



Victoria Park Harriers & Tower Hamlets Athletics Club Annual General Meeting 2015

Directors' reports

Contents

Chairman's report - Dave Robinson.....	2
Men's road & cross country report – Simeon Bennett.....	5
Women's road & cross country report – Laura Morgan	8
Men's track & field report – Tony McDowall.....	10
Women's track and field report – Charlotte Nicholls	11
Youth development report – Cornelia Abe-Minale	12
Finance report - Ian Warren.....	13

Chairman's report - Dave Robinson

The first and most important message from me on behalf of the club membership is to thank all our magnificent and dedicated coaches, officials and volunteers. An enormous thank you goes to all who have devoted so much of their time and energy over the past year to provide the organisation, facilities, coaching etc, which we all take for granted. A special mention for our officials and coaches who not only run our training sessions but also organise club championships, co-ordinate and help run track meetings, league races, various other events and much more besides. Additionally to our youth coaches who not only train our young athletes but also have the added responsibility of care and guidance of youth members in both their athletic and social development. I cannot mention all of you by name but the club is deeply indebted to you all.

An enormous thanks to fellow Board members again this year along with the addition of Rachel who was appointed club secretary shortly after last year's AGM and has been a great addition to the team.

Finally, a big thanks as ever to Rob P, bar manager and social events supremo.

The year ahead

With Road & XC in particular, we are faced with a growing challenge. We no longer have an environment where members join the club, focus mainly on club events, league races and only a limited number of outside / public races. We now have a much broader community of members who have a variety of focuses and whose objectives, include Park Runs, a large number of National and International marathons and half marathons, 10k's, iconic events such as Comrades, triathlons, cycle events etc.

The pressures on our Junior Coaches at the Track and Youth Endurance are enormous and many thanks to Alf, Kelvin, Manny and others at the Track and Cornelia with her Youth Endurance group. The club is seeing a stronger than ever Junior Section which is great for the future.

With such a wide variety of member interests and talents we need to pull members into the core of the club in every way we can. We can't ignore the diversity of members interests or the flexibility that we need to put in place to maintain our growing and diverse membership.

Support

The challenge is to continue to offer and support a variety of events for a diverse membership with a broad set of member aspirations. All members from our 'elite' runners to our 'start to runners' need to be equally supported and nurtured. This is a big ask however, and for a big club run solely by our dedicated volunteer helpers, coaches and officials but it's important and we all know and have experienced the benefits of our welcoming and friendly club where bonds are formed and lasting friendships made.

Specifically concerning Road & XC, we recognise now more than ever that we need to encourage more members into supporting roles. To do this we are seeking to develop a series of groups to help at the various events, currently and up till recently all 'more or less' totally organised and run by our amazing Road & XC Captains (and a staggering amount by Sim alone) along with a variety of helpers. This is a good time to try and formalise 'support teams' to spread the load. With the complexity and quantity of our training and Road and XC calendar we are aiming to put together a number of these groups to work with and deputise for Sim and Laura, or in some cases take on total responsibility for the activity. Whilst, for instance, I totally endorse our XC focus on the Met League, our members and teams are also doing brilliantly in the Chingford League, and enjoying this... so this needs our support too. Currently Neil is being a brilliant promoting the Met League focus (and Chingford League) along with Sim, Laura, Rachel etc ...and we have started the process with Joyce taking on Chingford League responsibilities as a women's Chingford League captain. The 'Support Teams' probably of 3 or 4 members will hopefully include:

Met League: Neil (+2)

Chingford League: Joyce Berry, Rachel M, (+1)

Assembly League: (non urgent)

*Club Regular Thursday evening Tempo Runs : (+3)

Club Thursday Night Handicaps: Dave R, (+2.. incl Catherine McLaughlin hopefully)

Club Championships: (+3)

Other Team Events (London XC, Southern's, etc): Sim / Laura +3

(I've put a few names in the above list of those already involved ... excluding Sim and Laura ... and added Catherine as a possible without her knowledge because she's done it before and was brilliant .. as was Sue B too at a summer handicap)

This is somewhat in draft and will be developed more over the coming month(s), but hopefully quite rapidly. Part of the aim in this is to bring more members into the core of the club (with a shared and not massive commitment) - which is healthy and inclusive for the club, widening member influence and involvement.

*The list includes our regular Thursday night Tempo Session and club-night (bar). We are aware that numbers on Thursdays are down on previous year's at this time. With the challenges mentioned above this session is particularly difficult to sustain at a good level with member's own training regimes for variable events... so it's difficult always to have 'leaders' for the various group runs and abilities. Without this new members won't keep turning up.

Club Tuesday evenings with Coach Cairns

Mick is also always keen to have help on a Tuesday evening - especially when numbers are high and when 2 groups are necessary. Sim of course often deputises, but I'm sure Mick would probably also welcome a small support group...

`Start to Run' sessions

Laura's 'Start to Run' Sessions have started up again and I believe she has a good team supporting.

Premises

- **Mile End:** A further thanks to Alf, particularly on behalf of all track users, for his work on the Gym refurbishment project and putting in place a more structured and controlled use of the facilities. The project was mainly funded by the London Marathon Trust and pushed along by Alf and Tim Howells. A contribution was also made from the Club along with the purchase of a new (and expensive!) Leg Press that was much needed.
- **Clubhouse:** The 'Old Gym': We have continued good use of this space by My Local Pilates, Yoga for Runners, and occasional use by other groups This is good for the club, good for the local community and brings in a bit of income for the club. For those of you who have not seen this space, it is an attractive smaller space upstairs from the bar.
- **Weights facility and strength and conditioning:** A big thanks again this year to Victor Sarramian (Victoria Park Fitness) who continued PT ' strength and conditioning' coaching with both club members and other clients through until July. Most of you will know that Victor has now moved 'back' to his home area in Spain with his partner Sabrina and we wish them both the very best. We have been very fortunate in Victor's bringing in Fabien Lassonde to take over Victoria Park Fitness and maintain this valuable facility. Along with with Tony Bunbury at the Monday circuits / strength and conditioning session, these facilities are well used by members. Thanks to both.
- **Hall Hire/ Hosted Events:** We have a number of regular Hall users including winter use by 'Our Parks' Yoga on Saturday mornings funded by LBTH. Our clubhouse is also used for number of Charity Events and one-off hirings which this year have included - Celebration of Life Run in support of St Joseph's Hospice and HemiHelp Fun Run.

- **Cottage:** Quite a bit of maintenance and improvement work has been needed this year, but the letting of the Cottage is a major club asset and provides a significant income for the club. We have also taken on the letting of this direct, rather than with a managing Agent which was proving very unsatisfactory. We have always looked after maintenance anyway. This represents more income to the club... for a little extra work for Ian and I.

On behalf of the Board, thank you all for your continued membership and we wish you all excellent training and racing with us in the coming year ... and don't forget always to set your goals a little bit higher than you at first might think possible!

Dave R

Men's road & cross country report – Simeon Bennett

In the past year Laura has become established in her role as Women's Road & XC Director and given the strength and achievements of the women's teams this year we have separate Director's reports to reflect this.

Cross country

As usual, the club competed at:

- Both main cross country leagues (Chingford and Metropolitan),
- Middlesex County and the North London XC Champs (held near Ruislip, West London),
- London XC Champs and Nationals XC Championships (both at Parliament Hill)
- Ware Cup

Metropolitan League

The senior men's A team retained their position in Division 1 finishing 6th overall. Special mention to Tomas Stasionis and Sam Humphrey who were both ranked in the top 20 positions overall in the league for the season. Our strong presence meant we had solid finishes for our men's B team and Vet men's team as well.

Our friends and rivals at Barnet and District AC were also promoted to Division 1 for the 2015-16 season and some good rivalry is expected in the 2015-16 season. At the time of writing we have made a strong start, with our men's A team currently in 6th (ahead of Barnet!). Our men's B team has had a strong start, whilst the vet's team has potential to be promoted to Division 1! The club will continue to prioritise this showcase league this season and will encourage as many members to attend the five races.

Chingford League

Our Men's team were 4th in the A league, 3rd in the B-league and in the Veterans league they came fifth. It was not a trophy-winning season this year but the focus was on maintaining our presence in the league whilst pushing for really strong showings in the Metropolitan league. Only a small number of teams competed in the season finale - the relays. For the 2015-16 season we aim for a more consistent showing at all races.

The club retained the Ware Cup for another year by a clear margin following the Loughton race in December 2014.

Lastly, on a very unforgiving Alexandra Palace course in foul weather in January, our men's team came third overall at the Middlesex County cross country championships.

Road Running

Handicap + Mob Match

10 monthly handicap events successfully took place with 470 runners starting across the year (no event was held in July due to clashes with the Assembly League fixtures). The juniors compete each and every month making this a really fun event - special mention to Coach Cornelia for her efforts here.

The January Mob Match against Eton Manor also took place, back on Eton Manor's own course for the second time. Congratulations to them for winning back the trophy for the first time in seventeen years. This was taken in good spirits on the night but we will ensure there is solid competition for the 2016 edition, back on home turf at Well Street. The annual alternation of courses is likely to continue now.

Assembly League

The full complement of 6 races were held once again, with the club hosting two as usual. The club's men ran well, 3rd overall team and 4th in the B team competition. Our strong women came third overall and 3rd in the B team competition.

Marathon + Other Road Races

2015-16 was a fantastic year for the marathon distance, with 40 club members competing at the Virgin London marathon with the usual excellent support from the club along the Highway and elsewhere along the course. In addition the club fielded a significant number of runners at major events including Manchester, Brighton, Abingdon, Berlin, Chicago and other marathons. Special note to a number of athletes who have applied themselves to training and taken significant PBs during the year including Chris Brammer, Steve Hobbs, Finlay Gall, David Jones, Paul Gaimster, Bjorn Browatski to name but a few. The club salutes you. The most improved athlete award will be very difficult to judge once again.

In the summer, the club competed once again at the Westminster Three Bridges relays with a spectacular 10 teams competing and representing the club. Special mention to Rob Pitkethly who worked hard to organise these the club's entries once again..

Our men and women had more success at the 10 mile distance, returning to the Harry Hawkes 10 in Thames Ditton. Including 2nd overall (Sam Humphrey) and 7th overall (Dan Mutlow). The men took a controversial 2nd place in the team prize and our women won for the third year running.

The club and its volunteers were proud to host other races this year including the Mike Penman memorial mob match once again, the Middlesex County, Pride and Celebration of Life 10km events as well and hope to do so for many years to come. Thanks to all those who gave their time to assist.

Club Championships + Boswell League

I was proud to arrange and run the full compliment of races once again (1, 3.5, 5 mile XC, 10 and 20 mile) with a total of 225 athletes competing across all events. Thanks once again to those who've helped me with these races, particularly at the XC at Woodford where the course requires lots of work to mark out.

Thanks to the good work of June Barrow-Green and Duncan Steen who continued the diligent task of collating the Boswell League, after a great start the previous year. Congratulations to Sam Humphrey and Jo Singer who the senior trophies this year. We have also introduced a veteran category trophy to ensure recognition of others, congratulations to Gary Bagnall and Sue Bint who take these trophies.

This year saw the introduction of two new trophies donated by June Barrow-Green, 'Spirit of the Cross Country' award. These were awarded in the summer to Steven Shanks for his commitment to racing for the club despite living far away, and to Philippa Cockman who showed grit and determination through the worst of the XC mud.

Fell Running

Once again, the member's enthusiasm for hills continued relentlessly in 2014-15, with the club fielding strong teams in the January Box Hill Fell race. Yet again a number of committed club members raced here, then sped back from Surrey just in time to make the Chingford league fixture the same afternoon - *Super Saturday* as it has now become known. We also competed in the Orion Fell Race in June and the pinnacle event of the season, the Isle of Wight fell running weekend. Big thanks go to Neil Cook and Rob Pitkethly for significant organising efforts once again.

Disruption

Due to some problems with the entry the club was unable to field a team for the South of England championships in Brighton.

The Physical Shield relays were cancelled for a second year running due to problems with the course, although this should return in 2016, potentially at another venue. There was little desire to enter teams for the 6 + 12 stage road relays this due to the sheer volume events over the preceding winter season. Again, we hope to remedy this in 2016.

Lastly, due to pressures on many people's time the club chose to take a break from the Open 5 but a return in 2016 is planned.

Looking Ahead

The 2015-16 season is shaping up to be even more exciting. The key priorities will be:

- continue to focus on the Metropolitan League as our priority XC league
- I hope the club can return to the 12/6 stage relays in 2016 - something I will push to get in place
- Open 5 has a provisional date for its 2016 return
- Continue to provide support for our runners of all abilities be it elite marathon runners or those new to the sport. I believe it is a genuine strength of the club that we make every effort to support and recognise the efforts and achievements of as many members (men, women and juniors) as possible.

The length of the report shows just how much has taken place over the year. The club continues to grow and strengthen thanks to commitment and enthusiasm from so many members. Special thanks this year to Major Carr who has provided tireless support out front and behind the scenes across the season, to women's captain Laura and to the regular volunteers and helpers not already mentioned in the report.

In the coming months I plan to hand over many of my captain's responsibilities to others. After seven years it is essential for others to have a voice in the activities of the club as well, we will look to have a new Men's Director at some point in 2016.

Women's road & cross country report – Laura Morgan

It has been another great year that I have had the privilege of captain of the women's team in both road and cross country events, and it has been an honour to serve a club made up of such brilliant, kind and talented individuals that keep it going. Special mention to Captain Simeon Bennett, due to be a proud father and who has continued to be such a strong backbone to the clubs successful events (and who also brought home gold in the Middlesex marathon champs this year) and Chairman Dave who has worked effortlessly to keep the clubhouse ticking over, overseeing the maintenance, functions and use of the club to ensure members and the public can benefit from this great building. Both of these individuals, along with super caterer Rob Pitkethly have given a huge amount of their time to the club for the benefit of us members, which is hugely appreciated. There are many others who contribute to making the club such a great place, too many to list here!

Over the last few years our women's team have developed hugely. It was not so long ago when there might often be just one or even no women turning up at races, there is now a large contingent of great runners attending most races, as demonstrated in our increasing success with the highly competitive Met League, our strong positioning in the Assembly League, the ongoing representation at races throughout the country, and indeed the world, and our comeback this season so far in the Chingford League. Our women's Vet team has also gone from strength to strength as our fastest runners creep over the vet barrier whilst still getting faster!

Metropolitan League

Following a strong start which led to a successful 2014/15 season the Women finished 2nd in Division 2, so have been promoted to Division 1 for the 2015/6 season. This is the same for the Women's Vet team, who finished at the top of the Division. To avoid race fatigue following the regular packed schedules that are now part of everyone's diaries, we have decided to focus on the Met League in particular so hope to see as many people as possible at this league for this year.

Assembly League

This highly competitive road league seen a great turn out once again, although we were certainly helped with two of the events being hosted on home turf. As with the men's team, the women's team came third overall, with the B team also coming third in their category. Big thanks to club member Jasna Skroce who moved to Italy at the start of the season but manage to make it back for most of the events for the league.

Chingford League

We were unable to sustain the glory of the 2013/14 season and lost the new women's trophy for the league to Eton Manor for the 2014/5 Chingford league, although coming in at a respectable second place, the vets team coming in third. Runner Joyce Berry has recently started in the role of Captain for the Chingford league to ensure those who still want to be part of this fun and interesting league still have the support, and this has no doubt led to the initial surge in success for the women's team at this league so far this season.

Club championships

The club hosted another round of Club champs- including the 1mile, 3.5mile, 5mile (xc), 10mile and 20mile races. Huge thanks to Sim who did most of the work to arrange these fun races.

London Marathon and other races

Although a slightly lower turnout this year, the VPHTHAC women were still solidly represented by a strong team of marathoners, with great results. Special mention to Sue Bint who celebrated her 40th birthday by completing her first marathon in 3hr 15mins, and also to Rachel Morison who also crossed the finish line at 3hr 15mins following a brilliant period of training.

There have been a large number of successes in many, many other races this year for the club's women, to name just a few: Mandy Dohren had a brilliant year, breaking the clubs women's 10mile record at the Great South Run this year in a brilliant time of 62mins 32secs, and Susan Leese has now won the silver medal twice in the Middlesex 10km Champs (2014 and 2015). Jo Singer came

1st in the 2014 Beachy Head marathon, and managed to beat her time a year on, coming in at 3hr 30mins for the windy 2015 event, which is an excellent feat given it is one of the toughest marathons in the country.

Going forward

After a number of pregnancies last year we have looked on in amazement at how the new mothers of the group are getting back into racing and we looking forward to seeing Charlotte Maile, Rachel Thomas, Rosie Pitt, Hazel Norton Hale back at the front of the packs.

I have re-initiated a beginner's running group to try to reach out to those interested but who lack confidence in joining in with the main sessions of the club and as the population demographics develop we will continue to keep looking at ways in which we can accommodate the large diversity of runners. This includes trying to keep the Thursday night sessions as inclusive as possible, aligning with Chairman Dave's mention on this- although it is also great to see a regular weekly group or women out for the Tower Bridge 10 each Thursday.

I look forward to continuing on my role with the club, including the vibrant and diverse social side of the club, and hope that more and more people will continue to get involved.

Best wishes to everyone for a successful running season!

Men's track & field report – Tony McDowall

2015 season was a real mixed bag with the Southern Men's team finishing 4th place overall and narrowly missing out on a place in the Southern Men's League Final by the narrowest of margins. It also provided excellent opportunity for all athletes to compete in high quality local races. Unfortunately the Southern league season finished at the beginning of July so we were unable to field a team for the BAL Qualifier in mid-September.

BAL Match 1 Tooting

A spate of early season injuries and frankly a lack of commitment from some athletes meant that a very small team made the journey to Tooting. The absences cost the team dearly as we were unable to fill all events. With most of our senior sprinters missing we picked up very few points in what is historically a very successful event for us. Wins on the day were very hard to come by but Baddar and Alex Babb both won the B string Pole vault and High Jump respectively. Max Ware and Andre Dalhkamp made their debuts for the club and the 5000m saw the return of club legend Richard Newbold to run a swift 17.34 to pick up some good points for the team. The team finished 4th on the day.

BAL Match 2 Mile End

A stronger team turned out for the second match wins on the day came from Alex Babb (400m and High Jump), Martin Thomas (800), Tom Heslop (1500 and 3000m Steeplechase), Issac Osofisan (1500), Shaun Slator and Jamie Madison (both Pole vault), Darren Morsen (Long Jump), Baddar Echakhah (Javelin), Wes Clarke (Hammer) and 4x400relay team. Steve Hobbs and Andy Dyson also made their debuts for the team. We had 6 athletes in the 5000m four of which went sub 17min. Athlete of the match went to Tom Heslop who comfortably won the steeplechase in a new PB. We won the match and were back in contention for the league title.

BAL Match 3 Tooting

A number of athletes were unable to compete in the third match of the season wins on the day came from Alex Babb (400m), Shaun Slator and Jamie Madison (both Pole vault), Wes Clarke (Hammer), Columba Balango (200m). This was not enough to win us the match and we ended up third by the narrowest of margins.

BAL Match 4 Tooting

We went into the final match needing to beat Herne Hill Harriers by 2 places to make the Southern League final. Wins from Alex Babb (400m), Ajibola Aderemi (200m), Shaun Slator and Jamie Madison (both Pole vault) and Columba Balango (200m). Dave Jones ran a big PB of 2:01 to finish 2nd in the 800m. We once again finished 3rd and missed out on the final.

For the future

We had a significant increase in the number of distance runners competing for the club this season and this will hopefully continue into the 2016 season. To try to reduce fixture congestion and increase participation we will be competing in the Southern Athletics League (mixed men and women). Highlight of the season from the senior men's point of view had to be Darren Morsen winning the English Senior men's long jump title with a club record of 7.59.

Women's track and field report – Charlotte Nicholls

The women's team competed this year in the Premier Division of the Southern Women's League (SWL). We didn't have a particularly strong season overall due to low turnout for some events at each competition. We had very few senior athletes competing for us this season, which we hope to change for next season.

Irrespective of our overall performance in the league, our athletes that did compete in the league performed well, with athletes achieving personal best distances and times.

Due to the make up of the league, and the limited locations of the competitions (Guildford and Eton only) we felt it necessary to consider alternative leagues for next season.

As a result, we have decided that for next year that we will move to the Southern Athletics League, which is a mixed league and we are hoping this will involve having some of our competitions more locally than we have in the SWL. Unlike the SWL, this league doesn't include the U15 athletes, so we will need to encourage a good turnout from the senior men and women across all disciplines.

Thank you to all who have competed this season, and we hope to have a successful year in the SAL."

Youth development report – Cornelia Abe- Minale

Sprints, Throws and Jumps

We had an outstanding season for our U15 sprinters.

Myrone Rhule Alexander ranked 5th in the 200m and 12th over 100m and Tia Barret ranked 20th in the girls. Sadly both athletes were hampered by midseason injuries.

Kia Dubarry-Gray ranked 23rd in the 200m and finishing 4th in the English schools Championship.

A fantastic result as she is a first year athlete in her age group.

First year in the U17 Girls 300m Michelle Mamudu is ranked 15th.

U20 Men 400m Hurdles Ajibola Aderemi is ranked 5th and achieved 3rd place in the English schools champs.

We had a productive season without any outstanding results in the U13 age group, a distinct lack of fast athletes hampered our YDL U13/15 competition.

Darren Morson is the top ranked Long jumper in the U23Men and 9th in the seniors.

Nnenna Eronini is 3rd in the U17 Women Discus and Gbemisola Olaosebikan 11th in U20 Women Shot Put.

Distance

Last winter's Cross-country season ended with a great Metleague results in the U13 age group.

The girls finishing 2nd and the boys coming 3rd and Luca Minale finishing overall in 2nd place.

We started this season equally well with the U13 girls in 2nd and the U13 boys in 3rd place.

As our team is maturing we now have also a competitive team in the U15/17 age group, lying in 5th place at the moment. Nile McKenzie finishing 5th in the last race. We are still struggling in the U15/17 girls to bring 4 strong athletes to the start line.

Outstanding athlete on the track was Nile McKenzie in the U17 Men with 1.57.44 in the 800m.

He reached the final in the English Schools Champs, a great result for a first year athlete.

Our distance group is growing in numbers with a strong base of U11s, we are hoping to bring a large number of committed athletes through to the older age groups especially girls.

Finance report - Ian Warren

See separate attachment.