

Chairman's Report - AGM 2021

The Covid -19 virus which first emerged in March 2020, just a week after our last AGM, has affected us all and brought havoc to our lives. As an Athletics club we have done our best to help maintain the health and fitness of our members. Let us hope for a brighter future as soon as possible. Steve Perkin has produced his usual excellent report on our key athletic performances in 2020 but also reflects the reduced level of activity.

Development Plan

I mentioned last year that we were preparing a new 5 year plan and this is now in operation. This is to help us identify and manage our priorities. Just a few bullet points from the plan:

Coaching

We always need more coaches. We have been quite successful in the last 12 months in recruiting new coaches and also existing coaches achieving a higher level of qualification. Our coaches during the pandemic have been quite superb in helping as many athletes as possible maintain their fitness levels. If you are interested in helping us increase coaching numbers please speak to one of our coaches or contact me trevor.davies@chilternharriers.com. This might particularly appeal to members in the 16 to 25 age range, the 50 plus range or parents and perhaps helping at club nights in rotation.

Succession Planning

We have a committee of 12. Some of us have now reached a very senior age and it would be good to have some 'younger blood' to help drive our plans forward. If you are interested in helping us please either have a word with the Secretary, one of the committee members or me.

Event organisation

We always need help in putting on our 4 events. Each event has a 'race director' and a working party to help put together an action plan. If you would like to see how we operate and would like to get involved please let me know. You may find it challenging and rewarding.

Improve sponsorship links

Whilst our funds are in a healthy state we would still like to improve our income and relationship with sponsors. This is two sided with a sponsor providing financial or material support and the sponsor benefiting from a relationship with a popular and successful local club supporting a healthy pastime. If you have experience of dealing with sponsors and would like to help please step forward.

Financial

Despite a loss of income from reduced subscriptions and cancelled events we were again able to show a cash surplus for the year ended 31/12/20. We were helped by not having to pay for facilities we were unable to use.

We have accumulated reasonable funds over the years but our financial strategy remains the same, to have sufficient funds so that if an opportunity arises involving a local facility we would be in a strong position to move ahead. As before if anyone hears of any likely development that could be used as a sporting venue or centre where the whole club can meet please let me know. This could be a free standing all-weather surface and clubhouse or shared with others. It does not have to be a potential running track but probably attached to a school or a sports club or even development of a brown field site.

Facilities-Chiltern Hills Academy

We had hoped to use the new G3 pitch and floodlighting recently installed at the school. Soon after the building work commenced I had some three conversations with school representatives about our club making a financial contribution towards the funding in return for a 'rent free' period of hire and this was well received. In the event I was disappointed to learn that you have to wear 'football' type boots on the surface, not trainers, which would not have been any good for athletes. I do not think people at the school were aware of this when I had spoken to them.

The 'seniors' have been meeting at the school on a Tuesday evening since Spring 2015. We have been using the Drama Room as a meeting place before and after training. The room can easily accommodate 50/60 runners. We also have use of changing rooms and toilets etc.

There is however a potential problem for the future. The new G3 pitch has been hugely popular with up to 60/70 youngsters using it at any one time. I have taken the opportunity to visit on a few occasions during the early days of Covid-19 and it was obvious that there is going to be a shortage of parking when we resume training there. This is not helped by further expansion of the school with a decrease in parking spaces and we may need to consider an alternative venue.

We would ideally like a hall or large function room, just as a meeting place, either in Amersham or Chesham. We have used Star Yard Car Park occasionally in Chesham during the lockdown and this has the benefit of a large car park and being close to the town centre. Chesham is also very narrow at this point, only some 250 meters East to West with access to open space and footpaths close by.

Do you know of a nearby facility we could use?

Membership

The committee propose subscriptions will remain the same as in 2020. Some of you did not renew your membership last year and you may well have taken a rest because of the virus. We would be pleased to see you again but you will need to rejoin the club provided we have not reached capacity which is certainly possible in some of the age groups.

Would everyone also help by paying your subscription by April 1st. This is essential to ensure there is public liability insurance in place whilst you are training or competing.

If you are going to University you do not need to pay a club subscription but if you want to compete whilst you are there you need to pay the England Athletics fee. Also please tell Steve Field our Membership Secretary that you are at Uni. We will look forward to seeing you in the holidays and when you have completed your degree.

Our events

These include Pednor 5, Junior Triathlon, Shardeloes 10K, and Herbert's Hole 10K. We hope to organise our usual four events this year but some flexibility in dates may be needed particularly earlier in the year.

London Marathon

Two of our members hold very enviable records. David Walker has completed all 40 races and only approx. a dozen men share that distinction. Barbara Ralph has only run in 30 of the races but that is more than any other female and she was one of three people in 2020 to be named winners of the "Spirit of the London Marathon Award". Congratulations to them both. They live very close to each other in Chesham and train on the hills around Chartridge.

The race this year will be on 3rd October and hopefully we will again take a bus full of runners and supporters to the event. Come and join us if we are allowed out!

Volunteers

Most Years I am delighted to thank our 'army' of volunteers particularly those helping to put on our 4 events which involves about 100 people marshalling etc.

In 2020 all 4 of our events were cancelled but another 'army' has surfaced and maintained the club's activities and morale. I am in awe of the effort put in by the Management Committee, our coaches led in the seniors by Trevor Brawn, Mike Shrive, Steve Field and supported by many others and for our Young Athletes led by Steve Perkin, Nick Hughes and again supported by a team of coaches and parents. Some of the youngsters have even benefited from one to one coaching.

Another team has worked tirelessly in organising and communicating various activities and virtual races and relays including Team Bates, Katie Royals and Ruth Holroyd and many others.

Team Green is still in great shape and thank you to everyone who has helped and taken part.

Let us hope for a return to full activity so we can enjoy the sport we love.

Trevor Davies- Chairman

Chiltern Harriers Athlete Performance Report 2020

This report is markedly different from previous editions with all Chiltern Harriers hosted events in 2020 cancelled and only a very limited amount of competition available after the March lockdown.

However, the club appears to be weathering the storm reasonably well with good participation levels in the track, road, and cross country competition that has been allowed. The club has also been involved in, and organised, some virtual racing which has added a different dynamic to competition.

January and February saw the usual conclusion to the 2019-2020 cross country season with Chiltern have its usual good showing.

The Bucks AA Cross Country Championships took place, alongside the Bedfordshire Championships, at Shuttleworth in early January. Team wins came from the U13 Girls, U15 Girls, U13 Boys, U15 Boys, and U17 Men. Individual victories were secured by Lesedi Nkoane (U13 G), Alice Brown (U15 G), Alden Collier (U13 B), and Thomas Askey (U15 B). Other medallists included Frankie Baxter, Marea Logan, Maddie Hughes, Max Baxter, Rowan Gawne, Cormac Nesbit, Thomas Redmond, Alex Aldred and Richard Slade.

The Chiltern Cross Country League saw the club finish in third place (again). However this season saw Chiltern Harriers wins in Match 1 and Match 5, so encouraging signs. The female side of the club were top, as were the juniors. The male overall position was third but well behind Bedford and Milton Keynes.

After five matches the Senior Men were seventh in division 1 with the U20s fifth and Veterans eighth. The Senior Women were second with the Veterans occupying the same place.

The Juniors again impressed with wins for the Under 17 Men, Under 15 Boys, Under 13 Boys, Junior Women (U17/U20) (for the first time!), and Under 13 Girls. The Under 11 Boys, Under 15 Girls and Under 11 Girls were second. These are superb results in a very strong league for juniors.

Individually, Richard Slade was second in the Senior Men's competition: a great achievement. Aran Davidson was ninth. Neil Turner was ninth in the Vet 40 category; Andy Hickman (7th) and Ian Lawson (10th) well placed in the Vet 50s; and Trevor Brawn second in the Vet 70s. In the U17s, Alex Aldred was fourth, James Palmer 7th and Luke Martin 8th. Angus Stoneham was fifth in the U15s and the U13s saw a win for Alden Collier, with Rowan Gawne third and Gabriel Strutton-Smith fifth. In the U11s Tom Ford was fourth, Zach Cleary fifth, Charlie Quantrill ninth and Felix Danielli tenth.

On the female side, Ellie Bates was fourth Senior Woman with Hannah Wardley sixth. Bex Nkoane won the Vet 45 league with Sue Elliott fourth, Christine Burroughs fifth, Cathy Holloway seventh and Caroline Stephens tenth. Skipper Miriam Kempson was fifth in the Vet 55s. Soraya Lockwood was second U20, with Alicia Bushell fourth and Katie Repper fifth in the U17s. Charlotte Docwra was eighth in the U15 Girls and Zoe Gilbody took a win in the U13 Girls with Lucy Wilkinson seventh. Ellie Danner was seventh U11.

Chiltern featured highly in several big cross country championships. The U13 Boys won the Southern and National Championships at Parliament Hill and Nottingham respectively. The U13 Girls won the Southern and were fifth in the National. The U15 Girls were second in the Southern and fourth in the National, and the U15 Boys were fifth in the Southern.

Alden Collier had a great run to win the Southern U13 title comfortably, but had to dig deep to hold off a rival in a waterlogged Wollaton Park, Nottingham to secure the National. Zoe Gilbody competed in the Midlands Champs to be second but went one better to win in Nottingham. Frankie Baxter had her best run to win the Southern title and was 12th at Wollaton. Lesedi Nkoane was fifth U13 Girl at the Southern.

Zoe Gilbody continued her amazing season to win both the Inter Counties at Prestwold Hall and the English Schools at Liverpool, running for Shropshire. Other good runs in these very high level races came from Archie Pinder (eleventh U13 at Prestwold) and Thomas Redmond (16th Junior at Liverpool), both running for Bucks.

Once Lockdown occurred very little happened but some local virtual events kept athletes interested across the age groups. Some track meetings took place at Harrow and Lee Valley in the summer which were popular with juniors and younger seniors in particular. In the Seniors, notable 800m runs came from Harry Cox (1.53.5), Cameron Reid (1.54.47) and Adam Day (1.54.49) and in 1500m - Harry Cox (3.54.9), Adam Day (3.57.96), and Alex Johnson (4.05.89). Aran Davidson led the 3000m rankings with 8.59.65. In 800m Alden Collier (U15) ran 2.01.42 and Thomas Askey (U17) 2.03.87 - both fine efforts. Zoe Gilbody led the female rankings with 2.22.05, 4.45.7 and 10.17.14.

One event to fall victim to restrictions was the World Schools Cross Country Championships due to be held in Slovakia. After several years of strong performances in the English Schools Cross Country Cup, including numerous wins, the girls school team selected to represent England was Dr Challoner's High School, all of whose athletes are also Chiltern Harriers. The team of Alice Brown, Olivia Edwards, Abbie Henderson, Holly Henderson, Maddie Hughes and Orla Williams are hoping that a rescheduled event will take place in 2021.

The autumn saw some great road races by Chiltern athletes, Aran Davidson (32.18) and Richard Slade (32.22) both bagged 10k PBs at the Remembrance 10k at Bovingdon as did Hannah Wardley (38.49).

There was even a little cross country in the autumn with Peta Bee of Cookham Running Club organising some small performance races for younger age groups with athletes starting in small waves. Active Training World also put on larger races at Merchant Taylors School, well attended by Chiltern athletes. Individual wins at these races came from Ellie Danner, Tom Ford, Alden Collier, Thomas Redmond, Zoe Gilbody, Emily Ford and Izzy Martin.

Boxing Day saw the start of England Athletics Virtual 5 Mile Relay Competition. The first round allowed club runners to log a 5 mile road performance and upload on Strava with a closing date of January 13th. Scoring teams were composed of the fastest four males and fastest four females from each club. After a slow start the competition took off when clubs completed their first batch of eight runners and Chiltern were always well up, at one point as high as fourth. In the end 128 teams completed the first round and Chiltern finished an excellent ninth, thereby progressing to Round 2 in mid-February. The eight scorers were Richard Slade, Fabian Downs, Cameron Reid, Aran Davidson, Bex Nkoane, Ellie Bates, Maddie Hughes and Lean Ni Chiobhain.

Round 2 will be a focus for athletes in the new year with little other competition available.

Steve Perkin