

A great way to start the new year is with cross country and there were plenty of Harriers who turned out for the Cheshire Cross Country Championship on 8<sup>th</sup> January at Pickmere. The wet weather turned the hilly course into a muddy quagmire and also led to the parking having to be relocated a mile away from the course leading to added complications for the racers.

In the Women's 3.8 mile race Emma Weston had a storming run to finish 21<sup>st</sup> out of the 97 runners and pick up 1<sup>st</sup> place in the F50 category. This was a particularly impressive run from Weston as it was her first competitive race back after a long injury layoff which had side-lined her for most of 2021. The other Harrier keeping her company in the race was Georgina Budd who came in 83<sup>rd</sup> in 40.41.



Emma Weston

Photo: Weston

In the 5-mile men's race, Tom Fellbaum ran a strong race to finish 14<sup>th</sup> out of the 145 runners in exactly 33 minutes. He was followed by Bryan Lomas who finished 36<sup>th</sup> in 36.24 who also picked up 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the M50 category. They were followed by Chris Moss, 58<sup>th</sup> in 38:57, Stuart Rider, 79<sup>th</sup> in 38.57, Sean Rowsell, 104<sup>th</sup> in 44.06 and Nick Budd 118<sup>th</sup> in 44.06.

Sticking with the cross country theme, the final weekend of January also saw the holding of the Northern Cross Country Championship. The race, held way over in Pontefract at the horse racing course, attracts a high calibre of runner from all over the region and at 8.3 miles long is also a significant step up in distance. The beauty of cross country, is however, that whilst it attracts elite runners it is still open to all and there were plenty of accomplished but slower racers who turned up to enjoy the event. The conditions were dry with a firm footing underneath but the racing was made significantly harder due to Storm Malik which whipped up some strong, biting winds.

Of the three Harriers who made the journey Bryan Lomas again had another strong run finishing 227<sup>th</sup> out of the 517 runners in 53.29 followed by Tom Walker, 284<sup>th</sup> in 55.37 and Nick Budd, 489<sup>th</sup> in 69.22.

In between these two races there was a MACCL cross country race on 15<sup>th</sup> January at Tatton Park which Bryan Lomas also attended in order to maintain his form (and also just because he is a massive fan of cross country racing). In that six mile event he finished 133<sup>rd</sup> out of 470 runners in 37.55.



Bryan Lomas

Photo: Mick Hall

Going back to the start of January the first weekend of January also saw the running of the "Hit the Trail" race. This race takes place in Reddish Vale Country Park to the

north of Stockport and is mainly run over undulating trail/mud tracks criss-crossing the park. There were three Harriers taking part amongst the 355 runners over the 4.7 mile course. Suzie Roscoe crossed the finish line in 134<sup>th</sup> place in 39.42 followed by Rob Parkin, 287<sup>th</sup> in 50.45 and Dave Taylor, 300<sup>th</sup> in 52.04.

On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> there were two separate races that got quite a few Harriers up early out of their beds. At the 5 mile Alderley Park Winter Trail race there were six Harriers taking on the 5 mile slightly undulating course. Graham Cooper was 79<sup>th</sup> out of the 493 runners in 36.08 followed by Nick Budd, 145<sup>th</sup> in 38.56, Danny Jackson, 149<sup>th</sup> in 39.03, Georgie Budd, 169<sup>th</sup> in 40.01, Jade Longmuir 190<sup>th</sup> in 40.47 and Josie Galbraith, 253<sup>rd</sup> in 44.02.

The Four Villages Half Marathon on the same date, which is a regular attraction on the Harriers calendar saw eight of the club competing in a field of 842 runners. Tom Fellbaum dashed round the hilly course to finish 25<sup>th</sup> in 1.17.23. The other Harriers were Tom Walker, 105<sup>th</sup> in 1.26.26, Stuart Rider, 155<sup>th</sup> in 1.32.13, Mel Worthington, 262<sup>nd</sup> in 1.32.40, Jessica Knowles 231<sup>st</sup> in 1.37.42, Kelly Hurlstone, 406<sup>th</sup> in 1.47.54, Suzie Roscoe, 446<sup>th</sup> in 1.49.05 and Nick Wilkins, 490<sup>th</sup> in 1.52.03. Despite the hilly course both Mel Worthington and Suzie Roscoe managed to set new half marathon personal bests.

The week after (22<sup>nd</sup> January) it was the winter edition of the club's Cloud Handicap race. This race has been in existence since the club was formed almost 40 years ago and, due to the leisure centre being rebuilt, reverted to its original starting point just outside the rugby club's clubhouse. In this race the more able runners are handicapped by having a delayed start based upon their recent form and results. In this instance the last runner had a handicap of over 44 half minutes compared to the first runner. The winner is the first runner to make it back having navigated the seven miles and 860ft of ascent.

Dave Taylor and Rich Benson were the first two runners to set off and were the first two back in 85.18 and 85.19 respectively which meant Dave was also the overall winner of the race and, to cap it off, picked up the record for oldest ever participant in the race. Next back was Sam Gathercole in 89.12 (actual time 64.12 given he had a 25 minute handicap), Jack Sargeant, 89.30 (63.30), Tom Fellbaum 91.09 (46.39), Stuart Rider 91.09 (46.39), Mel Worthington, 91.32 (62.32), Georgie Budd, 91.57 (70.57), Nick Budd 94.10 (69.10), Duncan Young 97.34 (77.34) and Rob Parkin 99.15 (82.15).

Tom Fellbaum's impressive pace, starting from the back, saw him set a new course record for the winter event.

The final two races of January both took place on 30<sup>th</sup>. The first was the Stockport Daffodil 10k, which is a new event for the Harriers. It's a surprisingly undulating multi-terrain course with some short off-road sections and a sting of an uphill finish. Kelly Hurlstone was 307<sup>th</sup> out of the 839 runners finishing in 49.12 with Suzie Roscoe not far behind finishing 313<sup>th</sup> in 49.23 and Rob Parkin 575<sup>th</sup> in 58.06.



Rob Parkin

Photo: R Parkin

The other race was a solo ultra-event: Lady Anne's Way is a historic trail following the footsteps of Baroness Clifford of Westmorland from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The 100 mile route goes between Skipton Castle, where she was born to Brougham castle where she died and finally on to Penrith. This event, staged over two days sees the competitors completing much of their running in the dark. Graham Cooper finished the 100 miles in 3.48.07.

If interested in joining us, there are official club runs on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday all setting off from the Congleton Tennis Club. The club is always keen to see new members whether you are a speedy racer or more of a social runner. So, if you are thinking of joining then just come along to one of the regular/ club runs for a few weeks and try us out for size; you will be made to feel more than welcome with no obligation to join. You can find full details on our Congleton Harriers website: [Congleton-harriers.co.uk](http://Congleton-harriers.co.uk). You can also connect with the club on Facebook where details of club activities are posted regularly.