**Presidents Report for AGM**

I am quite sure that nobody wants to either sit through a long address by the club President or feel obliged to read a long dissertation on the web or in hard copy.   However, I do feel obliged to say something as a sort of valedictory offering at my last AGM as an officer of the club.

I joined the club in the autumn of 1982 and was invited to join the committee in 1984.   The ensuing 32 years have seen a huge growth in the membership and an equally impressive expansion of the club’s activities.    Back in 1984 our membership was not much more than 100 and we were mainly a club for juniors.   I believe we now have a membership approaching 300, covering all ages.   Back in 1984 we had a senior men’s track and field team, but no ladies team and no junior teams.

At that time the men’s league covered the whole of the south in 8 divisions and we had to travel as far as Norfolk, Devon and Cornwall from year to year.   I well remember us being threatened with relegation to division 8, the very bottom division, a prospect which we did not relish, so a modestly small team travelled to Canvey Island hoping to get enough points in the last match of the season to avoid this ignominy.   Pleasingly a small team of Barry Tullett, Nick Saunders, Bob Ruff, Matt Bristow and I just succeeded.   Things have changed a lot and we now have a mixed male/female senior team jointly with Lewes in a league which has been sensibly regionalised.

Back then we had a few cross country entrants from time to time but scored very few points towards the foot of the table.   But now we have good teams in both ladies and men’s leagues and, indeed, our men have just excelled themselves and, after a couple of recent promotions, finished in second place in league one.  A truly great effort.

Meanwhile club involvement in road and trail races in the county has increased hugely, and not only because there are so many more fixtures nowadays.    As a result we have been able to leave a great record of success in the county Grand Prix in recent years.  Not satisfied simply with these local fixtures club members have competed all over Europe, in a number of events in America, in the Sahara desert and many other exotic places.

All this is only to emphasise just how the club has developed in the last 20 years as our senior section has grown and thrived.    Those juniors who have competed have acquitted themselves well but we need larger numbers turning out in the Sports Hall league, summer track & field leagues and cross country if we are to make our mark amongst the medals and awards at the end of each season.

The club clearly has a tremendous amount going for it right now and we must all do all we can to maintain the momentum and build on the successes we have enjoyed in recent years.

Whilst it is invidious to mention just a couple of people out of the many who have done so much to lift the club to its current level, I still feel that I must mention two leading lights in this uplift of the club and they are Linda Tullett and Martin Delbridge for their enthusiasm and leadership from the coaching side which has played such a major part in recent successes.

And now as I drift off into the sidelines I should just like to say that I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with the club and although my own days of competitive action (and even the odd medal) are now past I will continue to check up results from week to week in the Middy or on the web.  Some things really do get into the blood and are very hard to shift!

I wish my successor and all club members all the good luck in the world in all future administration and competition.

With my very best regards to all

John Gill