

The Congleton Harriers are now into the winter running season with the first of the North Staffordshire Cross Country League (NSCCL) being held on the afternoon of Saturday 27th September. The first of the four events was well hosted by Vale Royal Running Club at Knights Grange, Winsford, which is not strictly Staffordshire. The weather was kind, being a fairly mild day and conditions were dry underfoot. The women had 2 laps of the field with Jo Moss coming first for the team she was captaining in 46th place. Michelle Matthews ran well being only 3 places behind Moss, followed by Heather Jackson in 62nd place. Debbie Hill was 90th and Maria Jenson, new to cross country finished in 97th place. Other newcomers, Polly Wilding and Emily Heptonstall crossed the line in 106th and 140th place respectively. Unfortunately Jayne Winstanley had to drop out after the first lap due to injury.

The men's team, ably captained again by Bryan Lomas, had a four lap course. In keeping with the ladies, the captain was the first Harrier to cross the finish line, in 32nd place, in what was a very competitive field. Bryan Carr was also only 3 places behind his namesake in 35th place. Chris Moss was 59th and Andy Roberts, 91st. Club chairman, Pete Newham came home in 105th. The remaining ranking was as follows: Graeme Burns, 120th; Chris Hewitson, 128th; Paul Bevan, 185th; Dave Taylor, 195th; Chris Thomas, 201st and Steve Pullan, 226th.

Sunday 5th October was the Congleton Sting-in-the Tail Half and Quarter Marathons. This was the 31st year for the event, with a team of Harriers making up the organising committee ably chaired by race director, Steve Webb. The weather was unseasonably warm and sunny making for excellent running conditions and a record field took part. The event received good feedback from competitors for organisation and the friendliness of the marshals. Whilst many of the club members were busy on the day making the events run smoothly, a few were able to don their running shoes. Craig Hewitt, a relative newcomer to the club came 117th in 1:32:21 (chip time). An older club member in both years and belonging was Bill Boyton who posted an incredible time for someone into his 8th decade. He came in 207th place in 1:41:12. Ian Prime was the third male Harrier in 1:47:12 (421). Maria Jenson was the first female Harrier in 1:51:23 (320). Janine Hulme and Sarah Richards completed in 1:51:41 and 2:31:30 respectively.

On Saturday 11th October, the two Bryans, Carr and Lomas, took part in the Langdale Horseshoe Race which is one of the Lakeland classics and as such attracts a large and high level field. The event covers many of the well known peaks in the region amounting to 14 miles and 4750 feet of climb. Not an event for the faint hearted and certainly not in the conditions which met the Bryans on the day; cold, foggy in parts and very wet. Visibility was particularly poor up at Stickle Tarn, Bowfell and Crinkle Craggs but did improve for Pike o' Blisco and down to Old Dungeon Ghyll. Conditions underfoot were slippery and treacherous. Lomas finished in just under the 3 hours in 2:59:05 (115/357) and Carr in just over the 3 hours in 3:01:43 (130th).

On Sunday 19th October, 12 Congleton Harriers travelled up to the Howgills, an area situated on the Yorkshire Dales / Cumbrian Borders for the 2014 FRA British Relay Championship. The event was this year jointly hosted, co-ordinated and very well organised by Howgill Harriers and Dallam Running Club. The club had assembled a men's and ladies' team to compete against the best from the country. The event followed the usual format of four legs consisting of a shorter individual leg, a longer pairs, another longer pairs with challenging navigation and a final shorter individual leg. None of the legs were a walk in the park and a deterioration in the weather over the day meant that those towards the end of the event had a particularly bad time. The men's team consisted of Craig Hewitt, Bryan Lomas, Bryan Carr, Andy Roberts, Pete Newham and Chris Hewitson. Lomas was the captain who was pleased with the enthusiasm of his team mates but who was disappointed that an error in the 'clag' meant a detour which cost valuable time. The men finished in overall 96th place.

The ladies' team consisted of Paula Kennerley, Charmaine Wood, Michelle Matthews, Heather Jackson, Polly Wilding and Debbie Hill, with Hill taking the full force of the bad weather. The ladies came 187th. No one said 'never again' and Lomas is hoping to have representation from the club at the Fell Relays 2015.

JK