

Sandy 10 8th APRIL 2018 report

Runners shimmered in rain showers and a long-standing record fell on Sandy's streets in the latest running of Biggleswade Athletic Club's showpiece road race. The Sandy 10 once again attracted hundreds of new and experienced runners from across the region, and further afield.

First over the line was John Eves from Bedford & County AC, in a fine time of 53:24. His performance laid down the gauntlet in front of the rest of the field from the first mile, and he stormed round the course, stretching the gap all the time to finish fully three minutes clear of his nearest challenger. Well within the mix at the top of the leaderboard, finishing 13th overall, but more importantly well within the ladies' course record, Georgia Schwiening from Cambridge & Coleridge AC crossed the line in 1:00:11 to take 16 seconds off a mark set back in 2004. Danielle Sanderson, the former record holder, was an accomplished international marathon runner, and Georgia's performance shows that it's only a matter of time before the hour is broken on a course which features a pig of a hill in the early miles.

Rounding out the top three in the men's standings were Adam Mills of Bedford Harriers (56:24) and East London Runners' Thomas Grimes (56:26), while Johanna O'Regan of Riverside Runners kept Schwiening in her sights for the duration, to finish just 46secs behind in the ladies' results with 1:00:57, second in those standings and 16th overall. Third lady finisher was Eleanor Hunt in 1:03:17, and a host of clubs would do well to get in touch with her, as she competed as an unattached runner! She finished in an excellent 26th place overall.

Men's age group prizes went to Ty Farrer, the fourth-placed finisher overall (Male veteran over 40 prize, 56:39, Huntingdon AC), Jim Morris (MV50, 59:35, Stamford Striders), John Skelton (MV60, 1:03.26, Milton Keynes AC) and Bob Wells (MV70, 1:10.56, Bedford Harriers). In a hotly contested men's team prize, Riverside Runners emerged victorious over Bedford Harriers.

On the women's side the LV35 honour was retained by Christine Lathwell (1:07.05, Stopsley Striders). Paula Downing matched her to reclaim the LV45 award (1:08.28, Mablethorpe Running Club), while Veronica Shadbolt took the LV55 prize (1:13:57, Garden City Runners). Taking LV65 honours was the indefatigable Yuko Gordon, a stalwart of Fairlands Valley Spartans, and her outstanding time of 1:13:31 also earned her the Roger Wadeley Trophy for the best age-graded performance of the race. Wadeley, who died in 2010 after a battle with cancer, was a Biggleswade AC stalwart for over three decades, and a talented racer who still holds 11 club records, two of which date back to the 1970s.

The ladies team prize went to Bedford Harriers, and they also took the Erlensee Cup given to the club who enter the most runners – a staggering 77, which accounted for almost a sixth of the total number of runners in the race.

The prize for top local finishers, where only runners from SG18 and SG19 postcodes are eligible, went to unattached athlete Trevor Grace (1:04:38) and Ann Wood of Werrington Joggers (1:17:01). Last year's winners of these prizes, Jamie Hall and Elaine Livera, have gone on to enjoy an outstanding, prize-filled 12 months in the yellow and blue of BAC.

While excellent conditions for running, keeping runners cool, the rain made spectating a damp undertaking, but marshals, resplendent in a their now-annual selection of weird and wonderful hats, kept the cold at bay with warm encouragement, and their presence

ensured smooth and safe running in and around the town, as seasoned competitors rubbed shoulders with charity runners and first-timers. At least one runner got a shock on the day to learn that the race was over 10 miles and not 10 kilometres! The course starts and finishes just off Sunderland Road in Sandy, before looping round Northcroft in a U-shape before beginning the progressive, to some seemingly endless climb through the Sand Lane sandhills before joining Everton Road. From there the runners continue until the "Potton Triangle", from which they then retrace their steps back towards the hills – kinder on the return – until a breathless hurtle home.

Once again the race was run in support of Sue Ryder, who will benefit from the surplus race proceeds, and organisers were delighted that volunteer Frazer Allison assisted smooth running on the day. For its 2018 running the Sandy 10 received vital sponsorship from Marshalls of Sandy, who helped to fund the provision of souvenir technical T-shirts for all finishers, and the Roger Wadeley Trophy – Roger was a former employee of the company.

The all-important bananas for finishers were contributed by Woodview Farm Shop in Gamlingay, which is a familiar haunt for BAC members on one of their regular Sunday Coffee & Cake routes. Crisps and water were also extremely welcome donations by Asda in Milton Keynes, and the catering team led by Bev Strong did an excellent job keeping runners and spectators warm and hydrated back at race HQ.

Officers from Bedfordshire Police were an invaluable part of the organisation, lending support and a visible source of reassurance to marshals and runners at key points of the route where competitors crossed over open roads.

Once again early feedback from competitors was extremely warm and generous. Steve Round, who finished 12th, said: "It was my first time running the course – it's a big thumbs up from me! Marshalling was excellent, and I finished 4secs off sub-1hr which is a big PB for me. So I'll have to come back next year!" Another first timer, Rachel Williams, added: "I have to say I was very impressed – even the rain didn't dampen spirits. It was a great route with great marshals and support."