

Annual Report

155th SEASON
2022-23



THAMES HARE AND HOUNDS

Thames Hare & Hounds

OFFICERS 2023-24

President	ANDREW WEIR
Honorary Treasurer	GORDON PEARCE
Honorary Secretary	SIMON MOLDEN
Club Captain & Men's Captain	JAMES HOAD
Ladies' Captain	CHLOE BECKETT
Second Team Captain	ALASTAIR BROWN
Men's Vice-captain	PATRICK RODDY
Ladies' Vice-captain	BETHANIE MURRAY
Fixtures Secretary	PATRICK RODDY
Chief Pioneer	MIKE FARMERY
Honorary Medical Officer	ANDREW McLEOD
Carver and	MAUREEN POOLE
Handicappers	CHRIS RYE CLAIRE ATLMANN
Committee	RICHARD OLLINGTON
Trustees	ANDREW WEIR, SIMON MOLDEN & GORDON PEARCE
HEADQUARTERS	At the Memorial Playing Fields Wimbledon Common, SW15 3PQ (opposite the Robin Hood Gate Entrance to Richmond Park)



THAMES HARE & HOUNDS

ANNUAL REPORT
2022-23

Mr President, Ladies & Gentlemen

I am pleased to report that the club completed another successful season, enjoying another period of relative calm after the disruption caused by the Coronavirus pandemic. At the elite end, there were many performances of note; however, two perhaps stand out. Individually, Oliver Fox's fifth place in the Southern Championship at Beckenham Place Park was exceptional. On the team front, our ladies' team fifth place in the National in Shropshire was something that will long be remembered.

However, the season was not just about the elite and we continued to stage our usual array of club handicaps across the season as well as our various external races, including the Dash for the Splash, Second Sunday 5 and Alumni Race (in its new calendar slot in mid-September). We also returned to the Green Belt Relay and once again secured memorable team successes.

I shall briefly dwell on the other two of our other events, namely the University Race and Parkland Relays. The former in December 2022 saw the club come together for a very enjoyable day that encompassed not only the three races, but the unveiling of the World Athletics Heritage Plaque awarded to the club in December 2021 and the official opening of the Brasher Chataway Bannister Bridge at the south-western corner of the Memorial Playing Fields. Replacing the somewhat dilapidated and narrow bridge, the new structure represents a significant upgrade and will be an important feature of our courses for years to come. Our thanks go to David Jenkins for all his efforts in bringing the project to fruition. On the Parkland Relays front, it was a year of some frustration as we had to battle against some fairly nonsensical bureaucracy to be able to host it in Richmond Park again. This is reported in more detail later in this report; however, I am pleased to say that common sense ultimately prevailed and we were once again able to enjoy the idyllic setting for an event that remains very popular with local clubs.

As ever, the season also saw the usual array of social fixtures, including the Annual Dinner, University Race dinner, Summer Party and Outlying Run. Our thanks go to the Carver for delivering such a fine array of functions once again.

Finally, the past year saw the loss of four longstanding members: Major-General Keith Spacie (1982); Hugh Maitland-Jones (1949); Roger Thorn (1961) and Fiona Russell (1982). All made significant contributions to the club and will be very much missed. We were also deeply saddened by the tragic death of Bob Harrison (2012) who was killed in a traffic collision while out running in November.

Simon Molden
Hon. Secretary
September 2023



THAMES HARE & HOUNDS

AWARDS
2022-23

Short Distance Challenge	James Hoad
Ladies' Short Distance Challenge	Bethanie Murray
Short Distance Handicap	Eibhlin Ní Bhrádaigh
Long Distance Challenge Cup	James Hoad
Ladies' Long Distance Challenge	Claire Altmann
Long Distance Handicap	Jessica Davies
Cheshire Tally-Ho! <i>(Fastest Thames man on the Roman Road)</i>	Paul Newby
Cheshire Tally-Ho! Ladies' Trophy <i>(Fastest Thames lady on the Roman Road)</i>	<i>not contested</i>
James Ryan Trophy <i>(Fastest Thames Veteran on the Roman Road)</i>	Paul Newby
10 Mile Challenge	James Hoad
Ladies' 10 Mile Challenge	Bethanie Murray
10 Mile Handicap	James Hoad
Road Running Challenge	James Hoad
Clough-Whittome Handicap	Andrea Stehlikova
Kensit Trophy for the Aggregate Handicap	Andrea Stehlikova
Midsummer Handicap	Andrew Collins
Harry Hall Award	Zoe Lynam
Memorial Trophy <i>(Best aggregate finish in the Southern and National)</i>	Bethanie Murray
London Marathon Veterans' Handicap <i>(Silver plate donated by Malcolm Thompson)</i>	Helen Geldert



THAMES HARE & HOUNDS

TROPHIES

Short Distance Challenge

Two handled Silver Drinking Cup

Long Distance Challenge

Silver Victorian Claret Jug

10 Mile Challenge

Silver Plated Rose Bowl

Memorial Trophy

Silver Goblet

Road Running Championship

Bronze Running Man

Hardy Willcock Memorial

Silver Salver by Gerald Bennie

James Ryan Trophy

Silver Plated Bowl

Cheshire Tally Ho Trophy

Silver Plated Tankard

Ladies Short Distance Challenge

Silver "Irish" Cup of 1936

Ladies Long Distance Challenge

Pewter Tappit Hen



THAMES HARE & HOUNDS

SECRETARY'S REPORT

September

The season opened on Sunday 11th September with the Second Sunday 5, which incorporated the Short Distance Handicap. Eibhlin Ní Bhrádaigh claimed the first tankard of the season with a run of 48:14. James Hoard (30:09) and Bethanie Murray (35:46) took the Challenge titles.

The following Saturday (17th September) saw the Alumni Race take place in its new autumn slot. The event was won by Hugo Donovan (Bradfield) in a speedy 26:00. James Hoad was first Saltire in third (26:46). In the many team competitions, Sedbergh won the King Henry VIII Trophy for the open event; Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School, Rochester won the V40 Old Brentwood's Trophy; Bradfield won the V50 Chataway Cup; Harrow County won the V60 Old Denstonian Cup; and Brentwood won the V65 Jane Bubear Cup. The Old Coventrian Cup for the first lady home went to Olivia Papaioannou (Shrewsbury High School) for the second year in a row and the Old Johnian Trophy for the first ladies' team went to Denstone. Finally, Sir Joseph Williamson's Mathematical School won the Shrewsbury Cup for the age-adjusted team victory and Hugo Donovan (81.94%) took the Wyndham Halswelle individual trophy.

The following the day, the Surrey Road Relays took place at Wimbledon Park. Our two ladies' teams finished fifth and eighth with Ruby Woolfe (16:04) posting our quickest leg of the day. A slightly makeshift men's team finished 11th with James Hoad running the fastest left (14:27).

On 24th September, the Aldershot Relays took place at Rushmoor Arena as an alternative to the Southern Road Relays at Crystal Palace. The Thames ladies' team finished a commendable 22nd with a quartet of Ruby Woolfe (21:18), Claire Hammett (21:53), Zoe Lynam (29:44) and Bethanie Murray (22:57).

October

As in 2021, October opened with the London Marathon on the 2nd. This was the last time the event was scheduled for the autumn and Thames marked the occasion in style with our men's team taking second place overall in the team competition through Paddy Roddy (2:22), James Hoad (2:25) and Harry Lane (2:26). Further down the order, Chris Finill kept up his ever-present record (3:01:08) and Helen Geldert was first Thames lady (3:25 and ninth V60).

The following weekend was the October staging of the Second Sunday 5 and Thames was well represented at the top end with Oliver Edwards in second (35:12) and Alexi Cross in third (35:41).



October 15th saw our Surrey League campaign open at Effingham Common. The ladies' team produced an excellent performance to win the round, packing four in the top 12 (Ruby Woolfe second; Bethanie Murray seventh; Lauren Major 11th; and Serena Carter 12th). Later in the day, the men produced a solid fifth place, led home by Neil Ibata in fifth. Behind him, James Bartram (30th), MacGregor Cox (31st), Richard Ollington (39th) and Neil Chisholm (46th) all made the top 50.

The following weekend, a select band of Saltires travelled to Spain to compete in the Trofeo Pico Cueto, at the invitation of Martin Alvarez-Espinar. Our men's team of Paddy Roddy, James Hoad and Richard Ollington finished in a very impressive second place, just over a minute behind the winning team, which included Martin himself. Our ladies' team of Andrea Stehlikova, Rebecca Hughes, Jess Davies finished 41st overall and fifth in the ladies' competition.

The final weekend of the month saw a double fixture for Thames. In the Surrey Masters Cross-Country at Nonsuch Park, Denise Barnett finished second in the V50 and Richard Pitt and Jim Foster finished fourth and 12th respectively in the V65. Performance of the day, however, went to our erstwhile President, Mike Farmery, with victory in the V70 competition.

Down at Sandhurst, a healthy band were in action in the traditional Milocarians' race. Thames dominated to take the team victory with James Hoad, Richard Ollington and Eoin Brady filling the first three places.

November

After a blank weekend at the start of the month, the club was back in action for the Surrey League on 12th November, held on the Common (although not our course). The ladies were not able to match their performance of the first round and finished ninth overall. Ruby Woolfe once again led the way home, this time in an excellent second place (16:52). Close behind her was Bethanie Murray (sixth in 17:39). There was then a gap to Claire Altmann in 52nd (19:33) with Daisy Irving-Hyman in 78th (20:12) completing our scorers. The men produced another solid performance to finish sixth overall. We had four inside the top 50 in the shape of Paddy Roddy (18th, 27:43), MacGregor Cox (20th, 27:48), James Hoad (40th, 28:41) and Richard Ollington (48th, 28:57).

The next day was November's Second Sunday 5. Thames took the first two home with David Symons leading the way (33:55) followed by Oliver Edwards (35:15).

The following weekend and our focus shifted to north of the river and Parliament Hill for the London Championships. Both our men's and ladies' teams produced excellent results to finished third. For the ladies, Ruby Woolfe continued her fine form with third place (21:36) and repeating the previous weekend, Bethanie Murray finished just behind her in sixth (22:29). The scoring team was completed by Claire Altmann (46th in 24:59) and Daisy Irving-Hyman (49th in 25:13). For the men, MacGregor Cox led us home in fourth (35:02) with Paddy Roddy (11th in 35:59) and Josh Carr (14th in 36:28) also making the top 20.

November closed with us welcoming Oxford and Cambridge to the Common on 27th for their traditional pre-race course run in advance of the University Races the following Saturday.



December

In the University Races, Cambridge carried off the honours in both contests. In the 46th Ladies' Race, the Light Blues lived up to their strong pre-race favourites tag by taking five of the first six places and winning by 29 points to 50. Niamh Bridson Hubbard (Magdalene) repeated her 2019 success to take the individual victory in a new record time for the course (which has been in use since 2000) of 22:30, taking 19 seconds off the previous mark set by her in 2019 and Julia Bleasdale (Pembroke) in 2003. Oxford now lead the series by 26 wins to 20.

The 131st Gentlemen's Race was a significantly closer affair, with the Light Blues emerging victors by the very narrow margin of 38 points to 40, the closest score since 1982. Going into the race carrying the favourites tag, they managed to withstand the loss to injury of 2021 winner James Edgerton (Jesus) and Joe Massingham (Pembroke) to record their third victory in a row, thus putting them ahead in the series (66 wins to 65) for the first time since 2013. Jeremy Dempsey (Girton) improved on his second place in 2021 to take a clear victory by almost 30 seconds.

Earlier in the day, Oxford won the 30th Old Blues' Race by 175 points to 252 (scoring 14-a-side) with Jack Millar (University) taking repeating his 2021 individual victory. Oxford now lead this series by 18 wins to 12.

It was a special day for the club as it also witnessed the unveiling of the World Athletics Heritage Plaque – awarded to Thames in December 2021 – and the opening of the new Brasher Chataway Bannister Bridge over Beverley Brook, which the races crossed in their closing stages. We were honoured to welcome back former member and Olympic silver medallist, Wendy Sly, and double World Cross-Country silver medallist, Tim Hutchings, for the plaque unveiling.

The following day, Simon Baines won the V50 British Masters 5km Championship in a time of 15:43. Two places behind him was second claimer Stuart Major (16:36). In the V45 competition, Martin Shore was fifth (16:46). Ben Reynolds took second in the V55 (16:50) and Ian Butler was 17th in the V60 (20:41).

On the next weekend, Thames had a host of runners in action at the South of England Masters Cross-Country Championships at Horspath. In the Southern Inter-counties race, held in conjunction with the event, Serena Carter was first home for Surrey in third (22:43). In the masters cross-country, Andrea Buchanan was sixth V45 (26:26), Vikki Filsell was fourth V55 (27:52), Martin Shore was sixth V40 (35:19), Ben Reynolds was fourth V50 (36:35), Ian Butler was 18th V60 (46:03), Rhodri Davies was fourth V65 (49:39) and Paul Newby was fifth V70 (36:22).

The following day saw the latest round of the Second Sunday 5 with Ashley Middlewick in ninth (33:19) being the first Saltire home.

The first half of the season closed with the traditional Five Miles and Carols on 21st December.



January

The new year opened with the Surrey Cross-Country Championships at muddy Lloyd Park in Croydon. The ladies finished fifth overall with Serena Carter (tenth in 32:10) and Ruby Woolfe (11th in 32:13) leading the way. The men were seventh, headed by James Hoad (16th in 43:17), Richard Ollington (18th in 43:30 and Eoin Brady (20th in 43:43). The following day saw Eoin put in his second race of the weekend to win the Second Sunday 5 in 32:13.

On January 15th, the third round of the Surrey League took place at Beckenham Place Park. The ladies' team recovered from their disappointing second round to finish fourth overall. Bethanie Murray (fifth in 29:57), Lizzy Apsley (sixth in 30:35) and Claire Hammett (eighth in 31:31) all making the top ten. The men again finished in fifth; however, the team was headed by two exceptional individual performances from second claimers: Jack Millar (first in 25:02) and Alex Howard (third in 25:38). James Hoad (21st) was just outside the top 20 in 26:56.

Aided by a blank weekend in the calendar, there was an unusually high Thames turnout the following Saturday for the Box Hill fell race. The team marked the occasion well with our women in second overall and men in fourth. James Hoad continued his fine form to finish third in 54:24, with Eoin Brady in ninth not far behind him (58:33). For the ladies, Andrea Stehlikova was 13th (1:15:09), Jemima D'Arcy 19th (1:17:20) and Jess Davies 22nd (1:18:21).

January closed with the Southern Championships, returning for the second successive year to Beckenham Place Park. Our ladies produced another strong team performance to finish eighth overall with Bethanie Murray continuing her fine season to finish ninth (27:24). Behind her, Claire Hammett (25th in 29:02) and Rachel Boswell (82nd in 31:25) both made the top 100. The men went one better to finish seventh, spearheaded by an outstanding individual run by Oliver Fox, who finished fifth (46:20). Behind him, Richard Ollington (50th in 49:35), James Hoad (55th in 49:46) and Eoin Brady (84th in 51:14) all made the top 100.

February

On the opening Saturday of February, we were pleased to welcome our old rivals from across the A3, Ranelagh Harriers, for the first mob match on the Common since 2019. The race was preceded by our club photo and its lure sufficiently boosted our numbers to allow us to take a hard earned victory by the narrow margin of 988 points to 1,001, scoring 31-a-side. The result left the overall series at 28 wins to us and 21 to Ranelagh. James Hoad was first home for Thames in second (39:59), thus giving him the men's Long Distance Challenge title for the season. Claire Altmann in 31st (50:08) took the ladies' Challenge.

The following weekend saw the conclusion of the Surrey League at Lloyd Park. Bethanie Murray (third in 30:13) once again led the team home with support from Claire Hammett (fourth in 30:57) and Serena Carter (ninth in 31:29), who both made the top 10. This result put us fourth on the day and for the season overall. The men completed a season of remarkable consistency to finish fifth on the day and fifth overall. Jack Millar produced another fine run to win the race (25:21) and he was supported by James Hoad (21st in 26:36), Paddy Roddy (28th in 26:55), Richard Ollington (30th in 27:02) and Eoin Brady (43rd in 27:37), who all made the top 50.



On February 19th, 225 runners toed the line for the ninth Dash for the Splash. In the final outcome, Thames was well represented in the top placings with Richard Ollington taking the victory (37:51) and Ashley Middlewick third (39:49).

We rounded off February with the National at Bolesworth Castle on Saturday 25th. Our ladies' team capped another successful season to finish fifth overall (and second southern club behind Aldershot, Farnham & District). Lizzie Apsley led us home in 34th (31:49). Just behind her was Bethanie Murray (36th in 31:56), Claire Hammett (40th in 32:04). Ruby Woolfe (56th in 32:48) also made the top 100. The men finished 13th overall, with Neil Ibata in 107th our first finisher (39:49). Behind him, James Hoad (11th in 39:51), Richard Ollington (132nd in 40:10), MacGregor Cox (148th in 40:23), Josh Carr (170th in 40:41) and James Bartram (171st in 40:43) all made the top 200.

Our report for the month should not close without a mention of Roger Robinson, who won the V80 World Cross-Country Championship at Bathurst, New South Wales on February 18th. A memorable achievement.

March

March was a fairly quiet month for club fixtures; however, the highlight was the 38th mob match against South London Harriers on 25th March. In very heavy conditions, made worse on the playing fields by the Rosslyn Park Sevens in the preceding week, we prevailed over an inadvertently slightly shorter course by 96 points to 188 (scoring 11-a-side). This brought the overall series back level at 19 wins each. Richard Ollington was quickest on the day (39:07), although the moral victor was James Hoad (40:30), who was the only runner to complete the full route. Ellen Weir was first lady home in 41:55. The disruption caused by Covid in previous seasons meant that we unusually hosted both mob matches this season. As a consequence, the Long Distance Handicap was run in conjunction with this match and the tankard was taken by Jess Davies. In the evening, the Annual Dinner took place at the Union Jack Club in Waterloo.

Elsewhere during the month, our second claimers Jack Millar (fifth) and Alex Howard (15th) were both in action in the Inter-counties Championship at Prestwold Hall on the opening Saturday. Bethanie Murray was our only lady in action and she ran very well to finish 17th.

On March 18th, Phill Tedd competed in the British Masters Cross-Country Championships and excelled himself to win the V45 competition.

Finally, on 12th March, the Second Sunday 5 returned (having missed February to accommodate the Dash for the Splash). It incorporated the now traditional mob match against Milocarians who convincingly took the honours. Anisse Ismaili (seventh in 33:20) and David Symons (ninth in 33:57) were our first two home.



April

Although April is the month that sees the club's activities start to draw to a close for the season, the month opened in a very busy fashion with both our men and ladies in action in the Southern Relays held at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Our ladies' A team produced an outstanding performance to finish sixth overall in their six-stage event. There were sold runs throughout the team through Bethanie Murray (16:56), Serena Carter (26:01 – long leg), Katy Hedgethorpe (18:38), Claire Hammett (26:25 – long leg), Ella Fennelly (17:16) and Lizzie Apsley (17:10). Our B team finished 23rd overall. The men were in action over 12 stages and finished a creditable 26th. Our best legs came from James Bartram (22:37 on the long leg 1) and Will Utley (16:21 on leg 2).

Two weekends later, the ladies' team followed up their success in east London with an even better performance to finish tenth in the National Six-Stage Relay at Sutton Park. The team was led off by Lauren Major (13th in 31:14 on the long leg). She was followed by Lizzy Apsley (12th in 18:28), Katherine Turner (ninth in 19:04), Bethanie Murray (tenth in 31:38), Claire Altmann (tenth in 19:47) and Katy Hedgethorpe (tenth in 19:36).

In between these two events, the Second Sunday 5 resumed with Matthew Jones (32:57) and Alexi Cross (34:32) taking first and third.

For the season's 10-mile Handicap and Challenge, the club made a temporary return to virtual racing as a result of the ongoing dispute with Richmond Park over the future of cross-country racing in the park, which is dealt with later in this report. Held over the period 1st-16th April, members posted their times over the 10-mile course. At the end of the period, James Hoad won both the Challenge and Handicap with a speedy time of 53:06. Bethanie Murray won the ladies' Challenge in 70:24.

April was completed by the second London Marathon of the season as it returned to its traditional slot in the calendar. Performance of the day went to James Hoad, whose 2:18:38 placed him 23rd overall and third in the non-elite category. Alistair McMaster (2:40:17), Ian Hurley (2:40:38) and Paul Cheetham (2:43:45) all got under the three-hour barrier. A little further down, Chris Finill continued his ever-present record with a time of 3:21:00. For the ladies, Claire Hammett was first home in 58th (2:51:41). Andrea Buchanan (3:11:15), Jennifer Carter (3:11:15) and Felicity Hayward (3:24:30) all broke three-and-a-half hours.

The Summer

With the belated arrival of warmer weather, our cross-country activities wound down; however, our members were still very active on the road and track. The highlight of May was another excellent Green Belt Relay, orchestrated by Matthew Jones. Having successfully negotiated the not insubstantial task of getting all of our runners to the various points around the capital, we finished the two-day contest with victory for our ladies' team and a close second (just thirty minutes behind Ranelagh) for our men's team. Added to this, we took home the King of the Mountains trophy to cap a very successful weekend.

On the Sunday of the same weekend, the Second Sunday 5 took place with Anisse Ismaili taking the individual honours in 31:26.



The main event in June was our Parkland Relays, which was held in glorious sunshine on the evening of Wednesday 14th. However, preparations for the event had proved to be much more fraught than the evening itself following the Royal Parks informing us when we submitted our initial application in February that they were no longer permitting cross-country races in Richmond Park. Their justification for this decision was that the sport was now deemed to be incompatible with its status as a National Nature Reserve and Site of Specific Scientific Interest. Needless to say, this fairly incomprehensible decision provoked a strong reaction from us and other neighbouring clubs (at least three of whom had received exactly the same message from the Royal Parks) and a scathing article from Will Cockerell in *Athletics Weekly*. There then ensued a series of hastily concocted and contradictory public communications from the Royal Parks before, ultimately, sanity prevailed and it was confirmed that cross-country was not in fact deemed a pariah sport and that we could go ahead as planned. Unfortunately, the time wasted on such an unnecessary dispute meant that we were not able to confirm the event was going ahead until three weeks beforehand. This inevitably did have a material impact on the number of teams entering, with 64 representing the smallest number since 2009.

Nevertheless, those who were able to run enjoyed another evening of enjoyable racing over the scenic course. In the men's event, Ful-On Tri recorded a maiden team victory, comfortably beating Ranelagh's Veteran A team and Wimbledon Windmilers' Veteran B team. Our A team finished fifth overall. Matthew Merrick from Up and Running in Sheen ran the fastest time of the night in 14:21. In the ladies' contest, Stragglers won from Ranelagh and ourselves. Sarah Holt (16:41) from Stragglers ran the quickest leg.

On 24th June, the Midsummer Handicap took place over our five-mile course. The tankard went to Andrew Collins (39:17), with the quickest times of the day being from James McMullan (29:51) and Claire Altmann (34:13). In the evening, the club gathered for the Summer Party, once again kindly hosted by Simon and Belinda Leathes.

The Second Sunday 5 continued throughout the summer with Eoin Brady (31:49) winning in June from Anisse Ismaili (32:41). Anisse followed this up with victories in the July and August editions. On the last weekend in June, the Outlying Run took place and we returned again to Streatley. Our thanks go to Paul Newby for planning a range of route options.

In July, we put out four ladies' teams in the Sri Chinmoy Mile Relays in Battersea Park. In a tight sprint finish, our A team of Katy Hedgethorne (5:18.47), Bethanie Murray (5:20.72) and Katherine Turner (5:23.71) took the overall victory. Our B team finished 10th, our C team 25th and our V50 team eighth in their category.

The club's competitive year drew to a close with the Clough-Whittome Handicap, held in conjunction with the Wedding Day 7km Race in Bushy Park on the last Friday in July. James Hoad won the Road Running Challenge with his second place finish (22:02). The handicap tankard went to Andrea Stehlikova. Our ladies' team of Katy Hedgethorne (second in 26:06), Felicity Hayward (ninth in 27:47) and Jess Davies (17th in 28:56) finished second overall.

