

## Tonbridge Athletic Club

### Chairman's Report for the Year ending 30 September 2011

I start this Report with the news that our President, Mike Rowbottom, has decided to step down from the role for personal and family reasons after many, many years - even he cannot recall when he took over! Mike joined Tonbridge AC as a middle-distance athlete in the late 1950's and, as a teacher at Skinners School, almost immediately started a conveyor belt of athletes into the Club. He has coached probably thousands of athletes and worked tirelessly for the sport, not only for TAC but also for the Kent County Athletics Association and Kent Schools Athletics Association. He has been honoured by the South-East Athletics Association for his commitment and contribution, whilst Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council presented a Lifetime Achievement Award - never has an award been so justly made. We will all miss Mike but no doubt the lure of and his love for the sport will see him at events in the future. The position of President is for life, and so Mike becomes our second Life Past President. We wish him and his family well and thank him for his amazing contribution to TAC and to the world of athletics as a whole.

In past years, I have compiled the Chairman's Report from feedback supplied by Committee Members and Team Managers but, inevitably, there is a risk that someone or something will be omitted. Therefore this year, I have amended the format by including Reports from those who wished (or were arm-twisted!) to contribute, widening the scope to include contributions from coaches who, of course, are closer to the athletes, who themselves are the *raison d'être* for the Club's very existence. The Reports below are in random order, so please do not assume any sense of priority or importance. There is some duplication due to the overlap of responsibilities :

#### **Peter Selby : Race Walking Coach / Team Manager :**

The race walking squad was again extremely successful in the UK National Grand Prix Championship, winning the overall competition for the sixth year running and again taking the individual male/female titles. There have been some excellent performances from Ben Parsons, Emily Symons, Catherine Cotterill, Kelsey Howard, Georgia Parsons and Guy Thomas, and not to mention of course Tom Bosworth's outstanding victories this year being National Champion at 5k, 10k and 20k, and breaking the UK 5k track record in the process. This record had stood for over twenty years and is probably one of the few British records to be broken in the last twelve months. Tom is a couple of minutes off the Olympic 'B' standard but it should be remembered that he is still only 21, a young age for a race walker whose peak is often not achieved until late 20's/early 30's.

Ben Parsons represented both England Schools in the Inter-Schools International and the English Race Walking Association in the international in Dublin. Guy Thomas also travelled to Dublin, walking for the England team, and both produced good results.

Squad numbers are slightly down on previous years and it is somewhat disappointing that, with a massive new influx of members into TAC, potential race walkers cannot be encouraged to participate in a few events, particularly those who may not be entirely comfortable with cross-country/road races or, indeed, those who would like to cross-compete. Joanna Jackson, winner of the Women's Gold Medal in the last Commonwealth Games in Delhi, is a very accomplished and successful cross-country runner who uses a great deal of running for her training.

Can I thank parents of race walkers who have been extremely helpful this year in providing transport and support? It is not only Tonbridge who have achieved exceptionally good results in walking events, but Kent as a county is probably the best junior team in the UK. Finally, thanks to Tonbridge School for their help and assistance in any particular request- the walkers appreciate the use of the various facilities.

#### **Peter Mason : Coach / Team Manager of the National Young Athletes' League Team :**

TAC NYAL had a tough but very satisfying season in the Premier West division, finishing 3rd in the league behind top clubs Enfield & Haringey and Blackheath & Bromley. We qualified for the regional finals at Cophthall Stadium for the second year in succession.

The final proved to be a very competitive match and, although finishing 7<sup>th</sup> from 8, we could walk away very satisfied with many top placings throughout the match. An interesting fact is that the top four teams from the South went on to be the winners & runners-up in the National Finals. One of our highlights was pushing National Champions, Enfield & Haringey, to just 8 points at our home match.

With over 90 athletes from the club participating throughout the season, the team spirit has been second to none, with the following going on to English Schools and National Championships finals;  
Sean Molloy and George Duggan, English Schools and National Champions.  
Tadhg Healy 3<sup>rd</sup> in English Schools and 4<sup>th</sup> in National Champs.  
Tom Parker, English Schools runner-up and National finalist  
Ed Hall, Schools and National finalist.  
England Schools vests for Sean, Tom and Tadhg.

### **Chris Hogwood : Coach & Organiser of Tonbridge Tornados**

Tonbridge Tornados has been in operation for 3½ years now and, this year, was incorporated as an organisation into the Club as a whole. We coach children who are between 6 and 8 years old. In the sessions, we cover all areas of athletics, even hammer!!! This couldn't happen without the dedication of the coaching team of Shelley Jackson, Sylvia Chapman and Kathryn Mason. Some children have transferred to the Tuesday and Thursday sessions once they have turned 9; we believe this makes the transition easier and gets children hooked on athletics at an early age. We are already looking forward to our annual Christmas Party!!!

### **Mike Rowbottom : Club President**

No club can be a success without a band of volunteers apart from the athletes, coaches, team managers and committee members, and Tonbridge is no exception. For the past year, a big 'thank you' to all who have helped in such ways as preparing the track and field facilities for home meetings, or forming the teams to receive entries and record results at Open Meetings, or performing official tasks such as raking the pits for the jumping events.

Thank you also to Bob Hales for providing the Trophy Cabinet and Notice Board; Bob is such a long-standing club member that the vast majority would not recognise him, but he continues to show interest and help in Club affairs. Thanks also go to Andy Yeomans, our Auditor and Financial Advisor, for his work for TAC, especially in the realm of investigating possible charitable status. To these and all others who help with these background tasks, we thank them for their time, effort and expertise in so many various ways.

### **Mark Hookway : Coach / Team Manager**

The Winter cross country and road running season proved to be one of the most successful in the club's history, with more athletes now coming through to compete at senior level.

At the National Road Relay Championships, in October, the under 15 boys and under 17 men both won, whilst the under 13 boys took the bronze medals. These results were mirrored at the National Cross Country Relay Championships, in November.

In December, Andy Combs and Robbie Farnham-Rose, were both selected and ran for the Great Britain under 20 men's cross country team that raced in Portugal, and won the European Gold team medals.

Five team wins were gained at the Kent Cross Country Championships in January before the South of England Championships. In the Southern, the male teams put on an unprecedented show by winning the u13,15,17 and 20 team titles, whilst the under 15 girls won the silver medals. Max Nicholls won the individual under 15 title.

The teams won four team medals at the National Cross Country Championships, including wins by both the under 15 boys and under 17 men, with Max Nicholls finishing second in his age group. The club continued to support the annual 'National' trip, that included a total contingent of around 160 athletes and supporters travelling to Staffordshire.

The Winter season culminated in the senior men bettering any other past performance by the club's teams when they finished 10<sup>th</sup> in the Southern 12 stage road relay and 28<sup>th</sup> in the National equivalent.

The club continued to invest time in the youngest age groups, through the promotion of the monthly series of one mile cross country races, throughout the Winter.

Julian Rendall was selected to race for England in two trail races, these being World and Commonwealth Championships.

In the Summer, the National Junior League was used as a lower priority team competition for the under 17 and 20 age groups and at the time of writing the club's participation in this league is being considered, due to the overall volume of league competition.

The track season proved to be another successful one for individuals. English Schools' titles were won by Sean Molloy and George Duggan, who both repeated these victories at the National under 17 and 15 championships respectively. Sean equalled the UK age 15 record for 800 metres of 1.51.60 in the process. He also won the British Schools International, running for England Schools, whilst Tom Parker was second in the hammer at the same event. Both Sean and George completed unbeaten season at their specialist events, with Sean winning the UK School Games title in September.

Steve Fennell won the England Athletics Association 800 metres championship and made the final of the UK championships. At the end of the season he was selected to represent England in France in a 1500 metres relay. Steve also won the Southern senior 800 metres title earlier in the season.

Robbie Farnham-Rose was another international, finishing eighth in the World Youth Games 1500 metres, running for the GB under 18 team and then won the bronze medal at the same distance and age group, in the Commonwealth Youth Games.

Andy Combs was a silver medallist at 5000 metres at the English Senior Championships.

At the end of the club's year the South of England Road Relay Championships take place at the end of September, when teams won the under 13 boys and under 17 men's events. The senior men's 8<sup>th</sup> place, with three 17 year olds in the team, hopefully indicates that there is a bright future ahead.

### **Iain Presnell : Coach / Member of Kent Schools Athletic Association Management Committee and Chairman-elect**

Ed Hall came 6th in ESAA U17 400m

Tadgh Healy 3rd in ESAA 400H

Lewis Church and James Masterson were part of the Kent Junior Boys Team that came 3rd in the ESAA Combined Events Champs.

Tadgh also won an England Schools vest for Combined Events

Tom Parker, Sean Molloy and Matt Blandford all represented London in the UK Schools Games

### **David Hull : Level 4 Performance Coach**

A mention for Tadgh Healy :

1<sup>st</sup> National indoor heptathlon with 2<sup>nd</sup> highest all time score

1<sup>st</sup> South of England heptathlon

2<sup>nd</sup> Scottish U18 200m

3<sup>rd</sup> English Schools 400H

Just missed out on medals in National U17 400H and 100H, 4<sup>th</sup> in each event and the only athlete to attempt the double

2<sup>nd</sup> claim athletes :

Megan Southwart won National U20 400H and represented Great Britain at the European Junior Championships.

Craig Morten 3<sup>rd</sup> 400H National Championships in his first year in the age group and 3<sup>rd</sup> English Schools 400H. He was also 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Scottish U18 400H and 400m and represented Scotland U18s in the Celtic Cup.

### **Richard Owen : Coaching Co-Ordinator / Club Coach**

Our club continues to grow with relative ease, but the same can not be said for the recruitment of additional qualified coaches (particularly Throws coaches). This is a common problem that most if not all athletic clubs face, but despite this dilemma our commitment and focus to recruit additional and much needed coaches will continue as a prime objective throughout 2012. Coupled with this will be a further drive to find more willing volunteers who can assist and support our coaches during regular training sessions as this has been one area that has been relatively successful during the year.

Looking back, I have been hugely encouraged with the significant increase in the number of parents / guardians of young athletes who are getting involved in supporting and helping out during training sessions

and I feel we should continue to build on this. It makes a big difference and helps ease the strain on our limited resources, but we can never have enough help and support. We will always need willing volunteers to come forward and get involved and assist whenever possible. It helps contribute to the TAC community spirit that is being created too which has been a significant factor behind the club's success.

There's a lot to be excited about at TAC. We have gone through considerable growth over the last few years and seen continuous improvement in its competitiveness evolve rapidly – we are not standing still. It is now one of the most endearing and successful clubs in the south of England and you should be proud to be part of the club. However, this has come at a cost with our limited resources being stretched and we have been too dependant on certain key individuals. We have to recognise that this is not sustainable, especially as the club continues to grow.

It's time for the club to build on success by providing a competition and development pathway that will help attract and retain our athletes and will allow our club to go from strength to strength. This is why our efforts to find more coaches and helpers are so important to the club's improvement and success, which we have all deservedly achieved and enjoyed to date.

### **Dawn Hookway : Co-ordinator of Open Meetings & Officials**

We have completed yet another successful track season for which we have had a fantastic group of officials who turn out to help run the meetings, be they home or away, rain or shine. The trouble is that they are not getting any younger and, as a breed, officials are now becoming rarer. There is a great demand for more officials to help maintain our success. It would be penalising the athletes not to turn out and help. It does not have to be all day or for every match but, unless we get a development line for officials at TAC, we will find it difficult to go forward. Do not get me wrong - we are very lucky at TAC with the help that we have but we only have a small group of qualified officials and this means that they have to turn out most weekends during the summer. If you think you can help and are willing to become qualified, just let me know. I would like to thank everyone who helps with our Open Meetings. My hope is to continue to improve them and give the TAC athletes even better competition. I hope I can count on everyone's continued support for these meetings.

### **Mark Ormerod : Joint Manager of Southern Athletics League Team / Coach**

This year the senior men and women joined forces in the SAL, a new venture of which TAC is now a founder member. The first match was very close, the team managed 171 points but only came 3<sup>rd</sup> of 4. In the second match we were a distant third with 124 points. The third match was very close again but we were edged into 4<sup>th</sup> by 2 points. In the 4<sup>th</sup> match, we fielded only 6 ladies and were a distant 4<sup>th</sup>. Then came the last and home match, knowing we needed to finish in the top 2 to avoid relegation; we managed to fill nearly all the events accumulating our season's best 172.5 points but were missing a lot of our top athletes and only finished 3<sup>rd</sup>, failing to avoid relegation by one just point. The main problem this season, as in many seasons, was the lack of heavy throwers, coupled with not having enough women athletes turning out. There were many good performances and two league records. Nicole Taylor with the women's 1500m steeplechase record and Steve Tester, Chris Kiely, Ed Hall and James Wildish now hold the men's 4x400m relay record. Thanks to Dawn, John, Dick and all the helpers. Excitingly, a large number of Clubs have now applied to join the League in 2012, vindicating the decision of the founder member clubs to opt for a league with both men and women competing rather than the traditional single-sex leagues.

### **Chris Hogwood : Coach / Team Manager of Kent Young Athletes League Teams**

I have thoroughly enjoyed managing in this league over the season. Athletes have enjoyed the competition and competed well at all four matches. The 1<sup>st</sup> match was very early in the season at Ashford in April. But numbers in the team increased greatly for the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> and we must have had over 70 athletes compete across all 8 teams. This league is great for introducing competitive athletics to new athletes. Over the season the boys finished a creditable 2<sup>nd</sup> in Division 1 and 2<sup>nd</sup> in Division 2 (this shows the quality and quantity of our athletes!!). The girls also finished as runners up in Division 1 and 3<sup>rd</sup> in Division 2. There were many consistent performers (too many to mention!) this year, with Chanda Lamb and Una Laquetabua always

getting the team off to a great start. We dominated the hurdles events throughout the season which is fantastic. Thanks to all the parents and supporters and I look forward to another great season next year.

### **Chairman's Notes**

We were delighted to welcome Bob Hales, Life Past-President and a Founder Member in 1947, and his wife, Daphne, to the Club Championships in late August. As Mike Rowbottom has advised, Bob very generously funded the Trophy Cabinet and the Notice Board Cabinet which now feature prominently in the Club Room.

It was also a pleasure to hear from Mrs Beryl Wood, the daughter of Peter Hoath who joined the Club in 1948 and arranged the first 'Tonbridge 10' road race, in which there were just four competitors! Peter now lives in Australia but is still in contact with Laurie Manser, who resides in Speldhurst, and remembers Michael Redhead, one of our Vice-Presidents. Dave Cross, our Archivist, is looking at ways in which the Club's history can be formally recorded and memories from Peter and Laurie will be included.

I am sure that Bob, Peter, Laurie and Michael are very proud that the Club for which they participated in its formative years has developed so well. In fact, at year end, membership was 642, an all-time high, with 548 competing first-claim members. As Chris has mentioned in his report, we also have the flourishing 'Tornados' section for the youngsters, whose attendees are not members of TAC as such but sign up for session periods of 6-8 weeks at a time. Some have already graduated to membership, a trend which, if continued, promises a rosy future for the Club.

Our Treasurer, Pippa Blackstone, and our Auditor, Andy Yeomans, have spent countless hours investigating the possible benefits of charitable status or possibly Community Amateur Sports Club (CASC) status. It is a veritable minefield which needs to be carefully considered as, once attained, there is absolutely no going back. Therefore it is only right that the Club Committee takes its time to weigh up the 'pro's and con's' to ensure that the decision taken is the right one. As both processes would require changes to the Club Rules, their review has been put on hold until the future direction is confirmed. We should also be able to ensure that our Rules mirror those of the Kent County Athletics Association, whose constitution is also being reviewed.

The Australian Athletics Team will be based at Tonbridge School in the lead-up to the Olympics. Considerable work has already been completed to the athletics facilities, including the provision of a superb new pole vault which will be available for TAC competition use. Ice-baths will also be provided - brrrrr!

Amazingly, it is twenty-seven years since the agreement was signed between Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Tonbridge Council to facilitate the construction and operation of the athletics facilities in the grounds of the School. Many TAC members contributed in the form of donations and loan guarantees and we are indebted to them for their foresight and generosity. The agreement expires in 2012 but formative discussions are already taking place between the Council in the form of the Tonbridge Sports Association and the School, and TAC has been invited by both parties to contribute to produce procedures and practices relevant to the extended facilities and to the demands of the next 18-20 years or so.

I have written this, my seventh, Annual Report with some regret as it is my last. I have been hugely privileged to be the Chairman of such a progressive club but every organisation needs to move on, hopefully to an even higher plane, and I look forward to supporting my successor in achieving the goals to which TAC aspires. Hopefully, with a change in my personal circumstances, I will be able to become even more actively involved and, as a member of the Executive of Kent County Athletics Association, to provide the Club with representation and feedback from a wider perspective.

It would be simple now to go through a whole long list of people who, on and off the track, field, road and country, have had such an influence on, and contributed so much to, the Club, not only during my spell as Chairman but during my twenty-three years on the Committee but they all know who they are and, on behalf of the Club, I wish to express my heart-felt appreciation and respect. They are all volunteers and donate so much of their time and effort to the development of this wonderful Club. Thank you, one and all.

I would also wish to thank everyone, members, supporters, parents, officials and countless others who have supported our efforts, not just in 2010-2011 but throughout the existence of TAC. Long may it continue.

That's it! I now step down with huge gratitude for being afforded the opportunity to lead this great Club of ours - best wishes to all.