



## King Henry VIII Relay Race 2013



The King Henry VIII Relay Race, which has taken place since 1972, has a rich history of famous competitors, including Seb Coe and the Brownlee brothers, ensuring that top athletes from across the country wear their school vests with pride around War Memorial Park every year. The course has seen snow and freezing conditions, as well as sunshine and dry solid ground. This year, after record breaking rainfall and the shadow of melting snow, we set up the course in the wettest and muddiest conditions for a long time! It was always going to be a great race. Helping to marshal in the woods, our sixth formers gave many recounts of runners attempting to side step the puddles, only to lose their balance and fall into the quagmire. One school mentioned to me a Year 8 runner on the last leg who found the puddles came up to her thighs!

In the Boys' Race (six runners each completing a 2.3 mile circuit), 46 teams ran for the King Henry VIII Cup, and it was won by St Albans in a time of 74.59 minutes. St Albans have enjoyed great success in this race over the years, to which our results board in the main hall bears testament. Judd School came in second for the 5<sup>th</sup> time in 6 years. King Henry's fielded two teams, the 'A' team comprising Manveer Sahota, Ed Broadberry, Harrison McCartney, Nasif Ssemwogerere, Hugh Twigg and the captain, Jack Pegler. They finished 23<sup>rd</sup> in a time of 85.54, which given the interest that this race draws from around the country, is a good result. The B-team (Oliver Bolland, Mat Gay, Adam Huxford, Reece Quinn, Tom Hogger-Gadsby and Matt Bourke) finished 44<sup>th</sup> in 96.42. Ed, Harrison and Manveer all broke the 14 minute barrier; very impressive with the difficult running conditions of the course. Locally we also saw Rugby School, coming 17<sup>th</sup> (Ben Sutherland running 12:32 in the last leg) and Warwick School in 39<sup>th</sup> place.

The Girls' Race (four runners each on the same course) had 26 teams, and saw Loughborough seeking to avenge last year's one second defeat to Loreto. Megan McBrien of Bishop Vesey's dominated the first stage, before Hertfordshire county champion Lizzy Bird took St Albans into a clear lead – in a time which would equal or surpass all of the boys' teams but the top three! On leg 3, Northern Cross champion Harriet Knowles-Jones took Loreto to the front, where they remained to retain the Girls' Relay Cup. Midland Cross champion Mari Smith ran a very fast time to secure Loughborough second place. King Henry's fielded three teams again: the 'A' team of Penny Oliver, Victoria Kempton, Charlotte Cleasby and Naomi Richardson came fifth, with a time of 62.32 minutes. This was an improvement from sixth place last year, and only just missed receiving an award after the race. In her final race, having run every year since she joined the school in Year 7, Naomi ran an impressive lap: second fastest time in the last leg, and the fifth fastest lap of the race. Penny Oliver, Coventry Schools Cross Country League and Coventry City Championships winner, also ran a top 20 time out of more than 100 runners. King Henry's two other teams comprised Rachael Abbey, Emma Kempton, Aimee Morse, Laura McTernan, Rosie Hopley, Rhiannon Cope, Bethany Gardiner and Chloe Jenkins. All the runners did very well, especially as the course became more difficult, often ending with an exuberant leap over a large puddle just before the finish line! Other local schools Rugby, Bablake (who entered for the first time) and Tile Hill Wood (who won in 2008) came 17<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> respectively.

Athletes and team managers were delighted by the appearance of former marathon world-record holder, Silver Olympic medallist, and former King Henry VIII school boy Basil Heatley, who presented the trophies. He spoke of the Olympic legacy, and encouraged the runners in their pursuit of success and enjoyment of the sport.

Many parents and members of the public also came to watch this annual event, and there was a great atmosphere at the park. One of these was a reporter for the national magazine Athletics Weekly who wrote up a very encouraging report of the race. Thanks to all those who spectated, and especially to the students from all years and the staff (past and present!) who helped in the smooth running of the day. The race has come to be recognised as the most important annual national schools' relay race, and it was an event with which the school can be proud.