

### **First ever county title for Tonbridge ladies**

Tonbridge Athletic Club captured the senior women's team title at the Kent Cross Country Championships, for the first time in their history, on Saturday, in addition to another five team championships.

The championships were held for the second year in a row on the fast and relatively flat grounds of Wilmington Grammar School, near Dartford and consisted of ten events in total. Tonbridge with six team and four individual titles going their way, were the most successful club on the day.

The success in the senior women's race seemed unlikely twenty four hours before the start, as Deirdre McDermot had declared herself as unavailable, due to ill health, but she changed her mind on the morning of the race, feeling much better. This proved decisive for Tonbridge, as after a steady start she made her way through the lead pack to capture 2<sup>nd</sup> place.

At the front for almost the entire eight kilometres was McDermot's team mate, Grace Nicholls, who had Clare Elms of Dulwich, for company in the early stages. However, Nicholls gradually pulled away to victory, always looking in control and at the finish she had 36 seconds to spare over McDermot. Sophie Wilkinson, at home for Christmas, from university in New Zealand, proved that she has maintained her fitness with a fine 10<sup>th</sup> place, which gave Tonbridge the team title and defeat the fifteen other clubs. They also won the six to score title, when Lowri Richards (24<sup>th</sup>), Pippa Blackstone (53<sup>rd</sup>) and Rachel Fagg (54<sup>th</sup>) were added.

The senior men's championship eluded Tonbridge, as a strong Kent AC squad took the title by 57 points to 88, with Medway and Maidstone third with 148. Ben Cole (4<sup>th</sup>) led Tonbridge home, with the second scorer being Dan Bradley (8<sup>th</sup>) having an outstanding race. Ben Reynolds (14<sup>th</sup>), Julian Rendall (15<sup>th</sup>), Graeme Saker (22<sup>nd</sup>) and Greg Cole (25<sup>th</sup>) completed the team score.

Tonbridge maintained a record, that is now four years old of not losing a Kent team title in the male under 13, 15, 17 and 20 age groups, as all four teams won once again. However, the under 20s could not have been closer, since only one point separated them from Invicta AC. Tom Cox (3<sup>rd</sup>), Jamie Bryant (4<sup>th</sup>) and Luca Russo (5<sup>th</sup>) scored for the team, although it was Jack Keywood's 9<sup>th</sup> place that pushed the last Invicta scorer back and helped win the championship.

In the under 17 men's age group, Tonbridge dominated, providing the first three home through Charlie Joslin-Allen, Max Nicholls and Corey De'Ath, with Dominic Brown (5<sup>th</sup>) and Sean Molloy (6<sup>th</sup>) also near the front. The women's team in this age group also took the team title through Saffron Salih (4<sup>th</sup>), Alice Wood (5<sup>th</sup>) and Nicola Wilkinson (6<sup>th</sup>).

George Duggan comfortably won the under 15 race and was supported by Stuart Brown (5<sup>th</sup>), showing his best for of the season, plus Tim Faes (10<sup>th</sup>) and Euan Nicholls (11<sup>th</sup>). Tom Kendrick won the under 13 race in similar fashion, with Jamie Goodge, running a very strong second half of the race, taking 2<sup>nd</sup>. James Puxty (7<sup>th</sup>) and Leo Rossouw (10<sup>th</sup>), completed the winning score.

Sian Driscoll took 3<sup>rd</sup> in the under 15 event, as did the Tonbridge team, with Leah Melvin (6<sup>th</sup>) and Hannah Czarnowski (19<sup>th</sup>). There were also superb runs from the under 13 girls' squad, who took second place through Kathleen Faes (5<sup>th</sup>), Eleanor Cohen (7<sup>th</sup>) and Genny Allan (8<sup>th</sup>). Alice Ralph also had a fine run in 9<sup>th</sup>.

Elsewhere on Saturday, Ruth Bourne won a bronze medal in the under 17 race at the Surrey Championships and was supported by Sophie Foreman (5<sup>th</sup>) and Tabitha Adams (10<sup>th</sup>) as Tonbridge were third team.

In the Sussex Championships, on Sunday, Nicole Taylor won a silver medal in the under 17 age group and Ryan Driscoll a bronze in the under 20 event.

Robbie Farnham-Rose finished 17<sup>th</sup>, of 71 finishers, in the Great Edinburgh International Cross Country event, on Saturday, where he represented the Great Britain under 20 men's team.