

## Chair's Report April 2021-March 2022

Perhaps the most significant aspect of this past year has been the increase in **membership**. Membership of the club at the end of March 2021 was 128 and membership now stands at 188, well above the target of 140 which we set last year. (These figures do not include social members). This has an enormous impact on finances so the club is now in a healthy financial position. I'd like to extend a really warm welcome to all those who have joined the club in the last couple of years and I hope you will remain members for a long time to come.

The year got off to a slow start in terms of **Sunday events** but we have made progress recently with enjoyable trips to Beckenham Place Park, Central London, and the Surrey Hills. Last year saw an orienteering trip to Shere in Surrey and a well attended outing to Sussex co-ordinated by Linda and Tim Griffiths, (thank you Tim and Linda!) plus a few more local runs.

Regarding **cross country**, a big thank you to **Emma Embleton** and **Alan Brown** for leading the women's and men's teams, with attendance well up on previous years. We achieved our attendance targets for the women's fixtures and almost fielded a full team in the men's competition on a couple of occasions.

In 2019-20 (there was no competition 2020-21), the DPR A team came 26<sup>th</sup> and DPR B were 42<sup>nd</sup>. This year, the A team came 18<sup>th</sup> and the B team 26<sup>th</sup>

The men came 14<sup>th</sup> on Division Four.

The club was also represented, for the first time in many years, at the National Cross-country Championships. Thank you to all those who turned up for the cross country, it proved quite an adventure.

The **Handicap** proved more popular than ever and enormous thanks to **Alan Brown** for organising the event every month. It was a very successful year, we averaged 24 runners per month, and members not only enjoyed challenging themselves around the course but also went the extra mile to the local pub each month and we had some great nights.

The **Summer League** was disrupted by the Covid restrictions and only three events were held. Attendance was very disappointing at the club championship event at Regent's Park but it seemed the whole club took the first available opportunity to get away from London when Covid restrictions were relaxed. Thanks to the efforts of Lucy Ross we hosted a very successful event in Dulwich Park and as usual put on a fantastic spread for our visitors who passed on their thanks and compliments. A reasonably good turn out at Battersea Park ensured the club moved away from bottom place in the league rankings. Again a big thank you to **Lucy Ross** for her hard work in organising the event and to all those who helped on the day, and to those who turned up for the races.

Thanks to the efforts of **Sonia Burrows**, and despite the disruptions caused by Covid, we completed the programme of **club championship races**, with particularly good turnouts for the mile, the 5k, the 5 mile, 10 mile and the cross country.

Two successful parkrun ladders were organised by **Gillian Cavell**, with a very high level of participation including a continued enthusiasm for travelling to disparate parts of the country to earn extra bonus points. Well done to all those who took part and again enormous thanks to Gillian who was awarded with the 'Special Achievement' award at the annual dinner.

The club has this year funded three members' completing a **coaching course** 'Introduction to Running Fitness', Katia, Paula and Zach. This represents a significant step in enhancing the level of expertise within the club.

Susan also ran two '**Introduction to Faster running**' courses, thank you Susan.

Major contributors to the club's success, as in most years, were the two **beginners' courses** with record attendance levels and a relatively high enrolment rate of graduates into the club. The spring course was followed by a group of graduates enrolling themselves into a Central London 10k. It was a visible manifestation of the success and effectiveness of the course.

Enormous thanks are due once again the **Susan Smith and Di Suter**, and to those who led the runs each week, **Emma Embleton, Oghene Aaron and Paula McMahon**, and to **all those** who turned up to accompany the beginners on their journey. The beginners course is integral to the health of the club and continues to provide an opportunity for local people to transform their relationship to exercise and running in particular.

We have had quite an active year **socially**. Thank you to **Clare Stephen** for organising the successful visit to the velodrome and an evening in the Half Moon; to **Angela Emmott and Emma Heath** for their efforts in organising the annual dinner which was enjoyed by all who attended. We owe thanks for a successful pizza night to **Mark Schofield** and to **everyone who brought food** along to the summer races event and of course to **Susan Smith** for coordinating all the races, it was a fun evening.

We had a very enjoyable quiz night thanks to **Will Simpson's** superb question setting and to **Clare Stephen's** help on the night.

One of my particular aims for this year was to create social opportunities around the cross country races and these were quite well attended and represented a big step from previous years.

Our social events enabled the club to raise over £500 for **SDCAS**.

The core activity of the club is however the **Tuesday night** club run and the '**Improvers**' sessions on Thursday nights. Thank you to all who turn up, either regularly or occasionally, and particular thanks of course to Susan who turns up every week to lead the warm up on Tuesday and also leads the sessions on Thursdays. Once again the club owes her an enormous debt of gratitude for all her efforts. The committee decided this year to award Susan with **Honorary Membership** of the club, and this was presented to Susan at the annual dinner.

I would like to extend a warm thank you to the **committee** for all their hard work and support over the year, to **Oghene** for administering the applications so well. This was Oghene's third year in the post so has decided to step down...thank you again, there's been quite a lot to do this year! Thank you to those who contributed along the way but then stepped down, **Clare Stephen, Jacque Kerr and Denise Blake**. Thank you to **Jess Hodgson** for joining the committee recently and for standing for the position of membership secretary, and to **Sonia Burrows** who put on a full range of club championships. **Emma Pond** has negotiated the intricacies of club kit provision with considerable skill, thank you, Emma. **Emma Heath** demonstrated her creativity at the annual dinner and her efficiency throughout the year in servicing the committee; and I am sure you will all agree that we've had a terrific series of newsletters, interim newsletters and assorted communications from the super capable **James Hewlett**, thank you James.

And an enormous thank you to **Derek Hodgson** who has been treasurer for four years and prior to that was Chairman for three years and possibly held a position before then. Derek is now standing down-he has run the finances with great efficiency and accuracy and it makes such a great

difference to an organisation when they know the finances are managed reliably and with great integrity. Thank you Derek! Thank you **IB** for offering to fill the vacancy, much appreciated.

As indicated in the report any amount of activities would be meaningless if the club's values were not adhered to or if held in the wrong spirit. I hope members feel that the ethos of the club has been maintained throughout the year. We are a running club and performance is an integral part of the picture but it's the appreciation we give to individual members and their individual journeys that really counts. I think the club is very successful at this but to build on this success I would like to take this opportunity to encourage members in all races that when they finish they **walk back along the course to encourage those who are yet to finish**, and for this to be a distinguishing feature of the club. It already happens to some extent but it would make such a difference if everyone bought into the idea.

The club survey was designed to elicit ideas for the future of the club rather than being a satisfaction survey but members' responses suggested a generally high level of satisfaction with how the club is performing. It is not the time, however, to be complacent as there is so much potential for the club to flourish further and we can never ignore the fact that people can find alternate ways of getting their daily or weekly exercise. Our success ultimately depends on participation. The more people participate, the more likely others are to join in. So if there is one more message to members for the future it is **'please turn up for events'**! Read the newsletters carefully, put the events in your diary, and when George Clooney rings with an alternative invitation....you know what to say. We'll offer him counselling to overcome his disappointment.

Thank you to everyone for their support during the year and here's to a successful 2022.

David Mullany