

VAC Annual General Meeting

Thursday 23 September 2021 using Zoom

Road Running Secretary's Report

Road races could not be held until the Government's COVID-19 restrictions were eased in April 2021 and Runbritain recommenced the licensing of road races, with guidance about social distancing and hygiene.

In December 2020, VAC worked with Hercules Wimbledon to lay on a 5k road race around Wimbledon Park but it was postponed when London was placed under higher COVID restrictions.

When licensing resumed in April 2021, VAC and Hercules Wimbledon staged the 5k road race postponed from December. There was massive pent-up demand. The race was full, with 120 Masters entrants, around 55 of them VAC members.

Battersea Park Series

VAC staged four 5k Masters road races and race walks in Battersea Park in May, June, July and August. Complying with the Runbritain guidance and the even more rigorous demands of the Battersea Park authority created a huge amount of paperwork, organisation and extra features. There were wave starts, staggered arrivals, sanitiser stations, COVID signage and extra medics, officials and marshals. It was expedient to stick to the 5km distance for all four races and to use a course favoured by the Battersea Park authority. To facilitate the wave starts, we used chip timing. We also employed an organiser (Ben Noad) to pull it all together and operate the events on the day.

The May and June Battersea Park races had limits of 100 entrants and sold out very quickly, boosted by free entry for VAC members. The July and August races had higher limits with a charge of £6 for VAC members. These races attracted 95 and 80 runners respectively.

Inevitably, with the necessity of extra features, such as chip timing and additional medics, and the free entry for VAC members in May and June, the Battersea Park race series did not break even this year. The average loss for the July and August races was around £500 per race. For the May and June races with free entry for VAC members, the average loss was higher. The VAC Committee considered that these expenses were justified in the circumstances of the pandemic. As well as providing competitive opportunities for a large number of VAC members, the series generated a considerable amount of goodwill and admiration and attracted at least 20 new members.

The 2022 Battersea Park series of five races is planned to return in April 2022 with a mixture of 5k and 5 mile races. The finances will be reviewed and a more sustainable financial model will be adopted.

VAC Road Championships

VAC's scheduled One Mile, 10k and 10 mile road championship races were either cancelled by the promoters or were unduly restrictive because of the pandemic. VAC used the British Masters Half Marathon championships at Redhill Aerodrome in July as a championship event and awarded medals in five-year age bands. We also awarded the Ron White shield to Simon Baines for the best age-graded performance in the event. VAC has now designated the British Masters 10k in November at Cyclopark, Gravesend, as its 2021 10k championship.

Virtual Competitions

During the pandemic, virtual races provided a welcome element of competition. Around 20 VAC members did the virtual Virgin London Marathon in October 2020. VAC was well represented in the BMAF's 10km Virtual Challenge in December 2020. Forty members registered a 10k time and VAC won the official competition amongst Area Masters Clubs for fielding the largest team. Many VAC members also supported the BMAF's One Mile Virtual Relays in March 2021.

Maggie Statham-Berry

VAC Entries Secretary

22 September 2021