

EKAC REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2019

January 2019

Starting 2019 with a bang (pardon the starting gun joke) Greg Kelly became the first athlete since 1934 to win the New Year Sprint on two occasions. This year at Musselborough was the 150th running of this prestigious event and the first prize was £8000. As a previous winner, Greg had a substantial handicap, so his victory was quite a feat. At the BMC indoor meeting on the 4th January, which incorporated the National 3000m Championship races, Hannah Anderson ran magnificently to win the U17 Scottish 3000m title. At the same meeting, both Callum Charters and Amit Kumar won their respective High Jump events and numerous other PBs were set by other club members. At the same venue the very next day the Scottish Athletics Indoor League was in full swing and we had strong representation in the form of junior teams, many of whose athletes also set personal bests. This was repeated at the next meeting on 29 January. Moving outdoors again, we had 3 athletes selected for the Inter District Cross Country events in Stirling on 12th January. Hannah Anderson (4th place in U17 race), John Fergusson and Grant Baillie acquitted themselves well in their respective events. At the end of January the EKAC Masters team took a fine 6th place in the Masters Relays at Strathclyde Park, with Grant Baillie registering the 7th fastest individual time on an extremely windy day.

February 2019

New to the Masters Category, Grant took the opportunity to compete for the title at the Scottish Masters XC at Hawick on 2 February on a hilly, rutted and icy course. After leading early on he eventually crossed the line in 7th place. The Club was pleased to honour 2 of our own that month with Life Memberships. These went to Gordon Bury for services to Coaching over many years and to one of his athletes, Greg Kelly, for his more recent achievements on the track. Although his season was curtailed by injury, you'll hear more of Greg later. 59 athletes attended our Club Cross-country Championships on 9 February in Strathaven. The sprint handicap race was won by Cait Minster. Club cross-country champions were Kayleigh Pew and Ryan McNamara at U11, Aimee Anderson and Callum Charters at U13, Leah Muirhead and Chris Cairns at U15, Kelly Baillie and Daryl Reid at Senior and Vivien Thorpe and Gerry O'Neil at Masters level. The Scottish Cross Country Champs were held at Falkirk on 23 February. Once again we successfully managed to put up the club tent, this time the new one with EKAC printed on the front. Out of 29 athletes competing, first EKAC finishers on the day were Charlotte Evans and Callum Charters at U13, Leah Muirhead and Chris Cairns at U15, Hannah Anderson (in 5th place) and Hamish Anderson at U17, Kelly Baillie and Grant Baillie (in 37th place) at Senior level.

March 2019

On 10 March, a very wet and windy day, Grant Baillie set a PB in winning the Balloch to Clydebank Half Marathon by almost 1.5 minutes and became West Districts Senior and Masters Champion at the same time with this great performance. The weather was so bad over the next few days, due to Storm Gareth, we had to cancel training. The final SAIL meeting took place in mid-March, resulting in more PBs by our youngest athletes indoors at the magnificent Emirates Arena. At the end of March a squad of EKAC Tartan Army supporters went to the World XC at Aarhus in Denmark. One of the innovations introduced here by the IAAF was to allow club athletes of a sufficient standard to enter a ballot for the chance to line up with the National teams on the start line for the Senior events. Jamie Clements duly took his opportunity and the EKAC vest was proudly worn for the first time ever in the World Cross-Country Championships. The kilt-

clad squad were a highly visible presence and continued to promote the Club with spectators, athletes and Senior IAAF official alike.

April 2019

The 2019 Outdoor Track & Field season started in April. In mid-month, through the sterling efforts of Kenny Clements, we had a visit from Scotland's current top athlete Laura Muir, who, with her Coach Andy Young, took the time to conduct a Q&A session with our athletes. The event was well-attended and Laura dealt with some great questions from our younger athletes in an informative and inspirational way. I think everyone got a lot from her visit and came away suitably motivated. With Spring well underway, a host of EKAC athletes competed in the Lanarkshire relays on 21 April in East Kilbride, and the club came away with 9 medals after an exciting evening of athletics. These were: 2 gold, U13B 3x800, U15B 3x800; 3 silver, U13G 3x800, U13B 4x100, U17M 4x100; 4 bronze, U11G 4x100, U13B 3x800 (B team), U17W 3x800, U17M 3x800.

May 2019

The first major Track & Field Championships of the Summer were the West Districts in mid-May. Our 18 young athletes reached 11 finals, winning 2 medals, from Hannah Anderson (bronze in the 1500m) and Calum Charters (silver in the high jump).

June 2019

After promotion to Division 2 of the CSSAL this year, we expected the competition to be of a different level to Division 3 last year and so it proved, but our athletes met the challenge. There were 2 meetings in June and 1 in September. We finished a close 3rd (from 8 teams) in each of the first 2 meetings in June and at that point were only 47 match points behind the leaders and 13 points behind 2nd place (out of around 1600 points accumulated), indicating that we had the potential for promotion to Division 1. However, this league is a bit of a numbers game, benefitting clubs who can fill all the event places, and in truth our results has been delivered by the strength of our Junior athletes. We didn't field full squads in the Senior events and this was most noticeable in the last meeting, where we finished in 7th place, resulting in an eventual comfortable 4th place finish in the Division. We are starting to see increased membership at the Senior level and the adult running group is playing an important role in this, but we really need to keep on working on recruitment. At the end of the month the local Calderglen trail races provided another success story for EKAC with 1st and 3rd places in the main 10K race courtesy of John Fergusson and Daryl Reid respectively. They were backed up by a host of great performances and team medals for many of our other athletes in the remaining races.

July 2019

One of our members, Kenny Clements, celebrated 40 consecutive years with the Club this year, so we organised a surprise special night to celebrate, where we reunited him with many EKAC members from the past and read out congratulatory messages from many friends, including Callum and Derek Hawkins, who recorded a video message from their US training camp.

August 2019

Throughout the Summer EKAC athletes competed in a number of Track & Field leagues. The Youth Development League had 3 meetings and a final and our U13/U15 athletes competed with great success as part of a composite South Lanarkshire Team. At the Masters Track & Field Championships, Grant Baillie won the M35 800m title and took a bronze at the 1500m, showing remarkable range from 800m up to the

marathon. A small squad of 15 EKAC athletes contested the Scottish Track & Field Championships over consecutive weekends in August. They reached 4 finals in total. Greg Kelly won a silver medal in the Senior 100m and honourable mentions go to Hannah Anderson for 4th place in the 800m and Jonathan Hunter for 8th place in the 1500m. As already mentioned, in his first year as a Senior, sprinter Greg Kelly had another fantastic year. He had multiple call-ups for the Scotland team, set a Club record time of 10.65 for 100m while placing first in the Scottish Universities Championship, and placed 4th and 5th respectively at the British Universities and Loughborough International events in addition to winning multiple Highland Games sprint competitions.

September 2019

Amongst many fine performances from the 55 EKAC athletes who competed at the Lanarkshire Track & Field Championships at East Kilbride on 8 September, our athletes won 6 gold, 4 silver and 8 bronze medals. Our Lanarkshire Champions were Ryan Clydesdale, Chris Cairns, Ryan McNamara, Sam McGrory and Aimee Anderson. Two weeks later, at the EKAC Track & Field Championships our new champions were Carrie Charters and Ethan Selfridge at U11, Emily Buchan and Sam McGrory at U13, Hannah Kelly and Callum Charters at U15, Hannah Anderson and Owen Selfridge at U17, Rachael Thomson and David Thomson at Senior and Kelly Baillie and Vincent Glennon at Masters. At our Awards presentation we also gave out some special awards. These were: Scott Walsh Endeavour Award to Emma Livingstone. Athletes of the year to Ryan McNamara at Junior, Hannah Anderson at Youth and Greg Kelly at U20/Senior level. The Sheila MacDougall Award for the best performance at the Club Championships went to Carrie Charters.

October 2019

October saw the start of the Cross-country Season, beginning with the Western Districts XC Relays at Kilmarnock. We managed to field 2 Women's teams in this event for the first time in many years, and the Men's team, comprising Jamie Clements, Grant Baillie, Martin Lynas and John Fergusson yet again produced a great performance to finish 8th. A total of 41 EKAC athletes competed over all age groups with the day's best performance going to Hannah Anderson with 2nd fastest time in the U17 Women category. The following weekend was the Lanarkshire Road Relays at Coatbridge and I am happy to report this was one of our best ever performances at this event! The girls won medals in every age group, with 3rd at U11, 1st at U13 (and fastest leg of the day by Aimee Anderson), 2nd at U15, 3rd individual by Emma Livingstone at U17 and 1st at Senior (with fastest leg of the day by Kelly Baillie). For the boys, the U11s took a comfortable 1st whilst the Seniors, missing most of the regular first team athletes, battled hard to bring the team home in 3rd. Next up was the Scottish Cross-country relays, on 26 October at the usual Cumbernauld course. This year the underfoot conditions and weather were kind to all 42 EK athletes who competed. The Senior men finished 20th and we again had 2 Senior women's teams and 7 young athletes' teams. Performance of the day was by Grant Baillie who recorded fastest Masters M40 time by some margin.

November 2019

Moving into November, the first big event was the Scottish Short-course Cross-country Championships at Kirkcaldy on the 9th. First home for the club were Gracie Carlin and Callum Charters at U15, Hannah Anderson (a fine 3rd place) and Hamish Anderson at U17 and the family double for Kelly Baillie and Grant Baillie at Senior level. Grant's performance won him the M40 Masters Scottish title and earned him selection for the Scottish team for the British & Irish Masters International at Aintree, where he was first counter and picked up a bronze team medal. The Lanarkshire Cross-country championships took place at a new venue in Kirkland Park Strathaven, with EKAC hosting. The event went well and in a poll organised by

the LAAA it garnered a lot of praise and seems to be much preferred to the course at Drumpellier Park. We had 3 Lanarkshire Champions: Ben Baillie at U11, Aimee Anderson at U13 and Kelly Baillie at Masters, who finished 2nd Woman overall in the race. Other individual medallists were Euan Thorpe at U11, Callum Charters at U15 and the duo of John Fergusson and Daryl Reid at Senior. Team medals were won by the U11B (gold), U13G (bronze), U13B (silver), U15G (silver), U15B (gold), Senior Women (silver) and Senior Men (gold). On the same day, Hannah Anderson travelled to Liverpool for the UK Cross Challenge, a National level event which doubled as the U20 and Senior trial race for the European XC Champs. With a great run, Hannah claimed the bronze medal in her U17 race.

December 2019

The West Districts Cross Country Championships took place at a very wet and muddy Balloch Park in early December. Of the 38 EKAC athletes contesting the event, the 2 standout performances were from Hannah Anderson, a runaway winner of the U17 Women's title, and Grant Baillie, 1st Master M40 in the Senior Men's race. The Senior Team had 16 men competing and narrowly missed a team medal in 4th place. At the Christmas Handicap on 21 December the winners were Carrie Charters and Ben Baillie at U11 and Beth Allan and Declan Perrie at U13/U15. Lorna Edwards took the Senior Handicap win over the usual 4 mile course at Auldhouse. That same evening we had a Coaches and Seniors night out, the highlight of which was the presentation of a Life Membership award to Grant Baillie for his achievements when wearing the EKAC vest. Over the festive period, club members were highly visible at Drumpellier, Strathclyde and Troon Parkruns and several PBs were set over the junior and 5K distances.