

Our season began with a disappointment. On October the 28th, our planned BMAF Cross Country Relay Championship at Long Eaton had to be cancelled. The Midlands had suffered badly from storm Babet and our venue, West Park, was used as a emergency reservoir for the nearby overflowing rivers. It turned out to be a correct and justified decision to cancel the event a week early, as it was still waterlogged on the proposed event day. Early entries to the championship were slow coming in and we had to pull out all the stops to promote it and finally reached a entry of 111 teams. (All team entries were refunded)

The British and Irish Masters Cross Country International on November the 11th was our next fixture, hosted by the Scottish Veterans Harriers. It was a huge success. On arriving at Tollcross Park, Glasgow, we were welcomed with a crisp sunny morning and although it had rained for weeks previously, we found a mud free, but undulating course.

England dominated the men's age group teams and Ireland were the victors for the women's shield, but England had secured enough points to take the overall shield. The evening dinner and presentation, with guest of honour, Ian Beattie MBE, the chairman of UK athletics, was very well attended, in fact the whole day was faultless and excellently organised by the SVHC and next year's fixture at Belfast, organised by NIMAA, has certainly found a hard act to follow.

Our last event of the season, on March 16th 2024, will be the BMAF (Open) Cross Country Championship at the Rhug Estate, Corwen, N Wales. It will also incorporate the EMAA Inter-regional competition.

It is fitting for myself being a Welshman, that this, my final organised event as Cross Country Secretary, is in Wales. After enjoying some 14 years in the role, the time has arrived for me to stand down. I would like to thank all the BMAF Executive, that have supported me and of course all the athletes that have competed during my stint as secretary.

Harry Matthews has understudied me for a few year's and I hope that, as a natural successor, he is appointed to the role of Cross Country Secretary at the AGM.

Diolch, Mel James.