

VAC AGM: 23 SEPTEMBER 2019

2018-2019 Cross Country Report by VAC Entries Secretary

Summary

VAC continued to provide opportunities for members to compete in cross country matches. We staged our annual open Masters cross country championship, attracting record numbers. A VAC men's team competed in Division Four of the Surrey Cross Country League but lacked strength in depth and finished 11th out of 12. We fielded men's and women's teams at the English Masters Inter-Area Challenge and came second overall. There was VAC representation in the South of the Thames matches, East Surrey League and the Vets Inter-Club race at Loughton. Eleven VAC members represented England and Scotland at the British & Irish Masters International match. Many other members competed in BMAF, European and World Masters cross country events.

1. VAC Cross Country Championships, Wimbledon Common: 19 January 2019

Fine weather encouraged good support with 59 finishers, a record in recent years. On the morning of the race, tree felling alongside the Beverley Brook forced a rerouting of the course into the playing fields on the other side of the brook. The new route added a couple of hundred metres to the 7.5km course. Richard McDowell, M35, was the VAC Men's Champion. Susan McDonald, W50, was the Women's Champion. Times were not counted for course records because of the course diversion. This was disappointing for Joe Aspinall and Susan McDonald whose times would have set new VAC M80 and W50 course records. The race had a UKA Permit and was operated under UKA rules.

2. Men's Surrey League Cross Country 2018-19

VAC fielded a men's team in the four fixtures of Division Four in the Surrey CC League. Team spirit and commitment were excellent. Thanks go to Paddy Clark who continued as the Team Manager. The Club successfully co-hosted two of the fixtures (Epsom Downs and Lloyd Park), which involved providing officials for the finish funnel and producing the official results.

Ten men were required for full scoring teams. This was achieved in two of the four matches, but we were three short in the first match and two short in the third. We also lacked fast runners who could score high up the field. The VAC team finished 11th out of 12 in the Division. This was lower than in the previous year, but the quality of our opponents may have improved and the introduction of scoring B teams has led to potential VAC runners choosing to compete for their 1st Claim clubs. VAC's Ian Kitching won the season's M60+ award.

At the AGM of the Surrey League in April, it was proposed to reduce the size of Division Four from 12 clubs to 9, with the rationale of improving the quality and removing under-performing clubs which were alleged to be complacent and uncompetitive. The proposal was shelved after strong opposition, including from VAC. Our view was that it was wrong to make these assumptions about the bottom three clubs and that the sport should be seeking to be inclusive and extend competitive opportunities, not restrict them. Although the threat has gone away, VAC cannot take its participation in the Surrey League for granted. We will make extra efforts next season to encourage new men to compete for VAC and to urge the regulars to return.

3. English Masters Inter-Area Cross Country Challenge 2018, Bury St Edmunds

The third staging of this event was hosted by EMAC. VAC achieved a fine second place overall in a highly competitive match of two races contested by seven BMAF area clubs. The scores were calculated on race times converted to age-graded percentages. VAC's 13 women were dominant and won the women's section convincingly. VAC's 12 men were second behind a strong team from EMAC who made their home advantage count. Jess Franklin (W35), Clare Elms (W50), Dave Cox (M65) and Richard Pitcairn-Knowles (M85) won their respective age groups.

4. VAC members in national and international championships

Around 15 VAC members made the trip to the BMAF Championships in Belfast in March 2019. Ben Reynolds won the individual M55 Gold Medal and the VAC trio of Ben Reynolds, Andy Weir and Paul Cheetham won the M45 team Gold for Thames Hare & Hounds. Eleven VAC members (nine for England and two for Scotland) represented their country at the British & Irish Masters International in Swansea in November 2018. VAC's Jessica Franklin finished fourth in the women's race and won the W35 Silver medal. Simon Baines (M40), Clare Elms (W50) and Lynda Hembury (W60) won individual Bronze medals.