

# Newsletter Dec 2021



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## Chairman's Update

Dear Tri2O'ers

A festive warm welcome to your December newsletter. Once again thanks must go to our Editor in Chief Sunil for pulling together another great read.

Firstly I would like to thank all members who attended our annual AGM in November, the presentation and draft minutes have been circulated. If there are any further questions or comments feel free to drop me a line.

At the AGM we made an exciting appointment to the Main Committee – our new Head Coach, Georgia Jackson. Thank you Georgia for stepping into this role. I know that with your passion for our wonderful sport you will make a super Head Coach. I do love the very smiley photo below in Georgia's first "Coaches Corner". I would like to once again sincerely thank Sean Stewart for his sterling contribution as Head Coach for the last 4 years.

Many thanks to Tony "El Toro" Rodriguez, Stuart "Ultra" Jay and Sally "Podium" Waterman for sharing their recent race experiences, enjoy their write ups below. DO check out the photo below of Tony on his run at the Reading Triathlon! – I wish I looked that cool & relaxed on a run!!!

It was heart-warming to see the feedback below from BTF on our Reading Triathlon. All members who helped this year should be proud of their efforts – well done.

I am still keen to hear from any member who would like to discuss the Deputy Race Director Role as [minuted](#) in our AGM. This is a rewarding opportunity for the right person so please do drop me an email at [chairman@tri2o.club](mailto:chairman@tri2o.club) if you are interested and we can arrange an initial chat. Also, any member who is keen to know more about the role of Bike Officer role, which is currently vacant, please get in touch.

It is exciting to see a growing number of new members join the club over the past few weeks, a warm welcome to the Orange Army. I really look forward to meeting all of you over the coming months.

In the meantime, enjoy your newsletter & I wish every Tri2O member a very happy and safe festive season and hope that 2022 brings some triathlon fun, enjoyment, and success to you all!

Best wishes

**Mike Nash**  
Chairman

## Save The Date for Reading Tri 2022



11 Sept 2022



### Update from **Reading Tri Committee**

The date for next year's events is confirmed – Reading Tri will be held on **Sunday 11th September 2022**. We will aim to open entries on 1st January 2022. Reading Tri is a signature event for Tri2O Triathlon Club and we rely on our club members to help make it happen.

We had a very successful Reading Tri in 2021 and are pleased to share with you the **BTF Technical Official's Event Report**, submitted by their **Chief Technical Official**, Emma Carter-Biggs, who was at the event.

#### **1. Competitor Info**

Score: Good

Comments: Clear instructions on the website, and an excellent video briefing.

#### **2. Registration Process**

Score: Good

Comments: Nice and smooth, good social distancing measures in place.

#### **3. Swim Organisation and Safety**

Score: Good

Comments: Swim entry had been moved along the bank, to facilitate a time trial start. This was done efficiently and in a timely manner to ensure good competitor spacing.

#### **4. Transition Area**

Score: Good

Comments: Transition is a large area which has carpet across the floor, to improve athlete

comfort. Waves were mixed in order to allow athlete spacing., An additional area was provided for relay teams, away from the other competitors.

## **5. Design and signage of courses**

Score: Excellent

Comments: This is a well established event so the routes are well designed. It is an all off road run, which I think catches out some athletes! The repositioning of the run course, and changes to the bike mount and dismount lines were a definite improvement this year, made possible by the closure of the hotel on the site. Hopefully any future changes will allow the new layout to remain as is.

## **6. Drafting**

Score: Good

Comments: No reports of drafting. Sadly no Moto TO available, but there were a lot of marshals on the course, who maintain good clear contact with the race director, calling in any issues.

## **7. Marshals**

Score: Excellent

Comments: The marshals are all triathletes themselves, members of the hosting club. As a result they are familiar with their event, and know the best way to enhance the athlete experience. They listen well to feedback from the TOs and are quick to action any changes or suggestions.

## **8. Overall safety of event**

Score: Excellent

Comments: This is a very good event, with the athlete experience at the heart of it. The team behind it are committed and enthusiastic, and want to ensure a positive event for all. They listen well to suggestions and ideas to make the event safe. Clear marking of potholes on the bike course, and the bike course is checked both the night before and on the morning of the race. the removal of a dead badger was a job for someone! but was executed quickly and without a fuss!

## **9. Response from competitors**

Score: Excellent

Comments: Competitors enjoy this race. It is clear from the numbers of athletes who return year after year, as well as the number of novices who take part. The addition of the aquathlon this year was a good idea, and the athletes involved were very happy to be racing. Nice mementos for the athletes as well.

## **10. Treatment of officials and Marshalls**

Score: Excellent

Comments: The athletes are polite and friendly, and happy to be racing. In addition they are very grateful to the officials and marshals, and are positive in their responses to both.

## **Additional comments**

This is another excellent race from the team at Tri2O. They have worked hard to put on a race this year, and have incorporated lots of elements to improve the athlete experience and remain Covid compliant.

The team should be congratulated on a very good race!

## Membership Update

We would like to welcome the new club members (and some retuning ones).  
We hope you enjoy being members of the club!

- Clare Watson
- Clive Goodwill
- George Varelis
- Hannah Redgrave
- James Harding
- Jamie Shillam
- Matt Austin
- Rafael Nunez
- Steve Roddy
- Trevor Moseley
- Vanessa Elliott

**Nicky**

Membership Secretary

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## Coach's Corner – Let me introduce myself

For those who don't know me, I'm Georgia, and I have just taken over from Sean as the club's new Head Coach. First, thank you Sean for all you've done not just as Head Coach but also for the club more widely over the years. I'll try my best to carry on your good work!

If you do already know me, feel free to skip the next three paragraphs! I have been involved in triathlon for 23 years, since I joined some fellow medical students in a relay team at the London Triathlon in 1998. Fast forward a while, via some extended training breaks and young children, and I moved to Berkshire and joined Tri2O in 2012. At that point, I couldn't run a mile without stopping! After a stint as Ladies' Captain, I was conned into taking on the Chair of the club at the AGM in 2013, by the then Secretary Colin Wilson and Head Coach Dom Dos Remedios, a post which I held for three years.

After a bit of an epiphany in 2015, I left my 15 year career as a doctor (no regrets) and started coaching in 2016. I've worked my way through the qualifications up to and including Level 2 Diploma, enabling me to coach individual athletes as well group sessions. I have personal experience of a wide range of multisport and single discipline events personally (and have enjoyed almost all of them!) from marathon swims to age-group world triathlon and aquathlon championships at sprint distance, to middle distance triathlon, off-road duathlon and SwimRun – but no, I'm never doing an iron distance race! At the moment, I just enjoy swimming, cycling, running, yoga and kettlebells regularly, and of course coaching. My son asked me recently what my dream job would be, and after some reflection I was happy to be able to say I'm doing it now! If I could combine it with being an artist too, well then I'd be in heaven.

As well as coaching alongside Jennie at the Friday club swim, Jennie and I also run our own small group Tuesday morning swim technique sessions, I have my own coaching business



(Merlin Triathlon Coaching) and also run [GO TRI events at Green Park](#) every month – beginner multisport events (mostly duathlon) – with the invaluable support of Tri2O and the enthusiastic Orange Army. I've been part of the team that runs the Reading Triathlon since we took over the organisation of the race from My Sporting Times in 2017, and you might have seen (or heard!) me deliver the race briefing there.



Over the coming weeks and months, I'm planning to come along to all the coached club sessions to meet a few more of you, especially new members, and find out how the different sessions run. I'd love to hear what you, the members, would like from me and the club, particularly with regards to the coaching, so please do get in touch via the FB group (I'm Merlin Jackson on Facebook) or by emailing [coaching@tri2o.club](mailto:coaching@tri2o.club) if you have any feedback or ideas, including any suggested topics for Coach's Corner.

One thing I know many of us would love to see is the return of regular weekend club rides. I'm hoping to lead some shorter, slower-paced, social non-drop rides that will be suitable for all abilities, when family commitments (and weather conditions) allow it, but it would be fantastic to have the support of a club Bike Officer to help co-ordinate and drive a revival of group riding in the club. Please do contact me or any member of the committee if you're interested in this role.

I look forward to meeting you all over the coming weeks and months. Bye for now, and remember, this triathlon malarkey is supposed to be fun, so make sure you enjoy it!

**Georgia Jackson**  
Head Coach

## Virtual Run Club (VRC) 2021

by **Edwina McDowall**

Great to see some new and familiar Tri2O'ers join the **Autumn VRC term**. VRC is for all abilities; with guidance depending upon your run experience, fitness and available time, to help you build a good foundation with the right balance over the winter.

As 2021 comes to a close, now is a perfect opportunity to recharge, set out your year ahead and get some structured run training in for your triathlon season. **Need ideas?** Look no further than our Tri2O Triathlon Club Facebook page, by searching under 'Posts' and VRC you can easily access all the Autumn VRC weekly workouts.

### **What was the goal for the Autumn term?**

The goal was to make your run training more structured and consistent, your form more efficient with some technique work, creating a platform for you to reach new levels ... plus having some winter run competition (WRC) fun along the way!

Specifically, this included

- 7 run set workouts from the end of October to early December.
- Support to structure your run training week with VRC workouts and additional bonus run workouts.
- Coach check with Edwina – Live Zoom call every Thursday 20:00-20:30 to review the 'Athlete of the Week' run workout, answer questions, share experiences, Strava routes and get inspiration from other Tri2O VRC Team members.

That's all for this year and next year we will experiment with some new formats to hopefully expand our virtual participation further. If you have ideas, please get in touch!

Wishing you all a Runtastic Christmas and New Year!

Happy running and stay safe and healthy.

**Edwina x**  
Run Officer

## My First Ever Triathlon – Home Sweet Home – The Reading Tri



by **Tony Rodriguez**

My first ever triathlon – Home Sweet Home – The Reading Triathlon Olympic Distance

**INTRO:** Hi fellow Tri2O-ers! I am Tony (Rodriguez), or “El ToRo” as some friends call me because of the combination of being Spanish and the first two letters of my common name and my surname. I joined Tri2O in February 2020. I had been running and cycling for some time and decided that since I had previously done some swimming that I would have a go at doing triathlon, and what better than a local one organised by Tri2O. Having grown up by the sea in Barcelona, I was already confident in the water but never very good with technique or speed. However, I thought I could improve with some training and dedication.

**Pre event:** The Covid Pandemic then came and changed things for us all, planning and preparation with other shorter events became a challenge in 2020 and to some degree also in 2021. So I decided I would not be entering any other events in preparation and would just do our local Reading Triathlon if it took place. It was thus good news to hear that it would take place in 2021. My preparations were going well until my foot problem came back and I had to dial down the running. Also the much deserved holiday (back home) twice and a wedding to party and celebrate at meant my training was suffering. So I decided I would lower my expectations for the Reading Triathlon, I would just be happy to learn from the experience of a first ever triathlon. That meant I had to really finish it in order to learn from it. So the GOAL was to FINISH it. That is what I had said to several people when I went to help with the site preparation the day before, that my goal was just to finish it. Telling people really helped to motivate me during the event. It is a bit like when you are raising money for charity, you feel compelled to honour your pledge. So for some of you this may also work to get you across the line BUT be realistic when setting goals and don't put yourself under pressure for your first time and enjoy the event!



**DURING:** So the day came and since I had been helping out the day before I was already familiar with what was where and the process. I live couple of miles away, so I cycled to the start already with my tri-suit on and a bag with the other items needed, but that turned out to be incorrect. I had forgotten with a last minute change of bags to include my running belt (which had money in it). Thanks to someone's generosity I was provided with a substitute belt. I got the bike ready in transition, put my wetsuit on and engaged with some banter and advice from a couple of fellow participants next to my bike. One of them turned out to be someone I had met many years ago in a different setting. Anyway, that was comforting and I walked with them towards the lake for the swim start. I positioned myself towards  $\frac{3}{4}$  down in my starting wave, I would not then get in the way of others but also would be able to have some swimmers left behind me in case I struggled and needed to follow and pace. The GOAL I told myself, was to FINISH and if it went well that was a bonus.

I went into the water, which was a pleasant 21 degrees, and started the swim, following a couple of swimmers just in front of me. I thought the pace was right until I had to recompose myself when one of them disappeared into the distance and the other started to also swim faster. I thought to myself, "oh boy, this is going to be hard" and thought it better to slow down and wait for the next swimmers behind me to overtake me and see what pace they would do. It worked like a charm and I felt better; before I knew it, I was approaching the ramp for the transition to the bike. I walked the short distance to my bike and started to remove my wetsuit. It was not easy and in fact I started cramping up whilst taking it off. Doubts began to surface and I thought that I may after all not finish the race if I was already having cramps! Anyway, I took some time to slowly get changed, took some deep breaths and got my heart rate down a bit which helped me through the cramps. I knew cycling was my forte so I knew I would get through the next stage. I also congratulated myself for having coped well in the water earlier. So off I went and cycled (no tri bars) like I had planned, tempo pace around 200 watts for  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the distance and then a bit harder for the end of the ride and to transition 2, where I got hold of my socks and running shoes. I just used a shoe horn to ease putting them on and then grabbed some fuel and off I went for the run.

Initially all was going well on the run and I even started overtaking people, albeit going slowly, but then after lap 2 of 10 a massive cramp in my left thigh came sharply to bring me to a halt. I took a rest, more deep breathing followed and then some walking and then I started to slowly run again. After a few more metres, again more cramps, in more places and on both legs. "Oh, SH\*T" I thought, "I am stuck and cannot move! I may not be able to finish after all." I then went through some more mental thinking and decided I was determined to do it somehow. I took more deep breaths and brought my heart rate down then started to run till my heart rate went above a certain threshold when I would then walk and then run again same. It worked but it meant I was being overtaken by everyone in the field and ending up almost alone towards the end. I felt a bit embarrassed to be honest, but thought it should not matter and that I was going to achieve my objective of finishing my first ever triathlon as the technique of keeping my heart rate low was working to control the cramps. Anyway, I got to the finish line, even managed to get directed to continue with the laps when I was already finished, so retracted and went back properly to the finish line where Sonya greeted me with a goody bag and some fruit.

I had mixed feelings, on the one hand pleased my persistence had paid off and I had finished the event and achieved my goal but on the other a little embarrassed to be arriving so late that the medal presentations had already started. Then all of a sudden my name was announced as the club member that had finished his first triathlon. That was really nice, as was the support I

got during the event from a number of people, so I told myself it was worth it and that I should not beat myself up so much. After all, the fact that I was even there was an achievement. Maybe I am a fool but I don't generally care that much and always feel we beat ourselves even before it is over.

**My advise:** Don't beat yourself up unnecessarily for your first event and distance; there is almost always a chance to improve next time; use the event as a learning experience. Be realistic with expectations.

### **What I would do different for my next A race?**

- More focussed training
- Improve transition strategy and times – brick workouts, shorter events and duathlons
- Prepare the minor items: elastic shoe laces, tri-bars, watch settings (auto-pause off), whatever else one may often forget, salt tablets
- Enjoy it all again even more!

My next A race? —> Reading Triathlon – Olympic Distance



## Katie Henderson Nominees 2021

Congratulations to all our Katie Henderson nominees for 2021. The winner will be announced on 22nd January 2022 at our Annual Awards Event at ZeroDegrees.

**Clare Fox:** For leading by example and encouraging other women to take part in events that might otherwise feel intimidating. Clare has encouraged members to participate in Zwift races, Zwift club rides and Zwift summer evening rides, and helped women feel more comfortable with participating knowing that they will not be the only woman present.

**Edwina McDowall:** For being not just a stellar athlete but for inspiring and motivating others over the past year with the Virtual Run Club (VRC). Edwina invests a great deal of time, effort and passion in preparing for the VRC zoom sessions. As an incredibly successful and dedicated runner herself, she is happy to share her tips with her club mates.

**Justin Watkins:** For his tremendous passion for all things triathlon, which is inspiring and contagious, and his honest approach and enjoyment of the sport. As a club swim coach he has shown his desire to help others no matter their level of experience. Justin frequently encourages club mates and congratulates their multisport achievements.

**Lee Hinton:** For going out of his way to support and encourage club mates. He rarely races for himself and is often found supporting others through their races, keeping them going and, most importantly smiling, when it gets tough. Lee also supports competitors he doesn't know – fixing punctures, encouraging struggling runners – he is a true ambassador for the club.

**Pete Gough:** For his countless hours of work to make Reading Tri a success. His personal commitment to ensuring everything is in place for the big day is huge. Pete has worked tirelessly, particularly over the past 2 years with the additional challenges of Covid, to deliver a successful Reading Tri in 2021 – something that is vitally important for the financial stability of the club.

**Sally Waterman:** For enthusiastically contributing to club activities and events and supporting and encouraging others to have fun. Sally inspires new and existing members by training hard and showing that perseverance can produce a great performance and even a podium finish when it matters.

**Tasha Skidmore:** For always being so welcoming to new members and friendly to all. Tasha's enthusiasm and passion for the 'orange army' have been especially motivating for everyone over the last 12 months when socialising was not a "thing". She is always willing to help where she can and has continued to keep members engaged with the club

## Brighton Marathon 2021



### Stuart Jay

Not an Ultra “just” a marathon I hear you say, this run felt tougher than the Ultra’s I have done over the last couple of years, just the post-race recovery is a lot quicker. As you are about to find out.

Brighton and I have history, this was the place of my first marathon back in 2014. Back then training was less focused and was all about getting around, however after finishing the race in 4 hours & 3 minutes I made myself a personal challenge to keep going back until I achieved a sub-4 hour time. Every year since then I have got slower, mainly due to lack of training due to work commitments (even flew back from Australia basically to run the marathon and then flew back the following week) and also have 1 DNS and 1 DNF both due to injury (2019 managed to get to mile 14). I have run quite a lot over the last year and was feeling good going into the race with a nice 20 mile run at marathon pace a couple of weeks out giving me a needed confidence boost.

I love the whole Brighton Marathon experience and every year have made a weekend of the event; this year was no different. So, with Andi coming down to be the best support crew as ever, we headed down on Friday for another go to try to break sub-4.

Going down Friday takes away a lot of stress as generally the event check-in is quieter, and it means that you can have more of a chilled day the day before the main event. We got the train down which makes things a little easier (when they are good) and got over to registration which was quiet as expected. This year the bag drop was in the event village rather than on the day which was a huge improvement. Historically this has been carnage and caused many people to still be queuing to drop their bag when the race starts. I had prepared my drop bag before I went so it was really easy. After that we looked around the different stalls and also made plans for the day in terms of meeting point after the race.

After we had walked to our hotel on the seafront and checked-in, we went for a short jog on the seafront. It was good to shake out the legs and I also manage a few PB's on Strava because normally when I run up the prom its between mile 23-25 and it's a shuffle! We had dinner in the restaurant under the hotel which served amazing traditional Mexican food.

Saturday morning, we got up and did parkrun on the prom. We said we would go slow but just seemed to run quicker than we had planned. We had reservations at The Ivy (well for the following week) for brunch so showered and headed across. After brunch we headed back down to the event village to meet some work colleagues who were also racing. I had collected Piers's race number on Friday so had to hand it over before race day. The trains were delayed, and some cancelled on Saturday, so we were thankful we had come down on Friday. Saturday, I had pre-booked Bella Italia which was OK but not up to the same standard as previous meals. Then an early night, although got caught watching the tennis final a little.

## **RACE DAY**

Up early and porridge eaten we walked up to the start at Preston Park, they were restricting numbers so Andi then headed back down the route ready for me to jog past. Whilst loitering in the park I bumped into Lee, it was good to see a familiar face. As we were heading towards 'go time' I made one last pitstop then was ready for the off. Brighton is a big event with around 12,000 people running either the marathon or 10k, so the first few miles are busy and you have to watch your footing a little. There are also a couple of short sharp streets to run up, but eventually you get to the sea front, normally around the same time the elites are flying past in the other direction. I had nutrition with me, but it was hot, I skipped the first few water stops but grabbed some around mile 6. The support is amazing throughout (well almost but we'll come to that) and its difficult not to get caught up in the excitement, so I kept looking at my watch, trying to slow down. I saw Andi at various locations before heading to the first out and back. The village on the outskirts had hooked up a hose to cool people down. I was keeping to my plan and eventually caught the 4-hour pacer, so as long as I stayed in front I knew I would achieve my goal.

About half way I started to think that the mileage was out as I ticked off a half marathon but could see the official half way marker about ½ a mile in front of me, I was under my target goal pace and again reminded myself to slow down. I saw Andi shortly after that as we headed up the hill for the second half of the marathon. The support throughout the top part of town is great but then you get to a quieter part from about miles 18-22 which is the dreaded out and back around the power station with the smell of fish in the air and pained faces heading back towards you, it's easy to let it affect you. The conditions were getting hotter and there were bodies dropping by the side of the road. This is the opposite of the start when you have happy faces running the other way. Still I powered on, one eye on my watch.

As you come out of the power station you run along the promenade, not running as fast as the previous 2 days but running nonetheless. The support has you head back is amazing and looking at my watch I knew I was on for sub-4. I could even take time to walk and drink (I couldn't run and drink as I got more of it over me than in me!). I saw Andi for the final time as I headed into the last km. My watch beeped over mile 26 and I still had what looked like a mile to go. Crossing the line I celebrated like I won the race, years of trying and finally.....3:52. The race was measured incorrectly (26.75 miles) so Strava says my marathon time was 3:47, I'm taking that. It was hard work running that quickly for so long,



normally I run slower and stop for a snack every 8-10 miles, that was a mental barrier I knew I was going to come across during the run.

After the race I found Andi (who had walked a marathon) and colleagues from work, had a celebratory beer and ice-cream, we had dinner plans with Piers and his wife so got ourselves ready (we had some nice food over the weekend). At dinner we talked about the race and going quicker, I think I could go a little quicker but not sure I want to (for now). Racing is hard and the next goal would be 3:30 and that would be hard work, I have plans to go longer not necessarily faster. As with everything consistency is key, I find with running the more you do the easier it becomes, although the first hurdle is getting out the door or the first mile but once your out you feel amazing for doing it. I hadn't done too many long runs (+18 miles) in the build to Brighton but had run quite a lot so had the base to be able to get through.

I bathed in the glory for a little but couldn't for too long as there was more running to do and even a triathlon. Andi and I had Hever Castle Olympic Distance Triathlon 2 weeks after Brighton. A technical issue led to a DNF for me (snapped chain right at the beginning of the bike) but Andi smashed her first Olympic distance triathlon, finishing 2<sup>nd</sup> in her AG.

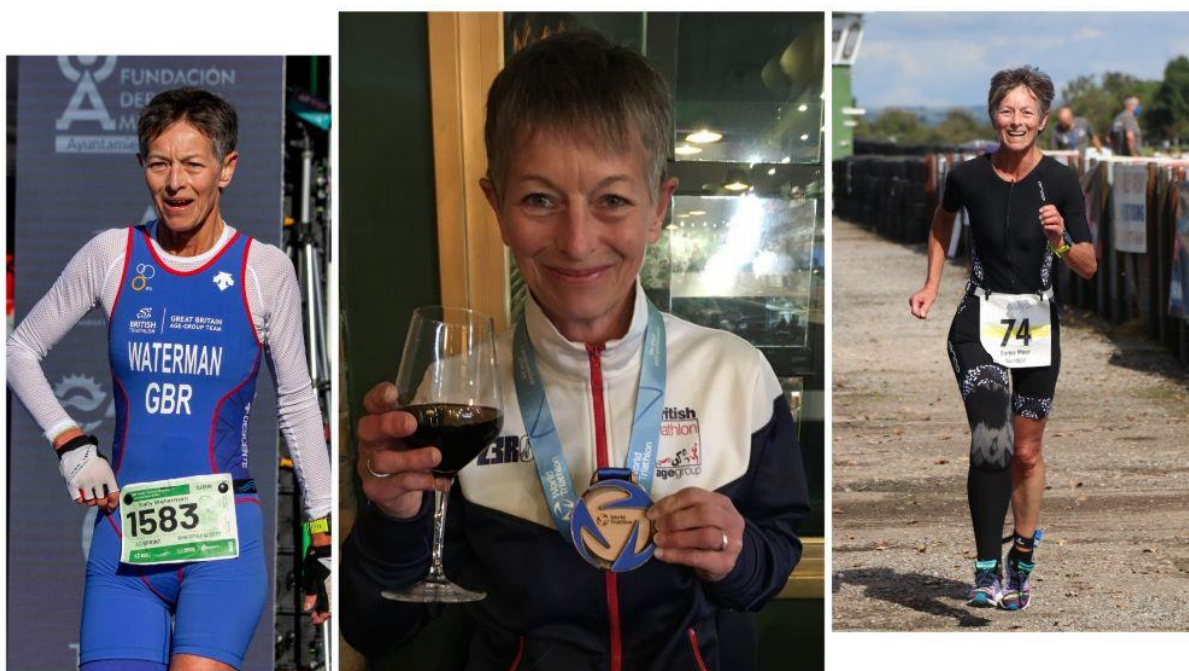


I also had Run to the Sea (RTTS), a 50k Ultra, scheduled 4 weeks after Brighton, & Marlow 10 mile the week after Hever. Marlow 10 was a really great run, I felt really strong and finished 14<sup>th</sup> overall. Never have I not needed to scroll to the 2<sup>nd</sup> page of results to see my name. The race itself is really good, its a great course and running alongside a turkey farm is different to any other race. Next on to RTTS. Sunil was racing as well, and we started together. I did the race last year so knew the course, similar to other Ultra's it is a run of two halves. The 1<sup>st</sup> half being in the countryside and 2<sup>nd</sup> being by the sea. We set off aiming for 5 hours but with more of a completing goal than a time goal. We went off way too quickly but whenever we talked about the pace, we dropped the pace for a little before it crept back up again, and again and again. As we ran through Bournemouth by the pier we got people looking at the race number to try to see what event was going on. As always they are surprised to hear that we are running so far. We ticked over the marathon distance and I saw

that I had actually ticked off another sub-4 hour marathon (years of trying then twice in 4 weeks!). However, that wasn't to plan, and I was feeling it a little. It was hot and my heart rate was too high, so I dropped off the pace and Sunil pushed on. I took advantage of the showers alongside the beach to cool myself down. I run/walked a bit over the last 10 km and chatted to others using the beach and also people running. When you get to the end of the longer runs you find yourself going past and then being overtaken by the same people. As I got to the final couple of miles I could see that with a push I could be sub-5, so finished strong and in 4:59. That was over an hour quicker than last year, although different circumstances don't make the two performances completely comparable. Last year I wasn't fully recovered from TP100 but this year I had run more up to the event, including the marathon at Brighton.

That was the last "race" of the year for me, I have a few races already booked for next year so will need to build the running back up for Country to Capital Ultra (43M) just after Christmas and then back to Brighton in April before a triathlon filled summer and then back to running the RTTS and preparation for 2023.

## Life Is Full Of Surprises... some welcome, some not



### by Sally Waterman

It seems a very long time ago that I crossed the finish line in the 2019 Sprint Duathlon World Championships in Pontevedra (Spain) and heard Sean shout '3rd Brit'. I was indeed the third member of Team GB in my age group (F60-64) to finish which meant automatic qualification for the 2020 World Championships. I was delighted and astonished to have finished ahead of some great athletes in the team in my first sprint distance duathlon championships race. I had previously raced standard distance but after finishing in tears in Fyn (Denmark) in 2018 after struggling to lift my large 'lymphie' leg at the end of the 2nd run and having to walk, I decided to give the sprint distance a go.

As we all know only too well, 2020 races were disrupted. The Duathlon World Championships which were going to be in Almere (Netherlands) were postponed a couple of times and then rolled forward to 2021. After further delays and uncertainty the sprint Duathlon World Championships finally took place in Aviles (Spain) on 6 November. After so long not travelling anywhere and avoiding public transport I felt more anxious about getting there and back than the race itself.

I had not raced a duathlon since 2019 so in preparation I decided to enter the 2023 world championships qualification race at Darley Moor which was due to be held on 19 September. I started to step up my training by adding hill repeats and speed intervals to my runs and by running before and after one of my weekly TrainerRoad bike sessions. I was beginning to feel that I could go faster for less effort and started noticing the benefits of the brick sessions. However, my training came to an abrupt halt in August after I got knocked over on the pavement by an electric scooter whilst walking home from ('irony' alert) an optician's appointment. There was a nauseating noise as the back of my head bounced on the tarmac several times. I remember screaming a lot so knew I was conscious. Sean came and collected me and watched over me for 24 hours – fortunately my mild concussion was short-lived. I

spent the next few days resting with a grazed head which had a lump so massive that I couldn't lie down comfortably, and which hurt with every step I took.

I thought that maybe within a week I would be able to start training again but a few days later I had worrying visual disturbances in my left eye – flashing lights and floating whips. We had travelled to the Cotswolds with the idea of doing some cycling but decided to visit the minor injuries clinic at Cirencester Hospital to get my eye checked out first. They referred me to the eye clinic at Cheltenham Hospital as an 'emergency', which turned out to be a 3 day wait. Here I was told the good news – that my retina was not detached – but the bad news that particles had been dislodged from the vitreous fluid at the back of my eye (this has been reported in a small percentage of people who suffer a head injury). The flashing lights had gone but I had what seemed to be grey spiderwebs floating in my eye. I was told these would be permanent and that my brain would eventually get used to them being there. The ophthalmologist told me not to run, cycle or swim for 3 weeks.

I just had time to get some running and cycling in before racing at Darley Moor (a motorcycle race circuit in Derbyshire). I set myself the goal of just getting to the finish line without stopping. I was happy to have achieved this, but it was distressingly slow, and I didn't make the cut-off (within 115% of the time of the winner of my age group) needed to have a chance of qualifying for the 2023 world championships. That was hard to take but did motivate me to get back to my training plan so I could be as race fit as possible for Aviles.

After what seemed way too few weeks of focussed training it was time to board the plane that had been chartered by Nirvana to take GB team members to Aviles. Travelling and queueing with duathletes who were all keen to avoid Covid reduced some of the anxiety about mixing with others. We arrived 2 days before the race and had just the day before it to recce the bike course, not ideal, particularly as the rain was heavy! However, in the small group, expertly led by Sean over busy roads via a riverside cycle path to the race site, was someone who would have an impact on my race. As we chatted at the back of the group I listened to Clare, who was in my AG, tell me how this was her first serious race since having heart surgery to repair a leaking mitral valve. She, like me, had set her expectation to just completing the race and enjoying the experience of racing in GB kit again and hearing the enthusiastic GB supporters cheering us on.

It was finally time to race and after a short warm-up run I went to line up in the first pen with all the women 50 years and older – somewhat unexpectedly we had to keep our face masks on until we were at the start line. In addition to GB athletes there was a good turnout from the US, Spain, and Mexico. Clare and I headed out on the first run (5k) side by side but after about 2k she took the lead – my competitive nature kicked in instantly. Finally on one of the short inclines I got past her (those hill reps on the University campus were worth the effort after all!). I came into T1 just ahead of her and headed out onto the bike course.

This bike course was two laps with an extra little loop down a slip road and, after a tight U-turn, back up it, three times. Although the race was draft legal there was no-one around to draft. A few groups of women from the younger age group came past on their 2nd lap but were way too quick for me. I was hoping Clare would catch me so we could work together to get past some of the Americans, but I knew from the recce that she would probably be slower than me uphill.

As I was about to head out on my 2nd run (2.5k) Clare was racking her bike close by. I had worked very hard on the bike – riding the 20k as if it were a TT rather than a duathlon was exhilarating but not very sensible! If I was to stay ahead I was going to have to find the mental strength to push through the pain and keep the pace up on the run. The course went along a pleasant riverside path which was mainly flat, it wasn't raining and there was almost no wind, all of which helped me keep relaxed and focussed on the task. To get to the finish line you have to run up a fairly steep ramp for about 10m. My legs felt remarkably strong, and I was able to push hard uphill to finish strongly. As we crossed the line we were handed a facemask. Clare came in just over a minute later with a smile on her face.

We cycled back to the hotel (which involved two very steep climbs!) soon after the race without checking the results because our bikes had to be packed up to go back to the UK overland that evening. I searched online for the results whilst Sean dismantled the bikes. Only those for the women were available and they were loading slowly by age group. Eventually the women F60-F64 were there. I read them several times then said some words I won't repeat here. Sean looked up and assumed something was wrong; I was unable to speak and just handed him the laptop – he then saw the reason for my reaction, I had come third (second Brit)!! After 9 years of competing in the Duathlon World Championships I had finally made it onto the podium. I could not have been happier with the outcome. Clare was 4th and also very happy with her result. We have both automatically qualified for the 2022 race – location and date as yet unknown



## Results & Achievements



- **Enterprise Accountant's Winter 5 Series / [Event 1](#)**
  - *Great result for the Tri2O boys, claiming 5 of the top 10 slots.*
  - [Geoff BARLOW](#) – 2nd
  - [Sean STEWART](#) – 3rd
  - [Anthony HAYES](#) – 4th
  - [Andrew WEBBER](#) – 7th
  - [Neil HARRIS](#) – 10th
- **Mapledurham 10 Miles**
  - Leanne JAMES – 1st Female 10M
  - Sean STEWART – 1st Male (50-59)
  - Nick SILCOX – 2nd Male (50-59)
  - Heather PHILLIPS – 3rd Female (50-59)
- **Mapledurham 10k**
  - Edwina MCDOWALL – 2nd Female 10k
  - Sally WATERMAN – 2nd Female (60+)
  - Elizabeth GANPATSINGH – 2nd Female (40-49)

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## Dates for your diary

- 14-Jan-2022 : Tri2O Yoga Workshop (book via TeamApp)
- 22-Jan-2022 : [Tri2O Annual Awards](#)
- Mar-2022 : Katie's Pink Ride. (date to be confirmed)
- 22-Apr-2022 : Club Trip to North Wales (Apr 22nd – 24th 2022)
- Jun-2022 : Tri2O Famous Fish n' Chips Ride (date to be confirmed)
- 11-Sep-2022 : [Reading Triathlon 2022](#)

## We would love to hear from you

The next newsletter will be in February 2022, please send your contribution to [info@tri2o.club](mailto:info@tri2o.club) before **10<sup>th</sup> February**.

We would **love to hear from you**, particularly if you have taken on a new challenge or are new to triathlon.

