

## SOUTHERN INTER COUNTIES CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

Saturday 11th December

This year, the Southern Inter Counties Cross Country Championships took place at Lloyd Park in Croydon. They were previously held at Horspath in Oxford, so we were 'playing away' and had a new course to reckon with and quite a bit further to travel. Despite the distance, there was lots of enthusiasm from Oxfordshire runners to be part of the team. We had a terrific lineup, and only 2 runners could not make it and had to reluctantly turn their places down.

Lloyd Park is a sprawling 114 acre urban park. An excellent cross country venue, with no shortage of challenges to keep the runners on their game: lots of hills, a few bottlenecks and some pretty technical sections with sharp corners. The terrain was mainly grass with lots of woodland and boggy areas. There was most certainly no shortage of mud! The day was cold and grey, but with not too much wind. Good weather for running, but chilly on the start lines.

The starts were jam-packed and heaving, and made for a steep learning-curve for those who were championship racing for the first time. There were some pretty sharp elbows in evidence and lots of shoving and pushing to get to the front. The mud didn't help things, and a few people went over as the races set off.

The U13 girls were first off at 11am with 119 runners packing out a 3000m course. Cecilia Huepfl ran a very well-paced race and was our first Oxfordshire runner to bring it home. She nailed a very creditable 9<sup>th</sup> place, with Mollie Davis finishing in 43<sup>rd</sup>, Amelie Lorimer in 55<sup>th</sup> and Ella Ramsay in 70<sup>th</sup>, meaning that our team came in 11<sup>th</sup> overall. They were well supported by Tabitha Bosley in 83<sup>rd</sup>, Megan Powell in 84<sup>th</sup>, Ava Dowman in 113<sup>th</sup> and Beatrice Burrows in 119<sup>th</sup>.



*U13 girls start line*



*U13 Girls Tabitha Bosley and Megan Powell*

The U13 boys ran over the same course as the girls and were 14<sup>th</sup> of the 24 teams, led home by Thomas Roberts in 49<sup>th</sup>, Thomas Henderson in 52<sup>nd</sup>, William Morris in 57<sup>th</sup> and Jonas Tipping in 63<sup>rd</sup>. Competition was stiff and the finishes were packed, meaning just 10 seconds could lead to 10 places lost or gained. 104 runners finished the race in total, and the team had great support from Samuel Long in 72<sup>nd</sup>, Samuel Nixon-Gagg in 87<sup>th</sup> and Alex Garry in 89<sup>th</sup>.



*U15 boys from left to right: Jonas Tipping, Thomas Henderson, Alex Garry, Thomas Roberts, Samuel Long and Samuel Nixon-Gagg*



*Thomas Roberts leading the Oxfordshire pack*

The U15 races were run over 4000m. Holding her own in a very packed and jostling start-line, Isla McGowan got away well and ran a blistering race, tracking the leaders across the entire 1 lap course and just missing the podium with a very fine 4<sup>th</sup> place. A terrific result, especially when racing at this level. This bought the team home in 10<sup>th</sup> place of the 21 teams, with Every Powell in 21<sup>st</sup>, and Elena Blake and Florence Salmon packing well in 65<sup>th</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> respectively. Emily Channon in 93<sup>rd</sup>, Leila Denne (95<sup>th</sup>) and Payton Carter (97<sup>th</sup>) gave solid support to their team mates. There were 105 finishers in the race.



*A packed start line for the U15 girls race*



*Isla McGowan pulling out the stops in the U15 girls*



*Leila Denne, U15 Girls*

The Masters Ladies race ran between the junior races, meaning the course was thoroughly churned up by the time the U15 boys kicked off. William Shayler was our first Oxfordshire boy home in 39<sup>th</sup> of the 109 runners, with Oliver Sherratt and William Reynolds 1 second apart in 55<sup>th</sup> and 56<sup>th</sup>. Robert Charlton came in 67<sup>th</sup> bringing the team home in 12<sup>th</sup> of the 21 teams. Supporting their team were Euan Lewis, Richie Mack and Connor Morgan in 69<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> respectively.



*U15 boys left to right, Richie Mack, Lewis Reynolds, William Shayler, Robert Charlton and Euan Lewis.*



*Oliver Sherratt, U15, goes head-to-head with another runner*

The course got longer again for the U17s, comprising 2 laps over 5000 metres. It was great to see Olivia Martin back on form after a period out. She kept a strong position in the top 10 across the race, pulling ahead a few places on the second lap to finish a very strong 6<sup>th</sup> out of 95 runners. Great runs from Tilly Westbrook (40<sup>th</sup>), Jenny Critchley (42<sup>nd</sup>) and Anna Joliffe (47<sup>th</sup>) rounded out a solid result. Our U17 girls were the top Oxfordshire team of the day, coming 8<sup>th</sup> out of 18 teams. It was great to see all 8 ladies finish well with Roisin Exley, Matilda Crown, Tilly Lainchbury and Harriet Mullins in 62<sup>nd</sup>, 63<sup>rd</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> respectively.

The U17 Men were the last of the junior races, with a field of 109 runners. William D'Arcy set out very strongly and held his own against a very fast paced front for the first part of the race. He dropped a few places on the second lap but finished a highly respectable 14<sup>th</sup> against some very strong opposition. Second Oxfordshire home was Finley Colverson-Martin with a great run to finish 31<sup>st</sup>, 22 seconds behind William. Quinn Miell-Ingram made up a number of places on the second lap, finishing in 37<sup>th</sup>. The team were completed with Benjamin Sims in 67<sup>th</sup>, placing us in 11<sup>th</sup> overall. It was great to get all U17 Men out with Harry Richards, Isaac Green, Matthew Quartermain and Matthew Bower in 92<sup>nd</sup>, 98<sup>th</sup>, 107<sup>th</sup> and 109<sup>th</sup> respectively.

The U20 and Senior Women's teams were decimated by a perfect storm of COVID, injury, illness and awaiting a PCR negative result but the 4 athletes who were able to race produced some great results. The Senior Ladies and U20's raced together over a 6000m course. Our first Senior lady home in 8<sup>th</sup> place was Cordelia Parker, followed by Sophie Lloyd in 18<sup>th</sup> and Rosie Davies 48<sup>th</sup>. Our only U20 was Rosie Mullins who finished in 42<sup>nd</sup>.

All in all a very solid set of results for Oxfordshire, against some extremely stiff competition. Thank you to all the athletes for their enthusiasm, racing with such determination, and representing Oxfordshire so well – you did us proud.