

The UK CAU Inter-Counties Cross Country Championships were held this year in the magnificent grounds of Wollaton Park. Overlooking the course is the imposing Wollaton Hall, widely recognised as the filming location for Wayne Manor in The Dark Knight Rises. The venue rivals the traditional home of championship cross country at Parliament Hill Fields and provided a spectacular backdrop for one of the most prestigious events of the winter endurance calendar.

Conditions were close to perfect for racing, with firm ground underfoot allowing fast running across the sweeping parkland. The course itself offered a true championship test, with a climb immediately from the start which quickly stretched the large fields before opening out across the open grassland. Races concluded with a fast downhill run towards the finish, rewarding athletes who had judged their effort well earlier in the race.

The historic deer park, with herds of deer roaming the grounds, added to the character of the venue and created a memorable setting for the day's racing.

The athletes represented the county with great pride, determination and sportsmanship throughout the day.

With such deep fields, the margins between finishing places were incredibly small. In several races the difference between finishing inside the top 30 and outside the top 100 was often little more than 30 seconds, highlighting the exceptionally high standard of competition.

U13 Boys – 3rd (Team Bronze)

The standout performance of the day came from the Hampshire U13 Boys, who delivered an outstanding team performance to secure team bronze medals.

Leading the team home was Paul Friedrich, who produced a superb run to finish 2nd overall and claim the individual silver medal. Strong support came from Eddie Shawcross-Campbell (9th) and Roddy Voute (19th), giving Hampshire three athletes inside the top twenty. With Zachary French finishing 79th to complete the scoring four, Hampshire secured an excellent podium finish.

Hampshire finishers: Team Result: 3rd

- 2nd – Paul Friedrich – 10:45
- 9th – Eddie Shawcross-Campbell – 11:09
- 19th – Roddy Voute – 11:20
- 79th – Zachary French – 11:50 (4th scorer)
- 108th – Samuel Liddiard – 12:02
- 136th – Hugo Holt – 12:13
- 231st – Alex Olestsenko – 12:49
- 244th – Joshua Gordon – 12:57

U13 Girls – Team Result: 20th

The Hampshire U13 Girls competed well in a large and competitive field, gaining valuable championship experience.

Hampshire finishers:

- 62nd – Skye Granger – 12:52
- 85th – Lydia Jones – 13:05
- 97th – Emmeline Fowler – 13:10
- 166th – Penny Sheppard – 13:41 (4th scorer)
- 188th – Isabelle Hoskins – 13:47
- 198th – Emily Battershall – 13:55
- 210th – Erin Greenfield – 14:00

U15 Girls –Team Result: 15th

The Hampshire U15 Girls delivered a determined team performance in another deep and competitive race.

Hampshire finishers:

- 57th – Grace King – 16:25
- 67th – Katharina Hoppe – 16:31
- 71st – Freya Klepacz – 16:32
- 100th – Olivia Bentley – 16:56 (4th scorer)
- 180th – Bethany Hinshelwood – 17:43
- 196th – Amelie Shawcross-Campbell – 17:55
- 210th – Aoife Uniacke – 18:08
- 219th – Amelia Underwood – 18:11

U15 Boys – Team Result: 32nd

The Hampshire U15 Boys competed well in another large field and battled strongly across the challenging course.

Hampshire finishers:

- 96th – Jonah Tildesley – 14:45
- 150th – William Stock – 15:06
- 155th – Arlo Edwards – 15:08
- 158th – Isaac Gill – 15:09 (4th scorer)
- 246th – Lewis Davis – 15:55
- 262nd – Joshua Pailing – 16:05

U17 Women – Team Result: 5th

The Hampshire U17 Women produced an excellent performance to finish 5th overall, one of the strongest team results of the day.

Hampshire finishers:

- 29th – Amelia Thomas – 19:49
- 39th – Julia Smykala – 20:05
- 46th – Aurelia Klidjian – 20:11
- 52nd – Ava Spiers – 20:16 (4th scorer)
- 63rd – Mia Spiers – 20:29
- 95th – Grace Baker – 21:04
- 110th – Uma Doublet – 21:21
- 197th – Eleanor Jepson – 22:51

U17 Men – Team Result: 11th

The Hampshire U17 Men also produced a strong performance to finish 11th overall in a highly competitive race.

Leading the team home was Nirajkrishna Manojkumar, who ran an excellent race to finish 8th overall, placing himself amongst the leading athletes in the country.

Hampshire finishers:

- 8th – Nirajkrishna Manojkumar – 19:29
- 68th – Edward Bailey – 20:28
- 69th – Hezbawi Tekeste – 20:28
- 83rd – Ewan Pilley – 20:36 (4th scorer)
- 94th – Samuel White – 20:46
- 124th – George Oldroyd – 21:04
- 219th – Thomas Savill – 22:03

Summary

The Inter-Counties Championships remain one of the highlights of the cross-country season, bringing together the strongest county teams from across the country.

The Hampshire athletes competed with great determination, pride and sportsmanship, producing strong performances across all age groups. The U13 Boys team bronze and U17 Women's top-five finish were particular highlights on a memorable day of racing.

Events like this provide invaluable experience for young athletes and it is always a privilege to see runners progress through the age groups over the years, developing both as athletes and as competitors.

Hampshire can be proud of the way the teams represented the county on a superb course and in a spectacular setting at Wollaton Park.