

SOUTH OF THE THAMES CROSS COUNTRY ASSOCIATION, REPORT FOR 2014/2015

1. **AGM:** Held at Belgrave Hall on 2 May 2014

2. **Elections / Re-elections:**

President:	Tom Richards (South London Harriers)
Hon. Gen. Sec.	Geoff Newton (Tadworth AC)
Hon. Treasurer	Don Turner (Epsom & Ewell H)
Hon. Race Sec.	Don Turner (Epsom & Ewell H)
Hon. Asst. Sec	Archives & History Brian Boulton (Cambridge Harriers)
	Trophies Brian Boulton (Cambridge Harriers)
Hon. Auditors	Sarah Smith (Ranelagh Harriers)

3. **5 Mile Team Race**

This was held at Wimbledon Common on 22 November, hosted by HW. There were 321 finishers.

Men

1.	Paskar Owor Belgrave H	25.43
2.	John Gilbert Kent AC	26.14
3.	Dean Lacy Cambridge H	26.24

Women

1.	Stacey Ward Herne Hill H	31.34
2.	Mel Wilkins Belgrave H	31.52
3.	Claire Grima Hercules Wim.	32.08

U20 Men

1	Peter Chambers Croydon Harriers	26.39
2.	Joe Lyne South London H	29.34
3.	Neil Reissland South London H	32.16

Men's Teams (4 Score)

1.	Tonbridge AC	38 pts
2.	Belgrave H	46 pts
3.	Hercules W	65 pts

Women's teams (4 score)

1.	Belgrave H	29 pts
2.	Kent AC	68 pts
3.	Ranelagh H	71 pts

Men's Teams (8 Score)

1.	Belgrave H	165 pts
2.	Tonbridge AC	165 pts
3.	Hercules Wimbledon	263 pts

4. **Championship Race 7 ½ Miles**

This was held at Farthing Downs on 20 December, hosted by South London Harriers. There were 284 finishers.

Men

1.	Dean Lacy Cambridge Harriers	42.45
2.	Chris Greenwood Kent AC	44.25
3.	Ben Cole Tonbridge AC	44.31

Women

1.	Melanie Wilkins Belgrave H	50.59
2.	Lucy Reid Tonbridge AC	51.40
3.	Amy Clements Kent AC	52.14

M40	Chris Greenwood Kent AC	44.25
M50	Tom Conlon Herne Hill H	50.40
M60	Paul Sanderson G&G	55.22

W40	Cath Stibbs Kent AC	56.25
W50	Clare Elms Dulwich R	53.49
W60	Maggie Statham Holl. Sp.	62.09

Men's Teams (6 score)

1.	Tonbridge AC	114 pts
2.	Brighton & Hove AC	116 pts
3.	Herne Hill H	122 pts

Women's Teams (6 Score)

1.	Belgrave H	92 pts
2.	Dulwich Runners	138 pts
3.	Kent AC	142 pts

PTO

Men's Teams (12 Score)

- | | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| 1. Brighton & Hove AC | 531 pts |
| 2. Herne Hill H | 550 pts |
| 3. Kent AC | 592 pts |

Comment:

There were encouraging signs in 2014. The combined men's and women's field of 321 for the 5 Mile Team Race was the largest for many years. At 284 the Championship race field was a more modest increase on recent years, but still encouraging. I see the South of the Thames races as an intermediate stage between the various county championships and the SEAA Championships. Realistically, in view of the high costs of travel, competing fixtures and the pressure on people's time, I would expect the future to be limited to runners from Surrey, Kent, Sussex, Hampshire and Berkshire, but even that should produce fields of 400-500 instead of the 200-300 we get at present. There is a sort of catch 22 here. If we got bigger fields our races would have greater status which would encourage more clubs to make the effort to travel and take part, and greater status would give us more respect from people promoting other fixtures.

There have been a steady trickle of clubs joining and re-joining the Association, but these are to some extent balanced by clubs whose membership and interest has lapsed. We are very dependent on the preferences of individual club contacts. Every time a club changes its cross country team manager / secretary there is the potential to gain or lose a club as member of the Association.

Fixture congestion remains the main problem we face. Put simply, there are more cross country fixtures than weekends to fit them all in. In the 1970's it was still necessary to join a club to have access to a reasonable amount of competition and the South of the Thames still saw itself in the role of providing "2nd class competition" i.e. encouraging up and coming runners by means of the barring clauses. Fast forward to the present day, past a number of running booms and we have a huge number of recreational and fund raising runners catered for by a proliferation of open races and a reduction in the number of serious competitive runners and the need is for encouraging serious competition. Now the need is to raise the status of our races in order to compete with other fixtures. With twenty-twenty hindsight we should have, in my opinion, removed the barring clauses about twenty years ago.

The Association was formed towards the end of the 19th Century to provide competition for runners who were unable or unwilling to join the established clubs of the day. As our races gained in stature and society became less class conscious these established clubs all joined the Association. However recently it has been noticed that the clock is turning back, with some of these established clubs preferring to compete against each other in mob matches rather than in our races. Whilst we try to avoid clashes with league races, other championship races and major relays it is just not practical for us to try and avoid clashes with mob matches and friendly matches between a small number of clubs. If we could raise the status of our races they might be persuaded to move their mob matches etc.

It was sad to hear of the passing of Past President John Lofts at an advanced age. John was a prominent member of Aldershot, Farnham & District AC and did much stalwart work for these clubs and SEAA. He was also involved with Fleet and Crookham AC.

Geoff Newton
Hon. General Secretary