

## **The Idea and Intention of the Inter Association Match**

The idea was fairly simple to understand and was based on the Welsh Schools v Welsh Youth fixture in rugby union.

Welsh Schools would select the top eight cross-country runners from its championships. These would be mainly students/pupils in what we now would call years 12 and 13 (old lower and upper sixth) with the occasional year 14 student serving three years in a school sixth form.

The Welsh Cross-Country association would have a pool of talent, who had left school – effectively year 14 or first year in higher education – plus any interested eligible Anglo-Welsh athletes plus any athletes in years 12 and 13 but not involved in the Welsh Schools' team.

It was likely that the fixture might end up as 'Current Welsh schools' versus 'Past Welsh Schools', but the aim was to provide a carrot to keep athletes in the sport and to help them to develop and become quality senior athletes and, although we are reporting on cross-country here, there was an emphasis on 'equality of opportunity'. Not a situation where there was an inter association match for cross-country but not one for track & field! Matches for both.

Agreement had been reached prior to 1980 that the first two matches would be held in that calendar year, and the cross-country match was staged successfully by Welsh Schools at Fairwater Park in Cardiff on March 29<sup>th</sup>.

The Welsh Cross-Country teams dominated both races, taking the first three places in each and easily winning both team titles.

Carol Bradford won the women's race, which has twenty-three listed finishers, including twelve from the schools. Stephen Blakemore, the Welsh Schools' middle champion in 1978, won the men's race by over twenty seconds from Ieuan Ellis but with only seventeen finishers. Sadly, Steve passed away in June last year.

There was disappointment for the Inter Association track & field match, planned for Jenner Park, Barry, on July 19<sup>th</sup>. The Welsh Women's AAA were not ready to field a team so the first event was planned as a male only match. Sadly, the heavens opened overnight and the track was flooded. Meeting Director Andrew Ireland had to call the event off at short notice. Thankfully, it was only a one-year delay and the fixture was held for male and female athletes on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1981 at Jenner Park.

## **The Inter Association cross-country match in 1981**

The decision by the Welsh Cross-Country association to stage the event at Deeside in north Wales may have played a part in deterring some athletes from travelling or perhaps some athletes were upset that pupils like Stephen Knight, who had competed at Builth, had not been invited, and they decided to withdraw as a mark of support.

Whichever of those reasons – or perhaps others apply – the Welsh Schools senior girls team was much as selected while the senior boys' team was much changed.

### **Under 20 Women's race**

Senior champion Kathryn Williams did not compete but Welsh Schools was still able to field the girls from position two to nine.

In Kath's absence, it was her sister Elizabeth who benefitted as she claimed a narrow 1 second victory ahead of Welsh Cross-Country team-mate Bernadette Thomas, while the experienced Llandrindod sixth former Rebecca Powell (Becky) claimed the first top three position from a schools' athlete. Ann Howard and Wendy Ryan filled match places fourth and fifth before Nicola Lewis, only ninth at Builth but here running well above that form, led a string of six schools' runners home – and the schools actually closed their scorers before their hosts.

Unlike Fairwater in 1980, the team scores were very close with the Welsh Cross-Country Association winning by only five points.

### Results - Under 20 women/Senior Girls – no distance listed

Race	Match	U20 Women		Time	Club
1	1	Elizabeth Williams	Welsh CCA	16:51	Port Talbot H & AC
2	2	Bernadette Thomas	Welsh CCA	16:52	Cardiff AAC
3	3	Rebecca Powell	Welsh Schools	17:18	Llandrindod HS
4	4	Ann Howard	Welsh CCA	17:27	Aldershot, Farnham & district
5	X	T Langford	Guest	18:05	Colwyn Bay AC
6	5	Wendy Ryan	Welsh CCA	18:10	Cardiff AAC
7	X	J Neild	Guest	18:13	Crewe & Nantwich AC
8	6	Nicola Lewis	Welsh Schools	18:29	Gowerton CS
9	7	Margaret Crockett	Welsh Schools	18:33	St Cyres CS
10	8	Cath Owen	Welsh Schools	18:35	Bishop Gore CS
11	9	Gaynor Cox	Welsh Schools	18:57	Bishop of Llandaff HS
12	10	Lorena Marchetti	Welsh Schools	19:13	Bishop Hannon HS
13	11	Caroline Devereux	Welsh Schools	19:15	Gwernyfed HS
14	12	J Balmont	Welsh CCA	19:20	Bracknell AC
15	13	Julie Barratt	Welsh Schools	19:29	Yale College
16	14	Sonia Millington	Welsh CCA	19:52	Deeside AAC
17	15	Sally Williams	Welsh CCA	20:13	Wyeside AC
Dnf		S Fox	Welsh CCA		Deeside AAC

#### Team

1	Welsh CCA	1	2	4	5	12	14	38
2	Welsh Schools	3	6	7	8	9	10	43

### Under 20 Men's race

This brought together a very strong Welsh cross-country team with a very weakened Schools' squad.

Forgetting the original selection, of the first twenty finishers in the schools' senior boys' race:

- Keith Noble (1<sup>st</sup>), John Pimley (2<sup>nd</sup>), David Thomas (4<sup>th</sup>) competed
- Richard Toms (3<sup>rd</sup>), Peter Lloyd (4<sup>th</sup>), Marcus Thomas (6<sup>th</sup>) did not compete
- Stephen Knight (7<sup>th</sup>) did not compete but we do not know if he was ever invited
- Mark Jones (8<sup>th</sup>), Ian Williams (13<sup>th</sup>), Stephen Armstrong (15<sup>th</sup>), Rhodri Breeze (18<sup>th</sup>) and Ian Humphreys (20<sup>th</sup>) were listed as Welsh Cross-Country
- John McKeever (9<sup>th</sup>), James Hill (12<sup>th</sup>), John Grainger (16<sup>th</sup>) and Jason Datt (19<sup>th</sup>) do not appear in the results and may not have been invited.
- Jonathan Hooper (10<sup>th</sup>), Andrew Reed (11<sup>th</sup>), David Sansum (14<sup>th</sup>), and Peter Curran 17<sup>th</sup>) appear as part of the Welsh Schools team

There were many familiar faces in the Welsh Cross-Country team which dominated the race, filling eight of the first nine places.

We know that some members of the Welsh schools team travelled to the Deeside venue by minibus, possibly driven by team manager Andrew Ireland, and that group may have travelled on the day of the race, something which may have impacted on them during their race.

Unusually, there is a tie listed for first place – one which involved two of the three members of the WCCA team which had competed in the world junior men's race at Madrid. Nigel Stops, and Nick Boughey, respectively 61<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> in Madrid tied for the win while Steve Smith – 82<sup>nd</sup> in Madrid – had to settle for sixth here.

The Welsh Cross-Country Association were able to field a number of north Walians in their team including the experienced duo of John Messum, a long-time volunteer for his Deeside club, and Stephen Gardiner. Nigel Adams underlined his potential with a fine run and Rhodri Breeze showed much improved form on his run at Builth.

For the Welsh Schools' squad, senior champion Keith Noble was first man home in fourth place but John Pimley, second at Builth, found the race tough and finished only 14<sup>th</sup>, while David Thomas, fourth at Builth, did not finish. Andrew Reed was second Schools scorer, in 10<sup>th</sup> place, while Jonathan Hooper and David Sansum, both of whom were probably delighted to get their first 'representative vest' were also in the scorers in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> positions.

For a second consecutive year, the Welsh cross-country team were clear winners. Whether this meant that 'The Old Boys' are always better than the 'Current Boys' is a question open for discussion.

### **Puzzle**

**There is one puzzle in the results. The sixth schools' scorer is listed as 'M Levy'. No-one of that name competed at Builth. Does anyone know who he was?**

### **Results -Under 20 men/Senior Boys – no distance listed**

#### **U20 Men**

1=	Nick Boughey	Welsh CCA	24:06	Swansea Harriers
1=	Nigel Stops	Welsh CCA	24:06	Shaftesbury Harriers
3	John Messum	Welsh CCA	24:37	Deeside AAC
4	Keith Noble	Welsh Schools	24:45	St Cyres CS
5	Nigel Adams	Welsh CCA	24:53	Swansea Harriers
6	Steve Smith	Welsh CCA	25:04	Swansea Harriers
7	Stephen Gardner	Welsh CCA	25:41	Deeside AAC
8	Mark Jones	Welsh CCA	25:44	Torfaen AAC
9	Rhodri Breeze	Welsh CCA	25:56	Beddau AAC
10	Andrew Reed	Welsh Schools	25:49	Bishop Gore CS
11	S Jones	Welsh CCA	26:00	Wrexham AC
12	Glyn Griffiths	Welsh CCA	26:02	Eryri Harriers
13	Ian Williams	Welsh CCA	26:09	Abertillery Achilles AAC
14	John Pimley	Welsh Schools	26:20	West Mon CS
15	Stephen Armstrong	Welsh CCA	26:37	Deeside AAC
16	Jonathan Hooper	Welsh Schools	26:38	Whitchurch HS

17	David Sansum	Welsh Schools	27:10	Bishop Gore CS
18	Ian Humphreys	Welsh CCA	28:11	Wrexham AC
19	M Levy	Welsh Schools	29:32	
20	Peter Curran	Welsh Schools	30:14	St Illtyd's College
dnf	David Thomas	Welsh Schools		Bishop Gore CS

**Team**

1	Welsh CCA	1	2	3	5	6	7	24
2	Welsh Schools	4	10	14	16	17	19	80

Thankfully, both associations persevered with the fixture which, after Deeside, tended to be held in mid or south Wales.

It was held as a separate fixture for over twenty-five years, with number fluctuating and with teams from Irish Schools or Scottish Schools competing occasionally to raise the status from 'Representative' to 'International', but the real joy was in the years when the match was held as a part of the renamed SIAB international (renamed from BSIAB in 1989 at Barry), when the event became a real festival of cross-country running.