



Easingwold Running Club – Advertiser article January 2024

My ERC 2023 Season – Stephanie Cooper

Having never won anything sporty in my life, I'm absolutely delighted to win Easingwold Running Club's Female Club Championship this year! The joy of the club championship is that all the race results are age adjusted, so there are some bonuses of growing older! I'm by no means a fast runner but as I'm quite a lot older than many of the female club runners, my results are quite good when they've been adjusted!

I first starting jogging in my school lunch break. But as we had some England school girl cross country runners at our school, I was always the one lagging at the back and I always felt a bit awkward, so didn't keep it up for too long. However, in my early 30s a friend asked if I'd like to do the Race for Life with her to raise funds for Cancer Research. We surprised ourselves by running all the way and decided to continue meeting up once a week to go for a run locally together. I soon learned that this was a great way to clear my head and catch up with my friend at the same time, and soon we dared to enter a few local races.

Following major surgery in 2013, I had to stop running, but visiting some friends in South Africa three years' later, they suggested we joined them for their local parkrun. After running out of excuses, I decided to give it a go, and once again amazed myself by running all the way (albeit very slowly), and on returning to the UK, I registered for a parkrun barcode and started going most weeks. I gradually got my fitness back, and found that I really enjoyed running with a group – I was racing against myself, but I didn't feel awkward as there were always people to encourage me, and I started to get fitter and faster. My husband then joined me at parkrun, and soon we were there every week!

A couple of years later we decided to take the plunge and join ERC. I'd always thought that running clubs were only for fast runners, but Easingwold Running Club has runners of all speeds and the different groups mean that you can always find people who run at similar speeds to you. The varied sessions are fun, and 'tourist' nights mean that you get to experience some lovely routes in the countryside round and about Easingwold.

This year's club championship races have been really varied, ranging from a very (very, very) muddy Hooded Horse 10k on the side of the White Horse, a road race league 10k run in Pocklington in rain of biblical proportions (I nearly didn't make it to the start line as I was terrified by some very ferocious thunder and lightning just minutes before the start!), and the hilliest 10 mile run I've ever done (the Guy Fawkes 10, starting at Ripley Castle). We got Easter eggs upon finishing the Helmsley 10k, were surprised to see the Prime Minister taking part in the Northallerton 10k, and completed the Burton Leonard 10k on a very hot sunny summer day. In all of these races I've really been competing against myself, willing myself not to stop and walk on some hills, trying to keep up the same pace throughout, and beat my time from previous years, but all of the blue and green Easingwold t-shirts add extra encouragement and challenge, and the faster runners cheer us in at the finish too.

Several female runners have been injured this year and unable to complete enough races to qualify for the club championship, and I'll have great difficulty in defending the first place next year, but I'm still so proud of myself for having achieved it this year, and want to thank everyone for their encouragement and support.

Stephanie completed 12 out of the 20 events this year to become the female club champion for 2023. This included 7 off-road events and 5 road ones. She was the top scorer in seven of those events which included the Burton Leonard 10K, the Sutton-on-the-Forest 10K and the Northallerton 10K.

If you fancy a go at taking on Stephanie and the rest of the team, why not consider joining in 2024 and making it a New Year's resolution? See <https://www.easingwoldrunningclub.co.uk/> for more details.