

History of the Hungerford Hares Running Club

The Hungerford Hares were born one summer's evening on 5th June 2007.



It all stemmed from an idea by Mandy, our club Chair. She had been living in Hungerford for ten years with husband Chris. He was a keen runner and had introduced Mandy to running at the end of her nurse training in Brighton. *"It was free, and I loved running along the seafront"*.

Founder Members

In 1999, Mandy was running with Marlborough Running Club. Her work colleague and friend June was an experienced runner at all distances, although a member of another Berkshire running club. She helped Mandy train for her first half-marathon. Mandy's sister Claire was also just getting into running. Two other friends were recruited, James and Matt.

Planning – April 2007

The five friends took this seriously. June came up with the club name and it was immediately adopted. The official Hungerford colours of maroon and royal blue were a natural choice for the club colours. A friend of James' working at Porsche designed the club logo – the cartoon Hare.

Club roles were allocated – Chair, Secretary, Treasurer. That seemed enough back then!

England Athletics, the official body of athletics for England were contacted and affiliation was in place by the November of that year, with the club vest and design registered with them for races and other running events.

There was a trial session with just the five founders meeting up on 30th May and then the club was all set...



The first meeting of the Hares

Rather like Woodstock, if you can remember it, you weren't there. All we know is that it took place on the 5th June 2007. That month of June was a wet one, but the Tuesday evening was bright and sunny. Certainly the five founder members were there, and maybe others, meeting at the Triangle Field next to Hungerford Rugby Club, as we still do today. No photos, sadly, but this photo was taken that same year, early members showing off the new club kit.



Glen, Matt, Esther, Claire and June

The Hares multiply

Other runners steadily swelled the ranks. Esther and Geoff were early committee members, Geoff already being an experienced member of Newbury AC. Other members took the EA Leadership in Running Fitness course to become Run Leaders – those qualified to teach and carry out running activities. Several other Hares have since similarly become qualified: Claire, Billy, Victoria, Simon, Andy, Hilary and Cat among others.

Sessions such as hill repetitions and intervals training were added to the more relaxed social runs programme. Warm up and cool downs became a regular feature.

The Harey 8 Race

By 2012 the committee was confident enough [to plan and host its own race](#), an unusual distance of 8 miles, cross-country, and now an established part of the Run West Berkshire series of summer races. It has been repeated every year, until 2020, cancelled because of the Covid-19 crisis. Each year the club has committed to supporting a local charity to raise funds, whilst ensuring a great race experience for the runners. The charities have included The Bruce Trust, The Tuesday Club, Chain and Sport in Mind.



Harey 8 Race 2019



Mandy presenting a cheque to Sport in Mind 2017



Mandy & Claire presenting a cheque to The Bruce Trust in 2015

Club Races

Being EA-affiliated, members of the Hares can take part in official races organised by England Athletics. (As well as fun runs and the like!). Here's some of the Hares supporting a local race in 2014, the Kintbury 5, for many years organised mainly by club member Dave W. From 2020, Moshe, another of our members, has taken over the organisation of this event.



June, Claire, Victoria and Billy at the Kintbury 5 race in 2014

Other races the Hares typically attend include the Ridgeway Relay, the Bayer Newbury 10k, the Lethbridge 10k, the Welford & Wickham 10k, the Reading Endure 24 – and the Virgin Money London Marathon!

Ten years of the Hares

We had a table on the steps of the Town Hall on 10th June 2017 in conjunction with Sport in Mind representatives as they were our chosen charity for the Harey 8 that year. We encouraged local people to come and find out more about the Hares and we sold cakes with the proceeds going to Sport in Mind.



Special Programmes

These include a **Beginners' Programme** run each spring, led at first by June until she moved away, and latterly by Simon and Hilary. These are aimed at absolute beginners, some of whom have never run before, to get them running a 5k within 8 weeks. Indeed, Hilary was an early graduate of the programme – and has since run several marathons.



Beginners' 2015 with Claire & June in Hares' tops

1. Hungerford Primary School After-School Running Club

Mandy, June and Simon linked in with the Hungerford Primary School to provide an after-school running club for the year group 5/6. This has been a great success, often getting 30+ kids out doing interval/hill sessions as well as timed runs to improve their physical and mental health. At this age their performance improves massively from month to month.

2. Parkrun takeovers

These are where the Hares takeover the volunteers' duties of a local Saturday parkrun, giving the local organisers a chance to run their own parkrun. We've done this at nearby Marlborough Common parkrun. It helps advertise the club (including the Harey 8) and just promote the benefits of running in general.



Hares' parkrun takeover 23rd March 2019

3. Social Events

Regular and much-anticipated events include the annual Xmas Run where we run around the town admiring the houses' Christmas displays and light-heartedly scoring them: *"Mmm, nice flashing display, good use of fake snow but that reindeer looks a bit wobbly... 9/10"*. Christmas outfits and fake beards are optional but [a jaunt through the aisles of Tesco](#) is traditional. Similarly a Halloween fun run, Pancake Day run, Easter Egg hunt – any excuse.

In summer, we usually have several Away Runs where we meet up in a local village and run a route ending up at a country pub. Examples include Inkpen, Aldbourne, Wickham and Eastbury. Sunday morning runs come in and out of vogue; Esther usually insists on an 8:30am start on the Common.

4. Guest Trainers

We were honoured to have Olympian marathon runner Mara Yamauchi lead a training session for us on 4th July 2019. Mara holds the second-fastest marathon time of a British woman athlete, the record holder being Paula Radcliffe. Mara put us through our paces, then hosted a Q&A session afterwards.



Mara trains with the Hares 2019

The less glamorous, but no less reliable Andy from the local West Berkshire Injury Clinic has run strength and conditioning sessions for us. Many of the Hares are among his clients! *"Now, you are doing your daily stretches aren't you?"* he always asks us.

5. Internal competitions

We've had lots of these – from the simple "run a given route and estimate your time; the Hare with the closest estimate wins" - to a Strava Segments challenge during the C-19 lockdown in May 2020. This virtual running challenge saw over 180 runs in and around Hungerford by the Hares, with club members recording times on various local run segments, notching up places on the corresponding public leaderboards and even taking the coveted Crown (fastest time) on around 70 of the segments.



Also during lockdown: a Rainbow Challenge where we had to take photos of all the colours of the rainbow during a run. (Just exactly what colour is Indigo?).

And a long-running Photo Relay Challenge; Andy took a photo of a local landmark, the first Hare to find it took their photo of it as proof and added a new photo of a new landmark. And so on.

Into the Future

Mandy says:

"The club is still going strong; the diversity of the group is the secret to its success, with a complete range of abilities from beginners to ultra-runners. The sessions are back after lockdown and we are lucky to have been awarded £700 from grants to help support the club in various ways. I am the only remaining founding member of the club and continue to be Chair after 13 years. I am proud of the club and what it has achieved for the local community and I have an added bonus of making so many good friends.



Mandy - Chair

We are a friendly, social club who recognise the importance of regular exercise for improving mental and physical health. We now have a Mental Health Champion in the club, an initiative started by England Athletics. Her role is to support people to access the mental wellbeing benefits of running, remove stigma and get people talking about mental health.

The main committee and subcommittees are also important to our success. I really did not think the club would still be in existence in 2020. We are all volunteers and the support from the committee is incredible ensuring the smooth running of the club whilst looking for new and different ways to improve and develop. I thank them immensely, both past and present

members, including the founders, without whom the Hares may never have happened!"

