

2024 AGM Junior report

We had 180 juniors in total and we ran a full programme of **Coaching Sessions**. Thank you to all lead coaches: Liz Raven and Nicola Budding for the Fell Training; Sally Westlake, Ros Blackburn and Emma Barclay for the Younger Endurance Training; Kate Lofthouse, Christine Reilly and Andrew Overend for the Older Endurance Training; Katrina Kennedy for Sportshall Athletics; Sally Malir for her specific Older Endurance Group and Mael and Joan Matthews for their Sprinting Group.

This report covers the period from September 2023 through to mid-February 2025 and the finances from 1/9/23 to 31/12/2024.

Cross-Country

In the **West Yorkshire Cross Country League**, we had 25 juniors racing in the 2023 series which dropped to 9 in the 2024 series. In 2023 there were top ten placings for U17 Sam Bentham 2nd, Archie Budding 3rd, Oscar Shinn 8th and Alexander Wolfenden 9th; U15 Oliver Holder 7th and U13 Robert Carter 1st. The U17 Boys team came 1st and Girl's 4th overall. In 2024 there were top ten placings for U17 Alexander Wolfenden 5th and Oscar Shinn 9th and U11 Ethan Pickwood 9th.

In the **PECO Cross Country League** there were 11 juniors who ran in at least one of the four PECO 23/24 race series dropping to 6 in the current series. In 23/24 we had 4 juniors who competed in 4 or more races (Leyton Hudson, Evie Dyson, Amelia Nichols and George Whittlestone). In the current series four juniors have competed in 4 of the races: U11 Isobel Moore in 1st place and her brother Michael in equal 2nd and in U16 Amelia Nichols 13th and Lily Singleton 33rd.

In the **Championship Races** 7 juniors raced at the Yorkshire Championships 2024 with top ten placings for U17 Sam Bentham 4th, Archie Budding 6th and alongside Samesh Chotai and Alexander Wolfenden gained a 3rd team place overall. 7 juniors raced at the Northern Championships with Archie Budding our best finisher in 6th place. In the 2025 races we had 4 juniors racing in the Yorkshire Championships.

The **Wharfedale Primary Schools League** which we coordinate is currently in its nineteenth year. Hundreds of children from the 12 local schools competed in the 4 league races organised by Westville House, Addingham, Ben Rhydding and Ghyll Royd in 23/24 with an extra two races in the 24/25 season hosted by All Saints and Ashlands. The Grand finale of KS2 relays and presentation of awards at Nell Bank has become a highlight of the league. As ever thank you to the organising team of Felicity Tomblin, Rachel Websdale, Debbie Nicholson, Simon Richardson and Robin Moffat for running the league and thank you to Sally Westlake for organising the KS2 XC Relays at Nell Bank.

Fell Running

Like Cross Country our numbers competing on the Fells are down on what we used to have but 26 juniors competed at a JIH League Fell Race (U9 to U17) in 2024. Juniors who competed in more than 5 races and finished in the top 3 were: U11 Michael Moore and Isobel Moore, U15 Robert Carter, U17 Oscar Shinn and Oliver Holder. Many thanks to David and Rachel Holder for continuing to compile and organise the JIH League Tables. In addition, we had 24 juniors competing in the BAN League with 7 juniors competing in more than 7 races and gaining top 3 places: U11 Michael Moore, Rose Weston and Isobel Moore. U15 Joseph Bentham, U17 Oliver Holder, Oscar Shinn and George Whittlestone.

Many thanks to Rachel Holder and Rachel Carter for organising the Ilkley Moor Junior Fell Races; Trail Races and the Sprint Fell Relays. Going forward we need more volunteers to join the team to organise these races so please make yourselves known to us.

Sportshall Athletics

About 90 children between school years 3 - 7 attend weekly sessions and Decathlon Awards are presented to everyone at the end of March. There are many talented athletes in the two sessions and a significant number of Gold Awards. In 2024 the Regional Sportshall Athletics Team Competition was resurrected, and Olivia Harrison, Ethan Pickwood and Maisie Swann were selected to compete for Yorkshire in the NE Regional Final.

Track and Field Athletics

Our Sportshall Groups do half a term of general outdoor athletics in the summer term as a taster and those with a specific interest in competing can do so in the West Yorkshire T&F League. Strictly speaking we do not do Track and Field anymore, but we did have 6 juniors competing in the 2024 season: U20 Lizzie Reilly and Archie Budding, U17 Oscar Shinn, U15 Heather Crolla, U11 Rosa Crolla and Ethan Pickwood. Best performances from each - Lizzie 2nd place in 400m (65.87); Oscar 3rd in 800m (2.18); Heather became Yorkshire Discus Champion (20m.82), Rosa 1st in Shot (5m.29) and Ethan 1st in Long Jump (3m.73).

Impressively Archie Budding became the U20 Scottish Steeplechase Champion (2000m) in a time of 6:12 (11th in UK) and gained PB's in 1500m (3.55) and 3000m (8.44).

We have had 27 adults (13 Qualified) and between 20-25 Junior Leader **Volunteers** who have given up their time coaching athletics and without their commitment and dedication we could not run our programme. Many thanks to everyone who has supported the Junior Section and well done and thank you to Rebecca Mon-Williams for gaining her Coaching Assistant qualification.

Our Junior Leaders help and lead small group activities during our sessions and 8 completed their Leadership Award in 2024.

A copy of the junior **finances** accompanies this report. There is nothing out of the ordinary and we have a very healthy bank balance. I would like to thank Helen Brooks for independently examining our accounts again this year.

2025 and Beyond

Looking back at the last 18 months since the last AGM report I think it is fair to say that we have lost our focus a little and there is some groundwork to be done to get back to where we should be.

Disappointingly we no longer offer a specific sprint training session and at the start of 2025 we had to cancel our Younger Endurance Training Session because we do not have enough qualified coaches. All of the Year Six athletes were relocated to the Older Endurance Session and the Year Five athletes will be allowed to do the same in the summer. However, in cancelling the Younger Endurance Training Session we have lost a very important link from school racing into club competition.

It is quite sad to see the decline in the numbers of juniors racing in both XC and on the fells, it is clearly not due to a lack of talent amongst the children of Wharfedale. Moreover, it is extremely disheartening to see a steady trickle of younger athletes transferring to other clubs, which is a massive shame considering the amount of work that has gone into building up such a brilliant Junior Section. Nonetheless, all clubs ebb and flow and it requires constant hard work to stay at the top for any length of time. With this in mind, we are now working on how to reverse the current trend.

Coaches and Volunteers from the Junior Section have been in conversation with the Senior Club to have a collective focus and we have decided to target the PECO Cross Country League next season to get more juniors and seniors racing. We need to go back to basics by encouraging the juniors to put on the vest and compete, in time creating a greater presence in club competitions.

If you are reading this and are interested in making a difference and developing the sport of athletics (whatever the discipline) we need you to let us know. We desperately need more people to step into volunteering whether its coaching, race organising or being an official. We have several individuals who can mentor you through a number of volunteering roles and help you to gain qualifications and continue the good work.

Please contact me direct by email (Shirley@ilkleyharriers.org.uk) if you have any specific questions about the junior report, finances or offers of volunteering.

Shirley Wood
Junior Admin and Co-ordinator

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