

Chairman's Report by Nina Smith

Good evening everyone and thank you for coming to the 2017 AGM of the Datchet Dashers Running Club. Most of you know that this the end of my tenure as chairman and as a member the committee so I will attempt to amuse you one final time with my brief recollection of the year.

Before I go on to anything else I need to thank the rest of the committee. After a somewhat sudden job change on my side earlier this year, bringing with it a 4 hour daily commute into London each day, coming to the club, or in fact doing any running at all during the week become near impossible, even when South West Trains were having a good day.

The committee stepped in and carried the responsibility throughout the rest of the year, and I am eternally grateful to them for supporting me. Whilst we didn't traditionally have a deputy, Bryony acted as my deputy during the year and we have undergone a near role reversal in the last few months, when she has been leading the club in all but name.

I would to also especially like to thank those members standing down this year, David Lee, Gillian Richards, Bella Shah, Monika Revesz and Rob Foster, for their contributions and hard work over the year. The club could not function without members taking on additional responsibility and putting up with me and my pedantic ways over the year. Whilst this may seem like a large turnover, many of the current committee have served for a number of years, and it's a more natural cycle of bringing in fresh blood, ideas and approaches.

When the committee tries to make a decision on behalf of the club, we have best intentions in mind and try to please as many members as we can. This is invariable difficult with close to 300 members and we have seen this several times this year. Our members are not afraid to voice their views on matters, and whilst that is commended, we aren't always able to support all requests - this does not mean we aren't listening. Invariably we also all have full time jobs and at times this can mean replying to emails can take a bit longer and last minute changes can't always be accommodated. But we have always tried to do the best for the club.

Now, onto what has been going on this year. If 2016 was the year of weddings – 2017 in the club was marked by babies. Absolutely everywhere – some whose arrival was a little more dramatic and other who gently joined the world of the Dashers. We can look forward to a few speedy youngsters in coming years.

Our year started a little different, with us organising a brand new event – the Dash in the Dark. Bryony somehow managed to convince Black Park to conceding to let us trample through there in the dark, one balmy March evening, with only having to pay for the car parking - it turned out be a brilliant event. We received fantastic feedback, with the only drawback being a request by the park for us to safeguard migrating frogs in future years. The event was good value and we didn't lose any money on it – so we are looking for a repeat of the success and the entries are already open for the 2018 version. This was a real turnaround compared to the Great Park Dash and Dorney 10K, which were financially difficult events.

Some concerns we have carried over from last year – we continue to be pressed for spaces to run on Tuesday evenings, and for the first time recently have faced complaints about us using the town centre for the 5k timetrial. The number of slower Dashers on Thursdays continues to be low, though we do now have far less problems with volunteers for tailrunners, following its inclusion into the marathon draw.

The summer brought with it another new event, a partnership with Runface, which resulted in the unbelievably successful Beat the Boat. The event was a risk the club would have been unlikely to take alone, given the complex nature and financial outlay it represented. However, not only was it a very successful event, its also heading towards being a sold out event already for this year. One thing I have learnt as chairman is that often when everyone else sees an exciting opportunity, we see insurance and risk assessments and this proves more than anything why fresh blood on the committee is good for the club.

The summer was full of other Dashers events, our very successful Relay event made a comeback – we trialled a new course for the Divided Dash and the Jim Banks was very nearly upset by a delay in the fish and chips arrival!

We also finally this year replaced our shed. Any of you who have ever banged their head on the old one or have fought with the doors will understand what I am talking about – it required a game of Jenga to fit our growing pile of club things into it. However, it is fair to say that the construction phase of the new shed was a month long drama during which the only continuing highlight was the fact that the sun shined for about 4 weekends in a row. For about a week I was getting updates from Bryony that said things like ‘shed is the wrong size, had to start again today, what do you mean, we need a new foundation???’. We are eternally grateful to the construction gang, who have all spend large amounts of their free time for this project, so thank you to Alan Dray, Tony Wharf, Bryony, Leigh, Colin, the Olney’s and others, for their blood, sweat and tears.

Dashers continued to collectively head to overseas races, whether that is running around Jersey or heading to do Amsterdam Marathon, Dashers were out in force. We remain a club of great variety, from the short to the very long distance, excelling at all events, though I will let the captains elaborate on that further. We continue to attract new runners of all speeds, particularly because we are so visible in the local community.

In late autumn we finally took the step of replacing our club kit and after careful consideration we decided to fund a club shirt for all current members of the club, given we were changing the design. I am really excited to see the club out in the new shirts and a big thank you to Carl Dawson for getting this organised.

The now well established Jules Jog happened in late October and we had a bit of excitement this year when the Great Park decided to let us know with 3 weeks to go that we could not use the usual course – we were saved by Jez Allsop, who magicked up a new route, which seemed very popular despite the hills.

Coming full circle we once again had a fabulous turnout at our XC with 475 runners and the day went incredibly smooth – everyone is so well organised now and the event is probably the least stressful of the year, despite it requiring exact time matching prior to the start with the Remembrance Sunday silence. Whilst we for the first time had to pay for the use of the Brocas, the XC series was never designed to make money for the club, and we will continue to pay for the entry of all club members for the series.

So after 2 years as chairman and 6 years on the committee I am aware that change can be a good thing and I know that Bryony and the new committee will represent the club magnificently and do everything in their power to strongly lead us into another year. I am incredibly proud to be a Dasher, was honoured to have been your chairman, and look forward to joining you all once again as just a runner.