



Veterans Athletic Club  
Newsletter  
June 2024



**Richard McDowell on Wimbledon Common winning  
VAC's Cross Country Championship.**

## **VAC Committee Members: Sept 2023 – Sept 2024**

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<b>Auditor</b>	Graham Laylee	

Veterans Athletic Club was established in 1931 and is affiliated to England Athletics, BMAF, South of England AA, Surrey County AA, the Race Walking Association and the South of the Thames Cross Country Association. We offer athletic competition for men and women aged 35 and over. Cross-country, road, track & field as well as race walking - there is something for everyone. Based in London with members across the South East, we can provide opportunities to compete with other like-minded masters/veterans. A fixture list is printed in the newsletter. Please support these events. The newsletter welcomes contributions and events always need volunteers, as well as competitors. If you want to get involved, contact any of the Committee members listed above.



## Editor Angela Kikugawa Writes

I am sorry to say that this will be my last newsletter for the VAC. Some of you will be aware that I left London at the end of 2016 and although I intended keeping in contact with the club and doing the events that I had so much enjoyed, like the cross country and road leagues, it didn't happen. Covid and long trips to Japan seemed to get in the way and I now find that it is getting on for ten years since I have

entered a VAC event and as such it is time for me to move on.

I am pleased to say that Stuart Mathews, who is the new Membership Secretary has agreed to take on the role of editing and assembling the newsletter and I am sure he will make a great job of it.

Thank you for the opportunity to have produced the newsletter, I have enjoyed it. I hope you all continue to enjoy your athletics for many years to come and that VAC continues to flourish.

Good luck and Sayonara!

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### Photographs

Many thanks to Cliff Hide who provided most of the photos in the newsletter, including those on the front and back covers. Cliff takes photos at VAC events and is happy to supply copies to members free of charge, but please give him a credit if you post the photos on social media. For copies of photos, contact him on [cliffhide10@aol.com](mailto:cliffhide10@aol.com)



### **Message from Stuart Matthews**

We now have nearly 650 members. Thank you to the many who renewed promptly and a warm welcome to the 110 new members who have joined the club since December.

Huge credit goes to Peter Kennedy in recognition of everything he has achieved as VAC's Membership Secretary for at least 10 years, bringing membership records into the digital age and streamlining the joining and renewal processes. I'm grateful for his help in showing me the ropes. Peter is now fulfilling the role of Track & Field Secretary which has been vacant for some time and is critical to the delivery of VAC's T&F ambitions. Foremost this year is to hold VAC's outdoor championships. Happily, we now have a date (31 August) and a venue (Tooting Bec). However, it can only go ahead if there are enough of the right level of officials. You and your clubs may be able to help. Please read Peter's appeal in the T&F section.

The Committee still needs help to relieve pressure on the small number of hard-working officers. We need someone to assist with communications and social media. We also need help with organising club competitions in the different disciplines, including selection of the Inter Area T&F teams. There is also a Committee role for a Welfare/Safeguarding Officer. Details of what's involved is elsewhere in the newsletter.

Please consider whether you could help in any way. It's a great reward to know that you are enabling our club to support Masters athletics and to provide competitive opportunities for members who are always grateful. The Committee is an incredibly friendly and helpful group of people, something which I have been lucky to benefit from since I took up my new role.

I'm looking forward to meeting some of you in the future when I can get down to some Masters' events where VAC members are competing.

**Stuart Matthews, Veterans AC Membership Secretary**

## Fixtures

Date	Organiser	Event	Venue	Entry	Entry CD
23-Jun-24	Ranelagh Harriers	Ranelagh Harriers Richmond 10k. VAC Championship.	Race HQ at Kew and Ham Sports Association	Start time: 9am Details and Entry on the Ranelagh Harriers website	Race fills up early. Closes when full.
26-Jun-24	VAC	VAC 5,000m Track Championships	Millennium Arena, Battersea Park.	Four races seeded slowest to fastest. First race: 18:50. Enter on OpenTrack.	23-Jun-24
06-Jul-24	Bushy parkrun	5km parkrun. Featuring the annual Octogenarian and Nonagenarian gathering.	Bushy Park Teddington. Look out for the sign "80 AND OVER. MEET HERE!"	Start time: 9am Octogenarians and supporters are welcome.	Enter on the day (but need your parkrun Barcode)
16-Jul-24	VAC	5K Road Race and Race Walk	Battersea Park.	7pm start. Entry on OpenTrack. Register at Bandstand.	14-Jul-24
20-Jul-24	Kingston parkrun	5km parkrun. Featuring VAC "mob match" gathering.	Burnell Rd green space. KT2 5BH.	Start time: 9am. Look out for VAC vests.	Enter on the day (but need your parkrun Barcode)
26-28 July 2024	BMAF Services	British Masters Track & Field Championships	Moorways Stadium, Moor Ln, Allenton, Derby DE24 9HY	Details and Entry on OpenTrack	13-Jul

31 Aug 2024	VAC <b>Officials needed!</b> Contact Peter Kennedy if you can help.	VAC Outdoor Track & Field Championships	Tooting Bec Athletics Track, Tooting Bec Road, London SW17 8AR	Details and Entry on OpenTrack	25 August
07-Sep-24	England Masters Athletics Association	British Masters Inter Area Outdoor T&F Challenge	Rockingham Triangle Athletics Stadium, Corby	VAC teams for Men & Women. Age groups 35-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+. Range of events.	Expressions of interest to Entries Secretary
11-Sep-24	VAC	VAC 10,000m Track Championships	Millennium Arena, Battersea Park.	Three races seeded slowest to fastest. First race: 17:50. Enter on OpenTrack.	09-Sep
14-Sep-24	BMAF Services	British Masters 5,000m Track Championships	Monkton Stadium, Dene Terrace, Jarrow NE32 5NJ	Enter on OpenTrack.	09-Sep
21-Sep-24	Vitality Westminster Mile	VAC One Mile Road Championships	The Mall, London. Assemble in Green Park.	Enter via Westminster Mile website. Select VAC and Adult Wave 1.	To be advised.
28-Sep-24	England Masters Athletics Association (EMAA)	Selection Race for the England Team for British & Irish CC on 16 November.	Within the North Staffs CC League. Betley Court Farm, Betley, Crewe, CW3 9BH	Open to UKA Registered members of BMAF area clubs in England. Details and entry on OpenTrack.	To be advised.

28-Sep-24	East Surrey League	Cross Country race.	Lloyd Park. Croydon	VAC men's and women's teams. No limit on numbers. Free.	VAC runners declared on the day.
12-Oct-24	Surrey League	Cross Country race. Match 1.	Reigate Priory Park	VAC men's and women's teams. VAC vest necessary.	Advance notice to Team Managers
19-Oct-24	VAC	VAC and Surrey, Middlesex, Herts & Sussex 10k Open Track Walk Championships	Norman Park Community Sports Centre, Bromley	1 pm start. Categories A and B. All ages welcome.	To be announced.
9 Nov 2024	Surrey League	Cross Country race. Match 2.	Hurst Green, near Oxted	VAC men's and women's teams.	Advance notice to Team Managers
16-Nov-24	Northern Ireland is the host country.	British & Irish Masters Cross Country International	Billy Neill MBE Country Park, 341 Comber Rd, Belfast BT16 1RQ	Each country has a selection process. There is a trial race on 28 Sept for the England team.	England team selection meeting on 28 Sept.
01-Dec-24	BMAF Services. Hosted by VAC.	British Masters 5k Road Championship	Battersea Park.	Start time 11.00am. Medals ceremony at the Pear Tree café. Details and entry on OpenTrack.	24-Nov
29-Dec-24	Royston Runners and BMAF Services	British Masters 10 Mile Road Championship. Also VAC Championship.	Freman College, Bowling Green Lane, Buntingford, Herts, SG9 9BT	10.30am start. Entries open on 1 Sept. Details on Royston Runners website.	Race closes when entry limit is reached.

### **New Style VAC Vests!**

A good stock of men's and women's club vests is available. They are made of a lightweight, quick drying, Protex fabric and feature the name Veterans AC in full on the back. The cost is £25 including postage.

The men's old stock with its heavier fabric is being sold off at a discounted price of £15 including postage. The women's old stock which benefits from light fabric but doesn't have the club's name on the back is also being sold for £15 including postage.

All vests are official club vests and can be purchased from our kit supplier, Doug Maughan of Douglas Sports. Details and sizes are on the Club Kit tab on VAC's website or email Doug at [info@douglassports.co.uk](mailto:info@douglassports.co.uk).

## **NEWS**

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### **VAC FEMALE WELFARE OFFICER WANTED**

Athletics clubs which are affiliated to England Athletics are required to have welfare officers. The ideal is one female and one male. Regrettably our current female welfare officer, Debbie Singleton, cannot continue so we are looking for a replacement. The role is explained below. England Athletics offer (free) training courses, so if you feel you could fulfil this valuable role or would like more information, please contact VAC's Secretary, Ros Tabor: [secretary@vetsac.org.uk](mailto:secretary@vetsac.org.uk)

Club Welfare Officers are key to all members knowing what to do and who to speak to if they have a safeguarding or discipline or conduct concern. They are also key to managing lower-level club issues and disputes, and/or flagging concerns for early intervention to prevent escalation and behaviours which prevent enjoyment of the sport. Welfare Officers also form part of the club committee and perform a key role in implementing good safeguarding governance locally at the club.



By completing training provided by England Athletics and understanding the policies and procedures set out by UK Athletics, clubs can be confident that their welfare officers have the right level of knowledge for the role.

### **Notice of VAC's Annual General Meeting, 7pm Thursday 19 September**

All members are invited to come to VAC's AGM. The venue is a meeting room at the Civil Service Club, 13-15 Great Scotland Yard, London SW1A 2HJ.

The AGM is an opportunity for members to meet and become involved with the club. The Treasurer will present VAC's financial accounts and the Committee will deliver reports on their areas of responsibility. Questions and suggestions are welcome.

An **important proposal** for VAC to change its structure to become a limited company will be presented and discussed. A vote will be held on a possible model.

The present officers of VAC's Committee may be prepared to continue in some capacities, but the club **urgently needs new people and extra help**. Please consider joining the Committee to bring much needed support. People to do communications, marketing and competition organisation are needed. The position of Welfare Officer needs to be filled. If you could provide help in any aspect, make yourself known to a committee member at any time.

Nominations for officers for the 2024-25 Committee and any proposals for consideration at the AGM should be sent to Ros Tabor, the Secretary, by Thursday 5 September.

If you cannot join the AGM, you are welcome to feed in your views and suggestions in advance by email, letter or phone call to the Secretary or another Committee member. Names and addresses are at the front of the newsletter.

# CROSS COUNTRY

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## VAC Cross Country Championships, 20 January 2024



Richard McDowell (M40) (pictured on the front cover) led from the start in a superb defence of his 2023 champion's title. His emphatic victory in a time of 25:30 was one second quicker this year despite more slippery conditions down to and around the Queensmere pond. Matilde Lomba (W35) of Hercules Wimbledon was the women's winner in 30:52, overhauling Nikki Sturzaker (W50), last year's winner, in a thrilling finish. Nikki was pushed hard and she too was quicker this year.

There were 78 finishers on the 4.75 mile, two-lap, course. Jani Kraner (M40) was second, one minute behind Richard McDowell and nearly a minute ahead of third placed Steve Winder, the first M50. Three of Steve's Epsom & Ewell clubmates followed in quick succession, claiming the M45 Gold, Silver and Bronze medals. In ninth place, Mark Tennyson again won Gold but this year in the M60 age group. Mark's time of 29:07 earned him the best men's age-graded performance of

89.5%. Other age group winners were Michael Tay (M35), Mike Webber (M55), Tony Pamphilon (M65), Peter Kennedy (M70) and Mike Mann (M75).

For the women, Madeleine Armstrong-Plieth (W40) was a good third just ahead of Rachel Berry (W50). Vikki Filsell and Lucy Woolhouse retained their W55 and W60 trophies and can be seen running together above. Lucy's time translated to the best age-graded performance of the day at 90.8%. Other Gold medals were won by Rebecca Pickard (W45), Jo Quantrill (W65) and Jane Georghiou (W70).

## Surrey Cross Country League

### Men's Matches – So Close!!



A mere seven points decided promotion to Division Three. Overall, after four matches, VAC's men's team finished third in Division Four, tantalisingly close to the second promotion place. After adding up the placings of the ten scorers in each of the four matches, VAC's combined score was 1656. The score of Clapham Pioneers in second place was 1649. The close scores really do highlight that every place matters for both the "A" team of the first ten men and the "B" team of the next ten.

As a recap of the season, after the first two matches at Epsom Downs and Hurst Green, VAC was lying second out of the 14 clubs in Division Four.

**Oxshott Woods** was next in January. A magnificent turn-out of 20 men tackled the tree roots and horrific hill of the two-lap course. The "A" team of ten were a good third. The "B" team of the next ten went even better and placed first. Richard Batchelor was VAC's lead man with Peter Lee second, followed by newcomer, Jim Carrington who is pictured above. Charles Hampden-Smith and Malcolm Davies were both in the top fifty, with Richard Evans, Ben Revill, Stewart Bond, Duncan Rimmer and Ebe Prill completing the A team. John Foss led the B team, with every VAC man counting in the scores. Overall, VAC held onto second place in Division Four, but Clapham Pioneers were closing in.

**Lloyd Park** in February for the finale was at its worst, with everyone's feet guaranteed to get soaked and mucky. The preceding wet weeks had turned much of the course into a bog. A team of 20 braved the mud bath. John Foley was VAC's first finisher, followed by Peter Lee and Malcolm Davies. VAC's first ten scorers packed well in the top 70 positions. Newcomer, Felix Allen, was welcomed in the 6th scoring position. The B team was again led home by John Foss. VAC's 20th man and final scorer, John Carter, recently celebrated his 80th birthday. There were plenty of men behind him at Lloyd Park. VAC finished in third place behind Sutton Striders and Clapham Pioneers, both promoted as a result. However, VAC's full B team of ten had superior strength in depth and were a fantastic first on the day.

Thank you to the 39 men who played a part in VAC's splendid season. Four of them ran in all four matches: Malcolm Davies, Chris Lee, Andy Mitchelson and Dan Maskell. Eleven ran in three of the matches. In the League's age category awards, VAC's M60-69 runners dominated the rankings with the top three places going to Charles Hampden-Smith, Richard Evans and Ebe Prill, with John Foss fifth (first M65). Malcolm Davies was fourth in the highly competitive M50-59 category and was the second M55 in the listing.

A massive vote of thanks goes to Paddy Clark, the Team Manager, first there at the matches and the last to leave. He provided the numbers,

groundsheets, gazebo and most importantly the support and encouragement essential to the great team spirit.

## Women's Matches



This season, the 29 clubs in the lower division were split into Divisions 2 and 3, and VAC's women's team had been deservedly placed in Division 2. They successfully held their position, creditably finishing 10th of the 15 clubs. The B team did well too, coming 9th out of 15.

Thank you to the 15 women who ran for VAC in the season. There have been full teams at each of the four fixtures and everyone scored in either the A or B teams. Lisa Thomas ran in all four matches. Sarah Allen, Vera Blei (pictured above), Gina

Coulson, Anna Garnier, Viv Mitchell, Ros Tabor and Lucy Woolhouse ran in three of them. In the Surrey League's Over 60 category, Lucy Woolhouse (W60) topped the list and Anna Garnier was third (first W65). Thanks also to Helen Davies, VAC's Team Manager, who did a fantastic job organising and supporting the team,

The season's first matches were at Epsom Downs and Hurst Green. The third match was at **Oxshott Woods** on the course tackled earlier in the day by the men's team. The route made its way through woods and sandy heathland, twice up a notoriously steep hill. It was riddled with tree roots. Nine VAC women started the race but one was forced to withdraw with a badly turned ankle. Lucy Woolhouse was again VAC's first finisher.

Seven VAC women competed in the final fixture at **Lloyd Park** on a tough undulating two-lap, 4.9 mile, course churned up by the two preceding men's races. Constant rain all week had saturated the course which was a bog in many places and had long stretches of sloshy mud. Lisa Thomas was VAC's first finisher in 39th position followed by Jo Quantrill (W65), the first Over 60 in the combined Division 2 and 3 race. Vera Blei, Viv Mitchell and Ros Tabor completed the scoring team, backed up by Sarah Allen and Catherine Porter. VAC's A team was 13th on the day.

Many VAC members compete for their first claim clubs in the Surrey League, and that's fine. However, if your first claim club doesn't need you, you would be most welcome in VAC's men's and women's teams.

First-claim VAC members are eligible to compete for VAC. Also second claim members are allowed to run for VAC **as long as they do not compete for their first claim club in any of the four league matches in any of the Divisions in the 2024-25 season.** Members from outside Surrey are also very welcome, although the Surrey fixtures often clash with those of other county leagues.

There is no limit on the VAC turn-out. The more team members there are, the greater the strength in depth and the bigger the impact. Please contact the men's team manager Paddy Clark ([paddyclark@hotmail.com](mailto:paddyclark@hotmail.com)) or the women's team manager Helen Davies ([helendavies@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:helendavies@blueyonder.co.uk)) if you wish to join the teams. Every VAC runner is welcomed and appreciated.

## East Surrey League, Lloyd Park, 2 March

Ten ran for VAC in Lloyd Park on the same course used for the Surrey League. This time it was even muddier after weeks of heavy rain. The deep puddles and saturated fields were a challenge which VAC's team tackled enthusiastically.

John Foley (M55) was first for VAC with a fine run to finish in 16th position (14th man). Lisa Thomas (W55) was next, an excellent 7th in the women's listing. The men's scoring team of four was completed by



John Foss, Chris Lee and Mike Mann, with Andy Mitchelson and Dan Maskell as back-up. The women's team was completed by Jo Quantrill, Nicky Atkins and Lesley Mill in her first race for VAC.

### **Selection for the 2024 British & Irish Masters Cross Country International**

With Northern Ireland as hosts, the event will be held at the Billy Neill Country Park near Belfast on 16 November. The match features five teams: England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Northern Ireland. For selection for the England team, there will be two trial races on 28 September, held within an existing North Staffordshire Cross Country League event at Betley near Crewe. Further details and entry will be on BMAF Open Track. It is also necessary to attach back-up information about the athlete's 2024 achievements. This is required from both those competing in the selection race and those who are not able to compete but still wish to be considered for selection. Mike Mann ([mcmann90@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mcmann90@yahoo.co.uk)) is the VAC contact and will be a member of the England team's selection panel.

It's an honour to be picked to represent your country and VAC is proud of those who are selected to represent any of the five nations. It would be great to see lots of VAC members wearing VAC vests in Crewe competing for the England places. The selection races are every bit as competitive and exciting as the international event.

### **British Masters Cross Country Championships, Corwen, 16 March**

Nine VAC members closed the season with a trip to North Wales for the British Masters Cross Country Championships. The rain stopped for the two races but the course starting in a farm field of the Rhug estate was saturated until it climbed up a lovely Welsh hillside grazed by sheep. On the descent, there was a fast-flowing stream as an obstacle to be leapt over.

The first race was two laps, about four miles, for all the women and the men aged 65 and over. VAC's Jess Franklin had a great run to finish third woman and win W40 Bronze. Next was Madeleine Armstrong-Plieth in 11th (4th W40) followed by Peter Kennedy (5th M70), Maggie

Statham-Berry (W70 Silver), Guy Ogden ((4th M80) and Annie Ross (4th W70).

The second race was three laps for the men aged 35-64. Mark Cursons was VAC's first finisher, placing 41st overall and 7th M60 in a particularly strong age category. Other VAC finishers were Jacob Armstrong-Plieth (M50) and Mike Teasdale (M55).

The event was also the Inter Area Cross Country Challenge for BMAF area clubs. Midland Masters won both the men's and women's competitions. VAC unfortunately did not have enough runners to form scoring teams of six men and six women.

## ROAD RUNNING

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### **Battersea Park Summer Series**

The 2024 series features four races from April to July. The flat 5k and 5 mile courses in the park are the same as used by the elite Friday Night Under the Lights races and have become renowned for fast times. The first two races have been keenly fought and course records were broken in both of them. The 5k championship will take place on 4 June, with the final 5k race on Tuesday 16 July.



## 5km Road Race, 2 April

The race was a wet one but the gloomy skies and drizzle did not deter the 96 finishers from fierce competition and some great times, including impressive age-group course records for Anna Critchlow (W55), Clare Elms (W60) and Andrew Leach (M60).

VAC's Simon Shaw, pictured, led the charge to the finish line, finishing in 16:26, just three seconds short of his own M50 course record of 16:23 set in April 2023. Next was Philip Cooper (M45) of EMAC in 16:30, holding off VAC's Adrian Russell (M45) four seconds behind. In sixth place, Andrew Leach (M60) from North Herts, set an all-comers' M60 course record of 16:51, well ahead of VAC's M60 record of 17:14 posted by Mark Cursons in August 2023. Other age group category winners were James Pilch (M40), Richard Tomlinson (M55), David Pitt (M65), Ged Ruffle (M70), Peter Giles (M75) and Michael Johnson (M80).

Rebecca Luxton (W40) of Chelmsford AC was the women's winner in 18:33, but only three seconds ahead of VAC's Clare Elms (W60), pictured, whose time of 18:36 was a new W60 course record, shattering the previous W60 best of 20:13 set by Jackie Balfour in June 2023. Anna Critchlow (W55) was fourth with a great time of 19:40 which broke VAC's W55 course record of 19:55 set by Lisa Thomas in July 2021. Other age group category winners were Kate Carter (W45), Jacqueline Richardson (W50), Anne Lippitt (W65), Marion Rayner (W70), Sue Garner (W75) and Penny Elliott (W80).

## 5 Mile Championship Road Race, 7 May

A strong field of 65 finishers enjoyed the pleasant warm sunny conditions, although numbers were reduced by industrial action on several train lines.

At the head of the race, Richard McDowell (M45) became the Men's Champion after a close contest with SLH's Daniel Gaffney (M40) with both men under 26 minutes. Richard's time of 25:39 reduced the M45 course record by over 20 seconds from Andy Bond's previous mark of 26:03 set in 2022. Richard Macaulay was third in 26:34 which knocked one second off Ben Goddard's M35 record set in 2023. Close behind, in 26:41, last year's winner, Andy Bond, now in the M50 age group, had

the consolation of breaking Steve Winder's M50 course record by 16 seconds. Other Gold medals for age-group firsts were awarded to Jonathan Ratcliffe (M55), Andy Jordan (M60), David Rowe (M65), Mike Forder (M70), Peter Giles (M75) and Michael Johnson (M80).



Karima Harris (W50) was the Women's Champion in a fine time of 30:16 which broke the previous W50 course record of 30:45 set by Sue McDonald in 2019. Next was Clare Elms(W60), pictured, whose magnificent time of 31:40 set a new W60 course record, considerably improving Pamela Whitter's previous mark of 33:56 set in 2022. The previous day, Clare had competed in the Bannister Miles event at Oxford's Iffley Road track to mark the 70th anniversary of Roger Bannister's iconic

four minute mile. Clare's phenomenal 5:30.88 broke the British W60 mile record by eight seconds. She now holds ten national age group One Mile records from W45 to W60 categories on the road and track. Other Gold medallists in VAC's championship were Laura Donnelly (W35), Lesley Mill (W55) and Linda Aird (W65).

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## British Masters and VAC 10 Mile Road Championships, Buntingford, 30 December

Twenty VAC members defied any post-Christmas lethargy and lined up with nearly 500 others for the popular Buntingford Year End 10. The event hosted the British Masters 10 Mile Championships and attracted nearly 100 eligible Masters contestants whose quality was evident in the results when they filled twelve of the race's first twenty positions, all well under 60 minutes.

The event was also VAC's 10 mile championships. Peter Harvey gives us a great insight into the Buntingford course in an account of his experience which follows on Page 20. The successful BMAF and VAC championships will be repeated for 2024 at Buntingford on Sunday 29 December. Please consider joining VAC's squad.

Ben Short (M35) was VAC's first finisher in a time of 54:04. He was a magnificent third in the race and second in the Masters championship, claiming BMAF M35 Silver and VAC Gold. Duncan Woolmer (M40) was VAC's next finisher in 54:52, placing fifth in the race and winning BMAF and VAC Gold medals. David Lipscombe (M45) was third for VAC in 56:09 and also won BMAF and VAC Gold medals. Jennifer Armson (W40) was VAC's first woman in a great time of 64:09. She was the second woman in the BMAF championships and won BMAF and VAC Gold medals. Next was Victoria Carter (W50) in 69:25, claiming BMAF Silver and VAC Gold, followed by Helen Pool (W45) in 70:04. Other double BMAF and VAC Gold medallists were Lynda Hembury (W65), Chas Taylor (M75) and Eddie Thorpe (M80). VAC Golds were also won by Peter Harvey (M55), John Cooper (M60), Rob Sargent (M65), Jerry Lockspeiser (M70), Helen Pool (W45) and Barbro Julin (W60).

Every year, the Ron White shield is awarded to the VAC member who gains the highest age-graded score in VAC's 10 Mile or Half Marathon Championships. This year the winner was Lynda Hembury (W65) whose time of 73:13 at Buntingford translated to an amazing age-graded percentage of 94.40%. Avril Riddell achieved the next best score of 85.33%, followed by Duncan Woolmer at 85.11% and Peter Harvey at 84.25%.

## My experience at the Buntingford 10 by Peter Harvey (photo by Kevin Richards Photography)



I was delighted that the Buntingford 10 miler was the host of the British Masters Championships as well as VAC's and Herts County Vets champs. I cycle to every race and the 44 mile round trip ride from Welwyn Garden City was not a problem. I last did the race in 2015 in a mediocre 66 minutes 2 seconds which was good enough for a Herts Gold team medal and an open team prize. With good karma I toed the line, not just for Garden City Runners (GCR) but also for Vets AC which I had recently joined.

The Buntingford 10 is a course of two halves: the up and down. We begin with a tour of Buntingford's residential streets then head out into East Hertfordshire's green and pleasant land, uphill. I went off rather quickly, trying to stay in a pack with a few M50s. I sensed this was the place to

be and doggedly stayed in touch uphill, my weakness. The second half of the course was downhill, and I was in my element. I cruised to the

front of the pack and began to test them. On a decent downhill gradient I knew I needed to get away, shouted “yes” and bolted. I pulled ahead and joined up with a chap from North Herts RC. I was also joined by the spirit of my departed father who was encouraging me to keep the pace up. Being a medium has its advantages... The last two miles contained a couple of nasty hills but I just held on to my place and finished in a surprising masters PB of 60 minutes and 53 seconds, 39<sup>th</sup>/487 – remarkably the same position as eight years ago!

The race was really well organized by Royston Runners and every finisher received a decent custom-made medal. Most importantly and unexpectedly for me, I got M55 Silver in the British Championships! The last time I won a national medal was for judo in the early 1980s. I was beaten by a sub four-minute miler from Devon who was just over a minute ahead. I was third M50 in the Hertfordshire Vets Champs and uncontested in the M55s for VAC. GCR would probably have won team bronze but for someone not ticking the county box. I believe the rules dictated that I had to run in my GCR top, but I’m looking forward to wearing a VAC singlet soon. I’m delighted that the Buntingford 10 has been chosen again to host the 2024 British Masters and VAC championships on 29 December. Hope to see you there!

## TRACK AND FIELD

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### **OUTDOOR TRACK AND FIELD – an update from Peter Kennedy**

Stop Press! Good luck to the 102 VAC members who have entered the World Masters T&F Championships in Gothenburg in August.

### **Date and Venue for VAC Championships!**

It has been difficult to find a suitable date and venue for our 2024 outdoor T&F championships. However, the biggest challenge is recruiting the large number of qualified officials and volunteers necessary for a UKA Licence and essential for staging an efficient, accurate and safe meeting. Our first date of 9 June turned out not to be viable. However, happily, we have now booked Tooting Bec track on Saturday 31 August and have begun a recruitment drive for officials and helpers.

We are appealing for your help. Please come forward if you are an official. Also spread the appeal within your first claim clubs, maybe with the help of your club's officers. Be proactive in approaching and recruiting any qualified officials known to you or your clubs. Every official is valued.

Entries for the event on OpenTrack will first be offered to VAC members and then extended to all Masters athletes. I hope you will enter if T&F is your discipline. However, we will have to cancel the event (and offer refunds) if there aren't enough officials. If you can help, or know of officials whom we could approach, please contact me (Peter Kennedy) or Ros Tabor (VAC's Officials Secretary). Our email addresses are at the front of the newsletter and on VAC's website.

In the meantime, middle distance track runners can look forward to VAC's 5,000m championship races on 26 June and the 10,000m championships on 11 September. Both events are at the Millennium Arena, Battersea Park. First-time track runners are welcome. Entries are open on OpenTrack.

## INDOOR TRACK AND FIELD



### VAC Championships, Lee Valley, 11 February

We held our indoor championships in conjunction with EMAC. The calendar gets very congested at the beginning of the year so it would be hard for both clubs to find separate dates for stand-alone championships. A joint fixture also means better competition for athletes, and better availability for the number of officials required to get an event licence.



Lee Valley is always a popular venue, and the event went very smoothly. At least 100 VAC members competed. Twenty-eight VAC Indoor Championship Best Performances were recorded including two from Allan Long (M80 60m and 200m), Liz Amos (W45 200m and 400m and pictured), Vaughan Ramsay (M50 High Jump and Triple Jump) and Alexandra Marginean (W35 High Jump and Shot).

Full results are on the website.

### EMAA Indoor Inter-Area Challenge, Lee Valley, 25 February



The England Masters T&F Challenge is keenly fought between the nation's nine Masters Area Clubs. It is a VAC priority to field a full men's and women's team at the indoor and outdoor events each year. The competition is divided into four age bands: 35-49, 50-59, 60-69 and 70+. The schedule includes the full range of track and field events although some events aren't staged for the 60-69 and 70+ age bands. Each area club is allowed to enter one representative in each age band in each men's and women's event, with every place in every event worth valuable points.

In this year's indoor challenge, VAC's team of selected athletes finished a worthy third with 481.5 points behind Midland Masters (574 points) and Eastern Masters (556 points). VAC's men's team were third in their competition, and the women's team fourth.

In the 90 events, VAC recorded 16 first places (9 for the men and 7 for the women), 15 second places and 7 third places. This is a magnificent achievement, but the team's high score was boosted by every single point gained.

Highlights were the triple firsts by Mike Vassiliou (M60 60m, 400m and Relay and pictured above) and double firsts by Liz Amos (W35 200m and 400m). Other splendid outright wins were achieved by Bilen Ahmet (M35 Pole Vault), Fiona Bishop (2k Walk), Tim Carter (M70 Long Jump), Clare Elms (W50 1500m), Charmaine Johnson (W60 Shot and pictured on the back page), Sarah Loades (W50 400m), Alwyn Lombaard (M35 High Jump), Chris Loudon (M35 800m), Gavin Stephens (M35 200m), Nikki Sturzaker (W50 800m), David Williams (M60 1500m) and the M60 relay team of Adrian Day, David Hinds, Mike Vassiliou and Paul Wignall.

The next Inter Area match is the outdoor Challenge at the Rockingham Triangle Athletics Stadium in Corby on 7 September. There is a full range of track and field events for the 35-49, 50-59, 60-69 and 70+ age groups. Expressions of interest in competing should be made to the Entries Secretary at [entries@vetsac.org.uk](mailto:entries@vetsac.org.uk) (Maggie Statham-Berry).

## **European Masters Championships, Torun, Poland, 17-23 March**

Toruń is a lovely historical city in the middle of the Northern half of Poland. It has an excellent indoor athletics stadium which is regularly used for international competitions.

The UK was well represented with a team of around 300 athletes competing indoors as well as outdoors at the cross country, road and throwing events. Over 60 VAC members attended and made a big contribution to the UK's tally of 165 medals, including 50 Golds, which



put the UK in fourth place overall. The hosts, Poland, topped the medal table with a total of 251 medals (103 Golds), with Germany second and Spain third.

Four VAC members won individual Gold medals. Clare Elms achieved a magnificent tally of four Golds in the W60 800m, 1500m, 3000m and 8K Cross Country events plus a W60 Cross Country team Gold. Zoe Doyle (W45 800m and 1500m) and Ian Richards (M75 3000m Walk and 5K Walk) both claimed two individual Golds. Sue McDonald won W55 Gold in the Marathon. Allan Long's second place in the M80 200m saw him break the British record in a time of 31:84, well inside Tony Bowman's previous record of 32:30 set in 2016.

Here is a summary of the daily action for VAC members.

Day 1 (Sun 17th) featured 3,000m races, where Clare Elms W60 won Gold, with Ros Tabor W70 and Sue McDonald W55 picking up Bronzes.

Day 2 saw Ian Richards win M75 Gold in the 3,000m walk.

On Day 3 Clare Elms won her 2nd and 3rd Golds - 1st W60 in the 8k cross country, with her GB team also coming first, including Margaret Wadman. Also at cross country, Michael Johnson was 2nd M80, also in the Gold medal winning GB M80 team, Sue McDonald was 2nd W55, Ros Tabor 3rd W70 and Chris Ness won a bronze team medal in GB's M50s. At 400m Susie McLoughlin was 2nd W45 followed by sister Liz Amos in 3rd, Kat Sutton was 2nd W35 and David Hinds was 3rd M70.

Day 4 featured 60m finals, where Wally Franklyn M70 and Kevin Craven M55 were our best placed, each in 6th.

Day 5 (Thursday) saw the 800m finals, where there were wins for Zoe Doyle W45 and Clare Elms W60 (her 4th gold); Kat Sutton won her second medal, W35 bronze. Louise Wood was 3rd in the W55 Triple Jump.

Day 6 had the 5k road walks, where Ian Richards won his second M75 Gold. In the 200m, Allan Long was second M80, in a British record. Liz Amos W45 and Wally Franklin M70 came close to medals with 4th places.

Final Day 7 featured the 1500m and women's 60m hurdles finals plus a road marathon and an afternoon of 4x200m relays.

In the 1500m's Zoe Doyle W45 and Clare Elms W60 won their 2nd and 5th Golds respectively. Anna Critchlow was second W55 and Ros Tabor 3rd W70. In the 60m hurdles Emily McMahon was 2nd W70. In the Marathon, Sue McDonald was first W55, adding to her Silver and Bronze indoors earlier in the week, and Chris Higgs was 3rd M65, also part of GB's 3rd placed M55 team.

In the relays, Anne Nelson was in GB's first placed W70 team and Gavin Stephens also won Gold in the winning M45 team. In 2nd placed GB teams were Isaiah Adekanmbi and Craig Cox (M35 team), Liz Amos and Zoe Doyle (W45 team), Emily McMahon (Mixed 70 team), David Hinds and Wally Franklyn (M70 team) and Barry Ferguson in the Mixed 80 team. In 3rd placed teams were Ashley Reid (M40 team), Liz Amos (Mixed 45 team) and Sarah Loades (W50 and Mixed 50 teams).

## LONDON MARATHON, 21 APRIL

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At least 50 VAC members completed the course from Greenwich to the Mall along with around 50,000 others. The weather was conducive for good times with a cool cloudy start and some pleasant sunshine during the day.

Nine members achieved sub three-hour times and nine were in the top ten of their age groups. Alice Riddell-Webster of Fulham RC topped the W55-59 category with a fine time of 2:58:15. Simon Shaw of Ealing, Southall & Middlesex placed second in the M50-54 age group with 2:36:18. Karima Harris of Highgate Harriers was the fastest VAC woman and second in the W50-54 age group but was very unlucky to miss top place, including a new British record. Her chip time of 2:48:29 was just three seconds slower than the age group's winner, although Karima wasn't aware of her rival's presence in the throng.

The fastest VAC member was Ed Chuck (M35) of Dulwich Runners setting a PB of 2:26:02. Next was Richard McDowell of Hercules Wimbledon now in the M45-49 category in a time of 2:28:56, placing him third in the age group. He is pictured on the front cover. The third fastest was Micah Evans (M40) of Blackheath & Bromley in 2:36:02, faster than last year by over two minutes. Eddie Ware (M45, 2:45:51), Adam May (M40, 2:51:10) and Steve Ingledew (M60, 2:58.36, 9th in the M60-64 age group) were the other sub-three performers. Other top-ten age group placers were Susanna Harrison (4th W60, 3:24:09), John Carter (6th M80+, 5:52:27) and Ruth Hutton (8th W55, 3:11:40) with John Foss a commendable 12th in the M65 category with 3:14:39.

Two of VAC's walkers race-walked the course. Ian Richards was competitive with the runners and placed 10th in the M75 category in 4:41:47. John Arthur (M60) posted a creditable 5:17:51.

VAC was allocated one club place which was awarded to the first interested member whose name was drawn out of a hat. This year, the lucky person was Dean Saliba (M45) of Victoria Park & Tower Hamlets. He was grateful for the opportunity and completed the event in 4:13:19.

Congratulations again go to Bill O'Connor who is one of the remaining "Ever-Presents" who have completed every single London Marathon since its inception in 1981. Bill, now in the M75-79 age category, duly completed his 44th event in a time of 6:41:45. In 2024, six Ever-Presents started, and six finished.

A table of VAC members' performances is on VAC's website. It has been compiled from scrutinising the official results. Apologies if we have failed to spot someone. Please let Maggie Statham-Berry ([entries@vetsac.org.uk](mailto:entries@vetsac.org.uk)) know if this is the case.

# RACE WALKING

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## **Battersea Park Race Walks, 2 April and 7 May**

There were twelve finishers in April's Walk, held in persistent rain which became heavier as the race progressed. The overall and ladies' winner was Melanie Peddle (W55) from Loughton AC in 28:46. The runner up and men's winner was Stuart Bennett (Brentwood Beagles) in 31:12. A warm welcome was given to new members, Man Biu Lam (pictured) and Chik Ha Kwok (Metros) and to first timers Lynne Drummond (Crystal Palace FR) and Hannah Cock (HHH).

May's Walk started ten minutes before the running race which gave the



seven contestants their own line up, appropriate for a Championship. In contrast to April's event, conditions were good with pleasant warm sunshine. Ian Richards (M75) (Steyning AC and VAC) had a comfortable overall win in 44:50 and became VAC's men's champion. Melanie Peddle (W55) (Loughton AC) won for the ladies in a fine time of 46:13. The second lady, and VAC's Ladies Champion, was Maureen Noel (W60) in 51:11, followed by Penelope Cummings (W45) in 52:42.

## Cecil Gittins Memorial Walks, 27 May



This annual event, hosted by VAC, commemorates the life of Cecil Gittins who died nearly ten years ago in November 2014. It is a fitting tribute to Cecil whose numerous years' service to athletics included being an active race walker, an official and an influential committee member for VAC and the Race Walking Association for which he

was Chairman and then President. As an official, principally a timekeeper, but also a judge and a recorder, he spent many hours beside the track and the road. For VAC he is especially remembered as the timekeeper for VAC's many cross country races in all weathers on Wimbledon Common. The photo shows Cecil, with QPR scarf, on the left with Ron Hopcroft on the Common in 2009.

The ninth running of the event was again at Cyclopark, Gravesend, on the dedicated cycle circuit, designed like a large Scalextric set with many gradients and bends. The event incorporated the Enfield Race Walking League and offered road race distances of 2.5k, 5k and 10k (four laps). There were 22 paid entries with 18 on the line. Thankfully, the predicted rain didn't happen, and conditions were ideal with a mixture of sun and cloud cover.

The one lap, 2.5k, race provided an opportunity for two young athletes to record commendable times. Ellin Wilson (U15G) of Ashford AC was first in 14:37, followed by Lily-Ann Cooper (U13G) of Newmarket Joggers in 17:42. The Ladies' 5k race had a new winner, Sheila Leavy (North Herts RR) (W70) in 40:41. The Men's 5k was won for the third consecutive year by the present RWA President, Chris Hobbs (Ashford AC) (M65), in a fine time of 34:53.

The winner of the Ladies' 10k was Jacqueline Benson (Ashford AC) in 62:04. VAC's Fiona Bishop (W60) was second in 71:28. The Men's 10k was won by Olympian Ian Richards (VAC and Steyning AC) (W75) in 58:23.

# PARKRUN

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## Victoria Dock



Eleven VAC members gathered at Victoria Dock on a sunny Easter Saturday morning. The course is completely flat but overall times are affected by five U turns on the three-lap course. Public transport options were reduced because of Bank Holiday engineering but with a parkrun barcode you can cross the Thames on the Emirates cable car after the race and appreciate the view. Kay Sheedy (W35) was VAC's fastest runner and also the parkrun's first female finisher. Next was Gina Galbraith (W45) who was the second woman. Jim Carrington (M45), Felix Allen (M50), Kevin McAleer (M60) and Mike Mann (M75) were first in their age groups, as were Chiara Cristoni (W50) and Ros Tabor (W70). Ros also achieved the top age graded performance for the day's event (90.44%).

For VAC's next parkrun gathering we will be visiting the Kingston parkrun on 20 July. Please come along if you're from round that way or be a tourist and tick it off your list. Look out for the VAC vests. It's a great way to meet fellow VAC members and feel part of the club.

## Octogenarian and Nonagenarian parkrun, Bushy Park, 6 July

Anyone over 80, 85 or 90+ is welcome to join other like-minded youthful octogenarian and nonagenarian parkrunners at the seventh instance of this annual gathering. You could help swell the attendance towards a possible world record of 100 octogenarians and nonagenarians at one parkrun event. Meet at the east end of the car park in Bushy Park. There'll be prosecco and cupcakes afterwards! It would be good to know an idea of numbers beforehand, so contact Richard and don't forget your barcode.

Richard Pitcairn-Knowles: [rppk@btinternet.com](mailto:rppk@btinternet.com)

## Members: Fiona Bishop

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Fiona has been a member of VAC since 1998 and is known to many as a prolific competitive race walker and runner at all distances from sprints to 15k and 20k walks and Half and Full marathons. Fiona is regularly the VAC member who competes in the most events at international championships. Here is a resume of her professional and athletic life.

Fiona was born in 1959, arriving three months early and profoundly deaf. She was the youngest of four children, with two older sisters and a brother.

She was selected to attend the only boarding Grammar School for the Deaf in Newbury. Whilst there she completed the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award. As part of the scheme she went on an Outward Bound course in Aberdovey and got the bug for outdoor activities. She later received her award at Buckingham Palace from the Duke of Edinburgh and actually spoke to him again whilst running in Windsor Great Park at the same time as he was out in his racing carriage!



After graduating from North Staffordshire Polytechnic with an HND in Applied Physics Fiona got a job as an NDT (Non Destructive testing) Engineer. She worked on various projects for British Aerospace and other companies on testing aircraft, satellites and equipment for power stations.



Whilst working for British Aerospace she decided to join a “Skiffing” club. A “skiff” is a timber boat, and you can row singly or in a double with a “Cox”. The club was based at Walton on Thames and she practised on Tuesdays and Thursdays after work. She opted to pair up with another woman in a double skiff and began to compete at regattas against the four other clubs based on the Thames - Sunbury, Egham, Wargrave and Thames Ditton. The races were normally over 500 or

1000 metres and she remembers proudly winning two tankards in competitions. However, the most memorable achievement was completing the Lechlade to Teddington Lock (76 bridges) challenge (a distance of nearly 200 kms) over one weekend.





When work moved her to Stevenage, she was unable to find a new club locally but the company was involved in the Arianespace Programme and she was asked to run for them at short notice in a 9Km cross country run against the partners from the rest of Europe. She finished 3<sup>rd</sup> and was becoming hooked on running. She joined a local club, Verlea AC, and

competed in both track and cross country races. She had some success in Hertfordshire County events and with Bedford nearby she used to compete at a race famous locally at Ampthill which included a steep climb. After finishing 3<sup>rd</sup> in her age group one year, she was presented with a trophy by one of her fellow competitors, the great Paula Radcliffe.

In 1992 she moved to Chertsey and then to her current home in Horsell joining Dorking and Mole Valley running club and later Woking AC. While at DMV she competed in some short Triathlon events and at Woking AC she started doing the Vets league where she tried race walking. She met a very good race walker called Ann Lewis who told her about the Masters Athletics events in Europe and the World.

For the last 20 years Fiona has competed regularly at both European and World Masters Athletic Championships, running and walking distances from 5000 metres to the Marathon, and regularly competing in multiple events such as cross country, track walks, road walks and 10k, half marathon and marathon road runs.

She competed at the 1st Deaf World Championship in Athletics completing the marathon in Izmir in Turkey. She has also won a team bronze in the Deaf European cross country in Portugal.

In recent years she has taken part in parkruns across the globe from Europe to Australia, completing 273 parkruns at 95 different locations.

Although she has placed individually in many walking and running categories, it is representing her country as a team player that has

given her the greatest pleasure and success whilst meeting and making friends from across the world.

Having recently retired from work, Fiona intends to continue to challenge herself by competing in international Masters Athletics events whilst also increasing her tally of parkruns and representing her beloved Surrey at Race Walking.

## OBITUARIES

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### KEVIN BURNETT (1939-2024)



Kevin Burnett, a long-standing member and former VAC President, passed away in May 2024 at the age of 84. He had been active in sport from the age of 11, playing football and cricket, and on retirement from these he took an interest in running. He joined Striders of Croydon (then known as Philips City Striders) in 1987 and joined VAC in 1988. He also belonged to Holland Sports AC, Hercules Wimbledon and the Surrey Walking Club.

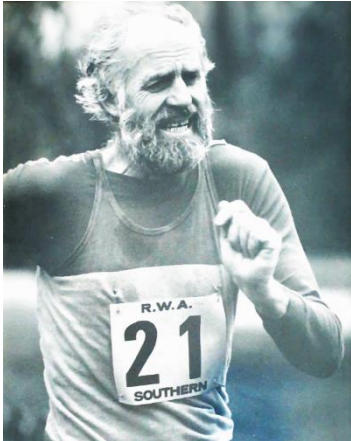
He was a prolific competitor for his clubs and there is an impressive total of 1109 performances recorded on his Power of 10 profile, including 602 parkruns beginning

at Banstead Woods in 2007 and reaching the 600 milestone at Swanley in 2023. In Track & Field, he started as a sprinter but was particularly suited to the throwing events and equally enjoyed the shot put, discus, hammer, javelin and weight throws, sometimes doing them all at a single meeting. In 1996 he won six medals (two gold and four silver) in the Surrey Masters T&F Championships and continued to be a

medallist in these championships for the next 25 years. As a race walker, he gained valuable points for Striders in the Southern Counties Veterans League. The photo shows Kevin in his Holland Sports vest at a Southern Athletics League meeting.

*Thanks to Alan Dolton for information for this obituary.*

## **KEN LIVERMORE (1932-2024)**



Ken Livermore died in January 2024, aged 91. He had been a continuous VAC member for 36 years, joining in 1987. He competed as a race walker in club, county, national and international events on the track and road at all distances from 2K to 20K. He was a regular at VAC's and BMAF's events, competing well into his 80s. One of his great achievements was becoming Centurion #386 in the 1966 Leicester-to-Skegness 100 miles' walk, clocking a very impressive 21:07.41.

As a young man, Ken established himself as a good runner on the North London athletics scene. He joined Woodford Green AC, then moved on to the club now known as Enfield and Haringey AC. He became a race walker but also enjoyed orienteering and long-distance walking. He put back into sport by acting as a recorder on many 24-hour races over 100 miles and being a long serving Walking Secretary for the Hertfordshire County Athletic Association.

*Thanks to the Essex Walker newsletter for information and photo.*



**Charmaine Johnson won the W60 Long Jump at VAC's Indoor Championships, as well as Golds in the High Jump and Shot. She also scored maximum points for VAC by winning the Shot Put at the indoor Inter-Area Challenge.**