**Taylor wins Southern Cross Country title**

**and Tonbridge collect four team medals**

Matthew Taylor, of Tonbridge Athletic Club, captured a shock win in the under 17 men’s race at the South of England Cross Country Championships, at Parliament Hill Fields, Hampstead, on Saturday.

The tough and muddy conditions were to Taylor’s liking and he was in the lead group for almost the entire six kilometre race. With four hundred metres to go it was a battle for gold between Taylor and Will Barnicoat of Windsor, who had run for Great Britain under 20s, in the European Championships before Christmas. However, the younger man was at his absolute best and was able to create a lead before the home straight and win by four seconds. He led the Tonbridge team to silver medals, supported by Henry Taylor (15th), Matthew Dubery (17th) and Fintan Kavanagh (33rd).

Nicole Taylor had a fine race in the senior women’s race, improving two places from her best ever position last year to finish second, after a race long battle with Jess Gibbons of Reading. Tonbridge won the bronze team medals, from seventy teams, gaining a podium place for the first time in their history. Lucy Reid (5th), Alice Wood (27th) and Harriet Woolley (80th) scored and all had strong performances amongst a field of more than seven hundred starters.

The Tonbridge senior men’s team, despite being some way short of full strength, produced an excellent performance to win the silver medals, from eighty one clubs, as Aldershot took the title. Max Nicholls, who has Parliament Hill Fields as one of his favourite courses, led the squad home in 8th, with Corey De’Ath 15th and Ben Cole 16th. Then came three scorers who were new to winning team medals at this level, in the senior ranks, as Jamie Goodge (25th), Michael Ellis (39th) and Stuart Brown (47th) all had outstanding runs in a field of around twelve hundred starters on the nine mile course.

The fourth set of team medals plus an individual medal came in the under 13 girls’ race. Lily Slack equalled her performance from last year to finish second and was supported by Penny Horne (19th), Gracie MacAuley (25th) and Georgia Conroy (44th) as the team finished runners-up to Chiltern.

The other Tonbridge teams were the under 13 boys who finished 8th, under 15 boys 7th, under 15 girls 6th, under 17 women 10th and under 20 men 4th.

On Sunday Helen Gaunt was first female home in the Canterbury 10 mile road race, recording 63.56, just nine seconds away from her best set in 2011.

There were a few club members competing in the London Indoor Games at the weekend, at Lee Valley. Amongst the highlights were wins for Elicia Lacey and Emily Bowart. Lacey won an under 13 girls’ 60 metres hurdles, in 9.71, just a hundredth of a second away from her club record, whilst Bowart won an under 17 women’s 300 metres in 42.36.