



www.bedfordandcountyac.org.uk

Bedford and County AC Newsletter

March 2023

About the Newsletter

This is the fourth edition of a new quarterly Bedford and County newsletter. If you have something you'd like to contribute to the next edition, please email webmaster@bedfordandcountyac.org.uk. This could be an outstanding individual or team performance, a write up of a favourite training session, a memorable performance from years gone by (see the 'Blast from the Past' section), or something else that might be interesting or informative.

A Thank You From Alex and Rosemary



There Was a Party at the Stadium on Sunday 18th February To Celebrate Alex and Rosemary's Years of Coaching at Bedford and County

"We would like to say a big thank you to the club, the committee, and our athletes for arranging a get together with all our past and present athletes.

It was left to me to make sure Alex actually arrived. All I knew was that the group of girls we usually go out with once a year was going to be there, so that is what I told him. He still asked too many questions!

We had a lift to the club, and from that moment it was just surprise after surprise. Most of the people had travelled a long way to spend time with us (one from Singapore), and that made us feel very honoured.

Everywhere we looked we saw people that we have known over a very long period, athletes and some parents who we haven't seen for a long time. Everyone was swapping memories and laughing as if they had only seen each other yesterday. Paula spoke via the internet, Bob Thompson gave a speech and presented us with a Knife and Cleaver voucher and a plaque to go on the club wall. I would like to thank everyone who gave us presents. When we started at the club, girls only played netball or joined a running club so the baseline for under 13 was 10 times the size of today and that made our job easier.

The older girls gave us a book of memories with lots of photos of club members. We will bring it down one evening if anyone would like to see it. Thank you once again for a brilliant Sunday afternoon. Regards, Rosemary and Alex.”

You will still see Alex and Rosemary on some club nights, but they will be spending a little more time with their daughter in the South-West so won't be there every time.

News From the Teams

Boys Endurance Squad



The boys' endurance squad continues to go from strength to strength with good numbers consistently training on the track and the roads of Bedford through the winter months. The final 3 rounds of the Chiltern League cross country have been the focus, with the cold and wind of Stopsley Common in December followed by the Glastonburyesque muddy conditions experienced at Campbell Park in January. The final race of the series, a home fixture at Keysoe, took place under benign skies and mild temperatures making for fast competitive racing. 20 different junior boys competed for the club across the season, the U15s alone had 12 athletes participating. With that squad depth it is perhaps not surprising that the U15 team won the overall Division 1 title by a significant margin. Oliver Wilson and Harry Scott also secured first and second Division 1 U15 individual places for the season. Special mention should be made of those boys who completed all 5 rounds: Thomas Harper (U11); Oliver Coombes (U13); Harry Scott and Zach Danobrega (U15); and Daniel Smith (U17).

Outside of the Chiltern League, the Bedfordshire County Cross Country Championships were dominated by Bedford & County athletes – both the U13 and U15 boys teams took home winners trophies and individual titles were won by Finley Bent (U13) and Oliver Wilson (U15). There was a step up in the size of the fields and quality of competition at the SEAA Southern XC, Beckenham and the ECCA Saucony Nationals, Bolesworth Castle. The club was again well represented with the U15 boys team achieving creditable 10th and 14th positions respectively. All good experience for the athletes.

Congratulations and good luck to all those of the squad who have been selected to represent Bedfordshire in either the Intercounties or National Schools cross country events, the final races of the season. With warmer weather hopefully on the horizon, attention will then turn to the track where the boys can look forward to building on their winter successes.

Bedford Wheelchair Racing

“Good winter training sessions bode well for the coming track competitions. All wheelchair users are showing signs of improvement and we have high hopes for 2023.

At the end of last year Varun Bandi was promoted to England Athletics Talent Paralympic Pathway. The regular monthly sessions take place at Loughborough once a month and are aimed at those showing potential to achieve international recognition within 6 to 8 Years. This is a great step forward for Varun and we look forward to his progress and to his breaking his own club records in a range of track events.

Two other athletes have been identified by England Athletics and their performances this coming summer may well see them invited to join the Junior Talent Programme. Katie Connolly and Sean Chigumba impressed during the 2022 track season, setting club records in a number of disciplines for their age and classification. Sean also plays wheelchair basketball and is on the national training squad for his age group.

Wheelchair Racing is a very expensive sport and we rely on external funding sources, as well as parental contributions, to ensure that all racers are properly equipped and able to compete on equal terms. Some funding successes over the past few months have seen grants obtained from the Greene King Trust Fund, as well as from Wetherspoon and Carling for spare parts for the Club's chairs – a total of £4,600. Jade Olulode has been offered a

grant of £5,000 towards the cost of a new racing chair for which she has also raised over £1000 from a Go Funding website. Efforts continue to raise more funding to enable all athletes in the squad to have the best equipment available.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the efforts of the Coaching team - Zoe Luscombe, Michael Blunt and Sharmila Harman."

Howard Darbon

Jim Black's Endurance Group

Over the winter months the group have been training twice weekly growing in numbers and strength. Since Christmas there have been more than 25 individuals attending the sessions either on the track (Tuesday) or around the Embankment area (Thursday). This training has been put to good use in the Chiltern Cross Country League, whilst others have been building for Spring Marathons.

Some of the younger, faster members have moved into the "Goodwin Group" and have been replaced by newer members who may not be as competitive to start with, but who equally enjoy the training.

Highlights from the group are Ewan Wilson who finished in 2nd place in the Chiltern Cross-Country League V50 category, Molly Betmead who finished in 4th place in the Senior Women's race at the Keysoe Chiltern League match as well as the overall season, and Ellie Garraway who started her track season with 2 impressive wins at the recent Inter Regional Masters Indoor event.

Both Ewan and Molly competed in four of the five Chiltern Cross Country League matches, improving in each event working their way up the field with consistent performances. Well done to both of you!

On Sunday 26th February Ellie was selected to compete for the East in the Masters Inter Area Challenge at Lea Valley. A long day of competition was held with Ellie winning the V50 1500m race with a time of 5.11.87. To help the team Ellie then completed the Long Jump, scoring valuable points. After a short break for lunch she was back on the track winning the 800m race in 2.29.38 before finishing the day with the fastest leg of the 4 x 200m relay. Both of these times set new age records for the club and give Ellie an idea of her potential for the track season ahead.

Vets Cross-Country Team

Over the five Chiltern Cross Country League matches the Men's Vet team finished in 4th position. Ewan Wilson led the way finishing in 2nd place in the V50 Category. Unfortunately he, Andy Blair (7th) and Simon Harper (29th) were the only athletes who managed to compete in four of the matches. Six others made the team up in different races with at least four scoring in each event. We missed the chance of a team medal due to illness and injury. If we had managed to field our strongest four, we would have been competing with Leighton Buzzard for the league title. The team's thoughts now turn to the Masters Road relay in May. If you are over 35 and aren't part of this team, please let team manager Jim Black know so he can include you in future selections.

Calling All Young Athletes - A Look Ahead to the Track and Field Season

Jodi Henderson writes, "Congratulations to all the Bedford and County AC athletes who have been selected to represent Bedfordshire in the Inter-counties and/or English Schools cross country events in March. All the best in your races!

With the cross-country season coming to an end, we will now be focusing on the summer track and field season (and hopefully warmer weather!) which gets underway on Sunday 23 April in Norwich.

We will be taking part in the Eastern Young Athletes League (EYAL) in the U13, U15 & U17 age categories, and in the Youth Development League (YDL) in the U13 & U15 age categories,

please contact myself or Tina for the dates and locations. There will be a free coach provided for all athletes to all of the away matches – please ensure that you let us know if you would like a place on the coach.

For anyone who hasn't taken part in an athletics fixture yet, do speak to me, Tina Blackwell or your coach if you have any questions: we are here to help.

A few weeks before each fixture, I will contact all parents / carers on my database to confirm attendance. From this information, I will produce a team sheet and email details across nearer to the event, so you can plan your day. If your son / daughter is interested in trying out a different event to their usual one and there are spaces to accommodate this, do let myself or Tina know.

If your son / daughter would like to take part in the summer track and field events and you haven't already done so, please get in touch:

Jodi Henderson (Boys Team Manager): jodihenderson60@gmail.com

Tina Blackwell (Girls Team Manager): tdblackwell@btinternet.com

Outstanding Individual Performances

National Cross-Country Championships

The National Cross-Country Championships took place at Bolesworth Castle, Chester, on 25th February. The Senior Men's team was led home by Ben Alcock and finished sixth, with some excellent individual performances, including Ben's 10th position and Harry Brodie's 33rd place. Rebecca Murray and Noah Campion both had fine runs, with Rebecca finishing fifth in the Senior Women's race, and Noah finishing seventh in the Junior Men's race. There were also excellent top 50 finishes for Euan Supple in the Under 17 Men's race, Lyla Danobrega in the Under 17 Women's race, and Lily Farr in the Under 15 Girls' race, and the Under 15 Boys team finished in a creditable 15th place.

Southern Cross-Country Championships

There were some great results at the Southern Cross Country Championships at Beckenham Place Park on Saturday 28th January, with Ben Alcock finishing 3rd in the Senior Men's race, and Noah Campion coming in 5th in the Under 20 Men's race.

Bedfordshire Cross-Country Championships

Several of the club's athletes won their respective age groups in the Bedfordshire County Championships in Ampthill Park on 7th January. Well done to Eleanor Smith (U13 girls), Finley Bent (U13 boys), Lily Farr (U15 girls), Oliver Wilson (U15 boys), Imogen Chesterton (U20 women) and Ed Blythman (senior men). Ed also came ninth in the B race at the British University Cross Country Championships on 4th February.

In addition, there were medals for Megan Barnicoat and Catherine Warren (2nd & 3rd U13 girls); Oliver Coombes (2nd U13 boys); Ellie Harper (2nd U15 girls); Mackenzie Kotrys and Theo Beale (2nd & 3rd U15 boys), Lyla Danobrega (2nd U17 women); Euan Supple (2nd U17 men); Lauren Nichols (3rd senior women); Emma Coombes (3rd V40 women); Craig Emmerson and James Minter (2nd & 3rd senior men); and Ewan Wilson (3rd V50 men).

Alan Turnbull was also the first M50 in the Cambridgeshire County Championships.

Chiltern Cross-Country League

The fifth and final round of this season's Chiltern League took place at Keysoe on Saturday 11th February. The event was organized by Bedford and County. There was a win for Noah Campion in the Under 20 Men's, and top 5 places for Harry Brodie (3rd) and Craig Emmerson (5th) in the Senior Men's race, 4th places for Noah Campion in the Under 17 Men's race, and for Oliver Wilson in the Under 15 boys. There were some fine performances from the women, with Molly Betmead coming 4th in the Senior Women's race, Lyla Danobrega finishing 3rd in the Under 17 Women's race, Imogen Chesterton finishing 3rd in the Under 20 Women's race, and Lily Farr finishing 3rd in the under 15 girls race. The masters also did the



*Ben Alcock at the
Southerns*



club proud - Steve Horton was the third M40 home, whilst Alan Turnbull and Ewan Wilson were second and third respectively in the M50 category.

In the team competition, the club as a whole were second overall across the five match series, the Senior Men were top, as were the Under 15 Boys, the Under 20 Men second and the Veteran Men 4th. The Under 15 girls, and the Under 13 Girls also finished fourth.

Well done also to the Bedford and County organizers on an excellent event.

Road Running

There were some very strong performances at the Battersea Park Friday Night Under The Lights 5 Miles race on 16th December, which was run in temperatures of -2°. Despite snow and train strikes, there was a strong field.

- Harry Brodie, 5th place, 23:52
- Craig Emmerson, 21st place, 25:00
- James Minter, 28th place, 25:19
- Sam Knee-Robinson, 43rd place, 26:31
- Lauren Nichols, 5th place, 30:53



Friday Night Under the Lights, 16th December

Indoors

Gracie Wins International Recognition

Gracie Wall gained further international recognition, competing for the England under 20 high jump team as part of the World Athletics Indoor Tour Silver in Hustopece, Czech Republic on 4th February. Despite limited training, Gracie managed to claim the bronze medal in a 1-2-3 for the English team. Congratulations to Gracie, both for her selection, and for the bronze medal.



Jack Blasts to 3000 Win

Jack Goodwin had a great win in the BMC 3000m B race indoors at Sheffield on 8th January. Jack clocked 8:13.63, which puts him 12th on the UK list so far this year.

Bedford Athletes Show Their Steel in Sheffield

Several Bedford and County athletes enjoyed success at the England Athletics Indoor Championships held in Sheffield 11th / 12th Feb.

Jasmine Wilkins, despite running with some soreness to her back ran 7.73 secs in the heats of the 60m, and 7.79secs in semi final (Jasmine set an U20 Women's and Senior Women's club indoor record for 60m of 7.70 seconds earlier in January).

Daniel Harding-Forbe lowered his P.B. from the previous week's run by returning a time of 50.89 secs in the 400m – this was a new club indoor under 20 best, and the second time Daniel has lowered this particular mark in February.

Both Jasmine and Daniel were a little disappointed with their performances, but overall accepted that it should stand them in good stead for the outdoor season ahead.

Thaila-Jade Mason (under U17) achieved a 60m hurdles PB of 9.16 seconds, and reached the semi-finals. She also Long Jumped 5.00m, finishing in eleventh place.

UK Championships

Etienne Maughan ran in the UK Champs in Birmingham last weekend in the 60m hurdles. She ran a pb of 8.61.



The England Athletics Indoor Championships Took Place on 11th & 12th February



Tennyson James won double gold at the British Masters Indoor Championships

International Success for Raph

Meanwhile in the Netherlands Raphael Bouju, senior man, won their Indoor Championships in a pb of 6.64. He is now the Outdoor and Indoor champion of the Netherlands. He has been selected to represent the Netherlands in the European Indoor Championships in Istanbul on the 2nd to 5th March.

Masters

Bedford and County Masters enjoyed success at the British Indoor Championships in Sheffield on 18th and 19th February. Tennyson James won gold in the M65 200m in 27.37 and gold again in the 60m hurdles in 10.78. Peter Benedickter claimed silver in the M50 400m in 58.18. Steve Bass won bronze in M50 60m hurdles in 10.08. And Graeme Packman finished in 4th place in the M65 shot with 9.33m. Tenny also set two club indoor M65 records: 27.00 seconds for the 200m at the Run Jump Throw & Master GP in Sheffield on 4th February, and 62.60 seconds for the 400m at the London Indoor Games U20/Senior on 21st January.

Volunteers Wanted!

Bedford and County AC is run entirely by volunteers. Our volunteers provide their skills and time to ensure that the club runs smoothly. Training is provided as required.

If you feel that you can offer some help at the club or are interested in learning more about any of the vacancies below please do get in touch with us at: email us at Committee@bedfordandcountyac.org.uk.

Currently the following vacancies are open:

Track and field officials

We really need officials to help out on match days and to ensure that the club fulfils its requirement to provide sufficient help for competitions to go ahead. Full training is provided. To find out more check out the information provided on the [England Athletics Website](#).

Social Media Coordinator

Do you enjoy posting to Social Media such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook? Would you like to help build anticipation about upcoming events (for example, track and field league fixtures, cross country races, road running races), and celebrate participation and success? If that's you, Bedford and County AC are looking for somebody to fill a new social media co-ordinator role. You will set-up and run the club's social media accounts, which are currently either non-existent or dormant. For further details and role description please see: [Social Media Coordinator](#).

Volunteer coordinator

Bedford and County AC are seeking a volunteer co-ordinator to promote volunteering and recruit volunteers for the club.

What does the volunteer coordinator do?

- Champions volunteering within the club
- Co-ordinates recruitment and training of volunteers
- Inducts and support new volunteers.

For further details and role description please see: [Volunteer Coordinator](#).

Club Development Plan

Bob Thompson writes, "We continue to make steady progress on the Development Plan as follows:

1. Governance and Articles of Association
 - The Articles of Association and Club Rules have been updated again for approval at the EGM.
 - A full range of job descriptions for club officers are now in place.
2. Performance and Participation / Athlete Recruitment and Development
 - Athlete recruitment is ongoing.
3. Volunteer recruitment, development and retention
 - Two coaches meetings held to date with input from Darren Kerr of Wonky Bodies/Posture Fit, a range of discussion on safeguarding, health and safety, home matches co-ordination and equipment for coaches. Further meetings to be planned.
4. Communication - website, social media and social activity
 - The newsletter is now established as a regular publication.
 - A second club survey for members will be available for members to complete during March.
 - Advert for social media co-ordinator posted on website.
5. Athletes with disability / wheelchair section
 - Good progress has been made with fund raising targets exceeded for the athletes with disability / wheelchair section.

Please see the full Development Plan at

<https://www.bedfordandcountyac.org.uk/index.php/about-us/development-plan.>"

Annual Member Survey

We have launched a new survey for Club members to complete. This is your chance to let us know your thoughts about your Club and to suggest ways that the Club could be further improved. There are sections relating to coaching, communications, social aspects and more. There are also sections where you can send your own comments.

The survey will run until the end of March at which point the data will be reviewed by the Club Committee and reported back to members. The survey is anonymous.

This feedback should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete and will only be used for the reasons outlined above.

To complete, please click on the below link or scan the QR code.

[Bedford and County AC Annual Survey 2023](#)

Thank you for your time and your valuable feedback.

Best wishes

The Committee



*Scan this QR code to go
straight to the Annual
Member Survey*



*Nova Perris competing
for Australia*

Blast from the Past

Who is the only Bedford and County athlete to win an Olympic Gold Medal?

Nova Perris-Kneebone - now Nova Perris

She was also the first Australian Aborigine to win an Olympic Gold Medal. (A lot of quizzes get this wrong and state Cathy Freeman at the Sydney Olympics in 2000 as the first Australian Aborigine to win an Olympic Gold).

Cathy Freeman was the first Aborigine to win an INDIVIDUAL Gold Medal but at the previous Olympics in 1996 Nova won a TEAM Gold Medal as part of the Australian Ladies Hockey Team - the Hockaroos as they are known in Australia. After that she gave up Hockey and took up athletics and went to the Commonwealth Games and the Sydney Olympic Games as a 200/400m runner.

During this period she trained with Bedford and County - as did a number of Australians from Western Australia- the others were men.

Nova Perris-Kneebone then retired from athletics and went into politics becoming Minister for Indigenous Affairs in one of the State Governments. She has now retired from politics.

Who is This?

With the retirement of Alex and Rosemary, there was some debate as to which current member of the club has the longest record of continuous service.

So, who is it?

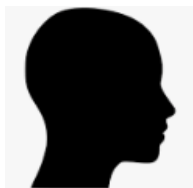
This could be as an athlete, coach, team manger, official, volunteer or other capacity, or a combination of some or all of them.

Please email the name(s) of who you think it might be to the editor Peter Webster (webmaster@bedfordandcountyac.org.uk)

If you think that it might be you, don't be shy, nominate yourself.

You could nominate a number of persons as we might come up with a top ten, but do so in order of who you think is the longest serving.

All will be revealed in the next newsletter!



Upcoming Fixtures

League Matches and Championships

No matter what age you are, there are opportunities to compete for the club in league matches, and county, area and national championships over the next few months. For details, see the fixture list on the [Bedford and County AC website](http://www.bedfordandcountyac.org.uk).