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Mad for it at Manchester Marathon

The marathon season got under way at the weekend with a sizeable field of 17 Weston Athletic Club members making the journey north for this year's Greater Manchester marathon. Race conditions were pretty perfect, with dry, cool air and the lightest of breezes.

Rob Furlong was the club's fastest finisher in a sterling time of 3.05.49. Stephen Powell crossed the line in 3.14.16, and Stuart Diamond soon after in 3.15.57.

Cheryl Valentine was the club's fastest female in 3.43.10. Helen Diamond ran her quickest marathon yet to finish in 3.49.09. Sheryl Selway also ran a strong race to finish comfortably under the four hour mark in 3.53.03.

Stuart, Cheryl, and Helen were further rewarded by earning themselves good for age places at next year's London marathon as a result of their excellent performances.

Meanwhile, other members had travelled even further for their marathons. Jason Revill completed the Rome marathon in 3.34.15, while Paul Baker, in Paris, was on target for the time he'd been training for, right up until mile 20, when the unseasonably warm heat overcame him, and he had some tricky miles ahead before finishing the race in 4.15.24.

Unusually, none of the club's runners opted for the full marathon at Taunton this year, but 17 toed the line for the half marathon - renowned for its undulating route including two hills in the closing miles. Matt Wheeler was the club's fastest male, finishing the lumpy course in 1.27.17. Nia Davies also had a great race following all her hard training miles lately, and she was next from the club to finish, just five minutes later, in a superb time of 1.32.27, second overall in her category.

Andrew Sandiford and Neale Jarrett finished next in 1.34.15 and 1.37.46 respectively. Julie Bailiss was the club's second fastest female, finishing in 1.46.43, while Niki Fulstow, despite not having trained for the race, ran a creditable race to finish in 1.48.03.

Paul Snelling won his age category with his excellent time of 1.46.29.

Sunday's other championship race was the Salisbury 10 mile road race. Only four of the club's members took part, but all ran strong races. Vicki Wilkins was first club female, finishing in 1.27.06. Kate Rossiter crossed the line in 1.34.36 and Vanessa Jennings in 1.37.18. Richard Brent was the club's only male runner and he ran a fast race to achieve a time of 1.04.34.

Thursday evening was the final race in the current Burnham 5k series which attracted 15 club members all keen to gain a fast time over a shorter distance. Good conditions made for a quick race with all runners finishing comfortably under 28 minutes. Weston's three fastest men were Richard Brent, finishing in 18.30, followed by Phil Tomlinson in 18.42 and Matt Wheeler in 19.19.

Susan Duncan finished the series with another personal best in 19.36. Nia Davies crossed the line in 20.22 and Michelle Fryer just eight seconds later, also both achieving new fastest times.

The next race organised by the club is the sixth prom run of the season on Thursday April 26. The main five mile race starts on the seafront near the Tropicana at 7.30pm and is preceded by the one mile junior race at 6.45pm. Runners can enter on the night or online at www.westonac.co.uk/promrun.

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