

Veterans Athletic Club Newsletter - Spring 2020



Anna Critchlow
tracked by Clare
Elms in the
England Masters
Inter Area
Challenge

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Veterans Athletic Club was established in 1931 and is affiliated to England Athletics, BMAF, South of England AA, Surrey County AA, the Race Walking Association and the South of the Thames Cross Country Association. We offer athletic competition for men and women aged 35 and over. Cross-country, road, track & field as well as race walking - there is something for everyone. Based in London with members across the South East, we can provide opportunities to compete with other like-minded masters/veterans. A fixture list is printed in the newsletter. Please support these events. The newsletter welcomes contributions and events always need volunteers, as well as competitors. If you want to get involved, contact any of the Committee members listed above.

Editor Angela Kikugawa Writes

I hope you are all keeping well and managing to stay safe in these difficult times. This newsletter we had planned to be a special Olympic edition but sadly, like so many other sporting events, the Games now cannot take place.

The cancellation of the Olympics was a huge disappointment for everyone and for the Japanese people in particular. My initial feeling was that many here saw it as a matter of national pride that the 'show must go on', and the Government held on as long as they could, believing they could still make it happen. But as the scale of the pandemic became clear, they bowed to the inevitable. I am really pleased it was not cancelled, as was discussed, and in the end only postponed for a year. As the weeks have unfolded it is clear that this was the right decision and the feeling of disappointment has now been replaced with a determination that the 2021 Olympics really will be 'the best ever.' I truly hope so. Sport is often a great source of hope, not just on a grand scale but on an individual basis as well.

Like so many of you I had a year of races and events planned and was coming to England in June for two races I had been training

hard for. There were also many visits to family and friends all of which will now have to wait. But once the initial disappointment passed I also have a commitment to make my races the best ever, not in terms of best times, since they are long gone, but in terms of the enjoyment I get from them. I often joke with my sister that when I was younger I worried about times and as I have got older I only worry about finishing. But following this pandemic I believe the most important thing is actually to get to the start. Things might not go my way on the day, I might finish and I might not, but by getting to the start line with both a determination to complete and at least a 50% chance of doing that, I will have achieved 99% of what I set out to do.

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**Message to VAC
Members from
Membership
Secretary, Peter
Kennedy**

Membership of VAC was due for renewal on 1st April and some of you have already paid, for which we thank you. Most members however have held off paying because there is little prospect of any competition for some months. The VAC committee do not feel that is fair to take your full year's membership and not provide you with a full year of competition. We have therefore decided the following:

- Existing memberships will be valid until competition restarts. This will enable everyone to receive the VAC newsletter and be eligible for the BMAF discount on Athletics Weekly.
- For 2020/21, the annual fee will be reduced to £6 for this year only, no matter when in the year you choose to renew. Members who are 2nd Claim with VAC will still have to be registered with England Athletics through their first-claim club.

- If you are a competing 1st claim member of VAC, please pay £21(including the EA registration of £15).If you are currently classed as a competing First Claim member but can no longer compete due to injury or otherwise, and you still wish to be a member, then let me know and you will not need to pay the EA element of the membership fee.
- If you already renewed your VAC membership for this year before 29 March, you will only have to pay £6 for next year's membership.

It is easiest to pay your membership online via OpenTrack. Go to the BMAF website <http://bmaf.org.uk> and select the menu option "OpenTrack". Login and this takes you to "My Account". Click on View/Renew on the VAC membership record and follow the instructions. If you find the online process difficult, I can accept a cheque if necessary, to the address below. If you have any problems, email or call.

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Spring, Summer and Autumn 2020 Fixtures

Coronavirus Postponements and Cancellations

UKA has suspended all athletics activity in the UK until 31 May. It is widely predicted that this will be extended and that restrictions in some form will be in place until the Autumn, and maybe longer.

The priority is for people to stay safe and to halt the spread of the virus.

Events worldwide and nationally have been cancelled or postponed. Look at the BMAF website for details of the international Masters competitions which are affected, including the cancellation of this year's World Masters T&F event in Toronto. It remains to be seen whether the European Masters non-stadia competition in Madeira (now October 2020) and the European Indoor championships in Braga (now January 2021) will take place.

Nationally, the BMAF has lost fixtures such as the annual 5km championships at Horwich. Other fixtures such as July's Inter-Area T&F Challenge and the national Masters T&F in August are in doubt because of uncertainty about the size of gatherings which may or may not be allowed and the long lead time for organising the officials for these events. Again, watch the BMAF website for details.

For VAC, we are keeping our fixtures after the end of June under review. We feel that it's unlikely that July's fixtures such as the 5,000m track championships and the Battersea Park 5km road race will go ahead. There is also a big question mark over our parkrun gathering at Lloyd Park in June and the Over 80s celebration parkrun at Bushy Park in July. VAC's One mile, 10k and 10-mile championships have all been affected. Keep checking the fixture list on the VAC website.

For the Walks, Dave Hoben has rescheduled the Jack Fitzgerald Memorial walks at Tilgate Park to 24 October and the Cecil Gittins Memorial at Cyclopark to 10 October (to be confirmed).

Let's hope that the cross country season can begin in October.

NOTE POSTPONEMENTS AND CANCELLATIONS

Refer to the VAC website (www.vetsac.org.uk) for updates and additions.

Date	Organiser	Race/Event	Venue	Entry	Entry Closing Date
Saturday 4 April 2020	VAC POSTPONED TO 10 OCTOBER To be confirmed	Cecil Gittins Memorial Walks (incorporates Enfield League 10k match)	Cyclopark The Tollgate Wrotham Rd Gravesend DA11 7NP	All ages welcome. Distances 2.5k, 5k,10k,15k (road). Enquiries Dave Hoben	
Sunday 19 April 2020	West 4 Harriers POSTPONED Hoping to reschedule in Autumn 2020.	Fuller's Thames Towpath 10 VAC 10 Mile Championships	University of Westminster playing field, Hartington Road, Chiswick, W4	Entries would be transferred. If a new date isn't possible, entrants would get a discount on the 2021 event.	Entries suspended
Tuesday 28 April 2020	VAC. CANCELLED	Battersea Park Summer Series	Battersea Park,	Enquiries: Entries Secretary	
Wed. 20 May 2020	VAC POSTPONED Hoping to reschedule in 2020	10km TRACK WALK. 10km Track Walk VAC Champs	Battersea Park, London SW11 4NJ	Working to reschedule later in 2020. Enquiries: David Hoben	
Sunday 24 May 2020	Validity Westminster Mile POSTPONED Hoping to reschedule in Autumn 2020	British Masters One Mile Road Champs and VAC One Mile Champs	The Mall, London. Assemble in Green Park, London SW1A 1AA	Entries would be transferred. Details on Validity Masters Mile website.	Entries suspended
Saturday 6 June 2020	VAC POSTPONED TO 24 OCTOBER	Jack Fitzgerald Memorial race walks	See below	Start time: 12.30pm Enquiries: David Hoben	
Date	Organiser	Race/Event	Venue	Entry	C/D

9 Jun 2020	VAC CANCELLED	Battersea Park Summer Series	Battersea Park,	Enquiries: Entries Secretary	
Saturday 13 June 2020	Lloyd parkrun Croydon UNDER REVIEW	5km parkrun Featuring VAC “mob match” gathering.	Lloyd Park Coombe Road, Croydon, CRO 5RB Start near Lloyd Park tram stop.	Start time: 9am New parkrunners must register with parkrun to obtain a Barcode.	Enter on the day (but need your Barcode)
Sunday 21 June 2020	Ranelagh Harriers UNDER REVIEW ENTRIES SUSPENDED	Ranelagh Harriers Richmond 10k Also the VAC 10km Championships	Race HQ, Kew and Ham Sports Assoc. Riverside Drive, TW10 7QA	If cancelled, the race will not be rescheduled this year. Further info: Ranelagh Harriers website	Entries suspended
Saturday 4 July 2020	Bushy parkrun UNDER REVIEW	Usual 5km parkrun, open to all. Featuring the fourth annual Octogenarian gathering and celebration.	Bushy Park. Meet at the eastern end of car park. Look for sign “	Start time: 9am Octogenarians and supporters are welcome. Enquiries: Richard Pitcairn-Knowles (rppk@btinternet.com)	Enter on the day (but need your Barcode)
Tuesday 7 July 2020	VAC Held under UKA rules. 5km course certified accurate. UNDER REVIEW	Battersea Park Summer Series 5 Km Masters Road Race and Open Race Walk. VAC 5km Championships	Battersea Park, London SW11 4NJ Close to Millennium Arena	Start time: 7pm Entry via OpenTrack, not yet open. Masters guests welcome. Enquiries: Entries Secretary	Online entry by 6 July. Entries on the day accepted.
Sunday 12 July 2020	BMAF/ England Athletics Masters Association UNDER REVIEW	British Masters Outdoor Track & Field Inter Area Challenge (VAC team to enter) Competition for BMAF Area Clubs.	Coventry Athletics Track, 98 Frilsham Way, Coventry CV4 8AH	Men & Women 35-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+. Events: 100m 200m 400m 800m 1500m 3000m shortH 2km walk, 4 x 100m, LJ HJ TJ PV SP DT JT HT WT	VAC Team selected in advance. Enquiries to T&F Sec
Date	Organiser	Race/Event	Venue	Entry	C/D

Wednesday 15 July 2020	VAC UNDER REVIEW	VAC 5,000m track championships Four seeded races. Entry limit to be set.	Millennium Arena, Battersea Park, London SW11 4NJ	Open to all BMAF members. Entries via Member Login at OpenTrack (not yet open).	Closing date 8 July or earlier if limit is reached
Tuesday 4 August 2020	VAC Held under UKA rules. 5M course certified accurate. UNDER REVIEW	Battersea Park Summer Series 5 Mile Masters Road Race and Open Race Walk.	Battersea Park, London SW11 4NJ Close to Millennium Arena	Start time: 7pm Entry via OpenTrack, not yet open. Masters guests welcome. Enquiries: Entries Secretary	Online entry by 3 August. Entries on the day accepted.
Wednesday 9 Sept 2020	VAC UNDER REVIEW	VAC 10,000m track championships Three seeded races. Entry limit to be set.	Millennium Arena, Battersea Park, London SW11 4NJ	Open to all BMAF members. Entries via Member Login at OpenTrack (not yet open).	Closing date: 2 Sept or earlier if limit is reached
Sunday 20 Sept. 2020	South of England Athletic Association and VAC	South of England Masters T&F Championships VAC Track & Field Championships	Lee Valley Athletic Centre Meridian Way London N9 0AR	Entry via OpenTrack, not yet open. Probable events: 100m 200m 400m 800m 1500m, sprint H, long H, 2k/3k SC, HJ, PV, LJ, TJ, SP, DT, JT, HT, WT.	Closing date 6 Sept.
Saturday 10 Oct. 2020 NEW DATE TBC	VAC RWA Race Permit Accurately measured course	Cecil Gittins Memorial Walks (incorporates Enfield League 10k match)	Cyclopark The Tollgate Wrotham Rd Gravesend Kent DA11 7NP	Start time: 1pm All ages welcome. Distances 2.5k, 5k, 10k, 15k (road). Rescheduled from 4 April 2020. Enquiries Dave Hoben	Entries not yet open
Date	Organiser	Race/Event	Venue	Entry	C/D

Saturday 10 October 2020	England Athletics Masters Assoc (EAMA) with the North Midlands Cross Country League	England Masters Cross Country Team Selection Race for British & Irish Masters CC International, Dublin, 14 November 2020	Markeaton Park, Kedlesdon Road, Derby DE22	<u>See</u> BMAF website for details. Register via Member Login at BMAF OpenTrack Race distances: 6k for women plus men 65 to 75 plus; 9.8k for men 35 to 64.	Closing date Friday 25 Sept.
Saturday 24 October 2020 NEW DATE	VAC	Jack Fitzgerald Memorial race walks (approx. 3 and 6 miles road). Seniors/Juniors /Vets. Cat "B". Open event. Profits donated to appropriate charity.	Tilgate Park, Crawley. Registration at Tilgate Forest Golf Centre, Titmus Drive, Crawley RH10 5EU	Rescheduled from 6 June. Start time: 12.30pm Entry form to follow. Enquiries: David Hoben	Entry in advance preferred. Entries on the day accepted
Saturday 14 Nov 2020	Country Associations of England, Scotland, Wales, N.Ireland and Republic of Ireland	British & Irish Masters International Cross Country Champs.	Ireland is host country. Venue: Santry Demesne, Dublin	See BMAF and EAMA websites for details of England selection, including selection race on 10 October.	Closing date for England applicant s: 25 Sept

For other regional/national/international masters events refer to the **BMAF website**



Allan Long wins the Michael May trophy

VAC member, Allan Long, has been awarded the twice-yearly Michael May trophy in memory of Michael who gave so much to Masters athletics and to VAC in particular. Giuseppe Minetti presented Allan with the trophy at the BMAF indoor T&F championships with this description:

“Allan Long, born in 1942. It all started when he was near retirement and attended a Tooting track open meeting. He thought he would give it a go. He joined Herne Hill Harriers in 2004 at the age of 62, began training with their coaches and soon took off as a top-

class sprinter and jumper. He has competed in over 350 events since 2007. Always a gentleman, kind and considerate to competitors and officials alike. Always willing to fill in for the team; be it relay, an unexpected jump event or helping to officiate. And that goes from HHH vets team matches through to Great Britain Masters representation. The most unassuming superstar because he doesn't believe he is one. But that is the nature of the man that makes him so deserving of the Michael May Award. Allan is a role model of earnest endeavour who competes and succeeds at the highest level but remains the humble, willing helper and supporter of athletics and all around him.”

For VAC, we would add that Allan joined us in 2006 and has been a great supporter of club events. He is always willing to represent VAC at the inter-area competitions in whatever event he is needed. Recently he did the 200m, long jump (1st place) and relay for VAC at Lee Valley. Thank you, Allan.

VAC Athletes win National and International Awards

2019 was a great year for Clare Elms and Ian Richards whose haul of national, European and World records and Gold medals was rewarded by many awards.

In the UK, Clare and Ian were announced by the BMAF as the overall best British Masters award winners. Clare also won the women's best middle distance and long-distance awards, and Ian won the men's walks award. Clare was also voted as the Best Female Masters Athlete by the readers of Athletics Weekly.

In the European Masters Association awards, Ian was selected as the Best European Overall Male Masters Athlete of the Year. Clare was voted as the Best European Female Long-Distance Runner.

In the World Masters Athletics annual list, Ian was voted Best Race Walker and Runner-up in the Best Overall Male category. Clare was voted second in Middle Distance and joint runner-up in the Long-Distance category.

We are proud of Clare and Ian and of all VAC members who compete on the national and international stages, supporting and representing VAC and Great Britain, maybe bringing home medals and setting PBs as well as achieving their goals and enjoying themselves.

Virtual Racing

If you are pining for athletics competition, the concept of virtual racing is an option, subject to obeying the rules on social distancing and the Government's guidelines on the nature of daily exercise.

Using Strava and Garmin technology, event organisers and clubs are promoting virtual races for individuals and teams. The idea is for competitors to do the distance solo on their own routes and submit the proof of their runs online. It would be great to form VAC teams. For example, OpenTrack is offering you the chance of having some fun in their virtual racing via <https://opentrack.run/product/virtual-racing>.

England Athletics Registration 2020-21



The EA registration fee has been kept at £15 instead of the planned £1 increase, because of Coronavirus. They may yet offer more to athletes and/or the clubs if the crisis continues, as seems likely. Registered Masters athletes can benefit in

normal times from:

- England Masters road race challenge series versus the Celtic nations
- £2 discount on entries to road races
- discounts on products offered by their business partners
- coaches' and officials' development and support services
- club support webinars
- marketing hub for communications relating to Masters athletics

For further information see the publication "England Athletics at a Glance" to be found on <https://www.englandathletics.org/about-us/press-office/>

CROSS COUNTRY

Despite the looming Coronavirus crisis, a full season of domestic cross country races was completed. It brought successes for VAC members, admiration for the Men's Surrey League team and the final VAC championships on our historic Wimbledon Common course.

Men's Surrey League 2019-2020

The VAC team proved to be more than worthy of its place in the Surrey League by finishing a commendable seventh out of the 12 teams in Division Four, a big improvement on our lowly 11th place the year before. It was truly a team effort by the 21 men who took part during the season, and notably by the five ever-presents, Gary Ironmonger, Gary Budinger, Bruce McLaren (pictured next page at Lloyd Park), Andy Mitchelson and Ian Strong who ran in all four matches plus Carey Gray

who ran in three and was there for the other one. Consistent back-up was provided by Darren Franks, Barry Attwell, Tony Harran, Steve Clancey and Andy Murray who all ran in three of the matches. There were also fine individual performances, including Gary Ironmonger's first place in the season's V50-59 category and Barry Attwell's second in the V60+ age group.

A massive vote of thanks goes to team manager, Paddy Clark, who brought the team together and provided essential support with numbers, gazebo, groundsheet and most importantly friendship and good humour. VAC also stepped up and co-hosted two of the matches, manning the finish funnel, providing marshals and compiling the results. Our willingness to help has been noticed and we have won great respect in the community of clubs for our contributions on and off the field.



To recap, the first match, back in October 2019, was held on a wet day in Richmond Park on the slopes around the Isabella Plantation. The 13-man team achieved a magnificent fifth place, led home by first-timer, Chris Beecham (M50) who placed fifth in the Division, followed by Gary Ironmonger (M55) in 12th. Bruce McLaren (M50), another welcome newcomer, was our third finisher. Unfortunately, there was some bad luck too. Carey Gray, ever-present for the last seven complete seasons, got stuck in gridlocked traffic and missed the start. Similarly, Liam O'Hare was delayed and set off in chase four

minutes after the hooter had blown. Unluckiest of all was Tony Austin who tripped on a tree root and fell heavily on his shoulder. He was

helped by Liam who had caught up with him, and the two of them valiantly finished the race, taking the last places.

The second match at Epsom Downs in November was even wetter and a lot colder. Miserable conditions! The team of 15 again finished fifth team out of 12. VAC's Andrew Mitchell, a nationally top-ranked M50, placed second in the Division Four race, followed by top-50 placings for Gary Ironmonger, Bruce McLaren, Darren Franks and Tony Harran. Individually, VAC runners creamed off the age-group positions, with top places for Andrew Mitchel (M50), Gary Ironmonger (M55), Gary Ribbons (M60), Barry Attwell (M65) and Peter Giles (M75).



In the New Year, the third match was a three-lapper at Oxshott Woods with its renowned hill and stony ground. Fortunately, the weather was kind. Gary Ironmonger ran well in 11th position in Division Four to lead the team in, with Eddie Lambert (left) not far behind, still in the top twenty. Bruce McLaren ran strongly through the field to take VAC's third spot. Missing some of our top-placing runners, VAC were 10th on the day.

A strong turnout of 14 for the final match of the season at Croydon's Lloyd Park saw us achieve eighth place on the day. Gary Ironmonger was first home in 11th, followed by Bruce McLaren, Darren Franks and the fast-improving Andy Mitchelson, Lloyd Park was at its wettest and extremely muddy

beyond the first field, making it a very tough challenge and a fitting end to the season.

Surrey League Division 4: Final Standings 2019-20

1	Barnes Runners (promoted)	1441
2	Tri Surrey (promoted)	1509
3	Collingwood	1832
4	Lingfield Runners	1848
5	Holland Sports AC	2081
6	Elmbridge	2377.5
7	VAC	2489
8	British Airways	2536
9	Horley Harriers	2608.5
10	Windrush	2663.5
11	Epsom Oddballs	3599.0
12	Sutton & District AC	3900.5



As a club, we value every runner and everyone is welcome. Please consider running for VAC in the 2020-21 season. Second claim runners are allowed to run for VAC in Division Four as long as they do not represent their 1st claim club in any of the Surrey League fixtures in any Division during the season. Coronavirus

restrictions permitting, the first match is scheduled for 10 October. Divisions Four and Three run together, producing exciting, challenging, 5 mile competitions with over 300 runners at various country venues. Some of this year's team are pictured above at Lloyd Park. From left, Andy Murray, Darren Franks, Ian Strong, Gary Ironmonger, Gary

Budinger, Bruce McLaren, Trevor Robinson, Andy Mitchelson, Liam O'Hare, Barry Attwell, Paddy Clark.

East Surrey League



David Ogden, Gary Budinger, Maggie Statham and Andy Mitchelson (pictured above) formed the VAC team at the final match of the 2019-2020 East Surrey League at a very muddy Lloyd Park on 7 March.

British and Irish Masters Cross Country International

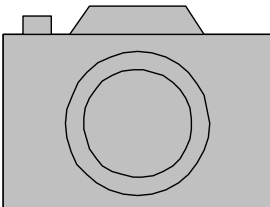
In November 2018, this prestigious annual match of the home countries plus Ireland was hosted by England at Aintree racecourse, the home of the Grand National. It was a flat grassy course with the going 'good to soft'! In four separate races, all the women and men over 65 raced over 6km (3 laps), while the younger men (35 – 64) completed 4 laps to make 8km. The weather stayed dry and was much milder than anticipated. The results team, with VAC's Peter Kennedy in charge, supported by Andy Murray, provided an efficient service with positions and scores quickly available

Fifteen VAC members were selected to run for England, with four as reserves. Clare Elms (W55) and Peter Giles (M75) won Gold medals, as well as securing team Golds for England. Sue McDonald won the



Silver medal in the W50 age group. She was the first scorer for the England team, which won the W50 Team Gold. Ben Reynolds gained a Bronze medal in the M55 category, as well as Team Gold. For the first time a category was added for W75 runners and Lesley Bowcott won the Bronze medal. Lesley has been a pioneer for recognition of the women's older age groups and won a bronze medal in 2014 when the W70 category was first introduced.

Other VAC members were members of medal winning teams including Ian Johnston (M50) running for Scotland and Liam O'Hare (pictured at Lloyd Park in the Surrey League) for Ireland. In addition, Zoe Doyle won the open race, held after the 4 championship races. England won the women's, men's, and overall championships, with Ireland second overall.



Many of the photographs in the cross country section were supplied by Cliff Hide who is happy to provide JPEG copies to members. Email him at cliffhide10@aol.com. Many thanks to Cliff for his contribution to the newsletter.

Selection for the 2020 British & Irish Masters Cross Country International

With Ireland as host, the 2020 match will return to Santry Demesne near Dublin on 14 November, Coronavirus restrictions permitting.

For the England team, the selection process has been changed and there will now be two selection races on 10 October 2020, incorporated within the existing North Midlands Cross Country League races (if restrictions are lifted). The venue is Markeaton Park, Kedlesdon Road, Derby. Entry is via the BMAF Open Track system only and the closing date is Friday 25 September. In order for the area selectors to have sufficient information in respect of an athlete's 2020 achievements, it will also be necessary to complete an application form. This will be required from both those competing in the selection race and those who are not able to compete in the event but still wish to be considered for selection. Further details are on the BMAF website's fixture list.

It's an honour to be picked to represent your country and VAC is proud of the members who are selected. It would be great to see lots of VAC people wearing the VAC vest in Derby for the selection races.

VAC Cross Country Championships, 18 January 2020

Conditions were good for VAC's last race on Wimbledon Common's 4.5 mile "Thatched Cottage" course and it was fitting that a sparkling new course record was set by the winner, Mike Cummings of Herne Hill Harriers.

Fifty four members and guests competed on some very muddy stretches, but also firm tracks. Mike Cummings (M35) and Richard McDowell (M40) were locked together for the first lap and well into the second, until Mike pulled away at the top of the horse ride, to win by 16 seconds in a time of 23:47. Both men (pictured next page) were well inside the previous course record of 24:48, set in 2016, and Richard's time of 24:03 was also a new M40 course record.



Megan De Silva of Ranelagh Harriers, 10th in the race and first woman, set a new women's record for the VAC Championships of 28:08. However, the record for the course still belongs to Clare Elms who posted a time of 27:44 at the Inter-Area match in 2016.

VAC Gold medals were won by Robin Jones (M45), Andy Bowen (M50), Gary Ironmonger (M55), Tom Morris (M60), John Grigg (M65), Mike Mann (M70), Peter Giles (M75) and Doug Milsom (M80). Peter Giles's time of 33:32 rewrote the previous M75 record of 39:06 set by Doug Milsom. Doug

however had the consolation of similarly breaking the M80 record by nearly six minutes.

For the women, VAC Gold medals were won by Jay Hadfield (W45), Sue McDonald (W50), Lucy Woolhouse (W55), Carol Jones (W60), Jane Georghiou (W65) and Lesley Bowcott (W75). Sue McDonald was the first woman for VAC and won the women's trophy, as well as setting a new W50 championship record. Lesley Bowcott, already the W70 record holder, posted a great time of 44:54 which will serve as the inaugural and all-time W75 record for the course.

History of VAC's Wimbledon Common courses

The 2020 competition was the final time that a VAC championship would be run from the traditional start area at the bottom of Wimbledon Common, near Camp Road. For 2021, we are required by the

Wimbledon Common Conservators to devise a new course which does not encroach on the fairways of the Common's two golf courses.

Looking back to 1990, there were at least four VAC cross country races during the season presided over by Bob Belmore. He used a 4.8 mile course starting from the corner of Camp View and North View close to the first hole of the Wimbledon Common Golf Club and taking in two laps of the Thatched Cottage, Beverley Brook and horse-ride circuit before a run-in alongside Sunset Road to Camp Road. Bob Treadwell and Maggie Statham hold the course records (see table below). For the officials, Don Turner was always there as timekeeper, come rain or shine.

VAC Cross Country courses on Wimbledon Common			
Starting Point	Duration	Men's record	Women's record
Camp Road 4.8M	Before 1990 - 1999	Bob Treadwell (24:43 in 1993)	Maggie Statham (27:37 in 1993)
Caesar's Well 5.8M	2000 - 2013	Mark Critchlow (30:10 in 2001)	Clare Elms (34:11 in 2013)
Thatched Cottage 4.5M	2014 - 2020	Mike Cummings (23:47 in 2020)	Clare Elms (27:44 in 2016)

Although the course was popular, there were regular disputes with golfers when the runners were warming up and assembling on or near the first hole. For this reason, in the 1999-2000 season, Bob decided to relocate the start of the races to Caesar's Well, a grassy clearing accessible from the car park at the end of Sunset Road. His new course avoided most of the golf holes and still picked up the traditional Beverley Brook and horse-ride elements of the old course. However, as each lap was fairly short, at around 1.9 miles, the races were run over three laps (around 5.8 miles) with an option for the women to run two laps.

The Caesar's Well course was used for 14 years, during which time attendances began to reduce and eventually the only race was the annual championships. It was fitting that the final race in 2013 saw Clare Elms blaze round to shatter her own previous course record and set a superb women's mark for the record books. For the men, Mark

Critchlow posted an unbeatable time in 2001, which still stood as the record in 2013. For many years, the finish line was controlled by three men who epitomised dedication and reliability. They were Cecil Gittins, Ron Hopcroft and Pete Mulholland, all now sadly deceased. The photo of Cecil, Ron and Pete in action on the Common in 2010 will no doubt stir some memories.



In 2014 it was felt by some that the Caesar's Well course was too long and that a change was needed. Joe Aspinall proposed a new two-lap 4.5 mile course starting in the clearing near to the Thatched Cottage and preserving the Beverley Brook and horse ride sections. There were 22 finishers in 2014, a number which quickly built up

during the next six years. We even acquired a gazebo for comfort. Don Turner was still a regular timekeeper and the number of times he has supported VAC's events as an official must be in the hundreds. Records for the course were set and broken. Clare Elms again claimed the women's record. Her magnificent run in 2016 was never threatened. Mike Cummings demolished the men's record in the final race on the course in January 2020.

During the seven years use of the Thatched Cottage course, the Conservators and Rangers Office became increasingly strict about possible interference with other users of the Common. Their main concern was the horse riders but in 2019 their attention shifted to the golfers to such an extent that a decision was taken to deny a permit to any races which crossed golf holes. VAC appealed for our race in January and we were allowed to go ahead one last time as long as we worked with the Wimbledon Common Golf Club to deploy marshals at points where our course ran on or near their holes. We became very familiar with the names of the five offending holes: Long Hole, Heather, Long Butt, Running Deer and Paradise! To her credit, the General Manager of the Golf Club turned up on the day of the race and marshalled the Paradise Hole.

So for 2021, we need to devise a new course of around 5 miles away from golf holes and within walking distance of Belgrave Hall which we would like to continue to use for the post-race awards. Dennis Williams is in charge of this and would welcome any views and suggestions.

British Masters Cross Country Championships, 14 March 2020

The finale of the domestic Masters cross country season was at Corwen, Denbighshire on Saturday 14 March. By then, the UK had recognised the great threat of Coronavirus and we had received advice about hand washing, avoiding shaking hands and self-isolation. The Premier League had stopped the weekend's football matches but the Cheltenham horseracing festival was ongoing. The Bath Half Marathon would take place the next day, but the Fleet Half Marathon would not.

Against this background, some gave the event at Corwen a miss but many felt that in the absence of stronger advice, they should continue with care. It of course transpired that this was the last weekend of sporting competition in the UK for the foreseeable future. Lockdown began on 23 March.

The event was held on the picturesque farmland of the Rhug Estate just outside Corwen. It was an excellent venue, with a well-stocked farm/gift shop and attractive café. The course was mostly firm grassland, undulating, with a tricky water-splash on each lap which

guaranteed wet feet.



Six members represented VAC. In the first race, for women and the 65+ men, Anna Garnier (left with Peter Giles behind) had a superb tactical run to break clear of her W65 rival from

Northern Masters at the water-splash, which Anna charged through fearlessly. She took the W65 Gold by 14 seconds. Maggie Statham backed her up with the W65 Bronze. Peter Giles won the M75 Silver medal. He had a rare off-day and was beaten by 6 seconds by a new M75 with some pedigree. Maurice Marchant (M70) completed the line-up for VAC.

In the second race for the M35 – 60 age groups, VAC's Ben Reynolds had a great run to mix it with the younger men and finish 13th, claiming M55 Gold by some margin. Ed Skinner (M60) completed VAC's contingent. The races also formed the Inter Area Cross Country Challenge but VAC did not have enough finishers to form a team. The trophy was won by Northern Masters.

TRACK and FIELD

INDOORS

As usual, the Masters indoor season was compressed into four intensive weeks of competition. At the first event, the SCVAC Championship on 14 February, the Coronavirus epidemic in Asia was concerning many but it was not yet impacting on athletics events in the UK. The South of England/VAC Championships and the Inter-Area competitions followed in successive weeks, with greater unease but still little change in behaviour. However, by the time of the finale of the domestic season, the BMAF Championships on 7-8 March, we were trading "elbow bumps" instead of handshakes and hugs. Just over two weeks later, the UK was in lockdown.

VAC Indoor Championships,

VAC's championship was held within the South of England and EMAC championships, ensuring good competition in the age groups. VAC members who were first in their respective age categories and therefore overall South of England champions are shown in the table below. There were three wins for Joanna Flowers (W50) and Peter Giles (M75) and two for Fiona De Mauny (W35), Nikki Sturzaker (W45), Joan Trimble (W65) and Mary Axtell (W75). In the women's 1500m there was a clean sweep of VAC winners from W35 through to W65.

	Men			Women		
Field Events						
Pole Vault	M35	Jon Ladley	3.10m	W65	Sue Dassie	1.70m
Long Jump				W65	Emily McMahon	3.12m
Shot Put	M45	Martin Willis	8.80m	W75	Liz Sissons	8.70m
Trip. Jump	M65	David Blunt	8.70m			
Sprints						
60m	M40	Stuart Channon	7.52	W50	Joanna Flowers	8.72
	M65	David Hinds	9.03	W65	Joan Trimble	9.3
				W75	Mary Axtell	12.73
200m	M55	Pat Logan	25.95	W50	Joanna Flowers	28.66
				W65	Joan Trimble	33.07
				W75	Mary Axtell	48.28
400m	M35	Steven Tester	52.89	W35	Fiona de Mauny	59.48
	M45	Scarlett Parker	58.75	W50	Joanna Flowers	01:04.6
	M65	Timothy Carter	01:08.0			
Middle Distance						
800m	M75	Peter Giles	02:52.2	W35	Hayley Cargill	02:18.4
				W45	Louise Oldfield Jensen	02:30.2
				W50	Lisa Thomas	02:34.3
1500m	M60	Richard Holland	05:10.2	W35	Fiona de Mauny	04:45.3
	M75	Peter Giles	05:52.5	W45	Nikki Sturzaker	05:16.5
				W50	Lisa Webb	05:19.0
				W55	Clare Elms	04:55.8
				W60	Andrea Sanders-Reece	06:51.0
				W65	Anna Garnier	05:54.0
3000m	M45	Andre Dahlkamp	09:55.9	W45	Nikki Sturzaker	11:51.2
	M70	Peter Hamilton	13:10.0	W55	Lucy Woolhouse	11:35.5
	M75	Peter Giles	12:51.9			
	M80	Joe Aspinall	17:53.9			

England Masters Indoor Inter Area Challenge, 1 March

Six area Masters clubs competed at Lee Valley on 1 March. VAC was represented by 52 athletes who covered 73 of the 91 events. For the men, we had a representative in all but three events (M35 PV, M50 TJ and the M35 2kmWalk). The women were less plentiful, and we had empty slots in the field events and walks. Every point was valued, and VAC was rewarded by an excellent third place in the men's match and a creditable fifth in the women's. Overall, we were fourth. The winners were Midland Masters.



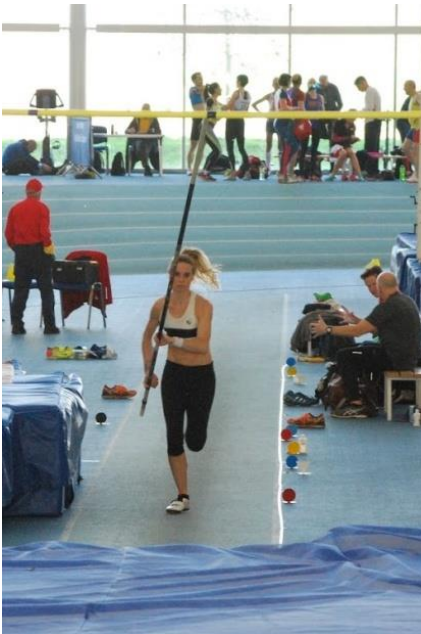
The highlight of the sprints was Giuseppe Minetti's (who is featured on the back page. Photo by Tom Phillips) first place in the M50 200m. His time of 24.62 was also a Championship Best Performance. This was complemented by Fiona de Mauny's fine win in the W35 400m. Second places were gained by Allan Long (M75 and pictured left in the long jump, photo by Tom Phillips) in the 200m, Steven Tester (M35) in the 400m and Lisa Thomas (W50) in the 400m. Rachel Waters (60m), David Hinds (60m), Adrian Day (200m), Alwyn Lombaard (60m Hurdles), Mark White (400m) and Geoffrey Kitchener (400m) bagged thirds. In the 4 x 200m relays, we fielded a

men's team in each of the four age groups and achieved second place in the M35 event and third places in the others. The women's composite W50 team placed third. Next page David Hinds and Alan Perry in the M60 Relay show good form. (Photo by Tom Phillips)



In the distance events, Tony Tuohy (3,000m), Peter Giles (1500m), Anna Critchlow (1500m) and Clare Elms (3000m) had fine wins. Anna was also second in the 3,000m and Clare was second in the 1500m, having

dropped down an age group and competing with the W35 runners. Other second places were gained by Lisa Thomas (800m), Anna Garnier (800m), Ros Tabor (800m), Wayne Lashley (800m), Gary Ironmonger (800m and 1500m), Richard Holland (1500m) and Andrea Sanders-Reece (1500m). Richard was also third in the 3000m, as was Maggie Statham.



Allan Long's win in the M70 Long Jump was VAC's only first place in the field events. New member, Kim Saha, (pictured left) was a valuable addition to the VAC team, placing second in the W35 Pole Vault competition. Cara Maker also claimed second in the W35 Long Jump. Anna Garnier placed third in the W60 Shot as well as being VAC's only jumper, putting points on the board in the W60 High Jump. For the men, Vaughan Ramsay, Robert Peers, Keith Seldon, Geoffrey Kitchener, Franck Triolaire, Timothy Carter, Martin Willis, Peter Wishart and Antony Richards all played their part, and in many cases did two or

even three events to make sure that VAC was represented.



Unfortunately, a fixture clash drew many walkers away from Lee Valley and VAC struggled to fill the events. We were grateful to Arthur Thomson (M80) who was second in the M50 age group and to Chris Flint (M75) who was fourth in the M60 category. Neither had walked on a track, with stricter judging, for years but they did VAC proud. Both are pictured left.

Thank you to everyone who took part and to Maggie Statham-Berry who put the teams together, helped by David Hinds for the M60 sprints. The outdoor Inter-Area Challenge is set for 12 July but it looks unlikely that it will

go ahead as the Coronavirus restrictions affecting travel and gatherings could still be in place in some form.

We urgently need volunteers to select and organise the VAC teams for the indoor and outdoor Inter-Area T&F Challenges. The task could be split into managing the men's and women's teams separately or managing the track team or the field team. If you are interested or can help in any way, please contact a Committee Member at tfsec@vetsac.org.uk

BMAF Indoor Championships, 7-8 March

VAC members took home a crop of medals and even two British records from these prestigious national championships.

Peter Giles set a British M75 1500m indoor record of 5:36.94 on the first day of the event and returned the next day to post a new indoor 3000m record of 12:07.38 to add to his outdoor record. The previous indoor record of 12.12.72 had been set 23 years ago. Peter also won the 800m M75 Gold medal.

Double Golds were won by Clare Elms (W55 1500m and 3000m), Gary Ironmonger (M55 800m and 1500m) and Fiona de Mauny (W35 400m and 800m).

Others to win Gold were: Liz Amos (400m), Joe Aspinall (3000m), David Blunt (PV), Anna Garnier (1500m), Caroline Garratt (Javelin), Geoffrey Kitchener (High Jump), Pat Logan (200m), Mike Mann (3000m), Cara Maker (Long Jump), Giuseppe Minetti (200m), Chris Privett (Hammer), Ian Richards (3k Walk), Tony Richards (Javelin), Ed Roe (200m), Edmond Simpson (1500m), Laura Street (1500m), Lisa Thomas (400m) and Lisa Webb (1500m).

Our trip to Braga by Andy Murray and Ros Tabor

The European Masters Indoor championships in Braga, Portugal, on 15-21 March had been postponed because of the Coronavirus but we decided to go to Braga anyway. We knew it was a pleasant city, and it would be an opportunity for some warm weather training for the European Non-Stadia championships in Madeira in April.

There were signs of the future as our flight was only about half full, but in Braga we met other GB athletes and some Dutch and Germans who we have competed against at previous events.

Our first night was relatively normal with several restaurants to choose from and people walking around. However, the next day we began to notice café and shop closures. This was to increase throughout our stay. By the end most shops were closed and cafes and bars were only open for limited hours and sometimes only selling through an outdoor serving window.

We were right – Braga is an attractive city but the museum and churches, including a magnificent cathedral were all shut. Luckily the

weather was bright so walking around was pleasant. We took buses – very few passengers and impossible to pay. The kiosks where you buy tickets were closed, and the drivers were taped off from passengers.

We changed our flight and came home early, by which time the Portuguese government had declared a state of emergency and was closing its borders. Let's hope that the event can take place on its rescheduled date in January 2021. Braga is well worth a visit.

Track and Field Competition Survey

Thank you to those who replied to the survey which Peter Kennedy launched in January 2020 seeking members' views on the future direction and shape of the competition which VAC offers to the membership. It was sent by email to 492 members who have expressed an interest in T&F. A summary of the responses is on the VAC website. More responses are welcome during 2020. There is a link to the survey on the VAC website. The conclusions of the Committee and proposals for the future are below. Please let Peter Kennedy know what you think and in particular if you can offer any help as an organiser or official.

Conclusions of the Committee

There is full support for continuing to have a traditional championship. There is moderate support for multiple meetings when members would be competing against those of similar ability, leading to overall winners for the whole season.

Action Plan proposed by the Committee

- Incorporate VAC championships into both indoor and outdoor South of England Masters Championships.
- Continue to organise the VAC 5,000m and 10,000m Championships, as well as entering teams in the inter-area competitions.
- Investigate whether VAC members could compete in the Rosenheim League as guests or as a team. Identify T&F Open Meetings which VAC members could compete in to make up a summer series.

- Give further consideration to awards for best age graded performances in each discipline.
- Approach those members who said they might be willing to help in order to put together a team to organise VAC events instead of a single Track & Field Secretary.

PARKRUN

If you are an over 80, 85, or 90, male or female, runner or walker, and would like to help set a possible Guinness World Record please put Saturday 4th July in your diary now and resolve to be at the fourth Octogenarian Bushy Park Parkrun ready to start at 9:00 am. Well that is the plan at least, although we do accept it may have to be put off until September because of the pandemic. In 2017, 18 octogenarian finishers probably set a world record for so many oldies running in one race; 38 finished in 2018 and 48 in 2019 (pictured below). With the prospect of over 50 this year we have notified the Guinness Book of Records of our intent and hope you will want to be part of this possible world record and celebrate with us after the run as usual with Prosecco and cupcakes! Don't forget your Parkrun barcode!! We will meet at the eastern end of the car park before the run. Further information if needed from: George Frogley: froglgeor@aol.com or Richard P-K: rppk@btinternet.com So hope to see you all on July 4th but later should circumstances demand.



OBITUARY- PETE MULHOLLAND BEM (1939 – 2020)

Angela Kikugawa writes: As a first claim member of Hercules Wimbledon, I am very sorry to report the death of Pete Mulholland. Pete was a lifelong member of Hercules Wimbledon, being Cross Country Secretary for fifty years and Club President from 1983 to 1985. After retiring from competitive running Pete was active in Surrey County Athletics Association and was President in 2016. He was also a founder of Wimbledon Common parkrun in 2007 and was always there on a Saturday morning giving out finish tokens. He was long-time contributor to Athletics Weekly and a past masters' editor.



He was very supportive of VAC events and frequently helped officiate at our races on Wimbledon Common including Cross Country Championships. In 2004 his volunteering was recognised at the England Athletics London Region Awards and in 2015 he was awarded the British Empire Medal for his Services to Athletics.

I could fill this entire edition with the tributes that have been paid to Pete and members can view many of them on the Hercules Wimbledon Website.

<https://www.herculeswimbledonac.org.uk/news/2020/4/3/goodbye-mr-hw>

I personally have many fond memories of Pete, but in particular recall about five years ago giving out tokens with him at Wimbledon Common parkrun. He would have been in his mid seventies then but his enthusiasm and love of Hercules Wimbledon never dimmed. A young woman, who no-one had seen before, crossed the finish line in an outstanding time. 'Quick' said Pete, 'go and talk to her and see if she is unattached. Get in quick before that bloke from Wimbledon Windmilers!'

He will be missed.



**Giuseppe Minetti,
Championship
Best Performance
in the 200m at the
Inter Area
Challenge**