Erme Valley Harriers – Secretary's Report, AGM 2026

Nov 3, 2026

Introduction

It has been another busy and largely positive year for the club. Senior training has been well supported, junior winter training has been the busiest for some time, and all three of our club races went well.

It has not all been easy. We have had a very wet winter, a long hot summer that hit training numbers, and the sad loss of Paul Ross in July. The Harrier that month was a tribute to him, and his funeral was a real celebration of the life of a great man.

Membership

Our membership currently stands at 236, almost the same as last year's 238. We have 137 seniors, of whom 8 are volunteers, and 99 juniors. That is one more senior and five more juniors than last year.

The new even-year age groups came in on 1st April, so the junior breakdown is not directly comparable with 2025:

Age group	Members
U10	8
U12	36
U14	33
U16	17
U18	5
Total juniors	**99**

The winter season uses age on 31st August 2027, so we have had a lot of new U12s to register with England Athletics for the first time. The numbers at the youngest and oldest ends are still small. Only 8 members are U10 and only 5 are U18, so recruiting younger juniors and keeping our older ones remain priorities.

Committee and officers

Lynne Whitfield has completed her first year as Treasurer, having been elected at last year's AGM. She took over from Chris Prall, and thanks again to Chris for his five years in the role and for staying on the committee to help with the handover. Helen Chapell has taken over the Club Championship and she been posting updated standings every month.

Tom has continued to do a great job as Chair. On top of that he is now leading the new team running the Westward League, which started its season with the relay at Newnham on 11th October. Emma has again organised the handicaps and the weekly training routes.

After 17 years, Jayne and I stood down from organising the Westward League at the end of last season. We would like to thank everyone again for the lovely gifts and kind wishes we received.

The year in review

Our club races

The Ivybridge 10K on 23rd May was a huge success, with over 500 finishers and only one minor casualty. Runners praised the organisation, the marshals and the T-shirts. It was great to see Luke Hayes win the race. We donated £500 from the race to the WATER charity.

The Relays on 26th June went very well. The EVH men's team smashed the course record, and Will Battershill ran very fast. The 3 Tops Fell Race on 15th August also went off fine. We are reviewing it, as last year's casualty showed the higher risk of a fell race.

All three events depend on our members, who once again did a fantastic job. We were short of helpers at times, so please do come forward if you can.

Juniors

Junior training has been busy, with new recruits most weeks, and winter training has been incredibly popular. In the Devon Sportshall League we led for much of the season and went into the final fixture just a few points behind Plymouth but managed to overhaul them on the last day. Thirteen of our athletes represented Devon at the Regional Sportshall, and some ran in the Inter Counties Cross Country.

Five new coaches qualified on the Assistant Coach course in Plymouth in the spring, which is a real boost. The junior presentation evening in April was a great success, and our Funetics event was featured by England Athletics.

The disappointment has been the track and field season. Despite our efforts, numbers competing have been very poor. We would still welcome feedback on why.

Seniors

Senior training on Tuesdays has gone well, with a steady stream of new faces. We introduced a 10-minute warm-up, now led by the coaches. We also asked everyone to stick to the planned routes so we know who is where, especially for new members. The fun relays at Filham were a massive success, with juniors and seniors training together.

Friday training never really recovered, so it is suspended until the spring. We are looking at a senior session on Thursdays at ICC instead.

Highlights

- Simon Fitze broke Alan Ryder's club marathon record in Valencia in December, running 2:39:26. Alison McEwing broke her own record there in 2:46:31.
- Ben Holmes then broke the club marathon record in London. Simon Fitze, Helen Chapell and Dave Rayfield set age-group records.
- The senior team retained its title at the Armada Christmas Relays, with Ben Holmes running the fastest leg.
- Emma and Sally won gold at the Devon Cross Country Championships, and Ben Holmes was 2nd.
- Chris and Pete Allen represented Devon at the Inter Counties Fell Race.
- Ronnie Haynes won the Cornwood 10K.
- We entered teams in the Tavi and South Devon Relays, and in the first South Hams Relay.
- Seniors have started competing in track and field again, helped by adding those fixtures to the Club Championship.

Looking ahead to 2027

We face challenges as always, but if we all work together I am sure we can overcome them. The main ones are:

- **Coaches and volunteers.** The five new assistant coaches are a great start, but we still need more, along with run leaders and race helpers. We need a succession plan so newer volunteers can take over from our older ones.
- **Juniors in competition.** We need more juniors at track and field and cross country fixtures, and better communication with parents.
- **Recruitment at both ends.** We need more U10s coming in and more U16s and U18s staying on.
- **Supporting the Westward League.** Now that Tom leads it, the club needs to get behind it, especially with marshals.

Thanks

I would like to thank all the committee for their hard work again this year. Particular thanks to Sharon for all she does for the club, and to Lynne for taking on the Treasurer's role. Thanks also to the coaches, who have again done a great job.

A huge thank you to Dave Fox for producing more fantastic Harrier magazines, and to Ken and Sharon for the kit. Thanks to everyone who marshalled or helped at our races and to those who led groups on club nights. As always, I would like to thank Jayne, who does such a valuable job helping the club and me.

I hope you all enjoy the AGM. It is an opportunity to put your views forward, so please do. The club will continue to go forward in a safe, sustainable way in line with the requirements of the governing bodies and our members.

Keith Reed, November 2026