

No.672 / Vol.129 Reports & News

Summer 2019

**BLACKHEATH & BROMLEY HARRIERS AC**

# GAZETTE



*Danny Brewer on the way to winning the mile in the Anniversary Open Meeting 17th July 2019*

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## From the Editor



At last the long awaited milestone long in planning, our club's 150th Anniversary year. From the early beginnings of the first races of the original Heatherns in autumn 1869, through to the 21st Century and the prospect of a move to a new home, the achievements of world class Blackheath athletes, a club of diverse talents and abilities.

Roughly half way through the year (March to March) and already there's been a flurry of activity, some of it

anniversary year related; a series of meetings in which athletes of all ages and abilities have displayed their talents in a bid to achieve personal bests and high placings on the Leaderboard. You can read about it here. Then on a Wednesday night in July there came a host of invited athletes from other clubs and from other countries who along with veteran runners from the club's past, displayed their talents in enthusiastic competition on events on track and in field. You can read about it here.

Elsewhere congratulations must go to the Men's Masters who achieved promotion back to the top division of the SCVAC after the disappointment of being relegated last summer. Many seasoned veteran athletes whose talents graced the club in summers past as juniors and seniors, gave of their best in a different age to take the club to its rightful place in masters competition. You can read about it here.

There's also been another commendable and relatively successful performance of the Junior Men in Europe and their remarkable retention of their national title in what is arguably their best season ever, and an equally commendable performance by the women in Leira where again they attained a podium finish. You can read about it here.

Many thanks to all those who contributed material. Some of it has an anniversary flavour especially from Alan Stevens our man in New Zealand who has given us a snapshot of what the club was like towards the end of its first century.

Equal thanks go to my erstwhile layout editor Ozzie Adams who has once again been available to step in to assist in producing this issue, and maintaining the splendid standards of design which readers have appreciated over recent years.

**Wilf Orton, Summer 2019**

Before signing off I wish to offer grateful thanks to the following for willingly providing articles and reports for this issue:

PP Pat Calnan, PP Tim Soutar, Paul Austridge VP, Maz Turner VP, Rod Harrington VP, Nick Swatton VP, Alan Stevens VP, PP Nick Brooks, PP Steve Hollingdale, Tim Ayres VP, Peter Rogers

**The next issue covering the winter 2019/20 is in preparation and the deadline for submission of material is Late December 2020.**

# Ad Hoc Group 150th Season Celebrations Final Summary... Spring 2019

Subject to final tweaks and changes the agenda which was originally proposed in the Autumn of 2015 was finalised. The Anniversary year had begun!

## Anniversary Logo

Circulated and in use, contact Peter Rogers (peter.rogers@mac.com) for specific advice or David Appleton (dlappletonbbhac@me.com) for Headed Paper.

## Merchandise

Clothing with the logo is available, and a new 150 years beer has been brewed by Westerham Brewery. Arranged by David Appleton (dlappletonbbhac@me.com).

## Celebration Year

Runs from the AGM on 23rd March 2019 through to the AGM in March 2020.

## 150th Anniversary Dinner

Thursday 7 November 2019 at the House of Commons. Full details are on the website. Organisers: Chris Haines (c.r.haines@city.ac.uk) and David Appleton (dlappletonbbhac@me.com).

This is now fully booked, 152 have paid the required deposit and there will be a further 18 formal guests at the dinner making 170 in all. It is possible that places will become available if one or two do not take up their reserved options so anyone wishing to go on the waiting list for a place then please pay the deposit and notify Chris Haines accordingly.

The dinner, by courtesy of Colonel Bob Stewart DSO MP, will be in the Members Dining Room and is 'black tie preferred'. The timings are such that the reception will start at 1830 so you will also need to allow plenty of time to get to the House of Commons and to pass through security. It would be sensible to plan your arrival at least for 1730.

## 150 Year Celebration Meeting

This track and field meeting is on Wednesday 17th July 2019 at Norman Park.

Lead organiser Mark Purser (markpurser@me.com).

## Website

Mike Peel (mike@mikepeel.co.uk) has included a 150 years area on the website for members to post celebration activities, events and items.

Entries can be made on line in advance although there may be a limited number of entries on the day.

The program to include open races from 100m to 1,500m, mile and relay, as well as some field events. The highlight event to be the Sydney Wooderson Memorial 800m (men and women) which is by invitation only.

## 150 Mile Leaderboard

The event had originally been set up by Derek Gregory, and

was included in the 2019 track fixture list.

However he withdrew and volunteers agreed to carry this forward. The project was delegated to a sub committee comprising Tim Ayres, and Stephen Hollingdale and Nick Brookes to whom all information would be available on (brooksienick@icloud.com).

The project runs from AGM 2019 to AGM 2020 and is open to all first and second claim members as well as Associate members at Club Open Meetings, Club Championships and occasional home fixtures such as the Southern Athletics League.

The entry fee will be £1.50 per attempt and prizes of £50 will be awarded for best male and female athletes and for age adjusted performances.

## History Update

Pat Calnan (p.calnan@btinternet.com), Bill Foster (billfosterlsac@hotmail.com) and Wilf Orton (wilfred.orton@justice.gov.uk) had agreed to plan this on a longer timescale. Dependant on archival material available, and awaiting completion of those gazettes covering the 150th Anniversary year. (Up to the Winter 2019/20).

# The Narrow Road to the Deep North

## Our young ladies take the YDL final in their stride again

*With the YDL continuing to look for ways to reduce the expense, to them, of holding the National Finals, we find ourselves this year in Manchester for our, likely, showdown with Shaftesbury Barnet Harriers (SBH).*

*Things haven't gone all our way during the regular season: on the joint men's and women's scoring that the League adopt, SBH beat us by a margin in the first match, we won the second and third (on their home turf – or whatever it is that they have now at Allianz Park) to move to the top of the table, before they pipped us by ½ a match point to gain some kind of revenge in our own home fixture, though not remotely enough for them to regain pole position. We therefore take the stage at the Manchester Regional Sports Arena as Southern Premiership Champions.*

### Defending the title

But all that is history and we know we shall have to produce our A game if we are to defend our title: for the first time in many years, the Shaftesbury Barnet Harriers women's team is, relatively, far stronger than the men's and there has been little between the two women's

teams over the summer. True, we have never been able to field anything approaching our strongest possible team – the middle distance squad, particularly, has been ravaged by injury and illness all year – and we gather as a far stronger unit, but we know that SBH will be sensing blood and will have pulled out all the stops.

The day, fortunately, is set fair and there will be no repeat of the torrential downpour at the recent Manchester International at which some members of the team had competed for GB Juniors. As in 2018, the first event is the long jump and we're looking for another flying start. It is provided by Funminiya Olajide, with another solid U20 A string win, backed up by a PB, and another win, from new recruit, Danielle Hopkins, in the B. Claudia Baker begins with two no jumps, such that the Team Manager's nerves are on edge even before his first coffee of the day, but she secures points with her final leap: panic over, at least for now. Moving to the pole vault, in a disappointingly small field, we edge further ahead of SBH, who only field two athletes, with Lois Warden and Ellie Barrett taking 2nd and 1st in the U20 and Achieng Oneko 3rd in the U17. And then it's track time, starting, as

ever, with the long hurdles. In the U20s, Grace Scopes is a smidgeon off her PB in 2nd and Zoe Austridge has a winning debut over 400mH in the B string. The 300mH doesn't go quite as well, but Kelsey Pullin and Ella Brown keep us in contention.

### Matching SBH stride for stride

Meanwhile, they're getting into the swing over in the hammer circle. Molly Walsh is runner-up in the U20A by a mere 5cm(!) and Hannah Macaulay, in her non-specialist event, gains a valuable bronze. At the same time, Yasmin Austridge is having a tremendous tussle in the 1500m with her SBH opponent, just missing out on 1st and Isabelle Stoneham, on debut and running up an age group, also finishes in a fine second place. With Ailbhe Barnes running well too for 2nd in the U17s, we're still matching SBH stride for stride. We also gain four silver medals in the 100m, courtesy of Marcia Sey, Funminiya, Zsiria Thomas and Tianna Haynes. Unfortunately, the golds all go to SBH.

Before we know it, we're back in the field, the shot circle to be precise, where Hannah improves to silver in the U20A and Lauren Farley wins the B. Not only does Nana

Gyedu win the U17, but her winning distance of 14.71m, although modest by her standards, also lands her the Overall Best Performance in the match! And while this is taking place, we have possibly the best track performance of the day with Louise Evans using all her European Junior experience to judge her 400m to perfection, reeling in her fast starting, SBH opponent to pass her coming off the final bend. Natasha Bennett runs well to take silver in the U20 B string, before Holly Mpassy, still on the road to full fitness after her injury issues of the early summer, wins the 300m by over a second. And we keep up the pressure by fine runs, in identical times, in the 80mH from Ruby Bridger for 2nd in the A race and Shakanya Osahon in winning the B. With Marcia needing to rest a niggle in view of our imminent trip to Europe, Mallory Cluley and Zoe nevertheless produce the same result in the 100mH.

### **Maintaining the pressure**

Which takes us to the discus and our first, and it transpires only, clean sweep of first places in an event, courtesy of Hannah, Eloise Locke and Tobi Akinrele. Hannah therefore concludes her day with a complete set of medals

and we're maintaining the pressure nicely. As we do also in the 3000m, where we gain more points than SBH, who only field 3 runners, with Jess Neale and Isabelle (again running in the U20) both winning their races. Events are coming thick and fast and it's already time for the 200m. As with the 100m, SBH win both U20 events, Louise and Tianna (competing up an age group) running them close to secure silver medals, but Holly and Zsiriah turn the tables, winning both the U17s, so it finishes honours even. SBH then shade us in the high jump, although Danielle, in her specialist event, is joint winner and Zoe takes silver and Ruby a bronze.

We're now into the home stretch with only two individual track events and two field to go, plus, of course, the relays. We think we have our noses in front though the boys' managers keep trying to depress us by telling us we're behind. Regardless, we know we have a strong finish and we kick for home, starting with the 800m, where pride of place goes to Zakia Mossi, with a dominant display of front running and a comfortable win in the U17 A, supported by a solid second place in the B from Tola Pearce. In the

U20s, Yasmin takes bronze and Ellie Dolby successfully moves up an age group to take the B win. We also have a strong performance in the steeplechase, with Olivia Berry and Ailbhe Barnes taking 2nd and 1st respectively in the U17 races and Ellie Osmond 2nd in the U20 A, but SBH, somehow, prove even stronger.

This also turns out to be the case in the triple jump, where we are depleted as a result of long term injuries, but still take both silver medals in the U20 (Funminiyi and Zoe) and a bronze from Molly Savage in the U17. That leaves just the javelin. Lauren and Eloise don't disappoint, winning both U20 strings by large margins, but we fair not so well in the U17.

### **Champions again**

And so it's all to play for in the relays and, once again, after two close run races, SBH just shade us into second place in both sprints. We think it really must now be quite close, but the girls have it all under control and shrug off the pressure. Our 300m quartet of Zakia, Shakanya, Kelsey Pullin and Holly, have saved their best 'til last and romp home in gold medal position with a new Club record. Not to be outdone, in our final event of the day,



## Continued

our 4x400m team of Natasha, Grace, Francesca Evered and Louise also win decisively. We have done our best and now we wait to hear whether our best is good enough.

There is no doubt regarding the combined match (especially as we've been getting updates on that during the day), where we triumph by well over 100 points. And, it transpires, our match has not been as close as we feared and we emerge as Junior Women's National Champions again

by a reasonably comfortable margin of 28 points. We're off to Europe again... or so we thought: little did we know that we're probably not, as European Athletics have subsequently decided to review the future of the European Clubs Championships and it is unlikely to take place in 2020. So we'll have to come back next year and do it all again to qualify for whatever event European Athletics decide to promote in 2021.

None of this should detract from a fine team performance, yet another in a long line which extends our run as National Champions to 6 unbeaten years (and to 9 titles out of the last 10). And so, for those not bound for Portugal, we come to the end of another successful summer season: thank you, ladies, it's been a pleasure, even if your team manager may not always have given that impression!

*Tim Soutar*

### 2019 Women's YDL Squad:

Yasmin Austridge

Natasha Bennett

Louise Evans

Marcia Sey

Mallory Cluley

Amy Leach

Steff Fisher

Grace Scopes

Danielle Hopkins

Millie Smith

Zakia Mossi

Maddie Mastrodonardo

Jade Oni

Funminiyi Olajide

Molly Walsh

Eloise Locke

Nana Gyedu

Ruth Chappell

Hannah Macaulay

Titobioluwa Akinrele

Lauren Farley

Lois Warden

Ellie Barrett

Holly Platt

Ruby Bridger

Zoe Austridge

Zoe Martial

Alice Prentice

Karina Harris

Eva Stephanou

Ellie Osmond

Tola Pearse

Zsiriah Thomas

Katia Cienciala

Ofejiro Otomewo

Holly Mpassy

Tianna Haynes

Shakanya Osahon

Daniella Harper

Amy Miller

Jess Neal

Ella Brown

Kelsey Pullin

Francesca Evered

Ailbhe Barnes

Olivia Berry

Ellie Dolby

Eve Ward

Annie Thomas

Sophie Hoare

Heidi Forsyth

Claudia Baker

Achieng Oneko

Hang Kiu

Mhairi Brooks

Molly Savage

Ella Brown

Akeiyla Robinson-Pascal

Kamiyla Robinson-Pascal

Bethany Paton

Zoe White

Sabrina Mannes

# Let the Stormy Clouds Chase

## Our Ladies Cope With a Wet Welcome in Portugal

*The build-up to this year's European Champion Clubs Cup for Juniors had been the most fraught in years: for many months through last winter and the early spring there was doubt that it would take place at all, as it appeared a suitable venue could not be found. As the location, Leiria in Portugal, for the B Competition had been announced almost as soon as the 2018 Championships had finished, this looked more and more concerning as the months rolled by. A number of conversations with UKA cast no light on the situation and, sensing that the meeting may be in danger of not taking place, the Club suggested to UKA that a solution might be to combine the A and B competitions. Perhaps it was merely a case of great minds thinking alike, but within weeks it was confirmed that Portugal it was to be.*

### Surmountable obstacles

By this time, however, flight prices were heading, well, skywards and a lot of hard work was then required to identify an affordable travel option. To cap it all, 6 weeks before the competition, Norman Park then became unavailable, due to the refurbishment works, causing disruption to training groups. And then, of course, there were the inevitable(?) injuries, which had hit our middle distance squad particularly hard over the summer and proceeded to rob us, only days before the event, of our European Junior 400m finalist. It was clearly preordained that we were going to have to do this the hard way.

It was, therefore, with a sense of no little relief that our squad of 22 all presented themselves at Stansted on the early morning of 19th September for our Ryanair flight to Lisbon. From there, the journey was largely incident free and we arrived at our hotel in Fatima, where all the A Competition teams were to stay, by early afternoon.

Friday morning was, as the brochures often say, 'at leisure'. Many took the opportunity of exploring what has become one of the most important international destinations for religious tourism, receiving between 6 and 8 million pilgrims a year, following the apparitions of the Virgin Mary reported



*The Junior Ladies team won third place in a rain soaked final in Leiria*

## Continued

by three little shepherds in 1917. Having been suitably, spiritually uplifted, the day ended with a joint team meeting with the boys and the now customary presentation of bibs to the competitors.

Drawing back the curtains on Saturday morning, the teams were in fact met with a greyness which presaged persistent rain throughout the day and extremely challenging conditions. With the combined A&B competitions to accommodate, it would be a long day with an early start.

### Abysmal early conditions

In accordance with tradition, the first event was the long hurdles. In recent years this has been one of the most fiercely competitive races and so it proved, even in the abysmal conditions, and an already soaked track. Team Co-Captain Grace Scopes



*The hurdlers acquitted themselves well, even winning*

nevertheless acquitted herself well, narrowly missing out on a pb.

First off in the field was Lauren Farley. Lauren had made hay all summer while the sun shone, obtaining an English Schools title and a GB Junior vest. But today, the sun stayed in bed and the effects of a long season took their toll, but, although below her own high standards, a 4th place finish still provided us with solid points. Meanwhile

over at the NTC, Molly Walsh was being introduced to sub-aqua hammer throwing, at which she proved remarkably proficient. Holding her nerve and her technique together, she was rewarded with a fine silver medal.

Back on the track, Zakia Mossi was taking on the 800m. Having missed a large part of the season with injury and being one of the youngest in the field, Zakia ran a mature race to secure more valuable points for the team. The 100m was up next and new recruit, Marcia Sey, using this, as a warm up for her specialist event, sprint hurdles, produced a season's best to win our 2nd silver medal of the day. And in the final event of the morning, Holly Mpassy, another who had had her struggles with injury over the summer, made it a 3rd silver. Stepping into the big shoes of Louise Evans, our gold medal winning relay



*Heavy rain created abysmal conditions*



runner from Borås, Holly demonstrated she was the ultimate super-sub, chasing home the Spanish athlete who had made the European Junior Final. And we go to lunch lying in second place behind the Spaniards.

### Battling with the elements

With the afternoon session came the 100mH, Marcia's speciality, and she accordingly went one better, leading from the first hurdle to record our first win of the day. But our first event in the field demonstrated how fickle our sport can be and, in the wet conditions, Lois Warden was unable to record a height in the pole vault. Two more field events were soon underway: in the shot, over at the NTC, Nana Gyedu,



*The 4x400m relay team gave Fenerbahçe a run for their money*

on debut in the competition, improved through the rounds, as she acclimatised to the wet conditions, to finish in a fine 4th place behind a Euro Junior finalist (from Turkey) and the Euro Discus champion (from Holland). Back in the stadium, meanwhile, on the long jump runway, Funminiye Olajide was also struggling with the conditions as well as the recurrence of an old injury, but used all her experience to land another silver medal.

Our next track event was the 1500. Steeplechaser, Ailbhe Barnes, found herself in a tactical race, with no-one wanting to take on the pace. In the, eventual, ensuing burn-up, she did well to finish just outside the medals. Next up, Zsiriah Thomas found herself in a very classy field in the 200m, containing a number of girls who competed in Borås. Undaunted she ran a very strong race and was rewarded with a big PB. While all this was going on, Danielle Hopkins and Hannah Macaulay were both battling the elements in the high jump and discus, respectively. Both performed equally well, each gaining a useful 4th place.

### Some late successes

Before our last field event of the day, we had our two longest track races. In the 3000m, Annie Thomas ran a measured race, conscious of the fact that she hadn't raced for some time, ensuring that she banked as many valuable points as she could.





And then it was over to co-captain, Yasmin Austridge, to resume her battle with the steeplechase – this would be her 4th, and final, appearance in the event at these Championships – and what a battle it was: always on the pace, she led going into the last lap and although it looked as though she might be caught coming into the finishing straight, she pulled away over the last barrier for a deserved victory (only our second of the day, such is the quality at this event). Which brought us to the triple jump. Having been checked over by Gemma and passed fit to compete, Funminiya was back on the runway for an event which, for now, is still something of a work in progress for her. That's as may be, but she still produced a jump to capture the bronze medal.

## Continued

### Clinching the bronze place

With just the relays to come, Fenerbahce looked to have the match in their grasp yet again but we were determined to give them a run for the money. And so it proved, with our quartet of Mallory Cluley, Marcia, Zsiriah and Holly Mpassy leading into the 3rd change. A slight handover miscalculation was all the Turkish team needed to squeeze past, but we still finished a very comfortable second. Going into the 4x400m, although Fenerbahce now only had to get the baton round to secure victory, a mere 4½ points separated the next three teams. As has been the case in recent years, the Czech team fielded a solid, winning quartet and this left us to fight it out with Playas de Castellon for the final podium spot. Coming down the home straight, Castellon were clear for 2nd. So, Holly had to ensure she held off at least one of the chasing Slovenian and Turkish runners, for us to hold onto the bronze medal team position. The result was in doubt until the last few strides, but Holly saw the team home in determined style.

In closing, on behalf of all the girls, may I thank all those who worked so hard

### Final results

1	TUR	112.5
2	CZE	103
3	GBR	99
4	ESP	98.5
5	DEN	80
6	SLO	69
7	NED	60
8	SUI	60

in so many different ways through the season, and those who made such generous contributions, to get us to Leiria.

*Tim Soutar*



*Molly Walsh sub aqua throwing held her nerve to win a fine silver medal*

# British Athletics League Season 2019

*As the League celebrated its 50th birthday, we were back in the top division where we started in the first season in 1969. It was a strange year in that we competed not actually knowing what was going to be happening in 2020. The League might continue as before or it could merge with the UK Womens League to form a new joint scoring competition. That would all be resolved at the AGMs in November.*

It was, therefore, a case of carrying on as normal. Our prospects took a big hit in the month before the opening match with javelin thrower James Whiteaker breaking his arm and throwers Luc Durrant and Louis Mascarenhas deciding they would not be competing this season. Hammer throwers Joe Ellis and Tom Parker were out in the States and never got here all Summer, Joe with injury problems and Tom with visa issues. This meant we would compete in the top division in the League without six of our eight best A and B strings throwers. Ouch.

## Match One, Swansea Sunday 12th May 2019

In 2018 the first round of League matches clashed with the BUCS and over a dozen athletes of our athletes were

unavailable as a result. Other clubs were similarly affected and the general view was that this could not happen again. They had clashed with the BUCS to avoid matches on the same weekend as the County Championships only to find so few British League athletes supported these. A study by UKA confirmed this and a competition permit was issued for League matches to take place on the Sunday of County Championships weekend. The reasoning was that a number of County Champs only took place on the Saturday. In addition there were no County Championships in Wales so in theory a large number of officials would be available. This was why Swansea was a double match with the Premiership and Division One in action.

Two of our British League athletes competed at the County Championships in 2019 but there was no guarantee they would have been available for Swansea anyway. James Habbergham set a pb for 1500m at the Yorkshire Championships on the Saturday before travelling down to Wales. Similarly Phil Sesemann competed in a 5km road race in Ipswich before heading as far as Swindon on Saturday evening and completing the journey to Swansea on the day.





## Continued

However, aside from the County Championships, there were plenty of other reasons for us not being at full strength, with exams, injury, and illness, plus, the distance to Swansea made it difficult to reach for an early starting double match for those who had to travel on the day by public transport. And where was Alex Pope?! It promised to be a tough match for us but despite having few field eventers, Kelechi Aguocha and Rob Sutherland to be precise, we made plans to cover most events.

The weather was probably the best I have seen a British League match, not a cloud in the sky and a very gentle breeze. Our athletes responded with nine personal bests and we didn't finish in last place. We were actually the second best team on

the track but the field was a different story which meant we ended up seventh overall, less than 40 points off fourth.

It has to be said that some of the events were weaker than expected and it was quite shocking to seeing only nine out of a possible sixteen athletes starting the 3000m steeplechase. Lewis Mills had been hoping to be dragged round to a fast time but in the end led from start to finish setting a personal best of 9:28.70.

Lewis' victory was one of three events where we took maximum A string points. In the 400m under 20, Ethan Brown ran a perfectly paced race to cross the line in 47.20 with Dan Putnam making it maximum points in the B string with an excellent 47.31.

Both joined Duayne Bovell and Matthew Knight to secure victory in the 4x100m in 41.91, before, with Jordan Layne replacing Duayne, they took runner up spot in 4x400m with our fastest time for a while, 3:16.40. This included a 46.8 split from Dan.

Prolific racers Phil Sesemann and James Habergham took second and third places in their respective strings of the 1500m. James also did the 800m and shot. Youngest member of the team was Ben Gardiner who made his League debut in the B 800m.

He ran a blinder battling down the home straight to secure third place and take over a second off his personal best with 1:54.80.

One of the best races of the day was the 3000m where Ross Braden missed out in a last lap burn up finishing 5th in a very useful 8:28.55. Charlie Davis set a best of 8:38.78 in the B string.

Matthew Knight's 21.90 in the 200m was another personal best and Richard Morris 55.78 for the 400H was a best with electric timing.

Richard is one of our HCAs and is happy to help out once his main event was out of the way. He did the hammer, discus, javelin, high jump and 110m hurdles. He was one of a number who went the extra mile for the team.

Tom Desborough only came into the team at short notice having just started running again after a ten week injury lay off. As B string he came third in the steeplechase and fourth in the 400m hurdles as well as throwing the discus.

Alex Nwenwu is not fit yet but still made the trip and threw the javelin after his 110m hurdles. Then there was Ross Braden and Jordan Layne in the long jump, and Duayne Bovell (shot and hammer).

We did have two "proper" field eventers though. Kelechi







Aguocha, our find of the season last year, took fourth in the high jump with a clearance of 2 metres before scoring some important points in the triple.

Rob Sutherland, spent much of the weekend doing his University studies, and despite one or two niggling issues gained sixth in a useful triple jump contest.

Each club is now required to supply officials at the British League so it was great to have John and Margaret Baldwin, Dave Cordell, Kieve Brown, Keith Field and Denis Lawrie helping out plus Chris Haines, Ken Daniel and Nick Brooks supporting and helping out.

Oh and the refreshments were good, with the mini Cornish pasties a bargain at 30p each.

### **Match Two, Allianz Park Sunday 9th June 2019**

Frustratingly we were given seventh place on the day only be informed the next afternoon that there had been a mistake in calculating the steeplechase and we had in

fact finished eighth. This just should not be happening in the top division of League competition in this country.

Yet, as with the first match in Swansea, it was difficult to feel too disappointed because there were so many good performances. Eight members of the team set personal bests. Well done Joe Rogers (800m), Charlie Davis (3000), Bailey Stickings (400m hurdles), Tom Desborough (3000m steeplechase), Barnaby Corry (pole vault), Charlie Short (hammer), Dele Aladese (shot) and Richard Morris (400m hurdles). In addition, Kelechi Aguocha equalled his best of 2.10 in the high jump and there were thirteen seasons bests plus our fastest 4x400m for a long while, 3:13.61. This is why the League is important.

Best track event was the 400m hurdles where Bailey Stickings (52.31) and Joe Fuggle (54.06) picked up third places in the A and B strings. Dan Putnam ran another good 400m with 47.46 from

lane one and Jordan Layne's 49.37 was a seasons best. Dan (47.0), Joe (48.5) and Jordan (48.2) then teamed up with Joe Rogers (50.0) for the 4x400m. They were over two seconds quicker than at Swansea but two places lower.

Again in the middle distance, in addition to the three pbs mentioned above, Declan Neary and Josh Schofield (1500m), Alex Bruce Littlewood (3000m) and Alex Gibbins (3000m chase) all set seasons bests.

We had a tough time in the sprints but Dan Putnam, Duayne Bovell, and Matthew Knight did fine. It was good to have Reece Young back in the team in the sprint hurdles. Despite running into a -1.3 headwind, his 14.68 was his third quickest time ever. Alex Nwenwu had one of those days in the B string with a DQ and we were a DNF in the 4x100m.

The triple jumpers had been speaking to each other and they all arrived at Allianz to provide a top class competition. Jonathan Ilori jumped 16.00 and yet this was only good enough for third, just five centimetres off the winning leap. Eight jumpers were over 15.40 so Rob Sutherland didn't make the cut, I think for the first time. Jonathan also set a seasons best in the long jump for

## Continued

fourth with young Ben Sutton picking up a good third in the B string.

Nil points at Swansea in the pole vault, it was a different story here. Scott Huggins set a seasons best of 4.92 for third in the A string. Barnaby Corry is only 14 but looked perfectly at ease on his British League debut as he set a personal best of 4.10 for another third place. Our highest placed A string of the day was Kelechi with his second place in the high jump. He equalled his 2.10 best and it surely won't be long before he goes higher. Lewis Ely returned to competition and, despite going off a short run up, he cleared 1.85. It was good to see his dad Chris there after illness.

We were stronger in every string of the throws but the opposition must have been on a yogurt rich diet because we were mullered. There is a scoring system which is used to compare performances across the events. The top eight performances of the day all came in the throws. But our guys did fine. Charlie Short set a new best of 37.29 in the hammer and was sixth in the A string. If he had thrown a further 17.59 he would have taken fifth spot! It was Alex Pope's first competition after injury and, despite his best efforts to get the contest abandoned by



destroying the cage, he had to settle for three no throws. It was great to have him back in the team though as he was there also for the shot, discus and javelin. It was also good to have Dele Aladese back in action after his exams. He was close to his best in the discus, and he made his debut with the senior shot. Richard Morris set an electric timing pb in the non scoring 400m hurdles and then chipped in with a seasons best in the javelin.

Thanks to all the supporters who came along and to our officials Dave Cordell, Ann Brown, Keith Field, Sam Purser and Mark Purser.

### **Match Three, Sheffield Saturday 6th July 2019**

The match followed a similar pattern to the previous two with lots of good performances and a few mishaps. We finished 7th on the day but are still a point behind Cardiff in the table. We had been hoping to beat

the City Of Sheffield as well, but they took full advantage of being hosts by taking third place.

Perhaps the performance of the day was that of Angus Harrington in the 800m. Still to break 1:50 for the event, he lined up against five who have, and showed them a clean pair of heels to win in 1:50.81, which makes him the equal fourth on the Club's all time list for the event in the League.

The middle distance success didn't stop there as Will Fuller put the final touches to his preparations for the European Under 23 championships by kicking away from the field and clocking 3:53.24. Will, at 22, was our oldest middle distance runner on the day. Fellow under 23s James Habbergham (800m), Declan Neary (1500m), and Charlie Davis and Josh Schofield in the 5000m all had useful runs. Charlie's 15:00.86 meant

he had run a pb in each of the three matches. Our new Club Junior steeplechase record holder (9:20.01) Lewis Mills met up with some strong opposition, crossing swords with two sub 9 minute chasers. It was a cagey affair with neither of the favourites willing to take on the pace. He was 4th in 9:34.31 but it could have been a lot quicker. Sadly we could not field a B string despite contact being made with an esoteric group of individuals.

Ethan Brown found himself lining up in the 400m against Newham's Rabah Yousif, currently the fastest in the country, plus Birchfield's Saddam Koumi whose best was 45.41, over a minute quicker than Ethan. It was a cracking race with Koumi winning in 46.47, from Yousif with Ethan third in 47.01. Only Olympian Tawanda Chiwira has run faster for the Club in the League.



Dan Putnam won the B string by over half a second in 47.26 to continue a great season. Dan and the Club did not have such a good day in the short sprints, however, as he suffered a DQ in the 100m and the relay team dropped the baton. Despite decent runs from Korede Awe, Matthew Knight and Duayne Bovell we didn't pick up a lot of points.

It was swings and roundabouts as well in the 400m hurdles. Joe Fuggle claimed a very useful fourth place against some good opposition but in the B string Bailey Stickings tweaked a hamstring and bravely made it to finish nearly ten seconds down on his best.

Alex Nwenwu was promoted to the A string sprint hurdles and took a good 5th place, keeping control despite an athlete crashing out next to him. It was 5th also for Lewis Ely in the B string, another example of doing an event for a point and ending up with much more.

The day finished on the track with another strong performance in the 4x400m from Jordan Layne, Joe Rogers, Dan Putnam and Joe Fuggle. The time of 3:15.82 is the second quickest time since the Club record of 3:11.59 was set in 2010 so it was a bit disappointing to find we weren't going to

receive any splits because there weren't sufficient timekeepers. It is supposed to be the top division of League competition in the country.

There were some more impressive performances in the field and again some disappointments. Jonathan Ilori was just outside 16 metres in the triple jump gaining second place with 15.94. It was a competition riddled with no jumps and sadly three of them were recorded by one of our most reliable team members Rob Sutherland. So nil points in the B string. Jonathan also took second in the B long jump with Ben Sutton 5th in the A string with 6.79. Most of the athletes seemed to be around 30 centimetres down on their bests so Ben will be over 7 metres any time.

Kelechi Aguocha is the best high jumper to come through the Club's younger ranks since the days of Trevor Llewelyn and Tim Foulger in the late 1970s. His best at the start of last season was 1.80 and at Sheffield he lined up against seven athletes who have jumped higher than 2.10. Yet he finished equal second with 2.05. With another year in the under 20 age group, Trevor's 41 year old Club record is under threat. Ever dependable Lewis Ely took fourth in the B string with 1.85 and was close to 1.90.

## Continued

Youngest member of the team was 14 year old Barnaby Corry in the pole vault. He went over 3.80 which was down on his recent best of 4.20 but it was the same with the other athletes. Five have gone over five metres this year, but the competition was won in 4.80. It was just a shame we couldn't field a B string on this occasion.

There are a maximum of 112 points available in the four throws and if all strings are filled a minimum of 20 can be scored. At Swansea we scored 22 points, at Allianz, it was down to 21, but in Sheffield we achieved a seasons best of 24! We have been having a tough time of it but we will improve and one of those who will help us do that is discus thrower Dele Aladese. Only a first year senior he has the potential to throw a lot further. He also helped out in the shot and hammer as did Angus Harrington in the javelin.

Duayne Bovell, the oldest man in the team competed in six scoring events including all four throws. It seems only yesterday that he made his debut as an under 17 in 2002 and was running in the relay with our President Julian Golding. Julian was in attendance supporting the team and catching up with lots of old friends and acquaintances.



Finally thanks to officials Keith Field, Dave Cordell and Steve Hollingdale; to Nigel Stickings and Ken Daniel for their help with the management; to Chris Ely for coaching help with Kelechi; and to the supporters. We were, however, one man light as Chris Haines had been planning to join us from Leicester but went down with a nasty virus.

Not only does Dave Cordell officiate, he also provides the cabaret. A stroll out from the hotel late Friday to look for possible eating places for the team saw us in the market and, spotting a stand and seating area where Polish beers were being served, it was felt a quick drink to refresh us after our journey was a good idea. Then Dave appeared with Steve Hollingdale from their 5 star hotel, the Premier Inn being a little below Dave's standards. However, after some more

Polish beer and visit to Wetherspoons, Dave decided he could lower himself to dine at our hotel. By the end of the evening he was pouring more wine over the walls than into his glass. The team, being a sensible lot, sorted themselves out.

### Match Four, Birmingham Saturday 3rd August 2019

The season finished with another enjoyable joint match with our UK Womens League team at Birmingham which saw us finish 7th in the Premier Division of the British Athletics League. Had we placed in that position in the Premiership in football we might be competing in Europe next season.

Highlight of the day was the triple jump competition where Jonathan Ilori's leap of 16.27 was easily his best of the season and just one centimetre off his best. This was the furthest ever by a



Club member in the League. Three others in the match also went over 16 metres plus one guest. Another three were over 15.60. It just shows how good a British League competition can be when the athletes turn up.

The four best athletic performances in the match were from the triple and a total of six from the event were in the top ten of the day. Missing the top 10 were a 7.50 long jump; a 73 metre hammer; a 5.10 pole vault, a 2.14 high jump, a 60.47 discus and a 71.95 javelin.

Our only other top three A string placing was Phil Sesemann. On Thursday he had set a new best of 13:45.73 for the 5000m at the Belfast International but, two days later, he was toing the line in the B 800m, his first race over the distance this season. He followed this with second place in the 1500m getting the best of most of the lead pack in a tight finish. His 3:47.45 makes him the Club's fifth fastest ever in this event.

He wasn't the only one running heavy legged as B string Declan Neary had run 8:23 for 3000m the night before at the Birmingham Relays; while Lewis Mills only arrived at the hotel just before midnight having flown in from Geneva from a photo

shoot. Sitting on the floor of an overcrowded train on the way up wasn't helpful either. He was someway off his club record in the steeplechase but he was there.

Elsewhere in the middle distance there were solid runs from Joe Rogers in the 800m, Ross Braden and Charlie Davis in the 5000m and Tom Desborough in the 3000m steeplechase. Tom had earlier set a seasons best in the 400m hurdles, his train having reached Perry Barr at 11.30 giving him enough time to jog to the stadium to make the start line at 12pm.

"A" string hurdler Bailey Stickings had one of those days. Sick earlier in the week, he thought he had recovered, but he hadn't. There must be a bug going round as Matthew

Knight had to pull out of the sprints having been ill.

Duayne Bovell was promoted from non scorer in the 100m in the last match to A string this, and responded with another sub 11 clocking. Ethan Brown stepped down to the 200m for this match and met up with a loaded field, four of whom have run sub 21 seconds. In the B strings of both sprints we welcomed Michael Damoah to the team and he made a good debut picking up some useful points.

Joe Rogers volunteered to run a 400m after his 800m but he hadn't fully recovered and there was disaster for Adam Herring in the B string, when, having thought he had heard a recall gun, he found he had given the rest of the field a head start.



*Kelechi Aguocha... the best high jumper to come through the club's younger ranks since the late 1970s*

## Continued

We had two seasons bests in the sprint hurdles from Alex Nwenwu and Lewis Ely. Alex was one of four athletes who competed in all four fixtures this season along with Duayne Bovell, Charlie Davis and Kelechi Aguocha.

Kelechi wasn't quite as high as he would have wanted but his two metre clearance gave him equal 4th. Lewis Ely equalled his seasons best in the B string and set another seasons best in the triple jump.

Like the triple, the long jump was a strong competition with eleven seven metre plus jumpers in the field. Seven were over seven metres on the day but not our youngsters Ben Sutton and debutant Myles Xavier. They will be soon, and both are destined to be important members of the team in the future. It may have been Myles debut for the team but it didn't stop him organising the running order of the 4x100m, much to the amusement of Duayne Bovell. "I was that boy once" said the oldest member of the team.

Another youngster who has made a big impression is Barnaby Corry. Just 15, he equalled his best in the pole vault with a leap of 4.20. He was fortunate to be partnered by Scott Huggins, who, despite not having trained for nearly two months, cleared 4.80.

In the throws, three of our up and coming stars made a good fist of it against some on the nations best. Charlie Short drove up on the day to compete in the hammer while in the B string Dele Aladese even set a personal best. Dele was more at home in the discus with new man Philip Bartlett, and both also picked up some useful points in the shot.

In the javelin Duayne Bovell set a new best in the A string as did Joss Barber in the B string, having just arrived back from New Zealand. It is probably fair to say his distance thrown was in inverse proportion to the air miles travelled, but we were very grateful he was there to help the team. All these efforts meant we had our biggest number of points in the League all season.

The relay teams were a little patched up after a difficult few days. Duayne, Ben, Myles and Michael got the baton round safely; and Ben and Myles joined Adam and Ethan to finish the 4x400m in 3:21.49. Adam has always delivered in the relays and did so again while Ethan confided that the 47.1 split was his fastest ever.

### A note of thanks

Thanks too to all the officials, supporters and helpers who made it such an enjoyable day for both our mens and womens teams.



In the Botley Trophy for the top points scorer of the season Dan Putnam and Jonathan Ilori both finished with 58 followed by Kelechi Aguocha on 49.

So 7th on the day and 7th for the season. This was actually our highest position in the League since 1995 so something to celebrate. The target was 6th and although we didn't achieve that, there are plenty of youngsters coming through to bolster the squad. The future is bright.

At the AGMs in November it was agreed that the British Athletics League and UK Womens League would merge to form the National Athletics League which would be joint scoring. We would be in the top division.

*Pat Calnan*

# Kent Young Athletes League

## 2019

### Tonbridge

2 June 2019

The season kicked off at Tonbridge and was overall a successful one for Blackheath and Bromley U13/15 boys in Division 1. The U13 boys finished 2nd with 154 points and the U15 boys finished 1st with 153.5 points. The overall combined total was 655 which meant BBHAC were placed 1st overall.

There were plenty of notable individual performances and plenty of first and second places, such as from Zuriel Nwogwugwu who displayed great versatility by gaining 1st place in the A string 100m (13.1) and 2nd in the Long Jump (4.48m), Max Kennedy who gained places in the shot, discus and javelin. The four boy team of J. Brooks, R. Moutade, A. Nikovo and Z. Naoyugwu finished 2nd in the 4x100m relay in an aggregate time of 55.2.

For the U15 boys Ben Platt finished 3rd in the 100m but only .3 of a second behind the first two finishers. He would have his consolation of a 1st place though in the javelin with a throw of 39.31m. There were a number of second places: Tom Sugden in the 800ms, Bryden Duncan (both in the shot), Bryden Duncan (in the discus).

However the stand out performances came in the relays: in the 4x100m the team consisting of Adam Islam Medeaux, Oliver Robertson, Ben Platt, and Connor Sutton clinched first place by .2 of a second over Bexley AC in a time of 48.1s. In the 4x300m relay three of the 4x100m team lined up, Kieran Blake taking third leg instead of Ben Platt and achieved a more clear cut victory, this time over Paddock Wood by 6 seconds in 2:40.3.

However in Division 2 the performances were more modest with a fourth place finish for the U13 boys and a fifth place for the U15s. There was only one place finish in the U13 category, David Jenkins attaining 3rd in the B string of the 200m. In the U15 category the best performance came from Ethan Alapafu who finished 2nd in the B string of the 200m, and in some events such as discus, shot and javelin there was no representation. In the 4x300m relay the team was disqualified.

### Ashford

7 July 2019

The Blackheath and Bromley team for the second Kent league fixture at Ashford was slightly depleted due

to a clash with the London Youth Games. The U13 boys were affected by the fixture clash, injuries and holidays and were only able to field six athletes but all six put in great efforts. The team competed superbly and won on the day. Some fantastic performances combined to leave the combined U13/15 boys and girls team on top of the league table, with one remaining fixture.

Due to the depleted numbers it was understandable that certain athletes would have to cross over the disciplines and show great versatility in competing in both track and field events. Perhaps it is consoling to know that at this age athletes can not only take on this multi-faceted challenge but compete to an impressive standard. Zuriel Nwogwugwu had a great day sprinting well in the 100m dipping inside 13 seconds, running a fine sub 27 in the 200m, knocking 2 seconds off his best and long jumping 4.75m with a winning jump. Daniel Jenkins raced hard over the 100m and 200m before his decisive contribution in the relay. Also due to compete in the quartet later on, Marley Byfield knocked nearly a second off his best time in the 200m and jumped a personal best in the

## Continued

high jump, and James Lawson made a solid Blackheath and Bromley debut with great performances in the 100m and long jump.

These four then combined their collective talents in the relay, Marley leading the relay team off with a strong opening leg. Daniel ran a great leg two down the back straight. James Lawson running a fine leg on the top bend set up Zuriel who brought the relay team home to a solid silver.

On a more sombre note, busiest of the day was Franco Hillier who started the discus warm up early, before racing over to the other side of the track ready for the hurdles. Unfortunately Franco caught one of the hurdles during the race and went down hard taking the skin off his knees. Franco wanted to carry on with his busy day in the discus, 1500m and relay but his body had other ideas.

In more specialist mode Ben Platt leaped a massive 3.50m to break the pole vault league record and collected a smart medal for his efforts. Jasper Brooks had a day off running but jumped well in the long jump winning the B string.

Due to the lack of U13 athletes available on the day, we had no-one in the shot,

discus, hammer, 1500m or hurdles making our victory even more impressive.

### Medway Park 4 August 2019

Blackheath and Bromley Harriers AC U13 and U15 boys and girls team are Kent league champions, adding this to the South of England title they won last month. A fantastic team performance at Medway Park on 4th August saw them crowned champions, despite many missing athletes due to the holiday period. In particular the U13 boys had a full and strong squad of twelve talented youngsters.

In the sprints Zuriel Nwogwugwu ran a fine personal best of 26.2 winning the 200m, a 4.86 long jump win and a fast leg in the winning relay team. To fill his day Zuriel turn his hand to high jump, so looking good for the up coming Kent pentathlon.

Rayhan Mourtada had a busy day coming second in the quick 75m hurdle race, followed by a win in the B string 100m running a new PB, second in the B string long jump and then finishing with a strong leg in the 4x100m relay. David Dare won the 100m A string with a new personal best of 12.6,

won the B string 200m in 26.9 and led the relay team home in seasons best time of 52.3. Andrew Nikoro had a winning day, placing first in the B string hurdles and first in the high jump and to complete his day ran a 100m sprint. Marley Byfield ran a great new best in the 200m.

We were lucky enough to have all twelve athletes fit and well at the end of the day and so were able to field three strong sprint relay teams. Marley Bayfield gave the relay team a great start with a fast lead off leg. Ryan Hang who is finding his sprinting feet with a great run in the 100m contributed well, running leg two down the back straight, and middle distance youngster Henri Verster having turned his hand to sprinting and sprinted well clocking 30.2 then ran the fast top bend in the relay. James Lawson also brought the relay team home on anchor leg.

Always great to watch the determined Daniel Jenkins race as he sprinted well in the both the 100m and 200m just shy of his best times. Daniel also led the relay team off on leg one. Find out which teams they were relaying in the second team was made up of Franco on leg one, field event specialists Finn Kitteridge



# UK Youth Development League

## Under 13/15s

and Max Kennedy on 2 and 3 and Andrew on 4.

To emphasise the clan and enterprise of the team there were, as in previous matches, several cases of young athletes displaying consummate versatility which extended over the disciplines of track and field. Before the relay Finn was busy in the field, jumping well in the high jump and throwing the javelin and putting the shot scoring loads of team points. Max also had three field events to conquer before the relay and threw over 30m again in the javelin and contested the hammer and shot again scoring loads of valuable team points. Franco Hillier ran well and finished fast in his first ever 1500m, before trying his hand (or legs) at the long jump. James Lawson had a very busy day running a personal best in the 100m, a quick 200m and jumping over 4m in the long jump.

It was very impressive to see every one of the twelve U13 boys take part in the relays, quite an intimidating site for the other clubs to see. Well done squad, a great finish to the Kent league track and field season.

*Paul Austridge*

*Consistent performances in recent years from a mix of experienced athletes and newcomers had seen the young athletes attain high finishes in this competition but in this summer this consistency paid off with both Under 13/15 teams attaining the title of Southern Champions. From here there was further glory in the National Finals for the Upper Range teams.*

### Toothing Bec 27 April 2019

A good start to the season for Blackheath and Bromley's lower age group squad last weekend, at Tooting Bec. The U13 boys squad was a mix of experience and new, with five athletes making their BBHAC track debuts. The squad was slightly depleted due to a clash with the London mini marathon but this only affected the middle distance events where we had no U13 boy 1500m runners.

The hurdlers were first up on the track and Rayhan Mourtada did well running a personal best despite wearing trainers! Rayhan also ran the 100m, 200m and leg two of the relay, a long busy day. Marley Byfield started his busy day with his first ever hurdle race and coped well over the barriers. Marley also



*Rayhan Mourtada, a versatile performer in the hurdles*

## Continued

ran a quick 100m, just outside his best, the long jump and ran the lead off leg in the 4x100m. Daniel Jenkins not only made his debut for the club but took on the task of both sprints and the relay and more than held his own, a great debut. Ruben Stober made a great debut only a few days after joining the club and sprinted well over 100m in a quick 13.7 and then ran the final leg in the relay.

In the field the first event was the shot put and Max Kennedy put in a good performance before heading off to the javelin where he threw a new personal best just 2cm shy of 29m. Finn Kitteridge started his busy day shot putting and then throwing the javelin before stepping in a short notice to secure valuable points in the high jump. Unfortunately we didn't have a second high jumper, so if any of you fancy giving high jump a go please let us know, it's a great way to get involved in the team and equally important earning the team much needed points.

In the 800m we had three more athletes making their track debuts with Jasper Brooks clocking a great season opener, Amir Dudhia running well over the two lap race and Jed Starvis completing the trio racing



well to clock his first 800m time. Later in the day Jasper leaped over 4m in a great long jump competition, Jasper's first proper long jump comp.

Ryen Rennie was hoping to make his track debut but unfortunately picked up a knee injury and despite being there made the wise decision not to race. With the mini marathon claiming three of our distance boys we unfortunately had no BBHAC U13 boys contesting the 1500m.

### Hornchurch 18 May 2019

Round two of the 2019 UKYDL was held at the Havering AC track in Hornchurch, in ideal conditions, resulting in a fantastic win for the Blackheath and Bromley lower age group team. With a second place in the season opener it was vital to post another great team performance, to keep us in contention for the Southern title and in a qualifying position for one of

the two places available for the National league final in September.

BBHAC U13 and U15 boys and girls once again showed great team spirit and were well supported on the day by coaches, parents, siblings and the new Club President, former Commonwealth 200m champion Julian Golding, who had made the journey across the Thames to give the team much appreciated support.

The day overall started well on the track, with all eight BB hurdlers clocking new personal bests. The U13 boys had a brilliant day with every athlete running, jumping or throwing a new personal best. Marley Byfield started his busy day over the hurdles, before sprinting the 100m, high jumping and running a great opening leg in the 4x100m. Rayhan Mourtada showed great determination in knocking nearly 1.5 seconds off his hurdle best, nearly 0.5sec off his 200m

best and running a quick bend in the relay. David Dare made his club debut and what an impression he made, winning a very fast 200m, clocking 25.96, a time that now ranks him 5th in the country. David backed this run up with another quick sprint in the 100m and then bringing the team home in the relay in a fast time. Zuriel Nwogwugwu, making his YDL debut made a big impact in the team winning the B string 100m and the long jump and running a great leg down the back straight in the sprint relay. Another athlete making his Blackheath Bromley and debut was Ryan Hang and he should be happy with his 100m sprint performance.

Jasper Brooks continued his fine season with new best in the 800m and in winning the B string long jump. In the first fixture we were unable to field any 1500m runners but went one better at this fixture with Josh Healy leading the Blackheath charge, recording a great new best time just outside 5 minutes. In the 800m Jed Starvis produced a solid performance, knocking a massive 5 seconds off his best and in the process scoring great team points.

It's no surprise, with Max Kennedy's great attitude

towards training and competition that he further improved his javelin throw best, passing the 30m barrier for the first time, recording a fine 32.05m and getting a full sized Stormtrooper for his efforts! A new shot put technique also helped Max to consistently put the shot over 7m.

Finn Kitteridge had another busy day in the field with PBs in the high jump and shot put and another good series of throws in the javelin, earning loads of points for the team.

Hendri Verster was due to make his BB debut but sensibly pulled out, despite making the journey to Hornchurch, after advice from the on-track physio, suffering very tight achilles. Plenty more opportunities through the long track season ahead. This fantastic result saw BBHAC sitting in second

place but with the same number of points as current leaders Reading AC, who host the next fixture on 23rd June.

### Reading 23 June 2019

Match three of this season's UKYDL was another tight fixture, but despite having a relay team disqualified, BBHAC U13 and U15 boys and girls managed the win and this catapulted them to the top of the Southern Premier league, with one remaining fixture, our home match at Norman Park.

The top two in the league qualify for the UK final in Manchester on 7th September and this result goes a long way to reaching that goal.

In near perfect conditions we had the performances to match. The U13 boys squad consisted of 13 athletes and all put in solid performances across all events. David Dare



*David Dare putting in a solid performance in the High Jump*

## Continued

broke 13 seconds again for 100m and ran a great new PB of 25.7 in the 200m, ranking him 7th in the country before bringing the relay team home in a equal season's best time. Zurriel Nwogwugwu, sporting a nice new pair of spikes ran well in the 100m, jumped well in the long jump and ran leg two down the back straight in the 4 x 100m relay.

Andrew Nikoro made his UKYDL debut posting three fantastic new personal bests. First up was the hurdles where he won his race, shaving off half a second, followed by the 100m, again taking half a second off and finishing with a 15cm improvement in the high jump. Marley Byfield continues to be a valuable member of the team posting a good 100m and leading the relay team off in style. Rayhan Mourtada goes from strength to strength showing that training does pay off,

firstly hurdling well to a new quick personal best, follow by another PB in the 200m and running leg three in the relay.

Jasper Brooks ran well in the 800m just outside his best and then despite heavy legs jumped to a fine new best in the long jump. Young Hendri Verster made a fine UKYDL debut running a mature, controlled 800m finishing well and being rewarded with a personal best time. Amir Dudhia ran hard in the 800m and was also pleased to record a new PB. Continuing the theme, young Jed Starvis ran a sensible but hard 800m and deserved his new PB.

Alex Middleton in his first 1500m race this season showed class running a sensible and controlled race eventually breaking away from his opponents in the home straight, slicing an incredible 16 seconds off his best, clocking an impressive 4:49.4. Josh Healy ran another



solid 1500m pacing well and finishing a fraction outside his best.

Finn Kitteridge had another busy day amassing loads of points from his three events starting with a PB in shot put, a PB in the high jump and then a good series of throws in the javelin. Max Kennedy had a worrying hand injury before this meeting but had recovered sufficiently enough to gain great team points in both throws, just short of his best in both shot and javelin, two events you don't particularly want to do with an injured hand. But credit to Max for gritting his teeth and getting stuck in.

### Norman Park 20 July 2019

The weather was hot but with a couple of unwelcome heavy downpours made for a couple of challenging moments. But if the challenges were daunting





the final outcome and results were even more satisfying.

The hurdlers got us off to solid start with all running close to their bests or PBs. Rayhan Mourtada continued his great season with a quick 12.87 over the 75m hurdle distance, a fast 200m and running leg two in the 4x100m clocking their fastest time of the season. Andrew Nikoro had a great day winning the 75m hurdles B string, and winning the A string high with a new personal best of 1.46 and ran a strong bend on leg three in the relay. Zuriel Nwogwugwu started his busy day with a PB in the 200m winning the A string, a PB in the 100m and then jumping near his best, placing 2nd in the long jump. Zuriel led the relay team home with a seasons best performance.

It was great to have a fit and well Ruben Stober back in the team and he ran well clocking a personal best time in the 100m. Daniel Jenkins ran well in the 100m timing an equal electronic timed best. Marley Byfield also ran a personal best in the 100m before leading the relay team off on leg one.

Jasper Brooks ran two new bests within four days and will be very pleased with his new time of 2:28.73 over 800m. Jasper also jumped well in



the long jump scoring more valuable team points. Hendri Verster looked good in the B string 800m as did Franco Hillier running a great new best time of 2:31.39. Harry Fage, now clear of injury ran hard to run a fine new best over 800m. Alex Middleton ran in his usual determined style pushing on throughout his 1500m race, clocking a fast new best time of 4:48.97. Josh Healey ran hard and was once again rewarded with a sub 5 minute time clocking 4:59.98, well under the 5 minute mark!

Max Kennedy threw over 30m again to secure 2nd in the javelin and threw just short of his PB in the shot. Finn Kitteridge started his busy day with a solid shot put competition before winning the B string high jump and then winning the B string javelin.

The boys finished the day with their best relay run of the season and so after a tough day on our home turf, with us trailing in third place

for much of the day, this late strong surge in the field and in the relays was enough for us to pass Havering AC to secure second (on the day) behind Reading AC. This great result was enough to crown both of our U13 and U15 boys and girls UKYDL Southern Champions, ahead of Reading and secures our spot in the National final in Manchester on Saturday 7th September.

### **UK Youth Development League Final, Manchester 7 September 2019**

The UKYDL final completes the league events for the summer of 2019 and Blackheath and Bromley Harriers young athletes once again excelled, with the U13 and U15 squad coming agonisingly close to victory and the U17 and U20 age groups winning convincingly. The U13 boys had a strong squad of 14 boys travelling to Manchester including three travelling reserves who were ready for any last minute illness or injury changes.

## Continued

These were Harry Fage, Daniel Jenkins and Hendri Verster and it was great to see them warmed up and ready to go if needed. They were as much a part of the team as any athlete.

The sprint hurdlers got us off to a terrific start with Rayhan Mourtada powering to a great win, in a new personal best time; a performance good enough to get his photo in "Athletics Weekly". Rayhan also ran a strong leg in the relay.

In the B string Andrew Nikoro was up against tough competition but ran well securing a great silver. Andrew also stepped up and ran a great replacement leg in the relay but not before competing in the high jump where he placed fourth in the A string.

Max Kennedy won bronze in the javelin with a 32.81m throw and was fourth in the shot clocking up good team points. Finn Kitteridge had a busy day in the field winning the B string high jump and winning the B string Javelin with a 28.88m throw. Finn was just outside the medals in the shot but scored more valuable points for the team.

Zuriel Nwogwugwu started his busy day running well in the 200m just outside the

medals, but then picked up a great silver in the 100m sprint before comfortable winning the A string long jump, just 4cm short of 5m. Zuriel also ran the last leg in a hastily changed team, due to a late injury replacement. David Dare won a fine silver in the B string 200m and was racing well in the 100m but unfortunately was struck by injury in the last 20m.

Jasper Brooks had a very good run in a tough 800m field and sliced off over 1.5 seconds from his best despite getting cramp, but this did mean Jasper wasn't able to contest the long jump as planned. With our strong reserves all ready to go, the long jump withdrawal wasn't a problem and Marley Byfield stepped up superbly jumping a new best of 4.25m and winning bronze for his efforts. Marley also ran a good leg one on the 4x100m relay.

In the B string 800m Franco Hillier ran a determined race and pushed hard at the bell, securing a brilliant bronze and took over two and a half second off his PB. The 1500ms were tough and Alex Middleton and Josh Healy both ran hard but unfortunately just missed out on the medals, placing fourth.

The Upper age group final was dominated by the black



vests of Blackheath and Bromley Harriers and saw them clock up a massive final tally of 903 points, with main rivals Shaftesbury Barnet Harriers 2nd with 776 and Team Avon in 3rd 587, making them Champions for the fourth year in a row.

The team as whole were superb and were a great credit to the club and I'm sure each and everyone one of the them will be stronger for the experience. In the last six years the lower age group have now placed 3rd once and 2nd five times, impressive but frustratingly close.

These results along with the upper age surely see BBHAC youngsters as the best club in Britain. We're looking forward to track and field season 2020 but not before the challenging winter season 2019/20.

*Paul Austridge*

# The Masters

## Summer 2019

*Last summer both the Men's and the women's teams were in the First division of the Southern Counties Vets Championships. At the end of the season both Ladies' and mens' team were facing relegation; the Ladies finishing in fourth place overall managed to avoid relegation and remain in Division 1 but the men experienced the bitter taste of relegation. It would be imperative that they climbed back at the first attempt, a tough ask given the difficulties of assembling teams for matches but no doubt a huge reservoir of talent and experience from a versatile squad would go a long way to helping them achieve that goal. As with 2018 only 5 of the 6 matches took place as the fourth match at Medway Park was cancelled due to unfavourable weather. Unfortunately no alternative dates could be found.*

### Sutcliffe Park, Eltham 3rd May 2019

In this first match of the season the club fielded 9 men and 8 women. A great start from the men's team saw them take first place in the first match of the season with a number of fine performances. There were first places for Simon Parish in the M35 400m, Gareth Evans in the M35 3000m and Stephen Langdon in the M50 javelin throwing a distance of 34.09m.

There was good back-up from the rest of the team with 2nd places for Steve Hough (M35B 3000m) and Reynaldo Guevara (M35 pole vault). The other members of the team placed 3rd or 4th; Dan Marks (M35A 400m), Simon Parish (M35 triple jump), Gareth Evans (M35 javelin throw), Roger Beswick (M50 400m, 3000m and triple jump), Alan Hardy (M50 pole vault), Rob Brown (M60 400m and triple jump)

In the Women's league there were first places for Carole Coulon (W35 3000m), Jackie Montgomery (W50 triple jump), Helen Godsell (W50 400m and W60 triple jump). Anne Cilia competed in W35 triple jump and was 3rd in W60 javelin throw. Maz was 3rd in W60 400m and Zoë Kingsmill competed in W50

3000m. There were two B string runners, Sarah Belaon (400m) and Jennie Butler was 2nd in 3000m.

The men finished first with a slight lead of 2 points whilst the women were placed second 8 points behind the initial leaders.

### Dartford 13th May 2019

Central Park Dartford but not Central Park New York was the scene of the next match which was less successful for both teams. There was disparity amongst the sexes with 12 men and 3 women. Again the strength in the A string wasn't matched by the B string where only one man competed. This was Blair Wilson who acquitted himself with a 1st place in the 200m and 2nd in the 1500m.

Other 1st places included Rob Brown (M60 1500m), Richard Coe (M60 discus), a 2nd by Tom Phillips in M50 200m and a 3rd by Ian Firla (M35 1500m). The club was also represented by Mark Ellison, Alan Hardy, Dan Marks, Simon Parish and Jim Phelan who as our eldest competitor still came close to a place in the M50 discus.

The team finished 3rd on the day but in equal first position overall with 2 other teams.

## Continued

With a less successful performance to that in the first match the men had to settle with third place which meant that they dropped to third place in the league but remained in close contact with the leaders.

Meanwhile for the ladies Helen Godsell led the way with a 1st place in the W50 200m, by a winning margin of 2 seconds from the next finisher, and 1st again in the W60 1500m, a comfortable victory by 19 seconds. To demonstrate her versatility she also gained a 2nd place in the W50 long jump.

Anne Cilia demonstrated her versatility by competing in W35B 200m, W50 1500m and discus, W60 long jump. The third woman in the team was Sarah Belaon. She ran W35A 200m and 1500m. This gave the team 4th place in the match but 3rd overall.

Thanks must go to Anne for taking on the Team Manager's role while Maz was in Hungary.

### **Tonbridge** **31st of May 2019**

Now on to Tonbridge School where we had 10 men and 3 women and the team's performances were reflected by their respective numbers.

There was accordingly an improved performance from

the men with 1st places in the A string from Tom Phillips M60 100m and Stephen Langdon M60 shot, and coming in the younger categories of the B string from Simon Parish in 100m, and Darren Cornielle in the B String 1500m. However the real stand out performance came in the 4x100m relays as a truly veteran team comprising Tom Phillips, Blair Wilson, Clem Leon and Simon Parish claimed a narrow victory by just 1 second over Ashford.

There were various performances in age category M50 by Clem Leon (M60) for the 100m, hammer and shot where he gained 3rd place. Steve Langdon (M60) also competed in M50 high jump. Blair Wilson was 2nd in M35A 100m and M35 shot and third places for Gareth Evans (M35 high jump) and Heath Anthony (M50 1500m). In his first appearance for the club Roger Platt came 4th in M35 hammer.

With their team performance the men were able to finish second and achieve second place overall.

The ladies with only 3 athletes managed 1 first place from Helen Godsell (W50 100m) and a third place by Sarah Belaon (W35A 1500m). Helen also ran W50 1500m

and Sarah W35A 100m and W35 shot. Maz competed in W35B 1500m and W60 100m and shot.

The team finished 6th but were 4th overall.

### **Ashford** **24th June 2019**

The match at Medway (scheduled for 10th June) having been cancelled the action moved on to the Julie Rose Stadium. The disparity between the two teams was further marked with 12 men and 2 women.

For the men this meant extra firepower (which included Alex Gibbins) and the match was a distinct triumph. There were 1st places for Ian Firla in the M35 B string at 3000m, decisively beating the field, Blair Wilson in the M35 A string at 400m, Alex Gibbins M40 completing the double in the 3000m (by a crushing margin of 40 seconds), M35 categorists Roger Platt in the Pole Vault and Blair Wilson in the Triple Jump, and late sixty-something Ken Daniel, providing another 3000m 1st place.

After the relay victory at Tonbridge it was now the mens' 4x400m team's turn to register a 1st, Blair Wilson being joined by Dan Marks, Alex Gibbins and Darren Cornielle who collectively



cruised home, this time by a comfortable 34 seconds over Paddock Wood.

These performances were backed up by 2nd places for Alan Hardy (M50 pole vault), Richard Coe (M60 hammer), Daniel Marks (M35B 400m) and Clem Leon (M50 triple jump). Clem also placed 3rd in M50 400m and competed in M50 hammer. Roger Platt also placed 3rd in M35 hammer. Finally the team performance was completed by John Turner appearing in M50 3000m.

The team were 1st in this match and moved up to equal first overall with Ashford.

The only two ladies were Jackie Montgomery and Maz Turner. Jackie contributed points in the high jump, hammer, and triple jump with a 3rd place, whilst Maz scored her points in the W60 3000m and W50 400m. As a result of this the ladies could only finish 6th in the match but remained placed 4th in the overall league.

### **Erith Stadium** **19th July 2019**

In the final Kent League Masters match at Erith the club fielded 8 men and 7 women and the men knew that they only needed to avoid Tonbridge winning the match by more than 2 or 3 clear

points to ensure promotion back to Division 1.

Even with a reduced contingent the men contributed some fine performances, Blair Wilson especially winning 1st places in the 100m and long jump. He was joined in gaining 1sts by Heath Anthony M50 800m, Ken Daniel M60 800m and Darren Corneille M35 in the B string 800m. Another display of versatility from Clem Leon resulted in a trio of 3rd places in the M50 100m, long jump and discus, and although the relay team, this time 4x200m did not win their event they too claimed a 3rd place. There were also supporting appearances from Alan Hardy M60 long jump, and Steve Hough M35B 100m.

The men's team finished the season on equal match points in second place with Ashford but came 1st with the highest overall score. This means that they will be back in the 1st division next year.

The women just needed to hold on to 4th place to avoid relegation to 2nd division and that's just what they were able to do. There were 1st places for Louisa Vallins (W35A 100m) and for Helen Godsell (W50 100m). Helen was 2nd in W60 800m, 4th in

W35 long jump and 3rd in the 4x200m relay together with Louisa Vallins, Sarah Belaon and Jackie Montgomery. Jackie also competed in W50 long jump (2nd), W50 discus (3rd) and W 50 high jump. Sarah Belaon ran in W35B 100m, W35A 800m and was our W35 discus thrower. Maz Turner ran in W35B 800m, Zoë Kingsmell in W50 800m and Anne Cilia competed in W60 discus.

A great effort by the very small team who turn out and compete for the cub in this league. Many of our competitors competed in lower age group categories to ensure those essential extra points were gained. Many thanks as well to John Turner for his amazing help, encouragement and support at all the matches.

### **Elsewhere**

Elsewhere Tom Phillips recently broke the M65 200m record with his run at The Kent Masters League in Dartford on 13th May. It also put him at the top of the UK M65 rankings. His time was 27.7, and two weeks later he won the 100m and 200m golds at the SCVAC finals in Abingdon. Also winning a medal was Stephen Langdon who took silver in the Javelin.

*Maz Turner*

# Maintaining an imperious reign in the YDL

## The Junior men in the Premier Division and European Champions Final 2019

*The 2019 season was ultimately the most successful in the history of the Club's junior men's section, but it didn't start that way. Off the back of three years of having dominated the Premier Division of the YDL and getting to Europe the year before, it was always going to be tough to maintain our imperious reign.*

### Early reverse

With a number of the stars from last season's final in Castellon having moved up to senior level and arch-rivals Shaftesbury Barnet having once again been active in the "transfer market" during the winter it was not a complete surprise when we found ourselves on the receiving end of a 60 point defeat at the first league fixture in Reading.

### Convincing victories

It was back to the drawing board for team managers Rod and Nic, so that by the time we got to the second fixture it was an altogether different proposition. The squad was bolstered by the belated introduction of several talented first year U17s such as Dillon Claydon (in the discus) and Barnaby Corry (in pole vault), the return from injury of a few "old hands" plus the arrival of a couple of new members, notably U17 sprint

sensation Jeriel Quainoo. The outcome was a thoroughly convincing win and a day that was littered with some exceptional performances. There was a triple A-string win in the heavy throws for Ben Hawkes, a sprint double for Jeriel; in the distance events Ollie Bright and Angus Harrington both took 800m/1500m win doubles and in the relays Ethan Brown anchored both 4x100m and 4x400m teams to wins which included a "UK lead" time in the 4x100m.

On to the third fixture at the home of our nemesis Shaftesbury, but by now the team was really beginning to hit their strides. We came home with a 100-point victory over the black and white stripes, pretty much securing our place in the national final for another year. Ethan

Brown, fresh from a 400m win and club record in the nationals the week before took the 200m and once again played a big part in double relay wins where the club took all 4 races. Jump talent Kelechi took the high jump with a 2m leap, there was another double for Jeriel, fine wins for Pedro Gleadall and Barnaby Corry in the Pole Vault plus a double win for Nathan Bushnell and PB win for Dillon in the discus. The final fixture at home in summer-holiday hit August was more or less a dead rubber but there was a party atmosphere in the sunshine at Norman Park. A highlight was double hurdles win for English Schools champion Alex O'Callaghan-Brown and other wins included Matthew Francis in the 3k, Lewis Mills in the steeplechase and Ben



*The Champions Clubs' final squad, a select few of the many who competed in the YDL this summer*

Sutton in the long jump. That wrapped up another league victory and confirmed our place in the National Final.

### The best in the country

On to Manchester for the final and an astonishing day it was to be. The junior men were utterly dominant against the supposed best 5 other clubs in the country – taking 19 A-string wins and 18 B-string wins. At under 17 there were double wins for Jeriel, Ollie Bright and Dillon. Ollie Briars was back to his best in the 400m and Pablo Seema Roca was back from an injury-hit season to take the 1500m. The U20s were even more dominant. Some fine wins included Ben Gardiner in the 800m, Josh Watson in the sprint hurdles and a double win in the heavy throws for Philip Bartlett. Meanwhile the sprinters once again dominated both relays. At the end of the day the entire squad recorded 903 points (including 410 from the B&B junior women) which meant both male and female squads were the best in the country and should go on to represent the country for a third year in Europe.

### We are Rod's 22, for the black, mauve and blue

Back to the 2019 season and the stage was set for the final fixture of the year, the



*One of the 'few' in rain soaked Leiria*

European Champion Clubs final, in Leiria Portugal. Throughout the season, 80 or so athletes had been part of our success story, backed by the work of all our coaches, officials, supportive parents and other volunteers who had helped the squad achieve such extraordinary feats during the season. Ultimately, it was sad that we could only take 22 for the trip to Portugal but hopefully others will be inspired to want to follow in their footsteps in years to come. The match in Leiria was between the 8 best junior squads across Europe, many of whom boasted multiple internationals (at senior level) and a level of funding that the Club can only dream about. Unsurprisingly the standard of competition was exceptionally high but our athletes rose to the challenge – everyone that stepped out onto the track (in incessant rain) produced performances that they could be proud of. On the day there were two individual golds – Jeriel Quainoo in the 100m in 10.79 (he also took bronze in the 200m) and Ollie Bright

who produced a superb last 200m home to take the win in a tactical 1500m. We won gold in both relays – the 4x100m squad of Matt Knight, Myles Xavier, Zute Ogbedeh and Jeriel won in 41.77 – the fastest by the club since 2012. The 4x400m squad of Alex O'Callaghan Brown, Ollie Briars, Ben Gardiner and Ethan Brown set a new club record of 3:14.90 (a time that is faster than any junior team in the UK other than the junior GB squad, since 2010!). Other individual medallists on the day included silvers for Angus Harrington in the 800m, Josh Watson the 110m hurdles and team captain Kelechi Aguocha in the high jump. The charismatic Theo Adesina delighted everyone with a fine 6.87m jump to take bronze in the long jump. Overall, the squad were runners-up to Fenerbache of Turkey – the best ever result in the Club's history – Well done to everyone that played their part throughout the season.

*Rod Harrington*

# The Southern Athletics League

## 2019

*The club had another good season on the Southern Athletics league finishing third in the league ahead of the 2018 champions, Chelmsford. We finished with two wins, two second and one third place. The league once again provided competition opportunities to a range of athletes, underpinning success in other leagues throughout the season. The highlight of the season was probably the women's 4x400m in the first match at Gillingham.*

### Gillingham 13th April

The first match of the season always feels like a challenge, particularly with an Easter as late as it is this year. Several groups of athletes who would normally be competing were away warm weather training (a wise move bearing in mind the icebergs seen floating in the water jump at the track) and we were hit with a spate of late withdrawals suggesting we would struggle to get anything from the match.

A desperate text to a man who will now forever be known to me as Tim "is there anything else I can do" Ayres and an early morning email from Shaunagh saying "I'm free

now if you need me" changed the mood from one of fear to hopeful anticipation.

We turned up at the track to find that neither Crawley nor Southampton had travelled in great numbers. This, coupled with a mind set of athletes saying "what else can we do" resulted in a strong start to the match with many outstanding performances.

However we dominated on the track and had several strong performances in the field resulting in us winning the match from host club Medway & Maidstone by a convincing 27.5 points. We ran a swift 3:20.83 in the men's 4x400m and then had the pleasure of watching an



*The Women's 4x400 team... performed to the largest crowd ever for the SAL*





inspiring performance the women's 4x400m. comprising Dina, Shannon, Holly and Krystal who were lining up for the final women's event of the afternoon in front of what was probably the largest crowd ever for a SAL event. The gun went and Dina flew out of the blocks to run a stunning first leg handing over to Shannon. By this stage we were more than 100m ahead of our nearest competitors with Holly and Krystal bringing the baton home. As Krystal came off the final bend it was clear that the club record would fall but by how much? Krystal worked hard down the final straight to finish in an outstanding time of 3:40.54 which was another league and club record which we were later informed was 11th on the UK all-time list. Well done team.

### **Chelmsford** **19th May**

The second match was tough with many athletes unavailable due to competing events on the same day. We finished 3rd just 2 points behind 2nd place and were

left ruining too many gaps on the day. Highlights of the day included an outstanding 54.7 by Rachel Dickens in the women's 400m. Both athletes won the relevant performance of the match award and were well deserved.

### **Harrow** **15th June**

The third match of the season at Harrow was a closely run affair. Harrow won the match with many of their national league athletes competing. The BBHAC team competed really well with several athletes covering multiple events to give us the edge over Colchester and Bournemouth helping us finish in 2nd place. Lowlight of this match was the valiant team manager thinking he might be able to fill a gap in the 400mH but realising that bravery and stupidity were easily confused!

### **Norman Park** **13th July**

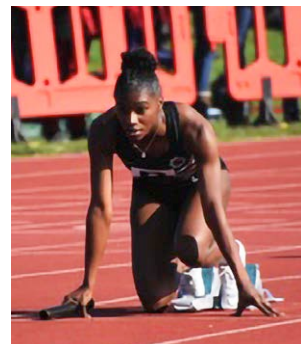
We had home comforts for match 4 and were comfortable winners by 22 points. Again, a lack of depth in the field cost us points, preventing us from winning by an even bigger margin. Performance of the day had to go to super vet Blair Wilson who threw or jumped 4 PBs in the 5 individual events he competed in!

### **Battersea Park** **17th August**

The final event was at Battersea Park where we finished a strong 2nd place behind league champions Windsor Slough & Eton. Once again we had a number of strong events on the day such as first places for the mens 4x110m relays, and double firsts from Niamh Bridson-Hubbard in the 880m and 3000m, as well as two firsts for the women pole vaulters Lois Walton and Holly Platt and a first in the Hammer for Molly Platt but not quite sufficient depth to pull us slightly higher up the league.

A massive thank you to all of the athletes and supporters and particularly to the club officials without whom the league would not be able to run.

*Nick Swatton*



*Dina about to fly out of the blocks to run a stunning first leg*

# The Parris Handicap Series

## 2019

*The monthly handicap race series started in 1993 when a decision was made to hold a race in place of the usual Ted Pepper 10km which was cancelled from the early May bank holiday. A replacement race was held instead on a Wednesday in the late summer. It became in 1998 the Roy Parris Memorial Handicap, club member and social runner Roy Parris having died of cancer that year and in his memory the annual Parris Handicap was then established.*

*After there had been a few unofficial winners an official trophy, the Parris Shield was presented to its inaugural winner Mark Ellison, and over the years a succession of runners of varying abilities have claimed it after a series of six 5k races held in the months from April to September.*

It is a testament to the success of this race that in 1993 the maximum number of runners in any race was 19 whilst 34 different runners took part in the series. This year between 17 and 24 runners turned out for each event and 44 different runners made at least one appearance during the summer with 5 of them completing all 6 races. We had several regular juniors taking place and it's always great to see them turning up putting in creditable performances.

The April race was won by John Leeson followed over the next 5 months by wins for Heath Griffin, Bernie Bater twice, and George Collins twice. The fastest man over the course was Marco Arcuri in a time of 16:47 and the fastest lady was Amy Leach in 20:10. The course record remains at 15:13, which was set by Barry Stephenson in June 2004.

At the end of the series the overall winner for 2019 was Heath Griffin with 105 points. He finished third last year and second in 2017 so he can take great pride in this achievement of consistency.

His performances held steady over the course of the season with net times ranging from 21:22 to 20:25 whilst his placings in the individual races were, no lower than

9th and one 1st and two 3rd places. It is often the case in this type of competition that a runner who finishes high up in one race will have to settle for one of the lower places in the next one courtesy of the handicapper but Heath followed up 3rd place in July's race with 1st in the next month's one.

The other leading final places went to Bernie Bater whose points total of 93 was assisted by two race wins, and Damian Hayes on 85 points who claimed a 2nd and 3rd place during the season. However, this year's competition would not see a tight finish for first place.

The early lead was taken up by Tom Leeson and then James Unwin after two events. The leading positions at that point did suggest that this might be an open competition but after the third race in June it was looking more like a three horse race between Bernie Bater now leader, Heath Griffin and Damian Hayes.

Heath, who had been in the leading pack from the beginning, moved into the lead place after four events in July and having won the August race effectively clinched the Shield by establishing a 15 point lead going into the final event, something which would be



*Parris Handicap winner Heath Griffin flanked by Bernie Bater and Damian Hayes receiving their new trophies from President Julian Golding*

unlikely to be overhauled.

Although Bernie Bater pulled back a few places it did not prevent Heath from winning the Shield comfortably even with his lowest placing all summer.

The tightest finish in a race was one of 2 seconds between race winner Heath Griffin and Dave Beadle in August with the third placed runner only a few seconds behind them.

It is always the aim of the handicapper to achieve the objective of all of the runners returning within a small time-band. This year the narrowest interval between the arrival of the first and last finishers was 2 minutes and 56 seconds in

the April event. In the other events the broadest time-band was 15 minutes and 44 seconds in the June race.

One of the big highlights of the 2019 series were the barbeques that Deniz Mehmed and Gareth Griffin arranged for every Wednesday night of The Parris Handicap. These proved to be enormously successful and attracted not only the runners but also non-runners and guests alike. Deniz and Gareth have already indicated that they will run these events again in future years. Not only is the catering first class but our bar profits increase considerably on these nights!

When concern is being expressed about the declining attendance on Wednesday evenings, the barbeques provide a welcome boost of popularity and numbers in what should be the focal point of the club's week.

These events could not take place without volunteers so many thanks to our Time Keepers Mike and Terri, Records Steve Hollingdale, Denise King and Peter Lovell and of course my wonderful wife Sheila who takes the entries and helps calculate the winners at the end of the evening.

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*Richard Griffin*

# Blackheath & Bromley 150th Anniversary

## Leader board Mile Challenge

### (Part 1 Summer 2019)

The concept of the leader board Mile challenge was a concept devised by Past Presidents Chris Haines and Derek Gregory, designed to have as many club members as possible compete in the rarely run one-mile event preferably on the track, anywhere, as long as it could be recorded and proof given. A small donation of £1.50 ensured entry. Given that the season ended abruptly the organisers have offered to host one more series of races once it is safe to do so.

Past Presidents Nick Brooks and Steve Hollingdale along with VP Tim Ayres organised a series of mile races on 13 different dates during 2019 and early 2020 which was not easy given the track was closed for a large part of 2019. We

experienced both small fields of runners and often large fields, in fact on one day we had to hold three different races to manage the number of runners, but generally speaking the races were just single races each time. If Nick was not time keeping with Steve, then John and Margaret Baldwin kindly clocked the times with John Hubbard assisting in recording the finishing order.

Club members running a mile elsewhere will be able to have that inserted on the 150 Miles Leaderboard on production of suitable evidence of that performance and payment of £1.50 administration fee to the Project Organiser.

Prizes of £50 each will be awarded to best male and female athletes as well as for the best age adjusted performance. In the event of the best male or female athlete also achieving the best age adjusted performance, the third prize will go to the second best age adjusted performance athlete. Prizes were awarded for fastest male and fastest female and also for best age group performance (not including fastest runners) which was run by either a man or a woman.

On April 7th Norman Park and 9 degrees welcomed 35 competitors to the first in a series of mile challenges over the coming 150th year of our great club. An overcast day but

with no wind meant athletes could set down a marker for the season, many running personal bests having not raced this rarely held event before.

The three main categories of men, women and age graded means we have Sam Reardon leading the mens category with 4:53.8, Tom Desborough 2nd in 5:18.0 and nine year old Heath Griffin 3rd in 5:54.3. In the ladies section the youngsters lead the pack with Megan Barlow first in 5:45.2, Maria Salamanca second in 5:53.5 and Isla Griffin third in 6:44.7, these athletes are aged 11, 10 and 11 respectively, with Rob Brown and Helen Godsell very close behind.

In the age graded challenge Maria Salamanca leads with 82.16% followed by Megan Barlow 81.99% and Sam Reardon 81.71%. Other tables of interest will be created as the season unfolds, among the Presidents Ken Daniel leads, Tim Soutar is 2nd and Julian Golding 3rd, and the VPs are led by Rob Brown, with Adrian Stocks 2nd and Andy Tucker 3rd.

At the Open meeting on 17 July 2019 the club saw many new club members come to action in the mile challenge so we now have almost 100 having undertaken the challenge.

As some mile races were added from elsewhere the table is



*Ian Montgomery who's just noticed that his wife is on the next page*



changing a lot. Josh Schofield has the fastest mile at 4:20.55 while Amarisa Sibley leads the ladies event with 5:24.0 from Kate Price 1 second behind. Ken Daniel is the fastest Past President with 6:10.4 and we have 13 athletes above 80% on the age group rankings with Sam Reardon leading the way on 88.64%.

In total the races saw nearly 130 club members take part with many coming back on numerous occasions, we also saw 29 guests take part including parents, siblings and friends. Phil Sesemann recorded the men's fastest mile with 4:04.33 with Josh Schofield second in 4:20.55 and Sam Reardon third with 4:31.0. In the ladies' section Niamh Bridson Hubbard was a runaway winner, not only winning the race on the day by a huge margin but also leading the times by an even bigger margin with her 4:57.1 performance. Teenagers Hannah Clark and Amarisa Sibley were second and third respectively with 5:21.0 and 5:21.5.

Eight men broke 5 minutes and 34 men broke 6 minutes while in the ladies one broke 5 minutes, 12 ran under 6 minutes and 34 were inside 7 minutes. On the age group leader board Phil was fastest with 91.1% but is excluded through winning the men's section so Sam Reardon wins

with 88.64%, with Roger Beswick second with 88.54% and Josh Schofield 85.46%. Leading ladies were Niamh with 84.68% and would also have been excluded, so Helen Godsell normally sprinting around the track rather than running 4 laps second with 84.57% was the highest age group performer among the ladies, Amarisa Sibley second with 83.80% and then Kate Price third with 82.19%.

A further meeting was held on 11 August 2019 with 50 runners and a new ladies leader in Niamh Bridson Hubbard clocking a sub 5 minute mile. There was a new leader in the Leaderboard Mile after Phil Sesemann ran 4:04.33 in Cork the previous night. After this there was an enforced break in the Leaderboard whilst the Norman Park track was being re-surfaced.

So far Fifteen Past Presidents have taken part with Ken Daniel the fastest with 5:58.18, leading lady Ann Cilia 8:17.5. President Julian Golding a 20:18 200m runner in his prime and Commonwealth 200m Champion in 1998 ran a respectable 7:09 mile and his wife Samantha and son Justin (aged 8) also took part. Also great to see 2 race walkers take part with Shaun Lightman achieving 10:39.2 and teenager Abigail Smith clocking 8:42.7. Vice Presidents were not in abundance but Helen Godsell



*Jackie Montgomery aiming to close in on Ian*

was the leading lady with 7:16.79 and Tim Ayres led the men with 5:28.04.

As we lost much of the season to the track closure it is hoped that we will be able to hold additional series of races to make up in the second half of the 150th Anniversary Year. This will give athletes other opportunities to come and prove their fitness, reduce their times a little as most people will be a year older which is great for the youngsters, but might not be so good for the oldies like the Past Presidents. The performances to beat are all detailed above.

Thanks to everybody who competed so far, we are still hoping to have logged 150 different club members so 21 short at this time, so come and give it a go. Also a big thanks to my partners Steve Hollingdale and Tim Ayres, and officials John and Margaret Baldwin and John Hubbard who gave up their time to enable these races to take place.

*Nick Brooks*

# The 150th Anniversary Open Meeting

## Norman Park, 17th July 2019

On 17th July, Norman Park hosted a special 150th Anniversary track meet, with a range of events, including the Sydney Wooderson Memorial 800m. The gathering was a huge success, with a fantastic atmosphere from the spectators accompanying some excellent performances on the track and in the field, including many from members participating in events they wouldn't normally do. Athletes of all ages competed from Under 11s to vet 75s.

This was not exclusive to Blackheath and Bromley but was a truly open evening. There were competitors from Chelmsford, Epsom and Ewell, ACBSS Belgium, London City AC, Crawley, Dartford Harriers, Birchfield Harriers, Thames Valley and Herne Hill Harriers.



*Clem Leon and Ian Montgomery in the vets mile heat*

A large number of competitors appearing were being coached and the collective efforts of several distinguished coaches were represented in all events on track and fields such as Ian Dibbins (100m, javelin), Jay Galley 100m, 800m, long jump), Roy Dickens (150m), Bud Baldaro (800m), David Liston (800m), Andy Frankish (800m), Nigel Stickings (800m), Mick Jones (mile), John Wakeman (pole vault) and Paul Patten (long jump).

There were several 100m races, most of which were competed by younger age groups, the best performance coming from Toby Olubi a Blackheath senior clocking 10.99 in whose heat most of the fastest times were ran. In the 150m Ollie Smith running for Harrow and Brunel University won his heat in 16.95.

The highlight event though was the Sydney Wooderson Memorial 800m which was by invitation only. This was won by James West from Oregon in 1:49.50 with the field of seven runners finishing within 9 seconds of each other.

However the largest attended event was the mile of which there were two races, one for the mainly seniors and younger vets, and the other for the older vets, the race line ups grading according to personal best. The fast stream race (23) was won by Danny Brewer in



4:45 from Roger Vilardell and Marco Arcuri both on 4:27. In this field five runners clocked under 5 minutes and 13 clocked under 6. In the second heat there were performances from veterans such as Helen Godsell, Ian Young, Chris Woodcock and Alan Pickering. These races were also part of the 150th Anniversary Leaderboard series.

A small number of field events took place including the pole vault which was won by Blackheath's Barnaby Corry with a height of 3.90m, and the long jump which was won by Blackheath's Myles Xavier in a leap of 6.47m.

We also had a record turnout of over 40 athletes participating in our 150th Leaderboard Mile event and thanks must also go to the club members who ran the bar and the BBQ. We are already looking forward to 2069 and our 200th Anniversary event! Well maybe not some of us but certainly those under 50 perhaps!

*Wilf Orton*

# Blackheath Harriers...

## Some Personal Memories

*During this anniversary year we shall feature some recollections of the club's past through the eyes of some of its most distinguished athletes. Here are recollections of Alan Stevens, Vice President, member for 60 years but also a life member and the club's man in New Zealand.*

*He writes: "One of the aims during my overseas experience in London was to find a good harrier club then get a job in the area. It was very common in the 1950s/60s for Commonwealth citizens to head off by sea to the UK, where we had right of entry. Certainly a springboard for much "experience"! My older brother Graeme had competed for Cambridge in a match against Blackheath Harriers and recommended that I should try them. So after touring during the 1959 summer I contacted them and on 9 September travelled down to their headquarters at Hayes in Kent, met the members and being Wednesday night went out for a run with them – and decided to join!"*

'Blackheath is one of the oldest harrier clubs, being formed in 1869 at the Kings Arms pub in Peckham, a then outer suburb of London, as the Peckham Hare & Hounds, before moving to the Green Man in Blackheath in 1878, taking the name Blackheath Harriers.

Blackheath was a large open grass space in SE London not far from Greenwich, but the spread of London forced them further out and after various moves, finally in 1927 they arrived at Hayes in Kent and purchased a property at 56 Bourne Way not far from the railway station. For me this was highly convenient as Hayes was the end of the line with frequent trains from Charing Cross from where District Line tubes went to Earls Court. Also along from Charing Cross at 415 The Strand was New Zealand House where I collected my mail. The clubhouse was two-storied with change rooms and ablutions on the ground floor, club rooms on the top floor with a bar and kitchen – really lovely. A large car park and adjoining caretaker's house.

'I hitchhiked up to Cambridge and borrowed Graeme's scooter "The Imp" to then scout out for a job

in the Hayes area. The role I was offered by the Office Furniture & Partitioning Co at Croydon was as their London Representative, so it made sense to live in London instead of the daily commute from Hayes. Hence my decision to live at the Overseas Visitor Club (OVC) in Earls Court meant most training was at Hyde Park, apart from weekly Wednesday nights with Blackheath.

### Becoming a member

'So I duly signed up and was elected a member on 5 October 1959. Unlike New Zealand the sport in the UK had separate organisations and clubs for men and women, so Blackheath was male only. Whilst the clubhouse was in a built-up area a path opposite led up onto the common where all races started with courses of 5, 7½ & 10 miles across an undulating green belt of farms, woods and country lanes. Back at the clubhouse the steward had the boiler going for the single shower to wash off the mud then you climbed into one of the nine 4ft square x 2ft deep tiled baths for a luxurious soak!

Upstairs afternoon tea was served, the bar opened and those who stayed entertained

## Continued

with a “smoke concert” – members doing items. As the only Kiwi member in their first 100 years I was always prevailed upon to perform a “Native Dance” – usually Pokarekare Ana & Kamate Kamate! On Saturdays at Hayes I was often inveigled into staying late...! At the sound of the incoming train passing, I had to down my beer, grab my gear bag and sprint around to the station to catch the last train back to Charing Cross. I could safely doze most of the way then catch the District line to Earls Court!

‘On 17 October I had my first race – the 5 mile championship and I had realised that there were a number of farm stone or wood fences that all the Brits climbed which, as a Kiwi I could vault, so used to gain advantages! I came 5th, but with the sealed handicap placed 3rd and was awarded one of the club silver spoons. I had avoided the handicapper, who thought I was only 19, but he soon assessed me and it never again won another top handicap placing! Afterwards I was introduced to a small, slight man, thick glasses, who was our most famous member – Sydney Wooderson. He was

the UK’s champion middle distance athlete of the 1930s – the favourite for the 1936 Berlin Olympics 1500m, won by Jack Lovelock. Unfortunately he had badly twisted his ankle previously and didn’t make the final. Quite a remarkable man, very humble, who bridged the war years and in 1946 won the European track 5000m and in 1948 won the England National CC title over 7½ miles, showing his versatility and durability.

### Early competitions

‘I had two good seasons 1959/60 & 60/61 with them, travelling down to Hayes most Wednesdays for training, usually around the country roads, passing Biggin Hill airfield, famous in World War Two and the London Police Dog School which always got them barking. Being midweek I was always amused in the change rooms to see the “City Men’s” bowler hats, wing collar shirts and brollys etc.! You could book previously for an excellent 2 course supper afterwards. The Club Captain, Alan Wood, who lived at Hammersmith, had a car and used to drop me back to Earls Court. With my job finishing mid-afternoon

I was able to run from Earls Court along West Cromwell Road and up Exhibition to Hyde Park and train around the Guards horse rides and into Kensington Gardens. That first winter London still had smogs and the heavy sand horse rides had trees each side which in the gloom enabled me to keep in the middle. When I got back to the OVC I had black around my nostrils and my track top stank of soot etc – not very healthy. Fortunately that changed when smokeless fuel and zones were introduced.

‘During the week you received a card informing you that you had been selected to compete for the A team on Saturday and meet generally at a train station where the captain would have the tickets. I kept my name on the list as Blackheath had traditional matches against another famous club or clubs in the Greater London area and as far afield as Oxford & Cambridge. At Oxford we changed at the famous Iffley Road track where Roger Bannister broke the 4 minute mile and at Cambridge (after Graeme had left) at the Fenners track and across the dreaded winter ploughed fields with tea afterwards in their Captain’s room in



college, toasting crumpets over the gas fire!

‘We had Mob Matches against Orion (Epping Forest), Ranelagh (Richmond Park) & South London Harriers (Coulsdon – South Downs); all these were home and away alternate years, as were the other matches. All members of both clubs started and counted for places – the club with the smallest number, less three, was the final tally for each. At South London Harriers I met Alec Pirie, Gordon’s father. At Blackheath we had the 5, 7½ & 10 mile championships and I also competed in the South of the Thames, Southern Counties and English Nationals. Our top men were John “Kipper” Herring (competed for GB in the 5,000m at 1964 Tokyo Olympics) and John Baldwin. I hovered around 3rd/4th with Tony Weeks-Pearson and Alan Brent.

### Memorable events

‘On 12 March 1960 I competed in the English Nationals at West Bromwich, a dreary Midlands coal town, with snow on the surrounding slag heaps. The special train from Paddington had carriages marked with the club’s names, similarly

the schools used at West Bromwich had classrooms allocated for clubs. The 9 mile course was three laps of a large playing field area and adjacent rough land; 650 starters, 93 teams lined up in single file in roped start pens, I was 4th in line for Blackheath so had a slow start, running in single file for ages, often jumping over some poor bod who had fallen over. Being used to the New Zealand Champs with only 50 starters it was very impersonal with this huge crowd of runners. Officials around the course would call out rough placings so I managed to keep my pace and finished 149th, our 3rd man home and our team was 16th. My first experience of the funnel finish. Back at the school, out on the tennis court quadrangle 100s of tin baths were set out with the local fire brigade filling them with hot water for you to try and wash the mud off. You can imagine all these naked men shivering in the winter cold!

‘The other memorable event was the famous annual London-Brighton Relay on 9 April 1960, approx. 50 miles starting at Westminster Bridge, with 12 in each team for which there was keen

competition during the weeks before. I ran lap 11 into the outer suburbs of Brighton and the Club Gazette reports “Stevens struggled to hold 4th place.....” and we finished in 5th place. My social life at Earls Court had affected my training! This was a true classic event with amazing sponsorship by the “News of the World” newspaper group which included special buses and a lavish afternoon tea at one of the top Brighton Hotels.

‘When Graeme came down from Cambridge in early 1960 and stayed with me at the OVC he also joined Blackheath and ran with me in Club events and some outside races, but after the stress of his PhD finals and the ongoing effect of the flu epidemic he was never able to show his true ability. But he enjoyed the camaraderie and when many of his/our Victoria University harrier friends arrived in London they too came down to Hayes, some to run, but to enjoy the social life. We were able to secure tickets for them to attend the Annual Blackheath Dinner. This was held in the Members Dining Room at the House of Commons. Before I arrived in 1959 the host had been the

## Continued

local MP – none other than the previous Prime Minister Harold McMillan, in 1960 our host was Sir Wavell Wakefield – the famous rugby man. A black tie affair, we were given a tour of the Commons & Lords before gathering in the ante room for drinks, then our Kiwi group were seated at the Club Captain's table – an honour remarked on by some! As you can imagine it was a most memorable affair. In 1961 I was able to secure tickets for my OVC friends and on leaving Earls Court had great delight in saying "House of Commons please cabbie!" The cloak room attendant at Westminster looked askance when Clive Walker handed over his duffle coat. Our host that year was MP Chris Chataway – the famous British athlete – part of Bannister's 4 minute mile success.

### Back in New Zealand

'In 1961 my job at the OVC with shift work and weekends meant I could only intermittently train or get out to Hayes, but after my mid-year trip to South Africa and decision to go home in December I visited Blackheath to say farewell and also paid up Life Membership – not knowing what the future held! This

entitled me to receive a copy of the Club "Gazette" which kept me informed and whilst I still had a UK bank account made an annual donation.

'Back in New Zealand one of the bonuses' in my job as a Travel Consultant was Educationals and if they routed via London I endeavoured to visit Blackheath. A memorable occasion in 1969 was a match against Thames Hare & Hounds – claimed to be the original harrier club, the preserve of Oxford & Cambridge graduates. Their headquarters behind the Kings Head at Roehampton was unique for their ablutions – they had many ancient hip baths that you sat in like an armchair to wash yourself. Their course was on Richmond Park and I competed for Blackheath. I was honoured with the attendance of one of their old members, Sir Ian MacLennan, who as British High Commissioner in NZ had become our Scottish Patron and before retiring presented us with a cup in his name that, with hall marks, is the only genuine silver one we had. He had specially come up to London to see me and presented me with a copy of Thames H&H history.

### 50 years membership

'When I was elected to the IAAF Cross Country Committee in 1991 I attended the annual World Cross County Champs – usually held in Europe and often caught up with Blackheath folk supporting the event, also Ian Wilson as GB Team Manager. Graham Botley was the long time organiser of GB Supporters Tours to all the world athletic events and always invited me to their social gatherings. At the 1990 Commonwealth Games in Auckland we had a breakfast gathering of 15 "Heatherns", some also being members of competing teams. In 1995 en route to the WXC in Durham I stayed with him and he invited me as a guest to attend the annual Vice President's Supper, during which I was elected a Vice President, an honour that I have greatly appreciated.

'The sport in the UK finally reorganised the men and women into one organisation and Blackheath merged with Bromley Ladies AC to become Blackheath & Bromley Harriers & Athletics Club and even elected Lady Presidents!

'In subsequent visits to the UK with Helen I was

able to introduce her to the Club and members. Then in September 2009 we attended a special supper when I was presented with my 50 year membership plaque. I was particularly honoured with the attendance of 17 Past Presidents – only 2 of whom had been my contemporaries. I was pleased to have as my guests Grant Wheeler and his wife Fiona who made the trip up from Chichester where they lived. Grant of course was not only my Groomsman at our wedding, but our great Scottish Club Champion and member of the first two kiwi Teams to the World Cross Country Champs in 1965 and 67 where he ran against John Baldwin and the whole team had visited Hayes.

### **Celebrating 150 years**

‘Over the years many have visited Wellington and/or stayed with us: Don Hopgood, Pauline and Ian Wilson, Denis Lawrie, Tim and Vicki Soutar, Margaret and John Baldwin. I keep in touch by visiting the Club website each Monday to check on weekend results and other news. In 2019 the Club celebrates 150 years with a dinner – again at the House of Commons. Helen and I had planned a visit

to include this, but as the culmination of the season’s celebrations the date is set for November – too late and cold for us! Pity, as the only Kiwi in their first 100 years I had not attended that dinner in 1969, held as the guest of the London Lord Mayor in the Mansion House, as we were newly married, building a house and expecting our first child! However, one of the other events Blackheath had was a 100 x 1 mile track relay and challenged other clubs to participate. I organised Scottish to do this in Wellington and struggled to obtain 100 genuine Scottish runners. Sir Ian MacLennan, our Patron, offered, so did the first lap, which gave us wide publicity in the media. He handed over to Graeme and I ran the 100th lap, both as Life Members of Blackheath we provided the link. Unfortunately it was a terrible, windy day at the exposed Evans Bay track and our time was not competitive, but Blackheath kindly sent us a commemorative baton.

‘In the 1980s – 2020 the track and field side has become one of the top clubs in England mainly due to the creation of the BEES (ie B&Bs) Academy for youngsters. Thanks to the

devoted efforts of coaches, managers, officials etc these have matured into leading athletes that have seen their teams win National age grade titles and represent GB with distinction at European Championships. Two athletes in particular: Dina Asher-Smith and Adam Gemili have medalled at Olympics, Commonwealth and/or World champs. With the summer sport based at Norman Park in Bromley the Club decided in 2019 to sell the clubrooms at Hayes and rebuild a new complex at the Norman Park track.”

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*Alan Stevens*

# The true meaning and significance of Obituaries

## A point of view...

*These reflections came out of the experience of attending the funeral of Peter Long in May 2018, and addresses the question of whether there is still a place in club media for obituaries and tributes to those who are no longer with us in person but will always remain in spirit and influence.*

### Obituaries...

#### A joyous celebration of life?

The two most certain things in life are, according to the old cliché, death and taxes. The two most certain items to be found in the Gazette are athletics reports and obituaries. They have constantly been a gazette item ever since its inception in 1898 and have announced the passing of many famous names in club history. In my own time as editor over the past nine years or so, I have included notice of the deaths of some 30 or so Heatherns with such illustrious names as Don Gillate, Tony Weeks Pearson, Gary Botley, Peter Long, Jack Broughton and Alan Brent to name but a few and others who were less prominent but also ardent members of the club.

Naturally it is right and proper to remember those who have passed away although for some cynical members the immediate reaction would be 'ok that's fine but they're gone, and can't come back and anyway they belong to another age'.

But then it is so easy to confuse death, funerals and obituaries with sadness and morbidity. Surely funerals are sad times, not an occasion for happiness or contentment,

but for despair, loneliness and intense depression. Yet beneath the veneer of joyous celebration there are so many weddings where doubts may be cast over whether the marriage commencing would last the course and whether the occasion really manifests goodwill and fraternity.

Now contrast this with all those funerals, re-cast as memorial services which bring people together in a joyous celebration of a life well lived.

A joyous celebration of a person's life? Why yes, it's quite hard to find many of what used to be called funerals to be sad occasions. And of course obituaries seem these days to have taken on a different character. Looking back at obituaries from gazettes of past eras, they were often brief and perfunctory usually only a few lines in length giving a brief description of a person's life which didn't say that much about them as a person. In recent years they seem to have increased in content, and become more descriptive to become tributes to lives well lived, and legacies that will outlive the deceased. They go a long way beyond a mere notice of death and tell us a great deal



of who that person was, what they really accomplished, and how they influenced others to positive effect.

### **Leaving traces of influence**

Yet the perception of them in contemporary times is limited. From my own experience several years ago, when I was editing my first issue of the Gazette I was sent a lot of material in tribute of PP Don Gilliat who had recently died.

Anxious to advertise the club to the wider athletic world I sent copies of the Gazette to various running periodicals for constructive feedback. I was criticised by the Editor of Athletics Weekly no less for allocating too much space to obituaries as if the club were a haven of the undead!

While I could well agree with this (despite the fact that I had been requested by those sending me material to ensure it was printed in full and not abridged) my response might be that such a life was so full of interest that to stint on copy would not do justice to that life. Besides, when Sydney Wooderson's death was commemorated in 2007 a whole issue of the gazette was given up to him including a sixteen page supplement devoted to his life and achievements.

Mention of Sidney Wooderson emphasises the fact that the deceased leave traces of their influence and legacy; the present clubhouse has, since 2007, been officially named the Sidney Wooderson Centre and his portrait and action photo take pride of place in it. There are trophies galore on display in the trophy cabinet, and awarded annually named after dearly departed heatherns such, as the Bennett Cup, Ted Pepper Trophy, and D.K. Saunders Cup, and races are named for them such as the Will Bolton Memorial Relays and the Parris Handicap Series. The fact that these races are woven into the club fabric clearly reflects what obituaries say about the deceased.

Perhaps the most defining obituary comes not so much from that of Sydney Wooderson but from his brother Stanley which seems to encapsulate many aspects of a person's life. For his memorial service in January 2009 his grandson Bob Gunn wrote a commemorative poem which he read at the service and which defined who he was and the aspect of his varied and rich life. They included not just his athletic abilities but his other talents,

his values and characteristics, and wide range of activities, and these can be seen in other heatherns as the following observations show:

### **Ambition, endurance and family values**

Firstly those remembered were consummately ambitious, anxious to go beyond the confines of their original backgrounds. Don Gillate emerged from an unassuming background working in life assurance to a highly distinguished career as an educationalist leading to assignments with the British Council. During his early teaching years he rented out his house, living in a caravan, to pay for an acting course to improve his diction. Then, some had known adversity to the point where their very lives had been severely under threat, Fergus Anckorn's story "represents the triumph of the human spirit in conditions of complete adversity and despair". Taken prisoner by the Japanese in the Far East during World War Two, he would survive a number of close escapes such as bombings, live shells, being doused with creosote and coming close to being shot by firing squad. This closeness to death reached the point where survival

## Continued

made he and other liberated prisoners value their life and be determined to make the most of it and live it to the full.

Others like Jack Broughton had, in his athletic career, to overcome obstacles such as austerity, and lack of support in opportunities to prepare for and be fully ready for an Olympiad including being refused leave by his employers to compete in it. Such experiences made him stoic and willing to press on regardless.

Then there was Derrick Brickwood who suffered from tuberculosis for two long years and yet took up running aged 57 and completed several marathons, as well as participating in the 'Running Sixties' John O'Groats to Land End relay and an epic long-distance walk along the Cotswold Way.

### **Commitment and athletic achievement**

Next they were, loyal and committed club members who gave so much to the club. This would have been in a variety of roles and offices, well known by club members or going largely unnoticed until they were no longer there, their absence being duly felt. Along with

his throwing skills Gordon Hickey, in a long club career was described as a perfect "Club Man" in his obituary, who was involved in many works to improve the club house, and as a committee man, highly vociferous at meetings. PP Peter Baigent, although an active athlete in his earlier club career, served many years of devoted dedication to the management of club affairs including editorship of this magazine, directorship and chairmanship of BHHQ Ltd, management of Norman Park and the Presidency itself.

Two other examples include PP Alan Brent of whom the Club History described "his continued industry for the Club".... in creating "an impression of integrity, understanding and dedication not readily matched"; and then there was Hannah Cordell who in six years as Honorary Secretary ensured that committee meetings ran smoothly and minutes were circulated to committee ahead of meetings, including the innovation of reports being submitted by the chairs in advance. In committee Alan Brent's contributions were considered 'measured, thoughtful and intelligent with .... great knowledge and great judgment'.

In addition there were of course many talented athletes with distinguished pedigree. Leaving aside Sydney Wooderson (whose great achievements have already been well documented in the club's archives), some had particular achievements to take pride in. Jackie Meklar was a distinguished long distance runner who won the Comrades Marathon five times and a silver medal in the Commonwealth Games for South Africa. Gordon Hickey, although never competing at international level was, in his younger years a serious competitor in the high jump (winning the Southern Counties title), and in later years turned to the shot-put gaining national titles at over 70s level.

Tony Weeks-Pearson represented Britain in world student events and won domestic titles at county level, and then there was Jack Broughton who despite his disappointments in the 1948 Olympics went on to secure long distance titles and records.

### **Qualities, virtues and abilities**

Further many were well endowed with many qualities, virtues and abilities. This was most clearly displayed

in the example of Gary Botley. There was so much to write about him that it took the combined efforts of three people to illustrate this. They highlighted such qualities as creating trust and familiarity between people leading to camaraderie and enthusiasm; a deep capacity for understanding and to be sympathetic, tolerant and wise in dealing with people and showing compassion for others in their adversity.

Others were remembered for their qualities of kindness and courtesy (Don Gillate), lack of malice (John Ashton), earnestness (Tony Bounds) and generosity of spirit which applied to many who were encouragers and enablers of others. Of Stanley Wooderson it was said that he could be forthright in his opinions yet uphold the dignity of others ("though he loved to argue with you, he would never stoop to scorn").

Also there were those souls who were multi faceted or in other words had many sides to their personality and a wide variety of interests. Some of these would be in other sports such as football (Gordon Hickey having played in goal for an ITN team where "his voice could be clearly heard in

the opposition goalmouth") or Bill Graham, described as having played football "to a very decent level".

Another sport highly popular amongst those dearly departed was cricket, both played and watched. One such enthusiast was Peter Long, a Life member of Kent County Cricket Club described as having an "almost encyclopaedic knowledge" on it. There were also golfers, serious walkers and competitive cyclists.

And it goes beyond the realm of sport into most activities. Stanley Wooderson was described in Bob Gunn's poem as a fine actor who had met his wife through acting. His more famous brother Sydney could count playing the cello as one of his many accomplishments. Both brothers were described as all rounders in cultural pursuits and great authorities on the classics, history and literature. Don Gillate's illustrious career in education was followed by an equally illustrious retirement involved in the Globe Theatre, the National Trust, and as a guide to South Foreland Lighthouse. Jack Broughton would in his later years keep fit by going ballroom dancing four times a week, Tony Weeks-Pearson

was a novelist and historian, and then there was the 'remarkable Fergus Ankorn'; as a member of the Magic Circle for over 80 years he performed tricks at Circle gatherings over the years, in prisoner of war camps to entertain his comrades, and on Britain's Got Talent.

There were characters and mavericks, people with a taste for good living in stark contrast to the health conscious fanatics whose abstemiousness borders on the excessive. Jim Betts, a life-long smoker and devotee of real ale had the antithesis of what is today regarded as the ideal lifestyle of an athlete, Botley liked his beer and trips to the races, and Peter Long his friendly gatherings at cricket matches with fine ales.

And lastly there were those who kept up their commitment to their faith in their church activities such as John Brittain, who introduced me to this club over thirty years ago, and for whom faith and commitment were to a higher power than the lure of athletic prowess; and Tony Bounds my other sponsor, firm in his beliefs and values which he would never dream of imposing on anyone, and taking an

## Continued

interest in those on whom fortune had not smiled.

### Lives lived to the full

Some died young and left only some indication of what they might have achieved but many lived long and fulfilling lives, packed full of achievement, lived to the full, often taking on new challenges in their later years and so sustaining the notion that one can be forever young in spirit. Of course one quality that remained with the onset of age was some would continue to be physically active well into their ightees old age. Peter Long and Jack Broughton reminded us all that life is to be lived actively, with as much quality as possible even if one is approaching the end of it.

As for those who remained to pay tribute, there were manifold opportunities to describe their departed friends' many qualities. The reports of memorial services reveal that they were widely mourned and remembered. One example of this was the service for Fergus Ankorn in March 2018 which lasted longer than most services "was attended by over 200 people" and included "no less than 8 personal tributes". Their influence could be

found everywhere and being survived by children and grand children, they live on in the shape of surviving family, protégées, pupils and those they coached. When a new generation emerges, something of the old continues to live on in them.

Reading through these obituaries one might well despair that the examples of those remembered have left behind them an impossible challenge for others who aspire to live up to their example. But they have rather provided encouragement to those who remain, and have inspired many to give of their best in the ongoing story of the club in which these people played their part.

Their obituaries are not just collections of mere facts and anecdotes but opinions, interpretations, and relevance which is history as celebrated by the club in this our 150th anniversary year.

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*Wilf Orton*



# Jackie Mekler

## 1932-2019

*It has just been confirmed that Jackie Mekler sadly died yesterday (1 July 2019). He joined Blackheath Harriers on 6 February 1954 and was a life member. The oldest surviving Comrades Marathon winner has passed away at the age of 87. Jackie Mekler was no mere runner; he was the last of the Comrades Great 5-time Winners who completed The Ultimate Human Race 12 times.*

Jackie ran his first Comrades Marathon in 1952 finishing in 7th position. He won his first Comrades Marathon in 1958 and went on to claim further victories in 1960, 1963, 1964 and 1968. He holds 10 Comrades Gold medals, 1 Silver and 1 Bronze.

From the age of 9, Jackie grew up in the Arcadia Orphanage in Parktown, and it was at the age of 13, that he started sneaking out in the early mornings to go for a run. He found freedom in this and spent this time dreaming of becoming a famous athlete.

He was expelled from the orphanage in his teenage years and went to stay with his father in a boarding house. He managed to secure a job at a printing company as an apprentice printer.

Jackie joined the Germiston Callies Harriers at the age of 16 and was running marathons by the time he was 18. His love

for the Comrades Marathon started at the age of 20 when he entered his first Comrades race.

Following his first two runs, Jackie took a break from the Comrades in order to pursue the standard marathon and to represent South Africa on numerous occasions in international competition during which time he held the world 50 mile record and earned a silver medal at the Commonwealth Games.

Returning in 1958 for the Up Run, Jackie completed the course in 6:26, a full 45 minutes ahead of second place. Over the next decade, he would go on to win the race a further 4 times. 1960 would be the year that would cement Jackie in our history books forever, as it was the year he became the first runner to break the 6-hour barrier on the Up Run, something that had taken 4 decades to achieve. His time of 5:56 was not his fastest though, with his best time of 5:51 again winning the race in 1963. Of Jackie's 12 runs, 11



placed him in the top 10 and 9 of those placed in the top 3, a phenomenal achievement.

He joined Blackheath Harriers in 1954. Not all his achievements were in South Africa – he also ran and won the London to Brighton in 1960. I was in communication with him a few years back and found him to be most generous and kind.

Jackie Mekler's marathons feature in the Blackheath & Bromley top 1000 performances and he is ranked 23rd on our all-time list. His Commonwealth silver medal was in the 1954 Vancouver games and reports of his run in the Polytechnic Marathon in 1955 and a month later in Reading can be found in the Blackheath Harriers Gazette of that year.

*Peter Rogers/Chris Haines*

02:35:25	Johannesburg, South Africa	1	17-Apr-54
02:40:57	Vancouver, Canada	2	07-Aug-54
02:40:21	Windsor-Chiswick	12	18-Jun-55
02:50:49	Reading	3	23-Jul-55
02:33:06	Queenstown, South Africa	1	20-Apr-57
02:36:04	Athens, Greece	5	06-Oct-57
02:39:45	Krugersdorp, South Africa	1	02-Mar-63
02:30:45	Bloemfontein, South Africa	2	05-Apr-63
02:27:53	Port Elizabeth, South Africa	2	28-Mar-64

**Executive Committee 2019/20****President:**

Julian Golding

**Immediate Past President:**

Paul Byfield PP

**Chairman of Committee:**

Nick Corry VP

**Hon Secretary:**

Vacant

**Hon Treasurer:**

David Appleton VP

**Chairmen of Active Athletics:**

Summer – Tim Soutar PP

Winter – Robert Cliff PP

**Chair of Finance:**

Stephen Hollingdale PP

**Chair of Communications:**

Tim Ayres VP

**Three Ordinary Members:**

Adrian Stocks VP

Paul Austridge VP

Maz Turner VP

**Chair of Development:**

Paul Byfield

**Sponsorship/Fund Raising:**

Vacant

**House and Social:**

David Cordell PP

**Membership Secretary:**

Rob Brown VP

**Track & Field Secretary:**

Vacant

**Cross Country Secretary:**

Vacant

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**Past Presidents****Existing Past Presidents of Blackheath Harriers AC:**

John R Baldwin (1975/76), Colin M Brand (1978/79), Brian G Stone (1979/80), Ian C Wilson (1981/82), Derek L Gregory (1986/87), Alan M Pickering (1992/93), Steve H Cluney (1993/94), David White (1994/96), Mike Martineau (1996/97), Mike J Mahoney (1997/98), Chris R Haines (1998/99), Richard J Coles (1999/2000), Mike Davies (2000/01), Mike Peel (2001/02), Pat Calnan (2002/03).

**Existing Past Presidents of Bromley AC: (to 2003)**

Daphne Reed, Joyce Hefher, Junior Field, Paul Jearum, Maureen Miller.

**Past Presidents of Blackheath & Bromley Harriers AC:**

John Robinson (2003/04), Margaret Baldwin (2004/05), Anne Cilia (2005/06), Ken Daniel (2006/07), Les Roberts (2007/08), Tim Soutar (2008/09), Alison Brand (2009/10), Richard Coe (2010/11), Denis Lawrie (2011/12), Steve Hollingdale (2012/13), Robert Cliff (2013/14), Dick Griffin (2014/15), David Cordell (2015/16), Bill Foster (2016/17), Nick Brooks (2017/18), Paul Byfield (2018/19).

**Vice Presidents****Existing Vice Presidents of Blackheath Harriers AC:**

George H Smith (1960), John E Lindblom (1962), Derek F E Hogg (1964), Tony V Hayday (1968), Richard J Edmonds (1969), Robert Richardson (1969), John Lissaman (1972), Barry M Shapcott (1973), Geoff R Last (1974), Frank C Rogers (1976), Frank J Dyter (1977), Jerry C W Friend (1977), Andy W Frankish (1979), Peter E Shephard (1979), Peter C Hannell (1980), Mike A Winch (1981), Ian K Young (1982), Gordon Brooks (1986), Simon Parsons (1990), Jim Phelan (1990), Nigel Keogh (1991), Trevor Llewelyn (1991), Mark I L Watling (1993), Steve J Freemantle (1995), R Colin Poole (1995), Alan R Stevens (1995), Nick Nuttall (1997), John E Turner (1997), Peter Lester (1998), Garry F P Spencer (1998), Bill Clapham (1999-2013), Mike J Cronin (1999), David Liston (2000), Roger A Michell (2000), Roger Counter (2002), Len Dalmon (2002), Roy Smith (2002).

**Existing Vice President of Bromley AC:** David Green.**Vice Presidents of Blackheath & Bromley Harriers AC:**

John Blackie (2003 ex BAC), Willem Buttinger (2003 ex BH), Ian Dibbens (2003 ex BAC), Hilary Gibbs (2003 ex BAC), David Taylor (2003 ex BH), Simon Tolson (2003 ex BH), Myrtle Augee (2004), Helen Godsell (2004), Simon Lloyd (2004), Anthony Pontifex (2004), Brian Power (2004), Nick Gasson (2005), Brendan McShane (2005), Brian Hartley (2006), Paul Patten (2006), Kate Pratten (2006), Michael Skinner (2006), Ray Gibson (2007), Richard Holt (2007), Mark Purser (2007), Rob Brown (2007), Bob Minting (2007), Costas Karageorghis (2008), Tom Phillips (2008), Terri Shotton (2008), Andy Tucker (2009), Roy Watkins (2009), Allan Williams (2009), David Appleton (2010), Peter Lovell (2010), Steve Pairman (2010), Colin Rowe (2010), Paul Austridge (2011), Con Griffin (2011), Deniz Mehmed (2011), Wilf Orton (2012), Mick Jones (2013), Mike Sheppard (2013), Dave McKinlay (2014), Alex Gibbins (2014), Richard Hall (2014), Jane Bradshaw (2014), Julie Asher-Smith (2014), Marion (Maz) Turner (2015), Sheila Griffin (2015), Jackie Montgomery (2015), Adrian Stocks (2015), Tim Ayres (2015), Claire Austridge (2016), Shaughnagh Brown (2016), Andy Rayner (2016), Steve Timmins (2016), Karen Desborough (2017), Chris Hilditch (2017), Mark Steinle (2017), Nick Corry (2017), Clem Leon (2018), Jay Galley (2018), Nick Swatton (2019), Rod Harrington (2019).

### **Photographs**

Jay Galley: p7, p8, p9, p10, p21, p22, p23, p24, p25, p26, p32, p33

Andy Hodge: p11, p12, p13, p14, p15, p16, p17, p18,

Mike Peel: p35

Tom Phillips: front cover, p38

Adrian Stocks: p36, p37

The editing team wish to express their thanks for all those who contributed articles and photographs for this issue. We have made every effort to correctly identify all the photographers but sometimes this is not possible. If you took a photograph but haven't been credited please let us know and we will publish the details in the next Gazette.

Thanks for photographs to all who took them.

150  
YEARS

