

## Alan Bennett

With heavy hearts we are sad to announce that the Tonbridge AC Club President Alan Bennett passed away on Friday 9th February. Alan was a massive influence on the development of TAC over the years and the very best supporter at events, encouraging everyone, whether from Tonbridge or other clubs. He served on the Kent Athletics committee and loved our sport. Our condolences go to all his family.

Alan filled many roles at Tonbridge AC including team managing, secretary, treasurer, Chairman, President, Tonbridge School Liaison.

Here are various messages received, plus a few photos at the end.

### **Dan Madams**

Oh no - how sad. That voice was always much needed. Lovely chap!

### **Alex Howard**

That's awful news - always the stalwart at the very far end of the XC course shouting louder than anyone!

### **Stuart Brown**

Terrible news - always knew the right words of encouragement and the right time! Generally also a lovely person to chat to at races and he was always interested in what you were up to whether uni or work!

### **Miles Weatherseed**

Really sad news, he'll be greatly missed. With how far his voice travelled it sometimes felt like we had an extra man out on the course in some of those Judd races and definitely helped to get the best out of all of us. There was definitely no hiding when things got tough if he was spectating.

### **Sam Crick**

This is such sad news 😞

Alan was one of the most dedicated fans to Tonbridge Athletic Club that we've ever seen! No matter the weather or destination in the country, Alan would be there... you may not see him, but you can guarantee you'd hear him!!

He wasn't biased to the calibre of athlete and the sound of his Tonbridge Call would actually increase if you were further down the field!

I remember distinctly coming up the hill at the far side of parliament hill, probably 15/20 people from the back and Alan yelling all the way up that hill - "COME ON CHARLIEEEE, COME ON CHARLIEEE". It must've been at least a minute before he looked down at start list of numbers he'd always carry and then shout "Sorry Sam... COME ON SAMMMMMM"

Rest in peace Alan! A Tonbridge legend 🙏

**Richard Owen**

Oh Mark, such sad news, but thank you for saying. We will miss his massive voice of support out on the course and for many other reasons too.

**Toby Emm**

Hi Mark, please could pass on my condolences to Tony and the rest of the family. Looking back Alan was always there supporting, even at school races and just a constant force of support. I can still hear his voice now and I'll remember it along with his passion and kindness for a long long time. He will be sorely missed.

**Dave Adkin**

So sad news

**Cathy Puxty**

James, Steph and Rich all remember his encouragement from wherever was the furthest away part of the course whilst they raced. I remember his support whilst coaching with him in Di's group. He was such a stalwart of TAC and will be missed. Please pass on our condolences to all the Bennett family from the Puxtys. Cathy xx

**Mark Pitcairn-Knowles**

Such a TAC force over my years at the club. Have found it hard to see him weakening over the last year. Will be missed by many from lots of clubs.

He was key to me beating Steve Keywood at Parliament Hill 🤔🤔, although he took a lot of flak from Steve, I made sure he knew how grateful I was.

**Andy Wood**

Very sad that we won't hear that 'cajoling ' on the way round a cross country again RIP Alan

**Jason Barton**

Such Sad news!! He was such a present at meets! 💔😭

**Grazia Manzotti**

How sad to hear this. I remember him cheering me on at my very first cross country race in 2019 my first Kent league and I didn't know him so went to meet him after the race. I thought what a gentlemen. He was always telling me off for wearing red shorts. I was thinking of him this morning and thought I must send him a photo with the blue shorts now. RIP Alan.

**Pete Mason**

That's very sad, he will be missed by everyone at TAC and all runners who he cheered on whatever the club. RIP Alan

**Mark Hookway**

Alan supported me so much and sometimes in what would otherwise have been moments of crisis. I and others had so much respect for him and many are quite upset by the news.

**'Jock' Gourlay**

Please pass on my condolences to Tony Sorry 🙄🙄🙄🙄

**Julie Goodge**

That is really sad news 😞

**Chris Hogwood**

Oh no. That's really sad.

**Iain Presnell**

Very sad news.

Every single member has and will benefit from Alan's efforts, negotiations and passion for athletics in general and TAC specifically. Without Alan we would still be running in the dark without floodlights, getting soaked on a track night without a pavilion and hauling equipment up from god knows where without trackside stores. And let's not forget the Community Use Agreement which all but guarantees permanent and affordable athletics (both casual and competitive) for all TAC members well into the future.

There was so much more to Alan than course/track side support and encouragement and even those members who never met or heard Alan are benefiting and will continue to benefit from his commitment to our club.

**From Kent Athletics Facebook page**

**Deniz Bowart**

So sorry to hear of Alans passing. He was the best support and could hear him from miles. Sending lots of love to his family xx

**Jan Hatton**

Sending sincere condolences to Alan's friends and family from the Hatton family 🙏

**Emma-Jayne Evans**

Really sorry to hear this. Thinking and praying for all of Alan's family and the Tonbridge club. With love from the Evans' family x

**Elizabeth Bignell**

Condolences to his family and friends, a truly lovely man.

**Richard Christian**

So sorry to hear the sad news about Alan. My sincere condolences to Alan's family.

**Tim Soutar**



**Alun Rodgers**

So sorry to hear about Alan's passing, I was on the receiving end of his encouragement from his usual position at Parliament Hill a few years ago. I introduced myself to him afterwards, thanking him for his support and we discovered our shared first name (different spellings

obviously), after that we always chatted ahead of races and he always supported me by name.

We spoke at length at Footh Cray in October and he talked about his illness, he said that he was determined to continue attending the Kent Leagues for as long as possible.

I last saw him at Danson Park, sat on one of the benches down towards the lake, still calling out encouragement.

I will miss his enthusiasm for the sport and his booming voice.

Rest easy Alan.

**Alun Rodgers**

I think a lot of people will miss that booming voice 😞

**Darrell Smith**

Very sad to hear this. Alan always had a moment to chat with me and support me if I bumped into him, usually at the farthest part of a Cross Country course. A true Clubman and a great loss to the Sport. My sincere condolences to his family.

**Chris Biddle**

My sincere condolences to Alan's family and to all at Tonbridge AC

**Scott Shurmer**

So sad to learn this 😞 Alan will be so sadly missed my favourable memory is him clocking me looking at my watch from Miles away ! And his support spot @ Brands Hatch kent champs by the pylons absolute legend x

**Moneil Patel**

So sorry to hear this sad news. True gentleman. Condolences to his family 🙏

**Scotty Lynch**

Parliament Hill XC won't ever be the same...his voice echoing across the woods.....

Rest in peace.

**Dan Blades**

Very fond memories of Alan. Initially as a nervous Year 8 student I was petrified of receiving an earful as I ran past. However over the years I grew to realise how much of a support he was to so many people - especially Tonbridge/Judd runners. He would always be in a place when you needed the most encouragement - the furthest hill at Parliament Hill or the very corner field of Somerhill School. He installed the never give up determination in me.

**Diane Wright**

So very sad to hear this news. A great President and gentleman; condolences to his family.

**Claire Capon**

My deepest and sincerest condolences to Alan's family and closest friends. I shall miss his support and warmth at cross countries and track comps 😞 Such a kind hearted gentleman who had time for everyone, regardless of what club you were or event you did. I was so touched when I learnt that it was Alan who had nominated me for a county award in 2012. Tonbridge AC, and our sport have lost one of the best. Rest In Peace Alan Xx

**Kevin Winch**

I am so sorry to hear in the last couple of years gave me a big shout as I was at the back of the field. A real gentleman

**John Harley**

RIP, Alan. You did a wonderful job for Tonbridge AC. Always there, always concerned for everyone/everything and always encouraging. Not least we shall miss you at our liaison meetings with Tonbridge School. They too will miss you as a source of reason and stability. 🙌👏

**Ryan Waterman**

By far one of the nicest men ive ever had the pleasure of knowing. So so sad, Sending my love to all his family and very close friends.

**John Gates**

Sincere condolences, from all at Bexley AC.

**Angie Crush**

So sad to hear this, and to never hear him bellowing at me again round a course - it was all that kept me going at times. He will be hugely missed xx

**David R Ralph**

Admin

RIP, Alan was secretary for KCAA for several years and did a great deal of work in modernising us and left us with a new Constitution, which is sill in use with only very minor changes.

**Russell McIntyre**

I'm very sorry to hear this, a huge loss for everyone at TAC, and my condolences especially to the family

**Graeme Saker**

RIP Alan a truly great club man

**John Hubbard**

Very sorry to hear this.

**Gareth Williams**

Very sad news, RIP Alan

**Graham Holder**

RIP Alan, my thoughts are with his family , Tonbridge AC & KCAA at this very sad time 🙏

**Phillip Pape**

I will miss our chats about Leeds Rhinos. RIP Alan

**Andy Poppleton**

A really lovely man. So very sorry to hear. Many condolences to his family.

**Lisa Knight**

So sad to hear this. Such a lovely man. Will miss his encouraging voice round the courses and was so dedicated to our sport. He will be massively missed.

**Jacqui O'Reilly**

Sorry to hear that. My sincere condolences to his family. He was such a lovely man and great supporter at events. I'm sure he be missed by so many.

**Terry Hawkey**

My sincere condolences to Alan's family and to all at Tonbridge AC.

**Eva Kolivoskova-Martin**

So very sad 😞.

**Margaret Archer**

R.I.P. thoughts with his family

**Rachel Fagg**



Thank you all. It means so much to read these messages and know how much Dad was loved, respected and appreciated by those who knew him. He loved the athletics community and was hugely dedicated to Tonbridge AC and the county, never happier than at the far reaches of a cross country course bellowing his encouragement to athletes across

all clubs or working on a project that would benefit the sport he loved. We will all miss him. So much. X

**Len Reilly**  
**Kent AC co-president**

I write on behalf of Kent AC to say how sorry we are to hear of Alan Bennett's death. As you say, he has made a great contribution to your club and the sport more widely and will be greatly missed.

Please pass our thoughts to your members and his family.

Kind regards

Len

**Joanne Brickell**

I was so sorry to hear about Alan's passing. Your tribute was very moving - you are going to miss him greatly aren't you as are the whole of TAC. I will always remember how kind he was to Meg when she was struggling with injuries and how supportive he was. Do you think you could let me know when his funeral is as Meg and I will do our best to attend. My thoughts are with you all at TAC.

**Tony Milana**

That's very sad about Alan. He was an Enfield (North London) boy, as am I. We used to talk about it all the time on TAC nights walking to out our points at Judd. He was indeed a one off and a 'real diamond' can be a bit of a cliché, but he really was one. You can take the boy out of Enfield, but you can't take Enfield out of the boy. It's a lovely tribute by you on the website. I didn't know he was ill. He really will be missed. All the best. Tony.

**Debbie King**

Very sad to hear this. He was such a lovely figure – always calling out encouragement to Ella and remembering everyone's names. He was part of what made the club so special.

**Maurice Marchant**

What a great loss Alan's death is to TAC. Younger members are more likely to remember his vocal support, known of course to many more than our club members (Is there any recording of that contribution?). He has really served the club over so many years, as treasurer, chairman and then president. I shall certainly miss him.

**Paul Hills**

Not a close friend, but we shared an interest in Non League soccer, about which he was very knowledgeable. Twice he took me to Tonbridge Angels, and I reciprocated at Ebbsfleet Untied. Until ill health Alan was always a willing marshal at races I put on. Swanley, Brand's, Dartford, he would readily offer his services. Always supportive. Last contact with him, by email, was reporting to him that his son Tony had continued this line of support at Brands in January. Boy Done Good as I reported to him.

I think the most memorable thing about Alan, (Shouty Man as he knew I called him), would be found at the most far flung points of courses to shout his support. Looked for him once at

Parliament Hill, so just tracked the course to a very quiet wooded section out towards Kenwood House. There he was in the dip hollering support. He would ask for team or entry lists so he could give name to those few he didn't know.

### **Bill Spiers**

You don't know me but I've been a friend of Alan's for more than 70 years.

We would have first met in 1953 when our respective families moved into a new housing development in Southgate, North London. We went to the same primary school - Eversley - and played together on the school football team when we were old enough. We went to different grammar schools after the 11-plus exams but remained good friends and close neighbours. While the close neighbours part ended when I emigrated to Canada in 1969, we remained good friends helped in part by both of us being big Spurs supporters!

At first, after I emigrated to Canada, we kept in touch intermittently - usually by exchanging news in Christmas cards. However, I always tried to meet up with Alan for a beer or two (or maybe more) when I came over to the UK to visit my family. With the advent of the internet and e-mail, we were able to communicate with each other more frequently and family and Spurs would be standard topics of discussion.

I just wanted to tell you that enjoyed reading your comments about Alan on the TAC website. As others have pointed out, a wonderful tribute to Alan. As a long time volunteer sports administrator myself (in Canadian soccer), I can understand and appreciate how much work Alan must have done for the Tonbridge Athletic Club. However, judging from your comments - as well as the many other comments from people in the athletics community - it was more than I ever imagined and clearly Alan will be sadly missed. We've both lost a good friend!

### **Diane Wright**

Wow - just read your tribute to Alan on the TAC website- that's set me off!! Great tribute to a great man!

























