VALE OF YORK
ATHLETIC COMMUNITY

TALES FROM THE VALE

Here's what's happening in our community and everything coming up!

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Cross Country Updates

Vale of York athletes participated in more Cross Country events throughout November, including the West Yorkshire Cross Country League and PECO.

West Yorkshire Cross Country – Race 2 - Thornes Park, Wakefield

Despite a challenging climb and slippy downhill at Thornes Park, there were some very strong performances across the board from the Vale. Highlights included:

- Will Walker U20M and Harry Bromley U20M who are currently first and second in the U20M league table.

- Tom Fell led the senior men's team home followed by Cam Bryson. They lie fifth and seventh overall in the league. Tom followed up his strong off-road performance with a strong 32:07 on the roads at Leeds Abbey Dash. He is closing in on Will Haw's 31:42 men's club record set at the same event two years previously.

- The women's squad (pictured above) fielded a full team for a second time, led home by Katie Adams who is 3rd overall in the U20W competition. Eva Newall is fifth U20W. As ever, the women embodied the spirit of the day with strong and stylish performances and huge support for everyone across the board.

- The men's senior team came second again, just behind Leeds City. The men tighten their grip on yet another second place finish overall, but there are challenges ahead as the York students head home for the Christmas break. Any men out there who can race on Saturday 20 December in Leeds, we need you to race to make a team of six!

Next WYXC race is this Sunday 7 December at Rothwell which is usually a very muddy one. Bring your longest spikes and a change of clothes. Full details on Teamo.

PECO Cross Country - Race 1 - Middleton Park

The weather was incredibly kind for our first PECO race of the season as the sun shone bright on the burnt out cars of Middleton Park. A huge turnout on Armistice Day saw our juniors and seniors out in massive numbers which was acknowledged by spectators and marshals who passed on a number of kind comments about our attitude and conviviality. Thanks to all those who lugged stuff up the hill, supplied cakes, biscuits, and scones, and raced, supported, and cheered.

We're proud of everyone who turns out for PECO, and our goal is always to simply show up in style to complete every race for the end-of-season merchandise money just can't buy. We don't want to rank our children, even though the leagues do. We just want to give them best opportunities we can, so they can all fulfil their own potential through athletics and running. Hansen was wrong. We can win everything with kids.

- The Vale of York senior women are currently tied in first place with Horsforth. Our women only gained promotion to the First Division last year, so dare they dream of back-to-back promotions and the dizzy heights of the Premier Division next year? Time will tell as the season progresses.

- Our senior men lie a strong second overall in the Second Division and could have potential for promotion themselves if they can survive the student exodus over the Christmas break.

- Steve Middup was fourth M65 and featured in an epic grimacing sprint home alongside a smiling Martin Senior.

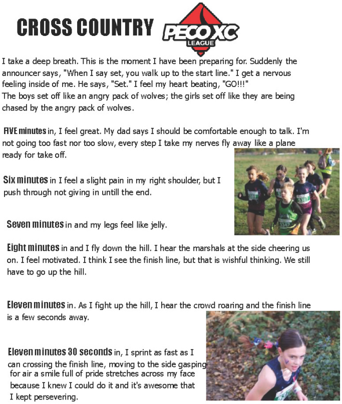
Next PECO is Sunday 14 December at Pontefract which should be a full distance affair this year. Full details coming on Teamo.

Rose Recaps

Junior member, Rose M, got creative last month with a personal recap of her first PECO Cross Country of the season at Middleton Park.

If any junior members would like to contribute anything to the newsletter parents can email newsletter@valeofyork.org with ideas.

We believe Whitney was right. Children are our future.



CROSS COUNTRY

I take a deep breath. This is the moment I have been preparing for. Suddenly the announcer says, "When I say set, you walk up to the start line." I get a nervous feeling inside of me. He says, "Set." I feel my heart beating, "GO!!!"
The boys set off like an angry pack of wolves; the girls set off like they are being chased by the angry pack of wolves.

FIVE minutes in, I feel great. My dad says I should be comfortable enough to talk. I'm not going too fast nor too slow, every step I take my nerves fly away like a plane ready for take off.

Six minutes in I feel a slight pain in my right shoulder, but I push through not giving in untill the end.

Seven minutes in and my legs feel like jelly.

Eight minutes in and I fly down the hill. I hear the marshals at the side cheering us on. I feel motivated. I think I see the finish line, but that is wishful thinking. We still have to go up the hill.

Eleven minutes in. As I fight up the hill, I hear the crowd roaring and the finish line is a few seconds away.

Eleven minutes 30 seconds in, I sprint as fast as I can crossing the finish line, moving to the side gasping for air a smile full of pride stretches across my face because I knew I could do it and it's awesome that I kept persevering.

World Transplant Games

We are delighted to welcome new member, Louise Prashad, to our community for 2026. Louise tells of her inspirational personal journey to the World Transplant Games in Dresden this year and how she won three silver medals in the jumps and throws.

In 2016, at age 21, I entered hospital heavily pregnant with twins, full of hope and excitement. Within days, everything crashed. I was diagnosed with the rare and brutal condition Acute Fatty Liver of Pregnancy — my body was shutting down. My twins were born without a heartbeat, I was placed into a coma, and doctors told my family to prepare for the worst.

Then a life-saving liver transplant changed everything. My donor, Sarah, gave me a second chance — the chance to rebuild a life I wasn't sure I'd ever get.

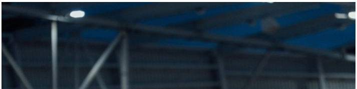
Waking up, I couldn't lift my head, feed myself, or take a step without help. Learning to walk, talk, live again — it was slow and painstaking. But I was determined: if I'd been given another shot at life, I was going to make it count.

Exercise became my anchor: not just to rebuild physically, but to rebuild confidence, purpose, identity. Running became my language of "I'm still here and stronger." Then I discovered the British Transplant Games and beyond — not just a competition but a community of people who understood every scar, every second chance.

This year, I had the honour of representing Team GB at the World Transplant Games in Dresden, Germany — and returned with three silver medals: Discus, Shot Put and Long Jump. I still pinch myself.

But I'm not done yet. I'm now training towards the European Transplant & Dialysis Games in Arnhem,the British Transplant Games in Sheffield in 2026 and a 100km ultra Race to the stones. Bigger throws. Longer jumps. Stronger strides. This isn't just sport — it's legacy. A way to inspire others to talk about organ donation.

Because every race I've done (over 320, from 5K to ultra-marathon), every raise of the bar, every medal, every dawn training session — they're not just for me. They're for Sarah, her family, for every donor and transplant recipient who dared to believe "there's life after". I am honoured to be joining Vale of York to continue my training.



Beverley Ballot Winner

The winner of our London Marathon place for 2026 is ... Beverley Horsfield!

There were seven names in the Selby Town FC hat and the lucky winner was drawn on Wednesday evening by our independent adjudicator, Andy Sim, Community Health and Wellbeing Lead for Active North Yorkshire.

Congratulations to Beverley and commiserations to Weronika, Neil M, Neil R, Giorgia, Brad and Paul.

Research Requests

We have had a couple of research requests in from universities in Newcastle and Birmingham recently looking for athletes who would like to help out. If you would like to take part in either of these studies, see the details below.

Newcastle Study into Eating Disoders

Despite running providing numerous mental and physical health benefits, recreational runners, especially female runners, are at enhanced risk of developing an eating disorder. Unfortunately, little is known about why they are at greater risk.

I am a PhD student at Newcastle University, seeking to address this by conducting a three-week study in February to investigate whether changes in self-critical thoughts influence vulnerability to disordered eating among recreational runners. Your participation would help to inform the treatment of disordered eating in individuals who view running performance as central to their identity.

Participation details:
You will complete a short, 7-minute questionnaire each week for three weeks.
The questionnaires assess your thoughts and eating behaviours over the past week.

All participants will be entered into a prize draw (on March 5th) to win:

£50 SportsShoes gift card
£30 Decathlon gift card
One of Two £20 One4All gift cards
One of Eight £10 One4All gift cards

To sign up to take part or learn more, please visit:
https://qualtricsxmskhqg5hl4.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cGesfqAKWRqW2bA

If you have any questions, please contact me at B.Westwood2@newcastle.ac.uk

After the research concludes, you'll also be invited to an optional online educational workshop where we will share the study's findings and strategies for addressing body image and eating concerns.

Birmingham Anti-Doping Knowledge Survey

We're excited to announce our participation in a World Anti-Doping Agency-funded research project led by the University of Birmingham!

What's involved? Athletes are invited to complete a 10-minute online survey about anti-doping knowledge. This information will be fed back to the World Anti-Doping Agency to improve psychological scales used to assess athlete knowledge on doing and enhance anti-doping education for high performance athletes. As a thank you for participating, you'll be entered into a prize draw to win Amazon vouchers worth either £50 or £100.

Who can participate?

· Athletes aged 14–16: Parents/guardians must authorise participation due to GDPR regulations – please read through the participant information sheet via the URL before making a decision. Your child can access the survey via the same link.

· Athletes aged 17–18: Can participate independently without parental consent

· Athletes aged 18+: Can participate independently

Ready to take part?

Choose the link that applies to you:

Athletes aged 14–17 (and parents/guardians): https://limesurvey.bham.ac.uk/index.php?r=survey/index&sid=776669&lang=en
Athletes aged 18+: https://limesurvey.bham.ac.uk/index.php?r=survey/index&sid=169338&lang=en

Each link includes a participant information sheet and consent form. Please read these carefully before completing the survey.

Important notes:

· Complete the survey independently, without input from others

· The consent form must be completed before accessing the survey

· Participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any time

Questions or wish to withdraw? Contact the lead researcher, Dr Barnaby Zoob Carter, at b.carter.1@bham.ac.uk

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Heidi Going Strong

Well done to Coach Heidi who was flying the Vale of York colours at an invitational winter throws competition last month, finishing 2025 off with a 25m+ throw in the Hammer (4kg) and 8m23 in the Weight Throw (9.08kg / 20lbs).

Heidi also celebrated a first-time parkrun success, achieving her goal with support from the virtual run crew. The eight-week programme for beginners has now drawn to a close and a new set of freshly-inspired runners will continue their training with the club setting new goals for themselves in 2026.

Wednesday's Community Training Run is a great next step for runners moving beyond beginner. Talk to any of the coaches or email ian@valeofyork.org if you want adding to the group on Teamo.

If you want to improve your jumps then Beverley and Sarah are running coached sessions on Saturday mornings at York. Pop down for a trial or see any coach for more information.

For throws, watch this space for outdoor opportunities in the New Year.

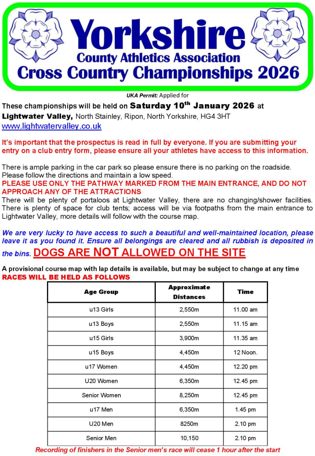
County XC Champs

If you have nine-months continuous residence in Yorkshire or you are Yorkshire born then you can enter the Yorkshire County Cross Country Championships on Saturday 10 January 2026. Entries close 20 December and the entry links are on SportSoft here. Standards are high for juniors but for seniors all are welcome within the one-hour cutoff. See Ian if at all unsure about entering.

If you live or were born in The Humber your champs are in Grimsby on Saturday 13 December. Entries close this Sunday 7 December and it's all on Roster.

Note: You can only enter one County XC Championships per season even if you live and were born in separate counties.

And if you like your Championship XC racing, there is talk of entering a team or two for the English Nationals which take place in Sedgefield on Saturday 21 February. Potential to stay in Durham and hire a team coach to Sedgefield and back. Let Ian know if you are interested. More details here.



Yorkshire
County Athletics Association
Cross Country Championships 2026

UKA Permit: Applied for

These championships will be held on **Saturday 10th January 2026** at **Lightwater Valley,** North Stainley, Ripon, North Yorkshire, HG4 3HT
www.lightwatervalley.co.uk

It's important that the prospectus is read in full by everyone. If you are submitting your entry on a club entry form, please ensure all your athletes have access to this information.

There is ample parking in the car park so please ensure there is no parking on the roadside. Please follow the directions and maintain a low speed.
PLEASE USE ONLY THE PATHWAY MARKED FROM THE MAIN ENTRANCE, AND DO NOT APPROACH ANY OF THE ATTRACTIONS
There will be plenty of portaloos at Lightwater Valley, there are no changing/shower facilities. There is plenty of space for club tents; access will be via footpaths from the main entrance to Lightwater Valley, more details will follow with the course map.

We are very lucky to have access to such a beautiful and well-maintained location, please leave it as you found it. Ensure all belongings are cleared and all rubbish is deposited in the bins. DOGS ARE NOT ALLOWED ON THE SITE

A provisional course map with lap details is available, but may be subject to change at any time
RACES WILL BE HELD AS FOLLOWS

Age Group	**Approximate Distances**	**Time**
u13 Girls	2,550m	11.00 am
u13 Boys	2,550m	11.15 am
u15 Girls	3,900m	11.35 am
u15 Boys	4,450m	12 Noon.
u17 Women	4,450m	12.20 pm
U20 Women	6,350m	12.45 pm
Senior Women	8,250m	12.45 pm
u17 Men	6,350m	1.45 pm
U20 Men	8250m	2.10 pm
Senior Men	10,150	2.10 pm

Recording of finishers in the Senior men's race will cease 1 hour after the start

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EvenSplits 5K

The November EvenSplits 5K in York was marked by exceptionally challenging conditions. Torrential rain tested both mental and physical endurance of athletes and spectators alike.

Despite the deluge, participation from the students was strong, with a huge number of student personal bests including a first-time sub 20 for Weronika paced by Kealan.

Tom, Blake, Kealan and Charlie also travelled to Leeds for the equivalent event at The Brownlee Centre later in the month in pursuit of better conditions and better times.

Well done to those who took part in all 5K events last month. The last EvenSplits York 5K is tonight 5 December. It looks like it could be a wet and windy one again.

Wakefield Indoor Series

U11-U20 athletes are invited to sign up to the friendly and supportive Wakefield 2026 Indoor Series that takes place at Thornes Park, Wakefield from 17 January.

Indoor Winter Series – Meet 1
January 17, 2026

Open to U11, U13, U15, U17 & U20 athletes

Entry for the entire series cost £20 and can be done online through the SportSoft website.

Meet 1
Date – Saturday 17th January 2026
Events – 50m, 50m Hurdles, Long Jump, 2 x 50m Sprint

Meet 2
Date – Saturday 14th February 2026
Events – 50m, Shot Put, High Jump 2 x 50m Sprint

Meet 3
Date – Saturday 7th March 2026
Events – 50m, 50m Hurdles, Long Jump 2 x 50m Sprint

Ones That Got Away

Sometimes great stuff happens and we don't find out about it until after the newsletter goes to press. November was a case in point.

Last month we missed out on this stunning photo of Blake on his way to second place in the Maverick Night Series 10K.

And, although there's no photo, Sam Gunning only went and broke the course record for the Gormire Gamble Fell Race with a sub 41:00 first place at the end of October.

If we've missed any of your news at any point during the year, send anything through to newsletter@valeofyork.org and we will make sure it's included at the start of 2026.

Have I Got Newts For You

Our planning application with North Yorkshire Council for a track and field training facility in Selby continues to move forward at a glacial pace. It has now been over two and a half years since our first submission. Highlights from the last couple of months include:

- As a result of a great crested newt being 'found' under a wheelie bin in the garden of one of the local residents, we are now having to budget another £5K to build 0.2 of a pond for the newt according to Natural England.

- We received a heavily redacted and very late response to our Freedom Of Information request trying to uncover exactly what is going on with the opaque lobbying and endless delays to and from North Yorkshire Council. We have appealed the redacted response and requested a full review in line with guidance from the Information Commissioner's Office. This review is now itself two months overdue.

- We have instructed Pinsent Masons, planning lawyers, to take the case forward on our behalf. They have agreed to do this on a pro-bono basis and we have now left it with them to put pressure on the council and lever their considerable expertise in this area.

- The lawyers have negotiated another 'extension' until 27 February 2026 - so it's unlikely we will be going back to planning committee before February.

We carry on fighting against a system that should be in favour of a local facility in line with local, regional and national strategic priorities for sport, health and wellbeing. And, yes, we have spoken to the local MP and Mayor and a number of local councillors.

Coach Corner

Brad Plows
Coaching Assistant

Hi, I'm Brad! I was born and raised in Kippax where my love for sport first began, with the village having an accessible leisure centre and excellent football, rugby league and cricket history embedded. This led me to try every sport I could, with football being the one that resonated with me the most, playing up until my mid-twenties in some capacity. I still play badminton, tennis and golf, as well as enjoying a swim.

My running journey began in my late teens, as I did some sporadic 10K races and occasional runs, but never fully embraced it. It was not until lockdown and the subsequent fitness levels I was at the end of it that I started to really gain a passion for exercise and what it can do for all aspects of my life.

I really enjoy the planning of sessions, nutrition and seeing the data of my improvements.

My fitness and exercise journey astronomically took off when I joined the VOYAC community run, what was supposed to be just a 5K every Wednesday has turned in to me achieving feats which I never thought I'd be able to do, from taking part in the PECO XC League cross country races, running a Half-Marathon and now competing in athletics in the West Yorkshire Track and Field League, for somebody who didn't consider themselves a runner this has been incredible and I owe it all to the coaches and members at Vale of York.

My day to day job as a Learning Technologist is to be creative and innovative to enhance students experience, I'm excited to translate this to sport and fitness and share my passion.

Upcoming Events

- Friday 5 Dec - EvenSplits 5K, York
- Saturday 6 Dec - Leeds University Relays, Leeds
- Sunday 7 Dec - WYXC 3, Rothwell
- Sunday 14 Dec - PECO 2, Pontefract
- Wednesday 17 Dec - Winter Solstice Run & Fox Pub Quiz
- Saturday 20 Dec - WYXC 4, Middleton Park
- Sunday 21 Dec - Children's Xmas Party, Staynor Hall
- Tuesday 23 Dec - Adults' Xmas Party, Panda Mami York
- Sunday 4 Jan - PECO 3, West Park Leeds
- Saturday 10 Jan - Yorkshire County XC Champs, Ripon
- Saturday 17 Jan - Wakefield Indoors Meet 1
- Sunday 18 Jan - Brass Monkey HM, York
- Sunday 25 Jan - PECO 4, Temple Newsam

See Full Calendar

Sports Shoes Discount Code

The SportsShoes code for December is AO16SFZ7U9G. Please note, the code is now valid on AW25 only products and will give you 15% off (exclusions apply, including but not limited to Brooks, Coros, Garmin, Maurten and Shokz), valid until 01/01/26.

If you are an England Athletics affiliated member, you can now redeem 15% off selected products by linking your EA URN to your SportsShoes ULTRA account and the offer will be automatically applied at checkout.

Visit Website

Any questions or comments please send them through.

And any news for the next newsletter please send to newsletter@valeofyork.org

Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year!

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to keep up to date
www.valeofyork.org**

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