

STRATFORD UPON AVON ATHLETIC CLUB



NEWSLETTER

Issue No 22 March 2009

Thanks to everybody who turned up to the AGM and who contributed to an interesting evening. Full minutes will be produced in due course but I do want to focus on a couple of issues that were raised and discussed.

- Firstly I have now taken on the specific role of Development Officer. This is a new position – covering the Senior and Junior Sections - and recognises the importance that the Committee places on ensuring that the club – as a whole - continues to grow successfully in all areas. We are starting from a very sound and secure base and have come a long way in a relatively short period but there is still plenty of opportunity to improve. One of my first tasks will be to draw up an action plan so if you have any ideas or thoughts on how the club could progress or improve please let me know.
- The discussion on communication has given me plenty to think about and as promised I will put together a questionnaire to enable a full review of what we do. In the mean time I am open to suggestions and your feedback on what works best for you. I have started to develop my ability to send texts which is one medium we could use to better effect. Apologies in advance should you receive an unintelligible message from me as I start to trial this option!!
- The feedback from the floor was that you still enjoyed and wanted a regular newsletter. This does require your contributions and it would be great if everybody could commit to providing one article per year. It helps if there is a link (however tenuous) either to running or the Club and individuals personal experiences / stories are always a welcome and interesting read. Having 'complained' at a lack of material I have trawled through my inbox and found a number of contributions that were awaiting the 'Editors' attention. Buoyed by your support I have therefore put this edition together at relatively short notice to clear the way for all the articles that I am expecting to flood in for the next edition.
- Can I remind you all of our excellent website stratfordac.co.uk which is maintained by Steve K. For anybody who has not visited the site recently it contains a wealth of information and is well worth a visit.
- And finally the Club is 30 years old this year and we will be planning to celebrate the occasion with various events throughout the year. Victoria Jeffs already has a number of ideas up her sleeve but I am sure she would welcome any ideas or suggestions as to what we could do to celebrate.

Tony Jackson
Editor

Contact the Editor - Articles / Feedback Wanted

You can get in touch with me by any of the following

Write to 32 Sanctus Road Stratford upon Avon CV37 9AE

E mail to Anthony.Jackson27@ntlworld.com

Tel No 01789 - 209102

Talk to me* @ training on Mondays, Wednesdays or on a Sunday Morning

Not the Roman IX Winners

Course Records M: 37:17 (2004) F: 42:45 (2006)

Year	M/F	Individual Winners	Club	Time	Team Winners
2004	M	Julian Moorhouse	Birchfield Harriers	37:17	Witney Road Runners
	F	Laura Woffenden	Leeds City AC	44:46	Bourton Road Runners
2005	M	Garry Payne	George Elliot Striders	40:49	Rugby & Northants AC
	F	Lucy Aphramor	Kenilworth Runners	46:01	Rugby & Northants AC
2006	M	Garry Payne	George Elliot Striders	40:12	Kenilworth Runners
	F	Sue Harrison	Leamington C&AC	42:45	Spa Striders
2007	M	Daniel Keen	Worcester Tri Club	41:39	Sphinx AC
	F	Michelle Parsons	Worcester Tri Club	46:24	Spa Striders
2008	M	Garry Payne	George Elliot Striders	41:54	Cherwell Runners
	F	Sue Harrison	Leamington C&AC	44:13	Rugby & Northants AC
2009	M	Stephen Price	UKNetrunner	40:57	Cherwell Runners
	F	Sue Harrison	Leamington C&AC	43:22	Leamington C&AC

Thanks to everybody who played their part in again making this year's race so successful. Here is a sample of the comments posted on the Runners World website about the race.

- Very well organised on a lovely winters day, very severe hill though
- Fantastic race made better by perfect conditions
- Great race and the weather turned out well. Will be back next year.
- Good run with runners of all kinds, couple of hills but plenty of down hills as well, Good weather and well organised
- Blessed by a sunny morning, we ran through the lanes and villages. The up hills are mainly at the start then it is down almost all the way to the end! Marshalls every few feet, it seemed, and locals standing at their gates to wave us through. Great atmosphere and I certainly plan to make it a regular in my calendar
- A Post-Christmas Cracker
- Wonderful day - enjoyed every step - well maybe not that hill at 5k!
- Cold weather but warm welcome from the marshals - thanks to all
- Really enjoyable race, lovely route and well organised. Great facilities afterwards with showers, food and drinks available. Excellent parking too and lovely atmosphere.
- Excellent organisation, very supportive marshals and a nice testing course
- Well run race, great course
- Challenging route with the hills but a great course. Good PB potential given that there aren't many 12k races around! All in all, a fab day out
- My second year of running in this race and once again really enjoyed it. Organisation is very good. Friendly atmosphere and the weather was perfect. All round fab. Gets a big thumbs up and a whole hearted recommendation.
- My 3rd time. Always enjoy this course. Nasty hill halfway but second half easier. Marshalls very supportive. Thanks Stratford Runners!

- Congratulations to Stratford AC who organised a superb event - slick organisation, well marked course, excellent supportive marshals etc etc.
- First time to this race, knew there was a hill and held back to start with but it still got me. Will know better next year! Great organisation, such friendly marshals, and could never be described as a dull race...
- Great area for a race and brilliant organisation. Very friendly marshals, supporters & locals. Will be back next year
- For me the ultimate beginners race - well organised and very friendly
- Organisation and support on a pretty cold day make this one a real treat for Jan - friendly atmosphere, I will certainly be there again next year without doubt!
- I was really happy with the level of organisation and markings around the course. A big THANKYOU to the marshals who were out in force and did brilliantly, and also to the people who marked up the course
- The organisation was top notch. Great venue and a fantastic course. The marshals were cheery, helpful, and in plentiful supply. Even the weather turned up for the day!
- Great organisation and lovely warm showers at the end. Good baggage transport from start line back to club house. Horrible hill approx halfway, but the view from the top of the hill, and the huge downhill afterwards made up for it! Fib tea and cakes too.
- My 4th time running this race and it never fails to deliver .. Really good organisation, great friendly atmosphere, hills to make it a bit of a challenge but not too hard, and a great rural run in - amazingly - glorious sunshine. A real feel good race.

Thanks from Naomi Whittaker.....

Kate and I would like to say thank you to SAC for the tremendous support we have received from the club following Joe's tragic death in Afghanistan. We so appreciate the love and care in all the cards, letters and e mails, and were very touched by the number of people who attended the vigil and funeral. Joe enjoyed running with the club on several occasions, he liked the friendly atmosphere and always felt welcome.

Members may be interested to know that there is a plaque with Joe's name on the war memorial in the Garden of Remembrance by Holy Trinity Parish Centre, dedicated at a service at 11am on Sat 25th October, organised by the Royal British Legion. There is also be an inscription on the war memorial at St Andrew's Church Shottery.

Thank you all.

Naomi

Goodbye from Phil

Hi all (those who know me)

After two years trying to get back to fitness, I'm now hopeful of a proper return to training. I was looking forward to a return to the club at the start of this year, however, I've been offered a job in Guernsey so I shall be leaving Stratford very shortly.

I wish the club continued success and wish you all the very best for the future.

Sorry, I've not been down to see some of you in person before leaving. Hopefully, I'll bump into a few of you at the London Marathon some time soon.

Ps If you fancy a trip over let me know. There's always the Jersey Marathon.....

Keep in touch
Phil Goodchild

Editors Note – “Where are they now?” – It would be good to hear any information on other past members.

HILLY 100 BIKE RIDE

On August Bank Holiday Monday, Steve Kirk and I decided to cycle the whole Hilly 100 mile route through the Cotswolds. What mad fools we were! In fact we were the only 2 members from the club who actually undertook the challenge.

We started from the club at just after 9.00am. The weather was overcast and mild, but fortunately there was no rain.

We proceeded to go out of Stratford via Luddington, through Welford and out of Long Marston with Steve leading the way on this 1st leg until we came to the end of the leg at Mickleton. Coming out of Mickleton on the 2nd leg we started to climb towards Chipping Campden. Once through Chipping Campden, there was another steep climb for a couple of miles before we eventually came to the picturesque area of Snowhill.

The 3rd leg from Snowhill to Brockhampton came and went without incident before we commenced the start of leg 4 from Brockhampton, which I personally knew very well as it was the leg that I ran in the Hilly 100 run in May this year. Leg 4 started with a long steep climb out of Brockhampton, and Steve left me trailing in his wake as I laboured up this hill. We continued cycling through the attractive Cotswold countryside before stopping for a bite to eat at a lovely pub in Withington, which in hindsight was probably not good timing since just shortly afterwards we had to tackle the nightmare hill at the end of leg 4 before Chedworth.

The weather continued to remain dry and we carried on through subsequent legs from Chedworth to Northleach and onto Lower Swell before we ascended a steep hill to Bourton-on-the-Hill, following which we then made the exhilarating descent into Moreton-in-Marsh just in time for tea and some much needed refreshment before we started the final 30 miles of the course.

Through leg 8 and then onto leg 9, and after about 3 miles of leg 9, we started to climb Ebrington Hill. Steve was well ahead and coping admirably but I was really struggling. The hill was just over 2 miles long and apparently is the highest point on the whole course. We then rode onto Crimscombe at the start of the final leg.

The light was starting to fade now as it was about 7-30 in the evening. There was one last long climb out of Alderminster to Loxley, and then the end was soon in sight. Aside from a few minor falls from my bike, due to problems with unclipping my shoes from the cleats, I had managed to return home relatively unscathed. I can genuinely say that it was one of the sternest fitness tests of my life, and most certainly the furthest that I have ever cycled in one day. The experience was, however, rewarding, I keep reassuring myself, even though I did not feel that way on the following day at work!

Finally, I would take the opportunity to offer my warm appreciation to Steve for organizing the event and even more so for putting up with me for 100 miles. For the adventurous members of the club I would definitely recommend it for next year.

Editors Note – apologies to James Deacon for the delay in getting this article into the newsletter! However, with the Hilly 100 coming up shortly it's an opportunity to remind people of the legs that they should be looking to avoid if they don't like hills

30 THINGS I LOVE AND HATE ABOUT TRIATHLON (Keith Hawkes)

LOVE:

1. Lots of shiny kit – who cares whether it makes you any faster?
2. After performing poorly in an individual discipline race I always say “I’m concentrating on the other two at the moment”.
3. A chance of making a GB age-group team (well OK not me, but the good ones in the club).
4. The warmth that having a pee inside your wetsuit gives you on a freezing morning in ice-cold water. To be honest, it’s such a pleasant feeling that I now occasionally start getting the wetsuit out at home if I’m having a quiet night in.
5. Using Sarah Bland’s motor home as an overnight hotel.
6. Falling in love with gently downhill, straight, quiet roads that have been recently resurfaced (I’m due to marry the A47 in Rutland next year).
7. The club relays at Nottingham (especially when Pete Evans cycles into a lake – will he ever be allowed to forget it?!).
8. If anyone comes in ahead of you, it’ll only be because they have a fancier bike than you (but don’t look too closely just in case).
9. With most races over slightly different distances and terrains it’s very difficult, if I avoid doing the same events, for Pete Evans to say categorically that he’s better than I am.
10. Lots of totty (that’s male of course, according to Sarah B).
11. Getting to see some beautiful parts of the world such as Jersey, Greece and er Droitwich.
12. Chatting pleasantly to someone on the start line of an open-water tri, and then kicking the crap out of them 30 seconds later.
13. The amount of stats available about my race performance means that I must be able to find something positive in there i.e. I was in the top 20% quickest through T2 amongst males aged 45-50.
14. Seeing Emma Bexson fall off her bike more times than I fall off mine.
15. It would be a great sport for Tony Jackson, since the list of excuses soars exponentially with the number of disciplines involved (see numbers 2 and 8 for example).

Editors Note: Thanks for the advice Keith. I’m starting my Decathlon training shortly!!

HATE:

1. Being beaten by Steve Kirk (especially when you’ve lift-shared with him to an event!).
2. The sound of disc wheels coming up behind me, as I lose yet another place on the cycle.
3. Picking bits of grass out of my wetsuit for the next week.
4. Stratford Tri.
5. Cost e.g. having to choose between entering Vitruvian Middle Distance and my Mum’s hip replacement was very difficult (but I did do OK in the race).
6. The smell of cycling and running shoes in my car after competing with wet feet and no socks.
7. Seeing a selection of Britain’s largest potholes.
8. Having to peer bleary-eyed at a 46-item checklist at 4 in the morning, wishing that you’d done it the night before.
9. Chaffed dangly bits from biking and running in a wet tri suit.
10. Not being able to breathe for the first 15 seconds after entering an ice-cold lake / reservoir / sea / river.
11. That early morning – sorry, late night – call of the alarm clock.

12. There's too much scope for losing your timing chip somewhere. (Although then, since you just get an overall time, you can always make your own splits up which is great – I always put down two 15-minute transitions and really quick discipline times.)
13. Continually going through in your head whilst swimming the sequence of events for the transition coming up, and then promptly panicking and forgetting it all when the person next to you exits T1 in just over 6 seconds.
14. People saying to me 'You should do alright on the run'. I'm sorry but it's not running; it's running after cycling – big difference!
15. Winter training rides where we're either soaked by the time we reach Loxley, or where we have to get off the bike and jump up and down for 5 minutes at Norton Lindsey just to stop ice-cold fingers and toes from breaking off.

Health & Safety – Track & Field Events

For those people who haven't read the UKA Booklet titled 'The Safe Conduct of Track and Field Events' or attended one of their enlightening Health & Safety courses the following is a summary of their output...

Hammer & Discus – As two gates are fitted for safety reasons both must be closed. Athletes will not be allowed to use any form of turning technique as they may get giddy and fall.

Javelin – Athletes will not be permitted to run carrying such a dangerous implement. They must walk to the scratch line with the point downwards. Any throw where the javelin does not stick in the ground will be disregarded as unsafe.

Shot – These are dangerous and heavy items and must only be thrown with two hands in an underarm method.

Long and Triple Jumps – Athletes will not be permitted to wear spiked shoes in case the 5mm needle spikes catch in a gap exceeding 5mm and they trip and fall. Judges must not go in the sand in case it gets in their shoes and causes a rash

High Jump – Bars will not be used as athletes keep knocking them off and may injure themselves or others. Athletes will jump and judges will decide whether or not they would have cleared their pre declared height.

Pole Vault – Jumpers will not be allowed to go higher than 3 metres in case of altitude sickness and nose bleeds. They must wear protective headgear and elbow and knee guards. Judges must not go closer than 5 metres to the site in case of falling upright, bars, poles or athletes.

Timekeepers – The stands from which they officiate are notoriously dangerous. In future league matches, as points are only awarded for places, timekeepers will no longer be required.

Starters – It has been noted that most starters are now wearing ear protectors, and all athletes are advised to do the same. The alternative will be to fit silencers or start races by dropping a flag.

Track Races – For steeplechase events athletes will be required to produce a Certificate of Competence to swim at least 3 metres. A lifeguard must be on duty at all times.

SAC Senior Endurance Coaching

Coaching for the Juniors has been in place for a long time but the Committee recognised that there was a gap to be filled and that coaching for the seniors was something that we should and could provide on a more formal basis than what has been available previously.

2008 was a year of planning in progress and exploring how best this could be provided. Finding someone to take on this task was our number 1 objective and we were delighted that Rob Minton stepped forward to offer his services.

The number 2 objective was to put something in place that would be interesting and beneficial to all of the membership – recognising that we cater for a very diverse group – both in terms of ability and understanding of the technical jargon. Fartlek, Parlauf, VO2 max, Pyramid Sessions etc!!

As such the membership has been split into three divisions in order to keep group sizes manageable, and to pitch the coaching at appropriate levels for everyone.

Sessions will be both informative and interactive and will include warming up followed by a full training session and finishing with warming down and stretching.

Throughout your sessions we hope that you will develop an understanding of the following: -

- Individual Running Technique
- Training Speeds and Pacing
- Training Schedule Principles
- Warm up and cool down exercises/theory
- Stretching – theory & practice
- Race Preparation and Tapering

And much, much more!!!

In addition to the Wednesday sessions Rob will now also be responsible for coaching the Monday night session. Please put into practice what you learn by joining us every Monday night to a coaching session on the track. Meet at the Track @ The High School at the usual time of 7pm when we will be doing a group warm up, a session and cool down that everyone ***no matter what their level*** can attend and enjoy.

Everybody should have details of their particular group and some details of the planned sessions. However, if you are new, have been missed off the distribution list or just have some questions to ask Please Contact Rob who will be delighted to help.

This is a new initiative that the Committee are very excited about. We accept that initially there may be some teething problems as we learn what works best. Please let us have your feedback so that we can learn from experience and make this work to its full potential.

Editors Note - This article wouldn't be complete without a massive Thank You to Paul Hawkins who has organised coaching sessions going back to 1995. However, his many other commitments to the Club (including coaching the Juniors) are such that he is happy to hand over the reins to Rob at this stage in the Clubs development.

Track Races

Once again the Club will be putting on a series of track races to enable members to have the opportunity to race over what are for some, very unfamiliar, distances. These series have proven very popular over the past couple of years and they are highly recommended.

The dates for the track series are:

18 March	3000m
8 April	Mile
29 April	800m
13 May	5000m
27 May	1500m

All races are at the track @ High School, Alcester Road, on Wednesday nights before the usual club night training session. Races will start promptly at 6.30 with registration from 6.00. As before, numbers to be worn but no entry fees and no prizes (unless Paul changes his mind!)

As an added incentive you might like to arrange your own 'head to head' challenge match. Over the shorter distance you might have the opportunity to turn the tables on someone who usually finishes ahead of you in races. That's certainly what I'm hoping for in the Tony v Dawn 800m challenge where the decrepit, ageing male that is me takes on the young athletic female that is Dawn.

Quote of the Month.

"If I'd missed one training session, I would have lined up with doubt and fear in my mind. What would happen if I lost gold by one thousandths of a second, because there was a training session I skipped or didn't give my all to?"

Chris Hoy after the Olympics in Beijing

Thanks to Paul for coming up with this idea. I'll include this as a regular entry in the newsletter so please send me your favourite inspirational quotes

Warwickshire Road Race League 2008

The final results for the 2008 WRRL have just been published (honestly) and congratulations go to

- John Turner who finished 2nd in the Mens V60 age group and
- Kate Wright who was 2nd in the Ladies V45 age group.

A special mention also to Michael Oliver who finished 10th in the overall veterans category.

On the team front the Men were 4th (of 15 teams) in both the Senior Men and Veteran Men's competition.

The Ladies were also 4th in the Veteran Ladies team competition and they were 6th in the Overall Ladies competition.

Our decision not to let any Stratford runners compete in the Summer Six obviously disadvantaged our hopes, and, provided we get sufficient volunteer marshalls this year, this is a policy that we may review.

Congratulations to everybody who competed in 2008 – with a bit more encouragement and coordination we can do even better in 2009.

Coming Soon.....

Here are the scheduled dates for the **2009 Midland League T & F fixtures**

Further information to follow but put these dates/venues in your diary now:

Saturday 2 May, Bromsgrove & Redditch hosting
Sunday 7 June at Leamington
Saturday 4 July, Burton hosting
Sunday 2 August at Leamington (Stratford hosting)

Junior Section

Junior Cross Country

On a (comparatively) warm sunny St David's Day at Perry Park in Birmingham the junior cross country league season came to a close with some impressive performances from Stratford athletes. The dry weather was a welcome change after the standing water and mud at the previous meeting at Nuneaton and the mud at Parliament Hills for those who had done the National Champs the week before. The league consists of twenty clubs and includes all the top teams from the midlands so the races are a real test.

All told there were 35 runners from the club, which before this season would have been a record turnout. This season though, at the previous four fixtures there have been 32, 42, 29 and 41 athletes running which has shown how the endurance squad has developed recently.

Particularly impressive have been the Under 13 girls where there have been regularly 13 to 15 taking part.

Of course it's not just been about numbers as the young Stratford team have shown some real quality. Fergus Allison in the under 11's has led the way improving from 19th at the start of the season 6th in the final race and coming 8th overall for the season, just missing out on a medal – the top 6 get medals.

Zoe Chandler is another runner who started the season with a 19th place but improved by the end to 5th place and 8th over the season in the under 15's. In the next age group Nienke Verwer had an erratic season due to illness and had to miss one fixture so didn't qualify for an overall standing. However, it looks like she's coming into form at the right time because in the last fixture she came third which equalled the best ever by a Stratford athlete.

Both Zoe and Nienke go on to run for Warwickshire at the Inter Counties at Nottingham on 7 March and two weeks later will run for Warwickshire Schools at the National Schools Champs at Stanford Hall, Melton Road, Stranford on Soar, Loughborough where they will be joined by Becky Young, Lucy McDermott and Molly White plus Jack McMullen in the Gloucestershire team.

The final overall league placings show Stratford in 11th place very close to breaking into the top ten. The leading age group were the under 11 boys who finished a great 5th place led by Fergus.

All in all a good season so many thanks to all the athletes and their chauffeurs who deliver them to the races.

Paul H

UK Athletics Coaching Courses – my experience!!

I did my Level 1 UK Athletics coaches course back in 2005 when my children became more involved in club athletics. It gave me the chance to spend time with them and see them progress through the club. The Level 1 was an excellent course with a major emphasis on “how to coach”, and a large practical element including sprint, endurance, jumping and throwing activities. It gives coaches the technical knowledge to coach across the age groups and disciplines.

It was suggested a couple of months ago, that I perhaps bite the bullet and complete the next stage of progression and enrol on the Level 2 Coaches Course. As a busy parent, I thought about resisting (time is always hard to find!) it is a two day intensive course, followed by practical / coaching with supervision over a few months, then finishes with an event module (mine is sprints) and an assessment. However, our club runs predominantly through the goodwill and efforts of the coaches, all of whom are volunteers, and all are happy to give up their time on a weekly basis to give something back to our children and community.... so, after a moment or two of indecision, I booked onto the course.

It ran at the end of last month and was an eye-opener... a two day core element where “everything” seemed to be discussed and put into practice: learning styles, feedback, use of demonstrations, effective observation, planning sessions, anatomy and physiology, strength training.....the list was endless. I come from a sport and coaching background and part of my job as a Pilates Instructor is to train other teachers, but this course made me work....!! I came away from the weekend with personal challenges and a renewed interest in what I do. The next step was to get in the hours of “supported practice” which has meant working with other age groups within the club, not just my regular Under 11s.

This for me, has been by far the most interesting part of my training. Not just the understanding and knowledge I am gaining, but the support I have been getting from the other Level 2 and Level 3 coaches within the Stratford Club has been overwhelming. Absolutely every coach I have had the opportunity to work with, has given me time and encouragement with complete enthusiasm... and it has actually made me rather proud to be part of this club. My involvement began as parent, then volunteer, before becoming a coach. As a parent, if **you** have an interest in athletics, do come forward and let us know. You might find it an incredibly rewarding path to take...

Lauren Bannister

Editors Note : From a Club Development viewpoint it is very important that we have the capability to provide the coaches and officials to support our growing number of athletes. In addition to providing advice and support to anybody wanting to volunteer, the Club will also meet any fees incurred by any member attending an approved coaching or officials course

The Tom Pink Memorial Relays

Tuesday 17th February 2009

This is a rather special and unusual competition for junior athletes, generously funded by the Pink family in memory of their son Tom, a keen athlete who died in a car accident in 1971. The event began in 2007 with U11 and U13 relay races aimed at chasing world record times for 1000 and 1500 metres. It will continue to take place annually leading up to the 2012 Olympic Games and is held nationally at various venues around the country.

The NIA in Birmingham was the venue for the event and it was the first time many of the young athletes, team managers and parents of the Stratford upon Avon AC team had been to the NIA for an athletic event which turned out to be a huge event with twelve clubs from across the country hosting full teams.... the arena was simply buzzing from start to finish.

In addition to the track relay races of Keeping Up With Paula Radcliffe (1000m continuous relay), Chasing Kelly Holmes (a 1500m continuous relay) Chasing Steve Cram (1500m continuous relay) with the challenge for the teams to beat Steve Cram's 1500m UK Record there are some very challenging Highland Games-styled field events to test co-ordination and agility as well as power. So, with events going by the name of 'Highland Steps', 'Weight for Distance' and 'Weight for Height', our young athletes were as intrigued as they were nervous! Two boys and two girls took part in each event, involving nearly all of the athletes.

In the U11's group we only had seven girls attending the event, so most had to take on two field events plus two relays... and somehow they still found the energy to complete the agility challenge, coming away with great scores and certificates.

In the field events, Anna Gamble did wonderfully in "weight for distance" coming third, and Isabelle Cain-Daley a superb second place in "tossing the caber". The girls team (Felicity Bee, Anna Gamble, Lexi Bannister, Sophie Connor and Isabelle Cain-Daley) ran great legs in the 1000m continuous relay, coming 3rd in the heats and a respectable 5th place in the finals. The Over / Under Relay proved interesting for the taller children and our A team with Felicity Bee, Anna Gamble, Lexi Bannister and Sophie Connor again came third in the heats earning them a place in the finals. The B team had a brilliant run, taking the lead early on with Isabelle Cain-Daley and both Suki Scholes and Harriet Flynn kept that advantage to win the heat... well done girls!

The twelve boys attending the NIA event held their own through the field events. Rory Dwyer picked up 2nd place in standing long jump with a 2m jump and Alex Eves equalled the event record with 69 in highland steps giving him a well deserved 1st place. In the 1000m continuous relay, our A team (Rory Dwyer, Alex Eves, Ashleigh Mazzina, Ianto Davis and Ben Taylor) ran brilliantly - to earn a 2nd place in the heats and 5th in the final.

The B team (Matthew Baylis, Joe Boyce, Freddie Burn, Sam Burn and Connor Vaisey) showed real determination coming in 4th in their heat. The Over / Under Relay brought a 3rd place "trophy winning" run in the final from the A team (Rory Dwyer, Alex Eves, Ashleigh Mazzina and Ben Taylor) and the B team (Fergus Allison, Max Ceconi, Ianto Davis and Connor Vaisey) came 3rd in their heat.

Five of our U13s athletes excelled in the field events to claim individual trophies and from the six relay races we claimed a further trophy. Jeniva Chambers' first attempt in the

Standing Long Jump catapulted her into bronze position with a massive leap of 2.03 metres. Greta Spink's best throw in the Weight for Distance event also gained her a terrific third place. This involved throwing a fair-sized ball with a handle, one-handed, as far as possible which for Greta was an impressive 12.50 metres.

Ben Davis brought home the first award for the Boys with a brilliant bronze in the Standing Long Jump. He did this with a terrific jump of 2.09 metres. Gaining one place higher and the silver medal was Connor Lawson-Evans in the Standing Triple Jump. His jump, 6.94 metres, was only 2cm short of the winning distance. Golden glory came doubly for Patrick Eves in the Highland Steps. He came joint first bouncing his way to a total of 74 jumps as well as beating the event record, albeit by a single bounce!

The track relay events offered great excitement for the spectators with many close finishes and some magical displays of quality running. The Stratford teams were all impressive with well rehearsed baton changes and focused determination.

In the Chasing Kelly (Holmes) 1500m Continuous Relay the Girls A Team came third in their incredibly close heat, qualifying for the finals as 5th fastest team. They managed to improve on this in the final with a well deserved 4th place in a fast race. The team consisted of Jeniva Chambers, Amelia Coulson, Ellen Scholes, Hannah Taylor and Molly White. The B Team ran a straight Time Trial race. In their race Abby Brooks, Alice Burn, Chloe Connor, Abigail Flynn and Hannah Hawley were beaten into fourth by a whisker! The last Girls team event was the 3 by 2 ½ Lap Time Trial. As if they hadn't run far or hard enough earlier, Abby Brooks, Alice Burn and Abigail Flynn put in gutsy performances to finish out of the medals but with their heads held high.

The Boys were Chasing Steve (Cram) instead of Kelly and it's improbable that they'd have run any faster were it the other way round! The A Team, like their female counterparts, came third in their heat, although the teams in this race were far more spread out. They too qualified for the finals as 5th fastest team. While first and second positions were decided early on in the final, Stratford put their seal on 3rd position and never stopped chasing the leaders. In so doing they knocked over 5 seconds off their heat time and took Bronze convincingly. The team were Luke Beardsmore, Alex Cox, Ben Davis, Patrick Eves and Cameron Kirk. The B Team, consisting of Howard Allison, Nye Davis, Connor Lawson-Evans, Joe Noble and Matias Watkins, chased Steve to come third in their Time Trial. Finally, was the 3 by 2 ½ Lap Time Trial for Howard Allison, Nye Davis and Matias Watkins who all showed great stamina as they assured themselves of a fourth place.

The smooth running of the event was down to the huge amount of work done leading up to the event by Carlyne Johnston and Sandie Evans getting the team organised and on the team bus and the support for Sandie by Lauren Bannister, Karen Taylor, Mandy Bee as team Managers on the day. Not an easy job making sure all the children were ready and waiting to be sent to the right place at the right time and a huge thank you to Amanda Evans for being down on the floor and escorting the children to the areas they needed to be for each of the events..

The event ran so smoothly and the Stratford Club Athletes behaved so well and competed so energetically, it made the NIA quite an experience. The organised coach trip there and back made the day much more relaxed for everyone and a big thank you to all the parents who came along to support, and to all the children who participated - it made for a great day...!

Ginny Eves and Lauren Bannister