

Norfolk Superhero Challenge Race Report

After two cancelled years, we were back for Superhero 2022 - We absolutely loved seeing you all again, it was a balm for the soul to have that kind of spirit and vibe spreading itself out from a field, near a marsh in Norfolk. It was hugely emotional to see everyone together again, being invited into be a part of and respecting the wonderful community that is Burnham Overy Staithe. We thank you all whole heartedly for turning up on the weekend and giving it your everything.

The organising team had grown with the addition of Nick and Carlotta and the anticipation and excitement levels had grown with it. Over the last few weeks the brilliant Rachel Hunter has been offering her services as a swim coach and we have seen plenty of happy Superhero faces turning up on the weekends to try out a kayak for the first time, or work out where the ends of the groynes were and how the tide affects the swim. We spotted competitor Steve Fields wade and dive into the fast moving channel on one such morning to rescue a lady who was being pulled out of her depth and definitely out of her comfort zone. Already, we thought, they are acting very much like Superheroes!



We had a spreadsheet for every eventuality. This event had, after all, been in the planning for three years by now. Children had been born whose parents had not even met when they first signed up to take part. The sweatshirts had been sitting in a box at the printers for long enough that all the 7 to 8 year olds had grown far too large (the only size left in merch). JUSTIN DOWLEY's field was mown within an inch of its life by TOM NORMAN, the Abacus Marquee crew struggled to fit the massive [PORVAIR](#) marquee into the field, the bar was rescued from its hiding place on a pig farm somewhere near Fakenham and the water pipes were rolled out by Phil Ellis. Thank you very much to [MAX OWLES](#) at the boathouse for her zest and vigour in helping us bagging space with traffic cones and producing extra marquees from thin air. You made the days before the event so much easier. We had looked at the weather forecast and it was looking warm, with a dip in temperature on the day, but nothing to worry about. [CAPT MARTYN FLITCROFT](#), our risk assessor, was adamant that the wind was going around to the North and the temperature would drop 15 degrees.

Our new addition to the set-up team was the recent school leaver, Will Alston, who arrived with a handy landrover plus trailer, and most importantly, a can-do attitude. By Thursday we had hung the bunting, rolled the beer in from [THE KINGS HEAD BAWBURGH](#), unloaded the kayaks, unpacked the [SAVILLS](#) water station, dragged out Johnny Reader of [NORFOLK GAMES & FRAMES](#) very fine matting as well as acquired some pretty epic suntans. The [BROADLAND TOILETS](#) had arrived, the pink ladies timetable, pens, provisions and goodies were all set out in anticipation and the sun was getting hotter.

By Friday we had set-up the [BONALLACK](#) kitchen, Ralph Ellis had set-up the merchandise stall and Nick Newbury and Phil Ellis had marked the course. Simon Wilson Stephens and Mark Lapping had put out the kayak flags with the help of Will and it was getting even hotter. Alec Lochore of [MUSKETEER](#) events had bought in the radios and marked the transition zone, Olympic style. [IAN WILLIAMSON](#)'s Massage tent was squeezed in, Ben from [TRI HARDER](#)'s marquee gave us an air of official looking respectability and we had worked out how to fit all the kayaks into their new zones. [GANGWAY](#)'s coffee and cocktails bar was in the field and the [RESULTS BASE](#) bike racks were ready for you. JO HOLDEN's beautiful roses were starting to wilt but Nick had bought in the heavy duty fans to cool down the beer barrels. It was scorchio!



[SOWERBYS](#) Pink Ladies looked resplendent in their pink t-shirts; Maddie, Sarah, Wendy and Alex were the Friday afternoon check in team and they were amazing. Cath Edgington was fully in charge when in you came, some with that funny nervous expression on your faces, some fully decked out in shiny Ironman merch, many also in very old superhero t-shirts. At first just in dribs and drabs and then slowly, momentum increased as you queued up to check in and pick up your tattoos, discuss the merits of tri bars (no), but all with a happy bounce in your step as the longed-for event, started to unfurl. Soon you were swinging your [GURNEYS FISH SHOP](#) bags around, trying out paddles and sticking on stickers. We sat down to an amazing supper by Sara Stocks of [BONALLACK](#) and the buzz and chatter was wonderful. So many people getting to see each other again - and a few new faces too. Last minute changes were worse than ever this year, we had 17 teams changes in the last week. Harry Snook and Tash Stocks were able to take a place that night! Literally they had never met before 5pm on Friday and were there, at the right place, right time to be able to take a dropped team place. Incredible.



Simon and Mark welcomed everyone back and introduced Nigel Flower of the [HOLT YOUTH PROJECT](#) to tell us all how important your fundraising is, and how much they appreciate it. Nick and Martyn took us through the safety briefing and the changes to the course were outlined carefully. Thank you all for taking note. Team Blue, you know who you are, drunk a thousand recyclable pints, sitting happily in the heat, unbelievably they still had a team in the top10 at the finish line.



George, of [GLR VISUAL](#) started gathering his video footage (coming soon) and the Marshalls picked up their goodie bags, containing Diana Riddington's delicious cake and [DASH](#) cans of wonky fruit as well as [ST PIERRE](#) pastries. Altogether we checked in 223 people, not a course record due to dropouts, but the first time we have had an odd number. This year we had a relay team, completing not competing, in memory of Adam Hartley, who very sadly died early last year. His ex-superhero partners Jeremy Wells, Mark Bottomley and Rob Devey, who had all taken part in this event with Adam before, took part as a threesome and Rachel, Adam's wife became a pink lady and donated and judged the prize for the smiliest competitor.

The sun went down on a golden day

Luckily Martyn had been right about the weather and it was perfect, a light Northerly with grey skies and not too hot or cold, a Goldilocks kind of day. The Boat men, were soon up and floating on a large early tide, PETER BECK, [PETER BICKEL](#), ROGER RAISBURY, TOM GATHERCOLE & HAYDEN, JAMES BASSETT, ROB FOX, TARA DOUGLAS HUME, SIMON

WILSON STEPHENS, AVRIL & JAMES EDWARDS and of course BIG JOHN THOMPSON on the [WELCOME](#) ferry.



This year we had a Sponsors boat, full to the brim with V.I.P.s, most of whom knew each other, which looked easily the most relaxed boat. Our wonderful photographers, ROSS & CAROL HADDOW were stationed at the start and at the finish of the swim. [NATURAL ENGLAND](#) met us on the beach and I have to say, well done for keeping 50 meters away from the roped off areas as the tide pinned us up the beach. There was just one, who got told off but I am not mentioning any names (MH). The [BARRATT & COOKE](#) swim started at approximately 9am, a little earlier than anticipated due to the shrinking sands and the coolness of the breeze, luckily the water was warm and only one pair of goggles snapped (but Rachel had a spare pair). [RNLI paddles boarders](#), two of whom had fathers competing, surrounded the swimmers in the water alongside the [Fakenham CANOE CLUB](#), [NORTH NORFOLK Stand Up Paddle boarders](#), the Wells [RNLI inshore lifeboat](#) and [LOWLAND RESCUE](#). The big tide meant no sandbank met us to be walked on and the onshore wind and tide gave us perfect conditions.

The fastest swim time was set by Paul Lamont who came out of the water after 16.21minutes with Davina Greenwell setting the ladies record with 18.49 minutes and winning the newly donated trophy. The hard was fully flooded and the drummers from [NORWICH SAMBA](#) were drumming the swimmers in to the various kayak zones.



The [GRESHAM'S](#) kayak leg, was almost unrecognisable, with the water right over the marsh in many places, making it especially difficult to relaunch after the portage. Last year's kayak

winners of the long course (men only), Dug Aylen & Alex Scoles, and the short course (with a lady in the kayak) Phil and Riddy Ellis, had both donated beautiful new trophies. The fastest long course kayak winners, Tom Vickery & Paul Forster made a time of 44.06 (We wonder what would have happened if they had not had punctures during the bike leg?) just beating last year's winners Dug and Alex with 44.41 minutes. We think Simon had put the men's turning buoy further down as he was not competing himself. A big thank you to the young GRESHAM'S team of kayak marshals under Sam Curtis's expert logistical tutelage. (Come on Sam, you know you want to...when are you entering?)



As well as having Carol Hadow in just the right place for some great photos, Paul our excellent [FAKENHAM CANOE CLUB](#) volunteer was able to give a very interesting view from the other side of the portage in his photos. (Thanks to Cath, our social media maestro, we have gathered some great ones on [INSTAGRAM](#), more to follow on our website...)

The [RQ CAPITAL](#) Cycle was won in a time of 2.09 by Ben Hunter-Watts & David Horton Fawkes, second and third were Dame Edna competitors, Davina Greenwell & Ben Rivett 2.11.17 (I've looked her up, she's a GB triathlete) and Benedicte Sampson & Harry Hitchcock 2.12.06.



[TMO](#), our traffic management boys were epic and a lot of you thanked them which is a lovely thing to do as normally they get shouted at when on the roads directing traffic. No drafting outside of the team worked well, and made it a safer race, and the new continental traffic system around the obelisk was well adhered to. Although Will Garnett was spotted drafting Minna Coke who was on her Isla bike that she got when she was only 12 years old.

Charlie Ward & Phil Ellis had a nasty crash from touching wheels at Deepdale which resulted in a broken collar bone for Charlie, pink lady Bev Widdowson, who was at the scene very soon after was loading them into her car, to take him to hospital when Charlie changed his mind and decided to finish the challenge. Thanks must therefore go to Ed Sidgewick & Mark Hewlett and James Milner & Ron Tsang for stopping to help as well as for various outriders who escorted them around the course, especially Graham Bray & Chris Everard. Given James and Ron came second in the overall by a little over a minute, even more respect for this. Proper Superhero spirit. I think we can safely say that the spirit of the event is very much alive when so many competitors help each other out, even at the pointy end of the race.



People went wrong, people got punctures, bikes were spotted in Burnham Market. Our Triharder bike mechanic Carl who was whizzing around in the [CRAYFORD & ABBS](#) electric car said that, as in all competitions biking skills need to be improved! Other road users are still around (and rear lights are required). [JEZ BATCH](#), our photographer at Sandringham had his camera trained on you and must have some good contacts in the local press as his photos were soon all over the Wells and Fakenham Times and the EDP online. Calvin and the [NORFOLK AND SUFFOK 4x4](#) response team were excellent at communicating with us from around the course, and thank you for letting out the pink ladies who got locked the wrong side of the the gate down at Holkham beach!

The water station of our sustainability sponsor [SAVILLS](#) was excellent, and allowed everyone to re-hydrate before going out of the field after transition. The [HOLKHAM](#) run had great weather for such a difficult and exhausting part of the event, a light drizzle had started and the breeze had gone. Ross Haddow was poised with his camera at the beginning of the beach to catch you all. Not only is it potentially a low point for the competitors but it is a very hard call for the beach Marshalls.



Our pink Ladies, Damien & Steve (new for 2022) were welcoming you on to the beach after the wall, Jerry Philippi, was 'extraordinarily good as usual' with the equally marvellous Daniel Williams either side of the crossing from beach to woods. Lady Anne's drive or the turning point, had Sarah, Wendy, Vicki and Jo with Sarah Longe's string quartet to serenade them whilst a busy Bev and Suse were on the boardwalk checking for any overindulgences. Coming over the dunes, you were being subtly assessed by one of our hidden doctors, Di, a long-time stalwart as both competitor and marshall. Poor Laura Bailey and Charlotte McDougall were in a cold and windy open point by the house boat - newcomers to the pink crew as well - we take our hats off to you both! Big John Thompson with the Welcome ferry was stationed there, with two paddle boarders as the first competitors across had 20 meters to swim on that retreating big tide. He kindly left his boat out there as he had to help some competitors who were cramping and the tide was too small for him to squeeze back in - thank you John.



It was very wet on the marsh due to the high tide - greasy as hell in fact - lots of trainers were lost, lots of people were helping each other. Thank goodness for the groovy bars of the band at the finish, [SWERVY WORLD](#), pulling you in to their warm embrace of feel good oom pah pah...

As you staggered across the last channel you did not disappoint our spectators, it was a race for the finish, the marsh was brutal, The finish banner was beckoning and the [VITA COCO](#) thirst quenchers ready for you. Medals, which were sponsored by Charles and Brygida Bourne of URBAN ARMOUR & BB TEXTILES, have already been spotted on auction sites online. They are collectors items, so amazing is their beauty and rarity. After 10 years of

supporting us as sponsors Charles and Brygida were bowing out on a good one. [HARRY CORY WRIGHT](#) (open studio; July and August, book a slot on his website) had designed the medals, which are made of sustainable British grown wood. Harry wanted an image that showed the view looking back to Burnham Overy boathouse, through the creek from Gun Hill. That same view, that at the beginning of the race is viewed with trepidation, is then counterbalanced by the relief of seeing the finish line at the end of the run, once the tide has receded. The yin and the yang, the pain and the pleasure. What a medal. You all staggered down the road in a tired but triumphant return to the field and the [King's Head BAR](#), manned by Dom Bidwell as well as a rotating crew of brilliant Marshalls. All the profits from the bar will be going to [Little Lifts](#). The rain could not dampen our party. The delicious hog roast from [GRAVES](#) of Briston was on the table at 7pm alongside the amazing food from SARA STOCKS for the [ST PIERRE SUPPER](#) on long tables decked with IBBI table clothes and Jo Holden's wonderful flowers.



We forgot the 10 year bells - we were too excited. Some of you had even given bells that we had posted out to you during lockdown back to us so we could properly present them to you at the prize giving. It was on the list - it's just that [BEN ZAVEN CRANE](#), the D.J. had turned up and the place was nearly exploding already with anticipation....please let us know who needs a 10 year bell.

Will Barratt, our swim sponsor, we missed you because of the dreaded - we do not mention it's name. Good luck with the rest of your training for your attempt at the [Arch to Arc](#) challenge later in the Summer. Nick Folland, we missed you when you pulled out at the last minute, because you had done it every year which leaves only one silly bugger - Mark Lapping as the last man standing, to have completed the course every year, even in lockdown, since the first one. We have, no doubt Nick that you will trot around the course later in the Summer when your ankle is better.



Holt Youth Project's JULIE ALFORD gave a very poignant speech and we thank her so much for turning up to congratulate you all and let us know what a difference it is going to make to the young adults of North Norfolk that her charity helps every day. Did you know that KIRSTIN & NICK CRANE, she of [VISUALADE](#), who sponsors our website, and her husband of [CRANE GARDEN BUILDINGS](#) have also donated two (beautifully insulated, secured, double glazed with integrated electrics and water) buildings for the Holt Youth Project from which to organise their new clothing project? Amazing...

We galloped through the speeches with the Adam Hartley 'Smiliest competitor' prize going to Anton Wimmer, of course - how could it not? A little mention for Rafe Lochore and Jack Reader - our youngest competitors - the yin to the yang that was Iain White and Chris Groves who were our oldest, as well as the wooden spoon winners. Of course the spirit of the superhero had imbued us all and they were the receivers of a standing ovation!



The actual Spirit award went to the entire STOCKS family who over the years have become integral to this event. Sara has provide the amazing food, Ben is a Sponsor, their children, Bertie, Sam and Oscar have all been kitchen helpers who have since become competitors and then of course there is Tash who took on a place with 12 hours notice with a random but lovely stranger!

The Wensum Plate now has 34 teams in it, and Will Garnet, who won with his daughter Flo, actually won the first event we ever held. In fact, he was 1st in 2007 and 2008 with Nick Folland, and is still winning trophies even now. Impressive

But we should also point out that 2022 is the first time we have ever had a Zimmer team win the Lord Nelson, which is quite literally phenomenal. Dan Guppy handed over Lord Nelson bust, having held on to for 3 years with his partner Jamie Sparrow, and he looked quite sad to see it go, but we couldn't think of a nicer guy for it to have resided with. The Lord Nelson bust is now the property of David Horton Fawkes and Ben Hunter Watts ,who were over the moon.



The marshalls prize goes to everyone in a PINK - you rocked, obviously we cannot name you all but safe to say that everyone knows where the heart of this event lies.

The tables were pulled to one side and a makeshift dance floor created. Zara of [BOMBAY SPROUT](#) was busy running around with pink wigs and photo selfie frames to remind you all that life is for living and laughing - however much running and marshalling you had done, you all embraced it and we cannot thank you enough. The [HOSTE ARMS](#) sponsored Ben Zaven Crane took the dance floor to whole new heights and I can certainly say that "Yes Sirs (and Madams) you can boogie!"

RESULTS

Fastest Swim, Paul Lamont 16.21

Fastest Swim Female, Davina Greenwell 18.49

Fastest Short Kayak, Scrambled Legs Benedictine Samspon & Harry Hitchcock 31.56

Fastest Long Kayak, Hawaiian Pirates Tom Vickery & Paul Forster 44.06

Fastest Bike, Last Orders, Ben Hunter Watts & David Horton Fawkes 2.09.02

Fastest Run, Jelicious, Ron Tsang & James Milner 1.09.39

Zimmer Winner, Last Orders, Ben Hunter Watts & David Horton Fawkes 4.44.39

Mixed Zimmer Winner, Tortoise and the Hair, Geraldine Jordan & Simon Able 4.47.22

Wensum Plate Long course, Tall and Small, Nick & Tom Allpress 5.23.11

Wensum Plate Short course, Where there's a Will there's a Way, Will & Flo Garnett 5.58.16

Local Heroes Award, Bad Form, Adam & Tom Bamford 4.49.19

Wooden Spoon, Jewels & binoculars, Chris Groves & Iain White 7.06.25

Adam Hartley Prize, Smiliest competitor, Anton Wimmer

Spirit Prize, Stocks family

Marshall prize - everyone wearing pink with special mention to Wendy Utting, Sarah Shaperio, Maddie Healy, Vicki Ringer, Camille Simmons, Lyne Dowdy and Sarah Wallace (HQ Queen)

Dame Edna, Scrambled Legs Benedictine Sampson & Harry Hitchcock, 4.26.54

Lady Hamilton, High Flying Birds, Anna Gurney & Emily Plumb, 4.56.12

Lord Nelson, Last Orders, Ben Hunter Watts & David Horton Fawkes, 4.44.39

PRIZEGIVERS

[Abahna](#), [Archangel Gin](#), [Algy's Popcorn](#) [Bombay Sprout](#), [Bringing the Outside In](#), [Coastal Exploration Company](#), [Creative Chiropractic](#), [Dash water](#), [Erpingham Farm Flowers](#), [Finisterre](#), [Glitter & Mud](#), [Harry Cory Wright](#), [Holkham](#), [Hoste Arms](#), [Ibbi Direct](#), [Langham Blue Bell](#), [Noir Velocity](#), [Nytimber](#), [Raynham Estate](#), [Sea Sense](#), [Smøk](#), [Stiffkey Stores](#), [The Hero Pub](#), [Thornham Deli](#), [Tom's Trunks](#), [Triharder](#), [Urban Armour](#), [Vitacoco](#)

CHARITY LINK

Can we remind you that anyone who has not raised their money, that it was part of your commitment of entry. Here is the link to our online fundraising platform which is being hosted on the [ENTHUSE](#) platform. Keep spreading the word about the Holt Youth Project and let us see if we can raise even more money for the young adults that they help across rural parts of North Norfolk.