

THE PUFFER



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Looking backand forwards....

A review of the 2010 season, including the Chairman's report from the AGM, and news of changes afoot for the 2011 Summer season – Ed.

KENT YOUNG ATHLETES LEAGUE - BOYS TEAM - SUMMER 2010

It has been another very good season for the KYAL Boys team, who successfully retained their championship title, making it their 3rd title league win.

The idea of this league is to mix a blend of new athletes (for them to gain experience) with the regular boys, to get the points and to carry on the great team spirit which we have.

This, you would say, is the development league for the NYAL and other leagues in the club. So if we struggle here the future could be tough but from this result we can see that the future looks very bright with both the boys and the girl's teams.

It has been very encouraging to see plenty of U13s being brought through Chris, Vicky and Dawn's groups, which has enabled us to field two Tonbridge teams, 1 & 2. The only team in Kent to do this!

As with all U13 teams it is a very new experience to compete as competitive athletes at club level and a certain amount of persuasion has to be used to fill all the gaps. It was a great pleasure to have such willing boys to fight for the team and fill in where they could. Chris Cohen became our No 1 hurdler whilst making a great partnership with James Wood in the high jump. Chris also combined with Luke Gunter, Toby Ralph, Jordan Muir, Euan Nicholls and Luke Melvin for a formidable middle distance squad. In the sprints there were encouraging performances from, Luke Curtis, Jacob Hancock and Olly Nix whilst Luke Gunter showed great form over 200m. In the throws Callum Porritt and Jack Mumford (until he broke his arm) showed great potential whilst James Wood must be praised for his javelin throws.

In the Tonbridge 2nd team, it was always enjoyable watching Timmy Driscoll and Sam Avis battling it out in the 800m and seeing their times coming down throughout the season.

In the U15s it was of course for some their last season in the league which always seems a bit sad for me, and I probably say it every year that, "it will be hard to match that lot". Maybe it will be with the likes of Sean Molloy, Max Nicholls, Hanro Roussow, Cory De'Ath, Josh Howitt, Dan Brothwood, Ben Bradshaw and others moving on but then I've still got the multi-talented Lewis Church and Harry Kendall, runners like George Duggan, Alex Kidd, Will Whitmore and many others who are improving all of the time, as well as top walker, Guy Thomas, It's looking like a great 2011 team already!

Pete Mason, KYAL Boys Team Manager

KENT YOUNG ATHLETES LEAGUE 2010 – (GIRLS)

Another KYAL season is over and from the girls point of view it has been a successful one. After three of the four meetings the combined U13/U15 girls team were leading Blackheath & Bromley and were heading for a historic win, however, scheduling the last meeting in the middle of the holiday season hit our U15 teams availability hard and we eventually finished a very creditable 2nd to B&B by a mere 38 points (1369 to 1331).

The facts were, that when we had good availability in the 2nd and 3rd matches we were better than most of the other teams, shown by us winning the Ashford event. In fact we had enough girls to enter two good teams in the Div 2 match there, winning that match too.

This is in no way a complaint regarding availability, and I would like to thank all the girls for competing, sometimes in new events, with enthusiasm and good humour. Many thanks also to all of the parents who transported the girls to matches, supported and especially helped out the officials in their duties. Lastly these events would be impossible to run without the officials, so thanks to them once again.

U13 Girls

When the season started with a largely inexperienced squad, many beginning their competitive athletic careers, few of us present would have realised that the tone would be set for the entire season in the first race of the first match.

Natasha Carlisle marked her debut by winning the 70m hurdles, and by the end of the season was unbeaten in this discipline, finishing at Bromley by running the 7th quickest time in the country this year. Chanda Lamb helped add to the great start by being unbeaten in her 3 hurdles races as the B string, and Kiera Waters won at Erith in the Div 2 match.

The second event at every match was the shot putt, and Jenny Stevens was unbeaten in the 3 matches she competed at. In fact she won 7 of the 9 events in which she took part, and finished the season as the 4th best in the country at shot putt and 9th best at discus.

Next up in the schedule was the first of the middle distance races. Hannah Czarnowski, Becky O'Hara and Alessia Russo all recorded 3 wins apiece over 600m and 1000m with Hannah's and Becky's times at Ashford ending the season as the 16th and 17th quickest in the country this year. Alice Ralph won the B string 600m at Bromley with Emily Rye running a very encouraging A string race also. One of the features of the season was the willingness of the girls to try new events and just have a go, which helps us as Team managers.

One of the most versatile and successful was Alessia Russo, who had 6 wins over the season in a variety of events covering the discus, long jump, 600m and 1000m, whilst also coming close in the high jump. In fact the girls won at least once in every event over the season, proving their versatility.

In the sprints Mercedes Broad was the most successful, winning 3 times over 75m and once at 150m. Becky O'Hara and Lucy Rungay came close to wins in good times and various other girls ran well over the season. It was the collective ability of our sprinters that made them almost unbeatable in the 4x100m relay, where we only lost once over the 4 matches. The stalwarts of the team were Mercedes and Natasha, but they were ably supported by Becky, Maddison Cumings, Lucy, Chanda and Emily Killick to make them a formidable team.

Another key for the season was the amount of girls who wanted to compete, this allowed me to enter another team 3 times in Div 2. This is a good, non pressurised way to gain some experience, and well done and thanks to Orla Mulcahy , Jagoda Buraj , Helen Clay , Mhairi Fenton , Jasmine Smith , Kiera Waters and a few previously mentioned girls , who all competed well in a variety of events.

As well as having versatile athletes it really helps in certain events to have specialists, notably in the throws and the 1200m walk. In the walk Georgia Parsons had two good 2nd place finishes in her A string appearances, and with the help of Pete Selby our walks coach encouraged Alice Ralph to a B string victory at Bromley in fine style.

The slightly nervous and unsure group of girls who turned up at Canterbury at the start of the first match had by the end of the League swept all before them. They won all four matches, and won the League by well over 100 points. I am reliably informed that this is the first league win by TAC girls ever, and hopefully not the last. Their ability and enthusiasm was a joy to watch, and a debt of gratitude should be given to Chris Hogwood and Vicky Thomas for their guidance and help, as over half of the girls came from their group.

U15 Girls

At the end of the league season we finished 4th of the 6 teams, having been 2nd going into the last match. If that event at Bromley was a relative low point, as scheduling it in the middle of August meant we had only 5 people available, the high point was the previous match at Ashford where we had 15 girls competing and we won the Div.1 and Div.2 matches.

Blackheath & Bromley were the dominant team throughout the season, winning 3 of the 4 matches, but our girls proved that they have the ability with the fabulous dual win at Ashford. Twelve of the 21 events won during the league were all won here. We welcomed 6 debutants into the team all of whom performed well after some initial nerves, especially having seen what additional events I had entered them into! India Smith (high jump), Lauren Davies (75m hurdles) and Amy Binns (long jump) all had wins, whilst Simone Baxter was the teams 2nd most successful athlete with wins in the 100m, 200m and high jump in her two appearances. Well done also to Maddy Scaife for her performances at Ashford.

In what was a very competitive sprints arena containing 2 of the top 4 sprinters in the country (running for other teams) Rose Hairs and Katie White competed consistently well, both gaining wins in either the 100m or 200m. In the technical events of the throws and 1200m walk I generally have to ask the girls to do these events as a favour, and although we gained some wins, we missed out as a result of not having any real specialists (except Ella Farndon in the discus).

There are exceptions to this, notably Rhianna McCarthy who has to cope with competing in the high jump and pole vault, which at the Kent League are scheduled at the same time, meaning she has to run between both competitions.

Another exception is the 75m hurdles where we had consistently good performances from Louise Springham, Lauren, Ella and Alice Deacon.

The largest number of successes came in the middle distance races where Alice Wood won twice at 800m and once at 1500m (in addition to twice at javelin and a walk victory), Sian Driscoll won twice at 1500m and Charlotte Cohen won at 800m and 1200m walk. There were also good performances over the season from Katie Humphrey, Fenella Mawdesley, Otilie Swift, Jemima Sneddon, Lucy Roud, and good debuts from Leah Melvin and Fran Taylor-Lowen.

The general rule is that the League table never lies, however I do think that 4th place does not do the team justice and I cannot fault the girls' effort or application. Well done to all of you, and for those girls that finished their KYAL 'careers' at Bromley, good luck in the different leagues you compete in next year and thank you for your time and effort.

ANDY WOOD, KYAL Girls Team Manager

NATIONAL YOUNG ATHLETES LEAGUE - SUMMER 2010

It has been another exciting and very competitive season for the NYAL team. With the newly formed league structure it was going to be interesting to see how we were going to perform in the Premier West Division with the new points system. Instead of match points awarded it was now an accumulation of scores from each match that decided which team would be in the top four. It was these four teams that would go into the newly formed Regional final.

As always it was important to get a good start and we had the advantage of hosting the first match. It was dreadful weather, pouring with rain most of the day, but we came away with a win and more importantly 120 points ahead of 2nd place Harrow. The Harrow team manager went away very unhappy as he had downloaded the wrong timetable thereby causing a few of their athletes to miss their events. Never mind we will take the points, thank-you!

This first match is always interesting because it gives the team manager an idea of the strengths of the team and what to expect from the season. My first aim going into the season is always to avoid relegation and then we win the first match and it changes to, 'Can we get to the final?' !

This was after seeing some quality hurdlers like, Natasha Carlisle, Louise Springham, Lewis Church, Tilly Russell & brother Gabriel, Craig Morten and Tadgh Healy coming away with near maximum points. A clean sweep in the 800ms with young Hannah Carnowski and Stuart Brown scoring maximum points for the U13s, Alice Wood and the talented Sean Molloy for the U15s not to forget Ellen Holmes in the U17 ladies who proved to be quite a talent in the 300m hurdles later in the season.

We had some quality sprinters as well, with Lucy Rungay, Rose Hairs, Katy White and Gemma Smith for the girls, whilst a very impressive Ed Hall made his debut for the club in the U17 men. Of course, in the field - throwers, Jon Hinton, Ryan Redman, Tom Parker, Niall Healy, Matt & Jenny Stevens scored a huge amount of points here and throughout the season, as did Emily Stone, Nicky Dobra and Rhianna McCarthy in the jumps.

So many promising performances that my mind was set for the Regional and maybe even the Main Final!

Our 2nd match at Guilford was a much better day weather wise and an equally good result match wise, with another huge win, although it has to be said against a couple of weaker clubs. Two wins out of two but the tough matches were to come.

Next were the National Champions Windsor SE&H and Auxiliary and Final champions from 2009, Reading. This would be a big test as to whether we could really match up to the big clubs. As it happens there were great performances but both clubs were just that bit stronger than us although the scores were very close in the end.

With these results we were firmly in 2nd position and it would have to take a disaster in the last match at Shaftesbury Barnett for us not to make the finals. Incidentally Shaftesbury were in a relegation battle which goes to show how tough this league is.

Our final league match was a bit weaker than normal due to the holiday season starting. It was good to welcome Matt Blanford to the team, who was absolutely brilliant in the U15 throws. Our U13 girl's 4 x 100m team, Natasha Carlisle, Becky O'Hara, Lucy Rungay and Mercedes Broad were unbeaten over 4 matches. Finishing second to Shaftesbury secured 2nd place in the league for us and ensured that they were not relegated, so it was a trip to the Regional Finals and a return to Shaftesbury, Cophall Stadium.

It was obvious from the start that we were going to struggle, mainly because of school holidays, but there was also a Judd rugby tour of Australia which took out many of our talented athletes. We had a total number of 54 athletes available where normally we would need between 70 - 80 for a full team.

It must be said we were outclassed in some areas but we had some brilliant individual performances. Sean Molloy, who was unbeaten over 400m & 800m throughout the season but I will not mention his hurdling, oh sorry I did! Toby Ralph looks an exciting find as does his sister Alice along with Becky O'Hara who can sprint and run 800m well

I could go forever mentioning all the good performances so I will just say a huge thank-you to all the athletes for trying so hard and being a great bunch to have in a team. Many thanks to the parents for helping and being so enthusiastic with their support. Also a special thank-you to Dawn and her merry band of Officials who have supported us throughout, many whose children have now grown up and some whom belong to other clubs but choose to help us.

Finally I would like to thank all those athletes who move out of the NYAL and into Junior and Senior groups, for their support over the years. Names that spring to mind are, Craig Morten, Ryan Redman, Jon Hinton, Jack Keywood, Robbie F-Rose, Luca Russo, Ryan Driscoll, Chris Lloyd, Sam Button, Daniel Adeline, James Fullbrook, Jamie Bryant, Oliver Kendall, and Ladies, Maisie Farndon, Ellen Holmes, Nicky Dobra, Kelsey Howard, Lucy Blackstone and Ruth Woodfine.

Good luck and I wish you all many years of enjoyable and successful athletics.

Pete Mason, NYAL Team Manager



National Junior League – Summer 2010

The NJL is a competition for the under 20 age group, but also allows under 17s to compete. The league season starts with four regional matches, before a promotion match late in the season, to see if a club can get promotion to the Southern Premier division. Beyond that, for the top clubs there is a national final and then even a European competition, so it's quite a prestigious league.

Tonbridge AC are in what is called the Medway Division, made up of eight clubs, all from Kent, but including Croydon. In all four matches we compete against the same seven teams and accumulate points based on the position achieved in each match.

We re-entered the league three or four years ago, after an absence for a long spell, where we just didn't have the number of athletes in the age group to justify competing. However, after going back in we dominated the Medway Division, winning pretty much every match for two or three years and qualifying for the promotion match.

A top two place in the promotion match would get us into the Southern Premier Division, where the 'Big Guns' hang out, like Blackheath, Enfield and Haringey, Shaftesbury Barnet and the like. That is where you see the 10.5 sprinting and good quality performances across the board. However, we have always struggled in the promotion match and never quite made it, a couple of times due to having a weak team on the day.

At the start of 2010 the coaches and team managers had a competition review, where we agreed that we should prioritise league competition or otherwise there would be a danger of athletes being pressurised too often for their own good. An under 17 woman, for example, could be asked to do a Southern League, UK Young Athletes League, National Junior League, Schools and Championship competitions. In the end we decided that we were probably still not strong enough to get to the NJL premier division and agreed that this league should be categorised as 'low' priority.

As the team manager it was a strange position to be in for myself, as for once I had the luxury of enjoying the Summer more and not having to chase athletes to compete in the NJL and then for every possible point on the day. Personally it allowed me to focus on other aspects within the club, especially as Mark Ormerod had taken over the Southern Men's League management.

I'd send out emails to athletes and get a reasonable response and then just give them a choice of what they would like to do. Some still couldn't get out of the habit of saying "I don't mind doing a Triple Jump or a throw for a point" and looked a bit confused when I replied that it was ok, but you don't have to!

Supporters, like Dave Wildish, would comment that "we had a few gaps in the team" or officials from other clubs would be completely confused and say "what's happened to Tonbridge?". I don't think they could understand my laid back attitude to team management, having seen the competitive side for a few years. (Don't worry I am re-charged and ready for the Winter).

So why bother with the NJL at all, if we aren't going to try and do aswell as we can ?

Well I now understand some of the extra benefits –

Those that competed genuinely did what they wanted to do and it made for a happy camp. Athletes coming back nervously from a lay off could be a bit cautious or pick an event that suited them.

The league allows non scorers so for example in the first match we had five 3000 metre runners and no steeplechasers. Previously, I would have persuaded a few to do the 'chase.

We saw examples of athletes trying out events for the first time, such as Jonny Hinton in the High Jump and actually clearing 1.60m, which isn't bad for a thrower.

It gave a few an early season opportunity to get an English Schools qualifying time out of the way in April.

The days are less frantic than other leagues and we had some good chats around the team camp, as the team manager was not dashing around pulling his hair out.

The league offers the opportunity for under 17 athletes, who can't get into our UKYAL team to get some competition.

So how did we do ? As a team the answer is the worst ever, with positions of 3rd, 5th, 6th and 6th, giving us 4th of the eight clubs in the division. But it didn't really matter.

Jonny Hinton and Jack Keywood were two athletes that did every match.

A few athletes had the best performances of the season, within the Medway Division, – 800m Grace Nicholls, 1500m James Taylor, 3000m Robbie Farnham-Rose and Nicole Taylor, Pole Vault Jesper Hallberg and Laura-Ann Henderson, Hammer Ryan Redman.

Some of the highlights for me –

The girl sprinters of Gemma Smith, Lucy Thrush and Lucy Dos Santos, who were always chatty, smiling and polite, but always nervous, especially when trying something new. Gemma, for example, came out and competently ran a 400m relay leg, which she may not have attempted elsewhere.

Alex Norden and Nicole Taylor actually requesting to race the 3000 metres, on a blisteringly hot day at Dartford and then both running pbs!

James Cotterill, an example of an athlete putting his toe back in the water of track competition and looking good over 800m and a 400m relay leg.

The day that England met Germany in the World Cup last 16 and I wondered why I was raking a triple jump pit, whilst the nation was watching a football match. I think in the end I was in the better place !

We had great help from officials such as Dick Sharp, John Sanders, Dawn Hookway and many others helpers, so many thanks to all of you who did this.

I am guessing that the club might take the same view of the NJL in 2011, although with so many good under 17s moving out of the UKYAL some may think differently. If you have a view on the club's priorities please let a team manager know.

Finally many thanks to all you athletes who took part. I can't recall one moment of frustration, bad behaviour or anything but smiles and courtesy from all who came along, which was really good.

See you in the Summer.

Mark Hookway
National Junior League Team Manager

Race Walking Annual Review

This year has proved to be a crucial period in the history of the race walking section of the Club, with just reward for the work of the last ten years by the juniors and up and coming walkers, as Tom Bosworth makes the England team for the Commonwealth Games.

Tom, who is only 20, will be one of the youngest athletic competitors. One of his compatriots, Alex Wright of Belgrave Harriers is in fact only 19. Tom started walking at the age of 12 and was a stalwart member of the early days of the junior race walking team, and a member of the group who won the Courier Award in 2007.

This year Tom won the National 20 kilometres Championship in his first race over the distance with a fine display of walking, and just two months later achieved the Commonwealth qualifying time. By the time this report appears the race will have been held and even if Tom does not win a medal, he will I am sure produce one of his best performances. *(Ed. Tom finished 11th in testing hot and humid conditions, in his second fastest time ever of 1hour 30.44 seconds)*

This year has also seen improvements by many of the walkers with championship victories for Kelsey Howard, Guy Thomas, Di Bradley, and other top class performances by Liam Baldwin, Emily Symons and second claim member Katie Funnell. Our overall performance in the Grand Prix this year may not have been as top drawer as previous years when we had successive victories between 2006 and 2009, but that is partly due to us concentrating on further development of the juniors and our support for the Under 13 and Under 15 Kent League.

Steph Rukin and Liam represented GB teams in international races in Switzerland, and Stephanie branched out with longer events, competing in the Open 10 Mile Race earlier in the year.

The history of race walking's success at Tonbridge AC is well known with our top international Tim Berrett, who has won medals in previous Commonwealth Games, and finished as high as 5th in the World Championships. Tim has now finally hung up his shoes for serious competitive racing but is leading the coaching development plan in Canada.

Regular training takes place on Tuesday and Thursday nights at the track throughout the summer and winter and the walkers are encouraged to take part in other disciplines, and they include very capable hammer throwers, shot putters, pole vaulters, discus throwers, and indeed middle distance runners.

The aim for 2011 in advance of the Olympics year 2012, is to strengthen the squad and encourage newer and younger members, particularly the 13 to 15 year age bracket, to participate more seriously in walking with a potential to achieve the sort of success which Tom Bosworth has now attained.

I will always be there to help and assist any athlete who would like to know more about race walking. There is a very active programme throughout the winter with the majority of races based more in the Home Counties area. Phone me on 01825 764726 or 01825 763598 orv07721 747999.

Peter Selby

Tonbridge Athletic Club

Chairman's Report for the Year ending 30 September 2010

This is the sixth Annual Report that it has been my privilege to compile (with a great deal of assistance from Team Managers and Coaches!) and it just gets better. Without doubt, Tonbridge Athletic Club is now one of the premier athletic clubs in Kent, albeit we do not yet have the strength in depth throughout all the age groups, particularly the Seniors, but it is very clear that we are 'getting there' as more and more younger athletes progress through the ranks - and are staying with the Club. It is also fair to say that the Club more than holds its own as a major sporting organisation in a town where the so-called major sports teams in soccer, rugby union and cricket are improving their standards of performance and progressing through the regional and national competitions, gaining the recognition that we all deserve. As was pointed out to me recently by a Life Associate Member, Tonbridge is becoming the hub of sport in West Kent - and Tonbridge Athletic Club is proud and honoured to be at the centre of this activity. With the Australian Athletics Team basing itself at Tonbridge School in 2012, and probably making visits beforehand in the coming year, the Club is ideally placed to take advantage of both the extensive publicity that the Olympic Games will generate and, hopefully, the experiences of watching world-class competitors in their preparations for major championships.

As in previous years, I won't detail all the performances throughout the past year as these are regularly, accurately and comprehensively reported on our website, by e-mails, in 'The Puffer' and in the local press. Nevertheless, it is my responsibility to report on the major successes that have been achieved, of which there have been many. However, before proceeding through the various competitions in which the Clubs and its members participate, I wish to take this opportunity to highlight the efforts of two individuals, one on the track and the other very much behind the scenes.

Firstly, I wish to congratulate **Tom Bosworth** on his selection for England at the Commonwealth Games in India - and then for his hugely creditable 11th place in the 20km walk - quite a performance in an event which, until now, seems to have been the prerogative of older competitors. Well done, Tom, and we all look forward to your selection for Great Britain at future major events.

Secondly, I am very sorry that **Vicky Thomas** has decided to give up the role of Hon. Secretary. As befits a lawyer, Vicky has provided the Club with superb advice and direction, most of it behind the scenes. However, I am delighted that Vicky intends to continue with her Coaching, Officiating and Support at Club events, other responsibilities permitting. Committee Meetings, however, will not be quite the same as we have to move from her comfortable lounge! Thank you, Vicky.

Now on to a summary of our activities in 2009-2010 and, as usual, apologies in advance for any that I may have omitted :

Kent Cross-Country League : It was unlikely that we would repeat our clean sweep of all the Team titles (except the u20's) of the previous year but we came mighty close. We won them all again except the u13 Girls (3rd) and the Senior Men's 12 to score (2nd). Probably the most encouraging aspects were the number of athletes graduating to the senior ranks and the increasing number of girls in all age groups. It is probably opportune at this stage to record our appreciation of the efforts of a few members of Dartford Harriers and others in Kent who have worked very hard to sustain this league when it appeared quite likely to fold. It deserves the support of all the clubs and Tonbridge AC is to the fore in this respect.

Cross-Country Championships : In **Kent**, we won six age-groups in both 2008 and 2009 and in 2010 we won no less than eight titles, a stupendous achievement, with additionally a second and a third. The rest of the County must be sick of us! Long may it continue! In the **South of England Championships**, there were victories for the u13 Boys and u20 Women and second places for the u15 Boys and u17 Men which led on to the **Nationals**, where we won two Team gold medals (u13 Boys, u17 Men) and two silvers (u15 Boys, u17 Women) plus two fourth places for the u15 Girls and the u20 Women. This surely must have been our best performance ever? In the **National Relays**, the u13 Boys completed the clean sweep of cross-country titles, whilst the u15 Boys gained bronze medals.

Race Walking : The overall performance in the Grand Prix this year may not have been as top drawer as in previous years when we had successive victories between 2006 and 2009 but that is partly due to a concentration on further development of the juniors and our support for the walking events in the Kent Young Athletes' League. Nevertheless, there were prestigious victories in several regional and national events and the Walking Section, under the guidance of Peter Selby, continues to go from strength to strength.

National Junior League : We dominated the Medway Division for several years but, when we reached the Promotion Match, we found that a lack of strength in depth, and perhaps a 'match too many' for most of our athletes who competed in many other competitions, resulted in disappointment. The decision was taken to lower the priority for the Junior League so that athletes could choose whether to compete - and in which events - with considerably less pressure. It resulted in a happy Team which enjoyed the matches and still finished fourth in the League. This competition provides an excellent stepping-stone between junior and senior levels and we look forward to raising its priority as more and more athletes progress from the Young Athletes' Leagues.

National Young Athletes League Team : With the new league structure, it looked as if it would be a very interesting season, and it was. Two early victories encouraged the Team and, despite subsequent lower placings to the likes of 'heavyweights' Windsor SE&H, Reading and Shaftesbury Barnet, earned a place in the Regional Final. To be really competitive at this level, a Team requires about 75 athletes but, due to holidays and a rugby trip to Australia, we only had 54 but performed brilliantly, although not reaching the National Final. Peter Mason and his management colleagues were very proud of the performances which bode well for the future, although nearly 20 'regulars' are no longer eligible for this competition.

Kent Young Athletes' League : In the Girls' League, the u-13's won Division 1 convincingly while the u-15's were in contention until the final fixture when, with only five athletes, they slipped to fourth place although, overall, Tonbridge Girls placed a very creditable second, just 38 points behind the might of Blackheath & Bromley. The Boys swept all before them to retain their Championship. Most encouragingly, this competition was used to introduce new athletes and we fielded teams in Division 2, where they performed exceptionally well. It shows that Peter Mason and Andy Wood are rightly using this League as a development opportunity with many of the younger athletes being encouraged to try out unfamiliar events and to move up from the early-stage training groups run by Chris Hogwood, Vicky Thomas, Dawn Hookway and others.

Southern Women's League : After two successive promotions, we knew that it would be difficult in the Premier Division and so it proved. Although the Team was relegated, subject to confirmation with any restructuring of the League, it performed extremely well and Kay Saker and Richard Owen as Team Managers have worked tirelessly. The Team is generally young in both the Junior and Senior Sections and so we can have high expectations that, provided we can continue with the development and retention of the athletes, a return to a higher division is possible in the very near future. Team spirit is fantastic, engendered a great deal by traveling together to fixtures in a coach and epitomised by a willingness to fill in as many events as possible at each meeting. For the future, though, this Team needs more athletes, more supporters, more officials and a home fixture!

Men's Southern League : After the previous year's consolidation, Mark Ormerod took over as Team Manager and the Team improved eleven places to finish in seventh place in Division 1. Consistency was the key as, after a fourth place in the first fixture at Ashford, we achieved two third places, two second places and culminated in an excellent home victory in the final match - and never failed to get less than 100 points per match. As hoped, many of the younger athletes came into the side and performed very well, frequently spurring longer-established team members to excellent performances. Greater strength in depth is still required but clearly the future is very bright.

Currently, there is a proposal to merge the Men's and Women's Southern League Competitions. This has its merits as well as possible disadvantages but the Club is taking an active part in these discussions in order that our views are fully represented.

Road Running : Anomalously, the **Southern Relay Championships** for 2009 (Sept) fall outside the scope of this report but it is worthy to report that the u13 and u15 Boys had both won their event whilst the u17 Boys were third. There were other good performances but special mention must be made of the 14th place for the Senior Ladies, their best ever performance. In 2010, no less than 16 Teams represented the Club and achieved three gold medals in the Junior Boys' categories. Creditably, the u15 Girls were fifth while the u17 Boys' B Team was sixth, an amazing show of strength in depth. The u13 Boys continued their excellent unbeaten performances by winning the **National Road Relay Championships for 2009**. (Early notice for next year's report : in October 2010, the u15 Boys and u17 Men both won the national titles with the u13 Boys earning bronze medals)

With these great team successes, there were clearly many exceptional individual performances, far too many to mention them all and their events in this summary. It would be invidious, however, not to mention those who, as well as Tom Bosworth, gained international selection. They include Liam Baldwin, Nick Barrable, Diane Bradley, Andy Combs, Huw Evans, Robbie Farnham-Rose, Will Grist, Tadgh Healy, Laura-Ann Henderson, Grace Nicholls, Julian Rendall, Steph Rukin and Guy Thomas. Congratulations to them all and, if I have missed any, my apologies and well done!

Individual titles at various regional and national levels were gained by Nick Barrable (over 35 World Masters Orienteering Sprint Champion), Matt Blandford, Tom Bosworth, Andy Combs, George Duggan, Huw Evans, Robbie Farnham-Rose, Chris Lloyd, Sean Molloy, Grace Nicholls, Ryan Redman, Guy Thomas and Ben Wiffen. In addition, there were countless County Champions in track, field, cross-country and walking and we congratulate them all. The fact that there were 36 Tonbridge athletes representing Kent at the UK Inter-Counties event and 28 representing Kent Schools at the English Championships tells its own story! As a further example, our President has reported that, as Tonbridge AC regularly supplies about 50% of the Kent Cross-Country Schools and Club Teams, he almost feels sorry for those young athletes from other clubs in the County competitions!

Of course, all these successes would not be possible without the dedicated support of a relatively small band of Coaches, Team Managers, Officials, Committee Members, Event Helpers and Supporters, all of whom devote considerable amounts of their own leisure time to assisting the individual athletes and our Teams in the many varied roles that are required for a developing Club. Yet again, our membership has increased over the past 12 months and is now well in excess of 600, of whom more than 530 are active competitive members. This year, I will not try to mention all these helpers by name as they know who they are, as do most of the membership, and they know that we are all hugely appreciative of their efforts and contributions. I will, though, make exceptions by referring to Julian Rendall, who has stepped down from the role of Senior Men's Winter Team Manager but, happily, is continuing to represent the Club in many events - thanks for all you have done, Julian, and Pippa Blackstone who has taken on the role of Honorary Treasurer, which, as mentioned last year, was a very hard task to follow Tina Bradford - but she's done an admirable job.

Finally, I would like to record formally the thanks of the Club as a whole to all those who have made donations over the past year. Every voluntary organisation needs funds and Tonbridge AC is no exception. Amongst other projects and expenses, we have now put out to tender the contract for the construction of the much-delayed trophy cabinet and notice boards for the Clubroom at the track, we continue to investigate the opportunities for enhancement of the track and field lighting and, necessarily, for involvement in major championships, our operating costs continue to increase. Every penny helps - and we are most grateful for every contribution as they all help to retain our membership subscriptions, match fees and transport fees at reasonable levels. Thank you again.

That's it for another year. Best wishes to you all.

Alan J G Bennett : Chairman - Tonbridge A C 11 November 2010

Southern Athletics League **A brand new league for 2011**

In 2011 the club has decided to join a new league, which is called the Southern Athletics League. At the same time we have withdrawn from both the Southern Men's and Women's Leagues.

At the end of last Summer a group of clubs got together and proposed that the existing Southern Leagues did something to accommodate clubs who wished their men's and women's sections to compete together.

There then followed much debate amongst all the Southern League clubs until finally both the existing leagues voted against incorporating either joint fixtures or a mixed sex league within their own formats.

As a result of this a completely new league was established and clubs invited to join. The Tonbridge AC committee debated the pros and cons of the new league and decided to join.

The key reasons for joining the Southern Athletics League

It was felt that a mixed sex league would fit alongside what Tonbridge AC has tried to develop through the UK Young Athletes League and National Junior League. In essence a league day is a club day, where we can all attend.

Secondly and certainly one of the prime reasons is that we felt that a reduction in fixtures would significantly lessen the burden on officials, team managers and helpers. Last Summer there were six SML fixtures and five SWL fixtures and only one was on the same day. The new league will have five fixture dates, so we will go from ten to five senior league dates.

It has been a belief for sometime by most club coaches that there is too much competition for young athletes and that this decision will reduce the pressure. For example, an under 15 girl could be asked to compete in the Kent League, UK Young Athletes League and SWL. This will not now be the case, since the SAL is for under 17s and above.

The South has been left with three leagues, as the old format SML and SWL remain. We could have waited and taken a 'let's see what happens' stance. However, we felt that if we were in the new league from the start, we could have more say in how it developed.

By the time we made the final decision a significant number of clubs had decided to join the new league and there are to be two divisions, with sixteen clubs in each. We felt that the potential competition offered was a healthy one.

Southern Athletics League 2011

Plans are not complete, but this is what we know already –

There are two divisions of sixteen clubs and Tonbridge AC are in the top division.

The fixture dates are 30th April, 21st May, 9th July, 30th July and 20th August.

The other clubs in our division are Harrow, Southampton, Walton, Chelmsford, Blackheath and Bromley, Worthing, Milton Keynes, Ashford, Norwich, Ealing, Enfield and Haringey, Nene Valley, Herts Phoenix, Stevenage and Luton

The way forward

Like all new ventures there is some risk in the decision, but there was also risk associated in staying in the old leagues.

The decision should not prevent Tonbridge ever going for British League status, but it would probably be sometime before we are ever strong enough across all disciplines for this.

There are potential disadvantages, the biggest of which is the unknown level of competition. However, with championships, open meetings and specialist meetings there are additional opportunities for those that need them. We might even have the opportunity to take athletes to some of these meetings that are available to them.

Personally, as a coach, past team manager and general supporter I am looking forward to the new league, so that we can see all our athletes compete on one day.

At the time of writing Mark Ormerod and Richard Owen intend to remain the team managers for the men's and women's teams respectively and I hope, like me, you will join in supporting them both for the 2011 season.

Mark Hookway
On behalf of the Tonbridge AC Committee

KEY CONTACTS - TEAM MANAGERS

Southern Athletics League (Summer:T&F)	Richard Owen	01732 360568
	Mark Ormerod	
Men's Southern League (Winter:Cross-Country)	Mark Hookway	01732 838211
Young Athletes League	Pete Mason	01732 363129
National Junior League / Junior Cross-country	Mark Hookway	01732 838211
Kent Young Athletes League	Pete Mason	01732 363129

OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS

President	Mike Rowbottom	01892 521673
Secretary	Anne Gibbons	
Chairman	Alan Bennett	07767 228972
Membership Secretary	Beverley Keech	01732 362465
Coaching	Dave Hull	07702 620234
	Mark Hookway	01732 838211
Club Clothing	Dawn Hookway	01732 838211
'Puffer' Newsletter/Website	Caroline Tinsley	01892 541296
Treasurer	Pippa Blackstone	

PUFFED OUT

That's the 2010 Review issue done! Please send your stories to caroline@tonbridgeac.co.uk. or 2 Hollyshaw, Camden Park, Tunbridge Wells TN2 5AD. See you next edition. Ed.