

THE HISTORY OF THE RR10 RACE SERIES

The roots of the RR10 race series (RR6 as it was started) are not hard to find. They are in the first jogging boom of 1981 - 82 onwards, which resulted in jogging clubs being formed all over the United Kingdom, the Solent area being a very active participant in this growth. These clubs were completely separate from the existing track/road clubs that enjoyed their own established competitions - track racing in the summer with road and cross country throughout the winter. The existing clubs had a full 12 months season, without any easy room for newcomers.

Then we had the backdrop of the first ever London Marathon in April 1981 (fully televised on BBC). This was followed not long after by the Southampton Marathon and Half Marathon as well as The Sunday Times Great Fun Run. The thirst of all this new breed of runners was whetted enough to create a groundswell of desire to generate some level of competition for these new clubs, especially during the summer months.

Facilitated by Southampton Leisure Services, a meeting of interested clubs was called and Southampton Road Runners, Hardley Runners and New Forest Runners were the most active in their support for this start up league - a friendly race series on Wednesday evening during the summer, all on local roads, with the exception of the Common. They were swiftly joined by Wessex Road Runners, IBM Hursley Runners and Lordshill Road Runners, and rules of engagement were loosely agreed - drop out clubs, distances, venues and timetable - but no track clubs were invited.

The first four races in the series are believed to have been run in Summer 1983, with The Common, Wilverley and IBM Hursley among the host courses. There are no results records from this time but it is estimated that between 60 and 80 runners took part.

The League soon grew from six clubs up to nine with the introduction of Romsey Road Runners, Totton and Eastleigh Running Club, with venues including Braishfield, Woodlands and Deerleap being added to the programme. Once road restrictions were introduced by the police, all events had to be moved off road - hence the title RR10 (Road Running10) became inaccurate.

In 1990 Southampton City AC (as a track club) were admitted, while in 1993 both Team Solent and the Southampton Running Sisters joined, enabling the series to stage ten races through the Summer and have smaller clubs sharing hosting duties. In order to compress the ten races into the calendar and not suffer from fading light in late August, as well as catering for any shift workers who might miss out on the entire race series, the League introduced one back-to-back Wednesday race at half way.

In 2000 Winchester and District AC were invited to join the League and swiftly absorbed as full members, while in 2006 Stubbington Green applied and were welcomed aboard on a restricted number basis for the first two years. This restriction was removed in 2009.

In 2010 Southampton Running Club and Team Solent merged to remove one club from the list, but Halterworth Harriers applied to join to redress the club count. IBM withdrew in 2008 but the final race of the series has continued to be hosted at IBM Hursley. Hedge End Running Club joined the group for the 2013 season and quickly became a big participant with their new and growing club.

The final current member of the RR10 joined in 2016, when Itchen Spitfires applied and were welcomed in after much debate how the League was going to continue without outgrowing the majority of the venues. The answer came with an eleventh event and an interesting matrix that involved every club dropping out completely from one race, as well as from their own hosting event. This move did result in a flattening off of the numbers at each venue, a trend that has been dramatically overturned during the 2018 season so far - where every race has set new records for their venue.

As the League developed, so too did legislation involved with UKA so that a permit to race off-road, plus full medical cover, including defibrillator and operator, became an integral part of the race organisers' duties.

At the core of the standards are the ethos that started the League. Friendly races for all club runners over varied courses and distances between 4 and 5 miles, no rewards for winners (hence why we resist sponsors) and the desire to welcome all clubs that qualify for the League if at all possible.

Going forward, the League has many challenges to be met. Not least of these is the desire to keep numbers at each race under control, in particular cars in the New Forest, where our venues are balanced on a knife edge.

Memories of the Foot and Mouth Outbreak of 2001 are now fading fast but it highlighted the urgent need to prepare other courses that are suitable for our use, in case of such an eventuality.

That very thing happened to us in June 2017 when Marwell Zoo decided that they did not want us using their car park and adjacent woods, with only two weeks prior notice. A substitute venue was scrambled out of the situation but only after a lot of back pedaling to achieve the requirement.

Growing the League yet again under its current format would be a major folly. Parking and runners' safety are both high on the agenda and we are reaching breaking point at several venues.

Any new members will almost certainly necessitate a complete change into something like an East and West League format. By halving the present numbers it might well be practical to reopen some of the venues that we used in the early years. (A full list of those venues is enclosed at the end of this document).

The results service that Alan Tulip has so successfully provided for 27 years will one day soon need a successor to fill his shoes (or is that fingers?). Is a Parkrun type solution the answer with bar code registration and the transfer of

equipment and numbers between organising clubs? This will have dramatic cost implications if adopted.

Finally a list of venues that have been used to the best of my knowledge, up to date:

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| Victoria Country Park | Wilverley |
| Kings Garn, Stoney Cross | Manor Farm (now River Hamble) Country Park |
| Cadland Estate | Fleming Park |
| University Fields, Eastleigh | Janesmoor Pond |
| Itchen Valley Country Park | Whiteley Woods |
| IBM Hursley | Dibden Inclosure |
| Stoke Park Woods | Farley Mount |
| Ashurst (Happy Cheese) | Deerleap |
| Longdown Inclosure | Worthy Down |
| IBA Crawley | West Wood, Netley |
| Marwell Zoo | Fairthorne Manor |
| Braishfield | Woodlands |
| Fawley Inclosure | Gangwarily |
| Lordswood | Rose Bowl, West End |
| Gangwarily, Fawley | Ampfield Woods |
| Ridge Farm Learning Centre | Badger Farm |
| Broadlands | Alver Valley Country Park |
| Brockenhurst College | Lordshill Fire Breaks |

Malcolm Price (February 2023)