

The curtain comes down on XC league meets – 9 February 2019

Ian Kennedy reports from the Hampshire League



**Richard Davies – only occasionally is he a competitor these days,
but a key contributor to Wimborne's Endurance set up**

For the first time in three years we returned to Dibden Inclosure on the edge of the New Forest. The WAC turnout was the best for a Hampshire League final fixture since that meeting back in 2016. Although our numbers overall were respectable, the team had a very lopsided look! The girls were outnumbered 17 to 5, I can't ever remember such an imbalance.

I arrived early to find a good pitch for the tent and got caught in a downpour – most other team members were still travelling at that point. With help from Nathan Fazakerley, the tent went up without too much difficulty, although with the wind gusting along the open stretch of the course I feared for the its survival. Fortunately as the day went on the rain stopped and conditions improved a little.

Selecting footwear for this course is a tricky one, no single shoe type seems ideal for the whole course. The open flat grassy area suggests spikes, but once on the forest tracks trail shoes are a better bet. That flat area gives a false sense of security, as once into the trees there is a gravelly incline, described by Charlie and Ben as 'steeper than Cranfield Avenue' which the runners had to ascend as they ran head-on into an icy blast!

The first race of the day was the under-11 girls. Both the under-11s races took place entirely on the flat open grassland. Imogen Rawles (16th) was our first home, she's got a terrific number of races under her belt this season. Imogen got support from the Fazakerley sisters. Ella was 36th, and younger sibling Isabelle completed the team, coming 44th.

16 – Imogen Rawles – 8:35
36 – Ella Fazakerley – 9:38
44 – Isabelle Fazakerley – 10:42

We had two boys in the under-11s race, and they were both well-placed. Woody Van der Feltz claimed a top ten place and Harry Butcher also finished in the top third of the field.

9 – Woody Van der Feltz – 7:51
14 – Harry Butcher – 8:02

The race in which we were best represented was the under 13 boys ... we had seven of them on the start line. It was also the race which produced our best individual result. A first-time top three finish in a Hampshire League race for any athlete is always to be savoured. It was a big performance from Tristan Green. In the first race of the Hampshire League season he came 25th, so he's really stepped up his game since then. Jack Williams was our next home. He also had a fine run, only once before placing higher than he did at Dibden. Securing the final team scoring position was Josh Fazakerley, the team came 5th on the day, the best WAC under-13 boys' team performance this season in the Hampshire League. Our remaining four runners all came in a cluster – 50th, 51st, 53rd and 58th with Tom Williams piloting in team mates George Butcher, Luke Mogridge and Archie Cunningham.

U13 boys (71 finishers) – 5th team
3 – Tristan Green – 9:44
28 – Jack Williams – 10:36
42 – Josh Fazakerley – 10:59
50 – Tom Williams – 11:16
51 – George Butcher – 11:22
53 – Luke Mogridge – 11:26
58 – Archie Cunningham – 11:46

Tom Fuller, only just returning after a bout of flu, was our first home, but he was kept honest by WACer Ollie Rawles, who was just ten seconds back. Completing the team was Jay Dunn. Jay's been doing some longer runs at the weekends, and this result and the time gaps to his team mates suggest that these are starting to pay dividends. The team were 6th on the day, like the under-13 boys, our under-15s produced their best team performance in the Hampshire League at the final fixture.

U15 boys (47 finishers) – 6th team

35 – Tom Fuller – 17:20

37 – Ollie Rawles – 17:30

40 – Jay Dunn – 17:42

It really did feel peculiar with so few WAC girls at Dibden. We'd had none in either the under-13s or under-15s. In the under-17s we were represented by just Beth Kingswell-Farr. Beth did a solid job for us, but finished the race feeling extremely light-headed. She didn't flop to the ground until after she made it through the funnel! After a spell sat in the tent with something to eat and drink she soon started to feel better. The next race up was the senior women. Once again there was only a single red vest out there. This time it was Sarah Orr who lined up. Sarah has book-ended the season. She did the very first league race in the Wessex and the final one in the Hampshire. We were very pleased to welcome her back. It was a fine run too, Sarah finished in the top third of the field.

U17 women (27 finishers)

20 – Beth Kingswell-Farr – 20:28

Senior women (146 finishers)

46 – Sarah Orr – 27:20

In the under-17 men's race, the rivalry between great mates Charlie Davies and Ben Martin continued here. Charlie has been having the better of this duel for most of the season, so it was great to see Ben pushing him hard all the way to the line on this challenging course. The pair were split by five seconds at the finish line.

U17 men (20 finishers)

13 – Charlie Davies – 22:21

14 – Ben Martin – 22:26

The spine of our men's team this season has been provided by Rob Rawles and Pete Kingswell-Farr. These two were once again out in force. We went through a spell where they were very likely to cross the line together, but in recent races it's been Rob who has edged ahead. Our regular pairing were joined by Richard Davies who had his first cross-country outing of the season. Richard of course gives tremendous value to the Endurance Squad with his tireless support for others.

Senior men (194 finishers)

119 – Rob Rawles – 43:33

137 – Pete Kingswell-Farr – 44:42

189 – Richard Davies – 56:23

That's it for cross-country league races this season. All that remains are the Nationals, Inter-Counties and the English Schools championships. In the latter Wimborne AC have a record number selected to represent the county, 20 of the 48. Our final act of the season will be our annual awards get together at the end of March. Details of that are to be announced soon.