

# President’s Report 2021-22

## Presented to the Annual General Meeting, 25 March 2022, by Jason Miles-Campbell

### Foreword

Whilst this previous year has continued to be dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic circumstances, Strathearn Harriers has continued its activity, supporting its members to continue running at the least, and for those who have been able, to thrive. The welcome return to training has certainly been a plus, but, on the downside, the pandemic restrictions have limited opportunities to race, and have thwarted putting on a social programme. With the spring days emerging, I look forward to 2022-23 being the year when we can get back to full club activity, and renew our ambitions.

### Governance

With the wise and grateful counsel of the Club Secretary, Club Treasurer and the other committee members, I am satisfied that the club has been run in keeping with its constitution. Of course, last year’s AGM was, due to *force majeure*, held online rather than in-person, and with the adoption of the minutes at this year’s AGM we seek to ratify that circumstance.

The Strathearn Harriers Committee has met 10 times this past year, largely online, in addition to *ad hoc* and sub-group meetings. I record my thanks to all who have contributed to the committee these past twelve months, and ask that other members of the club consider taking part in the club’s stewardship in future.

I give particular thanks to the three committee members standing down:

* **Mirela MacInnes**, for her diligent and important work as club Welfare Officer, steering the committee through the various Scottish Athletics policy and procedure changes lately, but always having been on top of ensuring Strathearn Harriers is a safe and comfortable club in which to participate
* **Phil Tipping**, for many years of contribution to the club, but most lately, as Club Secretary, keeping the club organised, overseeing the club’s liaison with Scottish Athletics, and always having a wise word to lend from his experience
* **Nicola Watson**, who as Club Captain and senior coach, has dedicated many hours leading the Senior club’s training activity, and encouraging participation at the racing on offer. I know I can pass on, on behalf of many of our Senior runners, an enthusiastic gratitude to Nicola for getting us up and out, purposefully training, during the difficult circumstances of this past year. I’m pleased to say that, whilst Nicola steps down from the committee (as required by the constitution, having served five consecutive terms), she’s indicated her willingness to continue as Club Captain and senior coach, and to advise the committee as appropriate.

### Club Activity

**Training**

The committee has sought to give clear focus to the importance of club training. The Juniors continue to see good participation at their Tuesday and Thursday training, and will be further covered by the Junior Coach in his report. The Seniors training is focussed on Wednesday evenings, Friday mornings and Sunday mornings. We have encouraged all members to join these sessions, which are enriched by having greater numbers and a diversity of levels. We note that training numbers have been growing, both with existing members joining in, and with new members coming along.

**Club Championship**

Despite the circumstances, the Club put on a series of five races last year to form the Club Championship, culminating with the Finale 5k in September. Congratulations went to James Grant and Lauren Fairweather, who emerged as Club Champions, with Andy Gallagher winning the Age-Graded prize, and Cathy Tilbrook the Most Improved category winner. In all, 53 Harriers ran in at least one championship race, with 16 completing all five.

The Club Championship 2022 has launched, and we look forward to a high level of participation once again. The club gives its thanks and appreciation to both Nicola Watson and Phil Mestecky for their organisation of the championships.

**Club Races**

The Strathearn Marathon 2021 marked the return of our races in June last year, and I’m sure for many was a proud and heart-warming moment to see runners back out on the wonderful course, backed by effective, friendly organisation. Despite the difficult circumstances, the unanimous feedback was glowing and filled with gratitude. Stepping down as race director, I record our thanks and gratitude to Cathy Tilbrook for her substantial contribution, and to the race committee for supporting her.

The Crieff 10k followed in July 2021, and continued the hallmark care and organisation of the club’s races. On a bright day, with good numbers participating, the race committee’s planning meant a safe and fulfilling race for the entrants. The club recognises the efforts of Jon Williams, Clare Martin and the rest of the race committee in their success.

In the autumn, the Simon Wake Comrie Hills Relay took place with smaller numbers than previously. This race clearly suffered most from the COVID-19 restrictions still in place, particularly around car sharing. Nonetheless, through the hard work of Keira Reid and the race committee, the race did go ahead, giving runners the opportunity to pit themselves against the Comrie Hills. With the (hopeful) continued lifting of restrictions, and with a review of how we put on this race, we hope to get back or surpass the number of teams that have entered in previous years.

**Race Participation**

This has not been a normal year in terms of race participation, with many events being postponed or cancelled. Nonetheless, where opportunities have arisen, Strathearn Harriers have taken the chance to line up on the start line, and have tested themselves against courses short and long, flat and hilly, tarmac and knee-deep in mud.

The club’s bulletin has provided as comprehensive a report of club members participating in races as possible, and I do not propose to list all the achievements here, not least for fear of leaving some out. However, I will offer congratulations to all of you that have represented the club, and, in particular, within our Juniors ranks, at national level.

**Media and Communications**

The club continues to provide a weekly email bulletin of activity, covering general club matters, Seniors News and Juniors News sections. From analytics, we know that this opened (and hopefully read) by a significant proportion of our membership.

We have continued to use our members-only Facebook group ‘Strathearn Harriers Members’ Facebook group to coordinate week-to-week activity, and to support the Juniors activity, in particular, the ‘Strathearn Harriers Juniors’ Facebook group. This still represents the most efficient means of getting information out. We also maintain a public Facebook page, ‘Strathearn Harriers’ which can be used to highlight to a broader community our activity, and entice new membership.

We recognise that the club website is in need of some renovation; in particular, recognising that Facebook has largely taken over as the internal communications mechanism, leaving the website to be our focus for attracting potential new members. It will continue, however, to be a reference for club governance information too.

**Social Activity**

The opportunity to gather for post-event food and chat following the Club Championship 5k race in September, and the Juniors Intra-Club Cross Country day recently in March, was well taken up with good atmosphere. COVID-19 restrictions have made indoor social events difficult to arrange, and whilst we entered January with hope that a club dinner and ceilidh could take place, the lifting of restrictions didn’t quite come soon enough, and the prevailing atmosphere of caution meant having to cancel the event. We look forward to being able to renew social activity as permitted by the waning of the pandemic.

### The Year Ahead

The following are matters I believe should be addressed by the committee in the coming year:

* We know that LoveAdmin, our membership system, has thrown up problems for both members and officers of the club alike. We will look to either revise how we use it, or look for another, more user friendly, system.
* We will continue to work to balance being a club where high levels of performance can thrive, whilst also by our objectives supporting wider participation in running and the benefits of running.
* We will consider what we can do to get more members involved in the organisation of the club, and in the organisation of its races. For the future, we always need ‘new blood’ to be gaining the experience of being involved for the long term future of the club.