It is getting towards that time of year when Okehampton club celebrates the achievements of the members throughout the year at the annual awards evening. It is very easy to only think in terms of what has happened recently when voting for people in the different categories, and we often don’t consider people who run in groups other than the ones we’re familiar with as their achievements may not have drawn our attention.With this in mind, it was suggested that a look back at the highlights of the year’s reports would remind everyone who had done what and make it easier for members to consider who they vote for.

As the awards year runs from April 1st to March 31st, one of the first races in the new awards year was the Tavy 13, where there was a good turnout of ORCs, and Andy Vallance came 3rd, Roger 4th and, together with Paul Carter and Andy Vernon, they took the 1st male team prize. Karen Vallance, Jayne Peachey and Abby Metherall took the 2nd female team prize, while at the Manchester Marathon Matt Pitson and Stuart May both had good runs with Stuart setting a new PB.

The week before the London Marathon was the Plymouth Half Marathon where several ORCs competed, among them Mark Hawkins, who had taken up running again after a break of 30 years in order to run this race with his niece in memory of Mark’s father. This was just the start of Mark’s second participation in the running scene!

At last year’s London Marathon, Roger Voaden, running his fiftieth marathon in his fiftieth year ran another superb race to finish in 2.55.53, setting a new club record for his age group and starting the new awards year with a platinum award. There were also huge PB’s for Emma Sizmur and Lucy Marrison. There were more first timers running in 2016 than we’d ever had, most of whom had trained together enjoying the support from each other, so congratulations to Jackie Dawes, Claire Stanbury, Lucy Brint, Emma Kellerher, Claire Spraque and Angela Hatten.

The Bodmin 5 Tors race is a tough fell race, but Mags Jarvis is a tough runner and claimed her age category prize there for the second year in a row.

Anne Binns travelled to America for the Boston marathon, inspired by the memory of Marilyn Cooper running it but became unwell out there and didn’t achieve the time she deserved.

The week after London saw more ORC marathoners, this time enjoying the lovely North Dorset Village marathon, where Chris Turner ran a PB.

In May there were two new club age group records set, one by Jane Jackson, running the mile time trial in 6.52 for the FV60 category and Roger Voaden set a new club MV50 record at the Ivybridge 10k in 37.41, both achieving platinum awards for their categories.

At the Bideford 10k seven runners recorded PB’s, including Katie Littlejohns who also set a new club record for her age category in 42.47. Other PBs were by Nicola Smith, Lucy Brint, Caroline Wilson, Claire Stanbury, Rachael Haydon and Ruth Bushell. Jane Jackson’s offer to pace Lucy to a PB also gave Jane a win the FV60 category.

With two marathons also on that day, Roger Voaden came 5th in the Exeter Marathon while Jeremy Tandy who thrives on tough off road races, ran his first Imerys Marathon on a very hot day to set a new PB by 29 minutes.

Caroline Wilson completed her first marathon and the first part of a huge challenge she had set herself for the year when she returned to her native Scotland for the Edinburgh Marathon.

June saw two runners taking on the iconic but tough road Ultra marathon the Dartmoor Discovery. Rob Kelly loves this race and improved on his previous time over the course, while Nick Seccombe ran it for the first time and finished just a minute behind Rob.

At the Ruby Run Okehampton was well represented again. Congratulations went to Andy Vallance who, after achieving several podium finishes on this course over the last 13 years was finally on the top podium!

Mags Jarvis was out on the fells again, this time where fell running started, the Lake District, and she flew the flag for ORC by winning her age category in the 17k Grasmere Gallop trail race.

Jane Jackson ran the Yeovil Marathon as part of the training for her upcoming Ultra and came away with a GFA London qualifying time as a bonus. She also slotted a 5k into her training to set another club FV60 record of 23.31 and achieve another platinum award.

At the Tavy Relays ORC men were on fire with Andy Vallance, Geoff Hill, Rob Hicks And Paul Crease making up a vets team that came 1st in the Vet category and 5th overall. Matt Pitson, Will Lamerton, Graham Bryant and Mark Harding made up the 3rd placed senior team.

At the popular Bude Lifeboat Run Jo Turner flew round coming third in her age group while Jane Jackson took first FV60.

The first of the club summer series saw Rob Hicks win the Cosdon Hill race with Andy Vallance coming third. This was a good month for Rob who had already taken third place at the Burrator Horseshoe and was steadily completing his 365 challenge to run all 356 sq miles of Dartmoor in a year.

In July the Great Escape Half Marathon starting from Princetown was another successful outing for Katie Littlejohns who was third lady home.

Up in the Lake District Jane Jackson struggled with hail, wind, rain and over 6,000ft of ascent to complete the Ultimate Trails Ultra Marathon. By winning her age group she got an automatic entry to the next years race, but wasn’t sure if that was a prize or a punishment!

Two ladies set themselves a different sort of challenge and abandoned pure running to have a try at a Tri and took part in the Roadford Novice Triathlon. For Suzanne Gatton this was her first Triathlon and only her second race of any kind. Mags had done a triathlon before but this was her first in open water. Both did extremely well with Suzanne 2nd in her age group and Mags 1st in hers, an impressive effort by both.

August started off with the second in the club’s summer race series, The Great West Fell Race. Rob Hicks had to settle for second place in this race, unable to catch the very sharp Pete Devenport who went on to become an Okehampton member and represented us very well in the Westward League series. Katie Littlejohns had a terrific run and was the first lady.

 At the multi-terrain Totnes 10k the next day Roger Voaden took the 2nd MV50 prize after a run in very hot conditions and Jane Jackson was first FV60, just missing the cash prize for her age group’s course record by 2 seconds.

At the Run Exe 5k series Roger added to his growing collection of platinum awards and, just one second behind him, Rob Kelly ran a good PB, his first for three years and perhaps the first sign of better things to come for him.

Nicola Smith and Lora Medland ran their first marathon and chose an off road one, then made it even harder by running a ‘warm-up’ 10k the evening before!

The third race in the summer series, The Oke Croak, had a good entry of visiting runners but fewer Oke runners. Pete Devenport was the winner with Rob Hicks coming 7th.

September sees the last of our summer series, the Sourton Tor race, a straightforward up and down fell race. Greg Millar, Jo Turner and Ali Holiday were the only three runners to represent the club - well done them.

At the club handicap race there was a tight finish between Kerry Morashti and Christine Fritsch, with Kerry just hanging on to win. George Haskell was third and Matt Pitson was the fastest round the course.

Geoff Hill ran his first marathon in Loch Ness while four Orcs ran the Barnstaple marathon, with Rob Kelly coming home ahead of Roger Voaden for the first time. Jackie Dawes was first ORC home in the Half Marathon scoring her second PB in a couple of weeks, having previously set one at the Michelmores 5k.

The Bovey Beauty is a challenging off road race over some of the toughest Dartmoor terrain. Rob Hicks had a great run there to come second overall and win the senior male group.

By October the autumn marathon season is in full swing and Chris Turner and Mark Hawkins both ran well at the Bournemouth marathon where Chris clocked up another PB, his running really improving this year. It was Mark’s first marathon and, having only run his first half earlier in the year, he didn’t really embrace the experience, vowing ‘Never again’….Oh yes?

Seventeen ORCs ran the Great West Half Marathon with great success. On a hilly course not renowned for fast times, Matt Pitson, Geoff Hill, George Haskell, Mark Hawkins and Rachel Haydon all achieved PBs, with Matt coming an impressive 15th out of 3,000 runners.

Marathon Man Roger Voaden had a superb run at the Leicester Marathon where he achieved his first sub-three hour time outside of London, finishing in 2.58.27 to come 15th overall and 2nd MV50. At another venue Nick Seccombe also had a flier with a PB at the Abingdon Marathon.

Mags Jarvis tried out a duathlon for the first time and was pleased to do so well, although coming second in the “Vintage” category was not very flattering!

Having barely had time to draw breath after his run at Leicester, Roger Voaden was out on another marathon course, the Dartmoor Vale., where he was accompanied by training partner Paul Carter. Both ran well again to finish 2nd and 3rd male respectively.

November means the Bideford 10 Miler, a race always popular with Oke runners, and this year a huge turnout of 30 ORCs impressed even the host club. Rob Kelly continued to show what good form he was in being the first ORC home with a PB run that gave him 14th place overall. Roger was 2nd MV50 and Katie Littlejohns ran brilliantly to win the Senior Ladies category, scoring a PB of 1.12.56, which bettered her own club record at the distance by 5minutes. Jackie Dawes was thrilled to make it onto the club records chart for the first time, setting a new age group record and PB of 1.22.30. At the age of 67, having only run 5 and 10k races, Jane Richardson completed her first 10miler in a very respectable time, showing your’e never too old to set yourself new challenges. PBs were also clocked by Chris Turner, Jason Ewing, Stuart May, Jo Turner, Claire Stanbury, Lucy Brint, Nicola Smith, Caroline Wilson, Jo Burrow, Rachel Haydon, Ruth Bushell, Angela Hatten, and Sarah Bell. Katie, Claire, and Charlotte Radnor took the Senior Ladies Team prize. All in all a very successful day’s racing.

Christine Fritsch had completed an impressive list of off road races throughout the year - The Bude Pirate Run, The Bovey Beauty, The Volcano Run, Eden Half, and Bicton Blister, but she turned now to night races with the first of the Wild Night Run series, the Dart to Dart.

In the second round of the Westward League we had a ladies team running for the first time. Young Molly Marvin was the first Oke lady to finish just ahead of her mum Sarah and continued to secure this place throughout the rest of the series with progressively better performances, qualifying for the Devon Championships at the December meeting. The mens team put in another good performance, getting increasingly competitive within the League and between each other.

January’s race calendar starts with the First Chance 10k where there was a good turnout of ORCs with Matt Pitson running a great race to come 17th overall, just one second off his PB.

Molly Marvin did the club proud by running for Devon at the County X-country Championships, coming 5th of the Devon runners.

Caroline Wilson took on a huge challenge when she travelled to the USA to take part in a four day event at Disney World. Here runners start with a 5k race on the first day, followed by a 10k race the next, a half marathon and finishing with a full marathon, running a total of 48.6miles. Caroline had struggled with injury throughout her training but sheer determination got her through the challenge.

January saw more members trying out the concept of night racing with nine running the Wild Night 10k in Haldon Forest. Already familiar with this type of running Christine Fritsch was the first ORC lady to finish and Mags won her age category.

Later in the month, on a cold, wet night Christine Fritsch ran a night Half Marathon and Kerry Morashti did the 10k option, where a marshalling error saw them both run longer distances than intended. It did however make for good Grizzly Training for Christine who came 3rd in her age group.

In February, Phil Turner, one of last year’s beginners group ran his first race, the Chichester 10k, accompanied by his wife Jo, who made sure he stayed focused by talking to him the whole way!

Training partners Roger Voaden and Paul Carter just couldn’t wait for the spring marathon season to begin and tried the revived Gloucester marathon to come 7th and 10th respectively.

At the Fullfords Five the ever-improving Jackie Dawes set another new club record for her age group in a time of 40.09, while Pete Devenport came 13th overall.

The Exeter Half Marathon, run over two days, saw mixed fortunes. Matt Pitson, well into his London training, set a new PB and a new club record for the distance in an impressive 1.16.42 to come 3rd overall, with Andy Vallance not far behind coming 6th and both of them running times good enough to secure platinum awards.. The following day saw Lora Medland and Nicola Smith make their attempt to run a sub-2hr half. They had been so determined to do this they had sought help from the master of fast road running, Roger, who had written a schedule for them and coached them. On the day poor Nicola had a heavy cold and just couldn’t run her best, but Lora showed the training had paid off and stormed home to be first ORC lady and set a huge PB. Lotte Smith also ran a new PB here.

The Westward League had several of our runners representing the club having only run the Exeter 1/2 the day before. This didn’t stop Matt Pitson and Andy Vallance from giving great performances however. Pete Devenport was the highest placed ORC again here.

Another freezing cold night saw Christine Fritsch finish the Wild Night Run series giving her 5th place in her category for the series. Reverting to daylight races Christine took on the tough Hameldown Hammer on a very windy day where she was the first ORC home, followed by a new but experienced member Ang Martin.

At the Exeter City 10k Rob Kelly and Chris Turner both continued to improve their times to set new PB’s and come home in 5th and 8th places. Lora Medland was on a roll and now set a new PB at 10k too.

The March race calendar starts with the Bideford Half Marathon where the club yet again stood out with a record entry of 37 runners. There were some outstanding performances with fourteen runners setting new PB’s, and Katie Littlejohns again clocking a new club record in 1.33.33. Mike Westland ran a club record for his age group in 1.46:48; Claire Sprague knocked a massive 10mins off her PB, Lucy Marrison, 8mins, Jayne Peachey 6mins and Lucy Brint over 4minutes. Nicola Smith, determined to put her Exeter disappointment behind her, finally got her sub-2hr time with over 2mins to spare. Ed Dumpleton, another new member from the beginners group ran his first race here and made an excellent start to his racing career. Jane Richardson pushed the boundaries of her running even further with her first half marathon ever…..marathon next Jane? Rachel Holland, Jo Burrow and Ruth Bushell were also taking on the Half Marathon for the first time.

March brought bad weather for the Granite Way races where the marshals deserved their prizes as much as the runners for standing in the freezing wind and rain! In the 20 miler Andy Vallance was first ORC home, more disappointed with his race tactics than his 4th place. Rob Kelly, well into his London training, came 5th, his dedication to his training meaning he was having to do much of it by night or early morning due to work/family commitments, even doing the Coe sessions alone on these runs. Anne Binns was the 1st FV50 home. In the 10miler, Last year’s winner, Chris Turner, chased the first placed runner all the way, but couldn’t quite catch him but still set a new PB. Ed Dumpleton enjoyed his race at Bideford so much he entered his first 10miler to win the MV40 category. Jo Bradford has improved hugely and ran her first 10mile race just edging ahead of Mags Jarvis, with whom se had run the whole race, at the finish. Mags also set a new PB and won the FV60 category, with Janet White winning the FV65.

The “Never again” marathon runner Mark Hawkins thoroughly enjoyed a trip to the Barcelona Marathon! He loved the atmosphere, the support and the fact he knocked 11 minutes off his PB to get a sub-3hr time, so much so that he came home and immediately entered the Madrid Marathon!

The impressive list of off road races completed by Christine Fritsch this year finished with a good run round the iconic Grizzly, improving on her time there last year.

At the Tavy 13, which this year was held in March not April, Roger Voaden finished 9th overall and 2nd MV50 , while Ged Fitzgibbon took 3rd MV65 at the Age UK 10k the same day where Rachel Haydon knocked 3mins off her PB.

Hugh Robinson went back to his hometown to run the Reading Half Marathon, where he set his PB five years ago. Showing what improvement can be gained from training with the club he was surprised and pleased to set a new PB there by over one and a half minutes.

The last in the Westward League series saw a great result for the club in the final team placings with the mens team finishing in 6th place. Considering the number and quality of teams entered this was a terrific result. The Ladies team finished 11th, largely due to the reliable and talented Marvin family who made it to all the races. This sort of event is a really enjoyable outing, with great support and camaraderie from fellow runners and we hope that more members will have a go at it next year. Congratulations and thanks to all those who turned out whenever they could to represent the club this year - Andy Vallance, Matt Pitson, Pete Devenport, Hugh Robinson, Rob Kelly, Chris Turner, Paul Crease, Stuart May, George Haskell (you know you love it George!), Sarah, Molly and Eleanor Marvin, Juliet Paterson, Anne Binns, Jane Jackson and Mags Jarvis.

Four ladies and four men have all managed to complete every distance in the Awards chart; Lucy Brint, Jackie Dawes, Nicola Smith, Claire Stanbury, Andy Vallance, Chris Turner, Rob Kelly and Stuart May. Well done to all of them!

I hope this helps everyone make their choices of who to vote for in the various categories. You can also look at the Awards chart for 2106/17 on the website.