

**MID LANCASHIRE CROSS-COUNTRY LEAGUE**  
**Cross-Country Secretary's Report**  
**to the 2017 Fixtures Meeting**  
**7:30pm Wednesday 16th August 2017, Lansil Club,**

Assesment of the 2016 - 2017 Season

I'm pleased to report that the 2016 - 2017 season ran smoothly with none of the disturbance of the previous year's cancelled fixture. Six fixtures were characterized by fair weather, large turnouts, well-organized events and were followed by a successful Presentation. The season's fixtures were:

(1) Astley Park - Chorley Athletic & Tri (1/10/16) (2) Cuerden Valley Park - Red Rose Runners (29/10/16), (3) Liverpool Cross - Merseyside Clubs (26/11/16), (4) Towneley Park - Trawden AC (14/1/17), (5) Rossall School - Thornton-Cleveleys RC (11/2/17) and (6) Leigh Sports Village - Leigh Harriers (5/3/17). The Presentation was on Friday 21st April at Bamber Bridge CC Club.

My sincere thanks go to all the organizers for their generously given time and efforts and to the officials for their invaluable contribution to the successful running of this season's cross-country. It was a sad loss to all who knew her and to the Mid Lancs. League when Val Lawson died on 22nd September 2016 after helping on registration so efficiently and so usefully for 10 years.

Thirty-four clubs and two composite teams took part in the season's sport to varying degrees: a surprising and increasing number of clubs, 28, now have some junior participation and 31 clubs competed in the senior competition. A high 4631 runs were recorded rather skewed by the large turnout of non-league competitors at Liverpool. This equated to an average of 772 runners per fixture made up of an average of 373 Juniors and 399 Seniors. Junior attendance is approaching that of the Seniors mainly through the excellent attendances in the younger junior age groups. Numbers for boys and girls in the Under 11s and Under 13s average around 60 but numbers still fall sharply in the older age groups although there was a 16% increase over 2015 - 2016 figures. Senior runs show a ratio of 3:2 men to women but with a noticeable trend for the sport to be growing in popularity amongst women. Veteran runners predominate in both male and female competition but with more non-veterans competing in the men's (possibly because they have an extra five years to veteran age). Based on the runners completing five events the figures are 68% men veteran to 79% women veterans. There were 2878 runners entered for the season but this number was swelled artificially by re-registering athletes updating their England Athletics status.

Comments on the Fixtures

(1) Astley Park Staged early season for the second time, Astley Park was blessed with good weather. Chorley Athletic and Tri led by Stan Jewell put on courses of outstanding variety and interest which attracted a record 862 in total and 156 Under 11s. Astley Park is unavailable to us this season.

(2) Cuerden Valley The introduction of Cuerden Valley Park, with more complications due to the distance to parking, meant a huge amount of work for organizers Red Rose Runners who met the challenge with energy and imagination. Misty conditions prevailed but didn't stop many declaring a real enthusiasm for the venue. Attendance, 757, was still high even with some clubs choosing the Red Rose League in preference.

(3) Sefton Park Full with 2000 entrants, Liverpool had its usual big occasion atmosphere. Mist hung around until weak sunshine appeared for the senior races. Numbers in the older juniors' races provided these age groups with the competitive fields that the League can't. The nominal Mid Lancs. field size was 899. Entries had to be made in advance though club reps at a £1 per head.

(4) Towneley Park New organizers Trawden AC brought their own take on this well-established venue and staged it very successfully. Centrally-placed for many Mid Lancs. clubs and held in good weather, it attracted 766.

(5) Rossall School Presenting an austere windblown appearance from the outside, the interior is homely and welcoming and, importantly, provides more varied and challenging cross-country than would be expected. Excellent parking and catering facilities plus hard work on the part of organizer Mark Prior of Rossall and Thornton-Cleveleys, makes this a popular venue which attracted 642 competitors

(6) Leigh Sports Village While a well-used venue for South East Lancashire and Red Rose Leagues, it was a first visit for the Mid Lancs. thanks to the great amount of work put in on our behalf by Joe and Margaret Galvin of Leigh Harriers. Courses are attractive if flattish and hard underfoot in parts. The total attendance of 703 was large for a final season event.

The Presentation The Presentation had a maximum capacity crowd who appeared to enjoy the event and led to many winners being present to collect their prizes. A surplus of over £100 was added to Mid Lancs. reserves. The downside of the capacity crowd was that some clubs were unrepresented and disappointed. Future Presentation will have to offer a fairer booking system or move to a larger venue. Directions to alternative parking helped. Thanks go to the Committee, to Steve and Pat Jackson for marking the Hidden Places Quiz and to Dave Woods for the photography.

### Significant Developments This Season

The UKA directive of April 2016 that only fully paid-up and England Athletics registered athletes may compete in cross-country caused a great deal of extra work, particularly for the General Secretary and a degree of discontent amongst some athletes. However, the fairness of the decision was accepted by many clubs who proceeded to encourage their athletes accordingly.

The result was that progressively throughout the season supplying their EA number became the norm for runners looking to register and easier both for registration and Ron Scott. Most athletes who were at first removed from the results returned to reregister after completing EA formalities. It's expected that similar checking procedures will be applied next season. Other leagues rely on the gate system provided by the Sport Soft website but this does not offer as reliable a check.

By a narrow margin, the 2016 Cross-Country Meeting decided against a joint fixture between the Mid Lancs. and the Red Rose Leagues. Consequently separate

events for the two leagues took place on 29th October at Cuerden Valley and Witton Park. Clubs with dual membership chose which of the fixtures best suited them. The two leagues running on the same date attracted a total of over 1400 runners suggesting that there is sufficient demand to justify holding parallel fixtures.

The experiment to offer men over 70 the chance of running shorter courses by competing in the Senior Women's 6K has not attracted very large numbers and may have depressed entries from this age category.

A second CPR and defibrillator training course was held in February at a new venue, St. Saviour's Church, Bamber Bridge and led again by Dawn Taylor of Rossendale First Response. Fifteen attended this year bringing the total trained to 26. The defibrillator was carried to all the cross-county events and to several of the track and field fixtures.

### Requirement for a Deputy Cross-Country Secretary

At the Fixture Meeting on 16th August a member is sought who will take sufficient interest in the organization of cross-country to take on the role of Assistant Cross-Country Secretary. Numbers have grown since 2011 - 2012 from a meeting average of 516 at five fixtures to 772 at six fixtures last season. The work needed in registering and checking has also increased a great deal and there is also the problem of being concentrated solely in my hands. It would be consoling to know that should I fail to arrive at a fixture someone else can take over with the least disruption. There are many aspects of the job that could be done independently: processing competitor lists, co-ordinating the fixtures, arranging officials' cover, overseeing results, communicating with team managers, looking after duplicate sets of equipment and organizing the Presentation are all jobs that could be carried out autonomously.

If someone will consider taking on the role, with or without the idea of succession, the future of the Mid Lancs. League's cross-country could be secured. If you or anyone from your club could undertake this role, I'd be most grateful.

**Dawn Lock, Cross-Country Secretary, Mid Lancashire League 30/7/2017**