**Presidents Report**

Well, what a year this has been, it started well if a little damp. Large numbers took part in the New Year’s Eve Relay held at the War Memorial Park and a great atmosphere was generated by all there looking forward to the year ahead.

The Hampshire Cross Country League proceeded well, and the Club staged a very successful meeting at Popham Airfield. Over the years the Club has maintained a particularly good relationship with the Manager of the site, and this has obviously helped. The venue has got busier as well, but we managed always to put on a top-class event at the Airfield. Our runners of course like racing there and once again did well with both the Club’s Senior Men’s and Women’s teams finishing in the top 3.

The Cross-Country Championships at Parliament Hill and Wollaton Park were very muddy due to a very wet February. This however did not stop our runners from competing and putting in some good performances and it was great to see the Club finish teams in both the under 13 Girls and under 13 Boys categories at the National held at Nottingham.

A group of Athletes then went on to compete for Hampshire Schools at Liverpool in the English Schools before athletics came to grinding halt due to the COVID-19 virus. From the end of March through to June no organised training took place and for much of that time and the Club’s athletes trained on their own.

Behind the scenes the Club’s Committee worked hard holding things together, gaining a Government grant and co-operating with Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council. Gradually during the Summer training started to happen at Down Grange and lots of organisation went into allowing athletes to train on the track and maintain social distancing while doing it. Finally, competition was allowed and with strict England Athletics rules in operation a Club runner only 100m event took place, this was followed by 2 more Club events before the end of the Summer. All 3 events were superbly organised by those involved and there were several good performances.

As the dark evenings came along things became difficult and further lighting sets were purchased and congratulations must go to the Coaches who operated under difficult circumstances away from the track. On the track a timetable of use was organised and longer floodlight sessions booked and though the Hampshire Cross Country League did not take place some competition did.

Just before Christmas there was a Club runner only race at Popham held for Seniors while the under 17s took part in an event at Down Grange. Both were enthusiastically supported by the athletes who once again had to observe social distancing. After that the lockdown was enforced again and so all group training stopped and individual use of the track was also stopped and as we approach the AGM that is where we are.

We might be in lockdown, but the future looks bright with the Council and the Club planning on an upgrade to the facilities at Down Grange. The track will be resurfaced this Summer but also down the Home straight plans are in the making for a Stand, a Club House and building to house the Photo Finish. We have been assured this will happen although different to what was originally planned.

We hope of course, come the summer that some competition will be able to place and in early May at the Track a Club only event will happen. In the meantime, it is a a big thank you to everyone that has kept things going, the Club Officers, the Committee, all the Coaches and everyone else that has kept things ticking over. Let us hope 2021 is a good year and we can see an abundance of competition and brilliant performances.

Ian Byett