

MILOCARIAN ATHLETIC CLUB

Established 1930

President: Brigadier Tony Ling CBE, Late The Queen's Regiment.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT ON THE 2023/24 SEASON.

Introduction.

1. Like last year, the club held a well-supported home match, at Sandhurst, at the start of the season and then suffered a shortage of both opposition and opportunity throughout the rest of the winter. It was apparent that the lingering effect of Covid was still sapping the strength of weaker clubs. On the positive side, park and local authorities lifted restrictions on use of their open spaces. The strength of the park run movement may well have been instrumental in this, it is too big to ignore.

2. A rather lacklustre season ended on an encouraging note when the club made a strong showing at the Runnymede Relays.

General.

3. The restricted number of fixtures notwithstanding, it proved difficult to raise teams, the perennial problems of postings and family commitments reducing numbers. A small core of strong runners usually guaranteed that the club would be competitive, but depth was lacking.

4. It was hoped that Last year's fixture against a Sandhurst side would be the start of an annual series, but an Academy ban on Saturday sport brought this to a halt. Similarly, promising links with Birmingham and London OTCs were severed by changes in permanent staff and efforts are ongoing to re-establish them.

5. An enthusiastic body of members and associates kept the virtual running competition going strongly and at a high standard. The overall level of performance has improved steadily, year by year with the leading runners pulling the others along behind them. Park runs may not be meant to be competitive, but they do seem to bring out participants' best performances. Virtual running has provided a means of keeping what is essentially a virtual club tied together and it will be continued.

Organisation.

6. The Committee, 2023/24.

Neil Wood, late Army – Chairman.

Richard Adamson, late Army – Cross Country Secretary.

Gavin McAllister Esq. – Treasurer.

Mike Sumpter, late RAF – Website Manager.

7. The new committee members have taken up the reins seamlessly and managed the season well. Gavin McAllister's experience as a banker mitigated the wearisome process of changing account holders; his patience and attention to detail were exemplary.

Achievements.

8.Virtual Running.

a.The virtual competition allows participants to log times for runs of over 5km on Strava which are then converted into 5km times and consolidated fortnightly into an order of merit. Six fortnightly sessions make a season at the end of which an overall ranking is produced and the results published on the club's website.

b.The competition is now in its fourth year and fifteenth season and it seems to have achieved momentum and become an established fixture in members' running routines. One of the fascinations of it is the variety of places where times are logged; every continent bar Antarctica seems to have featured.

c. Just over 60 runners are signed up to the competition and about 30 regularly submit times. The top of the honours board has been dominated by Tom Kirby who has regularly set sub-17 minute times with David Branfoot in close contention. Coming up on the rails is Charlie Wood who, with A levels out of the way, is putting in some serious training and has reduced his times from a consistent 20 minutes to sub-18 and there seems to be more to come.

9.Team Matches.

a.General. As usual, the season commenced with the home match, at Sandhurst, after which there was something of a lull until Orion's fixture, in the new year, another lull and then a burst of activity, involving an invitation event and two regular inter-club matches, in March, before rounding off at the Runnymede Relays.

b.28 Oct 23, the Home Match.

i. The weather was good, the course challenging, as usual and the fixture was well-supported by 7 clubs and 80 runners, although numbers were much-reduced by the lack of cadets, owing to a change in policy on Saturday sport. Nevertheless, the field was of a high standard, Thames Hare and Hounds, in particular, having brought a very strong team.

ii. James Hoad of Thames Hare and Hounds dominated the race, winning in 30:46, ably supported by his team mates who packed the podium and fielded the fastest lady in 9th place to claim the Terry Lewins Trophy for a second year with Milocarian A, led by Tom Rann, in fifth, following in a fairly distant second. The ladies' prize was taken by Ranelagh who were well clear of Runnymede Runners.

iii. Prizes were presented by Mrs Clare Spacie.

c.13 Jan 23, Orion 10 mile Race. This is an annual epic where only the distance and the quality of the field remain the same; taking place in early January, the weather is a lottery and that dictates the going which varies from muddy to liquid toffee. This year the weather was good, as was the going, by Epping Forest standards. Orion Harriers hosted several north London clubs and an expeditionary force of four Milos in a field of 175. The winner was well clear in 66:17, leading home a strong Orion team, Eton Manor challenged in second. Dan Collis led the Milos in 17th and 73:47, knocking 8 minutes off his time in 2023; Gavin McAllister improved his time by over 3 minutes.

d.3 Mar 24. British Airways. The club was invited as guests to BA's annual match against Hillingdon AC. Felix Keating and Gavin McAllister could not resist the lure of a four lap event, in a rather featureless park, packed between the M4 and Heathrow airport and took fourth and 11th places respectively. The race taking place on a Sunday morning, the team manager had to assume that the club's other runners were at church.

e.10 Mar 24. Thames Hare and Hounds.

i.The Keith Spacie Trophy was contested for the first time having been inaugurated the previous year in commemoration of a stalwart supporter of both clubs.

ii.On a dry and mild morning the Milos came away with the spoils. James Hoad, who had won at Sandhurst, led the field in 31:14, backed up by a Thames team-mate, but the Milos packed well with 6 runners in the first 12, led by Tom Rann in 31:34, to take the team trophy and to ensure that the club's was the first name to be inscribed on it.

f.23 Mar 24. Ranelagh Harriers, The Ellis Trophy.

i.The club has good form in what is usually a fast field, but a variety of factors led to an understrength team turning out in Richmond Park which could not contest the trophy.

ii.The Ranelagh course is quick, lots of nice, firm grass and nothing dreadful in the way of hills. The home team's Peter Cook won in 29:50, Charlie Wood challenged strongly for the Milos in third, but was short of support, the remaining Milos finishing in the middle of the field of 66.

iii.Stragglers made off with Ranelagh's team trophy with the home team having to content themselves with being the runners-up.

g.29 Jun 24. The Runnymede Relays.

i.The format of this annual event was changed for the 2024 running from a straightforward 6 leg relay to a test of laps covered over a three hour period for teams of two or four runners, single sex or mixed. The lap length remained the same at 3.7 miles of Windsor Park.

ii.The club fielded one of the strongest teams in a long time and aimed to challenge for honours across several categories. Conditions were perfect for running and Runnymede Runners had attracted a good turn out of 36 teams.

iii.The overall winning team would inevitably come from among the male fours and Datchett Dashers and the Milos were in contention throughout the afternoon. Eventually Datchett's consistency prevailed and the Milos had to settle for second, three minutes adrift after three hours of running. The leading four teams managed 8 laps each while the club's second male four ran 7 laps to take 12th overall.

iv.The Milocarian male pair of Alex Rudd and George Christie ran 7 laps between them, something over a half marathon each, to win their category in 10th place overall. Alex Rudd was a model of consistency, his four laps taking between 22:39 and 23:06 each. The club's mixed four finished just ahead of the male pair, in 9th overall and third in their category.

v.There was general agreement that the new format worked well, particularly as it was backed up by a very effective computerised scoring system that enabled real time tracking of what became a fairly confusing field as the afternoon progressed. As a final break with tradition, the organisers reversed the habitual direction of the lap to clockwise and that was reckoned to be worthwhile too, probably because it meant that the finishing stretch was now downhill rather than a long uphill slog.

10.Meanwhile.

a.Although the club raced relatively few miles during the season, some members were busy competing individually and piling up both height and distance.

b.David Branfoot, based in Cyprus, won the Limasol 10km, in October and came 8th in the Larnaca half marathon the following month.

c.Hamish and Celia Waring probably ran more racing miles between them than the rest of the club put together. They competed in a variety of events across the UK and Europe, from Snowdonia to

Madeira and at distances spanning 35km to 175km. They challenged for honours as individuals and as a pair, Hamish winning in The Peak District and Grasmere and Celia as the runner up in The Black Mountains while they were second pair in Sonwdonia.

Membership.

11. Membership is open to the regular and reserve forces, male and female, serving and retired and their dependants. In spite of reduced momentum after the virus, retention of members has been good and the club has kept its competitiveness.

12. The committee has decided that club subs should be held at £25 for new members for the first year, which includes the cost of the member's club vest and £10 a year thereafter, payable by direct debit.

13. Non-running members' subs have been held at £7.50 a year which entitles them to be circulated with race details and invitations to attend events, including the home match.

14. Officer Cadets and undergraduates in OTCs and equivalents are signed up and given a vest on the understanding that their direct debits will not be activated until after commissioning or graduation.

15. Although a tri-service club, currently Milocarian AC is 'Army heavy' and it would be appreciated if the RN and RAF sports boards would encourage participation by their runners when possible.

Trophies.

16. General. The two Milocarian trophies awarded externally have come back into service, one being contested annually and the other every two years. They are held and insured by the organisers of the events at which they are awarded under loan agreements with the club.

17. Awards to External Competitions.

a. The Milocarian Cup. The club's memorial trophy is pledged to the Youth Sport Trust to be awarded to the winning regional athletics team at the national schools' games, which are held at Loughborough. Owing to funding difficulties the games have had to be held biennially recently rather than annually as originally intended; the next schools' games is to be held at the end of August 2024. Several graduates of the games will be representing Great Britain at this year's Paris Olympics, such as Katarina Johnson-Thompson, Morgan Lake and Adam Peatty.

b. The Milocarian Trophy. This was adopted by Achilles AC for their annual inter-schools relay championships, to be awarded to the outstanding girls' team. The last meeting was held in May, at Iffley Road, Oxford and the club's chairman presented the trophy to Millfield School's 3 x 800m girls relay team who produced the only record of the meeting in winning their event.

18. Club Trophies.

a. The Terry Lewins Trophy. Inaugurated in 1988, this cup has been awarded to the winning team in the club's annual home match, usually held at Sandhurst, in October. Milocarian AC hosts the clubs against which it will compete during the rest of the season. The cup is currently held by Thames Hare and Hounds who also won it October 2022.

b. The Milocarian Ladies Trophy. First awarded at the last home match before the virus struck, this cup goes to the winning ladies team at the home match and is currently held by Ranelagh

Harriers.

c.The Ploen Trophy. Named after the location of King Alfred's School, in Germany, the perennial winner of the The Milocarian Cup in the 1950s, it is presented annually to the club's best runner over the course of the cross country season.

d.The Wyvern Cup. Donated by the Wyvern Club, the association of former pupils of King Alfred's School, it is awarded to the club's leading lady runner each season.

Acknowledgements.

19.The club values hugely its associations with the staff of HQ RMA Sandhurst and particularly of the gym that give so much help in maintaining the club's flagship event, the home match. Similarly, the Army Sports Control Board is ever helpful and supportive in nudging runners towards the club

20.The club would not function without the dedicated work of the cross country secretary, the treasurer and the website manager; it is a tribute to them that the club has maintained its momentum over recent years and can look forward to the coming season with confidence. The website, managed by Mike Sumpter, has been of particular value as a means of keeping the club together and maintaining a competitive challenge via the virtual running sessions.

21.Keeping the Club Alive. The club has recently managed to find new members for the committee, but is always on the lookout for new runners and supporters.. Neither age nor athletic ability is a barrier, enthusiasm and imperviousness to British winter weather are the necessary qualities. Anybody who is interested or anybody who knows anybody who might be interested should contact the chairman on 01622 718665 or wood358@btinternet.com.

22.The club's website is accessible on www.milocarianac.info and sets out membership details and will contain the 2024/25 race calendar, results and details of club activities in due course.