Victoria Park Harriers & Tower Hamlets Athletics Club
Annual General Meeting 2016

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Chairman’s report - Dave Robinson

Much as my opening paragraph in last year’s report, the first and most important message from me and on behalf of the club membership is to thank all our magnificent and dedicated coaches, officials and volunteers. An enormous thank you to all who have devoted so much of their time and energy over the past year to provide the organisation, facilities, coaching etc, which we all take for granted. A special mention for our officials and coaches who not only run our training sessions but also organise club championships, co-ordinate and help run track meetings, league races, various other events and much more besides. Additionally, our youth coaches who not only train our young athletes but also have the added responsibility of care and guidance of youth members in both their athletic and social development.

Further thanks to fellow Board members along with other key members who have been pivotal in the promotion, organisation and ongoing success of our club, in particular Neil Cook, Joe Feltham, Joyce Berry and Mandy Dohren who have all taken on additional roles this year... And to Major, who continues to advise, help and organise events across the entire spectrum of the club’s activities. Finally of course a massive thanks to Mick Cairns whose Tuesday structured sessions are avidly supported and provide a unique asset in the club’s repertoire.

Directors of Track & Field, Road & XC and Youth will all describe the successes of the year, but a very special thanks to those coaches at the track and with the youth endurance group who continue to nurture our young athletes with increasing success. The club is a better place for the participation of Juniors at our monthly handicaps and as last year the annual Summer Relays evening was enjoyed by all. Similarly our participation this year in the Southern Athletics League has been a catalyst for increased participation and interest in track athletics across the club.

Thanks also this year to the newly formed ‘Bar and Social Events Team’ of Malachy, Susan, Marlis & Mike Sheppard (when he’s in the country). It has taken 5 of us to do the one job previously accomplished with ease by the magnificent Rob P.

Support and Organisation

The pressures on our Junior Coaches at the Track and Youth Endurance are enormous and many thanks to Alf, Kelvin, Manny and others at the Track and Cornelia with her Youth Endurance group. The club is seeing a stronger than ever Junior Section and it’s good to see senior members actively supporting our young athletes.

With an increasing number of ‘open’ events and with member’s varying and diverse interests, we need to provide the opportunity for more members, who wish it, to take an active part in the running of the club in every way we can. Last year we outlined some of the strategies we hoped to develop to create support teams and individual roles to communicate to members and to help manage our various club and competition events. This has happened to a degree and is ongoing but does need expanding. Neil Cook has raised this for further discussion with some new ideas and additional specific roles. This will be discussed at the AGM and hopefully a new impetus will be created.

Premises - Clubhouse

• The ‘Old Gym’
We have continued good use of this space by My Local Pilates and occasional use by other groups. This is good for the club and good for the local community.

• PT and strength and conditioning
Fabien Lassonde (Victoria Park Fitness) has continued PT and strength & conditioning coaching with both club members and other clients this year. This is a much valued and popular resource and we are very lucky to have Fabien both as a trainer and active club runner. Along with Tony Bunbury’s Monday circuits / strength and conditioning session, our gym and weights facilities are well used by members. Thanks to both.
• Hall Hire/ Hosted Events
We have a number of regular Hall users including winter use by ‘Our Parks’ Yoga on Saturday mornings funded by LBTH. Our clubhouse is also used for number of Charity Events and one-off hirings which this year have included - Pride Run 10k, Celebration of Life Run in support of St Joseph’s Hospice and HemiHelp Fun Run.

• Cottage
We manage the letting of the Cottage ourselves rather than through Agents as in the past. This continues to provide a good income for a little extra work for Ian and I.

• Kitchen and Bar Refurbishment
We have finally made progress on this albeit rather later than was hoped. The potential works fall into 3 categories:
  1. Essential building / structural fabric repairs, improvements and alterations
  2. Kitchen fit-out
  3. Bar, new ‘flexible’ dividing wall to extended bar /meeting space, windows, door and shutters to garden.

We will hold a couple of ‘open evenings’ (Thursdays) for member input / consultation over the next few weeks. We have costs for some but not all of the elements of work. Whilst the Board have agreed a budget allowance from club funds, this will not stretch to ‘everything’ and we are hoping for some member participation both in ‘working party’ labour and / or fund raiser ideas for the elements we may not be able to afford immediately.

We have had help and ideas from a number of members to date and will be setting up a small group to oversee and co-ordinate the project going forward.

On behalf of the Board, thank you all for your continued membership and we wish you all excellent training and racing with us in the coming year.

Men’s road & cross country report - Simeon Bennett

It's been another busy and exciting year. The men's team has grown in strength, depth and confidence. This is thanks to enthusiasm and commitment from all members of the club and a few individuals in particular. This report is a brief look at the highlights.

Cross country
The club competed en masse in the usual broad collection of races and leagues, including:
  • Both main cross country leagues (Chingford and Metropolitan),
  • Middlesex County and the North London XC Champs (held for the first time at Hackney Marshes),
  • London XC Champs and South of England XC Championships (both at Parliament Hill)
  • Ware Cup at Loughton

Metropolitan League
The senior men's A team retained their position in Division 1 finishing 7th overall, just behind our rivals Barnet & District who gave us good competition throughout the season. Despite a win for Paul Martelletti in the last race, a slightly reduced team turnout for the last race meant we lost a few points. Overall our season wasn't as strong as 2014-15 as a number of our regular lead runners were out due to injuries. However, our Senior B and C men's teams remain in division 3 and on a positive note our men's Veteran team were promoted to Division 1. After a very strong turn out at Isle of Wight we hope to harness this winning momentum for a very strong 2016-17 season for both senior and veteran men.

The club will continue to prioritise the prestigious Met League this coming season and will encourage as many members to attend the five races as possible..

Chingford League
Our Men's team were 2nd in the A league (two places higher than the previous year), Our B-team were 3rd in that league (same as previous year) whilst the Veterans had another strong performance to finish 3rd (versus 5th the previous year). It was not a trophy-winning season this
year but the focus was on maintaining our presence in the league whilst pushing for really strong showings in the Metropolitan league. Four mens teams competed in the season finale - the relays. Overall this is a good improvement on the 2014-15 season, especially due to other race priorities.

The club retained the Ware Cup for another year by a clear margin following the Loughton race in December 2014.

Road Running

Handicap + Mob Match

12 monthly handicap events successfully took place with just under 500 runners starting across the year which is a new record. Juniors were in attendance each month which adds to the atmosphere at the events. As ever, I am thankful to all of those who help out each month; there has been no shortages of volunteers at handicap and other events this year. Special mention to Coach Cornelia and some of the other parents who support each month.

The January Mob Match against Eton Manor also took place as a 'home' fixture where the club scored a narrow victory against our local rivals Eton Manor. Afterwards there was the usual celebration in the bar. A big thanks go to all the volunteers who helped out on the night, especially chairman Dave who stepped up to fill my position, as I was out with a new child. The fixture continues to alternate venues, so we'll be east of the River Lea in 2017 ('Essex') when Eton Manor host once again.

Assembly League

The full complement of 6 races were held once again, with the club hosting two as usual. The men had a very good season bringing, with our A and B teams coming second. Individuals did well with Paul Martelletti and Sam Humphrey 2nd and 3rd overall. Anthony Withstandley battled to the end to take 2nd MV45, whilst Paul Gaimster (2015's Most Improved Athlete) continued to run very well and take 3rd MV40 for the season. Our women's team and individual vets also had a brilliant series.

Marathon + Other Road Races

2015-16 was a fantastic year for the marathon distance, with 40 club members competing at the Virgin London marathon with the usual excellent support from the club along the Highway and elsewhere along the course. In addition the club fielded a significant number of runners at major events including Manchester, Brighton, Yorkshire and Berlin marathons. Special note to a number of athletes who have applied themselves to training and taken significant PBs or strong performance during the year including Sam Duggan, Anthony Withstandley, Alun Myers, Chris Brammer, David Jones and Paul Gaimster, to name but a few. The club salutes you. The most improved athlete award will be very difficult to judge once again.

Our men and women had more success at the 10 mile distance, returning to the Harry Hawkes 10 in Thames Ditton. Including a win for new club member George Gurney and Jo Singer. Paul Gaimster was the first veteran male and both the men's and women's teams took the team prize.

The club and its volunteers were proud to host other races this year including the Mike Penman memorial mob match once again, the Middlesex County 10k, Pride 10km and supported a number of other charity running events. Thanks to the many many club members who regularly and selflessly gave their time to assist.

Club Championships, Boswall League and Others

I was proud to arrange and run the full complement of races once again (1, 3.5, 5 mile XC, 10 and 20 mile) with over 200 athletes competing across all events. Thanks once again to those who've helped me with these races, particularly the XC at Woodford where the course requires lots of work to mark out.

Thanks to the good work of June Barrow-Green and Duncan Steen who continued the diligent task of collating the Boswall League, after a great start the previous year. For the coming year Vicky Fabbri has kindly agreed to take this. Congratulations to David Jones and Jo Singer who the senior trophies this year. We have also introduced a veteran (40+) category trophy to ensure recognition of others, congratulations to Gary Bagnall and Sue Bint who take these trophies once
again.

In 2016 we will again, award the trophies donated by June Barrow-Green, ‘Spirit of the Cross Country’ award. They will be given at the AGM.

Open 5
After a brief break, the Open 5 returned in 2016, thanks in no small part to Joe Feltham and Major Carr. We hope to repeat this in 2017 with a provisional date of April 1st.

Fell Running
The club’s love of all things hilly, continued throughout the 2015-16 season. As usual, there were good teams at the January Box Hill Fell race and the Orion Fell Race in June. Significantly, we took the biggest team ever to the Isle of Wight fell running weekend, cleaning up in the highly coveted men’s and women’s team prize, beating local rivals, Serpentine AC. Additionally there were some very strong individual performances from both the men and women. And, as usual, there were big thanks to Neil Cook for his organisation. A collection was held and gifts of recognition given to Neil on 7th October.

Disruption
The Physical Shield relays were once again (third year running!) but it is hoped they will return in 2017, possibly at the Olympic Park. The 6 + 12 stage road relays were cancelled and then re-scheduled at the very last minute and the club was not informed, making it very difficult to submit teams. We hope to rectify this in 2017.

Looking Ahead
The 2016-17 season is shaping up to be even more exciting. The key priorities will be:
• continue to focus on the Metropolitan League as our priority XC league with the same enthusiasm as the Isle of Wight weekend
• team entries in the 12/6 stage relays in 2017
• Open 5 to continue and build upon its 2016 success
• Continue to provide support for our runners of all abilities be it elite marathon runners or those new to the sport. I believe it is a genuine strength of the club that we make every effort to support and recognise the efforts and achievements of as many members (men, women and juniors) as possible but I’m sure we can do even better.

Lastly special thanks to those who’ve given much of their time to assist this year, namely Major Carr, Laura Morgan and Coach Mick Cairns tirelessly leading the Tuesday night sessions.

Women’s road & cross country report - Laura Morgan

It has been another great year that I have had the privilege of captain of the women’s team in both road and cross country events, and it has been an honour to serve a club made up of such brilliant, kind and talented individuals that keep it going. Special mention to Captain Bennett who has continued to co-ordinate most of the events that the club puts on and to Chairman Dave continues to work tirelessly to keep the clubhouse ticking over, overseeing the maintenance, functions and use of the club to ensure members and the public can benefit from this great building.

Cross Country Leagues
For the highly competitive Met League of 2015/16 the women had a good season, coming 5th in Division 1, with the B team coming 3rd in Division 3. The Women’s vet team ran brilliantly, coming third overall in the league.

Special mention to Jo Singer who came 12th overall in the league and first in her age category. Whilst we have focused our efforts on promoting the Met league this last year to try to prevent race fatigue, Joyce Berry has taken on the role of captain for the Chingford League and has done an excellent job in promoting and recruiting to the fixtures. The women’s team won the shield back from Eton Manor last year which is certainly partly attributable to Joyce’s brilliant efforts at getting everyone out. The victory was also a testament to the commitment of the individual runners.
As the next cross country season starts, we can look back with pride at how far the club came last season, and build on that success going forwards. Keep up the good work all!

**Assembly League (summer road races)**
Gone are the days when we’d be lucky to get a single female at Beckenham, for the last couple of years now have seen the women’s team climb the ranks in this fun, fast and highly competitive summer league. Both women’s A and B teams came 3rd. Jasna Skroce, who has been based in Verona, Italy, deserves particular credit for her efforts and determination to make it back to the UK for a large number of the league races and undoubtedly helped keep us in the rankings.

**Club champs and Handicap**
The club hosted another round of Club champs- including the 1mile, 3.5mile, 5mile (xc), 10mile and 20mile races. Huge thanks to Sim who did most of the work to arrange these fun races. The Handicap continues to be a well-attended routine fixture on the club calendar and a huge thank you to the volunteers who regularly help with this.

**Marathon**
It was only in 1984 that the Olympics accepted women for the marathon event due to the argument still being made that running was too taxing for the 'frail' female gender. Roll on 32 years on there were at least 13 women representing the club at London, many of whom getting PBs, including the ever-speedy Mandy Dohren who finished in a smashing 2hours 52minutes. It’s great to see those hard, lonely miles down the canals of Hackney pay off for such a large number of hardworking individuals. Vikki Fabbri is one who knocked her PB down by 20minutes. Vikki was on the fringes of the club for a while, but finally succumbed to the clubs charm earlier this year in becoming a regular attendee at training and races and has kindly offered to take on the Boswell League. Special mention to Kelly, who managed to break 4 hours whilst being 4 months pregnant, and Well Done to Mel, who managed to get around the 26.2miles with a broken arm in plaster.

There were many other road and trail races that members have represented the club at, including a number of other road marathons, the Isle of Wight Fell championships in which the women took first and third team prizes, and the Harry Hawkes 10mile race in South London.

I would like to say a huge thank you once again to the other board members for their continual hard work and effort into maintaining this wonderful club, along with the other many volunteers and helpers. This includes those who’ve taken over the management of the bar and kitchen alongside the officials, timers and marshals at races.

I look forward to continuing on in my role with the club, including the vibrant social side of the club, and hope that more and more people will continue to get involved. Best wishes to everyone for a successful running year ahead.

**Men’s track & field - Tony McDowall**

Our first season in the Southern Athletics League didn’t get off to a great start as we finished 2nd in the first match to eventual league winners Thurrock. We had no women in the 800, 1500, 3000 or steeplechase and this cost us dearly as Thurrock won by 27 points. Highlight of the match was Darren Morson jumping 7.45m to win the Long jump by over a metre and break the division record.

Back to back victories in our next two matches meant we were moving slowly up the table however the fourth match against league leaders Harlow and local rivals Woodford meant we needed to be at our best to win. Two late withdrawal from the women's sprints and an injury to our A string make sprinter was a far from ideal start to the day. However the quality and team spirit was evident throughout the day. Two 3rd place finish and first and second in the 200 for Michael and Alex were good points for the team. Two late no shows in the women's sprints meant that Margret had to use her powers of persuasion to convince some of the female jumpers/hurdles to do the sprints. Serlina and Millie stepped up to finish first and second in the 100m. Flora and Anna finished 1st and 3rd in 200m.
The men's 400 has been a great source of points for us this season and that continued with Columba winning the A string in a comfortable 50.31. Chris zah Jr. made his season debut for the team and easily won the b race. Anna ran just outside her seasons best with 68.29 to finish 4th in the 400. Dave Jones returning to his pre London marathon form ran tactically well to get second in the 800. A late withdrawal due to unforeseen circumstances meant that I had to step in and run the 800 with no warm up and managed to gain 3rd place in the b string.

In the women's 800 Daisy ran a good race to finish 3rd in 2.43.41. This was backed up by Cheryl who ran a great race despite feeling unwell to finish 2nd in the b string. Rachel Thomas put in arguably the performance of the day by running the 1500 less than 20 min after the 5000m and she just reeled in the leader lap by lap before kicking her with 300m to go and showing great strength to hold on to win. Alison Tay making her debut for the team ran a string race despite carrying an injury to finish 2nd in the 1500m.

Two second place finishes from Max Ware and Richard Hope in the 1500. Tom Heslop returning from injury lead from start to finish to dominate the 3000m. Max Ware backing this up by winning the b race and running well within himself as he agreed to double up and do the 1500. Marr Walker making his debut for the team ran a great race to finish in 5.22. Daniel Mutlow continued his good running with a big PB in the 3000m. In the 5000m Rachel ran a great race to run 19.49 to finish 2nd. Cheryl despite feeling ill and having just completed the 800 finished first in 21.12. In the 400h Dave Shortridge and James ran well to pick up two second place finishes. In the women's race it was total dominance from Millie Zah running her first competition for a number of years won in 72.72 closely followed by Becca in 78 for victory in the b string. In the 110h Baddar and Dave ran well to finish 3rd. Serlina doing her bit for the team again won the 100h. Becca also stepping up to gain valuable points for the team won the b string with her second victory of the day. Two first place finish for the second match in a row saw me and Gary Bagnall (who was running for the first time in 3 weeks due to illness and injury) pick up maximum points. Daisy doing her 3rd event of the day finished 2nd in the women's steeplechase. Some more work on the water jump will take a lot off her time.

We went into the final match of the season knowing that victory would guarantee us promotion. Unfortunately a few late withdrawals and a number of athletes returning from injury meant that Serpentine won the match replaced us in the automatic promotion places. This put is in the lottery of the paper match with the other 3rd and 4th placed teams from all three divisions and despite the best efforts of myself and Alf to find our best performances and at one point getting us into 2nd place. A miscalculation on the women's Discus meant we finished 3rd only 3 points behind AFD. We will be in Division 3 for the 2017 season so we need to make sure we guarantee promotion next time round.

Women's track and field report - Charlotte Nicholls

This was our first season in the mixed Southern Athletics League (SAL). Following a few years not being able to have home matches in the Southern Women’s League (SWL), it was great to have the chance to host two home matches in one season.

We finished the season with the same number of league points as Serpentine but losing out on individual points, leaving us third in our division (out of 22 clubs in total). We won three of the matches and came second in the other two. This unfortunately meant that we ended up narrowly missing out on promotion, but a promising start for us in this league.

The attendance from our female athletes has been much improved this year, likely in part to having the matches much closer to home than in previous years - those who competed in the SWL fixtures remember the difficulties of our many journeys down to Guildford in recent years.

It has been great to see some new faces on the track this year, with Charlie Maling having her first season as a track athlete (and coach), as well as Hazel Robertson greatly strengthening our position in the throwing events. It was brilliant to see our athletes taking on new events this season including Daisy Day-Fawcett taking on the steeplechase to pick up valuable points.
Unfortunately, we still had gaps in our team sheet across most disciplines this year, so it would be great to build on this going into next season and aim to put out a full team for every competition.

We are hopeful for promotion next year, when we are expecting another two home matches for maximum turn out. We are looking forward to having some of our junior athletes reaching the necessary age to compete in the SAL next year who will be great additions to the team.

If anyone is interested in competing on the track who hasn't done so as yet, please get in touch - you would be most welcome at Mile End to try out a couple of sessions and maybe find a new event to compete in! It’s a great opportunity to test your legs over some shorter distances. Or if you know anyone who would be interested in helping out, we always need more officials.

Thank you to everyone who has competed this year, and a particular thanks to the coaches and officials who make sure the events can take place.

Youth development report - Cornelia Abe-Minale

Finance report - Ian Warren
See separate attachment