

2011 AGM report from Junior Ilkley Harriers

We have had an incredibly busy and successful eighth year with membership reaching 266. Eight sixteen year olds moved into the senior section (bringing our total since we were set up to 46). More juniors are committed to training and racing with the club, more parents and junior leaders are involved with coaching at sessions and the whole junior section is becoming much more sustainable. Training sessions take place over 6 days a week and are well attended. This is only possible because of the fantastic support and commitment of over 40 coaches, parents and junior leaders each week.

In competitions we are going from strength to strength as we continue to encourage children to participate in a wide range of athletic activities. In 2011 we saw a glimpse of the real potential the junior section holds – the next few years are going to be so exciting.

In Cross-Country we had more juniors competing in the Complete Runner League and our U11 and U13 girls teams gained podium places and bronze medals. 20 juniors raced in three or more events and gained an individual placing – top 10 placings were achieved by Francis Westhead (U11-10th), Phoebe Ogden (U11-4th), Sarah Pickering (U13-8th) and Georgia Malir (U15-7th). In the Yorkshire Championships our U13 girls team were 4th and U13 boys team 6th. The massively popular Wharfedale Primary Schools League, set up by Ilkley Harriers and now in its fifth year has provided the ideal starting point for most of these athletes. Over 450 children from 11 local schools compete in the 6 league races organised by All Saints, Ashlands, Ben Rhydding, Ghyll Royd and Westville House Schools. And as a much needed stepping stone between school and higher level competition the Peco XC league organises XC Challenge races for 8 to 16 years which are gaining in popularity year on year.

On the fells we have witnessed some fine performances with individuals competing in both BOFRA and FRA races. Georgia Malir (U16) won a silver medal at the English uphill Championships and has gone on to be our first junior to represent England gaining selection for the Home Internationals in Wales where she was the second girl to count for England and the proud recipient of a team gold medal; and Sarah Pickering lifted the U12 Yorkshire Fell Championship trophy in August. Although not so many juniors compete on the fells we have seen consistently good performances throughout the year from Jack Cummings, Ruaridh Mon-Williams, Euan Brennan and Emily Elmes.

Throughout 2011 we have been further developing our Track and Field Athletics programme. We are still not there yet but we can say that we are able to cater for all aspects of the discipline to different degrees. To encourage more competition at all age levels we have promoted the Ingrams League series at York alongside other local open events. As a result we have had more children from 8 to 18 competing with some fantastic individual results. The specific coaching that we are able to offer at Ghyll Royd School really is making a huge difference to our juniors who wish to concentrate on their athletics and compete. Many thanks go to our specialist coaches – Dwayne Heard and Sally Judkowski (Jumps), John Burrows (Throws) and Nick Spencer (High Jump) and I cover the Hurdles. The outstanding athlete of the summer has to be U15 Harry Maslen who is the first JIH to make it to the English Schools Championships. He missed out for a place in the final of the 80m Hurdles by the narrowest of margins but must be congratulated on his PB of 11.71 in the heats. Please visit the JIH web site to watch Martyn Pearce's video of Harry's semi-final race – it's brilliant. Harry is multi- talented and tried his hand at a Pentathlon at Sport City at the end of August. His second place ranks him No 1 in Yorkshire and 13th in the UK. I am sure that his PB's of 1m.71 in High Jump and 5m.74 in the long jump will remain as club records for many years to come.

There have been other athletes who have competed with distinction over the summer and achieved podium places at the Ingrams League. Third places went to Chloe Tindale (U17) and Evie Malir (U11) and 2nd places went to Daniel Judkowski (U17), Harry Maslen (U15) and Zoe Judkowski (U13). Hopefully over the next few years we will see a lot more of our athletes gain the confidence to compete at higher levels.

In 2011 one hundred and sixty juniors took part in weekly Sportshall Athletics sessions. 11 juniors were selected for the West Yorkshire regional teams and 1 for the North Yorkshire team; seven at U11 level,

three at U13 level and two at U15 level. This matches the performance of the previous two years but a disappointing number of U15's attended trials so numbers should have been higher. A number of younger juniors attended the Bradford Athletics Network low level Sportshall Athletics competitions to gain vital experience for bigger events such as regional trials. And at our own annual Sportshall Athletics awards presentation evenings we gave an impressive number of gold awards as well as the presentation of cloth 'colours' for Sportshall Athletics, Track & Field Athletics, Cross-Country, Fell Running and Road Running (including Terrain) to juniors for achievement and commitment to training and competing for the club.

Relays are always a lot of fun and something that we like to encourage at Ilkley. It's good to be a part of a team and everyone gets to do a lot of cheering. There are a lot of friendly junior relays suitable for all ages and abilities. At the Washburn Valley Relays we fielded 7 teams and regained the trophy. And the increased number of junior and family teams at the Will Ramsbotham Badger Stone Relays gave a very special element to this summer evening event.

We have organised 6 events this year – Wharfedale Primary School's XC relay event, Junior Fell races, Badger Stone Relays, Junior Trail races, Sprint fell relays and the IGS Year 6 induction day activities.

Coach Education is hard work. We are struggling with the new UK coaching structure and we are finding it more difficult to find individuals willing to give up so much time to do courses. However our coach development structure is working very well. Through the Bradford Athletics Network initiative we have had two mornings (with our athletes taking part) at John Charles Centre, Leeds with a follow up pole vault session; a SportCoach course at ILT&SC 'FUNdamentals of Movement' and a 365 course held at Bingley. One of the key initiatives started at the beginning of 2011 was a Sports Leadership course with our junior helpers. With a grant from England Athletics we have had 13 juniors complete all their theory course elements with Katherine Robertshaw (an outside tutor) and all have been clocking up voluntary hours during our coaching sessions. The group will run an organised event in December before qualifying. Those who are over 16 can then go on to do a Community Sports Leadership Award in the spring. All our junior leaders/helpers are fantastic and have been an invaluable help throughout the year. Thanks must go to Ros Blackburn, Rachel Websdale and Alison Eagle for overseeing the course and supporting the juniors. England Athletics are showcasing the project as an example of good practice with the athletics networks.

The most important ingredient to our success since we started has been the enthusiasm, support, commitment and motivation that all the coaches, helpers, parents and juniors have given to the activities that we organise. We introduced the 'Volunteer of the Month' Award last year which is presented to individuals for their commitment to the junior section. For many of our volunteers it is a small amount of recognition and reward for many years of commitment, enthusiasm and support to the junior section. The recipients since September 2010 have been Ian Marshall, Max Greaves, Sally Malir, John Burrows, Alison Bennett, Dwayne Heard, Sally Judkowski and Naomi Elliott. Without the volunteers who give their time freely to 'make things happen' we could not have achieved half as much, so many thanks to everyone who has supported the junior section this year.

... and what for the future? We will continue to do our best to support our juniors at all levels throughout all athletic disciplines. So I guess it's just more of the same. However we have plans to raise the bar in competition by providing more specific coaching sessions for the older juniors. This has already begun – Malcolm & Sally Pickering have set up an 11 years and older speed endurance group; Rachel Websdale has started junior circuits for Year 10 and older (and parents) and Joan & Mael Matthews are starting a sprinting programme using the UAK track a couple of times a month. Onwards and upwards.

Shirley Wood
Junior coaching co-ordinator