# **AGM**

# **CHAIRMAN’S REPORT**

# **2022/2023**

I said this last year and it still holds true: ‘The past year has seen Basingstoke and Mid Hants Athletic Club continue its progress on every front; performance, governance, coaching and facilities development. We are an amateur club seeking to improve its professional standards in all aspects of our activities.’ We have definitely continued on our upwards trajectory as a Club in 2022/3.

It’s worth pointing out the fantastic age range of our active members: literally 8-83! Yes, Wally Thorpe, we do mean you, as our ever running octogenarian! It’s also the Club’s 75th Anniversary Year. We have come a long way in 75 years. We will have the chance to think about how far in the coming months.

If I’ve missed some things or people, please forgive me. Behind the successes are coaches, officials, team managers and many unsung helpers and athletes. Although we are an individual sport, we need to have a strong team ethos to build our success. It is striking that Eliud Kipchoge, the most successful marathon runner of all time, sees athletics as a team sport.

## **Successes**

The Club Committee spends much of its time planning ahead and addressing challenges, so it’s useful to look back and remember our successes.

What a year! Highlights included having three 800m athletes at the top of the national senior rankings early season, followed of course, by Ben Pattison’s magnificent Commonwealth bronze medal and European 4th place, supported by coach Dave Ragan. A steep learning curve for both! Wind on eight months or so and there was a great bronze medal 800m performance by Daisy Allford at the recent British Indoor Championships.

Our multi-events squad, led by Rafer Joseph who is also England Athletics Multi Events Talent Lead, performed at a consistently high level nationally, including at an international meeting in Estonia in February.

Let’s not forget our overseas members either; Colorado based Thomas Staines and Reece Sharman-Newell posted sub 1:46 times for 800m, whilst Mair Edwards has just posted a quality indoor 400m for Easter Michigan University as she looks forward to competing over 200m and 400m in the summer, alongside completing her Masters degree in Molecular and Cellular Biology! Gemma Finch is now a member of Atlanta Track Club after graduating from Troy University, Alabama. Gemma has just gone 4th on the UK all time 1000m indoor rankings.

In the National Athletics League, we maintained our position in the Championship (ie 2nd division) thanks to the sterling efforts of an heroic core of athletes. Over at the Southern Athletics League we were promoted to Division 1, whilst we retained our number one team position in the Wessex League.

Our older male athletes did brilliantly to win the Hampshire County Veterans League, whilst the ladies finished 3rd with a depleted team. Come on ladies!

In cross country we are flying high, led by Tom Sycklemore in his breakthrough year. Tom leads the Hampshire Cross Country League standings, having also won the County Championship. BMHAC senior men are 2nd team. Ben White leads the under 20 men whilst Becca Sleap is 3rd lady with Charlotte Ragan in 4th.

Immi Edwards has battled hard to stay in the hunt for an under 15 girls top 3 placing: she’s currently 2nd! The U13 boys are 3rd team at the moment whilst Archie Burniston finished with a magnificent silver in that category in the County Championship.

The Junior Cross Country League, launched by Liz Flitcroft, has continued to grow with six clubs now taking part.

The senior road runners are prolific competitors, especially with the multi-event Club Championships series. The PBs set this year are too numerous to mention, though Charlotte Ragan’s 2:51 marathon was an outstanding result. Don Powell continues to inspire and amaze with his exploits on the fells..and the flat..in his seventies.

Thanks to Tim Fowler and his team, The Hampshire Hoppit goes from strength to strength, despite a below par entry last year. Entries are up this year AND the race is rated the 7th best in the country1

Despite the disruption of last year’s track closure, training continued at various other locations, notably the Andover track. We recovered quickly with the Club Championships and the first of a new series of open throws meetings in November.

We ran two ‘Come and Try’ Sessions for U11 youngsters on our waiting list in September. We have been able to take some into our U11 coaching groups and an additional Sunday morning session.

We introduced the AAA Standards Award scheme, issuing certificates to athletes under 20 who posted performances meeting the standards. There were 11 Grade 1, 15 Grade 2, 39 Grade 3 and 91 Grade 4 certificates. Well done people; every certificate represents a personal triumph. It was great to see athletes gaining certificates for higher level performances through the season. We will be able to compare the data year on year.

On a more prosaic note, we have worked through the challenges of ensuring that Club governance is fit for purpose now and in the future - the AGM agenda reflects that.

The upcoming new Clubhouse, Stand and Photo-finish building are obvious successes..and timely in our 75th year. Felicity will report separately on the project.

**Thank You**

A big thank you to all our team managers. It’s a hard job made more difficult by last minute ‘no shows’ with little warning.

None of these successes would have been possible without the unstinting efforts of our great coaching team and our really strong group of officials. Both groups do our Club great credit. On the coaching side, we have worked hard to improve the coherence of our groups in the interests of optimising athletes’ progression.

We are fortunate to have so many really experienced and able coaches, as well as Dave and Rafer. In particular, John Davis is a nationally recognised sprint coach.

Similarly, we have extremely committed officials, some of whom (including Liz Flitcroft, Steve Snodden and Alastair Tucker) served at the Commonwealth Games, thus continuing the BMHAC tradition of supplying officials at all levels of competition, including the very highest echelons of the sport.

We have been fortunate to gain some new coaching helpers and assistant coaches. However, we need yet more to give us the ‘headroom’ we need to cover holidays, illness etc. The more we have, the less the load on existing coaches. The same applies to officials. Officials at track and field meetings can work alongside having children competing, for example. In many cases, a free lunch is on offer!

The road running coaching team work across many venues and time slots to support their athletes with widely varying targets and distances.

Thanks too, to our band of willing volunteers who help officials, and also Jo Breeds when in her Social and Refreshments Coordinator mode.

Finally, a big thank you to my colleagues on the Committee. We have worked through some large agendas with some complex issues to address.

**Challenges**

Naturally, there are challenges that we have to address, including:

1. Fitting out the new Clubhouse. Felicity will spell out the challenges
2. Celebrating our 75th Anniversary and the opening of our new Clubhouse in a befitting and newsworthy manner
3. We never cease to need more volunteers to help in all aspects of developing our Club. Many of us are of an age where we may have to reduce our commitments and, in some cases, become limited in what we can do physically.

In particular, we need:

* Team Managers for the Alder Valley boys, Southern Athletics League, National Athletics League and Hampshire County Veterans League ladies teams.
* A Health & Safety Officer
* Volunteers to help with the new Clubhouse…jobs to be confirmed but a hot drink on a cold winter’s night, anyone?

In all cases , we would be happy to talk through what is required.

1. Getting more athletes competing. We recognise that young athletes, especially, participate in other activities. However, it is really important that athletes learn to compete as well as train with significant benefits for individual development. Athletics really is a team sport. We compete as individuals but work as teams in training, racing and competitions, encouraging each other on to better performances.

Coaches will never ask people to compete if they do not think they are ready. However, remember that competing is an essential element of being an athlete. How many people would call themselves footballers without playing for a team?

1. Appointing a new Treasurer. This is underway, with several requests for more information received.
2. Completing the requirements of the Club Standards. We are nearly there; we just need to ensure that all coaches DBS certificates have been renewed.

So, ladies and gentlemen, there is much to do whilst we strive to improve further as a Club. Here’s to an even more successful 2022/3.

Leigh Henderson

Acting Chair
February 2023