to run further than our race, but they still did really well. Lauren forgot to take her inhaler before the race so this didn't help her.



We all really enjoyed it and hope we can get more children to do it next time.

Sportshall – Match 2 *from Georgia Vallis*

We were more prepared this time for our Sportshall competition as we knew what to expect, but there were more teams and athletes so it was a hard afternoon. We looked better this time as we had our club vests on.

Although we had practiced we had hard opposition and didn't do as well as in the first Match. Furney and Owen did well in their event and came second. Aiden and Niall won their race. For the girls, Molly and Caitlin did the best by coming 4th in the Chest Push throw.



The obstacle course at the end was quite hard, especially as the hurdles were really high.

We've got 2 more Sporthall competitions left, so we need to keep practicing and find some more boys to compete with us.

Lord Wandsworth Cross Country *from Georgia Vallis*

The sun was shining at our second ever cross country race. It was a busy morning as both the younger juniors and the adults had races.

The first race was the Under 15s which we had Saskia Monaghan running in her first race for the Harriers. She did very well and won the girls race. We hope that she will race for us again.

The next race to set off was the adults. Sean, Neil M, Keith V, Blissy and Eric were all running. They had a long race so the other junior races started whilst they were still running.

Molly and Lauren were in the next race. They beat everyone, including the boys and came first and second.

The last race was the Under 9s which was my race. There were 17 in the race and 8 of these were Harriers. We all worked hard and brought home some medals. Owen was third in the Boys race and I came first in the Girls, with Victoria getting the bronze medal. Emily was very close behind, then Annabelle, Jessica, Amelia and Amy completed our successful team. Some of the girls are only 7 years old, so they did really well.

After we finished our race the adults started to come back. They had a hard race as the course was tough, but Sean didn't let the side down and he maintained our winning streak for the day.



GOSPORT HALF MARATHON**20th November***from Piers Puntan*

After a great run at Lordshill I was up for this one big time; unfortunately due to a missing stop cock cover, try saying that after a few JD and cokes, and a twisted ankle on the Wednesday before I only got to the four mile mark before I had to pull out and jog home.



However enough about the failures, what about the successes? With Lee away for such a long time Sean is making hay at the top of the consistency league pulling out another top notch performance, though not quite below the 75 minutes he wanted for a VFM Championship entry. Lee back from nearly two month's injury posted a creditable sub 80 minute time. Neil is showing more form and Robin is again progressing, another PB to make up the men's team. Stuart again racing after a London XC put in a respectable time. Neil has had a few weeks off and this and the distance stretched his stamina to the limit; though sub 90 minutes is a good time to work on. Martin also struggled at this distance though it's racing all miles in the bank

We had a solid ladies team out with Hannah Lucy, Kate and Claire all going sub 2 hours with Sara just over the hour. A surprise was that Paul was running with Claire however did mean we got a men's B team out!

Harrier	Gun Time	Position
Sean Holmes	1h 15m 20sec	14th
Lee Tolhurst	1h 19m 21sec	41st
Neil Martin	1h 21m 48sec	65th
Robin Oakley	1h 24m 02sec	94th
Stuart Searle	1h 26m 53sec	132nd
Neil Glendon	1h 29m 23sec	176th
Martin Groundsell	1h 32m 54sec	251 st
Hannah Oliver	1h 51m 12sec	722nd
Lucy Griffiths	1h 55m 30sec	831st
Kate Groundsell	1h 57m 43sec	896th
Claire Boyle	1h 59m 43 sec	960th
Paul Wheeler	1h 59m 43 sec	961st
Sarah McCann	2h 05m 38sec	1083 rd

*1379 finished***HANTS XC LEAGUE at GOODWOOD****12th November**

George & Robbie both had good runs and are obviously benefitting from Mark's training routines. They will both surely build on these seasons performances and will be looking to "stuff" a few seniors in the cyclist's race.

Harrier	Gun Time	Position
George Preece	18m 15sec	47th
Robbie Dennison	19m 01sec	53rd

58 finished

5 ladies made the trip down to Goodwood with Team Captain Kerri leading the squad home in 53rd place as she prepared for her forthcoming race for Hampshire. Katie Rundle was next home some 45 seconds ahead of Sarah who did well to anchor the Senior team which finished 13th but now lie a respectable 8th in the overall League. Monique was less than 30 seconds behind Sarah and she closed the Vets team that also finished 13th but are currently 7th overall in their division. Liz closed the club interest with another good performance on a good day for the ladies section.

Harrier	Gun Time	Position
Kerri Barton	26m 02sec	53rd
Katie Rundle	29m 28sec	87th
Sara McCann	30m 12sec	92nd
Monique Van Neuten	30m 39sec	98th
Liz Sandall-Ball	32m 02sec	107th

117 finished

The men's good start to the cross country season continued after their opening 7th place at Farley Mount as they improved to record a fine 6th place with the Vets team also doing well by climbing from 4th overall to 2nd. Sean as expected was first man home but Robin's purple patch continued with another storming run. Best sight of the day must have been Bliss finishing a race and let's hope it becomes a familiar sight from now on. Neil Martin is proving to be Mr Consistent and was not far behind him and he, in turn, was chased home by Richard who was the last counter for the senior team. Keith anchored the Vets team home and also took the Overton Fire Station honours by leading Neil Glendon home. Piers put in another battling performance with the ever young ET closing the club interest in what I believe is his 37th season of Cross Country and beating a fair few younger men in the process.

Harrier	Gun Time	Position
S.HOLMES	31m 27sec	42nd
R.OAKLEY	32m 59sec	67th
M.BLISS	33m 47sec	77th
N.MARTIN	34m 00sec	84th
R.CLIFFORD	34m 29sec	99 th
K.VALLIS	35m 17sec	111th
N.GLENDON	35m 41sec	118th
P.PUNTAN	37m 25sec	148th
E.TILBURY	41m 44sec	199 th

222 finished

Lost Property

A blue waterproof was left at Goodwood Cross Country. If this was you then please contact Keith Vallis.

REMPSTONE ROAST DUATHLON *from Dave Titcomb*

Following a poor week when I missed the Gosport ½ due to man flu and crashed my new mountain bike (which made me pull out of the handicap) I was determined to do this one! It was a 2 mile run, then a 10 mile mountain bike, then another 2 mile run set on the heathland and woodland behind Studland Bay in Dorset.

A field of just shy of 100 set off from the Burnbake campsite and I was 15th coming into the bike transition. I then took another couple of places as we headed off on the initial uphill section but was then overtaken by many in the downhill section – most of whom did not seem to share my fear of sudden injury or death. I did manage to pull a few places back when we went uphill again but came into the run transition in 47th place.

Happily there was still 2 miles to run and I managed to pull back another 12 places and finish in 35th place overall. It was a great little event and the weather was fine and sunny with some top class bacon butties at the end – I just need to get a few MTB lessons and leave the brakes alone!

IAU World Trail Championships - Connemara, Ireland 9th July 2011

Steve McNair recently spotted an ex Harrier on TV and, after a little bit of Googling found the following blog. <http://ultrastu.blogspot.com/>

Stuart was a member of the club in the mid 1990's and was one of the elite sub 20 minute over the Foxdown handicap course. Stuart has a blog site that some of you may find of interest.

Just a very quick update on yesterday's IAU World Trail Championships that took place in Connemara, Ireland.



The race was absolutely awesome, a real experience running in a Great Britain vest, as displayed in the photo above, taken by the Irish Team Manager Tony Brennan, shortly after the start of the first climb up Diamond Hill, where, when this photo was taken, I was in sixth place!

Yes, I adopted my usual strategy, "Run as fast as you can , while you can" and was actually leading the race for a wee while, and reached the start of the first tough climb after 5 km in 3rd place. As you can probably imagine, quite an exciting experience! I then settled down into a more realistic pace, and just enjoyed the very demanding boggy and mountainous course. I ended up finishing in 15th place overall, out of a total field of 131 starters. I was the first Great Britain team member to finish in a time of 7:10:42. Other male team finishers were Julian Rendall 7:16:50 (16th), Allen Smalls 7:39:47 (29th), and Craig Stewart 7:47:00 (35th). Unfortunately Andrew James (Highland Fling winner) had to pull out due to a hamstring injury, aggravated as a result of an extremely boggy and slippery course.

The British Womens team was led home by a fantastic 3rd Place by Lucy Colquhoun in a time of 7:57:20, followed by Adele Salt 9:36:40 (18th), and Heather Foundling-Hawker 10:38:24 (24th), Also, unfortunately Karen Rushton had to pull out.

Overall an amazing experience. Stuart

4E FOULEES DES VIGNETTES CROSS COUNTRY AT COUTANCES, NORMANDY, FRANCE

20th November *from Graeme Lowndes (Team Manager)*

It was a great day for Hampshire Athletics with the county taking 6 team trophies; 6 individual 1st places; and 5 athletes taking 2nd places.

Senior Women

Jennifer McLachlan in her first senior run for Hampshire after a fast start held on for the three laps to finish in 4th overall position – 3rd in the senior category. Sue True was pushing up towards Jennifer and was not far behind to finish in 5th overall position – 4th senior. A familiar name some year's back, Emily Lowndes made her come back to County Cross Country running after a spell of 7 years, in great style. She achieved a commendable overall 10th position – 8th in her senior category.



Emily's club mate from Overton, Kerri Barton, was close behind in 12th overall position – 9th senior lady.

The team took 2nd place with 31 points.

“Quote of the Month”

New club member Carole had a rapid introduction to the Quote of the Month after she enquired if there were any spare places left on the February Training weekend in Norfolk.

It should be noted that Richard Clifford's first question in response came when he was only on his first pint which makes it an even bigger blooper..... **“Are you a woman?”**

Should have gone to Specsavers Richard.

FOXDOWN HANDICAP**24th November**

A quick report as I was not there to see it, well done to Anum who ran out an easy winner as she took 44 seconds off her PB. Run of the night came from runner up Neil who confirmed his recent good form with a 35 second improvement on his PB. I will not tempt fate by saying anything good about Mike's run but he must have been happy with his third place. There were 2 first timers with Nick taking the family honours over Richard. The final PB came from Martin who trimmed 4 seconds off his best. Fastest on the night was Sean ahead of Neil & Robin.

Pos.	Harrier	Fin. Time	H'Cap	Act. Time	Time Pos.
1	A.MAHMOOD	29.33	1.17	28.16	15
2	N.MARTIN	30.23	8.43	21.40	2
3	M.BLISS	30.39	8.30	22.09	5=
4	N.ALVIS	30.58	5.49	25.09	9
5	R.ALVIS	31.0	5.49	25.11	10
6	M.VAN NEUTEN	31.07	1.28	29.39	19
7	M.GROUNDSELL	31.11	7.04	24.07	8
8	L.GRIFFITHS	31.17	2.45	28.32	16
9	S.HOLMES	31.22	11.08	20.14	1
10	S.SEARLE	32.23	9.14	22.09	5=
11	R.CLIFFORD	31.26	9.33	21.53	4
12	K.VALLIS	31.34	8.56	22.38	7
13	E.TILBURY	31.41	3.08	28.33	17
14	R.OAKLEY	31.59	10.10	21.49	3
15	E.SIMPSON	32.00	3.21	28.39	18
16	K.GROUNDSELL	32.02	4.14	27.48	14
17	E.SANDALL BALL	32.50	0.58	31.52	20
18	K.BARTON	33.34	5.49	27.45	13
19	G.ENGLAND	34.39	9.27	25.12	11
20	N.GLENDON	36.15	9.58	26.17	12

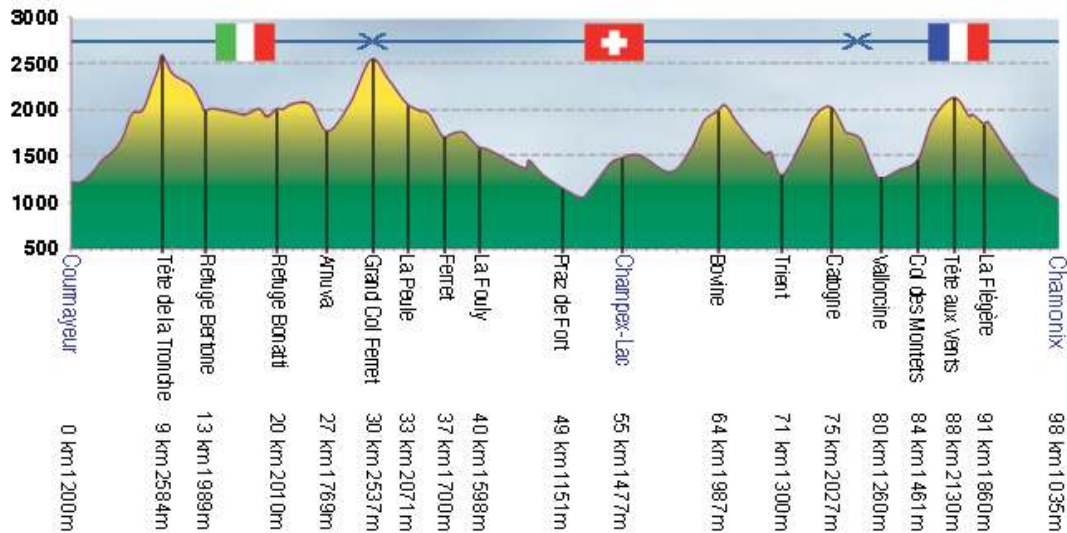
The following picture has been sent by John & Monique.

'Jirka (George) and Jitka say hello to all their friends at Overton Harriers'



This month's final report is a club record 5 pages long as Andy Hartley recounts his experience in his biggest endurance challenge so far.

CCC -26TH August 2011 Courmayeur(Italy)- Champex (Switzerland) – Chamonix (France) 98 km- 5,500m of ascent.



I'd been training for this since mid-December so I'd put a lot into it. Training had gone well. I'm never the best trainer but I'd not done less than 50 miles a week for months and had put a couple of 80 mile weeks in. It had taken over my life and I'm so grateful for Charlie supporting me (often through gritted teeth) in my preparation. I did feel ready for it and it was amazing to see the impact that proper training has on your running!

We drove into Chamonix on the Thursday to pick up my number and do the kit check etc. It was a great atmosphere with a huge number of runners gathering from all over the world. There was a London Marathon style exhibition selling all you might need to do 100km+. It was interesting to see just how small a bag some of the real pros could get away with. Anyway what was important was the quality of the t-shirt- a nice North Face Polartec affair in red and white. The bus ticket I was issued with to get to the start on Friday morning said 7.00am so by mid afternoon we headed back to Megeve where we stayed for a late afternoon by the amazing municipal pool (50 metres , outdoor heated surrounded by mountains; so that's what you pay high taxes for!) It was around 33 degrees in the early afternoon so I was concerned. However the forecast was for a cooler day on the Friday with a possible storm coming through.

I set the alarm for 5.00am and made myself the prescribed breakfast of egg, porridge etc. The race website was really helpful in giving you a guide to eating the week and days before the race in order to maximise glycogen in the muscles. Extra potatoes, pasta and eggs etc, obvious I know, but it was good to be told these things. I wish I had listened about the bit that said don't take Ibuprofen but more of that later.

I got Charlie up at 6.00am and we headed off into grey pre dawn light. It was clear but felt cool. As we drove up into Chamonix I could see people heading down to the bus point and I felt *so* excited. These moments are few and far between and really worth savouring.

I met a couple of Brits in the bus queue, a London banker and a Scottish housewife. In a bizarre coincidence the banker was flying out of Geneva straight after the race to be at a wedding at 4pm in Overton! The Scottish girl was experienced and she talked of the value of pacing herself in all these races. She certainly did that rising from 1100 after about a third of the race to finish in 450th.

As we got to Courmayeur the music was pumping in the town square and the mountains loomed steeply overhead. It was here that it became apparent that my number meant I was in pen 2 of 3. I was pleased in

some ways but also a bit disappointed. The pen system was introduced as the new route is on a single track all the way up the first ascent. Passing was not going to be easy. However it's two and half marathons not a sprint! I met a guy I'd communicated with on the FRA forum thread for the race, Morgan Williams, who is also on the FRA committee and is Bob Graham chairman. He was cool and we chatted for a few minutes before we moved on. We would meet up later!

About 25 minutes from the start people started going into their pens. I stood next to Mark, a Brit living in Zurich who told me of his attempts to train solo in the mountains in the dark. Unfortunately after having got a train from Zurich about 30 miles out into the hills he arrived at around 10.00pm. He then ran for about an hour gradually up into the hills through dark and deserted villages. He eventually hit the foot of the trail just after 11. After about 5 minutes of running there was a huge rumpus around 20 metres off the path to his right. He said he stopped dead still before a large mammal ran past him around 5 metres away. At this point he reconsidered his evening's entertainment and ran fast all the way back to the station to get the last train back to Zurich and he was in bed by 1.30am, the dark lonely forest but a distant memory. Anyway as we were chatting an announcement came over the tannoy in Italian, French but not English. Suddenly everyone was reaching for the map and the phone and lots of excited chatter filled our ears. Mark was listening and then translated that the route was being changed to counter the extreme weather that was forecast for the evening. I had pored over the map book you get sent for weeks beforehand and I was a bit gutted. The original route is brutal in the last 30 km but in my head I was ready for it and I'd visualised it. I managed to readjust my mind – Ce la vie and all that, it was still going to be an amazing 24 hours. However what I didn't know nor did anyone else was where were we going now!



Anyway 10 am came and the first pen started. We were held for another 10 minutes. It soon came and to the sound of Vangelis we departed. Following 500 metres downhill we turned and ran through the narrow streets of the town. Crowds lined the streets and cow bells and pans were banged and clanged all along the route. Suddenly we turned the corner and the road became a wall of uphill tarmac. The issue of people using sticks soon became apparent as one tall Finnish woman proceeded to waft them around and take several eyes out. The track soon became single narrowed and walking was inevitable because of the steepness and the rocky trail. The Eurosport helicopter kept buzzing overhead as we headed in and out of the trees. I felt good although it was warm and I was starting to sweat. I got my sticks out after an hour and despite having not used them before I was soon feeling the benefits as I got into my rhythm.

With the route change we headed up to the Refuge Bertone as the first checkpoint. It took about 2 hours I got checked in and after another quick climb we were suddenly in the alpine pastures. I saw Morgan who said we had about an hour and a half of glorious running. It was undulating with streams, meadows, and amazing views. He told me to hold steady as it was a long way to go. I ran off! After about an hour or so I noticed my quads starting to twinge on the descents. It was fine I thought. After the next checkpoint we

then had about an hour to the next checkpoint. My quads continued to twinge. We then went downhill losing around 500 metres to Arnuva. The descent got steeper and steeper as we zig zagged down the mountain. My quads were starting to burn in a way that soon became unbearable. By the food stop I was almost in tears. My quads had contracted to the point that I had trouble walking, never mind running. I got some food and drink and then rubbed a substantial quantity of Ibuleve gel into my aching legs. I also took two full strength Ibuprofen and hoped for the best. Fortunately. This check point is at the foot of the steep climb up the Grand Col de Ferret and after a couple of hundred metres it was a straight up with an 800 metre of height gain it was my calf muscles to be exercised for the next hour. I actually really enjoyed the climb and the views of the Mont Blanc glacier field were stunning. This was a truly beautiful place and very isolated indeed.

At over 2,500 metres the summit of Grand Col De Ferret is high. The clouds were gathering, the wind was howling and thunder was rumbling away. I was glad to get over the top before the weather closed in. My quads killed on the descent and I was struggling for a while but it was still amazing with high alpine pastureland and no roads in sight. Bizarrely we did come across a farm and the farmer and his family were sat on a bench outside their barn under warm blankets offering support and a water trough. After a long descent we eventually dropped painfully and near vertically through some woods and hit the road. I was starting to pick a few off now and feel stronger. This feeling increased as we ran into La Peule. I took on some delicious pasta soup before cracking on. I now started to fly. It was a long trail descent and I just kept overtaking! I was feeling so strong and I managed to pick up over 300 places in about 3 hours. We went through some incredible tiny Swiss villages full of those tiny dark wooden chalets of a picture postcard style. As I reached the foot of the 400 metres ascent to Champex Lac I started to feel all invincible. It was about 6.00 pm now and I'd been going for 8 hours. Chrissie Moehel (ultra athlete) describes the climb as 'mellow'. I describe it as not mellow. It goes on for longer than is necessary however the greeting as we arrived in Champex Lac was great. In the food tent there was an oompah band and several hundred runners all buzzing around chatting and comparing notes. I chatted to a French civil engineer who spoke English with a Geordie accent! After a good refuelling stop this is where the route changed and we were forced on a very steep drop down to Matigny on the River Rhone. It was only 450 metres above sea level so this was another big descent (around 700 metres of height loss). It was at this time that I saw my Scottish housewife friend. She looked strong as her end result proved. I continued to feel good and as we bottomed out and crossed the river the light was fading. Our run now followed a difficult trail along the side of the valley. We zig-zagged up and down through vineyards and forest. The head torches were donned and suddenly everything slowed. You have to really concentrate on these rocky trails at night and I was surprised at how harder it was. After about an hour and a half we arrived in Martigny just as the rain came on and the wind began to howl. The checkpoint here was just a big marquee full of slightly confused runners trying to establish what happened next. I found out we had a 5 km ascent gaining about 1100 metres before dropping into the next checkpoint. That was going to be steep!



As we hit the slope the sticks came out and I started the steady ascent. For the first couple of kilometres we were on and off residential roads and it was lovely to see lots of locals handing out tea and coffee and wine despite the rain and wind. After about half an hour of slog we went into woods and I started to feel a bit odd. Odd turned to queasy and I pulled aside and went all dizzy. Next minute I'm on my knees with the regurgitated contents of my stomach at my knees. Several competitors stopped and "Ca vaed? " me. Clearly I wasn't! The rain was falling hard now and I was feeling sorry for myself. With heavy legs I got on with it and continued the ascent. After another period of time I went queasy again. This time it was projectile. I was hunched over a stream really throwing as the rain came down and the wind roared. Thunder and lightening were rolling around and the climb seemed endless. At last someone said the summit was just ahead but the lightening was everywhere now, it was midnight and getting very cold. We dropped down into Trient off the summit of the Col de Forclaz and I felt awful. I was soaked, cold

and very nauseous. My friend Morgan was just behind me and he consoled me and told me to give it 20 minutes in the aid station. He left me with the words “ Courage, my friend, courage”. I had some tea and pasta soup and was just trying a mouthful of chocolate when this huge rush of sickness welled up. I rushed outside and vomited hot tea which was a novel experience. I was now down to bile and felt grim. A nice doctor then touched me on the shoulder and pointed me towards the first aid hall. I went over and was given a blanket and an anti nausea pill. I was told to wait . I got warm and then felt better. I then got going again however my stomach muscles ached so much running was really uncomfortable. The route took us along a road with the rain lashing down before we turned off and headed uphill. The slope was too steep to run but it was a solid trail and easy to get a good rhythm established. I gradually woke up again. However as we got to the summit at around 2,300 metres it began to snow. It was lonely at night. You couldn't see people's numbers or faces and I was in the woods all alone. I really had to dig deep to keep going. The descent down to Vallorcine was rocky, steep and through some very difficult woods. I slipped over a couple of times but at least the snow had gone back to rain! Eventually we arrived in the village just as the rain was stopping. My feet were frozen solid my 'waterproof ' gloves weren't, I was really thirsty but I knew I couldn't keep it down. Then I saw that there was a patio heater in the tent. I stood there with several others shivering hard but it wasn't enough. However outside a farmer had started a huge blaze with waste wood. I stood next to it and watched my clothes steam.!

The next stage was 8km to Argentiere however it was fairly undulating rather than mountainous and I could run most of it even though it was very wet and my feet continued to be frozen. As I descended into Argentiere I was once again picking off the odd runner and feeling better. The food tent was in the town's main square. It was 4.00am now and it felt very weird. The nurse in the tent said just 8 more kilometres and after hugging her and drinking a sugary cafe noir I was on my way. It has to be all downhill from here doesn't it? Wrong- talk about messing with your head! Almost all of the trail was through the woods on difficult rocky trails that seemed to go up more than down. The last 4km was really difficult as rather than descend down the valley head into Chamonix we went round the side of Cham always in the woods, always in the ****ing dark woods. At last we started to go downhill and after but a few minutes I was in the grey pre- dawn filled streets of Chamonix. I kept going and after a quick trot along the river the town hall was in sight. I saw Charlie then and gave her and Eddie a big kiss before cruising round the final corner and into the finish 19 hours 39 minutes after I'd started at 5.51am. Poor Charlie had been at the finish for nearly three hours. She'd got a bit excited about when I would finish and also my pit stops had cost me over an hour and a half. She was frozen, poor thing. She was so pleased to see me again and the sense of relief and achievement surpassed the nausea I was feeling. As dawn broke we got my kit, got a quick shower and headed home via the bakery. I slept for most of Saturday on and off but bizarrely come Sunday I was good and despite a little stiffness coming down stairs I felt pretty strong.

The sense of achievement was incredible and hasn't left me yet. I am so pleased with my resilience for carrying on when I could have folded. The stats were that 84% finished from the starting line up so over 300 folded en-route (the full UTMB race which is 166km saw only a 47% completion rate partly because they started in the middle of the rain and snow which left many people frozen and with low morale and still with 130 km to complete!) My position was improving all the time; I overtook over 250 runners during the long downhill sections after my quads cleared up and I felt really strong until I became ill so I know a better position is possible. It was great to run in the same arena as Killian Jornet, the world's best ultra runner although looking at all the You Tube videos he was somewhat more comfortable than me! I saw so many amazing things and took myself to 'another place'. It is several races within a race with lots of problem solving to do en-route- do you take advantage of the cheese and salami at the food stops? I did but shouldn't have! How do you pace yourself? Toilet stops en route? (They do give you two small bags to scoop your poop into should you feel the need!) How do you cope with the downhills and the mess it makes of your quads? Keeping on top of kit and weather changes is also quite stressful; do you stop, lose time etc to put the waterproof cover on your rucksack or do you carry on and risk getting everything soaked?

Would I have done anything differently? I would have done more ascents and especially long descents in training and I should have taken paracetamol for pain not Ibuprofen as advised on the race website. However I felt strong at the finish and if I ever do it again I know that there is definitely scope for going a bit quicker. Whilst this account perhaps spends too long documenting the struggles it was so much more positive and I was smiling for most of the time I wasn't vomiting a congealed combination of energy gels, bars, cheese and salami. All in all, a truly life defining experience.



Point	Heure	Temps	Clst
Départ	V-10:12	-	-
Refuge Bertone	V-11:22	01:09:30	941
Refuge Bonatti	V-12:29	02:17:06	876
Arnuva	V-13:18	03:06:00	863
Grand Col Ferret	V-14:45	04:32:33	936
La Fouly	V-16:26	06:13:47	950
Champex-Lac	V-18:25	08:12:58	785
Martigny	V-21:02	10:49:33	695
Trient	V-23:35	13:23:19	753
Les Jeurs	S-01:07	14:54:33	854
Vallorcine	S-02:32	16:19:45	846
Argentière	S-04:00	17:47:28	809
Les Tines	S-04:59	18:46:27	820
Chamonix	S-05:52	19:39:23	810

HARTLEY Andrew

Finisher : 19:39:23

Classement Général : 810

Classement catégorie V1 H : 274

Club : Overton Harriers

Nationalité : Royaume-Uni

<http://www.ultratrailmb.com/accueil.php>

<http://www.abc.es/videos-deportes/20110828/exito-espanol-carrera-dura-1133081718001.html>

The latter is a great little film focusing on Journet. Most of the footage is the second half of the UTMB which is the bit I did. He ran it a little quicker!!!