**Tonbridge are National Champions once again**

Tonbridge Athletic Club’s men’s team regained the English National Cross Country Championship title on Saturday, at Wollaton Park Nottingham and headed a record medal haul for the club. They were supported by the under 13 girls, also winning their championship, with silver medals being won by the under 15 boys, under 17 men and under 20 men.

The men had won both in 2017 and 2018, but were runners-up to Leeds last year and probably not amongst the favourites to lift the trophy this season, as the likes of Bedford and Aldershot would be strong, aswell as the current champions.

Conditions in the week beforehand, with rainstorms, had tested the organisers, making the course extremely challenging, with surface water and knee deep mud in places. This would test the resolve of all the competitors, but nearly two thousand took part in the men’s event.

The conditions suited mountain running international Max Nicholls, who led the team home in 11th, followed by Ben Cole (24th), Kieran Reilly (32nd), Ryan Driscoll (42nd), Corey De’Ath (58th) and Luke Fisher, having his best ever performance in 76th. Leeds had started well with two in the top eight, but scored 277 points to the Tonbridge total of 243, with Bristol, Bedford and Highgate not far away.

The under 13 girls all performed well, with Lily Slack in 5th leading the way, ahead of an outstanding run from Gracie MacAuley in 9th. Penny Horne (38th) and Georgia Conroy (84th) completed the scoring team, as Tonbridge won by just eight points, from Wreake and Soar Valley, with Wolverhampton in third. Two hundred and fifty seven runners completed the three kilometre course, as Tonbridge won for the second year in a row.

Tonbridge had hopes, rather than expectations, for medals in the three competitions, where silver medals were won. The under 20 men finished second to Shaftesbury Barnet through James Puxty (17th), James Kingston (20th), Will Beeston (60th) and Dan Schofield (69th), despite the latter two recently returning from injuries.

The under 17 men were runners-up to Windsor, with the four scorers being Matthew Taylor (5th), Fraser Gordon (24th), Henry Taylor (30th) and Alex Beeston (50th). The under 15 boys finished just one point ahead of third placed Windsor and behind a very strong team from South London Harriers. The four scorers packed very well, amongst 364 finishers, through Adam Jeddo (26th), George Hopkins (35th), Ananjan Ganguli (37th) and Josh Prendergast (42nd).

The senior womens placed 7th from 94 completed teams, despite missing a couple of key runners. Nicole Taylor (20th), Lucy Reid (27th), Harriet Woolley (104th) and Chloe Bird (124th) scored, as around a thousand started the race.

In the other age group races Tonbridge finished 5th in the under 13 boys’, 6th in the under 17 women’s, 8th in the under 20 women’s and 12th in the under 15 girls’ events to complete probably their best overall set of National Championship results.

**Coppard wins National 800 metres title**

Whilst many of his team mates were competing in the cross country championships, at the weekend, Simon Coppard, won the National under 20 men’s 800 metres title, at Sheffield. After winning his heat on Saturday in 1.56.42, he took the lead in Sunday’s final and hung on to win in 1.54.70, as Oliver Lill, of Basildon, ran 1.54.77 and David Locke of Cardiff 1.54.85.

Competing at the same championships Zac Beasty set a personal best of 7.44 in the heats of the under 17 men’s 60 metres, whilst Freya Ridge finished 7th in the under 17 women’s High Jump, with 1.60 metres.

Also competing indoors, at the British Championships, being held at Glasgow, Sean Molloy was unlucky not to qualify for the six-man 800 metres final, missing out by just 0.06 seconds in the heats. Molloy ran a season’s best of 1.50.37, whilst Ben Murphy ran an indoor personal best of 1.52.19. Jack Lennard also qualified for the championships, but was eliminated after both the 60 metres and 200 metres heats.