Blackheath and Bromley young athletes were once again out in large numbers for Saturdays South of England Cross Country Championships. Arriving at Parliament Hill on a dry bright morning it soon became clear that the ground was totally water logged and athletes and spectators were all in for a difficult muddy day.

With 56 youngsters representing the club we had a great showing in each age group and this was most obvious in the U15 girls who comfortably won the team race and becoming South of England Champions. The team of four scoring girls finished in the top eleven ahead of all the other teams second placed scorers, great bunching. Jess Keene 4th led the girls home with Kelsey Fuss 6th, Naomi Kingston 8th and Yasmin Austridge 11th. They were well backed up by Georgina Taylor 40th, Tammy Falshaw 93rd, Joanna Clowes 124th, Mary Guy 139th, Chloe Kibblewhite 146th, Gabriela Gosnell 212th and Darcy Kirwin 255th.

The U17 girls team finished 4th overall  with Niamh Bridson Hubbard 15th, Charlotte Rhule 51st, Anna Myers 62nd, Sam Leighton 95th, Jenny Sheasby 136th and Chloe Haffenden 145th.

Despite missing three top ten finishers from the Kent Champs the thirteen U13 boys running, still excelled and finished  5th team on the day. Another gutsy run from Henry James Cowie (despite being accused by Herne Hill Harriers of trying to noble one of their best runners, having accidentally spiked him before the start of the race!!) saw him coming down the finishing straight in an impressive 4th, Michael Eagling 31st, Coleman Corry 61st and George Pope 76th completed the scoring four. It was hard to split Lewis Stickings 112th and Joseph Georgiadis 113th as they both sprinted to the finish clocking the same time. Young Keir Lundy had a strong run in 142nd followed by Lewis Warren164th, Ben Gardiner 172nd, Callum Myatt 196th, Billy Keene 206th, Harrison Parker 216th and

Cameron Swatton 244th completed the impressive Blackheath and Bromley showing.

Eleven U13 girls lined up for their 3K slog through the mud and collectively they finished in creditable 6th team place. Millie Smith 21st led them home, with Imogen Meers finishing strongly in 47th ,

Jessica Sellar continued her first season for the club with another great run in 55th and young Emilie Penlington 85th completed the scoring four. Grace Scopes 103rd, Alice Prentice 105th Stephanie Taylor 116th, Lauren Goddard 180th, Isabelle Bridge 185th, Claudia Pickup 227th and Zoe Austridge 243rd completed the Blackheath contingent.

The U15 boys had nine braving the course and were brought home by Marco Arcuri 74th, Alex Wiltshire 88th and  Charlie Davis 107th. Joss Barber showed great early form but after losing a spike, running back but unable to find it, lost momentum but still did well to finish in 116th completing the scoring quartet. This gave the lads a team placing of 16th. Will Pope finished in 181st, Arthur Carey finished well in 216th, Oscar Hussey despite running with a severe stitch throughout was 219th, Scott Bulmer suffering a double elbow blow to the stomach at the start  234th and Harry Keene also losing his shoe somewhere in the quagmire 254th.

The three U17 boys were not able to score as a team but all had great individual runs. Will Fuller was strong throughout, hurdled a dog a one stage (see video) and powered his way through the field to finish a very impressive 6th. Richard Webb full of running came home in a fine 20th. Thomas Desborough had his best Southern run coming home inside the top 100 for the first time finshing 97th.

Will Ruiz had the difficult job of being the only BBHAC vest (which incidentally was dropped in the mud by a senior official before his race) in the U20 mens race but more than held his own placing high up the field with a great run in 35th.

Two U20 girls made good accounts of themselves with Amber Red 39th and Beth Frost 67th but we were unable to field a scoring team.

  All the young athletes did extremely well running over a hilly, muddy and testing course, even more impressive that some managed in trainers!  The club does have a selection of second hand spikes at the
  track which are available for those who require them.

The last race of the day saw nearly 1000 runners swarming over the mud and in the worsening condition this made the use of our club tent an even more valuable asset.

Dave and Hanna Cordell get to the course early, erect the tent, even provide a few chairs, collect all the numbers and race chips ready to hand out and then late in the day when most have already left, dismantle the tent and try and repack it for the journey home, once home they then clean, dry and re pack ready for the next meeting.

Their job was made harder on Saturday by a short but very sharp storm that damaged the tent which would have blown away had it not been for Dave and Hanna, President Bob Cliff, Tim Souter and a few Samaritans who kindly helped rescue the tent.

On behalf of all the young athletes and their parents I would like to thank Dave and Hanna for all their time and effort they put in to making our race days more comfortable.
Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

There are some great videos of all the days races at <http://www.athleticos.org/coverage/251344-2014-South-of-England-Cross-Country-Championships>

All races throughout the season can also be viewed at <http://www.tacdistancerunners.com/race-videos-winter-201314.html>

Full results can be found  <http://mcs.open.ac.uk/mkac/14seaaxc.htm>

The next club race is the weekend trip to Nottingham for the Nationals.

Good Luck for all those competing for their counties next weekend at Southampton.

Paul Austridge