

Last week's racing for the Congleton Harriers kicked off mid-week with Bryan Lomas and Lucy Rusbridge continuing their Derby 5k odyssey; they were back in action at Raynesway in a field of 108 runners completing one and a half laps of a course made up of pavement and cycle tracks. Lomas finished 29<sup>th</sup> in 18:48 and Rusbridge finished 71<sup>st</sup> in 22:18. Despite professing that they would have liked to have performed better, the pair were both good enough to secure third place in their respective age categories.

The Jewel in the Crown of the cross-country calendar is the English Cross Country Association's national championship. This year the race was held at Harewood House in Leeds. The same venue hosted the Northern Championship race last year and so the five Harriers who made the long journey to Leeds knew what was in store for them. First and foremost a fabulous course set in a fantastic location: Harewood House being a stately home with large estate grounds. To add to the interest, it is also the site of a major UK conservation initiative which re-introduced Red Kites into the area back in 1999. A quick glance up at the masses of iconic birds soaring overhead of the club tents was all that was required for the runners to take their minds off the exertions ahead.



*Lomas, Rusbridge, Budd, Moss and Rider enjoying the sun and blue skies pre-race*

*Photo: B Lomas*

Any course for a national championship is not going to be easy, and the course tested the runners from the outset with the competitors having to deal with a sharp uphill start before winding around the grounds. The course featured frequent challenging uphill climbs followed by sharp descents, including a particularly steep incline at the end of lap one which had to be repeated just before the finish by the exhausted competitors. The conditions were made more challenging on the day by the unseasonably high temperatures. It's not unusual to see cross country runners trying to keep warm before the start at these events before battling across muddy terrain. Not so this year, sunglasses, extra water and a really firm ground were all in evidence.

The Harriers were involved in two races: the senior women's race and the senior men's race. All the races attract a large high-quality field (there were 1034 runners in the women's race and 2006 in the men's). The large numbers of runners made for a spectacular starting spectacle as they charged up the first hill from the starting line. In the women's race Jo Moss was the first Harrier to complete the five-mile course crossing the finish line in 418<sup>th</sup> place in 39:00 and Lucy Rusbridge in 644<sup>th</sup> in 42:51. In the men's race Bryan Lomas finished the 7.5-mile course in 888<sup>th</sup> place in 48:31, Stuart Rider was 1177<sup>th</sup> in 51:20 and Nick Budd was 1733<sup>rd</sup> in 58:57. Despite the hot conditions and the tough course, all the Harriers agreed that it was well worth the long journey over to Leeds.

On Sunday there was a massive turnout of Harriers at the Knype Pool 5-mile race hosted by Biddulph Running Club. This is an annual charity race run in support of the Biddulph Mayor's chosen charities. This popular race is an undulating off-road event run across trails and fields. Sixteen Harriers lined up on the starting line including one new club member: Kelly Hurdstone. Chris Moss was the first to finish in a field of 175 runners finishing 15<sup>th</sup> in 34:03 followed by Paul Steel, 28<sup>th</sup> in 36:04, James Yates 37<sup>th</sup> in 37:26, Jo Moss 43<sup>rd</sup> in 38:19, Alice Nimmo, 58<sup>th</sup> in 49:35, Helen Jeffrey 63<sup>rd</sup> in 41:07, Sarah Proudmore, 71<sup>st</sup> in 42:11, Nigel Poole 83<sup>rd</sup> in 43:36, Kelly Hurdstone, 86<sup>th</sup> in 44:05, Dave Whittaker, 90<sup>th</sup> in 44:56, Rob Parkin, 91<sup>st</sup> in 44:59, Harry Stubbs, 102<sup>nd</sup> in 46:46, Sarah Higgins, 118<sup>th</sup> in 48:08, Sandy Hall, 142<sup>nd</sup> in 51:36, Dave Taylor 151<sup>st</sup> in 53:46 and Paul Crean who unfortunately had to pull up short due to injury.



Alice Nimmo

Photo: A Nimmo

Within these results there were some fine age category performances. The standout was Stubbs who, back racing, strode to an impressive 1<sup>st</sup> place in the M70 category. There were also strong performances from Steel, 2<sup>nd</sup> in the M50 category, and from Moss, who somehow finding something left in the tank following the previous day's cross country, took 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the F40 category.



A full complement of Harriers at Knype Pool (Harry Stubbs - 2<sup>nd</sup> left)

Photo: R Parkin

Finally, a couple of advance notices for the coming weekend. On Saturday Congleton Harriers will again be pacing at the Astbury Mere Park Run. On Sunday most Harriers will be marshalling rather than running as the club hosts its annual Cloud Nine Fell Race. This popular race, which is already sold out, will see 300 runners slog up to the top of Bosley Cloud and then onwards to Bridestones before looping back to the start. The race starts on the Biddulph Way at 11.00 with this year's race being started by the Congleton Mayor. So, if you are out and about around the Cloud on Sunday, take a few moments to cheer on the hardy runners tackling this gruelling event.

The club is always keen to welcome new members so if you are thinking of thinking of joining then just come along to one of the runs for a few weeks and try us out for size; you will be made to feel more than welcome with no obligation to join. You can find full details on our Congleton Harriers website: [Congleton-harriers.co.uk](http://Congleton-harriers.co.uk). You can also connect with the club on Facebook where details of club activities are posted regularly.