

Civil Service Athletic Association

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

1 The Civil Service Athletic Association in 2023

During 2023 CSAA, in conjunction with CSSC, promoted the following events:

- i) 10k & 5k Challenge in Battersea Park,
- ii) Half Marathon within the Freckleton event,
- iii) Open and Masters Track and Field combined with the RAF at Rockingham Triangle,
- iv) Race Walk in conjunction with the Police at Cannon Hill Park Birmingham incorporating the Ryan Cup
- v) Cross Country at Parliament Hill, London.

In January the CSAA Representative Team competed in the Annual Sir Sefton-Branker & SEAX Cross County Fixture against the RAF at RAF Halton.

During the year CSAA Executive Officers were also involved in discussion regarding the future status of CSAA within CSSC and received reassurance from the CEO down that CSAA still had a vital role to play in an everchanging role for CSSC within and beyond the Civil Service. This involved a lot of heartache for the Committee but at the end of the day it was agreed that if the CSSC Policies and/or those of England Athletics (EA) were adhered to there was very little likelihood that members would be held liable for any accidents or incidents arising.

This only confirmed the processes that CSAA Event Organisers already undertook to ensure that their events were run in accordance with current guidelines and recommendations. In all cases the organisers were qualified EA officials and experienced in event organisation outside of CSSC.

CSAA were also ready to embrace the direction that CSSC were moving in in respect of Exit Polls and the request for more events at a local level working with Area Associations. It is hoped that two pilot events can take place in the North West Area in 2024 as it was recognised that the CSAA Committee did not have the capacity to run local CSSC events without outside assistance. In many areas parkruns would be deemed “local events” for CSSC Members to participate together.

2 Events During 2023

The Men’s Sir Sefton Brancker Cross Country Match against the RAF dates back to 30th January 1929 and has seen many Great Britain Internationals competing for both teams. The 2023 fixture took place in January at RAF Halton and whilst the Civil Service Women struggled to field a team the Men had no such issues winning the Trophy and having the first three across the line - Jack Millar, Ed Bovington and Tom Adams. The Women’s SEAX Trophy, which was introduced in 1987, saw only 4 Civil Servants able to compete on the day which meant that the RAF retained the Trophy. Thanks go to the CSAA Team Managers Ian Statter, who was standing down after a marvellous stint of 35 years, and handing the baton over to Dan Summers and Claire Cameron who tried so valiantly to find late replacements for the Women’s Team.

In May the Coronation Challenge hosted the CSAA 10k Championships and 5k Run at Battersea Park and it was another well organised event with CSAA and CSSC staff working well together for this showcase event. This year 187 Men and Women completed the 10k with times ranging from 31.02 to 87.06 illustrating that it was open to all athletes no matter what their standard but who enjoyed running for health and fitness along with their CSSC colleagues.

In June the action moved to Freckleton who very kindly allowed CSAA to host the Half Marathon Championships within their race in Lancashire on a Sunday morning. Once again numbers were low due to a variety of reasons such as distance to travel, lack of 100% funding from CSSC and Departmental cut

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back on expenses. However, with 13 athletes it was an improvement on the 8 in 2022 and the majority were in favour of returning for the 60th running of the Freckleton event in 2024. It is hoped that this will be the first race of the “local events” and that the North West Association will promote this to all its members and provide volunteers to assist with the race.

Rockingham Triangle in Corby hosted the Open & Masters Track and Field Championships which was held this year alongside the RAF Championships which was a first. The number of CSSC athletes participating was a cause for concern, especially as the majority were in the Master’s Categories and without the RAF athletes it would have been questionable whether the event could continue. However, those that competed enjoyed the competition and with such a long history stretching back to 1864 it is vital that this Championship can continue for many years to come.

The officials were of the highest standard with many being highly graded by England Athletics and without them there would be no event at all. Thanks must go to Gaye Clarke & Bob Brimage for all their hard work in arranging the event and to all the CSSC staff who turned out to assist with the running of the event.

On to September and the Race Walk hosted by the Police Sports Association at Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham which included the historic Ryan Cup Match. This year the Police regained the Ryan Cup but once again numbers were low and most were competitors with many years under their belts at this event. Unfortunately, the venue with its changing and post-race buffet will now be unavailable in future years and another location is required if this event is to continue. How new walkers can be attracted and encouraged is a challenge for CSAA and CSSC.

The final event of the year was the Cross Country Championships which were held over a new course at Parliament Hill in London. For the first time the Men and Women ran the same distance of 5 miles over a testing course but once again the ground, which should be soft and muddy, was bone dry, rock hard and riven with cracks which were an issue for the organisers and runners alike. Thankfully there were no injuries and the event was deemed a success with 55 Men and 17 Women competing. Jack Millar (SPARTA) rounded off a very successful year by winning the race, having won the Sir Sefton-Brancker XC back in January and the 10k in May and all by good margins.

3 The CSAA History

2024 is 160 years since the very first Civil Service Sports Day was held on 23rd & 24th April 1864 at Beaufort House, London.

Athletics historian, Peter Lovesey, penned the following

“The CSAA was extremely prestigious in the Victorian era and the sports were certainly one of the most important occasions in the calendar. Charles Herbert (1846-1924), a winner at the sports in 1869, 1870 and 1875, became the Hon Sec of the Amateur Athletics Association and a member of the International Olympic Council from its foundation until 1906, when he fell from the top of an omnibus. He was regarded by Pierre de Coubertin, the creator of the modern Olympics, as one of the key figures who made the first Olympics possible.”

It is hoped to celebrate this anniversary during the year starting with the 10k & 5k events at Battersea Park almost 160 years to the day of that first event.

4 The CSAA Committee

The CSAA is an elected body and the Committee has met via Zoom during 2023, apart from a face to face at the AGM in February. The AGM is for all members to attend though it is recognised that this is not

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always possible due to work commitments, time-off and travel difficulties. However, this should not discourage anyone from becoming an elected Member of the Committee or just volunteering their services to help at events, because without this volunteer community there is the real possibility that events could disappear altogether as the current organisers reach the stage when they have to hand over responsibility.

If anyone wishes to discover more about what is involved or offer their services for a particular event then please contact the Secretary for more information. Volunteers remain the lifeblood of the sport and CSAA will welcome anyone who lives locally and wishes to assist at any event. For example, this might involve timekeeping, number recording, course marshalling, officiating, handing out race numbers, course marking etc and would assist the Committee in so many ways and continue to maintain the high quality that athletes currently enjoy when participating.

The elected Committee for 2023, at the AGM held in February was as follows:

President	Hedley Featherstone MBE
Chairman:	Ian Statter
Secretary:	Nick Hume
Treasurer:	Paula Booth
Life Vice Presidents:	Bill Berry, Brian Craig, Dave Evans, John Hall, Neil Hornsby, Nick Hume, Bill Kingston, Roger Smith, Gerry Trainer, Ted Wingrove
Committee:	Bob Brimage, Jason Brewer, Claire Cameron, Gaye Clarke, Michaela Dempsey, Steve Hallas, Jason Holt, Grete Howarth, Steve Norris, Dan Summers, Ros Townsend-Hope, Steve Uttley, Tim Wright
Accounts Examiner:	J Dransfield

Within the Committee there is a wide range of knowledge and experience that covers all aspects of the athletics spectrum. A number of the Committee Members also serve in volunteer capacities from national to local level for Clubs, Counties and National Associations and/or are qualified Coaches, and/or Officials thus bringing increased expertise to the organisation of CSAA events. This also enables good working relationships with organisations such as England Athletics and UK Athletics if the need arises.

5 Final Round-Up

The planning for 2024 has already commenced with the date for the 10k & 5k already set in the hope that it provides participants a chance to book it in their calendars early.

During the year it is hoped that the 160th Anniversary of the CSAA can be celebrated and CSAA President, Hedley Featherstone, is very much on-board with this idea and is keen to assist in the promotion of this and highlight the long history of athletics in its broadest sense within the Civil Service.

Nick Hume CSAA General Secretary January 2024

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Annex 1 Event Statistics

The Table below summarises the number of participants per event in the year before Covid and for 2022 and 2023 as life returned back to some normality.

Event – Combined Men & Women	2019 Nos	2022 Nos	2023 Nos
CS 10k	180	197	187
CS XC	60	72	72
CS Relays	49	NA	NA
CS Half Marathon	13	8	13
CS Race Walk	11	14	12
CS T&F	79	40	55

An interesting fact to note is that according to the parkrun statistics (at 21/1/24) CSSC Sports & Leisure has 1,829 runners registered under that name who have completed 102,179 runs between them whilst DRSA (Mod) has 1,738 registered and 56,797 recorded runs. These numbers will be on the lower side as many CSSC runners will be taking part under their Athletic Club names. However, this illustrates the tremendous number of people taking part in physical activity outside the events organised by CSAA/CSSC and rather belies the need for more local athletic events.