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**GATE
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HARRIERS
NEWSLETTER**
highgateharriers.org.uk

FEBRUARY 2012

ISSUE NUMBER 24

EDITORIAL

Pretty obvious what the main topic for this Newsletter is – the superb victory by our men at Brighton! Champions of the South of England has a good ring to it; we have reports from the men's perspective by Henry and also as seen from the eyes of a Young Athlete in Ben Hatch – and no issue would be right without a comment from 'Mr. Highgate' Ben Pochee!

Other important stuff to read though, with our AGM notification, Open Meeting, home track & field dates and a plea for help at the Nationals. Couple of really interesting general interest pieces too, from Becky Penty on her high altitude training in Kenya and one from Alastair Aitken, our inimitable Press Secretary.

IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED THIS NEWSLETTER IN THE POST IT IS BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE AN EMAIL ADDRESS FOR YOU!!! EMAIL IS THE EASIEST AND FASTEST WAY TO COMMUNICATE WITH OUR MEMBERS SO IF POSSIBLE PLEASE LET US KNOW YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS BY EMAILING highgateharriers@hotmail.co.uk. IF YOU WOULD RATHER NOT SUPPLY AN EMAIL ADDRESS THE NEWSLETTER IS AVAILABLE THROUGH OUR WEBSITE.

Notice is hereby given of Highgate Harriers Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 18th April at the Heath Education Centre 6.30-8 p.m. Full details, Agenda, and details of our guest speaker will be distributed in March.

Our early season **Open Meeting** is on Wednesday 11th April. As usual we have special events for under 11's starting at 5.30 with the main meeting starting at 7. Free entry to club members – only if you enter online! Timetable and entry on our website www.highgateharriers.org.uk.

CAN YOU SPARE AN HOUR OR SO AT THE NATIONAL?

We will be selling programmes and results at the National Cross-Country Championships at Parliament Hill on Saturday 25th February, if you can spare some time to help us please contact our new Volunteer Coordinator, Nick Stockman, at nick150696@aol.com.

HOME TRACK FIXTURES

Track and Field dates at Parliament Hill are as follows:

11 th April	Open Meeting
28 th April	LICC (inc. QuadKids)
6 th May	Young Athletes League (but hosted by London Heathside)
20 th May	Young Athletes League
9 th June	SAL (new combined Senior Men/Women)
1 st September	SAL

If you can help at any of the above please contact Nick Stockman, nick150696@aol.com.
We need as many qualified officials as we can get to successfully host fixtures, but also need general help so don't be shy coming forward!



THE SOUTHERN 2012

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

By Henry Dodwell

The Mens' Perspective

It was an early start. Very early. Saturday morning at the tennis courts for 7.30 was painful for me. So when I arrived to see a bus full of team mates, all mildly cheerful, being rounded up by Ben Pochee, it wasn't all that bad. An assortment of Harriers and supporters all travelled down to Stanmore Park on the 'Battle Bus' on what was to turn out to be an historic day.

The weather was bitterly cold but dry and sunny, so when we were dropped off at 10am outside the course there were a few apprehensive comments about being exposed to the elements for 4 hours waiting to race. But yet again team spirits were raised with the setting up of the massive Gate encampment and preparations for the ever enthusiastic young athletes races.

The course was laid out over the marvellous Stanmore Park, a fantastic setting for a championship cross country race (and I've seen a few in my time), with an amphitheatre like undulating start/finish field area and a wooded steep hill above which the route twisted up and down before throwing you back down into the field area.

The ground conditions were firm due to the dry weather and drainage provided by the porous chalk rocks beneath the course. However, the large nodules of flint all along the course around the wooded hill made it similar in places to running over cobbled streets, which added to the challenge and uniqueness of the venue.

After cheering on the mighty junior athletes, the men's team retired to the warmth of the Brighton University campus cafe. Note for future race preparations: get the team together early, sit somewhere comfortable, engage in some healthy banter whilst resting the legs and drinking hot drinks. This turned out to be a great way to relax and take the mind off the impending high pressure cauldron of a championship cross-country race.

With an hour to go, the men's team assembled at The Gate encampment, and went for an easy recce run of the course, Shaun wisely turning us back before we had climbed the hill to save precious leg power for the race.

The time was upon us, and 15 Highgate men of steel toed the line with 5 minutes to go, avoiding any chance of the starting debacle of 2011, in Pen No. 1. The Southern Cross Country is the only championship race in the country that covers a 15km distance, a serious undertaking on such a demanding course.

The race itself is a blur of mini-battles between faceless rivals for every foot of ground, crowd noise, colours, cameras and amazing support for The Gate. All over the course it seems were our supporters providing encouragement and useful team information. Thanks to all of you out there on that course, in particular to the young Highgate lads on the first hill of the lap - tremendous supporting which, I can say for all the Harriers in the race, never failed to lift the spirits and legs to get past the guy in front.

Personally, my battle was with a Shaftesbury Barnet rival and friend. Note to readers: never wind up an opposition runner by slapping him on the back while passing him on a hill and making a sly comment about being slow. As the Shaftesbury guy did to me. This only served to spur me on to pass him on the next hill and make him suffer behind me for the rest of the race. The mile long downhill into the finish area was a joy, especially crossing the line and seeing the team finished in such close order, to easily take the win for the first time since 1997 and close out the first 'B' team. In the words of our absent Scottish star, Murray Strain, 'It doesn't take one superstar performance, just six guys prepared to toe the line and not stop suffering until the opposition wave the white flag of surrender'.

The pictures of the following celebrations and trophy antics tell the story. A great day out!

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

By Ben Hatch

The Young Athletes Perspective

Beep, my alarm when off I glanced over, 6:30am. I stopped it and rested my head back again, that's when I thought to myself "wait, I've got the XC championships today!"

I sprung out of bed and went to the kitchen where my mum (kindly) had made me breakfast and a humongous packed lunch. After I had eaten and got my gear together I was out the door. My mum, at around 7:10am (kindly!) drove me to Parliament Hill, where the Highgate Team and the coach which is taking the team all the way to Brighton and back! I was one of the lucky ones; Pierce Boyle biked from home to get to the coach right on time along with the rest of us, Terry Fawden also had to wake up early at 5:30am to arrive on time! (Now that's the Highgate spirit).

At 7:30am we were off, a two hour drive down to the Southern XC championships, to be honest Pierce and I slept most of the journey, but the whole team were in full swing singing songs and chatting about the race! What an atmosphere!

Taking a left off the motorway we arrived at a huge field/forest, we all get off the coach with our belongings, the flag and tent. We enter with pure fighting spirit although most of us needed the loo! We trekked on through the wilderness of competitors to find a good spot for the Highgate HQ, a.k.a the tent and flag.

With a little help from the senior men, we had the tent up in no time! As everyone was settling down in the HQ, we all of a sudden heard a horrible screeching sound just out side of the tent. Brave Ben Pochee went to investigate. In a second he came back with a harmonica in one hand and a megaphone in the other, but behind him was of course the cheeky, but fast James Millet! He had found the megaphone which was meant to be for cheering!

Before I knew it, it was my race (under 15's) and what a race it was! There we were bunched up, crammed in between 211 other runners, all very cold and eager to get racing. It was a very tough course with a giant hill and wavy bends. In the end Highgate under 15 boys did very well with James Millet 77th, Alex Machin-Paley 111th and me, Ben Hatch, 117th. What a result!

Shortly, after my race was the under 13 boys, they had a slightly shorter course but a tough one it was! Terry Fawden, a very fast strong Highgate runner stormed up the killer hill and back to the finishing line with an amazing place of 20th. great running Terry! To be honest the mad screams and cheers from the Highgate Megaphone really helped him up that hill!

After the thrilling Under 13's race, our one and only under 17 boy, Pierce Boyle was up, ready to take on the rest of the teams in a muddy, long race. As soon as you knew it they were off! Highgate's spirits were up cheering Pierce as he came screaming down the hill ready for another 2 more laps. He held on tight all the way across the finishing line, with a superb effort giving him 136th place in a powerful race!

Highgate's Women were sadly very short of runners with only Elinor (88th) and Natasha (183rd) making the long trip South.

Last but not least the senior men! Raring to go they approached the start line with a fearsome team of 15 men all focused on one goal!

They were off, with a great start Ben Noad and Shaun Dixon threw themselves into the course along with Ryan McKinley and Ben Pochee, not far behind with the rest of the team. It was a great start for Highgate seeing they wanted to win the 6 man home first Award. As the laps went on the Highgate Juniors were situated at the top of the hill, trying to give them the most encouragement we could give, including Millet with his Harmonica! But on top of all the cheering there was a much more important job to do, with the help of Graham and the megaphone we were able to shout to the senior men where about they were in the race and what position they were in the Highgate team, so they knew when to go faster so that they can get all 6 men across the finishing line first! It was a very hard job and of course the run for the senior men, but it was worth it seeing the Heroic Highgate men come first team home! Brilliant running from all the senior men who took part in the treacherous race across the fields of Brighton, which is now the turf of where Highgate Harriers are victorious!

After celebrating and receiving the huge silver cup, which the senior men are still cherishing, we pack up our tent and start to head back to the coach. On the coach the whole team were chanting and dancing all very happy to be winners! My fellow U15 team mate Alex Machin-Paley was so happy during the ride home he started to climb under the all the seats trying to tug on everyone's legs! Again after a long day of running and cheering I was quite tired, but the atmosphere on the coach was mental!

Eventually, we arrived back at Parliament Hill, still with the chants and smell of victory (and smelly runner's feet) still in the air; to be honest I was so tired, but very happy for the team! I'd just like to congratulate everyone who raced in the Southern XC championships and a big thank you to Graham and Kate for arranging the Young Athlete teams.

Thank you and UP THE GATE!!!!

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

By Ben Pochee

The Travel Perspective

On January 28th 2012 Highgate Harriers took several youth and senior teams to the South of England Cross Country Championships in Brighton, this event is the 2nd biggest Cross Country event in the country and therefore it was a huge achievement for the senior's men's team to be crowned South of England champions!

However, beyond the physical contribution for the victory, a significant factor in Highgate Harriers senior men's win was the unique team spirit and collective passion especially displayed by the youth team members. From previous experience when our team has travelled to major events via a multitude of independent means it has proved very hard to generate a sense of team and a true sense of competing for each other as opposed to competing as an individual. The funding from Camden Council which facilitated the coach hire provided far more than merely transport, it provided an opportunity for team talk en route and allowed each runner to motivate a fellow runner for the racing challenge ahead and it clearly worked wonders!

I would personally like to thank Camden Council for the supremely positive impact their funding decision had on our team, and I know each and every member at Highgate Harriers would also like to state their appreciation.



TRAINING IN KENYA

By BECKY PENTY

Almost four weeks ago I arrived at the High Altitude Training Centre (HATC) in Iten, Kenya - I have been lucky enough to get a place on the UKA Endurance Programme which runs a number of month long camps throughout the year to this training centre founded by World Champion Lornah Kiplagat in 1999.

Situated at 2400 metres above sea level, the HATC is surrounded by hundreds of miles of dirt track roads perfect for running, along with a 400 metre dirt track near by. In addition there are facilities on site including a gym and solar heated swimming pool.



Freya Murray, Becky Penty, Steph Twell, Claire Hallissey, Hatti Dean and Louise Damen

This is my first time at altitude and an opportunity to see what its like to spend a month being a full time athlete leaving my day job back in England.

The set up at the centre is ideal and all orientated to providing the optimum environment to train and recover in. All the food is locally grown and very nutritious ensuring that the increase in energy expenditure is compensated for through an increase in carbohydrate intake - although I am missing certain home comforts such as cereal and dark chocolate.

The Kenyan children are amazing and along with the cows, goats and sheep roaming on the trails there is often the constant shouts of “how are you?!” and requests for high fives as they run alongside (or overtake!) in very often bare feet. The novelty however does wear off when they ask you halfway up a hill how you are, and my lungs feel as if they may explode!

Unfortunately I have only been able to run for half my time here as the rocky terrain exposed my rather ropey biomechanics which has lead to my Plantaris muscle in my right leg becoming overloaded. The Physio support however has been amazing and whilst frustrating in the short term, has hopefully meant in the long term I have been able to address some issues which contributed to the injury such as very weak glutes!

Despite not running the whole time I still feel I have got a huge amount out of the camp and feel very lucky to have been able to have experienced the environment and training routine along with getting to know a great bunch of new people.



The local track!

ATHLETICS REPORTER SUPREME!

Alastair Aitken, The club's Press Secretary since 1966 and one of the best known athletics interviewers in the UK remembers some of the high points of his career

Graham Norris has kindly asked me if I could write a short article about my athletics reporting, maybe on some of the places I have visited and the 'Stars' I have interviewed.

So many places like Oslo, Edinburgh (Commonwealth 1970), Athens and Rome European and many other events in the UK and so many interviews, I would hardly know where to begin.

However I will say something.

I first started a serious interest in athletics when I was 9 years old in 1949, after coming 3rd in a blanket finish in the Under 10's 100 yards at Prep school, the day my brother Ian won the senior event. Also at that time my Father took me to the White City Stadium where we were able to see the athletics from the best vantage point, as he was a wartime friend of the Manager of the White City Stadium.

I wrote my first athletics article in the Pitman's Gazette when I was 17 and won the Pitman's College half mile.

I then joined Highgate Harriers but found the racing much too tough at the time and rejoined again at the end of 1964, as Ted Fosbrook saw me on the extension running around. I became Press secretary for the club in 1966.

I have always worked in insurance in the city for bread and butter but always wanted to be a horse racing or athletics commentator/journalist. I soon gave up the idea of the former.

In the 1970's, my 'Great' friend and ex-international hurdler, Peter Hildreth, got me jobs as a back up man for BBC outside radio broadcasts at Crystal Palace and also to do three interviews and a report on Radio London.

It was back in 1962-63 I first got published in an athletics 'Trade' journals *Modern Athletics* 'Athletics Weekly' and 'Athletics Arena'.

Now my main hobbies are to do Press work for Highgate Harriers, a contributor for *Athletics Weekly*, *British Milers club magazine*, *Masters Athletics* and *RRC Magazine* and websites like the Metropolitan League website...

David Burrows is really fantastic in putting my work on his HH website which is vital for me...

Rudisha and Robles are on Richard Xerri's *Runners Digest* website alongside 'U tube' film of their records.

Now for the original question. I went to the Olympics in Tokyo (1964); Mexico (1968--Really interesting in so many ways with great Mexican music and wonderful hospitality from the Mexicans); and Munich (1972). That all was when the Olympics were to a great extent amateur and also not 'Corporate' like in recent games **but** just as exciting!

My ambition has always been to challenge myself with very interesting interviews for one reason or another. World mile record holder Jim Ryun was not going to give any interviews at his hotel after he had thrashed Kip Keino at the White City but an American coach told him I wanted to talk to him and I then was able to do that!

Charles Elliott the Editor of 'Athletics Arena' said to me I would never get an interview with Ron Clarke, the day after he broke the 3 mile World record at the White City and, he bet me £5 I could not do that so, I went down to Brighton and interviewed him with the National Press sitting in on the interview..

Another situation was after seeing smooth mover, Juha Vaatainen win the 10,000 and 5000 in the European of 1971 in Helsinki I wanted specially to find where he was and seek him out, which I eventually managed to do. The thing was he set the trend for 10k runners of the future, having been a sprinter originally and so, he ran off a 65 penultimate lap with a 53.9/54.00 last lap which had never been done before in a Championship. It was after that the 10k in the future changed its colour completely.

Mike Beevor, an international cross country runner who is a friend of mine, told me a week before Dave Bedford would break the 10k World record at Crystal Place (1973) so I interviewed

***ATHLETICS REPORTER SUPREME!* continued**

him in my Kensington flat on the Monday and the interview came out in AW the day he did it and he took 7 seconds off Viren's record.

My interview with Lillian Board was rather special in 1969 as, within a year the attractive and lovely lady died!

Tommie Smith (1968) and John Walker and Al Oerter were special one's.

I interviewed Angelo Taylor '2000 & 2006' 400m hurdles Olympic Champion in 2010, near Croydon and as the Press did not know he was in England and, even now, no interview has yet appeared with him anywhere except on the Highgate Harriers website and Runners Digest!

I also interviewed Usain Bolt before he became very famous and Seb Coe when no one was interviewing him, between his two Olympics, also Paul Ereng when he was number 3 Kenyan before he won the Olympic 'Gold'

Who were the most charming 'Big Stars' I have met?. At the top I would say Dave Moorcroft, Ron Clarke, David Hemery , Don Quarrie, Roger Kingdom and Bill Toomey. I am particularly fond of Tony Simmons as a person.

There is another individual interview which was a bit special and that was with the President last year of the ECCU by the name of Maureen Smith, who was only the second woman ever to break 5 minutes for the mile. I bet not a lot of people know that!

WELCOME!!!

Welcome to the following new club members who have joined since the last issue:

Young Athletes – Victoria Jenness, Aneris Johnson, Oliver & Daniel Light, Camila Merino, Sam Morris, Akal Bains, Lucy Evans, Antonia Merino, Gaspard Salle de Chou, Maia Taylor-Winter.

Seniors – Michael Jenner, Alla Ouvarova, Tom Rogers, James Ward, Niall O'Briain.

We hope you all have a successful, rewarding and, above all, enjoyable time with the club.

UPCOMING FIXTURES

March

3 rd	Ealing CC Relays (m/w)	Perivale (Horsenden Hill)
3 rd	NWL Young Athletes CC	Perivale (Horsenden Hill)
25 th	Southern 12 & 6 Stage Road Relays	Stantonbury Stadium, Milton Keynes

April

11th	Early Season Open Meeting	Parliament Hill
14 th	National 12 7 6 Stage Road Relays	Sutton park, Birmingham
22 nd	Virgin London Marathon & Mini-Marathon	London