

# **Sedgefield Harriers**

## **AGM 2019**

### **Report of the Committee**

#### **General**

The year from the AGM of 2018 has seen another decent increase in membership: we currently have 138 senior members which represents an increase of 11 on the previous year (which itself was up 15 from the year before). The junior section has 147 members.

The club again staged a number of successful events including the Neptune Relays, the Sedgefield Serpentine and the summer and winter Gerry Kearsley Handicaps. Internally, members participated in good numbers in such as the Grand Prix and the monthly Time Trial.

Coaching and training continued healthily across many evenings and days of the week, with members stepping in well if regular coaches were unable to attend.

For the fourth year running, a group of Harriers visited Hamminkeln to run in the local running club's Citylauf race. Anyone who has participated in this knows what a great weekend it is with superb hospitality and friendship. The invitation to any Harrier to make the relatively easy journey into Germany is always extended. We do know however that our German friends are looking to change the date of their event for 2020. For the third successive year, those from Hamminkeln SV then visited us for the Serpentine weekend and we welcomed them warmly.

A new club website has also been a very good addition for us. Thank you to Phil for that. A new membership subscription system, allied to England Athletics' portal, has also been adopted. This wasn't quite the smooth transition as suggested by EA, and a very big thanks to Andy as Membership Secretary is due, for the very many resolutions he had to find to make it work.

The other half of the Featherstone partnership has managed the new club kit well this year. Examples of the new range of clothing appeared in a number of Christmas stockings last year and the idea to give away a free pair of running briefs with every order was a masterstroke.

The 'Back the Track' objective seemed to take a large step closer to reality earlier this year, with the potential for significant additional funding becoming a strong possibility.

#### **Seniors**

Despite very good turnouts, the men's cross country team wasn't able to hold on to its division 2 status of the Harrier League but a strong showing in the first event this season is good cause for optimism. The women's team were able to field strong, full teams right through last season and we hope that this can continue again. The summer track and field season was well attended with a number of PBs achieved in the NYSD League. The enthusiasm of some regular-attending Harriers and their ability to persuade others to participate in XC or track and field was much appreciated.

The Grand Prix has once again been a success, with strong participation right through the divisions, a super total of 66 members. A full range of distances from 400m to marathon has meant there has been something for everyone. 41 Harriers have also participated to date in the monthly Time Trial, again showing good engagement.

Sixteen Harriers enjoyed a relaxed training weekend in February, using Helmsley Youth Hostel as the base. Running, walking, socialising and shopping were enjoyed by all.

Attendance at senior sessions has been strong, right through the winter and summer seasons; twenty plus for Tuesday and Thursday sessions, for example, is common. We try to cater for a full range of abilities, and this inclusiveness without compromising intensity for those who are fleet of foot, feels like a strength of our club. Training sessions have again covered the full range from Sheree's Monday beginners' course to the Wednesday effort session. Sunday's morning run is also popular and a thank you here to Stuart who always has a route in mind. Despite its best intentions, the Sunday group might seem a little quick for some people. If you would like a slightly slower pace, please think about leading a gentler/shorter distance group. This would certainly be well received.

As last year, Ean has deservedly stepped back a little from his coaching commitment during the summer and it has been good to see a number of other Harriers volunteering to lead sessions. We would very much encourage any members to do this and to attend any run leadership or coaching courses in order to give themselves the confidence and/or ideas to deliver sessions. I can personally vouch for this. Please go to <https://www.englandathletics.org/coaching/qualifications-landing-page/> to see a wide range of locally based available training events. Any training costs will always be borne by the club. Leading a session is actually much easier than some might think. We always want a session to feel useful but those who attend training are generally happy to just be told what to do; variations on previous sessions are quite simple to concoct, and anyway if all else fails, just bring a whistle!

Please do think about putting yourself forward for coaching/leading accreditation.

### **Juniors**

The junior section continues to produce promising young athletes who enjoy their sport; it provides a great outlet for children in the town. For those of us without direct links to the juniors it is great to see them competing at crossover events such as cross country and the Great Tees Run.

Because the majority of the committee don't have direct links with the junior section, it does find it quite difficult to stay abreast of their achievements and also the challenges. David Graham has been the committee link and has done good work in ensuring a tightening up of junior attendance and membership procedures this year. A degree of rationalising and discipline has been a good thing. However, due to work commitments, Dave is stepping down from the committee meaning that the good work remains a fragile thing.

The junior coaches understandably just want to coach. Generally they don't want to be involved in the wider organisation. Parents generally just want to drop their children off. But the club and the committee really require people who can assist in the admin and management side, so please, if you

think you can help, speak to us. It doesn't require a big commitment. We need that support and the communication link with the juniors.

Although the current complement of junior coaches is good, the next generation of junior coaching and leadership is always very helpful. Sometimes seniors get a feeling of 'wanting to put something back' and some of you have talked about this. Again, please follow that previous link if you are interested in junior coaching.

Finally, a big thank you from the committee, to all involved in the junior section for helping to make it thrive. Your work is very much valued.

### **Coaching**

This has been covered in the previous two sections.

### **Volunteering**

Any amateur sports club is only as strong as its volunteers. Our core of volunteers remains strong but new, committed volunteers are needed to take up the baton. Thank you to Fay, who agreed to become our Volunteer Coordinator earlier this year. Please remember the answer to any question that she asks you is "Yes of course Fay, what do you want me to do?".

### **Club Race Events Programme**

The Neptune Relays (brilliantly covered by the Northern Echo) and the Serpentine Trail Race were great events once again. Beth and Mark were a little worried about low numbers for the Serpentine but final day attendance was quite strong (perhaps a little below the recent average) with 147 finishers. September is traditionally a popular month for local running events and ours is one of a number of very good runs during the period. The Gerry Kearsley Handicaps both required rerouting this year with a two lap course devised instead. They were once again super events and a big thank you to Ean. Thank you to all our volunteers who help to stage all these events.

Much earlier in the year the committee discussed the possibility of hosting the North Eastern Cross Country Championships again. This opportunity brings kudos to our club but is of course a serious undertaking. Chris Lines has more information to share about this at tonight's meeting.

### **Community**

The club continues to play an active part in the local community and supports events such as the Christmas tree decorations in St Edmund's. The Run Santa Run event seemed to pass us by in December 2018 and the committee isn't sure why. We are happy to be involved this year if required.

### **Member Engagement**

The new website has been a very good addition. It is easy to navigate and is maintained regularly to ensure it stays current and fresh. Linked to the new website has been the introduction of Race Rundowns, our own member-contributed race reporting. Copied shamelessly from another local club, this idea seeks to show the wide range of running in which Harriers are involved and perhaps inspire others to compete too or new members to join our club. Each one is a great read. They seem

to have been well received and rumours that some people run quicker from me when I approach to ask to write a Rundown, than in the race itself, are absolutely not true.

Facebook continues to be a good medium for exchanging information about all things Harriers. To our credit we don't have some of the social media behaviour difficulties that some other clubs report. Not all Harriers are Facebook members however and we must always try to remember to include these people when planning/organising events and runs.

Welcoming new members is a key responsibility for us all. After a number of weeks away I attended last Thursday's session to see about five new faces, which was great. Please take the time to say hello and make acquaintance with any new people, including steering them to the website and further info about us.

The organisation of internal, informal running events remains one of our strengths. This year, these have included such as the 10 Before 10, Plogging, Coxhoe Timeless Run and the 12 Days of Fitness. Well done people.

### **Social**

The annual dinner, held at the Manor House in 2018, was a success, as was the return of the summer social at Ceddesfeld Hall. Pizza night earlier in the year for volunteers was also a hit, as is the meeting for junior coaches with the offer of a free pint as a thank you. This year's dinner and awards night returns to Hardwick Hall Hotel; please buy your tickets using the online link.

### **Back the Track**

Members who attended the meeting in the spring will recall the potential advancement of the track campaign. Local democracy has required further examination of plans but it is believed that this will only affect timescales rather than the outcome itself. More will be shared with members when known.

### **Summary**

In general, it has been another very good year. We have continued to increase our membership, hosted several successful races, navigated the new membership system, competed successfully in cross country and track and field, deepened and renewed friendships with our twin town in Germany, trained several new coaches, competed well both internally and externally, and written about it for others to enjoy.

Moving forward, continuing to sustain the junior section and bridging the communication gap between it and the committee remains a challenge. There is also the eternal challenge of recruiting and retaining committed coaches and volunteers, including at committee level. We are a super club; please think what you can do to help keep it progressing.

Thank you.