**HHH Presidents Report 2021** (AGM 1/4/2022)

Twelve Months ago we were holding our AGM using Smart Technology (and even smarter graphics) as our general world had been turned upside down by Covid. We’d been in and out of Lockdowns and talk of “Groups of 6” had become part of our everyday Lingo, we’d also learned about Virtual Racing, and indeed still had two races to run in our own Spring Series. I think we all enjoyed those final races, the wit from the reporters and the spirit of competition that arose. Thanks again to all the organisers behind those.

In spite of increased relaxation of Covid restrictions there wasn’t really much of a summer season – not much T&F for Juniors, some vets league meets (well done Paul & Marcus for chivvying folk out) but not much structure around the usual summer leagues races – no WSFRL, no SGP series. It wasn’t until the autumn that the Beetroot vests began to show in anger as the Cross Country season got underway. In spite of Covid and other distractions disrupting participation we still had 52 senior members complete 135 races in the Sussex Leagues and Championships (compare 48/140 in 2019/20 season). Our juniors were in fact a little up on 2019/20 : 23 athletes running 62 races cf 25 running 55 races – even if this was well down on the peak interest in 2014/15. We should recognise that Covid infections skyrocketed in the 10-15 age group at the peak XC race time. Well done to those who got out – athletes, coaches, parents and very especially the team organisers and the tent supply crew! I think the County appreciated our organisation of the 3rd league race at the new Ardingly venue – a good course with fine undulations!

Social interaction restrictions caused the SDW relay to be postponed by a month and as a consequence Harriers goal of 3 teams was compromised to just a single team entry. I think the plans are on track for a full 3 teams this year though.

As the Sussex racing calendar bursts in to spring, it would be good to have the club being out again, with both numbers filling the field and the speedsters out at the front – we seem to have lost sight of one or two of you.

Turning to look inwards at how the club is running, I think there are some things to feel good about.

I think Andy Hind has taken to the Co-Chair role and particularly with his efforts on Social media has started to pull us into the 21st century – well done and many thanks Andy. This has clearly spilled over to the Social side of the club also, with some excellent nights at the Hop Sun and the Stand Up. There’s even a Whatsapp group called “Harriers Work Events” to keep this on the boil. Whether I

can mention the Beer Mile and the Wheatsheaf “after party” in this company, I am not sure – but participants and spectators seem to love it.

The “Group of 6” mantra pushed us to have several new run Leaders qualified. This has proved a real boon and allowed more variety and flexibility in our Tuesday evening endurance running coaching/Leadership. With Ian Dumbrell gaining his coach qualification, Martin and Marion were able to occasionally stay indoors while Ian and Graham Kenward enjoyed the rain. Thank you to them and all the Run Leaders.

The Junior coaching has continued – and many thanks to the stalwarts who have continued to support this. Members will recall we shifted to Warden Park several years ago as a necessary “space gain” step to allow more Coaches to be established and to coach more juniors as the waiting list seemed long. I appreciate that Covid has disturbed us here, but I think we may need to re-assess whether we still have the appetite to continue to drive in this direction : Parental involvement here is key – something for the 2022 Management team to reflect on.

Sadly over the last year we have lost two loyal and competitive Harriers, whose names can be found multiple times in the Harriers records listing – Ian Cooper very shortly after our last AGM, and the ever present Jenny Denyer who left us earlier this month, We remember them.

**Mark**

(aka El Presidente, Harvey’s Mark, Lately A Runner)