Words from Alan Cox

PAUL STURTRIDGE 1952 -2026

A couple of stories from Sturts' early days with us :-

Braunton 10 1989

This guy came up to me before the start of the race and said "are you Coxy?" "Yes that's me" I said. "I'm thinking of joining you or NDDR, I'm quite a good runner" – "OK see me after the race".

He was wearing a Rock Band T-shirt – ripped shorts – blacks socks and well worn trainers with holes in!!!!

This was when the race went up Heanton Hill at the start and from my position I could see him in the lead pack – with his distinctive long ungainly stride – he won't be there long I thought!

FINISHED 2ND – 54 MINS!!!

Two to three hours later in the Williams Arms he wobbled over and said "buy me a pint and I'll join your club"
I said "I'll buy you a pint but it's up to you if you want to join us"
Sturts said - "Well your club is the only one still in here drinking so that's made my mind up"
HE JOINED THE NEXT EVENING

****

Out on a lovely hot summers evening to Instow and back with a good number of club runners we suddenly heard a splash in the river – Sturts had stopped by Zeta Berth and just jumped in and was swimming around! Out he gets – "what was that all about?" – I said
"I was a bit warm so decided to jump in to cool down!"
Then he sploshed his way back to the club with us!

One night after a pretty heavy session at the club he didn't arrive back home to Littleham. He was found in the hedge the next day where he had fallen off his bike and decided to sleep where he fell!!

****

A PROLIFIC RACER WITH UNBELIEVABLE STAMINA

A LITTLE SNIPPET OF SOME OF STURTS' RECORDS AND TIMES

WYVEN TOUGH 10 (10.4 MILES)	60.22	2ND O/40
PLYMOUTH HOE 10 MILES	54.55	1ST O/40 DEVON CHAMPS
WESTWARD XC LEAGUE 1993/94		1ST O/40 SEASON WINNER
EXMOUTH 5 MILES	25.48	2ND O/40 DEVON CHAMPS

SW VET CHAMPS ALL ON THE SAME DAY

3000M S/CHASE	10.50.8	2ND
3000M	9.17.3	2ND
1500M	4.19.2	3RD
5000M	15.59.6	2ND

LENSBURY 10K	31.47	PB O/40
BRAUNTON DEVON CHAMPS 5000M	15.37.6	1ST O/40
EXETER GREAT WEST ½ MARATHON	70.54	2ND O/40
TORBAY 10	54.30	1ST O/40
PLYMOUTH 10	53.05	1ST O/40
LONDON MARATHON	2.33.35	O/40
DOONE RUN (APPROX 10 MILES)	64.57	1ST
SOUTHERN VETS RELAYS 1ST LEG O/40	18.58	(APPROX 3.6MILES) 1ST
ROSS SHIELDS DEVON 6MILE CHAMPS	32.20	1ST O/40
TAVY 7	38.41	2ND (1ST O/40)
BIDEFORD ½ MARATHON	76.50	1ST O/45
EXMOUTH 5	27.42	1ST O/45
ARLINGTON COURT CANTER 10K	37.39	5TH (1ST O/45)
DARTMOOR DISCOVERY 34MILES	4.32.53	12TH (1ST O/45)

Also I must mention he introduced his sons to running with the Club – LUKE and TIM – good runners and always enthusiastic and then there was brother NICK – almost at the same level of performance and definitely just as eccentric!

RIP PAUL

Coxy

AS DICTATED BY PAUL

NATIONAL VETERANS ROAD RELAY CHAMPIONSHIPS 1992
HEATEN PARK MANCHESTER 9.5.92

(OR Olivers Army trip to Fairyland as narrated by Paul Sturtridge)

This is the story of two running teams, a park in Manchester and a rest home for film extras. The story begins at 2pm on Friday 8th May 1992 when the Blues mini tank engine piloted by the Fat Controller rolled away from the Club house in a northerly direction. Beside him he had two female navigators.. The crossword crew made up the next row in the bus captained by the bearded one. Most of the sensible members of the party sat towards the rear of the craft amongst the baggage. Right on cue some wet stuff appeared from the sky halfway up the M6 but we made good time and pulled up outside what the Fat Controller had booked into at about 8pm. There were some comments about the outside decor looking like the house in Psycho when Norman Bates walked into view with the hound of Baskervilles. We were recovering from this when a female jockey pulled up, dismounted from her car and went into the house. Coxy emerged smiling - everything was O.K but they had not removed the contents of the Antiques Roadshow from some of the rooms. This was not all - they had not finished decorating the rooms either. Ann and I reckoned the DIY buff was the jockey because all the attempts at renovation ended four feet up the walls. Later that night most of the party went for a pleasant dinner in downtown Eccles. Ann and I opted for some refreshment at the local Hostelry followed by a light Indian meal. When we returned in good spirits we were surprised to see several taxis who had apparently been bribed to drive around Manchester and pick up all th dossers and deliver them to the hotel for a cheap kip. Several of these tattooed characters put in guest appearances in various rooms for the rest of the stay. Hazel's breakfast was quite good including Maurices Fish, which also put in a guest appearance during the relay. Actually all the people we met in Manchester were nice and friendly.

On to the races, the women were making their debut in the Vets relays and they did brilliant. Chrissie gave the team a solid start, Ann built on it by overtaking four ladies and six men over 50. Jenny held on with a fine run and Liz ran a storming last leg to bring the Ladies in 16th from the 26 teams that entered. Thats 16th team in England, (and Wales, there was also a team from Wrexham.)

I managed to see most of the race but the previous nights curry meant that most of the viewing was done from the shelter of some bushes, until the local dogs put in a complaint to the council...

About this time a clapped out Triumph 2000 arrived in the park with three shady looking Devonians on board, it was the rest of the mens teams.

The Fat Controller declared the teams and we decided running order. The course was the same as the ladies ; 3 miles 90 yards of undulating tarmac paths around the park. Like last year JJ led the team off, he ran the same time 16.11 and same position 32nd, it was a good solid start and he was less than a minute down on the leader 15.16. Maurice took over and carried out a good 16.52 Internationals like Martin Duff ran 16.39, only two places lost as well as the fish. My turn next, the only relay I have run before was the six stage at Aldershot when I struggled to hold the teams position. This was much better with runners coming back to me allaround the course. The finish came too soon but I managed to put the team up 28 positions to 6th the joint highest gain of the day and the 7th fastest time 15.14.

Anyway, enough bragging Dave ran next and did well in a leg packed

VETS RELAYS cont'd
with class internationals, his sleep the night before had been disturbed by a mysterious banging noise..
Denis ran next and produced an absolute blinder 16.48 to pull up 3 places to 24th. We cheered him on from halfway around the course (near a pub) and he was all action arms and legs pumping and staring at the back of the next runner he was going to pass. Alan Waters went next,as Dave failed a late fitness test on his hamstring,and after 6 legs we were still up in 36th place from 93 teams entered. Tony,who the previous week had featured in Athletics Today, guested next and only lost four placesafter his usual fast start. So it was left to Coxy to anchor the team home and he bounced round in 16.57 on the glory leg to bring the team in, in a very creditable 37th place.

(c) Paul Sturtridge 1992

Full results

Ladies (places were race places i.e including O/50 and O/60 men)

66	Chrissie Waters	22.57	
56	AnnDavison	20.29	(+10)
57	Jenny Cockwill	21.37	(-1)
48	Elizabeth Higgins	20.43	(+9)

Final position 16th in Ladies race.

Men

32	John Jeffery	16.11	
34	Maurice Cockwill	16.52	(-2)
6	Paul Sturtridge	15.14	(+28)
27	Dave Lang	18.23	(-21)
24	Denis Johns	16.48	(+3)
36	Alan Waters	19.21	(-12)
40	Tony Merrett	18.21	(-4)
37	Alan Cox	16.57	(+3)

Words from Pete Jackson, Exeter

Stunned to hear this news.

Ran with Paul at Heles School late 1960's. Had many great times with him. Hiking over Haldon in 2ft snow, to watch City play at Plymouth, in gym shoes and T shirts, freezing, that was Paul.

We were dinner monitors and always had extras, one day we ate 10 roast potatoes each with 5 minutes to spare before a cross country race, Paul won, I was 2nd as usual.

We went night fishing once on our bikes, luminous floats etc - however no lights to see the floats. Ended up in a scout hut in Heavitree where there was a floating tent in the eaves. The ropes broke and we were chucked out to the floor, went home at dawn.

Words from Simon Stacey

I remember travelling to the 12 stage road relays with Sturts in the old Blues mini bus. It was a long journey from Bideford to Essex with a very early start so on the way home Sturts, who may have been driving but was definitely in charge of directions, suggested taking a short cut through the centre of London as in his words "it is Sunday afternoon so there shouldn't be many be about and it will be quiet". It was far from quiet and the short cut added hours to the journey. It was a good sight seeing tour and a great laugh though, with Sturts being the butt of a lot of jokes relating to directions and London being quiet.

Sturts was a brilliant runner and a top bloke, he will be sadly missed.

Words from Candy and James

Every Christmas Eve we will remember the year many beverages were drunk and Sturts went home in James' jacket - it was a completely different colour and brand - it couldn't have fitted him!

Words from Ben Gilmore

I was only a member of BAAC between 1992 and 1997, but it's always been in the background before and since, and Sturts was very involved in my time at the club, so there's a few standout memories for me...

I had first met Sturts in about 1990 when I was about 12 and he was a supply teacher for one of our art classes at Pilton. I'd sort of seen him at races that my dad did at the running club, but had never spoken to him. He came into the art class, assessed the group in front of him, and sensibly suggested, in that loud-but-friendly voice, to get on with our art and let him know if we had questions, while he did some marking. He kept himself to himself, while doing his marking (I like to think marking meant reading Athletics Weekly or Exeter City programmes), before I mentioned that my dad knew him. He immediately stopped his marking and started to ask all about my dad's running and telling me about races they'd both done. By the end of that lesson, my whole class knew a whole lot more about the Westward League, Devon Champs and 6-stage relays.

My first ever race for the club in 1992, with my younger brother (Ollie). We did the junior race at the Cullompton 10 - Sturts was second or third in the main race that day, but interested to know how it went for us and massively encouraging.

The Woolacombe Beach Race in 1992 or 1993 - his brother Nick got the win... and I remember Nick was a bit amazed / overwhelmed, either through winning it or needing to find a way to drink the beers... so he decided to have a cigarette, while his brother just laughed with that machine-gun laugh of his.

Track races in the South West League, with Sturts driving the minibus, before he then did a mini-decathlon trying to perfect his Hammer and Triple Jumps.

Sturts racing pretty much every week. Racing hard, but not taking it overly seriously.

Boxing Day football - Sturts came along with Luke and I think Tim. All left foot... if I recall correctly.

Tuesdays and Thursdays on the cycle track, Bay View Road and Northdene, for Andy G's sessions. Intervals occasionally interrupted with that machine gun laugh. What a great group to be part of.

Sturts had time for everyone. Always smiling, always interested. One of the people in life that is positive whenever possible. A great guy and, yes, it was a long time ago, but I'm really pleased that I knew him.

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club's post

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club
17 July at 22:29 ·

We are very saddened to learn of the passing of one of us, a true Blue. Our thoughts are with his family. RIP Paul Sturtridge 💙🎽



218 69 1

All comments

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club · 3w · Author
All this love, condolences and stories being shared truly show how much Sturts meant to so many. As a club, we'd like to collect as many memories as possible to put together a Blues Family tribute. If you'd like your memory or story included, please email it to club@bidefordaac.co.uk
Reply

Martin Colwill · 3w
Feel privileged to have known one of life's true characters ! Thinking of the family at this sad time
Reply

Jamie Blackman · 3w · Top fan
What a man! One of the nicest people you could meet. The club won't be the same with Sturts not there. All my love goes out to his family xx🫶😔
Reply

Tracey Wilson · 3w
Very sad to hear this. Lots of memories over the many years.x
Reply

Andrew Pearson · 3w
So sad, like it says above a true Blue he will be missed 😢
Reply

Liz Roberts · 3w
Such sad news. He was always smiling and supportive 💔🌈
Reply

John Paul Sleep · 3w
So sad 😔 what a great bloke
Reply

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club's post

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club
17 July at 22:29 ·

We are very saddened to learn of the passing of one of us, a true Blue. Our thoughts are with his family. RIP Paul Sturtridge 💙🎽

John Shapland · 3w · Top fan
Very sad, Paul was a good friend for many years and a brilliant runner, 15.05 for 5K, true character will be sadly missed, condolences to Luke and Tim. RIP Paul
Reply

Barrie Judith White · 3w
Very sad to hear this ,such a character.
Reply

Andrew Ingle · 3w
Everyone who met Sturts will remember him. He was a larger than life character who brought happiness to so many.
Reply

Linda Eastmond · 3w
RIP Sturts, so many stories you will be sorley missed 💙💙
Reply

Alan Heard · 3w
There was only one Sturts there will never be another like it , a character, a gent ,a great laugh and a Very Special friend , RIP mate.
Reply

Alan Annette Wilson · 3w
RIP Sturts sad news x
Reply

Stuart Anderson · 3w
Sorry to hear the sad news.Paul was a regular racer in the south west when I was also competing in the area. Many races in the 1980's from Westward leagues, road races and South west xc, a real club representative.
Reply

Maurice Cockwill · 3w
How sad to hear that, great athlete good fun to be with. Remember the time he came up to Torrington Mayfair day managed to get us refused to be served in two pubs. Rest in peace Paul 🥂
Reply

Stuart Burrows · 1w
I was at teacher training college with Paul and later a flat share. In those days you wouldn't have seen him break into a trot for anything. Loved Bowie's hunky dory, he adopted a pike call Gilbert which he and a group of his friends put in the ornamental pond in the college,
Reply

Daisy Dave · 3w
Was such a lovely guy worked with him at Devonshire pine many decades ago...then on the running circuit
Reply

Ricky Butler · 3w
Such a shame.. got some great memories running with sturts .. lots of laughs ..R.I.P you warrior xxx
Reply

Mark Ashcroft · 3w
Lovely guy, first met him when he was doing supply teaching up at the school and he loved his sport, the kids loved him!
Reply

Andy Walter · 3w
A great character and runner. RIP Sturts
Reply

Sue Manley · 3w
Danney and I are sad to hear this. Such a great gent. He was truly a great 'Blue' and fishing friend. 🏃‍♂️🏃‍♂️🎽🚿🚿🚿
Reply

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club's post

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club
17 July at 22:29 ·

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Steve Hatch · 3w
RIP mate
Reply

Charlene Wilton · 3w
Oh no, known Paul for many years.. RIP Paul.. u was loved by so many.. 💔 x
Reply

Simon Stacey · 3w
Sorry to hear this. Lots of great memories of travelling to races with Sturts on the old blues mini bus. Great bloke.
Reply

Frank Elford · 3w
So sad to hear , lovely lad ,had some great battles on the road & x country with Sturts RIP Paul 🏃‍♂️🏃‍♂️x
Reply

Tony Vesty · 3w
So sad to read this thoughts are with his family
Reply

Robert Floyd · 3w
Oh no. That's sad news. I did the dartmoor discovery 32 miler with Paul and Simon Lacey ... we beat the royal navy into 4th place team. We got 3rd.
Reply

View 1 reply

Alan Waters · 3w
Sorry to hear this sad news,fond memories of Paul, great character and runner,R.I.P.
Reply

Vicci Greenaway · 3w
So sorry to hear this, always smiling and cheering us all on, sending love to all his family and friends x
Reply

Karen Slocombe · 3w
I cannot believe this news. Paul was a wonderful friend to me for 16 years so kind and supportive. Nothing was ever too much trouble. He was a true gentleman and taken far too soon. He adored his little dog Knoxy and then went onto adore dusky too. I can't believe he's gone and I will miss him so much. God bless At least you are with your beloved knoxie now x
Reply

Tim Calcutt · 3w
Rip sturts a true blues legend.
Reply

Sue Oliver · 3w
Very sad to see this remember many track meetings & BLUEs events with Paul
Reply

Nicole Heryet · 3w
Very sorry to hear this 😢. RIP Paul. Nicole & Adie xx
Reply

Gill Daniel · 3w
Sorry to hear this.
Reply

Shaun Coleman · 3w
Raced against Paul many times in the 80s - RIP Paul
Reply

Christopher Williams · 3w
Such sad news, a great athlete and a lovely man. RIP Sturts.
Reply

Bill Siviter · 3w · Top fan

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club's post

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club
17 July at 22:29 ·

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Kevin Heywood · 3w
Really sad news, a proper character and a great runner, will be truly missed.
Reply

Keith Reed · 3w
Sorry to hear this sad news I remenber Paul well back in the day when I used to race against him. Condolances to his family
Reply

Michael Cork · 3w
Rest in peace paul.
Reply

Carly Cutts Hammond · 3w
Very sad to be hearing this. Lots of love to his family, friends and to you all at Bideford Amateur Athletic Club, terribly sad xx
Reply

Steve Turner · 3w · Top fan
The runners runner 🏃
Your a legend Sturts, will miss you 🏃😔
Reply

Mike Brown · 3w
So sorry to read this. My condolences to Paul's family
Reply

Rachel Hargreaves · 2w
Can't believe you are gone Paul x
Reply

Laura Davis · 3w
So sad to hear this. I remember Sturts from my junior running days at The Blues. He was a big part of the club and always smiling! Condolences to his family. 💙
Reply

Stuart Thomsett · 3w
Shocked and saddened
Reply

Kevin Jones · 3w
Smashing bloke. So sad 😢
Reply

Darren James · 3w · Top fan
Such sad news
Reply

Mark Fundrey · 3w
Very sad news, a lovely man and with an amazing running history.
Gutted to hear this and my condolences to Luke & Tim.
Will miss you Sturts, you Legend 💙🍺
Reply

Tara Fundrey · 3w
Very sad news, such a nice man 💔 sending lots of love to the family xx
Reply

Anna Walter · 3w
So sad 😔 xx
Reply

Jim Murray · 3w
Legend he will be massively Sorley missed xx
Reply Edited

Ryan Jewell · 3w
Sad to hear this, lots of great memories of Sturts- tight lines 🎣
Reply

Martyn Hill · 3w

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club's post

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17 July at 22:29 ·

We are very saddened to learn of the passing of one of us, a true Blue. Our thoughts are with his family. RIP Paul Sturtridge 💙🏏



Geoff White · 3w
Such sad news what a great competitor Sturts was. Condolences to Paul's family 😢
Reply Edited



Gary Montague · 3w
So sad..a great gentleman
Will be missed by all
Reply

View 1 reply



Richard Rundle · 3w
Sad news . RIP Sturts.
Reply



Anthony Merrett · 3w · Top fan
Sad news
Reply



Keith Jordan · 3w
So sorry to hear this!
Reply



Sally Branch · 3w
So very sorry to hear this 😔
Reply



Cy Margieson · 3w
Sad news, RIP Sturts x
Reply



Ann Rees · 3w · Top fan
So sorry to hear this sad news! Xx
Reply



Alan Nettle · 3w
So sorry and shocked to read this news.
Great memories of Sturts, cycling to training from Barnstaple, training then cycling back after a few too many in the club! Watching football at Exeter along with Nick and often Tim and Luke. A few pints in the Red Cow before hand.
Rest easy my friend.
Paul Sturtridge 'Sturts'
Reply

Martin Colwill
RIP Blues Legend Sturts 22:23

~Kenny James
A true friend,athlete and drinking mate😞 22:25

~Kenny James



❤️ 😂 4

Martin Colwill
Knox has heard it all before ! What a character , you'd hear him before you saw him !! Top bloke 22:38

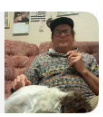
~Wayne
RIP Paul 💙 22:40

Lorraine Clements
Really really sad to hear this. Sturts was one in a million. Such a lovely man- and a huge character. 😢
He will be so missedxxx 22:40

👍

Lorraine Clements

> **~Kenny James**
> Video



Pure Sturts..🥰 22:42

~Steve
A true legend
will miss you Sturts 🚴 22:45

~Steve Clements
A complete character and great athlete. 22:46



Jane Watts
Such sad news xx 22:53

Sat 18 Jul



~Kieran Hodge
So sad. RIP Sturts. ❤️ 00:42

C

Coxy
Great athlete, great clubman for 30 plus years and a great friend.
R. I. P. Paul 07:14

👍

CG

Catherine Gardner
So sad. RIP Paul you will be missed xxx 07:20

~Kenny James



07:26

❤️

~Kenny James



Mark Fundrey
Will miss you Sturts, just a great character and clever lovely man.
Edited 07:43

~Simon Mugglestone
A lovely bloke and a Blues Legend, such sad news 🎽😢 07:47

~Arron Kearney
A true club legend, wonderful man and a true one of a kind 08:10

Michelle Bright
Will miss his character. A true blue, very sad news xx 08:47

~Vincent Helliwell
Perhaps we should dedicate the upcoming Pub Run to Sturts & invite any lapsed members who new him along to the club as well either to just celebrate his memory with a drink or come along on the run? 11:46
👍 ❤️ 4

Jon Lamont
> **~Vincent Helliwell**
> Perhaps we should dedicate the upcoming Pub Run to Sturts & invite any lapsed members who new him along to the club as well either to just celebrate his memory with a drink or come along on the run?

JL Great idea mate! ❤️ 11:48

Tracey Wilson
> **~Vincent Helliwell**
> Perhaps we should dedicate the upcoming Pub Run to Sturts & invite any lapsed members who new him along to the club as well either to just celebrate his memory with a drink or come along on the run?

TW I think that sounds like a lovely idea 11:50

Ann Rees
Brilliant idea Vince! Such a legend ! 12:09

~Kenny James

Knoxy & pickle dreamteam!😇 12:14
❤️ 😻 3

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club's post

Bideford Amateur Athletic Club
18 July at 08:37 ·

Club Captain

Our flag is at 1/2 mast today.

So sad to have read that we have lost a true Club legend. The messages on our Club chats have shown what a great friend Sturts (Paul) was to us all.
Lots of our members sharing great memories and photos.

My memories will be of the stories of when my Dad would take a group in the old Blues bus to Ilfracombe drop them off and they would run back to Bideford, seeing Sturts marshalling in his usual spots and the best will be when the food came out at the Club he would make his own line to get all around the food.

To your family from our Blues family we are sending our condolences.

Tracey 💙



151 3 3

All comments

Sheila Harris · 3w
Yes he took my dear husband down to Ilfracombe and he ran back, when he trained for the London Marathon RIP.

Reply

Martyn Hill · 3w
Lovely gesture legend Paul Sturtridge

Reply

Karen Slocombe · 3w
God bless you Paul x

Reply