

Chairman's Report -AGM 2024

The club continues to thrive. We are holding our AGM on 4th March at the White Hill Centre, HP5 1AH at 7:30 pm. All members are very welcome including parents of Young Athletes.

We have not had a President since Tony Watts in May 2022. We have now identified someone who is very keen to take on the role and will be proposed by the committee for election at the AGM. Please come along and find out more about the club and enjoy a complimentary drink afterwards.

Development Plan

We will soon be writing a new development plan, the present one runs from 1/1/20 until 31/12/24. Unfortunately, it coincided with the start of Covid and the club, and all sport, was hugely affected.

Nationally our sport has fewer athletes, coaches and officials than hitherto. There are 166,000 athletes registered with England Athletics as against 190,000 in 2019. The figures for coaches and officials are even more disappointing. In addition, activity in schools has reduced and many adults are now working from home which means they can choose when they want to run rather than attending an evening session in cold or wet conditions.

We particularly want to grow the number of senior athletes and under 11's as well as coaches and officials. Are there any other areas of the club you would like to see developed? If so, please tell me before we write the development plan.

Subscriptions

The England Athletics annual fee which all competing athletes need to pay is increasing by £2, from £17 to £19. This includes Young Athletes from year 6. Club subs. will be held at the present level but we will review in 12 months. Our subs are very much in line with other local clubs.

Track Fees

We will continue last year's initiative of paying track fees. We are very aware of the cost-of-living situation and as long as we earn reasonable income from the races we put on, hopefully this can continue. Other local clubs, even with tracks, charge their athletes to use the facility, so a point of difference in our favour.

Coaches and Officials

We will pay for courses run by England Athletics and mileage costs for those attending club activities. We urgently need to increase the number of officials including 'Field Events'. In addition, for Graded Officials, we will also pay expenses.

Is anyone in your family interested in coaching or officiating? You can be a partner, parent or Grandparent. It will also be good if we could provide officials for our own events as many of the wonderful volunteers coping at present are all getting older.

Sad News

We lost three of our 'running friends' in 2023:

-Shelly Trigg – Shelly passed away in May 2023 following a brain haemorrhage; she had joined our club in January 2022 and made so many friends who were devastated by the news.

In 2000 and after the birth of her son Bladen, she had joined the David Lloyd gym in Bushey which led to her taking up running and she ran her first marathon in 2006. Over the last 17 years she had run 24 marathons, raising money for Whizz Kids, Helen Douglas House, Muscular Dystrophy and Action 4 Archie and many more. She ran 5 of the 6 major marathons, London, Boston, Chicago, Berlin and in 2022 New York City. She had signed up to run Tokyo in March 2024 to complete the package. Her New York marathon run raised £15k for equipment for the Eden Ward at Wexham Park hospital,

where her sister was being treated. She had also volunteered for many years at the local foodbank in Rickmansworth.

We have been thinking of her loving family and would like to do something to honour her memory.

-Trevor Glover Wright – Trevor sadly passed away last July at the age of 91. He was one of the early members of the club, joining soon after our formation in 1978. He was also a 'life' member in recognition of his great contribution.

For many years he was a talented and enthusiastic athlete, particularly capable over hurdles. Even later on, he thought nothing of vaulting styles etc when doing cross-country runs. From 1990, when he began to slow down, he started organising monthly 'pub runs' and we must have visited most of the 'watering holes' in the Chilterns. His group, now called 'Trevor's Trekkers' have completed over 450 'pub runs' which involve a 5 mile walk or runs of 8-10 miles.

In his memory, many have come forward to organise these monthly events. Our thoughts are with his wife Clare and his family.

-Fabian Downs- Fabian started as a young athlete in the club; he was always very talented. He represented Oxford University as Captain of their cross-country team. He travelled extensively and for periods settled in Switzerland and subsequently New Zealand where he taught French, German and Spanish. He wrote a book 'Globe Trotting' and shared his experience of running in 53 countries around the world.

He won our own races including Pednor 5, Shardeloes 10k (twice), Herbert's Hole 10k (twice) and the Chesham Town Centre 5k celebrating the jubilee in 2012. Some of his personal best times were 5k: 14m29s, 10K: 30m41s, marathon: 2h.23.01 (Berlin 2016). He returned to the UK when he was having health problems. We last saw him running the Pednor 5 in May last year when he was not well but determined to turn out. He tragically passed away in November 2023 from blood cancer at the very young age of 37. We are in discussion with his friends who want to arrange some kind of memorial event.

I wrote on behalf of Chiltern Harriers to the families of all three, may they rest in peace.

Our events

We held the Pednor 10 and 2x5 mile relay races last New Year's Eve. The race had been held until 2018, and organised by the Arctic One Foundation, which provide opportunities for people with disabilities to get active and enjoy sport. Our club had always supported this event, supplying marshals etc.

Herbert's Hole 10k, one of our regular events, has proved problematic recently, with the paths leading out of Lowndes Park in very poor condition with quite dangerous roots exposed. The local council do not appear interested in providing the finance or manpower to improve the situation so for now we have no choice but to 'mothball' the event for the foreseeable future.

We cannot expect our volunteers to handle more than three events a year so we are left with Pednor 5, which this year will be on Monday 6th May, Shardeloes 10k, on Sunday 22nd September and in addition, we plan to organise the Pednor 10 and 2x5m relay and to split the profits 50/50 with the Arctic one Charity. The event was very successful in 2023 with some 340 runners entered. The event will be on 29th December.

Communications

A small sub-committee has been reviewing club communications. This kicked off with a survey in 2023 for which many thanks to all who responded and has now resulted in a few specific strands of work, including a streamlining of social media channels, and the introduction of a new WhatsApp community to increase transparency. In addition to consider the structure of the website and a project to create an enhanced club calendar.

Circuit Training Sessions

On Monday evenings we have a session in Hervines Pavilion from 7-8pm. The session is graded to suit both Seniors and Young Athletes and to help increase general, core, and body condition. It is free to members.

Junior Running Camp

During the Easter holidays, over 30 of our young athletes and some 6 coaches attended a training camp at Loughborough University. This included a mixture of training sessions, workshops in areas such as sports physiology, improving running performance as well as a Q and A with an elite athlete. The weekend was thoroughly enjoyed. Our youngsters had previously attended a similar camp at Phasels Wood Activity Centre in 2019.

Chiltern Cross Country League

It has been wonderful that we won this quality league for the first time in 2021-2022 and repeated the performance in 2022-2023. This season, 2023-2024, we won at three of the five venues but had to settle for second place over the season to Milton Keynes AC.

It is a shame that most years the second and third fixtures coincide with events organised for schools and many of our young athletes feel obliged to run in their school's event, rather than the Chiltern League. This is understandable but the Young Athletes are the strongest team in the league so it is frustrating to lose so much talent for those two fixtures. We look forward to trying again next season, but congratulations to all our athletes for the effort they have put in, together with many individual awards.

Club Heroes

-Sue Slade. In November 2023 Sue earned the accolade of 'inspiring official of the year' at the England Athletics South-East Volunteer Awards. She was recognised not only for her dedication, but her knowledge as an official and willingness to bring others into the role.

She is of course one of our senior coaches and with family members also excelling as athletes, she is part of a very active 'athletics family'. She, with her husband Brian for many years, organised the Amersham Round the Town Race until the pavements became too congested with the growing number of pedestrians visiting cafes and restaurants etc. But undaunted she still manages with Brian to put on the annual Bran Tub Relay just before Christmas.

-Matt Robins Matt has been our treasurer since 2017. In May last year he indicated he would like to stand down at this year's AGM. Hywel Thomas kindly agreed to take over to ensure a seamless transition.

Poor Matt has had an awful time recently trying to deal with the banking sector. We had banked with Barclays for some 30 years. They apparently requested some information which we sent, but they said they did not receive and promptly gave us notice they were closing our account with a balance of some £13k. We set about opening an account with NatWest, this had to be done online and took some two months to complete. I would like to apologise to members who were inconvenienced by being unable to enter events, pay subs or claim legitimate expenses. In addition, we had to ask local businesses to be patient. This was a frustrating and stressful time for Matt, and our grateful thanks to him for the effort he put in.

He had also been our race director for Shardeloes 10k from 2016 until 2022. He also had to deal with the subsequent havoc caused by Covid with the event being planned and then cancelled more than once as a result.

Management Committee

The following will be standing down at the forthcoming AGM: Steve Perkin, Graham Palser and Matt Robins. All have given sterling service and I cannot thank them enough for their unstinting contribution to the club's health.

We have a couple of vacancies, if you would like to get involved, please speak to me or another member of the Management Committee. We would be happy for you to attend a couple of meetings to see if you are keen to join. We meet four times a year. Much of our preliminary work is done in sub-committees and you may prefer to become involved in one of these.

Finally

I do hope you can all enjoy our sport this year and achieve your targets. It is Olympic year, so plenty of athletics to enjoy. I am sure some of you will venture to Paris for some of the live action. A big thank you to all our volunteers, coaches, officials, marshals and others who 'fly the flag' for our club locally.

Trevor Davies, Chairman.

December 2024