

VAC Annual General Meeting

Thursday 23 September 2021 using Zoom

Cross Country Secretary's Report

The cross country season due to begin a year ago in October 2020 was very much in doubt because the incidence of COVID-19 cases was rising again in the UK and a second wave of infections looked very likely.

England Athletics issued guidance in September 2020 about holding cross country competitions, including protocols to ensure social distancing for athletes and officials and limits on numbers of participants. England Athletics proposed several "test events" to put the protocols into practice and evaluate them. VAC was fortunate that the annual East Surrey League cross country match in Lloyd Park in October 2020 became one of these pilots, thanks to the perseverance and hard work of one particular individual at Croydon Harriers.

VAC is a member of the East Surrey League and we were invited to field a men's and women's team of 18 in total at Lloyd Park on 24 October. The start was in waves, the course was shortened, and we were socially distant from one another, but VAC members were delighted to be there, racing together again in a wet and windswept park. VAC's women's team were second overall, led by Clare Elms (W55) who was third overall and the first Masters woman. The men were a creditable 6th, led by Rich Berry (M45) with Terry Booth (first M50) and David Ogden (first M60) following.

The success of the England Athletics test events raised hopes that some Surrey League cross country matches might go ahead and that VAC's cross country championships could be staged on Wimbledon Common in January 2021.

However, it was not to be. As a result of the Government's national lockdowns in November 2020 and from January 2021, England Athletics suspended all competitions, effectively bringing the 2020-2021 cross country season to an end.

Regular events returned to the calendar during the summer of 2021 including the monthly Second Sunday trail race on Wimbledon Common hosted by Thames Hare & Hounds. VAC chose the September race as a get-together of members at our traditional cross country venue.

The forthcoming cross country season looks promising. There is a full programme of events, starting with the East Surrey League fixture in Lloyd Park in October, followed by four matches of the Surrey League for which VAC enthusiastically fields a men's team. In the year ahead, we will be taking soundings from VAC's female members to gauge interest in entering a women's team in the 2022 season.

VAC's cross country championships are provisionally set for 22 January 2022 on Wimbledon Common, subject to a permit from the Wimbledon Common conservators. We hope to use the new 5 mile course which does not encroach on the golf holes of the Common's two golf courses.

VAC will enter a team at the England Masters Inter Area CC Challenge provisionally planned for February 2022. Regrettably, the annual British & Irish Masters CC International match due to take place in Ireland in November has again been postponed because of concerns about travel and Covid-19 infections. VAC members would have taken part in the English trial race and some would almost certainly have been selected for the national teams.

Maggie Statham-Berry

VAC Entries Secretary

21 September 2021