

Tewkesbury Tri – Review of 2023



What follows is a summary of the year based on all the comments and reports shared on WhatsApp and in the weekly newsletters. If I've missed anything, or if your endeavours have gone unnoticed, my sincere apologies. Most importantly, everyone's achievements are worthy of celebration. The fact that we all get out and do what we do is what makes us brilliant.

But before we start looking at all of the individual achievements we need to give a massive shout out to all the club members who **volunteer** their time to make our club what it is:

- We benefited from **over 250 coached swimming sessions** led by our volunteer **coaches**.
- We were able to join **run sessions**, various **bike activities** and **winter Turbo sessions**, all organised from within the club.
- There were **four highly successful races**, loved by those that participate, with each one requiring months of organisation, and plenty of support on the day.
- The **committee** have worked throughout the year to make sure the club runs smoothly and efficiently.

A big thank you to everyone involved. And so, onto the year in review:

January

January brought an early wave of triumphs for the club.

Mel Nicholls secured her place on the **2023 British Triathlon World Class Programme**, aiming for Paris 2024 glory. **Tom Radley** was selected as one of the first **British Triathlon Age Group Ambassadors**.

Dave Granger, Malcolm Swarbrick, Stevie Robb and **Tim Shattock** all braved the near Baltic conditions at the Phish Gala with water temperatures of 3C.



February



During February we continued to make a splash. We kicked off the **Winter Aquathlon series** with a bang, with the first race drawing in a start list of 77.

Phillip Howells, our marathon maestro, made it onto BBC TV after conquering his 333rd marathon – that's running royalty for you! And as if that wasn't exciting enough, we unveiled our slick **new club kit** to keep our team looking sharp and speedy.



March

By March things were in full swing for the club! First up, we had the privilege of being run coached by **James Chantler-Mayne** as we soaked up some training techniques used by the elite at Loughborough. A bike session was to follow but the **Super League Arena** games organisers had different ideas. **James** travelled to Switzerland to participate, making it through to the final, which we were able to watch on live TV.

Back on home turf, our Aquathlon series splashed into action again, attracting good numbers once more. And the awards started to roll in. First up was the **South West Region Inclusivity Award**, and then a few weeks later the club were crowned as Triathlon England's **National winners** in another live broadcast!



Tim Shattocks and **Malcolm Swarbrick** showed their paddling skills in the Waterside canoe race, tackling 34 miles from Devizes to Newbury. Further afield, **James Chantler-Mayne** was racing at the sharp end at the European Triathlon Cup in Quarteria, leading out the run at one stage and finishing 13th, one place ahead of legendary Norwegian Gustav Iden. Over in Venice **Iain McInnes** was in GB kit at the European Sprint Duathlon Championships, putting in a solid performance.

Back in the UK, **Tom Radley** and **Nicole Radley** both clinched spots in the 2024 British Age Group team at the Oulton Park Duathlon. As you will see, this was setting the pattern for the year to come.

Andy Hicks finished off the month with a bang over at the "Fission Half Marathon" (*I'm proud of this line*)

April

April was another huge month of achievements for our triathlon crew! First off, big cheers to **Andy Hicks** for conquering the Paris Marathon. **Mel Nicholls** set the scene for her year by clinching the gold at the National Paratriathlon Championship. The prize for most 'bling' won this year definitely goes to Mel. Over in Halesowen, **Suzie Tharme** dove into action at the Sprint Triathlon. **Jez Kirby** tackled the cobbles, rain, wind and mud of the Tour of Flanders Sportive in Belgium, whilst back on home turf, our **Aquathlon series** wrapped up in style with the final race of the Winter Series!

Shout outs to **David Wright** for conquering the Manchester Marathon and our inspirational swim coaching duo of **Dave Granger** and **Dave Page** who took some much deserved time off from the poolside to take part in the Mallorca Long Course Weekend. There was exciting news on the membership front as we introduced the **Open Water Associate membership**, unlocking year-round access to Croft Farm Water Park!



Our globetrotting athletes were out in force and on fire at the World Multisport Championships in Ibiza – **David Taylor** nailed 8th in the Standard Distance, **Tom Radley** 15th in the Sprint Distance Championships, and **Paul Willis** powered to 5th in the Standard Distance Duathlon.

Anna Rudgeley faced the Spartan Beast like a true warrior in the 21km challenge, whilst **Malcolm Swarbrick** and **Tim Shattock** clocked up more nautical miles paddling their way through another K2 Hasler Series race.

Last but not least, **Helen Milner** and **Phil Johnson** tackled the Bluebell Blunder 10k.

May

May was another month of epic feats and aquatic adventures for our triathlon tribe! Our trio of duathletes had returned home from Ibiza, but **Neive Richardson** and **Liz Spires** remained there. They were on GB Age Group duties in the long-distance Aqua Bike World Championships.

Jez Kirby walked 106km in 24hrs to complete the Isle of Wight Ultra Challenge, helping raise £10k for charity.

The season kicked off with a splash at Croft Farm Water Park, with our first, but slightly delayed timed swim of the year. The water was too cold on the original date for most of us that prefer warmer water to swim in.

Tom Radley was mixing it up at Eton Dorney, tackling a Sprint Triathlon and working hard with former London 2012 Olympics domestique to the Brownlee brothers, Stuart Hayes.



Mike Thompson, Dan Merifield, and Dan Parker-Gage conquered the Outlaw Half in Nottingham, despite some trials and tribulations with vehicles and muddy fields before the start. We had our first 'first triathlon' of the year with **Ellen Hallett** completing her first event and exclaiming "I am a Triathlete".

Dave Hill gave us a glimpse of what was to come this year as he showcased his podium potential at the Southport Triathlon, snagging 2nd in his age group and a stellar 11th overall against a stacked field! **Jez Kirby** and **Nathan Peck** represented the club at the local Gloucester Sprint Triathlon, while **David Taylor, Tom Radley, and Nicole Radley** all dominated at the Darley Moor Sprint Duathlon, securing GB Age Group spots for next year's European Sprint Championships!

Over in Southern France **Stevie Robb** was amongst a group conquering the formidable and iconic Mont Ventoux.

June

June was an absolute whirlwind of triumphs and challenges and the club were unstoppable, and it was another month to remember!



Our club teamed up with local clubs for the first-ever Women's Cycling session at Evesham Velopark. The international travels continued with a group out in Madrid for the European Championships. **Mel Nicholls** grabbed a silver in the Elite PTWC, **David Taylor** rocked to 6th in the Standard distance Triathlon, while **Tom Radley** and **Dave Hill** powered to 7th and 6th respectively in the Sprint Triathlon. Dave's result was all the more impressive by coming home as second Britain to Donald Brooks - probably the most successful Age Group triathlete in the world right now.

Huge shout out to **Mary Mayne**, who did her annual 10km race in Gloucester to raise more funds for Cancer Research.

Martin Carter and **Elaine Clarke** conquered Challenge Wales, whilst **Helen Milner** and **Jane Harris** travelled up to the Lake District for the Lakesman Middle Distance Triathlon. Jane clinched 2nd in her age group despite minimal training.

Neive Richardson owned the Standard distance Aqua Bike at Cholmondeley Castle, securing a well-deserved 2nd place, while at the same event **Iain McInnes** continued his Duathlon domination by winning his age group and securing another GB Age Group place. Back to the Lake District and the foursome of **Helen Milner**, **Phil Johnson**, **Stevie Robb** and **Ali Palmer** took on the 8.5km Chill Swim in Lake Coniston.



Dan Merfield formed part of a 5-man team conquering a 24-hour running relay event, whilst Brad Maber was in the pool competing in a regional Swim Masters competition. It was another month and so another Hasler canoe event as the duo of **Malcolm Swarbrick** and **Tim Shattocks** navigated the waters at the Falcon Hasler in Oxford.

Kathy Lewis and **Linda Coxsall** did another one of the Ultra Events. They took part in the Cotswold Ultra Challenge walking 100km. **Tom Radley** and **Dave Hill** powered through the Cardiff Sprint Triathlon, securing more GB Age Group spots for the World Championships.

One that we were all jealous of was **Brian McCarthy** travelling to Germany to tackle the legendary Challenge Roth, and what an experience it looks to have been. The prize for the best pictures of the year definitely goes to Brian. Finally, **Jez Kirby** was in Chester for the Deva races, tackling the Aqua Bike and getting a GB slot for 2024.

July

Things were only going to get better and July was an absolute blaze of achievements for our triathlon squad as they turned up the heat!

Duncan Henderson brought back an old favourite with the "Steady Eddie" Sunday rides. It was a busy month with club members competing and participating in events galore. **Brad Mabers** was back in the pool at another Masters swim event.

Down in Cornwall **Andy Hicks** took on the coastal challenge of Man vs Coast, whilst **Mel Nicholls** was over in A Coruna, Spain, adding another Silver to her tally at the World Triathlon Para Cup. **Emma Bexson** powered to 5th female at Ironman Bolton, and winning her age group, whilst over in Germany **Dan Freeman** powered his way round to another stunning performance at Ironman Frankfurt..



Martin and Lesley Carter went down to Tenby to participate in events at the Long Course Weekend. Also in South Wales **Andy Hicks** and **Liz Spiers** completed Ironman 70:3 Swansea, with Liz winning her age group. At another Swansea event, **Mel Nicholls** competed in the World Triathlon Para Series, which became a Duathlon due to the sea conditions.

David Taylor and **Tom Radley** proudly donned their GB trisuits, again, at the Sprint Triathlon World Championships in Hamburg, and whilst there **Nicole Radley** did the open sprint triathlon the following morning.

Back on home soil **David Taylor**, **Tom Radley** and **James Chantler-Mayne** travelled up to Roker Beach, Sunderland for the a weekend of racing and as part of the Triathlon World Series. They all successfully avoided stomach complaints from the supposedly dodgy water conditions. David powered through the British Standard Distance Championships to a 7th place finish, Tom came 5th in his race and immediately went to be wine and dined as an Age Group Ambassador. James finished 13th in the Super Series.

Malcolm Swarbrick and **Tim Shattock** were on the water again, this time on the local backwaters of the River Severn in Tewkesbury as part of another Hasler event. Over in Winnipeg, Canada,

Byron Crook was at the World Police and Fire Service Games, getting a bronze medal at the Age Group 10k track event. Finally, **John Bennett** sneaked away for a 6 day swim Bootcamp in Majorca.



August

August was another month of tests and triumphs for our triathlon warriors – rain or shine, they conquered every challenge with style and spirit!

First to go in August was **Emma Dickinson**, who was taking on her second-ever triathlon at the Birmingham Triathlon in Sutton Park. First the swim was cancelled due to water quality, turning the race into a Duathlon, and then she had to battle torrential rain and horrendous racing conditions, but her determination prevailed and she finished it.

Stu Bird took on the Centurion in South Wales – a full weekend event similar to the Long Course. **Dan Parker-Gage** and **Ben Holland** did an evening event at Cromhall Quarry. **Fiona Macrae** took on the Thames Marathon swim, covering a whopping 13km and securing a fantastic 10th place among the females.

Also making a splash were **Dave Granger** and **Mark Whyman** doing a the 6.5km Herm 360 swim around the island.

At the English Sprint Triathlon Championships **Dave Hill** clinched 3rd, **Tom Radley** 2nd, and **Nicole Radley** 5th. **Jane Harris** powered to 1st place at the Police Championships Standard Triathlon, and **Mel Nicholls** was adding more medals to her 2023 tally by winning the British Paratriathlon Championships at Eton Dorney.

Finally, **Neive Richardson** went over to Menen in Belgium to do the European Middle Distance Aquabike Championships, securing 10th place.



September

By September, the summer might have been coming to an end, but at Tewkesbury Tri there was no slowing down. The annual triathlon had moved to its new timing, and bookings were through the roof. The event sold out.

On the sporting side, **Phil Johnson** and **Fiona Macrae** were out in the open water once more. This time it was the final Chill Swim, and the big one - 11 miles of Lake Windermere. **Nigel Lawson** and **Dan Freeman** stayed local and did the Cheltenham half marathon, while **Dan Meriman** took on the challenging Ironman Wales in very hot conditions.

Linda Coxsall and **Kathy Lewis** squeezed in a 'cheeky' evening triathlon at Bishampton, whilst **David Taylor** and **Stu Bird** headed off to Rutland Water for the Vitruvian middle distance race. David finished 2nd in his age group, but still owes Stu the post race chips he'd promised. **Fiona Carter** took on the challenge of a 2.5km open water swim, and the trio of **Ben Holland**, **Nathan Peck** and **Helen Milner** got in a late season evening triathlon at Cromhall Quarry racing to finish before it got too dark.



Tristan Priest, **Dan Parker-Gage**, and **Terri Knight** powered through Ironman 70.3 Weymouth in unfavourable conditions. There was another first triathlon for **Dan Derrick** completing a standard distance event at Cotswold Water Park, finishing in around 2hrs 30mins - a very impressive time for a first attempt.

The summary of the month wouldn't feel complete without mention of **Malcolm**, **Tim**, **Mel** and **Neive**. This time **Malcolm Swarbrick** and **Tim Shattock** were doing a 40 mile Hasler event on the River Thames. **Mel Nicholls** and **Neive Richardson** were in Pontevedra, Spain, for the World Championships. Mel had a mechanical which prevented her from getting the result she wanted in the World Paratriathlon Championships and Neive came 10th the AquaBike World Championships.

October

There were signs of things slowing down by October, but the results were still impressive.

The main action took place on the Iberian peninsula. First up, **Cristian Orea** took on the sun-soaked challenge of Ironman Barcelona in his stride and **Duncan Henderson** tackled Ironman 70:3 Portugal.

Mel Nicholls raced two weekends on the trot. First it was the World Para Tri Cup in Portugal where she won silver, and then repeated this a few days later in Malaga at the World Triathlon Para Cup.

Closer to home **Helen Milner** was tackling any kind of trail race she could find. First up was the "Blaze the Bobbins" race, in 'blazing' conditions, followed by a very muddy Hope Valley 8-mile race just a week later. Both were done with **Phil Johnson**. Then a week later she was doing the hilly two day "Dirty Double" with **Jane Harris**.

Finally, **Malcolm Swarbrick** dodged Storm Bobet to take on the epic "Commando Paddle," tackling a multi-day whopping 125 nautical miles in a canoe expedition with fellow Marines.



November

By November members were having to travel far and wide to compete. Winner of the new prize of "Best location to do an event" goes to club chair, **John Bennett**, narrowly beating the club members that had travelled to Sunderland in July. John's destination was the Caribbean for the Barbados Open Water Festival. Well done John for completing a 3.5km open water swim.

Over in Spain **Vickie Pullin** was crowned World Champion twice, and got Top 10 finishes in 3 other events at the IFSS Dog Sled World Championships.



December



The results continued to roll in during December. Mel Nicholls secured her place on British Triathlons World Class Programme for 2024, taking yet another step closer to the Paris Paralympic Games. Finally, Dave Granger 'Walked the Talk', or rather 'Swam the Talk' by showing us how it's done at the Swim Wales Masters Short Course Championships. He won two Gold medals, for the 400m and 1500m.

Throughout all of this we've been able to welcome a number of new members to our wonderful club.

Welcome to:

Robert Brush, Ali Palmer, Ben Holland, Vicki Pullin, Fiona Carter, Dan Derrick, Emma Bexson, Katie Pridmore, Claire du Toit, Philippa White, Tim Harris, Robyn Hammond, Ben Bowers, Terri Knight & Matthew Cable.

What a year!

That's an impressive set of activities across the club, and I'm sure it's not even half of what went on. We've completed it all, from first triathlons to Ironman events, from participation in a variety of endurance events through to representing Great Britain.

Collectively, we've covered every corner of the UK, and members have competed in France, Germany, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Italy, Portugal, Barbados and Canada.

Thank you to all those who have supported me with your race reports and articles. We've all been inspired by your stories and write-ups, and I've enjoyed receiving every one of them. Whether it's **Terry Ballard's** experiences as a Technical Official, **Mike Thompson's** long list of learning's from Outlaw Half Nottingham, or the wonderful and encouraging story that **Linda Everis** shared with us, they've all been great. I can't wait to read more of these next year.

I'm sure you'll agree, it's been quite a year. It's been great to reflect, and hopefully this will get you fired up for 2024.

Tewkesbury Tri - You rock!