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Dates for your diary

- **Committee meeting** – Tuesday 2nd November at 20:30pm at TRFC. If you have any points for discussion or would like to attend, please email secretary@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk.
- **AVR Over the Hills** – 7th November
- **AVR Wiltshire Half Marathon** – 28th November – volunteers needed (see page 5)
- **AVR AGM** – Tuesday 11th January 20:00 at TRFC
- **Presentation Evening** – Saturday 5th February 19:30 at the Civic Centre, Trowbridge
<https://www.facebook.com/events/372848747881042/?ref=newsfeed>

London Marathon 2021

Many thanks to Robin-Mark Schols for acting as reporter for this year's race.

This year saw a good showing of yellow vests representing the club at the London Marathon. Here are some words from some of our runners I've been able to interview since we all took part.



Diane Hier (pictured left) is probably best known for her Ironman pedigree but her first London appearance was for Guide Dogs for the Blind in 2001. She has managed to achieve a good for age spot ever since, running her 17th London on Sunday. She was very happy with a time of 3:41:58 and another medal to add to her haul.

Pippa Brewer knew what to expect in those last few miles on Sunday having run at Brighton just a few weeks ago. She really enjoyed her run, completing in 3:44:11 and raising over £1800 for the Salisbury Hospital Stars Appeal.

Rich Harding (pictured right) ran very well last year and came prepared to take his 3rd London run very cautiously this time having had some knee problems during his training. Lining up with a deal of tape around it he was aiming for a time good enough for good for age next year and was still able to pull out a fine 2:50:27. Rich was also very keen to pay tribute to the coaches at AVR for the time and effort they put in to our sessions each week as we all do.



Phil Harding (pictured left) was our most experienced runner out there and has run a total of 56 marathons before this and his experience on track and cross country, as well as over 90,000 miles run in his lifetime meant he was well prepared. Phil ran 2:36:19 at London in 1986 and says he likes to run at a well-judged pace and finish with as near to negative splits as possible. He's seen it all and when asked about memorable experiences from running he cited two, getting mugged for his runners in Tanzania being one and the other losing his car keys in the jungle in India then finding them a week later while out running again as the other. Phil crossed the finish line in 4:02:28.

Ben Blackwall was another of our club in action, only getting his club shirt during the week! Ben tends to run more off road events so isn't around club as much as others but came well prepared and earned a well-executed 3:10:36 finish.

Robin-Mark Schols (pictured right): I set my PB of 2:53:21 at London in 2015 and it has stood as a club age record since. Sunday was my 13th marathon and 7th at London having achieved good for age for 8 years but having to defer in 2016 due to the operations I had to receive for my brain infection after previous tumour surgery. I was very happy with a run of 3:11:19 this time, which was faster than my 2017 run here, really feeling that I executed my plan, hydrated and fuelled so well so I was well prepared for those last 6 miles where it can all go so wrong. It's a shame the race will be in the autumn once again next year as it may well clash with other goals I have, but I'll be doing my level best to be there for my 9th year. Performances I have been able to find for other AVR members I knew ran it, really well done to everyone.



Josh Lay 3:51:14, **Jackie Rockliffe** 3:16:11, **Pete Jefferies** 5:02:04, **Adewale Kadiri** 4:31:07

On the day although the event was set off in waves I'm certain it didn't affect the atmosphere as once again the crowds along the way were immense in their support. The AVR lollipop was there at Whitehall just after the turn off Embankment but despite my really looking out for it, I was disappointed I missed it. Maybe I was concentrating hard on steeling myself for that last big effort down Birdcage Walk, but the support both there and along the route from people we knew was fantastic and an essential ingredient of the experience. It was good to see a few familiar faces in the Admiralty afterwards. So it's farewell to Virgin Money and thank you for 12 years supporting us. Here's to 2022.



AVR Race Kit – Col's Top Shop

If you have a race coming up, you may want one of our race tops? We offer 3 race tops for our runners. Race T-Shirts or Vests which come in lady's or men's fits (sizes range from XS – 3XL). Plus we are also currently holding a small stock of lady's Midi Crop tops.

Pictures of available kit are online here:

- **Race kit:** <https://www.avonvalleyrunners.org.uk/club-race-kit> (contact Colin)
- **Training Kit:** <https://www.avonvalleyrunners.org.uk/club-training-kit> (available at Sportsbug)
- **AVT kit:** <https://www.avonvalleyrunners.org.uk/avt-kit> (available online)

Size	Ladies	Men's
XS	8	36
S	10	38
M	12	40
L	14	42
XL	16	44
2XL	18	46
3XL	20	48

To purchase, please contact our Kit Manager Colin Sawyer to check if we hold a top in your size by email to kit@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk telling him your size and type of top required.

Coming soon...

More training kit and reflective winter kit are on their way!

Halloween Party

Many members and their families enjoyed the Halloween party at TRFC on Friday 29th October. Games, prizes and music were all planned by the Social Working Group **Vicky Bodman, David Hyde, Caroline Barham, Katy Nickless, Marc Sampson, Claire Heathercoat.**

Resident running DJ, Martin Russam was on hand to provide the tunes and a big thank you to the TRFC bar staff for keeping everyone topped up. Congratulations to all of our game and best-fancy-dress winners too.





VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**Our club is run by volunteers.
Can you spare time to help?
We always have a number of
roles that need filling
including Race Directors,
Marshalling for Events, Social
Working Group and Results
Collation**

**For More Info or to register interest
please contact
volunteers@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk
or
secretary@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk**

WWW.AVONVALLEYRUNNERS.ORG.UK

Volunteers for November

We are in need of 15-20 more volunteers for the AVR Wiltshire Half Marathon.

AVR Wiltshire Half Marathon November 28th 2021 - 3 volunteer points

We are grateful for anyone who volunteers for the club - friends and family are very welcome to come along too!

Please email us today if you can help: volunteers@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk

Helping at either event will earn you points towards your AVR volunteering total and get you closer to owning one of the coveted volunteer t-shirts! (pictured right)



Paris Marathon – by Tim Burrell

'PARIS, BABY!' (Joey Tribbiani 'Friends') – or AVR does the Paris Marathon

Fabrice Gagneux and I signed up for the Marathon de Paris in April 2019, and this October, some two and a half years (and a lifetime of Covid) later, we finally made it to the start line.



For those of you that don't know, the Paris Marathon is generally regarded as being one of the top 10 marathon races, with a course running past many of the famous sights. Indeed, Paris, being such a compact city means that there wasn't a dull section of the course, with a constantly changing vista delivering one incredible view after another. The race has a 50,000 limit (or 57,000 depending who you read), and often sells out quickly – as we were to find – for very good reason.

The course begins on the cobbled Champs Elysee, with the Arc de Triomphe as a backdrop. From there, it goes to the Place de la Concorde, then looping round the Opera quarter past the Palais Garnier before turning alongside the Jardin de Tuileries and the Louvre. That's in the first two miles, or roughly 15 minutes running! Mile three takes you through a fashionable shopping area then out into the Place de la Bastille where 50m of the July column in verdigris copper with a golden statue of liberty on top towers over you. Beginning to get sensory overload now – churches, columns, palaces..... The route soon goes through one of the two forest areas, lakes, and yep, more palaces, before heading back west along the Seine past Notre Dame, the Louvre (again), many lovely bridges with views to Les Invalides and finally the Eiffel



Tower before heading into the Bois du Boulogne, emerging from the woods several miles later to head back up towards the Arc de Triomphe for the finish line. Wow!

I've read that there are typically around 250,000 spectators. Having never done a city marathon before, I was blown away by the support (I even got a couple of 'go Avon Valley Runners'!) It helps that the course is quite narrow in places, so the spectators are right on top of you just like in the Tour de France, but slightly out of the centre, you're just as likely to have to dodge people seemingly oblivious of the race; crossing the road with the Sunday shopping, suitcases, bikes or scooters. Or in my case, fail to dodge a scooter.... many drum bands, dance troupes, and I'm pretty sure that was a gaggle (correct collective term?) of drag queens blowing us kisses at one stage. It all felt very charmingly French.

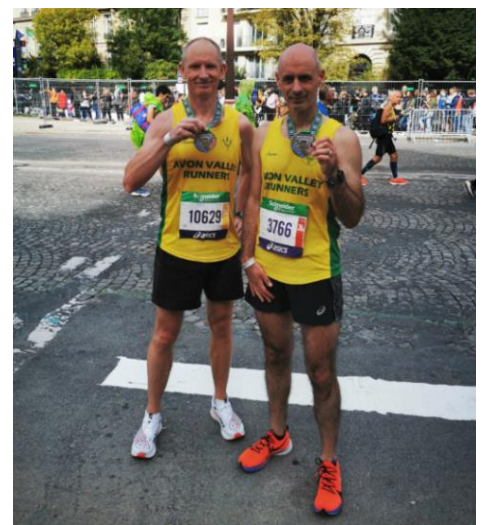
I get marathons now! I wasn't confident coming into it, worrying about the time lost to injury and getting covid (mildly) a few weeks before, and I'd become obsessed with hitting the wall and the pain everyone tells you to expect – it really didn't sound like much fun, and more than once I wondered why we'd put ourselves through it. But this was an overwhelmingly positive experience – not painful, but brilliant. Perhaps it was Paris, perhaps it was that my fabulous coach Fiona prepared and guided me so well, perhaps it was my new white shoes, and maybe, just maybe, I actually like running this distance. It was definitely the post run celebrations (all three days of them).

Would I do Paris again? Absolutely, I loved it! You couldn't ask for a more beautiful course which meant that it was fun and enjoyable, and the miles and time just flew by. Would I recommend it? Again, absolutely. If you already love marathons then Paris should be high on your list of priorities, and even if you don't really like marathon distances, I think most runners would still have a ball doing this. The 'World Marathon Book' says *'This popular marathon is one you should add to your bucket list, and, if you want to run only one or two marathons, Paris is definitely one to consider'*.

One caveat - I wouldn't necessarily recommend it if you are primarily looking for a fast time; it's quite congested (although perhaps that's normal for a big city race), you do have to watch out for human hazards, the route isn't as flat as others, plus those cobbles at best slow you down, and at worst could injure you.

Oh, and if you're interested – thanks for asking - Fabrice knocked 6 minutes off his PB with 3'39, and yes, I did manage to scrape a good for age time for London 2023 of 3'17, and having been bitten by the bug, am now really looking forward to pulling on the AVR vest there!

Allez les coureurs de la vallee Avon!



Wiltshire and AVR Offroad leagues 2021

The Wiltshire Off-Road Race League (WORL) is an annual series of races for all runners from clubs affiliated to Wiltshire Athletic Association with the goal of promoting running within the county and raising the profile of Wiltshire clubs and athletes. These races are Off-Road, meaning they are mostly gravel path, woodland, fields etc. There will usually be road sections. Expect these races to be hilly and potentially muddy. The races are selected by the XC and Off-Road secretaries and clubs are encouraged to submit races for consideration. There are typically eight races in a season which runs from Autumn to the following Spring.



**Wiltshire
Athletic
Association**

WORL races selected as qualifying races for 2021:

1. ~~Sunday 17th October – White Horse Gallop~~
2. Sunday 21st November – Avebury 8
3. Sunday 28th November – Yarnbury Yomp10k
4. Wednesday 29th December – Plain Crazy
5. Sunday 16th January – Slaughterford 9
6. Sunday 6th February – Lungbuster
7. Sunday 13th February – SMaRTT Smasher 10k
8. Sunday 27th February - Terminator

In addition to the WORL, AVR will have their own league starting in January 2022 in which the information can be found on our website here: <https://www.avonvalleyrunners.org.uk/road-race-series-2022>

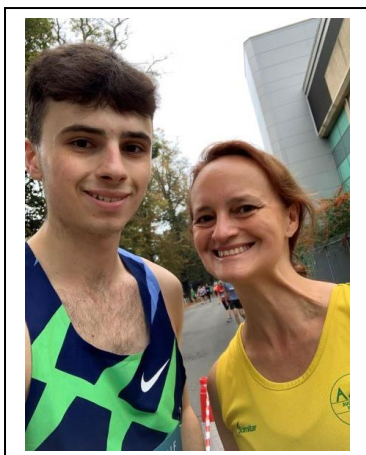
The White Horse Gallop

12 AVR members took part in this tough race, organised by Stampede Sports, to kick off the start of the WORL. Runners are faced with many tough hills to climb including up the near-sheer face of the Westbury White Horse! Tim Lerwill came in third place overall in a great time of 54:58 and Mel Ward-Nicholls was the first and only AVR female to tackle the course in 1:20:16.



Oxford Half Marathon – By Sharon Firkins

The Oxford Half Marathon was one of many races taking place the weekend of the 16/17th October. Postponed for 12 months in 2020, like so many due to pandemic, I'd successfully applied with my son Toby via ballot for a place. Toby had started uni in September, so I was looking forward to catching up, though not looking forward quite so much to the run!



I've run the AVR Half and the Bath Half twice, with a HM PB of 2:08:49, so with the Oxford Half billed as fast and flat, I was hoping to try for a HM PB. Training over the summer had been scuppered by a twisted ankle at the end of August. I'd completed a few long runs but did not feel half marathon ready.

The event complied with COVID-19 safety measures with participants required to upload lateral flow test results and complete a health declaration beforehand. Runners were also allocated a specific arrival time and we got to the village an hour before the race start. With a race field of nearly 13,000, the race village was already quite busy and the usual toilet queues quite dense. Sometime later, we had a quick warm up and then dropped our bags off. The toilet queues were even

ridiculously longer at this point, so Toby and I parted and walked to our respective pens which were about a 10 minute walk from the race village.

Clearly there weren't enough toilets and the race was delayed whilst runners got to their pens – some people did not make it to the start in time because of the queuing so clearly something the organisers need to work on for next year. Whilst the weather was almost perfect for running, it was a bit chilly standing around waiting for the start (definitely need to remember a bin bag next time) and I was beginning to regret the cup of tea I'd had two hours earlier!

Finally we were off! The Half route started on Broad Street near Trinity College then wound its way round the beautiful buildings in the centre, before leaving and heading up the Banbury Road. There was a great atmosphere, with music and cheering supporters lining the streets. It was also fantastic to see so many charity runners running again and raising much needed funds.



Once I'd moved through the congested first mile where the streets were quite narrow, I felt warmed up and the first five miles flew by (broken up by a stop to use the less crowded facilities!). We then ran further away from the city and up the Marton Ferry Road. Runners who had set off earlier were coming towards us on the other side of the road, towards the 9 mile marker. I saw Toby at this point, looking much more comfortable and relaxed than I was starting to feel. There were less people at this point, so it was little quieter until we reached the lovely village of Marston where there was great support - the bagpipes in particular were fantastic.

It was starting to feel warmer, so I made sure to use the very welcome spray shower and take on more water. My lack of training was starting to show, particularly from mile 8, back down the Marston



Road, so it was a case of keeping one foot in front of the other and trying not to stop and walk too many times as I ran back into the city. A 2:10 pacer had passed me, so I tried not to let them get too far ahead, trying to keep their banner in sight. With two miles to go, we ran into University Parks to do a huge somewhat congested loop of the race village on a trail path, which felt more like a parkrun. It was then back onto the road for the last mile winding around the historic centre, back to the fantastic crowd support and finally, after what seemed ages, the finish!

I finished in a time of 2:10:41, which having stopped in the race and limited training I was delighted with. Catching up after with Toby, he was slightly surprised as after very little distance training since starting uni, he had run 1:26:20, which was a HM PB.

All in all, it was a really enjoyable race; so great to be in a huge participation event again! The race definitely has potential to be fast, is very well organised and supported and it does showcase the historic parts of the city. The organisers just need to sort the toilet situation out and it will be perfect!

AVR goes ultra – by Laura Waterhouse

I never thought I'd be in a position to write this article, but thanks to AVR (or a few crazy individuals!) here I am!

A few members of AVR have spent many months this year in serious training for what can only be described as a long day out. Don't get me wrong, I love a long day out... I'm just not sure I would have chosen running to be the topic!

Let me introduce the team:

Caroline Scott – researches everything, uber-organised and definitely sticks to the plan.

Hayley Anderson – done this before and knows what to expect.

Chris Walford - Iron Man... what more needs to be said?

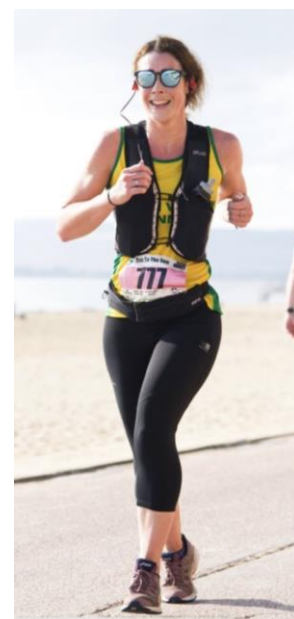
Kathryn Partington – again, done it before and knows how to get to the end in one piece.

Carly Hodgson (pictured right) – Got the legs, so can happily turn up and know it's in the bag.

James Kew – Started running to lose weight – lost 5st and hasn't stopped running yet.

Vicky Bodman – Support system, planner, communicator, driver, calming influence, bag drop... and more.

Me (**Laura Waterhouse/Beardsley**) – stupid one that takes a place 4 weeks before the event and hopes it'll be ok! (Thanks, Andrew Jefferies)



A small group of us decided to take the drive down to Bournemouth on Friday after work. Vicky did sterling job making sure Caroline and I got there in one piece in plenty of time to get to our rooms for the night. Chris drove himself down and met us at the hotel with the instructions to have one of the rooms for one! The evening then involved a meal out sharing stories, and enjoying the food and non-alcoholic beverages, not forgetting discussing Chris's tattoo having completed the Iron Man only 2 weeks before.



After making sure the kit was up to scratch (only minor issues that could easily be sorted with duct tape), a reasonable night's sleep was had by all.

On to the main event!

Saturday morning was an early start for those in Bournemouth... it was even earlier for those driving down on the day! The journey to the finish line (in the dark) could not have happened without Vicky willingly getting up at 5am, for nothing more than a drop off, so the rest of us could get the event bus to the start line. Moors Valley Country Park is a lovely place, even better that the coffee shack next to the toilets was open!



By the time any member of AVR started, the dawn chorus was well and truly over... I'm so glad I packed that head torch! Hayley and Kathryn set off first with Caroline and Chris only 5 minutes behind and I set off not long after them. I can't accurately say when Carly started but she whizzed past the lot of us before the first drinks station at 10k!

The first half of the race was in beautiful forests and wooded areas and for October we were very glad of the shade. The second half, while in a gorgeous setting was in the open and definitely helped top up the summer tan that we were worried was fading fast. Vicky was on hand at drinks station 3 (20 miles) for first aid, receiving unwanted kit, and general bolstering moods.

The last 10 miles was along the beach front from Poole to Bournemouth and then on to Hengistbury Head. The crowds were out (though not all were aware they were being passed by fools undertaking a 50k run) and the lack of sea breeze was noted by all. Again, Vicky was there in the last few miles, though honestly I have no idea what mile I was at by this point, to encourage and join in for the last push. Caroline and her super cape were able to sprint to the finish... I'm not sure where she found that last bit of energy. Note to self, buy Tailwind for any future events!

With all 7 AVR that started completing the course, it was definitely well worth the trip. For some of us it was our first and for others it was the last, but none of us would have been there without the support and guidance of our AVR family. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for allowing me to be a part of AVR and for getting me to where I am now. Whatever the future may bring, I know you will all be there beside me.

L xxx

How we fared:

Carly Hodgson – 4:55:05

James Kew – 5:26:10

Laura Waterhouse – 6:09:03

Caroline Scott – 6:26:04

Chris Walford – 6:26:07

Hayley Anderson – 6:38:55

Marc Webb – 6:56:16

Kathryn Partington – 8:34:49



AVON VALLEY TRIATHLETES

By AVT secretary Kat Taylor-Laird

Swimming Hats



AVT swim hats are on order for our social open water swims and events as a way of both promoting AVT and identifying AVT members.

These are available at a cost of £5 each. Email avt@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk to order yours and arrange collection.



AVT Hoodies

Did you know that AVT now have hoodies too? Like the AVR design, they are black but they have green inserts and the AVT logo on the front, as modelled by Chris Walford here after completing Run to the Sea. These additions to the kit range are available from Sportsbug in Trowbridge and Melksham for £25.



The Ride of Our Lives – by Robin-Mark Schols



On Sunday 10th of October member Robin-Mark Schols and his grandson took part in the Silverstone 10k, a race moved twice due to COVID-19. He'd originally entered to have a go at running a fast 10k in November 2020 but as it was now just a week after London marathon it had become a case of just running it for fun, with Robin completing in around 42 minutes. This was just the precursor to what was to be a mammoth week of effort to test both of them like they'd never been tested before. Robin, who is better known within the club for his running, takes up the story below.

Back in August my Grandson Ben said I had inspired him so much with my running achievements, he wanted to do

something to mark them. A keen cyclist, he'd had the idea he wanted to cycle every mile I'd run this year over a week to raise money for the charity Brain Tumour Support from his efforts. At the time I told him I still had some goal races and that the total by the end of September could be as much as 1400 miles. I offered to join him to help with a few miles and offer support and keep him motivated. He loved the idea and so started to plan it.

In addition to the distance we were to cycle, Ben decided he wanted to give it an army twist, so we were to sleep under bashers (a sheet with two poles) in sleeping bags outside. In October. We were also to have a staple diet of army rations only, though we could compliment this with essential fuelling needed like gels and electrolytes. He approached his Commanding Officer and got permission. By the end of September my run total had now reached 1546 miles which we hoped to complete on the cycle between Monday 11th October and hopefully finish on the Saturday without leaving the area we were doing the task in.

Day 1

After a few problems with turbos and cassettes on my bike set up on Monday, we abandoned it and borrowed a smart turbo and bike from one of the lads on camp and we were set. The time setting up meant we didn't get started until 15:30, so we'd lost a good chunk of the day but we got 188 miles done by 11 o'clock. Given the time we'd had available that first day after setting up, it was a good effort that set us on our way well.

Days 2 and 3

My first sleep outside wasn't the best so I was a little grumpy first thing on the Tuesday but after some food we got down to business and by the time we finished the second day we had completed a further 300 miles between us, with another 302 miles the next day leaving us feeling like we really needed to work hard on Thursday to give us a chance of finishing on time at the weekend.

Day 4

This was our biggest mileage day so far and turned into a late one where we amassed a colossal total of 356 miles, 156 from me and 200 from Ben. We were elated but tired, though we did feel we had got ourselves into position to succeed. We had probably over done it.

Day 5

Getting up on the Friday we had 400 miles left to the end of the task. We were both shattered having given our all the previous evening. It was a struggle to get going, the saddle was very hard now and our legs were really tired and by lunch time we had only managed 47 miles between us. It was the lowest point of the week and in that moment we really felt like we'd bitten off more than we could chew and considered we just might have underestimated the whole challenge.

We struggled on, doing a few miles in between rests and then while Ben was resting, we had a visitor. One of his work colleagues asked if he could set his bike and turbo up and join us and it just gave us a little lift and just like that, the change to the dynamic got us started again. A little later Bens' partner Jade turned up also bringing their dogs who were really excited to see him, (and he them) giving us both an extra boost.



During the early part of the week we'd had visits quite often from Bens' army colleagues which were really great, but as the end of the week came the guys were disappearing as they headed home for the weekend and we'd missed the interaction with them.

By bed time in an incredible turnaround, we went from literally being down and out on the floor in the afternoon to completing 310 miles between us, leaving us just 90 miles to ride on the Saturday to complete the challenge.

Day 6

We were raring to go on the Saturday as it had now dawned on us that 90 miles was actually just 45 miles each. We got on and did a quick 10 then stopped for some breakfast. After completing another 15 miles, we realised we were likely to finish much earlier than expected, so Ben made a call to let people know the new time we expected to be done.

With around 10 miles to go we were joined by Jade and the dogs and some of the members of Bens' regiment and their families, supporting us as the sun finally broke through the grey autumn skies and with less than 5 miles left, we were live on social media on the home straight. At 2 miles to go we had a surprise pizza delivery, a welcome sight after 5 days on army rations. We could quite literally smell the finish line now. Then, just like that we were done and it was over. We were both elated and celebrated our achievement while feeling sad it was over at the same time. I needed a moment alone just to take in just what we'd achieved. I'd cycled 704 miles in less than 5 full days. I'd never cycled 100 miles before, let alone over 700 in less than 5 days. Ben had done 840 miles, he was amazing. He'd planned to cover 200 miles a day at a pace of 16mph for 13 hours each day at the outset but things don't always work out as you think. I'd offered 100 a day to support him and if I'm honest, I realised I'd offered to surpass the furthest I'd ever cycled in my life on just one occasion for 6 consecutive days, with my furthest ride being 160 miles on the Friday.

The sense of achievement was immense, 1546 miles between us in less than 5 whole days felt and was massive and managing to raise over £1600 for Brain Tumour Support made it all the more worth it. It had been a massive journey though we hadn't been anywhere other than Watopia. We'd asked so much of our minds and bodies and they had delivered like we had no right to expect them to.

We were both back to work on the Monday but both of us have been feeling the effects as we recover. We'd both like to thank everyone that donated or sent messages of support during the challenge where we have doubled the original target we set ourselves. In addition to the amazing amount raised, we made an amazing memory together. I just wonder what we might do next.



AVT results

Don't forget all AVT race results need to be e-mailed through to avt@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk for inclusion in the results spreadsheet. At the moment this is looking a bit sparse and I know that there has been some races taking place. Please go through your races for this year and send through your results, with race distances and times. Please also send link to official results page too if possible.

Remember you need to enter the race as a member of Avon Valley runners/triathletes and wherever possible wear your AVT kit to promote the club. Tri suits can be purchased from <https://www.halosports.co.uk/clubs/avon-valley-triathletes/>

