

A Report on the Welsh Masters Ladies Team Performances

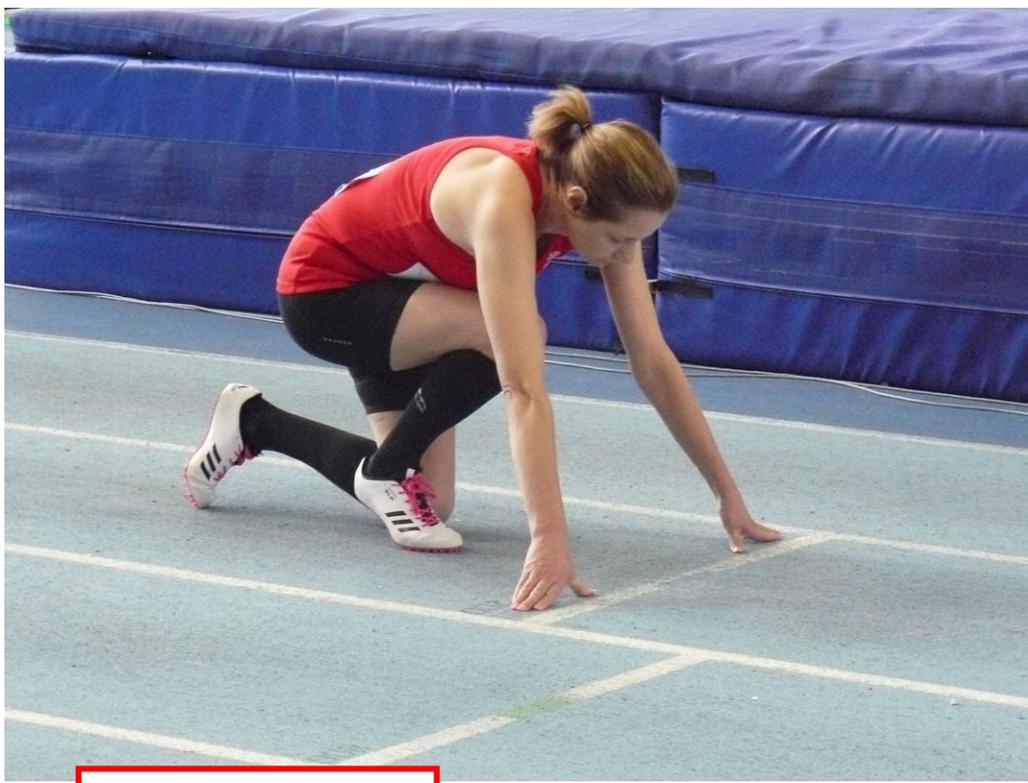
Another year another challenge, this event certainly lives up to its name! This time, as well as the almost inevitable withdrawals through injury, we had “The beast from the east” depositing large amounts of the white stuff over most of the UK.

Several of our team were forced to pull out in the final day or two as they were either blocked in by snow drifts or felt it was unsafe to travel. However, on the day some 16 Welsh Masters Ladies assembled at Lee Valley in North London to take on the best of the rest from the other regional groups.

The Track Events...

The first event on the track was the 60m Hurdles. With Amanda Cook injured and Vickie Watkins snowbound, we had no athlete in the race for people in the W35-49 age category. At W50-59 Mel Garland came 4th with an SB to obtain 3 points and get our team total moving.

Next it was the 1500m races. At W60 Joan Howe was injured and despite my best endeavours I couldn't find a replacement, whilst at W50 Angela Jones was stranded in Usk! Luckily we had Helen-Marie Davies at W35 and she set a new PB (by some 6 seconds!) and brought back another 3 points.



**Louise Kirby at the start
of the W50 400m**

Next up on track it was time for the 400m races. Georgie Prior stepped in at W35 to cover for her stranded sister, Vickie Watkins. Georgie stormed around in 65.19s a (Masters) PB to come home in 2nd place and secure 5 points for “Team Wales”. At W50 Louise Kirby, who like Georgie was making her Welsh Masters debut, smashed her previous PB running a time of 71.52s in collecting another 4 points, beaten only by two GB internationals.

At W60 Caroline Marler ran an SB but was pipped on the line by two other athletes. All three of them clocked 72 point something.

It was then time for the 2k Race Walk. Last year we fielded no athletes in the walk, but this time we had both slots filled. Gill Williams, giving away 20 years to some of the other athletes, competed at W35 and was rewarded with a new PB of 16'34.42.

In the W50 category Wendy Bennett bettered the previous Championship Best Performance winning in a Season's Best time of 11'12.67.

Together our walkers accumulated an excellent 8 points towards our team total.

Gillian Williams in the 2k Race Walk



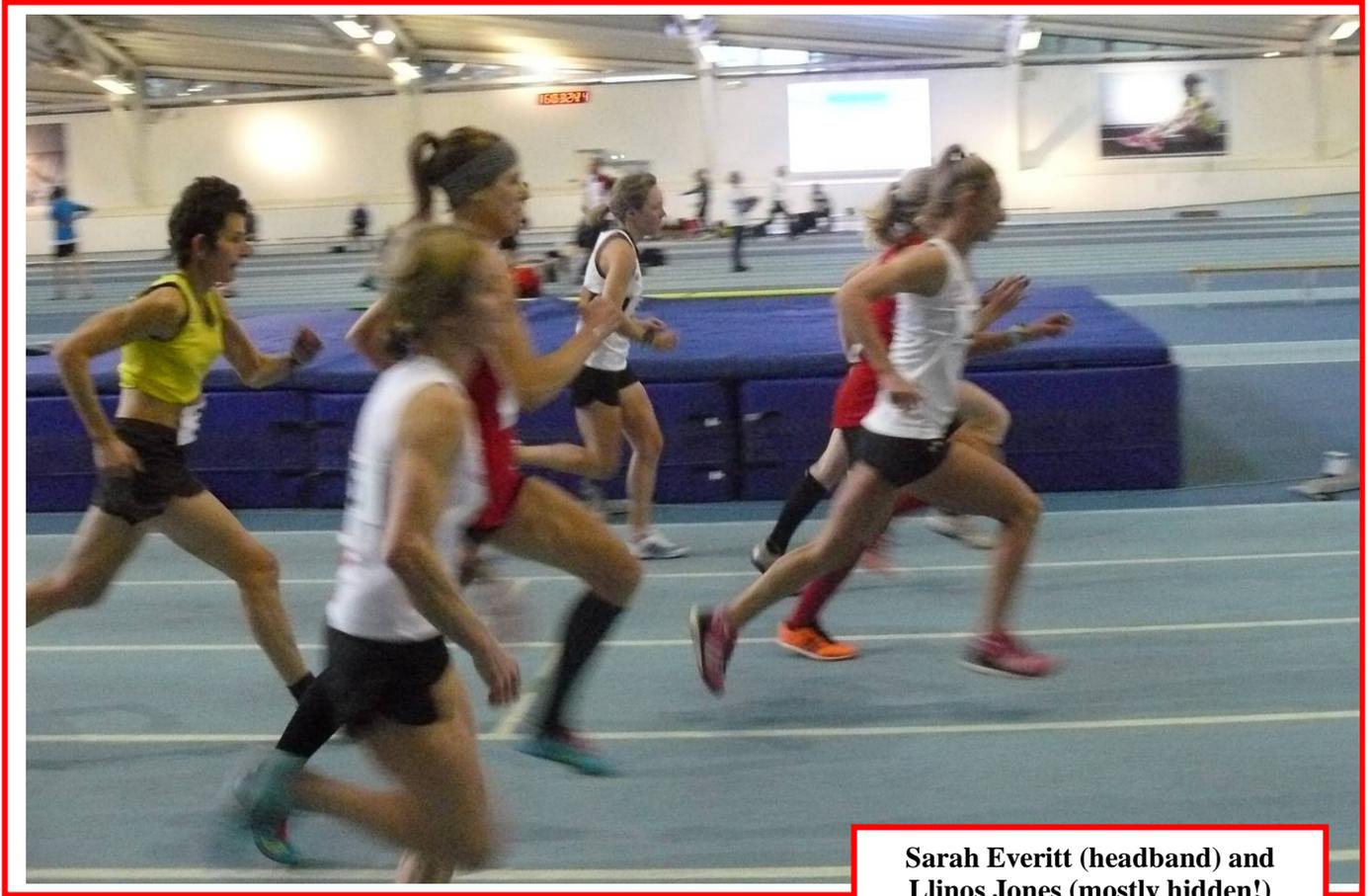
The 60m sprints were complicated for us by the non-availability of Joanne Frost and Juliet Sidney, both of whom withdrew after the team had been selected. I switched Angela Sonn to the younger age group and she responded with a new PB of 9.27s. In the W50 category Mel Garland stepped in to fill the gap left by Angela having switched. Mel ran 9.16s for 4th place. At W60 we were represented by Pat Oakes, who kindly agreed to compete in a younger age group "just for the points" and ran an SB, then at W70 Iris Holder recorded 11.33s as she gradually gets back to form having fractured her leg in 2017. Well done ladies, collectively you gathered 12 points for Welsh Masters.



At 800m in the W35 age group, Georgie Prior was back on the track, where she ran a (masters) PB of 2'26.85. At W50 it was Sarah Everitt running for Welsh Masters. Sarah sat on the tail of the long time leader then sprinted past on the finishing straight to clinch victory in 2'36.55 (SB) For Sarah this was not about the time, but securing the victory for maximum team points. In the W60 category Ros Townsend-Hope (SB) came 3rd with a time a couple of seconds quicker than last year. Sadly our W70 entry, Pat Gallagher, was stranded 3 miles up a country lane, blocked in by the snow. Together, the athletes brought in 14 valuable team points for Welsh Masters.

Georgie Prior setting a PB in the 800m

In the 200m we were again forced into a re-shuffle as a result of absences, this time it was Juliet Sidney Michelle Thomas and Sharon Samuel that couldn't make it. Angela Sonn ran against the W35 youngsters, clocking 31.81s. Within her own age group (W55-59) Angela is now ranked number four in the UK. At W50 Louise Kirby ran as a substitute for Angela, coming 2nd with a time of 31.95s, setting a lifetime best! Caroline Marler in the W60 age group ran an excellent 32.72s. Together, our 200m runners secured another 11 points to add to our team total.



Sarah Everitt (headband) and Llinos Jones (mostly hidden!) at the start of the 3000m

Llinos Jones in the W35 3000m was another making her Welsh Masters track & field debut – and what a debut. Llinos set a PB of 10'46.01 propelling her to number two on the current UK rankings. In the W50 category Sarah Everitt again demonstrated her class with a fine victory which moves her to number one in the UK rankings. A combined total of 11 more points for the Welsh total.

Meanwhile, in the Field Events...

Sadly, in the Pole Vault, we could not fill the W50 slot, but look forward to Alison Murray re-joining the team in the summer. At W35 we welcomed another newcomer (and former Welsh International) Claudia Cabbage. Claudia vaulted 2.40m, whilst simultaneously competing in the Shot Putt where she came 2nd just 1cm ahead of the 3rd placed athlete. Claudia also helped with the High Jump, where she achieved 1.30m. Between the three events, which were all SB's, Claudia amassed 11 valuable team points.

Karen Llewellyn had travelled across from Pembrokeshire to represent WMAA in the W50 Shot Putt. Karen managed an SB of 8.30m for 2nd place and 5 more points to our total. Also in Shot Putt, Caroline Marler at W60 came 2nd with an SB of 8.32m and Iris Holder came 2nd in the W70 age group with 5.30m

In the Long Jump, Iris was once more the WMAA W70 representative, clearing 2.93m to win maximum points and head the UK rankings. At W60 Pat Oakes (again “competing down”) jumped 2.61m to add more points to our team total. In the W50 competition, Mel Garland jumped 4.40m but had to settle for 2nd place as she was beaten by her friend Jo Willoughby, a former Welsh International who now competes for Midland Masters. At W35 Amanda Wale covered for Joanne Frost and Amanda Cook, both out injured.

Amanda (Wale) herself is still not 100% but “just for the points” cleared 3.92m and came 3rd

Moving to the Triple Jump Amanda (W35) managed 8.88m for 4th place and Mel Garland (W50) 8.90m for 2nd place and a combined figure of 8 team points for Welsh Masters.

Pat Oakes competed in the W60 High Jump, setting an SB, whilst in the final field event of the day, finishing at 6.30pm, Mel Garland won the W50 High Jump and maximum points with 1.35m. Mel then attempted what would have been a new lifetime best of 1.41m, coming very close, but will have to try again another day. Mel is now ranked number two in the UK.



**Pat Oakes, in her full
“Proud to be Welsh” kit.
We love the scarf Pat!**

The final events on the Track were the 4x200 relays...

These relays are always tremendous fun with athletes and spectators cheering and encouraging their teams. As you might expect, the Welsh Masters contingent were fairly vocal!

- Our W35 team had to be withdrawn as due to an injury we could only muster three fit athletes
- Our W60 team was made up of athletes from W60, W65, W70 and W75 age groups. Nevertheless, they got the baton around and secured 4 points for the team. Well done ladies.
- Our W50 team of Mel, Sarah, Louise and Angela can each run 200m in less than 32 seconds, so I knew that as a unit they would be tough to beat – and so it proved! They came home in 2'08.05 to clinch victory and obtain 6 more team points.



**L-R Angela, Louise, Sarah and Mel
Our winning W50 4x200 relay team**

The Results...

After a short delay whilst the results staff completed their work, the team positions were announced and the various trophies awarded. OK, we didn't win a trophy, but you all deserve a prize as, amazingly, despite all the problems with snow, ice and injuries, the Welsh Masters Ladies achieved a magnificent third place in the competition. This really is a wonderful result and reflects the hard yards in training, the dedication and commitment, as well as a team spirit that other regions must envy.

EASTERN MASTERS	146.5 points
MIDLAND MASTERS	146.5 points
WELSH MASTERS	145 points
SOUTHERN COUNTIES	137 points
VETS AC (LONDON)	131 points
SOUTH WEST VETS	9 points

Look again at the team positions, we were beaten by just 1½ points. If only.....could have made it.

Well done and congratulations to everyone who came along and took part – a fantastic team effort, but of course, we have an unfair advantage over the other teams, Dragon Power!

Roger Garland – Ladies Team Manager – Welsh Masters Athletics