



## **South of England AA Championships**

*Parliament Hill*

25th January 2020

Parliament Hill was the venue for last weekend's South of England cross country championships. The recent heavy rain meant that it was going to be a real energy sapping mud fest, a few athletes were even seen finishing with only one shoe on.

For some of Ilford younger athletes it was their first time being exposed to the full horrors of a muddy Parliament Hill and the huge fields of the South of England Championship.

First off were the Under 15 boys. Illness and train problems meant that Ilford only had two athletes in this race, but both Ryan Holeyman and Matthew Hick acquitted themselves well. Matthew made a really fast start up the first hill, with Ryan a bit more conservative. However by the first mile they were running together and picking their way through the very large field. Ryan was the stronger over the latter stages and finished in 172nd place, with Matthew 235th, there were 317 finishers in the race.

The boys under 13 were next, Ilford had three athletes Joseph Grange, James Thake and Aaron Hick, as they reached the top of the hill all three were buried in the middle of the huge field. James and Aaron were gradually picking their way through the field, however Joseph was flying through the field. The finish of the race is downhill, and Joseph was still passing runners to finish a very good 21st, James was next to finish in 240th and despite taking a fall mid race Aaron finished 251st. There were 304 finishers.

The Under 17's were next, and Ilford had four runners in this race. Aaron Samuel who has been in fantastic form all winter, did not quite live up to his own high expectations, he never really got in contact with the leading group. He worked hard on the second part of the race and eventually finished 9th. Jak Wright and Bradley Deacon have also been running very well this winter and both made positive starts to the race, they were well positioned in the middle of the pack and both working hard to move forward. Jak who admitted a dislike for Parliament Hill finished 61st and Bradley close behind in 79th. It was an improvement of over 50 places for both of them on last year's race. Farris Patel was the final member of the team, and despite hating the mud he continues to turn out for the team. He has put in the miles in recently and looked strong in finishing 164th. The team finished in 9th place, which is believed to be the highest position for an Ilford Under 17 team since the mid 1960's

Jordan Hinds was Ilford's sole competitor in the U20 women's race, and by this time the



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course was well and truly churned up. Jordan has been training hard since starting University this year and is looking much stronger in races. After a steady start she worked her way through the field and was taking runners all the way to the finish. Jordan's finishing place was 56th, which is her best place ever in the South of England Championships.

Once again in the Under 20 men Ilford only had one athlete, which was Mungo Prior. It was his first year in the U20 age category and it was therefore expected he would find the going tough, but Mungo defied expectations and had a great run. Again making a slow start he gradually moved his way through the field on each lap to finish with a very good 30th place.