

Catching up with running and athletics clubs across the country

# Pont-y-pwl & District Runners

[www.pontypoolrunners.co.uk](http://www.pontypoolrunners.co.uk)



**P**eople run for many different reasons - to experience the buzz of a good run, the challenge, to keep fit or to lose weight. For Dimitri and Christine Vorres running is something they do for all the above reasons, but also they love to actively participate in the sport of running, entering races, participating in local leagues and socialising with like-minded people.

At the end of 2011 it was clear to both that whilst the club they were members of trained regularly, there were no goals to the training, and no encouragement or interest in entering teams into local events; it was time to move on.

Luckily, Dimitri and Christine had lots of support from friends and the local council, and so together, they decided to form a new club. Pont-y-pwl & District is a club with a mission to encourage not just running, but participation in races, and to promote local events so that youngsters entering the sport have races to enter in years to come.

The first month was exciting, deciding on colours, kit, logo and so on. The first consignment of 15 vests were snapped up immediately as people realised that there was a club in their area and joined up. The club affiliated to the local Leisure Centre League and entered two teams for a cross-country race in January, and quickly followed that with teams in the Llisbury 8 race at the end of the month. In February the first team award was achieved at the Dursley Dozen Race.

Four members of the club were proud to take part in the 2012 Virgin London Marathon - and all four came in the top 10 per cent of the 37,000 participants who took part. Steve Davies was the first member to cross the line in a highly commendable time of 2:56:16, and 31st in his age category of Vet 50. The other three club members all came in within seconds of each other; Emma Bayliss

in 3:22:03, Ray Morgan in 3:22:21 and Julie Davies in 3:22:58. These times mean that Steve, Emma and Julie qualify for a 'good for age' entry in next year's event.

30-year-old Emma and 31-year-old Ray have also, between them, raised nearly £1,000 sponsorship money to support the work of St. David's Hospice Care, a local charity that provides home-based hospice care in South East Wales. The club had got off to a great start during its first year.

Throughout the summer months the club attracted more and more members, of every standard, and membership grew quickly to nearly 50 members. During the autumn Pont-y-pwl also affiliated to the Gwent Leagues, and is entering teams for many different cross-country events.

"Our ethos is to encourage everyone, no matter what ability," says Christine Vorres. "Anyone who likes running is welcome, but we do ask members to give it a go, to try new types of events, terrain and distances."

In August the club organised a weekend trip to Tywyn to the Race the Train event, and, says Chris: "It was a brilliant success! A weekend camping in the wet did nothing to dampen team spirit."

Pont-y-pwl Runner's vests have already been spotted at fell races, cross-country events, trail runs and road races. Members also recently entered a team for the Cardiff Half Marathon and again raised hundreds of pounds for St David's Hospice Care.

Dimitri says: "We have absolutely no regrets about starting up the club, it was the right thing to do, at the right time. We are enjoying sharing our experiences with all the newcomers, and watching them develop their ability is very rewarding - and the social element is wonderful. The events that we participate in are really just an excuse to get together for lunch!"

The club meets at 7pm every Tuesday and Thursday at Pontypool Leisure Centre, and caters for all abilities. "Our beginner's sessions started last month, and we already regularly have around 20 runners doing distances ranging from one mile to six miles," adds Christine. "We feel that as part of the Olympic legacy running is definitely becoming popular again. After the boom of the 80's there was a bit of decline, especially in taking part in events, but we are seeing growing numbers at training nights and participation at events such as the Tour of Torfaen."

The club's plans for 2013 include entering teams for the Man v Horse event in June, a trip to Italy for a trail marathon and Race the Train in July.

