Hi all

Blackheath and Bromley HAC young athletes closed the domestic winter season this weekend at the brutal course that is Parliament Hill!

The National Cross Country Championships, ‘The Nationals', are the highlight of the cross country season and this year it was back in the South at the tough hilly course run over Hampstead Heath. All running clubs throughout the country, from Cornwall to Northumberland and counties between converge to compete at the very highest level England has to offer.

Parliament Hill, with its up hill start is daunting enough but add to that conditions under foot that have not been seen for many years and you can’t help but have massive respect for every single athlete who makes the starting line, let alone those that finish! Recent rains made the already sodden course a quagmire with mud and puddles a foot deep (30cm for the metric folk), you only have to look at the photos on our web site to fully appreciate them. Great character building!

Photos at [www.bandbhac.org.uk/national%2021-02-15.html#photos](http://www.bandbhac.org.uk/national%2021-02-15.html#photos)

The day started early for Hanna and Dave Cordell (once again) and after surveying the site found the perfect lofty spot to position the club tent, affording spectacular views over the London skyline and relatively dry under foot. Hanna somehow even managed to keep her chair clean!

School half term, skiing holidays and injuries affected our numbers but we were still proud to have 43 of our young athletes making it to the start.

The U17 girls were first off and Niamh Bridson Hubbard led the girls home with a fantastic run finishing in 12th place, this despite spraining her ankle last week. Niamh was moving down some steps at the local train station and slipped on anti freeze, put down to melt the ice and to prevent people slipping!! No running for a while but plenty of aqua running obviously kept her fitness levels up. Jess Keene hasn’t trained for two weeks due to illness so it was great to see her back in action and finishing a respectable 25th, all things considered. Georgina Taylor had a solid run in 120th follow by Mary Guy continuing her great season in 149th completed the scoring team finishing just outside the medals in a fine 4th place. Jenny Sheasby, having missed some training recently due to her studies did well finishing in 205th.

Six U15 boys set off and Coleman Corry was first home having a strong run coming just outside the top 100 in 101st place. Michael Eagling was next home in 118th but later had to forfeit a box of chocolates for misplacing his Blackheath top! Oscar Hussey, running his last cross country race as an U15, came in 142nd. Callum Myatt fresh from his Kent debut, completed the scoring four in 261st giving the team 19th place overall. Charlie Andrews running in his National debut finished strongly in the muddy conditions in 282th as did Lewis Stickings in 290th.

Sam Leighton was our sole representative in the U20 women race and crossed the line in 82nd.

The U13 girls race had the most athletes running with 433 girls finishing. BB’s first home after a gutsy run was Jess Neal in 60th place, next  was Rosie Allen in a strong 120th, followed by Morgan Squibb in a great 138th and Zoe Austridge, over 150 places higher than last year, in 213th ensuring the team finished in 18th out of 49 scoring teams. Niamh Milmo in her first National  was 221st, Lauren Goddard was 312th and Caitlin Prifti, also on her debut was 393rd. U13 Isobel Bridge who is currently injured travelled with the team and spent the day cheering them all on, hopefully she will be able to compete again soon.

The U17 boys were affected by holiday and injury and only had three boys start but Joss Barber continued his great season with his highest National finish in a fine 44th. James Crawley on his National debut was a respectable 218th. Charlie Davis, having not run for a few weeks due to injury was determined to run in the National because, to quote Charlie “ It’s the National! ”. Unfortunately Charlie’s lack of running caught up with him and he rightly decided to pull out half way into the race, hopefully with no lasting damage done, I just hope physio Gemma Viney won’t be too hard on him!

Next up hoping to defend their National  cross country title were the U15 girls who had also won two National relay trophies this season. Yasmin Austridge set off in determined fashion holding a top ten place over the first half of the race and finishing her highest ever National in a great 8th place. Millie Smith a year young had a fantastic run finishing 15th place bettering  her great performance of last year when finishing 19th. Naomi Kingston continues to run with guts and determination and crossed the line in a very respectable 38th. Naomi’s standards and expectation of herself are very high having finished last years National in a brilliant 5th place but she shouldn’t be disappointed with her performance as we are only talking a matter of seconds making the difference in very difficult conditions. Genny Allen completed the scoring team in a great 79th securing team bronze medals. Amy Leach, at only 14 years old  was our first lady home in last weeks 7 1/2 mile mob match, continues to improve and had a fantastic run finishing well inside the top 100 in 87th, nearly 100 places higher than last year. Kelsi Cornish had a good run finishing inside the top 100 in 98th and Stephanie Taylor finished well in 211th.

We haven’t had a scoring quartet of U20 for many years so it was great to see four Blackheath vests on the start of the U20 men 10k race. Will Fuller has had a couple of bouts of illness so great to see him back racing again and he should be very pleased with his 26th finish. Richard Webb had a strong race in 74th as did Will Ruiz making the top 100 in 89th. Most pleasing for me was seeing ever present Thomas Desborough finally be part of a full scoring team and his fine 124th was good enough to secure a great 6th in the team competition.

The U13 boys was the last junior race of the day before the mass numbers of senior women and men took flight. Having won team bronze at the South of England hopes were high for another great performance and the boys didn't disappoint. Rowan Fuss showed his class again with a brilliant 10th place finish, Peter Guy showed his strength leading the field up the nasty start hill and finished in a great 18th. Keir Lundy and Joseph Georgiadis could only be separated by one second but their 83rd and 84th positions made safe the teams bronze medal finish. Such is our strength and depth in the U13 age group another six boys were backing up the bronze winning team. 11 year old Sam Reardon making his National debut powered through the mud to finish a fantastic 138th in a field of nearly 400 runners. Robert Suckling was a strong 149th and another 11 year old Thomas Penlington ran superbly to finish 174th. Cameron Swatton showed his continued improvement with a strong run knocking off nearly 100 places from last year in 208th. Two further debuts from Jake Leng in 253rd and Ethan Kitteridge, who described the conditions “as like running though PVA glue” in 307th completed the Blackheath presence. Many thanks to David Lundy who was able to collect the medals on behalf of the U13 boys.

For those of you not familiar with Parliament Hill and the Nationals, it is such a big prestigious event that many BB members make the difficult journey to get there to watch and support our athletes. This year that included track coach Nigel Stickings and track team manager Nic Corry and they were both able to drag themselves away from the renowned farmers market long enough to watch their off spring! Mike Peel and Terry Shotton were welcome spectators as they also doubled up taking quality photos (see above) and helping Hanna and Dave dismantle the tent after proceedings. Great to see past president and former National cross country competitor Graham Botley showing PP Pat Calnan around the course! Grahams take on the course was interesting as he commented on how dry under foot it was compared to the old days!! Tony ‘the Pope' Pontifex was also out on the course blessing and supporting the athletes along with PP Tim Souter, desperate to run himself. Current club president Dick Griffin was as usual there enjoying his last few weeks of presiding over our club before the next incumbent???  All will be revealed at the AGM on 21st March. The cakes at the farmers market were also the draw for track manager Ken Daniel although being the athlete he is, he would never admit to that. Mick Jones was all over the course cheering all on, as well as making sure they had warmed up and had their electronic chips on! Another team manager there supporting (as always) was Karen and Mark Desborough (Tom’s mum and dad) along with countless other parents, grandparents and family. Two mums Kathryn Suckling and Jenny Leng actually ran in the senior women race, finishing the day as dirty and tired as their sons Robert and Jake.

This weeks team managers awards are as follows

Girls awarded by Andy

*"There were some outstanding performances yesterday led by Yasmin Austridge and Millie Smith with their best ever placings in the Under 15 race, and Niamh Bridson-Hubbard in the Under 17 race. However the team managers prize is shared by Jessica Neal leading the Under 13 team home in her first national, and Amy Leach who improved almost 100 places from last year in her best run of the season”*

Boys awarded by Paul

Rowan Fuss wins the managers award at the National for his superb run in finishing 10th, a fantastic achievement still with another year in the age group.

Both team managers managed to stay on their feet this week but by looking at the state of everyone at the end it looked as though we had all fallen in the mud!

Next years winter season should be as exciting as this years and the standard will be even higher as nearly two thirds of the athletes will still be competing in the same age groups.

BBHAC’s future is looking very bright.

Full results from the National [www.englishcrosscountry.co.uk/news/2015-nationals-results-pdf/](http://www.englishcrosscountry.co.uk/news/2015-nationals-results-pdf/)

Next year’s National will be held in the North of England and will involve a weekend trip by coach with a two night at a hotel. As soon as the venue and date are confirmed we will be making a reservation and then asking you for a small deposit so that we can estimate numbers.

Paul Austridge