**The History of “*David Alun Williams*” North Wales Cross Country League**

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| *The first cross country league in Wales was the North Wales League, which held its first race at RAF Valley on 18th October 1958 won by Roger Harrison Jones, of Rhyl AC. Roger who joined Prestatyn Running Club when it was formed, was still winning league titles in 2020 claiming the M80 title (Roger went on to win a number of Welsh vests and compete in the International Cross Country, subsequently the World Championships).**Initially the league was started by Ray Billington - then with Liverpool Pembroke AC, and Les Baldwin, Wrexham. Amongst the early teams were Eirias AC, Wrexham AC, Rhyl AC, RAF Valley, local Army units and Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities.* *It wasn’t until the 1983-84 that a women’s race was added to the league (women’s races had been held in the North Wales Championships about 10 years earlier but with small participation levels). The running boom of the 1980's together with changes in attitude to women participating in sport encouraged the league to go ahead with women’s races.**The North Wales League has always encompassed teams from across the border in its membership as well as those from throughout North Wales. The league has grown steadily over the years with approximately 200 runners taking part in fixtures in the late 1980's gradually increasing to the record numbers in 2020 of 722 different runners took part in the league (392 finishers at Fox Hills, Colwyn Bay).**As the number of participants competing in the league grew, and in order to encourage new clubs to participate, a two tier Division was introduced in 2005/06. Whilst athletes still compete in the same race, the teams are in different divisions. Other small changes have been made over the years, including combining the Under 17 Men's race into the Women's race. The Women's race now also incorporates the Masters M65+ athletes, which has worked well. Other changes have included less runners to score in Division 2 (4 men; 3 women) to help the smaller and newer clubs and including age groups from U17 through to 85+.**David Alun Williams became Secretary of the newly formed North Wales Cross Country Association and for the next 45 years he was "Mr. North Wales Cross Country", doing everything to promote cross country in North Wales (David had taken part in some of the earlier league races competing for Bangor College). Bernie Jones took over as Secretary in 2018 when David's ill health made it impossible for him to continue and he was made a Life President. Sadly a few days before the last fixture of the 2019-20 season David Alun Williams passed away. In honour of everything that he did for the league and cross country in North Wales, the League was officially re-titled the "David Alun Williams North Wales Cross Country League" from 2020 onwards.**The league has been fortunate that during its life, three key people have been responsible for ensuring that race days have gone smoothly and fairly. In the early years of the league Les Baldwin, Wrexham combined refereeing duties with racing until George Tudor, Shrewsbury took over and refereed the league for over 25 years. Bernie Jones, Wrexham served his "apprenticeship" as Assistant Referee to George from 2000 and took over as Referee in 2010 when ill health forced George to give up.* *In the 2019/20 season a record 32 clubs took part in the league and there were a record 1,739 finishers over the five races and at Fox Hills, Colwyn Bay a record number of 392 athletes completed the two races on the day. Since the league was re-started back in 1975-76 season, two clubs have dominated the overall league title in both the Men's and Women's league with Wrexham AAC outgunning Eryri Harriers due to their many early successes. In the individual races, four men shine in the number of overall race wins and they are Tony Blackwell, Wrexham (21 Wins from 1975-1988), Colin Donnelley, Eryri Harriers (17 Wins from 1985- 2001), Chris Davies, Telford (21 Wins from 1997-2011) and Rob Samuel, Eryri Harriers (12 Wins from 2008-to date). However, none of them come close to the number of wins by Claire Martin, Telford (40 Wins) who won her first race as an under 17 Claire Gardner at Nantporth, Bangor in 1991. Ali Lavender-Rawlinson comes closest, with 23 wins from 2009-to date; one of which was during the 2019-20 season. Other key female race winners are Ali Whitelaw, Wrexham with 11 Wins from 1990-1998 and Lyn Maddison, Colwyn Bay/Prestatyn/Wrexham, 13 wins from 1984-2003.**\*****Please Note that all of the above exclude those results where I do not have race results from so it is likely that the individual race wins for a number of the athletes would be significantly higher\**** |