



**Veterans Athletic Club**  
**Newsletter**  
**July 2023**



**Virginia Mitchell sets a new 400m  
World Record in Torun Poland!**

## VAC Committee Members: Sept 2022 – Sept 2023

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	Graham Laylee	

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

Some of you may recall from a previous edition of the newsletter that Richard Askwith, the sports author and journalist, asked for input from our members to his new book, *The Race Against Time*. The book was published towards the end of last year and as I had given Richard my thoughts, he was kind enough to send me a complimentary copy. VAC is given plenty of mention in the book as is the octogenarian parkrun

organised by Richard Pitcairn-Knowles.

I really enjoyed the book and as well as the stories of so many inspirational characters, I particularly liked reading about some of the ideas for keeping stronger for longer. Few of you will be surprised that weight training was high on the list for this but so were the benefits of a small amount of High Intensity Training (HIT). Needless to say, I tried it on the spin bike at the local gym and am not surprised it works as after four minutes I was exhausted. The book also talks about the benefits of stretching and includes a reference to a book called *My Border Collie Doesn't Stretch* by Nigel Crompton. The premise of this book is that movement should not be confused with flexibility and that more benefit can be obtained by mimicking the movements required for strong running than by focusing on exercises that increase flexibility, such as static hamstring stretches. Once again, I bought the book and decided to try it out, and although it took me a while to get used to the exercises, I can certainly see what the author is getting at.

You are probably hoping I am now going to report an improved performance for my efforts? I am afraid it's a bit too early to say, but I promise to keep going and give you an update by the next newsletter.

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## Message from Peter Kennedy

We reached 681 members at the end of March, which makes us the largest BMAF area club. My thanks go to all those members who have renewed promptly. However, success brings its problems:

We are continuing with a full range of competitions for all disciplines, but the existing Committee members are very stretched to deliver this. We need to expand the Committee with people who could take on the following roles before any of us decides to retire because the workload has become too great:

- Communications, including mass emails and social media.
- Help with organising some of the competitions.
- Help with Membership Secretary tasks.

Please give this some thought and if you are willing to take on one of these roles or wish to know more about what the work would entail, please contact me or any of the existing committee. If you are willing to help but not immediately, then please consider coming onboard at the AGM in September.

Let me reassure everyone that I am not abandoning VAC but rather than waiting until the moment I announce my retirement in the next 1-2 years, it is better that we find someone else now to take on some of my responsibilities. This will enable me to pick up some of the tasks of the Track & Field Secretary, a role which we have been unable to fill for the last 9 months. This role is critical to the delivery of VAC's T&F championships so that we escape the perpetual struggle to recruit enough technical officials to support Ben Noad in managing the meeting. We plan to create a London Masters Track & Field championship for all clubs in the London area and our championships would form part of this event. Soundings have shown that the London clubs are indeed interested in participating and willing to help with providing officials. Unfortunately, we have not yet found a date and venue to accommodate us during the summer months.

**Peter Kennedy**  
**Veterans AC Membership Secretary**

## 2023 Fixtures

Date	Organiser	Event	Venue	Entry	Entry CD
01/08/23	VAC	5K Road Race and Race Walk	Battersea Park.	7pm start. Entry on OpenTrack. Register at Bandstand.	29/07/23
06/08/23	England Masters Athletics Association	British Masters Inter Area Outdoor T&F Challenge	The Pingles Stadium, Avenue Rd, Nuneaton CV11 4LX	VAC teams for Men & Women. Age groups 35-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+. Range of events.	Expressions of interest to Entries Secretary
1-3 Sep	BMAF Services	British Masters Track & Field Championships	Moorways Stadium, Moor Ln, Allenton, Derby DE24 9HY	Enter on OpenTrack	Two weeks in advance.
09/09/23	Peckham Rye parkrun	5km parkrun. Featuring VAC "mob match" gathering.	Peckham Rye Park, Colyton Road, Southwark SE15 4JR	Start time: 9am. Remember your barcode. Look out for VAC vests.	Enter on the day
13/09/23	VAC	VAC 10,000m Track Champs	Millennium Arena, Battersea Park.	Three races seeded slowest to fastest. First race: 17:50. Enter on OpenTrack.	09/09/23
16/09/23	BMAF Services	British Masters 10,000m Track Championships	Monkton Stadium, Dene Terrace, Jarrow NE32 5NJ	Enter on OpenTrack.	09/09/23

<b>Date</b>	<b>Organiser</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Entry</b>	<b>Entry CD</b>
21 /9 - 1/10	European Masters Athletics	European Masters Athletics Champs	Pescara, Italy	Register via EMA website.	08/08/23
23/09/23	Vitality Westminster Mile	VAC One Mile Road Champs	The Mall, London. Assemble in Green Park.	Enter via Westminster Mile website, when open.	To be advised.
24/09/23	Folkestone Rotary Club and BMAF Services	British Masters Half Marathon Champs	The Grand, The Leas, Folkestone CT20 2XL	Part of the Folkestone Half Marathon. Start time:10am. Enter on OpenTrack.	17 Sept.
08/10/23	MBNA Chester Marathon and BMAF Services	British Masters Marathon Champs	Chester Racecourse, New Crane St, Chester CH14JD	Early bird entry price until 31 July. Check BMAF website for entry info.	To be advised.
14/10/23	Surrey League	Cross Country Race Match 1	Venue to be decided.	All VAC men and women (1st and 2nd claim) are eligible, subject to conditions. VAC vest necessary.	Advance notice to Team managers, Paddy Clark (men) and Helen Davies (women).
14/10/23	England Masters Athletics Association (EMAA)	Trial and Selection Race for the England Team for the British & Irish Masters CC International on 11 November.	Markeaton Park, Kedleston Road, Derby, DE22 4AA	Within the North Midlands CC League. Details and entry on OpenTrack.	26/09/23

Date	Organiser	Event	Venue	Entry	Entry CD
11/11/23	Surrey League	Cross Country Race Match 2. Match 3 is on 13 Jan. Match 4 is on 10 Feb 2024.	Venue to be decided.	All VAC men and women (1st and 2nd claim) are eligible, subject to conditions. VAC vest necessary.	Advance notice to Team managers, Paddy Clark and Helen Davies.
11/11/23	Scotland is the host country.	British & Irish Masters Cross Country International	Tollcross Park, Tollcross Rd, Glasgow G32 8TF	Each country has a selection process. There is a trial race on 14 October for the England team.	England team selection meeting on 14 October
03/12/23	BMAF Services and VAC	British Masters 5k Road Championship	Battersea Park.	Start time 11.00am. Medals ceremony at the Pear Tree café.	To be advised.

## VAC Vests!!

Vests are available from our kit supplier, Doug Maughan of Douglas Sports. Details are on VAC's website or email Doug at [info@douglassports.co.uk](mailto:info@douglassports.co.uk).

In a few months' time, the design of the club vests will be changed to feature the name Veterans AC in full on the back. The Men's vests will also be made from the same lighter fabric as the women's. The new vests will cost £23 plus £2 for postage. The men's old stock is currently being sold at a discounted price of £13 plus £2 postage.

# NEWS

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## **“RUNNING STORIES by people of all ages, speeds and backgrounds”.**

This is the title of a best-selling book compiled by VAC members Jerry Lockspeiser and Andrew Roberts. 100% of the authors' revenue from sales goes to “The Running Charity”, which works with struggling young people, perhaps homeless, to harness the positive power of running to boost mental health and long-term resilience. The book contains 88 short stories of 2-3 pages each about why the person runs and the benefits they get, along with a photo of each writer. The stories are from people of widely differing backgrounds and are very varied. All are incredibly inspiring and motivational, expressing the huge benefit the writer gets from running. The book costs £8.99 (£5.99 Kindle eBook) on Amazon and other online retailers, and can be ordered through independent bookshops.

## **Becoming an athletics' Official or Coach**

VAC will consider paying for members to become qualified athletics officials or coaches. In return, VAC would hope to benefit from the skills acquired. Check out the courses offered by England Athletics and contact Ros Tabor ([ros.tabor49@gmail.com](mailto:ros.tabor49@gmail.com)) if you're interested.

## **Coaching Offers**

VAC is grateful to the VAC members listed below who have gained qualifications and are putting something back into the sport by offering coaching and training groups to club members.

### **Dave Annetts (pictured on the back page)**

Since retiring two years ago, Dave has been working his way through the UKA's Coaching courses and has gained the Event Group Endurance qualification which covers all running events (beyond the sprints) and Walks. He is keen to offer help for VAC members within these disciplines.



Although VAC members know Dave as a top Race Walker, he was a competitive runner for 30+ years and now coaches the running groups at his club, North Herts Road Runners. His main interest is improving athletes over 5k to Half Marathon and in 1-1 Coaching. Contact Dave at [david.annetts1@outlook.com](mailto:david.annetts1@outlook.com)

### Neil Danby

Neil is offering Masterclasses for Masters Runners at his club's athletics track in Hurst Green, near Oxted. Neil is an Olympian having competed for Britain in the biathlon in 1988. He is a top-ranked M55 middle distance runner, as well as an endurance coach.

The remaining dates for Neil's Masterclasses are Wednesdays 26 July and 30 August.

The classes are FREE. The goal is to give a better insight to training and racing as a Master. The sessions include drills, plyometrics and rep/interval running, with plenty of explanation, demonstration, participation and Q & A's throughout the evening plus time in the club house afterwards. The duration of the session is 7.10pm to 8.30pm. Just turn up. For more details, contact Neil at [bobbiedan@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:bobbiedan@hotmail.co.uk).

The address is Holland Sports track, Mill Lane, Hurst Green RH8 9DF. There is plenty of car parking and it is only a two minute walk from Hurst Green train station which is one stop after Oxted. Trains run regularly from London Victoria and London Bridge.

### Rob Sargent

Rob is a Level 3 athletics coach in endurance and was a member of the England Athletics Coach Development Programme. He works with a group of mainly masters runners which like to be called 'the Warriors of Time'. They meet at Cricklefields Stadium, High Road, Ilford IG1 1UE on Tuesday nights from 6.45pm. The group covers the full range of endurance events from 5km to the marathon and there are generally over 20 attending the track sessions over a range of abilities and ages. There are also have other group sessions during the week.

Anyone who would like to come along and train with Rob and the group would be welcome. You can contact Rob for further details at [robrun26@live.co.uk](mailto:robrun26@live.co.uk)

Tony Austin

Tony has a Run Leader qualification and leads a training group which meets at the Wimbledon Park Athletics Track on Tuesdays. The group is mostly Hercules Wimbledon members who are also VAC members but there are also some from Wimbledon Windmilers. Anyone wishing to join the group is welcome to come and try a taster session. Tony can be contacted at [austin663@btinternet.com](mailto:austin663@btinternet.com)

David Budden and Dominika Brookes.

David and Dominika were mentioned in the December 2022 newsletter. David ([davidb7b7@gmail.com](mailto:davidb7b7@gmail.com)) is a Level 2 Performance Coach (throws) and Personal Trainer. Dominika ([dominika247@yahoo.com](mailto:dominika247@yahoo.com)) has completed the England Athletics Coaching Assistant course, an entry level qualification which focuses on the fundamental movement skills that underpin athletic activities. Both would be happy to advise and support VAC members.

## Notice of VAC's AGM, 7pm Monday 11 September

All members are invited to come to VAC's AGM. The venue is a meeting room in the Premier Inn, 82-83 Eccleston Square (off Gillingham Street), Victoria, London SW1V 1PS.

The AGM is an opportunity for members to meet and become involved with the club. The Treasurer will present VAC's financial accounts and the Committee will deliver reports on their areas of responsibility. Questions and suggestions are welcome.

The present officers of VAC's Committee may be prepared to continue, but they **need new people and extra help**. Please consider joining the Committee to bring much needed support. A Track & Field Secretary is an urgent need. Other areas of need are communications and social media, competition management and membership secretary tasks. If you could provide help in any aspect, make yourself known to a committee member at any time.

Nominations for officers for the 2023-24 Committee and any proposals for consideration at the AGM should be sent to Ros Tabor, the Secretary, by Monday 28 August.

If you cannot join the AGM, you are welcome to feed in your views and suggestions in advance by email, letter or phone call to the Secretary or another Committee member. Names and addresses are at the front of the newsletter.

#### Photographs

Many thanks to Cliff Hide who provided most of the photos in the newsletter. Cliff takes photos at VAC events and is happy to supply copies to members free of charge, but please give him a credit if you post the photos on social media. For copies of photos, contact him on [cliffhide10@aol.com](mailto:cliffhide10@aol.com)

## Track and Field

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### Double joy for sisters in Tampere 2022



Keeping it in the family was always the aim for the W45 400m World Masters final in Tampere in the summer of 2022. In 2018, Susie McLoughlin had struck Gold in the World Masters in Malaga in the 400m W40 age category and replicating the achievement as a W45 in Tampere was the main effort. On this occasion her sister and training partner, Lizzie

Amos, was also lined up on the start line to double the chances of the

Gold medal coming back to Surrey. It was double joy with a Gold and Silver, but it took a European W45 Record of 57.49secs for Susie to edge past her sister Lizzie who ran 57.83secs which was the 3<sup>rd</sup> fastest ever by a European in this age group.

Neither are strangers to athletics success. Susie's first international medal was won at the 1994 World Schools Games where she placed first in the 200m. This was followed by a Bronze at the IAAF World U20 Championships in the 4x100m the same year. Lizzie won a Bronze medal at the 1995 IAAF European U20 Championships as part of the GBR 4x400m relay team. Since then, they have navigated their way through the sport, representing England and GBR at Junior, Senior and now Masters level. What's more unique is that they are identical triplets with their third sister, Helen Channon, also a successful athlete, who has won three European Masters Long Jump titles. The "Williams triplets" have turned heads on the track on many occasions, notably when they've teamed up in relays. One such occasion was when they all represented GB Students at the Loughborough International.

The three sisters are members of Walton AC and have been members of VAC since qualifying as Masters' athletes in 2012. There is hope that all of the triplets will compete at the European Masters championships in Pescara, Italy, in September and win more medals for GB and VAC.

## CROSS COUNTRY

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### Surrey Cross Country League

#### Men's Matches

After the first two matches at Reigate and Oxshott Woods, VAC was 7th out of the 14 clubs in Division Four.

Chobham Common was next in January. A magnificent turn-out of 20 men, some of whom are pictured above, splashed round the two-lap course, described as "undulating". Heavy rain stopped in time for the start, but the stony course was awash. Richard Batchelor was VAC's

lead man. Clive Rolfe was second followed by Gary Ironmonger, making a welcome return to cross country competition. Richard Tweddle, Ebe Prill, Vic Maughn, Duncan Rimmer, John Barron, Chris Lee and Tony Harran completed the A team. VAC's strong B team provided great back-up. The A team finished a good 5th on the day, pushing them up into 5th overall.



The final match was at Morden Park, in February. A 21-man team took on a benign-looking route through open, natural, parkland. In reality, the three laps were punishing and relentless in their undulations. Richard Batchelor was again VAC's first finisher in a fine 16th place in the Division 4 race. He was followed by Clive Rolfe and Vic Maughn, both in the top 50 finishers. VAC's team were 6th on the day.

In the final standings, VAC achieved an excellent 5th place out of the 14 clubs in Division 4. A decision to increase the sizes of Divisions 1, 2 and 3 to ten clubs meant that four clubs were promoted from Division 4 to Division 3, so VAC just missed out. Next season, VAC will have Division 3 in its sights!

In the age-category awards, Richard Tweddle won the M60+ trophy, with Vic Maughn in second place. Richard Batchelor was fourth in the highly competitive M40 category and was the top M45 in the listing.

Thanks go to the 28 men who ran for VAC's team during the season. Five of them (Richard Batchelor, Gary Budinger, Andy Mitchelson, Andy Murray and Dave West) ran in all four matches.

A massive vote of thanks goes to Paddy Clark, the Team Manager, who held the team together and provided the essential back up with numbers, gazebo, groundsheets and most importantly friendship and good humour.

## Women's Matches



*Sarah Allen, Helen Davies, Lucy Woolhouse, Sarah Knox, Jo Quantrill, Ros Tabor  
(photo by Martin Berry)*

The 2022-2023 season heralded the successful return of a VAC women's team after an absence of ten years. The men's and women's matches were held at the same venues, generating fantastic team spirit and lots of mutual support. There have been full scoring teams at each of the four fixtures and pleasing results.

After the first two matches at Reigate's hilly Priory Park and Oxshott's tricky, tight, course, the team was in 11th place overall. The third match was at Chobham Common. Constant rain had made the undulating course very challenging with lots of surface water and deep puddles plus an uphill muddy section at the end of each lap. Lucy Woolhouse led the team of six, well up the field, and first W60 in the race. Then came Helen Davies, with Jo Quantrill, Gillian Wheeldon and Viv Mitchell completing the A team.



A good turn-out of eight VAC women completed the final match at Morden Park in good conditions with a cool temperature and no wind. The convoluted course meandered around firm, open, grassy parkland, and up and down some testing slopes. Lucy Woolhouse was again VAC's first woman, and first W60 in the race. She was followed by Helen Davies, Jo Quantrill, Anna Garnier and Gillian Wheeldon completing the A team. Great back-up was provided by newcomer, Vera Blei, in her first cross country race, followed by Sarah Allen and Ros Tabor. VAC's team finished a

commendable 10th on the day.

The Team Manager, Helen Davies, did a fantastic job organising and supporting the team, as well as competing strongly in every fixture and achieving second place in the League's W50 category. Lucy Woolhouse, also an ever-present, was the fastest runner in the W60+ age category in each of the four races and wins the League's W60 trophy. Jo Quantrill (pictured wearing 2302) and Sarah Allen also ran in all four races. Jo was second in the W60+ age category.

Overall, VAC was an excellent 10th out of the 29 clubs in Division Two. Next season the division will be split into Div 2 and Div 3. VAC will be in Div 2, a great reward for the new team.

Many VAC members compete for their first claim clubs in the Surrey League, and that's fine. However, if your first claim club doesn't need you, you would be most welcome in VAC's men's and women's teams.

First-claim VAC members are eligible to compete for VAC. Also second claim members are allowed to run for VAC as long as they do not compete for their first claim club in any of the four league matches in any of the Divisions in the 2023-24 season. Members from outside Surrey are also very welcome, although the Surrey fixtures often clash with those of other county leagues.

Ten are required for a complete men's scoring team, and five for a women's team, but there is no limit on the VAC turn-out. The more team members there are, the greater the strength in depth and the bigger the impact. Please contact the men's team manager Paddy Clark ([paddyclark@hotmail.com](mailto:paddyclark@hotmail.com)) or the women's team manager Helen Davies ([helendavies@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:helendavies@blueyonder.co.uk)) if you wish to join the teams. Every VAC runner is welcomed and appreciated.

## VAC Cross Country Championships, 21 January

Last year's new course was used again. It had been devised to avoid golf holes and to present a fast, challenging route using Wimbledon Common's classic trails. The two-lap course, totalling around 5 miles, started and finished at the grassy area adjacent to the Fox and Grapes pub near the Causeway. It included a scenic tour of the Queensmere pond and a steep climb back up to the Windmill on the plain.

There were 76 on the start line on a fine, but cold, day. The race was dominated by last year's winner, Richard McDowell (M40), although he was closely tracked by Chris Loudon (M35) on the first lap. Richard's pace eventually produced a clear win by over 40 seconds in a time of 25:31. There was a big gap to third-placed Martin Harris (M45) who finished in 27:54, just pipping Mark Tennyson by one second. Mark's fine run earned him the M55 Gold medal and the best age-graded performance on the day with a magnificent 92.5%.





Nikki Sturzaker, (pictured left W45) was the women's champion with a fine run which placed her 16th in the race in a time of 31:30. Matilde Lomba (W35) was second, just 15 seconds behind, with Denise Barnett (W50) third. Lucy Woolhouse retained the W60 trophy which she had won in the 2022 championship. Her time translated to the best women's age-graded performance of 89.7%.

## **EMAA Inter-Area Cross Country Challenge, Lloyd Park, 4 March**

VAC hosted the annual challenge for Masters Area Clubs which was held within March's East Surrey League race.

The course in Lloyd Park was firm and free from its usual mud. 118 runners completed the combined race, with 53 contesting the Inter Area challenge. Micah Evans was the fastest for VAC, placing third in the combined race and first M40. He was also the lead runner in the Inter Area competition. Denise Barnett was VAC's fastest woman, third in the race and first W50.

VAC did well In the East Surrey League's team competition. The women's team topped the table of seven clubs. The men's team was second in the men's contest.



For the Inter Area contest, VAC members turned out in force to reclaim the winner's trophy, last held in 2016. The enthusiasm of VAC's 42 finishers certainly made up for the lack of opposition on the day, as SCVAC's men provided the only other complete team. The score for each team was the average of the best six age-graded performances for both men's and women's teams. VAC's top six male scorers achieved a fantastic average of 83.20%. The top age graded performance was Mark Tennyson's (pictured) 87.05%. VAC's best six female scorers posted an average of 80.71%, with

Jo Quantrill the top performer with 87.13%. Jo also won the trophy for the best age-graded performance of the day.

## **British Masters Cross Country Championships, 18 March**

The finale of the domestic Masters cross country season took place on a tough, muddy, course on the site of the former Rising Sun colliery at Wallsend. The far afield location meant that only a few VAC members made the trip, and the races were dominated by athletes from the North East.

In the women's race, Clare Elms won the W55 Gold medal, retaining her W55 title with a superb 11th place finish. Vikki Filsell was the 4<sup>th</sup> W55 finisher. In the same race, Steve Plested was 4<sup>th</sup> M70 and Richard Bloom won the Silver medal for the M75 age group.

In the men's 35-64 race, Martin Shore placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the M45 age group. For the M55s, Mark Tennyson won the Bronze medal, followed by Terry Booth in 4<sup>th</sup> place. Together with a third member of Guildford & Godalming, Mark and Terry picked up M55 Team Silver medals. VAC's other representatives at the event were Jacob Armstrong-Plieth (M45), Mike Teasdale (M55), Len Reilly (M60) and Rob Sargent (M65).

### **Selection for the 2023 British & Irish Masters Cross Country International**

With Scotland as hosts, the event will return to Tollcross Park, Glasgow, on 11 November.

The match features five teams: England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Northern Ireland. For selection for the England team, there will be two trial races on 14 October, held within the existing North Midlands Cross Country League races. The venue is Markeaton Park, Kedlesdon Road, Derby. Entry is via BMAF Open Track and the closing date is 26 September. Further details are on the competition entry page.

In order for the area selectors to have sufficient information about an athlete's 2023 achievements, it is also necessary to complete an application form. This is 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. Mike Mann ([mcmann90@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mcmann90@yahoo.co.uk)) is the VAC contact and will be a member of the England team's selection panel.

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

# Road running

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## Battersea Park Summer Series

The 2023 series features four races from April to August. The flat course in the park has become renowned for fast times if the weather and competition are good. The first three races have been at capacity and course records were broken in each of them. The final race is on Tuesday 1 August and is 5km.

### 5km Road Race and Race Walk, 4 April



Exactly 100 runners competed. Cool conditions helped to produce fine performances, including five age-group course records. Andy Bond (pictured) dominated the race to win in a time of 15:51, rewriting Richard Tomlinson's M45 record of 16:17 which had stood since 2014. Tim Jenns (M45) chased hard for second place and his time of 16:10 was also inside the old record. Seven men were inside 16:30 including Simon Shaw (16:23) who improved Mike Boyle's M50 record of 16:34 which had stood since 2012. Neil Danby (16:29) was a convincing first in the M55 age group and took four seconds off his own course record of 16:33 set in 2021.

Melissah Gibson (W35) of Ealing Eagles was the women's winner in a time of 18:10, setting an all-comers W35 course record, just five seconds quicker than Bernie Pritchett's W35 record of 18:15 for VAC members set in 2006. Nikki Sturzaker (W45) was the second woman, followed in quick succession by fellow W45s, Ginevra Stoneley and April James-Welsh. Nikki's time of 18:16 knocked nearly thirty seconds off Debbie Jackson's W45 course record of 18:43 set in June 2021. Ginevra and April's times were also inside the old record.

In the Walk, the men's winner was Dave Annetts (M55) with a new personal best of 22:58. Maureen Noel (W55) came first for the women in 31:12. VAC was pleased to welcome back Mark Culshaw and Stefano Zennaro to the start line after long absences.

## 5 Mile Championship Road Race and Race Walk, 9 May

Most of the 94 finishers completed the race before rain fell heavily. Andy Bond (M45) from Dulwich Runners was the race winner, successfully defending his Five Mile Champion's title. His time of 26:08 was just five seconds short of his winning time of 26:03 in 2022. Kay Sheedy (W35), also from Dulwich Runners, was VAC's women's Champion. She stormed round the 3.5 lap course in a time of 29:49 to shatter Bernadine Pritchett's W35 record of 30:58 set in June 2005.

Ten men were under 28 minutes and there were six new course records. Ben Goddard in second place in 26:35 set a new M35 record, beating Mohammed Ismail's 2016 record of 26:59. In fifth place, Steve Winder claimed M50 Gold in a record-breaking time of 26:57, improving Richard Tomlinson's record of 27:29 set in 2019. Simon Shaw, in seventh place, was the M50 Silver medallist in a time of 27:19 which was also inside the previous record. Another age-group battle took place between two top M55s, Neil Danby and Andrew Ridley. Neil was pursued relentlessly by Andrew but pulled away on the last lap to claim eighth place in 27:35, with Andrew finishing tenth in 27:53. Neil's time was an M55 record, twelve seconds ahead of Gary Ironmonger's record of 27:47 set in 2018. Other age-group Gold medals were won by Stephen Fabes (M40), David Ogden (M60), Merlin Allan (M65), Ged Ruffle (M70), Edward Thorpe (M75) and Michael Johnson (M80).

For the women, Nikki Sturzaker had a fine run in second place behind Kay Sheedy. Her time of 30:25 broke VAC's longstanding W45 record of 30:44 set by Danielle Sanderson in 2008. Nikki's late charge pipped Nichola Evans on the line but Nichola's identical time of 30:25 was an allcomers' W40 record, ahead of the VAC W40 record of 30:37 set by Marilyn Clarke way back in 1997. Other age group Golds were won by Susan McDonald (W55), Caroline Helder (W60), Avril Riddell (W65) and Jane Georghiou (W70).

In the Walk, the predicted rain fell during the closing stages of the race and the later finishing competitors had a drenching. The women's and overall winner was Melanie Peddle (W50) of Loughton AC in 45:45. In second place, coming in as the men's winner was Stefano Zennaro (M50) from Belgrave Harriers in 48:32. Glen Keegan (M55) achieved a personal best of 57:23. VAC was pleased to welcome Sian Baum (W55) (Herne Hill Harriers) for the first time at this event, although no stranger to shorter track events.

## 5km Championship Road Race and Race Walk, 6 June

In cool conditions, five course records were broken.



The 94 finishers were led home by Peter Lighting (M40) of Kent AC in a time of 16:18, closely followed throughout by a pack of three who charged over the line a second apart. Neil Danby's (pictured 26) power and determination carried him into second place in a time of 16:25, four seconds inside his own M55 course record set in April. Tom Hollis (M35) of Lonely Goat AC was third in 16:26, with Simon Shaw (M50) on his shoulder in 16:27. Simon's time was just four seconds slower than his own course record set in April. The trophy for the first VAC member was won by Neil

Danby. Gold medal winners in the other age groups were Ben Millar (M45), Steve Corfield (M60), Merlin Allan (M65), Mike Forder (M70), Liam O'Hare (M75), Peter Torre (M80) and Joe Aspinall (M85).

Gabriel Carnwath (W40) of Sutton Striders was the women's winner in a time of 17:28 which sets a new all-comers' W40 course record and an outright record time in VAC's 5K races. The previous best of 18:07 had

been set by April James-Welsh (W40) in June 2021. April still holds the record for VAC members. Gabriel's sub-18-minute performance was followed by another, as the second-placed woman, Caoimhe Nic Fhogartaigh of Kent AC, stormed home in 17:47 to set a new all-comers' W45 record. Nichola Evans (W40) was third, closely followed by Natasha Sheel (W35) and first VAC woman, Nikki Sturzaker (W45) who won the VAC Women's trophy. In the W60 age group, Jacky Balfour claimed Gold with a time of 20:13 which broke her own course record of 20:24 set in April. To continue the quality, a superb new W80 course record was set by Penny Elliott who also holds the W75 record. Penny's time of 29:02 shattered Pam Jones's W80 record of 31:17 set in 2016. Other Gold medals for age-group firsts were won by Susan Dixon (W55), Anna Garnier (W65) and Jane Georghiou (W70).

In the Walk, the men's winner was Dave Annetts (M55) in a time of 23:59. The ladies' winner for the second time in succession was Melanie Peddle (M50) from Loughton AC, in a good time of 28:20, a few seconds outside her personal best. Penelope Cummings (W45) was third in 31:12. Ever presents Maureen Noel (W55) and Fiona Bishop (W60) did their usual creditable times and won Gold medals.

### **British Masters Mile, 4 June**

Three VAC members made the long trek to Edinburgh for the Scottish Mile which incorporated BMAF's 1 Mile championships. The weather was wonderful and the scenic course along Silverknowes Promenade had a slight tailwind. They all ran well and were rewarded with BMAF medals. Lucy Woolhouse won a Silver medal in the W60 age group with a time of 6:06. Peter Kennedy's time of 5:53 earned him the Silver in the M70 race. Andrew Ridley took M55 Gold in a fantastic time of 4:35 which scored an age graded percentage of 99.77%. Unfortunately, the time can't be ratified as a British record because the course was point-to-point.

# Indoor Track and Field

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## VAC Indoor Championships, Lee Valley, 26 March

VAC was pleased to join with Eastern Masters AC for the indoor championships. Despite the clash with the World Indoor championships in Poland, the event was well supported and for VAC, at least 50 members competed. Many saw it as a great way to round off their indoor seasons with decent times and marks, as well as winning age group medals.

Performances to note for VAC were the Indoor Championship Best Performances (CBP) set by Craig Christian (M40, 200m, 24.30 secs), Tim Carter (M70, 400m, 71.23 secs), Edmund Simpson (pictured 154, M85, 1500m, 8:17.73), Lucy Woolhouse (W60, 1500m, 5:44.55), Steve Winder (M50, 3000m, 9:29.60), Chris Ness (M50, High Jump, 1.45m), Emmanuel Ogunniyi (M50, Long Jump, 5.55m) and Stacey Gonzalez Betancourt (W45, Pole Vault, 2.90m).



Outstandingly, Michael Shortall (M35) covered six events and was rewarded with six Gold medals and two CBPs (8.95 secs in the 60m Hurdles and 11.08m in the triple Jump). Patrick Reynolds (M70) also contested six events to a high standard. Craig Christian (M40) won five Gold medals from the sprints, High Jump and Long Jump. Martin Willis (M50) also competed in five events, claiming a Gold medal in his first ever competitive Triple Jump. Nikki Sturzaker achieved a clean sweep of the W45 endurance events, winning Gold in the 800m, 1500m and 3000m races. Kevin Craven (M50) was the fastest in his age group



(including EMAC and Open competitors) for the highly competitive 60m and 200m races.

## **EMAA Indoor Inter-Area Challenge, Lee Valley, 26 February**

VAC's men's and women's teams performed strongly and were rewarded by an overall fourth place out of the nine competing clubs.

A particular highlight was Virginia Mitchell's (pictured on the front cover) Championship Best Performance to win the W60 400m in 65.46. Another fantastic achievement was Giuseppe Minetti's two CBPs to win the M50 60m (7.60 secs) and 200m (24.55 secs). The 4 x 200m relays were the most exciting of all the competitions. VAC's M70 team members (Tim Carter, Peter Kennedy, Alan Long and David Hinds) flew round faultlessly to claim a fine win. This was followed by a magnificent victory in a tight contest for VAC's W60 relay team of Anne Nelson, Anna Garnier, Lucy Woolhouse and Sue Wisdom. VAC's M60 relay team also did well for a commendable second place.



There were six other fine individual first places: Bilen Ahmet (M35 PV), Dave Annetts (M35 2k Walk), Mike Cummings (M35 1500m), David Hinds (M70 60m), Pat Logan (M60 60m) and Emmanuel Ogunniyi (pictured) M50 Long Jump). In addition, there were 8 second places and 11 third places. Unluckiest of VAC's team members were Anna Critchlow and Rhiannon Needham who both ran well in the combined W35/W50 3,000m race only to find out afterwards that the results of the race had been declared void because the officials had miscounted the laps.

The next Inter Area match is the outdoor Challenge at the Pingles Stadium, Nuneaton, on 6 August. There is a range of track and field events for the 35-49, 50-59, 60-69 and 70+ age groups, although proposed changes to the timetable have limited the number of 70+ events. Expressions of interest in competing should be made to the Entries Secretary at [entries@vetsac.org.uk](mailto:entries@vetsac.org.uk) (Maggie Statham-Berry).



## Triple World Records for UK Track Relays

On 15 February, three British relay quartets, including VAC members, assembled at the Lee Valley Athletics Centre to attempt to break the M55, M60 and M70 world records for 4 x 800m, indoors. With an enthusiastic commentary by the stadium announcer, the relay race was billed as a showpiece within a scheduled open meeting.

The first leg runners in each age group lined up and started together but because of the significant difference in age between the three quartets, it was more like a time trial for each runner.

In the M55 age group, the third leg runner, VAC's Steve Atkinson, the 2022 British M55 800m champion outdoors, ran a magnificent 2:12 split

to set up the strong final leg. The time of 8:57.37 set the first new World Record. The average across all four legs was 2:14.3.

In the M60 age group, the final time of 9:31.9 set the race's second World Record, knocking over 19 seconds off the previous record set in 2018 by a team from the USA.

Finally, in the M70 age group, the second leg runner, Peter Kennedy, BMAF Chairman and VAC's Membership Secretary, ran a solid split time, but the star quality in the team was in the last two legs. The fourth leg runner, David Oxland, a member of both VAC and MMAC, holder of four M70 British records, pushed hard and fast to set the final time of 10:46.37. This was the third World Record of the evening, breaking the old record by 11 seconds. The average time across all four legs was 2:41.6.

The relays were thrilling and a wonderful advert for Masters' athletics. They can be watched in full on YouTube via the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9WvqauNBjYU>

## **World Masters Indoor Athletics Championships, Torun, Poland, March/April**

Toruń is a lovely historical city in the middle of the Northern half of Poland. It has an excellent indoor athletics stadium which is regularly used for international competitions.

The UK was well represented with a team of over 300 athletes competing indoors as well as outdoors at the cross country, road and throwing events. Over 50 VAC members attended and made a big contribution to the UK's tally of 156 medals, including 49 Golds, which put the UK in fourth place overall. The hosts, Poland, topped the medal table, with Germany second and the USA third.

On the track, VAC's Virginia Mitchell (pictured on the front cover) excelled and won three W60 Gold medals in the 400m, 800m and 4x200m relay. Her winning 400m time of 64.55 set a new W60 World Record. Her winning 800m time of 2:29.96 also set a W60 World Record, but it only lasted a few minutes because a US athlete posted a

superior performance in the subsequent W55 race, having turned 60 after the start of the championships.



Allan Long (left 1373 M80) also won three Gold medals in the 60m, 200m and 4x200m Mixed Relay. Allan's time of 9:36 improved on his own British M80 record for the 60m. Allan also won Silver in the Triple Jump.

Dave Annetts was another record breaker. His Silver medal winning times set a new British indoor M55 record for the 3,000m Walk and a new British M55 Best Performance for the 10k Road Walk.

Another VAC Gold medallist was Gavin Stevens who won Gold in the M45 400m, as well as being part of the Gold winning M45 4x200m relay team. He also picked up a Bronze medal in the 200m.

Off the track, Sue McDonald took home a magnificent tally of four W55 Gold medals. She won the 10k and Half Marathon road races and also picked up team Golds in the Half Marathon and the cross country race, for which she also won an individual Bronze.

The 4x200m relays were possibly the most exciting events of the championships. David Hinds talks about them, and the successful GB M60 and M70 teams in the article which follows.

VAC Individual Medals at Torun			
W40	Zoe Doyle	800m	Silver
W45	Susie McLoughlin	400m	Bronze
W45	Stacey Gonzalez Betancourt	Pole Vault	Silver
W55	Sue McDonald	Half Marathon and 10k	Gold x 2
W55	Sue McDonald	Cross Country	Bronze
W55	Clare Elms	Half Marathon and 10k	Silver x 2
W60	Virginia Mitchell	400m and 800m	Gold x 2
W70	Anne Nelson	60m and 200m	Bronze x 2
W70	Ros Tabor	1500m	Silver
M45	Gavin Stephens	400m	Gold
N45	Gavin Stephens	200m	Bronze
M55	David Annetts	3000m Walk and 10k Walk	Silver x 2
M60	Pat Logan	60m	Bronze
M70	Ian Richards	3000m Walk	Bronze
M80	Allan Long	60m and 200m	Gold x 2
M80	Allan Long	Triple Jump	Silver

## Track Relay Successes at World Masters Indoor Championships

By David Hinds

In addition to the many excellent individual performances by British athletes at Torun, the British team had considerable success in the 4x200m relays. As usual, the relays took place on the final afternoon and were exciting and enjoyable both to watch and to take part in. For the men, there were gold medals for the M45, M60 and M70 teams and bronze medals for the M35s and the M50s. For the women, there were gold medals for the W60, W65 and W80 teams, silver medals for the W40s and W70s and a bronze medal for the W35s.

The M60 team was led off in style by John Wright (Northern Masters) (2023 200m and 400m gold medallist and M60 indoor 200m world record holder) who gave them a big lead over the USA. That lead was progressively increased by VAC members, Pat Logan (2023 60m bronze medallist) and Mike Vassiliou (2023 400m silver medallist). Peter Ilo (Midland Masters) finished off the race to take the victory over the USA by a considerable margin with the other teams some way behind. The winning time was a new UK and European record.

The M70 team had a tougher task. Our main opponent was a US team which comprised Michael Kish (2023 60m and 200m gold medallist), Thad Wilson (2023 60mH gold medallist), Russell Jacquet-Acea (a very close 4<sup>th</sup> in the 2023 60mH) and Charles Allie (2023 M75 60m and 200m gold medallist and current M70 indoor and outdoor 200m and 400m world record holder). We knew they would be hard to beat and thought they might be going for the world record, as they did (with success) in the M65 4x200m relay in Daegu in 2017 (with Wilson and Allie both in that team).

It was an exciting and closely fought race all the way. Wally Franklyn (VAC) led the team off to a strong start finishing only a short distance behind Wilson. David Hinds (VAC) then went chasing after Allie and succeeded in reducing the gap. Next, Adrian Essex (SCVAC) took on Jacquet-Acea and held onto the narrow gap. It was then all down to Simon Barrett (SCVAC) (2023 200m silver medallist and 60m bronze medallist). Simon got onto Kish's shoulder and tracked him all the way

round. In the home straight, he put on an amazing final burst and got past the world champion to take the victory. As with the M60s, the winning time was a new UK and European record. Even better, it was only nine-hundredths of a second off the world record.

In the W60 relay, Virginia Mitchell (VAC) (2023 400m and 800m gold medallist and W60 indoor 400m world record holder) ran an outstanding first leg to give the team a big lead. The rest of the team not only held onto the lead but increased it to win by a huge margin. In the M45 relay, Gavin Stephens (VAC) (2023 200m bronze medallist) ran a fast second leg to help the team to a convincing victory.

In the W70 relay, Emily McMahon (VAC) gave the team a lead at the end of the first leg but this was turned into a substantial deficit on the second leg. Anne Nelson (VAC) then ran a superb third leg to make up the deficit and put the team back in the lead. There was then a close battle between the UK and Germany on the last leg with the German athlete only winning by a very small margin (and collapsing in spectacular fashion over the line). Even though the W70s were pipped at the post, they had the consolation of setting a new UK record.



The British W80 team were the only team in their race but unfazed by the lack of competition they ran their best and were rewarded with a new UK and European record.

In the W40 relay, Zoe Doyle (VAC) helped the UK team to win the silver medal. In the M50 relay, the UK team took the bronze medal with help from VAC members, Giuseppe Minetti and Michele Beltramo.

This year mixed 4x200m relays were included for the first time. Gold medals were won by the X65 team including Brian Slaughter (VAC) and the X80 team including Barry Ferguson (VAC) and Allan Long (VAC) (2023 60m and 200m gold medallist and M80 60m UK record holder).

## London Marathon, 23 April

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VAC's members were out in force and at least 48 members completed the course. VAC was allocated one club place which was awarded to the first interested member whose name was drawn out of a hat. This year, Ben Martin-Dye of Fetch Everyone Running Club was the lucky person and an account of his experience in April's event is below.

There is a table on VAC's website (under Latest News) which lists the performances of VAC members. It has been compiled from scrutinising the official London Marathon results. Apologies if we have failed to spot someone. Please let Maggie Statham-Berry ([entries@vetsac.org.uk](mailto:entries@vetsac.org.uk)) know if this is the case.

There were ten VAC members under three hours and five who finished in the top ten of their age groups. The fastest member, once again, appears to be Richard McDowell in the M40-44 category in a time of 2:38:08. The next fastest was Simon Shaw in 2:38:33 which placed him an excellent 9th in the M50-54 age group. A near-identical time of 2:38:34 was set by Micah Evans (M40).

Ginevra Stoneley was the fastest VAC woman, in 2:56:01, placing 14th in the W45-49 category. Next was Dani Tarleton in 2:58:45, an excellent 4th W50-54. Alice Riddell-Webster was the best placed member with a fantastic 2nd place for her time of 2:59:45 in the W55-59 age group. Ruth Hutton was 5th W55-59 and Susanna Harrison was 6th W60-64.



A special mention again goes to Bill O'Connor who is one of the seven "Ever-Presents" who have completed every single London Marathon since its inception in 1981. Bill, now in the M75-79 age category, duly completed his 43rd event in a time of 5:57:59. In 2023, seven Ever-Presents started, and seven finished.

## The VAC Lucky Winner!

By Ben Martin-Dye

I've not done a marathon for five years, so I was lucky to win a place from VAC for the London Marathon 2023.

The day started with a ridiculous alarm of 4.30am. I make my energy drink, force some porridge down and set off to get the coach.

Get to Blackheath and the weather looks decent. This is the first wave start I have done, and I must say it works very well. The Championship guys and gals go off first and then as I am in Blue Wave 1, it's our turn.



My plan? Well, my PB from back in the glory days is 2:40 and I did a half marathon in 1:22 in January. However, I suffer from Fibromyalgia which is a long-term condition that causes pain all over the body. I get increased sensitivity, muscle spasms and muscle stiffness. I think I'm capable of a Sub3 but give myself a sensible goal of a Good for Age V50 of 3:15 as a target. That'll get me back to the big smoke next year.

I gradually edge forward to the start, looking down to see a menagerie of coloured trainers reminiscent of a bag of Skittles. I get into my rhythm straight away with the rolling start, which is so much better.

The early miles are spent trying to hold back to around 7 minute-miles, but they are showing as 6:43. At around 5K I say to myself I'm going to

try to hold this for as long as I can. The Sub3 is a real outside possibility.

Just as I hit 10K, a guy dressed as a lumberjack bounces alongside in full checked shirt, jeans and holding a big axe. On my other side is a pink fairy! I try my upmost to avoid being in the official photos with them.

Through 10K in 41:45 and all good. Its chucking it down now and puddles appearing everywhere.

9 miles in, Bermondsey and the next big one is Tower Bridge, my favourite part of the course. I turn the corner and there it is. If I had hairs on my neck then they would be up, but I haven't cos I'm bald. In the middle of the bridge, I see a mate ahead and run to him and grab his hand, raising it high up into the air like a referee declaring a boxer the victorious winner. Great moment as we bounce along savouring the love of the crowds.

I'm still feeling decent and approaching halfway. I go through in 1:29:18. Sub 3 could be on! On the other side of the road, I see Samantha Harrison a class GB athlete running superbly, striding out. I give her a massive shout. 15M in, and another 6:44 mile. Then an underpass filled with the sound of drums, echoing, reverberating all around. I keep my head down and plough on.

At 18 miles things are starting ever so slightly to get tough. I'm working harder now, and I dip into the sevens with a 7:05 mile. I'm soaked through, splashing through puddles now as opposed to avoiding them. I don't care. I'm trying to do the maths in my head with the splits but it's too hard at this point. The Sub3 maybe drifting but let's just get in under 3:15.

Big Ben. I'm doing all I can to keep moving. This seems to last forever. I think I'm running a 9-minute mile but actually it's not that bad, 7:21. 600 metres to go, the watch has gone over 3 hours, but my head has gone too, and I start panicking that I won't make 3:15. Runners are streaming past as I'm shuffling in my carpet slippers. I turn for home and see the finish gantry

I cross the finish line and instantly am caught by a marshall with a magnificent beard. I nuzzle into him. "Just hold me for a while" I say, as his wispy beard tickles my face. My whole body then decides to cramp up and I am whisked off to the St Johns tent for a massage and treatment.

As I stumble along, I look at my watch. 3:03:45! I am filled with emotion and start to tear up, knowing that I have raised £1,000 for The Lily Mae Foundation, a charity which provides support to parents and families after a stillbirth.

Thank you to Veterans AC for giving me a place and now another opportunity to make it back next year for yet more pain. Runners eh!

## Race Walking

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### Cecil Gittins Memorial Walks, 4 June



*The Start (courtesy of Ron Wallwork)*

VAC was pleased to host the eighth running of this open event at Cyclopark, Gravesend, a dedicated cycle circuit with many gradients and bends, which has hosted Olympic BMX champion Beth

Shriever. There were 26 paid entries which was an increase from 2022. The weather was picture perfect, with a cooling breeze on the exposed course.

There was a new winner of the ladies 5k, Abigail Jennings (AFD) (U23) in 25:18. Abigail was also the overall winner. The men's 5k was won for the 2nd year by the present RWA President, Chris Hobbs (Ashford AC) (M65), in a fine time of 33:28.

The new winner of the ladies' 10k was Grazia Manzotti (Tonbridge AC) (W50) in 56:51, just a few seconds short of her personal best. There was also a new winner of the men's 10k, Jonathan Hobbs from Ashford AC (Senior Man) in 51:43, after a long battle with Dave Annetts (N Herts RR) (M55) close on his heels in 51:47. Olympian Ian Richards was in third place, looking forward to this year's harvest of medals in his new M75 age group.

Jonathan Hobbs, winner of last year's UK Centurion 100 miles event, presented the prizes, which were Queens Park Rangers souvenirs in honour of Cecil Gittins who was a great fan of the club.

## Parkrun

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### **Nonsuch Park and Richmond Park**

At least 23 VAC members assembled for the Nonsuch parkrun in February. The course was the winter two-and-a-half lapper on flat tarmac paths and grass. Conditions were good – dry, with no wind, frost or mud. There were 760 finishers and VAC members were spread throughout the field from positions 2 to 729. Steve Winder (M50) was VAC's fastest finisher and second over the line. VAC's Gina Galbraith (W45) was the event's first woman. Jamie McLoughlin (M45), John Foley (M55) and Mike Mann (M70) were first in their age groups, as were Lisa Thomas (W55), Fiona Bishop (W60), Jo Quantrill (W65) and Ros Tabor (W70). Ros also achieved the top age graded performance for the day's event (90.12%). Jo, Steve, John and Gina completed the top five on this list.



Richmond Park was the venue for VAC's parkrun meet-up in May. Seven members enjoyed good conditions with the sun coming out and little wind. The course is one lap starting with a long downhill from Richmond Gate on a tarmac path, then a short flat stretch on the road to Sheen Gate which is now closed to traffic, and finally back up on the slightly undulating Tamsin trail. Richard Evans (M60) was VAC's fastest finisher and first in his age category. Lisa Thomas (W55), Maggie Statham-Berry (W65) and Andy Murray (M70) were also first in their age categories. Ros Tabor (W70) achieved the highest age grading of the day with a percentage of 86.41%.

For VAC's next parkrun gathering we will be visiting the Peckham Rye parkrun on 9 September. Please come along if you're from round that way or be a tourist and tick it off your list. Look out for the VAC vests. It's a great way to meet fellow VAC members and feel part of the club.

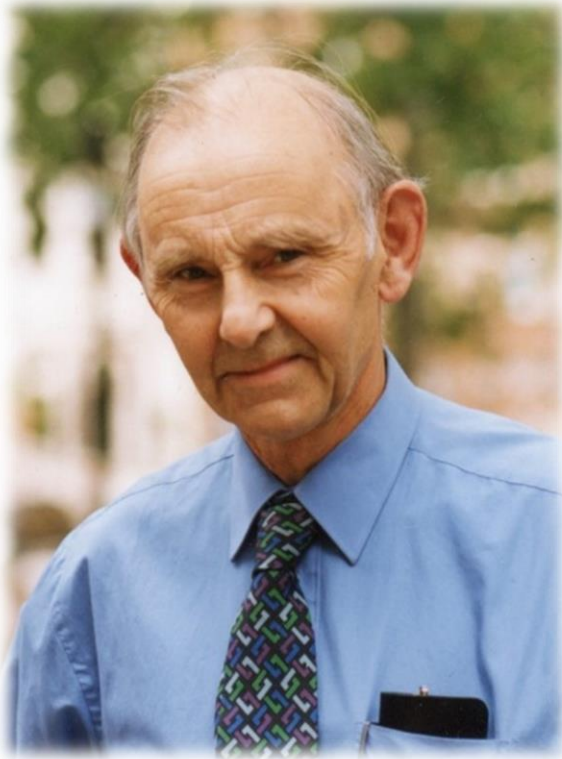
### **Octogenarian parkrun, Bushy Park, 1 July**

Anyone over 80, 85 or 90+ is welcome to join other like-minded youthful octogenarian and nonagenarian parkrunners at this annual gathering. The intention is to swell the attendance towards a possible world record

of 100 octogenarians and nonagenarians at one parkrun event. Prosecco and cupcakes afterwards! There will be a report in the next newsletter.

## Obituary

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VAC was very sad to learn that Jeremy Hemming died on 28 July 2022, aged 89. He joined Vets AC in 1981 and had been one of its outstanding officers during a period of three decades. For over twenty years, he wrote and produced VAC's newsletters, packed with news, interviews, reports, results and statistics. Four were issued each year and over eighty paper editions exist. They form a priceless archive of VAC's history and culture. They also show-case Jeremy's flair with words and his understanding of the

athletics' disciplines and extensive knowledge of the Masters athletes on the scene at the time.

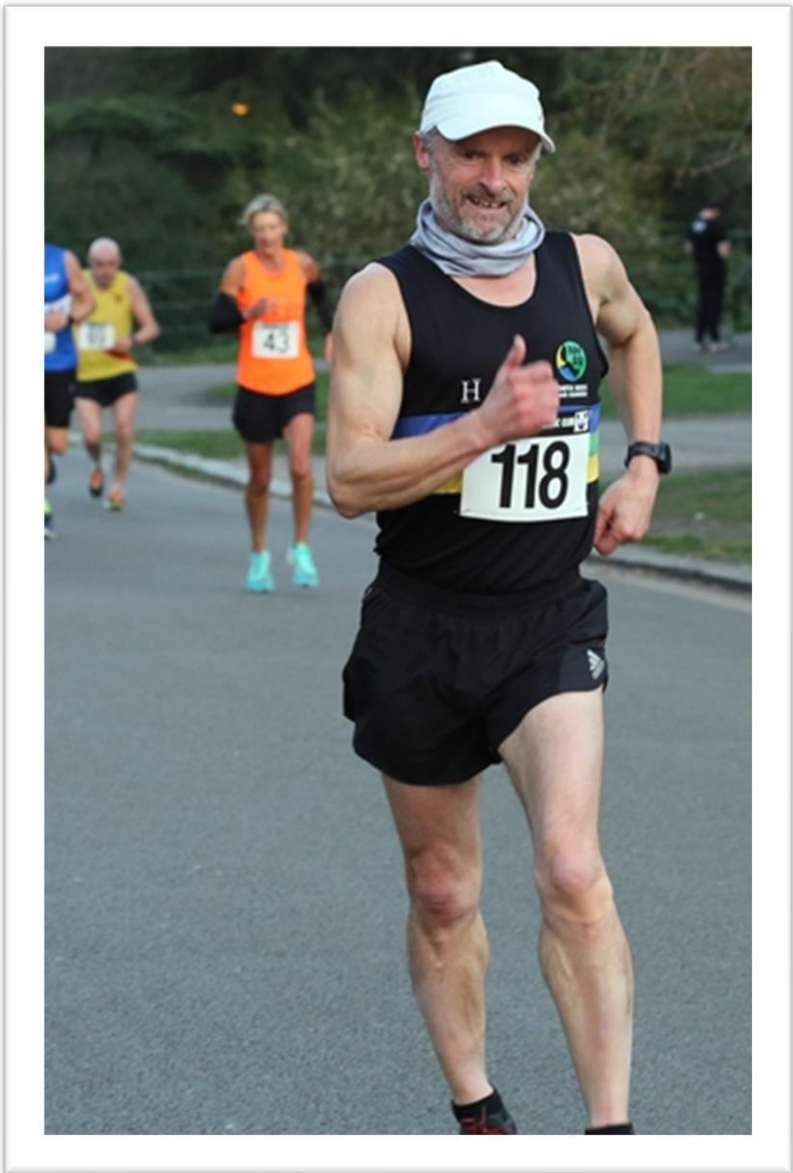
Jeremy will also be remembered as a talented sports' photographer and for his presence at every VAC event to capture the moments. His photos grace the results' pages of VAC's website going back to 2005,

bringing to life the prowess of Masters athletes and capturing the performances of many VAC members. As a dedicated Committee member, Jeremy also took on many other roles such as record keeping, event administration, fixture planning and publicity.

Born in India, Jeremy was educated at Wellington College, Berkshire, where a talent for running would secure him a place in one of the school's rugby teams. He served in the army, becoming a captain in the Royal Horse Artillery. He aspired to become a jockey and once raced at Sandown Park but accepted that he was too heavy and could not make the weight without health risks. Instead, he took up point to point racing and flourished as a polo player in the army's teams. After the army, he worked in the insurance and publishing sectors and as a proof-reader for the National Audit Office at a time when vast volumes of paper reports were produced and there were no electronic spell-checkers.

Jeremy enjoyed running to keep fit during and after his army career but did not compete until the 1980s when he was caught up in the running boom and introduced to Veterans AC by Sylvester Stein, the pioneering editor of "Running" magazine. He tried cross country and did some road running but his sprint speed was wasted until he settled on the 400m as his natural event. By training hard and taking advice from fellow veterans, he achieved a PB of a respectable 65.9 seconds.

VAC will always be grateful to Jeremy for giving so much to veterans' athletics over the years. He will live on through his splendid newsletters and iconic photos.



**Dave Annetts in the 5k Walk at Battersea Park after winning two Silver medals at the World Masters in Torun and setting new British records.**