

South of England Cross Country Championships 2011

West Suffolk AC enjoyed some excellent results at the 2011 South of England cross country championships at Parliament Hill, Hampstead Heath, London.

The course was very challenging with two substantial hills in the opening 1000m and several muddy sections which deteriorated as the meeting progressed.

The U15 boys were first away and West Suffolk AC's trio of runners had mixed results. Seb Anthony can be well pleased with 81st from 262 finishers clocking 17:17. An under the weather Cameron McKie started strongly but slipped back as the race progressed to finish 114th in 17:37. Michael Bartram had a steady run to 129th in 17:52. All three are bottom year in the age group so can look forward to next year with confidence.

Best individual performance of the day came, unsurprisingly, from Sophie Tooley in U13 girls. After the difficult opening 1000m Sophie was a superb 6th and despite tiring a little in the latter stages still came home a terrific 10th in 12:51 from 242 finishers. Sophie is also a bottom year in the age group and will doubtless set her sites on a medal next year. Suleika Horricks, a relatively new squad member, was experiencing this level of competition for the first time and found the going hard but persevered to 220th in 16:24.

With runners unavailable due to illness and injury Ben Eames was the sole entry in U13 boys but produced a typical gutsy display and was rewarded with an encouraging 50th from 224 finishers despite only a handful of training sessions since the summer.

India George was the leading WSAC runner in U15 girls. In her first cross country race at this level India produced a very solid performance placing 108th from 209 finishers. Beth Tooley ran shoulder to shoulder with her team mate for most of the race before drifting back slightly in the closing stages for a respectable 133rd in 18:45. Hettie Bawn completed the line up and from limited training worked hard for 189th clocking 21:21.

Holly Archer, an 800m specialist on the track in the summer, showed her versatility with a very useful 45th from 124 runners in U17 women.

Only two of the five WSAC runners entered started the U17 boys race but both placed well. Mac Delo, a bottom year in the age group was as consistent as ever with 46th from 178 clocking 22:19 and Adam Cripps also had a solid run to 117th in 24:13.

Emily Baker improved her time by an amazing two and a half minutes from the previous year and can be well pleased with 41st in U20 women in 29:01.

Last to go were the U20 men and all four runners were well placed. Alex Dunbar was the first of the quartet home in a superb 15th clocking 27:42 for the 8k course. Andy Ridley, in hard training for next weekends British University championships, was understandably not at his best but used the race as a hard workout placing 41st in 29:04. Dom Thackery was next in 54th (30:05) and Asa Burnett 65th in 30:59. This was WSAC's only complete team and they were 5th overall. Alex has another year in this age group and Dom and Asa two years.

Next weekend the action moves to Corby where no less than 16 West Suffolk AC athletes have won selection to represent Suffolk schools at the Anglian Schools championships.