



Running with Harpenden Arrows Running Club

We are a mixed ability friendly running club based at St George's School Sports Hall, Harpenden. The club has approximately 160 members who are gentle joggers who run 4 miles at 10 minute mile pace through to ultra-marathon runners and all abilities in between.

Where and when?

We meet Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 19:20 1st floor at the sports hall (see location map below). Car parking is accessed from Carlton Road, on occasions the school holds events in the evening so you may need to park in adjacent streets. Stuart Road or Ox Lane.

What do we do?

On Tuesday evenings we have a training session of either hill reps or speed training. These are optional; we also have run groups running a variety of paces over 4 or 5 miles. There is something for all abilities. Thursday evenings mixed run groups.

Health and safety

Your health and safety is paramount. It is your responsibility to ensure you are healthy enough to run. As a minimum you should be able to run 1 mile in 10 minutes without adverse effects.

Each run group will have a designated run leader. Please follow their instructions about route, when crossing roads and junctions.

Kit

High visibility top is **mandatory** during the winter months. As we are limited to running on roads during these months (September through end of April), high visibility is essential common sense safety precaution.

Please make sure your running shoes are adequate for the run you wish to participate in. You can get plenty of advice from club members, our chairman Colin Wareham can arrange a gait analysis and advise you on the type of shoe you need, or visit a commercial running outlet such as Sweat Shop.

Don't forget quality running socks for blister free running!

Get in contact

Prior to joining, please email membership@harpendenarrows.co.uk with any questions you may have.

Communications

Important club information can be found on our website www.harpendenarrows.co.uk. A membership form can also be downloaded. Once you are a paid up member you will be invited to join our Facebook group where lots of running related topics, news and chat can be found.

Location map



Club Facilities

We meet in room SP102 1st floor of the sports hall where you can leave your valuables when we are out running. There are also changing rooms and showers (do not leave any valuables in the changing rooms).



HARC club culture, how we collectively support our members

Anna's story – How I got to my first 10K

So there I was, in the winter of 2015, at my first club run night with the Harpenden Arrows Running Club. Running had never been my thing. I had hated it at school, never had time for it through university and had therefore convinced myself I was terrible at it in adulthood. I moved to Harpenden in 2014 with my boyfriend Simon. I have a demanding job, working long hours, and knew very few people in the area. I was keen to find an activity that could keep me fit and healthy, was manageable around my working hours and would enable me to meet some new people. So I started running on my own (2 out of the 3 didn't seem too bad at the time!).

But Simon kept nagging me to join the Arrows (he had taken the lead and joined in the summer of 2015). I wouldn't join. I thought I wasn't good enough, I'd never run further than 5km at that point and never without stopping! I thought there would be too much pressure to keep up and there was no chance of me running and talking at the same time! So headphones in, head down, I carried on regardless. Until one evening in September 2015, running along Luton Road on my own in the pitch black, I decided enough was enough. I was going to join Harpenden Arrows Running Club.

I still thought I wasn't good enough but with much encouragement from Simon, I agreed to go along with him for a taster session. He ended up being injured on my first run night so I went on my own. And I'm so glad I did! Everyone was really friendly. I signed up for a 4 mile run, a distance I'd never run before until that night and everyone made sure I completed it. The run leaders at the club are always great. They make sure everyone is safe and stick to the ethos of the Arrows; that you always look out for the all the runners in your run group. I did struggle a bit on this first club run, but everyone in my group looped back to keep the tail enders in the body of the group, something I found very encouraging, I felt supported.

I've met so many great people at the club since that first night and even taken part in a few races! Not least my first 10km race after spending my whole life convincing myself that I'd never be able to run that distance! Regular training with the Club, constant encouragement from lots of people at the Club and an understanding of the importance of setting small goals to reach along the way, meant that I completed my first 10km in April this year in less than an hour! From minimal running to 10km in less than 6 months! Thank you Harpenden Arrows.



Lyndon joined Harpenden Arrows in January and posted this on our club Facebook page after completing the Milton Keynes Marathon in May

So today I completed my first (official) Marathon, meaning I can join the elusive <1% of people on this planet who have run one at all. Wow.

And apart from my 39 year-old stumpy legs and twisted mind, I think I have a few people to thank too for getting me here...

Thank you to Scott for introducing me to the club in the first place - without you I possibly wouldn't have got what I needed to get me over the line today. To Chitra for answering all my inane questions with a smile when I joined and making me feel very welcome.

To Justin for some amazing sub-zero head torch runs in the countryside back in January - frosty memories. James, Roger and Jennifer for company on my first run over 17 miles. I started to think it might be possible at that point...

Thank you to David for the 'fun' hill and sprint sessions; I put up with breaking my body because your Facebook posts are always so amusing! To Andrew for taking me on an amazing trail long run, and spurring me on to my first (unofficial) marathon last month. And to Ed Rhodes for company and patience on my final long run, and the small but positive words of encouragement which definitely had an effect. Also thank you to Claire for the lift to the event - it was great to have company for all the pre-race chats.

A special thanks to Colin for sorting me out a club shirt - just in time, Justin again for suggesting putting my name on it and Louise for organising the letters to make it happen. It was weird to have strangers talk to me for 26 miles today, but I loved it you were right!

Not least to Laura, Sarah, Helen, Hannah, Amanda, Simon and Ollie - you didn't need to be out there cheering us on and taking photos - but you did and it worked a treat!

How could I forget my family, waiting patiently at the finish for the warmest of welcomes, despite me having disowned them 4 nights a week for the past 4 months!

Finally, to everyone else in the club, who has provided me company on our runs, advice, support, or just listened to my wittering. I may have run it but it was your support that got me there. Harpenden Arrows is a great club with an amazing spirit, and I feel very humbled to be a member.

Thank you all,

Lyndon



From couch to Marathon in 118 days!

“Merry Christmas” exclaimed my sister as she presented me with a gift. It was a novelty Christmas jumper size XXL. “That looks massive” I thought. “It will drown me”. To my horror it fitted just right. I checked the weighing scales. I was 51 years old, three stone overweight and there is diabetes in the family. I had to do something. My wife was much kinder. She bought me a fancy GPS running watch.

On Boxing Day, I came across an article about the London Marathon. A Marathon? That is something that had never seriously appealed to me. “I am not a runner. That looks far too much like hard work. I only ran up to 3 miles when I was much much younger.” But... the circumstances demanded action. I checked the date. 24th April. I worked out that if I started in the New Year that would give me 16 weeks to train. Surely that was enough?? I wasn’t sure but I know someone that could answer that. My friends, neighbours and members of Harpenden Arrows Running Club, David and Louise who are Marathon experts.

Not knowing if they would take me seriously, David and Louise advised that entries for the London Marathon were closed but there were alternatives. I would need to follow a demanding training plan in the midst of winter which would require discipline! Their very sensible advice was firstly enter the Silverstone Half Marathon in March followed by the Milton Keynes Marathon which is a week after the London Marathon, much easier to join. But most important of all, come and join the Harpenden Arrows Running Club. I now had a plan!!

So in early January I joined Harpenden Arrows Running Club. “OK – all the 5 milers stand to the right and all the 4 milers please stand to the left” directed Chitra. “Oh” I thought. He didn’t mention the 2 milers. That was not good! So off I went with the 4 milers.

My first run with the club was difficult, at 2½ miles I felt sick and by 3 miles I had to walk. However, a very kind lady, called Sharon, was giving me lot of support and insisted on staying with me. The runners at the front also looped to the back. It was becoming a real team thing. It really helped me to get running again to the finish. I was sold on this club thing. Tuesdays and Thursdays it was. On Saturdays I chose to run slowly and further alone but plenty of other club members connect through the Clubs Facebook page to run with some company.

The other great thing about the club was all the knowledge and advice. I thought running was supposed to be such a simple thing. Children do it all the time with no lessons. Not so. There are special socks, shoes and clothes. Then there are the techniques. It is a minefield but, with the club, there are plenty of experienced mine sweepers.

It seemed like no time at all when Louise and David were giving me a lift to Silverstone. It was March 13th. My first mass participation race. A distance further than I had ever run



before, even in my new running world. But, I was now two stone lighter and well prepared. I was pleased with my run, I didn't have to walk at all and managed to sprint over the finish. I was half way there to bucket list tick box!

My working schedule also changed and I was less able to get to club nights due to working away. No matter, I was already in a routine and took my running gear with me. I fitted the training around work and family life but always had the club contacts to guide me and keep me on track. The club had really helped me to conquer weight, fitness and mental preparation issues.

Marathon day came along far too quickly. Louise made sure that I had a club shirt with my name emblazoned on it. My goal had always been simply to finish a Marathon. I wasn't concerned about the time.

The run was hard. Much harder than I expected. You learn all sorts of things about your body and even things you just don't want to know, and no one talks about. It was much more of a mental challenge than I expected. There were stages when I just didn't know if I could make it. I had never experienced such problems of putting one foot in front of the other in my life before, especially after 20 miles. Now on the last mile, I knew I could do it and the end was in sight. I would soon be at the point when I would never ever have to think about doing something so crazy again. I even managed to speed up for the finish line.

I made it, my first Marathon! I had joined the top 1% of the country who had completed a Marathon. Fellow Club members who are seasoned Marathon and ultra-runners were patting me on the back.

So do you remember the bit above where I said something about never again? I have already applied for the next London Marathon and signed up for the Wheathampstead 10k. I am afraid I think that I am hooked with thanks to all at Harpenden Arrows Running Club.

Thanks

Jason.



And finally a little about running etiquette

Thank you for looping back

Probably the biggest reason I signed up to be a run leader was to chat with new runners, and encourage people at the back of the group. I love how Harpenden's a club where nobody gets left behind, and I wanted to be part of that.

But in the process, I've had an unexpected bonus. I've watched as faster runners loop back, and see the huge impact that simple action has on the morale of the rest of the group.

Usually, I manage to say thanks. But sometimes, between telling you how to cross the road and half-dying as I drag myself up Crabtree hill, I probably forget.

So, if you loop back, this is for you: THANKS.

Thank you. You're a great human being, and I wish you years of speedy, injury-free PBs, shoes that never blister and gallons of tasty race podium wine.

And here's why...

Just waiting isn't fair

It's all very well to wait at a street corner or the top of a hill, but that's not much help to the slower runner who has to work extra hard to catch up, while the fast runners take a cheeky breather, then gallop off as soon as they arrive.

When you loop back, you stop the crazy situation where the quicker runners get more rest than the people who really need it.

You get a training benefit

A little jog back every so often acts as recovery for you - so you can push harder in the main bit of your run, and effectively get the pace benefit of a few intervals.

I'm no coach, but I reckon it also stops your muscles cooling down and you risking injury with lots of stops and starts. (Plus, hey: free mileage.)

It helps the club offer more variety

We only have so many run leaders. When you loop back, it keeps everyone within sight - and that means we don't need so many leaders to look after each group.

That, in turn, means that we can schedule more runs for you to choose from each week. Just because you looped back. Thanks!

It helps people to improve

Whether it's your first week, or you're stepping up a group, we all remember how scary it is to venture out with runners who are that bit faster than we are. But that's how we all improve, and it's one of the main ways that being part of a club helps us to get quicker.



Knowing that Harpenden is a friendly club where people loop back and support the slower runner, rather than sneering at them and zooming away, makes it easier for people to take the plunge and try to step up to a new level, whether in terms of speed or distance.

It stops you getting cold

I refuse to believe that standing around in day-glo lycra at the top of Piggotts Hill in the howling wind and rain, getting funny looks from all the dog walkers, is anyone's idea of fun.

Running in the wind and rain is OK. Standing in it is not. That's why looping back rules.

It's good to run as a team

Nobody comes to running club to run alone.

Running in twos and threes is fine, but running in a GANG is brilliant. There's really something about talking the High Street en masse, that's inspiring and lifts everyone. Likewise, there's something about getting back to club, and warming down, all together, that really sets a seal on the run.

The Tuesday night posse, in particular, are great at this bit and that's why it's hands-down my favourite run of the week.

...But, most importantly of all...

It shows respect for your fellow runner

We all had to start somewhere. We've all come back from injury. And one day age will slow all of us down (except Tony Berry*, obviously). So if you've never been towards the back of a group, don't worry, you'll get there soon enough.

When a speedy runner loops back to encourage a back marker, it shows you recognise that they're a fellow runner, and they're working hard too. Maybe even - dare I say it - they're working harder than you are.

The point is, from the fastest to the slowest, we're all part of the family of running. And the runner at the back of the pack has far more in common with the whippets at the front than they do with the people at home on the sofa. We all have basically the same love-hate relationship with running. We're all cut from the same cloth.

And seeing the moment when the quick runners loop back to run with the group - where we really see that teamwork in action - is without doubt my favourite thing about being a run leader.

So, (in case I'm too out of breath to say it on Piggotts Hill) thank you for looping back. It does make a real difference.

*Tony Berry ran a marathon in 4:22 aged 80+

This article originally published on Fetcheveryone.com, amended 2014 for use by Harpenden Arrows Running Club