

## Press release from Chiltern Harriers A C, Monday 17 November 2014

### *A historic race and a historic result*

It could hardly have been a more fitting result.

The 22<sup>nd</sup> Herbert's Hole Challenge race in Chesham last Sunday was jointly won by Highgate Harrier, Ryan McKinlay, in a dead heat.

In an incredible coincidence it was a Highgate Harrier who 100 years ago won the National Cross Country Championship held over a similar course, and this year's Herbert's Hole, organised by Chiltern Harriers AC, was held in commemoration of that event.

In 1914, just months before the outbreak of the First World War, 25-year-old steeplechaser Charlie Ruffell was victorious. The Olympian went on to serve as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers in the war.

This time, it was another steeplechaser from the same club, 28-year-old McKinlay who triumphed, although he had to share his victory.

In the most exciting climax to the race in years, McKinlay fought to the line against his good friend Tom Beedell, a former Chiltern Harrier who now competes for Woodford Green & Essex. The pair finished the approximately 10.5km multi-terrain course in joint first in an impressive time of 36 mins 24 secs.

The historic result almost didn't happen. McKinlay, a two-time Scottish Steeplechase Champion, entered only at the last gasp. He e-mailed the Race Director, Tony Molesworth, on the eve of the race, asking to be allowed to take part, although the entry deadline had passed.

"As you are aware, 100 years ago a Highgate Harrier won here before the outbreak of the war and as a mark of respect I would like to be given the opportunity to run in this historically significant race," he said.

After the race, McKinlay said he was delighted to follow in the footsteps of the legendary Highgate Harrier, Charlie Ruffell. He was particularly pleased to win as just 24 hours earlier he had led his club to Gold in the London Cross Country Championships.

"It was very hard because I didn't have fresh legs," he said, "but it was important for me to honour the memory not just of Charlie but all the men who raced that day, and the great athletes from other clubs who went off to fight in the war."

It really brings it home to you, what those guys did. Running was a way for me to pay my respects."

McKinlay was among 255 runners who set out from Lowndes Park in mild but overcast conditions.

There were some outstanding performances over the hilly, muddy course. McKinlay and Beedell were followed home by Chiltern Harriers' Eddie O'Gorman (Vet 40) in 38:15.

In the ladies' race Philippa Keast took victory in 45:04. She was followed by Ali Young (45:39) and Sandra Reynolds (46:43), both Vet 45s running for Chiltern Harriers.

The home club took both the Men's and Ladies' Team prizes. The scoring team members were Eddie O'Gorman, Alistair Melville-Smith, Richard Quantrill, and Andrew Wiseall, Ali Young, Sandra Reynolds, Ellie Bates and Lean Ni Chiobhain.

The highest scoring fun team were the excellently-named "Smells Like Team Spirit" (Mirek Stiles, Giles Watson, Reb Levine, Simon Kiln).

The Mayor of Chesham, Councillor Mohammed Fayyaz was the official starter for the race and watched the thrilling finish.

Keep up to date with Chiltern Harriers via the website [www.chiltern-harriers.org.uk](http://www.chiltern-harriers.org.uk) or join our Facebook group.

***For more information contact:***

*Tony Molesworth – 07785 501499 or [tony@molesworth.me](mailto:tony@molesworth.me)*

*Next year's race date 23rd Herbert's Hole Challenge – Sunday 15 November 2015*