

Swansea Harriers Athletics Club

Annual Reports For AGM

Thursday 6th October 8.15pm

1. Secretary's Annual Report 2015-16

In last year's report I highlighted Swansea Harriers receiving the accolade of Best Athletic Club in Great Britain 2014. In November 2015 this was followed by the club being the winners of Welsh Athletics' Track and Field Club of the Year 2015 and Off Track Club of the Year 2015. These are major achievements for the club reflecting the high standards set by our athletes, coaches, team managers, officials and many other volunteer helpers, and a big thank you to everyone is richly deserved.

There may not be any further overall club honours in 2016, but team and individual performance continue to be set at the highest level.

Our Women's team maintained its position in the elite division of the UK Women's League by coming 5th against very tough competition. It was always going to be a challenging year with the retirement of Sue Leyshon as Team Manager, though with the combined efforts of George Edwards, Caryl Granville and other senior members of the squad, the team successfully came through its final fixture to consolidate its Premier League status. Work is already underway to strengthen the team in key areas and to put in place sustainable team management arrangements.

Our Men's Team continued its success of 2015, by coming second in Division 2 of the British Athletics League and again gaining promotion. Congratulations to David Jones and his team, who can look forward with confidence to 2017 to what will be high-level competition in Division 1.

Further senior success was achieved at the Welsh Senior, U20 and U17 Cup Final and preceding league matches. The final was won with a 200 points margin from second placed Cardiff AC, demonstrating signs that the club is beginning to increase its strength in depth at senior level.

It was also very encouraging to see our U20 and U17 athletes turning out in greater numbers and with more success in the YDL UAG league. The team came second to Cheltenham in South West Division 1 and gained promotion to the Midlands Premier Division. Despite some last minute drop outs, team managers Jeff Cooze and Gemma Howells were able to field competitive teams with a number of individual winning performances. There is the likelihood of a number of good athletes coming through the ranks from the U15s and as long as our current crop of U17 and U20 athletes remain in the sport, the club can challenge for more honours next season.

Congratulations must go to our U15 and U13 YDL LAG team and managers for not only winning the Midlands West Premier Division, but also coming a credible 6th. in the YDL final, where they competed against the best clubs in the UK. Our Juniors also won the Louise Arthur West Wales Junior League, though were unable to repeat this success at the Welsh Junior Cup final where they were 3rd to the two Cardiff clubs.

The most notable team success of the year, however, came off track with our women winning the UK four-stage national road relay. This was an exceptional performance by athletes Andrea Whitcombe, Eli Kirk, Kate Roberts and Caryl Jones. Later in the year, our men also showed their strength by finishing 6th. in the UK 12 stage national relay - another outstanding performance.

At an individual level there have been many top class performances at all age groups. Dewi Griffiths and Hannah Brier have again been our top performers gaining international honours. Dewi Griffiths was 5th in the 10000m at the European Championships, 27th in the World Half Marathon Championships in Cardiff and won the British Athletics Cross Challenge title. Hannah continued her excellent progress, coming 6th in the 100m World Junior Championships

and winning the 100m Welsh Senior Championships title. She finished ranked number two U20 woman in the UK in the 100m and number four in the 200m. In December 2015 Hannah won the Carwyn James Junior Sportswomen of the Year at the BBC Cymru sports awards.

Hannah, however, was not the only Brier making headlines in 2016. Her younger brother, Joe, had an outstanding season in his first year as an U20 athlete. He won the 400m Welsh Senior Championships and Welsh Schools Championship titles, delivered an impressive PB of 47.62 at the Welsh Athletics U20 International, and gained his first GB international junior vest with the 4x400 relay team at the Manchester International in August.

Other GB vests were won by Rachel Johncock, who also won the Inter County Championships 100m in a fast but windy 11.37, and Rhodri Williams - 400H juniors. Many congratulations to both athletes.

Another performance worth noting is the new U13B 200m club record achieved by Charlie Holland in 26.03. Charlie actually broke his dad, Darren's, old record set in 1987. Charlie also broke the U13B 100m club record, with his dad still U15B 100m record holder.

The separate reports from the Senior Women and Senior Men Team Managers, the Off Track report and the Coaching report provides more details of our successes and gives a clear picture of the commitment and talent that goes into making Swansea Harriers such a thriving and successful club.

An additional report this year is the Tuesday and Thursday (TNT) endurance group report. Eamon Kirk and Kneath Philipart ably lead the Group, the closest the club has to a social running group. Membership is growing year on year, with more and more members achieving notable successes on the road and at cross-country. The group epitomises the balance required between taking part for fun and enjoyment and at the same time endeavouring to maximise potential and achieve high standards of performance. Regular social events add to the group's strong team spirit.

As reported last year, work continues on the social side of the club with a very successful awards night last October recognising all U15 and younger athletes who competed for the club in league matches. This will be repeated again later this month, with the annual bowling nights for our older juniors also proving popular. Thanks go to Wendy Slade for initiating and organising these events.

Coaches of our junior athletes continue to be rewarded by Andrew Jenkins with seasonal trips to the Woodman - buying Andrew a pint is not essential- and a similar night for our much in demand officials has also taken place. A word of thanks must go to Marian Williams who, in the absence of an Officials Secretary, ensured effective communication with our very able group of officials to make every home match- and there were many- such a success. The need to attract (you don't have to be an official to do it) an Officials Secretary before next season is a priority for the club.

Successful clubs never stand still and are always exploring how best to sustain and improve on achievements. This year we have been fortunate to have the support of Cy Knibb in facilitating the development of a strategic plan for the club. Cy has been conducting face-to-face interviews with a number of club members with the purpose of identifying key areas for improvement and development, culminating in action plans to progress those areas identified. A report on this work should be available before the end of 2016. Positive action in taking the work forward will be critical and progress will be reported on a regular basis to the club's committee and through the club's website.

It is also vital to never take for granted the work done by so many volunteers within the club day in day out. I am indeed fortunate as Secretary to have the opportunity to formally thank everyone in the club for the contribution they make in ensuring we have such a positive national profile. Our athletes deliver success on the track, on the field, on the road and across country- whether it is at a personal level in achieving a new PB or in representing their club or country at international level. Our coaches, team managers, officials, cafe, other helpers and committee members ensure the infrastructure is in place for our athletes to achieve their potential. Well done to everyone. We look forward to a successful 2017

Tony Clements
Secretary, Swansea Harriers

2. WOMEN'S TRACK AND FIELD REPORT 2016

While the final table suggests we retained our place in the UKWAL Premier Division relatively comfortably, that was far from the case. It was a difficult and stressful season, in part due to the fact that we did not have a team manager

to succeed Sue Leyshon. The role was effectively shared, with the bulk of the work being done by Caryl Granville, who did a remarkable job, especially in dealing with the pressure of the high number of late withdrawals. Many thanks also to Barrie Owen for doing a lot of work behind the scenes and to Sue and Wyn Leyshon, Ann Owen, Jane Dakin and Dil Granville for doing the all-important officiating.

The three matches highlighted the impressive strength in the field of several of the Premier Division clubs, especially in the throws. Our throwers are among the leaders in the Welsh rankings and performed valiantly, especially in the final match when we were badly hit by unavailability, but found the going tough. Also in the field we were indebted to the unsung heroes like Sian Swanson, who competed in all three matches, covering long-jump, triple-jump and high-jump.

On the track we were rarely able to call on our highest ranking middle-distance runners so a considerable workload fell on Alaw Beynon-Thomas and Kate Roberts, who doubled up in all three matches. The sprints were less of an issue thanks to Hannah Brier making herself available for two matches and Rachel Johncock able to compete when Hannah was away for the world junior championships.

The number of Higher Claim athletes permitted was increased from four to six this year and this was as well because of the issues we had with injuries, illness and athletes not being available for various reasons. In this regard Mollie Courtney was a huge contributor, high-jumping in addition to hurdling and Bethany Close and Eve Williams also made key contributions.

We were never able to relax throughout the season, in part because we did not take full advantage of our home match, in which we finished fifth, meaning we were immediately on the back foot. Availability problems made the second match a real challenge (no pole-vaulters, for instance) and we could manage only seventh place, leaving us facing a real threat of relegation.

Thankfully, we saved our best until last. With Caryl Granville gradually getting back towards full fitness and Ellie Kirk and Verity Ockenden coming into the team we had six individual track victories, five in A string events, with Hannah achieving an outstanding sprint double and Verity, on her club debut, setting a pb in the 3000 metres which she won by six seconds. Only champions Birchfield scored more points on the track. Well though the track girls did, it was an all-round effort, notable for Anna Bryant (Leyshon) coming out of retirement to do the pole-vault, the B 400 hurdles and (to deservedly loud cheers) throw the hammer. A superb effort.

So the season ended on a positive note, but our survival should not disguise the fact that we lack depth in many events and are overly dependent on a small number of dedicated club athletes doing what ever is necessary to support the team.

Individually, the star of the season was Hannah Brier. While finding time to support the club loyally when ever possible, Hannah made further great strides (in the most literal sense) at international level, peaking when it mattered most to finish sixth in the world junior championships 100 metres, so congratulations to Hannah and her coach Neal Merry. Well done also to Rachel Johncock, who won the CAU inter-counties 100 metres in a wind-assisted pb of 11.37, and to Olivia Caesar for winning the BUCS 400 metres. Of our HC athletes, Mollie Courtney narrowly missed out on a place in the final of the world junior championships 100 hurdles and Bethany Close finished a brilliant third in the UK championships 400 hurdles.

George Edwards

UK Womens League Team Manager

3. Senior Men's Track & Field 2016

Swansea's Senior Men's team once again had a successful season achieving promotion to Division 1 thereby achieving back to back promotions for the first time in many years. Nevertheless, it was a close run thing with promotion hanging by a thread at times during the later part of the season.

The first round in Cardiff saw perhaps the best team performance with the club finishing 2nd behind a very strong Cardiff team. One of the big breakthroughs was that of Rhodri Williams in the 400mH where he finished 5th behind Olympians Jack Green and Rhys Williams to record a pb of 54.08. This performance was good enough to win him a GB Junior vest later in the season. Other outstanding performances were that of Joe Brier and Marcus Bayona- Martinez

in the 400m where both achieved pbs to record two firsts. Cardiff also saw the debut of Romanian International – Norbert Lenard.

The second match in Bedford was a much tougher affair basically because we had so many athletes unavailable for various reasons. At one stage, the team was languishing in 8th place well short of 7th position before making an outstanding comeback to snatch 3rd place. Glen Elsdon started the fight back with a win in the 110mH followed by Joe Brier and Marcus once again achieving a double first in the 400m. Danal Desta made his debut in the 5000m to record a pb of 14.37.24 for second.

And so on to Kingston where a better team performance secured a third place on the day to set up an exciting final match to decide the promotion places. Again the team was missing key athletes due to injuries and clashes with other events. Decathlete Aled Price scored big points for the club winning the Long Jump and the B 110mH. Double first by Guy Smith and Jonny Tobin in the 1500m.

The final match at Nottingham was a nerve-racking event with three teams – Cardiff, Kingston and ourselves – locked in a battle for the two promotion places. Again we were missing key men – this time due to the clash with the Celtic Games and to an accumulation of injuries – but the team were strengthened by a very strong middle distance squad led by Dewi Griffiths on his return from the European Championships. Special mention of Sullivan Smith who finished 2nd in the 3000m steeplechase – this was to be Sullivan’s final appearance on retiring from BAL competition after 60+ appearances. Sullivan holds the club record for most track appearances. Thank you for all your help. In the end, the club finished 3rd on the day ahead of a weakened Kingston team to secure promotion to Division 1.

Special thanks to Wyn Roberts, Peter Maitland and Captain Marc Hobbs for their support and willingness to cover events or to find people to cover events. Success was due in part to these guys but also to an excellent team spirit within the athletes who competed regularly. One of the disappointing features was the failure of a number of athletes to compete in the BAL on a regular basis. Some of this was due to fixture clashes but in some cases they were discouraged from competing in the BAL.

So onto 2017 and Division 1 - it is clearly going to be much tougher and the club is still weak in some disciplines such as the throws and jumps. We need to emphasise to the athletes and coaches that as far as the club is concerned BAL (and to that matter UKWL) competition is of the highest priority. Clearly for some athletes the World Championships and qualification for the Commonwealth Games is going to be of greater importance..... but that is only for a few individuals.

David Jones
Manager – BAL Team Manager

4. ROAD AND CROSS-COUNTRY REPORT 2015-16

The last 12 months have brought the club almost unbroken success at senior level in domestic road and cross-country events, with Dewi Griffiths leading the way as an individual. We also won our first national (UK) road relay title for 22 years.

At UK level the women gave us our best but also most disappointing days. The triumph came at Sutton Park where brilliant efforts by Ellie Kirk, Kate Roberts, Caryl Jones and Andrea Whitcombe enabled us to win the national four-stage relay title, Andrea breaking away from Bristol AC on an exciting final leg to anchor us to victory. The disappointment came six months later when we were unable to get a team together for the six-stage relay, in which we had taken medals in the previous five years. A combination of injuries, illness and high-flying runners being out of the country, highlighted the fact that while we have a squad of outstanding runners, it is nonetheless a small squad. We lack strength in depth.

Our women also won the Welsh road relay very easily thanks to Alaw Beynon-Thomas, Lara Philippart, Kate Roberts and Andrea, who again ran the last leg.

The men also won the Welsh relay by a very long way with the B team in second place. Dewi Griffiths ran the fastest leg of the day and was well supported by Jack Gooch, Christian Lovatt and Jack Gooch.

The previous October our men, though far from full-strength, ran solidly for 13th place out of 71 starters in the National (UK) six-stage relay. A far more encouraging performance came in the 12-stage relay in April, when we

finished sixth, our highest placing for several years. Dewi Griffiths ran superbly to record the fastest long stage of the day with Liam Lloyd and Jack Gooch also running especially well.

The cross-country season opened for us with two second places (both to Cardiff) in the revived x-c relays at Bridgend, where we were beaten fair and square. We were lacking some top runners in both men's and women's races but can have no complaints. However we had revenge when it really mattered, in the Welsh championships at Singleton Park, where we were totally dominant.

Dewi Griffiths was a runaway winner of the individual title, with second-placed Chris Carpanini, Marc Hobbs (4th), Guy Smith (8th), Matt Rees (15th) and Paul Tobin (24th) providing excellent support. The women's race provided a thrilling tussle between Caryl Jones and the ageless Andrea Whitcombe, with Caryl breaking away in the last mile to take the title, with Sian Edwards in fourth place, making the team title a formality.

Our runners did their best to support the Gwent League, but since the fixture list has become much more demanding in recent years, few see it a priority, especially the final race which comes after the Welsh championships – the natural climax to the season. The West Glamorgan League fixtures proved useful training races.

In individual terms the star of the season was unquestionably Dewi Griffiths, who was first in the Cardiff Cross Challenge, won the inter-counties title in Birmingham then finished 27th in the world half-marathon championship. Caryl Jones also recorded a superb win in the Cardiff Cross, which suggested a return to her very best, but frustratingly she was again affected by injury.

So for the most part it was a very successful year for the club, the women in particular despite the fact that long-term injuries to athletes of the caliber of Caryl and Sian Edwards were less than helpful.

We have every reason to be optimistic.

George Edwards

5. Tuesday and Thursday group (TNT's) - 2016 report

It has been a fantastic year for the TNTs. Our group has grown and diversified in the past 12 months. There is now an established team of 6 session leaders (3 women, 3 men, all active runners). The average attendance is now at least 20-25 runners per session, with a record of 35 so far. We are slowly attracting more female runners, and U35s, who are arguably underrepresented.

We've branched out in terms of the types of sessions and locations, in particular making more use of the track. We still maintain a lower threshold for joining the group, roughly 50-min 10K or 2-hour half marathon. We are also acting as a feeder for George Edwards' group.

The training and support seems to be working well. Of our core group of around 50 athletes, in the last six months, most people have had at least one PB out of the following: 3000m track, 5K, 10k half-marathon, marathon. There is also an emerging appetite for track, trail and ultras.

There have been numerous team highlights: our TNT group made up the majority of the 3 teams that were in the West Glam XC Competition: TNT Men, winners; Women, runners up, and Vet Men (Div 3 runners up). We also played a big part in the Welsh XC Champs at Singleton Park, with some great individual and team performances. In addition, we fielded a large group of runners at the Welsh Champ Road Relays.

We had a large number of athletes in the London Marathon, with most people qualifying via Good for Age, or using Club Ballot places. This led to some superb performances, with a Welsh Champs team silver for the women. We were runners up in the Welsh Castles Vets Competition, and winners in the Monarchs of the Mountains section. We have a handful of athletes who have gained Welsh Masters vests in the last year, and others who are aiming for this in the coming months.

We have become far more proactive about asking people to join the Club once they start training with us. We have also launched a Championship for the group, which rewards training attendance, racing and improvements in personal performance. This seems to have galvanised people with regard to training and racing.

We've benefitted from more visibility, due to having our own jackets and T-shirts made, along with some great publicity in Facebook, the local press, TV, and local Park Runs. Our links with other local clubs also seems to have strengthened.

Challenges include: the admin involved in coordinating the group; the potential to become too big to manage under our current model; no facility for adults to train with the club if they don't meet our basic lower threshold. The strengths, and there are many, include: a friendly and supportive atmosphere at training and races; a growing social

side to the group; members interested in becoming Leaders in Running Fitness; a focus on local and national team events.

We are hoping the group will continue to thrive in the next 12 months, and we're grateful for the support we have had, particularly from Brian Fox, Gary Irvine and Andrew Jenkins, and many others in our Club.

Best wishes

Eamonn Kirk, Helen-Marie Davies, Kneath Philippart, Vanessa Harragan, Rebecca Bennett & Simon Brewer

Swansea Harriers TNT Leaders in Running Fitness

6. Coaching 2016

Once again there has been little change in the coaching opportunities in 2016 from the last 5 years and the club are very, very lucky to have the coaches we do in Swansea Harriers. It is a major undertaking to be able to offer coaching to in excess of 600 members of all abilities and ages in every athletics discipline with sessions being delivered 7 days a week not just on the main club nights. At the time of typing the signs are that the club membership looks like it will rise again well beyond 600 members creating further challenges to be overcome with not only the number of coaches the club has but also the capacity of the University facility especially in the winter months indoors.

I'd like to thank all the club coaches for all their dedication, continued help, teamwork and cooperation and for giving up so much of their free time to come and volunteer at the club on a regular basis, your support is really appreciated and much needed.

The club currently has 63 UKA qualified coaches ranging from some volunteering on a casual basis once every couple of weeks to some who are at the track 3 or 4 times every single week. This is just about an adequate number of coaches to offer more effective coaching ratios due to the large number of members particularly in the junior sections in the club. The main challenge and objective is to retain and upskill these coaches so that they can become more independent and have the self confidence as well as appropriate qualifications to deliver higher quality sessions as the club builds towards the future. A number of key coaches are gradually winding down their coaching commitments to the club after in some cases decades of service. The concern is that there are less volunteers willing and available to step into their shoes by establishing their own groups.

The club hopes that more of the newer Coaching Assistants that have started with us in the last few years will have the confidence to go on and establish their own groups away from the junior introductory squads of which several of them are more than capable of doing so.

We have recruited just enough UKA Coaching Assistants but for the last 3 years have not had anyone complete, pass and progress to UKA Athletics Coach qualification. There are a variety of reasons for this situation not least the time, expense and complexity of the course. Nevertheless in 2015/16 there are 3 Coaching Assistants undertaking the course that we hope will pass very soon.

With the continued huge interest and increase in numbers of participants in the U11, U13 & U15 age groups it is essential that more parents continue to come forward to volunteer and undertake formal UKA Coaching Assistant Qualifications within the club introductory groups, in an attempt to have as effective coaching ratios as possible. As they progress along the clubs coaching structure and pathway we can then maintain these introductory group sessions.

A very positive area of growth in the club is in our adult "off track" coaching workforce otherwise known as the "TNT", where we now have 6 coaches qualified in the Leadership & Running Fitness pathway from UKA and that area of the club has shown substantial growth of members that have joined and represent the club.

UKA Qualified & Active Coaches

2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
39	44	47	45	43	42	44	50	59	63

Andrew Jenkins

Coaching Coordinator