

Keswick Athletic Club's Chairman's Report

22nd November 2020

Well, taking over as Chair twelve months ago was spectacularly poor timing on my part and none of us could have imagined what 2020 would bring. After all your fantastic success in 2019 and a really enjoyable Club Dinner the dark clouds began to gather. As the Covid virus began to spread, the first Championship race of the season at Yr Aran would be the last, although arguably that means Hannah Horsburgh has won this year's ladies Championship. For former British U23 Champion and new signing Nichola Jackson, it was to be her first and only appearance in a Keswick vest but we look forward to many more.

The situation became very serious in March and the Committee had to take the difficult decision to cancel training and competition. Rather than cancel each race one at a time, it was decided that the best course of action was to cancel all races for the year and re-start them when possible. This proved the right course of action as raising and dashing people's hopes through the year would have been unfair to all concerned. As restrictions were eased during the summer some return to competition has taken place in virtual races and some short-lived attempts to hold Covid-safe trail races.

Rob Allen managed to squeeze in an impressive completion of the 268 mile Spine Race before lockdown, Cat and Jo continued their dominance of their class in the Marmot Dark Mountains and Katie took advantage of a brief travel window to finish first Brit in the Matterhorn Ultra.

Keswick men won the local inter-club challenge and Steve Jones set about completing all the Wainwrights from Keswick under his own power, which is an amazing feat. Unfortunately, there was an inevitability about a resurgence of the virus in the Autumn and we are back in some degree of lockdown which may well persist until next Spring.

Training for both adults and juniors returned with the summer months and the committee are very grateful to all those coaches and leaders who made this possible, working within the guidance from England Athletics. However, the EA Guidance sets out what is possible within the law at any time but not what is right for each club at a particular time. As the Director for Public Health in Cumbria responded to the worsening local situation by advising that people stopped meeting in groups indoors and outdoors, the committee had another difficult decision to make. We unanimously agreed that for the sake of our members and the club's relationship with the community in Keswick, the right thing to do was to suspend training once again. This wasn't easy and we recognise how important sport and social contact is to people's physical and mental wellbeing.

Despite all this bad news, the club spirit is not diminished and club members have met and trained together throughout the year, according to the restrictions at the time and we have appointed Lucy Burnett as a Welfare Officer to look at ways to keep the social contact and mutual support going.

This year was definitely the 'Year of the Rounds' with some incredible feats of distance running as top runners sought to channel their efforts into endurance records. The Moot Hall regularly featured in media coverage as Sabrina Verjee, Kim Collison, George Foster, John Kelly and a host of other top athletes posted historic times. Keswick runners joined in with Calum's solo unsupported BGR, Craig's Joss Naylor Challenge, Cat's Lakeland Traverse, Jacob's Frog Graham and quick Abraham's Tea Rounds from Katie, Brennan, Rachel, Jacob, Trudy, Catherine, and

Lesley. The ladies also kept the team spirit going with team relays of the Wainwright's 7 Summits, 10in10 No Cure Always Hope Ultra and the Hodgson Brothers virtual relay.

I must thank members of the committee who are standing down this year. Julie Carter has been really helpful this year in debating the issues surrounding the virus and we wish her well with her running and her writing. Jenn has a lot of things to juggle now that she is looking after the beautiful Elsie as well as Carl and we must thank her for being a fantastic Ladies Captain. Steve Harwood has put an incredible amount in to Keswick AC through the committee and race organisation as well as his work with the cricket pavilion. Steve was a leading light in the club when I joined in the early 1980s and has maintained his interest and enthusiasm throughout that period so we really do owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

Can I also thank the remaining and new committee members for their hard work, particularly Trudy for keeping me right when my attention has been elsewhere. As we move into the new year we can look forward to a return to competition and training when the circumstances allow but the production of effective vaccines is definitely a light at the end of what has been a very long tunnel. I wish you all the very best for the forthcoming year and as I keep saying to people, I hope I see you at a race soon.

Andy